

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Agenda
Item No.

25 SEPTEMBER 2018

8

Children's Services Performance 2017-18 Out-turn and Performance Framework

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr T Wilson—Children's and Health and Well-being

Executive Summary:

This report outlines the 2017-18 performance of Walsall Children's Services as submitted as part of the Department for Education statutory returns, comparing performance with previous years where appropriate.

It also outlines the performance management framework that is being implemented within the directorate and the level of reporting that the Scrutiny committee can expect in the future.

Reason for scrutiny:

The report is intended to provide the scrutiny committee with an overview of performance of children's services.

Recommendations:

That:

- 1. To note the out-turn performance of Walsall's Children's Services.*
- 2. To note the development of the quality assurance and performance management framework including the level of performance reporting that the scrutiny committee will receive in the future.*

Background papers:

There are no background papers for this report.

Resource and legal considerations:

There are no resource and legal consideration for this report.

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

Right children looked after, for the right length of time in the right placement
Care leavers are economically active citizens of their community

Citizen impact:

The performance demonstrated in this report has a direct impact on the outcomes for children, young people and families in Walsall.

Environmental impact:

There is no environmental impact for this report

Performance management:

This report outlines improvements that are being made to the children's services quality assurance and performance framework. An improved QAF alongside better use of data and analysis to make evidence based decision will help to inform improvements and changes to services, improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

Reducing inequalities:

Understanding how performance affects outcomes for different groups will help to reduce inequality by improving those outcomes for vulnerable groups.

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out? No

Consultation:

This report and data within it has been shared and discussed with Children's Services DMT and portfolio holder Cllr T Wilson.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Within Children's Services, there is an expectation that performance will be closely monitored and managed and that the service and senior council leaders have a good understanding of the outcomes that are being achieved for children, young people and families in Walsall.
- 1.2. As well as significant external requirements for reporting and oversight from the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted, the service and corporate transformation agendas mean that there needs to be a renewed focus on and an improvement in the way that performance within children's services is understood and how data and analysis is used to make evidence-based decisions.
- 1.3. This report outlines the 2017-18 out-turn position as per the submission of the statutory returns.
- 1.4. It also details what the current reporting requirements within children's services are, how they are currently being met and what the plans are to improve this area going forward, particularly in light of the transformation agenda.

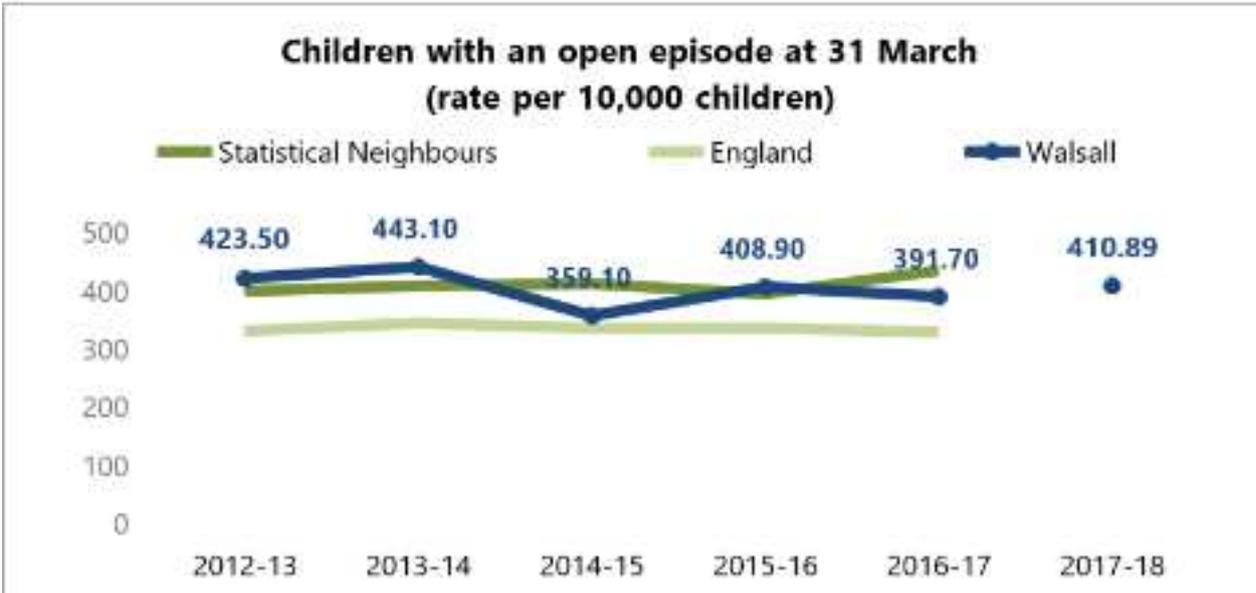
2. 2017-18 Out-turn data

- 2.1. Following submission of the 2017-18 statutory returns to the DfE, key performance for the committee to note is outlined below. A more detailed report will be prepared following the publication of benchmarking data by the DfE in the autumn.
- 2.2. In 2017-18, there was a significant increase in demand for statutory services. Although there was a reduction in the number of initial contacts, there was a significant increase in referrals, assessments of need and more complex assessments such as child protection enquiries. There was also a large increase in the number of children becoming subject of child protection plans.
- 2.3. Despite the pressures on front line services due to increased demand, performance in relation to the timeliness of assessments and interventions was good – despite some deterioration, remaining above or in line with statutory neighbours and England averages.
- 2.4. There has been an increase in the proportion of child protection plans that are repeat CP plans. It has been identified that some are appropriate due to the length of time between previous planning period and current planning period; however, some are due to over optimism when the previous plan was ended in relation to neglect and domestic violence.
- 2.5. Neglect remains the most prevalent need in Walsall, although there has been a shift from physical abuse and neglect to emotional abuse in terms of proportion. There is generally better identification of neglect. There has also been improved recognition and response to intra familial sexual abuse.

2.6. Outcomes for Care Leavers are improving with a significant increase in the proportion of care leavers that are in education, employment and training.

2.7. Overall numbers of children in need (as at 31st March)

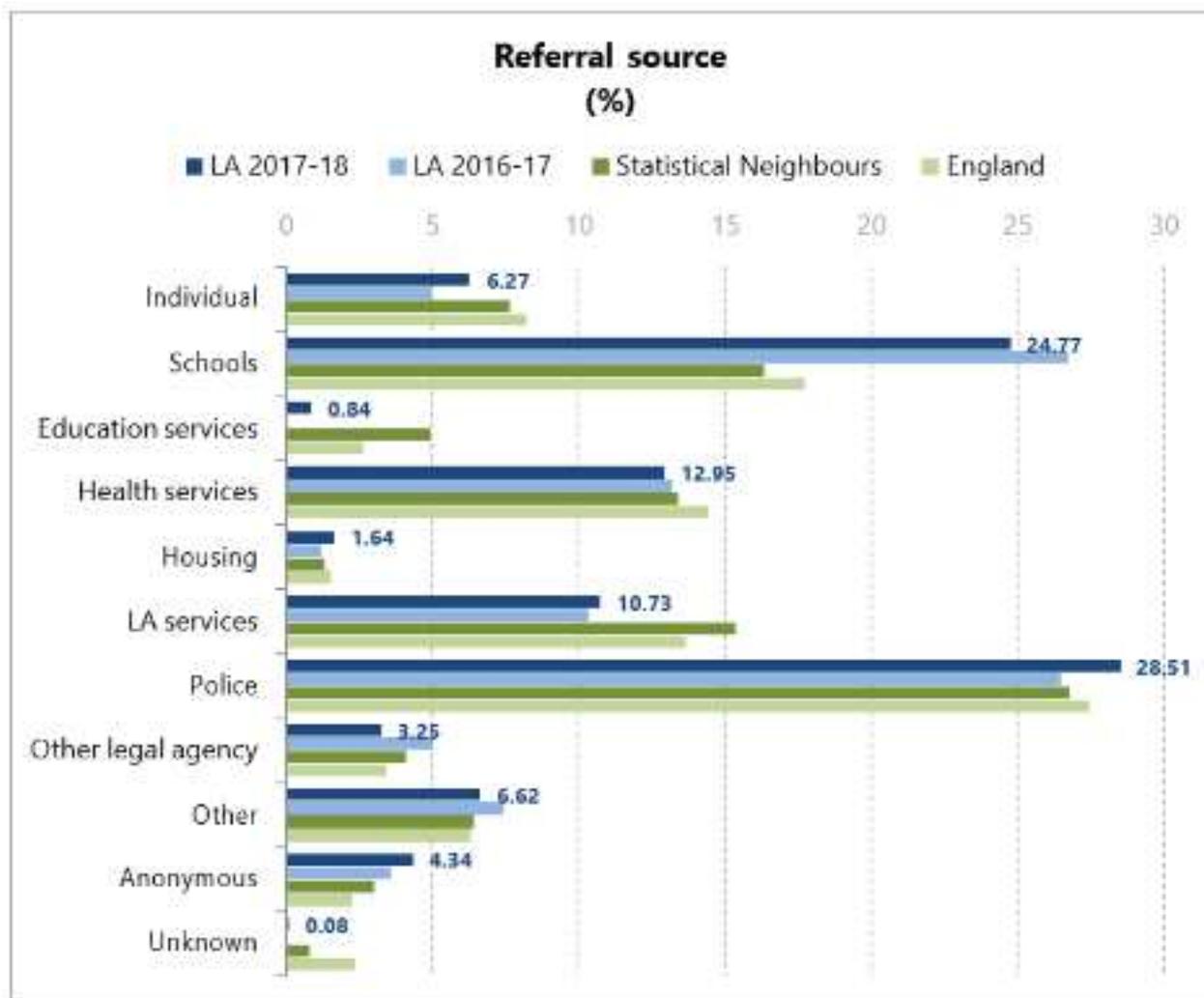
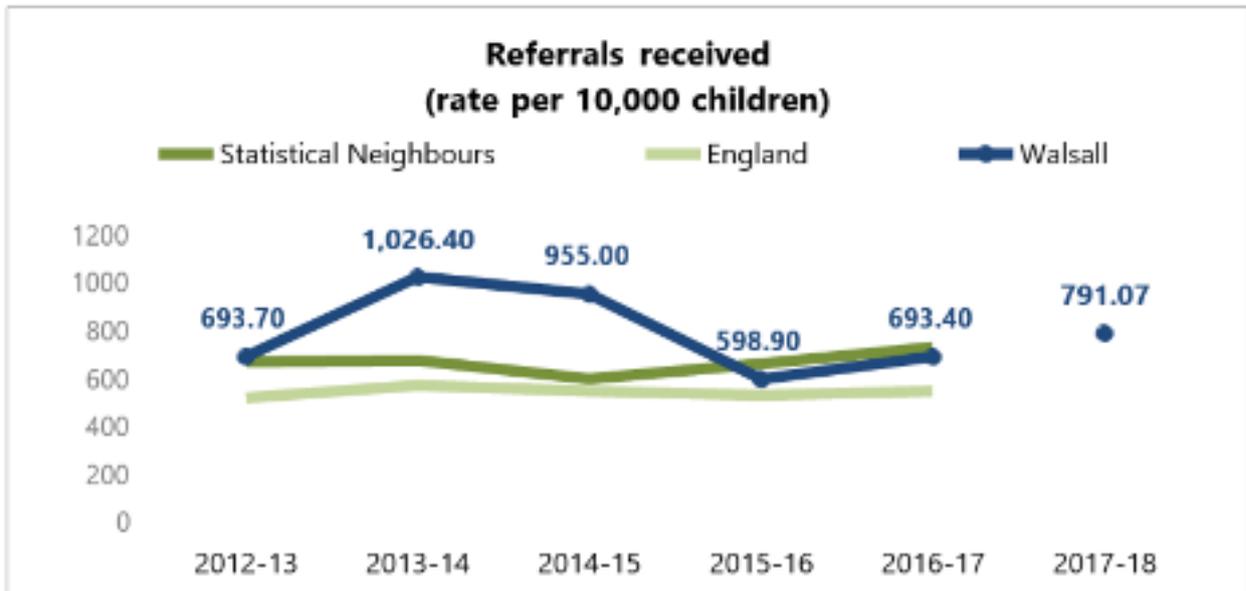
- The number of cases open to Early Help decreased by 14.2% (178) from 1,250 to 1,072.
- The overall number of children in need (including children subject of a child protection (CP) plan and looked after children (LAC)) increased by 4.8% (125) from 2,591 to 2,716
- The number of children who were the subject of a CP plan increased by 22.5% (75) from 333 to 408.
- The number of children who were looked after decreased by 2% (15) from 651 to 636.



2.8. Demand

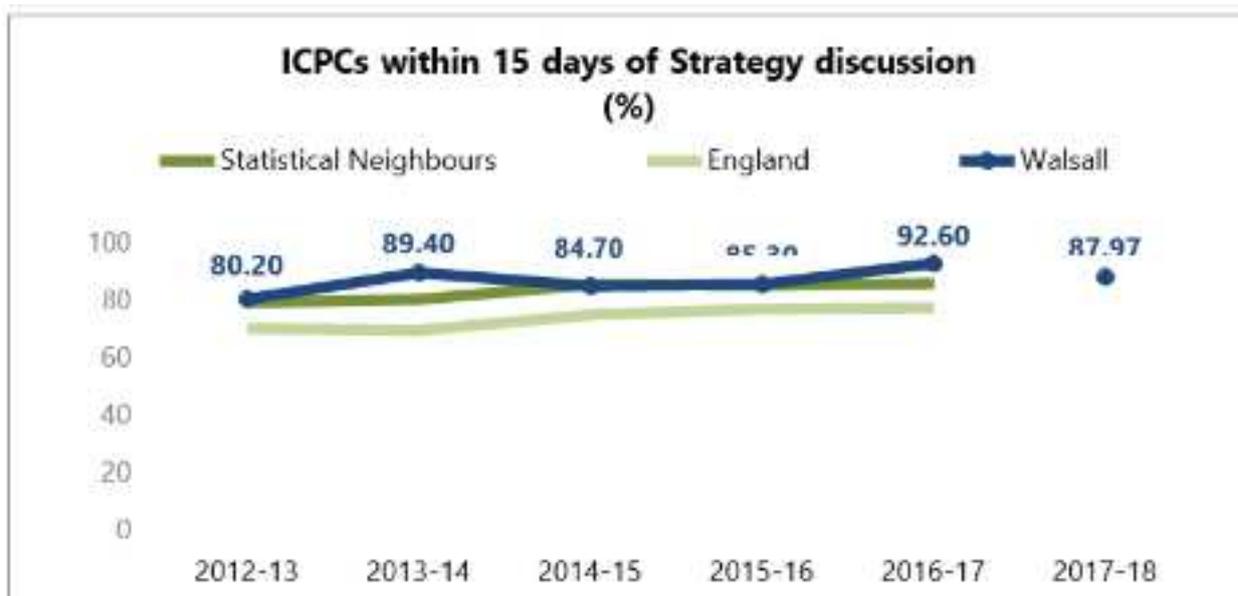
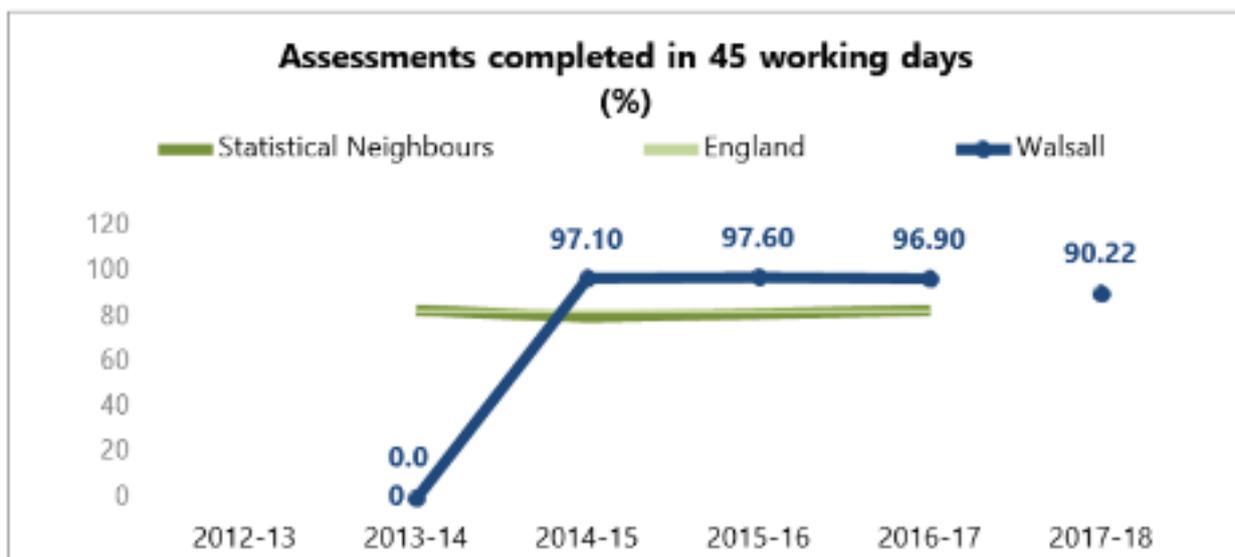
- There were 12,426 initial contacts received into the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in 2017-18. This is a reduction of 11.6% compared with the previous year.
- Despite this, the proportion of initial contacts that led to a referral increased from 33% to 42%.
- The overall number of referrals into social care was 5,229, an increase of 14% on the previous year.
- As in previous years, over 50% of all referrals came from the police (28.5%) and education (24.8%)
- The number of completed assessments increased by 18.3% (786) from 4285 to 5071.
- The number of section 47 enquiries increased by 30% (434) from 1446 to 1880

- The number of Initial Child Protection Conferences increased by 34% (193) from 564 to 757



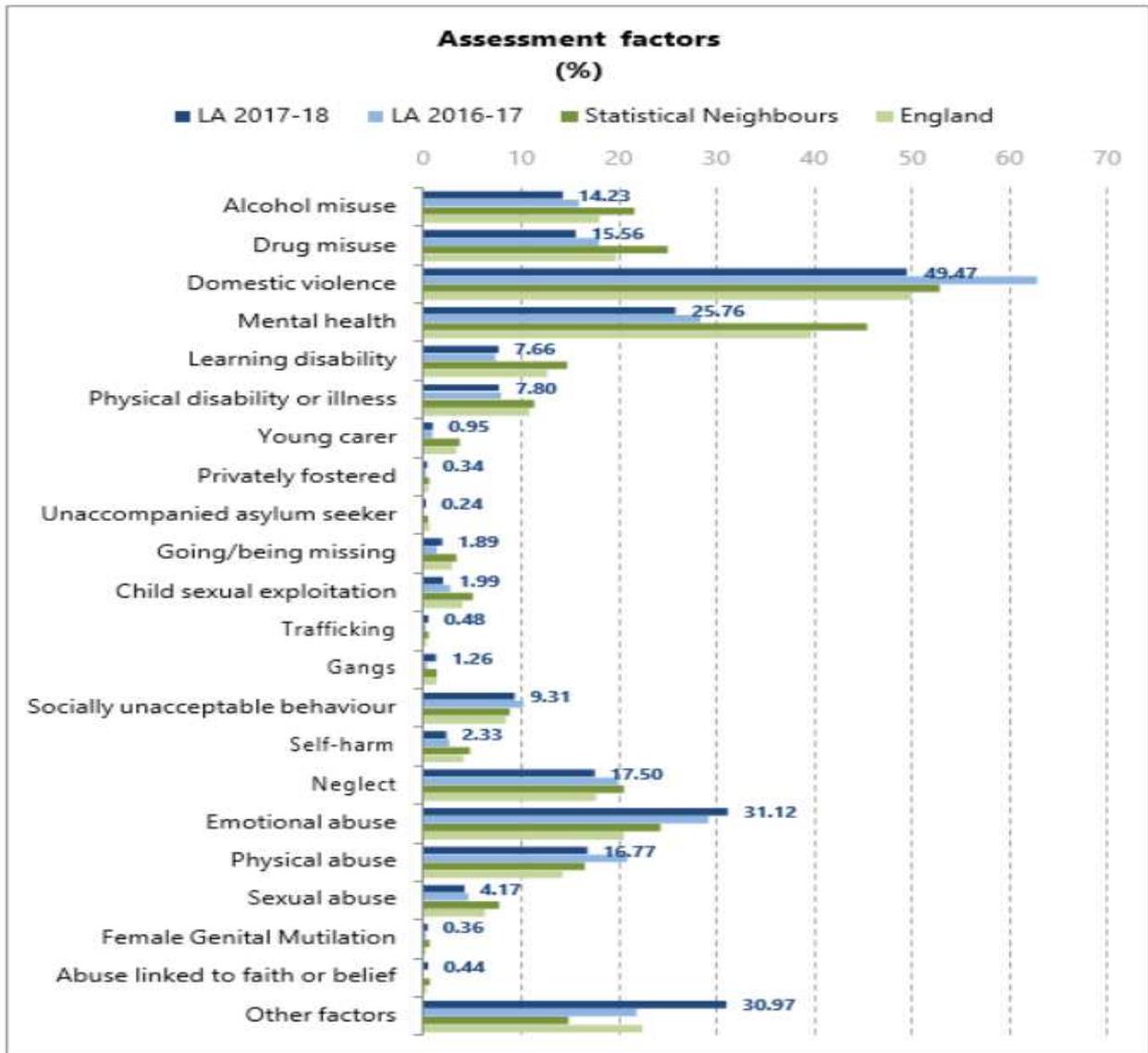
2.9. Performance

- 90.2% of assessments were completed within 45 working days. Although this has decreased compared with the previous year, performance remains above that of statistical neighbours and the overall performance in England.
- 88.0% of Initial Child protection conferences were held within 15 days of the strategy discussion, again, although performance remains in line with comparators.
- There has been a significant increase in the proportion of children becoming subject of a CP Plan for a second or subsequent time with 24.5% of CP starts being repeats compared with just 11.6% in 2016-17.
- The proportion of CP Plans which cease after 2 years or more decreased slightly from 2.5% to 2.2% and remains below that of comparators.
- 96.2% of child protection plans were reviewed within timescales – a slight fall on the previous year, but again, remaining in line with comparators.



2.10. **Types of Need**

- The most common factor at assessment was abuse or neglect (26.4%) followed by domestic violence (18.8%)
- Within the assessments where abuse and neglect was a factor, the proportion that were featured emotional abuse increased from 39% in 2016-17 to 46% in 2017-18.
- Within the assessments where domestic violence was a factor, concerns about the child being the subject of domestic violence decreased from 27% to 19%.
- For children who were the subject of a child protection plan at the end of the year, the proportion of plans where the initial category of abuse was neglect increased from 45.6% in the previous year to 60.0%, while the proportion who were subject of a plan for emotional abuse decreased from 42.3% the previous year to 27.0%.
- However, when the latest category of abuse was considered, the proportion of children who were subject of a plan due to neglect decreased to 52.5% while the proportion subject of a plan due to emotional abuse increased to 36.0%.
- For children who are looked after, abuse or neglect remains the top category of need and remains steady at just under 60%.



2.11. Looked After Children

- 71.2% of children who were looked after as at the 31st March were the subject of full care orders, 15.1% were the subject of interim care orders and 7.1% were on placement orders awaiting adoption.
- 58.2% of children who were looked after were placed with foster carers; friends or family fostered a further 19.2%. 9.1% (58) children were placed at home with their own parents.
- LAC placements remain steady with around 65% of children who are looked after on a long term basis (for more than 2.5 years) having been in the same placement for at least two years.
- 100% of children looked after were able to share their views ahead of their review and actually attended their review in 49.8% of cases – an improvement on the previous year.

2.12. Care Leavers

- In 2017-18 92.6% of Care Leavers aged 19-21 were in suitable accommodation. Of the 7.4% that weren't this was due to them being in custody.
- 61.3% of care leavers were in education, employment or training. An improvement on the previous year's result of 47.5%.

3. Statutory Returns and Ofsted Requirement

3.1. There are several statutory returns that are submitted on a quarterly or annual basis for children's services to the DfE and Ofsted. These are:

- **The Children in Need Census** (annual) – this is a child level return which provides information on the number of referrals, assessments, child protection assessments, children in need plans, child protection plans and care leavers.
- **The Children Looked After (CLA 903) Return** (annual) – this is a child level return which provides information on Looked After Children and children who have been adopted.
- **The Ofsted Fostering Return** (annual) – this return provides Ofsted with information about foster carers and is completed by all fostering agencies, including independent fostering agencies and local authorities.
- **Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) Return** (quarterly) – this return provides child level and person level data about children who have been or are in the process of being adopted or being assessed to become adopters.
- **Youth Justice Board (YJB) Return** (quarterly) – this return provides details of young people who have been the subject of interventions from the Youth Offending Service and who have been arrested, cautioned, held on remand or convicted by the police or courts.

3.2. In the months following submissions of the returns, the DfE and Ofsted, collate and analyse the data, linking it with data gathered from the School Census and held on the National Pupil Database (NPD) to calculate a range of indicators and to provide a national level analysis on demand and performance in children's services.

3.3. Datasets and comparator data is also published via Statistical First Releases (SFRs) and via tools such as the Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT) to enable Local Authorities to benchmark themselves against comparators including national, regional and statistical neighbours.

3.4. This analysis and data is released in various stages between October and March following submissions of the returns.

3.5. There is also a requirement for Local Authorities to produce and provide data and analysis in preparation for Ofsted Inspections and oversight. Ofsted required the following:

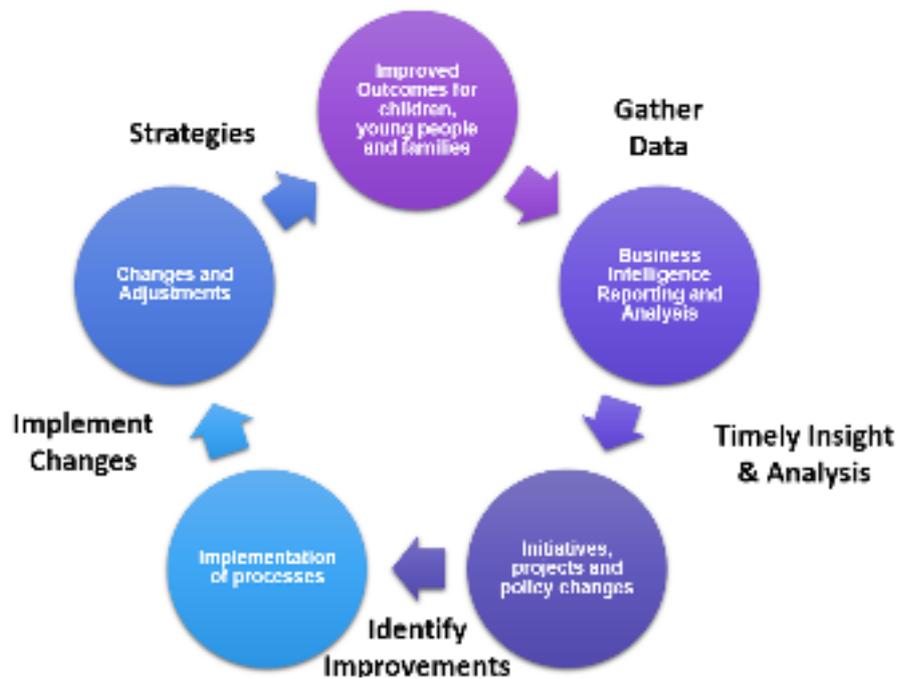
- The production of a Self-assessment document, to be updated at least annually, which outlines key information about the LAs child population and children’s services performance including data and information about changes and improvements.
- Participation in an Annual Conversation with the regional Ofsted lead. Prior to this conversation an agenda is issued and a number of questions are asked, which LAs are expected to provide reports and briefing notes to answer and will focus on how services are run and evidence of good practice and outcomes.
- Ofsted inspections which now take place under the new Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) framework. This outlines a full inspection every three years, with either focussed visits on a key area or a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) which is a joint inspection by Ofsted, CQC and other relevant partner inspection bodies. For these inspections, child level lists have to be produced containing key data items alongside other performance analysis, strategies and documentation, which provides evidence of outcomes for children and improvements.

4. Using data for evidence-based decision making

- 4.1. Children’s Services are on a constantly improving journey as we endeavour to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. It is vital when making decisions about the implementation of or changes to services for children and families that data and analysis is used to inform those decisions.
- 4.2. This ensures that any decision making is firmly underpinned by evidence. Data and analysis can then continue to be used to enable the effectiveness of the changes to be monitored and evidenced and also enable planned developments and changes to be refined on an agile basis if required.
- 4.3. Data and analysis also supports the evidencing of improved outcomes for children and young people and allows Children’s Services and the Local Authority as a whole to demonstrate that services that are being provided are done so within a sound Value for Money framework.
- 4.4. Ensuring that evidenced based decision-making is embedded within the culture in Walsall will be particularly vital to the success of the transformation programme.

5. Development of a Quality Assurance and Performance Management Framework

- 5.1. To use data, information and analysis effectively both for evidence-based decision making and performance monitoring, a robust performance management cycle needs to be in place:



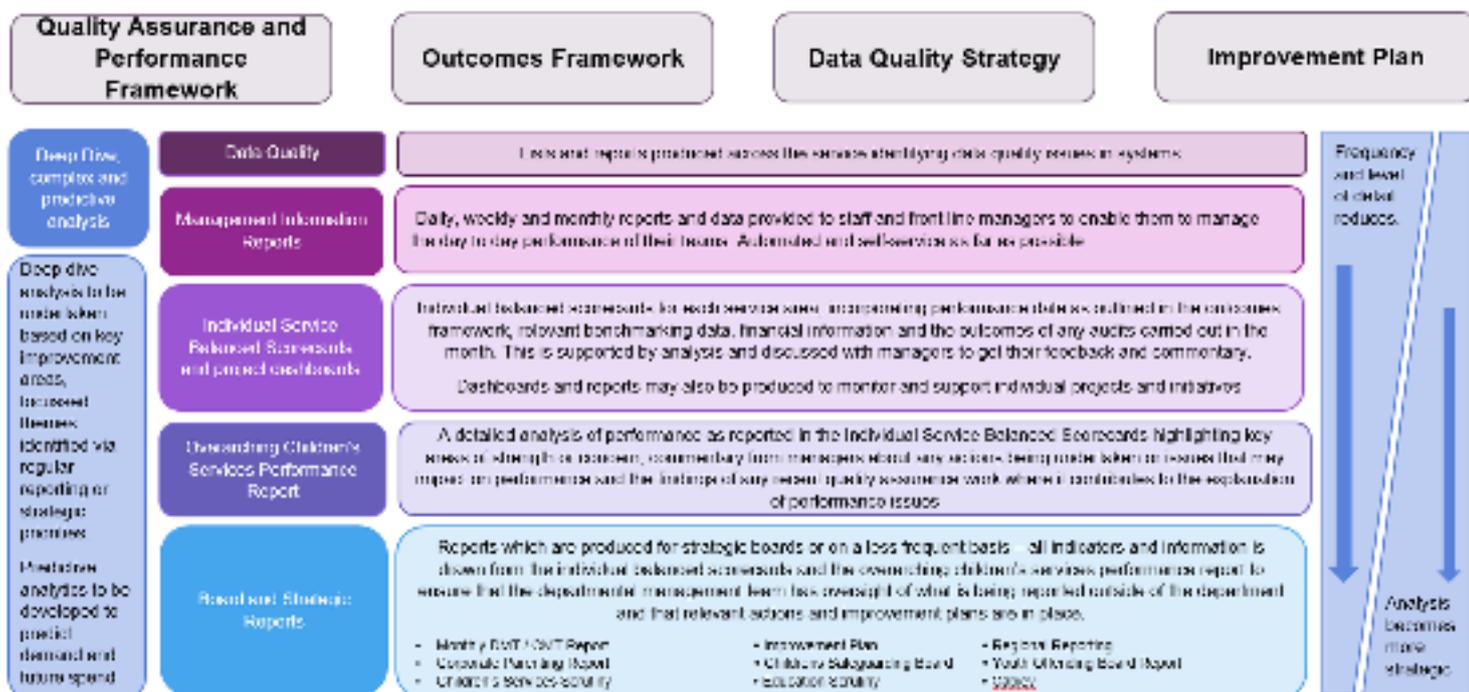
- 5.2. Within Children’s Services, there are already a number of reports, scorecards and dashboards that are produced within Children’s Services on a weekly, monthly and quarterly basis, which enable managers at all levels to monitor performance within their services and teams. There has been significant development in this area over the past 12 months.
- 5.3. Regular reports are produced, shared with and discussed by team, group managers are their monthly meetings, and a monthly performance board is held, chaired by the Director of Children’s Services and attended by the three Assistant Directors and all Group Managers. At this board, outcomes from audit activity, performance across the service and any exceptions or issues are discussed with relevant actions agreed.
- 5.4. This is line with good practice, however, there is still work to be done to improve the strength and depth of what is produced. The example below outlines the different levels at which reporting and analysis should be undertaken and how that information is disseminated:



5.5. There is still significant work to be done in this area and over the coming months, the Quality Assurance and Performance Framework for the Directorate will be reviewed to strengthen the performance cycle (see fig 1 below). The actions and outputs related to this include:

- **A refreshed Quality Assurance and Performance Strategy and Framework**
- **Strengthen links between the audit and quality assurance processes and performance monitoring**
- **Ensure that and outcomes framework and suitable monitoring of transformation activities are in place**
- **Review and improve existing reports**
- **Development of interactive dashboards to give managers real time, direct access to data needed to manage their services**

5.6. A detailed outline of the framework is shown below:



6. Oversight of performance by scrutiny

6.1. As part of the refreshed strategy, Scrutiny Committee will receive a dashboard and report on a regular basis outlining data and performance for key areas including:

- Demand at the front door
- Numbers of children and families requiring services
- Outcomes for children, young people and families

6.2. A report will also be produced when benchmarking data is released so that the Committee can be made aware of Walsall's performance and outcomes in relation to that of key comparator groups.

6.3. In addition, detailed reports and analysis may be presented either at the request of the committee, or where an area that may be of interest to the committee is identified by officers.