

Corporate Parenting Board

Monday 15th November 2021 at 6.00 p.m.

Council Chamber, Walsall Council House

Board Members Present:

Councillor T. Wilson (Chair)
Councillor K. Ferguson
Councillor K. Murphy
Councillor F. Mazhar

Officers Present

Jackie Alexander	CAMHS Manager (Birmingham Community Healthcare Foundation Trust)
Margaret Courts	Mental Health Commissioner
John Dunning	Children's Commissioner (Walsall CCG)
David Hughes	Children and Young Persons Champion
Alison Jones	Designated Nurse LAC (Clinical Commissioning Group)
Dr Kannath	Community Paediatrics (WHT)
Dr Rambhatla	Community Paediatrics (WHT)
Sally Rowe	Executive Director Children's Services
Jivan Sembi	Head of Service (Children in Care, Provider and Care Leaving Services)
Marlene Vernon	Flash Service

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. It was noted that a Shadow Board was held directly prior to the meeting to seek the views and experiences of young people.

The Chair asked the Children and Young Persons Champion to congratulate a young person who regularly attended the Shadow Corporate Parenting Board, as she had successfully gained a place at University to study medicine.

13/21 Introductions and Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Nazir and Worrall.

14/21 Substitutions

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

15/21 Minutes

A copy of the minutes of the meetings held on 1st July, 2021 were submitted. The Chair updated the Board on actions within the report.

(see annexed)

Resolved (Unanimous)

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1st July, 2021 copies having previously been circulated to each Member of the Board, be approved and signed by the chairman as a correct record.

16/21 Letter from Children's Commissioner

The Board received the letter from Dame Rachel de Souza, the Children's Commissioner for England.

Resolved

That the letter from the Children's Commissioner be noted.

17/21 Young People Engagement

The Children and Young Persons Champion described some of the highlights of Children in Care Council (CICC) since the last Board, and provided an update on the activities of the CICC. The Care Leaver Ambassador was introduced to the Board. Members were informed that the CICC had been involved with face to face interview panels, and young people chaired two full days of interviews for the post of Personal Advisors. Young People provided feedback that this had been a positive experience to be involved in.

The Board were informed that a new care leavers group had been launched with the first meeting held on 30th September 2021, ten care leavers who had not previously participated in the CICC had attended this first meeting. The CICC had suggested the following items for consideration by the Corporate Parenting Board at future meetings:

- Transition from children's to adult services.
- Support for driving lessons for care leavers.
- Photograph permission in schools and issues around the exclusion of children in care.

The Chair asked for an update in the development of an app for children in care. Young People and Members discussed the use of an app in comparison to a website.

Resolved

That the Young People Engagement report was noted.

18/21 Child Adolescent Mental Health Service

The CAMHS Manager spoke to the report (annexed) and highlighted the salient points. The Board were informed that there had been an increase in CAMHS referrals as a result of the COVID19 pandemic.

The FLASH service was described as a therapeutic service which offered a range of interventions to provide support to children and young people who resided within a 20 miles radius of Walsall, and as part of this, young people had access to a range of therapies. The service were in contact with schools who did not engage with CAMHS, to offer support and services.

Feedback from young people in attendance was that improvements could be made to service access after discharge to avoid the requirement to join the waiting list for support for their condition. The Service Manager stated that plans in place meant that young people were reviewed after 3 months to avoid this situation occurring.

The Board were informed of work to ensure that transition arrangements were in place to ensure that young people were able to use CAMHS up to 18 years of age. This new system would also ensure that young people's history was shared when they transitioned to adult services.

The Chair provided feedback from young people which included the difficulty with being removed from school lessons to receive CAMHS services. The Service Manager reassured Members that appointments were now scheduled early/late in the day for Looked after Children and at alternative venues.

Resolved

That the CAMHS report be noted.

19/21 Annual assurance report (CCG)

The Health Representative presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The Board were informed that the report provided an overview of the statutory health responsibilities of the CCG in relation to children in care and provided further detail of action taken to deliver on-going improvements to health outcomes for Looked after Children.

The Board were informed that 'Initial and Review Health Assessments' (IHA & RHA) were commissioned from Walsall Healthcare Trust (WHT) as the Health Provider by Walsall CCG. However, the process required close working between health and Local Authority colleagues in relation to information sharing, supporting attendance at appointments and reporting. The agreed Key Performance indicators with WHT stipulated the delivery of 80% of IHA's and 90% of RHA's within statutory timescales. RHA's service provision for children placed out of the borough is commissioned from external providers over a 20-mile radius with the WHT Looked after Childrens Team coordinating requests and assuring quality.

Members were informed by the Children's Commissioner (Walsall CCG) that despite the pandemic, the service had adapted and modified the way that it delivered services and as a result key performance indicators delivering 80% of IHA's and 90% of RHA's. It was stressed that throughout the pandemic GPs had maintained support to Looked after Children, however dentists were unable to prioritise routine check-ups over children who were experiencing pain which had impacted performance indicators (in relation to dental) for Looked after Children.

A Member expressed concern that KPI's at 80% were too low and the aspiration should be for this to be much higher. The Health representative stated that this had been increased to 85% across the Black Country but the service were always aiming for 100%. It was stressed that the service was always offered however KPI's were impacted due to 'when' it was offered. The Children's Commissioner stated that the performance of Walsall could be compared to other localities within the Black Country and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group, this would be provided to Members outside of the meeting.

The Board were played a draft film which was designed for young people who would be having a health check-up, in order to put them more at ease with the process. Young People in attendance provided feedback on this film, and it was noted that it was aimed at all age groups (noting that the use of emoji's may be too much for older age groups).

Areas for future work were described and further information on these priorities could be provided to the Board.

Resolved that:

- 1. The CCG Assurance report be noted.**
- 2. The CCG are asked to review the KPI's for Initial Health Assessments and Review Health Assessments**
- 3. The Chair on behalf of the Board write to NHS England to highlight the importance of dental checks for Looked after Children.**

20/21 **Health passports**

Representatives from Community Paediatrics (WHT) spoke to the presentation and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The Board were informed that information was gathered from Walsall Health Systems and Walsall Child Health Records. The information documented was different for each child for various reasons, such as placement moves or if they weren't born in Walsall, however as much information as possible was included. Information about a young person's family health history was not always available, although where possible family history was gathered from Children's Services documents provided, and information shared within health assessments and information in the Child's Health Records. A discussion with the young people was held to determine if they wanted certain information included. The child's voice was captured at every contact to share with the young person when they were older what life was like for them when they were a child.

Members were provided with details of a Health Passport app which had been trialled in Sandwell, which brings together the NHS app along with helpful information on a variety of different topics. On the NHS app young people would be able to access information such as medications they were on or have had; vaccination summaries; allergies; and to be able to book GP appointments.

All Care Leavers were provided with a copy of their health summary, it was noted that very few declined this provision.

Resolved

That the Health Passports presentation be noted.

21/21 **Corporate Parenting Strategy**

Members discussed the importance of the report and agreed that it should be deferred to the next meeting to ensure due consideration could be given to the report.

Resolved

That the Corporate Parenting Strategy was deferred until the next meeting.

22/21 **Work Programme**

The Board considered the work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year. It was noted that the views of the Children in Care Council would be sought on items considered by the Board.

Resolved

That the work programme was noted.

The date of the next meeting was 11th January 2022.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 8 p.m.

Signed

Date

Young Peoples Engagement

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 8th 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:

- 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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Report: Young People's Engagement and Children in Care Council

1.0 Introduction

The following items are some of the highlights that have happened since the last Corporate Parenting Board in November 2021.

1.1 Interview Panels

The CICC have been involved with some very important interview panels:

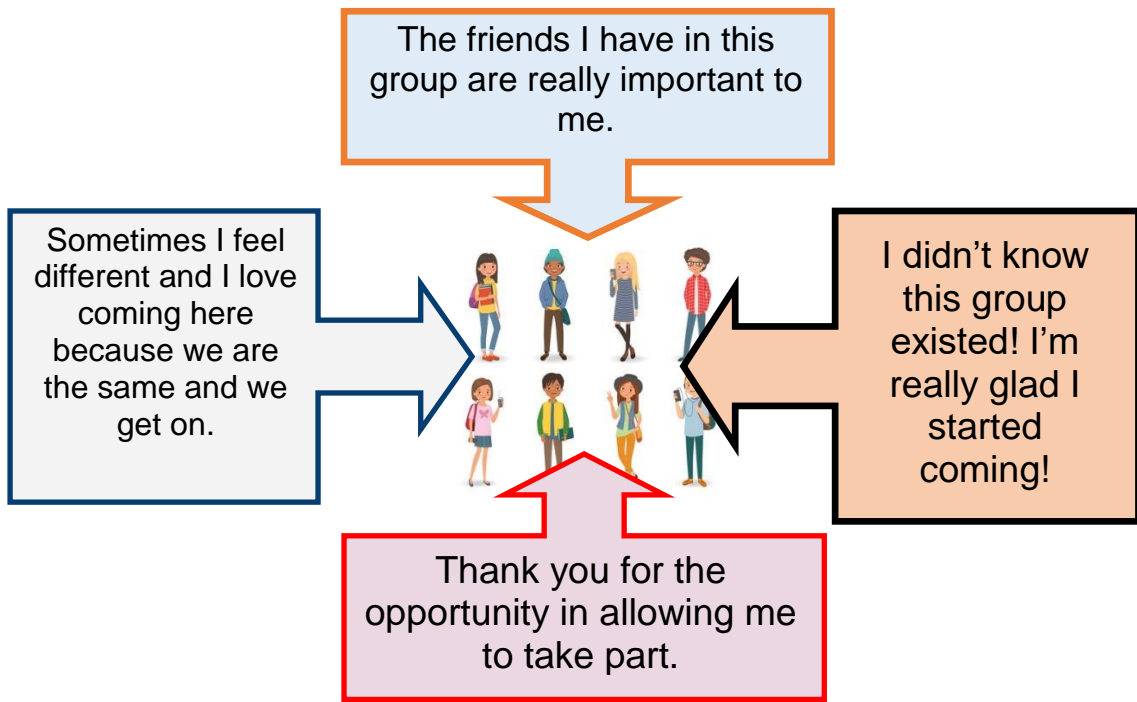
On the 15th of December our Care Leaver Ambassador Sophia and one of our care leavers Catherine interviewed a candidate applying for a residential home manager. As always the questions were pulled together by our care leavers and delivered with the upmost professionalism. We would just like to thank our residential services manager Jason for asking for the panel of young people as well as the kind gesture of the gift vouchers.

At the end of January we have also been approached to put another panel together to interview people for the Directors of Early Help WR4C and Partnerships position. We hope to see more managers across our services asking for young people to be involved in recruitment to help give them a voice.

1.2 CICC meetings

We continue to meet every other week on a Thursday at the Transition Leaving Care hub. These sessions start at 16:30 and finish at 18:30. The number of children attending is steadily increasing as are the referrals which we get for new young people. During these sessions we have a focus where we get the views of our young people on different topics and themes. For example we have looked at the language which is used within social services. We try to create a fun and interactive session where our young people can relax, play board games, pool, air hockey, do some arts and crafts, do group work and build up positive relationships with their peers. We always provide them with food and drinks which we find is a great way to bring people together.

Being part of this bespoke group is one of the main benefits for our young people. They often say things such as....



1.3 Care leavers group

The Care Leavers group continues to meet once per month face-to-face. This proves very popular as sometimes moving into early adulthood when leaving care can feel very isolating. This group provides care leavers with the opportunity to make new friends, to get out and socialise with other young adults that may have some shared experiences. Some good attachments to friends and staff have taken shape and we also keep in touch via WhatsApp. This is good for staff to be able to share upcoming events and is good for our care leavers to connect with each other in a safe space that can be monitored. This communication via smart phones has a significant benefit to people's mental and emotional health, as they often talk positively about connecting with others. Several of our care leavers have spoken up about anxiety and depression through this forum and the peer support they can offer and receive from each other is really significant. I believe it would be a good idea to arrange for some other professionals to join our sessions throughout the year. This will give our care leavers the opportunity to build relationships and break down barriers in an informal fashion meaning they may be more likely to seek support and self-help.



1.4 Christmas celebrations

On the 9th of December our two groups (CICC and Care Leavers) came together to meet up at the transition leaving care hub. We hid some selection boxes in the building and went on the hunt to go and find some yummy treats. This was a fabulous session and it was really good to get some of our care leavers talking to and offering support to our younger group members. Lots of Pizza and chocolate was consumed which put a big smile on people's face.



1.5 Independent Visitor Service (IV)

During this sessions we welcomed a guest speaker Kaiya from the Independent Volunteer service (IV). She spoke to the group about who they are and the service they offer and told them it was their right to have and IV. This was a successful introduction to this service as 7 of our young people wanted to access an IV for themselves.

The Independent Visitor's role is to contribute to the welfare of the child and promote the child's developmental, social, emotional, educational, religious and

cultural needs. A visitor may encourage the child to exercise their rights and to take part in decisions that will affect them. As far as possible, the Independent Visitor aims to complement the activities of carers and support the child's care plan.

The Independent Visitor visits, advises and befriends the child according to their needs and wishes. The Independent Visitor is expected to be child-focused, but is not a substitute for either a parent or a carer.

The Independent Visitor will have a duty to make regular visits to the child and maintain other contact, by telephone and letter as appropriate.

The main purpose of the visits and contacts will be to befriend the child and give advice and assistance as appropriate.

1.6 **Christmas hampers:**

Personal Advisors (pa's) have worked hard to make Christmas a special occasion for all our care leavers. A range of activities were arranged for them to attend. The team worked hard leading up to Christmas shopping and sifting through the donations we received to make sure gifts were handpicked and right for the young adult. Alongside the gift, the young people were provided with a handmade hamper, which were filled with lots of nice goodies for them to enjoy.

During the week leading up to Christmas, all care leavers will have a visit from their pa's. The team will visit young people across the country so they are all reminded that they are cared for and in our thoughts during the festive period. In total 210 have been delivered and very well received.



1.7 **Christmas Quiz Time:**


On the 21st of December the Care Leaver Ambassador Sophia put together a quiz for our CICC and one for our Care Leavers. This was all about having fun and coming together during the week of Christmas. Unfortunately it was not very well attended due to our young people having other plans and not being able to participate. The young people that did attend had a fabulous time and won a few gifts in time for Christmas which were delivered to their door.

1.8 **Total Respect Training:**

We have started to put some provisional dates in the diary for this training but are still awaiting confirmation for bookings at the EDC (Education Development Centre). If this proves too challenging to book the large hall then we may have to consider another venue such as Manorfarm Community Association which means we will incur a cost for room hire of around £96 per day.

Our ambition for this training is that we can train any professional in Walsall that works with children and young people. We may have to have a phased approach as the service is vast. This training will benefit young people with lived experiences of the social care system by boosting confidence and self-esteem and we also ensure they get paid for the hours which they dedicate. It is a very powerful way to train professionals and can have a significant positive impact on their practice.

1.9 **Celebrations and Achievements**

- All of the care leavers which joined our newly formed group this September have all successfully got through their first term at college. They have worked really hard in their studies and we are very proud of them all.
- Our care leavers at university have worked extremely hard this term in completing assignments and exams. Well done for meeting your deadlines! Onwards and upwards as they say! 

1.10 **Dates for forthcoming events and children in care council meetings**

Meetings will continue to be held every other week in person at Transition Leaving Care Hub for our CICC group and once per month for our care leavers group. We will keep this under review to ensure that we remain compliant with the Council's guidelines. We are meeting regularly with public health and taking advice into account to ensure our young people and staff are safe.

13th Jan – CICC meeting at TLC hub. 16:30 – 18:30
20th Jan – Care Leavers Group (Activity/ venue TBC) 5pm
27th Jan – CICC meeting at TLC hub. 16:30 – 18:30
10th Feb - CICC meeting at TLC hub. 16:30 – 18:30
29th Feb - Care Leavers Group (Activity/ venue TBC) 5pm

- 1.11 Finally I would like to remind everyone and anyone working with children in Walsall that Participation and Engagement should be at the forefront of everyone's agenda. Working 'With' Children, capturing 'Their' voice and being 'Proactive' in every engagement opportunity should not be an add on to the work we do with young people but should be seen as a matter of course and be a priority for all in shaping the support and services in which we provide.

David Hughes
Children's Champion

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 This report summarises the activity of the Fostering Service from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.
- 1.2 Walsall Council is committed to ensuring that, wherever possible, children are supported to live with their birth parents. Where this has not been possible and children become looked after, it is preferable that they are placed within a family setting. It is the aim of the council that wherever possible this will be with foster carer/s home approved by Walsall rather than through commissioning an external placement. Through guidance on delegated authority, there is a recognition that foster carers should be empowered to take on the day to day tasks of parenting in the same way as any good parent would.
- 1.3 Foster care is subject to legislative and regulatory guidance through, The Children Act 1989, The Fostering Regulations 2011 and the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011. It is further regulated through the Care Planning, Placement and Case Regulations 2010. The regulatory framework for fostering sets out the minimum standards expected to ensure that the care provided by foster carers is adequate to ensure that those children placed within fostering placements are well cared for and achieve good outcomes.
- 1.4 Fostering placements are referred to as either Mainstream or Connected Persons. Connected persons fostering refers to those households who offer to provide care to a child known to them, usually a relative. Mainstream foster care refers to a range of households who apply to become foster carers for children not known to them. Mainstream foster carers include those offering both long- and short-term care and those who provide respite care. Mainstream carers can be approved to care for between 1 and 3 children at a time and can care for children throughout the age range.
- 1.5 Walsall Fostering Service is located within the Children's Services Directorate of Walsall Council. The aim of the Fostering Service is to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of registered foster carers who can meet the needs of children. Fostering and family-based care are our first choice option for the looked after children of Walsall.

2. Overview of Achievements in 2020/21:

- Implemented Fostering Service Redesign
- Delivered effective support throughout the Global Pandemic
- Completed and provided feedback on our first Annual Foster Carer Survey
- Improved workforce stability - Reduced reliance on agency workers in the Fostering Service

- Provided a one off C19 payment to help Foster Carers with additional expenses
- Launched one new Mockingbird Hub and secured agreement to increase Mockingbird Hubs from 3 to 6
- Commenced Partnership working with Kinship
- Improved permanence for children through Special Guardianship Orders (SGO)
- Recruited more Foster Carers than previous 2 years
- Secured agreement to create a Support and Stability Team
- Secured agreement to provide improved training offer to Foster Carers and employees
- Secured agreement to trial dedicated telephone support line for Foster Carers
- Reintroduced Case File Auditing
- Put in place an Action Plan to improve work and learning into and from Fostering Panel
- Introduced Practice Improvement Group
- Undertook a review of the effectiveness of fostering panel
- Created post of Practice Improvement Manager
- Developed a Performance Dashboard
- Secured agreement for slight uplift on children's allowances for Foster Carers
- Introduced Monthly Support Meetings for Foster Carers
- Introduced regular newsletters to both Foster Carers and Special Guardians

3. The Structure Of The Fostering Service

- 3.1 In March 2019 as part of the improvement agenda for Children's Social Care a review of the Fostering Service was undertaken which made a number of key recommendations to drive improvements in recruiting, assessing, supervising and supporting mainstream and connected foster carers.

3.2 A key recommendation was in respect to the span of management grip and oversight. The review led to the creation of 4 teams and strengthened management structure to drive improvements in the meeting regulatory requirements, supervision of staff and quality of practice required to undertake assessments, supervision and support to Mainstream and Connected Foster Carers. The proposal endorsed by Directorate Management Team involved deleting two existing Assistant Team Manager posts and the Panel Advisor post, creating 2 additional Team Managers and creating three Senior Practitioners. Full implementation of the redesigned structure became operational in April 2020.

3.3 Critically a fourth team was created to increase the capacity for Connected Persons assessment and to enable those who support and supervise Connected Foster Carers and Special Guardians to specialise in this work. There has been a significant rise in the proportion of children cared for in such foster homes and combining the supervision of these households has enabled greater focus in the mainstream support team on growing in house mainstream capacity.

3.4 The Fostering Service is managed by the Group Manager for Provider Services and they report to the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting. The primary objectives for role of Group Manager are:

- Responsible for the service planning and management of all local authority Fostering Services
- Registered Manager of the Fostering Service
- Line Manager for the Residential Services Manager who has responsibility for the Local Authority children's homes
- Line Manager for the Placement Services Manager who has responsibility for finding external placements for Looked After Children.

1.1 Full implementation of the redesigned structure became operational in April 2020. A Team Manager now manages each team and all except the Recruitment and Assessment Team have a Senior Practitioner. Each team has 5fte social worker posts. As reported in the Annual Report for 2019/20, full implementation of the Fostering Service redesign took longer than planned. The permanent Group Manager joined the service in late November 2019, the Team Manager for Connected Persons Team joined in March 2020 and the Senior Practitioners took up their posts in April 2020. The Recruitment and Promotion Officer post was also vacant from October 2019 and recruited to in May 2020. The service was also operating with several agency social workers at the time; this has now reduced significantly.

1.2 The new structure comprises of the following teams:

- **Recruitment & Assessment**

This team is responsible for the assessments of Mainstream Foster Carers. The team provides supervision and support to carers until their

first annual review. The team are also responsible for working in conjunction with the Children's Social Work Teams on the completion of Private. A full time customer services officer responds to all enquiries from adults expressing interest in becoming foster carers. This team also operates a duty service. The team is also responsible for all marketing, recruitment, training and assessment activities. There is also a recruitment and promotions officer post that is instrumental in the production of new marketing materials and the coordination of new marketing events.

- **Support & Development**

This team is responsible for providing supervision and support to temporary and permanent carers, including family and friends (known as Connected Foster Carers). They also provide a duty service that ensures there is always someone available to deal with concerns or questions from foster carers. The team also completes SGO assessments on approved Foster Carers and are responsible for the submission of reports to the Annual Foster Carer Reviews.

- **Support & Development (Mockingbird)**

As detailed above plus responsible for delivering the Mockingbird Fostering model for the Local Authority.

- **Connected Persons**

The team provides assessment of friends and family members to become a Connected Foster Carers under the Fostering Regulations or to apply for a Special Guardianship Order. When required, to meet demand, they will also act as Supervising Social Workers to approved Foster Carers. This team is also responsible for post order support to Special Guardians.

- **Independent Fostering Reviewing Officer**

The IFRO undertakes all Annual Reviews of Foster Carers.

2. Looked After Children Analysis

- 2.1 There has been a significant increase in the numbers of Looked After Children in Walsall over the past 10 years by **37%** from **490** in 2012 to **671** in 2021. For 6 of the last 10 years, there has been an upward trend of children becoming looked after.
- 2.2 Although Walsall's rate of Looked After Children per 10,000 is lower than our statistical neighbours, it is higher than both the National and West Midlands averages, as such, it is reasonable to assume that there will be future demand for foster care.
- 2.3 Currently **24%** of our children are under 5 years of age, higher than national average of **21%**. With regard to children aged between 10 and 15, Walsall's rate

of **37%** is slightly lower than the national average of **39%**. The majority (**52%**) of our children are male, which is lower than the National and West Midlands averages.

- 2.4 Matching the ethnicity of children to foster carers remains steady; however, as with a slightly increasing Asian and Black British child group to support, future successes will require more culturally matched internal foster carers and diverse foster carer recruitment activity. Target recruitment campaigns are ongoing to meet the needs of minority ethnic looked after children.
- 2.5 Walsall predicts a gradual increase to the number of children becoming looked after who are part of a sibling group. The size of sibling groups will be marginally smaller (2 or 3 children per group) but group numbers will be more frequent. Of the 97 children who started to live with foster carers in 2020/21, there were **18** sibling groups with **52** siblings.

3. Children Living with Foster Carers

- 3.1 On 31st March 2021, there were **387** approved internal foster placements available (figure includes both mainstream & connected carers). This is higher than both outturns for 2019 (355) and 2020 (355), this is also higher than our Statistical Neighbour and West Midlands average (340 & 432) respectively. The breakdown of these placements per category was:

- Mainstream Carers 233
- Connected Carers 154
- Total – 387

- 3.2 At the end of March 2021, of the **670** Looked after Children, **501** (75%) were living with foster carers of which **148** (38%) were living with Walsall foster carers compared with **165** at the end of March 2020. This equates to **29.5%** of those children in foster care in 2020 compared with **31.5%** in 2020.

Fostering	31/03/19	31/03/20	31/03/21
Looked After Children	615	669	670
Placed with Foster Carers	459	523	501
Placed with Internal Foster Carers	189	165	148
Percentage of Children with Internal Foster Carers	41.2	31.5	29.5

- 3.3 There were **119** children living with Connected Foster Carers. In keeping with children’s care plans, a Special Guardianship Order quite commonly replaces Connected Fostering arrangements within 12 months from the making of the Full Care Order where appropriate and in line with the Child’s care plan.
- 3.4 On 31/3/21, there were 239 children living with independent fostering agencies and this is an increase compared with the 227 on 31/3/20 and 158 on 31/3/19.

3.5 Compared to 2019/20, throughout the full year, the number of children who had lived with internal mainstream foster carers remained static at 320.

4. Practice & Performance

4.1 To bring an improved focus to understanding practice and performance, the Fostering Service reintroduced the use of Case File Auditing and worked with colleagues in the Performance Improvement and Quality Service to develop a Performance Dashboard that uses data and an information from Mosaic Records to populate reports on the PowerBI Platform.

4.2 With regard to Case File Audits, the Learning Audit Tool used for these audits follows the same Practice Priorities used in the Child's Journey Audit Tool; however, some prompts were changed to allow for a focus on the assessment, support and development of Foster Carers. There is still a focus on the outcomes for children though and an additional section is included for the auditor to capture the views of the Foster Carer.

4.3 To improve the independence and objectivity of this activity, the Independent Fostering Review Officer randomly selects the case files for audit and allocates these for completion to either a Team Manager or Senior Practitioner that is not currently involved in the management oversight of the case. When completing a case File Audit, the auditor considers all activity for the previous 12 months.

4.4 Since the reintroduction of Case File Auditing in September 2020, **44** Case File Audits were completed. A steady improvement is evident against all of the Practice Priorities and of the **44** cases audited, **52%** were received an overall rating of 'Good'. When you factor in the ratings for Q1 (2021/22), this cumulatively increases to **56%**; however, when separated out, Q1 figure of cases with overall rating of Good is **67%**.

4.5 When completing the Case File Audit, the auditor speaks to the Foster Carer to check out their views on the relationship with their Supervising Social Worker and the Child's Social Worker. Foster Carers are also asked if they are involved in the child's care plan and invited meetings. For the audits completed in Q3 and Q4, Foster Carers rated their as 'Very Good' or 'Good'. They also reported that they involved the child's care plan and routinely invited to attend meetings.

4.6 On completion of a 12-month cycle of Case File Audits, the Group Manager will produce an Annual Report regarding this activity. The Fostering Service will then use the learning from this to map out a range of auditing activity for 2022.

4.7 The lack of accurate performance data had been a weakness for the Fostering Service. To address this, the Fostering Service have worked with colleagues in Performance Improvement and Quality Service to develop a Performance Dashboard. The reports that are now in place cover the full fostering journey and there is a separate report in development for Special Guardianship Carers. There is still some work to do on some of the background data for these reports and the application of these reports across the service is in its infancy;

notwithstanding, these reports represent a significant improvement to the data that was previously available.

5. Annual Foster Carer Survey

- 5.1 Although the Fostering Service had undergone a redesign, to help the Fostering Service understand, develop and embed its approach to the recruitment and support of Foster Carers, the Fostering Service needed to hear from our Foster Carers about their experience of fostering for Walsall Council. In order to gain this insight, it was agreed that a Foster Carer Survey was required.
- 5.2 The survey was undertaken in summer 2020, the format and questions for the Foster Care Survey was developed between the Fostering Service and colleagues in Corporate Consultation. Snap Survey software was used to help with the collation and reporting of the data and information.
- 5.3 In August 2020, the survey was sent to all approved Foster Carers. The survey ran for approximately three weeks, closing in September 2020 and 65 surveys were completed and returned. In Quarter 3 of 2020/21, the Fostering Service explored and analysed the extensive data and information contained in the completed surveys.
- 5.4 In March 2021, the Fostering Service provided feedback on the survey to Foster Carers; members of the Senior Leadership Team and the Lead Member for Children's Services also attended these sessions. Also shared and considered in these sessions were the plans for service development based on Foster Carer feedback. In order for this exercise to be more impactful, the Fostering Service have acknowledged that the timescale from the surveys being completed, to providing feedback needs to be shorter.
- 5.5 Constructed to capture both quantitative and qualitative information, the survey covered the following aspects of the fostering role:
 - Demographics
 - Support
 - Training & Development
 - Annual Reviews
 - Fostering Panel
 - Impact of Covid 19
 - Annual Events
 - Communication
 - What is working well for you as a Foster Carer
 - What needs to improve to help you as a Foster Carer
- 5.6 The Fostering Service e produced a response to the survey which was shared with our Foster Carers, the Lead Member and the Directorate Management Team (DMT).

6. Foster Carer Recruitment – National & Local Picture:

- 6.1 Research from the Fostering Network, indicates that only one in ten enquiries will become a newly registered household. In order to generate 20 new foster carer households, Walsall will need to receive 200 new enquiries per year. With recruitment still taking place in what could be described as an “overcrowded market” with Local Authorities competing with Independent Fostering Agencies and Voluntary agencies, this remains a challenge.
- 6.2 Walsall’s Fostering Service is operating in a highly competitive market place, which has seen an exponential growth of independent fostering agencies (IFAs). Historically IFAs have operated in a market of high demand and they have marketed themselves as filling a position to meet needs that typically local authority fostering services have been unable to provide (i.e. young people with complex challenging or dangerous behaviour, mother / baby places and other specific characteristics). IFAs operate on a national and local basis actively seeking to recruit current and potential foster carers from across Walsall and surrounding areas. They offer higher financial rewards and other recruitment and retention incentives.
- 6.3 Walsall Fostering Service now uses a cloud-based platform (Akeru) to attract and nurture prospective foster carers. Akeru enables the active measurement and optimization of each stage of the recruitment funnel.
- 6.4 There currently is no national data available to measure the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on foster carer recruitment and retention. However, based on anecdotal evidence and conversations with external stakeholders, we predict the coronavirus pandemic will have increased the need for more fostering households to ensure there is sufficient capacity to make the best matches for children. This may need to be reviewed throughout the year. (Source: Fostering Network).
- 6.5 There was a thought that the impact of the coronavirus pandemic could lead to a rise in the number of people considering fostering, in that the loss of employment might be an impetus for a change of direction and career. However, as there has been a growth in the number of people now working from home, the spare bedroom that once was available may now be being utilised as office space.
- 6.6 Between April 2020 and March 2021, there were 8 new Mainstream Fostering households approved at Fostering Panel and 12 Connected Person Households were recommend for approval at Fostering Panel.
- 6.7 **Effects of Walsall Demographics on Foster Carer Recruitment & Retention**

- 6.8 Having both a very young and an aging population could mean that potential foster carers or current of foster carers may have to take on the role of caring for their parents or grandchildren through providing informal care. This could impact on the availability and recruitment of potential foster carers.
- 6.9 Walsall has a higher than average percentage of households who live in socially rented housing. Social housing accounts for **24%** of the borough's accommodation, significantly higher than the England & Wales average of 17% (2011 Census).
- 6.10 According to the Office of National Statistics household projection (2018 Based), there is estimated 114,000 households in Walsall borough, and therefore it equates that more than 27,000 households are social housing lettings. These homes are allocated on need for bedrooms and therefore people in this type of housing will not usually have a spare room, an essential requirement for fostering for Walsall. However, due to the shortage of council/social housing stock we have seen an increase in the private housing sector which has allowed more prospective applicants to rent suitable accommodation which would allow them to foster.
- 6.11 In addition, as half of the Borough's 20 wards are among the most deprived quintile (i.e. the most deprived 20% of LSOAs), deprivation is likely to have an impact upon fostering recruitment activity.

7. Marketing, Recruitment and Mainstream Approvals

- 7.1 The global Coronavirus pandemic had a critical effect on services and to the recruitment of foster carers (see para 6.4& 6.5). This meant any face-to face events ceased and our focus shifted to heavily digitally led marketing strategies. We increased our online presence, adapted the delivery of services from face to face to online and provided support during the adaption process. We will review our approach to face-to face events in line with both Central and Local Government advice and guidelines.
- 7.2 From October 2019 to May 2020, the Fostering Service was without a Recruitment & Promotions Worker. Whilst there was some digital content (images) on our Facebook and Twitter pages, prior to May 2020, the Fostering Service's main approach to promotion and marketing consisted of traditional marketing such as, newspaper adverts, leaflet distribution, posters, and monthly face-to-face information events.
- 7.3 Our campaigns will target recruitment of carers for:
- Older adolescents
 - Brothers and Sisters
 - Parent and Child Foster Carers
 - Mockingbird Hub Carers

7.4 In 2020/21, there were **8** new mainstream fostering households approved and this created **10** placements. Whilst this is a significant improvement on the 2 fostering households approved in 2019/20, it still falls well short of our ambition to recruit and approve additional foster carers. The figure for 2021/22 is more encouraging; the Fostering Service are on track to recruit **14** new mainstream fostering households.

7.5 Between April 2020 and March 2021, Walsall Council received **154** general enquiries from residents about foster care. Of these, **31** progressed to initial visits and following further checks **8** became new foster carer households in the last year. This equates to a conversation rate of **26%**

7.6 Our target per year over the next three years is to attract a net increase of **20** fostering placements for 2021/22, **25** for 2022/23 and **30** for 23/24.

8. Deregistrations:

8.1 In 2020/21, **36** fostering households were de-registered. The table below outlines the reason for deregistration and includes data for both Mainstream and Connected Carers:

	SN Average 2020	WM Average 2020	Walsall 2019	Walsall 2020	Walsall 2021
De-registered to facilitate a transfer to an independent fostering agency	0	1	1	3	0
De-registration initiated by the fostering service	18	17	19	9	10
De-registration initiated by the foster carer	19	37	20	15	10
De-registration for unknown reason	0	0	0	0	0
De-registered to facilitate a transfer to a local authority	0	0	0	1	1
De-registered because the family adopted the child/children	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
De-registered because the family took out a SGO for the child/children	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	14
Total households de-registered between 1st April and 31st March	36	55	40	28	36

8.2 As there were **36** deregistrations or resignations, this represents an overall loss of **16** Foster Carers. As noted in the table above, 14 (38%) deregistrations relate to the child's carer becoming their special guardian.

9. Occupancy of Mainstream Fostering Placements

9.1 Walsall's mainstream foster carers now provide an average of **1.8** approved placements per household. Over the past 12 months, this rate has not changed from 1.8 on 31/3/20 to 1.8 on 31/3/21.

9.2 The role of Placements Liaison Officer was also created in April 2019 to support the efficient matching of in house foster carers to children requiring a foster placement. This role has supported the service to increase occupancy rates of in-house household and the close working between the Fostering Service and the Placements Team is considered to be a contributory fact in maintaining this percentage.

10. Connected Persons Fostering

10.1 Connected Persons arrangements are often very complex situations with families struggling to come to terms with the reasons why the children have become looked after. Connected Foster Carers receive the same level of supervision as mainstream carers. The Skills to Foster training tailored specifically for Connected Persons carers.

10.2 In 2020/21, **12** Connected Person Households were approved at Fostering Panel. Whilst this is a decrease from the **36** in 2019/20, the **12** new approvals created **19** placements.

10.3 The table below outlines the number of children living with Connected Carers. The number of children cared for in a connected persons fostering arrangement approved by Walsall Council decreased by 15 in 2020/21. The service is actively promoting legal permanence through Special Guardianship for children for whom this is the preferred outcome.

Year End	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Connected Care (Fostering)	130	127	115	134	119
% of total LAC	20.1	19.9	18.7	20.0	17.7

13 Achieving Permanency

13.1 Walsall has a commitment to ensure that a child's need for a permanent home is addressed and that a permanence plan is made at the earliest opportunity. The aim is to ensure that each child has an agreed permanence plan in place by the second Looked after Review.

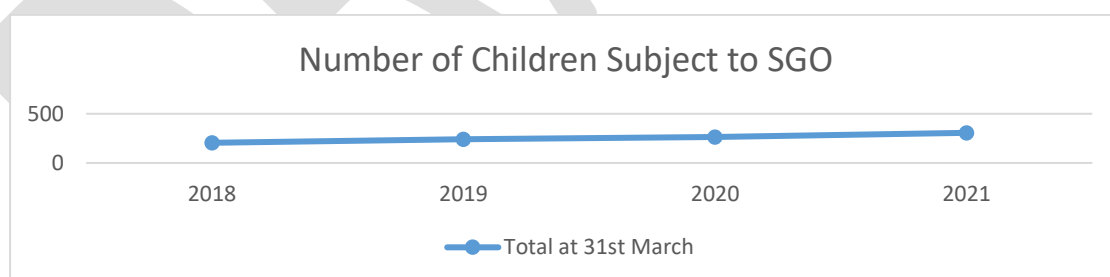
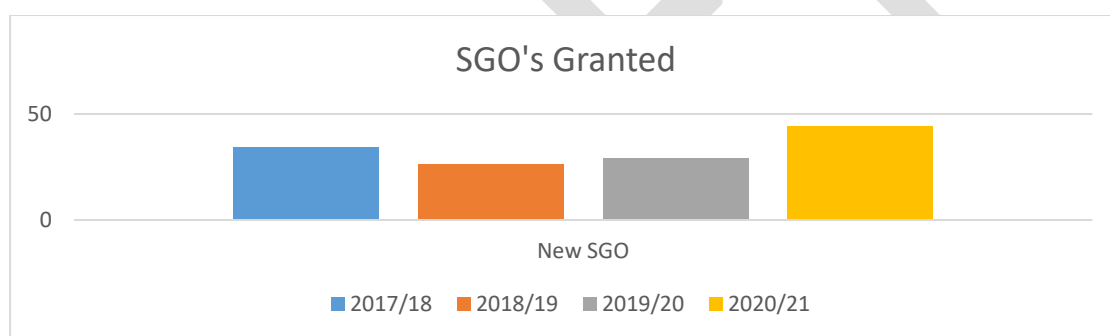
13.2 The expectation is that all children under the age of 16 will have a permanency plan; this can range from an eventual return home, a long-term placement with a foster carer, a Special Guardianship Order, a Child

Arrangement Order, or Adoption. For those 16 plus, the expectation is that their permanency plan will be addressed through their Pathway Plan.

13.3 The post of Permanency Co-ordinator was created in 2016 to track and monitor all permanency plans. All children with a care plan of long term fostering, adoption and Special Guardianship Order (SGO) are monitored in respect to timeliness and to prevent delays for our looked after children. The full time post for SGO Post Order Support has also supported families in progressing SGO applications as a means to achieve permanency with the confidence that this support will be offered after the order is granted.

13.4 The tables below outlines the number of SGO's granted each year and the number of children who are being supported under an SGO. Both tables indicate trajectory of growth in this option of permanence for children.

13.5 On 31st March 2021, there were **306** children supported by their Special Guardians. This represents a **49%** increase to that of 31st March 2018. The total number of children is continuing to rise in 2020/21 (**325** as at 01/11/21).



11. Supervision, Support, Training & Development

11.1 The Fostering Service delivers effective regular supervision to all Foster Carers in line with their need for support, supervision and personal development, as detailed in the policy for foster carer supervision.

11.2 According to the Fostering Service Regulations, at least one unannounced visit is undertaken to each fostering household each year. The frequency of unannounced visits is recorded on Mosaic, monitored by the Team Manager, the Annual Review process and the use of PowerBi Reports.

- 11.3 In 2018/19, compliance at the end of financial year was **90%**. In 2019/20, this improved to **94%** and in 2020/21, it was **92%**. The global pandemic did have an impact on this aspect of work. In the early part of 2020, numbers were low but these began to recover to business as usual by November 2020.
- 11.4 Foster Carer Training is provided through the Council's Children's Workforce Development Team. This includes both mandatory courses ensuring that foster carers have the training necessary to undertake their role and more in-depth training for those carers who want to develop particular specialisms or a deeper knowledge of a subject area.
- 11.5 In our Foster Carer Survey 2020, Foster Carers told us that they enjoy both a mix of virtual and online training. However, as the only real option to offer training in the previous 2020/21 was online, we have improved the online training offer.
- 11.6 To do this, the Recruitment & Retention Training & Development Workstream reviewed the existing arrangements and changed provider. The Fostering Service are now using the provider 'The Training Hub' for online training. Before opting for this provider, we asked a group of Foster Carers to sample the range of training on offer and they confirmed that this was an improvement on what we was previously available to them.
- 11.7 Preparation and training groups (Skills to Foster) have been held for all prospective mainstream foster carers. The training is delivered by the Fostering Service and in response to Covid 19, took place virtually in 2020/21. Connected persons foster carers are also invited to attend this training.
- 11.8 The service continues to support newly approved foster carers in completing the mandatory Training Support and Development Standards (TSD). There is an adapted version of these standards for connected persons foster carers and there is an expectation that any connected person carer completes this within 18 months of approval.
- 11.9 Capturing detailed information about the training and development of individual foster carers in a way that is reportable is an area of development for the service. While this information is known and monitored on an individual basis by supervising social workers, we are currently implementing the recording and data capture mechanisms that will allow us to report on and monitor this on an ongoing basis at a service level.
- 11.10 However, we know from our annual Fostering Return, we know that of the 325 foster carers that were approved on 31st March 2021:

Status		Number / %
TSD1	Not yet commenced	59 (18.2%)
TSD2	Training in progress	59 (18.2%)
TSD3	Awaiting sign off	6 (1.8%)
TSD4	Workbook completed	201 (61.8%)

11.11 In August 2020, Walsall Foster Care Association (WFCA) inform Walsall Council that they would not be offering the services requested by the Fostering Service. Whilst the WFCA remain operational and some foster carers continue to access what support is on offer, the WFCA no longer receive any financial support from Walsall Children's Services Directorate.

11.12 In October 2020, the Fostering Service introduced Monthly Support Groups for our Foster Carers. These currently take place virtually (morning & evening sessions) and are arranged and led by the Senior Practitioners. All Foster Carers are invited to these by a Senior Practitioner. Each session is themed and we aim to involve a guest speaker in each of these. We are working towards offering both face-to-face and virtual groups. Overtime, it is envisaged that those attending these groups can move to becoming a Foster Carer Association so that we can tap into their expertise to develop and shape the service. Areas covered in recent months are:

- Mockingbird
- CAMHS
- Early Years Support years team (supported young children)
- Staying Put

11.13 The Fostering Service now produce and share regular, separate newsletters with Foster Carers and SGO Carers

11.14 The Fostering Service are working on a plan to offer Nurture and Attachment Training (NATP) to all Foster Carers. In order for the Fostering Service to deliver on this, we are in the process of our staff completing Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy Training (DDP) and then the NATP train the trainer programme.

11.15 DDP is 'a therapy, parenting approach and model for practice that uses what we know about attachment and developmental trauma to help children and families with their relationships.'

11.16 Foster carers can access support and advice out of hours via the Council's Emergency Duty Team (EDT). All foster carers have the contact details for EDT and reports from carers who have used the service are positive. Carers use the service to report significant events and to seek guidance. On occasions, social workers have visited carers' homes out of hours, most usually in response to children exhibiting disruptive behaviour.

11.17 The Fostering Service continues to have access to regular consultation surgeries provided by Flash Service – the Tier 2/3 CAMHS service. The Hub Carers with the Mockingbird Service can use this service to consult on the

support they provide to the households in their hubs. Supervising Social Workers support foster carers to make use of the advice and support attendance by children requiring intervention.

11.18 All foster carers approved by Walsall Council are provided with membership of the Fostering Network.

12. Mockingbird Family Model

12.1 There are now three Mockingbird Constellations. The plan is to grow the number of Hub Carers to 6 by 2022. As of 1/11/21, the current position is as follows:

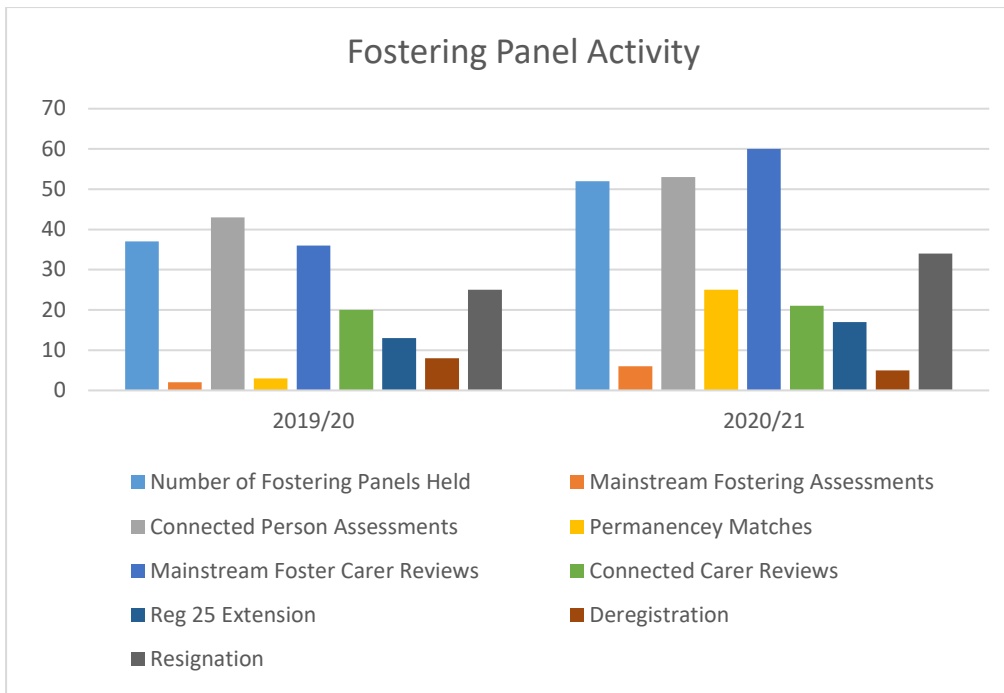
- Hubs – 3
- Hub Carers 9 (current hub carers and hub carers to be)
- Foster Carers- 57
- Looked After children- 40
- Adopted children- 6
- Children subject to SGO-1
- Birth Children- 17
- Adult household members- 6
- Totalling- 136 people

12.2 Walsall continues to work with Fostering Network in developing and delivering within the efficacy of the model and have agreed to be involved in an evaluation of that is being conducted by the Rees Centre at the Department for Education at the University of Oxford, commissioned by the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care. The evaluation aims to assess the impact of the Mockingbird programme on placement stability, on foster carer retention, and on changes in wellbeing of children in care.

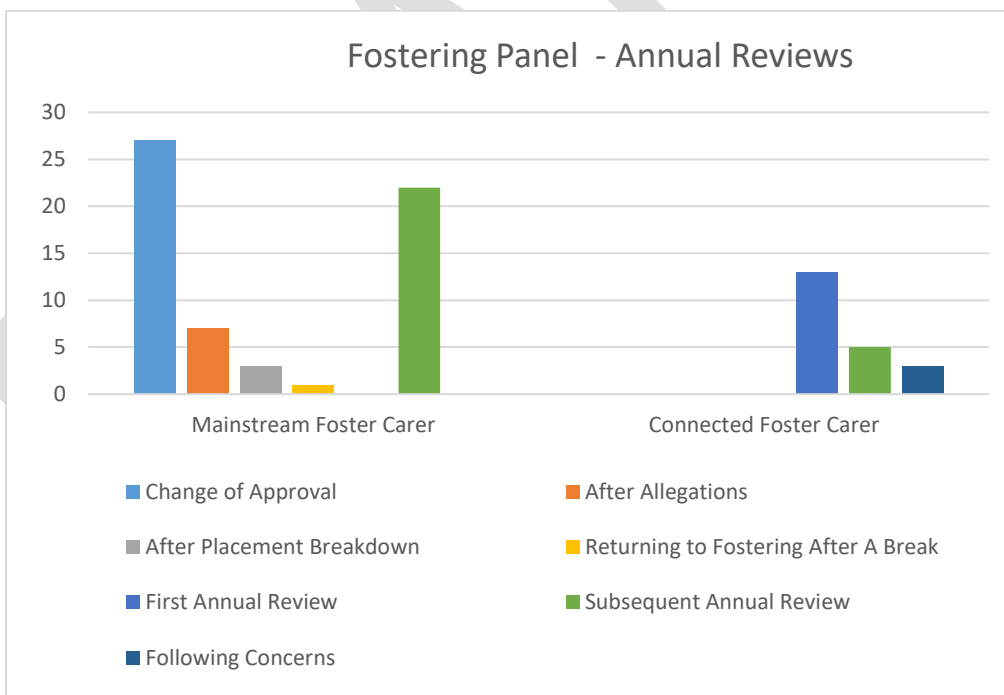
13. Fostering Panel

13.1 In 2020, Chris Dennison stepped down from his role as Chair of Fostering Panel. Lisa Cawthorn is continued as Chair and there are two Vice Chairs who are Sue Partoon and Catherine Mitchley.

13.2 Fostering Panel activity continues to be busy with the Panel meeting on 52 occasions. Panel was quorate on each occasion. The table below outlines the range of work discussed at Fostering Panel.



13.3 The table below sets out the reasons why a matter was discussed at Fostering Panel following an Annual Review:



13.3 Up until December 2019, a dedicated, full time Panel Advisor took the lead on co-ordinating the recruitment, induction and annual appraisal of panel members. During 2019-20, they also arranged training days for panel members alongside facilitating their private study through sharing information from guidance and research with panel members.

13.4 As part of the service redesign, the Panel Advisor post was deleted and Fostering Service Team Managers act as Panel Advisor on a Rotational basis at Fostering Panel. Due to other demands on Team Manager though, other aspects of the work associated with Panel Advisor have not been completed. To address this, the Fostering Service reviewed and deleted the role for the full time Independent Fostering Reviewing Officer and replaced this with post of Practice Improvement Manager. This post became operational in August 2021 (out of scope for this Annual Report).

14. Staying Put

14.1 The provision for 'Staying Put' has ensured that many young people are able to remain with their carers beyond their 18th birthday. Although this continues to represent a challenge around managing the availability of fostering placements, it remains important to ensure that the offer of staying put is made to every young person in foster care.

14.2 In 2020/21, of the **19** Care Leavers, **14** (73.6%) of these stayed put with their foster carers. At 31st March 2021, there were **41** care leavers age 19 and 20 that were in a fostering placement when leaving care. **18** (43.5%) of these were with former foster carers. Of the 18, **7** were from IFAs, **10** from Internal Fostering and **1** from connected care

10. Complaints

10.1 During 2020/21, the Fostering Service received 5 complaints; 3 from approved foster carers and 2 from prospective foster carers.

10.2 The reason for the complaints were:

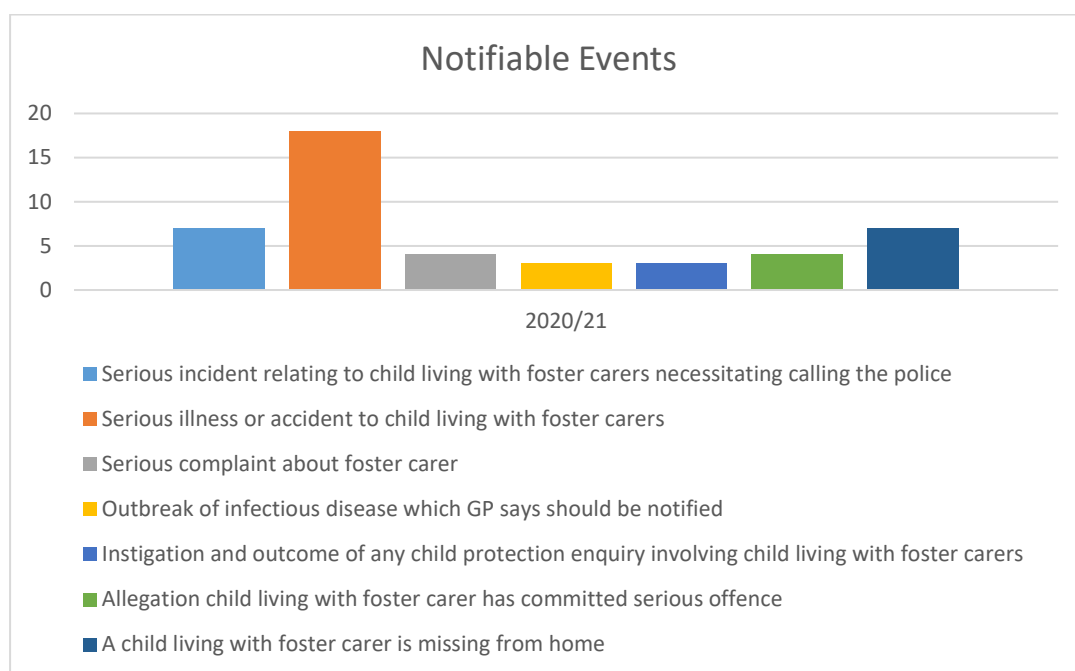
- Complaint about perceived lack of support from, discrimination by and unprofessional conduct of Fostering Team
- Complaint in regards to the decision to not financially back date progression to Advanced Level payment to Easter 2017
- Carers not happy that a portion of fostering allowance to be deducted due to the need to fund school transport
- Unhappy with fostering reference
- Disappointed with experience at Panel meeting in January 2021

10.3 All complaints were resolved: 3 were resolved at Stage1, 1 was resolved after a review by Senior Manager and 1 progressed and was resolved via LGO, which in the main, upheld how Fostering Service had attempted to resolve the matter.

11. Notifiable Events

11.1 In 2020/21, there were **46** Notifiable Events (Regulation 36, Schedule 7 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011). The majority (**39%**) related a child being

unwell or having an accident. The table below provides an overview of the other categories.



10.4 There were four allegations against Local Authority Foster Carers. Of these, three resulted in Section 47 enquiries being made. Following the allegations being submitted, one resulted in no further action being taken. The remaining continued fostering with additional monitoring. There have been no incidents of physical restraint were reported in 2019/20 and this is similar to 2018/19.

11. The Impact of Covid 19

11.1 Throughout the period covered by this Annual Report, the UK was dealing with the global pandemic. Along with the other services offered by the council, the Fostering Service had to adjust its approach. There were a number of areas that the lockdowns and restrictions affected the service and our foster carers. These included:

- Additional pressure on fostering households as children were spending more time at home and home schooling
- Children's access to education
- Access to support from family network
- Adjustment to undertaking many activities including meetings, visits and Fostering Panel through virtual platforms
- Changes to arrangements for children to see their families
- Reduction in the availability of fostering vacancies as foster carers are unable to include new fostered children in their households due to health vulnerabilities
- Impact on workforce – balancing work, home life, home schooling etc.

12. Service Priorities and Improvement – 2021/22

- Assess and approve 14 new mainstream fostering households
- Maximise the capacity of internal foster carers and increase the proportion of looked after children placed with internal foster carers
- Maintain an assertive and robust focus on marketing, recruitment and assessment of foster carers
- Extend the range of in-house fostering provision
- Increase range of support that is available to foster carers
- Complete Annual Foster Carer Survey
- Support & Stability Team is embedded and fully operational
- Launch Out of Hours Foster Carer Support Line
- 12 members of the Fostering Service to have completed DDP Level and go on to compete NATP 'train the trainer' course
- Confirm delivery model for NATP training to foster carers and workforce
- Grow Mockingbird Hubs from 3 to 6
- Continue to embed partnership working with Kinship (formerly Grandparents Plus)
- Complete 12 months of Case File Auditing and produce Annual Report Learning Report on this activity
- Continue to develop and embed the use of the Performance Dashboard
- Develop and embed the role of the Practice Improvement Manager
- Develop learning feedback loop for work into and out of Fostering Panel
- Review of SGO support and present an options paper to DMT for pre & post order SGO support.
- Present options paper to DMT on the arrangements for competing Annual Reviews

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Title Independent Visitors Service

Prepared by Debra Silvester Group Manager

Internal **External** **Confidential**

Prepared for CP Board

Date 20th December 21

Independent visitors and provider

1. This report is a follow up report from the one provided by Jivan Sembi in May 2021
2. An Independent Visitor is described as a trained volunteer who is there to “befriend and support children and young people in care” The statutory guidance states that the appointment should be considered as part of the development of the care plan and looked after review process. The child’s wishes and feelings should be ascertained as to whether or not an IV should be appointed.
3. Change Grow Live is the Walsall’s Independent Visitor provider and this is a sub-regional contract in partnership with Dudley, Sandwell and Telford & Wrekin. The contract with Change Grow Live started on 1st May 2018 and was initially in place for 2 years, this has been extended to April 2022. Dudley is the lead commissioner and has recently started the tender process in readiness for April 2022.
4. Walsall’s contribution has been £10,000 for at least 6 years; this reflects the target number of children for Walsall, which is 10. If necessary, Assistant Directors have always approved additional funds for any children requesting an IV above the target number.
5. The service is reviewed in line with the contractual arrangements and involves commissioners and strategic managers across the 4 Local Authorities. The Programme Manager provides quarterly reports and there is a sub-regional quarterly meeting chaired by the operational lead Alan McFarlane to review take up of the service. Walsall’s strategic lead is the Group Manager for the Safeguarding and Review Service.
6. The CGL service is proactive in recruiting and training volunteers. They currently have 41 volunteers from a range of backgrounds. They also recruit volunteers to match the specific needs or requirements of children. Over the pandemic, the service has operated virtually with some face to face work based on the needs of the children. The service has been creative in developing one to one sessions working virtually.

Eligibility

1. The provision is for children 8 to 18 years. Some IV’s will continue to befriend a young person beyond 18 years if the young person wants to.
2. Any child or young person who is a child in care in Dudley, Walsall, or Telford & Wrekin Councils or Sandwell Childrens Social Care trust.

Service take up

1. As of November 2021; 9 children have an IV and 3 are waiting for an IV this is an increase compared to 7 children having an IV in May and 2 waiting to be matched.
2. Generally, Telford and Wrekin and Dudley have higher targets and lower matches. Whilst Sandwell have a higher target and more matches.

Promoting the provision within Childrens Social Care

1. We continue to promote the use of Independent Visitors via a range of avenues including;
 - CGL have attended team meetings
 - CGL attended a CCIC meeting in April
 - Commissioning have attended the steering meetings and contributed to developing the service as well as ensuring value for money.
 - Advocacy is a prompt when completing a young person's pathway plan but the IV service is not. This could be remedied. The IV service has attended a TLC team meeting in the past, but not recently
 - The EHC assessment team are reminded of the service and do know how to refer; however tend to notify the social worker when a child expresses an interest.
 - IV and Advocacy have been discussed at some unit meetings in Corporate Parenting and Senior Managers have been provided with reports.
 - CWDT are arranging a visit from the IV and Advocacy service.
 - The IV service have attended a unit meeting with the CP Coordinators /IRO's. Advocacy and IV's is on the CP Coordinators /IRO's prompt sheets for child in care reviews and CP conferences.
 - Safeguarding and Family Support Social Workers take leaflets out to children and they intend to invite CGL and The Childrens Society to unit meetings.
 - Due to changes in provision of our Childrens Homes, once recruited, Assistant Home manages will take responsibility for promoting Independent Visitors. Each of the homes have participation meetings and their own nominated in house leads. Advocacy visits take place every month although this has been hugely affected by Covid19 and all visits throughout this period have been conducted by telephone, this has proved to be very challenging to get the children to engage. CGL are discussing this with the manager for Childrens homes
 - A new member of staff will become the representative for Family Placements, as it is important foster carers are fully informed and can support children in accessing an IV and/or advocacy.
 - Materials advertising the service have been sent to service areas.

3. Recommendations for Promoting IV and Advocacy in the future

1. The strategic lead and operations lead are keen to improve attendance at Advocacy and IV meetings and have worked together to create this. Attendance at the meeting in November was significantly better. However, this will require ongoing commitment and prioritisation from services.
2. Managers to invite representatives from both the IV and Advocacy service to unit/team meetings this will help staff to understand the difference between IV's and Advocates, know the criteria and referral process and promote the services with children and young people.
3. There is now a named IRO lead, who will attend the operations meeting. This representative will feedback information and ensure IV and Advocacy is kept on the unit meeting agenda. The aim is to remind IRO's to promote IV and Advocacy at a child's looked after review. It will also keep advocacy on the agenda for children with CP plans.

5. Circulation of publicity and materials, including the referral process will be ongoing.
6. It is crucial that those providing a home to children, be that a foster home or children's home know about the IV and Advocacy services and can support children in accessing these services. Hence, it is crucial that those providing a home are well versed in this provision.
7. Information about the IV service and Advocacy service should form part of a child's welcome pack when first becoming looked after.
8. A review of provision, and whether this could meet the demand set out in National Standards.
8. Both CGL and the Childrens Society would welcome the opportunity to provide an annual report and attend the Corporate Parenting board.
9. Feedback from the CICC would be most welcome. Do they know what an IV is? Is this discussed as part of their review? What else do they think would be helpful?

Debra Silvester

Group Manager, Safeguarding and Review.

Walsall Children's Services Corporate Parenting Board September 2021 Quarter 2

Please Note: 2020-21 benchmarking data has now been added
where applicable.



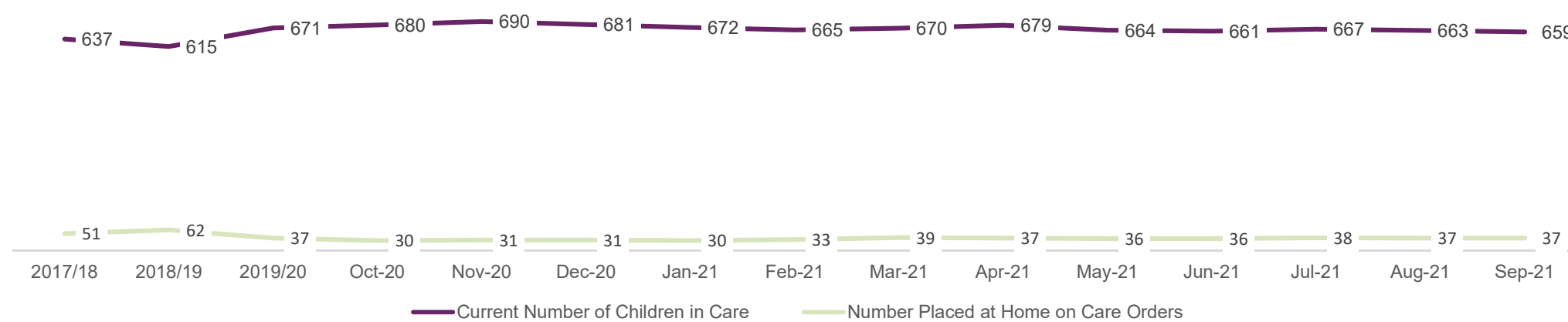
Walsall Council

PROUD OF OUR PAST OUR PRESENT AND FOR OUR FUTURE

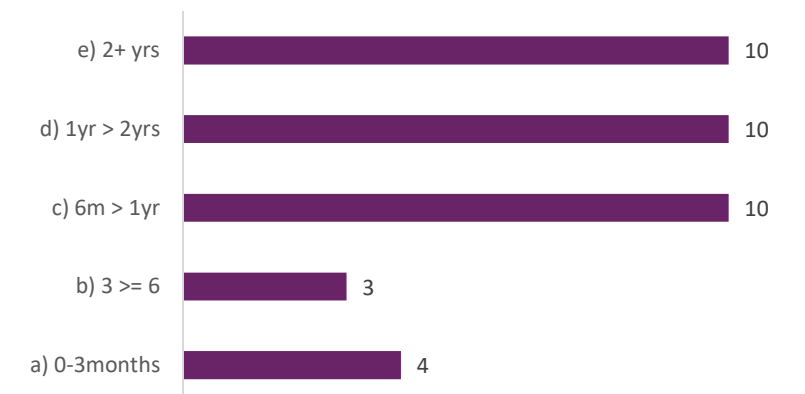
Current Children in Care (CiC) Profile



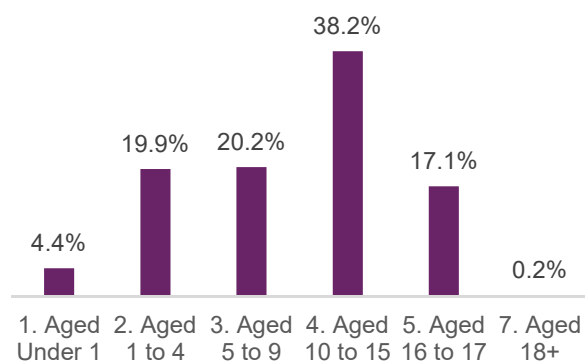
Number of Children in Care in Walsall (12 Month Rolling)



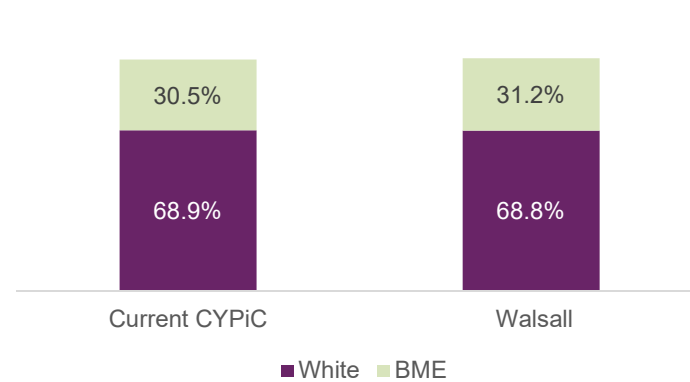
Length of Time placed at home on full care orders



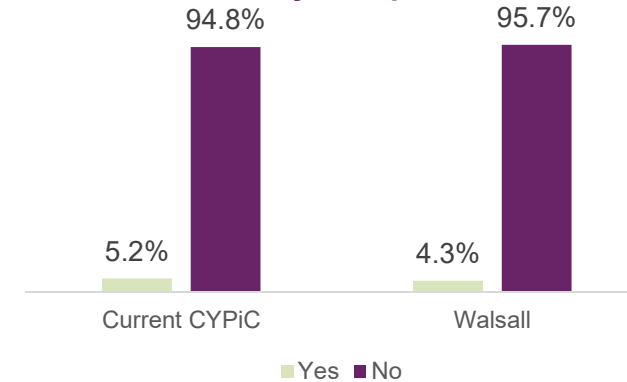
% of current CiC by age



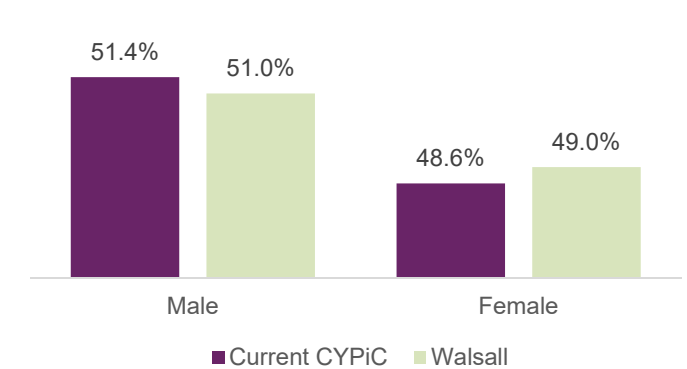
Ethnicity Comparison



Disability Comparison



Gender Comparison



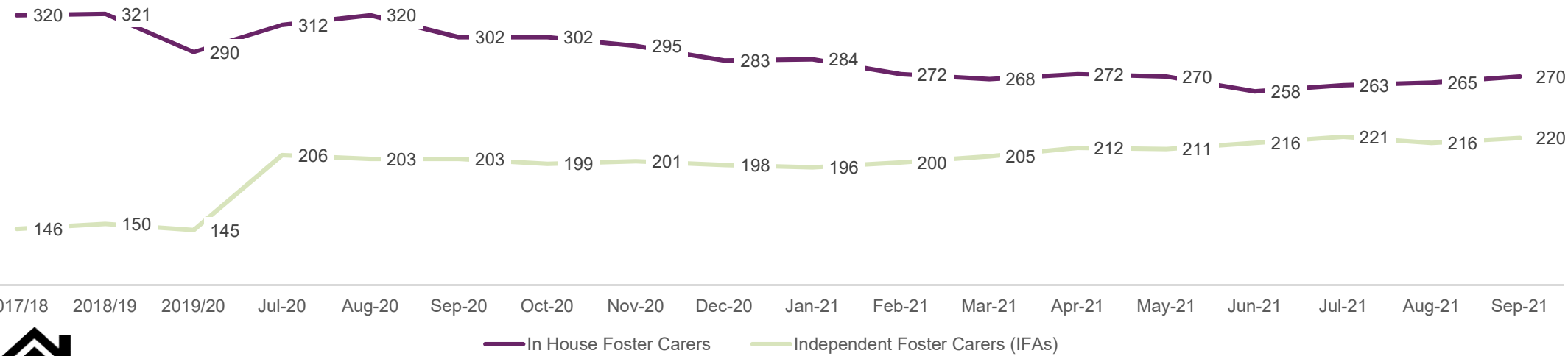
Commentary

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 (5.2%), compared to the overall 0-17 population (4.3%). A slightly higher percentage of Children in Care are male (51.4%) compared to the overall 0-17 population of Walsall (51.0%).

The current Children in Care population has continued to decrease slightly from 670 at the end of 2020/21 to 659 at the end of Q2 of the current year (2021/22). The current rate of 96 per 10,000 remains below that of our statistical neighbours but is still higher than the 2019/20 England and West Midlands averages. We currently have 37 children placed at home on full care order, a slight increase from 36 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.

CiC Placement Analysis

Breakdown of Foster Placements (12 Month Rolling)



The number of CiC placed with in house foster carers has been decreasing but IFA's remains stable.



% CiC placed 20 mile+ from home, outside of LA boundary
90
13.8%

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%

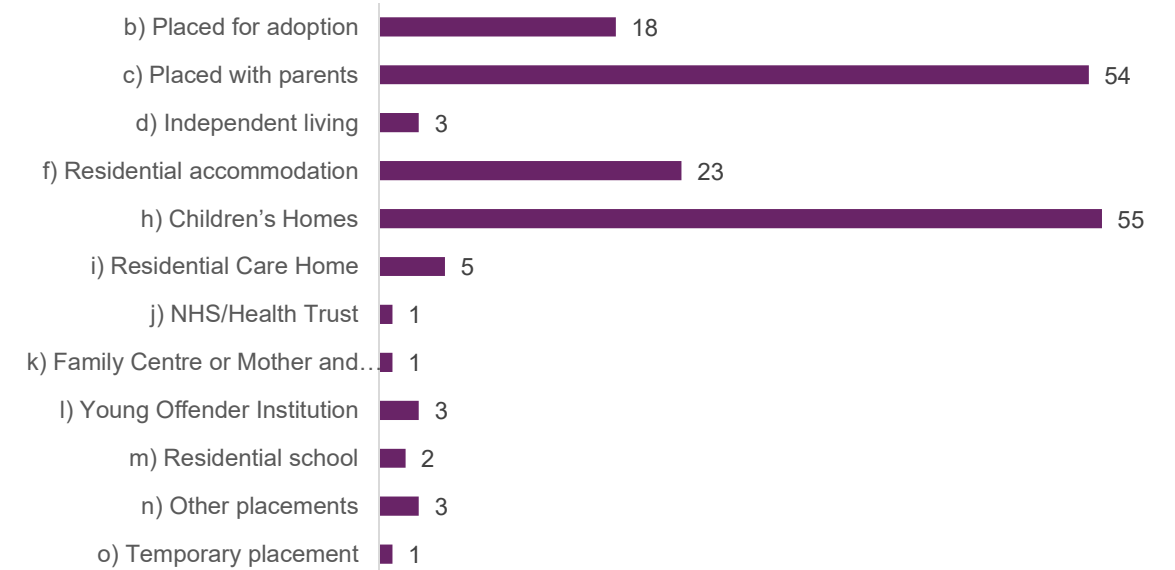
% CiC 3 or more placements in a year
51
7.7%

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
210
64.0%

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 increased during the second quarter of 2021/22, following sustained decreases during the previous 3 quarters of the reporting period. Currently Walsall has 270 children placed with in house foster carers, lower than the out-turn for the previous three years. Walsall has 220 children placed with independent fostering agencies. This figure has increased slightly during quarter 2, but has remained fairly constant during the reporting period.

13.8% of Walsall's CiC are placed 20 plus miles from their home address and 7.7% of the CiC population have had 3 or more placements within a year. This is an improvement on the 2020-21 out-turn and better performance than comparators in 2019-20. The percentage of CiC in the same placement for over 2 years if CiC for over 2.5 years (64.0%) is also improving but remains slightly lower than regional and statistical neighbour averages for 2019/20.

Statutory Visits and Reviews



% Visits undertaken to timescale

Where a statutory visit has been undertaken to timescale in accordance with the child's plan.

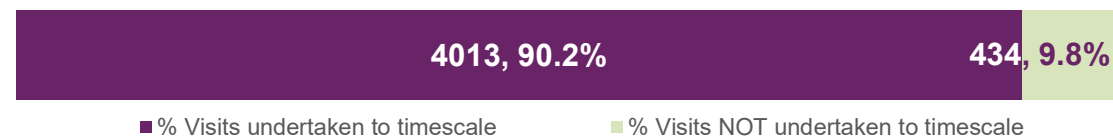
Time Since Last Visit Undertaken	Number	%
a) 0 - 6 weeks	597	90.6%
b) 6 - 12 weeks	57	8.6%
c) 12 - 18 weeks	3	0.5%
d) 18+ weeks	0	0.0%
No Visit Recorded - new in last month	2	0.3%
Total	659	100.0%



Reviews carried out within timescale (12month Rolling)

Where reviews for children looked after are carried out within timescale

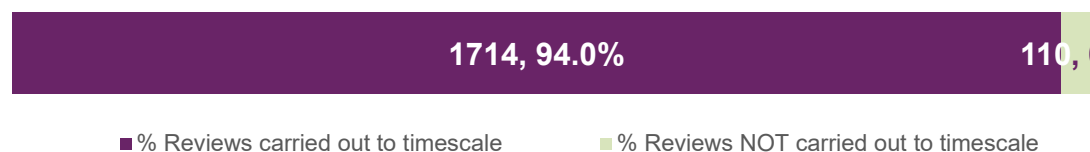
Time Since Latest Review	Number	%
a) 0 > 3 months	391	59.3%
b) 3 > 6 months	219	33.2%
c) 6 > 9 months	40	6.1%
d) 9 > 12 months	0	0.0%
e) 1 year or more	0	0.0%
No review	1	0.2%
No Review - new in last month	8	1.2%
Total	659	100.0%



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



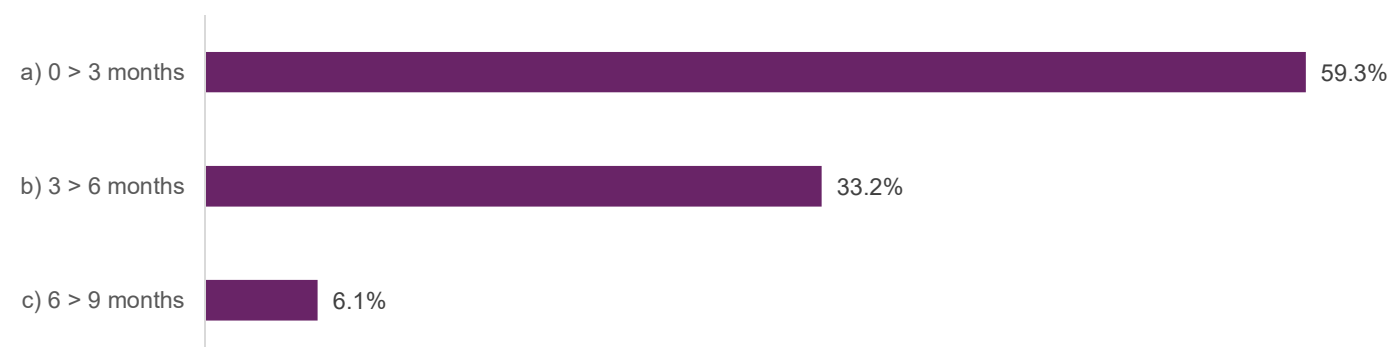
% of children in care by time since last visit



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 90.2% with 90.6% seen within 6 weeks of the previous visit or coming in care. There were 2 CiC with no visits recorded at 30th September 2021, these are new children who have entered into care during the month.

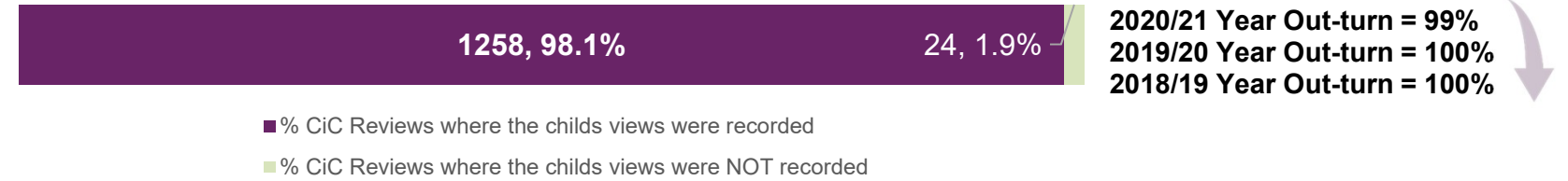
94.0% of reviews have been undertaken within timescales. This is good performance. 92.5% of current Children in Care have had a review within the last 6 months. 6.1% (40) children currently have overdue reviews, however, a proportion of these reviews will have been completed on time and will be in the process of being recorded (IROs have 20 working days from the date of review to write their reports).

Views of the child



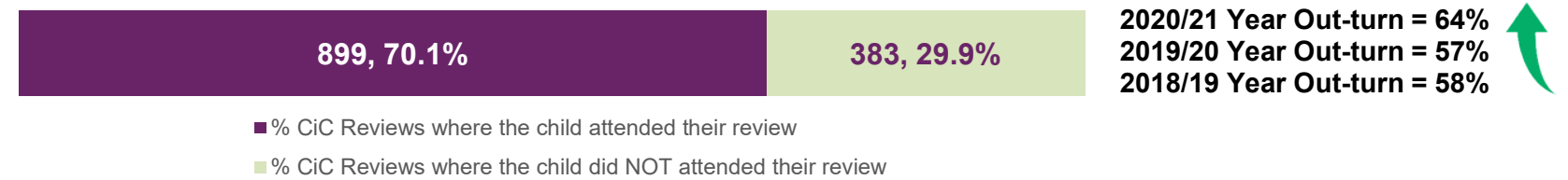
% CiC Reviews where the child's views were recorded (12 month rolling period)

The proportion of CiC reviews where the child's views were recorded (this is where the review took place and a "PN" code has been selected)



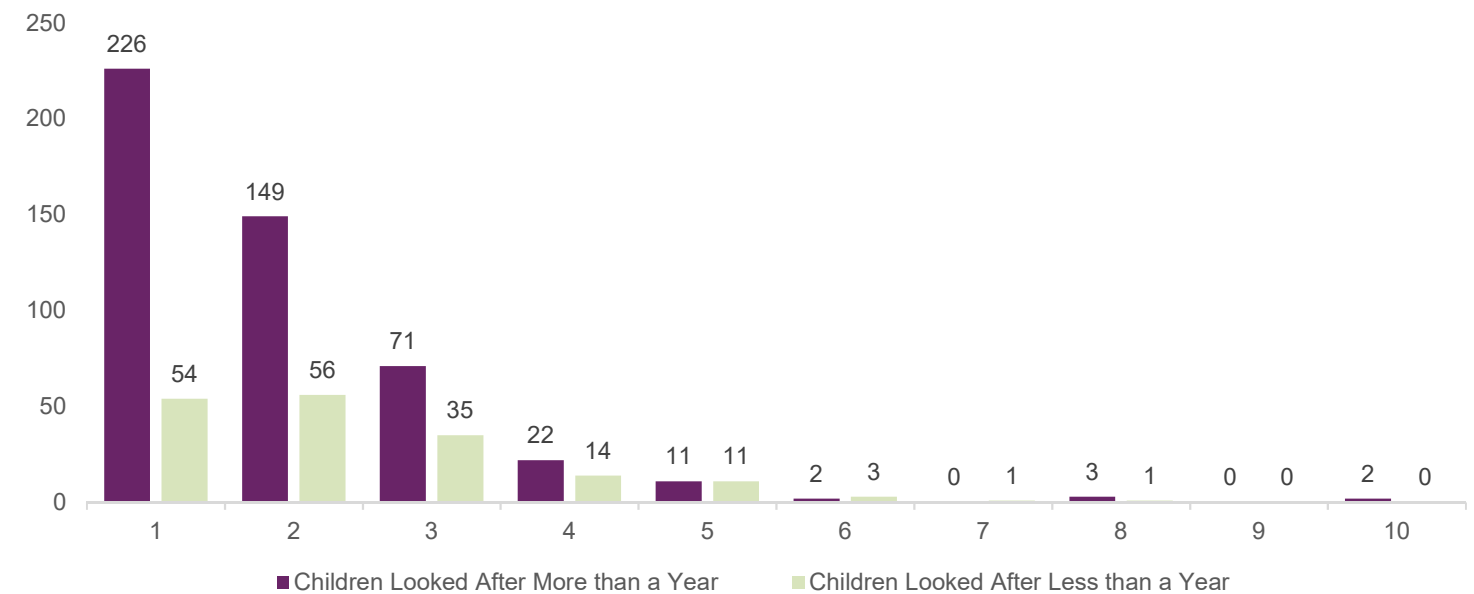
% CiC Reviews where the child attended their review (12 month rolling period)

The proportion of CiC reviews where the child's physically attends their review.



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	832	64.9%
PN2 - child attends and an advocate speaks for them	31	2.4%
PN3 - child attends and conveys their views non-verbally	9	0.7%
PN4 - child attends; does not speak for themselves / convey their views	27	2.1%
PN5 - child does not attend but asks advocate to speak for them	74	5.8%
PN6 - child does not attend but conveys their feelings to the conference	259	20.2%
PN7 - child does not attend nor conveys their view to the conference	26	2.0%
Total Reviews	1715	
No Participation Code Reported	24	1.9%

Number of Social Workers children have had in the past 12 months



Commentary

The child's views were recorded at 98.1% of CiC reviews. This is slightly lower than the out-turns for the previous three years, but remains very positive performance.

70.1% of children attended their review in the previous 12 months. This is a significant increase compared with previous years and has been supported and enabled through the increased use of technology.

It is positive that 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 226. This has increased slightly from 222 at the end of the previous quarter.

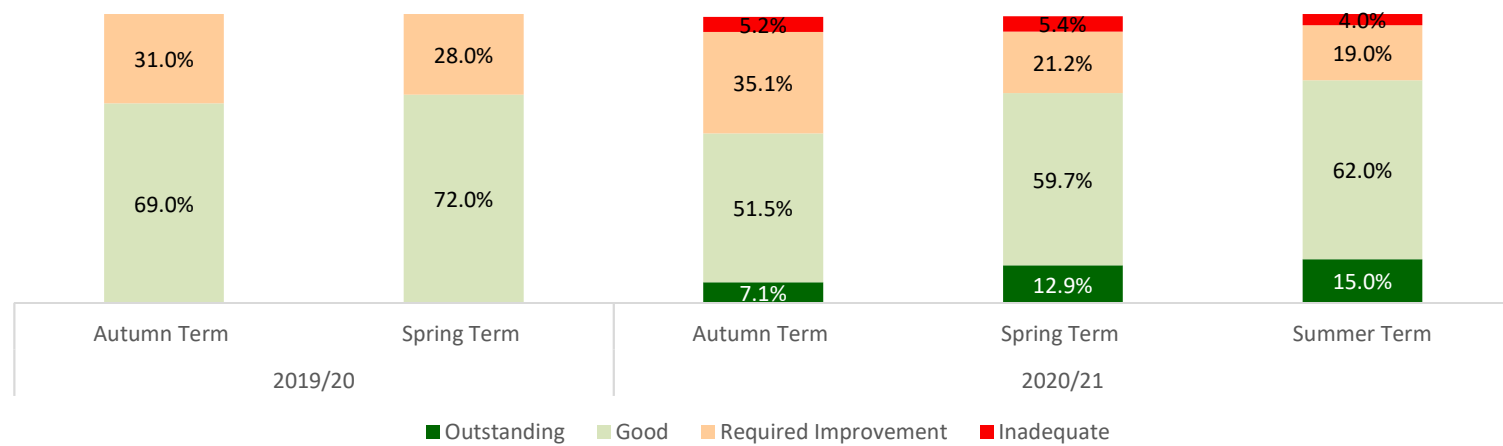
Education



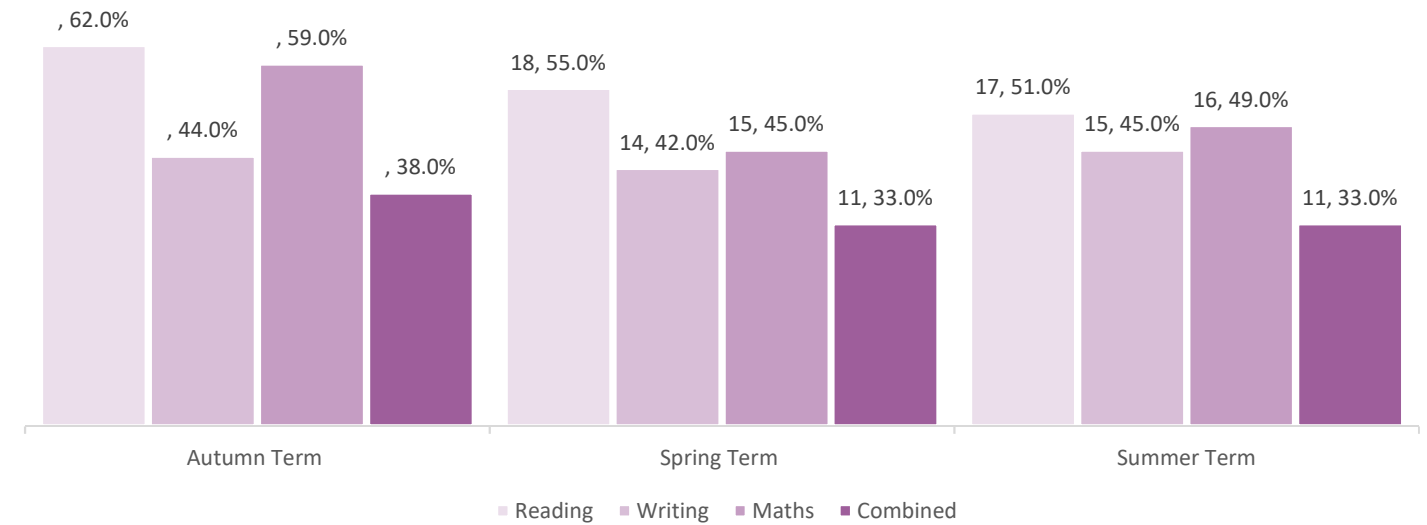
RAG Ratings of PEPS

The quality assurance process changed in 2020/21 from PEPs being rated good and requires improvement to being rated inadequate, requires improvement, good and outstanding, this enables us to distinguish between very good and very poor PEPs'.

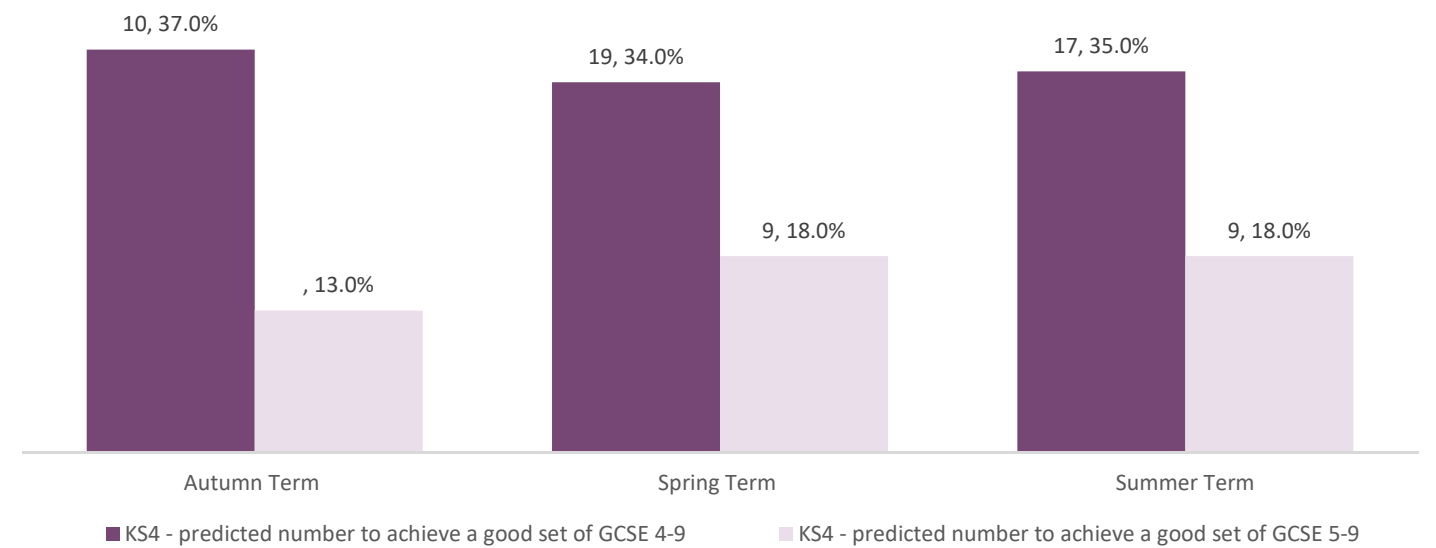
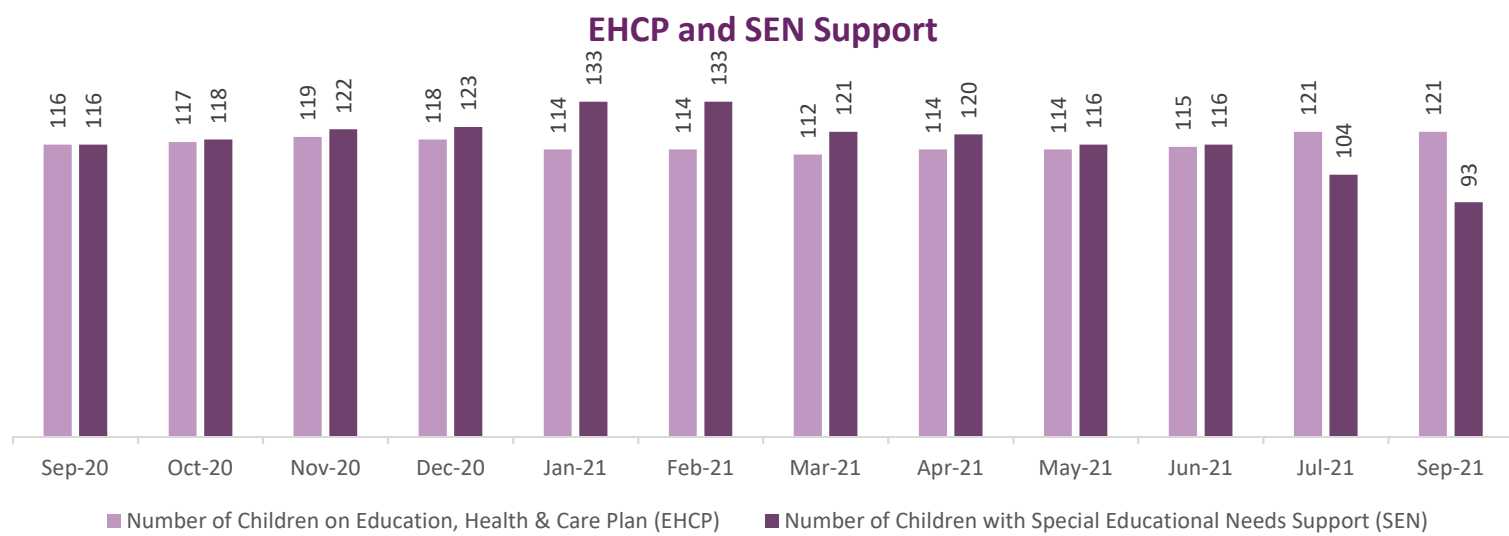
RAG Ratings of PEPS



Attainment Predictions Key Stage 2



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



Commentary

KS2 -The percentage of children predicted to achieve the expected level of attainment for KS2 in reading in summer 2020-21 was 51%, writing was 45% and mathematics was 49%. Compared with the summer term 2019-20 reading has increased from 48%, writing has decreased from 48% and mathematics has decreased from 52%. Combined stands at 33%, a decrease from last academic year.

KS4 -The percentage of children predicted to achieve a good set of GCSE (4-9) reported in summer 2020-21 was 35% which is an increase compared to summer 2019-20 (29%). The percentage of children predicted to achieve a good set of GCSE (5-9) reported in summer 2020-21 is 18% which again is an increase compared to summer 2019-20 (15%).

The number of children with an EHCP has remained static between July 2021 and September 2021 at 121, compared with September 2020 this has increase from 116.

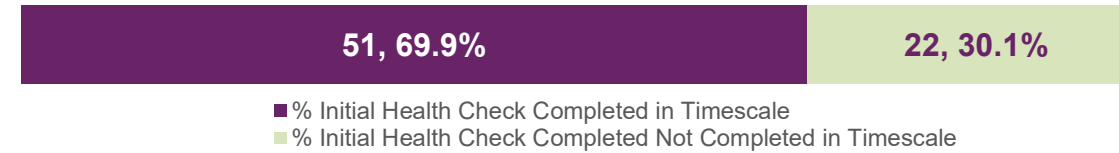
The number of children with SEN support has decreased from 104 in July 2021 to 93 in September 2021, compared with September 2020 (116) this is significantly lower.

Health and Well-being



% Initial Health Check Completed in Timescale

Assessments in timescale of CiC admission for those in care for

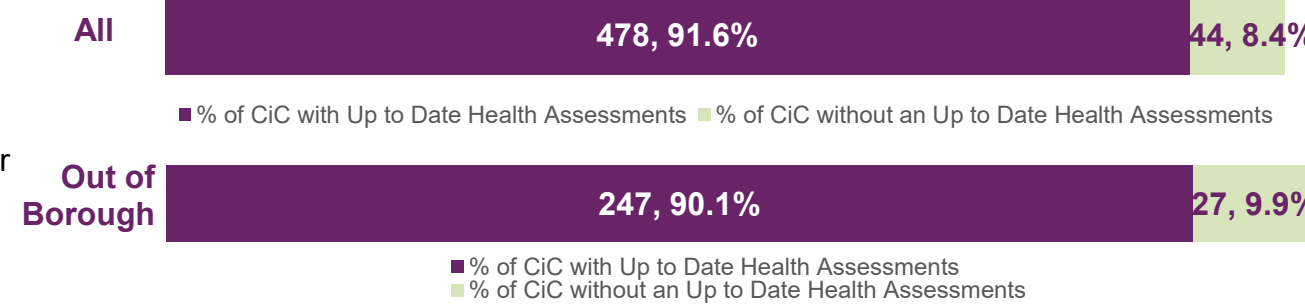


2020/21 Year Out-turn = 75%
2019/20 Year Out-turn = 49%
2018/19 Year Out-turn = 75%



% of CiC with Up to Date Health Assessments

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

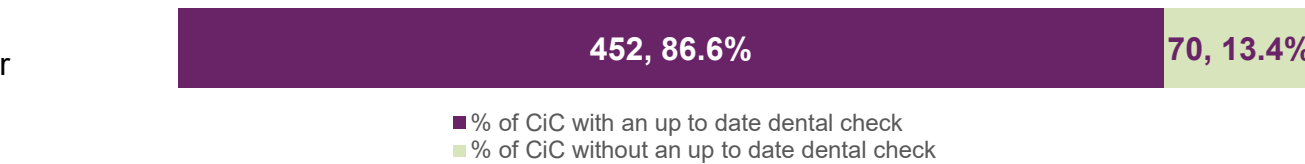


2020/21 Walsall = 85%
2019/20 Walsall = 80%
2019/20 West Midlands = 87%
2019/20 Stat Neighbours = 90%
2019/20 England = 90%
*These figures include Health Checks, Dental Checks and Immunisations.



% of CiC with an up to date dental check

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



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)

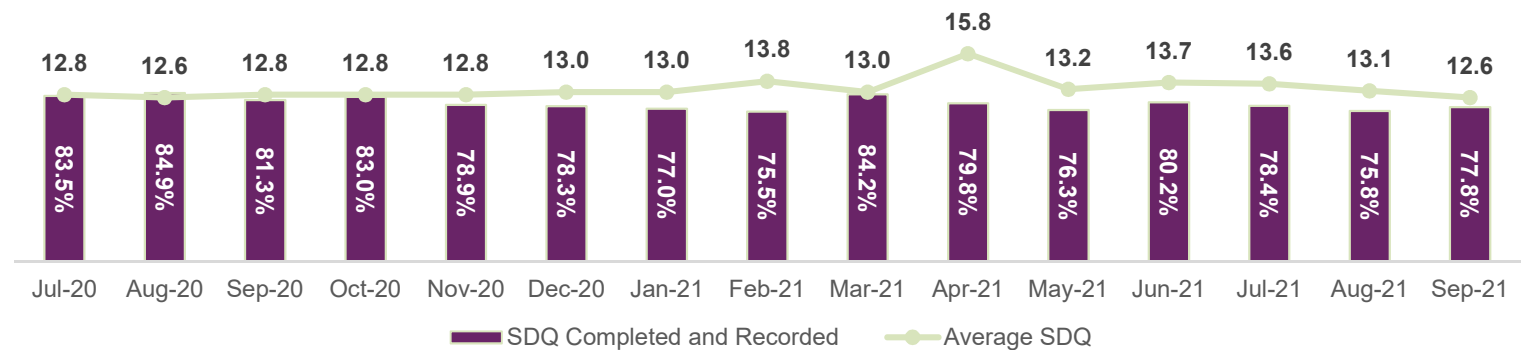
The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire should be completed for every child looked after for at least 12 months and aged 5 to 16 years-old.

Average SDQ Score
12.6

Breakdown

Score	Considered	Number	% of those eligible for SDQ	% against all Children
Score 0 - 13	Normal	228	54%	36.0%
Score 14 - 16	Borderline	50	12%	7.9%
Score 17 - 40	Cause for Concern	148	35%	23.3%

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



Commentary

Performance shows that the vast majority of children in care have up to date health checks. There has been a slight dip in the percentage of children whose initial health checks are done on time, but this indicator is affected by small numbers. 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.

Similarly a high and climbing proportion of children have up to date dental checks. This is a significant improvement on 2020-21 and indicates that the backlog in dental checks as a result of Covid is being cleared.

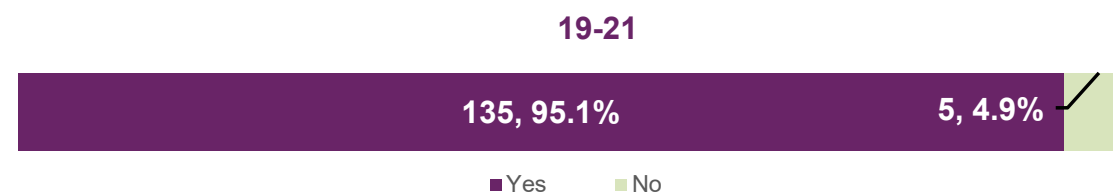
The proportion of SDQ's completed and recorded has decreased slightly to 77.8%, compared to 80.2% at the end of quarter 1. The average SDQ score is currently 12.6. This has improved since the previous quarter (Lower is better). 148 children currently have an SDQ score that suggests there may be a cause for concern in their emotional and mental well-being based on the answers they gave to the questionnaire.

Care Leavers



Care Leavers in touch

Care Leavers where the local authority is in touch aged 19-21

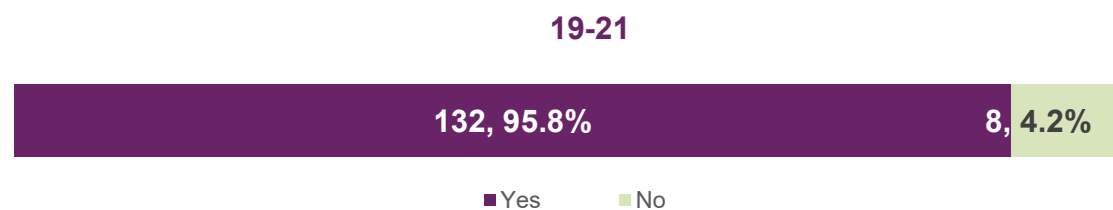


2020/21 Year Out-turn = 94%
2019/20 Year Out-turn = 95%
2020/21 West Midlands = 95%
2020/21 Stat Neighbours = 96.7%
2020/21 England = 95%



Care Leavers in suitable accommodation

Care Leavers whose accommodation is classed as suitable for age

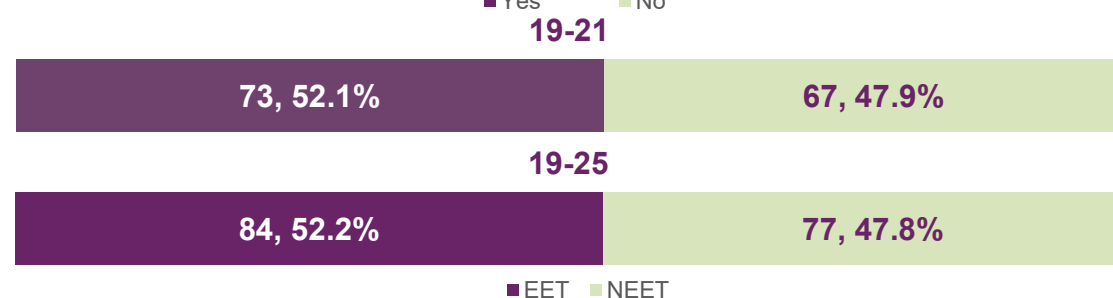


2020/21 Year Out-turn = 89%
2019/20 Year Out-turn = 89%
2020/21 West Midlands = 87%
2020/21 Stat Neighbours = 89.5%
2020/21 England = 88%



Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training

Education, Employment and Training of Care Leavers aged 19-21

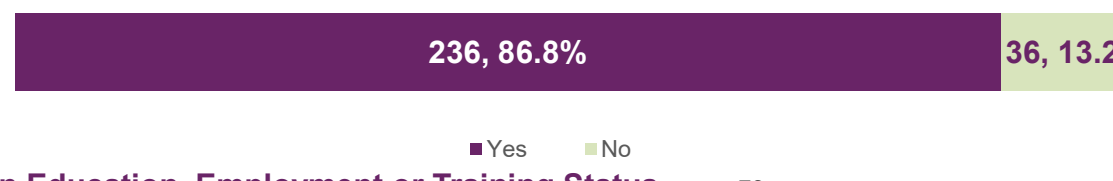


2020/21 Year Out-turn = 50%
2020/21 Year Out-turn = 54%
2020/21 West Midlands = 50%
2020/21 Stat Neighbours = 46.4%
2020/21 England = 52%



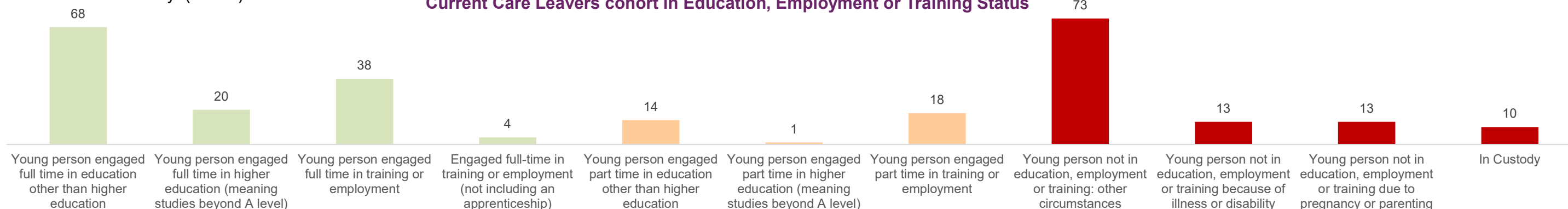
Care Leavers available to work - All Ages

Care Leavers who are available to work this excludes all those that are not available for the labour market due to illness/disability, pregnancy or young mothers or being in custody. (NALM)



2020/21 Year Out-turn = 54%
2019/20 Year Out-turn = 74%
2018/19 Year Out-turn = 63%
2020/21 Year Out-turn = 86%
2019/20 Year Out-turn = 86%

Current Care Leavers cohort in Education, Employment or Training Status



Commentary

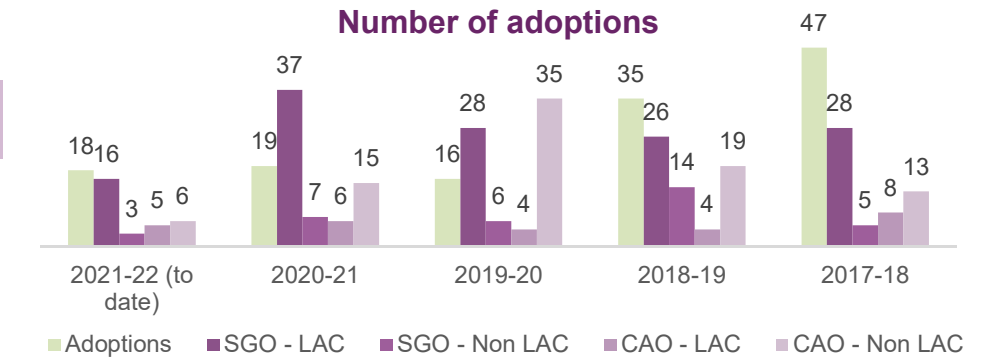
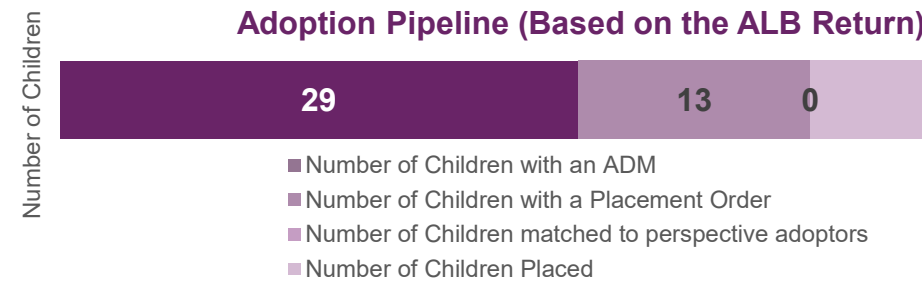
The percentage of care leavers in education, employment or training for the second quarter of 2020-21 was 52.1%. This has decreased compared to 56.3% at the end of quarter 1. The 19-25 cohort has also seen a decrease during quarter 2, with 52.2% care leavers in Education, Employment or Training compared with 57.1% at the end of Q1. Managers had expected these figures to decrease as the government's furlough scheme comes to an end and a dip over the summer is often seen on a seasonal basis as educational courses come to an end over the summer.

86.8% 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. 10 of Walsall's care leavers are currently in custody, an increase of 3 since the end of Q1. The number of care leavers in suitable accommodation remains high - of the eight 19-21 year olds that are not in suitable accommodation, 7 are in custody and 1 is in temporary supported accommodation.

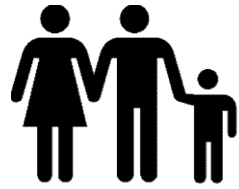
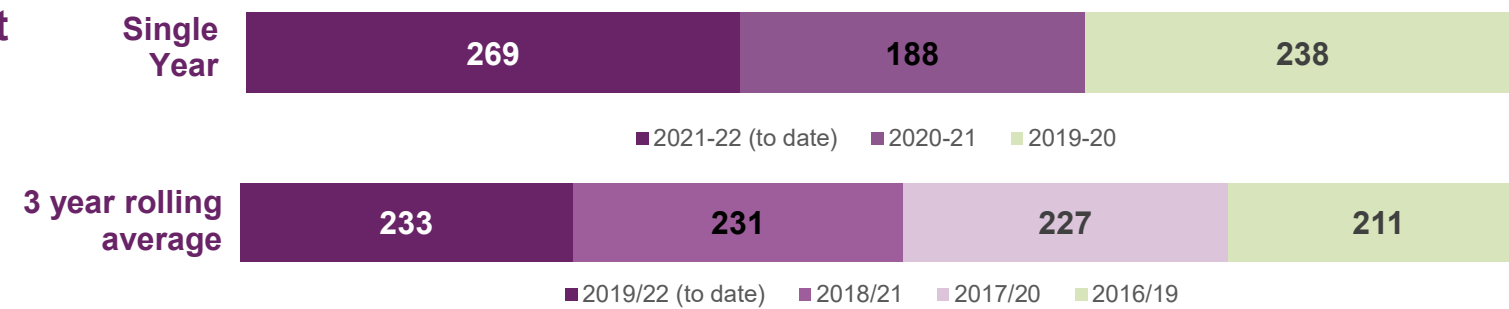
Adoption and Permanency



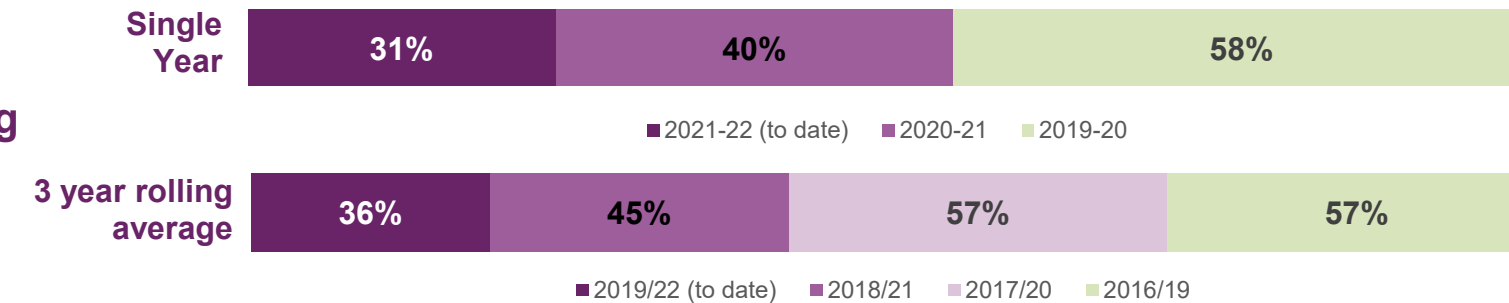
Adoption Pipeline



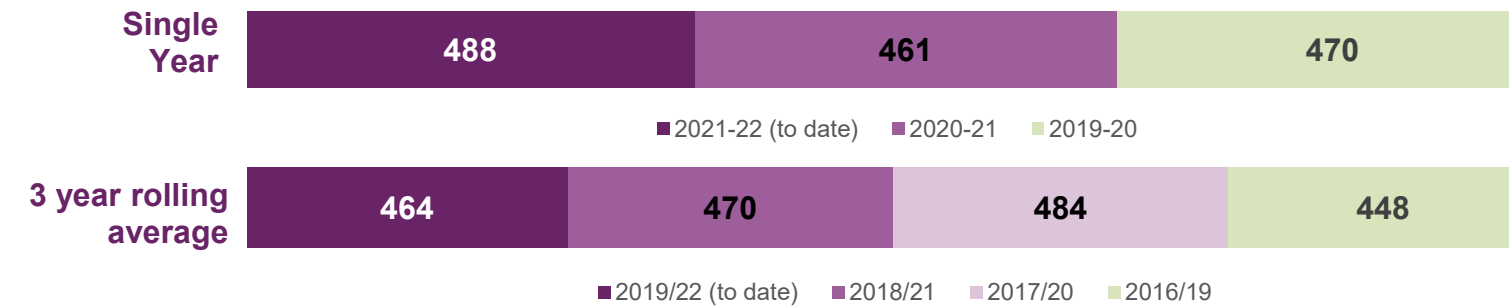
A2 - Average time between receiving court authority to place and finding a match



A3 - % Children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family



A10 - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (stopped at point of fostering for foster carers adoptions)



Commentary

There were 18 adoptions during the first two quarters of 2021/22, based on the latest ALB data. In 2020/21, 19 were children were adopted. This was an 19% increase compared to 16 during 2019/20.

So far during the current year, children had a longer wait than in 2020/21 between receiving court authority to place and finding a match - this was 269 days compared to 188 days in 2020/21. 31% of Children wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. Between April and September 2021, 14 Children have ceased to be looked after due to special guardianship orders and 3 due to child arrangement orders.

Corporate Parenting Board
11 January 2022

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024.

Executive Summary:

The council works in partnership with others to support families who need support in the community to care for their children within their family and family network. For some children this is not possible and they become children in our care.

Every councillor and officer within a council has a statutory responsibility to make good decisions for children in our care and care experienced young people (also known as care leavers) as a parent would for their own child, in this context councillors are Corporate Parents.

The corporate parenting strategy sets out our ambition for our children in care and care experienced young people, and how this will be achieved. The Corporate Parenting Action Plan will make the ambition in the strategy a reality.

Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board:

To agree the Board's shared partnership ambition for our children in care and care experienced young people

To support Walsall Council in meeting its legal responsibilities in regard to our children in care and care experience young people.

Recommendations:

1. The Board committee notes the final draft of the Corporate Parenting Strategy
2. The Board members are asked to:
 - Comment on the draft Corporate Parenting Strategy ("the strategy")
 - Agree the priority areas and action plan for the delivery of the strategy
 - Agree that the delivery of the strategy is monitored through the work plan of the Board.

Background papers:

None

Resource and legal considerations:

There are no resource implications associated with the development of the strategy.

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:

There are no environmental implications associated with the development of the strategy.

Performance management:

The delivery of the strategy will be monitored through the Corporate Parenting Board and the Directorate Management Team.

Reducing inequalities:

Successful delivery of a strategy to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers will have a significantly positive impact on the outcomes of one of the most vulnerable groups.

Consultation:

The children in care council 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:

Full Name: Jivan Sembi



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Jivan.sembi@Walsall.gov.uk

Report: Corporate Parenting Strategy

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The previous Council Corporate Parenting Strategy was published in 2017, following the approval of the Corporate Parenting Board. Building on the foundations of the existing strategies vision, aims and priorities, the council has developed a proposed corporate parenting strategy which aligns with the Corporate Plan and the changed legislative and national policy context.
- 1.2 In addition to the work done previously to understand the views and experiences of our children and young people, the development of the new strategy seeks to understand and respond to our intelligence on the significant impact of Covid-19 Pandemic the health, wellbeing, educational and social development of our children and young people.

Policy, Legislative & Regulatory Context

- 1.3 Since the publication of the last strategy there has been a significant shift in the national policy context in relation to corporate parenting. This has included changes set out within the DfE Strategy Keep on Caring 2016, the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the 2018 Statutory Guidance. Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers and the revised Ofsted Framework the Inspection of Local Authority Children Services Framework, the ILACs, published in 2018.
- 1.4 A primary intention of Keep on Caring was to “make corporate parenting everyone’s responsibility” that was to be delivered by the introduction of corporate parenting principles. These principles require all departments within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, encouraging them to look at the services and support that they provide through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do to support their own children. These principles were subsequently set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- 1.5 The Children and Social Work Act 2017, and the 2018 guidance defines, for the first time in law, the role of corporate parents, in addition to expanding and extending support for care leavers, for example through the publication of a ‘local offer for care leavers’ and making personal advisers available for care leavers up to the age of 25.
- 1.6 Central to the strategy are 7 principles, set out below. The new strategy sets out to embed these principles within the council and beyond with our Partners and broader community The principles underpin everything we will do and explain how the collective ambitions for children and young people will be made real.

“In order to thrive, children and young people have certain key needs that good parents generally meet. The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:

- *to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people*
- *to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings*

- *to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people*
- *to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners*
- *to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people*
- *for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and*
- *to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.”*

1.9 The new strategy adopts the wider vision of the council for Children and Young People:

- 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

1.10 To achieve this vision we propose 5 key strategic priorities

Our priorities respond directly to Our Promises, a list of commitments to children and care leavers, developed and agreed by the young people themselves and endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Board.

1. Safety and Permanency
 - a. *All of our children and young people will be safe from harm, with stability provided through secure homes and excellent carers.*
2. Mental and Physical Health and Wellbeing
 - a. *We will educate our young people to encourage a happy and healthy lifestyle, making sure that professionals work together to ensure that all their health needs are met.*
3. Education and Employment
 - a. *We will champion our young people and help them succeed in education and training, supporting lifelong learning and the pursuit of their interests.*
4. Transitions and Independence
 - a. *Our young people will be prepared for the world of work and supported to become active citizens when they leave care. They will be prepared for independence in the best way possible.*
5. Influence and Involvement
 - a. *Children and young people are at the heart of service design, delivery and evaluation*

1.11 At the core of the strategy is our intention to drive the corporate parenting principles and delivery for our children, young people, and young adults into all areas of the Council and or Partners, and to unashamedly leverage all opportunities to improve

the life chances of children in care and those who have left care. It reflects the high aspirations that we have and what can be achieved by working with Partners.

It is an aspirational strategy, which will be delivered through the development of a delivery plan and by championing this work across the whole Council and with the wider community of Partners across Walsall who can make a difference to the lives of our children and young people.

1.12 Delivery Plan

The following delivery plan sets out the timescale for the completion and publication of the strategy

Corporate Parenting Board	January 2022
Further Consultation & Engagement with children in care and care leavers	February 2022
Publication	March 2022
Delivery Plan	2022/2025

1.13 Summary

Walsall has a significant record of investment in services for our children in care and our care leavers, we have a partnership that is committed to achieving improved outcomes for our children. The draft strategy sets a high ambition for how we can continue to build on that investment and see meaningful transformation in the life chances of the most vulnerable in society.

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2025

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Foreword:

In Walsall we want all children to live happy, healthy lives and achieve the best possible outcomes they can. Whilst most children and young people are able to do this, we know that at times families require support to overcome difficulties and challenging circumstances.

Our priority will always be the safeguarding of our children and young people, ensuring that they are happy, safe and well-prepared for adult life. If ever we suspect harm or potential danger, we take full responsibility for their protection. This sometimes means finding them another home where their security and sense of belonging can be assured.

We know that there is no greater responsibility than as a corporate parent to our looked after children and care leavers.

When a child comes into care, the council becomes their corporate parent and in Walsall we expect everyone, in every agency, our partners and across every service, to go the extra mile to safeguard our looked after children and young people. This means ensuring that they are at the centre of our work and have all the support they need.

Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs we do, if it is not safe for a child to stay at home the local authority will step in to give them the care, support and stability that they deserve .

Our commitment is to deliver well-rounded support services that respond to the changing needs of our children and allow them to achieve their full potential. We believe in an empathetic relational model and design our services around the needs of children. We also recognise that each young person has a unique identity that requires tailored support. This means listening, learning and constantly challenging ourselves to improve as corporate parents.

Where possible, we do everything we can to help young people stay safe and at home with their families. We're fully committed to building resilience in families and shaping our services to provide better methods of early intervention. We will always support parents to keep their children safe and ensure they have the best chance in life when this happens we work with families, offering targeted interventions to support them to stay together.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defines in law our responsibility as corporate parents to secure nurturing and positive experiences for the children we look after, whilst extending the support we offer to our care leavers. As corporate parents, we take our duties toward Looked after Children and care leavers very seriously and are committed to providing the best possible support to meet their individual needs.

We understand that each child in our care is an individual and our approach reflects this. To do this, we listen to the voice of the child. We track and support a child's progress through school, look after their health and wellbeing and strive to make sure they have the same opportunities as their friends and peers. We are ambitious for every child in our care and will encourage them to achieve their full potential, by overcoming challenges to progress well in education, learning and training. We want children and young people to establish trust based relationships with their social workers and personal advisers.

We continue to be aspirational as a corporate parent, encouraging our children and young people to achieve the best they can and continually celebrate their achievements. This strategy is not just about informing Looked after Children and Care Leavers on how we will support them, but also informs our partners on our ambitions for the children and young people in Walsall.

Councillor Wilson Chair of Corporate Parenting Board & Sally Rowe, Executive Director Children's Services

Introduction

Walsall's Corporate Parenting Board brings together all these people and provides a welcoming forum for our children and care leavers to discuss and influence the full range of services available to them.

Alongside our corporate parenting principles, there are a number of priorities that underpin this strategy and the services that both ourselves and our partners provide and offer to the children and young people in our care. This strategy outlines our priorities for supporting looked after children and sets a framework for the council and partners to be held accountable on their promises. Delivery against our commitments will be monitored diligently by the Corporate Parenting Board.

We know all children are unique and have individual needs and circumstances. We work closely with children in our care to understand individual needs and ensure that their 'Voice' is truly heard. Members will listen to young people and check that they are happy and healthy, receiving a quality education and have access to training and employment opportunities, as well as their own home to go to when the time comes to live independently.

Our relational approach means we engage directly and routinely with our children, their carers and care leavers as well as our staff who support them, encouraging them to share experiences so that we can better understand the issues they face and adapt services to meet their needs. Children's experiences will always form the centre of our approach in Walsall.

This means it is our responsibility as Corporate Parents to

- Keep our cared for children safe and secure, we stick with them and go the extra mile for them
- Create a culture where we know and believe in all our children and young people. We help them to achieve their goals and ambitions - by recognising their needs, talents and aspirations
- Listen and make our children and young people's ideas happen, ensure their lived experiences improve practice and make sure they know and understand their story and their plans
- Believe in our children and young people and help them to be the best they can be both now and, in the future
- Embrace and celebrate the individuality of our children and young people
- We want our children and young people to be healthy and happy
- We will listen to our children and young people's worries and work with them to find solutions
- We want our care leavers to become confident and resilient adults living within their own community with support from trusted adults

To be effective corporate parents, we need a collective commitment from the whole Council, all elected members, council employees, as well as our partners, i.e. Health, Police, other councils and the voluntary sector, all acting as good parents, committing resources and working together to improve the lives of all children and young people in our care and care leavers.

Children and Social Work Act 2017 – Corporate Parenting Principles Act

When a child becomes looked after, Walsall Borough Council becomes the 'Corporate Parent'. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 sets out 7 Corporate Parenting Principles to achieve the best possible outcomes for Looked after Children and Care Leavers.

When our children move to adulthood, we follow the principles to ensure we provide our care leavers with the support and stability that any child would expect as they prepare to leave the family home.

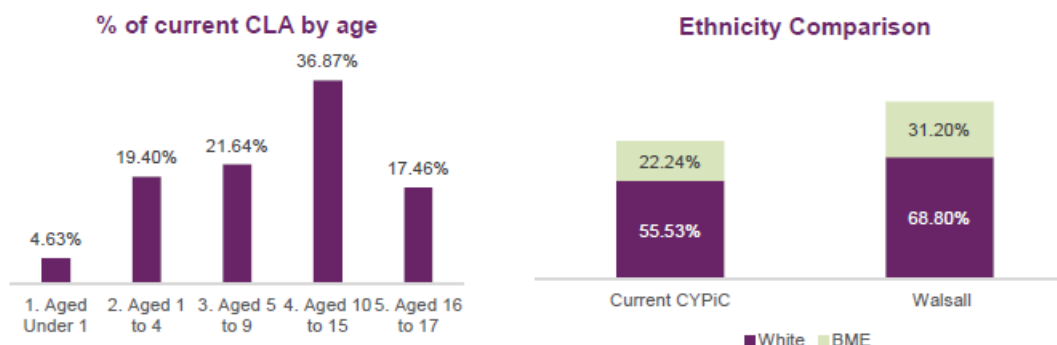
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- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people.
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
- To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

As an authority and corporate parent, we realise we cannot secure the best for Looked after Children and care leavers alone. In order to secure the best possible outcomes for our young people we need the support of other agencies. This includes working in partnership with colleagues from the National Health Service, Police, Probation, Housing Providers, Schools and Colleges and Voluntary sector.

Walsall’s Looked After Children - high level data at 31.03.2021 Helena to add

- As at 31st March 2021 there were 671 (97.3 per 10,000 population aged 0-17) children in care and 160 Care Leavers (aged 19-21)



- Throughout 2020-21 163 (23.6 per 10,000 population aged 0-17) children entered care, a 31% decrease on the previous year.
- 159 (23.1 per 10,000 population aged 0-17) children ceased to be looked after
- 75% of children in care were placed with foster parents and 8% were placed at home with their parents.
- 51.3% of Care Leavers (aged 19-21) were in education, employment or training
- 89% of Care Leavers (aged 19-21) were in suitable accommodation.

The Walsall Promise to Children in Care and Care leavers

Our Promise is a list of commitments developed by young people and children’s services decision makers to ensure that all our children in care and care leavers get the right services and support. By listening to our care experienced young people, we have developed a list of ‘Promises’ that form our Pledge to you as children in our care and care leavers. A pledge is an important part of running a service for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. It tells Children and Young People what we promise to do for them as their Corporate Parents

Young people and care leavers aged 16 to 25 years	Children aged 11 to 15 years	Children up to the ages of 10 years
<p>Education, Training and Employment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We promise to help you with your education and with finding the right employment and training opportunities. We promise to encourage and support you into college or university and give you clear information about the support you can expect. We promise to ensure that you have opportunities for work experience and employment such as apprenticeships and traineeships. We promise to support you to have different experiences and access to activities that may interest you <p>Keeping you safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We promise to help you to decide where you want to live and will help to keep you safe and comfortable We promise to help you to stay with your foster carers if this is possible. 	<p>Education and Training</p> <p>We promise to make sure that you have the best education possible and help you to plan for your future</p> <p>We promise to help you to enjoy new experiences and develop your own interests and hobbies</p> <p>We promise to celebrate your achievements and tell you how proud we are of you</p> <p>We promise to try and make sure that you don’t have to change school</p> <p>We promise to make sure that you get all the help and support you need to learn, achieve and succeed</p> <p>Keeping you safe</p> <p>We promise to provide you with a safe and comfortable place to live</p> <p>We promise to listen to you and involve you in decisions that affect your life.</p> <p>We promise to help you feel safe, both in and out of your home.</p> <p>We promise to encourage and support you to express your views</p>	<p>Education</p> <p>We promise to help you to play and learn at a school that is right for you</p> <p>We will help you join clubs and after school activities near to where you live</p> <p>We will help you to make friends</p> <p>We will tell you how well you are doing and let you know how proud we are of you</p> <p>Keeping you safe</p> <p>We promise to make sure you live somewhere safe where there will always be someone to take care of you</p> <p>We will make sure you can keep things that are important to you like your favourite toys.</p> <p>We will make sure you always have someone that you can talk to when you are feeling sad</p> <p>We will listen to what you like and don’t like</p> <p>Keeping you healthy</p> <p>We will make sure you stay well and can see a Doctor when you are poorly</p>

Young people and care leavers aged 16 to 25 years	Children aged 11 to 15 years	Children up to the ages of 10 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We promise to help you to manage your money and ensure you have financial stability ready for your future • We promise to help you to get important documents like passports and driving licence • We promise to pay for your council tax, even if you live outside of Walsall Council • We promise to provide you with opportunities to build your confidence so that you are able to make your own decisions about your safety <p>Keeping you healthy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We promise to help you to access health services and have access to your health passport • We promise to go with you to health appointments and support you if you need it • We promise to help you to access local leisure facilities to help you keep fit and well. • We promise to make sure you have someone to talk to or can access support with your mental wellbeing <p>Keeping in touch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We promise to help you to keep in contact with people that are important to you • We promise to celebrate your achievements with you • We promise to respect you as individuals and have high aspirations for your future • We promise that you will always have someone to contact 	<p>We promise to provide you with a trusted adult that can help you if you are feeling worried</p> <p>We promise not to do anything that will make you stand out as a child in care</p> <p>Keeping you healthy</p> <p>We promise to support and encourage you to have a healthy lifestyle</p> <p>We promise to make sure you are cared for by people who can keep you safe and healthy and will teach you how to learn to look after yourself as you get older.</p> <p>We promise to help you to access a range of leisure activities</p> <p>We promise to listen to any health issues you may have and will help you to get the support you need</p> <p>Keeping in touch</p> <p>We promise to help you to understand the reason why you are in care</p> <p>We promise to help you keep in touch with your family and friends, if it is safe to do so.</p> <p>We promise to respect you as individuals and listen to what you want</p> <p>We promise to help you keep a record of important events, achievements and people in your life that are important to you</p> <p>We promise to help you take part in things you want to do such as school trips and fun activities</p>	<p>We will help you to eat healthy food and drinks that will make you grow big and strong</p> <p>We will help you to be happy and feel good about yourself</p> <p>We will help you to play safely outside and enjoy exercise</p> <p>Keeping in touch</p> <p>We promise to help you to understand the reason why you are in care and will keep a story of your life for you to look at</p> <p>We promise to help you keep in touch with your family and friends, if it is safe to do so.</p> <p>We will help you stay in touch with Foster Carers and friends if you want to and will tell you if this can't happen</p> <p>We will make sure that you have a social worker that you can talk to</p>

Our priorities

Our priorities respond directly to Our Promises, a list of commitments to children and care leavers, developed and agreed by the young people themselves and endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Board.

- Safety and Permanency
- Mental and Physical Health and Wellbeing
- Education and Employment
- Transitions and Independence
- Influence and Involvement

Safety and Permanency

All of our children and young people will be safe from harm, with stability provided through secure homes and excellent carers.

Walsall works hard to ensure the right support is provided at the right time so that children can remain with their families. We always celebrate our family successes and we will support children to remain at home if it is safe to do so. However, if concerns about safety or wellbeing persist, swift action is taken to ensure the child has a safe and secure place to live, even if this means having to go into the care of the Local Authority.

We have a duty to ensure to ensure our young people have a safe place to stay. As corporate parents, we listen to and train our carers to have all the tools they need to be the best carers to our young people. We also understand the importance of support networks and make sure our young people have adults that they can rely on and provide as much stability as possible.

We know that uprooting children from their homes or having to change placements can be tough, so we work hard to find long and suitable families and homes for our young people that will allow them to flourish and make a success of their lives.

We commit to:

- Provide young people with a safe home to live with carer who are suitable and well trained. Young people will be happy and taken care of, and only moved again if absolutely necessary.
- Our Turning Point service will continue to make a direct contribution to helping children to remain with their families
- We will ensure that social work plans are child focused, culturally informed and consider the perspectives of partners in health and education.
- We will continue to help our children find stability, build trust with professionals and identify risks early to avoid young people entering the criminal justice system.
- We will give our young people all the information we can about their new family, home and where they will be living. They will be given information about the support available from youth services, including on education, training and careers.
- Ensure continuity of care for our young people so that they maintain a sense of stability and do not experience too many different professionals.
- We'll draw on the rich experience of our foster carers and enable them to provide best possible care for looked after children and young people.
- We will continue to challenge ourselves to offer the best services and develop our approaches.
- Continuing to explore family and friends in order for children to return to family and not remain in care for longer than necessary if appropriate.

- Promote and champion the specific needs of unaccompanied and separated young people including support with acquiring citizenship.

Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing

We will educate our young people to encourage a happy and healthy lifestyle, making sure that professionals work together to ensure that all their health needs are met.

Often our children have had tough starts in life and many children and young people experience the trauma of being separated from their families and communities. Being happy and confident in identity is a key factor in looking after our mental wellbeing, particularly when it comes to race, sexuality, disability and gender. It's therefore crucial that we encourage our young people to be comfortable in who they are and demonstrate sensitivity and inclusivity of difference for our young people to thrive.

We are commit to:

- Care planning will consider the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our children and care leavers
- We will support our children and young people to understand the importance of their health assessments and ensure that no one misses out on healthcare, with regular assessments to help identify need.
- We'll encourage all young people to attend their assessments by offering flexible arrangements both face to face and virtual appointments. Medical appointments will be kept even if the young people live outside of Walsall.
- Provide a holistic health assessment within four weeks of a child entering care, and annually thereafter (or six-monthly for Under 5's). Our health team will listen to their problems and understand their needs, reviewing their physical health, growth and development.
- We will ensure and promote access to mental health services. For those with specific needs will be offered support from the FLASH Team for those who live within Walsall or within 20 miles. We will work with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) or other providers to secure support.
- We will educate our young people and encourage a happy, healthy and active lifestyle, providing free access to leisure facilities. Maintaining an open dialogue about all aspects of their health; from healthy eating, exercising and staying safe, to sexual health, smoking, alcohol and substance misuse.
- We will support young people with substance misuse issues and intervene early to provide all the support they need.
- We will ensure that our children and young people know how to access their health records.
- We will ensure that the information about their health is kept confidential and only shared with people who need to know.

Education and Employment

We will champion our young people and help them succeed in education and training, supporting lifelong learning and the pursuit of their interests.

Ensuring that our children in care and care leavers are in good education, employment, apprenticeships and training will always be a priority for us as we know they offer the greatest opportunities for our young people to build a successful career.

All our young people are unique and have different interests and hobbies which provide opportunities to improve confidence, mental wellbeing and feel connected to something they love. In Walsall we maintain high aspirations for our young people and help them to make the most of their talents.

Walsall's Virtual School has high expectations and helps the children in our care and leaving our care to achieve the very best. Although the pupils attend many different schools and settings, we operate as if they all attend one school. We have high aspirations for their education, employment and training and we expect schools and settings to provide a quality learning environment which meets their needs and encourages and develops their ambition.

Virtual School monitors, supports and challenges academic achievements and attainment in partnership with schools, carers, social workers and personal advisers. We hold schools to account for the impact of the provision on pupil's progress through the education system using Personal Education Plans and monitoring the use of Pupil Premium plus .

The Virtual School is committed to ensuring that the Voice of the child will be reflected in our planning to effectively support all pupils and their views are sought at every Personal Education Plan meeting.

Virtual School deliver a variety of out of school activities throughout the year for children and young people of all ages. Some examples of the positive activities provided through the School are Summit2success Programme, Aspire to University and our Year 6 residential. We use pupil premium to fund sport, art and music activities and provide 1:1 tuition and other bespoke educational packages when needed. We celebrate the success of our children and young people through annual celebration events.

We have a Governing body, like any school, we provide reports on the work of the school and the progress and achievements of the children.

We commit to:

- Social workers and personal advisors working with our Virtual School, which ensures monitoring, support and advice for young people throughout the year.
- We'll help to ensure all children and young people achieve their full potential through education, training and good quality employment, making the most of their talents.
- We will identify any Special Education Needs (SEN) and meet these needs through an Education Health Care Plan or other SEN support, helping our young people overcome barriers to education attainment.
- Making sure they have a place at a good school or college and attend regularly.
- We will guarantee that every young person has access to digital devices, study resources, tuition and a high quality Personal Education Plan. They will also have excellent support from a Designated Teacher at their school.
- Ensuring our care leavers have a Pathway Plan that has clear information about what support is available once they leave care, go to university or undertake vocational training and apprenticeships. Also connecting them into training, coaching and other opportunities through *Endless Possibilities* and *Walsall Works*.

Transitions and Independence

Our young people will be prepared for the world of work and supported to become active citizens when they leave care. They will be prepared for independence in the best way possible.

Leaving care, like leaving home, is a critical transition for our young people and supporting them through this transition into adulthood is a major responsibility for us as corporate parents. This is not simply a matter of helping young people acquire a checklist of life and independent living skills – although it is those things – but also helping young people develop resilience, have a comfortable sense of self and have options for their futures. We recognise that young people mature at different paces and that some young people will struggle to gain independence and struggle in independence.

Working with our partners in health, education and CAMHS and Walsall Housing Group we are developing services so that young people remain living in the borough where they grew up with access to wrap around support while developing their independent living skills.

In Walsall we listen carefully to our care leavers and assess their needs to make sure they have all the services required for a successful transition into adult life. This includes making sure they have suitable accommodation while preparing for independence.

We commit to:

- Ensure that all young people in our care over the age of 16 years have a pathway plan specific to their needs and aspirations.
- We will make every effort to help young people remain living with their foster carer after 18 and up to the age of 21 if they wish (Staying Put)
- Once a young person leaves school, we will help them to make the most of their opportunities in training, further education and employment.
- From the age of 18, they will have a personal advisor to help them to become independent. Care leavers can continue with this support up until the age of 25 if they wish to do so.
- Care leavers will have the best housing and support offer we can give them as their corporate parent. We want all our young people to live in our borough and have access to our communities
- We will ensure our care leavers are given as much help as possible to find suitable housing, supported to move and settle into their new home, with provisions made to ensure they're happy, safe and are able to sustain the tenancy.
- We will help our care leavers learn the practical skills needed to live independently, such as managing budgets and applying for jobs.
- We will ensure that individual needs are taken into account and the needs of young parents are supported through their transition.
- We will ensure that young people know what their entitlements are and provide leaving care financial support, grants (eg setting up home) and other forms of financial relief (eg from council tax) to care leavers in line with our financial assistance policies.
- We will ensure that all young people understand and have access to our local offer
- Young people will continue to receive advice as they gain independence; developing personal resilience as they journey into adulthood.
- Fully support any young person who wishes to pursue higher education to obtain places and apply for student loans. We will fund vacation accommodation for young people as necessary.
- Continue our work with further education colleges, employment training providers, Walsall Works and Endless Possibilities to help young people access high quality training and apprenticeships.
- Challenge ourselves and our partners to provide specific internship, apprenticeship and employment opportunities for our looked after young people and care leavers.

Influence and Involvement

Children and young people are at the heart of service design, delivery and evaluation

Children and young people's Voices must be at the centre of our approach to corporate parenting. We want mutually respectful and collaborative relationships with our children and young people. This means embedding a culture of fully involving young people in all matters affecting them, welcoming and encouraging their participation, actively listening to and genuinely taking account of their views.

The Children in Care Council (CICC) is a voice group for children in care and care leavers in Walsall. They meet every month to discuss what improvements need to be made to the support young people receive, particularly those in care or care leavers. The CiCC meets and invites the Director of Children's Services, senior managers and Councillors to let them know what they are doing and ensure that young people are consulted on matters which affect their lives. The CiCC is regularly involved in decision making at various levels and hold decision makers to account. With the direct purpose of representing Walsall's children in care and care leavers the CiCC has had a clear and effective impact on the support that our children receive.

As Corporate Parents, we know that we cannot make effective decisions for young people and provide the support they need without their help, thoughts and views.

We commit to:

- An active Children in Care Council ensuring that the voices of children and young people is central to our work
- Appoint Care Ambassadors to strengthen the voices of children and young people
- We will ensure that children in care and care leavers participate in their planning and reviews
- We will ensure we learn from complaints received from young people
- We will ensure care leavers are engaged in their pathway planning and reviews
- Our independent reviewing officers will meet our children and young people
- We will enable access to advocacy

Leadership

Our Corporate Parenting Board will take lead responsibility for the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and action plan in each of the five key priorities.

The Board will:

- Be a forum for regular, planned and detailed discussion of thematic presentations
- Be a positive link with cared for children and care leaver forums
- Be a mechanism to listen to our cared for children and care leavers; to promote their voice and have influence in decision making
- Receive regular progress reports and performance reporting aligned to the corporate parenting plan and service plans for cared for children and care leavers
- Consider areas of good practice and areas for development and make recommendations to support continued improvement and development
- Provide a governance structure for corporate parenting
- Provide challenge and scrutiny

Measures of success

The Board will seek to ensure that current and future priorities and decisions and deployment of resources will reflect the needs of cared for children and care leavers. The first question the Board will ask of themselves, is, “would this be good enough for my child?”

The Corporate Parenting Strategy will be monitored and evaluated by the successful delivery of the corporate parenting plan through:

- Performance data will be provided to support and evidence progress on the five priorities
- Children and young people feel valued and able to shape and influence services
- Our audits telling us about the lived experience of children and young people
- Assurance reports for:
 - Annual Independent Reviewing Officer Report
 - Annual Fostering Report and Statement of Purpose
 - Annual Adoption Report
 - Annual Report of the Virtual School
- Annual health of Looked After Children Report
- Improved placement stability and reduction in unplanned endings
- Foster carer recruitment and retention
- Increased number of care leavers entering education, training or employment
- Review and revise our Local Offer for Care Leavers

Our Action Plan

Our priorities	What will we do	How will we do it	How will we measure success	Who will do it	Timescales
Leadership	a. Ensure that elected members are aware of and understand their corporate parenting responsibilities.	<p>Deliver updated training to members about what Corporate Parenting is and the function and responsibility of the Corporate Parenting Board and wider Children’s Services in being effective corporate parents.</p> <p>Revise and offer Respect Training in conjunction with Children in Care Council</p>	<p>Measure of Success (Performance Indicators)</p> <p>All new and existing Corporate Parenting Board members to participate in Respect training to support their understanding of their roles and responsibilities as Corporate Parenting.</p> <p>6 courses of Respect Training to be made available during 2022/23</p> <p>4 young people are trained to support the delivery of Respect training.</p> <p>X number of Councillors complete Respect Training between 2022/23, including Councillors that sit on Corporate Parenting Board</p>	<p>Children’s Champion / Group Manager Corporate Parenting</p>	<p>May 2022</p> <p>March 2022</p> <p>June 2022</p> <p>March 2023</p>
Safety and Permanency	b. Support and enable more children and young people to remain with their foster carers post 18 years of age.	<p>Review and update the Staying Put Policy to make staying put arrangements more attractive to foster carers and young people.</p> <p>Ensure that young people and foster carers are aware of the</p>	<p>New Policy in place (documentation)</p> <p>Measure of Success (Performance Indicators)</p>	<p>Head of Service for Children in Care</p>	<p>January 2022</p>

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Our priorities	What will we do	How will we do it	How will we measure success	Who will do it	Timescales
			<p>Adoption</p> <p>16 (9%) Adoptions in 2019-20 17 (10%) Adoptions in 2020-21 18 (18%) Adoptions at end of Q2</p> <p>Projection of 20 adoptions in 2022/23.</p>		
	d. Increase placement sufficiency by increasing the number of in-house foster placements and internal residential homes.	<p>Review of Placement Sufficiency – Review and analysis of data so that there is clarity on number and type of placements required.</p> <p>Exploring what sufficiency of provision we have available in Walsall, from both a fostering and residential perspective and elsewhere to meet these needs, the quality of that provision and how much it costs.</p> <p>Action Plan to be put into place setting out key priorities and intentions for our commissioning and development of sufficient provision and the practice that underpins this.</p>	<p>Review of Placement Sufficiency undertaken and action plan in place. (Documentation)</p> <p>Measure of Success (Performance Indicators)</p> <p>Increase fostering households by 20 new placements in 2022/2023</p> <p>Establish a further 2 Mockingbird Hubs in 2022/23</p> <p>2 new children’s homes purchased and operational by 2022/23</p>	Group Manager Provider Services / Head of Service Children in Care/ Commissioning Manager	<p>March 2022</p> <p>March 2023</p> <p>2022</p>
Mental and Physical Health and Wellbeing	e. Ensure the health needs of our children in care are met in a timely way.	Ensure that the completion of health assessments and dental checks are within statutory timescales	Measure of Success (Performance Indicators) - <i>proposed indicators for health</i>	Social Workers, Looked After Children Health	March 2023 Quarterly reports to CPB

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Our priorities	What will we do	How will we do it	How will we measure success	Who will do it	Timescales
		<p>Effective and timely liaison with health colleagues to ensure needs of children placed out of Borough are met and a smooth transition of services if children move placements</p> <p>Implement a dedicated support and stability team that provide therapeutic, trauma informed support and interventions for carers and children in conjunction with the FLASH service.</p>	<p>assessments to be agreed with CCG and Health Trust</p> <p>90% of children will have up to date review health assessment <i>(Target to be agreed with CCG and Health Trust)</i></p> <p>90% of children will have up to date immunisations</p> <p>95% of children will have an up to date SDQ.</p> <p>90% children will have an annual dental check</p>	Team (Walsall Health Trust), Walsall CCG	
	f. Enable care leavers to understand their health needs and how to access additional support when they need it.	<p>Ensure all care leavers receive their health passport and a copy is kept on their file</p> <p>Review and reset regular drop-in advice service for children in care aged 16+ and care leavers</p>	<p>Measure of Success (Performance Indicators) - proposed indicators for health passports to be agreed with CCG and Health Trust</p> <p>100% of care leavers are offered their health passport</p> <p><i>90% of young people receive their health passport</i></p>	Looked After Children Health Team (Walsall Health Trust) and Walsall CCG	March 2023 Quarterly reports to CPB
Education and Employment	g. Ensure that children in care and care leavers can access education, employment or training	Ensure care leavers are supported to access supported internships and traineeships as opportunities develop as appropriate	<p>Measure of Success (Performance Indicators)</p> <p>At least 52% of care leavers age 19 to 21 will be in Education,</p>	Transition and Leaving Care Service; Impact. Walsall Together	March 2023 Quarterly Performance to CPB

Draft Strategy to be approved by Corporate Parenting Board – November 2021

Our priorities	What will we do	How will we do it	How will we measure success	Who will do it	Timescales
		<p>Embed the pre-apprenticeship support offer for care leavers.</p> <p>All young people who are available for work are reviewed each month.</p>	<p>Employment or Training (in line with national performance.)</p> <p>At least 65% of children in care age 16 or 17 will be in Education, Employment or Training (in line with national performance.)</p>	<p>Endless Possibilities Virtual School</p>	
<p>Transitions and Independence</p>	<p>h. Children in care and care leavers will receive high quality and consistent support to transition to adulthood and develop their independent living skills</p>	<p>To jointly review housing pathways and simplify the nomination and referral documentation for care leavers, ensuring that that the language used is more reflective of the needs of care leavers Review joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers between Children’s Services and Money Home Job and WHG</p> <p>Develop and embed an independence programme for children in care</p> <p>Review and develop preparation for independence support for care leavers.</p> <p>Undertake a baseline survey to establish how children and young people feel about their transition experience</p>	<p>Co-produce care and pathway plans with children and their networks – writing ‘to’ the child. (audit)</p> <p>An agreed language with children in care and care leavers (the words we use). (documentation)</p> <p>Revised Housing Protocol is in place (documentation)</p> <p>Independence Programme in place and agreed with children and young people. (documentation)</p> <p>Revision of toolkit and support offer set up (documentation)</p> <p>Measure of Success (Performance Indicators)</p> <p>95% of pathway plans are up to date</p>	<p>Head of Service for Children in Care and Money Home Jobs</p> <p>Children’s Champion</p> <p>Head of Service and Group Manager Corporate Parenting</p>	<p>March 2022</p> <p>June 2022</p> <p>March 2022</p> <p>March 2022</p>

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Our priorities	What will we do	How will we do it	How will we measure success	Who will do it	Timescales
			<p>At least 88% of care leavers age 19 to 21 will be living in suitable accommodation (in line with national performance.)</p> <p>Increase the proportion of children and young people who say their transition experience was positive (<i>target to be established after baseline survey completed</i>)</p>		
	<p>i. Young People with complex disabilities/ needs/risks will have access to timely referrals / assessments to support their transition to adulthood.</p>	<p>To develop an All Age model setting out Pathways to Adulthood which will review transition processes and pathways between children’s services and adult social care services to support young people’s transition to adulthood.</p>	<p>Pathways to Adulthood Toolkit in place and embedded. (documentation)</p> <p>Case File Audit 6 months after Toolkit goes live to measure impact.</p>	<p>Group Manager, Resource Adults Social Care and Group Managers Head of Service</p>	<p>March 2022</p>
	<p>j. Care Leavers will have an up to date and accessible local offer which meets their needs.</p>	<p>Consult with our care leavers to revise our offer in line with best practice.</p> <p>Develop a local offer leaflet that is accessible to young people.</p> <p>Undertake a baseline survey to identify what proportion of care leavers know what the local offer is and how they can access information and repeat the survey annually.</p>	<p>Local Offer is reviewed and updated annually (documentation)</p> <p>Local offer available and accessible to young people (documentation)</p> <p>Measure of Success (Performance Indicators)</p> <p>Increase the proportion of care leavers who understand what the local offer is and how to access it</p>	<p>Group Manager Corporate Parenting</p>	<p>March 2022 March 2023 March 2024</p> <p>March 2022</p>

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Our priorities	What will we do	How will we do it	How will we measure success	Who will do it	Timescales
			<i>(target to be set following baseline survey)</i>		
	k. Maximise the benefits of the Care Leavers Covenant Regionally.	Engage with Care Leavers Covenant to continue to strengthen our offer to Care Leavers. Raise awareness of the Covenant with Members.	Learning from the Care Leavers Covenant is shared with Corporate Parenting Board (documentation) Learning is used to raise aspiration for Care leavers in Walsall through improved service delivery (case studies)	Group Manager Corporate Parenting Children's Champion	Ongoing
Influence and Involvement	l. Children and young people will be kept up to date with key information including a calendar of events.	Review of current website Options paper to be developed and shared with young people Work to be undertaken to identify a suitable platform to display and make information accessible to children and young people. Work is undertaken on information to be shared on platform and that it is child appropriate. Undertake a baseline survey to identify what proportion Children and young people know where to go to access information.	Revised platform is in place (documentation) Measure of Success (Performance Indicators) Increase the proportion of children and young people who tell us that they know where to go to access information and that the information available is helpful <i>(target to be set following baseline survey)</i>	Head of Service and Group Manager Corporate Parenting Head of Performance.	June 2022
Influence and Involvement	m. Children in Care Council (CICC) so that it is able to represent the voice of all children in care and is able to	Increase numbers and range of children and young people involved in the CICC.	Children and young people consistently involved in staff interview panels (documentation and case studies)	Children's Champion,	Ongoing

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Our priorities	What will we do	How will we do it	How will we measure success	Who will do it	Timescales
	hold the Corporate Parenting Board to account	<p>Ensure CICC is enabled to engage fully with the work of the Corporate Parenting Board</p> <p>Develop, recruit and appoint 2 posts for Care Ambassadors Apprenticeships</p>	<p>2 Care Ambassadors will be appointed (case studies)</p> <p>Increase participation of children and care leavers engage with CICC and CPB</p> <p>Measure of Success (Performance Indicators)</p>	Children in Care Council, Corporate Parenting Board	June 2022

Corporate Parenting Board Work Programme 2021/22

	<i>Report to AD</i>	<i>18th June</i>	<i>20th August</i>	<i>1st November</i>	<i>27th December</i>	<i>7th February</i>	<i>21st March</i>
	<i>Report to Democratic Services</i>	<i>22nd June</i>	<i>25th August</i>	<i>4th Nov</i>	<i>31st Dec</i>	<i>10th Feb</i>	<i>24th March</i>
	<i>DMT for noting</i>	<i>24th June</i>	<i>26th August</i>	<i>11th November</i>	<i>13th January</i>	<i>10th February</i>	<i>24th March</i>
Lead Officer	Board date	1st July	6th Sept	15th Nov	11th Jan	21st Feb	4th April
David Hughes	Young People Engagement						
Elise Hopkins Helena Kucharczyk	Development of website and app						
Alison Jones	Health Passports						
Jivan Sembi	Local Offer						
Jivan Sembi and Elise	Housing Report						
Mark Tobin Adoption @Heart	Annual Adoption Report						
Mark Burrows	Fostering Annual report						
Helena Kucharczyk.	Performance Monitoring	Q4	Q1		Q2	Q3	
Lorraine Thompson	NEET						
Alison Jones	CAMHS and emotional wellbeing of Children in Care and Care Leavers						
Lorraine Thompson –	Assurance report – virtual school	Information.					

Corporate Parenting Board Work Programme 2021/22

<i>not required to attend.</i>							
Alison Jones	Assurance report –CCG						
Jivan Sembi	Corporate Parenting Strategy				Action plan		
Debbie Sylvester with CGL	Independent Visiting Service Annual Report						
Jivan Sembi	Increasing Employability for Care Experienced Young People						Apprenticeship update Helena Baxter