



**Walsall Council**

## **Corporate Parenting Board**

Meeting to be held on: **Monday 14 November, 2022 AT 6.00 PM**

Meeting to be held: Council House, Walsall.

### **MEMBERSHIP:**

Chair: Councillor Wilson  
Vice Chair: Councillor Jukes  
Councillor Hicken  
Councillor A. Hussain  
Councillor I. Hussain  
Councillor Mazhar  
Councillor Worrall

### **ADVISOR**

Alison Jones (NHS Walsall CCG)

**Note:** Walsall Council encourages the public to exercise their right to attend meetings of Council, Cabinet and Committees. Agendas and reports are available for inspection from the Council's Democratic Services Team at the Council House, Walsall (Telephone 01922 654369) or on our website [www.walsall.gov.uk](http://www.walsall.gov.uk).

## ITEMS FOR BUSINESS

### **Part I – Public session**

1. Apologies and Substitutions
3. Declarations of interest and party whip
4. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)
5. Minutes of meeting held on 5 September 2022
  - To approve as a correct record – copy **enclosed**
6. Young People Engagement and Participation of Children in Care Council and Care Leavers
  - Report –**enclosed**
7. Corporate Parenting Board Quarter 2 Performance
  - Report –**enclosed**
8. Therapeutic Support for Children in Care – FLASH Service
  - Report –**enclosed**

### **Part II - Private Session**

9. National Review of Children with Disabilities and Complex Health Needs
  - Presentation - verbal

**Date of next meeting** – 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022

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## Specified pecuniary interests

The pecuniary interests which are specified for the purposes of Chapter 7 of Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 are the interests specified in the second column of the following:

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Prescribed description</b>
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	<p>Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by a member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of a member.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Regulations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p>
Contracts	<p>Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority:</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	<p>Any tenancy where (to a member's knowledge):</p> <p>(a) the landlord is the relevant authority;</p> <p>(b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.</p>
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where:</p> <p>(a) that body (to a member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and</p> <p>(b) either:</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(ii) if the share capital of that body is more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</p>

## **Access to information: Exempt information**

### **Part 1**

#### **Descriptions of exempt information: England**

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes:
  - (a) to give any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
  - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.
8. Information being disclosed during a meeting of a Scrutiny and Performance Panel when considering flood risk management functions which:
  - (a) Constitutes a trades secret;
  - (b) Its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the risk management authority);
  - (c) It was obtained by a risk management authority from any other person and its disclosure to the public by the risk management authority would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that other person.

## **Corporate Parenting Board**

**Monday 5 September 2022 at 6.00 p.m.**

**Conference Room 2, Walsall Council House**

### **Board Members Present:**

Councillor T. Wilson (Chair)  
Councillor. Jukes (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Hicken  
Councillor I. Hussain  
Councillor A. Hussain  
Councillor Worrall

### **Officers Present**

Colleen Male	Director, Children's Social Work
David Hughes	Children and Young Persons Champion
Helena Kucharczyk	Head of Service
Jo Manning	Group Manager
Jivan Sembi	Head of Service (Children in Care, Provider and Care Leaving Services)
Lorraine Thompson	Head of Virtual School
Alison Jones	Designated Nurse LAC
Lynn Noble	Interim Head of Service – Adoption at Heart

Young people representing the Children in Care Council.

### **Welcome**

At this point in the meeting, the Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone present. He also noted that the meeting to the papers, which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information system (CMIS) webpage.

## **8/22 Introductions and Apologies**

Apologies were received on behalf of Elise Hopkins (Advisor to the Board).

## **9/22 Substitutions**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

## **10/22 Minutes**

A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2022, were submitted.

(see annexed)

## **Resolved (Unanimous)**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2022, copies having previously been circulated to each Member of the Board, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

## **11/22 Young People Engagement**

The Children's and Young Persons Champion presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed).

Young people had met with locality managers, which provided the opportunity for them to receive information and ask questions. It was noted that this session provided insight for managers and there was a plan to involve young people in future areas of work.

Seven sessions of 'Total Respect' training had been delivered by care leavers with positive feedback received. It was noted that six care leavers were trained to deliver this training, with current recruitment of young people over 14 years of age to further deliver this training.

An update was provided on 'language that cares', this continued to be promoted within Walsall – consideration was being given to how this could be further rolled out.

The Board were provided with the opportunity to review welcome packs that were provided to young people when they came into care.

Members were informed that a request for the development of a regional pass for leisure centres (for care leavers) had gone out to partners, with positive responses received. It was hoped that the offer could be extended to Looked After Children. This proposal would be further discussed at future West Midlands Combined Authority events.

**Resolved:**

That the Young People Engagement Report be noted

**12/22 Adoption Service Report**

The Interim Head of Service presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The Board were informed that Adoption@heart was a regional adoption agency which provided adoption services on behalf of Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton Councils. There was a stable staff group and the service was part of a national network. The adoption scorecard performance was described, it was noted that there were less children being taken into the care of the local authority and we needed to consider the impact on adoption numbers. It was acknowledged that more work was needed to further understand the data. The Director stated that the service is focused on keeping families together and permanency planning had been strengthened which partly accounted for the drop in the number of children adopted.

Members asked how the agency was tackling the recruitment of adopters, and were informed that a marketing director had been appointed to lead on this. There was a government campaign for those children who were considered harder to adopt.

Challenge was provided to those indicators that were performing below the national average. Officers responded to explain that although some indicators were below the national average. Early planning permanence was good, and the authority aimed to be aspirational for those young people with complex needs for which the adoption could often take longer to progress.

In response to member questioning, officers confirmed that the agency tried to keep siblings together and that contact between siblings was being further developed in the best interests of the children and young people. Further information could be provided on a national pilot which allowed an improved arrangement for contact between young people and families.

A young person in attendance questioned the support provided to young people when siblings (and foster siblings) were not kept together. Officers described letter swapping and keep in touch process. It was acknowledged that further work on this was needed.

The Board were informed that work was being done to promote adoption to same sex couples. A discussion was held on the number of complaints received by the agency, with a very small number received each year. Lessons were learnt from complaints received and outcomes had included the rewriting of the policy to avoid a high level of assessment in the early stages of adoption.

Future developments of the agency were described and these included:

- The merging of governance boards.

- Early permanence and the reduction of delay.
- Increased diversity of panel representatives.

## **Resolved**

1. That the Adoption@heart report be noted.
2. That a further report be provided to the Corporate Parenting Board describing the support provided to siblings (and foster siblings) who were separated by the care process (this should include the views of children in care and young people).

## **12/22 Walsall Children's Services Corporate Parenting Board Quarter 1 performance data**

The Head of Quality and Performance presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The report evidenced that the number of children in care remained stable (in Walsall) in comparison to other areas who were experiencing an increase in this figure. The number of children entering the care system was reducing and there was an increase in the number of children and young people who were spending 9 months or less in care – this was linked to family safeguarding.

Members congratulated officers on achieving the child's view in 100% of CiC reviews and an increase in the number of reviews which the child attended. It was noted that progress of health checks was steady within the expected parameters.

Officers addressed an action that was raised at the last Board, in relation to the number of care leavers in supported accommodation.

The Board were informed that different providers of supported housing offered different services, with different levels of staffed support.

A discussion ensued on the performance relating to health checks completed in timescale and the reasons for this, reasons for non-attendance at reviews included parental refusal, home changes, clinic cancellations and illness. It was stressed that of 140 assessments, 11 were completed out of timescale. Members agreed that it would provide reassurance if the Board were able to consider a breakdown of reasons for the completion of health checks out of timescale.

The Board considered the performance data on care leavers in education, employment and training. Officers stated that Walsall's performance was just below the national average. Care leavers were tracked and the service was working alongside impact for change to find opportunities that young people could access. An audit had been completed and barriers for young people had been considered, barriers that had been identified as an individual's emotional health and well-being and unresolved immigration status.



## **Resolved**

- That the quarter 1 performance data be noted.
- That the Board receives a breakdown of the reasons for completion of health checks out of timescale.

### **13/22 Options for increasing the Setting up Home Grant for young people leaving care.**

The Head of Service presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The Board were informed that the setting up home grant was implemented as part of the Leaving Care Act 2000. At its inception the setting up home grant was set at £2000, and was further increased in April 2021 to £2,500. The report described the options for increasing the setting up home grant in view of the increase in the cost of living. Young people (at Corporate Parenting Board) had questioned if £2500 was adequate to support care leavers when they were setting up home, in response to this members had requested that the Board be presented with further detail and options.

Officers informed the Board that Walsall's offer was favourable in comparison to other local authorities, and that there was significant national conversation around this figure. The Director proposed that an incremental increase be proposed as part of the council's budget setting process - through the Directorate Management Team, whilst monitoring what was happening in relation to this both regionally and nationally. In order to do this, work would be done with the finance team to agree an appropriate increase to take into account the cost of living. It was also stressed that wider support to care leavers should be considered, as this was just one part of a bigger package.

## **Resolved:**

That a mechanism for the incremental increase of the 'setting up home grant' is included in the formal budget setting process, to come into effect in April 2023.

### **14/22 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and Young People cared for by Walsall Council**

The Head of Service presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The report provided an update to the Board on the children in care who arrived in the country as unaccompanied children seeking asylum, and the services provided to these children and young people. The Board were provided with details of the national transfer scheme and other routes into Walsall's care – and the specific needs of this group.

The Board were informed that the latest data shows that Walsall was caring for 16 UASC, and there were 37 care leavers who were UASC – all but one of these

were male. It was noted that the needs of this group were met in the same way as other children in care of the local authority, however at 18 years of age this group were not able to access the same support. Personal advisors offered support to young people in resolving their immigration status, and this support is provided up to the age of 25 years. However due to immigration status, access to accommodation, work and training opportunities may not be available, and the personal advisor must then work with charities to secure additional support.

Members expressed dissatisfaction that young people had uncertainty about their immigration status when they reached 18 years of age and suggested that this disadvantaged young people. Officers agreed that this was a difficult area of their work, and sought to assure Members that support was provided until the young person's immigration status was resolved. Contradictions in the home office dispersal service requirements on Local Authorities compared to the way the home office treated young people post 18 were acknowledged. However UASCs in the care of the local authority were treated as part of the local community and supported accordingly.

The health representative described the complex health needs of this group, and informed the Board that health colleagues across the region were considering the level of mental health commissioning required.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 8.05 p.m.

Signed .....

Date .....



## **Young People's Engagement and Participation of Children in Care Council and Care Leavers**

### **Executive Summary:**

The Council4Kids, the "Children in Care Council" (CICC), is the forum where Walsall's looked after children, young people and care leavers are able to shape and influence the parenting and support that they receive.

This report describes some of the highlights of the CICC since the last Corporate Parenting Board on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

### **Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board:**

To provide the Corporate Parenting Board an update on the activities of the CICC which will allow the Board to offer any support to the children, in partnership with strategic management as corporate parents for looked after children.

We are keen to ensure that the CICC is encouraged to share highlights and raise any issues and concerns they may have on behalf of care experienced young people in Walsall with a view to improving services and outcome for children in the care of Walsall Council.

The Shadow Board has been put in place to ensure that the young people are fully involved in the Corporate Parenting Board and that their views are considered as part of this process

### **Recommendations:**

The Board notes the activity and events of the Children in Care Council.

### **Background papers:**

Previous Young People Engagement reports.

### **Corporate Parenting Pledges**

The Walsall Promise for all Children in Care and Care Leavers

### **Resource and legal considerations:**

Walsall is committed to ensuring that children and young people are involved in decision making and processes that directly affect their lives through.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced seven Corporate Parenting Principles and 2 of the principles focus on the involvement and participation of children and young people: [Page 12 of 37](#)

- Encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- Take account of a child or young person's views, wishes and feelings

Article 12 United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child says that children and young people have the human right to have opinions and for these opinions to be heard and taken seriously and taken seriously.

### **Council Corporate Plan Priorities:**

- Children have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well.
- People have increased independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities.

### **Citizen impact:**

The services and the improvements play a key role in the quality of life and outcomes for the children, young people and families of Walsall. The Council and its partners as Corporate Parents make critical contributions to improve outcomes.

### **Environmental impact:**

None.

### **Performance management:**

The Children's Champion works with children in care and our care experienced young people to ensure that our CICC is a rich and engaging forum. Regular reports are provided to the Director of Children's Services and the Corporate Parenting Board.

### **Reducing inequalities:**


The children in care council seeks to secure improvements in the equality of services, which, when achieved will have a positive impact on our most vulnerable children, young people and their families.

### **Consultation:**

The CICC is one of the key forums through which services for children in care and care leavers seek to consult on service delivery and where children and young people are able to shape and influence the parenting they receive at every level.

### **Contact Officer:**

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<b>Report: Young People's Engagement and Children in Care Council</b>	
<b>1.1</b>	<b>Total Respect Training</b>
	<p>To date we have delivered 9 Total Respect courses to professionals in Walsall. We have 6 care leavers trained that deliver the course. The feedback from attendees is really powerful and this really encourages our care leavers, boosting their confidence and self-esteem. The skills that our care leavers gain through delivering this help them in so many ways, here are a few:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financially</li> <li>• Work experience which they can use when applying for jobs or training course</li> <li>• Working as part of a team</li> <li>• Speaking and delivering workshops to groups of people</li> <li>• Improves their listening skills</li> </ul> <p>We have 5 staff trained to deliver Total Respect and this is growing. On the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of October one of our new residential home staff is attending the training and will be taking 1 or 2 young people along over to Birmingham which will increase our numbers again.</p> <p>There are two areas which we want to focus on moving forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To train some younger people maybe consider training several young people aged 14 – 16 years. So far we have trained 6 care leavers to deliver Total Respect and by training up some younger children we think this could add value to the training as well as providing some really good experience for them.</li> </ul> <p>To book some training dates in the school holidays; we feel this may open up opportunities for young people as they should not be at school or college and may mean we get a different cohort of staff able to access the training.</p>
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Council4Kids groups</b>
	<p>The Children in Care council when meeting with a Head of Service recently called themselves just a '<i>reference group</i>', this is a powerful statement and one we need to address. We are looking to revise the way the Children in Care council and the Care Leavers function to enable them to be more participatory and as we move forward co-producers. The Participation Team are working with the Children in Care Council to refresh the way they operate, to explore their priorities for the year to inform an annual work plan. This will mean that the work of the council is more focused and can more effectively drive forward positive change.</p> <p>One of the first changes that has been made is to separate out the two councils into primary and secondary age groups, although we have taken a child centred approach to this and been thoughtful about the needs of our young people in which group works best for them. So far, we can really see the benefits of having two different groups. We are able to make the sessions more age appropriate which makes it easier to engage the whole group and they seem to be more focused and eager to join in.</p>

We have started considering some of their priorities and have been discussing some important topics with them. Here is a flavour of what they have been saying:

### **What should we put in our Newsletter?**

How can adults help you?

Don't feel scared to title yourself LGBTQ.

Promote the CiCC group.

I am interested in having an Independent Visitor.

Always happy for more children to join our group.

Try new food and share recipes – vegetarian and meat options.

Be proud of who you are.

These are the responses gathered from our Primary Council4Kids group. We will be using their ideas to help shape our new Newsletter.

### **What should young people be asked when they stop receiving support from social workers?**

What other support would you like?

Social workers always look after people.

How do you feel?

If you can see your parents.

Find answers to your questions.

Have you got any questions that I can help with?

You don't judge children.

If your parents don't get in contact then how can you see them?

Social workers don't always listen.

	<p>These are the responses we have gathered from the Primary group and we will also be doing the same exercise with the Secondary group. This work is helping to shape the new feedback forms that will be sent to children across the system (not just children in our care) when they finish having a social worker. Although it is early days, we can see that the restructure of our children in care councils is already allowing to better focus on co-production with the children who attend.</p> <p>Moving forward some of the work we have planned is to create a series of videos about issues regarding being in care, such as what can I expect from my review, what can I expect from my personal education planning meeting etc. To help support young people's participation in decision making in their own lives.</p>
<b>1.3</b>	<p><b>Children in Care Council and Corporate Parenting Board</b></p> <p>David has been undertaking consultation with young people over the last 6 months to understand their perspective about the current approach to their work with the Corporate Parenting Board and below is a summary of their perspectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people have shared it can feel scary to attend the board because it feels like a professionals meeting, they can feel like a rabbit in a head light and can feel it is difficult to join in with the discussions.</li> <li>• Young people have shared that they are 'switched off' by the discussions at the board, and can be bored or not understand what is being discussed if it isn't relevant to them.</li> <li>• Young people have shared that they feel that they are not being consulted about what is heard at the board or having a say in what is discussed and so feel it can be led by the adults.</li> <li>• Some of the young people have shared that when they share their individual experience they can feel shut down. They share it has been said that they are not there to share their personal experience and there to represent the wider views of Walsall young people, but they don't have opportunity to get the wider views to share at the board.</li> <li>• It is also felt that the Children in Care Council (CICC) does not have links to the Corporate Parenting Board at this time, and it is only the Care Leavers forum who are engaging with the board.</li> </ul> <p>As a Local Authority we have met with Councillor Wilson to think through how we can respond to the young people's perspective and refresh the way the children in care council, care leavers forum and corporate parenting board work together. The proposed approach would answer the issues they have raised and continue to allow a strong working relationship between the Corporate Parenting Board and children in care. The proposals below have been informed by learning from national best practice.</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To answer the young people's concerns that they are not included in decision making about what is considered with the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) a meeting could be held between the members of the CPB, democratic services, senior managers from the local authority, and CICC and CL forum. At this meeting, there could be a discussion about what should be heard at CPB. There are likely to be clear priorities set by CPB and local authority but the children and young people views could also be considered, what are their priorities of where member's scrutiny should be focused and how can this be addressed. When an agenda for the year is agreed it could be decided which forum/s would be best for reports to be considered at by the young people (ie CICC/Care Leavers forum, residential forum). It may be during the year, young people identify priorities they wish for the CPB to consider in addition to what is agreed, and where there is capacity consideration could be given to how this will be accommodated. It is recognised this may not be feasible for this year but consideration could be given to this informing future programmes of activity.</li> <li>• The young people's feedback suggests that considering reports at CPB can be quite overwhelming for them and can lead them to either not contributing fully or switching off. To answer this CPB could recommend that the author of any report coming to CPB have to first share it with the appropriate children's participation forum. This could be done in a child friendly way, with support from the Participation team to think about how they can effectively engage young people in the learning from their report. The author should be willing to take on board ideas and ways of addressing practice identified within this meeting into their report and young people's ideas should inform future action planning. CPB may want to consider requesting that authors ensure they include in their reports the learning they have taken from the young people and what they plan to do about this. The author and young people may also agree that there are actions which would benefit from further involvement from the CICC/CLF in progressing and this will be timetabled into the young people's annual work plan.</li> <li>• To enable young people to feel like they are providing a broader perspective and not just sharing their own views, the CICC and CL forum could also be supported to undertake wider consultation work with the cohort of children in care/care leavers to inform their thinking. The CPB may also identify particular issues they want this wider perspective on and request this is sought via the Participation team.</li> <li>• Where the report coming to Corporate Parenting board is a proposal, for example, for a new initiative or approach, it could be directed by CPB that the CICC and/or CLF should be involved at</li> </ul>
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	<p>the beginning of the process to help inform its development and there should be ongoing engagement throughout this process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Children in Care Council and/or Care Leavers forum will be supported to present their views about the reports they have considered. Where they feel confident and willing, young people will be supported to do this in person at CPB. However, it is recognised that for some young people we work with this may be too overwhelming and they may wish to present their views in different ways, for example, via the Participation Officer or using creative methods, the primary CICC may for example, want to make a poster which helps members to understand their thoughts. The CPB could direct the Participation Officer to take back to the young people what was discussed and agreed. This can also be communicated to the wider care population via the newly refreshed newsletters. The CPB could request a participation annual report be shared and this could include reports from the different participation forums, young people could be supported to come and help to present this report.</li> <li>• In addition, the Corporate Parenting Board could propose a schedule of more informal meetings with the Children in Care Council, Care Leavers forum and our Children's home forums. This would allow them to undertake face to face participation sessions to consider specific issues or themes and plan together about how these could be addressed. These could either be as part of the existing work programme of the board or additional sessions. In terms of frequency this could be as regularly as it is felt useful, it is likely they would be a minimum of twice a year but can be arranged to meet what members feel would be helpful. In some Local Authorities the whole board attend these meetings, in other authorities these kind of meetings are just attended by the chair of the board. Typically senior managers from the Local Authority also attend. These meetings are often held in a venue which the young people feel comfortable in and will include more informal ice breakers alongside the more structured participation activity.</li> <li>• These options will allow for a robust line of communication between the young people and CPB, enhance the opportunities for children in care as well as care leavers to contribute to Corporate Parenting Board and allow us to meaningfully co-produce activity to affect positive change.</li> </ul>
<b>1.4</b>	<b>Good news stories!</b>
	<p>As it is care leavers week from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of October we have decided to do something a little different to celebrate some of our care leaver's success. We have put together a number of short videos where our</p>

	<p>care leavers have been happy to send us some recordings and this will be presented to several managers, staff, elected members and other young people with lived experience. We would request that we can have ten/fifteen minutes of the meeting at the next panel to share these with you.</p> <p>In essence the young people have shared with us their accomplishments which stem from going to university to learning to passing a test for their bike so they can drive to work, to competing in athletic competitions!</p>
<b>1.5</b>	<p><b>Children's home forum</b></p> <p>We have started to work with the staff and our young people at all three of our residential homes. One of our care leavers Aisha that delivers the Total Respect training with us has a keen passion to be involved with our residential homes. She has lived in two residential homes herself so has some real life experience and ideas on how to engage some young people and how we can start to think of making some positive changes. We are looking at how she can support the delivery of the work with these young people. One of our initial tasks as a group is to support the Residential team with coming up with a name for our two new homes in Walsall. What we would like to do is to try and give them names that are different to our current ones as currently Redruth and Hilton are named after the roads where they are on. We are also hoping to work with the young people over the next couple of months to develop a video about living in our children's homes again to support young people about what they can experience. We are developing training for all staff to support active participation of children in their own lives and plan to offer this to the staff at our residential homes in the new year.</p> <p><b>Bluebells:</b></p> <p>Given the complex needs of the young people at Bluebells and that a number of our young people accessing this support are non-verbal we have to think differently about how we capture their views and engage them in the work of the home. David and Sophia are due to attend a Unit Meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November to speak to all of the staff with their manager Glen to consider some different options of how we can get the voice of our young people there.</p> <p><b>Redruth:</b></p> <p>We have had started to meet with Redruth monthly, so far 3 out of the 4 young people there have attended. At this point we are spending time building some connection with them. The focus of our discussions in October were regarding Total Respect and trying to engage them in the training. Unfortunately they did not feel confident enough to attend the two day training in Birmingham so David and Sophia will consider some other options in training them back in Walsall if they are still keen to get involved. The young people at Redruth are saying that they are keen to work with us and in November we will discuss what they want their priorities to be.</p> <p>Sophia and Aisha's wanted to share as this was their first visit to the home that they felt the home had a lovely vibe. They thought it felt really welcoming and homely with a personal touch. The living spaces looked and felt really nice and they like the pictures of the young people on display on several walls.</p>

	<p><b>Hilton:</b></p> <p>We have two teenage girls living at Hilton Road, at this time they are less keen to engage in participation activity with us but one of the girls connected really well with Aisha. We recognise it may take a little time to get them on board and we will focus the next couple of months on relationship building with the young people to try and engage them in more co-production moving forward. There are some challenges in terms of the dynamics between the two young people here and we will need to be thoughtful about how we support this moving forward. One of the young people at the home is considering joining the Coucil4Kids group so we will continue to work with her to encourage her to engage in this.</p>												
1.6	<b>Regional Participation work</b>												
	<p>On the 8<sup>th</sup> of September David attended the regional blueprint launch in Birmingham with a care leaver and two managers from the Transitional and Leaving Care service. This was a great event where we got to share and hear from others the great things that we and other councils do for care leavers as part of the Local Offer.</p> <p>David continues to meet with the regional participation group every month and will be leading on a piece of work around a West Midlands regional offer for transport. David is hoping to lead a piece of work across the region where we can understand the real life experience of care leavers looking at the cost and impact of travel on them with a view to being able to make proposals to the companies across the Black Country. David will be able to provide further updates to this in future meetings.</p>												
1.7	<b>Dates for the diary</b>												
	<p>New dates for the Council4Kids group:</p> <table><tr><td><b>3<sup>rd</sup> October</b></td></tr><tr><td>Secondary group – TLC hub 4:30 – 6pm</td></tr><tr><td><b>10<sup>th</sup> October</b></td></tr><tr><td>Care Leavers group – TLC hub 4:30 – 6:30</td></tr><tr><td><b>17<sup>th</sup> November</b></td></tr><tr><td>Primary group - TLC hub 4:30 – 6pm</td></tr><tr><td><b>1<sup>st</sup> December</b></td></tr><tr><td>Secondary group - TLC hub 4:30 – 6pm</td></tr><tr><td><b>8<sup>th</sup> December</b></td></tr><tr><td>Care Leavers group - TLC hub 4:30 – 6:30</td></tr><tr><td><b>15<sup>th</sup> December</b></td></tr><tr><td>Joint Christmas Celebration – all ages</td></tr></table>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> October</b>	Secondary group – TLC hub 4:30 – 6pm	<b>10<sup>th</sup> October</b>	Care Leavers group – TLC hub 4:30 – 6:30	<b>17<sup>th</sup> November</b>	Primary group - TLC hub 4:30 – 6pm	<b>1<sup>st</sup> December</b>	Secondary group - TLC hub 4:30 – 6pm	<b>8<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Care Leavers group - TLC hub 4:30 – 6:30	<b>15<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Joint Christmas Celebration – all ages
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<b>15<sup>th</sup> December</b>													
Joint Christmas Celebration – all ages													

**David Hughes**  
**Children's Champion**

# Walsall Children's Services Corporate Parenting Board Quarter 2

**Please Note: 2021-22 benchmarking data is not yet available so  
comparisons are against 2020-21 data.**



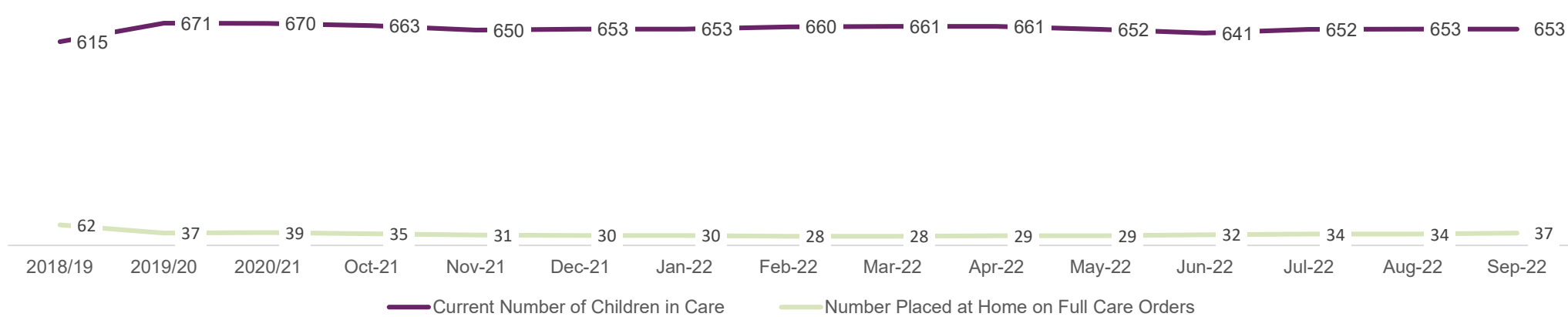
**Walsall Council**

**PROUD OF OUR PAST OUR PRESENT AND FOR OUR FUTURE**

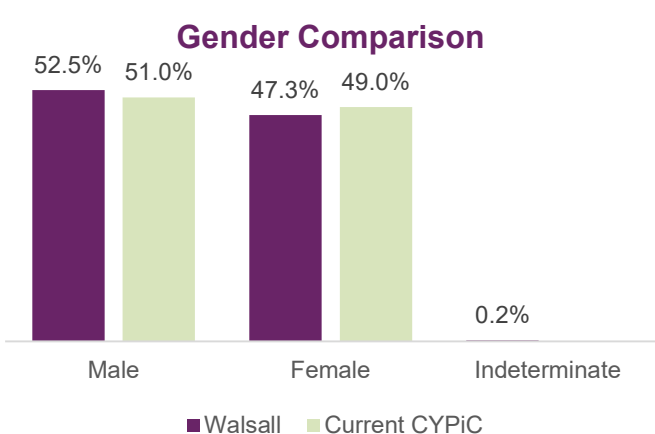
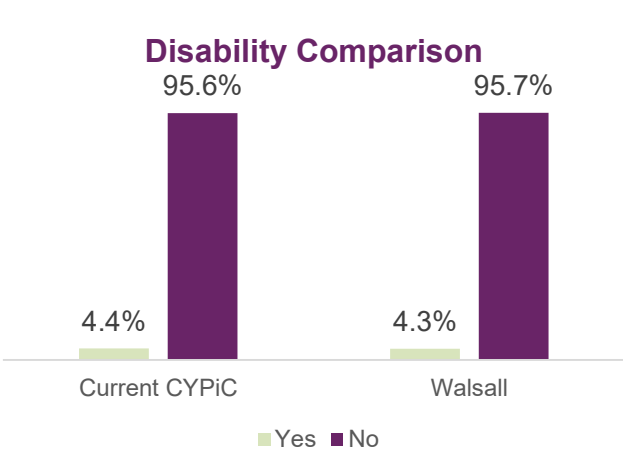
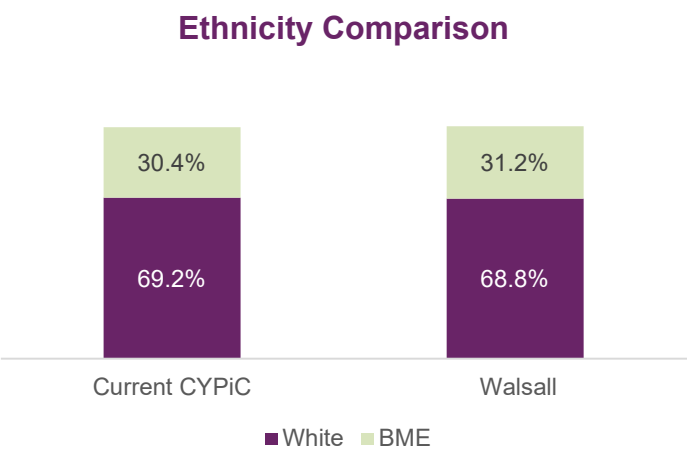
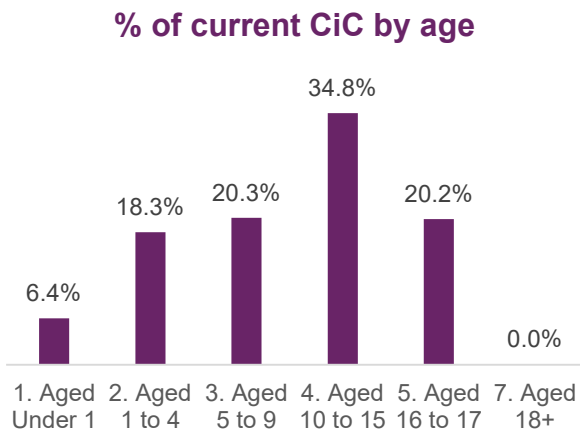
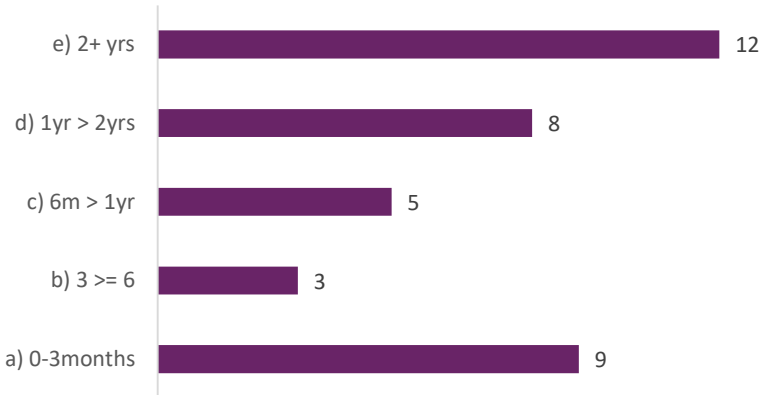
Current Children in Care (CiC) Profile



Number of Children in Care in Walsall (12 Month Rolling)



Length of Time placed at home on full care orders

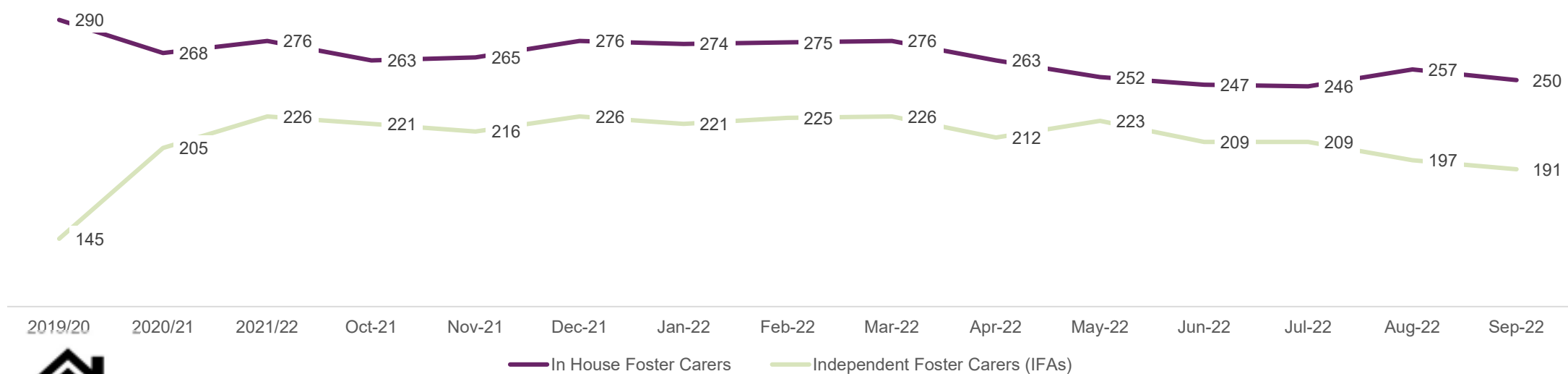


Commentary

Demographic data has been taken from the 2020 mid-year population estimates. A slightly lower proportion of Children in Care are from BME backgrounds compared to the Walsall Child and Young Person population (0-17s). A slightly higher percentage of Children in Care have a disability (4.5%), compared to the overall 0-17 population (4.3%). A slightly lower percentage of Children in Care are male (51.0%) compared to the overall 0-17 population of Walsall (52.4%).

The current Children in Care population has continued to decrease slightly from 661 at the end of 2021/22 to 655 at the end of Q2 of the current year (2022/23). The current rate of 95 per 10,000 remains below that of our statistical neighbours but is still higher than the 2020/21 England and West Midlands averages. We currently have 37 children placed at home on full care order, this is a slight decrease from 32 at the end of Q1. 20 of the 37 have been placed at home for over a year. Work is continuing with the courts to revoke care orders for children who are placed at home where appropriate.

Breakdown of Foster Placements (12 Month Rolling)



The number of CiC placed with in house foster carers and IFA's has decreased.



**% CiC placed 20 mile+ from home, outside of LA boundary**

**88**  
**15.7%**

2020/21 Walsall = 11.0%  
2019/20 Walsall = 10.0%  
2020/21 West Midlands = 14.0%  
2020/21 Stat Neighbours = 16.3%  
2020/21 England = 16.0%

**% CiC 3 or more placements in a year**

**57**  
**8.7%**

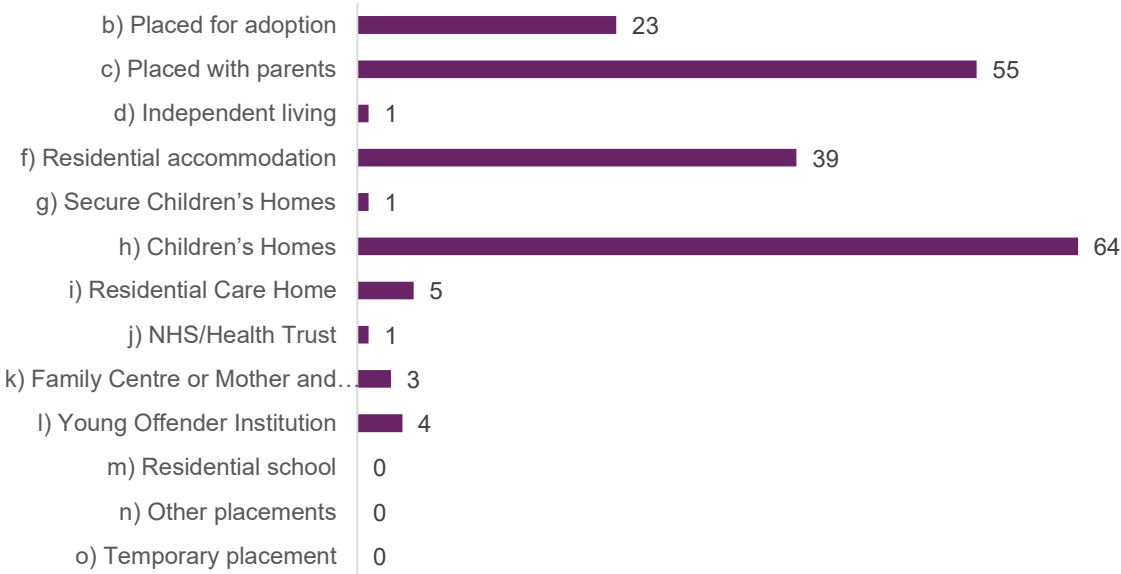
2020/21 Walsall = 7.0%  
2019/20 Walsall = 9.0%  
2020/21 West Midlands = 8.0%  
2020/21 Stat Neighbours = 7.1%  
2020/21 England = 9.0%

**% of CiC in same placement for over 2 years if CLA for over 2.5 years**

**217**  
**66.0%**

2020/21 Walsall = 67.0%  
2019/20 Walsall = 66.0%  
2020/21 West Midlands = 71.0%  
2020/21 Stat Neighbours = 71.5%  
2020/21 England = 70.0%

Current CiC by Placement Type (non-fostered)



Commentary

Trends for children placed with in house foster carers have decreased during the second quarter of 2022/23. Currently Walsall has 250 children placed with in house foster carers, lower than the out-turn for 2021-22. Walsall has 191 children placed with independent fostering agencies.

15.7% of Walsall's CiC are placed 20 plus miles from their home address this is an increase on the 2020-21 out-turn. 8.7% of the CiC population have had 3 or more placements within a year. This is also higher than the 2020-21 out-turn. The percentage of CiC in the same placement for over 2 years if CiC for over 2.5 years (66.0%) is slightly lower than regional and statistical neighbour averages for 2020/21.



Statutory Visits and Reviews



% Visits undertaken to timescale

Where a statutory visit has been undertaken to timescale in accordance with the childs plan.

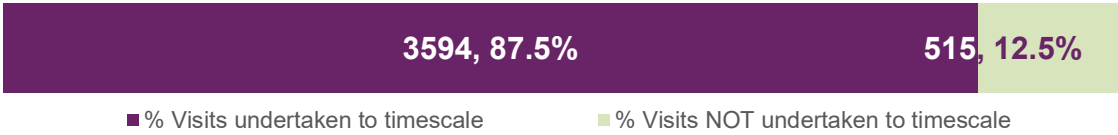
Time Since Last Visit Undertaken	Number	%
a) 0 - 6 weeks	548	83.7%
b) 6 - 12 weeks	90	13.7%
c) 12 - 18 weeks	13	2.0%
d) 18+ weeks	3	0.5%
No Visit Recorded - new in last month	1	0.2%
Total	655	100.0%



Reviews carried out within timescale (12month Rolling)

Where reviews for children looked after are carried out within timescale

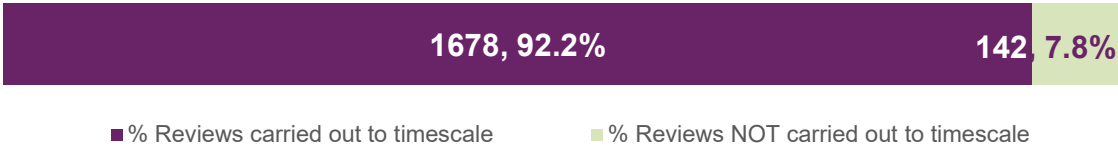
Time Since Latest Review	Number	%
a) 0 > 3 months	390	59.5%
b) 3 > 6 months	243	37.1%
c) 6 > 9 months	13	2.0%
d) 9 > 12 months	0	0.0%
e) 1 year or more	0	0.0%
No review	0	0.0%
No Review - new in last month	8	1.2%
Total	654	100.0%



2020/21 Year Out-turn = 92%  
2019/20 Year Out-turn = 88%  
2018/19 Year Out-turn = 88%



% of children in care by time since last visit



2020/21 Year Out-turn = 95%  
2019/20 Year Out-turn = 90%  
2018/19 Year Out-turn = 91%



% Time Since Latest Review



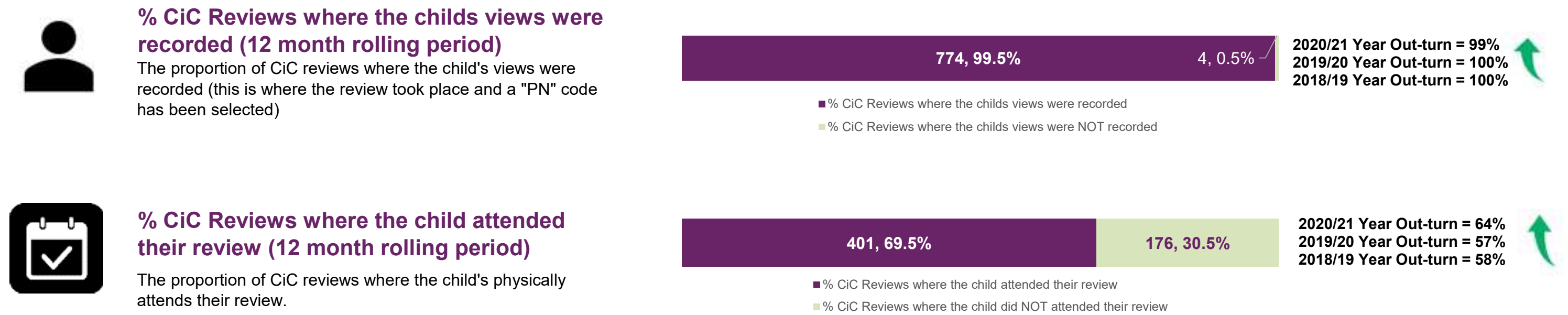
Commentary

The proportion of CiC where a statutory visit has been undertaken to timescale in accordance with the child’s plan is 87.5% with 83.7% seen within 6 weeks of the previous visit or coming in care. There was 1 CiC with no visits recorded as 30th Sept 2022, this child would have entered into care during the month.

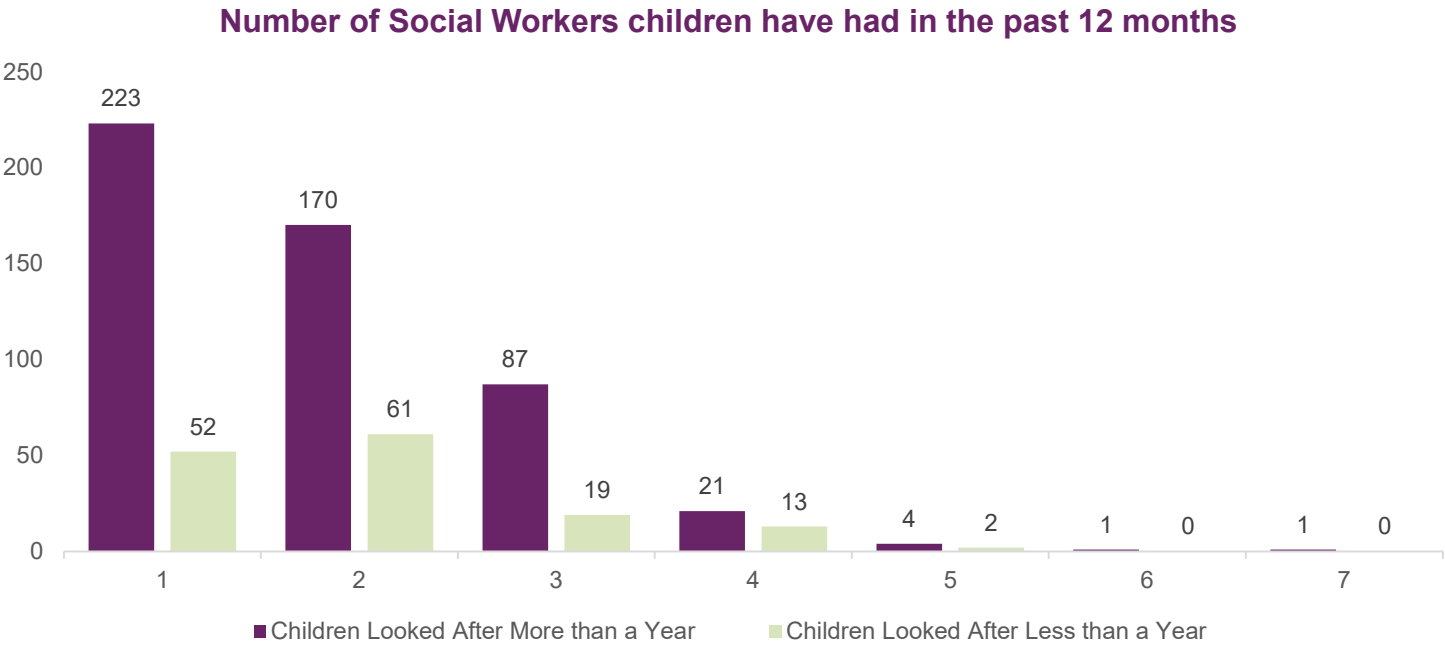
92.2% of reviews have been undertaken within timescales. 96.6% of current Children in Care have had a review within the last 6 months. 1.2% (8) children currently have overdue reviews, however, this review will have been completed on time and will be in the process of being recorded (IROs have 20 working days from the date of review to write their reports).



Views of the child



Type of Participation at Review (12 month rolling period)	Number	%
PN0 - child under 4 at time of review	433	N/A
PN1 - child attends and speaks for themselves	738	60.4%
PN2 - child attends and an advocate speaks for them	37	3.0%
PN3 - child attends and conveys their views non-verbally	20	1.6%
PN4 - child attends; does not speak for themselves / convey their views	35	2.9%
PN5 - child does not attend but asks advocate to speak for them	109	8.9%
PN6 - child does not attend but conveys their feelings to the conference	256	21.0%
PN7 - child does not attend nor conveys their view to the conference	26	2.1%
<b>Total Reviews</b>	<b>1654</b>	
No Participation Code Reported	0	0.0%



Commentary

The child's views were recorded at 99.5% of CiC reviews. This is similar to the out-turns for the previous three years, this remains very positive performance.

69.5% of children attended their review in the previous 12 months. This is a increase compared with previous years and has been supported and enabled through the increased use of technology.

The number of children experiencing a change of social worker has decreased slightly compared to the previous quarter. The number of CiC for more than 1 year who have remained with the same social worker for the past 12 months is 223. This has increased from 210 at the end of the previous quarter.

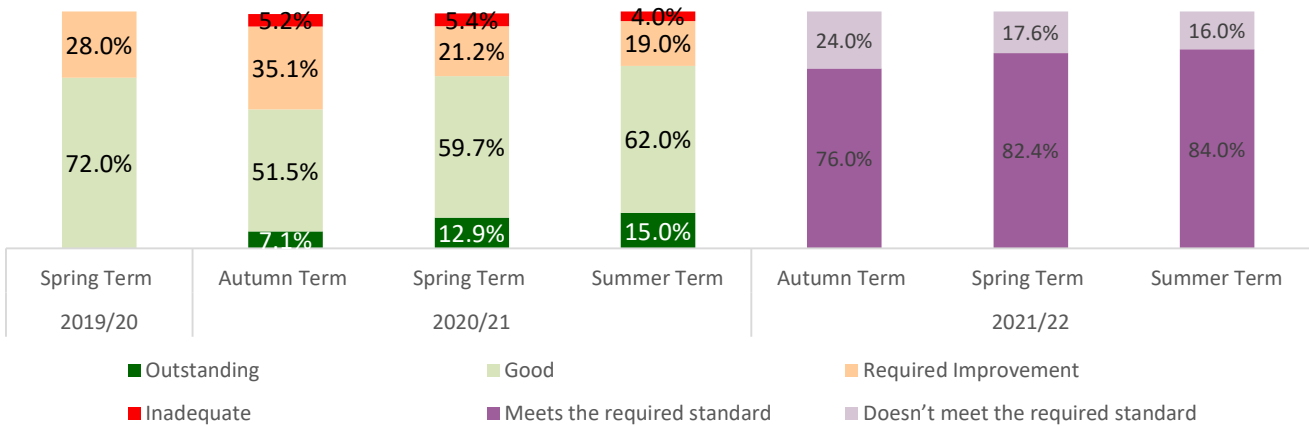
Education



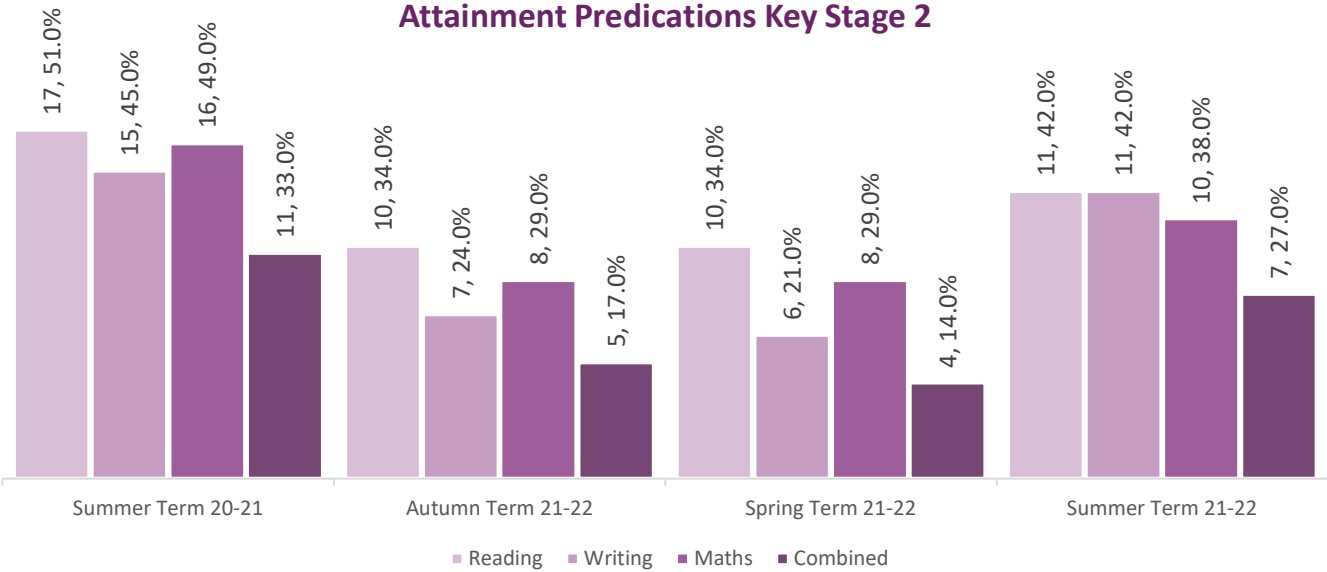
RAG Ratings of PEPS

The quality assurance process changed in 2021/22 from being rated inadequate, requires improvement, good and outstanding, to meets the required and standard and doesn't meet required standard this enables us to distinguish between very good and very poor PEPs'.

RAG Ratings of PEPs

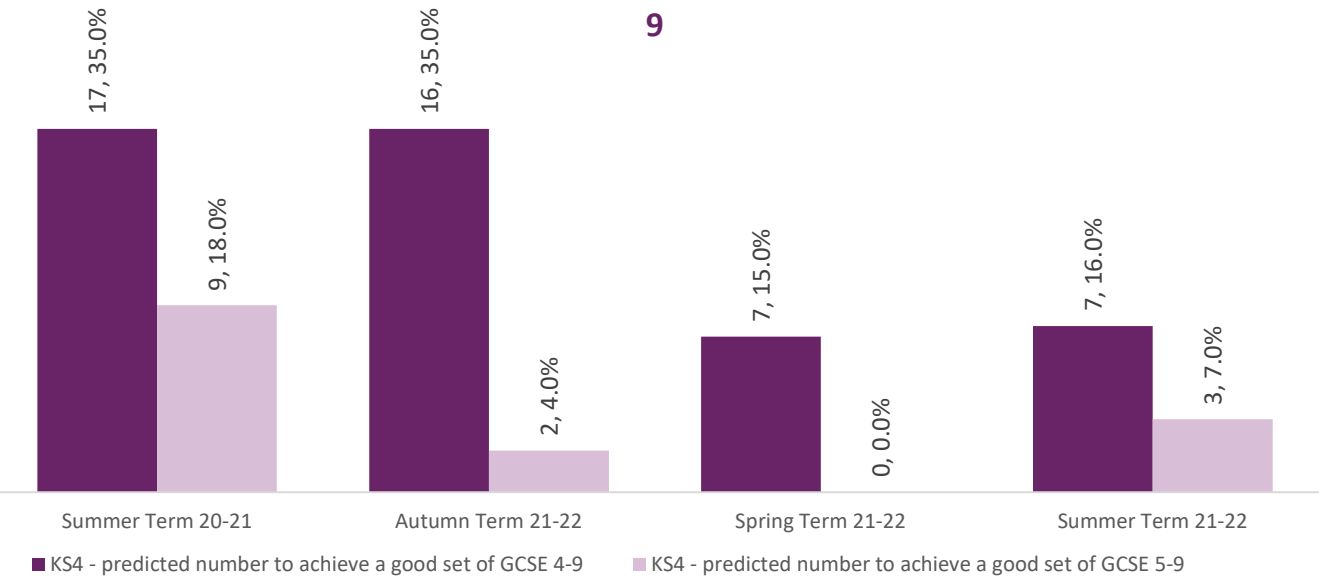
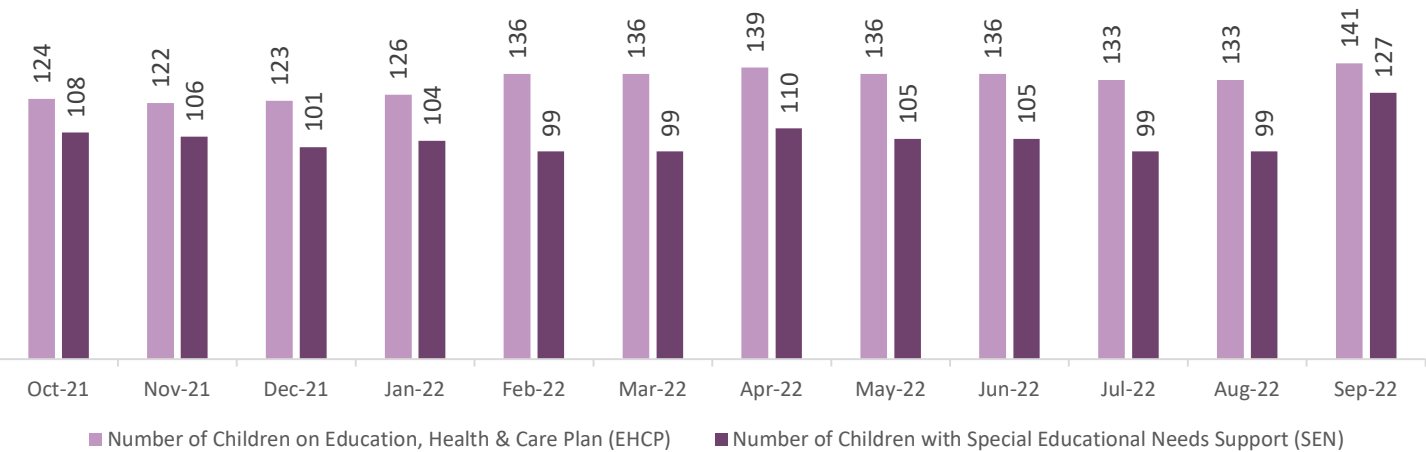


Attainment Predications Key Stage 2



Key Stage 4 KS4 - predicted number to achieve a good set of GCSE 4-9 & 5-9

EHCP and SEN Support



Commentary

**Please Note** - The quality assurance process for the rating of completed PEPs has changed from a "RAG" system to "Meets the required standard" and "Doesnt meet the required standard"

KS2 -The percentage of children predicted to achieve the expected level of attainment for KS2 combined in reading, writing and maths in spring 2021-22 was 27% which is a significant Increase compared to spring 2021-22 (14%), but is slight lower than the same period last year (33%)

KS4 -The percentage of children predicted to achieve a good set of GCSE (4-9) reported in summer 2021-22 was 16% which is a decrease compared to summer 2020-21 (35%). The percentage of children predicted to achieve a good set of GCSE (5-9) reported in Summer 2021-22 is 7% which is a significant decrease compared to summer 2020-21 (18%).

The number of children with an EHCP has been remained stable throughout the year but has seen an increase in September and is at 141, compared with 124 in October 2021.

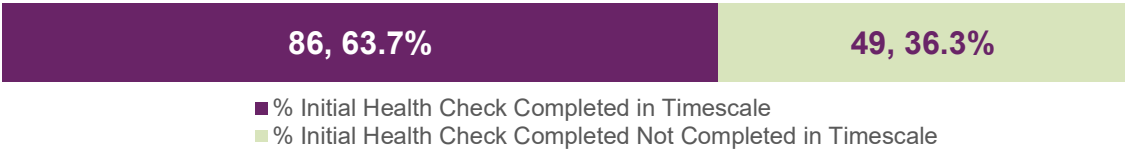
The number of children with SEN support has increased from 108 in October 2021 to 127 in September 2022. September 2022 (127) was the highest month in the year.

Health and Well-being



% Initial Health Check Completed in Timescale

Assessments in timescale of CiC admission for those in care for 28 days or more (12 month rolling figure)

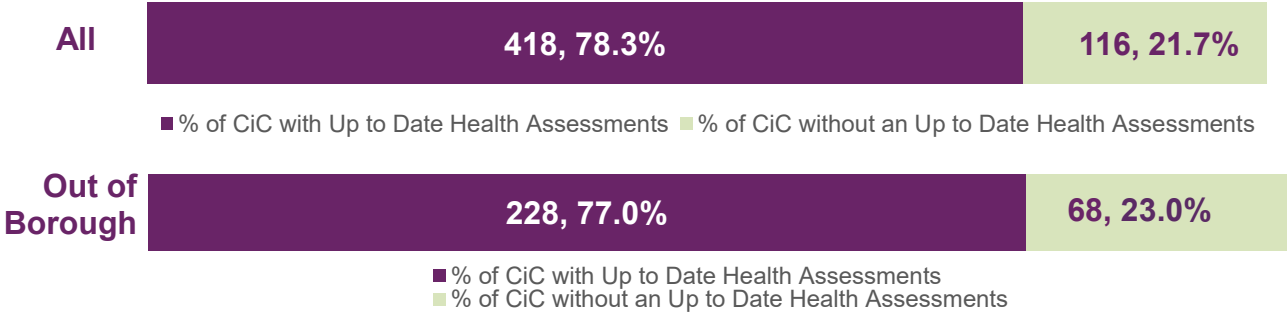


2020/21 Year Out-turn = 75%  
2019/20 Year Out-turn = 49%  
2018/19 Year Out-turn = 75%



% of CiC with Up to Date Health Assessments

Where the child is over 5 and has been in care for over a year

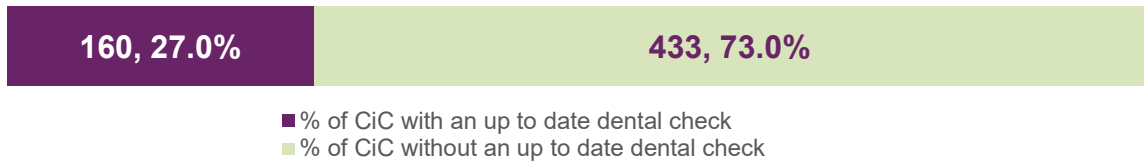


2021/22 (Prov) = 91%  
2020/21 Walsall = 85%  
2019/20 Walsall = 80%  
2019/20 West Midlands = 87%  
2019/20 Stat Neighbours = 90%



% of CiC with an up to date dental check

Where the child is over 5 and has been in care for over a year



2021/22 (Prov) = 88%  
2020/21 Walsall = 43.0%  
2020/21 Walsall = 92%  
2020/21 West Midlands = 33%  
2020/21 Stat Neighbours = 33%  
2020/21 England = 40%



Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

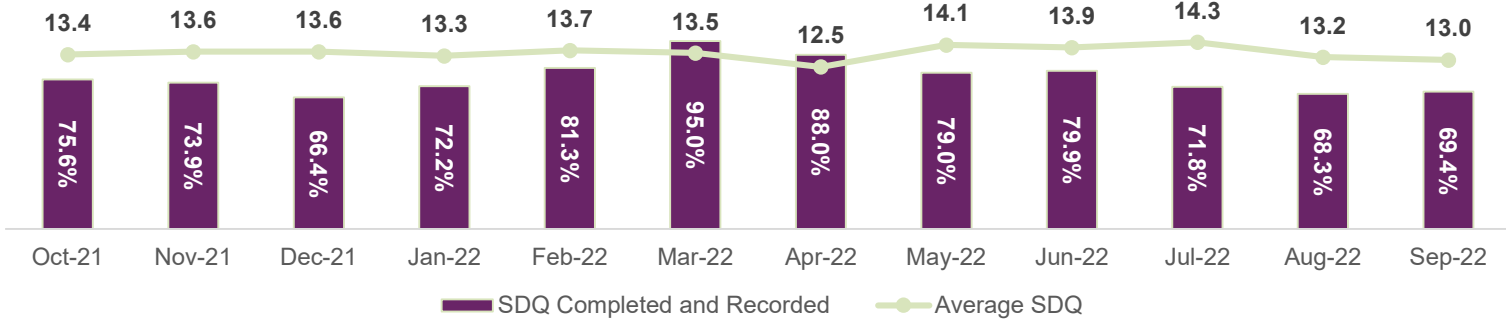
The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire should be completed for every child looked after for at least 12 months and aged 5 to 16 years-old.

Average SDQ Score  
13.0

Breakdown

		Number	% of those eligible for SDQ	% against all Children
Score 0 - 13	Considered Normal	226	53%	35.9%
Score 14 - 16	Borderline	52	12%	8.3%
Score 17 - 40	Cause for Concern	149	35%	23.7%

Number of children looked after for at least 12 months aged 5 to 16 with an SDQ score (Rolling 12 months)

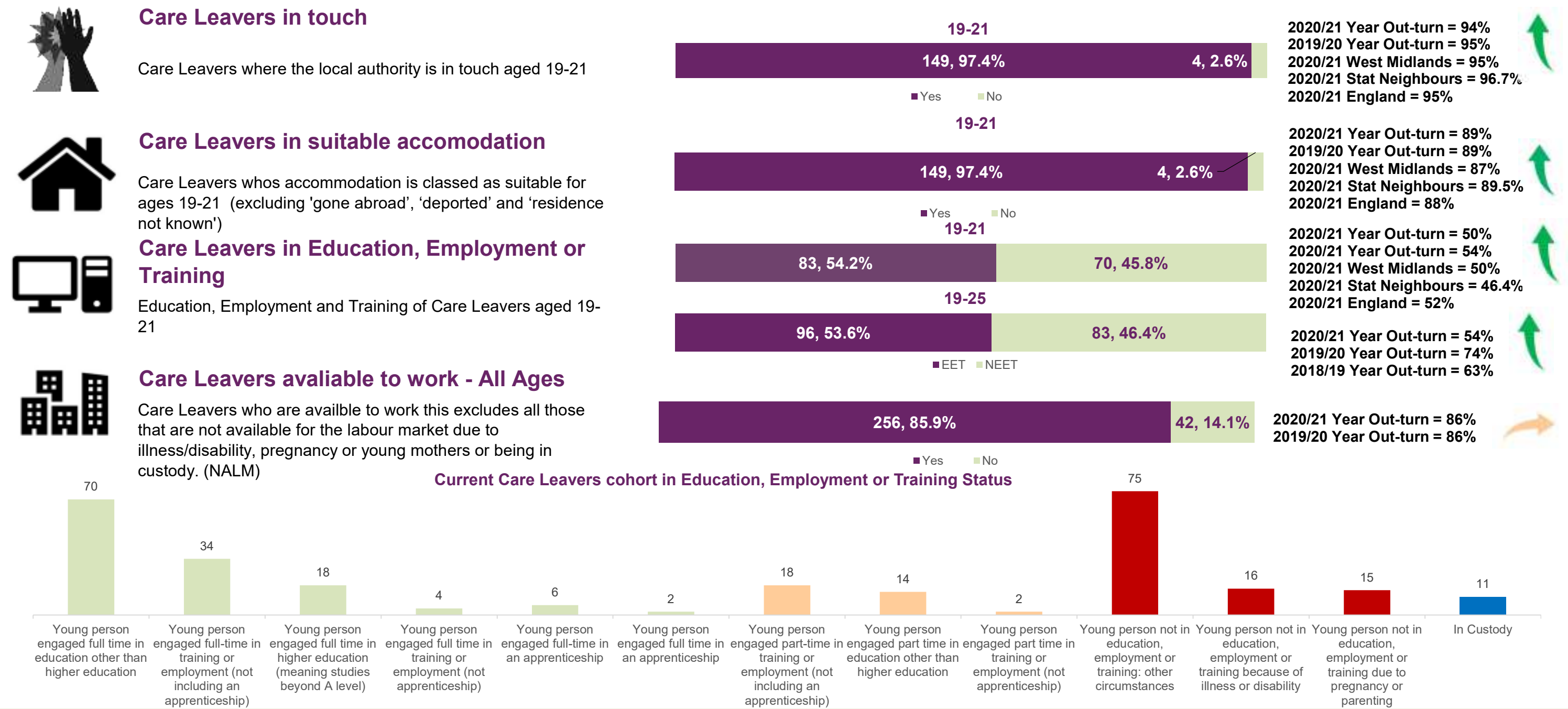


Commentary

Performance shows a continuing decrease in the number of children in care have up to date health checks just under 78.3%, compared to 85% at the end of 2020/21. There has been a decrease in the percentage of children whose initial health checks are done on time 63.7% currently compared to 73.7% at the end of Q1 2021/22. Social Care and Health colleagues continue to work closely together to ensure that processes for notifying health when a child enters care are robust and the finalisation of health assessments is timely. The Dental checks indicator is an indicator that increases month on month, so you should see significant impact quarter upon quarter.

The proportion of SDQ's completed and recorded has decreased significantly from March (95%) compared to 69.4% Sept 2022. The average SDQ score is currently 13.0. This remains relatively consistent. 149 children currently have an SDQ score that suggests there may be a cause for concern in their emotional and mental well-being based on the answers they gave to the questionnaire.

Care Leavers

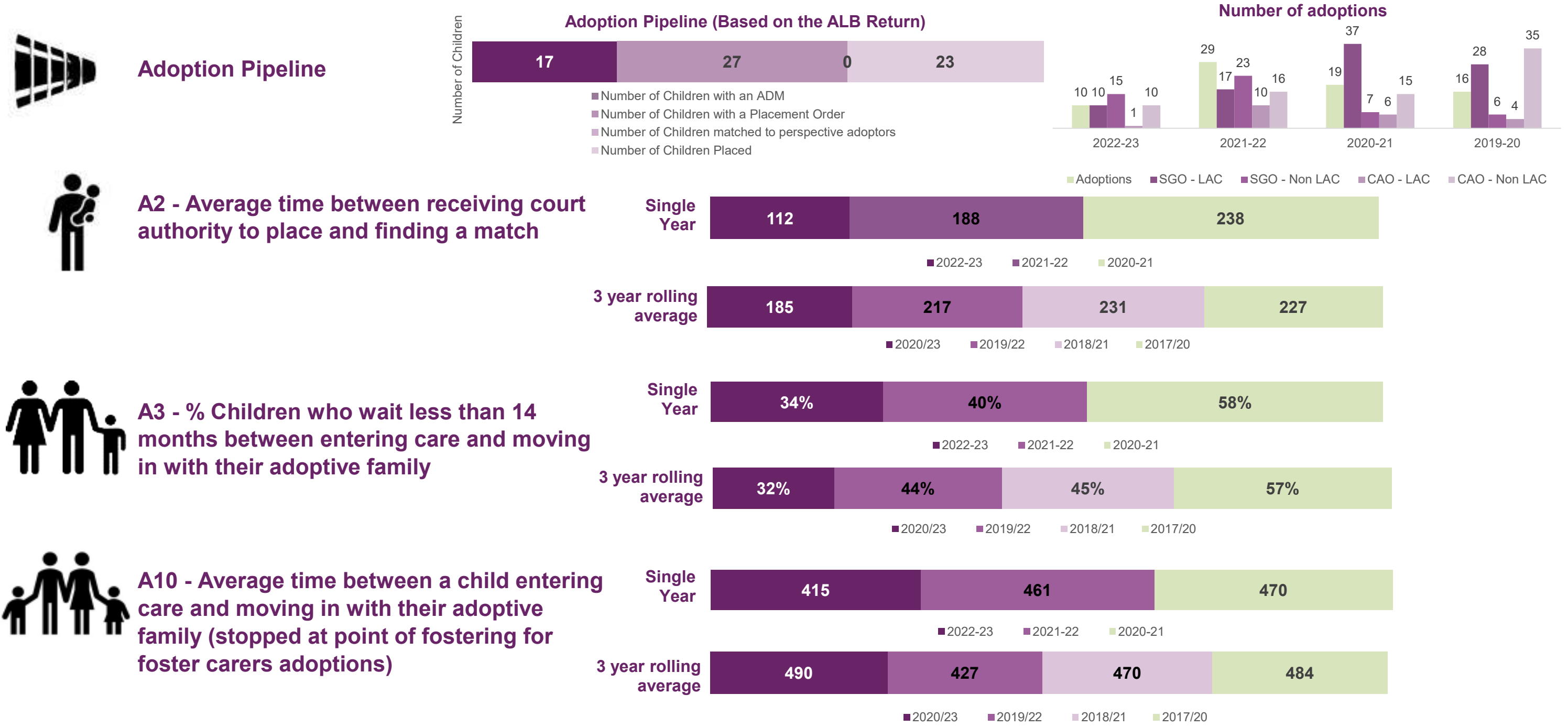


Commentary

The percentage of 19-21 year old care leavers in education, employment or training at the end of quarter 2 of 2021-22 was 54.2%. This has increased compared to 2020-21 out turn of 50%. The 19-25 cohort has also seen an increase during quarter 2, with 53.6% care leavers in Education, Employment or Training compared with the 54% 2020/21 outturn.

85.9% of care leavers are available to work - excluding those not available for the labour market (NALM) due to illness, disability, pregnancy or being a young mother or because they are in custody. 11 of Walsall's care leavers are currently in custody. The number of of care leavers in suitable accommodation remains high with 97.4%

Adoption and Permanency



Commentary

There were 29 adoptions during 2021/22 this based on the latest ALB data. In 2022/23 so far 10 were children were adopted.

So far during the current year, children had a currently waiting less time than in 2021/22 between receiving court authority to place and finding a match - this was 188 days compared to 112 days in 2022/23. 34% of Children wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. Between April 2022 and Sept 2022, 25 Children have ceased to be looked after due to special guardianship orders (10 - LAC and 15 - Non LAC) and 11 due to child arrangement orders (1 - LAC and 10 - Non LAC).



## **Therapeutic Support for Children in Care – FLASH Service**

### **Executive Summary:**

Children in care are often at greater risk of suffering poor emotional well-being or mental health than their peers not in care, often resulting from their early childhood experiences and trauma. Walsall Council has corporate parenting responsibility towards children in our care, which includes ensuring that they are safeguarded from harm, and are healthy and are cared for in ways in which any good parent would for their own child.

This report provides an update on developments in the services and support available to meet the therapeutic needs of children and young people in our care. These include the review of the service specification for the FLASH Service; the establishment of a panel to wrap support and resources around carers and children and young people in care; as well as a small team in the Fostering Service dedicated to supporting internal foster carers to promote stability for children in their care.

### **Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board:**

This report updates on the work of the FLASH Service and other support in place to promote the emotional well-being of children and young people in care. It provides an overview of the aims of this therapeutic support and an update on discussions with the Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust around the revised FLASH Service Specification.

### **Recommendations:**

1. To receive the report and update on the revised FLASH Service specification and the requirement for discussions to take place with the Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust for this to be agreed formally.
2. To update the Board on other support in place to meet the therapeutic needs of children in our care.

### **Background papers:**

List here any private background papers used in the preparation of this report. This does not include the listing of reports that have already been published.

*NB: Any reports or publications listed here will need to be available to be provided to the public, should they be requested, for 4 years.*

## **Corporate Parenting Pledges**

Mental and Physical Health and Wellbeing are a priority of Corporate Parenting Board.

### **Resource and legal considerations:**

The FLASH Service has been funded at the same level since 2016. This is £246K annually plus the contribution of 1 full-time equivalent Social Worker at £51K with a total value of £297K. The multi-disciplinary Support and Stability Panel is chaired by the Head of Service and has representation from Fostering Manager, Group Manager Corporate Parenting, Virtual School, Flash Manager and Designated Nurse for Children in Care. The Support and Stability Team comprises of a Senior Practitioner, a Youth Worker and 2 Children and Families Support Workers, employed by the Council and located in the Fostering Service.

### **Council Corporate Plan Priorities:**

Children have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well.

People have increased independence, improved health, and can positively contribute to their communities.

### **Citizen impact:**

Looked after children and care leavers are citizens of Walsall and as Corporate Parents we have a duty to look after them as we would our own children and prepare them for adulthood so they can fulfil their potential and play a full and rewarding part in their communities

### **Environmental impact:**

None

### **Performance management:**

The revised FLASH service specification contains key performance indicators which focus on the impact of support on the young person's stability. This, and the work of the Support and Stability Panel and Team seek to ensure that children and young people remain living with their carers, promoting stability and reducing the risk of breakdown and further disruption.

**Reducing inequalities:**

The Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out the response to secure improvements in the equality of services, which, when achieved will have a positive impact on our most vulnerable children, young people and families. By being effective Corporate Parents for children in care and Care Leavers, we collectively seek to redress the disadvantage they face.

The FLASH Service and other therapeutic support to children in care and their carers aim to mitigate the impact of early childhood experiences and trauma on their emotional well-being, seeking to improve outcomes for them.

**Consultation:**

Report will be shared with Children in Care Council.

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## **Report**

### **1. Context**

- 1.1. In 2016, Childrens' Services established a therapeutic service with the then Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Trust (DWMHT) to work with children in care whose emotional wellbeing was impacting negatively on the stability of their placement. Since April 2022 the service is located within the Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.
- 1.2. A review of the service was undertaken in 2020/2021 and a revised specification has been developed in collaboration with the CCG and the Trust, which is yet to be agreed by the Trust. This is due to the organisational changes within the Trust and changes in their senior leadership team. The delays have been escalated and the Clinical Service Lead has now been appointed and meetings are planned to review the proposed specification.
- 1.3. Although not all children who are looked after are placed in Walsall, the majority of them live within neighbouring West Midlands authorities. The service was established to ensure that location was not a barrier to therapeutic support and was designed to be delivered in Walsall and neighbouring boroughs including Sandwell, Dudley, Wolverhampton, South Staffordshire and Birmingham (effectively a 20 mile radius).
- 1.4. The specification sets out the requirements for the service to provide a targeted therapeutic service from registered professionals to undertake direct work with children who are looked after and whose early childhood experiences of trauma are impacting on their emotional well-being and secure attachments to carers. They work with:
  - Children and young people who are looked after (up to age 18)
  - Foster carers in supporting young people's emotional well-being
  - Parents as part of a reunification plan
  - Residential carers
  - Provide a drop-in service for care leavers

### **2. Therapeutic Support for Children and young people in our care**

- 2.1. In delivering therapeutic support to children in care, the FLASH Service:

Undertakes direct work with children and young people who are looked after.

Delivers support to children and young people living in foster care, Children's homes or supported accommodation in Walsall and within 20 miles.

Provides evidence based therapeutic support, which is not considered specialist CYP mental health intervention for a period of time determined by the need of the young person which must be clearly evidenced.

Delivers an evidence based therapeutic approach to trauma and attachment if available.

Provides support in the 'community' or homes where children live.

Provides Drop-in and consultation for Care leavers at Transition and Leaving Care Team (TLC).

Delivers consultation clinics for carers, social workers and other relevant professionals to support the child in their home.

Reviews the progress of the intervention and the impact on the outcomes for the children.

### **3. FLASH Service Activity and Impact**

- 3.1. The FLASH Team is managed by a Clinical Nurse specialist (Clinical Lead) and includes Senior Mental Health Practitioner, Family Support Worker, Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist and social workers.
- 3.2. In addition, the Virtual School fund a mental health practitioner since 2021, to work with children to better support them in school settings. The mental health practitioner who is a qualified social worker is located in the FLASH team. This has meant that referrals to the FLASH Service are appropriately targeted.
- 3.3. Referrals to the service are made by the social workers and are prioritised on the risk of placement breakdown. Young people whose care is at risk of immediate breakdown are classed as priority and followed up with social worker and other professionals involved to determine the nature of the response. All referrals accepted into the service are offered a consultation session for social worker and/or carers to more fully explore concerns and presenting needs.
- 3.4. The service currently provides high level information in relation to number of referrals received, awaiting allocation, children discharged from the service and the total number of children receiving a service.
- 3.5. The service specification includes key performance indicators and once agreed these will provide both quantitative and qualitative information about the impact of the service and outcomes for children, this will include children referred to service and stepping down from specialist CAMHS.

**Information on Referrals and Allocations from Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (January 2022 to September 2022)**

	<b>Jan 22</b>	<b>Feb 22</b>	<b>March 22</b>	<b>April 22</b>	<b>May 22</b>	<b>June 22</b>	<b>July 22</b>	<b>Aug 22</b>	<b>Sept 22</b>
<b>Referrals</b>	12 (3 ntu*)	10 (1 ntu* as core camhs referral)	<b>9 (5 ntu*)</b> (screened incorrectly, or not appropriate for flash)	2 (1 ntu*)	6 (1 ntu*)	9	4 (1 ntu*)	5 (3 ntu*)	7 (4 ntu*, refer back to consultation clinic)
<b>Priority allocated</b>	6	4	3 (1 sent to icamhs to risk assess first)	0	1	1	1	0	2
<b>Added to waiting list</b>	4	5	1	1	4	8	2	0	1 (infant mental health/under 5)
<b>Discharges</b>	9	10	0	0	8	3	6	7	9
<b>Allocated from waiting list</b>	3	3	2	0	3	0	5	5	0
<b>Caseload</b>	68	74	75	75	71	73	71	69	69
<b>Children on waiting list</b>	13	6	5	5	4	7	5	0	1 (infant mental health/under 5)

(\*ntu – not taken up)

3.6. The Support and Stability Panel is chaired by the Head of Service and the membership includes Fostering Manager, Group Manager Corporate Parenting, Virtual School, Flash Manager and Designated Nurse for Children in Care. The focus of the Panel is mobilise support and resources to achieve stable and secure permanence for children and young people in care and promote placement stability.

Its purpose is to: -

- Support placement stability of children and young people in care and leaving care.
- To consider the therapeutic needs for children in care and consider how these can best be met
- Review children where there is a risk of placement breakdown or where additional support is required.
- To consider the children to be referred to the FLASH Service
- The meeting will also provide support and robust challenge where there are barriers to the provision of resources by escalating this to the relevant managers across children's services, education and health services

3.7. In 2021/22 the Support and Stability Team was established in the Fostering Service which includes a Senior Practitioner, a Youth Worker and 2 Children and Families Support Workers. The focus of this team is to work with internal foster carers to provide support and promote stability for the child/ren in their care. The team has undertaken level 1 training in Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP), they will progress to level 2 training and deliver attachment and nurturing training to our foster carers informed by DDP.

3.8. We have worked with the FLASH Service to ensure that referrals are appropriate, all children waiting for a service are reviewed at the Support and Stability Panel and children are appropriately signposted to other services where this is appropriate. This has resulted in a reduction of children waiting for a service as well as joint prioritisation of children referred.

3.9. We have undertaken a small scale review of children and young people referred to FLASH and who were discharged from the FLASH Service between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 and 16<sup>th</sup> August 2022. This shows us that 47 children and young people were discharged during this period, although 1 of these children was in the care of another authority but living in Walsall (not eligible for support from FLASH.) Some children and young people were referred along with their siblings and this applied to 35 of those discharged during this time.

3.10. The FLASH Service works with young people up to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and 6 young people were discharged on or just before turning 18 years of age. We looked at where young people are living now, although we have not been able to establish if this is the same place they were living at the point of referral.

3.11. The majority of children and young people who were discharged from the service during this period, live in foster care; 16 young people with foster carers

managed by Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) and 6 children and young people live with foster carers managed by the Council's Fostering Service.

- 3.12. We have obtained information on the support offered by FLASH for a sample of these children and young people from their social workers. This shows that support was more likely to be in place for carers as opposed to direct work with young people themselves. In some instances, this was because young people were unable to engage with the offer and in other cases work solely with the carers was identified at the FLASH consultation. While some social workers felt the service was unable to engage with the young person, others felt that the support had a positive impact on stability for the young person.  
(Information was received in relation to 16 children and young people.)
- 3.13. Next steps are to ensure that the service specification is formally signed by Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and that the service specification is implemented over a 12 month period, where impact can be evaluated against the service specification, to ensure that we are effectively meeting the emotional health and wellbeing of children in care and that we are promoting placement stability.