



WORCESTERSHIRE CHILDREN FIRST BUSINESS PLAN

April 2020 - March 2021



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1. FOREWORD



I am pleased to introduce the Worcestershire Children First (WCF) Business Plan for 2020/21. This builds upon the vision, ambition and priorities set out in our **Interim Business Plan** for the first six months of operation following our successful launch on 1st October 2019. WCF was established as a wholly owned Council Company with a single unwavering focus on services for Worcestershire's children and young people. The Board and I are committed to delivering good early help, social care and education services that improve outcomes for children and their families.

Last year, 2019/20, saw significant achievements for children's services. Preparation for WCF establishment progressed efficiently, to timescale and without impacting on service delivery. Services for children continued to improve and this was recognised by Ofsted in their inspection report published in July. A new and constructive commissioning relationship has been established between the Council and Company as a strong foundation to support the delivery of continued improvement across the range of services. Our plan sets out our priorities to ensure Worcestershire's children and young people are happy, healthy and safe and that we build our reputation as a trusted provider and strategic partner across the county and region.

We are in a strong position to develop services, work innovatively to improve outcomes and deliver value for money. I am very pleased that we will welcome Babcock staff and services into WCF in the coming months which will assist in strengthening and streamlining our educational work across the county. This plan sets out our ambition to build on our first six months of achievement to move towards our priority to be delivering good services across the whole Company.

I would like to finish by thanking our staff who work with dedication to do their very best for children and young people. I know that their efforts are making a real difference through the feedback we receive from children and young people and that is the most important measure of success.

Rob Morrison

Chair Worcestershire Children First



2. INTRODUCTION

Worcestershire Children First Business Plan

Worcestershire Children First (WCF) was launched in October 2019 with a commitment to delivering good quality services to children and young people in Worcestershire as part of the multi-agency commitment made in the local **Children & Young People’s Plan 2017-2021**. Although WCF is operationally independent, we work closely with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) to deliver our services on their behalf including the statutory duties and responsibilities as set out in legislation.

Putting children at the heart of everything we do is our “golden thread”. Our purpose, priorities, vision and values permeate throughout our Company’s business; from our Board, strategic leadership, operational plans to frontline delivery of services to the children and families.

Vision, Mission and Values

OUR VISION

Worcestershire to be a wonderful place for all children and young people to grow up.

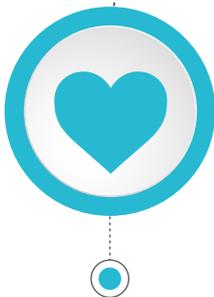
WORCESTERSHIRE
CHILDREN FIRST



OUR MISSION

Supporting children and young people to be happy, healthy and safe.

OUR VALUES



CHILDREN AT OUR HEART

We will keep children and young people at the heart of everything we do



VALUE FAMILY LIFE

We will support and empower parents to care for their own children well



GOOD EDUCATION FOR ALL

We will value education as the best start in life for all children and young people



PROTECTION FROM HARM

We will act in a professional and timely way to protect children from harm

Worcestershire Context

Worcestershire has 167,099¹ children and young people aged 0-25. The county is a mix of rural and urban areas with pockets of deprivation where health outcomes are worse than in other areas. WCF provides services to all children and young people but has a specific focus on those who are vulnerable.

Current numbers of children and young people with levels of vulnerability are shown below:



644 Children in Need (1 in 178 children)



517 Children on a Child Protection Plan (1 in 228 children)



820 Looked After Children (1 in 144 children)



242 Young People are Not in Education, Employment or Training (1 in 51, 16-17 year olds)



33 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (1 in 3569 children)



3990 Children on Education Health and Care Plans (1 in 42 children)



12,530 Children with a Special Educational Need or Disability (1 in 7 Children)



49 Children registered as Missing Education for the academic year 2018/19 (1 in 3420)

All figures from WCF in-year monitoring as at 31st December 2019 except Children with SEND - www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england-january-2019. Rates calculated against ONS Mid-year population estimates June 2019.

1 Source: UK Mid-Year Population Estimates June 2019: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalescotlandandnorthernireland>

WCF will relentlessly focus on providing services to the most vulnerable children and young people pre-birth to 25 years of age (for care leavers and those with special educational needs and disabilities). We will work strategically with WCC and NHS partners to support young people to reach independent and fulfilled adult lives.

Working in Partnership

Local authorities have a duty to make sure that every child whose education they are responsible for is able to access an “adequate and efficient” education. Under the Additional Support for Learning Act, there are duties to make sure that children and young people get the additional support for learning they need to reach their full potential. As a company delivering statutory services on behalf of Worcestershire County Council, we are jointly responsible with local schools to provide education for all children. Similarly as part of ‘Working Together 2018’ we have a duty within inter-agency working, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

In the delivery of our wider children’s services we recognise and value the essential contribution of our partnership, this includes:

- Children, young people, their families and carers
- Schools and Education providers across Worcestershire from early years through to further education settings
- Worcestershire County Council
- West Mercia Police
- Hereford and Worcester Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG)
- NHS provider trusts and GPs
- District Councils
- Voluntary sector services
- Independent providers

Through a wide range of strategic and operational multiagency forums, we will work together to improve the lives of children and young people in our community, striving to ensure they are happy, healthy and safe, whether they are in their family or in our care.



3. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGIC GOALS

WCF Board Structure and External Governance

As a wholly owned Council Company, WCF has a contractual relationship with Worcestershire County Council to provide statutory children’s services. WCF have a ‘buy back’ arrangement of 14 corporate support services, delivered by the Council with legal agreements. (for more information on the initial Company establishment and agreements please see WCF’s **Interim Business Plan**)

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

Our contractual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as shown in **appendix 2** hold WCF to account for delivering social care, early help and education service. Similarly, we monitor support from ‘buy back’ services through 14 Support Service Agreements (SSA’s). The formalities are managed day to day by WCC’s Commissioning and Partnership Management function; working positively and proactively with WCF’s Resources Directorate. The relationship is based on partnership, support, challenge, evidence and achievement of outcomes.

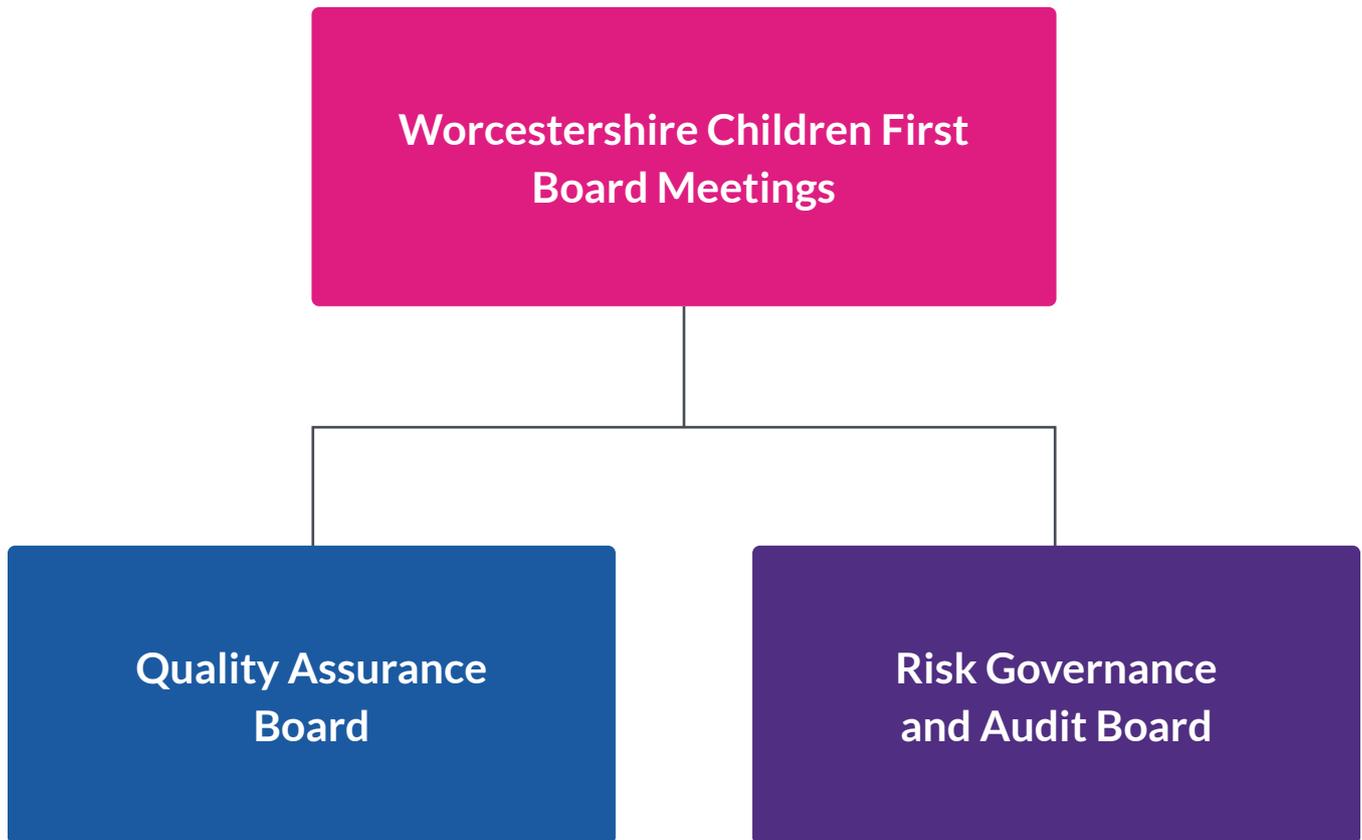
The WCF board consists of 11 Executive and Non-Executive Directors with a wealth of public sector expertise in supporting families and communities. Executive Directors are those employed by WCF to lead and manage delivery functions and teams, whilst Non-Executive Directors do not have responsibility for day to day operations but provide input and challenge via Board meetings and sub-board meetings throughout the year.

The governance structure for the Board of Worcestershire Children First can be seen in the diagram below:



(■ (Pink) denotes Non-Executive Director; ■ (Dark Blue) represents Executive Director.
The Chairman of the Board is a DfE appointment ■ (Purple))

To maintain rigour, WCF's internal governance takes the form of monthly WCF Board meetings (with quarterly meetings held in public). Additionally, there are two subgroups reporting into the Board of Directors focusing on improvement of services;



The Quality Assurance Board

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

The Risk Governance and Audit Board

The Risk Governance and Audit Board typically meets three times a year (or more frequently if required) and maintains an oversight of our governance, risk management, internal control and value for money framework. This Board ensures strategic compliance, management and performance of WCF as a whole with an unwavering focus on children and young people at the heart of our Company's purpose.

Internally, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), who are responsible on a day to day basis for running the business, meet regularly to ensure service improvement continues with momentum, and to ensure all areas of WCF have strategic oversight. Regular reporting and monitoring impacts positively on outcomes for children and young people and is the core and demonstrable Company purpose. Their ambition for Worcestershire Children First is to be rated as 'Good' in provision of services.

Each year we will share our company achievement and challenges through our public meetings. This will be an opportunity for our stakeholders, young people, staff and the public to feedback on company performance and inform services.

Directorate Structures and Internal Organisational Structure

Under the Chief Executive of Worcestershire Children First, sit three directorates with specific service provision and dedicated focus:

- Social Care and Safeguarding
 - » Family Front Door and Partnership (the assessment of children in need of support, care and protection)
 - » Locality Safeguarding (planning for children in need of support and protection)
 - » Through Care & Sufficiency (care and placement planning for children who are looked after and care leavers)
 - » Quality Assurance, Independent Review and the Principle Social Worker (monitoring the effectiveness, quality and timeliness of services through audit, key performance measures and service user feedback)
- Education and Early Help
 - » Forecasting and planning to ensure enough good education places for children
 - » Supporting schools and education settings to promote the welfare of and safeguard children
 - » Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) assessment, planning and review services
 - » Vulnerable Learners – virtual school for looked after children and inclusion services
 - » Early Help Partnerships
- Resources
 - » HR & OD Strategic Business Partner
 - » Funding and Policy
 - » Finance
 - » Management Information
 - » Strategic Business, Transformation & Commissioning

For more detail service structure charts can be found in **appendix 3**.

Quality Assurance and Scrutiny

We promote and engage with rigorous internal and external scrutiny and quality assurance (QA) mechanisms, to ensure we deliver high-quality service provision through:

- WCC Corporate Parenting Board
- WCC Children and Young People's Scrutiny
- Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership
- SEND Improvement Board

Ofsted and DfE Regulatory inspections for children's local authority services include:

- Inspection Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)
- Residential Children's Homes
- Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)
- Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI)
- Regulatory inspections of Schools
- Local area SEND

This collective framework ensures that arrangements:

- Have a continuous focus on service improvement at all levels of the organisation
- Embed a culture of learning from quality assurance and performance management
- Show the difference we are making to the lives of children and young people

WCF Quality Assurance Framework

Our Quality Assurance Framework has three dimensions:

- **Key Performance Indicators** - Analysis of our business and performance information on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis
- **Feedback from Children, Young People and Families** - We are committed to understanding and learning from the experience of our children young people and families. We have a comprehensive service user feedback programme in each area of business and a WCF compliments and complaints service
- **Audit Activity** - Completing thematic and case-file audits (multi-agency included)

We have developed and embedded this framework throughout our services to help us answer the important questions of how our services are being experienced by children, young people and their families and what difference we are making to their lives.

Feedback from Children, Young People and Families include:

“Mum was very complimentary about her Social Worker. She said she was brilliant, straightforward and gave her a chance for everything. She was so helpful”

“The children really liked the social worker and gained their trust immediately”

Out of 100 families who shared their feedback in 2019/20:

- 94% of families reported that the Social Worker spoke to the child or young person and listened to their views
- 92% of families reported that they were given opportunities to share their views
- 93% the right agencies were spoken to as part of their plan or assessment

Ofsted said of the QA Framework adopted by WCF

“The local authority has implemented a quality assurance system and has established a range of performance information, allowing senior managers to better understand its practice. Auditing of work is undertaken on a regular basis and is strengthened by a moderation system that gives the local authority a clear understanding of practice compliance”



Strategic Goals - Five Year Plan

Our ambition is to make a positive and sustained difference to the lives of children young people and families and to be able to provide a wide range of evidence to support this achievement. The diagram below provides a visual representation of how we plan to develop and improve our services for children, young people and their families over the next five years:

Year 1

- Service user feedback indicates WCF is making a positive difference to CYPF
- Working under WCF Brand
- Building stable and productive teams, culture and behaviours
- Social care rated Requires Improvement (at point of transfer)
- Commissioner/Provider separation
- Support services tested and operational
- Demonstrate credentials with existing parties and children, young people and families

Year 3

- Increasing co-creation with children, young people and families
- Work effectively and efficiently within financial envelope
- Evidence of improved outcomes
- Embedding new culture
- Review opportunities for growth within existing services
- Wider strategic relationships developed
- Gain independent recognition of improvement and performance

Year 5

- Achieve sustainability and potentially explore new commercial opportunities
- Improved and evidenced outcomes
- Effective and responsive development
- Council and community are proud of WCF
- Begin review of commissioning intentions
- Integrated, effective partnership working across the system
- Support services sourced effectively



4. SERVICE BUSINESS PLANNING - IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Worcestershire Children First Executive Leadership Team (ELT) are committed to providing the conditions for support, challenge and guidance across the organisation along with the essential organisational structure and monitoring to promote best practice. ELT, supported by associated stakeholders and strategic partners, have prioritised the following four foundations to support and monitor the service area business plans:

- Workforce and Culture
- Inspections and Focus Visits
- Leadership and Management (Quality Assurance Framework)
- Strategic Partnership Working

Workforce and Culture

Our ambition is to be the 'employer of choice' for children's services staff and we approach this through a culture that values the impact that our staff have in improving children's lives.

We have a culture of high expectations and have created the conditions where professional expertise is valued and can flourish.

The full organisational structure can be found in **appendix 3**. It ensures that, as a service, we continue to have strong front-line management and that we have the capacity and ability to flex in response to changes that are inevitable, whilst keeping a good level of stability and quality. Supported by financial investment and through staff feedback and performance review, we have been able to design a **Workforce Strategy** that has made a tangible difference.

Stability, capacity and the experience of the workforce is a fundamental foundation on which to build good practice. Where staff feel supported, challenged and empowered they are better able to work with confidence in a child-centred way. With permanent Social Workers currently at 85%, our data evidences a sustained positive picture on recruitment and retention of social workers, experience of the workforce and caseloads.

Management Stability and Capacity is also a fundamental foundation on which to build a stable workforce where staff feel supported, challenged and empowered to do the best thing for children and families. Recognising that Ofsted identifies requirements to monitor workloads, working conditions and wider system impact, will inform the basis of our staff surveys. We will also ensure our workforce is suitably qualified and promote and support professional development for best practice.

In our Children's Social Care and Safeguarding service we undertake staff surveys and staff health checks, in order to understand the views and experiences of our staff as employees. The most recent of these was completed over December 2019. The Health Check provides information that evidences our improvement and how we have sustained this over the last year. This feedback reported that:

- 94% of staff feel listened to and have their worries and concern addressed by managers
- 88% of social work staff have dedicated monthly supervision that is reflective and includes review of performance
- 84 % of social workers say they feel valued at work
- 71% of social workers feel they have a manageable case load
- 95% of staff feel their managers are visible, approachable and responsive
- 78% of social workers report receiving direct feedback on audits of their work
- 90% of staff say they receive regular information on learning from Quality Assurance activity within the service
- 98% of staff are using the Signs of Safety model and 94% feel this is a good tool for working with families
- 94% of social workers say they understand the Vision, Mission and Values of Worcestershire Children First and 91% say they understand how they and their team contribute to these

Going forward in 2020/21 there will be a detailed health check for all WCF staff to continue to understand the current workforce experience and respond appropriately to promote good practice and working conditions.

“Effective work has strengthened the workforce. Use of agency staff has reduced and the stability of staff in post has increased. The establishment of a social work academy has meant that there are increased opportunities for the local authority to ‘grow’ its own staff. The introduction of the role of advanced social work practitioners has strengthened career opportunities and the range of experience within teams. Staff are positive about changes that have been implemented, including that a strengths-based model of social work intervention is in place and embedded.”

(Ofsted, ILACS , July 2019)

As a workforce we all work together to embrace and flexibly respond to new demands within the transformation still taking place. Colleagues are supported and challenged by the executive leadership team (and their peers) in obtaining the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

Inspections and Focus Visits

External Inspection provides us with a measure of what “good” looks like and we can incorporate learning into our own service development

The most recent Ofsted inspection report for Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) took place in July 2019. The outcome rated our services as 'Requires Improvement to be Good.' This is the first time within the UK, that an improvement in grade has been awarded to a service under a direction to become an Alternative Delivery Model (ADM) and pre the launch of that ADM.

Positive progress was recognised in the form of:

- Improving quality of services to children and families since 2016
- Meeting goals in the service improvement plan
- Senior Leaders and elected Members ambition for and commitment to ensuring wellbeing, safety and outcomes for Worcestershire's children

- Strengthening and stabilising a permanent workforce who know children well
- Improving outcomes for children, changes to core practice and a sustained trajectory of improvement

In 2020-21 WCF will be pro-actively preparing for further inspections across the services, including:

- Ofsted Focus visit
- Ofsted Joint Targeted Annual Inspection
- Ofsted Inspections of Children's Homes
- Ofsted inspection of our Fostering Agency
- Local Area SEND Re-inspection

(As well as supporting our school and educational settings Ofsted Inspections and the West Mercia Youth Justice Service inspection)

In March 2018, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspected the effectiveness of the Worcestershire SEND provision. As a result, it was agreed that the Council and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) will work together with partners, parents/ carers, young people and school leaders, to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. To support this is a programme of work delivering the published 'Written Statement of Action' (WSOA) and formal governance to monitor and implement SEND Improvement.

Worcestershire's most recent DfE monitoring visit (October 2019) reported progress evidenced in:

- Governance and reporting structures being embedded and well represented by all stakeholders and partners
- The LA making good progress with its Written Statement of Action (WSOA)
- Work around engagement and co-production - described as being very encouraging

Leadership & Management (Quality Assurance Framework)

In accordance with Ofsted "Good" and "Outstanding" descriptors for leadership and management, WCF ensures a strong focus on contemporary understanding of what is happening in the business through performance management and monitoring in our three key areas of QA. We can identify what our strengths are and areas of development for improvement.

Management oversight of practice, including practice scrutiny by Members and senior managers, is established, systematic and used clearly to inform and improve the development and delivery of support, care and protection to children and young people.

We have developed a range of opportunities within our core business practice to ensure we ask children, young people and their parents how they have experienced our services and what difference our interventions have made.

Whilst we have been open and proactive in learning from feedback and the experiences of others we know that it is through embedding our own Quality Assurance and Performance (QAP) Framework that we will find a true and current understanding of what we are doing, how well we are doing it and what do we need to do differently to ensure we continue to develop and improve our services.

Ofsted said in our 2019 ILACS inspection, that the Social Care and Safeguarding Directorate...

"...has implemented a quality assurance system and has established a range of performance information, allowing senior managers to better understand practice. Auditing of work is undertaken on a regular basis and is strengthened by a moderation system that gives the local authority a clear understanding of practice compliance."

Developing consistently good practice across the Company is a priority. Quality Assurance measures are in place for social care and safeguarding and are being formally developed for Education and Early Help in 2020/21.

WCF will monitor from individual, team, and service areas, to the Directorate level, the performance of the organisation to enable us to identify gaps and areas for development. We will use this information to inform the development of services and strategies whilst having children and young people at the forefront of every decision made.

Strategic Partnership Working

We demonstrate our commitment, vision, mission and values in attendance at strategic groups including:

- Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Health and Wellbeing Board and its Childrens Strategic Partnership
- Safer Communities Partnership
- Worcestershire County Domestic Abuse Forum
- SEND Improvement Board
- Education Partnerships

The best outcomes for children and families can only be achieved by working in partnership. We are committed to:

- Working alongside children, young people and their families to deliver what they need and want
- Consolidating connections with internal and external stakeholders to deliver the best services possible
- Providing peer review and support to services working with children and young people
- Building on existing relationships with education leaders, schools and their governors
- Strengthening work with the voluntary and community sector through commissioning priorities
- Championing our status as a key improvement partner
- Being proactive in developing new and purposeful partnerships
- Encouraging and celebrating joint innovation
- Welcoming feedback to improve provision for children, young people and their families
- Ensuring our buildings are accessible and staff are flexible to the needs of the family

Service Business Planning – Improvement and Development

With Children and Young People at the heart of everything we do and a strong focus on improvement, we have fundamentally changed how we work. From positive changes in systems to structures and processes to practice, we have a fantastic platform to present the Directorate service development and improvement plans for the children and young people of Worcestershire.

These plans are set out in a plan on the following pages:

Social Care and Safeguarding

Workforce and Culture

	Family Front Door and Partnerships Emma Brittain	Safeguarding Maria White	Through Care Adam Johnston	Safeguarding Quality Assurance Dan Adams	
	End to End Leadership Team				
Ofsted Recommendations July 2019 and additional areas for improvement	The engagement with partners to deliver early help to families and to ensure that this help is timely.	The quality of intervention with families, where there is a risk that children may be received into care if the right support and guidance is not available. (Edge of Care - Supporting Families First)	The availability of a dedicated pathway to the provision of mental health services for children in care.	Learning from the breakdown of placements for children by the holding of timely disruption meetings.	
	Assessments of need for 16 and 17 year olds who present as homeless, including whether they should come into the care of the local authority. Young people should be told clearly about this option.	The timely availability of family support when children have a plan to leave care and return home.	Provision of personal assistants for care leavers when they reach the age of 17.		
			The availability of suitable accommodation and timely interventions that ensure that care leavers, including those aged over 18 years, are not placed in bed and breakfast accommodation or become homeless.		
	Sustaining improvement and building consistency in good practice Team Managers and Independent Chairs to proactively and effectively identify and improve quality and timeliness in all cases. Ensure comprehensive assessments, effective use of chronologies and family friendly outcome focussed plans are in place all the time for all children. Ensure robust case management and timely reflective supervision in place for all social workers all of the time.				
Service Area Business Development and Improvement Plans	Thresholds and Partnerships	Development of Specialist Family Support Service	Sufficiency of Placements	Are we Making a Difference? Outcome Measures - impact on children's lives	
			Review Integrated Service for Looked After Children (ISL) and Emotional Health & Well Being Service Development		
	Get Safe - identification and management of children at risk of exploitation.	Quality and timeliness of Court Work	Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) Business Plan and Inspection		Improving the quality and timeliness of plans, effective use of Dispute Resolution Process (DRP)
			Financial Management, Savings and Efficiencies		Organisational review of CWD and SEND
Financial Management, Savings and Efficiencies	Financial Management, Savings and Efficiencies		Financial Management, Savings and Efficiencies		
Innovation	Social Work Student in Practice	Family Safeguarding	Regional Fostering Developments	Practice Managers - Research in practice	
		Repeat Proceedings and Child Removals (Pause Project)	Safe Centre Regional Secure		

Senior Leadership Quality Assurance Programme

Inspections and Focused Visits / JTAI

Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP)

Quality Assurance Practice and Procedures

Safeguarding Practice Review Board

Get Safe Partnership Board



Education and Early Help

Co-production with Children & Families

		Sufficiency and Place Planning Robert Williams	Education Support and Effectiveness David Townsend	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) & Vulnerable Learners Gabrielle Stacey	Education Safeguarding Denise Hannibal	Early Help Partnerships Helen Hey	
Education & Early Help and SEND & Vulnerable learners Leadership Teams							
Education Partnerships	Service Area Business Development and Improvement Plans	Forecast education places in early years and mainstream provision	Early Years Strategy development and delivery	Local Offer	Strengthen links with Social Care and SEND	To develop the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) Headteacher Steering Group	Visits Engagement with partners to deliver Early Help to families and to ensure this help is timely (Ofsted)
		Development of forecasting for Specialist Education and Post 16 education provision	School Improvement Leadership and recruitment	Embedding inclusive practice in Early Years providers and Schools	Educational outcomes for Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children	To improve the skills and confidence of schools to manage risk/identify harm through workforce training & development including Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Network	Troubled Families Programme 2020/21
		Partnership working to open a new Alternative Provision school in Wyre Forest	School Admissions in year admissions management for all schools	Continuum of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision	Exclusions and Alternative Provision Review including the Medical Education Service		Implement and embed the Reducing Parental Conflict initiative
		Plan the strategic capital programme through needs analysis and condition surveys	Education Strategy School Improvement at district level	Continuing health care needs for children and young people with SEND	Review and publish Children Missing Education (CME) strategy	Quality Assurance Audit programme for schools; Keeping Children Safe In Education	Participation and Inclusion Team empowering children, families and young people to participate in decision making
		Plan new schools	Plans Governor recruitment, development and Quality Assurance	Co production in Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) process	Attendance and exclusions for Vulnerable Learners		Early Intervention Family Support (EIFS) delivery plan
		Develop new and existing provision for SEND pupils	Regional Schools Commissioner / Diocese	Quality of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)	Identification and tracking of Children Missing Education (CME) / Timeliness for suitability of Elective Home Education	To ensure compliance with WSCP Child Protection Procedures	Enhance the Early Help Local Offer
		Academy Conversions		Management of High Level Needs funding	children looked after (CLA) experience of high quality Alternative Provision / curriculum	Operation Encompass Phase2	
					Review and implement EHCP Annual reviews		
			Post 16 Graduated response guidance				
			Transition				
			Learner & SEND Support Services				
Financial Management Value for Money High Needs Management Optimise and Integration of Business Systems							

Inspections and Monitoring Visits

Quality Assurance Framework and programme

The journey is and will continue to progress at pace because we have the collective drive, passion, experience and commitment to deliver for children and their families.

5. PRIORITIES

- Implementation of Liquidlogic Case Management System – April 2020
- Supporting Delivery of the Early Help Strategy 2020-2024 – March 2020 onwards
- Troubled Families - throughout 2020/21
- Transfer and Integration of Learning and Achievement Services – June 2020
- Delivery of the Education and Skills Strategy 2019-2024 – live
- Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) – live
- Family Safeguarding Model – April 2020
- Supporting Families First (Edge of Care) - January 2020

As part of our Company's Business Plan for 2020/21 we are striving for transformational change to support WCF's continuous improvement journey. Collectively we have identified key priorities for the year ahead which will need dedicated focus and resource to ensure delivery of projects and ultimately best outcomes for children in addition to our performance focus and monitoring of KPI's.

Implementation of LiquidLogic Case Management System

Worcestershire Children First is in the process of implementing new Early Help and Social Care Case Management systems. Our existing system was procured and implemented over 12 years ago and is no longer developed by the software supplier. This lack of development prevents WCF from using the case management system to modernise and support service development and improvement. The new systems will better support front-line practitioners in their work as well as providing a modern platform for finance and performance management teams to produce useful and accurate data.

Successful implementation of the NHS Digital CPIS system and associated products, will improve our performance management and development systems, supporting our continuous organisational learning and provision of services for children and young people in Worcestershire whilst maximising the system across all children's services areas.

Supporting Delivery of the Early Help Strategy 2020-2024

The **Early Help Strategy** is being developed using principles of collaboration and co-production, inclusive of agencies and partners, children and young people, and parents/carers.

The strategy will enable early identification of need and preventative services through a shared vision that:

- Develops a 'whole family' approach to Early Help, which considers the needs of the entire family in a holistic approach
- Promotes joined-up partnership working across services, supporting children and families across the county
- Empowers families and communities to be involved in the Early Help system, rather than having services done 'to them'
- Keeps families together and children in their communities wherever it is best to do so
- Supports appropriate assessment of need and prompt signposting to relevant Early Help support
- Provides a beacon Early Help system, offering timely identification of needs and appropriate support to children, young people, families and professionals

The priorities of the strategy include:

- Providing information, advice and guidance to families, communities and partners, to improve support for children, young people and their families
- Embedding the Early Help pathway across all agencies and partners
- Developing co-locality working across the Early Help system
- Enhancing the digital Early Help offer and ensuring digital inclusion
- Training the workforce

Part of this focus will include the continuation of the Troubled Families programme in Worcestershire which sets out how in our county we will prioritise families for support and how we will deliver that support and evidence progress for families.

Troubled Families

Local authorities are responsible for ensuring the delivery of their own Troubled Families programme. The aim is to bring about sustained change to improve the lives of families where need may be defined as:

- Involvement in anti-social behaviour
- Experiencing financial exclusion
- Sustained worklessness
- Experiencing domestic violence or abuse
- Diagnosed with health problems

The current (second) phase of Worcestershire County Council's Troubled Families programme entered the final year of delivery in April 2019. The programme is aiming to submit 2421 successful payment-by-results claims by March 2020. The Troubled Families Delivery Plan for 2020/21 will be drafted imminently, focusing on Payment by Results claims, partnership working and data transformation. The plan will be finalised once details of the 2020/21 programme extension are received from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) who have funded the programme on a yearly basis.

Transfer and Integration of Learning and Achievement Services

The scope of WCF was widened to include the learning and achievement education services currently delivered by Babcock Prime to create an integrated service which brings the education and social care offer closer together, with a particular focus on prevention and vulnerable learners. The agreed date for transfer is 1st June 2020. The benefits for children, young people and their families that we expect to see following the transfer would include increased user involvement, improved communication between multi-disciplinary teams and integrated professional support

During the transition period WCF are appointed to manage the contract, with the Council remaining as the contracting party. This will provide the operational control that we need to deliver the programme of integration. A joint programme team from the Council and WCF has been established with leads and key deliverables identified for workstreams which will focus on; how the service will transfer with regard to contractual and legal requirements, and the finance and resource implications of the services and staff who will TUPE into WCF (c.140 staff).

Delivery of the Education & Skills Strategy 2019-2024

The **Education & Skills Strategy 2019-2024** establishes the educational aspirations for all children and young people; it clarifies roles in a complex education and skills system; sets out how successful collaboration can occur to achieve our ambition and share the risks and opportunities of the changes ahead; and will lead to the development of an action plan setting out how we will initiate change and achieve specific objectives:

- Highly motivated, well performing and ambitious education providers
- A curriculum and approach which inspires
- More education places in good or outstanding provision
- Building skills for our future workforce
- Improved capacity, skills and knowledge surrounding our vulnerable Learners
- Improved Social Mobility for all Children and Young People
- Training and the education workforce

As part of this is the provision of services for Children and Young People with SEND.

Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)

The premise of the **SEND Strategy 2017-2021** is that “we want all children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities to be truly seen and respected as individuals and to be the best they can be”. Five priorities lead this Strategy work which follow on from the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) to support service improvement:

1. A person-centred approach
2. Integration and operational delivery
3. Early intervention
4. Preparation for adulthood
5. Workforce development

Family Safeguarding Model

Following a successful bid to Worcestershire’s Business Rate Pilot Board in January 2020, funding was secured to enable implementation of a Family Safeguarding Model in Worcestershire. The Family Safeguarding Worcestershire model is designed to transform our approach to working with children and their families. Based upon a successful initiative developed by Hertfordshire County Council (and independently evaluated) which radically improved their services and reduced demand, whilst also significantly reducing the number of children who became looked after and subject to child protection plans. Our model will support the role of a social worker to provide rapid, proactive support to children and their parents and will be delivered by specialist workers trained in a range of highly effective interventions in specialist areas of Substance Misuse, Domestic Violence and Mental Health.

The Family Safeguarding Model reflects our Company commitment of valuing family life through supporting and empowering parents to care for their own children who are 0-10 years old and have certain circumstances that pose risk. The anticipated impact on children and family lives include:

- Reduced time spent on Child Protection plans
- Reduction in children entering pre proceedings
- Reduction in Care Proceeding applications
- Reduction in new accommodations for looked after children under 10yrs
- Reduction in children subject to a CP plan over 9 months
- Parents/children feel listened to be supported to share their views

Supporting Families First (Edge of Care)

As a children's safeguarding service, we have a duty to act in the interests of children and young people and to promote their welfare and protect them from harm. For some children and young people this means bringing them into our care. For these children we will act as good Corporate Parents providing a safe and stable place to live until we can find alternative permanence for them and they leave our care. For other children and young people it means supporting them to be cared for in their own families.

To build on our ability to effectively support children and young people to remain at home in the community in the care of their parents we have designed a new service.

In October 2018, Cabinet approved the development of our new Edge of Care Service. This new service went live January 2020. The service will work with families on the verge of breakdown, supporting them to find solutions to their issues and ultimately stay together, as long as it is safe to do so.

The service in Worcestershire is known as Supporting Families First. The approach is:

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

Outcome measures have been developed using the Troubled Families outcomes, our own Happy, Healthy, Safe mission and development is underway to build these into our new IT software, to enable us to draw out outcome reports not only for the individual child, but for evidence of impact of the service. Once this has been piloted in the Edge of Care service we will roll it out across the wider service area.

6. FINANCE

The key driver for managing WCF's Finance is improvement of outcomes for children, not cost reduction or income generation. It concerns the resources to run WCF, with agreed funding arrangements for 2020/21 and with indicative contract sums for 2021/22 and 2022/23, due to confirmation of future national spending reviews. The budget for 2020/21 is in full alignment with the Council's Budget setting process and this was considered and agreed by the Worcestershire Children First Board on 28th January 2020 and Worcestershire County Council's Cabinet on 30th January 2020.

Summary of Financial Information

The agreed contract sums are shown as two separate elements, net funding from WCC base budget and grants passed through to the Company to arrive at the gross contract price. These are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Agreed WCC Contract Sums

Agreed Contract Sum	2019/20 6 months	2020/21 Full Year
	£000	£000
Net Budget funded by WCC	49,808	100,214
Other Funding passed through:		
Funding added to contract (Grants / Income / Reserves)	6,708	14,408
Total	56,516	114,622

The first full-year of the contract is 2020/21. The year 2019/20 is for the 6 months to March 2020. The contract sum includes external funding that would be required to be transferred to the Company, on top of the Council 'Net Budget', in order to fund the gross expenditure requirements of Worcestershire Children First. The net budget includes the cost of Support Services that are purchased from the County Council of £7.2m in 2020/21.

The cost of learning and achievement services (currently provided by Babcock Prime) c£6.5M is not currently included in the WCF budget at this point, this will be built into the 2020/21 budget once the services transferring to WCF have been agreed - the proposed date for transfer is 1st June 2020, the contract price will be amended accordingly by contract variation.

Service Budgets

The total gross expenditure budget for the 2020/21 financial year is £115m. In development of the financial model and as part of the development of the business plan for WCF, a detailed review, analysis, challenge, and scrutiny has been completed by finance staff, the WCF Board, and as part of the agreed governance arrangements in the contract, which is authorised by both the Chief Financial Officer of the Council and the Director of Resources for WCF.

2020/21 Service Gross Expenditure Budgets and FTE

The budget takes account of demand pressures, price increases and agreed financial assumption by both Council and Company. There is an agreed continued commitment by the Council to invest £7.2 million to improve outcomes for children and young people (up to the age of 25) in Worcestershire, by addressing their needs holistically through early help and prevention, education provision and social care. There is a

further £1.1 million set aside in earmarked reserves which was established through the 2019/20 budget process to mitigate any potential financial risk on placements for looked after children which reflect the ongoing demographic and cost pressures in the service. However, this has not been required in 2019/20 due to the strong leadership, good practice in the service and careful financial management. The budget in 2020/21 includes investment for:

- Continuing the journey of improvement in children’s safeguarding with further full year investment of £4.1 million to reflect an increase in overall demographic pressures and costs
- Funding of recurrent costs pressures of home to school transport £1 million and an increase of £0.5 million on the placements budget to address the overspend reported in 2019/20
- A further investment £0.6 million into Special Educational Needs Transport
- The full year effect of £0.4 million for running costs for Worcestershire Children First

It should be noted that in these tables, certain assumptions have been made in respect of growth, savings, and inflation. For inflation, a figure of 2% per annum has been used on staffing costs only, in line with WCC MTFP assumptions which has yet to be agreed nationally. Utilities such as gas and electricity have also been inflated over the period, by amounts that again are in line with the WCC MTFP.

Savings have been incorporated into the WCF 3-year budget where they:

- Have been previously allocated to WCC services that were transferred to WCF
- At the time of transfer, were considered fully planned and deliverable and items agreed as part of the budget process in partnership with the County Council

In terms of demand growth, the budget reflects the latest agreed monitoring position, which incorporates trend analysis and a revised monthly forecast. This means that the budget includes the most recent estimate of increases/decreases across all placement types over the period.

Table 2: Recurrent operating costs WCF (2020/21)

Ref.	Service	Staffing	Premises	Transport	Other Non Staffin	Total Gross Expenditure
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
A	Resources Directorate	2,750	0	10	8,154	10,914
B	Social Care Directorate	28,697	474	696	45,906	75,773
C	Education and Early Help Directorate	5,018	253	397	4,741	10,409
D	Home to School Transport	287	0	15,133	2,006	17,426
E	Youth Offending Services	0	0	0	507	507
F	Total Gross Expenditure	36,753	727	16,236	61,314	115,029

Note: £407k of Sales, Fees and Charges income outside of the main WCC contract gives WCF a net budget of £114.622m (the contract sum in Table 1)

Table 3: Gross Expenditure WCF, over time

Ref.	Service	2019/20 (Part-year contract)	2020/21 Budget	2021/22 Indicative	2022/23 Indicative
		£000	£000	£000	£000
A	Resources Directorate	5,666	10,914	10,967	11,021
B	Social Care Directorate	36,181	75,773	79,845	83,891
C	Education and Early Help Directorate	6,192	10,409	10,506	10,606
D	Home to School Transport	8,223	17,426	17,426	17,426
E	Youth Offending Services	254	507	507	507
F	Total Gross Expenditure	56,516	115,029	119,251	123,451

Note: The figures above will increase from 1 June 2020 as they will include the transfer of Learning and Achievement Services - c£6.5m per annum

Table 4: 2020/21 Funding Sources and Contract Funding Reconciliation

		£000	£000
2020/21 Gross Expenditure			115,029
Non-WCC Sales, Fees and Charges		407	
WCC Gross Contract Sum			114,622
Funded By:	Dedicated Schools Grant	2,088	
	Public Health Ring-Fenced Grant	850	
	NHS Income	0	
	Other Grants	8,261	
	Other Income	71	
	Funding from Reserves	934	
	HTST Income	1,596	
	Capitalised Revenue	608	
	Total non-base budget funding passed through Council	14,408	
Total External Funding			14,814
Council Base Budget			100,215

The service element of the contract value is considered to be the 'gross budget' shown above, less the Sales, Fees and Charges income which could be recovered directly by the Company.

The 2020/21 budget is considered to be challenging and broadly sufficient in terms of meeting current service demands, however there are ongoing demand pressures in both the Placements and Provision budget, and Home to School and College Transport. Budget monitoring and variance analysis is reported monthly by the Company and will be used to regularly update the 3-year projection of Company budget.

Transfer of Reserves

The Company budget has an element of funding from reserves which will be passported as income, however children's services specific reserves will be held on the Council's balance sheet. The use of the reserves to fund activity will be agreed annually through the annual budget setting process or in year through the agreed change request process.

Transfer of Assets and Capital

There is no physical transfer of assets to WCF and the Company will not hold a capital budget. The Company will lease all buildings, including furnishings and fittings, from the Council. The rental charge for property will be for a 'peppercorn rent'.

Where the Company identifies a desired use of capital funds for investment, the Director of Resources will submit a business case requesting funds to the Council.

If the Council agrees the capital funding through its normal Capital Processes, any asset created as a result will be an asset owned by the Council.

VAT

As part of Company set up, we scoped requirements for PS Tax VAT/Tax advisors for advice to WCC and WCF. The conclusion following a review of the business case and contractual documentation by our advisors was the contract between the Company and the Council will result in a single supply of taxable services by WCF to WCC.

Further Tax Implications for the Company

Any surplus on activities within an accounting period is subject to UK Corporation Tax which is currently 19% and will be reduced to 17% from 1 April 2020.

Cashflow

A high-level assessment of the services in scope suggests that the cashflow is spread relatively evenly from month to month. A cashflow forecast has been carried out during implementation and has been reviewed constantly since go-live. Working capital has been steady (with an average balance of £24million in the first three months of operation). Cashflow will be managed carefully by the Company to ensure it can meet its obligations by paying support services charges on a quarterly basis. Discussions are now being held with the Council to co-mingle the surplus cash to ensure the Council safely manages its cash balances whilst ensuring the Company has enough day to day liquidity.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk Management and Business Continuity Planning are a vital part of the Company's success to consider and mitigate (where possible) inherent (unmanaged) and residual (managed) risk. This involves an informed understanding of the effectiveness of controls and actions in place subject to ORCT principles (Objective, Risks, Controls, Tests). WCF are representatives at Worcestershire County Council's (WCC) Corporate Risk Management Group (CRMG) who implement Corporate Risk Management and Business Continuity arrangements for critical services across all aspects of the Council's activities.

WCF will maintain the Company risk register, which will be scrutinised at the Risk, Governance & Audit Board.

Ongoing organisational risks which are regularly reviewed are:

- Serious harm or death of a child/young person
- Reputational risk as a result of receiving a poor Ofsted inspection rating
- Failure to act in the interests of children and young people - keeping them safe or planning for permanence
- Financial pressure and failure to achieve required savings
- Uncertainty of future funding arrangements (2021- 22 onwards) for local government which impacts financial strategy for the company
- Business continuity failure in critical services
- Insufficient staff capacity, capability and productivity - recruitment and retention
- Education for all children in Worcestershire including school financial pressures, Home to School Transport costs, management of the Dedicated Schools Grant on behalf of the Council, changes to school organisation and SEND

Other focus areas for risk management in WCF services 2020/21 include:

- Transition to Liquid Logic – impact on day to day service delivery and reporting
- Transfer of service to WCF from Babcock Prime
- Schools Performance
- High Needs Funding arrangements
- Residential Children's Home temporary closures
- Property management arrangements

Additionally, risks are captured as part of transformational projects.

Our risk management and business continuity framework, alongside our performance monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms, support our commitment to provide rigorous quality services, improving outcomes for our children and young people in Worcestershire.

8. CONCLUSION

The Business Plan for Worcestershire Children First details our areas of service and priorities for 2020/21 taking into account the known needs of families living in Worcestershire.

We are proud of our partnerships and remain committed to understanding the voices and experiences of our children and young people and actively welcome feedback via WCF email address:

transformation@worschildrenfirst.org.uk



9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference: Worcestershire Children First (WCF) Board

1. Introduction

The Board of Directors is responsible for exercising all the powers of Worcestershire Children First set out in the Articles of Association, however may delegate any of those powers to a sub Groups of the Board or to an Executive Director.

The principal role of the Chairman is to manage and provide leadership to the Board of Directors of WCF. The Chairman is accountable to the owner and DfE for the management of WCF, through the Chief Executive for company duties but not the Statutory Director of Children's Services responsibilities.

2. Membership

The members of the Board shall comprise of the Chairman, the non-executive directors and executive directors.

3. Attendance

Only members of the Board shall be entitled to attend meetings. Wider representation will be via invitation only.

4. Quorum

No business shall be transacted at meetings of the Board unless the Chair, two executive directors, two non-executive directors, (one independent non-executive director and one council non-executive director) are in attendance. A duly convened meeting of the Board at which a quorum is present shall be competent to exercise all or any of the authorities, powers or discretions vesting or exercisable by the board.

5. Meetings of the Board

The Board shall meet on a monthly basis, at a location that will be determined by the Board. Formal Board meetings will be held monthly with every third meeting held in public (Members of the public shall be entitled to attend such Board meetings but, shall not be entitled to speak or vote at such Board meetings). Additional meetings may be called where there is a business requirement to do so to support decision making.

6. Minutes of Meetings

All formal Board meetings will be minute together with clear resolutions of the Board. A record of attendees will also be provided together with any apologies received. A higher level record of informal meetings will be held to summarise attendance, apologies and general discussions.

The Chairman shall ascertain, at the beginning of each meeting, the existence of any conflicts of interest and minute them accordingly.

7. Duties

The duties of the Board are to:

- i. Determine (within the overall policies and priorities of WCF) and keep under review the company's strategic direction in accordance with the member views of the company
- ii. Determine the company's key financial objectives in accordance with the member views
- iii. Monitor performance against clear objectives, business plans and budgets in respect of:
 - » Quality of Services
 - » Finance
 - » Operational performance - workforce
 - » Risk management
 - » Matters that may materially affect the reputation of the Company
 - » Income, future growth and development of the company
- iv. Ensure appropriate financial stewardship through effective value for money, financial control and financial planning and strategy
- v. Approve and keep under review the WCF's annual revenue budget
- vi. Approve and keep under review WCF's arrangements for the management of risk
- vii. Approve the Annual report and Accounts and other statutory submissions
- viii. Approve a Schedule of Matters Reserved to the Board and Scheme of Delegation
- ix. Receive and consider reports from Sub Groups
- x. Review and, if appropriate, agree changes in the terms of reference for Sub Groups

8. Sub Groups of the Board

The Board may establish and delegate powers to formally constituted Sub Groups.

Sub Groups established by the Board shall include:

- Risk, Governance and Audit Board
- Quality Assurance Board

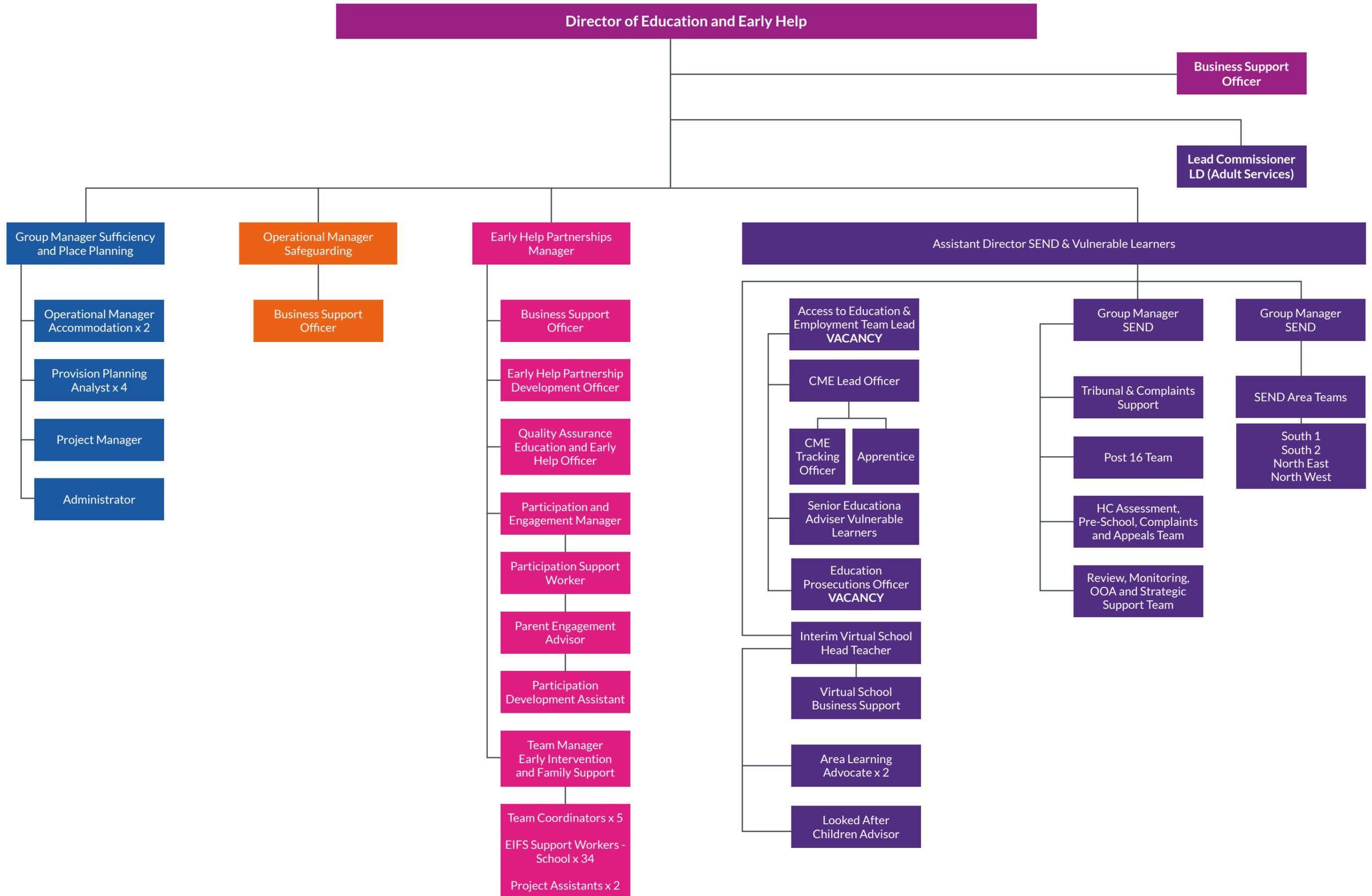


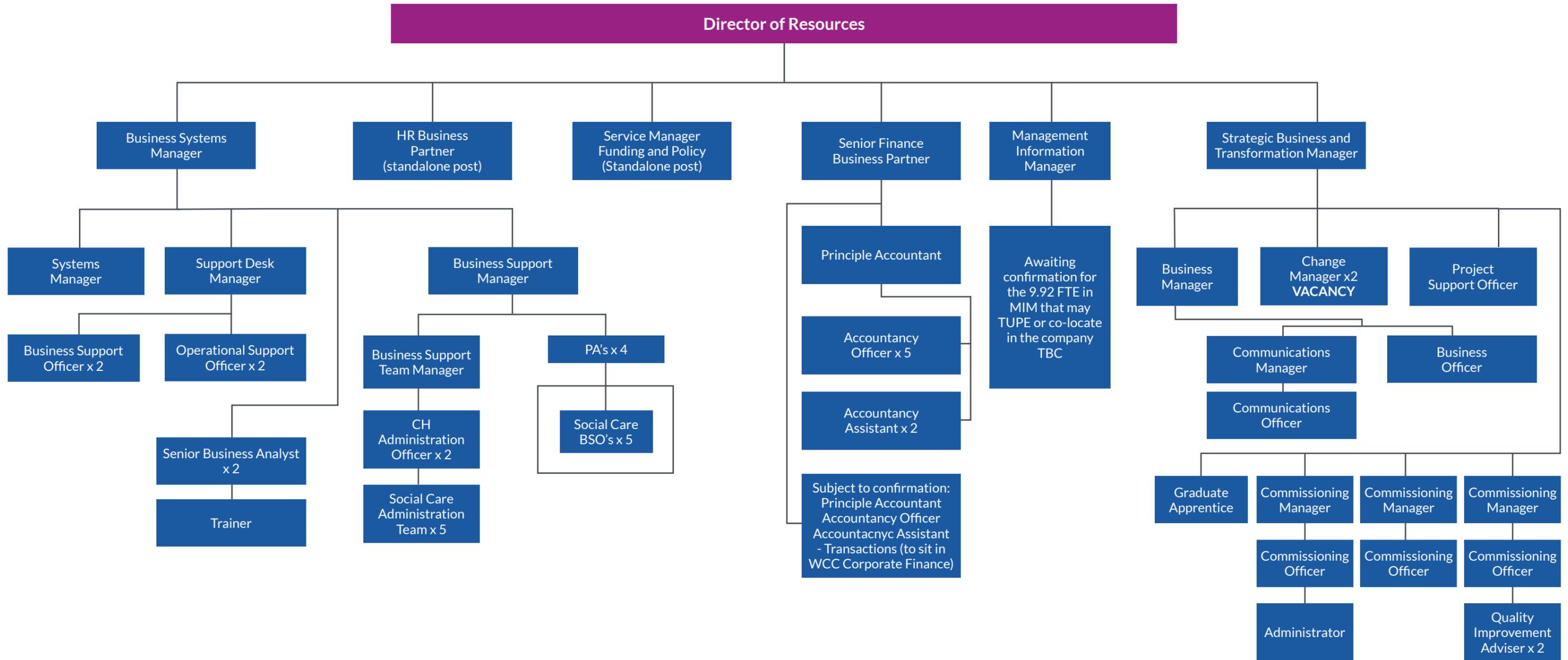
Appendix 2: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

KPI	Area	KPI Descriptor	Tolerance Levels	Quarter 3 Reporting (2019/20)
KPI- SC1	Social Care	Proportion of Referrals with a decision within 24 hours	52.3% - 62.7%	89.2%
KPI- SC2	Social Care	Proportion of social work assessments completed within 45 days	75.6% - 89.4%	89.8%
KPI- SC3	Social Care	Proportion of children subject to a Child Protection Plan with a plan in place	TBC	90.4%
KPI- SC4	Social Care	Proportion of Initial Child Protection Conferences held within 15 days	67.8% - 85.1%	73.2%
KPI- SC5	Social Care	Proportion of children who became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time	17.9% - 36.5%	23.3%
KPI- SC6	Social Care	Proportion of Review Child Protection Conferences held in timescale	87.9% - 100.0%	98.7%
KPI- SC7	Social Care	Proportion of children subject to a Child Protection Plan seen within 20 days	TBC	91.4%
KPI- SC8	Social Care	Proportion of Children Looked After Reviews completed within timescales	80.9% - 92.5%	94.2%
KPI- SC9	Social Care	Proportion of Children Looked After with an up to date Care / Pathway Plan	TBC	77.1%
KPI- SC10	Social Care	Proportion of Child Looked After visits that were within timescale (30 days / 60 days)	TBC	87.6%
KPI- SC11	Social Care	Proportion of children open for assessment or plan without an allocated worker for 5 days	TBC	1.8%
KPI- SC12	Social Care	Percentage of Care Leavers open to services with an up to date Pathway Plan (age 18-20)	60.0% - 98.3%	65.8%
KPI- ED6	Education	Proportion of Education Health and Care Plan decisions made within 16 weeks	51.5% - 67.8%	78.6%
KPI-ED7	Education	Proportion of new Education Health and Care Plans issued within 20 weeks	6.9% - 21.5%	54.9%
KPI-ED8	Education	Proportion of maintained schools judged as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted	TBC	86%
KPI- EH1	Early Help	Number of successful claims under the "Troubled Families" programme	"1590 - 3180 before Programme closes at end of March 2020"	2398

Appendix 3: WCF Structure Charts







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WORCESTERSHIRE
CHILDREN FIRST

