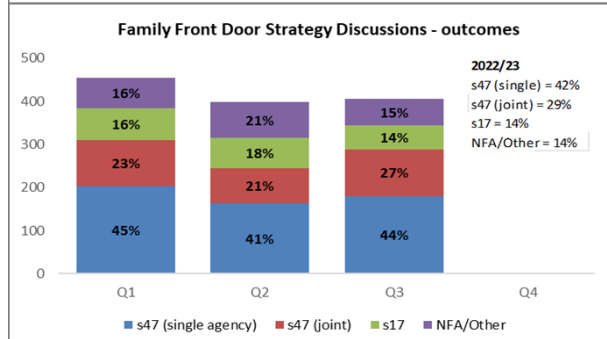
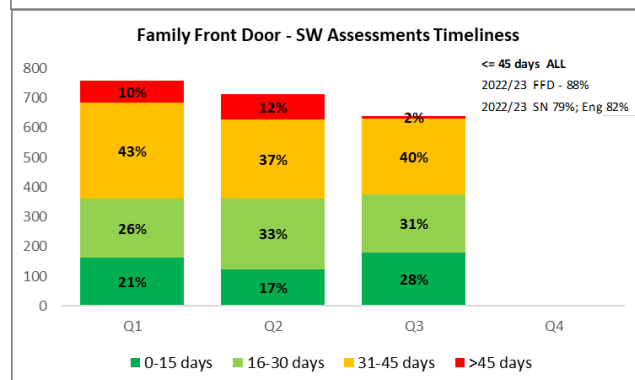
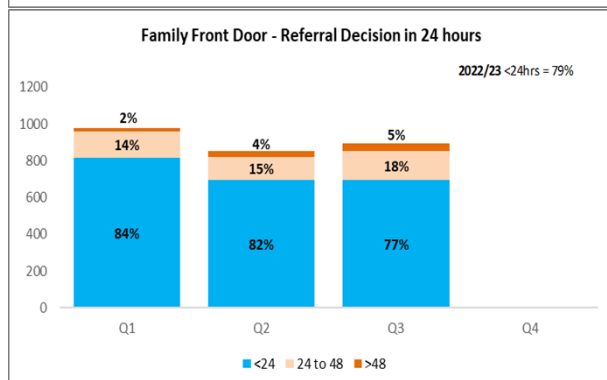
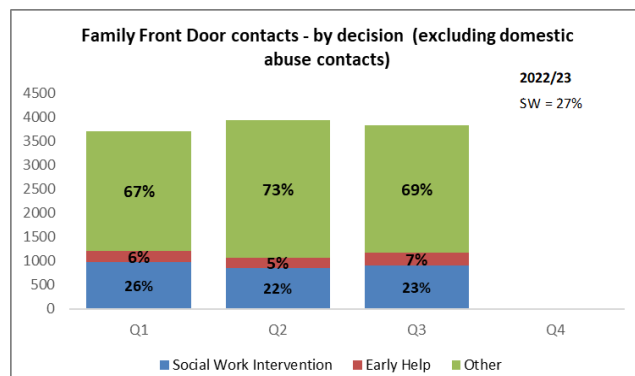
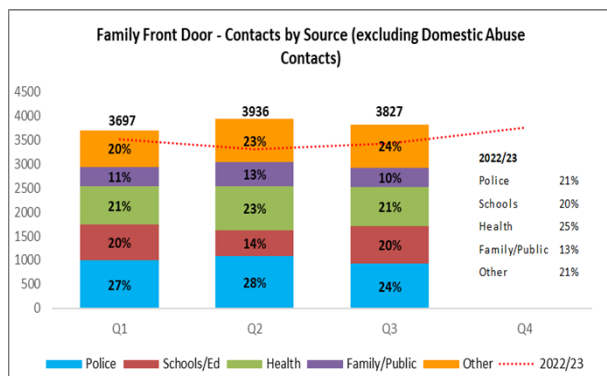


Worcestershire Children’s Social Work – Summary Data for Scrutiny Panel

2023/24 - Quarter Three

Family Front Door



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

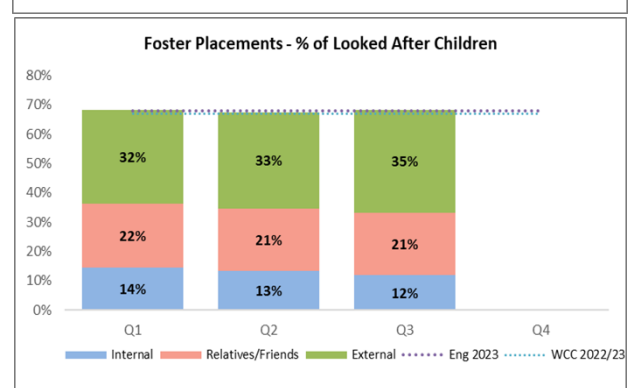
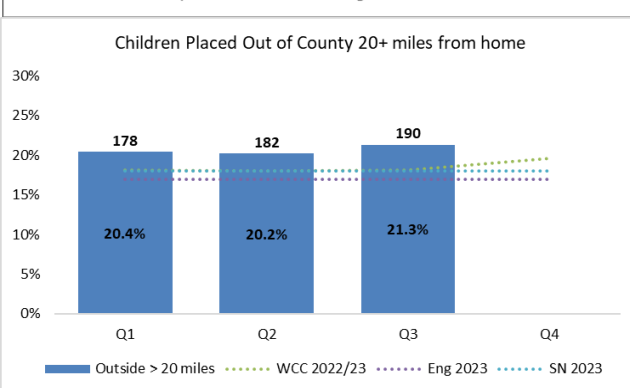
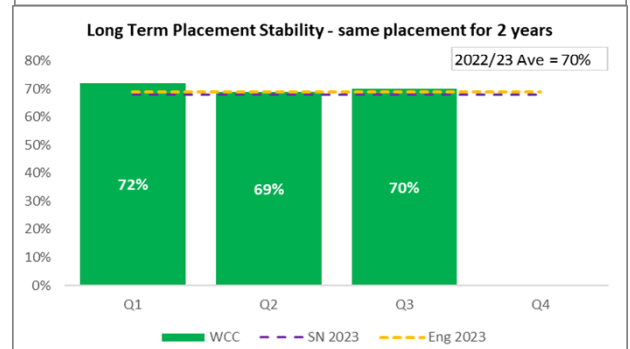
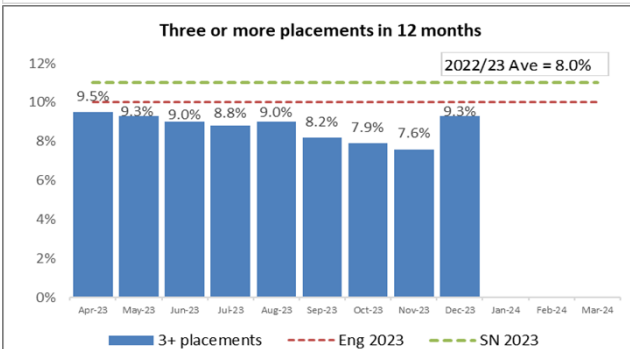
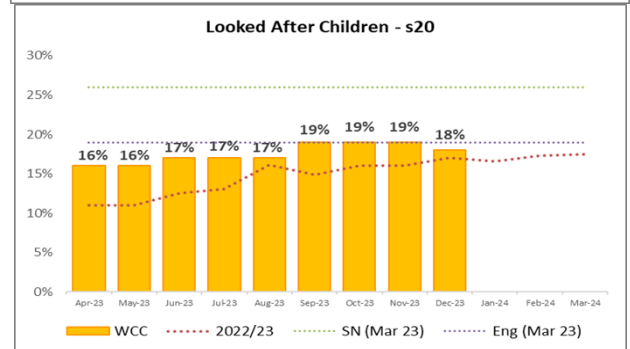
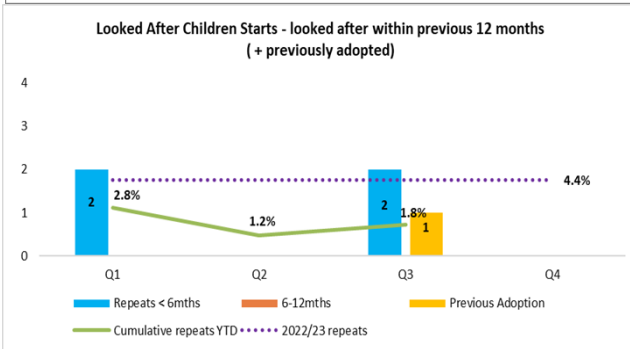
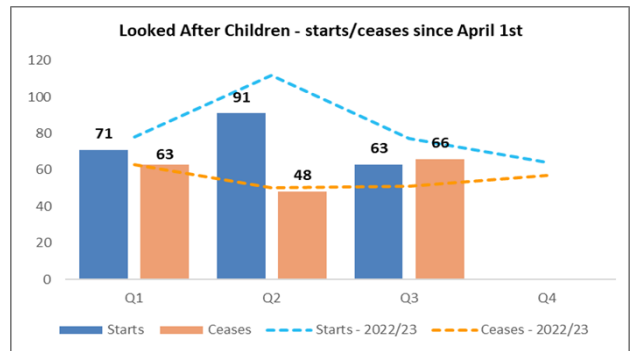
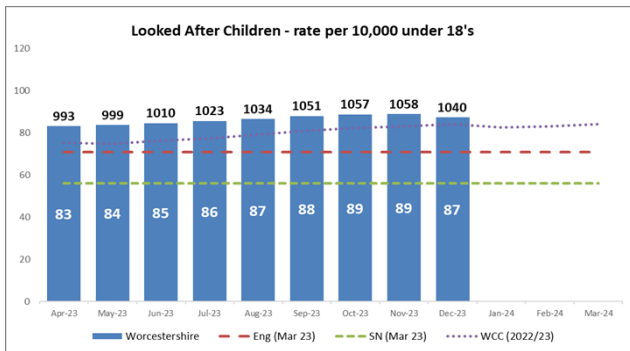
The top risk factor identified in our contacts are Parents struggling with parenting, which was the top last year, followed by Neglect rising up from third last year. Mental Health needs in parents has remained in our top three risk factors. We have seen a change in ASB and criminal behaviour rising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

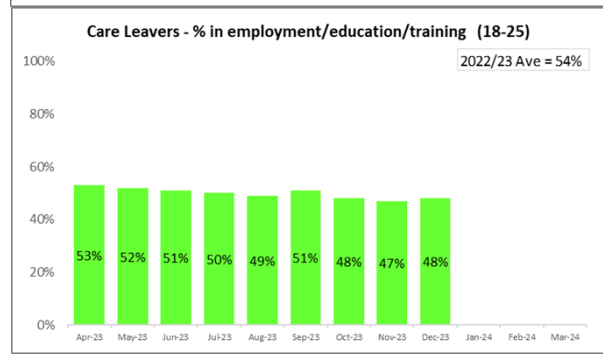
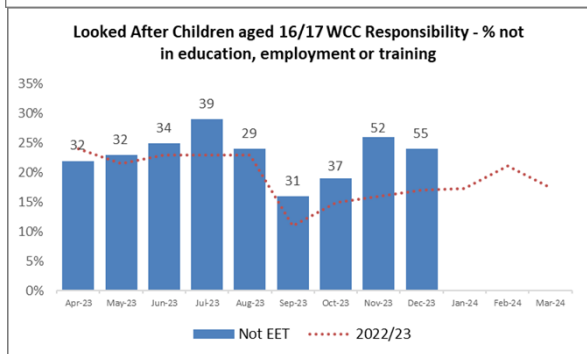
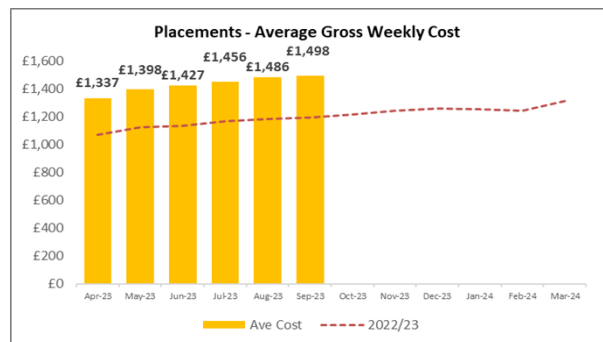
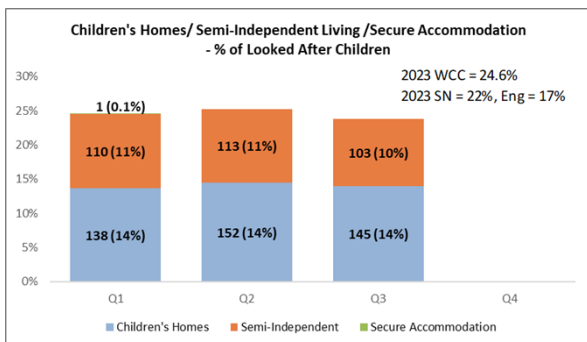
The **timeliness of completion of assessments remains high reached 98% in quarter three**, consistently achieve above England and Statutory Neighbour (SN) averages of 82% and 79% respectively.

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

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

Throughcare – Looked After Children and Care Leavers





No comparator data is available for this indicator

Care Leavers 19-21 in Employment, Education or Training as at 31 Dec 2023: **48%**. Latest comparative figure for age 19-21 using national annual snapshot methodology (2022/23) - Statistical Neighbours: **56%**, England: **56%**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

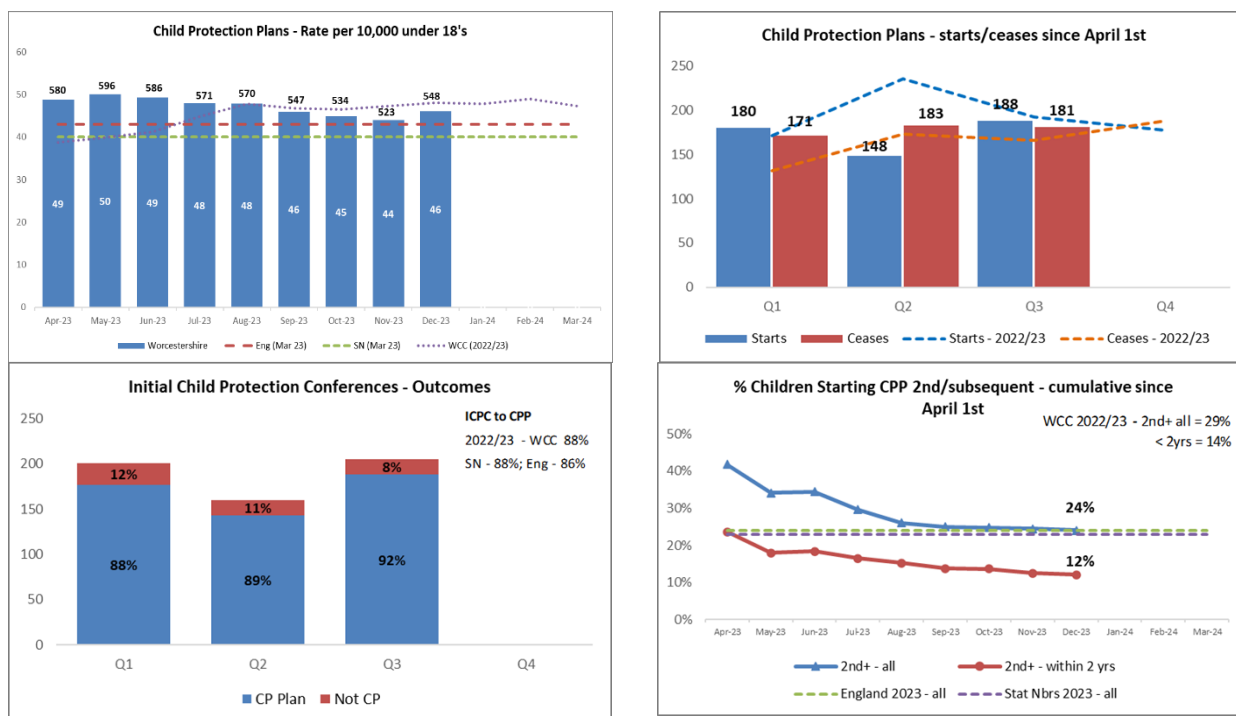
Care Leavers

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

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

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

Child Protection



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

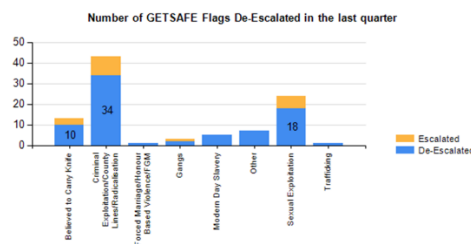
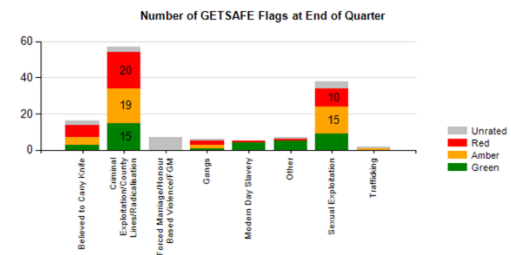
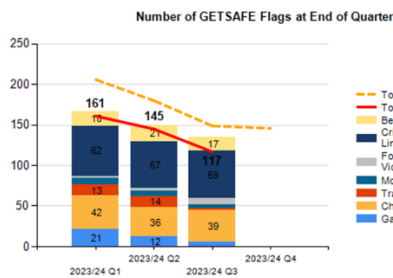
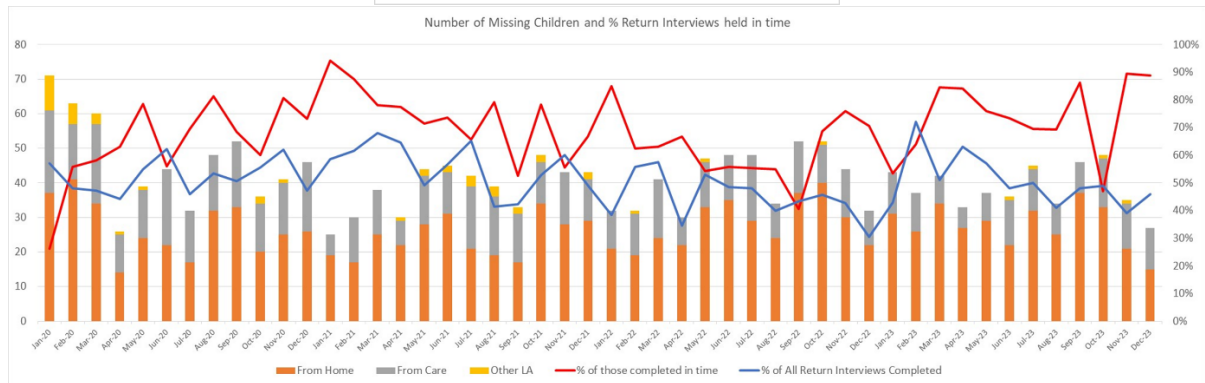
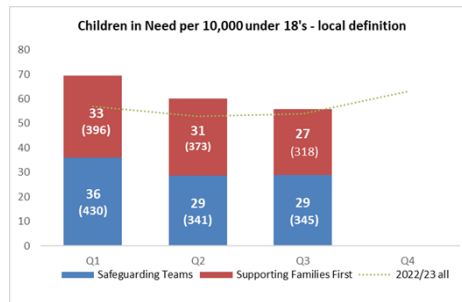
Repeat CP's within 2yrs remain low at 12% reflecting sustained outcomes achieved for these children and Repeat CP's at any point in time at 24% is in line with the England /SN averages, a positive reduction in last year's data where we saw an increase following re-emergence of child protection issues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

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

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

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

Children in Need



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

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

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

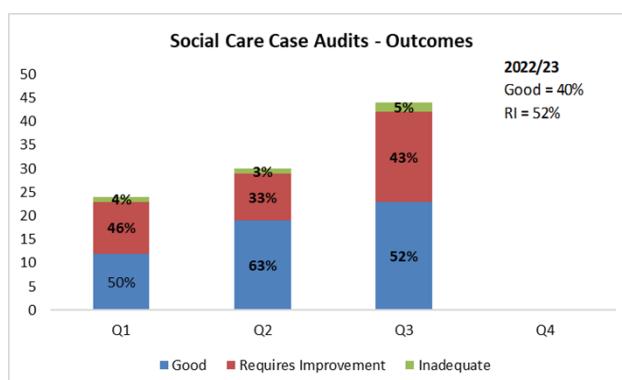
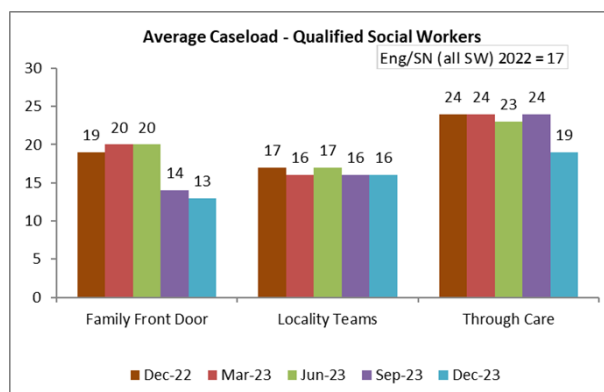
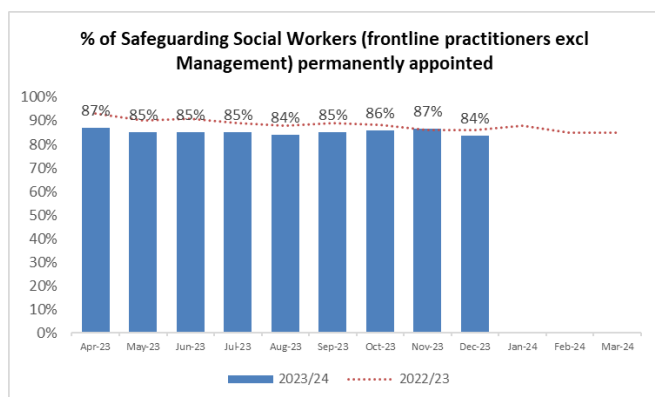
Missing from Home or Care

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

Get Safe – Umbrella term for risk of exploitation

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

Workforce and Quality of Practice



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

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

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

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

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