

Fostering Service Monitoring Report Form (England) for NMS 25 and Regulation 35 reports

1. Introduction

Name of fostering service	Worcestershire Children First Fostering (WCFF) URN: 2549696
Period covered by the report	01/01/2020
Name of person completing the form	Laurie-Mo Gullachsen
Position in the fostering service	Registered Manager, Fostering and Kinship
Date form was completed	30/04/2020

Date of last Ofsted inspection	ILAC 10/06/2019-30/06/2019 & Ofsted Registration visit for Worcestershire Children First Fostering (WCFF) 17/09/2019
Overall judgement	Requires Improvement to be Good at last ILAC inspection for Worcestershire County Council Fostering Service.

Statutory requirements for improvement (with dates)

The fostering and kinship service was inspected as part of the ILAC Ofsted inspection of Worcestershire County Council 29/07/2019. The comments pertaining to the Fostering service are detailed below, and alongside the registration site visit and Q1 report recommendations continue to inform Worcestershire Children First Business Development Plan.

ILAC recommendations:

- Assessments of mainstream foster carers are timely, thorough and analytical. Supervising social workers understand the needs of the children placed with foster carers well, and help carers develop the necessary range of skills to meet those needs. However, not all foster carers take up the full range of training opportunities, and this limits some foster carers' skills.
- The quality of supervision offered to social workers is inconsistent. There are gaps in frequency and recording in some teams and a lack of challenge and reflection, which acts as a barrier to better practice. Although there has been an increasing focus on getting it right, some aspects of social work practice are not yet good.

- Success in implementing the 2016–18 sufficiency strategy is very limited. The proposed edge of care service will only be implemented later this summer, recruitment of new fostering households has fallen well below targets and attempts to increase the number of ‘placement plus’ carers has also not been successful. The overall rise in numbers of children in care means that pressures on in-house provision are acute, but this has been mitigated by the increasing use of independent provision.
- The absence of disruption meetings following placement breakdowns is a missed opportunity for managers to learn from these situations and inform their future plans for children.

As part of the registration arrangements for Worcestershire Children First Fostering, there are statutory requirements to improve safe recruitment for staff in the fostering service and independent panel members.

Action undertaken to meet those requirements

The findings of the Ofsted inspection have led to further service improvement during Q4 in the following areas:

- **Learning and Development of Foster carers**

We have continued to build on the rapid progress we have made in the previous quarter to increase the scope and range of learning and development opportunities for our foster carers. We have a wide range of learning opportunities for our foster carers and each foster carer has their own learning and development plan which is bespoke to their skills and experience, specific to help them meet the needs of specific children in their care and also to develop carers skills in line with developing their ability to care for a range of children with different backgrounds and experiences.

Our training offer has been reviewed and we are able to offer a range of ways to deliver training flexibility including face to face daytime courses as well as evening, weekend and online alternatives to ensure that carers have a variety of options to chose from to develop their skills and abilities.

Our training programme can be read in full here:

http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20726/training_and_support/2080/training_and_development

During the covid-19 pandemic, we have been able to continue to offer training to our foster carers through online and webcast training. We have been able to prioritise carers for bespoke training where required to address

a particular challenge for carers such as developing skills to deescalate during the lockdown.

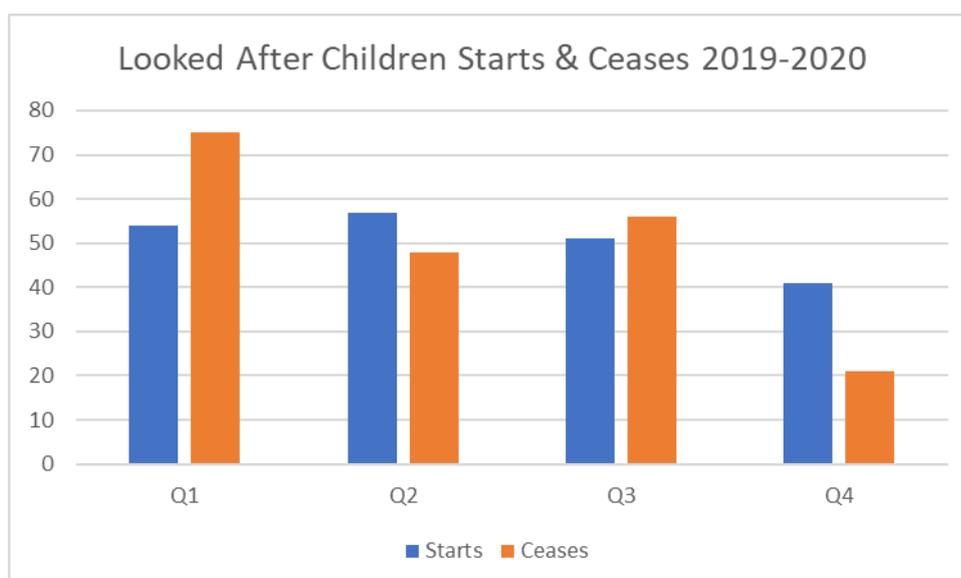
- **Improving Quality of Social worker Supervision:**

1. It is our practice standard that all social workers in the fostering and kinship service should receive monthly management supervision with their line manager.
2. Supervision audits take place to ensure that social workers are receiving supervision. At March 2020, social worker supervisions were showing as 93.8% taking place in timescale. This will continue to be monitored as a performance indicator on a monthly basis.
3. The Fostering service now also has a performance Dash Board which monitors case management supervision for each fostering family to ensure that there is management oversight recorded clearly on each case.
4. Whole service audit takes place to ensure timeliness of social work supervision
5. Quality of staff supervision and management oversight is reviewed through our quality assurance processes including looped and thematic audits.

- **Sufficiency of Placements for looked after children**

1. There were 41 new starters of looked after children during Q4.

There has been another decrease in referrals for new fostering placements during Q4 which is in line with practice of looked after children numbers reducing in Worcestershire Children First and the covid 19 emergency protocol.



1. The registered manager monitors placement sufficiency through the following methods:
 - a) Member of Resource panel
 - b) Review of placement referrals and oversight of where placements are not able to be met inhouse on a weekly basis
 - c) Review of looked after children placements start and finishes on a weekly basis
 - d) Chairing of consolidation meetings and disruption meetings

2. During Q4 we have continued social media recruitment campaign 'Join the Biggest Family in Worcestershire' starting Jan 2020 to recruit foster carers for a range of children aged 0-18 to help children be happy, healthy and safe, but continued priority for placements for children who require sibling placements or for teenage young people who require a foster placement.

During the covid 19 crisis, we continue to prepare and assess new applicants in order to provide ongoing sufficiency for looked after children.

3. The Kinship service have continued to provide high quality and timely family and friends assessment and support to family and friend placements which may result in Kinship Fostering arrangements, Private Fostering Arrangements, Special Guardianship Arrangements or Child Arrangement Orders. High quality assessments inform care planning and permanency planning for children including working as expert assessors for family and friend's arrangements with the family courts on behalf of Worcestershire Children First.
4. The kinship service has continued to work very hard to work during the covid crisis to continue to undertake assessments to inform care planning for children.
5. Worcestershire Fostering Service continue to engage with West and East Midlands Fostering Recruitment consortium to collaborate on high quality recruitment strategies alongside our regional partners.

During Q4 we have shared recruitment campaigns such as 'Truth be Told' based on foster carers experiences of caring for siblings and teenagers which we will use on social media for recruitment and as part of preparation training.

Work to prevent Disruptions:

7 Consolidation meetings have been taking place during Q4 with the following outcomes:

4	resulted in Continuation of the Placement
2	resulted in Irretrievable breakdown
1	resulted in a Planned placement move

Analysis

Key priorities in Q4 have been to build on the progress made during Q3 and to focus our attention from establishing the IFA to developing and embedding best practice across the service.

We have provided 83 new foster placements for looked after children during this period. We have continued to care for around 350 children at any one time.

Worcestershire County Council Fostering Service transferred to a brand new Independent Fostering Service, Worcestershire Children First Fostering from 01/10/2019. This was a significant 'go live' milestone alongside Worcestershire Children First being launched and was the culmination of a lot of hard work and planning to enable a seamless move for foster carers joining the new agency.

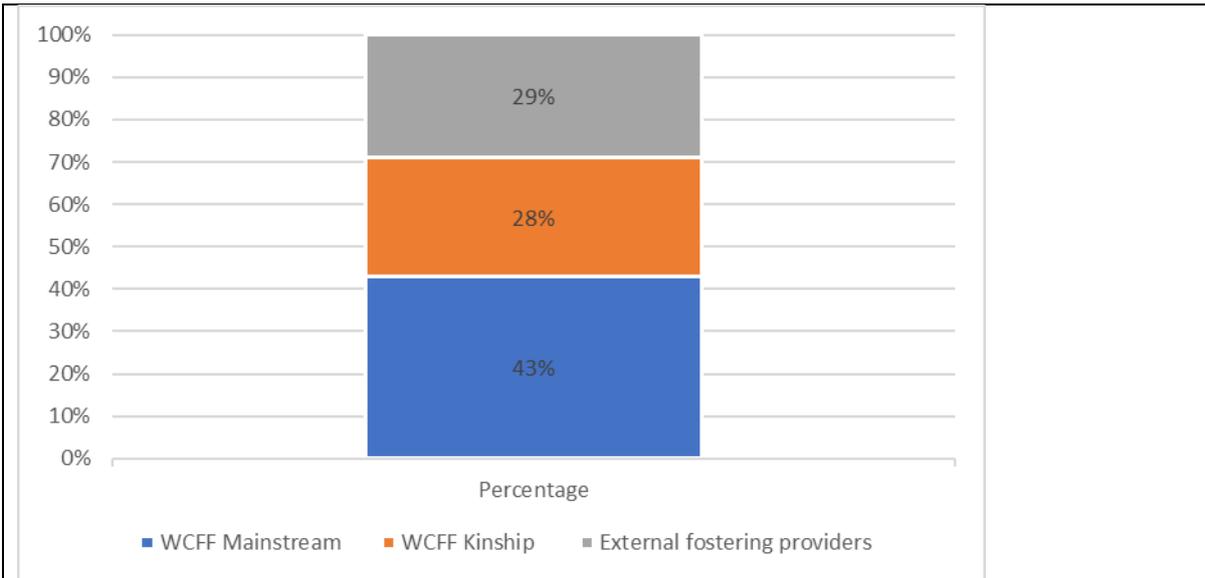
Worcestershire Children First Fostering are a wholly owned Independent fostering agency, providing foster placements for Worcestershire looked after children. Our statement of purpose outlines our key values and priorities to support the children in our care and to support the carers in their care of children in their own homes. There has been rapid service development to promote excellence in caring for children and to support the children in our care to be happy, healthy and safe.

During the first 6 months of operating, around 250 Worcestershire foster carer households have provided foster placements for around 350 looked after children at any one time. This is by far the biggest provider of foster care placements for Worcestershire's looked after children. We are proud to be the 'biggest fostering family in Worcestershire'.

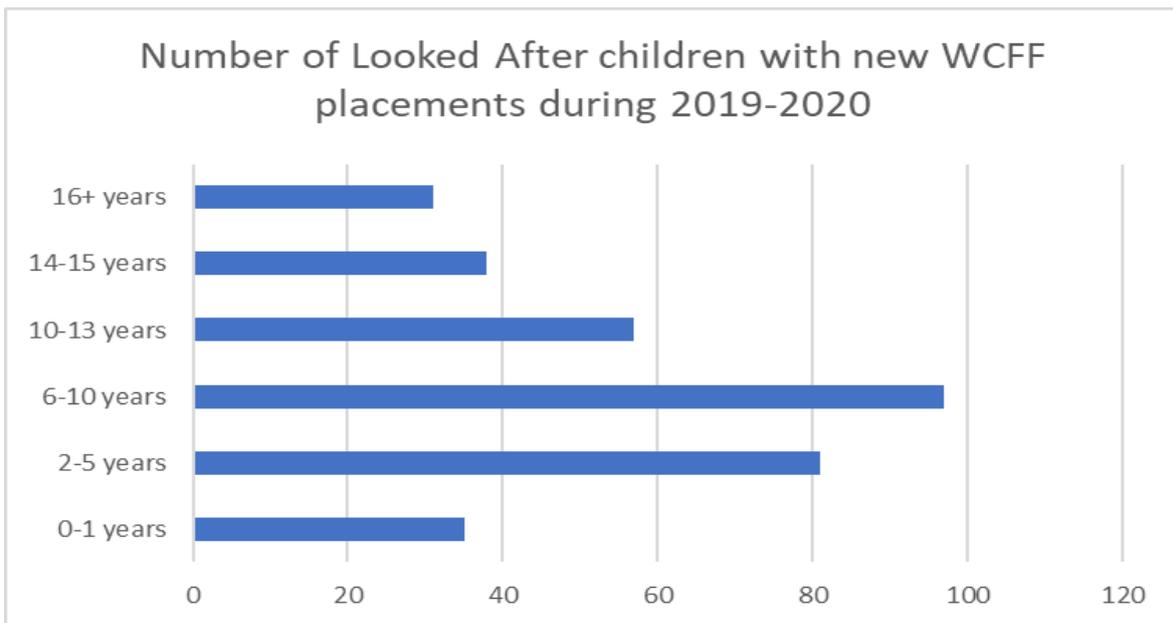
We have provided 83 new foster placements for looked after children during Q4 period. We have continued to care for around 350 children at any one time.

We have provided a total 339 new foster placements for looked after children during the year April 2019-March 2020 which is 50.43% of all new placements required during the year. We continued to provide foster placements to 316 children during 2019-2020. This means we provided foster placements to a total of 655 children during 2019-2020.

This breaks down as WCFF providing 71% of all foster placements needed during 2019-2020 which is shown in the graph below.



The breakdown of the placements offered is detailed below by age category. We continue to find it easier to provide placements for children aged 0-10. We continue to lead recruitment to recruit carers for older children and young people.



We continue to recruit new carers to provide sufficiency of placements

Action undertaken to meet those recommendations

The Statement of Purpose and business plan outlines how the service will operate and the priorities for service improvement are in line with the service improvements required from our Ofsted inspection and in line with the business

planning for Worcestershire Children First. These can be found as appendices to this report.

During March 2020, the covid 19 pandemic has inevitably had an impact. However, the service has quickly responded to deliver in new and innovative ways. Our new model of operating has been quickly established to ensure that children and carers are well supported during the crisis and is summarised in the Statement of Purpose (Covid 19).

2. Summary data

Foster carers	
Expressions of interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32 initial enquiries • 20 progressed to a social worker telephone interview • 19 initial assessment visits undertaken by a social worker
Assessments completed	<p>Mainstream: 3 concluded assessments taken to panel during Q4</p> <p>Kinship Assessment activity during Q4:</p> <p>Viability assessments:</p> <p>89 requests for viability assessment of which: 65 completed assessments 24 were discontinued due to applicants withdrawing.</p> <p>Carried forward from Q3: 11 full kinship assessments 1 Post allegation review 5 reg 24 assessments 6 PLSGO</p> <p>New assessment referrals in Q4: 37 Full Kinship Assessment referrals allocated for full assessment. 4 Private Law Special Guardianship Assessments 6 Assessment and support under reg 24</p> <p>8 kinship full assessments taken to panel resulting in 13 additional kinship foster placements. The rest of assessments were prepared for court.</p> <p>Private Fostering:</p>

	<p>In Q4 we had 3 new private fostering referrals.</p> <p>In terms of statutory visits to private fostering in time</p> <p>Jan 83%</p> <p>Feb 60%</p> <p>Mar 56% (which represents the covid lockdown).</p> <p>The two students that should have been with us until July 2020 both managed to fly home before the Covid lockdown.</p> <p>Total Assessments completed 2019-2020: Kinship: 40 full kinship assessments Viability: 292 Of which 99 withdrew Mainstream: 25 full assessments Post allegation reviews (PAR): 5</p>
<p>Assessments ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing assessment at 30/03/2020: Referrals for assessment during Q4 carried forward: Full Kinship Assessment: 23 assessments Reg 24: 4 assessments Private Law SGO: 9 assessments Private Fostering: 2 assessments</p> <p>Mainstream: Ongoing assessments: 4 Post allegation reviews: 3</p>
<p>Approvals</p>	<p>3 mainstream new foster carer approvals we made in Q4 which was the equivalent of 9 placements for children if all vacancies were occupied.</p> <p>3 Foster to Adopt approvals were made during Q4 offering placements for 3 children.</p> <p>This brings the Total of Mainstream Assessments concluding in approved foster carers during 2019-2020 to 22 households providing up to 26 additional placements.</p> <p>8 kinship foster carers were approved during Q4 which is the equivalent of 13 placements for specific children.</p> <p>This brings the total of kinship approved carers during 2019-2020 to 26 new households providing foster placements for 43 specific children.</p>

Reviews completed	<p>66 annual reviews completed during Q4 100% of annual reviews brought to panel within 12 months.</p> <p>The total number of annual reviews undertaken to 258 with 100% taking place within timescale.</p>
Foster carer training	<p>Pre-approval preparation training during Q4:</p> <p>Mainstream, 1 courses- 6 households attended Kinship-1 preparation courses- 18 households attended Training and Development Standards-8 households Domestic abuse-5 households.</p> <p>Please see attached as Addendum the number of foster carers who attended mandatory and developmental training in line with their learning and development plan.</p> <p>During Q4, a lot of training activity has taken place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved training offer has been set up programme for 2020-2021 has been set up-with availability increased around bitesize & refresher training. • Increased offer for online courses for carers living out of county or who find it challenging to get to face to face training. <p><u>Learning and Development Response to Covid 19.</u></p> <p>During March, due to the coronavirus pandemic, we have found ourselves having to cancel face to face training. At WCFF, we know that training continues to be very important to the development and enhancement of foster carers skills to be able to meet the needs of the children in their care. We have been able to replace each face to face training with an online alternative, followed up with carers discussing their learning with their supervising social worker and completing a learning log so that there is the opportunity to reflect and deepen the learning activity. The only training we have not been able to replace has been first aid training, however we have refresher training for all carers and basic skill training for all new carers.</p>
Quality Assurance of training	<p>The quality of training provided is evaluated through the impact that it is having on the care provided to children and the feedback which we receive from foster carers.</p> <p>The Learning and Development Advisor reviews feedback through learning evaluation from attendees. During 2020-</p>

	<p>2021 when we return to face to face learning, a programme of increased quality assurance and audit will be reintroduced so that we can best ensure that training providers are meeting the required learning objectives and to explore the impact this training is having on the care of children.</p> <p>Some specific audit will take place during 2020-2021 around de-escalation, new managing behaviour and attachment training.</p>
<p>Foster carer support groups</p>	<p>5 WCFF Support Groups took place during Q4:</p> <p>Kidderminster – 8 households attended</p> <p>Redditch – 5 households attended</p> <p>Evesham – 9 households attended</p> <p>Worcester – 3 household attended</p> <p>During March, due to the covid pandemic, support groups have been made virtual. Our first session took place in March but was only attended by 1 foster carer. More meetings are scheduled and are being actively promoted.</p>
<p>Foster Carer Forum</p>	<p>WCFF has launched a Foster carer forum. The purpose of this forum is to allow foster carers to be represented in a formal forum meeting with the managers on a quarterly basis. 6 foster carers representatives attended and the terms of reference of the forum were agreed. Each forum remains open for any approved foster carer to contribute and participate at each meeting and foster carer forums are arranged on a quarterly basis.</p>
<p>Terminations of approval & Resignations</p>	<p>1 recommendation of termination of approval for a foster carer was made by Independent reviewing mechanism Fostering Panel and agreed by the ADM in Q4. This followed a post allegation review.</p> <p>1 termination of approval for a kinship foster carer took place during Q4. This followed a post allegation review.</p> <p>Foster carer resignations:</p> <p>During Q4 there have been 9 mainstream foster carer resignations which resulted in 18 less placements during the quarter. I have reviewed each resignation and the reasons for their resignations are broken down below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resigning to become foster carers for another organisation: 2 households • Resigning for age/health reasons: 2 households

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resigned due to unable to match children with carers skills/abilities: 1 household • Resigned due to impact on own family: 1 household • Resigned due to ending career as foster carers: 3 households <p>During Q4, there have been 11 kinship carer resignations for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young Person turned 18 (remained under staying put): 3 households • Carers became special guardians for the child/ren: 3 households • Child became subject to a child arrangement order with the carer: 1 household • Children returned to parents: 2 households • Carers approval ended as placement was never required in line with the care plan for the child: 1 household • Carers who resigned during a post allegation review (children had moved): 2 households <p>Total Number of Termination of Approval 2019-2020:</p> <p>Mainstream: 2 household were de-registered following post allegation review. Kinship: 2 households were de-registered as approved foster carers following post allegation reviews.</p> <p>Total Number of resignations:</p> <p>Mainstream: total of 26 households resigned during 2019-2020. This resulted in a reduction of 43 mainstream placements. Reasons for resignation range from personal circumstances which impact on the ability to foster such as age, health or impact on their own family, whereas some individuals reach the decision that they no longer wish to foster and when individuals decided that they would like to foster for another agency.</p> <p>Kinship: 39 households, meaning 51 children are no longer looked after in those arrangements. The majority of these are due to young people turning 18 or the placement is no longer required in line with the care plan for children.</p>
Number of foster carers	Total number of approved carer households as of 31/03/2020:

	<p>146 Mainstream foster carer households caring for 198 children including 32 new starts during Q4.</p> <p>3 foster to adopt placements caring for 3 children.</p> <p>115 Kinship foster carers (of which 4 temporarily approved as reg 24 carers) caring for 160 children including X new starts during Q4.</p> <p>Total number of households: 243 Caring for a total of 353 at 31/12/2019.</p> <p>Providing a total possible placements if all placements were occupied:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Active</td> <td>294</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Non-active</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>On hold</td> <td>51</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Relative / Friend</td> <td>115</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Grand Total</td> <td>454</td> </tr> </table> <p>Reasons placements are on hold include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carer health • 3rd placement blocked due to existing children in placement • Carers on hold following adoption • Carers on hold following post allegation review • WCFF making changes to numbers of approval at next review • Carers unavailable for placements during covid 19 <p>Over the year the occupancy rate of our inhouse carers has continued to reflect that we are maximising our use of inhouse placements for Worcestershire children where there is an appropriate match. At the 31/03/2020 children placed in mainstream foster placements were at an occupancy of 83%.</p> <p>If we include the occupancy with the mainstream and kinship carers combined, our occupancy has been 89%.</p>	Active	294	Non-active	0	On hold	51	Relative / Friend	115	Grand Total	454
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Comment, analysis, and any action taken

Recruitment:

Mainstream foster carer recruitment continues to be a priority for the service. There has been some reduction in overall placements available although we have

continued to successfully recruit. Campaigns to recruit new carers and address capacity issues in the face of the covid pandemic are set out in our covid 19 statement of purpose and policy on temporary approval of foster carers should demand outstrip capacity.

Key Performance Indicators

The key performance indicators are monitored across the service. During this quarter, we have monitored performance during January and February as normal, however due to the pandemic starting during March, there is some reflection of this in the results this quarter.

In this quarter:

75% Mainstream assessments completed in 16 weeks

This performance level has improved from 33.3% during Q2 & Q3 which is a very positive improvement which has been as a result of proactive performance management in the teams and releasing capacity of staffing for recruitment purposes.

Assessment quality is good; leading to good quality placements for children however delays in the improvements made in assessments being completed in a timely way will positively impact on sufficiency in the service.

This continues to be a key area of priority as part of our business plan and this is a marked improvement which we will aim to maintain and improve upon.

70 % Kinship assessments completed in 12 weeks

This reflects an improvement on the previous Q3. Kinship assessments are often completed in much shorter timescales as directed by the courts. The kinship teams have collectively been carrying the absence of 5 social workers during Q3 into Q4.

79% Kinship Viability assessments completed in 10 working days

65 assessments were completed during Q4. This is an area on which there has been improvement and represents hard work within the kinship service where staff are able to complete good quality viability assessments in short timescales which inform care planning.

The kinship service has also been carrying 5 social work vacancies during Q4. We have successfully recruited, and new staff are starting during Q4.

71 % Reg 24 assessments to be completed in 16 weeks

7 reg 24 assessments were completed in Q4.

The temporary approval of a foster carer under regulation 24 is made under the Care Planning Regulations and in line with this, best practice would be that we complete all assessments in a timescale of 16 weeks. The kinship service closely monitors, and support temporarily approved foster carers during this time. It is possible for approval to be extended to a maximum of 24 weeks by extension agreement from the ADM, and this took place for the below cases. In the cases where this is happening, this is usually for reasons beyond the control of the service such as awaiting overseas checks.

- **100% Reg 24 assessments were finalised completed in 24 weeks**

Of the cases which were extended, 100% were completed in the 24 week period. I have audited the cases and the reason for the delay in 1 Reg 24 assessment was around statutory checks of DBS check and medical check being delayed, and such delays can be unavoidable.

100% Annual review meetings completed in 12 months

During Q4 all annual reviews have taken place in timescale. Whilst the reviews have taken place in good time, there have been experiences of delays in relation to the agency decision maker capacity. During Q4 we have appointed an Agency Decision Maker who is separate from the service.

During Q2 & Q3, annual reviews were realigned to ensure a timely ADM decision in line with the statutory guidance 'Assessment and Approval of Foster carers: Amendments to the children act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services) which states 'Approval of all foster carers must be reviewed, and a decision about suitability made, within a year of approval, and thereafter whenever it is felt necessary, but at intervals of no more than twelve months. The review must consider whether the foster carer and their household continue to be suitable.'

During Q4, the change to an individual ADM has been introduced to ensure that capacity is there to manage the demands of this role.

Changes will be in effect therefore in performance data in Q1 2020/2021.

Training and Development Standards:

At 01/04/2019 we returned the following data return to Ofsted following a review of the service:

127 households had completed
78 households were in progress
60 had not yet started

At 31/03/2020:

- **69% Training and development standards completed by mainstream foster carers (this is an increase on previous Q3) (98 households)**

- **35% Training and development standards completed by for kinship foster carers (this is a decrease from Q4 due to an increase in approved households) (40 households)**

There is a plan in place for every carer where the training and development standards are not complete, including additional support through mentoring and workshops.

- **67% of Foster & Kinship carers received Formal Case Supervision every 12 weeks-check data**

This is a decrease since the last Q3 which reflects in part the covid situation during March 2020 as workers and carers went into lockdown and routine visits did not take place whilst the emergency protocol was established.

Of which 85% of mainstream foster carers received formal supervision in 12 weeks on 31/03/2020. This is a marked improvement on the previous quarter.

55% of kinship foster carers received formal supervision in 12 weeks on 31/03/2020. This is a reduction from 96% in the previous quarter and this is far lower than it should be in the kinship service. This reduction represents carrying 5 vacancies, change to a new recording system and the onset of the covid-19 pandemic, leading to changes in the way in which services are delivered (as set out in the Covid-19 SOP).

However, during Q4 covid-19 Keeping in Touch Calls (KIT) were introduced, and during March, 123 KIT calls took place to our foster carers to offer support and supervision by video or phone.

Support visits

Due to the new recording system it has not yet been possible to monitor the support visits undertaken by supervising social workers in line with the agreed frequency of visits. This is an area which we are working hard to resolve. Managers and social workers are ensuring that workers are clear about the frequency of visits required.

With the onset of the covid pandemic, we have changed the way in which we operate and we centrally track the visits in line with the plan for the individual carers.

- **100% of Social workers have received monthly personal and case management supervision at 31 March 2020.**

- **70% of Cases have case management supervision at least every 12 weeks:**

Of which:

98% kinship cases received case management supervision in 12 weeks & 53% mainstream cases received case management supervision in 12 weeks.

This is a significant reduction in performance in Q2 in the mainstream service. This is all in 1 team, with 1 team manager and this will be addressed in a performance management action plan which is now in place.

- **At the last quarter 84% of foster carer household where unannounced visits took place in timescales**

Of which:

92% of kinship carers had unannounced visits in timescale & 78% of mainstream carers had unannounced visits in timescale

During Q4, due to the change in reporting system it has not been possible to track the unannounced visits due to the dashboard being under development. From March 2020, the statement of purpose has changed to reflect the covid pandemic therefore currently this is no longer a performance indicator and unannounced visits are only taking place where it is considered a priority need.

Annual report Analysis:

There have been huge improvements in most areas in relation to our practice KPIs from the start of the year. This tells us that there has been an increase in timely practice which has meant that we have a better understanding of our carers and how they are in turn meeting the needs of children and also receiving timely advice, support, supervision and that we are continuing to monitor learning and development plans to continue to develop carers understanding and skills to meet the needs of looked after children.

Where service performance dashboards have been embedded, there is continued evidence of service improvement and consistent management oversight of performance and ensuring that the correct data can be easily monitored for performance purposes is a priority during Q1 2020-2021.

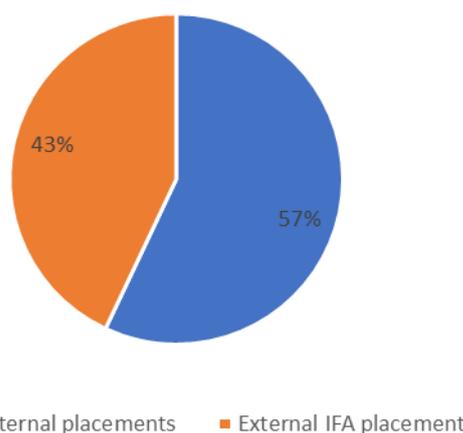
The service performance improvements have continued at pace and the teams deserve to be credited for striving to improve timeliness and quality of practice.

Children and young people

Referrals	<p>The referrals for foster placements for children during Q4 are as follows:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Age category</th> <th style="text-align: center;">New looked after Starters in foster placements in Q4</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Placements made by WCFF in Q4</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Placements made by IFA fostering during Q4</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">0-1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2 children</td> <td style="text-align: center;">11 children</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3 children</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">2-5</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 children</td> <td style="text-align: center;">10 children</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5 children</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">6-10</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7 children</td> <td style="text-align: center;">15 children</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3 children</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">11-13</td> <td style="text-align: center;">8 children</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3 children</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 child</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">14-15</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4 children</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2 children</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3 children</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">16+</td> <td style="text-align: center;">9 children</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2 children</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4 children</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Total</td> <td style="text-align: center;">59 children</td> <td style="text-align: center;">43 children</td> <td style="text-align: center;">16 children</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Percentage</td> <td style="text-align: center;">100% total children needing foster placement</td> <td style="text-align: center;">73% inhouse</td> <td style="text-align: center;">27% external IFA</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age category	New looked after Starters in foster placements in Q4	Placements made by WCFF in Q4	Placements made by IFA fostering during Q4	0-1	2 children	11 children	3 children	2-5	1 children	10 children	5 children	6-10	7 children	15 children	3 children	11-13	8 children	3 children	1 child	14-15	4 children	2 children	3 children	16+	9 children	2 children	4 children	Total	59 children	43 children	16 children	Percentage	100% total children needing foster placement	73% inhouse	27% external IFA
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New placements	<p>1. WCFF were able to offer 37 nonrelated placements to children during Q4 which is 63% of placements needed during the quarter.</p> <p>In addition, 6 children were placed in kinship placements during this period which is 10% of new placements in Q4.</p> <p>A total of 43 children were placed in WCFF placements which totals 73% of new placements started during Q4 were placed in WCFF.</p> <p>This is shown in the graph below:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>Proportion of children needing a foster placement placed with WCFF foster carers</p> <table border="1" style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>WCFF Inhouse Mainstream</td> <td>63%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>WCFF Inhouse Kinship</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>External IFA placement</td> <td>27%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>■ WCFF Inhouse Mainstream ■ WCFF Inhouse Kinship ■ External IFA placement</p> </div>	Category	Percentage	WCFF Inhouse Mainstream	63%	WCFF Inhouse Kinship	10%	External IFA placement	27%																												
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2. This has decreased slightly since Q3, from 82% placed in internal placement to 73% placed with internal placements during Q4.
3. Of all those children who are looked after at the end of Q4 and in need of a foster placement there were 614 children (73% of the looked after children population), WCFF is caring for 57% of looked after children and 43% of children are cared for by Non-agency IFA placements.

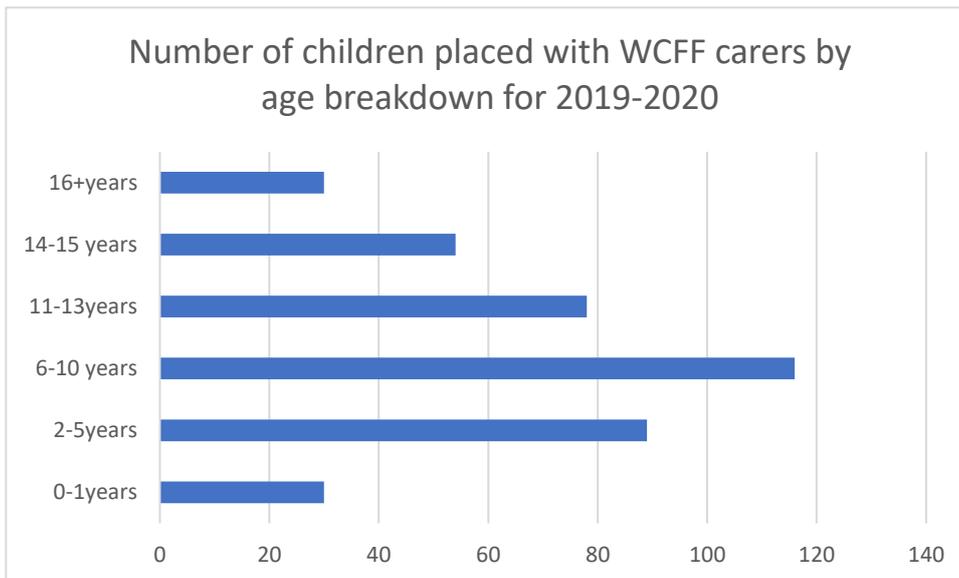
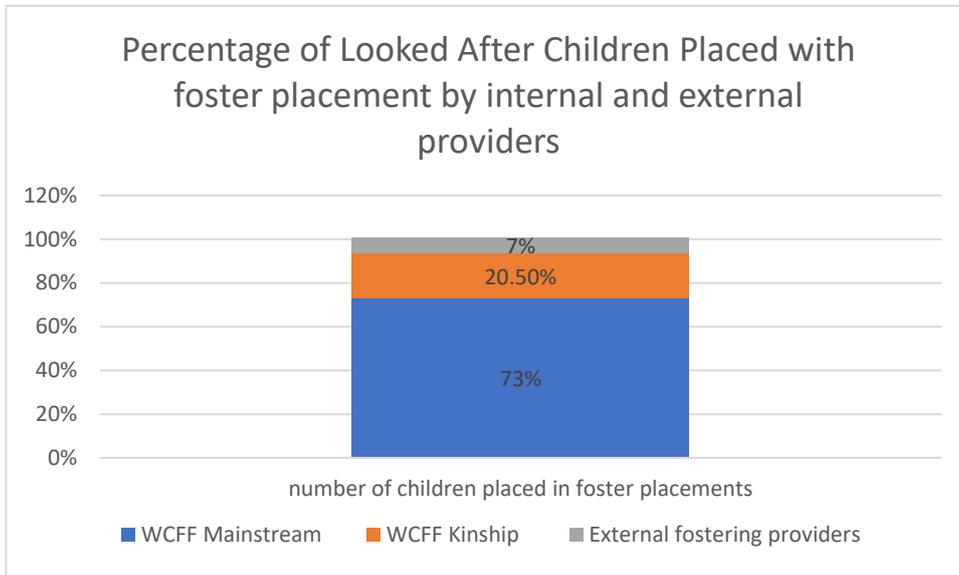
Total Inhouse to external split 2019-2020



Annual referral Figures for the year 2019-2020:

Age category	New looked after Starters in foster placements in 2019-2020	Placements made by WCFF in 2019-2020	Placements made by external IFA fostering during 2019-2020
0-1	30 children	30 children	0 children
2-5	91 children	89 children	2 children
6-10	121 children	116 children	5 children
11-13	86 children	78 children	8 children
14-15	58 children	54 children	4 children
16+	49 children	30 children	19 children

Total	435 children	397 children	38 children
Percentage	100%	93%	7%



Place
ments
ended

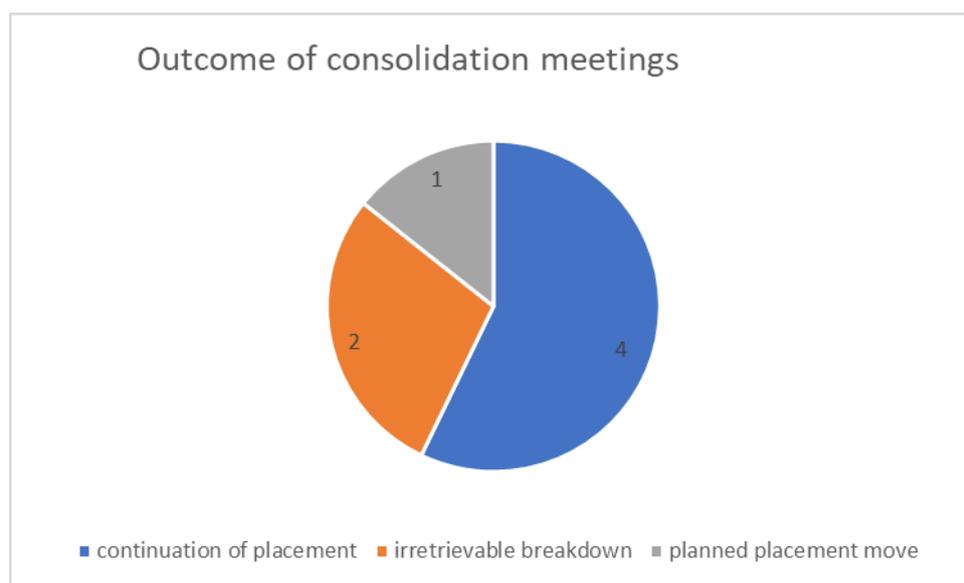
During Q4 45 placements ended of which:
 3 Turned 18 and moved to staying put arrangements
 5 children were placed for Adoption
 1 Permanency in family
 0 moved to IFA long term matched placements
 2 Returned home to parents
 2 children became subject to an SGO

	<p>1 young people left care moved to supported living 8 children turned 18 and moved to independent living</p> <p>Total placements ending for the year 2019-2020 was 195 children:</p> <p>4 Turned 18 and started a staying put arrangement 16 moved to Adoption 17 Permanency in family (kinship) 2 moved to IFA long term matched placements 39 Returned home to parents 31 children became subject to an SGO 3 young people moved to residential care 13 16-17 year olds moved to supportive living 31 young people left care aged 18 3 children moved to custody 12 left care reason recorded 'other'</p>																																																
Unplanned endings	<p>Number of disruptions from In-house Foster Placements 2019-2020</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="341 880 1310 1319"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>No of inhouse placements ending</th> <th>Number of disruptions</th> <th>% of inhouse placements ending because of disruption</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2019/20 Q1</td> <td>72</td> <td>7</td> <td>11.10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019/20 Q2</td> <td>70</td> <td>11</td> <td>15.70%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019/20 Q3</td> <td>67</td> <td>2</td> <td>2.90%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019/20 Q4</td> <td>58</td> <td>4</td> <td>6.90%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>203</td> <td>25</td> <td>12.31%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Compared with Number of disruptions from IFA Placements</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="341 1476 1029 1989"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>No of external foster placements ending</th> <th>Number of disruptions</th> <th>% of external placements ending because of disruption</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2019/20 Q1</td> <td>54</td> <td>8</td> <td>14.80%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019/20 Q2</td> <td>31</td> <td>6</td> <td>19.40%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019/20 Q3</td> <td>26</td> <td>0</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019/20 Q4</td> <td>23</td> <td>12</td> <td>52%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>134</td> <td>26</td> <td>19.40%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Date	No of inhouse placements ending	Number of disruptions	% of inhouse placements ending because of disruption	2019/20 Q1	72	7	11.10%	2019/20 Q2	70	11	15.70%	2019/20 Q3	67	2	2.90%	2019/20 Q4	58	4	6.90%	Total	203	25	12.31%	Date	No of external foster placements ending	Number of disruptions	% of external placements ending because of disruption	2019/20 Q1	54	8	14.80%	2019/20 Q2	31	6	19.40%	2019/20 Q3	26	0	0.00%	2019/20 Q4	23	12	52%	Total	134	26	19.40%
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	<p>This demonstrates a lower rate of inhouse disruptions at 12.31% compared to IFA placement disruptions at 19.40% in the year to date.</p>
<p>Number of children</p>	<p>Overall, there has been a slight increase in disruptions during Q4 with 4 disruptions during the period. The individual oversight of these are below.</p> <p>JR, 15 went missing and said he did not wish to return to his placement. A new placement was already identified, and JR moved placement. JR provided feedback on his placement where there had been an unplanned ending, and this was used to support the carers to reflect and learn from the feedback and the experience from JR's perspective.</p> <p>HC, aged 15 's placement ended because HC left her placement and moved to live with her sister who was a young care leaver, which was her preference because her other siblings were living together. This was not a regulated arrangement because reg 24 was not approved. HC was encouraged to return to her substantive foster placement, but HC requested to move to her mother, which was agreed under PWP regulations.</p> <p>SB, aged 15 placement ended when she made an allegation against her kinship foster carer. SB expressed a view that she wanted to move to alternative foster placement. The foster carers resigned, and the placement ended. Safeguarding procedures were followed in respect of the allegation.</p> <p>MM, aged 16 placement ended when the foster carers gave notice to end the foster placement due to MM going missing and finding it difficult to manage this situation due to the other children in placement.</p>
<p>Comment, analysis, and any action taken</p>	
<p>3 placement endings were led by the young people expressing a strong wish to live elsewhere.</p> <p>1 placement ended because the foster carers consider that they could not meet the young persons needs alongside the other young people in their care.</p> <p>3 carers continue to provide care as foster carers and learning and development has been prescribed in each instance to improve experiences for young people in the future.</p>	

Consolidation meetings continue to be used to try to put in place support where there are concerns around placement stability and this will continue to be used to improve outcomes for children.

During Q4, consolidation meetings have taken place for inhouse fostering placements and the results are in the graph below. Consolidation meetings for internal placements are often chaired by the Registered Manager.



3. Detailed data

Compliance with care plan

Summary

Foster carer supervision includes review of the care of the children in line with the care plan. Each supervision record is quality assured by the relevant team manager, which enables close management oversight of the compliance of care plans for children.

This forms the basis of reflective supervision for social workers which takes place on a monthly basis. Therefore, there is social worker and management oversight of the care plans for children, and where there are concerns about compliance with care plans, a clear plan is put in place.

In addition to this, we have an embedded quality assurance process which involves regular audit, monitoring of our Key Performance indicators and seeking service user feedback. We also seek feedback from partners including IROs and social workers for children. Supervising social workers also monitor plans for children’s health, view foster carer records and monitor and support personal educational planning.

	<p>Where concerns are raised about compliance with care planning for children, then this would be firstly addressed by the supervising social worker in consultation with Team Manager. If there are further concerns, there is a facility to bring the matter to fostering panel for an early annual review.</p> <p>Our annual review process seeks to collate the chronology of the year and to seek feedback from children, parents and the wider professional network.</p> <p>As part of service improvement, during Q4 staff have be trained to use Form FR which is developed by Coram BAAF to monitor performance of foster carers in line with the fostering regulations and national minimum standards for fostering. Due to Covid 19 the launch of this has been delayed but is now planned for September 2020.</p> <p>As part of service development in Q2, the fostering managers developed a supervision tool to better track the compliance with a care plan for looked after children in the care of mainstream and kinship foster carers. During Q4 this has 'gone live' in liquid logic during March 2020.</p> <p>The first reports to track progress in line with care planning from the supervision record will be available during Q1 2020-2021.</p>
Evidence	<p>Quality assurance activity of managers</p> <p>New supervision tool & training for social workers has taken place during Q4.</p> <p>New annual review & training for social workers taken place during Q4.</p>

Accidents, injuries and illnesses

Summary	<p>Each notification is recorded by the fostering social worker, referred for management comment and then sent to the registered manager for appropriate oversight.</p> <p>As part of review of the notification reporting system during Q4, Carers and social workers have been reminded that notifications need to be shared contemporaneously rather than waiting for a support or supervision visit.</p>
Evidence	<p>Dashboard of schedule 6 & 7 notifications</p>

Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding death of a child, serious illness or accident, or outbreak of infectious disease

During this period, there were 59 notifications of looked after children in the care of Worcestershire children's services being admitted to hospital during Q4.

Difficulties breathing in relation to seasonal illness:

4 children were admitted to hospital with difficulties breathing in relation to illness. They received appropriate treatment and were then discharged.

Self harm and risk of suicide

2 young people self harmed. 1 young person was admitted to hospital on 4 occasions for assessment of their mental health. 1 young person was admitted on 1 occasion. Both young people were followed up with intensive support to the placement and team around the child to reduce the risk of repeat harm.

Pre-existing conditions:

1 child has congenital oesophageal condition that required a planned operation.

1 child had a head injury (suspected Non accidental acquired before becoming looked after) that required a planned operation.

1 child had planned operation to correct a congenital cleft palate.

1 child had a planned operation to address a congenital heart condition.

Injury:

2 children were admitted to hospital following an injury from an altercation with another young person.

Intoxication

1 incident where a young person was intoxicated.

Accident

1 child received treatment for a minor injury

Infectious Disease-covid-19

A covid-19 notification has been created for looked after children. During March, there were 41 notifications of children being in placement and self-isolation where covid-19 was suspected in the home. Testing was not available for individuals in the community during March, so these were not confirmed cases. All carers were offered support by phone and support to access essential such as food and medication.

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

Our priority actions as a service during Q4 have been undertaken as detailed below.

Each child/young person identified as higher risk of mental ill health will be audited by Fostering & Kinship to check for the following:

1. Strengths and difficulties questionnaire returned and scored and considered as part of health assessment (dashboard report to be written to track/review this to include monitoring changes over time)
2. Health assessment completed (dashboard report to be written to track/review this)
3. Health passport/record reflects the most recent health assessment and SDQ and social workers will review as part of foster carer supervision quarterly
4. Marker for risk of mental health recorded on the child's file (dashboard will be written to track/review this)

The following actions have now been undertaken:

- Each child with a mental health high risk marker will have a specific 'mental health and wellbeing plan' developed, quality of these to be reviewed in supervision by Registered manager, Fostering/Kinship Team manager and supervising social worker. This will be monitored in supervision at 'mental health and wellbeing review' at least every 12 weeks.
- Where there has been a notifiable event under schedule 7, then there will be monthly frequent reviews as part of supervision with the TM and RM.
- All Fostering and kinship supervising social worker staff will undertake 'Mental health first aid training' as mandatory core staff training. As part of the service away day, a mental health practitioner from CAMHS will share mental health awareness training with all the service staff.
- Each fostering household will have mental health awareness as an objective in their fostering learning and development plan and we will use a variety of blended learning approaches to include e-learning and face to face sessions to support carers to respond to the mental health of looked after children in their care.

Additional training for carers has been identified around reducing risk from self harm and risk of suicide.

The carer webpages are also being updated during Q4 to provide links to advice and guidance and support to deal with these matters collaborating with organisations such as CAMHs, Kooth and papyrus.

Seizures:

Seizure plans and support from the health team around the child are being sought where this is a new condition.

Seizure training has been purchased for carers where this is required. First aid training is up to date for all carers where seizures are a risk for children.

Advanced plan for children with congenital conditions:

Team around the child support and respite and domiciliary support are in place for children where there are risks from pre-existing health conditions which may have complications. Work alongside the health teams is important to ensure that the carers have appropriate bespoke knowledge and training to care for children with these conditions.

Medication, medical treatment and first aid administered

<p>Summary</p>	<p>Medication forms recorded during Q4 -69.</p> <p>Health and wellbeing folders are used by foster carers in their homes to report on the specific health needs for children. All health and wellbeing forms have been reviewed during Q3 & Q4.</p> <p>Health records seen by Supervising social workers and health needs are discussed as part of placement planning, supervision and support visits. Children have regular optical, dental and health assessments.</p> <p>The medical folder and medication forms have been reviewed. These are now collected on each support visit and we are devising a way for foster carers to use a portal to send in these medication and health reports as part of the development of the liquid logic platform which is due to go live during Q4.</p> <p>During Q4, new ways to record and track medication has been introduced into the supervision record so that this can be easily tracked.</p> <p>Mandatory online training in dispensing medication has been rolled out to all foster carers.</p>
<p>Evidence</p>	<p>Medication forms Supervision records notifications</p>

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

Where medication is prescribed to children, foster carers do record this in their health records, so that this is available for children, and carers also now provide a medication record that is collected by fostering social workers.

Foster carers are reporting any extraordinary medication to their fostering social workers.

Foster carers must attend first aid training and 'what is health' as part of their mandatory training and foster carers must also keep a record of medicine administered and follow the advice and guidance of medical professionals.

Measures of control, restraint or discipline

Summary	<p>During this period there were 2 incidents of physical restraint Reported as Schedule 6 Notifications.</p> <p>During this period, there was 1 reported incident of restraint by foster carers who held CB, aged 8 by the wrists during an incident where CB was dysregulated and hurting herself and the carers.</p> <p>A further incident took place in relation to another young person who also had dysregulated.</p>
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Evidence	Notification reports.
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Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

During Q3 & Q4 we have been reviewing the offer of training to support carers to manage challenging behaviours, particularly around our learning from placement breakdowns, allegations and notification of restraint.

As part of service development, additional training has been added to our programme for 2020.

Key improvements are around our offer to include:

1. De-escalation training will be introduced during 2020. This training is relationship based and compliments the attachment parenting model. This programme concentrates on de-escalation of conflict in the home from young people and also supports foster carers to feel more confident to deal with these situations. The face to face training was delayed due to Covid 19 but we have been able to introduce online zoom bespoke training for those carers who are considered a priority because a. they have reported an incident of restraint or b. we are concerned that there may be an incident of restraint due to escalating behaviours
2. Social workers will be trained in this practice model in later in the year, due to Covid 19, however social workers (where there is priority training for the carers) are also taking part in the training so that they can best support the foster carers with this approach.

3. Foundation for attachment training will be introduced and delivered as a short course so that carers can get access to this course at the 'point of need'. Online alternatives have been made available during Covid -19
4. Nurturing Attachment training will be introduced on a new programme so that this is more available at the 'point of need' by running twice per year, so that usually there will be a course available within 6 months of referral. Online alternatives have been made available during covid-19.

During Q4, the 6 previous incidents of restraint have been piloting the positive behaviour approach. This pilot involved the following strategies:



positive behaviour 64256_Promoting_P
strategies (003).docx ositive_Behaviour_V0

- Positive behaviour plan to be introduced in line as a pilot approach during Q3 & Q4 where there have been incidents of restraint since April 2019.

The introduction of a positive behaviour approach pilot has been positive. During Q3 to Q4, there has been a reduction in restraint incidents from 6 reported incidents to 2 reported incidents. This is a reduction of 66.6%.

The positive behaviour approach has been further evaluated using service user feedback and this will be concluded during Q1 2020-2021 and consider whether this approach will be introduced across the service with additional training for staff and carers.

Complaints in relation to children/about foster carers, and their outcomes

Summary	<p>There have been no formal complaints about foster carers during Q4.</p> <p>During Q4 There has been 1 young people who have provided negative feedback to his IRO about his experience of care. The carer undertook further reflective work before being considered for future matches.</p>
Evidence	<p>Feedback from children as part of foster carers annual reviews and feedback at the end of placements via the child's IRO.</p> <p>Monitoring of allegations and complaints.</p>

Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding any serious complaint about a foster carer, or information being provided to the Disclosure and Barring Service

There have been No referrals to the DBS during Q4.

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

Children are consulted about their foster placements as part of the Annual review process; through IRO placement ending discussions and also through the electronic app Mind of My Own.

The Mind of My Own App is an underused resource in the fostering service. Whole service training has been provided to all the fostering and kinship social workers and panel members on 16/10/2019 at the service away day.

It has become a new practice standard for fostering social workers to support looked after children to use technology or direct work where possible to support children to give feedback about their quality of care. This has resulted in a great increase in the number of children providing quality feedback about their care.

Any concerns raised by a child are taken seriously. All children have access to a copy of the children's guide and can make a complaint direct to the registered manager.

Allegations or suspicions of abuse or neglect, and investigation outcomes

Summary

During this period, there have been 6 allegations made against 4 mainstream foster carers and 3 allegations made against 3 kinship foster carers.

1. Allegation regarding CF & RF-mainstream long term foster carers

There is a current investigation into allegations made by looked after children and other foster carers in respect of CF&RF.

There are 4 elements:

Allegation that AC was dragged and held tightly by the wrist causing injury

Allegation that CF had stabbed someone and had not disclosed this as part of her fostering assessment

Allegation that RF behaved in a threatening manner towards social work staff

Allegation that CF & RF had businesses operating from their home which they had not disclosed to fostering service, placing children in their care at risk from unknown individuals in the home,

Allegation that CF & RF had 'hit and punched' 2 looked after children.

The children have moved from the care of the foster carers following the 2nd allegation that CF had stabbed someone previously.

2. Allegation regarding BR made by grandchildren-mainstream foster carer

BR's grandchildren made an allegation that BR had been physically abusive to them and also reported that they had seen this happen to children in foster placement. A referral was made to the LADO and a s.47 enquiry was undertaken by the children's social work team. The looked after children were spoken to and did not make any allegations of harm. The children were on the cusp of a planned adoption move. The team around the child considered that it was appropriate that the children would be supported to move on in a planned way and there were no concerns or allegations made by the children, their social worker, nursery and education setting or by the supervising social worker. A safety plan of increased visits and monitoring of the placement was put in place. The foster carer BR was notified of the allegation and a post allegation review was to be undertaken and when the children had moved the placement would be placed on hold pending the outcome of the investigation and they subsequently resigned.

1. Allegation regarding GB made by looked after child-kinship foster carer

	<p>An allegation of emotional and physical abuse was made by the granddaughter young person. The foster carer resigned as a result of the allegations. The young person moved placement under a safety plan to her mother under PWP regulations.</p> <p><u>Allegation made by 2 children re MP-mainstream foster carer.</u></p> <p>Children were moved as a result of the allegation. The young person alleged that he was physically harmed when he tried to eat breakfast later than the household rules. A police enquiry is ongoing, and a post allegation review will take place following the conclusion of police enquiries.</p> <p>Allegation against SH & MT-kinship foster carers</p> <p>2 allegations were made in respect of this fostering household. 1 related to SH who admitted to slapping her granddaughter around the face during January 2020.</p> <p>1 related to MT, who was alleged to have become intoxicated with alcohol and made threats to harm the children during February 2020.</p> <p>MT has left the family home under a safety plan and PAR has taken place. SH is being assessed as a single foster carer as the relationship with MT has now ended.</p>
<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Allegations have increased during 2019-2020. Over the past year, there have been 31 allegations made, in respect of 26 individuals. All recorded allegations and referrals to the LADO have been jointly audited during Q4 with the LADO Dan Grey. This considered whether the referrals were appropriate and whether the threshold for decision to undertake a PAR was proportionate.</p>

	<p>14 of which related to allegations of physical harm of which 4 were substantiated, 4 were unfounded and 1 was unsubstantiated and 2 remain un-concluded.</p> <p>9 related to carer conduct which may have contributed to the harm of a child of which 2 were substantiated, 2 were unfounded and 2 were unsubstantiated the remainder are un-concluded.</p> <p>3 related to emotional harm and were 2 were unsubstantiated whilst 1 remains un-concluded.</p> <p>In response to this increase in allegations, we are reviewing our whole service approach to ensure that we are giving foster and kinship carers the best preparation, assessment, supervision support and development opportunities to reduce the risk of allegation and harm for children in our care.</p> <p>The following specific actions have taken place:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Looped Audit of post Allegation reviews 2. Preparation training has been reviewed to ensure that allegations are understood 3. Mandatory Training for foster carers has been refreshed to ensure that foster and kinship carers not only <i>understand</i> behaviour but are also prepared how to <i>respond</i> to behaviours without resorting to physical harm 4. Physical and verbal De-escalation training is being rolled out across the service-this has been substituted with online offer during covid 19 5. Staff and managers will be trained on de-escalation theory ahead of foster and kinship carers-this has been rolled out with fostering social workers who are supporting carers who require this training as a priority during covid-19. 6. Attachment training has procured to be available at the point of need-this has been made available online 7. Safer care training has been refreshed and updated 8. Positive behaviour plans are being introduced to the service to help carers plan for challenging and difficult behaviour in planned ways-this has taken place during Q4 and the impact is being evaluated. 9. Managers are booked on refresher managing allegation training-this has been postponed due to covid. 10. Foster panel have been trained around the process for managing allegations to support their recommendations 11. Staff are attending refresher assessment and annual review training to consider foster carers in line with the national minimum standards and fostering regulations and improved annual reviews are being rolled out during Q1 & Q2 2020-2021. 12. A joint audit of referrals to the LADO service has taken place with the LADO and registered manager to review thresholds,
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	<p>referrals and outcomes where the LADO service has worked with WCFF.</p> <p>13. Annual report from Fostering network has been produced and learning and recommendations are being considered in development of the service in particular around allegation practice.</p>
Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding instigation and outcome of any child protection inquiry, or suspicion/involvement of child in “prostitution”	
There have been no notifications of this nature during this quarter.	
Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided	
<p>Get Safe has been launched in Worcestershire at the end of the quarter, and training and development will be offered to our carers to support them to recognise and report any concerns they have in relation to:</p> <p>Gangs Sexual Exploitation Trafficking Modern Day Slavery Absent or Missing Forced Marriage Criminal Exploitation</p> <p>Get safe face to face training was due to be rolled out during Q4. Unfortunately, due to covid 19 that is not currently available, but this has been replaced with an online training option through our e-learning and caress are being encouraged to take up this training.</p>	

Children missing without permission	
Summary	All instances of children who are missing from placement have been reported under schedule 7.
Evidence	Notification dashboard Missing episodes and return interviews
Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding a child missing from placement	

During this period, there have been 3 notifiable incidents, relating to 3 children where children have been missing without permission. Both young people were found and returned safely to the home and were offered a welfare return interview.

All incidents were appropriately reported promptly to the local authority and to the police. All missing episodes resulted in a visit or discussion with fostering social worker, with oversight from the Team Manager and Registered Manager. There were some concerns raised by both young people in relation to how they were feeling about their placements and support was put in place to reduce the risk of the young people going missing from placement again.

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

The missing episodes of children in the care of Worcestershire County council are monitored closely by the supervising social worker and team manager.

There is a proactive approach to responding to missing children and engagement with the team around the child to reduce the risk of children going missing and to engage children in welfare return incidents to reduce instances of missing.

Get safe referrals are made where there are concerns around missing episodes.

Allegations that a child has committed a serious offence

Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding allegations that a child has committed a serious offence

There have been no incidences within the reporting period whereby a child has committed a serious offence and as such no notifications of this regard have been made to Ofsted.

Serious incident necessitating police being called to the foster carer's home

Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding a serious incident necessitating police being called to the foster carer's home

There were 6 notifiable events under schedule 7 during Q4.

2 related to young people assaulting foster carers in order to try to deescalate the situation. In line with our approach to reduce criminalisation of young people, no further action was taken in respect of the incidents, but one young person was

removed from the property under police powers of protection as the young person had escalating mental ill health and safety could not be guaranteed.

3 incidents related to missing episodes for young people who were found and safely returned to their placements.

1 was in relation to concerns about a child's mental health after they called ChildLine. The police attended the property on request of ChildLine. The young person attended hospital with ambulance service and police left without further action.

You become aware that the child/young person may have been abused (physically, sexually or emotionally) by another person, child or adult

Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding allegations that a child may have been abused

There have 2 incidents where a young person made an allegation of sexual abuse. 1 incident was reported to have taken place during supervised contact with their family. Another incident was a historical report of abuse against a member of family of the previous foster carers the child was placed with (no longer approved). Both matters were reported to the police in line with safeguarding procedures. The other incidents of harm have been reported as allegations made against foster carers and have been referred to the LADO and we have followed our safeguarding procedures.

In our service, we have created CEOP champions to lead in our service around staying safe online. 4 social workers are undertaking the training and will lead on raising awareness and knowledge across the social work team and with foster carers to ensure that carers understand the potential risk of online sexual exploitation so that future harm may be prevented.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, we hope to ensure that online safety is understood and implemented by our carers with the increasing use of technology for learning and social activities.

Staffing

New starters during Q3

The following staff have started in post during Q4:

- 0.6 FTE fixed term part time kinship social worker post-maternity cover kinship team 1
- 0.6 FTE social worker post kinship-
- 1 FTE kinship social work vacancy-kinship team 2
- 0.4 FTE kinship social worker (reduction in hours)-kinship team 1
- 0.4 FTE kinship social worker (reduction in hours)-kinship team 2
- 0.6 FTE kinship social worker (maternity leave)-kinship team 1

- 1 FTE mainstream social worker (maternity leave) Fostering team 2

Vacant posts not yet recruited to:

- 0.6 FTE clinical psychologist-post on hold
- 0.6 FTE social worker-kinship team 3-appointed but start date has been delayed due to recruitment freeze during covid 19.

All staff have a named supervisor and receive personal and case management supervision. Social Worker supervision is undertaken by a Team Manager on a monthly basis and is audited and tracked monthly. Team Business support officers have quarterly supervision.

The 6 Fostering Team Managers & Learning and Development Manager receive monthly personal and management supervision with the Registered Manager. In addition, monthly group supervision takes place with the Mainstream Managers and Kinship Team Managers. The learning and development manager and Registered Manager also receive monthly supervision. There are also monthly management meetings for all team managers with the registered manager and each team has a monthly team meeting.

Staff training

The training programme for foster carers has been significantly enhanced and all staff have been asked to link with their supervisor and attend this training where appropriate. It is important that staff have an awareness of the training that is on offer to carers and it is also an opportunity for them to enhance their own knowledge base. The training programme is also available to foster panel members.

Social workers in the service have access to the social work academy training offer as well as a programme of specific training to equip social workers with appropriate training to undertake their roles and duties. Social workers plan their continuing professional development in their supervision and periodic appraisals.

Key areas for staff development training going forward into Worcestershire Children First Fostering will be:

- Supervision of foster carers-for all new social work staff
- Foster carer assessment skills including annual reviews-for all social work staff
- Managing Allegations-for all social work staff
- SGO assessment training- for kinship social workers.
- Role of agency decision maker-for ADMs
- Panel membership training-for all new panel members or by request/development of panel members

Staff appraisals

All staff take part in appraisals with their line manager. 100% of staff had an up to date record of staff review of appraisal during this quarter.

Staff meetings

The monthly management meeting has a standing agenda item of 'staffing' and key points relating to individual staff members are explored within this. 4 Fostering Manager Meetings have taken place in Quarter 4.

There are monthly Mainstream and Kinship Team meetings where all staff attend to be briefed on operational and wider service matters including end to end leadership news and learning from audits. 8 meetings have taken place across the service during this period.

Team Managers attend End to End Leadership Meetings and there have been 2 meetings in this Quarter.

The registered manager also attends senior leadership meetings and 1 meeting has taken place during the quarter.

1 panel business day has taken place this quarter which covered the following agenda:

- Review business plan for through care and WCFF
- Promoting best practice-consulting with children, carers and parents
- Q3 report

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

Attendance at team meetings is monitored and non-attendance must be agreed with line managers to ensure staff have the most up to date information about service development and practice standards.

5. Fostering panel

Summary of panel

We have 3 fostering panels each month which consist of 20 core panel members from the central list and are independently chaired by Panel Chair or vice chairs.

A new dedicated panel advisor started during Q3 (22.5 hours) who has previous experience as a social worker in the fostering service and 1 FTE Panel Business Support officer and 0.5 FTE Administrator.

The main activity of the fostering panel is the consideration of approval of Mainstream and Kinship Carers and to review First Annual reviews, and any matters referred for panel oversight.

If a Regulation 25 extension is requested for a Temporary Foster Carer (Reg 24) this is also considered by panel.

Local review panels are chaired by Fostering and Kinship Team Managers. The focus of these reviews to review annual reviews after the 2nd year.

During Q4 there has been a change to the ADM following the registration of WCFF. The role of ADM is now shared between group managers outside of the fostering service who can satisfy the criteria of being independent from WCFF. All ADMs have received training in line with their role as ADMs and Ofsted have been notified of the ADM changes. A new ADM was also introduced in response to the covid crisis to support team capacity.

Fostering and Adoption decision makers	
Area of Decision Making	Decision Makers
Approval, termination and review of foster carers	Yvette Waide Tori Lynch Judy Mayo Amanda Walsh Selina Rawicz Kevin Bryan Ruth Hall Mark Tustin Emma Brittain Maria White
Placement under Reg 24 (temporary approval of foster carers)	Fostering ADMs: Laurie- Mo Gullachsen, Registered Manager for Worcestershire Children First Fostering Selina Rawicz, Group Manager. Through Care, Worcestershire Children First
Placement under Reg 25 (foster to adopt)	Laurie- Mo Gullachsen, Registered Manager for Worcestershire Children First Fostering Tina Russell, Director of Safeguarding, Worcestershire Children First
Exemptions from the usual fostering limits for foster carers living in Worcestershire.	Emma Brittain, Assistant Director
Agreement to the long-term matching of children with foster carers.	Maria White, Assistant Director, Safeguarding, Worcestershire Children First Back Up: Adam Johnston, Assistant Director, Through Care and Sufficiency, Worcestershire Children First.

Panel meetings

During this Quarter:

- 9 main panel meetings took place.
- 11 local panel meetings took place.

Cases considered and recommendations

Approvals Mainstream	3 households	+5 placements
Resignations Mainstream	-10 households	-18 placements
De-registrations mainstream	1 household	-2 placements
Approvals Kinship	8 households	+13 placements
Non approval kinship (deferred)	2 households	n/a
Kinship Resignations	11 households	- 13 placements
De-registrations kinship	1 household	-2 placements
Reg 24 extension	2 households	3 placements
Annual reviews held	66 households	100% in timescales

Panel Annual report

An annual report has been prepared for 2019-2020 by the panel manager and panel chair. This will be available to review on request.

Training and appraisals

Panel members are required to attend 2 panel business days per year. Additionally, panel members can access our foster carer training programme and are invited to the Annual Foster carer conference and service development days. During Q4, all panel members have had a learning and development review to ensure that all panel members are appropriately trained and skilled for the role.

The chair of the fostering panel, Registered Manager and ADM have met during Q4 to review individual panel performance and development.

All panel members and the panel chair have had an annual observation and appraisal.

The Registered manager has observed panel on at least 2 occasions this year. There has been 1 observation of panel in this quarter.

The ADM reviews panel minutes and recommendations as part of quality assurance.

During 2019-2020 we are introducing a new way in which panel will deliver their feedback which will allow scrutiny and ensure that it is easier to monitor trends and areas for improvement.

6. Consultation and feedback from children and young people

Summary	<p>Children and young people’s views are integral to the fostering service. A key priority in Q3 & Q4 has been to support staff to feel confident in being creative through using technology and direct work to seek Looked After Children’s views as part of the annual reviews and throughout the year. Positive feedback is celebrated, and any worries children and young people raise about their care are taken seriously and addressed with the foster carers and where necessary in line with the complaints policy.</p> <p>During Q4,</p> <p>In addition to this feedback, IROs speak to children and young people at placement endings to ensure that feedback is sought from children in a timely manner. During Q3 there have been very few children interviewed about their previous experience of being cared by inhouse foster carers. There was insufficient feedback in the conversations with the children to understand their views and this has been fed back to particular IROs.</p>
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	<p>Children in fostering families are also consulted as part of the foster carer annual review. See attached report. Children's lived experiences are explored in support and Foster carer supervision.</p> <p>All children have received a copy through the post of the Children's guide in line with their ages and understanding during Q3.</p> <p>Child's voice at foster panel: The youth voice team have undertaken a consultation with looked after children on behalf of WCFF and have involved children in identifying questions that children would like to be asked at fostering panel for prospective carers. This has been incorporated into fostering panel and will be reviewed.</p>
Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided	
<p>During Q4 we received feedback from 56 child from reviews of 66 fostering households. A summary of this feedback is provided as an appendix.</p>	

7. Consultation with foster carers

Consultation with Foster carers	<p>All foster and kinship carers are invited to share their views and to make representations as part of their assessment and annual reviews.</p> <p>During Q3 all foster and kinship carers were invited to take part in a survey about WCFF. 51 people responded and the summary of this feedback can be found in appendix 2. This will be repeated during 2020 as it was useful to capture the views of our carers and to respond to any concerns.</p>
Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided	
<p>All participants in the feedback survey were asked to provide their details if they would like to follow up their comments and this is taking place during Q4 by the registered manager.</p> <p>In order to improve consultation with foster carers, during Q4, foster carer forums are being rolled out across the 4 districts to involve all foster and kinship carers. As well as nominations for volunteer forum members to attend meetings on a regular basis, there will be an open agenda item at each meeting so that written or face to face queries or points of discussion can be raised by any foster or kinship carer. The registered manager and recruitment and retention manager will be present at each foster carer forum meeting. 4 forum meetings are planned for the rest of 2020 to take place.</p>	

We have introduced a rolling 'feedback' portal on the training and development website so that carers can share any feedback through this route as well as completing evaluation specific of training.

Consultation with Professionals

<p>Consultation with professionals</p>	<p>All professionals working alongside children and their carers should invited to share their views as part of their assessments and annual reviews. Feedback has been sporadic over some time and during Q4 this has improved to some extent.</p> <p>During Q1 2020 a new 'snap survey' will be introduced to improve accessibility for social workers to provide feedback using the Coram BAAF Form FR questionnaire for professionals. It is hoped that this will increase the number of feedbacks provided and also improve the quality of the feedback in line with the national minimum standards and fostering regulations.</p> <p>During Q 4, feedback was provided in respect of 16 of 66 annual reviews which is only 24%. We hope that through changing the way in which we seek out this feedback will improve this in the next quarter.</p>
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Consultation with Parents

<p>Consultation with parents</p>	<p>All parents of looked after children in the care of WCFF should invited to share their views as part of annual reviews. Feedback has been sporadic over some time and during Q3 & Q4 this has remained the same.</p> <p>During Q4 a new 'snap survey' has be introduced to improve accessibility for parents to provide feedback using the Coram BAAF Form FR questionnaire for parents. It is hoped that this will increase the number of feedbacks provided and also improve the quality of the feedback in line with the national minimum standards and fostering regulations.</p> <p>During Q1 2020, we had planned to consult with parents in partnership with the participation service and onside advocacy to support parents to be empowered to provide feedback to the fostering service about the care their child is receiving. Unfortunately we have had to postpone this event, but we are exploring how we may enable this to take place virtually in the first instance.</p>
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Equality and diversity

Summary	<p>Worcestershire Fostering Service actively engage with the following community groups in order to engage with diverse communities which represent the local community which we serve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bromsgrove District Council • Redditch District Council • Wyre Forest District council • Wychavon District Council • Worcester City Council • Malvern District Council • Fortis Living • Kinship Carers UK • Grandparents plus • Home For Good Worcestershire • New Family Social • Penny Appeal • Black History Month • Fostering Network • Foster Line • Worcestershire Pride • Redditch Pride • Malvern Pride • Evesham Pride <p>Equality and Diversity training is mandatory and is provided for all staff and foster carers.</p> <p>We have an offer mandatory e-learning which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith & belief • Equality in the workplace • Valuing Difference
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11. Financial information

See attached financial report and summary.

Signed	
Name	Laurie-Mo Gullachsen
Position	Registered Manager, Worcestershire Children First Fostering

FOSTERING SERVICE MONITORING REPORT FORM
(ENGLAND)



Date	15/05/2020
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Signed	
Name	Adam Johnston
Position	Responsible Individual, Worcestershire Children First Fostering
Date	