

Agenda

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 21 March 2024, 10.00 am
County Hall, Worcester

All County Councillors are invited to attend and participate

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DISCLOSING INTERESTS

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

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

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

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

WHAT MUST I DO WITH A DPI?

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

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

WHAT ABOUT 'OTHER DISCLOSABLE INTERESTS'?

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

WHAT ABOUT MEMBERSHIP OF ANOTHER AUTHORITY OR PUBLIC BODY?

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

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

Not normally. You must withdraw only if it:

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

DON'T FORGET

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

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 21 March 2024, 10.00 am, 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

Co-opted Church Representatives (for education matters)

Mr Tim Reid and Vacancy

Parent Governor Representatives (for education matters)

Vacancy

Agenda

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1	Apologies and Welcome	
2	Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip	
3	Public Participation Members of the public wishing to take part should notify the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance in writing or by e-mail indicating both the nature and content of their proposed participation no later than 9.00am on the working day before the meeting (in this case 20 March 2024). 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	Educational Outcomes 2023 including Ofsted Update (Indicative timing: 10.05 to 10.55am)	1 - 14
6	Early Education and Childcare National Expansion Programme (Indicative timing: 10.55 to 11.35am)	15 - 30
7	Performance and 2023-24 Budget Monitoring (Indicative timing: 11.35am to 12.05pm)	31 - 60
8	Refresh of the Scrutiny Work Programme 2024-25 (Indicative timing: 12.05 to 12.20pm)	61 - 64

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 21 MARCH 2024

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES 2023 INCLUDING OFSTED UPDATE

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and the Director of Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Place Planning have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on:
 - the educational outcomes for children and young people educated in Worcestershire schools for the academic year 2022/2023.
 - the overview of Ofsted inspections of Worcestershire state funded schools for the academic year 2022/2023.

Educational outcomes

2. For the academic year 2022/23 Key Stage 2 outcomes and Key Stage 4 outcomes are based on revised data sets released by the Department for Education (DfE). These outcomes are for learners in all state funded schools in Worcestershire, i.e., maintained schools, academies, colleges, and free schools.
3. These are the second key stage attainment statistics since 2019, after assessments were cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. These statistics cover the attainment of pupils who took assessments in summer 2023. Although less effected than the 2021-22 cohort, these pupils will still have had part of their education disrupted by the pandemic and this is shown when comparisons are made to 2019 performance.
4. Good Level of Development (GLD) is a performance measure used at the end of Reception (at age 5) and is the second publication of this since the 2021/22 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) reforms were introduced in September 2020/2021, therefore it is not possible to directly compare 2021/22 and 2022/23 assessment outcomes with earlier years.
5. In 2022, the performance in the Early Years for children in Worcestershire was in line with National outcomes, although below that of Worcestershire's statistical neighbours. In 2023 outcomes were as follows:
 - GLD above National (Worcestershire 68% National 67% Stat neighbours 69%)
 - Expected level across all seventeen Early Learning Goals Worcestershire 67%, National 66% and Stat neighbours 68%)
 - Average number of Early Learning Goals at expected level per child

(Worcestershire at 14.3, National at 14.1).

Key Stage 1 (Tests at the end of Year 2, when children are 7 years old)

6. Key Stage 1 (KS1) results show that:

- Pupils reaching National standards in Reading, writing and maths outcomes combined – Worcestershire 58%, National 56% (This remains below 2019 (pre-covid) achievement (65%) but is a 3% increase compared to 2022 outcomes.)
- Pupils reaching National standards in Reading in 2023, Worcestershire 69%, National 68% and Stat Neighbours 70%
- Pupils reaching National standards in writing in 2023, Worcestershire 62%, National 60% and Stat Neighbours 61%
- Pupils reaching National standards in Maths in 2023, Worcestershire 71%, National 70% and Stat neighbours 72%

7. Writing still appears to be the weakest subject relative to Reading and Maths, as it is Nationally. Historically this has been seen as a consistent trend, pupils need their development of reading to be strong to support strong writing. However, this has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic where children have not developed fine motor control for pencil grip and have increased speech and language issues which impact on spelling and grammar and breadth of vocabulary needed to reach National standards.

Key Stage 2 (Tests at the end of Year 6, when children are 11 years old)

8. Gaps in data performance between Worcestershire and National outcomes:

- in 2019 a narrowing of the gap was seen between Worcestershire Key Stage 2 (KS2) outcomes and National to two percentage points with Worcestershire achieving 63% (National 65%).
- In the 2022 results this gap remained at two percentage points with 57% of children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at the end of KS2 compared to 59% Nationally.
- In 2023, Worcestershire performance remained at 57% compared to 60% Nationally, meaning the gap increased slightly to three percentage points.
- Pupils reaching National standards in Reading in 2023, Worcestershire, 71% (73% 2022) National, 73% (75% 2022) and Statistical Neighbours 73%. This indicates the gap has remained the same between National and Worcestershire outcomes for reading.
- Pupils reaching National standards in Maths in 2023, Worcestershire, 71% (69% 2022) National, 73% (71% 2022) and Statistical Neighbours 72% This indicates the gap has remained the same between National and Worcestershire outcomes for maths.
- Pupils reaching National standards in Writing in 2023, Worcestershire, 70%

(70% 2022) National, 71% (69% 2022) and Statistical Neighbours 72%. This indicates the gap from National went from 1 percentage point above, to 1 percentage point below for writing.

9. Progress scores between KS1-2 for reading, writing and mathematics remain a concern. Targeted work described in **Raising standards in schools causing concern** (paragraph 44 below) is designed to secure continued improvement. This is the final year for KS1 Assessment and all progress measures from 2023/24 will be determined from Early Years Baseline to Year 6 outcomes in Primary.

Key Stage 4

10. At Key Stage 4 (KS4), each grade a pupil gets is assigned a point score from 9 (the highest) to 1 (the lowest).
11. The percentage of pupils who achieved a standard pass in both English and mathematics (grades 9-4) GCSE in Worcestershire 64%, National 65%. Statistical neighbours 65%.
12. The percentage of pupils who achieved a strong pass in both English and mathematics (grades 9-5) in Worcestershire 44%, National 45% and Statistical Neighbours 44%.
13. English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is the set of subjects at GCSE that keeps young people's options open for further study and future careers which are English language and literature, maths, the sciences, geography or history and a language.
 - The percentage of pupils undertaking EBacc was 38% which compares to the National percentage of 39%.
 - In 2023, the EBacc average point score in Worcestershire was 3.91, compared to 4.05 nationally.
14. Each pupil's Attainment 8 score is calculated by adding up the points for their 8 subjects, with English and maths counted twice. A school's Attainment 8 score is the average of all the scores of its eligible pupils.
 - Worcestershire's Attainment 8 was 44.8, this compared to the National figure of 46.3. Worcestershire's statistical neighbours achieved 45.7.
15. Progress 8 refers to the progress that pupils in a school make from the end of primary school to the end of year 11. It is a type of value-added measure, which means that pupils' results are compared to other pupils Nationally with similar starting points.
 - The Progress 8 score, at -0.04, and equal to National, puts Worcestershire as 74/150 in county rankings. National Progress 8 is -0.03.
 - Worcestershire's statistical neighbours achieved -0.07 and so were not as successful as Worcestershire.

Key Stage 5

16. At Key Stage 5 (KS5) the percentage of students achieving grades AAB+ at A

Level declined both in Worcestershire and Nationally from 2022 to 2023.

- 19.07% of pupils in Worcestershire schools and colleges achieved AAB+ compared to 27.42% the previous year.
- Nationally, 22.46% of pupils in state-funded schools and colleges achieved AAB+ at A Level, compared to 31.39% the previous year, meaning the gap between Worcestershire and National had reduced slightly from 4% to 3%.
- A level students averaged 33.74 points (a grade C+) across their best 3 A levels compared to 37.95 points (a grade B-) in 2022, placing Worcestershire in Quartile C, 84/150.

17. Applied General Qualifications allow entry to a range of higher education courses, either by meeting the entry requirements in their own right or being accepted alongside other qualifications at Level 3 such as A levels. Many Applied General Qualifications are endorsed by employers and professional or trade bodies.

- Students taking Applied General Qualifications in Worcestershire averaged Distinction- (and an average point score of 30.05) which is an improvement since 2019 when the average point score was 28.47, Merit+, but slightly below 2022 performance (30.29).

18. Tech Levels (or T Levels) are two-year technical programmes, designed with employers, to give young people the skills that industries need. The 'T' stands for technical and from 2020, T Levels give 16 to 19-year-olds a technical alternative to A levels. One T Level is equivalent to 3 A levels.

- The average point score for students undertaking the T Level in Worcestershire in 2023 was 27.82, compared to 28.50 for pupils Nationally (state-funded schools and colleges), placing Worcestershire in Quartile C, 91/150.
- Worcestershire's statistical neighbours achieved an average point score of 28.31.

Outcomes for vulnerable pupils - Disadvantaged pupils

19. Of particular focus has been attainment for disadvantaged pupils in the county. The DfE defines disadvantaged pupils as those who receive Free School Meals, or a child looked after (CLA). Schools receive extra funding from the government for every disadvantaged pupil to raise attainment.

20. At KS1 combined outcomes (reading, writing and maths) are below National at 36% compared to 40% Nationally. This difference from National remains consistent when looking at individual subject outcomes for reading, writing and maths.

21. At KS2 combined outcomes (reading, writing and maths) for disadvantaged pupils are well below National at 36% compared to 44% Nationally. Again, this difference from National remains consistent when looking at individual subject outcomes reading, writing and maths. (See System Leadership section (paragraph 34) for

some of the strategies for counteracting this issue).

22. At KS4, a widening of the gap can be seen regarding both Attainment 8, and Progress 8 scores for Disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils achieved on average an Attainment 8 score of 31.9, compared to National of 35.1. Progress 8 is on average -0.67, marginally below the National figure of -0.57.
23. When examining the progress of Children Looked After (CLA), pupil numbers should be considered as when interpreting percentage changes (low cohort numbers in one group could cause inflated or deflated results).
24. In terms of academic progress for 2022/23, compared to 2021/22 results, the attainment gap between Worcestershire CLA and Worcestershire 'all' and National 'all' improved in the following areas;
- Early Years Good Level of Development, Phonics, KS4 Achieving 9-5 in English & Mathematics, KS4 EBacc Average Point Score and Attainment 8.
 - However, the gap between Worcestershire CLA and Worcestershire 'all' widened in KS1 Reading, Writing and Mathematics (RWM) (despite improved results for CLA compared to last year), and also widened in KS2 RWM and Progress 8. This remains an area of focused work.

Breakdown of Outcome areas

25. The breakdown of outcome areas is:

EYFS:

- 49% (16) of CLA pupils achieved a good level of development (GLD), compared to 41% of CLA pupils Nationally. Worcestershire performance was 8% higher than CLA National (compared to 2% lower the previous year).

Key Stage 1:

- Reading, Writing and Mathematics: The percentage of Worcestershire CLA pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined was 35% compared to 30% Nationally. This is 5% higher which is sustained from 2022.
- Phonics: The percentage of CLA pupils in Worcestershire who passed the PSC (Phonics Screening Check) was 79%. This is 5% higher than nationally.

Key Stage 2:

- Reading, Writing and Mathematics: The percentage of Worcestershire CLA pupils achieving the combined expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics decreased from 40% to 35%. This remains above National CLA 34.0% but is a 5% decline in 2022.

Key Stage 4:

- Achieving 9-5 in English & Maths GCSEs: The percentage of Worcestershire CLA pupils achieving 9-5 in English & Maths was 11%. This has increased 1% since 2022 but is 1% lower than National.
- Attainment 8: The Attainment 8 score for Worcestershire CLA has improved year on year from 2018/19. Worcestershire CLA have closed

the gap year on year with both Worcestershire 'all' and National 'all' since 2018/19. 2022/23 saw the gap to Worcestershire 'all' close further (from 26.3 in 2021/22 to 21.5 in 2022/23) and to National 'all' close further (from 27.4 in 2021/22 to 22.9 in 2022/23).

- Progress 8: The Progress 8 score for Worcestershire CLA decreased from -1.14 in 2021/22 to -1.36 in 2022/23.

26. Despite closing the gap in 5/8 outcome measures for Worcestershire CLA, their outcomes fall below those for Worcestershire 'all' and National 'all', in line with the National picture for CLA. CLA face significant disadvantage in achieving educational outcomes and Worcestershire Virtual School (WVS) works to provide the support and challenge required to overcome this adversity. Areas for priority work to address any underperformance in terms of gaps have been:

- Virtual School leading Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings and holding school staff to account.
- The visibility of CLA in schools has increased and settings have been challenged to provide a wider and more targeted range of strategies to support their most vulnerable learners.
- The Virtual School's mission to create trauma informed and attachment aware settings (TIAAS) across the county has improved settings' ability to support CLA and increased their readiness to learn and their individual sense of value.

27. Permanent exclusions and suspensions for CLA remain low, despite the broader National picture of increasing exclusions and suspensions in the challenging times following the Covid pandemic.

Exclusions:

- 2021-22 = 3 (0.49%)
- 2022-23 = 1 (0.15%)
- 7 exclusions were avoided/rescinded by WVS intervention.

Suspensions:

- 2021-22 = 10.80% of the Worcs CLA cohort had at least 1 suspension (67 suspensions), compared with 2.84% for the Worcs 'All' cohort.
- 2022-23 = 11.03% of the Worcs CLA cohort had at least 1 suspension (75 suspensions), compared with 3.13% for the Worcs 'All' cohort. The slight increase is in line with the increase for 'All.'

The Worcestershire Virtual School has strong partnerships with schools in finding solutions to issues and averting exclusions.

28. The Government's Children in Need review (2019) evidenced that children in need of support from a social worker do significantly worse than others at all stages of education and that poor educational outcomes persist even after social work involvement ends. The review recognised the crucial role of Virtual Schools, and, from September 2021, the Virtual School role was significantly extended to include the strategic leadership of promoting the educational attendance, attainment, and progress of children with a social worker (those on Child in Need Plans or Child Protection Plans).

29. Worcestershire Virtual School work to support and challenge schools to provide inclusive environments for our children with a social worker, alongside building

strong working relationships with partners and stakeholders and our broader initiatives:

- Additional funding is in place to support learners where there are identified gaps in learning, through Recovery funding and through the National Tutoring Programme.
- WVS continues to promote the TIAAS programme (Trauma Informed & Attachment Aware Settings).
- WVS has fully funded all schools to have access to the RADY Project (Raising Attainment for Disadvantaged Youngsters) resources through Thinking Differently for Disadvantaged Learners. Phase 2 in 2023-24 will see pilot schools receiving fully funded intensive intervention from the RADY Team (Challenging Education).
- Extensive early advice and guidance is provided for schools with repeat suspensions to avoid permanent exclusions.
- Active participation in the RSA Preventing School Exclusions project which has an action plan being applied for system change across all schools.
- Half-termly meeting with WCF Education Safeguarding Lead to ensure repeat suspension schools are highlighted for contact and intervention.
- CIN/CP cohort - schools with repeat suspensions identified for advice and guidance.
- Partnership with Education Engagement Inclusion Team to ensure that suspensions/exclusions for CIN/CP cohort are prioritised.
- Advice/support offered to social care on the new DfE Suspension/Exclusion guidance. FAQs produced.
- Complex CIN and Core Group meetings attended where there is a risk of permanent exclusion, to ensure robust target/s set to support the pupil.
- Key Information documents provided to be included in Social Care Practice Standards, covering topics including attendance, suspensions and exclusions, educational neglect, use of part-time timetables, trauma informed practice and managing behaviour in schools.

SEN Pupil Outcomes (SEN with an Education, Health, and Care (EHC) Plan or 'SEN support')

30. At KS1 attainment for SEN pupils in each area of reading, writing and maths is above National, being on average 3% higher. Combined outcomes for RWM are also 3% higher (19% Worcestershire and 16% National).
31. At KS2 combined outcomes (Reading, writing and maths) for SEN pupils are 19% with 20% Nationally. The gap has narrowed by 2% since 2022 when there was a 3% difference. Individual subjects have a similar gap for Reading and Writing but Maths is broadly in line with National.
32. At KS4 Attainment 8 was 26.7 for Worcestershire and 28 for National. This gap has increased slightly since 2022. Progress 8 scores indicate all SEN children in Worcestershire are slightly higher than the National figure of -0.6 (-0.5).
33. For those pupils with an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) in Worcestershire outcomes are closer to the National score of 14.0 with an average Attainment 8 score of 12.2. Average Progress 8 scores for pupils with an EHCP were -1.1 which is in line with National.
34. WCF School Improvement advisers run careful checks at the risk assessment stage and when maintained schools are identified as at-risk, Officers examine

the attainment and progress of specific groups. Where this is established as a concern for children with SEN, specialist advisory support is part of the package of measures put in place.

System Leadership for School Improvement

35. Analysis with School and MAT (Multi Academy Trust) leaders, Ofsted Reports, Outcomes Data and WCF school reviews continue to identify system-wide challenges including Attendance, SEND provision, Behaviour, Staff recruitment and retention, and Leadership capacity. WCF have provided, in collaboration with external partners, a range of new programmes, leadership networks and opportunities that seek to build system leadership. These include:

- Projects with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)
 - The Evidence Exploration Partnership to identify priorities and co-develop solutions that address the underachievement of disadvantaged children and young people:
 - Developing Effective Learning Behaviours programme with Billesley Research School providing training to equip schools to support the social and emotional needs of their pupils, manage behaviours effectively and understand metacognitive strategies to support learning.
- Research programmes with:
 - Voice 21 Let's Talk at Transition – training, consultancy, on-line learning and a network for 6 Secondary schools to explore how investment in oracy supports effective transition and use the expertise to support other secondary schools. This is intended to improve SEND support and prevent exclusion.
 - TAST 5-6 – is a research programme provided by the University of Manchester et al. which focuses on preparing pupils for a more effective experience of transition by providing training and lesson plans for Y5 and Y6 staff. The impact of the work is being explored through the development of a pupil wellbeing assessment tool.
- RSA Preventing Exclusions – WCF has been working with the RSA to develop or amplify systems and strategies to prevent exclusions. This includes reinvigorating the SENCO network, redesign of Fair Access Panels, developing the outreach of Primary and Secondary APs and supporting the Primary Partnership.
- New Capabilities for a New World leadership programme provided by University of Worcester which supports school leaders to develop their leadership capacities and create conditions to lead change in the area of inclusion in their schools and collaboratively across the wider system.
- Collaboration with Teaching School Hubs and Curriculum Hubs to provide targeted support including Attendance Conference, targeted Maths and English support.

- Leaders of Learning network to share best practice with and between school leaders that focuses on teaching and learning.
- Multi-Academy Trust CEO network for Worcestershire. This academy-led network of over 30 Chief Executive Officers of academy trusts with schools in Worcestershire have agreed attendance and disadvantaged attainment as key priorities to improve for children and young people. Outcomes in this year have included pooling resources to tackle attendance and sharing leadership best practice.

Statutory Responsibilities and Wider work of School Improvement

36. The School Improvement (SI) team provide 2 days support for every Head Teacher recruitment and appointment in maintained schools, and have been involved in 14 appointments of Head Teachers in 22/23.
37. The SI team function as external advisers in the Head Teacher Performance Management appraisal processes carried out by Governing boards and have been involved in 40 in 22/23.
38. The SI team fulfil the statutory moderation duties on behalf of the local authority (LA). This includes monitoring the delivery of all statutory assessments in KS1 and KS2 and the moderation of Reading, Writing and Maths at KS1 and Writing at KS2. In 2022/23 the following proportions of visits were conducted with no cases of maladministration:
- 24 phonics Unannounced Monitoring visits
 - 24 KS2 Unannounced Monitoring visits
 - 53 KS1 Moderation visits
 - 42 KS2 Moderation visits
39. These visits are conducted by a school-based team alongside the SI team. All visits are in the month of June with the exception of KS2 Monitoring, which is in the National test week during May.

School Inspection outcomes

40. Under the current Ofsted framework inspections focus on the curriculum, exploring what is taught and how it meets the needs of pupils, rather than a focus on data outcomes. Ofsted assesses the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, and leadership and management. Each of these are graded and this feeds into an overall single judgement.
41. In July 2023 84% of Worcestershire schools were judged Good or Outstanding, this is an improvement on 2022 outcomes. 0% of Maintained schools were judged as inadequate.
42. In July 2023, the % of schools judged to be Good or Outstanding across the phases were as follows:
- 84% of Primary Phase Schools (2% increase)
 - 79% of Middle Phase Schools (4% increase)
 - 87% of Secondary Phase Schools (No change)
 - 81% of Special and alternative Schools (this is lower than in July 2022, but Dec 23 data indicates it has now risen to 88%)

43. From September 2022 School Improvement have offered 3 key services to all maintained schools in the inspection window. They are a SEN health check, a safeguarding audit, and an Ofsted rehearsal. These have had a positive impact in schools performing well at inspection.

44. In the academic year 2022/23, 75 inspections and 4 Monitoring visits took place. A summary of outcomes is below:

Maintained Schools (35 Inspections and 3 monitoring visits)

	Number	Percentage
Outstanding	1	3%
Good	28	81%
RI (all S5 Inspections)	6	17%
Ofsted Category	0	0
Monitoring Visit No Grade but judged on taking effective action (TEA)	3	100% TEA

84% of maintained schools were either outstanding or Good.

Academies (40 Inspections and 1 monitoring visit)

	Number	Percentage
Outstanding	3	7%
Good	32	80%
RI (all S5 Inspections)	3	8%
Ofsted Category	2	5%
Monitoring Visit No Grade but judged on taking effective action (TEA)	1	100% TEA

86% of academies were either outstanding or good.

All Schools (75 Inspections and 4 monitoring visits)

	Number	Percentage
Outstanding	4	5%
Good	60	80%
RI (all S5 Inspections)	9	12%
Ofsted Category	2	3%
Monitoring Visit No Grade but judged on taking effective action (TEA)	4	100% TEA

86% of all schools were either outstanding or good. (9% increase on 2022)

Raising standards in schools causing concern

- 45. The extent of the work with maintained schools is defined from an initial risk assessment based on Key Stage outcomes, the period since last inspection and wider intelligence, which is then adjusted once an initial visit has been undertaken. In line with the Ofsted emphasis on Quality of Education, the SI team focus on this during any risk assessment activities.
- 46. It is important to note that the local authority does not have statutory powers of intervention in terms of school improvement for 54% of schools in Worcestershire that are academy (or free) schools; that is 131/243 schools (as of July 2023). However, a large proportion of the 100+ academy schools in Worcestershire do seek our services on a traded basis from WCF; many book support for multiple activities including Early Career teachers (ECT), governance and leadership support; in particular, advisory work / training on assessment / moderation at KS2 (and Early Years/Key Stage 1).
- 47. As described in previous reports, the School Improvement Model has continued to be refined, in line with DFE guidance. There are graduated stages through which higher risk schools must travel to reach self-sustained good or better performance. The stages are shown in the diagram below:

Stages of School Improvement

Level of support provided	WCF stage	Likely school position
Intensive	4	Stabilising
Focused	3	Repairing
Monitoring and Light Touch	2	Improving
Secure	1	Sustaining

- 48. Early identification is vital, and risk assessments of maintained schools are nuanced to take into account prior trends in pupil outcomes but also other factors, such as the stability levels in relation to governance, leadership and teaching and further indicators (such as complaints about the school to Ofsted). Where a school is in particular need, work is conducted to firstly stabilise governance and secure leadership that will, in turn, increase wider capacity in school for improvement.
- 49. Each of the schools that require support at Stages 3 and 4 above receive a mix of both mandatory challenge and support on key themes and a bespoke package that reflects their specific issues. Every school experiences external evaluation, for example, through assigned improvement officer visits, and also training sessions/and on-site coaching / mentoring, for leaders and teachers alike. Training modules include a specific focus on improving provision in reading, writing and mathematics.
- 50. A considerable investment of time is made in convening at least termly Team Around the School Project meetings (TASP) for relevant Focus and Intensive support schools. At these, an assessment is made as to whether or not the school is taking effective action to improve. The headteacher, chair of governors, link adviser, school improvement lead and other key stakeholders, including finance / HR officers and diocesan partners are involved. In this way, the process is one of

a 'team around the school' in securing shared accountability to ensure rapid and sustained progress.

Impact on schools causing concern:

51. At the end of Academic year 21/22 37% of maintained schools were risk assessed as needing additional support. By the end of 22/23, this number had reduced to 23%.
52. 100% of inspected schools who had been identified as causing concern had verbal or written feedback provided by inspectors that School Improvement was providing appropriate and timely support.
53. In 22/23 0% of maintained schools were judged to be inadequate.
54. Performance at each Key Stage in Primary shows strong outcomes. For Maintained schools who receive the package of support from the SI team outcomes are as follows:
 - GLD – above National outcomes
 - Phonics – above National outcomes
 - KS1 – inline or above National for R, W and M
 - KS2 – in line with National averages for combined RWM
 - KS2 – above National for reading, above National for writing, slightly below National for maths (1%) Maintained schools are outperforming academies at KS2
55. The WCF school improvement impact on KS4 and KS5 outcomes is more limited due to the small number of maintained secondary schools (4 schools). Positive outcomes are noted below.
 - 75% of maintained schools achieved above National for KS4 outcomes. Progress 8 scores were less positive. (See Section 14 and 15)
 - 1 school improved from RI to Good in the academic year making 100% of Maintained Secondary schools Good or better.

Purpose of the Meeting

56. The Panel is asked to:

- Consider and comment on the educational outcomes report.
- Agree any comments to highlight to the Cabinet Member.
- Determine whether any further information or scrutiny on a particular topic is required.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and

Governance) the following are background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

[Agenda and Minutes for Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel 14 February 2020](#)

[Agenda and Minutes for Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel 16 March, 2021](#)

[Agenda and Minutes for Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel 22nd March, 2023](#)

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 21 MARCH 2024

EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE NATIONAL EXPANSION PROGRAMME

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and the Director of Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Place Planning have been invited to update the Panel on developments and Worcestershire's preparation relating to the Early Education and Childcare National Expansion Programme.

Background

2. Local Authorities in England have responsibilities for the sufficiency of early education and childcare places.
3. These duties include those from The Childcare Act 2006 which places a requirement on English local authorities, so far as reasonably practicable, to secure sufficient childcare in their area for working parents. This includes securing early years provision that provides funded places for working parents and children with specific disadvantages.
4. The Childcare Act 2006 also places a duty on English local authorities to provide information, advice and assistance to parents and prospective parents and to provide information, advice and training to childcare providers.
5. The Childcare Act 2016 also places a duty on the Secretary of State to secure the equivalent of 30 hours of funded childcare over 38 weeks of the year for qualifying children of eligible working parents. Children in England will qualify if they are under compulsory school age and meet the criteria. These regulations also set out the conditions to be met by parents in order for their children to qualify. This duty is discharged to local authorities to have the responsibility for passing through the entitlement funding for places, calculated by central government, to early years providers.
6. In 2023 the government announced an expansion of the childcare programme to provide access to supported childcare for younger children and babies for working families and extend 2-year-old funded provision. In addition, and by September 2026, all parents and carers of primary school-aged children who need it should be able to access term time childcare in their local area from 8am-6pm, so that parents can access employment and improve labour market participation.

- This is a significant programme of investment and market development and is of public interest and priority. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel requested that an introduction and plans for preparation and implementation of this programme be shared with the Panel.

Issues for the Panel to Consider

How does Worcestershire currently meet the early education and childcare duties?

- Across Worcestershire there are 446 early years and childcare settings on the Ofsted Early Years Register. This includes 209 childminders, 33 home child carers, frequently known as Nannies and 191 private or voluntary run settings (PVI sector), with a further 4 registered independent schools.
- There are 113 state funded schools with early years provision, this includes 27 maintained school nursery classes and 1 maintained nursery school. In total, there are 563 settings offering early years provision.
- Table 1 – Worcestershire early years funding take-up

Of the 563 early years settings:

Type of Provision	Number of settings	Percentage of settings	Take up Rate by families in Worcestershire	National Take up Rate 2023
Nursery Education Funded Places to eligible 3- and 4-year-olds	464	82%	97%	94%
Funded provision for eligible 2-year-olds	390	69%	77-79%	74%

- Our take-up of two-year old funding compares favourably to national figures. During Summer Term 2023 we were 7th out of 13 local authorities within the West Midlands and 7th out of 11 when compared to statistical neighbours, just behind Warwickshire, Staffordshire and Herefordshire who all had a reported 78% take-up rate.
- The remaining non-funded settings are primarily childminders who have chosen to rely on income from parental fees, often focusing their businesses on wraparound and holiday provision, and home child carers who are not allowed to offer funded provision and are paid directly by the families they work for.
- There are on average 9,500 3 and 4-years old children with funded places each year, with a further 1,000 two-year-olds funded each term, which equates to around 20% of two-year-olds in Worcestershire each year
- The quality of Early Years Ofsted registered provision in Worcestershire is consistently judged as Good or Outstanding, with only 3 of the 464 funded settings currently judged as Requires Improvement (2) or Inadequate (1) at the

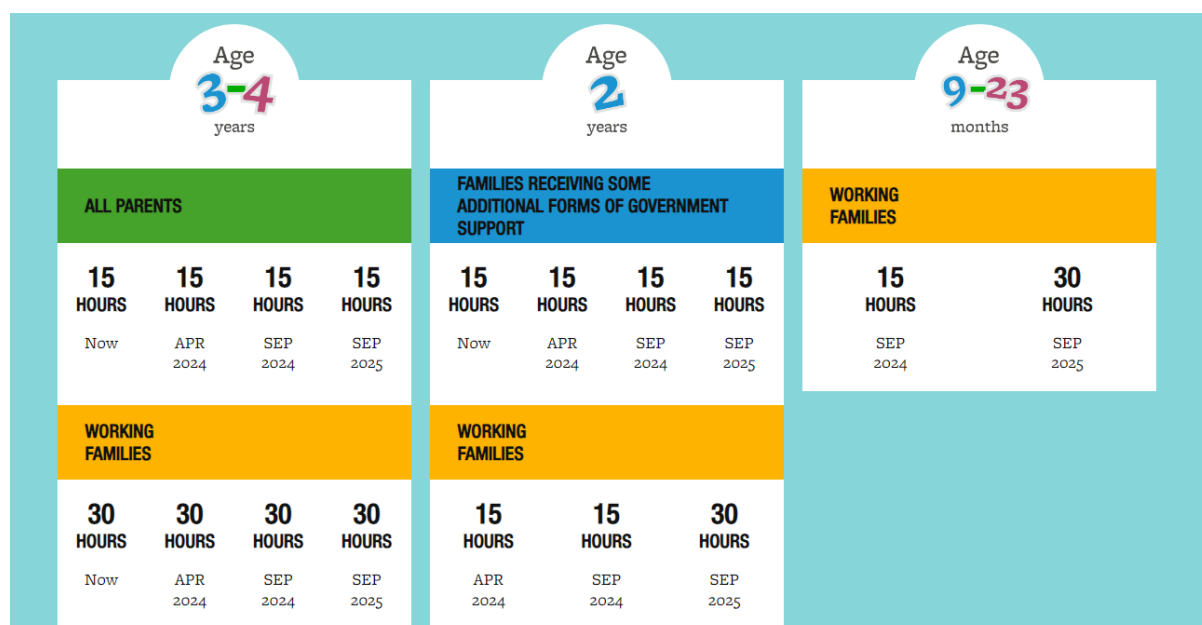
time of this report being published (0.6%). These settings receive direct intervention and support from the WCF Early Years Team.

15. Early indications of wraparound childcare for primary aged children shows that 87% or 174/199 mainstream schools serving children up to the age of 11 years in Worcestershire have some form of before or after school provision, with 80 schools having full wraparound in place. This is higher than the national estimate of 80% of schools providing some sort of wraparound childcare provision. This will include First Schools, Primary Schools and Middle Schools. This may be through school led provision or in collaboration with private childcare providers.

What will change as a result of the national programme?

16. The national expansion programme for childcare is phased across the next 2 years, starting in April 2024 with an increase in funding support for working families with children who are 2 years old by 31st March 2024. In September 2025 this entitlement expands to support an increase in funded hours for these families from 15 hours to 30 hours.
17. In September 2024 for the first-time working families of babies and children from (the term after they turn) 9 months to 23 months will receive funding support to access 15 hours of childcare for 38 weeks a year. This increases in 2025 to 30 hours of funding support.
18. Table 2 below is a visual description of the changes as shown by the national Childcare Choices government information platform.

Figure 1 – funded support for childcare from April 2024



19. The programme launch for additional wraparound childcare for primary school aged children starts from September 2024 with the ambition that by September 2026 provision is developed and sustainable. The term wraparound reflects that this provision is to enable parents to work, and so it should be regular and

dependable. Parents should not be required to pick up or drop off their children between the core school day and when wraparound childcare opens. Wraparound should operate from 8am – 6pm every day. Schools' existing enrichment and extracurricular offers can interact with, complement, and support delivery of wraparound childcare provision.

20. The programme should deliver provision that is child centred, easily accessible, and responds to the needs of the families, including those of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
21. In February 2024 the DfE published guidance for schools and academy trusts in supporting parents to access wraparound childcare. The ambition for wraparound childcare includes:
 - enabling parents to work or study
 - supporting vulnerable children
 - offering enriching activities that children enjoy
 - attracting parents to the school
 - supporting a soft start to the school day and attendance
 - investing fees into the school or community facilities
22. It is expected that the programme should be built on existing assets and understanding of the local community, which incorporates and does not disrupt and displace the existing wraparound childcare market. Local authorities, with support from schools, trusts and others, will need to be confident that sufficient provision is available in their local area to meet parents' needs and, where not the case, take action.
23. This provision is expected to be affordable for parents as they will be expected to pay for places. It is expected that the provision is registered with Ofsted, or subject to inspection as part of a school's overall provision under the education inspection framework. This will enable schools and other providers to promote and provide access for eligible parents to:
 - Tax-Free childcare (covering 20% of costs up to £2k a year, or £4k a year for children with disabilities)
 - The childcare element of Universal Credit (support for up to 85% subsidy of their costs)
24. Whilst the availability of places is the primary objective of the Programme, ensuring that children are safe and engaged in inclusive and high-quality childcare is vital to the ongoing sustainability of provision. It is therefore also necessary to support:
 - Quality, including Ofsted requirements, staffing qualifications and ratios
 - Safeguarding
 - Inclusivity
25. The WCF Early Years Team work closely with the Education Safeguarding Team who provide information, training, advice, support and challenge to both education settings including the early years sector.

Holiday activities and food programme

26. The national wraparound childcare programme only covers term-time provision. It does not extend to holiday childcare. Through the holiday activities and food programme (HAF) WCF commissions the coordination and provision of free holiday activities for children and young people. This includes healthy food and enriching activities for children in receipt of free school meals including eligible children and young people with SEND.
27. It is expected that local authority wraparound leads work closely with holiday activities and food programme coordinators. This will ensure both programmes capitalise on any opportunities for join-up and may help with provider sustainability. The web link below provides information to the Worcestershire HAF Programme, locally known as Ready Steady Worcestershire.

[Ready Steady Worcestershire - Holiday Activities and Food \(HAF\) Programme | Worcestershire County Council](#)

What is Local Authorities' role in the early years and childcare expansion programme?

28. The Department for Education (DfE) have outlined the following expectations for local authorities to achieve to ensure that the childcare expansion and wraparound programmes are delivered:
- Ensure strong local leadership through a robust governance structure
 - Allocate a designated lead and ensure appropriate resourcing
 - Plan for delivery – undertake supply and demand mapping, and identify delivery models for wraparound provision and development for gaps in the market
 - Complete and submit costed delivery plans – local authority capacity and programme delivery plans
 - Allocate funding to providers
 - Work with providers to set up provision
 - Promote the Childcare Expansion and National Wraparound Childcare programme to providers and parents
29. The DfE have commissioned Coram Hemsall's Group (the integration of two experienced national children's organisations) to provide childcare sufficiency support under the brand of Childcare Works. This organisation will provide proactive support in the form of development events for local authorities and providers, materials for evaluation, development and promotion, support and challenge for Local Authorities.
30. The DfE will continue to retain the following functions:
- Maintain named contact relationships with all LAs, holding regular keep-in-touch meetings, and being available for questions, clarifications and queries,
 - Identify risk and challenge via contact activities and refer support needs to Coram Hemsall's as necessary,
 - Continue to deliver key policy and delivery information and updates.

31. The work to assess demand, develop the market, address gaps, provide information support and advice is led by the WCF Early Years Team in collaboration with relevant other departments across WCF and WCC as a system wide programme of work. This includes:
- IT system support team – systems for eligibility checking and data exchange/returns
 - Finance team – payments to providers and funding advice and guidance
 - Communications – promotion of changes and new opportunities
 - Economy and Infrastructure – business development support
 - Public Health – Family Hubs
 - School Improvement Team – engaging the school sector
 - Education Place Planning – mapping and sufficiency assessments
32. Appendix 1 shows the system approach involving all stakeholders and the governance and oversight of this programme. This is a complex system development that is dependent on community engagement and co-production, a market that has capability and capacity, a clear assessment of the market position and targeted support to meet need where gaps are identified.

Inclusion

33. Following the Statutory Guidance for Early Education and Childcare, the Local Authority should promote equality and inclusion, particularly for disadvantaged families, looked after children, children in need and children with special educational needs and disability, by removing barriers to access to funded early years places and working with parents to give each child support to fulfil their potential. Local authorities must ensure they meet their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and take account of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice 0-25 when securing funded early years places.
34. In Worcestershire Private, Voluntary, and Independent providers have access to information, advice and guidance from the Early Years Inclusion Team, a team of qualified special educational needs teachers and support staff. WCF Complex Communication Team also provides advice and support for settings and young children in the early years.
35. Alongside this, during 2023 there has been a refresh to the Early Years Inclusion Pathway to ensure that children's needs are identified early, and the right support given at the right time. The link below explains the provision and pathways in Worcestershire for children with SEND.

[Childcare or preschool for children with SEND | Worcestershire County Council](#)

36. It is recognised that it can be more challenging for working parents to secure childcare for children with complex difficulties and manage work commitments with accessing appropriate provision and support for their child.

37. Worcestershire has a range of provision for young children with SEND in addition to mainstream early years settings (that are required to follow the Code of Practice 0-25 SEND and the duties of the Equality Act 2010).
38. WCF has been undertaking review and transformation of early years provision. This has been to respond to an increase in the identification and assessment of young children with SEND and under our sufficiency duties to keep provision under review.
39. A commissioning exercise is currently concluding to develop an increase in 'Enhanced Early Years Provision'. This is to provide access to children to meet the requirements of children whose identified complex needs make it difficult to attend a mainstream early year setting.
40. The places for children will be allocated via a termly, multi-agency planning meeting for children with identified complex needs. The needs will have been identified through an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
41. Whilst this enhanced early years provision is being set up, we continue to deliver provision through the offer of Specialist Outreach support from Vale of Evesham Special School, covering Worcester and South Worcestershire that works with children in their mainstream provision. Children in the Wyre Forest are supported by the nursery at Wyre Forest Special School working alongside mainstream provision. The specialist nursery at Batchley First School in Redditch along with Chadsgrove Special School support children from Bromsgrove and Redditch in conjunction with mainstream settings.
42. Some children with specific speech and language difficulties also access Early Years Language Classes alongside their mainstream provision. There are Language Classes available in each of the Districts of Worcestershire. Each of these different provisions are included as part of the entitlement to early years education and childcare for working parents.
43. Children who are looked after by a Local Authority may be able to access funded childcare; currently all looked after two-year-old children are able to access 15 hours per week, whilst 3- & 4-year-old children are able to access an additional 15 hours (30 hours per week) if their foster carers work outside fostering; this eligibility will include all early years age-groups in line with the early entitlement expansion.
44. The childcare wraparound programme for primary aged children should deliver provision that is child centred, easily accessible, and responds to the needs of the families, including those of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
45. During 2024 WCF will carry out focused work with the special schools including parent carers and alternative provision to assist them in the further development of wraparound care available for working parents where it is needed. This will include working closely with schools who already will have a range of enrichment and short break activities for children and families.

Programme Milestones

46. Table 2 - key programme milestones

Date	Wraparound Programme	Entitlements expansion
Jan-24		Statutory Guidance (Early Years and Childcare) published Early Years Recruitment campaign launched Childcare Choices opens for applications for two-year-olds
Feb-24	Guidance for schools/trusts published Submit LA Capacity delivery plan	EY's System updates
Mar-24	Supply and Demand mapping to be submitted by LA (Sufficiency Assessment)	EY's Census return (DSG)
Apr-24		Expanded entitlement for two-year-olds starts (15 hours)
May-24	LA receive Capacity funding	School Census updated for new criteria
Jun-24	Submit LA (programme) delivery plan Submit LA Capital Funding grant assurance return	Submit LA Capital Funding grant assurance return
Jul-24	LA receive Programme funding	
Sep-24	Programme launch; additional wraparound childcare places available for parents to access in all areas of the county	Expanded entitlement for under two's starts (15 hours)
Sep-25		Expanded entitlement increases to 30 hours
Jan-25		EY's Census will be used to generate all EY's DSG
Mar-25	LA Programme funding ends	
Jun-25	Submit updated LA Capital Funding grant assurance return	Submit updated LA Capital Funding grant assurance return
Sep-26	All children (Reception - YR6) are able to access affordable, high-quality wraparound provision	

Key Risks

47. Table 3 - key risks

Key Risk	Mitigation
<p>Sufficiency of provision Worcestershire must have sufficient provision in place to ensure the requirements of the Childcare Expansion agenda can be met</p>	<p>By the end of the Summer Term 2024, Worcestershire will have a robust Sufficiency Assessment in place which will be used to support market development and management. In combination with the funding available for both programmes, Worcestershire LA will support settings to expand and open in areas with insufficient provision.</p>
<p>Sector recruitment and retention The Early Years and Childcare sector are experiencing significant recruitment and retention issues, which impacts on the number of spaces that providers can offer.</p>	<p>The Department for Education are conducting a national recruitment campaign to try and increase the number of people entering the early years sector. Worcestershire Comms Team are using the campaign materials via social media to support recruitment.</p> <p>The Worcestershire Early Years Team work in partnership with the Skills Team to support the sector with advice and guidance on both recruitment and retention of staff.</p>
<p>Sector sustainability Providing sustainable childcare that is both high quality and affordable to parents/carers can be very difficult. With a sector that is still recovering from the impact of Covid-19, when many settings either closed or spent their financial reserves, in combination with recruitment and retention difficulties that often result in schools and settings having to use high-cost agency staff to operate within the legal requirements, there are many settings that are currently operating on a term-by-term basis.</p>	<p>Working with the Economy Directorate, the Early Years Team are currently putting together a Business Support offer, which aims to increase providers' financial and business skills.</p> <p>The recent review of the Worcestershire funding model (for early years entitlements funding) has prioritised maximising the hourly rates paid to providers (whilst ensuring they are affordable for the LA). The introduction of funded hours for younger children will encourage increased attendance patterns, as childcare becomes more affordable for families.</p> <p>Programme funding for the wraparound expansion can be used to support settings to increase the supply of places in advance of any increase to demand levels, without schools and settings risking their ongoing sustainability.</p>

Financial Support

48. Worcestershire consulted with the early years sector in Autumn 2023 on the early years funding mechanism for Worcestershire. The results of the consultation informed the development of the funding model for the under 3's funding streams, as well as minor changes to the 3 and 4-year-old rates to maximise the funding rates for the early years entitlements. Appendix 2 is a copy of the letter sent out

to all early years providers outlining the funding rates from April 2024, including the supplements that are in place to support vulnerable children.

49. The Department for Education have provided funding during 2023/24 to support local authorities to meet the increased capacity demands of implementing the increased entitlements; Worcestershire received £114,286 via a non-ringfenced grant.
50. The Department for Education are providing funding to support the wraparound programme to support both Local Authority capacity and to support schools and settings to develop and expand childcare provision. For Worcestershire this equates to £2.7million over the next two years, of which a maximum of £323,000 can be used to support capacity within the Local Authority. Paid via a non-ringfenced grant, the Local Authority are expected to report regularly on how the funding has been spent. Local authorities should use the programme funding to fund new and expanded wraparound provision, either to meet current demand or to guarantee supply whilst future demand grows. It can only be spent on childcare provision that meets the definition of wraparound but is not limited to state-funded schools and can support any settings that provide wraparound for primary school-age children.
51. Provided via a non-ringfenced grant, the Childcare Expansion Capital Grant is expected to support the sufficiency of both early years entitlement places and wraparound places and can be used to fund capital projects for private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers, state-funded schools and childminders. Worcestershire have been allocated £1,080,475, of which approximately 80% is expected to support the sufficiency of the early years entitlements, with the remaining 20% targeted towards the sufficiency of wraparound provision.

Purpose of the Meeting

52. The Panel is asked to:
 - consider and comment on the information provided; and
 - determine whether any further information or scrutiny on a particular topic is required.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Childcare Expansion Governance structure chart

Appendix 2 – Letter to Early Years Providers on Nursery Education Funding Rates

Contact Points

Sarah Wilkins, Director for Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Place Planning
Tel: 01905 846082, Email: swilkins@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk

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:

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2020

[Education sufficiency, school organisation and provision planning | Worcestershire County Council](#)

Childcare Choices website:

www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

Guidance documents for expansion and wraparound:

[Early education and childcare](#)

[National Wraparound Childcare Programme Handbook](#)

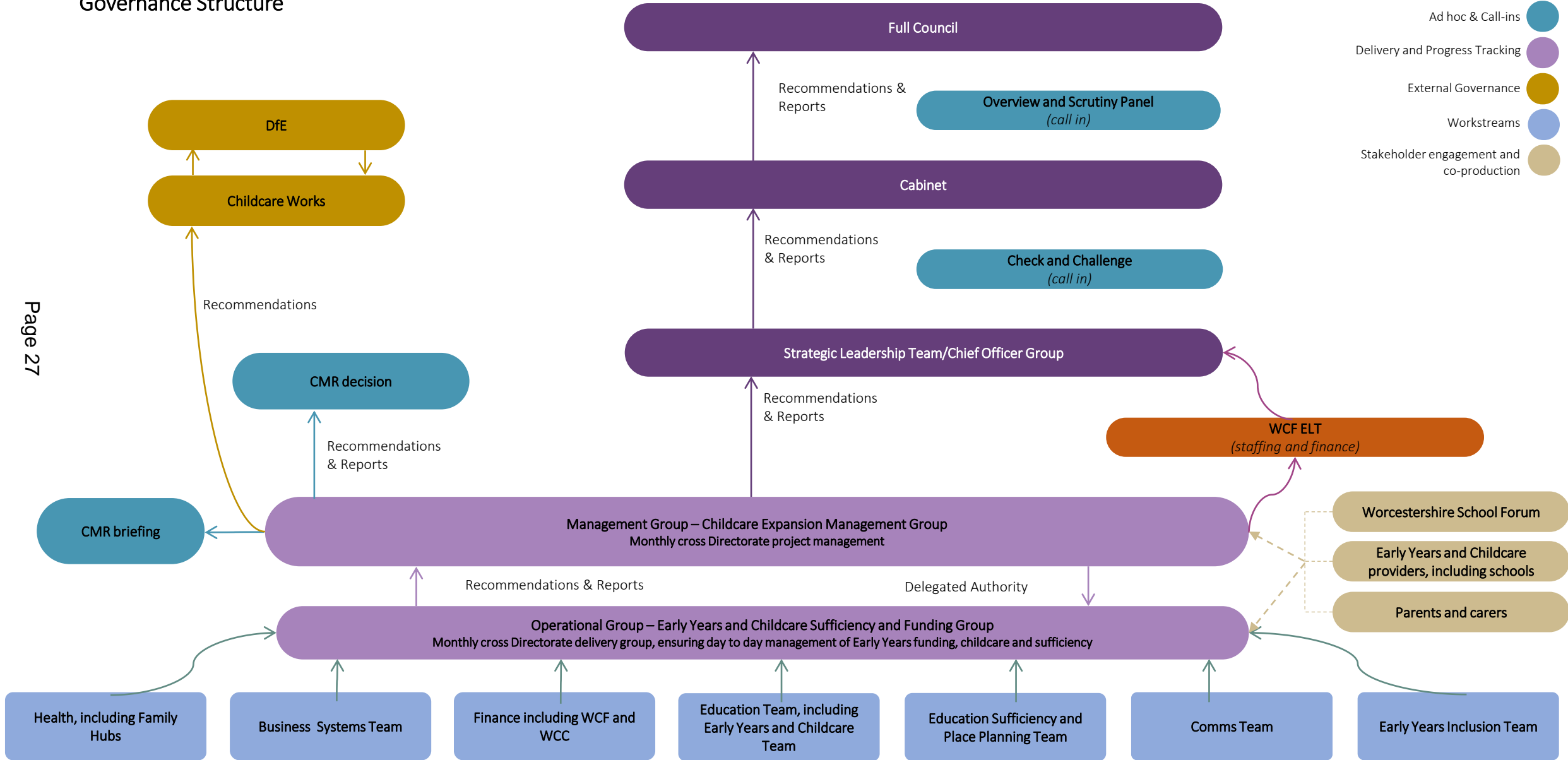
[Wraparound childcare: guidance for schools and trusts in England](#)

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

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Childcare Expansion Governance Structure

- Approval and Decision Making (ascending) ●
- Finance and resource decisions ●
- Ad hoc & Call-ins ●
- Delivery and Progress Tracking ●
- External Governance ●
- Workstreams ●
- Stakeholder engagement and co-production ●



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Dear Early Years Provider,

Nursery Education Funding Rates 2024/25

Following the Early Years Funding Consultation that took place in the Autumn Term and the publication of the Local Authority early years [funding allocations](#) in December, we are now in a position to confirm the NEF Rates from April 2024. The Early Years Funding Formula has been discussed at a meeting of the [Worcestershire School Forum](#) in January 2024 and formally approved by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Education as a decision delegated by WCC Cabinet.

The Early Years Supplementary Grant, which has been paid during Autumn 2023 and Spring 2024 comes to an end on 31st March 2024.

Hourly Rates 2024/25

The agreed hourly rates from April 2024 are:

Funding Age Group	Hourly Rate
3&4 Year Olds	£5.09
Two Year Olds	£7.05
Under Two's*	£9.59

**Please note that the rate for Under Two's will apply from September 2024, when the age-range is extended to include children from the term after they turn 9 months.*

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

The hourly allocation for EYPP is increasing to **£0.68** per hour. EYPP will be available for eligible children within all funded age groups, for a maximum of 15 funded hours per week. For 3&4-year-olds, EYPP will be automatically applied to the Universal hours.

Deprivation Supplement

All funded children who meet the deprivation threshold, which is based on their home postcode, will receive the appropriate Deprivation Supplement for all their funded hours:

IDACI Band (using child's home postcode)	Hourly Supplement
A	£1.00
B	£0.70
C	£0.40
D	£0.10

Disability Access Fund (DAF)

The annual supplement for children in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is increasing to **£910 per year**. DAF will be available for all funded age groups. To claim DAF, a copy of the child's DLA letter and a signed Parent Declaration Form need to be uploaded to the Early Years Funding Team via the Children's Services Portal (CSP).

Inclusion Supplement

The Inclusion Supplement rates remain the same and will be extended to include all funded age-groups, based on their level of need. The appropriate Supplement will be applied to all funded hours accessed.

GR Level	Age-Group	Hourly Supplement
GR2	3&4 Year Olds only	£0.90
GR3	All funded children	£1.60
GR4	All funded children	£2.86
Exceptional	All funded children, approval required	£6.30

If you need any further information, please email EYFunding@worcestershire.gov.uk or NEF@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Phillips

Finance Business Partner – Schools

Nicky Burford

Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency and Improvement Lead

CC. Early Years Funding Team

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 21 MARCH 2024

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 3 (October to December 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 9 and is attached in the form of presentation slides at Appendix 2.

Purpose of the Meeting

6. 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 27 March 2024
 - 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 Period 9 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) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

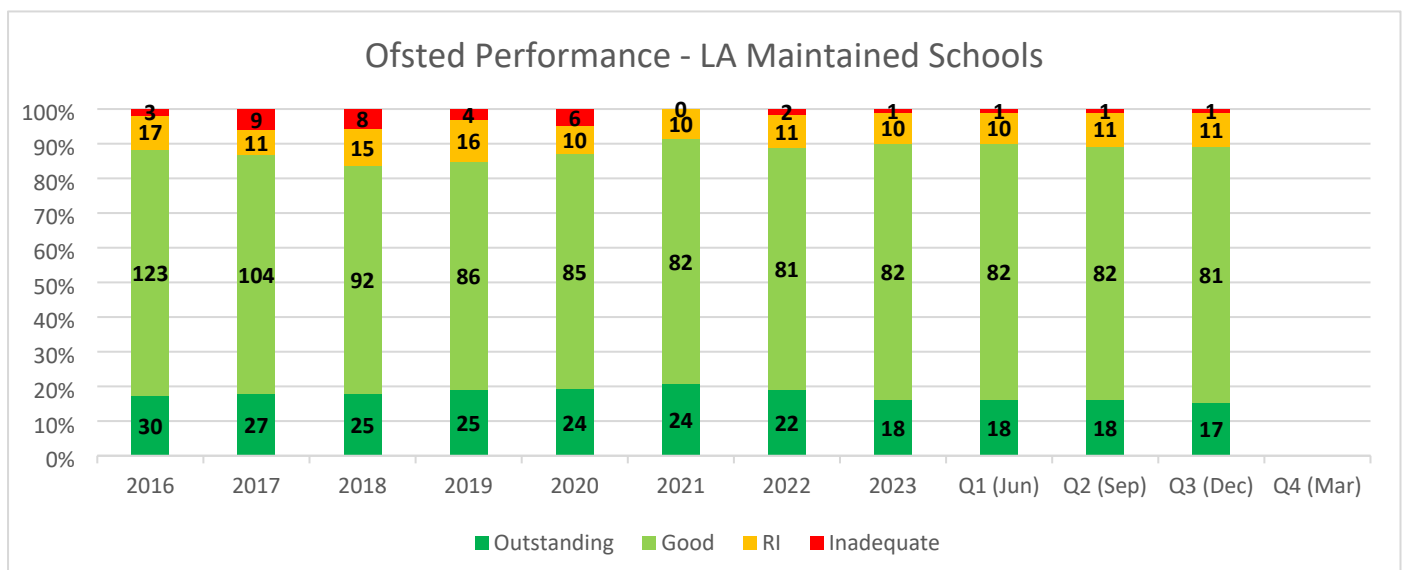
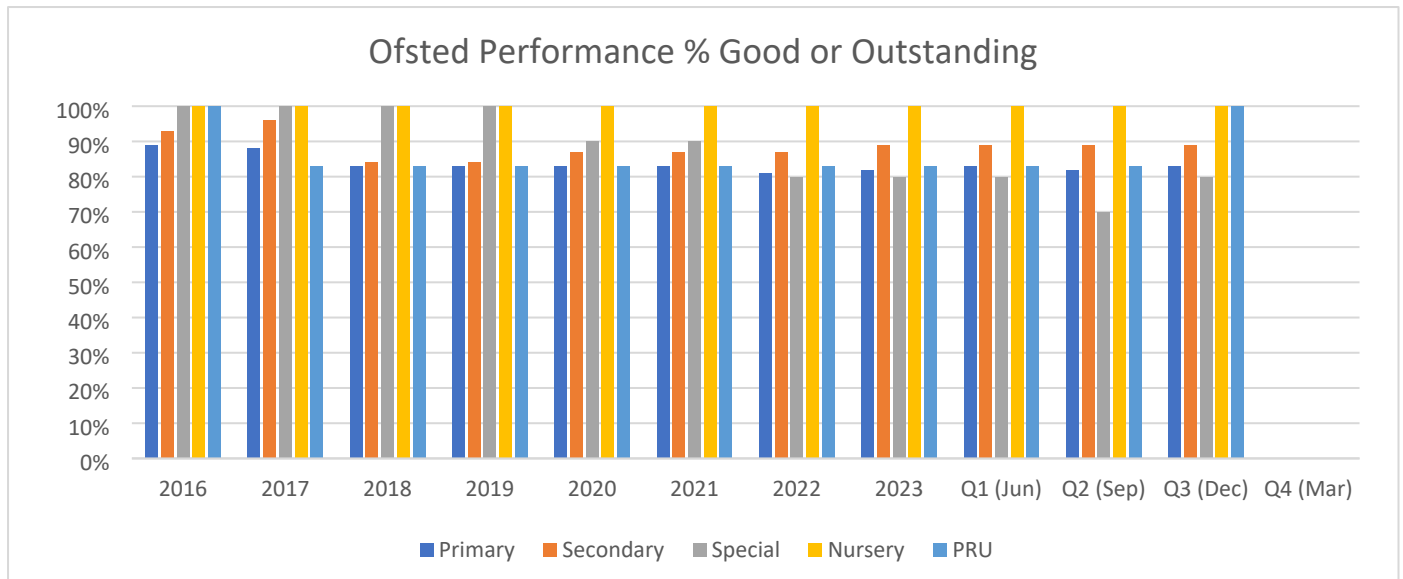
- Agendas and minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board on 19 December, 27 September, 26 July, 29 March and 30 January 2023, 7 December, 29 September, 20 July and 23 March 2022
- Agendas and minutes of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 6 December, 27 September, 7 July, 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.](#)

WCF – Education and SEND data for Scrutiny Panel – Quarter 3 - Dec-2023

Note Q1 shows June End and 2023 shows July end for year-on-year comparative purposes.

Ofsted Performance



Ofsted overview from September 2023 to December 2023

24 inspections in total:

Maintained Schools (8 inspections and 1 monitoring):

- 1 School improved from RI to Good
- 5 schools retained Good
- 1 school retained Outstanding
- 1 awaiting outcome/publication
- 1 monitoring visit
- For Maintained Schools - of published reports, 100% were judged Good or better.

Academy Schools (13 inspections and 2 Monitoring):

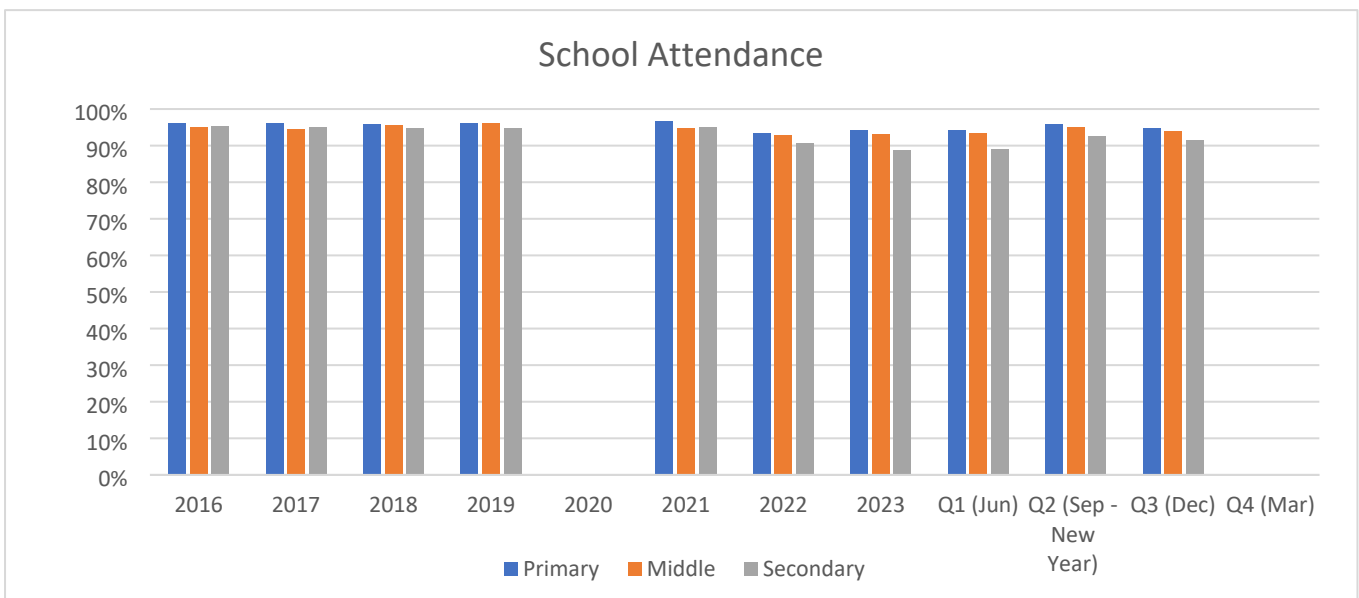
- 3 schools improved from Special Measures to Good
- 2 schools improved from Requires Improvement to Good

- 3 schools went from Outstanding to Good
- 2 schools retained Good
- 1 retained RI
- 1 school went from Good to SM
- 1 awaiting outcome/publication
- 2 Monitoring visits
- For Academy Schools - Of published reports 83% were judged Good or better

For the three monitoring visits there will be a Section 8 inspection of requires improvement and inadequate schools (4 visits in total). For the 3 published, 100% are taking effective action.

Overall, for all schools, 89% of inspections September 2023 to December 2023 were judged Good or better.

School Attendance (no data in 2020 due to Covid)



Attendance Commentary

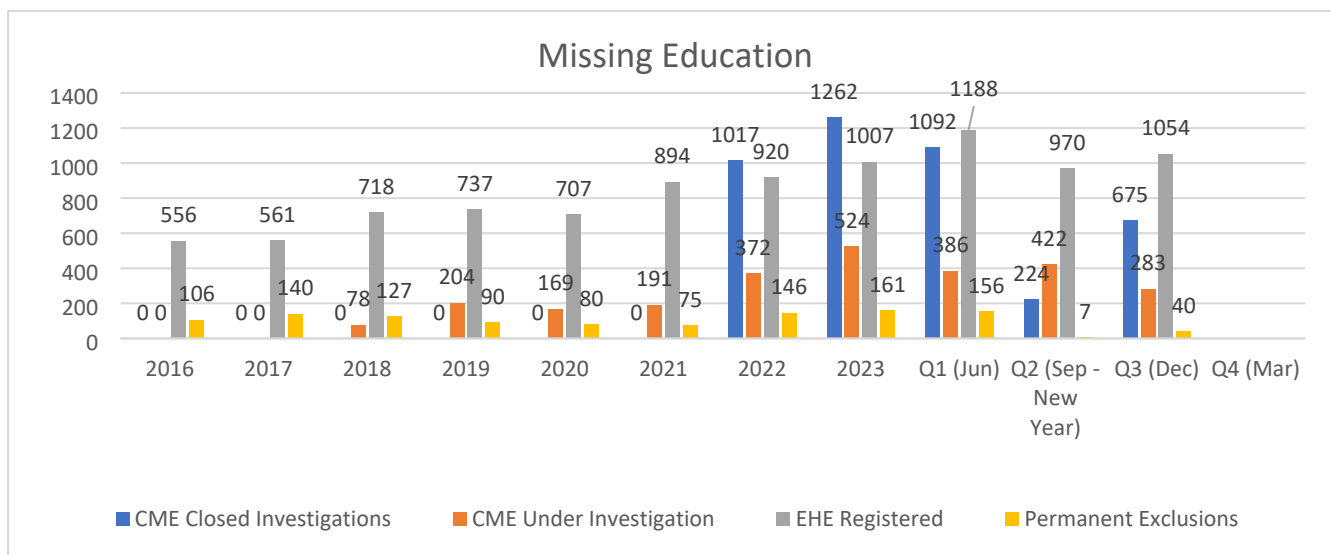
Pre-Covid, year on year, WCC school attendance had been stable for each education phase, reflective of national data.

Post-pandemic, the academic year 2021-22 showed a decrease in attendance across all phases. This evidenced schools' reporting of significant increases in mental health and wellbeing issues for both students and families as well as a shift in families views regarding the importance of regular attendance at school. These issues remain and all partners are working to restore attendance to pre-pandemic levels and above.

During the academic year 2022-23, approximately one in four children had less than 90% attendance (and were therefore classed as 'persistently absent'). 23 of WCC's 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.

2023-2024 data to date is showing similar levels of persistent absence (less than 90% attendance) and severe absence (less than 50% attendance) as in the previous year. However, WCC's overall attendance is showing a small improvement at this point, across all school phases.

The DfE ['Working together to Improve School Attendance'](#) guidance requiring schools, LA's and all partners/agencies to prioritise and resource attendance support becomes a statutory requirement from August 2024. WCF's Education Engagement Team is working to fulfil these new requirements, including strategic support from Education Engagement Officers, an enhanced training offer to support school staff CPD, and a daily support helpline accessible to parents/carers, professionals, and schools.



Children Missing Education

Continued efforts to encourage schools, partners, external agencies, and the public to utilise WCF’s centralised reporting mechanisms to enable the LA to uphold its statutory duties to identify, track, monitor and support CME are evident within this data. This has enabled more CME children and young people to be identified and supported back into education. A continued increase of CME reporting into 2024 is expected, as schools continue to ensure their adherence to DfE CME guidance, though at this point the number of reported CME numbers at Q3 are comparable to the same period of the previous year.

675 CME cases were closed during Q3 with CME officers successfully supporting and confirming a return to education in each case.

Q3 data also shows 283 CME cases under investigation. Since September 2021 CME cases have grown more complex in nature, increasing the duration and intensity of required CME officer casework and safeguarding support, partly as a result of issues related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

The number of EHE pupils in Worcestershire currently stands at 1054, an increase on Q2 reporting. EHE families continue to be supported through the EHE process, including assessing the suitability of EHE and supporting EHE pupils to return to school where appropriate. At the end of Autumn term 2023, 19% of EHE cases had been closed due to a return to school.

There was a slight increase in the number of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families being de-registered from school to EHE, which stood at 178 at the end of Q3. In response to the increase, specific resource was allocated to the GRT EHE cohort, to ensure the GRT community understood the responsibilities and expectations around EHE.

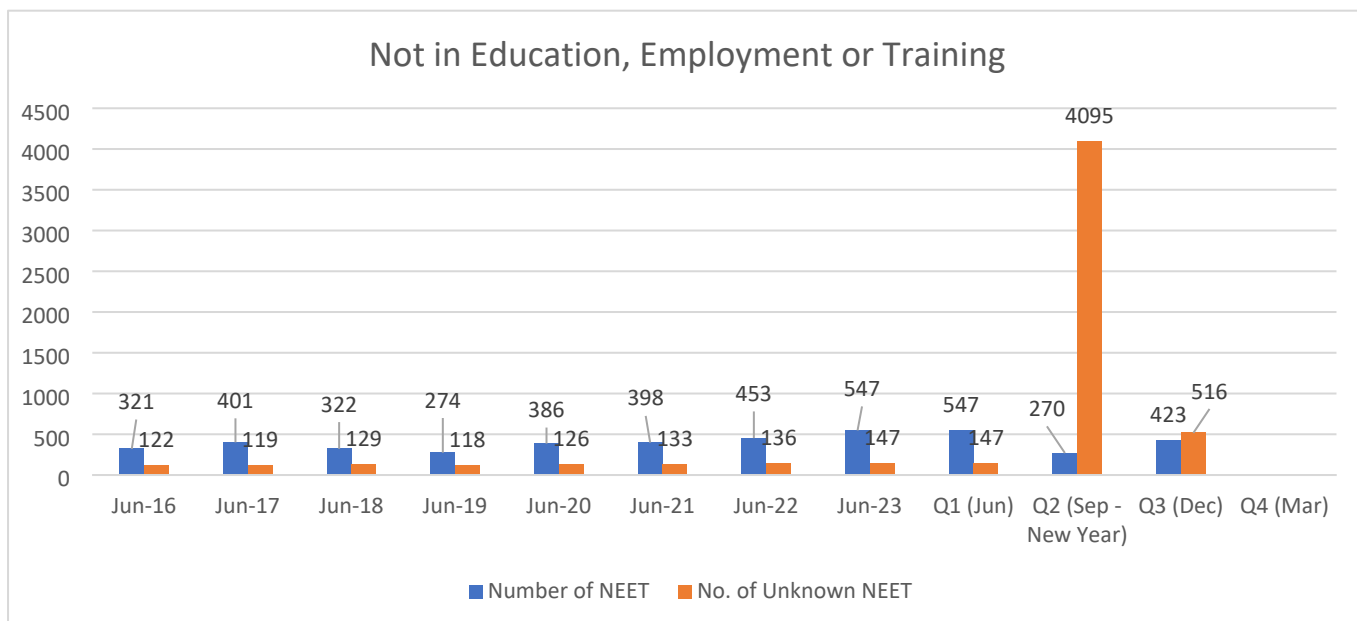
The EHE Triage process has been refined and embedded to provide robust scrutiny and increase the successful return to school for those students removed from roll for inappropriate reasons or where suitable education is not being provided under EHE. This had a particularly positive impact on reducing the number of Year 11 students being removed to EHE compared to the same period last year and thus reduced the number of EHE cases being deemed as NEET at the point of YP ceasing to be of statutory school age, as they remained in education.

Exclusions

The number of permanent exclusions for Q3 decreased by 33 in comparison to the same period in 2022/23. Preventative work has continued to gain momentum, with a steady decrease in the number of permanently excluded young people. Particular focus has been placed on Y7 and Y11 cases, with targeted support to schools notifying the LA of an exclusion for a Y7/Y11 student. 3 Education Engagement Officers focus on preventing exclusions by supporting schools and families to act at the earliest point possible when notified of a permanent exclusion. Strong working relationships with our partners in Alternative Provision ensures timely placement of students requiring an intervention placement or 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. Worcestershire LA are part of the DfE’s SEND & Alternative Provision Change Programme, a national initiative to improve inclusion, and are working on a Local Area Inclusion Plan to set out how the needs of children and young people in the local area will be best met in line with National Standards.

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

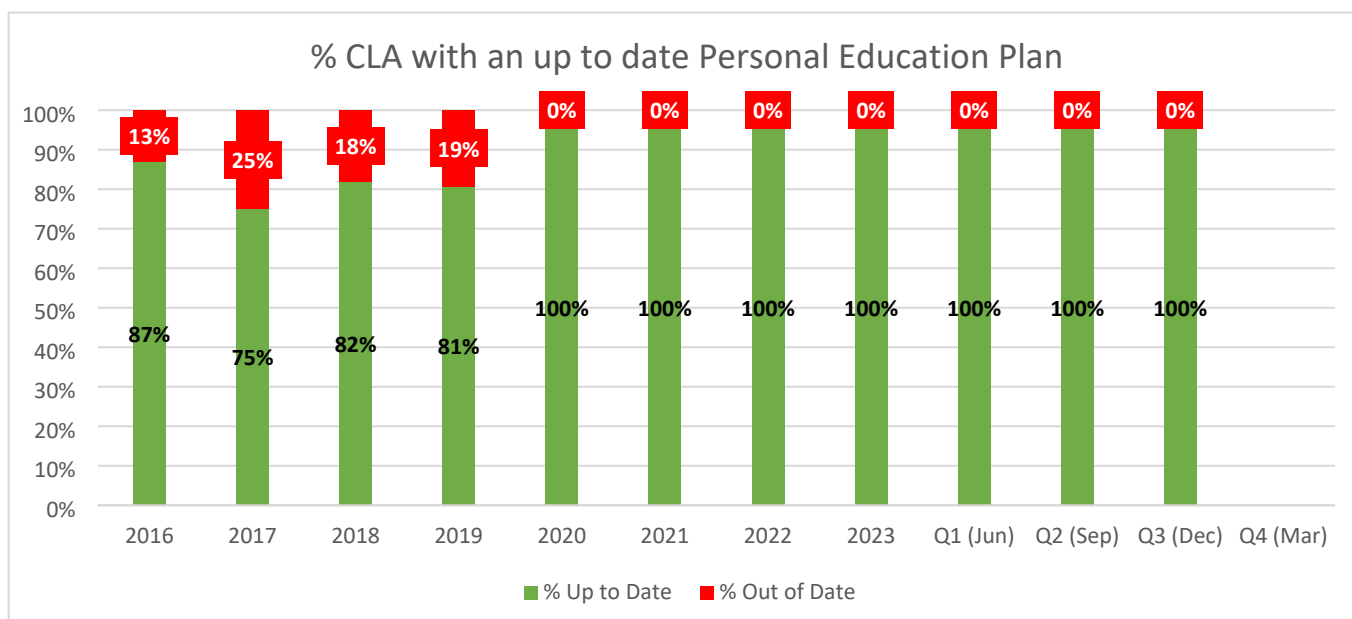


NEET

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 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 of mental health issues exacerbated by the pandemic, a noticeable increase in parents not encouraging their children to access Post 16 EET, and Post 16 learning providers are reporting increasing numbers of young people not socially or emotionally ready for college. Early indications suggest that 2023/24 is likely to show a further small increase in NEET on 2022/23 figures and it is unclear whether expected additional funding options for training opportunities (available from April) will impact on the figures this academic year. The WCF NEET team and WCC Employment and Skills team (as well as the Virtual School and Through Care team, for Children Looked After) are collaborating to understand these trends and to support and overcome these issues. Many other LAs are experiencing similar increases.

Please note: the September ‘Unknown’ Peak is due to young people moving provision each September - there are routinely a large number of unknowns that, until WCF establishes status, 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 (from the age of 2 to 18 years, both in and out of county) receive three Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings each year, organised, facilitated and chaired by WCF Virtual School Learning Advocates. 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 (see below).

PEP/PPP completion – 3 PEPs completed per year:

- 100%

PEPs/PPPs completed on time:

- 100%

PEPs/PPPs quality-assured:

- 100%

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.

Post 16 Personal Progression Plans (PPPs)

All Year 12 & 13 CLA have a scheduled PPP (the Post-16 equivalent of a PEP). 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, Health and Social Care to discuss pupils causing concern, such as those at risk of CME or exclusion, on Part Time Timetables and those where there are issues in securing suitable education. 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

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.

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.

PEP Quality Assurance

The Virtual School Headteacher and Deputy attend specific PEP/PPP meetings to offer support, advice and guidance to WVS Learning Advocates and to monitor the quality of the process.

In January 2023 Worcestershire Virtual School significantly improved the quality assurance, and consequently the quality, of PEPs by introducing a RAG rating using a consistent moderation framework within the ePEP system. This has improved the quality of PEPs and given Designated Teachers and Social Workers clear, practical guidance and feedback on producing a high-quality, purposeful document for the benefit of our children.

Spring Term 2022-23 outcomes (first wave of RAG rated PEPs):

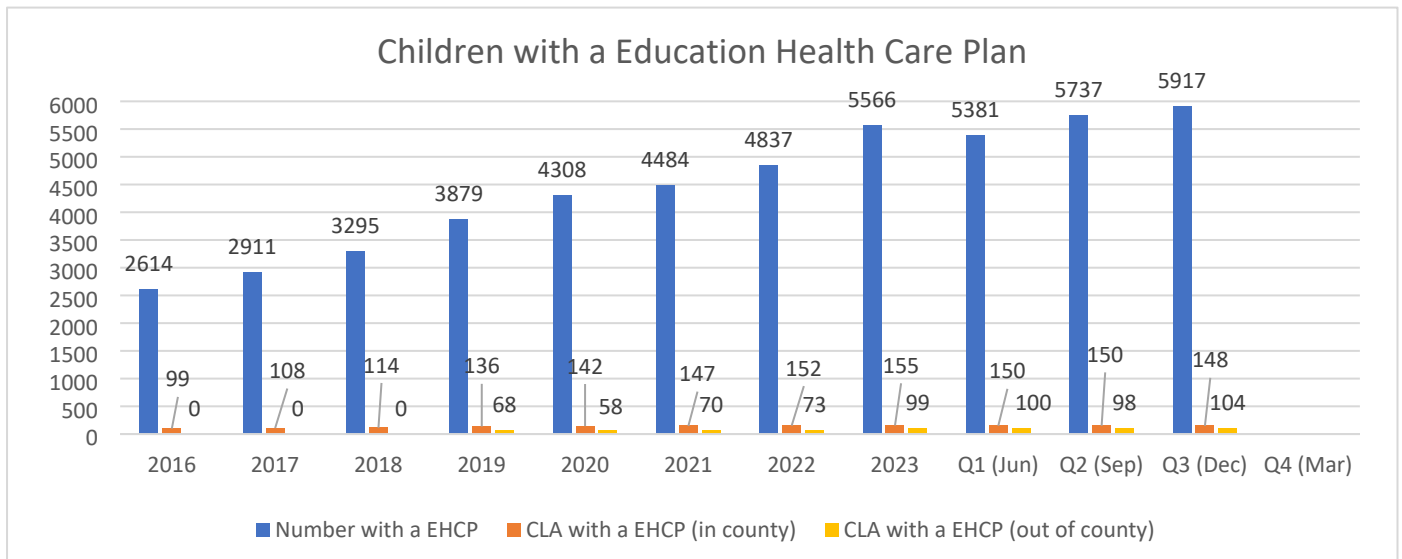
- 897 PEPs completed from EYFS to Post 16:
 - 85% Green (766 PEPs, from 322 settings)
 - 12% Amber (107 PEPs, from 68 settings)
 - 3% Red (24 PEPs, from 23 settings)

Summer Term 2022-23 outcomes (second wave of RAG rated PEPs):

- Improved on all counts:
- 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 (Autumn Term 2023-24).

Children with SEND



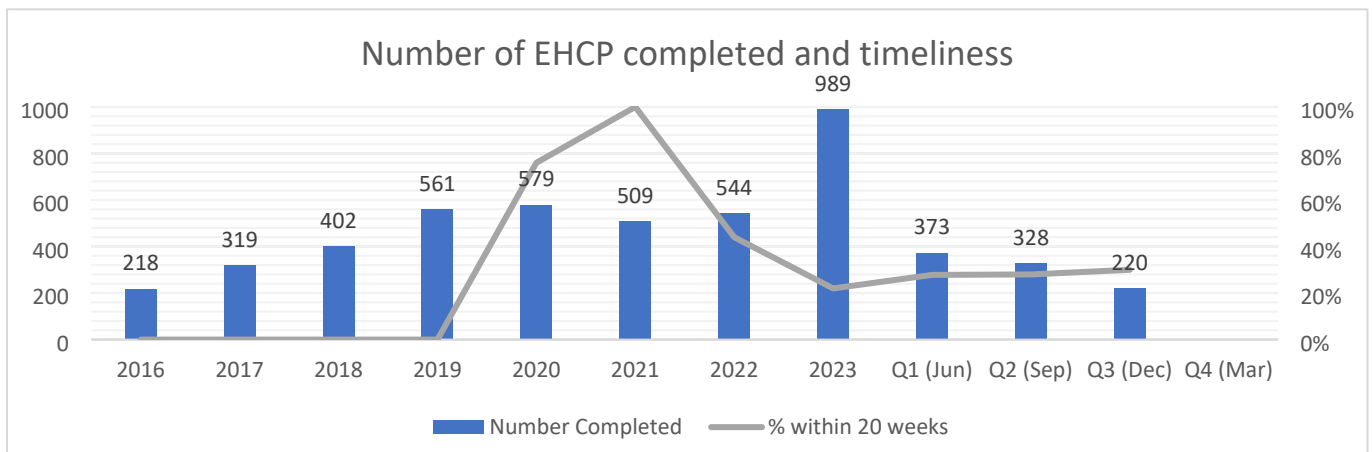
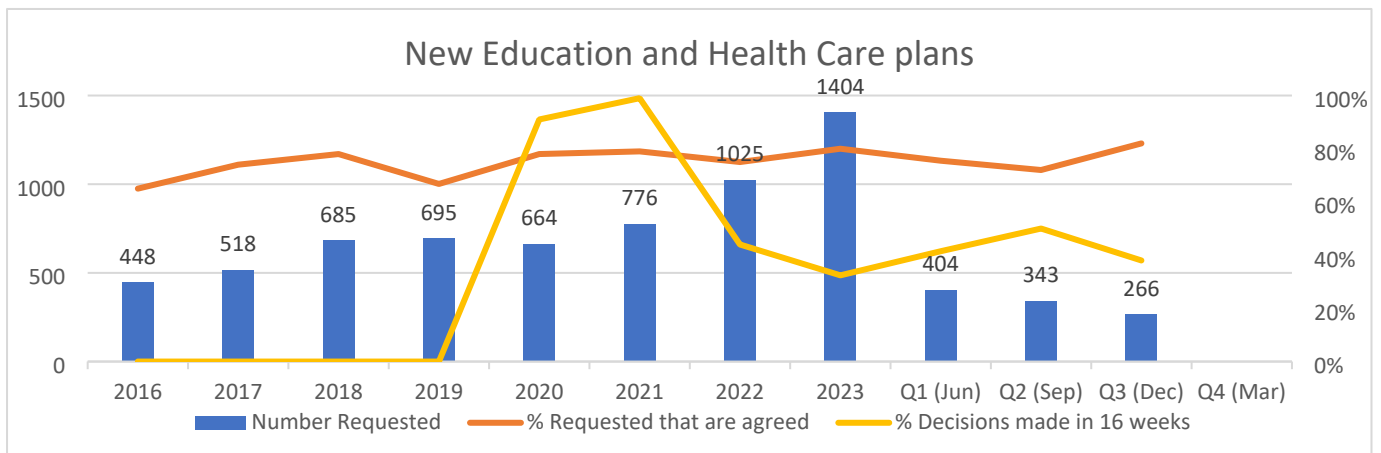
Children with SEND Commentary

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, although there was a decrease in Q3.

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

EHCP's requested and timeliness.



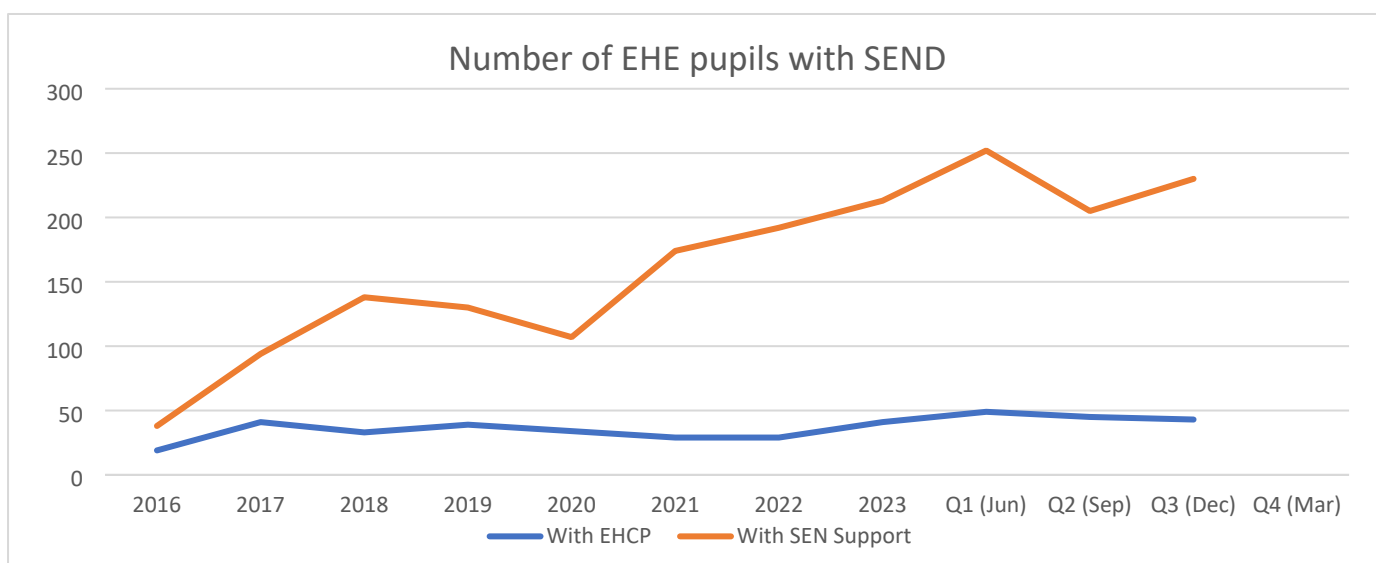
Commentary for EHCP's requested and timeliness.

There continues to be a challenge 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, maintained the improvements in terms of the 16-week and 20-week timescale and this continues to be an area of focus.

Elective Home Educated (EHE) Children with SEND



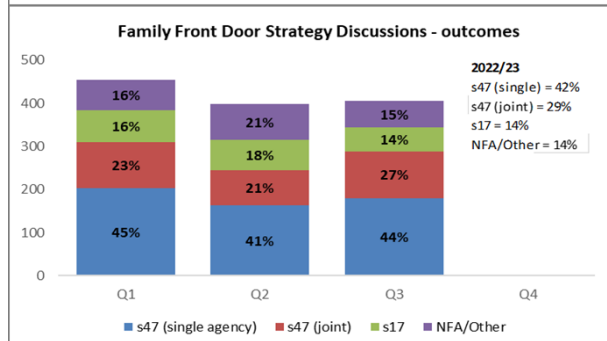
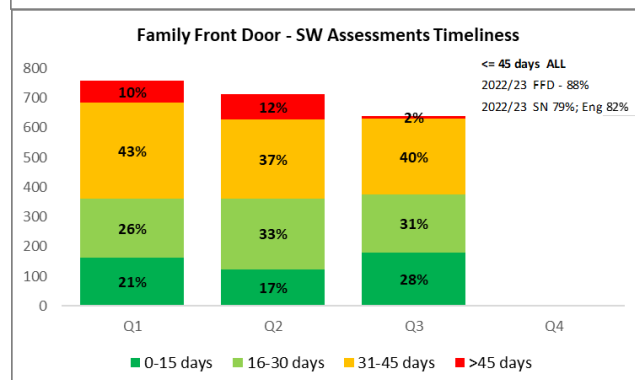
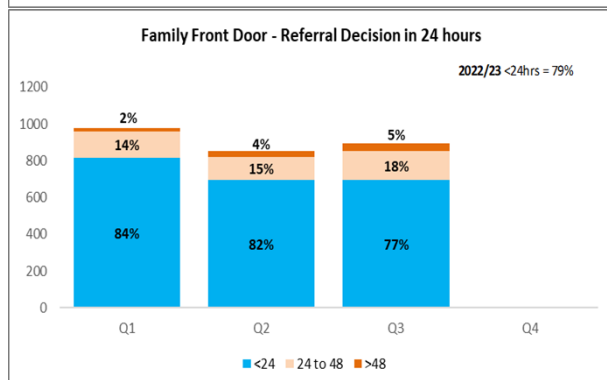
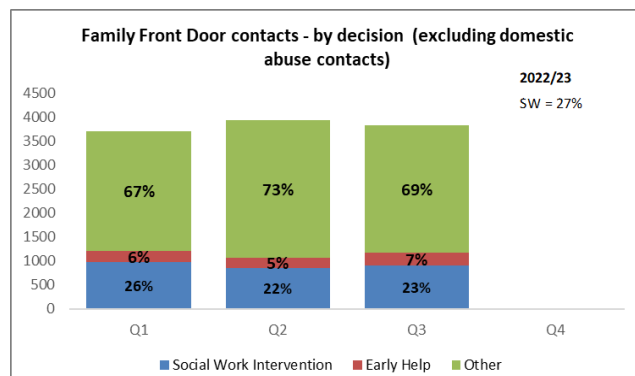
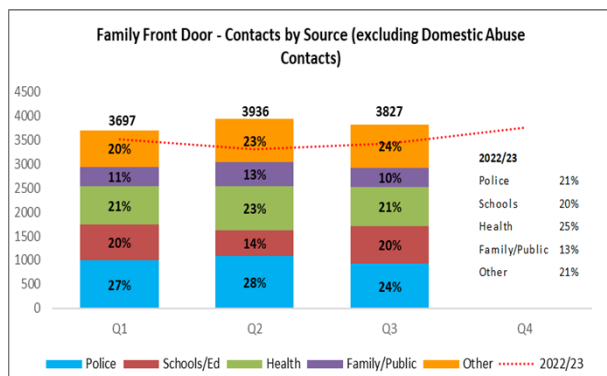
Commentary for Elective Home Educated (EHE) Children with SEND

We continue to be consistent in terms of children with an EHCP who are EHE. However, we have seen an increase in the number of EHE children who received SEN support at school. Further analysis of this cohort is being undertaken. The EHE Team continues to work alongside SEND services to ensure any students with additional needs, particularly those subject to an EHCP, are prioritised and there is joint working when a parent/carer makes the decision to home educate their child. The EHE Triage process has been refined and embedded to provide robust scrutiny and increase the successful return to school for those students removed from roll for inappropriate reasons or where suitable education is not being provided under EHE.

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

2023/24 - Quarter Three

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	33%
Parent/Carer	Alcohol	4	19%	4	15%	4	14%
Parent/Carer	Drug	6	16%	5	14%	5	11%
Child	Mental Health	3	19%	3	18%	3	20%
Child	Abuse or neglect - 'EMOTIONAL ABUSE'	5	16%	6	13%	6	10%
Child	Abuse or neglect - 'NEGLECT'	7	14%	7	11%	11	6%
Child	Learning Disability	8	10%	9	8%	8	10%
Child	Domestic Violence	9	8%	8	10%	7	10%
Child	Abuse or Neglect - 'PHYSICAL ABUSE' (adult on child)	10	7%	10	8%	16	4%

Percent of Assessments with "Trio of Harm" present	2023/24 YTD	2022/23	2021/22
Percent of Assessments with "Trio of Harm" present	12%	10%	10%

Over a thousand more contacts have been received at FFD by Qtr 3 (11,460) compared to the same period 22/23 (10,233). **We have seen an increase in police referrals from 21% to 26% of all referrals** being received with an **average 20% of police referrals resulting in a social work assessment**, which is a decrease from the 26% through last year. Health services represent approximately 21% of contacts received, which is a reduction from last year’s 25%. Only 16% of health contacts resulted in a social work assessment similar to last year. **These two agencies therefore represent a high number of contacts coming through the front door which are not meeting the threshold for a social worker assessment and as such indicate the direct route for referrals to early help are not being sufficiently used and indicates a high professional demand for information sharing and decision making on threshold through FFD children’s services. NB this excludes, the police domestic abuse notifications which are an important information sharing feature managed through the front door.**

We consistently receive approx. 12% of our contacts from family and the public, which is consistent with last year and reflects a good proportion of public / community contacts being made where people have concerns for the welfare of children. On average year to date 18% of those contacts have resulted in a social work assessment which is a slight decrease from the 22% in 22/23 and likely reflects an increase in contacts from the public of lower level concerns as a result of media coverage of our local child death.

Schools and Education providers represent approximately 22% of contacts received, a slight increase to 20% last year with school/education conversions to a social work assessment being much higher than Police and Health at 30%, so reflect a more appropriate use of threshold for referral through FFD.

We have received a much higher number of requests for early help year to date, with approximately 3.5k received each quarter compared to 2.5k each quarter last year. Work is ongoing through the Early Help Partnership to address gaps in service as well as assurance regarding provision available meeting need. Reductions of WCF early help due to costs savings will be a pressure issue going forward.

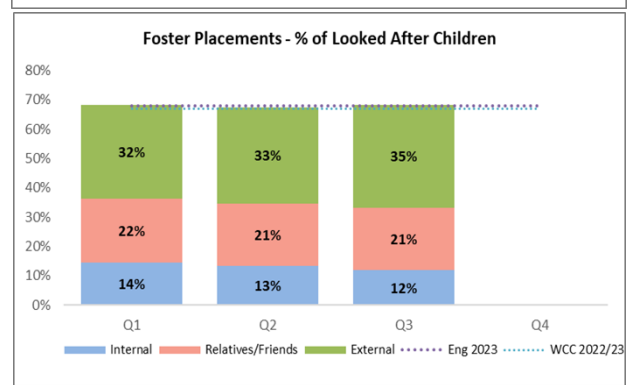
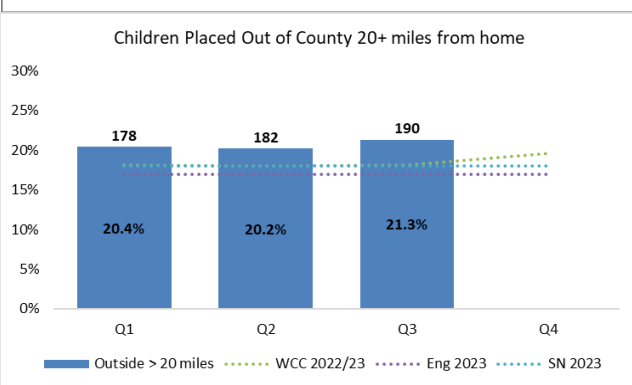
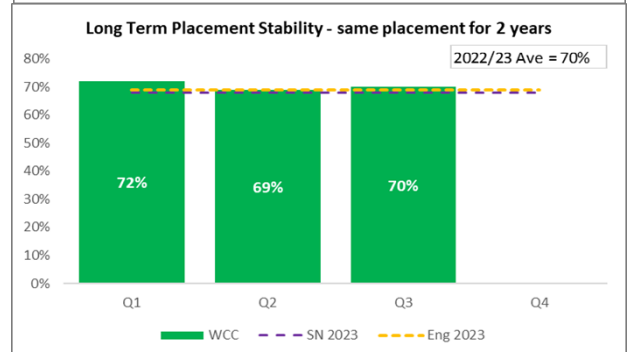
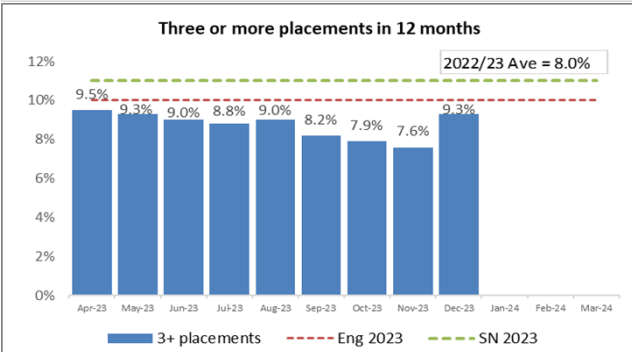
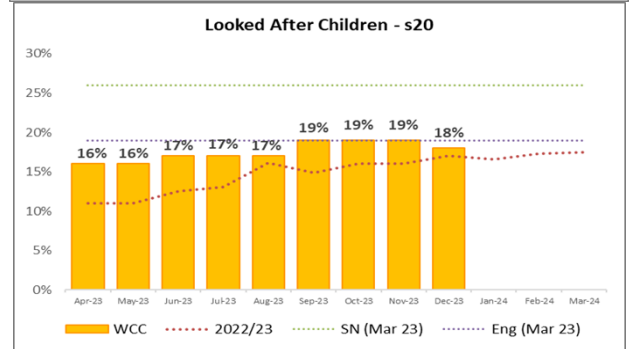
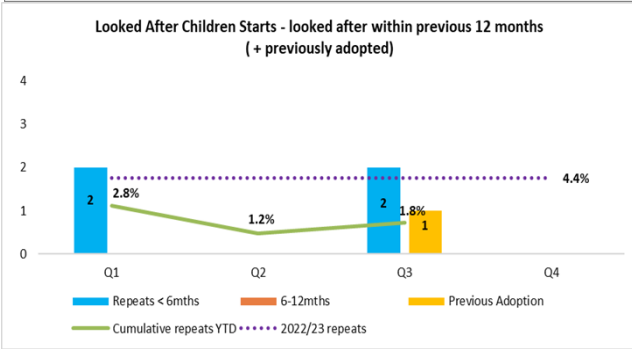
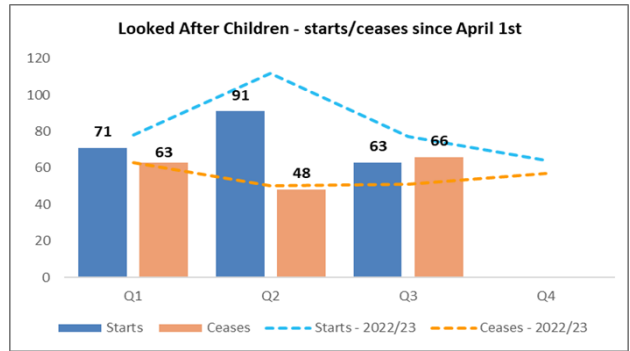
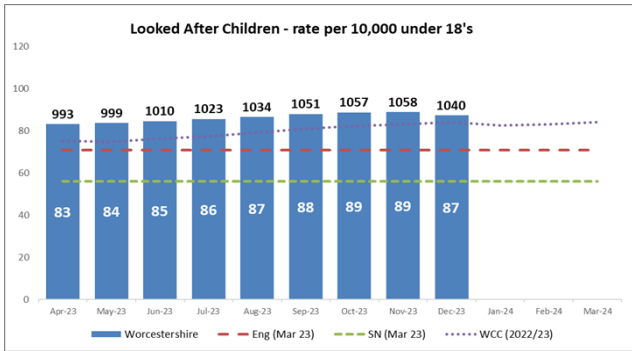
The top risk factor identified in our contacts are Parents struggling with parenting, which was the top last year, followed by Neglect rising up from third last year. Mental Health needs in parents has remained in our top three risk factors. We have seen a change in ASB and criminal behaviour rising to the 4th most common factor up from 6th last year and can be associated with parents struggling with parenting. **Why are parents struggling with parenting?** Our social work risk factors analysis would suggest this is because of their own Mental Health, the prevalence of Domestic Abuse in their relationships and their inability to meet behaviours presenting from their own Children's emotional/mental health needs, all being the top three risk factors identified in our Social Work Assessments.

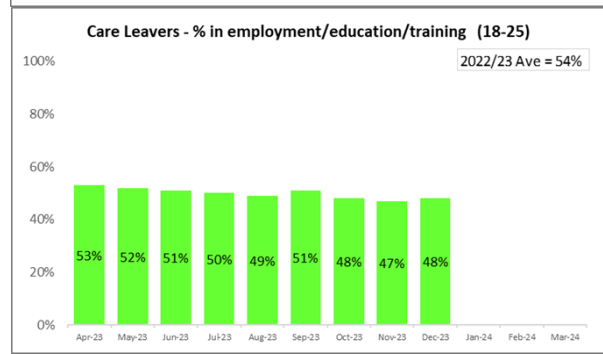
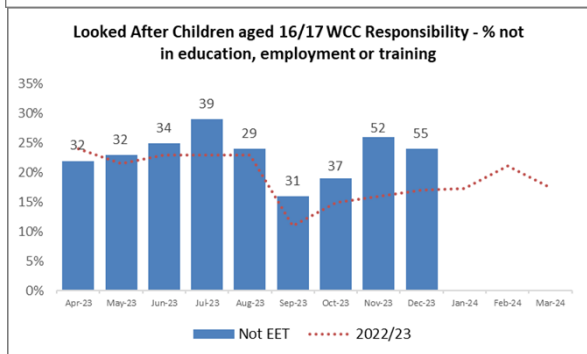
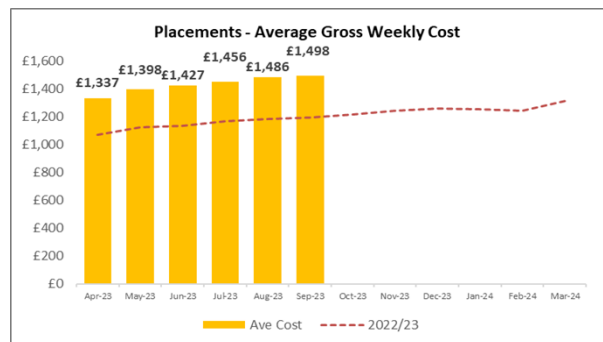
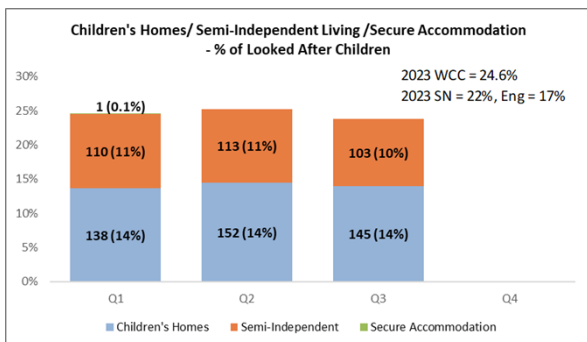
The **timeliness of completion of assessments remains high reached 98% in quarter three**, consistently achieve above England and Statutory Neighbour (SN) averages of 82% and 79% respectively.

The outcome of our social work assessments are showing a conversion rate year to date of 32%, compared to 36% last year, resulting in the need for ongoing plan of intervention and a consistent 16% stepping down to a support plan of targeted early help. The quality of assessments is reflected in data that shows **a low number of repeat assessments at 17%, well below the England average 22%** and in line with our statistical neighbours.

We continue to show a consistent and the highest percentage (43%) of strategy discussions resulting in section 47 single agency investigation, though this year a drop in those resulting in a joint Section 47 at 23% from 29% last year. This will be a focused audit. Our data shows excellent engagement of police, health and schools in our strategy discussions and a good increase of "other agencies" i.e probation, invited as appropriate.

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 31 Dec 2023: **48%**. Latest comparative figure for age 19-21 using national annual snapshot methodology (2022/23) - Statistical Neighbours: **56%**, England: **56%**

We have continued to see an increase in the number of children entering Care and whilst our “new Care” entries are lower or in line with SN our children are leaving at a lower rate and as such an overall rising number of children in care above our SN/Eng averages.

Specifically we have had an increase in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) greater than we have seen in previous years with an average of 30 rising to an average of 80. Our Qtr3 data shows that 17% of the New Starts year to date have been UASC (38).

Our S20 voluntary care cohort of children has slowly increased from what was 11% sustained over 2019/20/21, increased in 22/23 and now sits at 18% largely reflective of the rise in UASC.

Lower repeat care episodes (only 4 children YTD and one Adoption breakdown) reflect good practice in permanency and strong rehabilitation support plans which was identified as a strength in our Ofsted inspection.

Data shows that 73% of children leave our care either because they are achieving permanency or because they attain the age of 18 years. In terms of duration 47% leave care in less than two years reflecting that short journey to permanency (34% in less than 12 months). The 44% who spend more than three years in care are largely of those who will leave to at the age of 18 or return to parental/family via rehabilitation when it is safe to do so.

We see a **strong practice in the sustained timeliness of Looked After Child Reviews and Social Work visits** to children and strong practice in participation of YP in their reviews and with Personal Education Plans. **However we remain challenged to keep Health Assessments up to date, though this is an improvement on last year and keep Dental Check data recording up to date.**

We have a **consistent but higher number of children in children’s homes and semi independent living today. Our demand from residential care is primarily now coming from breakdown of children in the home and family environment** with 34 children year to date going from home

straight to residential. The ages of these children range from 10 to 15yrs so we have seen a **good reduction in those under 10yrs being placed in residential** which we saw starting to develop last year. We have also seen a really **good reduction in the number of foster care breakdowns** 9 from Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) and only 1 from our own internal carer, evidence of the strong support and expectation of providers and carers to work with us to prevent breakdown which we do through our consolidation meetings.

Still a worry that 17/68 new entries went from an agency residential to a new agency residential following breakdown. This is an indication of residential establishments not sufficiently working with us to prevent breakdown, often giving us short term notice and previous audit showed the average increased cost from one residential provider to another was £4k a week.

This year there has been work to create the role of **Specialist foster carer** with a specific project plan to try and reduce the use of residential for all children but key for those under 12yrs of age where we saw an increase due to inability to match to a foster carer.

Internal foster care continues to be a challenge though with the use of external foster care and relatives and friends **we have the England average number of children now in a “family based” case arrangement.**

Long-term stability remains high at 70% in line with England and SN and **short term stability is generally very good** with a small rise in December 23, where we had a larger sibling group move placements, this reflects the quality of matching and quality of care and support provided to our carers

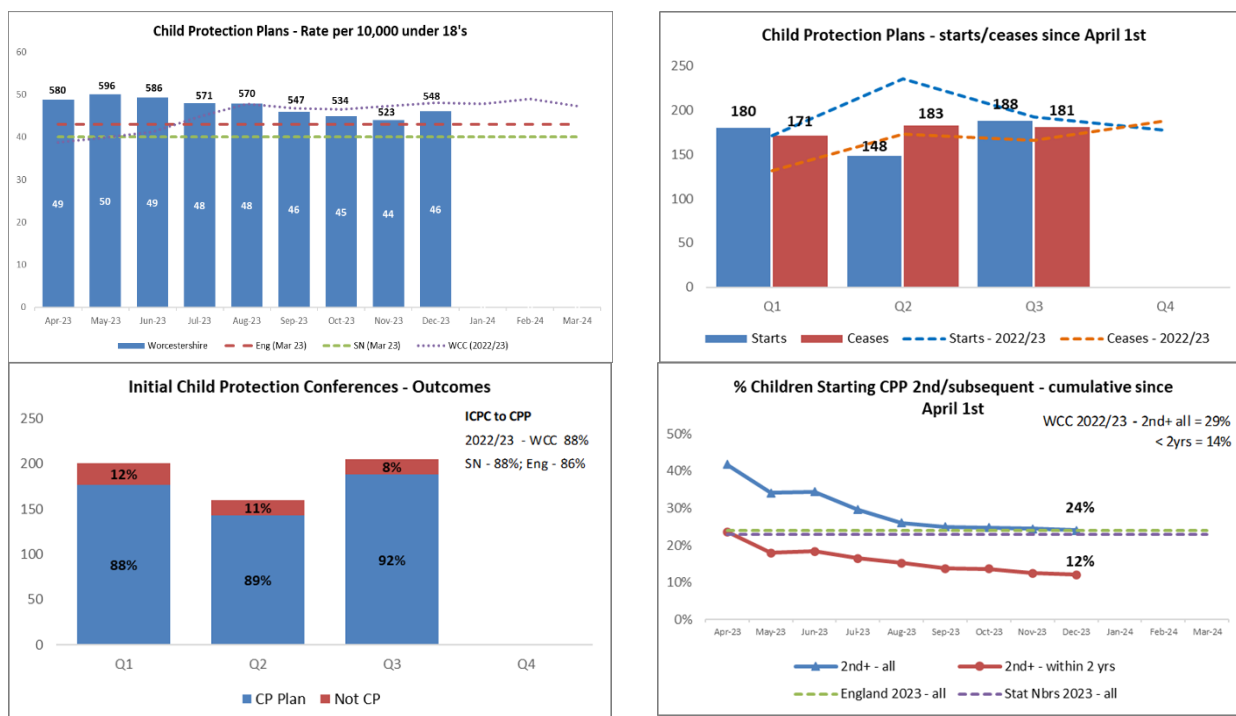
Care Leavers

The number of Care leavers open to the service has steadily increased as children are growing up and leaving our Care. Those aged 21 to 25, who are defined as “in touch” continues to grow and this is reflecting of the level of complexity of need these young people still have in their older years, the positive is that they feel they are getting the contact and support they need from the Care Leaver service, as was reflected in the Ofsted inspection where Care Leavers received a “Good” judgement outcome.

Care Leaver is a complex data reporting KPI where what we record locally, to ensure that we understand all of our children well, is different to the statutory return where, for example “in touch” is defined by whether or not a child has been in contact within three months of their previous birthday.

We are seeing a concerning reduction in the number of Care Leavers in employment, education and training, averaging now 48% from a previous year figure of 54%. However it is important to note the national growth in YP not engaging in education following Covid and the previous year Eng averages may change when we see 23/24 data and can make real time comparisons. What we do know though is that these children are a relatively stable group of hard to reach children, but work is required to sustain efforts to engage these young people in employment, education and training, and the Care Leaver service works closely with the skills service in WCC and Virtual School to target these young people and the hard to reach 16/17yr old to prevent this cohort growing further.

Child Protection



We saw a rise in our Child Protection numbers during and post Covid as we applied our good practice decision not to remove children from child protection during the Covid period yet still receiving incoming child protection cases. We are seeing those numbers reduce back down, but the complexities of cases for child protection we have seen post Covid are reflected in the increase of children on a plan over 15 months.

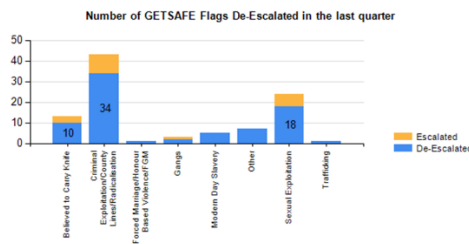
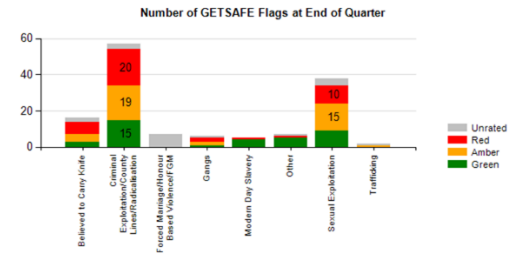
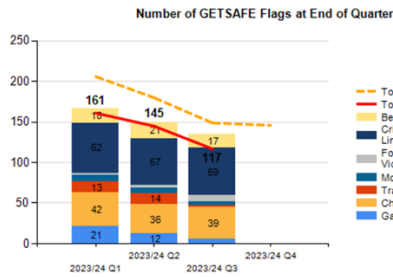
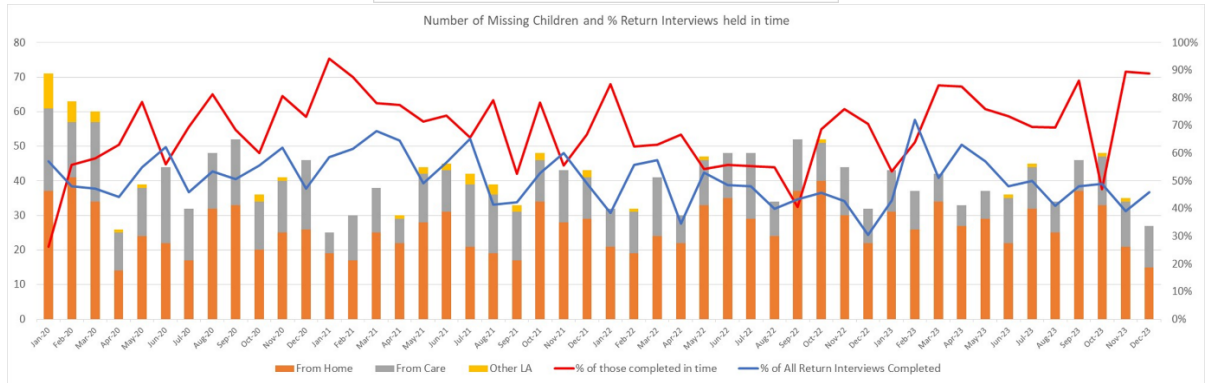
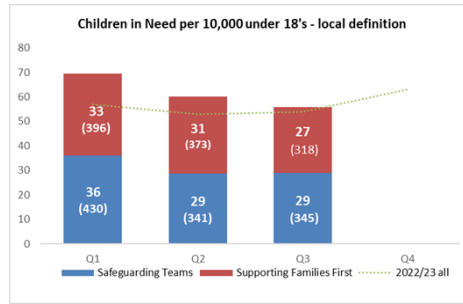
Repeat CP's within 2yrs remain low at 12% reflecting sustained outcomes achieved for these children and Repeat CP's at any point in time at 24% is in line with the England /SN averages, a positive reduction in last year's data where we saw an increase following re-emergence of child protection issues in families post covid.

Neglect remains the highest category of harm leading to child protection plans within Worcestershire and work is being undertaken to relaunch our neglect tool kit to ensure we are identifying neglect early and importantly, using early help services to address those issues of neglect before they reach the level which causes significant harm. The emotional abuse category reflects domestic abuse in household and increasingly the difficulty for parents in managing children's challenging behaviours, resulting in emotional harm.

We have strong data on timely visits to children, up to date child protection plans, initial and review child protection conferences. Also sustained good rates of participation and attendance in particular at conferences for those young people above the age of 12

21% of child protection cases have ceased YTD due to the child having a looked after status, this is a positive reduction on 27% last year and an associated rise in 74%, resulting in a successful child protection plan up from 68% last year.

Children in Need



We have seen a rise in the number of “local” children in need open to the service in both locality safeguarding teams and our supporting families first prevention team. Capacity issues impacted on both teams resulting in lower case closures and as such greater overall case load growth.

In locality Safeguarding this is being addressed with the development of a new Child In Need team designed to work with families post step down from Child Protection and those with low level intervention such as private fostering and Special Guardianship Order/Supervision Order support.

Supporting Families First continue to show effective care prevention with only 12 children year to date being accommodated and 77% of cases resulting in effective closure in line with the statistic achieved last year.

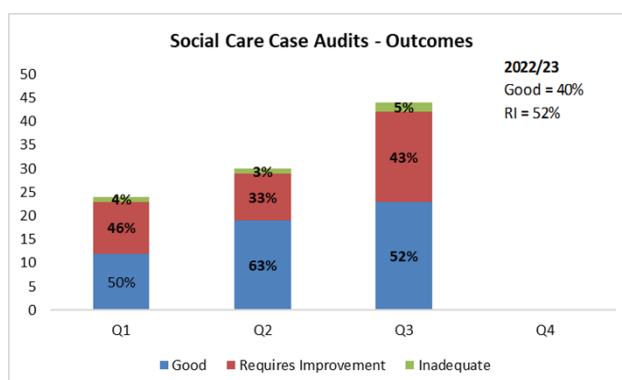
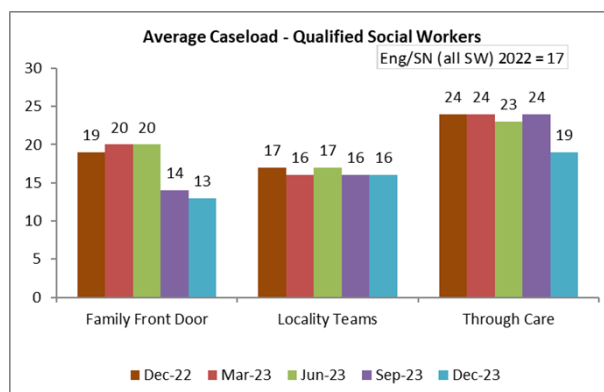
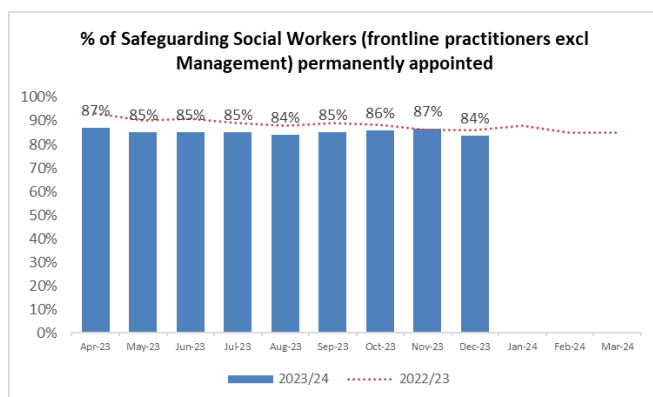
Missing from Home or Care

We can see a positive **reduction in the number of children missing from Home and from Care** this year in comparison to last year. An improved number of Welfare Return Interviews (WRI) have been completed from offered interviews at 50% up from 45% and an **improvement in timeliness** increasing to 74% from a previous year of 61%. WRI are a valuable part of identifying children vulnerable to Get Safe risk.

Get Safe – Umbrella term for risk of exploitation

Our Get Safe data shows **reducing number of children identified with a Get Safe flag** with particular reductions in at risk from trafficking or gangs in quarter three. We can also see **positive number of children who have been de-escalated** following intervention from the Get Safe partnership.

Workforce and Quality of Practice



We are fortunate to have retained a relatively high number of permanency in our safeguarding service, but this is still showing a decline and a reduction on last year. **This is a high risk area as replacing social work posts once we have lost them is incredibly difficult** and costly given the need to cover with agency staff and we can see the slight increase in Agency workers are direct correlation from the reduction in our permanency staff.

Permanency in management at 98% in WCF is reflected in the high percentage of social work supervision consistently provided to support and guide workers through this challenging field of work. Through 22/23, we saw caseloads rise to unmanageable levels in Through Care and Safeguarding in particular as we worked to replace SW posts. *Note these are average caseloads and always reflective in practice where we have managed vacancies or agency on induction / staff on reduced caseload.*

However data is accurately showing a reduction in the average caseload and this we know is reflected in practice with more manageable cases across our staff as reported in the December 23 workforce survey, where 74% of safeguarding staff said they had a manageable caseload.

We continue to challenge ourselves with regards to the quality of service through our use of case audits. Overall, 52% of our case work was judged to be Good this quarter, 44% were judged to be Requires Improvement, and 2 cases (4%) were judged to be inadequate.

The end of year for 22/23 outcomes judged 40% of Practice as Good, cumulatively for 23/24 to date case work is judged to be 54% as Good – evidencing a year-on-year improvement in practice. However, we continue to take learning from cases judged less than good and undertake targeted work to support practice development.

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Appendix 2 - Budget Monitoring 2023/24 – Forecast Outturn Period 9

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

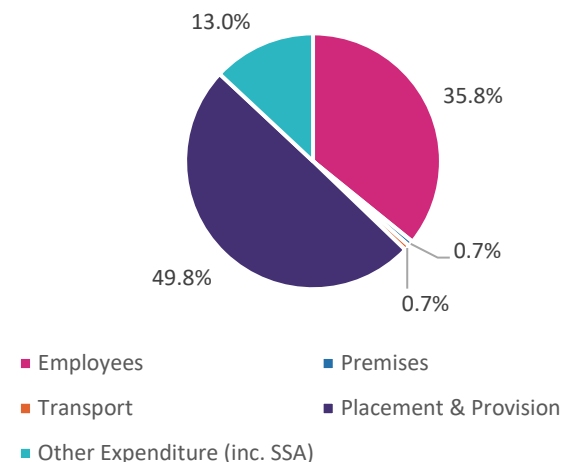
21st March 2024

WCF Budget Overview 2023/24

- The full-year WCF expenditure budget at P9 was £126m of which around half is the ‘demand led’ budgets of Placements for Looked After Children.

WCF Budget 2023/24	£m
Employees	45.085
Premises	0.848
Transport	0.859
Placement & Provision	62.657
Other Expenditure (inc. SSA)	16.403
Gross Expenditure	125.852
Sales, Fees and Charges & Interests	-2.570
Contract Price & Pay Award Funding	123.282

WCF Budget Expenditure by Type 2023/24



- At budget setting, it was acknowledged that there was known risk areas within the demand-led areas of the WCF budget, following an overspend in 2022/23, and an emerging national issue around demand and price of placements
- As a precaution, the Council assigned a £2m risk reserve to mitigate potential overspends

Forecast Outturn 2023/24 - £18.5m forecast overspend

	Latest Budget	YTD	Full-year Projection	Variance	Variance
	£000	£000	£000	£000	%
WCF Management & Board	938	637	873	-65	-6.93%
Training	184	80	163	-21	-11.41%
Resources Teams	4,052	2,147	3,277	-775	-19.13%
Support Service Payments	7,479	3,715	7,479	0	0.00%
Resources	12,653	6,579	11,792	-861	-6.80%
CSC Safeguarding Services	9,924	7,590	10,871	947	9.54%
Integrated Family Front Door	4,773	3,679	4,777	4	0.08%
Placements & Provision	66,083	66,839	84,095	18,012	27.26%
Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board	95	84	95	0	0.00%
CSC Through Care	6,068	4,771	6,591	524	8.64%
Early Interventions (ex. Targeted Family Supp)	5,587	3,762	5,247	-340	-6.09%
Social Care	92,530	86,725	111,676	19,147	20.69%
AAAD Staffing	7,142	5,693	7,365	223	3.12%
AAAD Short Breaks	2,545	1,742	2,714	169	6.64%
AAAD Placements & Packages	2,320	2,063	2,613	293	12.63%
All Age Disability	12,007	9,498	12,692	685	5.71%
Sufficiency & Safeguarding	557	320	744	187	33.57%
Quality and Improvement	1,382	713	977	-404	-29.23%
Vulnerable learners	3,648	2,082	3,430	-218	-5.98%
Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Place Planning	5,587	3,115	5,151	-435	-7.79%
Youth Offending Services	507	254	507	0	0.00%
Youth Offending Services	507	254	507	0	0.00%
TOTAL	123,282	106,194	141,818	18,536	15.04%
Contract Income	122,761	119,874	122,761	0	0.00%
Pay award above contract from WCC	521	521	521	0	0.00%
Projected Surplus/(Deficit) before Corporation Tax	0	14,201	-18,536	-18,536	

WCF P9 forecast is an overspend of £18.5m, down from £20m in the previous month.

The previous scrutiny report used P6 data, which showed a £28.6m overspend including £9.5m Home to School Transport (which has now moved to E&I).

Therefore the comparative P6 figure is £19.1m

Resources Directorate has improved by £0.3m since the last Scrutiny update. Interest rates have remained high, continuing our increased banking interest income, which accounts for is £0.6m of the variance. The remaining variance is due to holding staffing vacancies where possible, and the other controls on expenditure detailed later in this report.

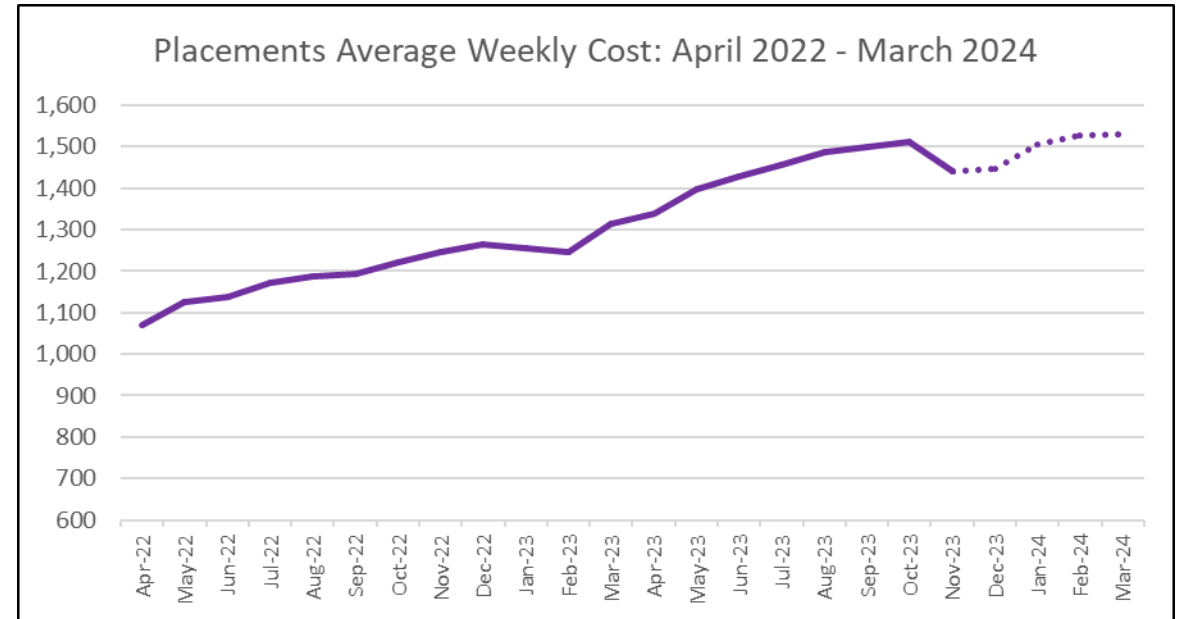
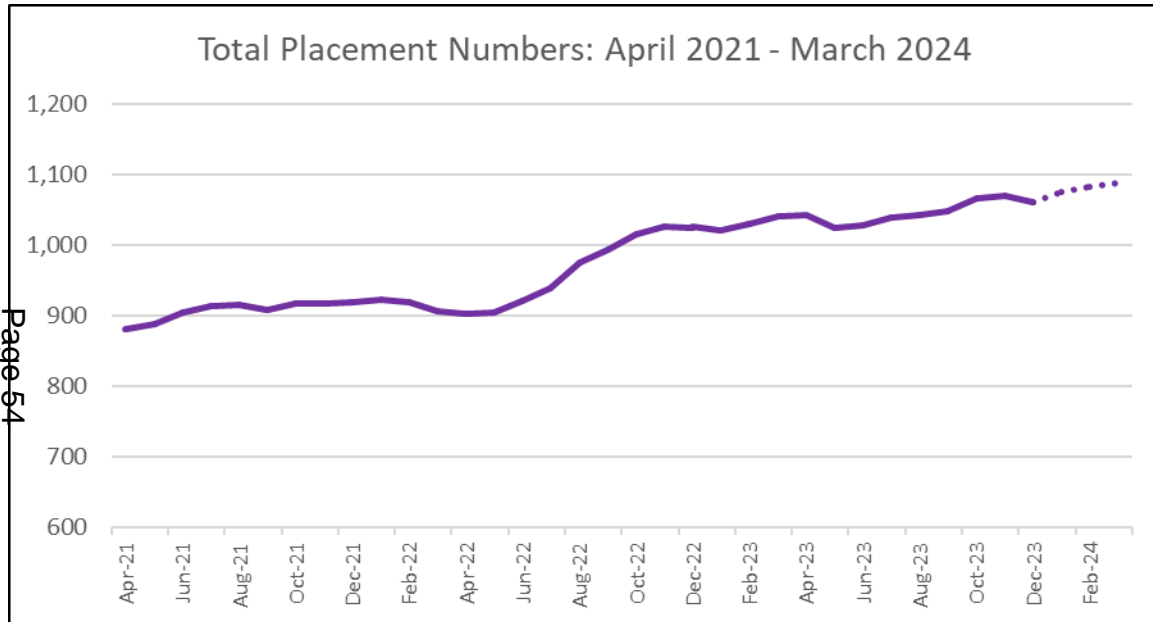
Social Care placements are discussed in more detail on the following slide. In other Social Care areas, increased volume of Court Fees and costs of agency cover are causing a small overspend forecast., although there are underspends emerging in some teams due to vacancy holding.

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 forecast underspend in EEYIP due to holding vacancies and amending forecast use of specific grant income.

Forecast Outturn 2023/24 - £18.5m forecast overspend (2)

- Social Care placements are forecast to be overspent by £18.1m, due to increases in both numbers and costs since budget setting. The current number of placements is 1,061, an 3.4% rise from the 1,026 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. The graphs below show the trend for both number and average weekly cost of placements, both of which show a small decrease this month.

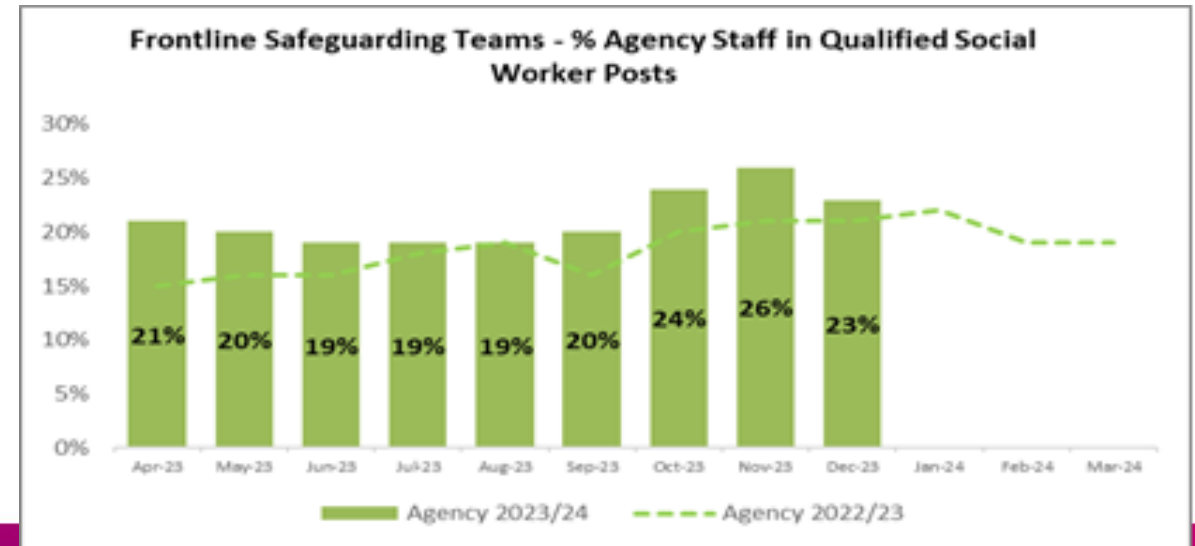


Our robust commissioning and management approach have resulted in cost avoidances which limited price increases however, this is more challenging in the current economic environment. In January 2025, an Internal Audit report into WCF processes around Social Care Placements returned a verdict of substantial assurance in our processes, including ensuring value for money.

Forecast Outturn 2023/24 – Staffing Position

- As at P9, WCF is forecast to underspend on staffing by £0.3m (1%). We are fortunate to have retained a relatively high number of permanency in our safeguarding service, but this is still showing a decline and a reduction on last year. **This is a high risk area as replacing social work post once we have lost them is incredibly difficult** and costly given the need to cover with agency staff and we can see the slight increase in Agency workers are direct correlation from the reduction in our permanency staff:

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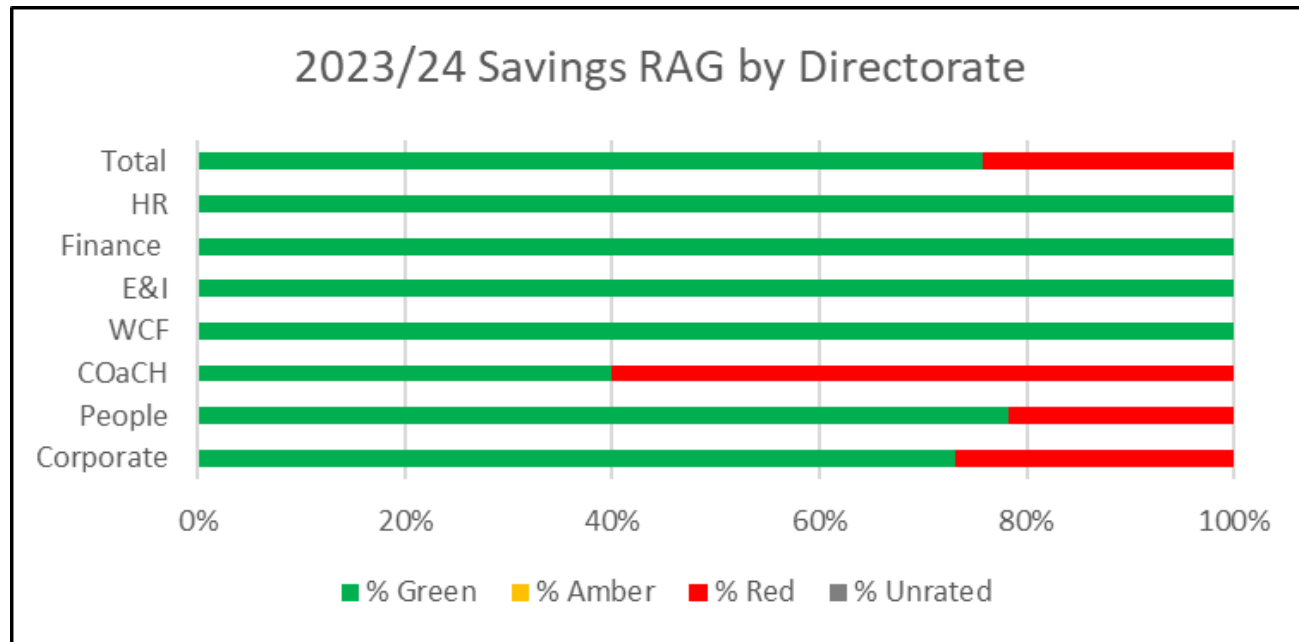


Forecast Outturn 2023/24 – Mitigating actions

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 P9 is an overspend of £22.1m with a cumulative deficit of £42.4m at the end of 2023/24.

2023/24 Budget Monitoring Period 9 - December 2023	Current Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Variance
DSG Blocks	£000	£000	£000	%
Schools	129,735	129,735	0	0.0%
High Needs	74,692	96,836	22,144	29.6%
Early Years	36,265	36,265	0	0.0%
Central	3,333	3,333	0	0.0%
DSG	244,025	266,169	22,144	

Summary Position for Dedicated Schools Grant	
	£m
Accumulated Deficit 1 April 2023	20.3
High Needs Deficit 2023/24	22.1
Projected Early Years and Schools Block	0.0
Savings on Other Blocks	0.0
Accumulated Deficit 31 March 2024	42.4

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- 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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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 21 MARCH 2024

REFRESH OF THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

Summary

1. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider suggestions for its 2024/25 Work Programme prior to it being submitted to Council for approval.

Background

2. Worcestershire County Council has a rolling annual Work Programme for Overview and Scrutiny. The Panel routinely reviews its work programme at each meeting to consider which issues should be investigated as a priority.
3. In addition, on an annual basis, the rolling annual Work Programme for Overview and Scrutiny is approved by Council.

Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25

4. The Scrutiny Work Programme for 2024/25 is now being refreshed. Panel Members and other stakeholders have been invited to suggest topics for future scrutiny.
5. Members are asked to consider the draft Work Programme and agree its priorities for 2024/25. Issues should be prioritised by using the scrutiny feasibility criteria agreed by OSPB.
6. The Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board will receive feedback on the HOSC's and Scrutiny Panels' discussions and agree the final Scrutiny Work Programme at its 25 April meeting. Council will be asked to agree the Work Programme at its meeting on 16 May.

Feasibility Criteria

7. The criteria (listed below) will help to determine the scrutiny programme. A topic does not need to meet all of these criteria to be scrutinised, but they are intended as a guide for prioritisation.
 - Is the issue a priority area for the Council?
 - Is it a key issue for local people?
 - Will it be practicable to implement the outcomes of the scrutiny?
 - Are improvements for local people likely?

- Does it examine a poor performing service?
- Will it result in improvements to the way the Council operates?
- Is it related to new Government guidance or legislation?

Remit of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

8. 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

Dates of Future Meetings

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

Purpose of the Meeting

9. The Panel is asked to consider and prioritise the draft 2024/25 Work Programme and consider whether it would wish to make any amendments. The Committee will wish to retain the flexibility to take into account any urgent issues which may arise.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Draft Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2024/25

Contact Points

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

Background Papers

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

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

[Agenda and Minutes 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

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting	Issue for Scrutiny	Date of Last Report	Notes/Follow-up Action
21 March 2024	Annual Update on Educational Performance Outcomes	22 March 2023	
	Early Years and childcare expansion programme		Added by the Chairman in November 2023.
	Performance (Q3 October to December) and In-Year Budget Monitoring		
22 May 2024	An outline of the Valuing Care Project (which involves triangulating needs with costs and outcomes to drive better value from placements, prevent entry into care and improve outcomes in the system).		
	Careers Advice in High Schools		Chairman agreed item be added to Work Programme – February 2023
4 July 2024	Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Safeguarding Report		
	Performance (Q4 January - March) and Year End Budget Monitoring		
25 September 2024	Update on SEND Accelerated Action Plan		
	An update on the Valuing Care Project (which involves triangulating needs with costs and outcomes to drive better value from placements, prevent entry into care and improve outcomes in the system).		

	Performance (Q1 April to June) and In-Year Budget Monitoring		
18 November 2024	Children Missing Education		Following consideration of attendance at January 2024 Panel, suggested that this wider issue could be reported back on in Autumn 2024.
	Performance (Q2 July to September) and In-Year Budget Monitoring (to include an update on the 2024/25 savings plans).		
January 2025	Scrutiny of 2025/26 Budget		
March 2025	Annual Update on Educational Performance Outcomes		
	Performance (Q3 October to December) and In-Year Budget Monitoring		
Possible Future Items	Home to School Transport		
	SEND – Outcome of Full Inspection		available later in 2024
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