



Walsall Council

Corporate Parenting Board

Meeting to be held on: **Thursday 1st July, 2021 AT 6.00 PM**

Meeting to be held: Council Chamber, Council House, Walsall.

Public access to meeting via: <https://cmispublic.walsall.gov.uk/cmis/Meetings.aspx>

MEMBERSHIP:

Chair: Councillor Wilson
Vice Chair: Councillor Worrall
Councillor Ferguson
Councillor Hicken
Councillor Murphy
Councillor M Nazir
Councillor Mazhar

ADVISOR

Alison Jones (NHS Walsall CCG)

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

ITEMS FOR BUSINESS

1.	Introductions and Apologies	
2.	Substitutions	
3.	Minutes To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22 nd March 2021.	<u>Enclosed</u>
4.	Young People Engagement To provide the Corporate Parenting Board with update on the activities of the Children in Care Council.	<u>Enclosed</u>
5.	Walsall Children's Services Corporate Parenting Board July 2021 Quarter 4 To consider performance monitoring information for quarter 4.	<u>Enclosed</u>
6.	Increasing Employability for Care Experienced Young People This report provides an update in regards to care experienced young people that are not in Education, Employment or Training.	<u>Enclosed</u>
7.	Virtual School Annual Report For information only, and tabling.	<u>Enclosed</u>
8.	Draft work programme To consider the work programme of the Corporate Parenting Board.	<u>Enclosed</u>
9.	Date of Next Meeting 6 th September 2021, 6 p.m.	

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012
Specified pecuniary interests

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

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

	<p>one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</p>
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Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)

Access to information: Exempt information

Part 1

Descriptions of exempt information: England

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

Corporate Parenting Board

Monday 22nd March 2021 at 6.00 p.m.

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

Held in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020; and conducted according to the Councils Standing Orders for Remote Meetings and those set out in the Council's Constitution.

Board Members Present:

Councillor T. Wilson (Chair)
Councillor. T. Jukes (Vice-Chair)
Councillor M. Nazir
Councillor M. Statham
Councillor C. Statham

Officers Present

David Hughes	Children and Young Persons Champion
Alison Jones	Designated Nurse LAC (Clinical Commissioning Group)
John Dunning	Interim Children's Commissioner for Walsall CCG
Colleen Male	Director, Children's Social Work
Zoe Morgan	Group Manager (Corporate Parenting)
Lorraine Thomson	Head of the Virtual School
Helena Baxter	Apprenticeship Programme Lead

Welcome

At this point in the meeting, the Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, and explaining the rules of procedure and legal context in which the meeting was being held. He also directed members of the public viewing the meeting to the papers, which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information system (CMIS) webpage. Members confirmed that they could both see and hear the proceedings.

148/20 Introductions and Apologies

There were no apologies for the duration of the meeting.

149/20 **Substitutions**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

150/20 **Minutes**

A copy of the minutes of the meetings held on 15th February, 2021 were submitted.

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th February, 2021 copies having previously been circulated to each Member of the Board, be approved and signed by the chairman as a correct record.

151/20 **Young People Engagement**

The Children and Young Persons Champion spoke to the report (annexed) and highlighted the salient points.

The Board were informed that since the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board, the Children in Care Council (CiC) has continued to meet virtually due to Covid-19 restrictions. The report covered the period January and February 2021.

Feedback received from young people (who had received supported housing) indicated that they felt well supported by their social worker/personal adviser. Many young people felt that the grant allocated to care leavers to buy essentials was not adequate. The Authority was considering this issue. Additional young people had been recruited to join the membership of the Children in Care Council, and there was a plan to increase the numbers further.

Young people had been sitting on virtual interview panels for positions within Children's Services, and this had been a positive experience for them.

The Chair thanked the Children and Young Persons Champion and the young people who had attended the Shadow Board directly prior to the meeting. Members were assured that the grant received by care leavers to equip new homes would be increased, which was a result of the Boards influence. It was also stressed by the Chair that the input from young people, who took part in the interview panel, was taken into consideration and played a part in decision-making.

A Member asked if there was SEND representation on the CiC, Officers confirmed that this was the case. Members commended the work carried out at the CiC, as feedback indicated that it had a positive impact on young people.

Resolved:

That the Young People Engagement report was noted.

152/20 **Health Services for Looked After Children Interim Report.**

The Designated Nurse LAC introduced the report and highlighted the salient points. The core activities of the CCG, in relation to LAC, were described and included:

- Initial health assessments.
- Review health assessments.
- Care leaver summaries.
- Adoption and fostering reports.

It was suggested that the Board receive a further report in September 2021 to ensure that Members were receiving the most up to date cleansed data.

Priorities set for 2021/22 were included within the report, and the CCG were keen to receive feedback from children and young people to enable identification of priorities.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on services was described, although new ways of working were developed and had been successful. A restoration plan was in place to be operational from 1st April 2021.

The Children's Commissioner stressed that the Flash service detailed within the report was a local authority service. A more detailed report on mental health and well-being could be taken to the Board in the future; however, Members were assured that services had continued throughout the pandemic with face-to-face appointments for those in crisis.

Members welcomed the suggestion of a young person health champion. A Member asked what could be done to increase engagement from GPs. It was suggested that the Covid-19 pandemic might have impacted on this as GPs were engaged very well and worked alongside the CCG to safeguard LAC.

A Member expressed concern around transition arrangements in place for mental health services for young people aged 16- 18 years. It was stressed by Members that this needed to be improved for LAC. The Chair thanked health care colleagues for their contribution and dedication over the last 12 months.

Resolved

That the Health Services for Looked After Children Interim Report be noted.

153/20 Care Leaver Pre Apprenticeship Programme

The Apprenticeship Programme Lead presented the report and spoke to the presentation highlighting the salient points. The Committee were informed that the 'Care Leavers pre-apprenticeship programme' sat within the Authorities 'Apprenticeship Programme'. The Committee were advised that apprenticeships were reviewed to determine the reasons for success and failure. Working with Partners was important to ensure that external opportunities were available to Care Leavers. It was acknowledged that this was a work in progress and there was further work to be done to ensure success.

A Member asked how the Service would engage with local businesses, the Programme Lead stated that the Service planned to work with 'Walsall Works', Kick Start, and use social media to increase awareness of the opportunities to work with apprentices. It was noted that care leavers continued to be placed in maintained schools during lockdown.

Resolved:

That the Care Leaver Pre Apprenticeship Programme was noted.

154/20 Virtual School Annual Report

The Head of the Virtual School explained the statutory duty to provide an 'annual report', the purpose of this report was to outline the activity of the Virtual School and report on the 2019-20 educational outcomes of Walsall's looked after children and the work carried out to support the education of looked after children during the Covid-19 pandemic. The salient points of the report were highlighted (annexed). The Virtual School worked very closely with schools; complex case meetings were held which identified children who were at risk of exclusion. The Virtual School carried out Personal Education Plans (PEP) to meet unidentified needs of young people who had come into care. The Committee were informed of the work completed to support children during lockdown, and children in care were encouraged to attend school. Priorities for the future were to further develop the virtual school offer. There would be a focus on improving post-16 PEP, and there would be an aim for all schools in Walsall to be attachment aware. Relationships with post-16 providers would continue to be developed and it was acknowledged that more could be done to support young people with this. The training offer to schools would be continued, and a CAMHS practitioner would be commissioned to support schools for young people in care.

It was noted that the 'Virtual School Annual Report' was not included in the committee paperwork. It was agreed that this would be circulated electronically and annexed at the next meeting of the Board.

Clarity was provided around pupil premium funding, and assurance was provided to Board Members that the child's voice was considered in all situations and decisions were made in the child's best interests.

Resolved

- 1. That the Virtual School Annual Report was noted.**
- 2. The Virtual School report would be tabled at the next meeting.**

There being now further business the meeting terminated at 8 p.m.

Young People Engagement.

Executive Summary:

The Council4Kids, the “Children in Care Council”, 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.

Since the last Corporate Parenting Board on 22nd March 2021, the young people have continued to meet virtually due to Covid-19. The report covers the period April to June 2021.

Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board:

To provide the Corporate Parenting Board an update on the activities of the CICC.

Recommendations:

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

Background papers:

Previous reports.

Resource and legal considerations:

The Children in Care Council is supported by the Children’s Champion. They continue to meet twice per month and a flexible agenda is in place for each meeting agreed in partnership with the young people. Under the Participation and Engagement agenda in Walsall we are required to get young people involved in decision making and processes that directly affect their lives (Article 12 UNCRC). Article 12 says young people still have the human right to have opinions and for these opinions to be heard 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 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:

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

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Care experienced Children and Young People have a chance to meet through Walsall's CiCC Influencers forum where they can have a say about the things that really matter in their lives. Children and young people are able to have influence and shape the services and policies which impact on the parenting and support that they receive at every level. The forum enables young people to build friendships and peer networks whilst learning new skills. Walsall Children in Care Council Influencers has met virtually since March 2020 due to Covid -19 every Wednesday and virtual meetings will continue whilst restrictions remain in place. We have recently as of the end of May 2021 changed the days and frequency of the meetings in the hope we can reach a wider audience and for planning of face to face sessions. The plans for the future are for the Influencers to meet face to face every other week once we are able to access the TLC (Transition Leaving Care) hub.

1.2 Virtual Meetings

The Children and Young People have now adapted to having their meetings virtually. The continued use of Microsoft Office Teams as a way to connect with our children remains successful, enabling them to connect with their peers to build positive connections. Children are familiar with online platforms as it compliments how they have at times had to access education. The children's champion attends a variety of regional and national groups via Microsoft Teams or Zoom where we network with many different local authorities. Our virtual meetings in Walsall are proving to be very successful when comparing to other local authorities. Some local authorities have not managed to maintain any of the groups for care experienced young people whereas in Walsall we continue to have a consistent group as well as getting new referrals every month.

We continue to use WhatsApp as a preferred method identified by the children to connect with the Children's Champion and each other. This platform is also free to use and makes sharing pictures, text and resources easy to access. The appropriateness of this continues to be managed by the Children's Champion.

1.3 Key updates since March 2021

1. **New recruits to the CiCC:** Since the last Corporate Parenting Board we have had 4 new young people referred to take part in the CiCC meetings. The Children's Champion continues to meet with professionals to promote the CiCC across the service as we want every young person in Walsall to know we have a Children's Champion and a forum where their voices can be heard.
2. **Participation in SEND:** The Children's Champion has met with the lead Emma Thornbury to consider how young people can be supported to participate within the service. Since Emma has moved on to work within Wolverhampton local authority the children's champion

has continued to work with Maria Kidd from the SEND team where further discussions are taking place as we seek to identify a SEND Champion. The purpose of this is to help further develop participation and the voice of the child within the SEND department working collaboratively with some of our most vulnerable children. The SEND team are also keen to have their own group of young people that access SEND support to help influence and shape their provision for children.

- 3. Mentoring Programme:** Our young people are keen to get involved within mentoring children in care whereby they will be able to draw on their care experience to offer support to other care experienced children. This is also part of our Local Offer work for Care Leavers as we aim to appoint Care Leaver Ambassadors within our apprenticeship scheme. The Children's Champion is looking into some recognised programmes such as ASDAN accredited awards where our CICC may have the opportunity to get a certificate for their hard work regarding their caring and nurturing nature as part of the forum.
- 4. Children's Homes:** The Children's Champion is keen to include more of our children in residential care in the CICC meetings. In order to do this, the young people have discussed how they can advertise and promote the work of the CICC to their peers in residential care in order to ensure that all children and young people have a say in the care that they are afforded. The children's champion has now created a video to promote the CICC. The Children's Champion is also in regular contact with our residential home managers.
- 5. Develop Champions:** After meeting with lots of different teams across services, we are now looking at to have champions within different service areas of the authority. We have already progressed this within Health but would also like to consider champions within Social Care and Education. The CICC have been consulted and feel this is a great idea. However progress in this area is slow due to current ways of working.
- 6. Care Leavers Covenant:** David has met with Alex Latham who is our link to the Covenant. The meeting went ahead on 30th March 2021 where we reviewed the current offer within Walsall and to also consider the West Midlands combined offer. Alex delivered a very powerful presentation where lots of strategic people attended in order to consider developing our links with the covenant further as Walsall are a "trailblazer".
- 7. Care Leaver Ambassadors:** Plans are now in place to appoint a Care Leaver Ambassador to work alongside the Children's Champion. We are currently reviewing our finances within Corporate Parenting to ensure we can fully commit to this offer and considerations are taking place to look at either two part time positions or one full time position. The position/s will be explicitly for care experienced young people

within Walsall to help give them a chance to gain a Level 2 nationally recognised qualification as well as the experience of working for the local authority. In turn once the apprenticeship is completed we would be fully supporting them to continue to progress into full time employment. The Ambassadors will be managed by the Children's Champion and a good offer of nurture and support will be put in place for them.

8. **Maria's letter:** One of our mini influencers Maria, wrote a letter which she passed on to her social worker. The letter talked about Maria's passion to live in a "clean area", to "have the voice of young people heard" and also Maria's "passion and love for doing something about climate change to make the world a happier and healthier place to live". Following this letter being received our Director Colleen Male asked the Children's Champion to liaise with Dave Brown the Director for Place and Environment. A meeting took place on 9th of June at 4pm where Maria got to speak with Dave in person on Microsoft Teams. Maria has now been asked to take some pictures to highlight some of the issues as well as writing up some information and creating a blog. A litter picking event will be arranged coordinated through contacts through Dave whilst keeping Maria fully involved through each stage. Maria has been asked to be involved in creating a poster or material for the general public to help raise awareness as well as encouraging the school where Maria attends to become involved. Dave will also look to promote this positive work through publicising with local press.

Maria's letter:

Dear sir or madam

My name is Maria Ross and I'm 11 years of age I know that I am only young but I feel we as children are not getting heard. You may be wondering in what way, we feel we need more jobs doing to help the environment and for children's well being for example we could give each school a environment representative or get a committee to go out each day or weekend to pick up litter, also you could put more bins around the Area.

But I also feel that children like me are not getting heard in the way we are supposed to be well I think you should put more children's ideas into thought

I hope you put these ideas into consideration thank you

Yours sincerely Maria Ross

9. **Top Tips for professionals:** The CICC have decided to pull together some top tips on the best ways of interacting with young people in Walsall. This work is still underway and will be shared once complete.

10. **1-1 mentor residential home:** The CICC were approached to ask for some support for a 14 yr old at our Red Ruth residential home. One of our confident 19 year olds in the Influencers group was more than

happy to help out. This experience will also be fantastic to build on his skills as he drives forward his ambition of becoming a social worker.

11. The language we use: The CICC have been discussing some of their pet hates and their frustrations they experience. This is a piece of work that helps underpin our restorative ways of working which they are completing and will feed into the 'Top Tips'. As well as this the Children's Champion continues to discuss this important topic with teams during unit meetings to allow for reflection on practice.

12. Young Persons Agenda: Some of the CICC that have attended the Corporate Parenting Board meetings have asked how they can add things to the agenda, change the format of the meeting slightly and get involved with chairing. At the last Shadow Board in March 2021 this was acknowledged by the chair and it has been agreed that the chair and the vice chair will attend a CICC meeting to listen to some of their ideas. This is something they are looking forward to as they want to get the most out of these meetings. A date has been set for the chair to attend the CICC meeting which should be going ahead on the 17th of June.

13. Face to face/ group work: The Children's Champion has completed a risk assessment and discussed with his manager plans to start this group up again. Further meetings are now taking place with Public Health to ensure a full holistic planned approach is carried out taking into considerations everyone's safety and current national and local data on covid-19 and any new variant. But for now all of our young people show some real commitment by attending virtually which we are extremely grateful for.

14. Promotional video: The CICC have been discussing new ways to promote and reach all care experienced young people in Walsall. They have been involved in supporting the Children's Champion to create a catchy video which has now been sent out to corporate parenting and SFS (Safeguarding) teams. We have new videos planned for this year so please watch this space and keep checking your emails.

15. CICC meetings update: Our meetings which historically were every two weeks within a group setting still have to continue virtually. Young people recognise the difficulties that not connecting with their peers can have on their mental health and are keen to meet again face-to-face. The new plan for the meetings will take place every other Thursday on Microsoft Teams 16:30 – 17:15 for children aged 13 and under and 17:30 – 18:30 for children aged 14 and above.

1.4 Other news

Our young people continue to engage with the Corporate Parenting Shadow Board. This gives them the opportunity to speak with their Corporate Parents around issues that impact them. We have some new

mini influencers on board now which will hopefully in the future be the next generation of care experienced young people attending the Shadow Board meetings. Some of our young adults have found employment or have other commitments with study and extracurricular activities, hobbies and sports so we are always on the look out to recruit my influencers.

1.5 Some recent feedback from our children and young people



1.6 Covenant: As a trailblazer for The Care Leavers Covenant we are committed to growing our invested partners. The Children's Champion arranged a review which took place on 30th March. We want to thank all of the managers and professionals that attended where some great discussion took place to further develop our local commitments and current signatories. Please do continue to spread the positive messages and encourage all young people age 16+ to sign up to the portal. For more information please contact the Children's Champion.

1.7 Participation Strategy: The Principle Social Worker in Walsall is in the process of putting together a Participation Strategy for Walsall. The CICC have been asked to get involved right from the start before the strategy is drawn up which will really make them feel valued and important. We have some plans to meet in June to discuss what Participation means to them and to find out what they think the strategy should include within our borough for all young people.

1.8 CICC Action Plan: The Children’s Champion and the Group Manager for Corporate Parenting are going to put a 12 month action plan together to help focus the CICC on some of their roles and responsibilities for them and for professionals as part of the CPB. This plan will be completed in collaboration with the children and young people and will be reviewed at regular intervals throughout the 12 month period to make sure it is fit for purpose.

1.9 Celebrations and achievements:

- ✓ A massive well done to two of our Influencers for being successful in gaining employment! New challenges and exciting times are ahead of you both so keep up the good work.
- ✓ A big thank you goes out to some of our social workers and personal advisers for continuing to promote the CICC and encouraging young people to find out more and to get involved.
- ✓ A big shout out and a special thanks to all of the young people that are committed to attending the CICC because without your willingness, passion and enthusiasm things would look very different in Walsall.

Dates for forthcoming events and children in care council meetings.

17th June - Event: Participation and Decision Making with Children and Young People in Care workshop <i>Dr Clive Diaz</i>
17th June 16:30 - 17:15 mini influencers and 17:30 - 18:30 influences
22nd June NLCBMF Participation Network Meeting
30th June 16:30 - 17:15 mini influencers and 17:30 - 18:30 influences
1st July CPB Corporate Parenting Board meeting, YP to attend Shadow Board
8th July Participation Steering Group chaired by Principle Social Worker
15th July 16:30 - 17:15 mini influencers and 17:30 - 18:30 influences
28th July Walsall residential homes planning meeting
29th July 16:30 - 17:15 mini influencers and 17:30 - 18:30 influences
2nd August Restorative Leads/ Champions meeting

Meetings will continue to be held virtually on Microsoft Office Teams until further notice.

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 cause and be a priority for all in shaping [Page 10 of 84](#) and services in which we provide.

Sometimes we get too wrapped up in our processes and forget some of the basics like getting to know our children well, spending time with them and listening with the intent to understand their perspective not always to respond with solutions.

David Hughes
Children's Champion

Walsall Children's Services Corporate Parenting Board July 2021 Quarter 4

Please Note: 2019/20 benchmarking data has been updated where available.



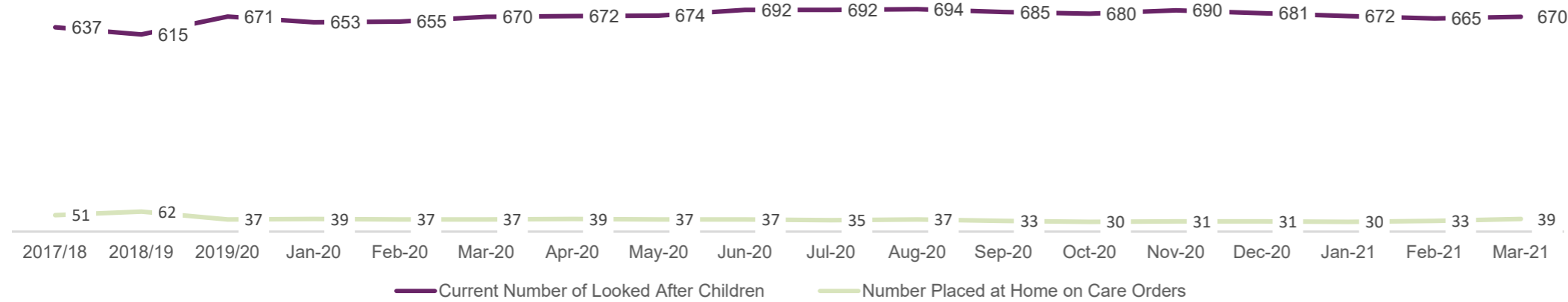
Walsall Council

PROUD OF OUR PAST OUR PRESENT AND FOR OUR FUTURE

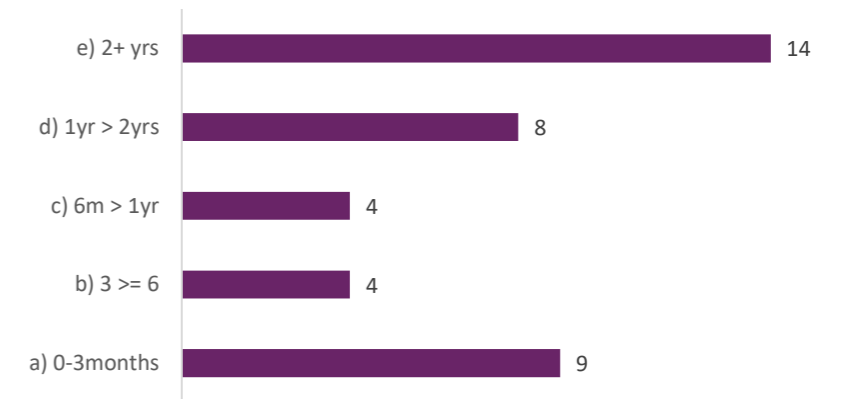
Current Children Looked After (CLA) Profile



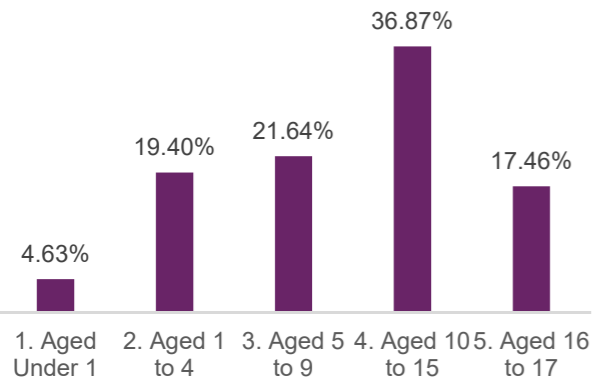
Number of Children Looked After in Walsall (12 Month Rolling)



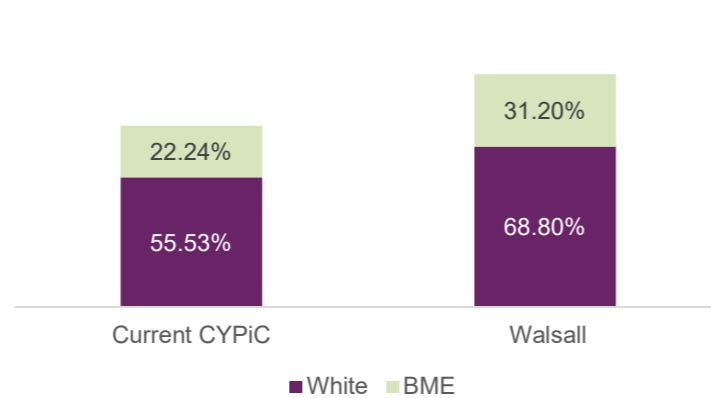
Length of Time placed at home on full care orders



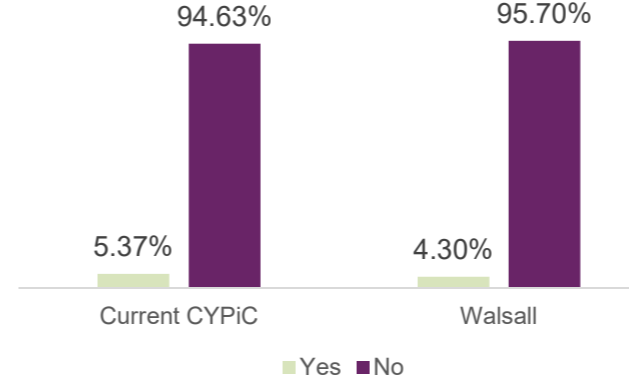
% of current CLA by age



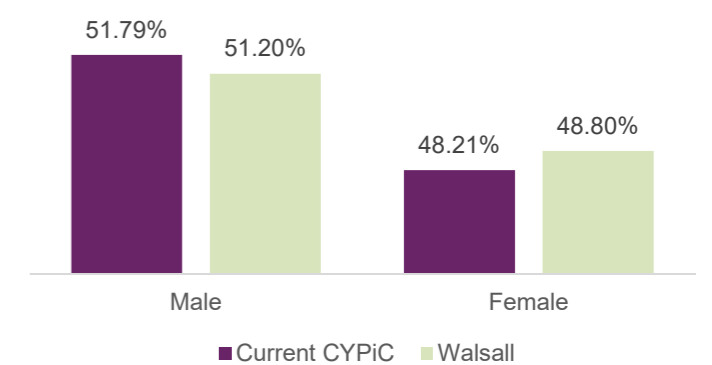
Ethnicity Comparison



Disability Comparison



Gender Comparison

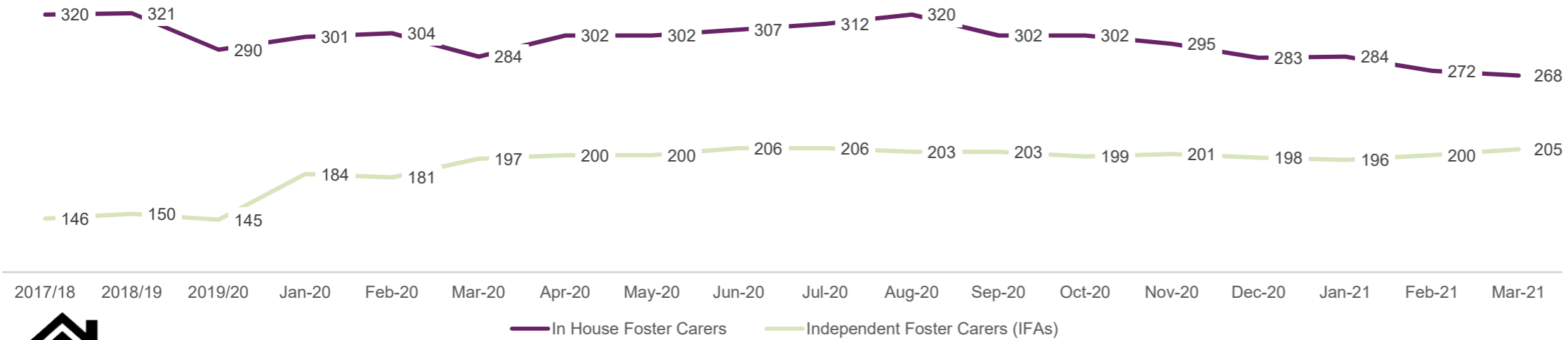


Commentary

Demographic data has been taken from the 2019 mid-year population estimates. A slightly lower proportion of Children Looked After are from BME backgrounds compared to the Walsall Child and Young Person population (0-17s). The current Children Looked After population has continued to decrease slightly from 692 at the end of Q1 to 670 at the end of Q4. The current rate of 97 per 10,000 remains below that of our statistical neighbours but is still considerably higher than the 2019/20 England and West Midlands averages. We currently have 39 children placed at home on full care order, this has increased from 31 at the end of quarter 3. 22 of the 39 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.

CLA Placement Analysis

Breakdown of Foster Placements (12 Month Rolling)



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



% CLA placed 20 mile+ from home, outside of LA boundary
96
14.5%

2019/20 Walsall = 11.0%
2019/20 West Midlands = 14.0%
2019/20 Stat Neighbours = 18.1%
2019/20 England = 16.0%

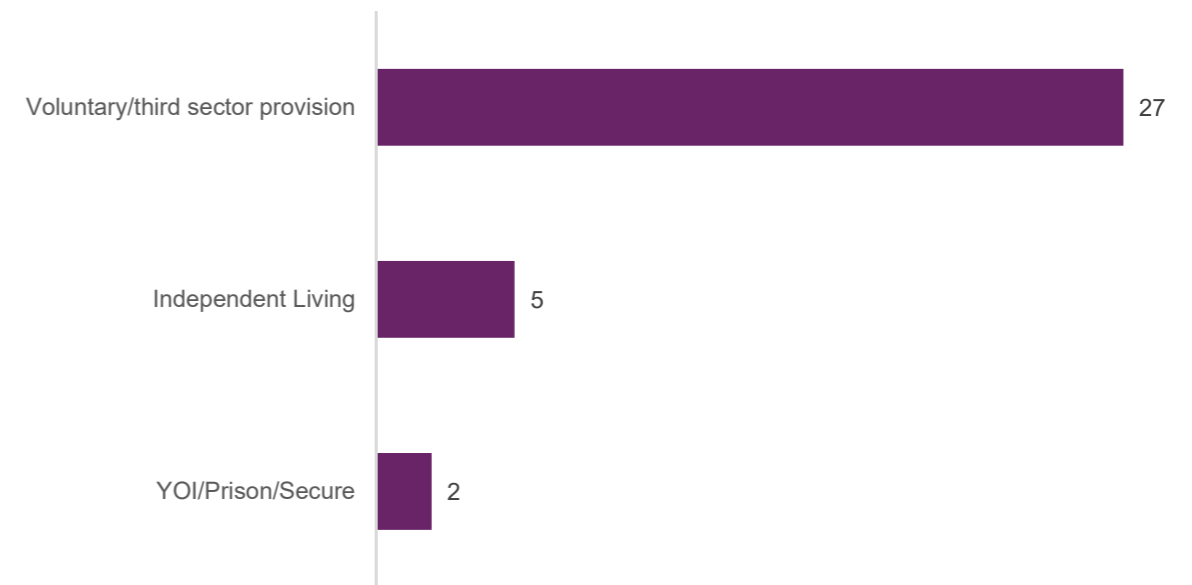
% CLA 3 or more placements in a year
50
7.5%

2019/20 Walsall = 9.0%
2019/20 West Midlands = 10.0%
2019/20 Stat Neighbours = 9.4%
2019/20 England = 11.0%

% of CLA in same placement for over 2 years if CLA for over 2.5 years
213
62.5%

2019/20 Walsall = 68.0%
2019/20 West Midlands = 69.0%
2019/20 Stat Neighbours = 67.1%
2019/20 England = 68.0%

Current CLA by Placement Type (non-fostered)



Commentary

Trends for children placed with in house foster carers have continued to decrease during quarter 4, following a peak of 320 during August 2020. Currently Walsall has 268 children placed with in house foster carers. The figure is the lowest figure during the current reporting period, and lower than the out-turn for the previous three years. We are currently exploring the reasons for this in detail, however, it will have been affected by increasing numbers of connected carers securing SGOs. Walsall has 205 children placed with independent fostering agencies. This figure has increased slightly since the end of quarter 3, but has remained fairly constant during the reporting period and is considerably higher than the figure for the previous three years.

14.5% of Walsall's CLA are placed 20 plus miles from their home address and 7.5% of the CLA population have had 3 or more placements within a year. Both figures have have decreased compared to quarter 3, with the latter figure now below the 2019/20 outturn for Walsall. The percentage of CLA in the same placement for over 2 years if CLA for over 2.5 years has increased compared to quarter 3, but remains lower than the Walsall outturn for 2019/20. The figure for CLA placed 20+ miles away from home remains higher than the West Midlands regional average, whilst the figures for the other two placement indicators are lower than regional, national and statistical neighbour averages.

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	647	96.6%
b) 6 - 12 weeks	20	3.0%
c) 12 - 18 weeks	1	0.1%
d) 18+ weeks	0	0.0%
No Visit Recorded - new in last month	2	0.3%
Total	670	100.0%



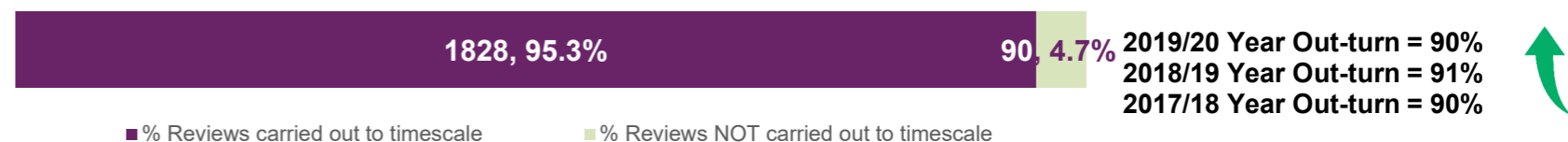
Reviews carried out within timescale (12month Rolling)

Where reviews for children looked after are carried out within timescale

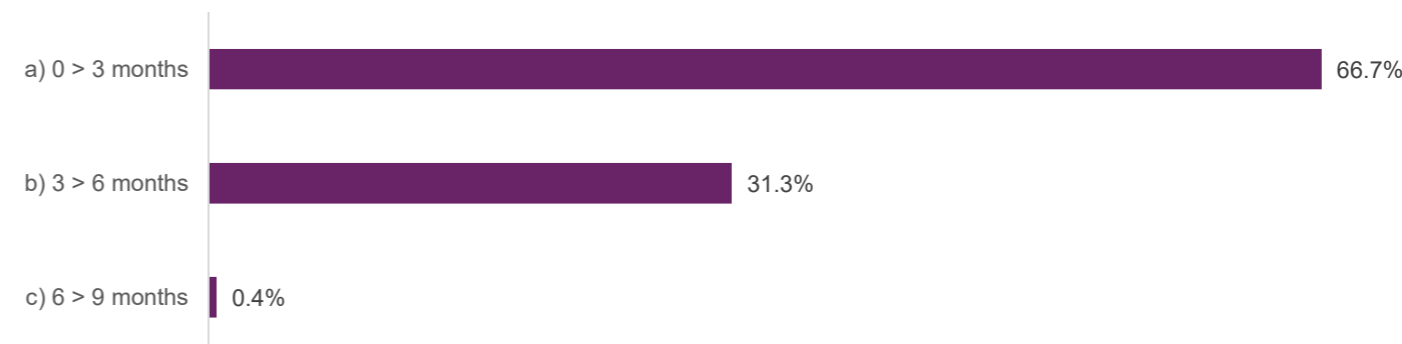
Time Since Latest Review	Number	%
a) 0 > 3 months	447	66.7%
b) 3 > 6 months	210	31.3%
c) 6 > 9 months	3	0.4%
d) 9 > 12 months	0	0.0%
e) 1 year or more	0	0.0%
No review	0	0.0%
No Review - new in last month	10	1.5%
Total	670	100.0%



% Visit Undertaken to Timescale



% Time Since Latest Review



Commentary

The proportion of CLA where a statutory visit has been undertaken to timescale in accordance with the child's plan is 91.7% with 96.6% seen within 6 weeks of the previous visit or coming in care. There were 2 CLA with no visits recorded at 31st March 2021, these are new children who have become LAC during the month.

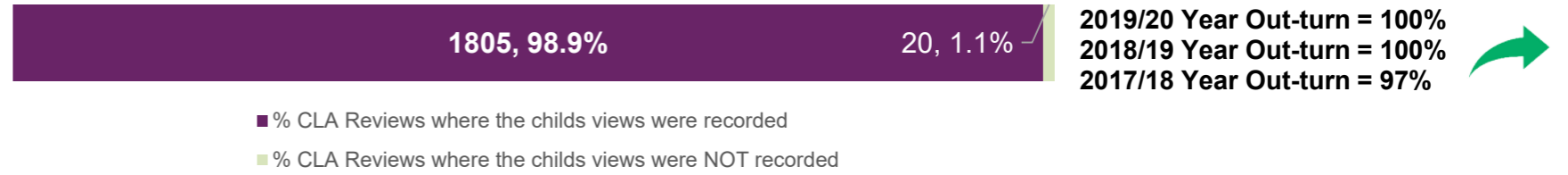
95.3% of reviews have been undertaken within timescales. This is higher than the 2019/20 out-turn of 90%. 98.0% of current children looked after have had a review within the last 6 months. 0.4% (3) children currently have overdue reviews.

Views of the child



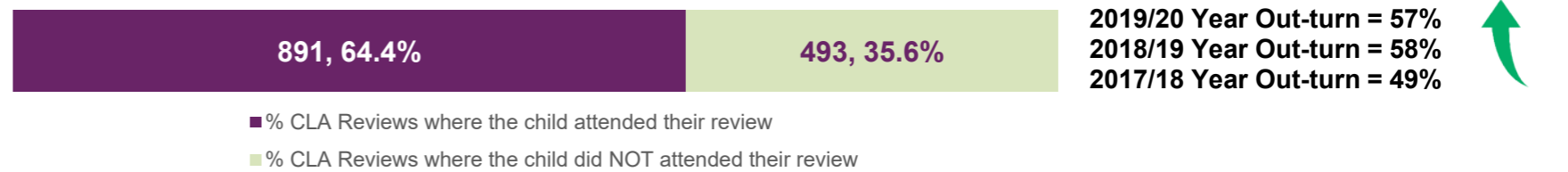
% CLA Reviews where the child's views were recorded

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

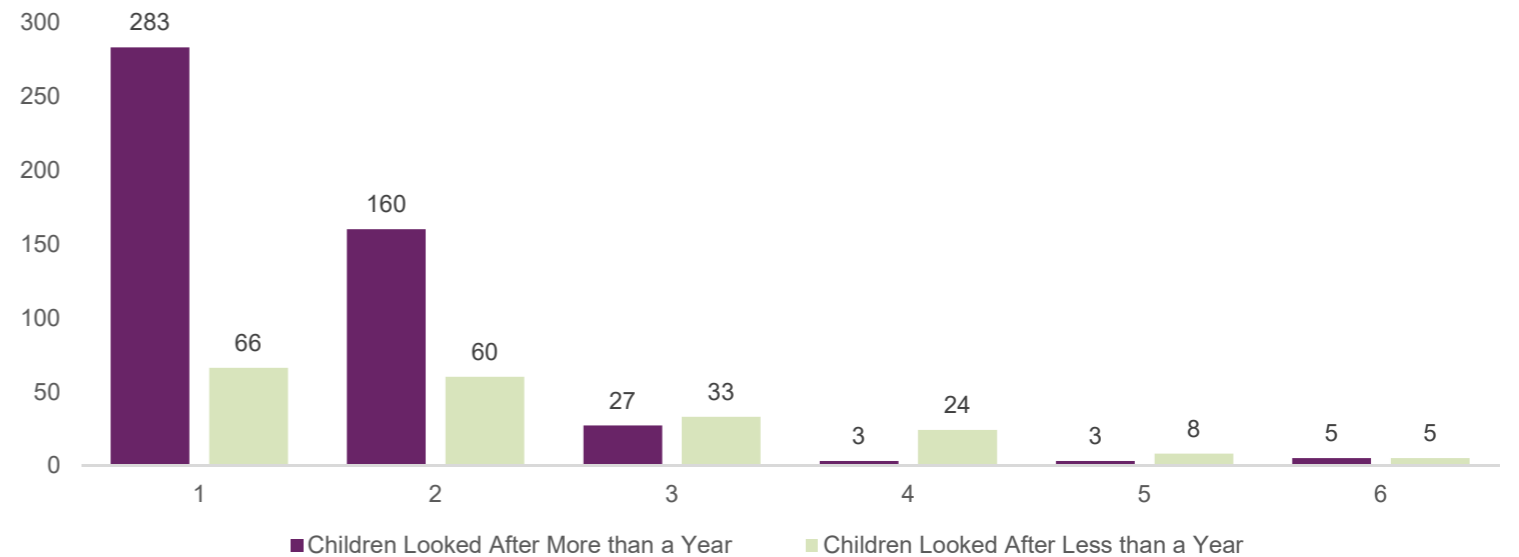


% CLA Reviews where the child attended their review

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



Number of CLA who have remained with the same social worker for the past 12 months



Type of Participation at Review	Number	%
PN0 - child under 4 at time of review	475	N/A
PN1 - child attends and speaks for themselves	827	61.3%
PN2 - child attends and an advocate speaks for them	19	1.4%
PN3 - child attends and conveys their views non-verbally	16	1.2%
PN4 - child attends; does not speak for themselves / convey their views	29	2.1%
PN5 - child does not attend but asks advocate to speak for them	90	6.7%
PN6 - child does not attend but conveys their feelings to the conference	324	24.0%
PN7 - child does not attend nor conveys their view to the conference	25	1.9%
Total Reviews	1825	
No Participation Code Reported	20	1.5%

Commentary

The child's views were recorded at 98.9% of CLA reviews. This is lower than 2019/20 and 2018/19, but higher than 2017/18. In 2019/20, 64.4% of children attended their review. This is higher than the out-turn of 57% in 2019/20. The number of children experiencing a change of social worker has increased slightly compared to the previous year. The number of CLA who have remained with the same social worker for the past 12 months is 283, and has remained the same since quarter 3.

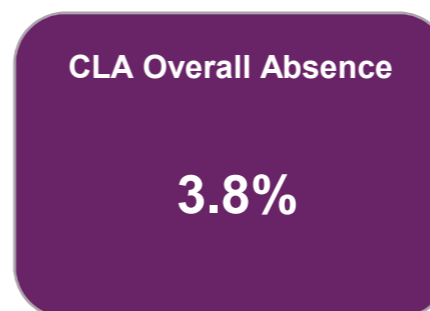
Education - Termly Data (Note 2019 is the latest published data we have, due to the covid-19 pandemic, the next release is due March 2021)

Figures highlighted are provisional				
KS2	Maths	Reading	Writing	RWM
Walsall Current - CLA 2019	55%	34%	55%	28%
Walsall Borough 2019	77%	70%	77%	61%
Stat Neighbours CLA 2019	52%	52%	55%	42%
England 2019 CLA	51%	49%	50%	37%
KS4	%	%	Attain 8	Prog 8
Walsall - CLA - 2020	15.8%	29%	23.0	-0.88
Walsall Borough 2020	40.9%	65%	47.4	-0.11
Stat Neighbours 2020 CLA*	N/A	27%	22.2	-1.21
England 2020 CLA	10.9%	24%	21.4	-1.23
Ofsted Rated Schools		Exclusions**		
No Students Attending Good or Outstanding Schools	EYFS	39	At least one fixed term Exclusion 2019	8.6%
	Primary	160		
	Secondary	161		
	Combined	360		

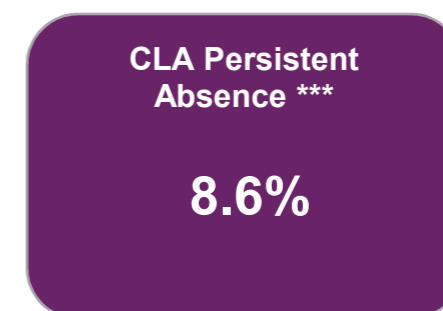
**A pupil is classed as persistently absent if they miss 10% or more possible sessions (due to authorised or unauthorised absence).

***There have been no permanent exclusions

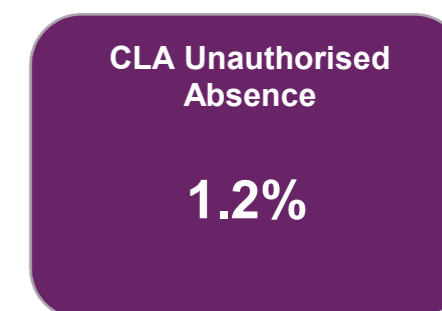
Progress 8 data is based on 2019, the DfE are reporting on it for 2020.



2018/19 Walsall = 3.6%
2018/19 West Midlands = 4.2%
2018/19 Stat Neighbours = 4.4%
2018/19 England = 4.7%



2018/19 Walsall = 7.5%
2018/19 West Midlands = 9.0%
2018/19 Stat Neighbours = 10.3%
2018/19 England = 10.9%



2018/19 Walsall = 1.1%
2018/19 West Midlands = 1.1%
2018/19 Stat Neighbours = 1.4%
2018/19 England = 1.4%



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'.

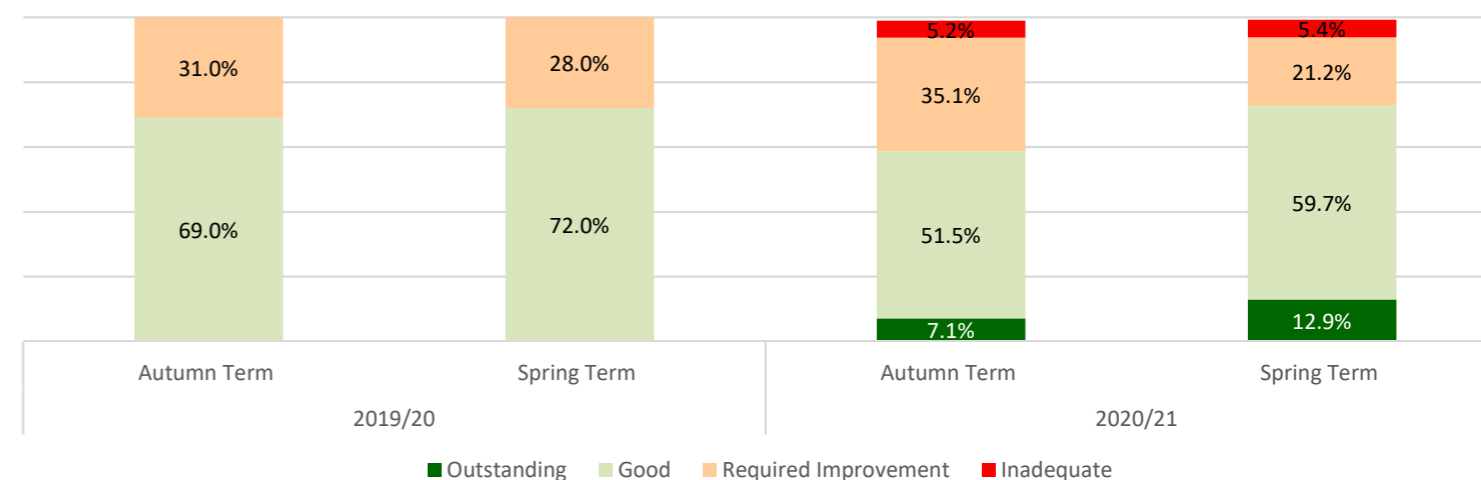
Methodology

Attainment in English and maths (9-5) From 2017, this measure looks at the percentage of pupils achieving a grade 5 or above in both English and maths. Pupils can achieve the English component of this with a grade 5 or above in English language or literature. There is no requirement to sit both exams.

Attainment 8 - Attainment 8 measures the average achievement of pupils in up to 8 qualifications including English (double weighted if the combined English qualification, or both language and literature are taken), maths (double weighted), three further qualifications that count in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and three further qualifications that can be GCSE qualifications (including EBacc subjects) or any other non-GCSE qualifications on the DfE approved list.

Progress 8 - Progress 8 aims to capture the progress a pupil makes from the end of key stage 2 to the end of key stage 4. It compares pupils' achievement – their Attainment 8 score – with the average Attainment 8 score of all pupils nationally who had a similar starting point (or 'prior attainment'), calculated using assessment results from the end of primary school.

RAG Ratings of PEPS



Commentary

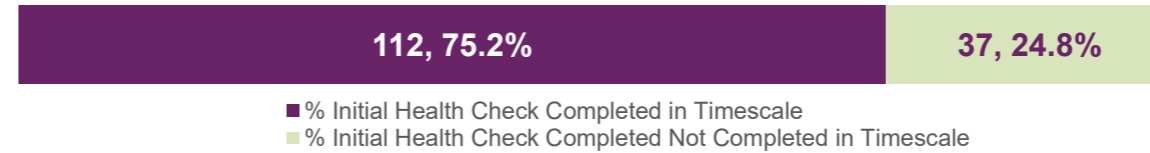
The proportion of ePEP's that were completed at the end of the spring term was 99.6% , The percentage of ePEP's that were completed for a full academic year was 99.9%. CLA overall absence, Persistent Absence and Unauthorised Absence are currently all below both Statistical neighbour and England averages. The percentage of PEPs RAG rated as outstanding has increased in spring term from 7.1% to 12.9%, PEPs RAG rated Good have also increased from 51.5% in Autumn Term to 59.7% in Spring Term

Health and Well-being



% Initial Health Check Completed in Timescale

Assessments in timescale of CLA admission for those in care for 28 days or more

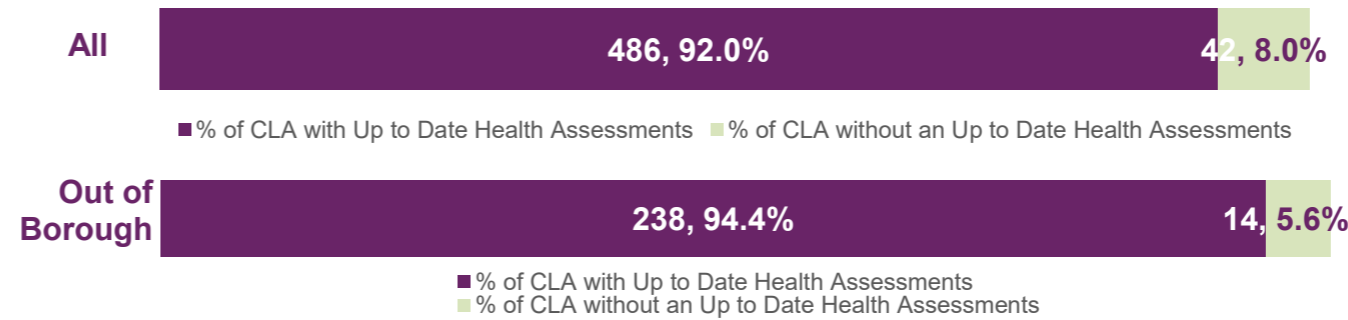


2019/20 Year Out-turn = 49%
2018/19 Year Out-turn = 75%
2017/18 Year Out-turn = 63%



% of CLA with Up to Date Health Assessments

Where the child is over 5 and has been looked after for over a year

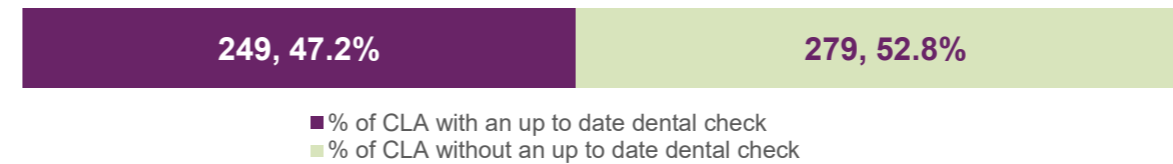


2019/20 Walsall = 80%
2019/20 West Midlands = 87%
2019/20 Stat Neighbours = 90%
2019/20 England = 90%



% of CLA with an up to date dental check

Where a dental check has been completed within 12 months



2019/20 Walsall = 92%
2019/20 West Midlands = 82%
2019/20 Stat Neighbours = 90%
2019/20 England = 86%



Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

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

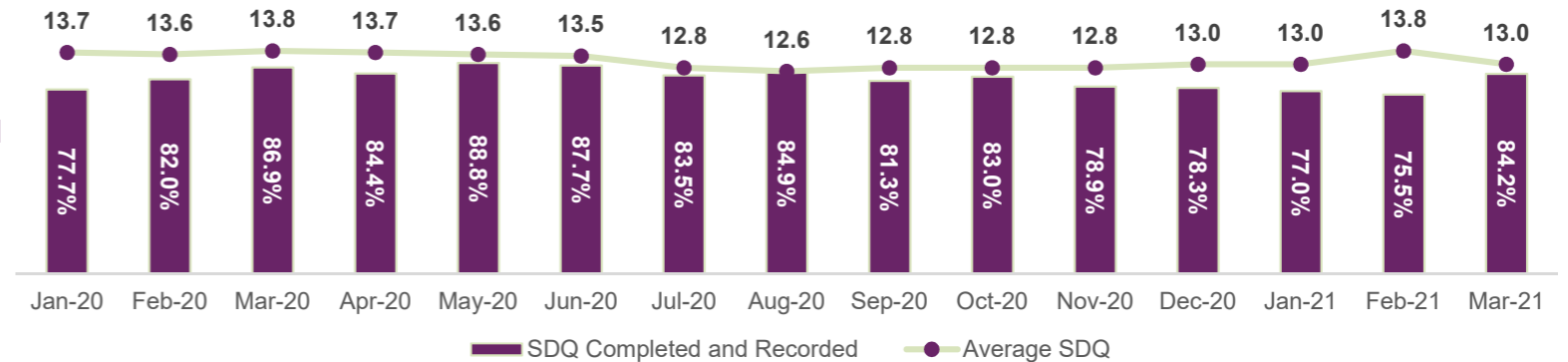
Average SDQ Score

13

Breakdown

Score	Considered	Number	% of those eligible for SDQ	% against all Children Looked
Score 0 - 13	Normal	253	55%	39.3%
Score 14 - 16	Borderline	52	11%	8.1%
Score 17 - 40	Cause for Concern	158	34%	24.5%

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



Commentary

The percentage of children looked after with an initial health check increased to 73.8% during the quarter 3 of 2020-21, from 67.2% in quarter 3. The percentage of children looked after with an up to date dental check has increased further during quarter 4, but is still below the out-turns for the previous three years. Dental checks were affected by dentists being closed at various points during the pandemic. Significant work has been undertaken, and continues to be taken in partnership with health to improve the processes and accuracy of data recording in relation to health assessments and to ensure that children and young people receive their assessments on time.

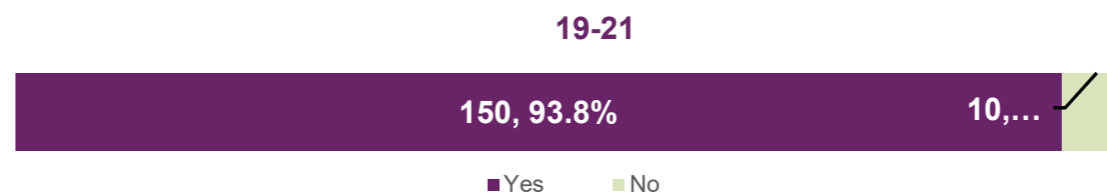
The proportion of SDQ's completed and recorded has increased by the end of quarter 4, following decreases between May 2020 and February 2021. The average SDQ score is currently 13.0. This has remained the same since the previous quarter, and is lower than the average for quarter 4 during 2019-20 (13.8) (Lower is better). 158 children currently have an SDQ score that suggests there is 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

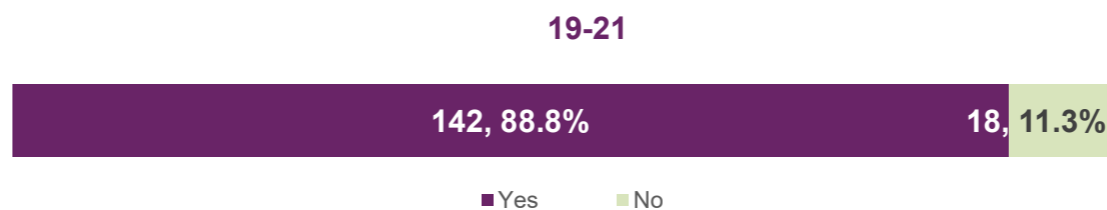


2019/20 Year Out-turn = 95%
2018/19 West Midlands = 95%
2018/19 Stat Neighbours = 97%
2018/19 England = 93%



Care Leavers in suitable accomodation

Care Leavers whos accommodation is classed as suitable for age

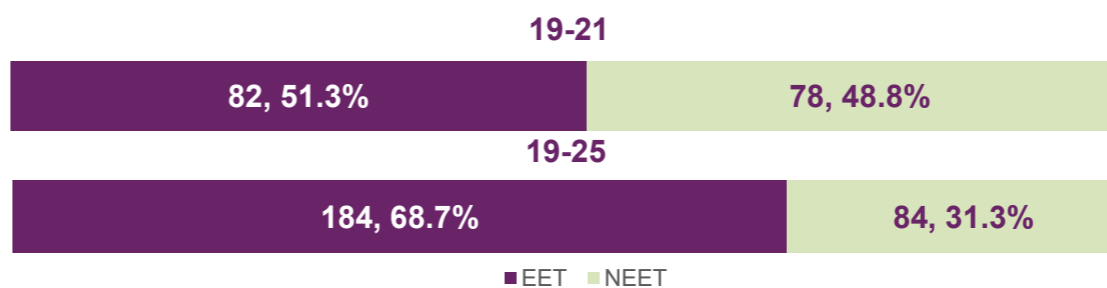


2019/20 Year Out-turn = 89%
2018/19 West Midlands = 85%
2018/19 Stat Neighbours = 88%
2018/19 England = 85%



Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training

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



2019/20 Year Out-turn = 54%
2018/19 West Midlands = 50%
2018/19 Stat Neighbours = 46%
2018/19 England = 53%

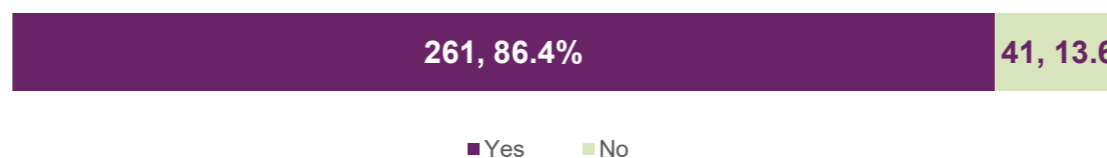


2019/20 Year Out-turn = 74%
2018/19 Year Out-turn = 63%
2017/18 Year Out-turn = 57%



Care Leavers available to work - All Ages

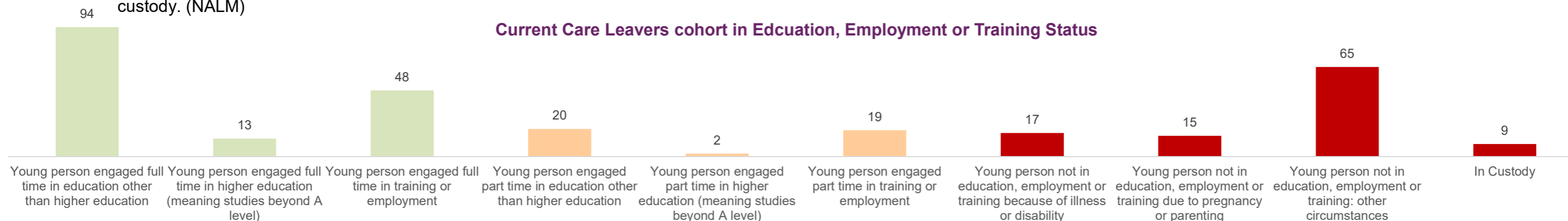
Care Leavers who are avblle to work this excludes all those that are not available for the labour market due to illness/disability, pregnancy or young mothers or being in custody. (NALM)



2019/20 Year Out-turn = 86%



Current Care Leavers cohort in Education, Employment or Training Status



Commentary

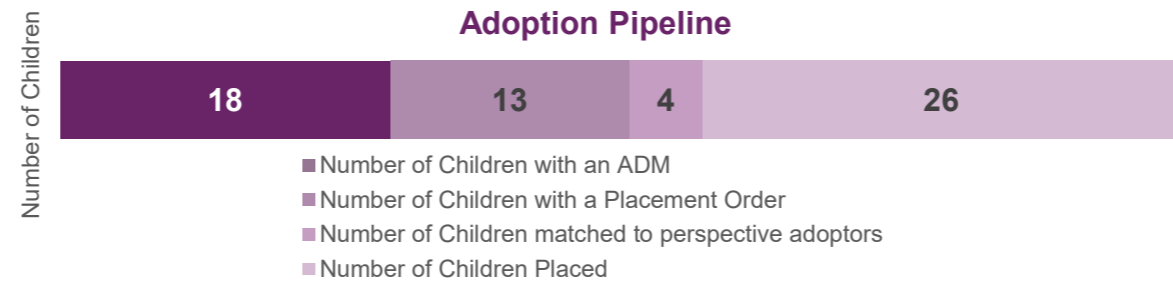
The percentage of care leavers in education, employment or training for the 19-21 has seen a decrease compared to the 2019-20 outturn where it was 54%, this has dropped to 51.3% in 2020-21 the 19-25 cohort has seen another increase during quarter 4. 68.7% care leavers aged 19-21 are in Education, Employment or Training compared to 53.02% for quarter 3. This is below the out turns of 74% for 2019-20 and 63% for 2018-19. Managers had expected this figure to decrease during quarter 4, as the government's furlough scheme was expected to come to an end. This reduction is still expected, but has been delayed somewhat, due to the extension of the furlough scheme.

86.4% 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. 9 of Walsall's care leavers are currently in custody, a decrease of 2 since the end of Q3. The proportion of care leavers in suitable accommodation has increased to 95.3%. The proportion of care leavers in touch with the council has decreased slightly and is currently at 96.7%. This is still above the 2019/20 out turn of 95%, and higher than regional and national averages for the same period.

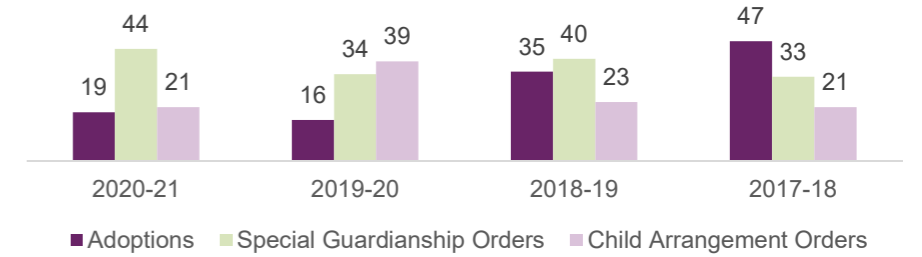
Adoption and Permanency



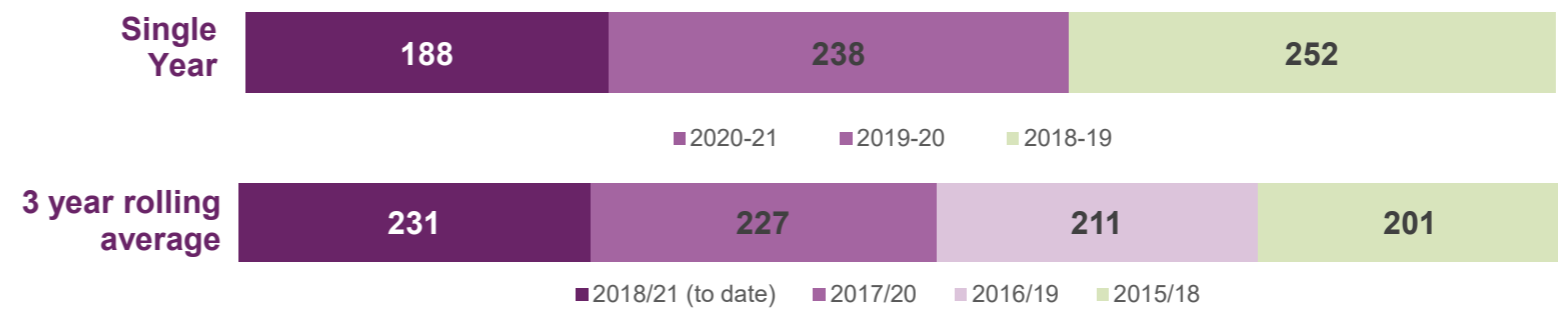
Adoption Pipeline



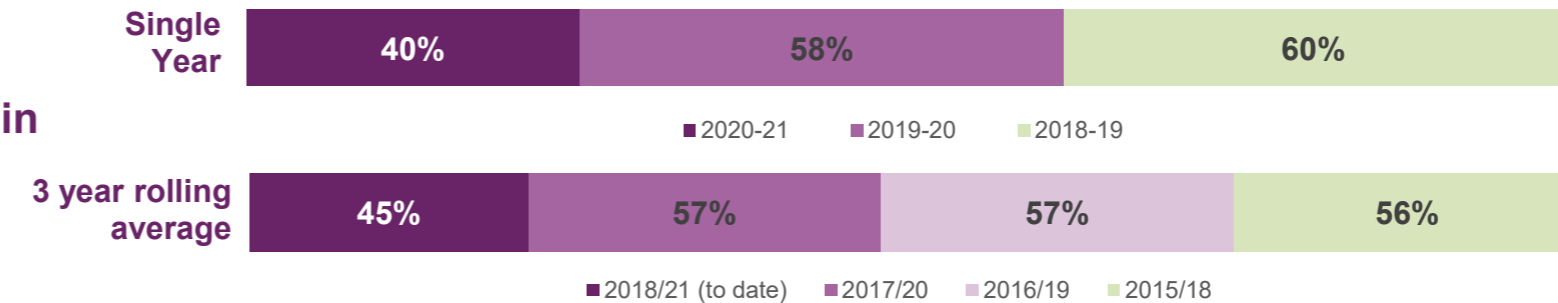
Number of adoptions



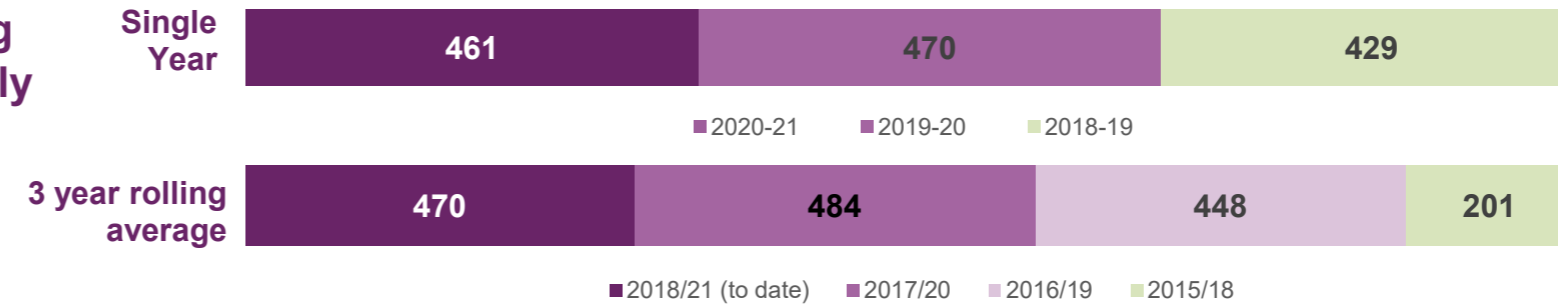
A2 - Average time between receiving court authority to place and finding a match



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

In 2020/21, 19 children were adopted. This is a 19% increase with 16 during 2019/20. Children had a shorter wait in 2020/21 between receiving court authority to place and finding a match - this was 188 days compared to 238 days in 2019/20. 40% of Children wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. Between April 2020 and March 2021, 44 Children have ceased to be looked after due to special guardianship orders and 21 due to child arrangement orders.

Increasing employability for care experienced young people

Executive Summary:

This report provides an update to the report tabled at CPB on 15th February 2021 in regards to our care experienced young people that are not in Education, Employment or Training. It aims to give an update of the current data along with an overview of the initiatives aimed to improve opportunities for them.

Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board:

To advise the CPB of the current position and to describe future plans.

Recommendations:

- The Board is asked to note the Corporate Parenting responsibilities of the Council with regard to ensuring Children in Care and Care Leavers have access to education and training opportunities that will assist them in their future.
- To note and endorse the proposed recommendations as set out in the report.

Background papers:

None

Resource and legal considerations:

Local authority duties to young people and care leavers are set out in the following legislation:

Children Act 1989
Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
Children and Social Work Act 2017
Education and Skills Act 2008 (sections 10, 12 and 68)

Education and Skills Act 2008 (sections 10, 12 and 68)

The DfE provides the framework to increase participation and reduce the proportion of young people NEET. Local Authorities have existing duties to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education or training. These duties are to:

- Secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people who are over compulsory school age but under 19 and for those up to age 25 with a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) or Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan in their area. To fulfil this,

local authorities must have a strategic overview of the provision available in their area and to identify and resolve gaps in provision.

- Make available to all young people aged 13-19 and to those up to age 25 with a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) or Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) support that will encourage, enable or assist them to participate in education or training.
- Local authorities must promote the effective participation in education and training of young people aged 16, 17 years old in their area with a view to ensuring that those persons fulfil the duty to participate in education or training. A key element of this is identifying the young people in their area who are covered by the duty to participate and encouraging them to find a suitable education or training place.
- Local authorities must make arrangements to identify those aged 16, 17 years old and up to their 18th birthday who are not participating in education or training.

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 report will describe the effort officers are making to improve outcomes for our young people

Environmental impact:

None

Performance management:

Corporate Parenting Board ensures everyone works together to fulfil the corporate parenting role and to hold each other to account for making this happen.

- it acts as the visible organisational champion for looked after children and young people and care leavers, promoting their rights, entitlements and aspirations;

- the mobilisation and optimum use of resources available to get the best chance of success for children in care and to support care leavers to positively transition to adulthood and independence.

Reducing inequalities:


Care experienced young people face additional barriers to achieving educationally and securing employment compared with the general population. This report will describe those barriers and the work of Walsall Council to help overcome them.

Consultation:

This report will be presented to the Children in Care Council's shadow CPB prior to the full CPB meeting on 1st July 2021.

Contact Officer:

Full Name: Mick McCarthy, Group Manager, Corporate Parenting

 07385 461212

mick.mccarthy@walsall.gov.uk

The current picture in Walsall

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Care leavers have poorer educational and life outcomes than the general population on average, and are underrepresented in higher education. All universities and colleges must now consider care leavers in their access and participation plans in order to encourage and support them into higher education but we are far from getting this right. With only 6% of care leavers nationally (and from Walsall) going into higher education, the need to ensure that our young people have the best possible chance at success and as such a number of initiatives have emerged in order to try and bridge this divide.

Likewise, in regards to training and employment opportunities, many of our care leavers have not been afforded the stability that allows them to gain the skills that would make them more employable within the job market. This often leads to poor outcomes in all areas of their lives including maintaining suitable accommodation, experiencing poverty, mental health issues and involvement in criminality.

1.2 There are a range of factors that should be considered when assessing the young person's readiness to access Employment Education and Training which include:

- the young person's wishes and feelings
- their current circumstances i.e accommodation and support network
- the aspirations of carers/corporate parents
- the planning and support that is offered prior to them prior to reaching 16 i.e. settled placements as most of our young people that entre university are from stable foster placements.
- the personal characteristics and ability of the young person
- their understanding of the support on offer to them

1.3 In Walsall, we currently have 291 care experienced young people aged 17-25, of which 79 aged between 17 and 21 are not in Education, Training or Employment. This means that our EET figure (those that are in education, employment and training) currently sits at 70% and those not in EET at 30%. This is a better position than in February this year, when the EET figure was 66%.

Age	17	18	19	20	21	Total
EET	84%	80%	72%	68%	48%	70%
NEET	16%	20%	28%	42%	52%	30%

The most recent (2019/20) national and regional data tells us that for those aged 19-21 inc., the % in ETE was:

England	53%
West Midlands	50%
Walsall (Current Data)	61%

A more detailed breakdown of all our 17-21 year olds tells us:

Age	17	18	19	20	21	Total	%
Full Time Education (not HE)	38	25	20	6		89	33.5
Full Time Higher Education		2	5	6	2	15	5.6
Full Time in Training or Employment	2	9	4	12	12	39	14.7
Part Time in Education (not HE)	12	8	2	3	2	27	10.1
Part Time in Higher Education				1		1	0.4
Part Time in Training or Employment	1		5	5	5	16	6.0
Not in Education Employment or Training – Illness or Disability	1	1	2	3	3	10	3.7
Not in Education Employment or Training – Other Circumstances	9	10	10	15	15	59	22.1
Not in Education Employment or Training – Pregnancy/Parenting			2	3	5	10	3.7
Total	63	55	50	54	44	266	

1.4 Within our young people that are not in ETE:

10 are not in education, employment or training due to pregnancy or parenting
 10 are not in education, employment or training due to illness or disability

This leaves a total of 59 young people that should be actively receiving support to improve their NEET status. However, other factors will impact on this as not all of the 59 will be 'job ready' or able to receive the right level of support owing to a number of factors. For example:

7 young people are currently in custody. Education provisions within prisons are currently suspended owing to Covid restrictions and this will ultimately impact upon offender's job prospects once they return to the community. We continue to liaise with our colleagues in probation and the prison service as part of our pathway planning to assist our young people in returning to the community.

6 young people are UASC and have no recourse to public funds. Whilst they are able to access educational support through ESOL, they are unable to gain employment owing to their immigration status.

Some have a significant/serious offending history which limits their options for work and training opportunities.

A further 12 young people are struggling with independence and are receiving significant support in order to ensure some stability. This sometimes means that their ability to enter the job market or focus on education and training is severely compromised. Other support such as stabilising their mental health or resolving accommodation issues is a priority and once resolved, a greater focus on education and training can begin.

As can be seen from the data above, the largest proportion of those not in EET are within the 19 – 21 age. This breakdown of the data allows us to look at how we can target our support.

As with all Local Authorities, the pandemic has impacted our young people that were working in industries that have been most affected by the restrictions. We have had a number of young people that were furloughed as well as others that have lost their

	<p>job entirely. In discussions regionally, we understand that all other areas have seen a change in their NEET figures with Warwickshire, Shropshire, Telford and Solihull which all report a decrease of their young people in education, employment and training. However, the recent lifting of restrictions, particularly in the hospitality sector has positively affected the data over the past 6 months.</p>
1.5	<p>As a way of tracking our young people here in Walsall, we hold monthly meetings called NAG (NEET Action Group) that comprises of a number of key professionals and agencies. These meetings are chaired by Lorraine Thompson, Virtual School Head and include representatives from Transitions and Leaving Care (TLC) Service and Black Country Impact. More recently we have extended this invitation to representatives from DWP and the wider Walsall Works programme of which the Black Country Impact is a part of. The difference between the two being that Walsall Works offers support to all Walsall residents over the age of 16 whilst Black Country Impact supports Care Leavers across the region.</p> <p>Due to low level of response from young people to this service, we have recently revised the function of our intervention at this group to provide a clearer focus on which young people are referred to Black Country Impact. In future, only those who have been encouraged to commit to support will be referred and before support starts, the young person's Personal Adviser will arrange to accompany them to their first meeting with Black Country Impact.</p>
2.0	<p>Walsall Council in house programmes for NEET</p>
2.1	<p>Virtual School – their role in supporting 16-18 year olds into Education, Employment & Training (EET)</p> <p>The Virtual School is responsible for liaising and working in partnership with agencies to support the education of children looked after. Lorraine Thompson is the Virtual School Lead and leads on strategic planning and developments, policy, new initiatives and service delivery.</p> <p>The Virtual School has a dedicated Post 16 team comprising of a key worker and careers adviser and mentor who work with young people aged 14-18 to ensure they are in appropriate post 16 education and are given the right support advice and guidance to make informed career choices:</p> <p>Our post 16 Key Worker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attends Personal Education Plan meetings for young people aged 16 & 17 • Attends SEN annual reviews for young people with an EHCP • Works closely with schools, colleges and training providers to ensure our young people are receiving the right support • Attends the monthly NAG meeting • Provides resources/equipment to help young people moving into EET <p>Our Careers advisor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides advice and guidance on KS4 options • Delivers careers drop in sessions to young people in year 10 & 11 • Holds group career sessions in secondary schools • Support young people with college and university applications • Identify appropriate post 16 provision for young people who are NEET

- Provide advice and guidance on financial support moving into higher and further education

Our Mentor

- Supports young people to remove barriers to participation
- Advocates on behalf of the young person with schools and college
- Attends interviews/meetings with young people

Since the start of the pandemic, the virtual school has continued to have face to face and virtual meetings with our young people to provide careers advice. They have supported 10 young people with university applications for this forthcoming year. They have also supported 3 young people onto a Council apprenticeship and are in the process of appointing a care leaver onto a full time Teaching Assistant apprenticeship within the Virtual School.

The Virtual School continues to provide support and guidance to our young people who are currently NEET by identifying appropriate provision and/or referring them onto other services such as IMPACT and Walsall Works.

Alongside the work of the virtual school, staff we also have other mechanisms in place to enable us to identify young people who may become NEET and need additional support at an early age. They have incorporated the Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI) into the personal education plans. This is a scoring system that enables us to identify young people who may become NEET so support and resources can be put in place before the young person leaves school in year 11.

In addition, as part of our reviews into pathway plans, we are incorporating a revised assessment of need to be undertaken by the social worker once a young person reaches the age of 15 years and 9 months. This assessment will focus on independence planning and will inform the Pathway Plan that replaces the Care Plan at the age of 16. Whilst this assessment will focus on all areas of preparation for independence, a large focus will be on the education and training opportunities that should be afforded to our young people.

There are currently over 40 young people signed up to our 'Aspire to University' (A2U) Project which is run by Wolverhampton university, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Staffordshire Virtual Schools to encourage more young people to move onto further and higher education.

They continue to work alongside Walsall Works and Endless Possibilities to develop a pre apprenticeship scheme for care leavers which will provide longer term support for young people prior to moving onto an apprenticeship. This is an ongoing piece of work that will feed into our Local Offer for Care Leavers.

The Pupil premium funding received by the DfE to help support looked after children aged 5-16 is extended to help support care leavers up to the age of 19. The funding has been used to provide equipment and resources to enable young people to move from NEET to EET i.e. uniform and equipment, travel expenses, driving lessons, extra tuition and online training courses.

As part of our in house support to children and young people, we have access to a dedicated careers advisor based within our Virtual School. As part of her role, she is able to provide support with CV writing, applications to colleges and universities,

finding suitable university accommodation and other practical support that may be required. In addition, our Personal Advisors have supported young people with visiting university and college campuses to open days as well as signposting information in regards to relevant training and employment opportunities.

Transitions and Leaving Care Service

As part of our support to our young people, Personal Advisors work closely with partners in the VS, DWP, Impact and education and training providers.

Our links with local colleges are good and regular discussion with them in regards to education and training options for our young people takes place. This has often led to bespoke packages of support being offered to those that require it. For example, K is one of our young people attending Walsall College undertaking a painting and decorating course. As a parent herself, she has overcome enormous struggles and at one stage was fearful that she would lose the care of her child. Through a robust package of support by both her PA, family and the college, she has made great progress and is now looking to be involved in mentoring other young people in similar situations.

Across the service we currently have 17 young people age 17-24 at University with another 10 potentially applying for this forthcoming September (4 of which are social work Degrees). There is a slightly larger number making applications for this year as some young people chose to defer a year owing to the pandemic. We have been offering additional support to our young people currently at university as some have struggled with the online learning and have felt despondent by their experiences not being what they would have hoped.

As part of the initial support we offer to our university students, Personal Advisors work jointly with the Virtual School to identify places, secure university accommodation and link in with the student leads. Many universities across the country have a dedicated support for care leavers and so we have now developed a good portfolio of those that are particularly supportive and can advise our young people accordingly.

In order to ensure the best level of support, we also signpost our young people to other agencies such as the Care Leavers Association and Propel Project (part of the Become Charity), both of which offer support and guidance to care leavers seeking to enter into higher education and further training opportunities.

We also identify and signpost our young people with a range of training and development opportunities. For example, we have one young person that has recently been accepted on the civil service internship programme within the business, energy and industrial strategy department. As part of his preparation, his Personal Advisor, along with the VS assisted him with interview techniques in order to boost his confidence. He was delighted to be accepted and we have high hopes for his success.

We also have access to Walsall's 'Endless Possibilities' Apprenticeship Programme. This targeted Programme for Care Leavers was specifically established to provide those Care Leavers who are interested in pursuing a career within the local authority, the experience and qualifications needed to secure permanent employment in order to achieve adult independence and economic wellbeing.

	<p>The commitment was to ring-fence 17 Apprenticeships vacancies (around 10% of our overall apprenticeship target) for Care Leavers. It managed to exceed that initial target last year as 20 young people were initially recruited as service areas were able to apply for a wage subsidy through Walsall Works to offset a proportion of the salary costs for the young person. The care leaver is paid the national minimum rates of pay for age and not the apprentice rate per hour in order to support the young person's costs of living independently. The young person receives all the usual Walsall Council terms and conditions of employment including paid holidays, staff benefits including access to the Council's wider learning and development offer. Walsall Works Programme makes a contribution to the salary costs for the Care Leaver for the first year and this is calculated based on the age of the young person, typically between 40% - 50% of the annual salary costs.</p> <p>Two of our young people have done exceptionally well with one having recently completed his level 3 as a Personal Trainer and another about to embark on her higher apprenticeship at Level 4 in Revenue. However, the dropout rate for young people in apprenticeships is very high. Feedback from them and their supervisors describes the high levels of support required to maintain the apprenticeship. Therefore we have become more mindful of who we refer to the scheme and will provide additional support in future.</p> <p>In terms of other apprenticeship schemes, we have had 2 young people accepted on the NHS Live and Work apprenticeship programme. This is a scheme set up regionally with local hospitals and offers a variety of apprenticeships within the NHS as well as on site living facilities. In addition to this, we have a number of our young people working within the NHS and Social Care that have played an active role throughout the pandemic. Their efforts have made us extremely proud.</p> <p>As a way of ensuring that our young people have access to as many opportunities as possible, we attend regional meetings with other Local Authorities across the region as well as attending sessions offered through the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum. We have also currently applying to be a part of a Local Authority Peer Learning Group around increasing employment opportunities for care experienced young people. A small number of LA's will be chosen to take part in a total of six sessions throughout this year by showcasing a project that they are currently working on of which we hope to use our pre-apprenticeship programme.</p>
3.0	Regional and National Initiatives
3.1	Walsall Works and Black Country Impact
3.2	<p>Since its inception in 2012, the Walsall Works programme has supported its residents, particularly young people aged 16-24 years, to improve their skills base through access to functional skills, upskilling in the workforce, apprenticeships and retraining.</p> <p>Despite restrictions in relation to Covid-19 and limited face to face engagement over the last few months, the programme has still been able to maintain delivery in some partner venues alongside a calendar of virtual roadshows, a virtual expo, events, sector specific sessions and continue to job match employer vacancies with local people in a number of sectors. Page 38 of 84</p>

The proportion of working age adults (16-64) with no qualifications has fallen gradually since 2004 demonstrating improvement in skills against all ages. However, Walsall does continue to underperform compared with the national averages. Walsall has a lower proportion of non-qualified adults than those in the West Midlands Combined region, and is significantly better than the Black Country average. For example:

- Walsall: 21,000 (12.7%) of working age had no qualifications
- Wolverhampton: 28,200 (17.3%) of working age had no qualifications
- Dudley: 31,000 (16.4%) of working age had no qualifications
- Sandwell: 41,600 (20.3%) of working age had no qualifications

Black Country Impact is made up of 5 delivery partners across the region in order to offer free training, help and advice to our care leavers in securing jobs and training opportunities. It is funded by the European Social Fund and Youth Improvement Initiative and can offer practical and financial assistance such as clothing for interviews, travel cards and childcare provision.

Through collaboratively working together across teams they are maximising the chances of success for our most vulnerable young people i.e. those with SEND, care leavers, young offenders, teenage parents, and those at risk of long term unemployment. The pandemic has seen a greater rise in the volume of young benefit claimants nationwide and many of our care leavers have been impacted upon by working in industries that have been significantly affected by the pandemic.

In Walsall, we currently have two Impact workers that work in partnership with the Personal Advisers based in our Transitions and Leaving Care Service. All of our eligible young people are considered for this service and are routinely discussed as part of the monthly NAG meetings. Updates are provided as to the work that has been undertaken and whether the young people are engaging with the support on offer. As a way of tracking the success, a log of contacts is kept by the Impact workers and shared with TLC Managers in order to ensure that all opportunities are explored and actions followed.

4.0 Kickstart Programme

4.1 The Kickstart Scheme is a national DWP programme and was announced by the Chancellor in July 2020, as a way to reduce the huge influx of young benefit claimants who will be displaced due to lack of employment opportunity within businesses facing economic challenges. Kickstart provides funding to employers to create 6 month placements for 16 to 24 year olds who are in receipt of benefits. Walsall Council will act as a 'gateway' organisation and will administer the programme which aims to make available 150 local work placements. Each placement is a minimum of 25 hours per week and is paid at minimum wage. The Kickstart programme will have skills and training embedded through the work placement to ensure that young people are equipped to take up employment once the 6 month placement has ended.

As a way of embedding this in our support to our Care Leavers, representatives from the Department for Work and Pensions presented the programme to Personal Advisors so that this could be incorporated into our Pathway Planning. Walsall Works has now launched its Kickstart offer that went live in Jan 2021. We will feed back the effectiveness of the programme at the CPB.

5.0	<p>Care Leavers Covenant</p>
5.1	<p>In July 2016, the Government published a major policy document ‘Keep on Caring’ to support young people from care to independence. A key policy commitment in the paper is a strategic pledge to introduce a Care Leaver Covenant. The Covenant is a promise made by the private, public and voluntary sectors to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them to live independently. Whilst all young people who leave care at 16, 17 or 18 are afforded statutory support from the local authority in the region in which they live, wider society also needs to play a part. In order to provide a greater level of support at this crucial stage during the transition of care leavers to adulthood, the covenant aims to provide care leavers with opportunities to enter the world of work, such as offering work experience placements, work shadowing placements, internships, traineeships and apprenticeships.</p> <p>A number of our young people have been referred to the Covenant and some have received good levels of support which has opened up opportunities that may not have been available to them. One of our young people has also been filmed offering some feedback on his experiences with the Covenant as part of their promotional material.</p> <p>As part of our work with the Care Leavers Covenant, we have been consulting with Local Universities and Colleges to offer additional support to care leavers attending higher education provisions. The Covenant aims to employ regional Covenant Progression Coordinators based within education provisions so that care leavers receive access to support both during and post study. This initiative is currently only in the early consultation stages but interest has been high and meetings with Local Authorities across the region have now taken place to move this forward.</p>
6.0	<p>Peer Learning Programme</p>
6.1	<p>In March 2021, Walsall became one of 10 local authorities within the Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum which will collaborate to share good practice. The programme is funded by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, which is supporting 30 voluntary organisations to improve outcomes for young people with care experience. By November 2021, our plan is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a pre-apprenticeship programme • Support our care leavers to gain valuable employability skills • Creating work opportunities and placements within the private sector • Strengthen our local offer to care leavers around employment <p>Progress to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through our procurement process we have met with an organisation that can offer a range of opportunities including a 3 month paid work experience offer, a virtual work experience through Speakers 4 Schools with priorities given to Walsall Care Leavers. • Contacts through the Black Country Apprenticeship Ambassador network have led us to an opportunity with a Tramway construction network of employers linked to a sector skills academy • Again through the Apprenticeship Ambassador Network we have linked to local Housing companies who can offer ‘trade’ Apprenticeships which is something we cannot offer • Guaranteed Interviews for Care Leavers has been extended out to our maintained schools

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Recruitment Agency is now providing 1 to 1 support to young people around interview skills which is bespoke to the individual • Again through our procurement we have arranged for our TLC Team to meet with our Framework of Apprenticeship Training Providers and this has led to a meeting with a training provider who has opened a leather academy (a very local skill that has been revitalised in Walsall, at one stage the Queen's handbags were made in Walsall). The Team Manager will be discussing how they can support our Care Leavers. <p>We are also looking to organise a roadshow of local employers and training providers and to include a commitment to corporate social responsibility in the form of opportunities for our young people when employers bid for new contracts with Walsall Council.</p>
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7.0	Summary and Recommendations:
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7.1	<p>Overall our NEET data is comparable, if not better than that we are seeing regionally and nationally. As we progress with some of the initiatives outlined above, the landscape is likely to continue to improve. We are particularly hopeful that the Kickstart programme will allow local businesses to offer our young people opportunities in sectors that may not have previously been available to them and open up jobs that will inevitably assist our local economy.</p> <p>We are currently looking at ways in which we can widen our scope as a service and increase our engagement with local providers and educations provisions so that the opportunities and initiatives are shared more frequently. Rather than open up the invitation to our in house NAG meetings, the view is that a separate steering group could be formed in order for local employers and education providers to share opportunities at a regional forum. As such, we will consult with the Care Leavers Covenant as to whether this is something that they could assist us with. Although just launched, this may also be something that is offered as part of the Kickstart programme.</p> <p>As a number of our young people have expressed an interest in joining the police or armed forces, we are looking at ways in which we can engage these agencies in how we can support care leavers through the application process. We understand that West Midlands Police offer an apprenticeship scheme and so we are looking at whether there is any scope for these to be ring fenced for care leavers.</p> <p>Whilst we currently have a good level of careers advice/support for our 16/17 year olds through the virtual school, there is a gap in regards to the support offered to them post 18. This is because Impact only works with those that are NEET and so the lower level of advice and support (what was once offered through Connexions), no longer exists. In order to overcome this, some areas have employed specific PA's within their leaving care services to plug this gap but for us here in Walsall there is currently no such resource and may be something that should be considered.</p> <p>As part of our Local Offer to Care Leavers, we are in the process of designing a pre apprenticeship programme that aims to ensure that all of our young people that wish to join the workforce, are fully equipped to do so. This will include tailoring specific roles for our care leavers so that they can have a 'taste' of what options may be available to them and incentivise them to move into certain fields at a pace that will ensure their success. This is a joint project with the Virtual School and our Apprenticeship Programme Lead.</p> <p>We are also planning to build on our support to those young people leaving custody as the current issues relating to lack of education and support currently in prisons is</p>
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going to leave some of our young people more vulnerable once they return to the community. There is not currently any focused work taking place but our aim is to complete an audit and dip sample some of our recent young people to see what gaps/key themes that we can identify that we can pick up with partner agencies. This piece of work will be completed by the end of August 2021.

Mick McCarthy
Group Manager – Corporate Parenting

Walsall Virtual School

Annual Report

2019/2020



Walsall Council

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Executive Summary

Throughout the whole of the 2019/20 academic year and including the Covid 19 lockdown period the Virtual School has continued to support all children looked after. We have continually reviewed our work to ensure we continue to deliver our statutory duties and provide effective support to all children and young people.

The overall number of children of school age looked after children has risen over the last 12 months from 471 in 2018/19 to 568 at the end of July 2020. 92 children entered the care system during 23rd March-31st August 2020.

The Pupil Premium funding continues to be available to all looked after children aged 3-18 and is distributed to schools through an 'individual needs based' model requested through the child/young person's personal education plan.

Since the implementation of ePEP, the completion rate of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) has risen to over 95%. We have also seen an improvement in the quality of our PEPs since schools have taken over responsibility for the completion of the document.

Overall attendance overall continues to be good and for the 5th consecutive year is better than that of all looked after children regionally and nationally.

The number of children and young people receiving at least 1 fixed term exclusion continues to be lower than that of regional and national looked after children. The most up to date figures show Walsall at being ranked 8th in the country for the least amount of exclusions. There has been no permanent exclusions.

Due to the closure of schools in March 2020, national curriculum assessments and statutory collections for this year were cancelled. For the purpose of this annual report we have included EYFS, KS1, and KS2 attainment predictions based on information provided by schools in the spring term 2020 alongside attainment data from the last 3 academic years. The 2020 predicted data is for information purposes only and will not be used to make direct comparisons or for benchmarking outside of this report.

The number of children predicted to achieve a GLD at the end of reception increased by 6% on the previous year. The number of children predicted to achieve ARE in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 1 was lower in all subjects than the previous year. The number of children predicted to achieve the expected level of attainment at the end of KS2 in reading, writing and maths combined increased by 20% from the previous year.

At Key stage 4 we have seen an increase in the number of young people gaining 5 or more 4-9 GCSEs (or equivalent) passes from 18% in 2019 to 36% in 2020. We have also seen a rise in the number of young people achieve 5-9 GCSEs from 5 to 15%.

Post 16 engagement is supported by the Virtual School Post 16 Team and monitored by the monthly NEET Action Group (NAG). The Number of young people who are NEET fluctuates month by month but all young people who are NEET engaged with our careers advisor and are being supported to secure appropriate post 16 provision.

We continue to raise awareness of the impact of trauma and unmet attachment needs with our schools. This year we have 10 schools involved in our Attachment Aware Schools Project and a further 24 will join the project in September 2020.

Purpose of the report

The purpose of the report is to outline the activity of the Virtual School and inform the Virtual School Management Board about the educational outcomes for Walsall's looked after children 2019/2020. The report reflects on achievements and identifies areas of development to achieve the best outcomes for our children in care

Contextual data in this report is for all looked after children as of 31st July 2020. Attainment data in this report is for children who have been looked after for 12 months or more as of 31st March 2020.

Context

The concept of the 'Virtual School Head' (VSH) was first outlined in the White Paper 'Care Matters: Time for Change' (DCSF, June 2007).

The Children and Families Act 2014 amended section 22 of the Children Act 1989 and placed a statutory duty on all local authorities to appoint a Virtual School Head (VSH) to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children. The children and Social work Act 2017 placed a duty on local authorities, under section 23ZZA of the Children Act 1989 to promote the educational achievement of previously looked after children in their area by providing information and advice to:

- any person that has parental responsibility for the child;
- providers of funded early years education, designated teachers for previously looked-after children in maintained schools and academies; and
- any other person the authority considers appropriate for promoting the educational achievement of relevant children.

Previously looked-after children are those who:

- are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by the Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order; or
- were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales. 'State care' is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.
- The duty applies to children who are in early years provision (secured by the local authority under section 7(1) of the Childcare Act 2006) and continues throughout the compulsory years of education where the child is in provision funded in part or in full by the state.

VSHs are integral to ensuring that local authorities discharge their duty to provide suitable advice and information for the purpose of promoting the educational achievement of previously looked-after children. They can also undertake any activity they consider appropriate where that activity will promote the educational achievement of such children in their area.

The VSH should:

- Have the resources, time, training and support they need to discharge the duty effectively.
- Have robust procedures in place to monitor the attendance and educational progress of the children their authority looks after (including those placed and educated out of county).
- Maintain an up to date roll of the Local Authority's looked after children who are in school or college settings and gather information about their education placement, attendance and educational progress.
- Must inform Head Teachers and Designated Teachers in schools if they have a child on roll that is looked after by the VSH's local authority.
- Ensure Social Workers, Designated Teachers and school staff, carers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) understand their role and responsibilities in initiating, developing, reviewing and updating each child's PEP (Personal Education Plan) and ensuring that identified needs are met.
- Ensure that up to date, effective and high quality PEPs focus on educational outcomes and that all looked after children, wherever they are placed, have an effective PEP.
- Ensure the educational achievement of looked after children is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibility for promoting their welfare.
- Report regularly on the attainment of looked after children through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

It is the responsibility of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services to ensure that these duties are met. The Virtual School is held to account by the Virtual School Advisory Board.

The Board is chaired by a Walsall primary school head teacher and constituted from representatives from education, health and social care. The Virtual School shares data, information and school development priorities with the Advisory Board each term.

The Role of the Virtual School

The role of the Virtual School is to promote the educational achievement of looked after children in the care of Walsall local authority, wherever they live or attend school. The Virtual school team work with partners to ensure that education is provided, children's needs are met and planning is of high quality. Our key responsibilities are:

- Coordinating and quality assuring all Personal Education Plans (PEP).
- Monitoring and challenging schools to make effective use of Pupil Premium in line with the 'Pupil Premium Grant 2019 to 2020 Conditions of Grant and Pupil Premium: Virtual Heads' Responsibilities
- Tracking the academic progress, attendance and exclusions of all looked after children
- Using our tracking data to highlight individuals who are not on target to achieve their predicted outcomes and providing them with additional educational support.
- Ensuring children with special educational needs or disabilities are supported appropriately.
- Implementing a range of targeted interventions to raise academic standards.
- Providing support and challenge to students, schools, social workers and carers.
- Ensuring effective transition between schools or specialist providers.
- Encouraging our young people to have high aspirations about their futures and remove barriers to further education.
- Leading training for foster carers, designated teachers, school governors and staff , and delivering bespoke training for alternative learning providers.
- Celebrating Achievements

Links to Walsall Strategies

The Walsall Corporate Parenting Strategy is committed to improving outcomes for looked after children and care leavers and have pledged to:

- Do everything they can to make sure children and young people have the very best education and training possible.
- Support young people in taking up opportunities for further education and apprenticeships.
- Help care leavers with their career plans

To support these pledges the Virtual School has:

- Moved to an electronic PEP (ePEP)
- Appointed a full time level 7 careers adviser
- Worked closely with all our schools to ensure first day provision is put in place for any looked after children who receive a fixed term exclusion.
- Provided apprenticeship opportunities to two care leavers
- Enabled all year 11 students to have access to a tutor to support their GCSEs
- Ensured that when a looked after child moves school they are placed in a good or outstanding school if it is the best school to meet their holistic needs
- A robust attendance monitoring process in place to ensure that looked after children do not miss education
- Through targeted use of Pupil Premium provided focussed support to looked after children working just below their expected levels of attainment or requested additional support with their learning
- Developed a Corporate Mentoring Scheme
- Further developed our Attachment Aware Schools Project

The Virtual School Team (as of 31st July 2020)

The Virtual School is made up of a team of dedicated professionals who provide support, advice and guidance to looked after children in a variety of ways.

In 2019, after a consultation with schools it was agreed that in addition to providing schools with pupil premium funding we would create a number of new posts to work directly with children and young people in their school or home. From July 2020 the virtual school is made up of two teams.

The School Support team

Education Advisor x 2 (QTS)

There are two Education Advisors within the team who manage a small team of tutors, mentors and key workers. The Education Advisors monitor the attainment and progress of looked after children and allocate appropriate resources where needed. They are also responsible for ensuring pupil premium is used effectively to improve educational outcomes

Key Workers

We have 4 key workers within the School Support Team. EYFS/KS1, KS2, KS3 and KS4. Our key workers model and coach strategies to improve outcomes, attend PEP meetings, provide advice and guidance to parents/carers and social workers in relation to improving education. Key workers also work alongside designated teachers to help facilitate and improve personal education plans

Mentors

We have a primary and secondary mentor with the school support team who work alongside children and young people to develop appropriate relationships to engage, motivate and remove barriers to learning. Our mentors also support looked after children through transitions

Tutors

We have 4 tutors within the School Support Team, 2 primary, 1 English and 1 maths tutor. Our tutors provide tuition in or out of school and either face to face or online. Our tutors also support parents and carers with home learning activities

Careers Advisor

Our careers advisor provides information, advice and guidance to young people aged 14-19 in relation to their career aspirations. She supports young people making a transition to HE and FE and works alongside out NEET young people to identify appropriate post 16 provision

The Inclusion Team

The inclusion team consists of a small number of staff who work with schools, carers and social workers to support children who do not have a school place, are at risk of disengaging from services/and or education. This includes children and young people who:

- Do not have a school place
- Are at risk of exclusion
- Have below 75% attendance
- Are undergoing an SEN assessment
- Are NEET

Education Liaison Officer

Has lead responsibility within the inclusion team and provides specialist advice to schools where children and young people are at risk of exclusion.

Key workers x 2

We have 2 key workers within the inclusion team who work alongside the education liaison Officer to reduce exclusions, challenge poor attendance, support schools through the graduated response and work with admissions teams to secure timely school places. Alongside the two teams we have our Business Support team who comprise of a PEP & Attendance Coordinator and Information & Finance Officer

We also have a full time Speech and Language Therapist and Educational Psychologist as part of our Specialist Support Team

Virtual School Staff Continued professional development

Training courses/CPD opportunities attended by the Virtual School staff during the 2019/20 academic year include:

- Transition and Vulnerability Training
- Delivering ASDAN courses
- Secondary Language and Communication Needs
- Supporting secondary aged children with social, emotional and mental health difficulties
- Solution Circle training
- Protecting Information (mandatory for all staff)
- Person Centred Planning
- Post Pandemic Nurture training
- Emotion Coaching
- Identifying Dyslexia & Dyscalculia
- Restorative Practice Training
- Trauma and Attachment with Lisa Cherry
- Secondary Speech & Language communication needs
- Safeguarding children and young people
- Drawing and Talking
- Teaching English to speakers of other languages

The Virtual School Advisory Board

The Virtual School reports termly to the Virtual School Advisory Board. The board is chaired by a Walsall primary school head and consists of the following people.

- HT Primary School (Chair)
- Principle IRO (Vice Chair)
- Assistant Principle-Local Secondary Academy
- Group Manager Youth Justice Service (Vice Chair)
- Early Years Adviser
- School Improvement Manager
- School Governance Manager
- Head of Service- Corporate Parenting
- Foster Carer
- Post 16 Officer- Walsall College
- Head of Service-Safeguarding

The virtual school sits structurally under the Access & Inclusion Service but is geographically situated within Children's Social Care in order to support and work closely with our Corporate Parenting social worker teams. The Virtual School Lead reports directly to the Director of Education and is part of the Access & Inclusion Senior Management Team.

The Virtual School cohort- A profile of our learners

As of 31st July 2020 there were 568, 3-18 year olds who were looked after. This is an increase of 31 children from 2018/19. There is an equal gender split with 51% being female and 49% male. 62% of children are educated in Walsall compared with 38% who are educated outside of Walsall. Of those children educated outside of Walsall, 75% are educated within the West Midlands.

Year Group	Phase Summary	No. of LAC	Male	Female	Walsall School	OOB School	SEN Support	EHCP
-2	72	18	9	9	14	4	2	0
-1		25	11	14	15	10	4	1
R		29	19	10	23	16	4	1
1	183	29	12	17	22	7	5	2
2		20	12	8	14	6	2	1
3		34	22	12	24	10	7	5
4		33	14	19	20	13	11	6
5		36	15	21	23	13	16	9
6		31	13	18	20	11	9	5
7	247	35	16	19	28	7	8	8
8		52	27	25	32	20	10	20
9		46	23	23	27	19	18	12
10		62	36	26	32	30	12	17
11		52	26	26	30	22	11	11
12 & 13	66	66	36	30	30	36	4	18
Total	568	568	291	277	354	214	123	116

What type of schools are our children and young people attending?

Statutory guidance 'Promoting the Educational Achievement of looked after children' states that looked after children should be educated in good or outstanding schools and unless there exceptional, evidence based reasons, looked after children should not be placed in a schools judged to be Inadequate.

We always aim to place a child in a good or outstanding school if it's in their best interest to do so. We will never place a child in an inadequate school unless there is no alternative options and we carefully monitor the education of those placed in requires improvement schools.

We recognise the importance of placement stability so would not move a child from a school rated less than good if the young person was safe, happy and making progress. If a school receives an inadequate rating, a meeting is held with the child's parent/carer and social worker to discuss what actions should be taken. We also discuss any move of school with the young person if appropriate to do so. In the last 12 months we have moved 1 young person due to the school being given an inadequate Ofsted rating.

As of 31st march 2020:

- 89% of children in early year's settings attend a good or better provision.
- 75% of children attend a primary school rated good or better.
- 68% of children attend a secondary school rated good or better

75% of looked after children attend a good or better school as of 31st March 2020. This is slightly less than last year (81%) which is mainly due to the number of children placed in secondary schools that have moved to a requires improvement (RI) grading.

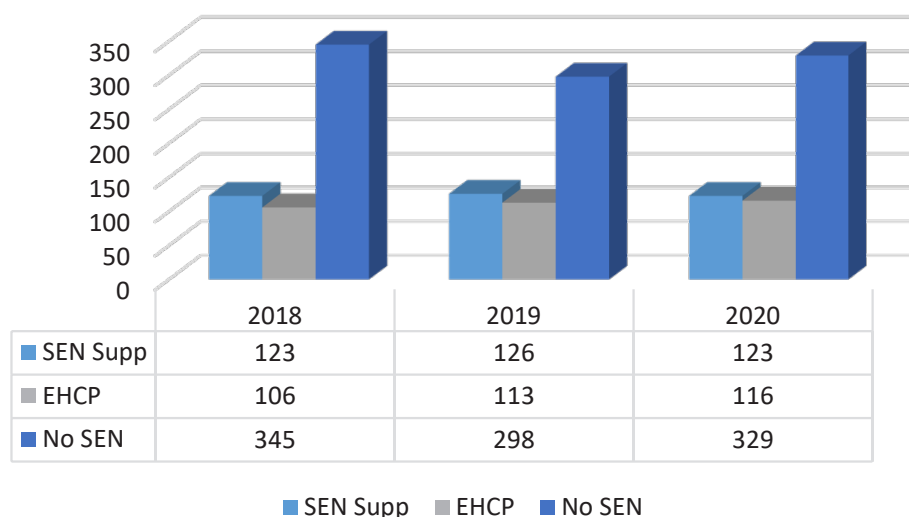
There is a small number of children who are placed in schools/settings which do not have an Ofsted grade due to being an academy converter or new school. These have been excluded from the figures which are based on schools with an official Ofsted grade

Special Educational Needs

Looked after children are 4 times more likely to have a special educational need than all children, and are almost nine times more likely to have an education, health and care plan than all children (DfE 2019). Nationally 55.9% of looked after children had a special education need compared to 14.9% of all children.

At the end of the 2019/2020 academic year there were 116 (20%) looked after children with an EHCP and 123 (21%) on SEN support. In Walsall 239 (42%) Of our learners have an identified special educational need.

No. of children with SEN



Looked after children are 3 times more likely to have social emotion and mental health (SEMH) as their primary needs than their peers. This is reflective in Walsall where 51 (44%) of our C & YP have SEMH as their primary need.

Our key workers work closely with schools and SEND teams to ensure the SEN graduated response is followed without drift and delay. They also work with schools to identify appropriate SEN resources, contribute to the SEN support plan, Support parents and carers to understand the SEN Code of Practice and facilitate statutory assessment requests. Over the last 12 months 5 parental requests for EHCPs have been made by the Virtual School.

The Virtual School Lead attends the SEN panel and External Placement Panel to advocate for looked after children when additional funding or a change of placement is required

EYFS (Reception)

There are 20 children in the EYFS reporting cohort, 14 of which attend an early years setting/school in Walsall and 6 attend a provision outside of Walsall. 18 children attend a provision rated good or outstanding by Ofsted and 3 have an identified special educational need. Of the 20, 8 are placed with foster carers, 8 are placed with family & friend's carers, 3 are placed with their parents and 1 is placed for adoption.

Of the 20, 10 (50%) were assessed as on track to achieve a good level of development at the end of reception. This is a 6% increase on the number who achieved a GLD in 2018/19. 10 of the cohort have been looked after for 4 years+, of these 10, 5 was assessed as on track to achieve achieved a GLD. Of the 10 who were looked after for less than 4 years, 5 were assessed as on track to achieve a GLD.

Interventions that were put in place to support children in Early Years

- Early Years Tuition Service provided tailored 1:1 support to 7 children in reception
- who were working slightly below age related levels
- All nursery and reception aged children received a purple letter box parcel full of learning resources to be used on their own or supported by their carers

Next steps

- We will hold half termly attainment and progress meetings to identify underachievement in early years and allocate appropriate resources/interventions
- We will initiate the introduction of a PEP for children aged 2
- Our Speech & Language Therapist will screen all under 5s to help identify any communication and language difficulties
- We will develop and implement an Early Years Enrichment Pack for all children in Nursery and Reception
- We will work with early years providers to further increase the uptake of the early years pupil premium

Key Stage 1

There are 15 children in the KS1 reporting cohort, 8 of which attend a school in Walsall and 7 attend a school outside of Walsall. 14 children attend a provision rated good or outstanding by Ofsted and 3 have an identified special educational need and 1 has an EHCP and attends an SEMH school. Of the 15, 8 are placed with foster carers, 6 are placed with family & friends carers, and 1 is placed with parents.

Of the 15, 7 (46%) were assessed as being on track to achieve age related expectation in reading, 8 (53%) were assessed as being on track to achieve age related expectations in writing and 8 (53%) were assessed as being on track to achieve age related expectations in maths.

Of the cohort 6 have been looked after for 5 years+ and 9 have been looked after for less than 5 years.

Interventions that were put in place to support children in Key Stage 1

- We worked alongside our teaching school to develop a KS1 writing project to help close gaps and raise attainment in writing
- All children in KS1 children received Storytime magazine through the post each month
- All children in KS1 received a letter box parcel full of learning resources to be used on their own or supported by their carers

Next steps

- We will hold half termly attainment and progress meetings to identify underachievement in KS1 and allocate appropriate resources/interventions
- Our Speech & Language Therapist will screen all KS1 children new into care to help identify any communication and language difficulties
- We will develop and implement a termly 'book in a bag' for all children in KS1 who have been identified and needing extra reading intervention
- All children in KS1 will have a log in to our online reading and maths programmes

Key Stage 2

There are 21 children in the KS2 reporting cohort, 13 of which attend a school in Walsall and 8 attend a school outside of Walsall. 19 children attend a provision rated good or outstanding by Ofsted and 14 have an identified special educational need of which 6 have an EHCP and attend special schools. Of the 21, 15 are placed with foster carers, 5 are placed with family & friends carers, and 1 is placed with parents.

Of the 21, 10 (48%) were assessed as being on track to achieve age related expectation in reading, writing and maths and SPAG. 8, (38%) were on track to reach the expected standard in reading writing and maths combined

Of the cohort 14 have been looked after for 5 years+ and 7 have been looked after for less than 5 years.

Interventions that were put in place to support children in Key Stage 2

- We worked alongside our teaching school to develop a KS2 writing project to help close gaps and raise attainment in writing
- All children in 3 & 4 received Storytime magazine through the post each month
- All children in KS2 received a letter box parcel full of learning resources to be used on their own or supported by their carers

Next steps

- We will hold half termly attainment and progress meetings to identify underachievement in KS2 and allocate appropriate resources/interventions
- Our Speech & Language Therapist will screen all KS2 children new into care to help identify any communication and language difficulties
- We will develop and implement a termly 'book in a bag' for all children in KS2 who have been identified and needing extra reading intervention
- All children in KS2 will have a log in to our online reading and maths programmes

Key Stage 4

There are 39 young people in the KS4 reporting cohort, 18 of which attend a school in Walsall and 21 attend a school outside of Walsall. 24 children attend a provision rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. 20 have an identified special educational need which 10 having an EHCP and 8 attend a special school. Of the 39, 24 are placed with foster carers, 5 are placed with family & friends carers, 1 is placed with parents and 9 are placed in residential homes

Of the 39, 14 (36%) achieved a 9-4 pass in English and maths and 6 (15%) achieved a 9-5 pass in English and maths

Of the cohort 27 have been looked after for 5 years+ and 12 have been looked after for less than 5 years.

Interventions that were put in place to support children in Key Stage 3 & 4

- All year 11 students had access to additional 1:1 English and maths tuition

Next steps

- We will hold half termly attainment and progress meetings to identify underachievement in KS4 and allocate appropriate resources/interventions
- Our Speech & Language Therapist will screen all KS4 children new into care to help identify any communication and language difficulties
- Careers advice will be available to all young people who are choosing their options in year 9
- We will develop and implement a termly 'book in a bag' for targeted children in KS3 who have been identified and needing extra reading intervention
- All children in KS3 and 4 will have a log in to our online learning programmes

Key Stage 5

The Virtual School are responsible for looked after children up to the age of 18.

The Virtual school has a careers advisor and KEY Stage 5 SEN Key worker who work closely together to support young people from year 11 through to post 16. The Virtual School Head also chairs the monthly NEET Action Group (NAG) where all young people aged 16-25 who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET are discussed

We aim to get the best outcomes for our care leavers by working with them as individuals, ensuring wherever they are placed, they are engaged in education, employment or training commensurate to their ability and aspirations. Each individual young person receives support and guidance towards their desired destination. For those young people moving on to university, the Virtual School has continued to remain involved at each step of the process. This has included working on the UCAS form and Personal Statement, applying for student finance and attending Open Days. The table below shows the post destination of all looked after children in year 12 and 13 as of the 20th March 2020

2019/20 post 16 destinations	Year 12/13
6th Form	7
6th Form (specialist provision)	4
College	38
Training provider	10
Apprenticeship	4
NEET (not seeking EET)	2
NEET seeking EET	14
Custodial	1
Total	76

Next steps

- Align the personal education and pathway plan
- Develop a robust tracking and monitoring system to track the attainment and progress for young people in key stage 5

Care Leavers Apprenticeship Programme

The Apprenticeship Programme for Care Leavers was specifically established to provide those Care Leavers who are interested in pursuing a career with the local authority, the experience and qualifications needed to secure permanent employment and so achieve adult independence and economic wellbeing. The Programme provides care leavers with the opportunity to access paid work through an apprenticeship for a fixed-term period (normally 13 – 18 months) during which time they can gain confidence, learn new skills and gain qualifications.

To date 20 Apprenticeships vacancies have been ring fenced within the local authority for care leavers and 20 care leavers have been recruited onto the scheme.

There has been a number of successes including a care leaver starting a Higher Apprenticeship in revenues and benefits.

The Virtual School have appointed two care leaver apprentices in the role of business and admin assistants

What our care leavers say about the programme

'Sometimes I was lazy but I could see this was a fantastic opportunity and I needed to work hard to get the results'.

The Endless Possibilities programme has opened so many doors for me; it has been a great kick-start to my career in Customer Service. The programme accommodated all my needs from support with travel through the Virtual School team to lack of confidence and experience. The help I have received has been overwhelming; I have been able to achieve many life goals since starting my Apprenticeship. With a lot of hard work and help from the programme, I can positively say I am more confident in the way I present myself and have the ability to offer excellent customer service. I am positive it will only get better from here and I look forward to what the future holds for the rest of my career.'

Next steps

- To further develop our Pre-Apprenticeship scheme to ensure young people have the opportunity to fully explore the requirements of the world of work in advance of applying
- Develop part time hour apprenticeships so young people can build up their resilience to working 37 hours per week as necessary.
- Develop a package of employability skills training – prior to application, linked to work experience.
- Align the Corporate Mentoring and apprentice scheme to enable young people to receive additional mentoring from senior council staff.

Attainment and Progress

The virtual school track and monitor the termly progress of all looked after children from the age of 3-18. Attainment data is collected by ePEP and analysed by our primary and secondary education advisors. Where concerns are raised that expected progress is not being made our advisors will liaise directly with schools to discuss appropriate interventions.

The 2020 predicted outcomes are for looked after children who have been continuously looked after, for at least 12 months, up to and including 31st March 2020, by Walsall local authority.

2020 results are standalone and should not be used to make direct comparisons or for benchmarking. Historical data has been included for information purposes only.

Exams were cancelled in 2020 following the closure of schools and colleges, on 20th March, to the majority of students (except for children of critical workers and vulnerable children) as part of the response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP), phonics, key stage 1 (KS1) and key stage 2 (KS2) national curriculum assessments did not take place this year. Therefore, statutory collections were also cancelled.

Following concerns about the standardisation of A level results, the government and Ofqual announced on 17th August that key stage 4 (and key stage 5) students would receive their centre assessment grade (CAG) or, if higher, the standardised grade awarded by the exam boards for 2020.

Performance tables will not be published by the Department for Education (DfE) for 2019/20.

Early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2 assessment grades have been collected via pupil's Personal Education Plans (PEP) and Walsall Virtual School staff intelligence.

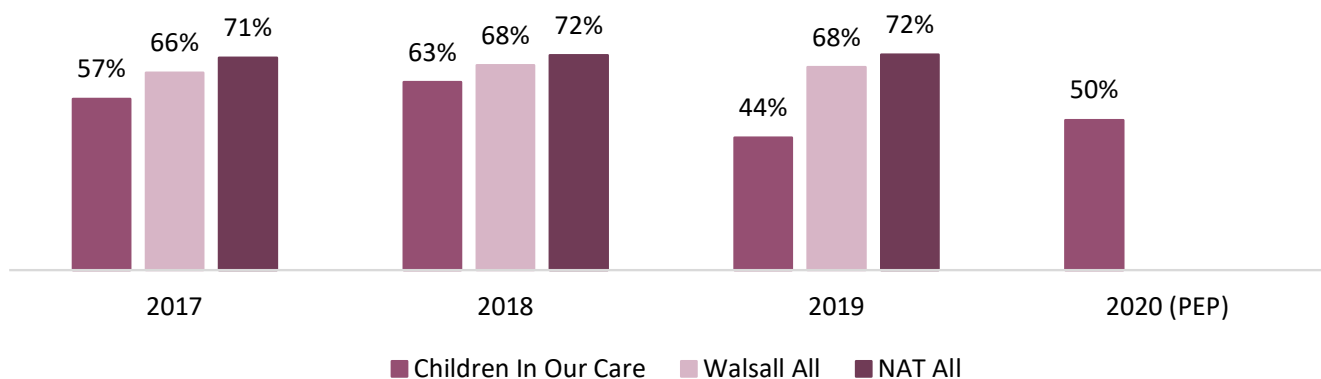
Key stage 4 grades were collected on GCSE results day (20th August 2020).

Currently, the validated 2020 outcomes for children looked after is scheduled to be released in March 2021.

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)

The chart below shows the number of looked after children who have been in care for 12 months or more as of 31st March and who have achieved a good level of development at the end of reception 2017-19 and those predicted to achieve a GLD based on school data collected at the end of the spring term

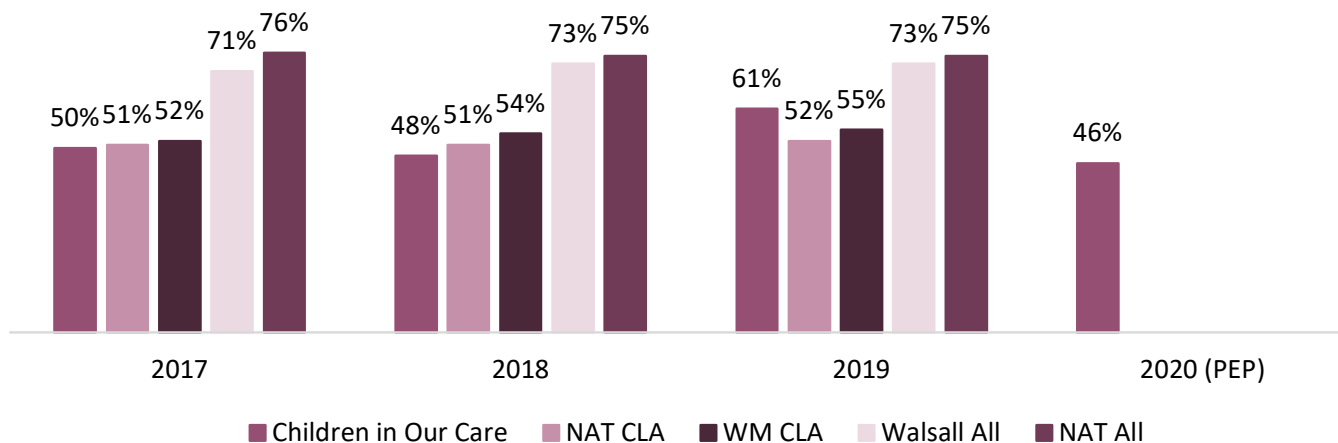
EYFSP - % Achieving a Good Level of Development



Key Stage 1

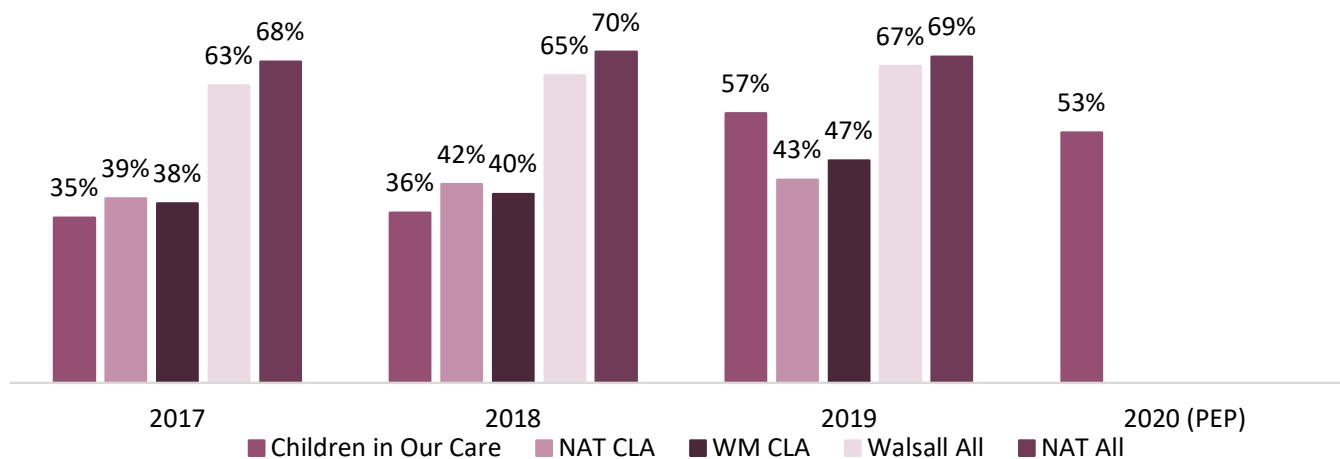
The chart below shows the number of looked after children who have been in care for 12 months or more as of 31st March and who achieved the expected standard in reading at the end of key stage 1 from 2017-2019 and those predicted to achieve the expected standard based on school data collected at the end of the spring term.

KS1 Reading - % Achieving the Expected Standard or above



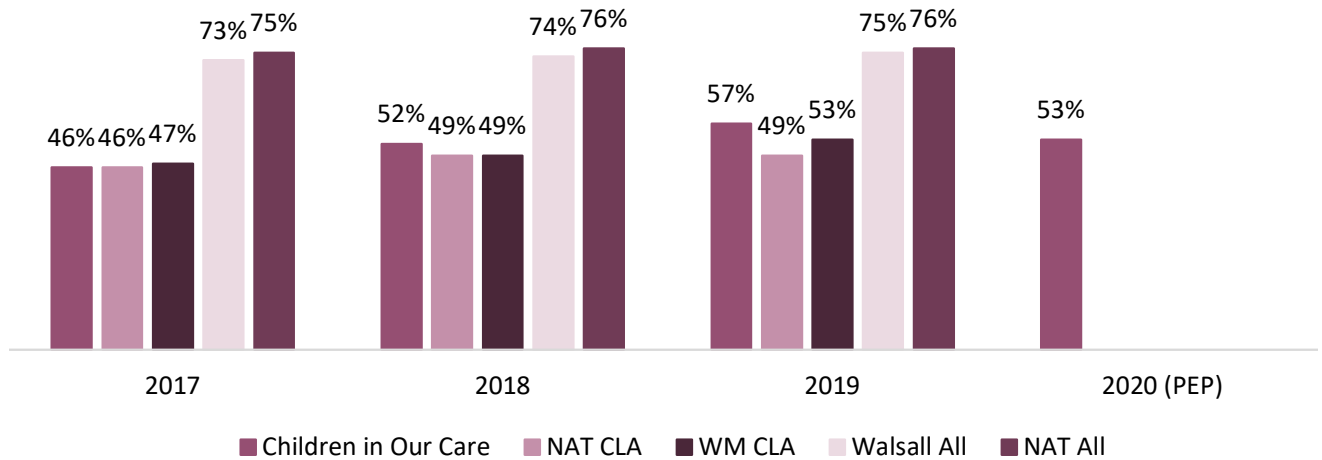
The chart below shows the number of looked after children who have been in care for 12 months or more as of 31st March and who have achieved the expected standard in writing at the end of key stage 1 (2017-2019) and those predicted to achieve the expected standard based on school data collected at the end of the spring term.

KS1 Writing - % Achieving the Expected Standard or above



The chart below shows the number of looked after children who have been in care for 12 months or more as of 31st March and who have achieved the expected standard in maths at the end of key stage 1 (2017-2019) and those predicted to achieve the expected standard based on school data collected at the end of the spring term.

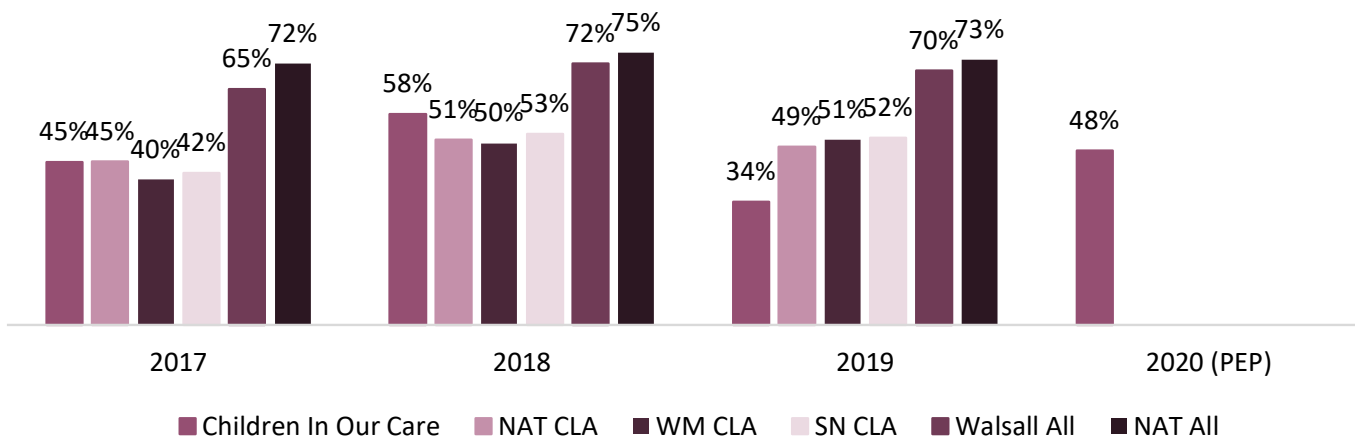
KS1 Maths - % Achieving the Expected Standard or above



Key Stage 2

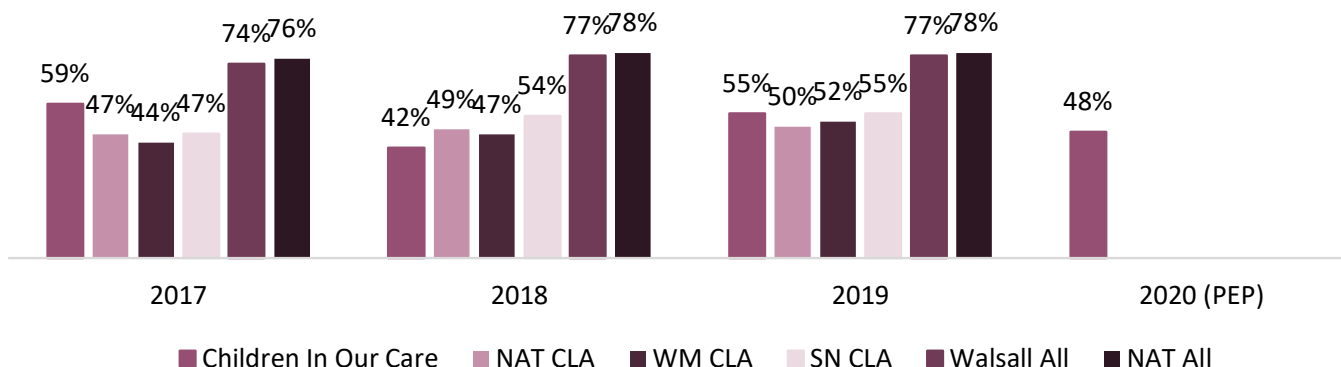
The chart below shows the number of looked after children who have been in care for 12 months or more as of 31st March and who have achieved the expected standard in reading at the end of key stage 2 (2017-2019) and were predicted to achieve the expected standard based on school data collected at the end of the spring term.

KS2 Reading - % Achieving the Expected Standard or above



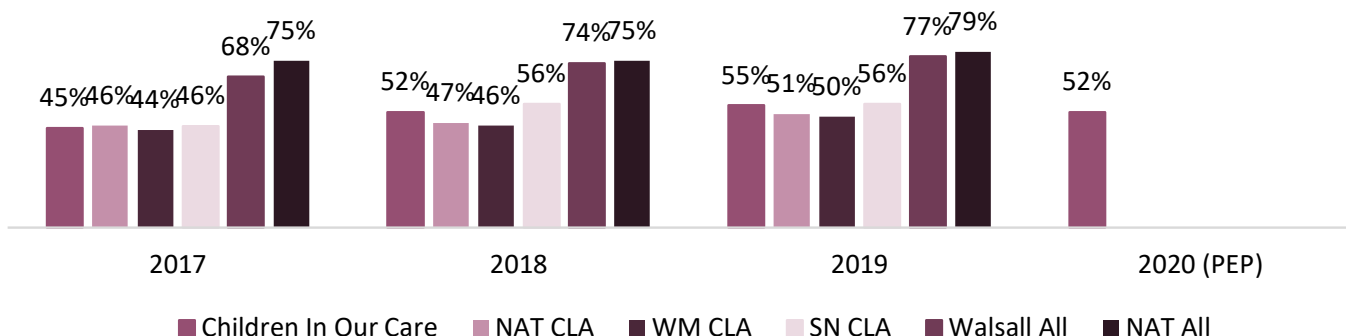
The chart below shows the number of looked after children who have been in care for 12 months or more as of 31st March and who have achieved the expected standard in writing the end of key stage 2 (2017-2019) and those who were predicted to achieve the expected standard based on school data collected at the end of the spring term.

KS2 Writing TA - % Achieving the Expected Standard or above



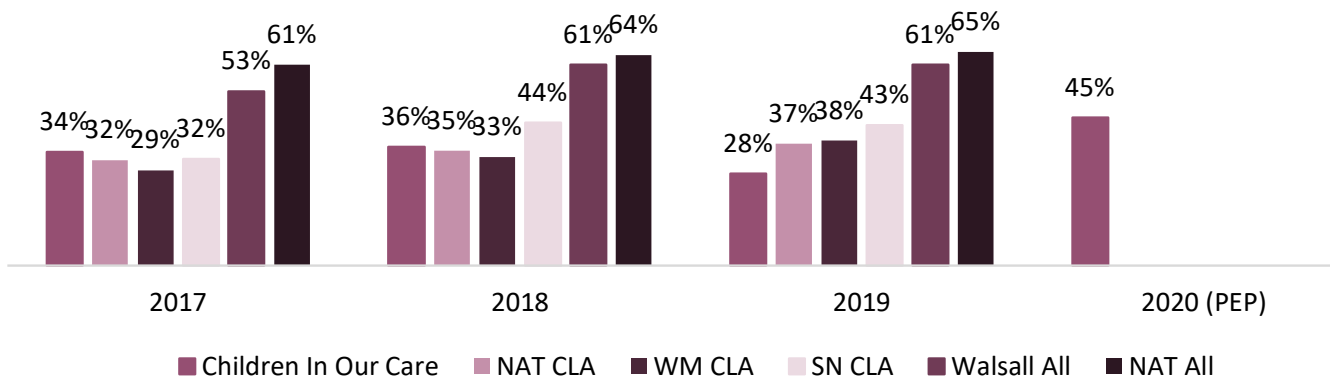
The chart below shows the number of looked after children who have been in care for 12 months or more as of 31st March and who have achieved the expected standard in maths the end of key stage 2 (2017-2019) and those predicted to achieve the expected standard based on school data collected at the end of the spring term.

KS2 Maths - % Achieving the Expected Standard or Above



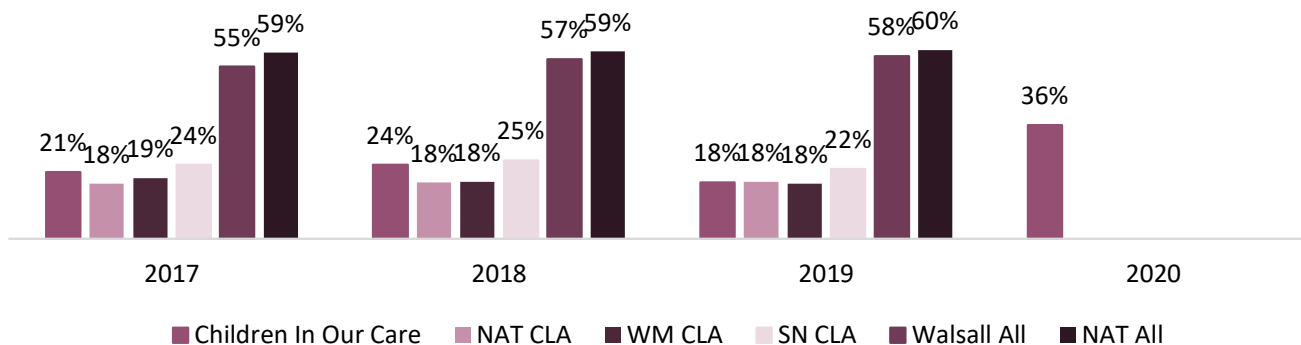
The chart below shows the number of looked after children who have been in care for 12 months or more as of 31st March and who have achieved the expected standard in reading. Writing and maths combined at the end of key stage 2 (2017-2019) and those predicted to achieve the expected standards based on school data collected at the end of the spring term.

KS2 RWMC - % Achieving the Expected Standard or above



Key Stage 4

KS4 9-4 pass including English and maths



In 2020, 36% of key stage 4 children in our care pupils achieved a 9-4 pass in English and maths. Due to Covid 19 the GCSE results were based on teacher assessments rather than exams. This is a 50% increase on the 2019 figures.

In 2020, 15% of children in our care achieved a 9-5 pass in English and maths.

In 2020, 3% of children in our care (1 student) achieved the English baccalaureate including a 9-5 pass in English and maths.

A full report on KS4 GCSE results is available separate to this annual report (**appendix 2**)

Attendance and Exclusions

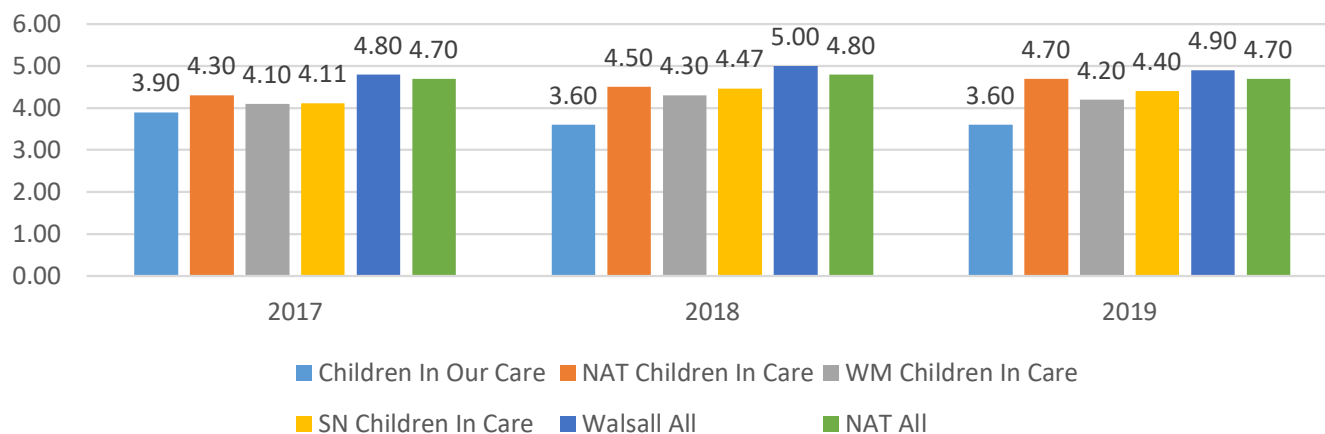
Attendance figures for Walsall's looked after children continue to better than that of looked after children regionally and nationality and that of all Walsall children.

The overall attendance rate for our children in 2019 was 96.3%,

The number of children and young people classed as persistent absentees reduced slightly from 7.7% in 2018 to 7.5% in 2019

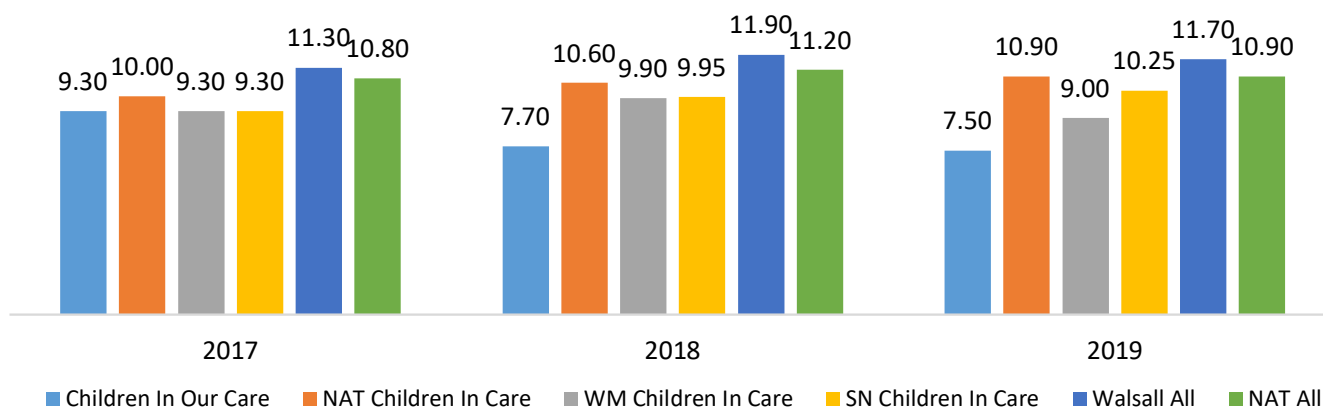
Looked After Call have collected attendance and exclusion data for Walsall looked after children since 2015. The system notifies staff in the Virtual School about student absences twice a day, in the morning and afternoon. Notifying staff about anyone with an unauthorised absence, school exclusion, and/or extended authorised absence. This enables our key workers to immediately challenge any absences, recall the PEP meeting and identify resources or intervention to improve attendance and reduce exclusions.

% Overall Absence Comparison



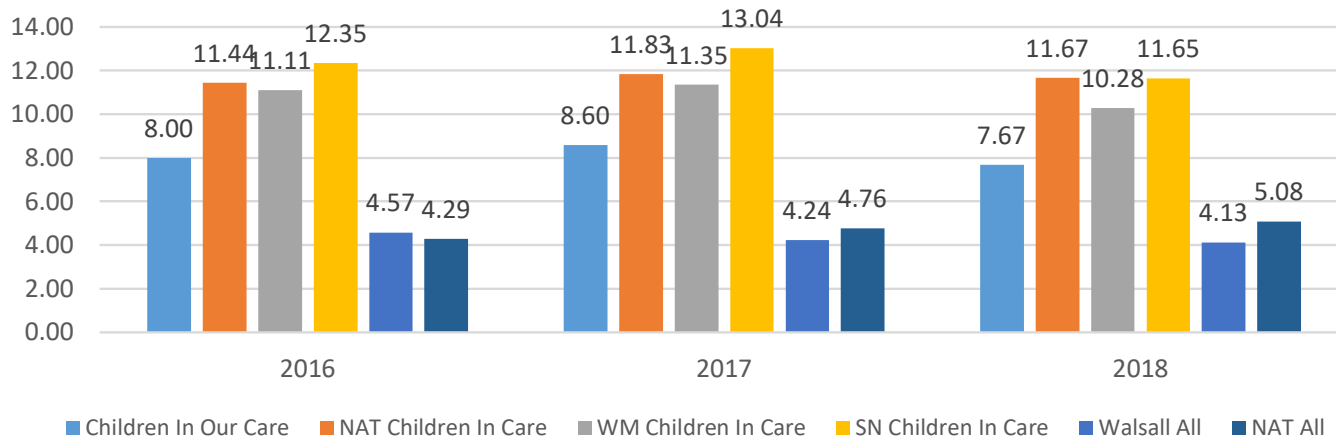
Persistent Absentees

% Persistent Absentees Comparison



Exclusions

% At Least 1 Fixed Term Exclusion Comparison



The percentage of children in our care with 1 or more fixed term exclusion, has decreased in 2018 by 0.93% and remains below children in care nationally, in the West Midlands and the statistical neighbour average. The number of looked after children receiving a fixed term exclusion is higher of that of all children in Walsall and all children nationally

Nationally, children in our care ranked 8th out of 152 Local Authorities, 2nd out of 14 LA's in the West Midlands, and 1st out of 11 statistical neighbours.

Children with below 75% attendance and at least 1 fixed term exclusion are discussed at our weekly complex case meeting. This enables us to discuss reasons for poor attendance or exclusion, co-ordinate a response and implement actions.

Having Looked After Call inform us of any exclusion on the day it happens enables us to act swiftly and put in any intervention or challenge required.

Placement stability

Underpinning all aspects of the work carried out by the Virtual School is our commitment to minimise any disruption to our children's learning. Research is clear that when a child moves school the impact on their progress can be significant and can contribute towards the attainment gap between looked after children and their peers. We make every effort possible to maintain a school placement when a child moves home.

Managers from the virtual school attend social care panels where children who may be at risk of their placement breaking down or who are undergoing a planned move are discussed. This enables us to have plan and implement any school move.

The Virtual school take lead responsibility for all school moves, including those where a child moves school due to SEN needs, moved to an adoptive placement, moves to a placement where attending their current school is unrealistic and emergency schools move to ensure safeguarding

In 2019/20 48 looked after children moved school, of these 48

- 34 moved school due to a placement move
- 4 young people requested a move of school
- 1 young person moved to avoid a permanent exclusion
- 9 young people moved due to a change in the SEN needs

Personal Education Plans

Since moving to an electronic PEP system in 2019 we have seen a gradual improvement in the quality of our PEPs. The number of PEPs rated good increased from 69% in the autumn term to 72% in the spring term.

The number of PEPs rated at good for the autumn and spring term was 70%. Our PEPs changed to a Covid 19 PEP in the summer term so quality assurance of PEPs was put on hold.

To further improve the quality of our PEPs we also implemented a 'quality assurance working group' consisting of primary and secondary head and designated teachers, post 16 managers, Independent reviewing officers and social work team managers. The group were asked to quality assure 10 PEPs each term alongside our normal QA procedure. PEPs and QA comments were then uploaded onto the ePEP system.

In addition to the QA process, we monitor every PEP to review the academic progress of looked after children and plan any support or interventions required.

Virtual School Education Advisors attend all initial PEPs and Key workers attend all PEPs for children in reception, year 2, 6 and 11. We will also attend PEPs where it has been identified that a young person is not reaching their potential. Our key workers will also attend PEPs where it has been identified that the quality of the PEPs need improving

Support and training is available to assist settings, schools and colleges to improve the quality of their PEPs. In March 2020 we carried out a 'deep dive' into the quality of our PEPs and RAG rated schools in terms of how many PEPs had been rated as requires improvement. An action plan was developed and in the autumn term we plan to work closely with those schools who have been identified as needing support to improve their PEPs.

We still have work to do to ensure PEPs are completed within timescales. School are allocated two weeks from the date of the meeting to the completion of the PEP form. In the majority of cases the form is not completed within the allocated two weeks two weeks

Pupil Premium Plus

The Virtual School's main budget is the pupil premium plus which is devolved to the local authority and is used as seen appropriate by the VSH to improve outcomes for looked after children. The local authority received £1,117,800.00 pupil premium for the 2019/20 financial year

We often review our services to ensure we are meeting the educational, emotional and personal needs of our looked after children and young people. This year, as well as commissioning a wide range specialist provision through the use of pupil premium we have also developed 'the Virtual School Offer'.(Appendix 1).The offer enables schools to access specialist provision in place of pupil premium funding. We have increased the number of Virtual School tutors, trained our key workers to offer a range of interventions to children and young people and appointed mentors to help remove barriers to education and participation. As well as direct work with children/young people our Virtual School Offer also provides support to schools and education providers, parents/carers and social workers. We also have an enrichment and enhancement offer to children and young people. In addition to the offer schools can also request pupil premium payments through our ePEP system.

We continuously look at how we can use pupil premium to inspire and meet individual needs and while the majority of funding is used to improve academic progress, this year we have used funding to appoint a full time speech and language therapist and educational psychologist.

The tables below provide a breakdown of activities funded through pupil premium and the percentage allocated to schools, staffing and projects

Activity	Examples
Virtual school Staffing	Key worker, mentor and tutor posts funded by pupil premium
1:1 support, tuition, mentoring and counselling	Home Tuition, extra tuition at school, mentoring, in class support, Online tuition, group work, homework support, booster sessions, play therapy, specialist counselling
Enrichment Activities	Music, sports clubs, activities
Learning Resources	Revision books, learning aids, digital technology
Alternative Provision	Other than mainstream school, additional nursery hours, Offsite nurture provision
Training	Schools, carers, social workers, other professionals and virtual school staff
Virtual School projects	EP, Salt, A2U, Letterbox, QM High School, holiday activities, residentials, Attachment Aware Schools Project
Other	Rewards, travel, data licences

Virtual School Projects funded by pupil premium

It is part of the role of the virtual school to provide the support needed to help children realise their short and long term academic achievements and aspirations. Alongside the academic support we provide we also run a number of activities and projects to ensure our students are able to experience learning in a variety of different ways and in different settings. These include:

The Letterbox Project

Letterbox is a national programme that provides personalised reading materials, games and exercises directly to local authorities to be delivered to looked after children. The aim of the project is to improve confidence in learning, and to increase the confidence of the parents/carers helping them at home. In 2019/20 141 children aged from 3-11 received monthly letterbox parcels. Feedback for our carers include what our carers said about the Letterbox Project:

“He is much better with counting and writing in his books for Maths and before was very shy to do any maths work due to no confidence”

“We do more together as a family it’s had such an impact at school and home it’s made them more confident with reading and writing and maths”.

“It’s been great receiving these parcels not just for the kids but for me as a parent, it helps been to help teach the girls the right way, letterbox also helps you to bond with your kids and for you to see for yourself how they have grown with the activities. I thank you for the parcels. I hope many more people feel the way I do.”

The Corporate Mentoring Scheme

The Corporate mentoring scheme was developed to provide short term career focused mentoring to looked after children. The purpose of the mentoring scheme is to support young people with their aspirations, realise their potential and build their futures through support provided ‘by the family firm’. That would encourage them to move onto council lead apprenticeships or further education. The aim of the mentors would be to enhance the understanding and experience of the mentees by assisting them to with knowledge of work based experience that will help young people to gain an insight into the world of work and how organisations work which will in turn support young people in making informed choices about their career pathway. In 2019/20 4 young people received mentoring sessions from senior staff within the council

Artslink Project

The Artslink Project was established by the West Midlands Virtual School to increase the number of cultural activities available to looked after children. Activities are offered to all children in care regardless of which area they live in and which authority looks after them.

A recent Artslink project to the BBC was attended by a group of our children and young people. The children learnt about the history of the BBC and had the opportunity to make a short video about important things in their life. The reported who worked alongside our children told us that the young people he had met had a natural talent in front of the camera.

To date 20 young people have been involved in activities run by Artslink

Aspire 2 Uni (A2U)

The Aspire to University Project (A2U) is a project jointly run by Wolverhampton University, Walsall, Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Staffordshire Virtual Schools and the Creating Chances Trust.

The scheme is an awareness raising programme with the aim of increasing the number of Looked after children achieving successful outcomes pre and post-16 and consequently entering university. To support young people to progress to higher education, Aspire2Uni designs and delivers a programme of informative and engaging outreach activities that give the young people more information and advice about what university is about, how to get there and what to study. They also offer work experience opportunities and support young people to achieve their qualifications by providing mentors and a tutor if needed.

There are currently 35 young people on our Aspire 2 university programme. We have 5 cohorts running at present from Year 7- 11. Each cohort has 3 outreach activity days a year, 1 per term.

Our young people are offered opportunities to explore a range of different faculties where they can meet current students, lecturers and mentors, in areas such as Science and Engineering, Sports, Performing Arts, Education and Health and Well-being. They also have the opportunity to visit Birmingham City University and University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Campus). Additionally, the children attend Jaguar Land Rover to share with them the different pathways into higher education such as apprenticeships or Vocational studies.

There are further opportunities such as a visit to the Houses of Parliament, opportunities to be ball boys and flag bearers at Walsall Football Club and residential camps to support with their studies and preparation for their exams.

The Queen Mary High School Project

The Virtual School takes part in a Literacy project aimed at children in Years 4 and 5. It is delivered by Queen Mary's High School. During the 6-week programme, the children work with Julian Roderick - a published author for one afternoon a week to create their own stories step-by-step through a range of teaching strategies including ICT and Lego! In the final session, they have the opportunity to share the stories they have written.

The Forest School

We take part in the Forest School Programme at Christ Church Primary School. It offers opportunities for children to make choices for their own learning and take and manage risks. Development of these skills encourages positive attitudes and behaviour. Children enjoy such experiences as building shelters, woodland craft-work, telling stories, cooking over fires, climbing trees, hunting for mini-beasts and making mud pies. As the programme develops, woodland tools are introduced to extend learning and provide new opportunities for risk management. Forest school sessions are available for children in year 3-5 during the summer term.

Nurture Provision

Some of our children and young people need a higher level of nurture to support their needs. We are able to access the Nurture House at Lower Farm School. Each child will have an action plan set at the start of the interventions at the Nurture House and this will be reviewed during and at the end of the child's time there. Children can access this provision for between 6-12 weeks dependent on their needs and progress when they are there. Nurture provision is available for children in years R-Y6.

Educational Psychologist

In February 2020 we appointed an Educational Psychologist to work one day a week in the Virtual School. Since this time she has completed 5 reports, delivered in house training to VS staff and has provided consultations with a number of social workers and schools. From September 2020 we have increased the EP time to 3 days a week, this will enable further development of Attachment Aware Schools Programme

Speech & Language Therapists

Our Virtual School team has two Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) who can support schools and carers, offer training and work with children to maximise a child or young person's communication skills and opportunities for social interaction and learning.

We offer advice and support to children and young people up to the age of 19 who have a speech, language and communication need (SLCN). This may be a single area of need or related to other difficulties e.g. learning; hearing or Autism Spectrum. These might include difficulties in understanding spoken language; learning vocabulary; using sentences; speaking clearly or fluently; or knowing how to communicate appropriately. Our Speech and Language Therapists offer bespoke packages of support to children presenting with speech, language and communication needs, including both direct and indirect support.

The work delivered by our Speech & Language Therapists this year includes:

- Direct one to one support to children and young people delivered in Schools (with some home visits) prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Continued and regular liaison with Social Workers and Carers regarding children's progress throughout the pandemic.
- Attendance (both face to face and virtually) at PEP meetings and LAC reviews
- Direct access to NHS systems to follow up queries raised in a timely manner
- Liaison with NHS SALT regarding in excess of 80 + children and young people in our care who are known to Walsall Speech and Language Therapy services or have recently been discharged (outcomes updated onto our SALT database on a termly basis.)
- From April 2020, every new child registered with the Virtual School (45 children and young people) has been cross referenced with NHS systems, 14 of which were either open to Walsall NHS Speech and Language Therapy or had had previous involvement. Outcomes of which have been recorded onto our database which is accessible to all Virtual School staff.
- Initial appointments completed in a timely manner reducing waiting times from initial point of concern/referral.
- Liaison with other Health Care Professionals (e.g. Health Visiting Team, CAMHS, and Community Paediatricians) to child or young persons' care is viewed holistically.
- Development of 'what we offer' spider diagram
- Development of Speech, Language and Communication training packages for all Key Stages, tailored for Educational staff and Parents/Carers.
- Training delivered to Virtual School staff, including WELLCOMM training and resources shared. A session has also been held on helping to develop the Teams understanding of current NHS SALT services and how children and young people are supported across a range of service delivery options.
- Speech and Language care pathway devised for implementation from Sept 2020, however amendments may need to be considered in light of Covid-19 pandemic
- A 'Teams' meeting held between the Salford Virtual School Head (Sue Johnson) Speech and Language Therapist (Fiona Taylor) in May '2020.

Attachment Aware Schools Project

As part of the local authority's Building Resilient & Inclusive Communities & Schools (BRICS) Project have developed our own Attachment Aware Schools Project. The project aims to increase awareness of trauma and attachment in relation to children's behaviour and learning. The first cohort of schools were identified in September 2019 and so far 9 of the 10 schools involved in the project have completed the first year of the project and achieved their bronze award. The second cohort of schools are due to join in September 2020. In addition to the 10 schools already involved in the project we have two schools who in partnership with the Attachment Research Community (ARC) have delivered regional training on how they have developed attachment aware practise in their schools

Walsall Schools taking part in the Attachment Aware Schools Project:

- Walsall Academy,
- Shire Oak Academy
- The Shepwell School
- Chuckery Primary School
- Delves Infants
- Delves Juniors
- Greenfield Primary
- Edgar Stammers Primary
- Woodlands Academy of Learning
- Brownhills West Primary

KS1/KS2 Writing Project

Walsall Virtual School and St John's Primary School (Teaching School) have developed a project to close gaps and raise attainment in writing, increasing the number of looked after children achieving the expected standard at the end of key stage 1 and 2. The project aimed to support school staff to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers to learning for individual children and have a bank of strategies, including a network of support in order to overcome these barriers. The project started with a cohort of children in Year 1 and Year 5. These children are now in Year 2 and Year 6, and so are at the end of their respective key stage. Due To Covid 19 we have been unable to fully evaluate the programme based on end of key stage data.

Support for previously looked after children and young people

Under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 local authorities and schools have a new statutory role to support young people who have previously been in care such as those who have been adopted from care and who left care under a Special Guardianship Order or a Child Arrangement Order (Residence Order). The Virtual School has always provided support, advice and guidance to previously looked after children but as a result of the additional funding provided by the DfE to help support VSHs to deliver the additional duties we appointed a key worker who has a wealth of experience in previously looked after children to take on this responsibility.

We currently have 294 previously looked after children attending a school in Walsall. 41 in early years, 162 in primary schools and 71 in secondary schools

Some of the work we have carried out in relation to previously looked after children is

- Challenging schools to avoid drift and delay in relation to the admissions of previously looked after children
- Challenging schools in relation to exclusions of previously looked after children
- Attended school meetings
- Provided intervention from our own staff
- Contribute to the SGO carers newsletter
- Challenge schools on the use of pupil premium funding for previously looked after children

Support for children and young people with English as a second language

Although we have relatively small numbers of UASC in Walsall, the number of young people arriving into Walsall has increased slightly over the last 12 months. In order for to provide support to this cohort of young people our English tutor completed a Training English to speakers of other languages course which has enabled enable her to deliver ESOL courses to children and groups of children in addition to their school or college lessons.

All looked after children with English as their second language receive a Person (Nimbl) tablet. The tablet provides young people with access to a whole library of interactive resources especially designed to help them with their school work.

We are currently in the process in developing an offer to our UASC young people to support them in education

Training for professionals

The Virtual school has a role to ensure that professionals working with looked after children have the right knowledge, information and skills to enable them to fulfil their role in contributing to improving the educational outcomes of all looked after and previously looked after children.

In the 2019/20 academic year the following training was delivered to schools, social workers and foster carers

- Termly designated teacher training sessions were held for each of the 4 localities in Walsall. The training sessions covered pupil premium, PEPs, Attachment aware project, admissions, exclusions and virtual school projects/activities. The sessions provided an opportunity for designated teachers to share strategies and initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for looked after children
- Transition & Vulnerability delivered by Kate Cairns Associates training was delivered to designated teachers and non-teaching staff
- Supporting looked after and previously looked after children in primary schools was delivered to designated teachers by Stuart Guest- HT of Colbourne Primary School and winner of the Sir John Timpson Attachment Aware Schools Award 2019
- 1:1 ePEP training is provided to new designated teachers and social workers
- Induction training was delivered to the newly qualified social workers and individual inductions sessions were offered to social workers new to Walsall. These sessions look at how social care staff can better understand the educational needs of looked after children and the role and responsibilities of the virtual school
- We have also commissioned online courses from ACEducation. Schools, social workers and carers can access the online courses free of charge

Celebrating Achievement

To recognise and reward the fantastic achievements of our children and young people in care we run two annual celebration events.

The Primary Event 'An Excellent Tea Party' takes place in the summer term and our secondary Event 'An Excellent Night Out' which takes place in the autumn term

On 18th October 2019 over 300 people attended the 'An Excellent Musical Night Out', our annual celebration event for secondary and post 16 children in care.

Over 100 looked after children and young people were nominated by their Carers, Social Workers and teachers for an award for excellent achievements during the past year. 86 children were presented with an award on the night by our Mayor and Children's Services Portfolio Holders. Awards were presented for achievements in school, participation in sporting activities and personal achievements such as moving onto independence and overcoming barriers.

Children and young people performed songs from their favourite musicals and were joined by special lookalike guests from the Greatest Showman. Social workers, youth workers and elected members also joined in the fun by performing a dance routine at the end of the evening.

Due to Covid 19 restrictions we were unable to hold our summer term primary celebration event

The work of the Virtual School during Covid 19

During the Covid 19 lockdown there was an expectation that children with a social worker continued to attend school as long as they did not have an underlying health condition putting them at severe risk. This included children in the care of the local authority.

To ensure our children and young people were supported to continue to access education during lockdown we worked closely with our social workers, fostering service to identify any young people who was RAG rated as high risk e.g. placement breakdown, social, emotional and mental health issues. We also contacted all schools to identify those children and young people who were most in need of additional support.

Risk assessments were carried out for every young person who had an Education Health and Care Plan and who was receiving extra support for any additional needs to ensure their needs could be met safely at home.

Each young person was allocated a named key worker who they could contact at any time if they required any additional support. The key worker would also keep in regular contact with the social worker to ensure they were fully aware of any care planning changes

Parents/carers and schools of those children not attending school were regularly contacted to discuss what support was needed to enable children to access learning at home. The majority of children were able to access learning via their own school learning platforms but for those children and young people who were unable to access online support learning resources were provided

- Over 50 children received laptops/tablets to enable them to continue with their learning in the home.
- Online tuition was provided to children and young people who requested additional face to face support
- Weekly emails were sent out to parents and carers providing lists of educational resources and websites for different areas of learning and development
- Artslink resource packs were provided for children and young people aged 3-12
- Reading books and learning resources were been sent to all primary aged children
- Log in details to our own digital learning platforms were provided to all children and young people

In addition to providing learning resources we also provided

- Online training to schools, parents and carers on supporting children back into school after
- Supported a number of children to access education provision after a placement move or when their own school remained closed.
- Provided careers advice to year 11 students concerned about their GCSE and A level results
- Supported children new into the care system by ensuring they were still able to access their education provision after moving placement
- delivered face to face and online transition support to children moving to new schools in September

Looked after children and young people were encouraged to attend school if they were safe to do so but due to the high number of families self-isolating at the start of the pandemic the attendance of looked after children was low. As families stopped isolating we saw a week on week increase of school attendance from 25 (6.3%) in March to 190 (30%) attending in July.

Virtual School Case Studies

Case Study Title: Supporting the emotional health and well-being of a primary aged looked after child

Reason for case study: To highlight the work of the Virtual School Mentor

Date of Case Study: Spring Term 2020

Agency Involvement: Virtual School

Child's Core Experiences:

RM has been in care for 1971 days due to Emotional Abuse and Neglect. He has had 4 care placements, but was recently reunified with his parent

School Content:

RM is now in year 3 in a local primary school. The school has 232 students, and of these, 2 are LAC. The school has an Ofsted rating of 'Good'. The school have expressed an interest in participating in training opportunities. The designated teacher has recently been assigned.

Child's needs at school: (know)

Attendance at school had been good but RM was working below Age Related Expectations in English Writing and Reading, as well as Mathematics. RM had been receiving Maths and Literacy tutoring, as well as Speech and Language interventions to address his communication difficulties and stammer. RM was refusing to work independently, and was extremely sensitive to sound or distraction within the classroom.

No SEN have been identified, and RM has not had a diagnosis.

RM had poor social skills, particularly with peers. There had been multiple incidents of aggressive/physically violent and inappropriate behaviour towards peers. Additionally, RM was lacking in skills to initiate and maintain friendships.

RM had healthy attachments and relationships with his foster family and sister, and actively sought attachment opportunities with school staff. He understood that conflicts with school staff were temporary and would not have a lasting impact. However, RM had anxiety around meeting with or speaking to mum. This was worsened by a delay in the planned reunification with mum due to COVID-19.

There were concerns about RM's Social, Emotional, and Mental Health. He had a very high SDQ score, indicating that these issues significantly affect learning and social interaction. CAMHS had previously been referred in relation to toileting issues but were no longer supporting. RM also presented with symptoms of anxiety, including bed wetting, inappropriate toileting practices, and emotional instability

Intervention: (decide)

In order to support RM, the Virtual School Offer included an observation of RM in school, leading to the design and delivery of a supportive programme by the Virtual School Mentor (Millie Hayes). This support would initially be provided every morning for 2 weeks, moving to 3 times a week. It would also include one virtual session a week during the summer break, giving a total of 25 sessions. This support took place within the classroom and other shared educational spaces, as well as a private space for sensitive and confidential work, and eventually within the home environment.

The programme included:

- Emotion Coaching to address anxiety and inappropriate behaviour towards others. Using Emotion Coaching resources, including emotion fans, empathy work, and problem solving, as well as modelling.
- Mindfulness to address issues with self-confidence and solutions to anxiety. Supported by Dr Karen Triesman resources (Binnie the Baboon workbook) for anxiety and mindfulness activities and worksheets.

The SMART goals of this support were:

- RM is able to recognise and understand emotions.
- RM is able to use strategies to deal with conflicts with peers.
- RM is able to use strategies to cope with stress.

Child's view of support: (respond)

"I helped Binnie feel less worried"

"I know who I can talk to when I feel worried"

"I am happy that you (Millie) will be working with me at my new school"

Impact of Intervention: (review)

RM has expressed that he enjoys the support from the mentor to the mentor and the carer. The carer noted that RM was uniquely excited to speak with the mentor compared to the other professionals involved.

RM is now able to label basic emotions when asked about how he feels, and has further developed his empathy skills. He is showing more sensitivity towards peers, and is able to recognise other's emotions, and offer solutions. However, his emotional vocabulary is still quite limited but is developing.

RM's social skills have improved, he is actively seeking relationships and has grown more comfortable sharing toys. He enjoys roles of responsibility but still requires further support with social skills, particularly play skills.

RM has been using some of his newly developed social skills to prevent stresses, and periods of distress have a shorter duration. He has also started using words to express himself when stressed allowing him to find a solution.

The introduction of a visual timetable eased transitions within school and improved engagement in classwork. RM responded positively to the timetable, and enjoyed the achievement of moving through the subjects as shown on the timetable.

Case Study Title: To improve self-esteem and confidence of a primary aged looked after child

Reason for case study: To highlight the work of the Virtual School Mentor

Date of Case Study: Spring Term 2020

Agency Involvement: Virtual School

Child's Core Experiences:

LP has been in care for 233 days due to family dysfunction, chronic neglect and parental drug misuse. LP and her family have been known to Children Services since 2007, and the family have previously been subject to Child Protection Plans due to risks of emotional harm. LP is currently placed in a foster placement with her younger sibling. There are plans to eventually place all siblings in one foster placement. LP has transitioned well into the current foster placement, she has bonded well the carers and seems relatively settled

School Content:

LP is in year 5 in a mixed gender primary school for children aged between 2 – 11 years old. This school is a Sponsored academy, with a capacity of 315 students, although it currently has 457 students in attendance, of these 5 are Looked After Children (LAC). The school has an Ofsted rating of 'Requires Improvement' (January 2019). The Designated Teacher (DT) is very responsive and proactive in seeking support for the LAC.

Child's needs at school: (know)

LP is working below age related expectations in Maths, Literacy, and Reading. LP particularly struggles with grammar, handwriting and reading comprehension. The DT has explained that this is due to previous poor attendance and punctuality issues, but progress has been made since LP was placed with the foster carers. Interventions have been put in place to bridge this gap, and LP is continuing to make good progress. No SEN has been identified and LP has not had a diagnosis.

LP has surface level social skills, she is able to talk to adults and peers, however she finds it difficult to trust others, and often prefers to remain unnoticed. LP is shy and rarely offers to answer questions in front of her peers and is also reluctant to ask for help from a teacher. However, LP has a small group of close friends, with whom she spends a lot of time with in school. Some of LP's social skills are thought to be caused by a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem.

Prior to the care placement LP had poor attendance and was often late to school. This has improved significantly since being placed with her carers and is no longer an issue.

LP seems to have a healthy attachment to her foster carers, and siblings, however she is reluctant to trust other adults and seems to be unsure about their motivations at times. Since being placed with her carers, LP has started to engage in a more meaningful way with school staff. There are no major concerns about LP's Social, Emotional, and Mental Health at this time, although her low self-esteem and confidence can inhibit her social abilities and result in worry/anxiety. This could become a more significant issue in future.

Intervention: (decide)

In order to support LP, the Virtual School Offer included an observation of LP, leading to the design and delivery of a supportive programme by the Virtual School Mentor (Millie Hayes). This included 10 mentor sessions delivered in school on a weekly basis, for around 30 minutes. The programme incorporated:

- Emotion Coaching to develop emotional intelligence, and improve communication and relationships with peers and school staff. Using Emotion Coaching resources, including emotion fans, empathy work, and problem solving, as well as modelling.

Mindfulness to address issues with self-confidence, self-esteem and provide solutions to anxiety. Supported by self-esteem activities (Butterflies of positivity) and mindfulness strategies to manage anxiety

The SMART goals of this support were:

- To develop emotional vocabulary in order to label emotions, and express these with teachers and peers daily.
- To use mindfulness strategies to manage anxiety in order to increase daily participation in group activities/discussions with peers and teachers.

Child's view of support: (respond)

Unfortunately the mentor support sessions have been paused following the announcement of a second lockdown (COVID-19) in November due to school policies. The risks will be re-assessed after the 4 week lockdown (virtual sessions were offered but cannot be facilitated due to staffing issues). This means that an up to date view of the support cannot be gathered from LP, however she has previously expressed that she enjoys coming for the sessions, and feels excited on that day of the week because we will meet for a session. More extensive views will be collected during the final session

Impact of Intervention: (review)

Since our sessions began, LP seems to be more positive, comfortable, and reflective. LP initially found work focused on her self-esteem quite difficult, she could not always think of positive affirmations about herself, and did not have an accurate perception of her skills, however this has improved and she can now quite easily pinpoint her achievements. We have been working on a visual representation of her qualities and skills (Butterflies of Positivity), and LP is excited about how this will look once completed. Combined with our other work on self-esteem, this should help to cement an improved perception of herself.

LP also seems to have further developed her communication skills and ability to trust. She has used our sessions to discuss her anxiety as well as issue with friends with very little prompting, opening up about friendship anxiety and a fear of loneliness. This seems to suggest that she feels safe and understood in our sessions, and also shows a desire to find solutions. She now seems to enjoy the process of sharing a worry and finding a solution/strategy. The DT has also shared with me that she has observed positive changes in LP, particularly related to her confidence and social skills. The DT explained that LP's body language has changed considerably, previously she would walk around school with her head down in an effort to go unnoticed but she now seems to be far more comfortable.

LP's attendance has significantly improved since being placed with her current foster carers and she has expressed that she enjoys school.

LP still needs some further mentor support in order to reinforce strategies for anxiety and further develop her communication abilities. This will be the focus of the remaining sessions once the school is able to permit visitors.

Case Study Title: Supporting a Post 16 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Minor

Reason for case study: To highlight the work of the Virtual School ESOL tutor

Date of Case Study: Summer Term 2019-Autumn Term 2020

Agency Involvement: Virtual School

Child's Core Experiences:

HH had been in the UK for a matter of days, arriving as unaccompanied asylum seeker from Afghanistan, his first language being Pashto, he could not speak English and was living in a residential home in Birmingham

School Content:

Due to the timing of his arrival in the UK the academic school year had already ended and HH was preparing for KS5 when he would attend Solihull College in September. The residential placement was the location for any learning interventions and there was no educational history available.

Child's needs at school: (know)

As English was HH's second language, the need for reading and writing skills were basic at the time. The immediate learning need was for HH to speak basic Standard English so that he could confidently integrate into the UK and his local community. At this stage no SEN had been identified.

HH had some awareness of the English alphabet and was able to form some letters correctly by copying them but further work was needed as well as work on pronunciation of several individual sounds.

HH was often quiet [most often because he was concentrating] and more focused on learning than socialising compared to his peers. HH was new to the country and had several adjustments to make; linguistically, culturally and socially so progression was to run parallel to his transition to living in the UK.

Intervention: (decide)

In order to support HH, the Virtual School Offer included an initial ESOL introductory session, leading to the design and delivery of an ESOL programme of study by the Virtual School Tutor (Annette Round). This support would initially be provided for a one hour morning session twice a week, moving to a two hour session twice a week for the remainder of the summer. This support took place within the residential setting - initially in the large kitchen, moving to a designated room where space and equipment was more readily available.

The programme included:

- Speaking activities to address language in a variety of social situations for which communication is key. Visual learning games for new vocabulary, role play, questions and answers, and 'be the teacher' activities
- Listening activities to address issues associated with hearing and understanding spoken native English in formal/informal situations. Modelled scripts, 1:1 listening activities, 'be the teacher activities'
- Reading activities to address basic skills in a variety of different social situations; menus, timetables, vocabulary flash cards, alphabet flash cards, whiteboard activities, matching labels with items
- Writing activities to address and reinforce newly acquired vocabulary and to practise scribing letters of the alphabet and individual words; paper activities, whiteboard activities, lists, labels

The SMART goals of this support were:

- HH is able to recognise basic vocabulary to be able to understand basic Standard English associated with a variety of everyday formal/informal situations
- HH is able to speak basic Standard English using basic vocabulary with his peers in a variety of formal/informal situations

HH was able to use his notes and resources provided to learn new vocabulary.

Child's view of support: (respond)

HH was motivated to learn English from the outset and expressed his ambition to go to college. When asked about his future, HH stated that he wanted to learn business skills and focus on ICT long term. When the sessions ended he said how grateful he was for the opportunity to learn to English and referred to his notebook of notes saying that he felt happy and ready to go to college. He also commented that he was [now] confident catch a bus to Birmingham to visit friends.

Impact of Intervention: (review)

HH had overcome some of the initial challenges of learning English as a second language.

HH expressed that he enjoyed the practical language sessions with his tutor and his peers.

HH was able to recall basic vocabulary in Standard English to make simple statements about himself such as his name, age, family and interests and was prepared for the classroom in September.

HH social skills improved, he actively showed support for his peers, offering help with translations to be able to understand specific areas of meaning between first language and English. HH had grown more comfortable sharing information about himself.

HH wanted to learn and enjoyed the challenges and coped with the pressure of learning English as a second language by copying down lots of vocabulary in his own notebook.

HH had been using some of his newly developed English language skills to answer questions and ask questions that are relevant to a range of social situations like finding out directions to a classroom, asking the time, asking for help, ordering food etc.

The use of visual images supported the recognition of various items like food and stationery items without the need for vocabulary initially, meaning that HH acquired a wide range of vocabulary.

HH benefited from working in a mixed male group. He began to understand some of the humour that became a part of the learning process and this helped him to relax and interact with his peers.

The impact of the intervention was not only evident in the short term in terms of newly acquired vocabulary and language skills, including basic speaking, reading, pronunciation and writing, but also in the medium term as HH went on to successfully attend college, further positively impacting improved outcomes for HH's new life in the UK.

In December, the SW provided an update on HH's progression at college, stating that HH had achieved over 98% in all three exams sat, commenting that "Given that [HH] knew no English whatsoever upon arrival this must in part be due to the foundational learning completed with the English tutor in the summer."

Case Study Title: Supporting transition from primary to secondary school

Reason for case study: To highlight the work of the Virtual School Primary Key Worker

Date of Case Study: Summer Term 2019-Autumn Term 2020

Agency Involvement: Virtual School

Child's Core Experiences:

O has been with his carer since he was in Year 2, he has a stable home environment and is placed with a supportive care. A transition plan had previously been put in place with the school for a very detailed transition period. Due to Covid 19, the schools were closed and the plan could not be implemented.

School Content:

At the Summer PEP, school expressed their concerns regarding the lack of transition preparation for O. They felt that O would need one to one sessions and support when he started secondary school to ensure he settled and his anxieties were minimised. They were concerned about O adapting to the size of the school and the continuing transitions throughout the day. School were worried that O would not be able to cope with the continuous change of room and staff.

Child's needs at school: (know)

In lessons, O had no issues with completing work, he is a quiet member of the class and is often reluctant to ask or answer questions. He will communicate on a one to one basis with peers and staff but will not speak aloud in front of the class

Intervention: (decide)

We completed four one-hour sessions with O. Three of the sessions were virtual using Bramble and the final session took place at O's home. These sessions covered a variety of transition activities and provided O with a transition booklet all about his new school. The booklet covered where the school was, whom his form teacher, head of house and designated teacher was, the school rules, routines of the day, uniform, homework and frequently asked questions and worries other children had before starting at the school. O kept this booklet and regularly shared it with his carer in the final weeks of the summer holiday.

When O started secondary school we supported him in school for two and a half days. This covered settling in, making friends, finding key rooms and meeting key staff in the school, learning the layout of the school and learning the routines. O adapted really well to the new school and although the keyworker was in the class or on the school premises very little support was actually needed after the first morning.

Child's view of support: (respond)

I felt more settled having a member of Virtual School to support him; he said he did not feel as nervous. He enjoyed the one to one sessions before starting secondary school and said a lot of his anxieties and worries had gone. He had all his questions answered in the sessions and was looking forward to starting the school

Impact of Intervention: (review)

O has received a smooth transition after being out of school for six months the return was evidently daunting for him just like many children but with the added anxiety of starting secondary school O felt very overwhelmed. By offering O the support, he was able to reduce his anxieties and see the transition as a positive move. He starting communicating with his carer in an appropriate way again and even agreed to wear his blazer to school.

He was much happier on the first day having already had the information about his key teachers and settled well. He used conversations starters discussed in our one to one sessions to help him talk to his peers and quickly built up a small friendship group of male and female student.

On the second day, he received reward point for helping another student who was lost and became very proud that he could help him or her thanks to the transition book and the extra tour of the school he has on the first day.

O made fantastic progress both in the one to one sessions and with starting at the secondary school, he impressed everyone and adapted to the new school much quicker than anyone thought.

Since the intervention finished O has continued to make fantastic progress in school, he has maintained the initial friendships and is widening his friendship group. He will participate in class and is fully engaged in his learning. He has also started to put his hand up in class to ask and answer questions.

Case Study Title: Improving outcomes with online tuition**Reason for case study: To highlight the work of the online tutors****Date of Case Study: Autumn Term 2020****Agency Involvement: Virtual School****Child's Core Experiences:**

TA is an unaccompanied Asylum Seeker from Sudan and was registered at the home office in England on November 2019. He speaks Zaghawa/ Arabic and English as an additional language. TA was previously placed with two other foster carers while living in Suffolk. He was officially transferred to Walsall in July 2020 however he has lived with his current carers in Walsall since March 2020. TA reports that he is much happier living in his current placement and that all his needs are being fully met. TA does not have any family or friends in the UK and has limited contact with his mother who is currently living in Calais. He has recently begun to socialise with other young people of his age within the local area.

School Content:

TA is currently in year 11 and has not attended school since moving to Walsall. The plan is for TA to go on role at a local Secondary school but attend another identified school where his needs will be fully met in supporting his EAL. The school has an OSFTED rating of 'Good' and there is currently one other LAC in the school. The identified school currently has 132 children on roll of mixed gender aged between 11-19 years old.

Child's needs at school: (know)

TA previously attended a local High School in Suffolk where he enjoyed learning a musical instrument, Maths, English, French and Electricity which. TA has previously reported that he was subjected to racist remarks while at school, a meeting took place and school took appropriate action. He has said that he would like to be able to have Friday prayer in school. TA also had support from TLC Live (On-line tuition) where he was supported in English, Maths and the focused area of learning was English as an Additional Language.

TA is very demanding at times and does not like to be told 'no' a lot. He struggles with boundaries as he wants complete freedom and independence, otherwise he feels restricted. TA has been known to use threats of running away when boundaries are enforced. He worries about being lonely and isolated, he wants to live in an area he feels comfortable which has other African cultures. TA struggles with rules and boundaries and can feel like he's being unfairly treated if he does not like certain rules. TA has said he feels comfortable in the local area as it is more diverse and there are more people with similar cultures and languages to him. He would like to be able to speak English fluently and to make better progress in school.

Intervention: (decide)

In order to support TA, the Virtual School Offer was to ensure that he was able to continue some form of educational support while at home. He was given a Laptop to enable him to access ICT programmes and appropriate packages considered. A discussion was had with various online companies in regards to teaching sessions and support available.

It was decided that because TLC Live were able to provide daily sessions with the support for students with EAL they would be the appropriate provider for TA. It was also agreed that as TLC Live had previously supported TA they had records of work that they had already completed and the same member of staff would be teaching him. TA was offered on line tuition on a daily basis x 1 hour per day until the end of August 2020.

Daily emails were received from TLC Live to Virtual School to confirm TA's attendance at the sessions and to inform us that he had arrived on time completing the sessions as required

Child's view of support: (respond)

TA attendance for the tuition sessions was 100% and he informed his carer that he had really loved the sessions as he continues to be very keen to be a fluent English Speaker. His carer reported that TA had not complained at all about the sessions and that it been really good for him. He said that it helped that there was continuity of support and that TA has said that the work given to him was more age appropriate for his level of understanding. Via the interpreter TA has reported that he feels more confident and prepared to start school and is looking forward to catching the bus, becoming more independent and socialising with other people of his own age when he goes to school

Impact of Intervention: (review)

A meeting has now been held with TA, his carer and his new school. His name is on role of a new school and will start on Monday 07 09 2020. TLC Live have been asked for records of reports from the tutor and these will be shared with the new school as appropriate. This will ensure that transition is supported to enable them to offer work at the level which is appropriate for TA.



Case Study Title: Year 6 attainment and progress

Reason for case study: To highlight the work of the primary tutors

Date of Case Study: Autumn Term 2020

Agency Involvement: Virtual School

Child's Core Experiences:

BS came into care in December 2017 due to being exposed to parental substance misuse, domestic abuse and neglect. BS was placed with his paternal grandparents since becoming looked after and is currently living with them under a Special Guardianship Order

School Content:

BS attends a local primary school. There are 209 pupils on roll. The school is rated Good by Ofsted.

Child's needs at school: (know)

BS was at Age Related Levels in Maths and Reading but was slightly below ARE in Writing. Blake is a very sociable and has many friends within the year group. He regularly talked about how he socialised with friends in and out of school. He is extremely polite and maintains excellent relationships with adults in the school. He attended every tuition session

Intervention: (decide)

1:1 Tuition was identified for B to support him with his Writing. I started tuition with B on 25th September 2019 until 11th March 2020. The tuition was for an hour per week. The tuition was expected to accelerate his progress so that he could meet ARE by the end of the academic year.

Child's view of support: (respond)

B was completely motivated by the sessions. He enjoyed learning new concepts. I covered a new element of Writing every week, which we practised. He would complete his work in his workbook but additionally would make his own notes in a book that he brought from home. This book would be used to help him remember the things we had covered, so that he could use them in his class work. He was organised and thoroughly enjoyed the learning experience. The class teacher informed me that B was using the techniques we had covered in his class work, which continued to improve. B started to grow in confidence as he recalled all the techniques. He would modify his practise writing and try to improve his vocabulary so that his sentences were the best they could be. He enjoyed the sessions so much, he asked if they could continue over the hour.

Impact of Intervention: (review)

The tuition enabled B to become more confident in his Writing. It allowed him the opportunity to explore his ideas without fear of errors, which in turn led him to become more creative. He would discuss his sentences so that talk became an integral part of the writing experience. I would ask him to search for improved vocabulary and he would self-correct. He would opt to use a comma for example and then state that if he changed the sentence he could then upgrade to using a semi-colon. His confidence grew throughout the sessions. He was always prepared for the sessions and brought books to the sessions, which we used as a stimulus for writing. He continued to make progress with his writing, sharing ideas with his peers, once he had returned to the class. The class teacher commented that he was making good progress with his writing as a result of the sessions.

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Corporate Parenting Board Work Programme 2021/22

Lead Officer	Board date	1 st July	6 th Sept	15 th Nov	11 th Jan	21 st Feb	4 th April
David Hughes	Young People Engagement						
Alison Jones	Health Passports						
Mick McCarthy	Local Offer						
Jivan Sembi	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			Invite CAMHS			
Lorraine Thompson – <i>not required to attend.</i>	Assurance report – virtual school	Information.					
Alison Jones	Assurance report –CCG						
Mick McCarthy	Corporate Parenting Strategy						

Corporate Parenting Board Work Programme 2021/22

Debbie Sylvester with CGL	Independent Visiting Service Annual Report						
Mick McCarthy	Increasing Employability for Care Experienced Young People						