



**Walsall Council**

## **Corporate Parenting Board**

Meeting to be held on: **Tuesday 10 January, 2023 AT 6.00 PM**

Meeting to be held: Council House, Walsall.

### **MEMBERSHIP:**

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

### **ADVISOR**

Alison Jones (NHS Walsall CCG)

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

## ITEMS FOR BUSINESS

### Part I – Public session

1. Apologies and Substitutions
3. Declarations of interest and party whip
4. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)
5. Minutes of meeting held on 14 November 2022
  - To approve as a correct record – copy **enclosed**
6. Young People’s Engagement
  - Report –**enclosed**
7. Children’s Residential Service
  - Report –**enclosed**
8. The Fostering Service Annual Report 2021-2022
  - Report –**enclosed**
9. CCG Assurance report
  - Report - **enclosed**

**Date of next meeting** – 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023

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**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:

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Prescribed description</b>
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	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 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.

## **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.

## **Young People's Engagement**

### **Executive Summary:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Recommendations:**

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

### **Background papers:**

Previous Young People Engagement reports.

### **Corporate Parenting Pledges**

The Walsall Promise for all Children in Care and Care Leavers

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

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

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced seven Corporate Parenting Principles and 2 of the principles focus on the involvement and participation of children and young people: [Page 5 of 53](#)

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

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

**Council Corporate Plan Priorities:**

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

**Citizen impact:**

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

**Environmental impact:**

None.

**Performance management:**

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

**Reducing inequalities:**


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

**Consultation:**

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

**Contact Officer:**

Full Name – David Hughes

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**Report: Young People’s Engagement and Children in Care Council**

**1.1 Total Respect Training**

To date we have delivered 11 Total Respect courses to professionals in Walsall. We now have 6 care leavers trained and 2 children in care that deliver the course. The feedback that the attendees give to our young people continues to be positive which hopefully means they are making a great impression and that the pace and content of the course is good. The last couple of sessions we have had our two new recruits delivering. They really have impressed us during the planning and delivery stages of the training. They have been actively engaged in deciding what to deliver and how to deliver it within the session. They really have hit the ground running and add their own little bits of advice and reflections whilst training, this has added lots of value to the course. We have in total 7 staff trained to deliver Total Respect which is higher than many of our regional local authorities. We are proud of this programme and feel we have a good number of both young people and staff trained.

In terms of development we need to better improve the take up by staff of this training offer in 2023, Jenny Cockcroft Group Manager for Quality and Practice will be taking this forward with the senior leadership team to ensure greater buy in and commitment to this across the social care teams. It was asked at the last Corporate Parenting Panel about Elected Members attendance at this meeting, to date we don’t believe any have attended. As discussed it may be that we could offer bespoke training to members at a time more convenient to them whilst also enabling them to attend the whole day training if this is something that would want to be considered.

**1.2 Council4Kids groups**

The children in care have written the following, with the support of David and Sophia, to share with you what they have been working on for the last couple of months at children in care council.

“We have been asked for our ideas for the big event next year which the Virtual School arrange for Children In Care. We did an exercise to look at some of the positives and negatives of previous years and then had a think about what other ideas could be good, We came up with the following”....

***Drayton Manor***

Pro’s	Con’s
Get to go on loads of rides	It’s a long day
Free food	Travel time
Get to meet new people	Didn’t know about it
Make new friends	Some kids are scared of rides

***Excellent night out***

Pro’s	Con’s
Get to show your talent	Too nerve racking
Opportunity to perform in front of others	Too many people and not good for some kids that don’t like big crowds
Meet new people	Carers might not take us
Be around loads of children in care	Might be too far away

	<p>Fun event to be part of</p> <p>Good to watch other people perform</p>									
	<p><b>Ideas we like</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="359 331 1425 477"> <tr> <td>Theme Park</td> <td>Free food</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Big party with music</td> <td>Bowling</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Go to the beach</td> <td>Go on holiday</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p><b>We discussed bringing back a virtual group</b></p> <p>We had discussions about bringing back a virtual Council4Kids group. This is because different people like social workers and foster carers have asked David and Sophia how other young people can get involved if they don't live close to Walsall or if they just can't get here. We think it's a good idea but we still want to come here and meet up together because we are all friends.</p> <p>David and Sophia said that next year they will start the virtual group and we can join in if we want to. This could be a good way to meet other young people that don't come here and we think it's a good idea.</p>		Theme Park	Free food	Big party with music	Bowling	Go to the beach	Go on holiday		
Theme Park	Free food									
Big party with music	Bowling									
Go to the beach	Go on holiday									
<b>1.3</b>	<b>Feedback from Care Leavers week</b>									
	<p>Our care leavers gave us some feedback about the participation session we put on for them during care leavers week; they said the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ We enjoyed it and thought it went well</li> <li>➤ It was nice to meet new people</li> <li>➤ I liked meeting other care leavers from Walsall Council</li> <li>➤ It was to have the chance to interact with managers and try and change things for all care leavers</li> <li>➤ I felt my views were taken on board</li> <li>➤ I met some nice people that I wouldn't have ever spoke to if I didn't attend the session</li> </ul> <p>The young people were clear that they would like more opportunities moving forward to have this way of interacting with senior leaders and elected members. They very much appreciated and the venue and format of the session and felt more comfortable and relaxed in sharing what they wanted to be taken away from this and said they felt much more relaxed and able to voice their opinions. David is pulling together the learning from this event and the consultation with care leavers that was undertaken during care leavers week.</p>									
<b>1.4</b>	<b>Children's home forum</b>									
	<p>Since the last report we have been working on two specific things with the children in our residential homes.</p> <p>1- We have consulted with our young people to ask them on their ideas to name our two new homes in Walsall. What we would like to do is to try and give them names that are different to our current ones as currently Redruth and Hilton are named after the roads where they are. They found this task tricky and told us it sounds easy but it's actually quite hard when it comes to it. Some names which they thought of were;</p>									



- The wish house
- The fun house
- Pine house
- Have a theme like 'Mountains'
- Treetops
- Tree House
- Tree Branch
- Branch Tree
- The Brambles
- Tree Log
- Log house

## 2- Toolkit for Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's):

Our Independent Reviewing Officer service wanted us to consult with our young people on what they feel should be considered when a social worker or IRO visit them at their residential home. Some good and meaningful suggestions were made by our young people, here are the results of this interaction from early December as directly quoted from our young people:

- Would you like to go back into Foster Care? Young people should be supported with this if this is what they want early on and not just left at the residential home.
- Would you like anything to make you feel more at home? Things such as a new computer/ games console or games. This can help you socialise with others that live with you as well as with mates outside of the home.
- Ask if we feel comfortable living here.
- Is there anything we would like to change.
- What improvements could be made at the home for you and for others.
- Are you happy here or would you prefer to live in Foster Care.
- Always provide us with updates on things that you said you would do.
- Ask me what the best time to come out and see me is.
- Am I happy with the people in my life because sometimes there are too many professionals and I don't know what they keep wanting me to say.

### ***Bluebells:***

David and Sophia met with the manager Glen and the staff on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November to look at how we can get the voices of our young people that access this provision.

### ***1<sup>st</sup> November meeting***

Discussions with the staff were considering how best to go about this as some of the children there are non-verbal. We would not be able to simply ask the young people questions or get them to go through a form or an activity with us. Also, it is not the same children attending or sleeping over every week, there is usually some kind of rota basis.

	<p>In the past when different staff or professionals have been in this can disturb or upset the children's natural environment as they are not used to this and they benefit from my good, consistent routine.</p> <p><i>Some good discussions were held and ideas were generated which included....</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-David and Sophia going in to observe without getting too involved or interrupting the usual structure.</li> <li>-Talking to the children's key workers.</li> <li>-Calling up/having contact with parents to ask for their views and feedback.</li> <li>-In special schools they have what is called a PCP (Personal Centred Planning) meeting or process where this may get discussed.</li> <li>-Another good suggestion which would be applicable for Hilton Road and Redruth Road could be speaking to the Independent Visitor service as they have already got established relationships with young people and could ask for their feedback.</li> </ul> <p><b>9<sup>th</sup> December visit to see young people-</b></p> <p>There were two teenagers at Bluebells when we undertook the visit. They were being cared for by two members of staff and the registered manager at the time. The one teenager was sitting in the sensory room and interacting with a tablet, he was really engaged in what he was doing. He was happy to say hello to me and shook my hand.</p> <p>The other teenager has some more complex physical needs and it is not as easy for people to interact with him. Although the staff again know him very well and can read his cues, they know what he likes and dislikes. It was a very pleasant visit to the home and it's clear that the staff who work there know the young people well and ensure the home runs very smoothly.</p>
	<p><b>Feedback forms for children who no longer have a social worker</b></p>
<p><b>1.5</b></p>	<p>The participation and quality assurance officers have been working together to create feedback forms to capture the experience of children and their families when the no longer have a social worker. The children in care council have helped to develop these forms and they will help us to better understand what our children and families experience of our service is and inform future planning. There are several forms which have been designed and are due to be rolled once they have been agreed by senior managers, with a plan of these going live in January 2023. The plan is to have a feedback form for children who were open to a social worker under child in need, child protection or as a child in our care but no longer has a social worker and is living with their family. A form for parents of these children has also been developed. Alongside this more targeted feedback forms have been developed for young people who are transitioning from care into the leaving care services and one final feedback form which is for young people when they cease have a Personal Advisor, for example when they turn 25 years old or determine they no longer wish to have a service. The Quality assurance officer will have oversight of this and will collate the findings on a bi-annual basis to inform our learning and development.</p>
<p><b>1.5</b></p>	<p><b>Christmas Celebrations</b></p>

This Christmas the children in care councils will be doing lots of Christmas crafts and having some festive fun! We will be making some Christmas goodies, eating some Christmas chocolates and watching a film with the whole group. On Tuesday the 20<sup>th</sup> of December we are taking a number of young people in care on a trip to the theatre to watch Aladdin in Wolverhampton. Our Care leaver Ambassador Sophia engaged with the theatre and was able to secure discounted tickets for the young people.

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

**Corporate Parenting Board**  
**10 January 2023**

**Children's Residential Service**

**Executive Summary:**

Walsall's Children's Residential Service aims to provide sustainable quality care to children from across the Borough who are unable to reside with their families and for whom foster care is not considered a suitable option at that time.

This report provides an overview of changes to the current service model through expansion and aims to improve quality and outcomes for our children.

The June 2021 Cabinet endorsed the plan by Children's Services to open and run two new children's homes to be run by Walsall Children's Services. These homes would specifically focus on the more complex, hard to place and therefore more costly children, and those who were in the process of being able to return home or step down to foster care

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

To provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on

- the activities and progress being made in the three current children's homes .
- The progress in establishing 2 new homes

**Recommendations:**

That the Board notes the progress made by the service.

**Background papers:**

Cabinet Report submitted 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Redesign of Children's Home

**Corporate Parenting Pledges**

The Promise: Younger Children 5-11 years

The Promise: Older Children 12-15 years

The Promise: Older Children & Care Leavers 16 years plus.

**Resource and legal considerations:**

**Legal considerations:**

- The Children Act 1989 (Section 22(4)) requires the Council to consult with young people and seek their views on decisions affecting them. The proposal will also require formal consultation with staff and their trade unions.
- The Children Act 1989 (Section 22G) requires local authorities to provide sufficient accommodation within the authority area which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after.

- Public authority decision makers are under a non-delegable ongoing duty to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. (Public Sector Equality duty).
- Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 and the statutory guidance issued under it imposes duty on a local authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way on which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- Regulation 49 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 requires the Responsible Individual and or the Registered Person to give notice in writing to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Ofsted as soon as it is practicable to do so if a registered provider proposes to cease to carry on or manage the home.
- The Government has introduced new legislation in 2021, prohibiting local authorities from the use of unregulated accommodation for children under the aged of 16 years. Children in care under 16 will no longer be allowed to be accommodated in unregulated independent or semi-independent placements.

### **Resource considerations:**

The three current children's homes are owned as part of council's assets. The council has allocated funding for asset and running costs.

In June 2021 a capital budget of up to £1,071,000 was agreed to fund the costs of purchasing 2 Children's Homes based on average cost of a four/five bedroomed house in Walsall being between £350 to £450K at the time of application. The two new homes have been purchased and work is underway to securing planning, Ofsted registration, refurbishment and furnishing costs of both properties.

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

The Walsall Right for Children Transformation Programme contributes to several of our Council Corporate Plan priorities:

#### **a) People**

We do and will continue to work with children, young people and their families to ensure they have increased independence, improved health, and can positively contribute to their communities.

#### **b) Internal Focus**

The programme is focused on a change of working, to ensure that within Children's Services we are as efficient and effective as we can be.

#### **c) Children**

The primary objective is to ensure that the right support is in place so that children in care can have the best start and are safe from harm, are happy, healthy and learning well.

**Citizen impact:**

The current service and planned growth provide Walsall's Looked After Children with improved opportunities to live, grow up and go to school in Walsall. We anticipate have a duty for children to live closer to home

The addition of 2 new homes creates opportunities for children to remain and participate in the life of their community; it also allows them to continue attending the same school. It develops a sense of place and belonging. It improves access to social support, health and community services, such as arts, culture, sport and leisure. It aids inclusion.

We aspire to look after our children in care within or close to Walsall. This allows for the maintenance of family contact and continuity of both education and healthcare. It also allows for a seamless transition towards independence for those children aged over 16 who will most likely be looking to assume adulthood and settle within the Borough. They will be close to any work experience, training and/or employment opportunities that may become available and will have ready access to their Social Worker or Personal Adviser situated within localities.

**Environmental impact:**

There is no identified environmental impact from the project

**Performance management:**

The Regulated Management Board has oversight of the effectiveness of the existing children's homes ensuring that we are meeting children's homes standards and wider service development.

The Children's Residential Steering Group responsible for the implementation of the redesign of Children's Homes is chaired by the Director of Children's Social Work and meets on a monthly basis and includes colleagues from Finance, Corporate Landlord and Asset Management to progress actions and manage identified risks.

A project risk register has been established for the project and provides updates on progress, identified risks and mitigation. Risks will continue to be identified, mitigations sought and impact managed through this process.

The progress of the project will report to the Children's Services Directorate Management Group and Capital and Asset Board and will not proceed without their approvals.

There is a Regulatory Board and Residential Steering Group chaired by the Director of Children's Social Work who meet regularly to monitor progress of the development in our children's homes.

**Reducing inequalities:**

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is currently being completed but is not expected to identify any concerns around the creation of the new projects  
Analysis will be completed and updated as we progress

## **Consultation:**

All employees who work with the Children's Home Service are given the opportunity to contribute to the Children's Home Scoping Exercise undertaken in 2020/21.

Care experienced children contributed to the initial scoping exercise, as did professionals from other teams and/ or agencies. Through engagement with the Children in Care Council, Walsall's care experienced children will be consulted on the ongoing plans to redesign the Children's Home Service.

Community Consultation around plans for the new homes has now commenced and will continue throughout the planning application period.

The consultation will inform the EQIA and will report to the Children's Home Redesign Steering Group, which is chaired by the Director of Social Work

## **Contact Officers:**

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## Report: Children’s Residential Care

### 1.0 Children in Care

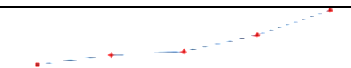
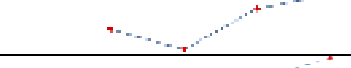
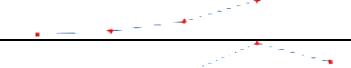

1.1 The Council’s looked after children population has increased and continued to grow since 2019, with a net increase of 5 children in 2019/20 with 671 children in care compared to 2018/19 when there were 614 children in care. During 2020/21 children in care increased to a peak of 693 in August 2020 reducing to 671 by March 2021 and 661 at March 2022.

There has been a gradual reduction in children in our care over the last 8 months and at 30<sup>th</sup> November there were 646 children in care. Of these 75 children were in living external residential placements in equating to 11.6% of children in care. The number of children accommodated in residential provision has more than doubled since 2019 from 37 to 75 in the last three years.

1.2 The increase in children in residential care and the demand for placements is at critical level, with a shortage nationally and locally of suitable foster carers for older children and residential provision. The market is saturated with high numbers of local authorities in competition for every bed across the country. The availability of children’s homes has meant that some children have needed to be placed in unregistered provision. There is an increase in children living more than 20 miles away from their homes. This is largely due to ongoing pressures in relation to placement sufficiency and the lack of available placements for older children and those with more complex needs.

1.3 Pressures on the cost of residential provision is high and the average cost of residential care has increased over the last 5 years. The total cost of external residential placements in 2021/22 was £11.9 million. Placement sufficiency is impacted locally, regionally and nationally as residential provision for children with complex needs is not readily available. The Council is finding it increasingly difficult to place children, particularly those with more complex needs which has meant some children are placed at distances as far as Scotland and London and experience many moves. Independent providers are currently in a strong position clearly evidencing the need to create more in-house services alongside plans to reduce the number of children coming into residential care.

### 1.4 Walsall Average Weekly Unit Cost for External Residential Placement

External Residential	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	Trend
Weekly Cost (£)	£3,445	£3,820	£3,960	£4,675	£5,772	
% Change		11%	4%	18%	23%	
Outturn (£ m)	5.7	6.1	7.2	9.6	11.9	
% Change		7%	18%	33%	24%	

Source: DfE and the Finance Team



- The average weekly unit cost for external residential placement had been increasing by **68%** from **£3,445** in 2017/18 to **£5,772** in 2021/2022.
- The annual outturn costs for external residential placement had been increasing by **109%** from **£5.7m** in 2017/2018 to **£11.9m** in 2021/22.

**1.5** The private providers market, whilst offering placements to children and young people, are also subject to the same external scrutiny from Ofsted as Local Authorities. The advice from central government is that Local Authorities should only place children in Good or Outstanding children's homes. The impact this has had for private providers is that they are reluctant to accept placements for more challenging children who may create disruption in the home, cause damage, pose a threat to other young people and staff and who are involved in criminal activity. The impact this has for local authorities is that they are often faced with paying extremely high costs to secure a solo placement and to secure additional staffing.

**1.6** A large percentage of Walsall's Looked After Children live in a Children's Home which is 20 miles or more outside of their local communities. Where children have moved to live outside of Walsall then this can have an impact in respect of social work and IRO time and expenses, which potentially incurs additional costs. Having to move outside of Walsall can lead to a breakdown or strain on longstanding relationships with family, previous carers and friends. It could also lead to excessive travel time to school or possibly a change of school. All these factors will affect the child's emotional wellbeing and their sense of identity.

**1.7** The complexity of need of some of our children means that we have, on several occasions, needed to place children far from their family homes and also, at times, in unregistered provisions. Increasing our footprint within Walsall will enable us to accommodate more children within Walsall and reduce the need to consider unregistered provisions.

**1.8** Increasing sufficiency internally will enable us to secure appropriate accommodation for children experiencing disruption who are under the age of 16 years who may be left with no available placement

**1.9 Unregistered Provision:** The demand for children's homes has also impacted by new legislation introduced by the Government in September 2021 prohibiting the placement of children under the age of 16 in unregistered children's homes. Placing children in unregistered provision is an absolute last resort. With the increasing rejection from registered providers to agree to accommodate some of our more challenging young people, there has at times been the need to access these services. Ofsted heavily scrutinise us around placing children outside of regulated services and it is vital that, where this has occurred, we maintain close scrutiny of the progress of our children and the performance of the provider. Some of our children are living in accommodation which is registered by CQC. In December 2022 there were 5 children under the age of 6 living in unregulated provision.

## **2.2 Operational services**

**2.1** The current portfolio of three Children's Homes operated by the Local Authority offers eight registered beds across two homes (Hilton Road and Redruth Road) for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. In addition, a six-bedroomed Short-Breaks service (Bluebells) for Children with Disabilities.

**Redruth Road** provides care for up to four young people and is currently rated as **Outstanding** with Ofsted. The last Inspection was carried out in October 2021.

**Hilton Road** also provides care for up to four young people and is currently rated as **Requires Improvement to be Good** following inspection in May 2022. The home was judged to be **Inadequate** earlier in the year, but sufficient improvement was made to improve the judgement. Actions identified from the inspection have all been met.

**Bluebells** Offers a Short-Breaks service for Children with Disabilities and currently operates for four nights per week. The home was rated **Good** at the last Ofsted Inspection in February 2022. The Ofsted Action Plan was completed following the visit and all actions identified have been met.

## 2.2 Occupancy Levels

Occupancy levels at Hilton Road have been impacted due to a number of factors. The Inadequate Ofsted judgement from earlier in the year and the subsequent decision of the Registered Manager to resign left the home with no identified Manager and several staffing vacancies. Recruitment of a replacement Manager has been challenging, reflecting the national picture. A new Manager was appointed in mid-October and is currently awaiting his Fit-Person interview with Ofsted. Staff have now predominantly been recruited to vacant posts and the home is now opened up to referrals again.

Redruth occupancy was 100% for over a year, but one child has recently moved on and, following a period of stabilisation, the home will look to offer the fourth bed for another admission. The home is close to full staffing.

Bluebells currently has thirteen children accessing short breaks. There have been a number of difficulties in recruiting staff to the predominantly weekend contracts, but work is underway to make posts more attractive to potential candidates. The Registered Manager is currently working alongside the Group Manager and CWD team to try and best match children into the home

## 2.3 New Children's Homes

In 2020, a review of Walsall Children's Homes was undertaken in respect of the three children's homes. Bluebells was excluded from this review as this provision was reviewed in 2019 and offers short term breaks to children with disabilities. As part of the New Ways of Thinking Framework, the review focused on the benefits, costs and opportunities to increasing the number of internal children's homes for Walsall's Looked After Children. The outcome of the Review recommended a redesign and diversification of the internal Children's Homes for an alternative and forward-thinking option for the future service delivery of residential care provision for children in Walsall. This proposal saw the disposal of one of the existing children's homes (Lichfield Road), and the establishment of 2 children's homes providing care for a total of five children. This included the acquisition of two suitable properties for the redesigned service.

## 2.4 Purpose of the New Homes

**Home 1** – located in Walsall and this home will offer up to 1:1 support to children on a short-term basis for up to 3 children. Children will be admitted to the home from families or foster Care breakdowns for a period of assessment involving Social Care, Health & Education which will support the plan for the child to return as many children back to their families as is possible. Where this cannot be achieved, then the home will work closely

with the fostering service Fostering Team to try and match children to appropriate carers. This service is deemed critical in reducing cost and improving placement sufficiency across Walsall. The home is currently undergoing refurbishment and is expected to be operational by May 2023.

**Home 2** – Located in Walsall, the home will provide up to higher levels of staffing of up to 3:2 support for children who are currently proving hard to identify suitable regulated accommodation who have been accommodated in unregistered provisions. Again, this service is critical to improving the Council's placement sufficiency and the home will provide a platform to support the stabilisation of behaviours and identify appropriate longer-term registered services for children.

## **2.5 Recruitment**

Recruitment of staff for the homes commenced in April 2022 and there is a rolling advert for staffing. A Home Manager and 2 Assistant Managers have been appointed. Recruitment for the additional Home Manager and residential care staff is ongoing. There are regional and national challenges in recruiting suitably qualified staff to these posts. Recruitment was identified as a priority at the last project board meeting to avoid the homes opening without sufficient staff and therefore incurring extra expenditure

## **2.6 Quality Assurance and Audit Framework**

Children's residential care settings – often known as 'children's homes' – are subject to regulation through individual registration of the homes themselves and the homes' 'registered manager' and through a cycle of regulatory inspection carried out by Ofsted under the Social Care Common Inspection Framework [Social care common inspection framework (SCCIF): children's homes for April 2022 - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))]. This SCCIF framework is separate from and unconnected to the inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework for the inspection of local authorities' children's services.

Ofsted publishes children's homes inspection reports on their reports website in an anonymised form to protect children. Published inspection reports do not contain any of the following:

- The name of the home
- The address of the home
- Any information that identifies the location of the home
- Any information that identifies an individual child or staff member (other than the Responsible Individual and the Registered Manager at the home)

2022 has seen the introduction within Walsall's Children's Homes of a more stringent Quality Assurance and Audit framework.

- A Managers "Golden Hour" Template has been introduced alongside a more detailed Managers Audit.
- SCCIF Audits have also commenced to support Managers to improve the overall quality of Service.
- A new Regulation 44 Visitor was identified to improve external monitoring and regular review meetings are now taking place with NYAS to review the effectiveness of the Independent Visitor reports.

## **2.7 Consultation with Children in Care**

All three homes consult regularly with children around their views, wishes and feelings through House Meetings, Individual Key work sessions and engagement with the Children in Care Council. Suggestions made by children are listened to and form an integral part of the running of the homes. Feedback requests are distributed to parents, Social Workers and other involved stakeholders to establish what others think we are doing well and where we could improve.

## **2.8 FLASH (CAMHS) Consultation**

There have been some challenges to this crucial part of the service. Previously, Walsall FLASH team had been visiting both Redruth and Hilton Road fortnightly and supporting staff with therapeutic approaches to working with children in the service. Some staffing difficulties within the FLASH service has meant that this service ceased altogether for a few months across the summer and autumn. From November 2022, Sandwell have agreed to deliver 4-weekly Consultations to the two homes as an interim arrangement. Moving forward, we need to consider how we can ensure uninterrupted and consistent Clinical support for the residential homes staff in providing the best possible therapeutic parenting to our children.

## **2.9 Therapeutic Model of care in our Homes**

The PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) Model been identified as the most suitable therapeutic model for the service moving forward. Some staff have already received DDP (Dyadic Development Psychotherapy) training which incorporates PACE, whilst whole teams will attend a 4-day PACE course (including one day around Attachment and Trauma) in the first quarter of 2023. Having an identified therapeutic model to work within is considered critical to improving practice and achieving best possible outcomes for children.

## **2.10 Elected Members**

Cabinet members are now allocated to each of the existing homes.

**Cllr Jukes – Hilton Road**  
**Cllr Worrall – Redruth Road**  
**Cllr Hicken – Bluebells**

All Councillors will be sent invitations to visit the respective homes in due course

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Fostering Service Annual Report 2021-2022</b></p>
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## **1. Context (or background)**

- 1.1 This report summarises the activity of the Fostering Service from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
- 1.2 Walsall Council is committed to ensuring that, wherever possible, children are supported to live with their birth parents. Where this has not been possible and children become looked after, it is preferable that they are placed within a family setting. It is the aim of the council that wherever possible this will be with foster carer/s home approved by Walsall rather than through commissioning an external placement. Through guidance on delegated authority, there is a recognition that foster carers should be empowered to take on the day-to-day tasks of parenting in the same way as any good parent would.
- 1.3 Foster care is subject to legislative and regulatory guidance through, The Children Act 1989, The Fostering Regulations 2011 and the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011. It is further regulated through the Care Planning, Placement and Case Regulations 2010. The regulatory framework for fostering sets out the minimum standards expected to ensure that the care provided by foster carers is adequate to ensure that those children placed within fostering placements are well cared for and achieve good outcomes.
- 1.4 Fostering placements are referred to as either Mainstream or Connected Persons. Connected persons fostering refers to those households who offer to provide care to a child known to them, usually a relative. Mainstream Foster Care refers to a range of households who apply to become foster carers for children not known to them. Mainstream Foster Carers include those offering both long-and short-term care and those who provide respite care. Mainstream Foster Carers can be approved to care for between 1 and 3 children at a time and can care for children throughout the age range.
- 1.5 Walsall Fostering Service is located within the Children's Services Directorate of Walsall Council. The aim of the Fostering Service is to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of registered foster carers who can meet the needs of children. Fostering and family-based care are our first-choice option for the Children in Care of Walsall.

## **2. Overview of Achievements in 2021/22:**

- Continued to deliver effective support throughout the Global Pandemic
- Sustained workforce stability and reduced reliance on agency workers in the Fostering Service
- Introduced Foster Carer Referral Fee Scheme

- Recruited more Foster Carers (11) than in previous 3 years
- Work to increase number of Mockingbird Hubs Carers to 6
- Continued our partnership working with Kinship
- Improved permanence for children through SGO
- Launched the Support and Stability Team
- Started our journey to have all employees trained in Dyadic Development Practice by October 2022
- Started our journey for Foster Carer to access Foundation to Attachment Training before progressing to Nurture & Attachment Training
- Completed 12 months of Case File Auditing
- Appointed to post of Practice Improvement Manager
- Secured agreement for further uplift on children's allowances for Foster Carers
- Continued to produce regular newsletters to both Foster Carers and SGO Carers

### **3. The Structure Of The Fostering Service**

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

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

3.1 During this reporting period, the following changes have been made to the Fostering Service Staffing Structure:

- Recruited to the Practice Improvement Manager post
- Created and recruited 4 new posts for the Support & Stability Team
- Created and recruited 2 new Child & Family Support Worker posts
- Created and recruited 1 new social worker to support Mockingbird
- Created 1.5 social work posts for Recruitment & Assessment Team.

#### 4. Children Living with Foster Carers

4.1 There has been an increase in the numbers of Children in Care in Walsall over the past **5** years by **2%**; from **645** in 2017 to **661** in 2022; on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022, there are **648** children in care.

4.2 On 31st March 2022, there were **196** approved internal fostering households (figure includes both mainstream & connected carers).

4.3 The breakdown of these households per category was:

- Mainstream Carers 121
- Connected Carers 75
- Total – 196

4.4 At the end of March 2022, of the **661** Children in Care, **502 (76%)** were living with Foster Carers of which **134 (27%)** were living with Walsall Foster Carers compared with **148** at the end of March 2021.

4.5 As for Children in Care living with an IFA Foster Carer, on 31/3/22, there were **250** children living with an independent fostering agency (IFA) Foster Carer. This is an increase from **239** in 2020/21

4.6 In terms of attempting to understand why we have fewer of our Children Carer living with in internal Foster Carers but more living with an IFA Carers, the Independent Review of Children's Social Care (IRCSC) reported that:

Fostering is on the same trajectory of becoming increasingly privatised and consolidated in the hands of a few large providers (Competition and Markets Authority, 2022). The market share of independent fostering agencies (IFAs) is 41%, and the top six independent fostering agencies account for 51% of all foster homes (Ofsted, 2020).

4.7 The report also noted that in 2020/21 'Recruitment and retention among independent fostering agency services led to a net increase in capacity of 525 additional households and 765 additional foster care places. In contrast, there has been a decrease in capacity of 35 households and 325 places in local authorities over the same period (Ofsted 2021b).'

4.8 Recruitment of new Foster Carers continues to be a significant challenge nationally. A recent report by Ofsted (2022) on Fostering notes that the number of available fostering places in England has fallen by almost a quarter in four years. In addition the number of approved foster carers also dropped as more Foster Carers have left the sector. The Ofsted report notes:



- Whilst the number of initial inquiries from prospective fosterers rose nationally by 18%, to 138,075 inquiries in the latest year, just 6% went on to apply (down from 9% in 2017-18).
- There were 8,280 applications to become a foster carer – the lowest number in several years and down 21% from 2017-18 and more Mainstream Fostering Households deregistered than were approved (5,435 versus 4,035), leading to a decrease in fostering capacity nationally.

4.9 A further challenge to the sufficiency of internal Foster Care Homes is when our Foster Carers go on to secure a Special Guardianship Order for a child(ren) who they have cared for as a Foster Carer. Albeit a positive outcome for our Children in Care, this impacts negatively on the number of available homes/ vacancies for children. Whilst this is also an option for an IFA Foster Carer to pursue, it is quite a rare occurrence. Another positive outcome for children that impacts negatively on sufficiency is when Foster Carers enter into Staying Put arrangements with the child. Again, whilst this is also an option for IFA Foster Carers, data at section 9 indicates that they enter into these arrangements in fewer numbers than Internal Foster Carers.

4.10 Matching the ethnicity of children to Foster Carers remains steady; however, as with a slightly increasing Asian and Black British child group to support, future successes will require more culturally matched internal foster carers and diverse foster carer recruitment activity.

## **5. Foster Carer Recruitment – National & Local Picture:**

5.1 Walsall's Fostering Service is operating in a highly competitive marketplace, which has seen an exponential growth of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). IFAs operate on a national and local basis actively seeking to recruit experienced and potential foster carers from across Walsall and surrounding areas. They offer higher financial rewards, other recruitment and retention incentives, one example being a retainer fee.

5.2 The recently published report on Independent Review of Children's Social Care (IRCSC) noted that:

'Nationally, there is not have enough foster carers. Over the last six years, there has been a 4% increase in the number of approved foster carers, whilst the number of children living in foster care has increased by 11% over the same period (Ofsted, 2021bw).'

'There is a growing crisis in foster care recruitment. In the year ending March 2021, 160,635 families came forward to express an interest in becoming a foster carer, and yet just 2,165 were approved (Ofsted, 2021a) . . . and 'without major action, we expect that fostering will face the same acute market issues as residential care in the near future'

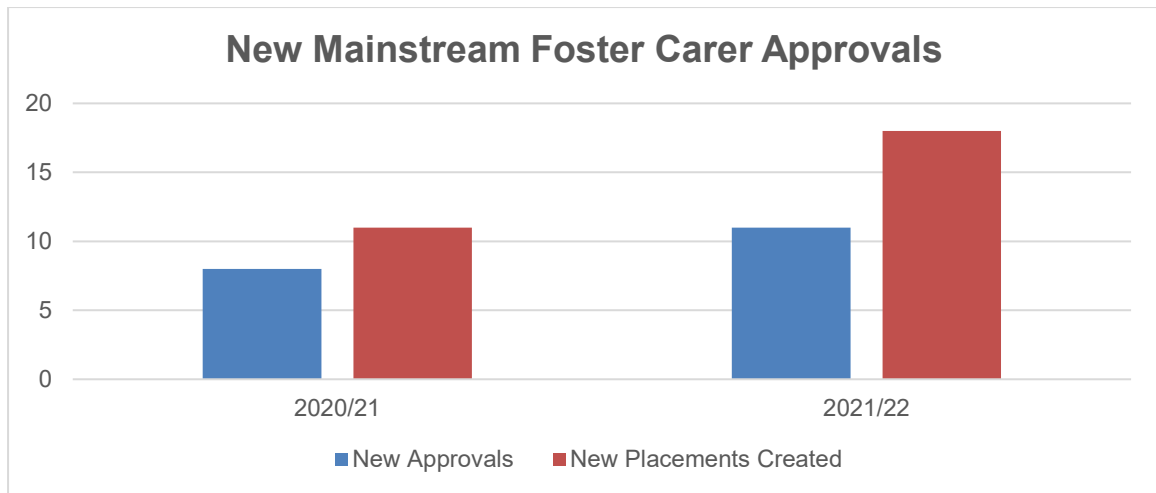


- 5.3 Like all other aspects of our society, the global pandemic also affected the recruitment and retention of Foster Carers. There was a thought that the impact of the coronavirus pandemic could lead to a rise in the number of people considering fostering, in that the loss of employment might be an impetus for a change of direction and career. However, as there has been a growth in the number of people now working from home, the spare bedroom that once was available may now be being utilised as office space.
- 5.4 Specific demographics do have an impact on the recruitment of Mainstream Foster Cares. Having both a very young and an aging population could mean that potential foster carers or current of foster carers may have to take on the role of caring for their parents or grandchildren through providing informal care. This could impact on the availability and recruitment of potential foster carers.
- 5.5 Walsall has a higher-than-average percentage of households who live in socially rented housing. Social housing accounts for **24%** of the borough's accommodation, significantly higher than the England & Wales average of 17% (2011 Census).
- 5.6 According to the Office of National Statistics household projection (2018 Based), there is estimated 114,000 households in Walsall borough, and therefore it equates that more than 27,000 households are social housing lettings. These homes are allocated on need for bedrooms and therefore people in this type of housing will not usually have a spare room, an essential requirement for fostering for Walsall. However, due to the shortage of council/social housing stock we have seen an increase in the private housing sector which has allowed more prospective applicants to rent suitable accommodation which would allow them to foster.
- 5.7 In addition, as half of the Borough's 20 wards are among the most deprived quintile (i.e. the most deprived 20% of LSOAs), deprivation is likely to have an impact upon fostering recruitment activity.

## **6. Marketing, Recruitment and Mainstream Approvals**

- 6.1 Without attracting additional Foster Carers and retaining existing ones, Walsall will not have a sufficient number of placements for existing Children in Care with locally based Foster Carers. Aligned to the strategy to have the right children living with right people at the right time, the aim of the Fostering Service's Transformation Plans is to have more children living with Walsall Foster Carers.
- 6.2 In terms of promotional activity, the global Coronavirus pandemic was still having an effect on this activity and the recruitment of Foster Carers in 2021/22. This meant any face-to face events were restricted and our focus shifted to heavily digitally led marketing strategies. We increased our online presence, adapted the delivery of services from face to face to online and provided support during the adaption process. For 2022/23, we have reviewed our approach to face-to face events in line with both Central and Local Government advice and guidelines (see para 18.5 for list of face to events events that have taken place in 2022/23)

- 6.3 Fostering Network report that it is reasonable to expect a 10% conversation rate from Initial Enquiry Stage through to Approval Stage. Between April 2021 and March 2022, Walsall Council received **140** general enquiries from residents about foster care. Of these, **35** progressed to initial visits and following further checks, **11** of the **35** were approved as new foster carer households and this created up to **18** new vacancies for children to live with a Foster Carer. This conversation rate equates to **8%** from general enquiry to approval and **31%** from progression of assessment to approval.
- 6.4 In addition to the **11** new Mainstream Fostering Households, **23** Connected Person Households were recommended for approval at Fostering Panel.
- 6.5 In 2021, the Fostering Service introduced a referral fee of £500 which on approval of the applicant by Fostering Panel, was payable to the referrer. Of the 11 approved by Fostering Panel, 4 were referred through this initiative. This relatively small investment could lead to a significant long term cost avoidance for the Council. Importantly, it is also very encouraging news for children and their families in that it creates more opportunities for children to live and grow up in Walsall and have improved connections with their family and friends.
- 6.6 In terms of timescale of completing assessments, the Fostering Service aims to have these completed and approved at Fostering Panel within 16 weeks. From the Initial Enquiry Stage through to Panel Approval, the average timescale for the **11** new approvals in 2021/22 was 9 months.
- 6.7 As the total number of enquires that have progressed to approval is low at **11**, even the slightest delay by an applicant skews the overall timescale delay. In 2021/22, the average timescale was impacted by the personal circumstances for 2 of the applicants. One applicant did not want to undertake face to face visits during global pandemic and the other assessment was halted to allow for the applicants to have an extension added to their home. One assessment was reallocated due to the long-term sickness absence of the assessing social worker.
- 6.8 To monitor the progress of assessments and help understand the narrative and personal circumstances of each applicant, in 2022/23, the Recruitment & Assessment Team introduced and Recruitment Pipeline Tracking Document which is reviewed on a fortnightly basis with the Group Manager. Although the Fostering Service has managed to approve more new Foster Carers than in previous years and are on track to improve on the number of new approvals for 2022/23, balancing the need to recruit new mainstream foster carers against the changing personal circumstances, impact life events and doubts about becoming Foster Carers is an activity that is understandably applicant led which requires skilled social work support and management oversight.



6.9 The Fostering Service have set the following recruitment targets:

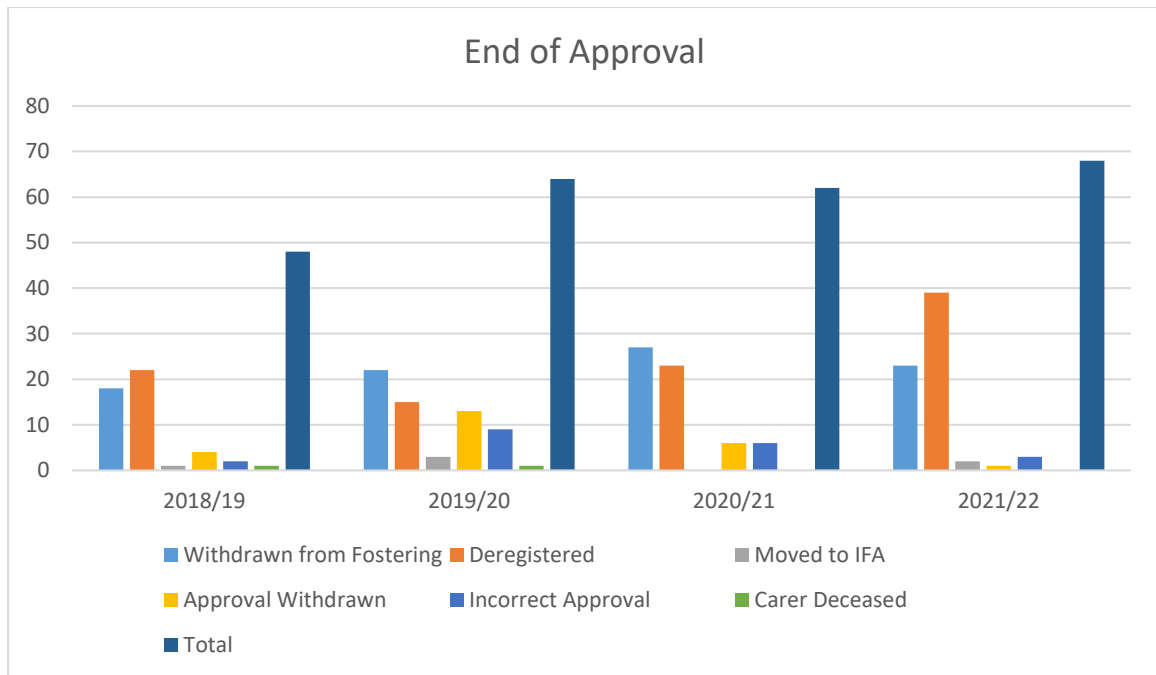
- 2022/23: 14 households with 18 beds
- 2023/24: 20 households with 25 beds
- 2024/25: 25 households with 30 beds

## 7. End of Foster Carer Approval:

7.1 There are wide range of reasons as to why a Foster Carer's approval ends. These can range from their fostering career naturally coming to end, a change to family circumstances, concerns about the ongoing suitability, moving to become a Special Guardian and of course transferring to an IFA. The table below covers all of these scenarios and captures data for both Mainstream and Connected Foster Carers.

7.2 In terms of the retention of Foster Carers, an area of concern has been the number transferring to an independent fostering agency. Based on the table below, in the previous 4 years, six Foster Carers have opted to transfer. Interestingly, the two Foster Carers that transferred in 2021/22 did so early in that financial year and in order to do this, they would've had to start these arrangements in 2020; therefore, for approaching 18 months now, we have not had a Foster Carer inform the Fostering Service that they want to commence the transfer process to an IFA.

7.3 When it is right to do so, actively progressing the deregistration of a Foster Carer should not always be perceived as a negative action. As noted above, there are a range of reasons for this and if after consultation and the offer of support, fostering no longer suits their circumstances, progressing this swiftly then frees up the Supervising Social Worker and allows for further allocation of work.



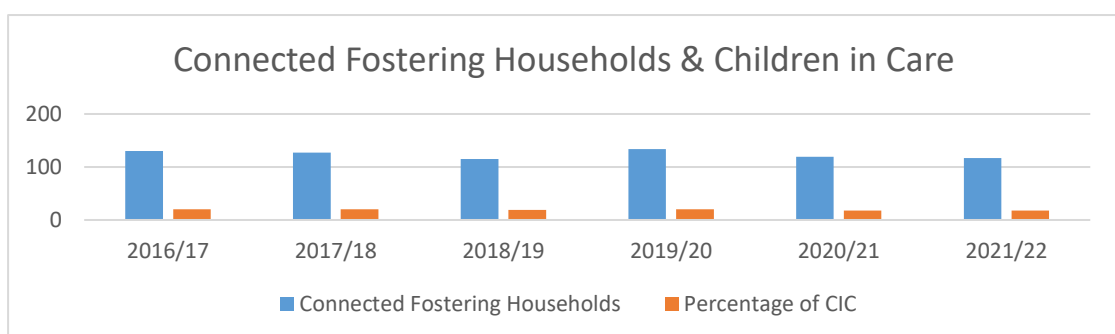
## 8. Occupancy of Mainstream Fostering Placements

8.1 The role of Home Finding Social Worker was created in April 2019 to support the efficient matching of in house foster carers to children requiring a foster placement. This role has supported the service to maximise occupancy rates of in-house household and the close working between the Fostering Service and the Home Finding Team is considered to be a contributory fact in maintaining this percentage. The situation is 'real time' and fluctuates daily. As of 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2022, a recent snapshot indicates that there are currently 3 available vacancies with our Mainstream Foster Carers. There were a further 6 vacancies not viable - these remain vacant are due to reasons of experience, skill set and approval status of Foster Cares in relation to the needs and age of children.

## 9. Connected Persons Fostering

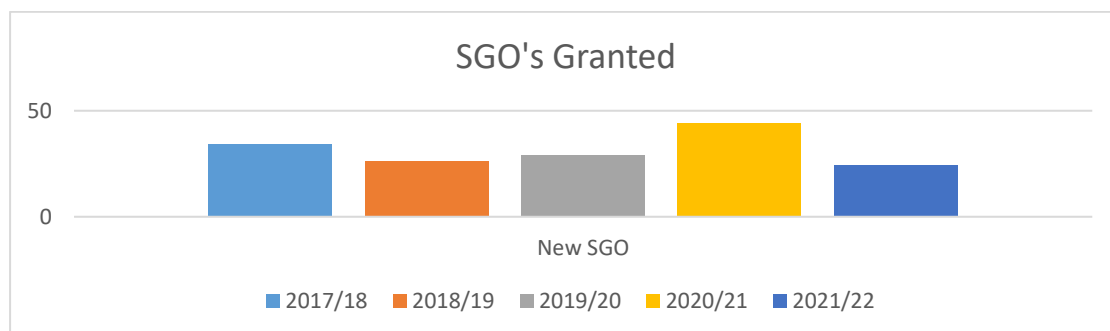
9.1 In 2021/22, **23** Connected Person Households were approved at Fostering Panel. This is an increase on the **12** in 2020/21 but a decrease from 2019/20 (**36**)

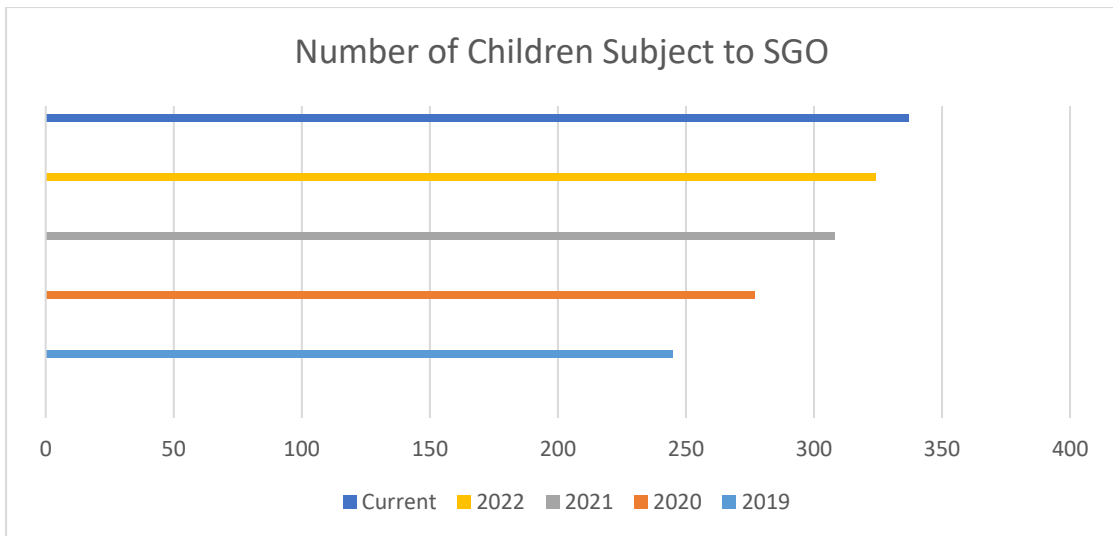
9.2 The chart below outlines the number of children living with Connected Carers.



## 10. Connected Foster Care & Special Guardianship

- 10.1 Connected Persons arrangements are often very complex situations with families struggling to come to terms with the reasons why the children have become looked after. Connected Foster Carers receive the same level of supervision as mainstream carers. The Skills to Foster training tailored specifically for Connected Persons carers.
- 10.2 Many Connected Foster Carers are assessed and approved on the basis that they will go on to apply to be the child's Special Guardian. Unless the Connected Foster Carer or Mainstream Foster Carer are also caring for another Connected Child in Care, On the making of an SGO, they will be deregistered as a Foster Carer; this is a positive as Children's Services actively promoting legal permanence through Special Guardianship for children for whom this is the preferred outcome.
- 10.3 In 2021/22, **9** Connected Carers were deregistered on the basis that they were now the Special Guardian for a child/ren. The **13** children who had been living with their Connected Carer ceased being Children in Care.
- 10.4 The tables below outline the number of SGO's granted each year and the number of children who are being supported under an SGO. Both tables indicate trajectory of growth in this option of permanence for children.
- 10.5 On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, there were **324** children supported by their Special Guardians. This represents a **34%** increase to that of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. The total number of children is continuing to rise in 2022/23 (**337** as at 01/09/22).





10.6 As the numbers of children being supported by a Special Guardian continue to grow, the Fostering Service completed a self-assessment regarding the offer of support to Special Guardians; both pre and post order. Based on the Self-Assessment, a report was presented to DMT, this was with the aim of understanding what work is recommended to:

- Improve the offer of support to Special Guardians
- Strengthen the arrangements that help achieve permanence
- Improve children’s life chances

9.7 A Task & Finish Group is now progressing this work with a view to an update report being returned to DMT

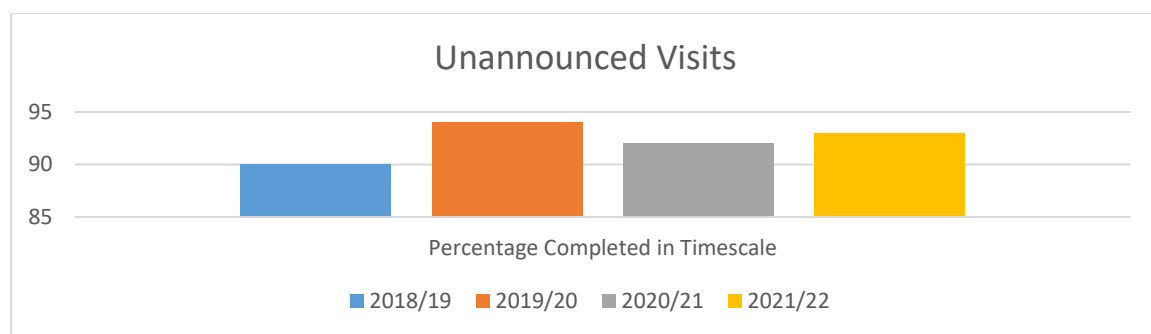
## 11. Supervision, Support, Training & Development

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

11.2 To establish a consistent approach to practice that is rooted in nurture, attachment, and recognises the impact of trauma, in 2021/22, the Fostering Service began the ambitious journey for the whole workforce to complete Dyadic Development Practice Training (DDP). DDP is ‘a therapy, parenting approach and model for practice that uses what we know about attachment and developmental trauma to help children and families with their relationships.’

11.3 The plan is for the whole workforce to complete DDP1 and for a smaller cohort go on to complete DDP2. This smaller cohort will also complete the ‘train the trainer’ sessions for Foundation to Attachment. When complete, this group will then deliver Foundation to Attachment Training then Nurture and Attachment Training (NATP) to all Foster Carers.

- 11.4 To complete this training requires a significant amount of commitment from both the Fostering Service and foster carers. DDP1 and DDP 2 requires an individual to complete 8 full days of training; the 'Train the Trainer' initiative is a further 4 full days. For a foster care to complete Foundations to Attachment, Training they will need to attend 7 half day sessions which will be delivered by the Fostering Service. The Fostering Service is on track to have the whole workforce trained at DDP Level 1 by October 2022 and to have 60 Foster Carers complete Foundations to Attachment Training by March 2023.
- 11.5 According to the Fostering Service Regulations, at least one unannounced visit is undertaken to each fostering household each year. Unannounced visits are recorded on Mosaic, monitored by the Team Manager, the Annual Review process and the use of PowerBi Reports.
- 11.6 In 2021/22 compliance at the end of the financial year was **93.3%**



- 11.7 Foster Carer Training is provided through the Council's Children's Workforce Development Team. This includes both mandatory courses ensuring that foster carers have the training necessary to undertake their role and more in-depth training for those carers who want to develop particular specialisms or a deeper knowledge of a subject area.
- 11.8 Preparation and training groups (Skills to Foster) have been held for all prospective mainstream foster carers. The training is delivered by the Fostering Service and in response to Covid 19, took place virtually for the bulk of 2021/22. This training is also offered separately to Connected Person Foster Carers.
- 11.9 The service continues to support newly approved foster carers in completing the mandatory Training Support and Development Standards (TSD). There is an adapted version of these standards for connected persons foster carers and there is an expectation that any connected person carer completes this within 18 months of approval. Based on the Annual Ofsted Fostering Return, we know that of the 325 foster carers that were approved on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021:

Status		Number
TSD1	Not yet commenced	56
TSD2	Training in progress	37
TSD3	Awaiting sign off	4
TSD4	Workbook completed	202

11.10 The Fostering Service introduced Monthly Support Groups for our Foster Carers. In 2021/22 these took place virtually (morning & evening sessions) and are arranged and led by the Senior Practitioners. All Foster Carers are invited to attend. In early 2022/23, these moved to face to face events which are held at Ryecroft Community Hub. Foster Carers are welcome to bring young children with them and it has been reported that attendance appears to be improving improved. Sessions are both themed and non-themed. Themed sessions have covered:

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

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

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

11.13 The Fostering Service continues to have access to regular consultation surgeries provided by Flash Service – the Tier 2/3 CAMHS service. The Hub Carers with the Mockingbird Service can use this service to consult on the support they provide to the households in their hubs. Supervising Social Workers support foster carers to make use of the advice and support attendance by children requiring intervention.

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

## **12. Mockingbird Family Model**

12.1 As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, there were 3 live Mockingbird Constellations. The plan is to grow the number of Hub Carers to 6 by March 2023. As of 1/10/22, the current position is as follows:

- Hubs – 5
- Hub Carers 8
- Satellite homes - 32
- Foster Carers - 68
- Children in Care - 51



- Adopted children - 5
- Children subject to SGO -1
- Birth Children - 28
- Adult household members - 13
- Totalling - 207 people

12.2 We have some fantastic practice taking place in Mockingbird. In November 2021 we held our first joint social event across the 3 hubs with around 90 people attending making connections within the hubs. This was a great team effort, both within the Mockingbird team and with our Hub carers. Also, existing hubs play a significant role in the support and development of our new hub carers.

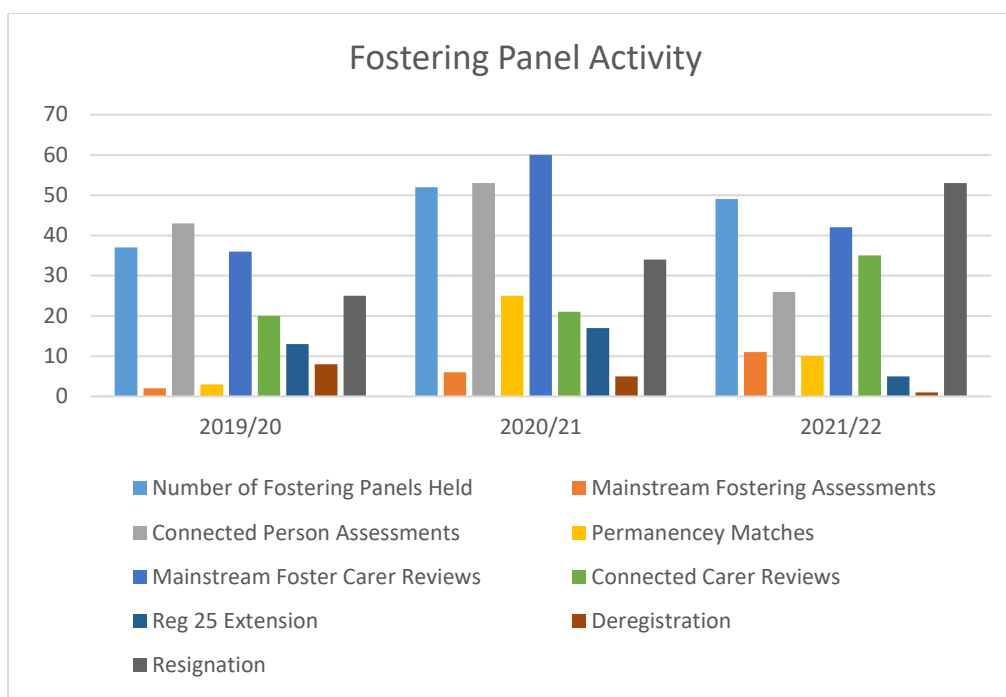
12.3 As for developments post this reporting period, in April 2022, the team launched 'teen events' which are to be held 3-4 times a year, so far, feedback from the young people attending is positive. The men's group has also launched and is successful running alternative virtual and face to face meet ups. The hubs joined together to celebrate the Queens jubilee in June 2022, attended by around 90 people across the hubs. This was a fantastic day and enjoyed by all.

12.4 In August 2022, the hubs came together for a day at the seaside, attended by over 60 people across the hubs. Also in August, social workers, hub carer, a foster carer and 8 children attended the Roost event which was organised by the Fostering Network.

### **13. Fostering Panel**

13.1 Lisa Cawthorn has continued in her role as Chair of Fostering Panel and there are two Vice Chairs, Sue Partoon and Catherine Mitchley.

13.2 Fostering Panel activity continues to be busy with the Panel meeting on 49 occasions. Panel was quorate on each occasion. The table below outlines the range of work discussed at Fostering Panel.



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

13.4 As part of the service redesign in 2019/20, the Panel Advisor post was deleted, and Fostering Service Team Managers act as Panel Advisor on a Rotational basis at Fostering Panel. Due to other demands on Team Manager though, other aspects of the work associated with Panel Advisor have not been of completed. To address this, the Fostering Service reviewed and deleted the role for the full time Independent Fostering Reviewing Officer and replaced this with post of Practice Improvement Manager. This post became operational in August 2021.

## 14. Staying Put

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

14.2 Of the **291** young people with status as a Care Leaver, at 31st March 2022, **41 (14%)** of care leavers age 19 and 20 were in a fostering placement when leaving care. **16** of these were with former foster carers, of which **5** were from IFAs, **8** from Internal Fostering and **3** from connected care.

14.3 At the end of November 2022 there were **29** young people aged 18 to 21 years living with their former foster carers under staying put arrangements.

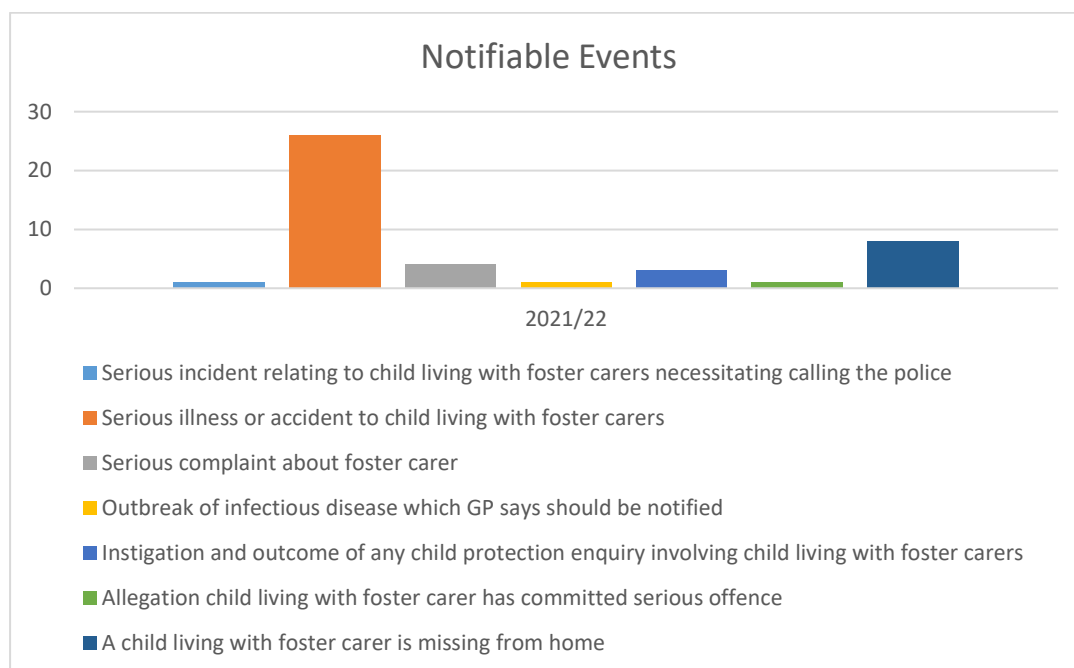
## 15. Complaints

15.1 During 2021/22, the Fostering Service received 3 complaints; 2 from parents; 1 from approved foster carers. The reason for the complaints were:

- Complaint about management of child's care whilst in her first foster home, an inappropriate child placed in same placement. The outcome was that the complaint was partially upheld; resolved at Stage 1.
- The Local Authority failed to follow due process when making care plans to move children from a settled placement and discrimination against foster parents. The outcome was that the complaint was not upheld at Stage 1 and the complaint has proceeded to Stage 2 investigation which is in progress.
- Concerns about appropriateness and conduct of Foster Carers.

## 16. Notifiable Events

16.1 In 2021/22, there were 44 Notifiable Events (Regulation 36, Schedule 7 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011). The majority (**59%**) related a child being unwell or having an accident. The table below provides an overview of the other categories.



16.2 There were four allegations against Local Authority Foster Carers. Of these, three resulted in Section 47 enquiries being made and Position of Trust Meetings were held. Following the allegations being submitted, one resulted in no further action being taken. The remaining continued fostering with additional monitoring. There have been no incidents of physical restraint reported in 2021/222 which is similar to previous years.

## **17.0 The Impact of Covid 19**

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

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

## **18.0 Service Priorities and Improvements – 2022/23 (Update)**

18.1 As the Annual Report is only produced after the Ofsted Dataset is returned in June of the following financial year, by the time the report is completed and ready to be shared, it can be making use of and commenting on activity approaching 18 months to 2 years old; as such, the next section is an attempt to outline the range of work that has or is planned to take place in 2022/23.

### **18.2 Improving the Fees & Allowances:**

- In summer 2022, DMT agreed to the request for additional investment to improve the financial support to Foster Carers. In September 2022, the Fostering Service completed a consultation exercise with Foster Carers on the initial proposals to revise the Fostering Fee Scheme which has been operational since 2018.
- In addition there has been agreement for 5% uplift to the weekly allowances paid to meet children's day to day needs from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022 as well as an increase to the mileage allowance to 45p per mile. The decision to increase allowances by 5% is by far the greatest uplift to this allowance in several years, and again evidences the Council's commitment to improving the offer of financial support for Foster Carers to meet the day to day needs of our children.
- Establish two new fostering schemes for Parent & Child and Step into Fostering.
- In November 2022, a further report was returned to DMT which outlined a revised position on how best to distribute the investment differently. Importantly, this revision was shaped by Foster Carer feedback and input. DMT supported

the recommendations in the report and the new Fee Scheme will be implemented By January 2022.

### 18.3 Increase the range and offer of support that is available to Foster Carers:

- Children's Party & Foster Carer Celebration Event: The Fostering Service held a Children's party in April 2022 and a Foster Carer Celebration in June 2022. Both events were welcomed and enjoyed by our Foster Carers and both will be repeated again in 2023.
- Out of Hours Foster Carer Support Line: On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022, the Fostering Service launched a trail of the Out of Hours Foster Carer Support Line. This is operated by a mix of staff from the Fostering Service and Foster Carers.
- Foundation to Attachment Training: The Fostering Service are now delivering Foundation to Attachment Training to all Foster Carers. To date 3 cohorts have completed this training and 2 further cohorts are to start in 2023. Feedback from those who have attended has been very positive and to afford Foster Carers with an opportunity to continue with their learning, they will be encouraged to attend the 'Talking Circle' sessions that are to launch in early.
- Council Tax Charge Exemption: From April 2023, our Foster Carers who live in Walsall will be exempt from paying the Council Tax Charge. This new initiative demonstrates how a council operated fostering service can work creatively across Directorates to offer something different and substantial to that on offer from an IFA. This is a significant benefit to this cohort of Foster Carers. Based on 2022/23 Council Tax Charge rates represents an annual saving to the Fostering Household of between £1,455.61 and £4,366.83. Further work is planned to explore how this benefit can be extended to those Walsall Foster Carers who live outside of the Borough.
- Access to Capital Fund: To help foster carers respond to any emerging accommodation needs, they can make a request for financial support to the Fostering Service. The Capital Fund has been extended for a further 3 years and can also be accessed by Special Guardians.
- Foster Carer Newsletters: To improve how we communicate and connect with Foster Carers, the Fostering Service continues to produce quarterly newsletters for Foster Carers. A separate quarterly newsletter is also produced for Special Guardians.
- Discount to access leisure facilities: Walsall children in care are entitled to free access to leisure facilities owned and operated by Walsall Council. Their foster carers also receive qualifying access to the Move It discount scheme which enables them to access heavily discounted leisure centre activities.

- Mockingbird: The Fostering Service has recruited its 6<sup>th</sup> Mockingbird Hub Carer. Work is now underway to launch this Hub by March 2023..
- Support & Stability Team: In early January 2022, the Fostering Service launched the newly created Support & Stability Team. The team consists of:
  - 1 x Senior Practitioner
  - 2 x Children & Family Support Workers
  - 1 x Targeted Youth Worker
- The purpose of this team is to provide support to existing Foster Carers and children to improve stability, prevent disruption and endings to children's foster homes, and support children to move from external foster and children's homes into internal foster homes. They also work identify best use of Foster Carers to meet needs of children who require an internal foster home. The work of this team links to the activity of a Service Transformation Plan and on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022, the team were track to realise the benefit target for 2022/23.

#### **18.4 Workforce Stability & Development:**

- Stable & Confident Workforce: A key ingredient to offering support to Foster Carers is having a stable and confident workforce. I'm delighted to report that on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2022, 95% of posts in the Fostering Service were filled on a permanent basis. The other 5% were occupied by 2 agency social workers who were being used to cover the duties of 2 colleagues away from work due to long term sickness absence. As the recruitment and retention of social workers is notoriously challenging, this is a significant achievement for the Fostering Service and one that makes such a difference to our Foster Carers and the children they care for.
- Clear Approach to Practice: I'm proud to report that The Fostering Service now has a clear approach to practice that is rooted in nurture, attachment and recognises the impact of developmental trauma. In a 12-month period, the workforce has completed a total of 256 days focused training:
  - Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP) Level 1 Training (40 staff x 4 days each)
  - Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP) Level 2 Training (12 staff x 4 days)
  - Foundations to Attachment/ Nurture & Attachment 'Train the Trainer' (12 staff who have completed DDP2 - 3 days each)
- The commissioning and completion of this this training in a 12-month period is recognised as not just a significant achievement but also another one of the Fostering Service's unique selling points that and can be used in future marketing and promotional activity.

- To ensure that this training initiative becomes embedded in practice, with the support of a colleague from Workforce Development, we are in the process of establishing quarterly DDP Practitioner Forums. These forums will provide the workforce with an opportunity to refresh their learning and share examples of how they are making use of this training to inform their practice.
- Practice Improvement: The Fostering Service have recently introduced a Practice Improvement Framework. This aims to pull together the learning from Case File Audits, Fostering Panel and Learning Reviews to support practice development across the workforce which in turn will strength the support to our Foster Carers and improv ethe outcomes for our children.

## 18.5 Foster Carer Recruitment:

- Promotional & Marketing Material: With the help of colleagues in the Marketing and Communications Service, the Fostering Service have refreshed the Marketing Plan & Communication Plan and this will be used to inform some targeted marketing activities in 2023.
- An overview of the branding used for the Fostering Service currently reflects that ideally in the longer term a rebrand is required, however this isn't the right time to do that. The brand is currently known and reflected on campaign materials and assets and has recently been used to advertise on Walsall Council's waste collection vehicles. It makes sense to continue by raising awareness using the existing branding. In the short term however, some work has been completed to sharpen up the font and the development of straplines, hierarchy of messaging and general layout to ensure maximum impact is gained from the current look and feel.



- Return to Face-to-Face Promotional Activity: As Covid 19 restrictions lifted, this afforded the Fostering Service with the opportunity to engage face-to-face with



prospective Foster Carers. More recently, the Fostering Service have undertaken the following face to face promotional work:

- Attended Walsall Pride on 27/8/22
  - Attended the Walsall Works EXPO Event at Walsall College on 14/9/22
  - Provided advice & Information in foyer of Tesco branch on 1/10/22
  - Held monthly promotional sessions in local libraries (monthly rota in place)
  - Attended Learning Alliance Event on 6<sup>th</sup> October
  - Attended event at Walsall College on 14<sup>th</sup> October.
- 
- Fostering Friendly Accreditation: Walsall Council recently secured accreditation from The Fostering Network to promote itself as a Fostering Friendly Employer (FFE).
  - Recruitment Campaign January 2023: As we have now achieved FFE Status and have improve the range of support to our Foster Carers, starting in January 2023, the Fostering Service will be undertaking focused recruitment activity to target the whole Council workforce.
  - Recruitment of new Mainstream Foster Carers:
  - As noted elsewhere in this report, there are significant challenges to the recruitment of Mainstream Foster Carer. The Fostering Service have a target to recruitment, assess and approve 14 new mainstream fostering households in 2022/23. To date, 4 new fostering households have been approved and there are a further 10 at different stages in the recruitment pipeline. Due to personal reasons, several other applicants have opted out of the assessment process in this period.
  - New Fostering Schemes: Funding has since been secure to create 2 new Foster Schemes – Parent & Child and Step In to Fostering. Recruitment to these schemes will start in 2023. The need for an Emergency Foster Care Scheme is also being explored.

**Author**

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**Black Country ICB – Walsall Place.**

**Corporate Parenting Board**

**Health Services for Children in Care Assurance Report  
April 2021 – March 2022**

Date of Meeting: Tuesday 10th January 2023

<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>Health Services for Children in Care Assurance Report 2021/22</b>
<b>PURPOSE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>To provide assurance to members of the Corporate Parenting Board that action is being taken to deliver on-going statutory responsibilities health for Children in Care.</b>
<b>REPORT WRITTEN BY:</b>	Alison Jones Designated Nurse Children in Care <a href="mailto:alisonjones10@nhs.net">alisonjones10@nhs.net</a> Dr Manju Kannath Designated Dr Children in Care <a href="mailto:manju.kannath@walsallhealthcare.nhs.uk">manju.kannath@walsallhealthcare.nhs.uk</a>
<b>REPORT PRESENTED BY:</b>	Alison Jones/ Dr Manju Kannath
<b>KEY POINTS:</b>	The report was collated with information provided by Walsall Healthcare Trust.
<b>Report Purpose</b>	An overview of the statutory health responsibilities of the ICB in relation to children in care, including performance of these responsibilities.
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>	
<b>CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD ACTION REQUIRED:</b>	Decision Approval ✓ Assurance

## **Main Report**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Most children become looked after because of abuse and neglect. Although they have many of the same health issues as their peers, the extent of these is often greater because of their life experiences. The NHS has a major role in ensuring the timely and effective delivery of health services to Children in Care (and, by extension, to care leavers) by commissioning effective services, delivering through provider organisations, and through individual practitioners providing coordinated care for each child (Promoting the health and well-being of looked after children 2015). There may be some use of interchangeable terms for Looked After Children/Children in Care in this report.

### **1.1 Leadership**

Statutory guidance states that integrated Care Boards should have access to Designated Doctors and Nurses for Children in Care, whose role is to assist commissioners in fulfilling their responsibilities to improve the health of Children in Care. Providers of health services are expected to identify a Named Doctor and Named Nurse for Children in Care to coordinate the provision of services for individual children and provide advice and expertise for fellow professionals.

The Designated Doctor for Children in Care participates in Black Country wide Safeguarding forums and the Designated Nurse for Children in Care is the deputy chair of the regional Designated Nurses for Looked After Children Forum. This group influences the care of Children in Care and Care Leavers, as there are some challenges which are regional issues in some commissioning arrangements.

## **2.0 An overview of the statutory responsibilities of the ICB in relation to children in care, and the performance of these responsibilities.**

### **2.1**

Promoting the Health and Well-Being of Looked-After Children (2015), provides statutory guidance for local authorities, ICB's and NHS England.

The NHS contributes to meeting the health needs of Children in Care by:

- Commissioning effective services.
- Delivery through provider organisations.
- Individual practitioners providing co-ordinated care for each child, young person, and carer.

The core activities that require commissioning from the ICB for Children in Care relating to statutory duties are:

- **Initial Health Assessments** - The IHA should take place in time to inform the child's first CIC review within 20 working days of entering care.
- **Review Health Assessments** - The review of the child's health plan must take place once every six months before a child's fifth birthday and once every 12 months after the child's fifth birthday.
- **Care Leaver Summaries/Health History documents** - Care leavers should be equipped to manage their own health needs wherever possible. They should have a summary of health records (including genetic background and details of illness and treatments), with guidance how to access a full copy if required.
- **Adoption Reports** - the collation of reports for adoption and fostering panel.

### 3.0 Current Commissioning Arrangements

#### 3.1

The Designated professionals for CIC recommend that Black Country and West Birmingham Integrated Care Board, Walsall place, (BCICB) commission a service that ensures appropriate arrangements and resources are in place to meet the physical and mental health needs of all Walsall Children in Care, regardless of where they are placed.

#### 3.2

The current health provider service in Walsall is Walsall Healthcare Trust, the Trust delivers statutory health assessments for Walsall Children in Care placed within 20-mile radius and hosted children from other areas. (In some cases, the team will extend the radius up to 50 miles)

#### 3.3

The ICB commission health assessments for those CIC placed further afield. The reliance on other areas comes with some challenge, which includes the timeliness and quality of interventions. All health assessments are quality assured by the Named Nurse/Designated Nurse against the national screening tool before being approved and shared with the local authority. Challenges remain around meeting statutory timescales, particularly for those children placed further afield. The Named Nurse continues to monitor and escalate individual cases where there are significant delays by liaising with the CIC health team and Designated Nurse who will contact the designated leads where the child is placed. In 2023, NHSE will be monitoring performance of teams who are picking up Out of Area children for health assessments to improve delays.

### 3.4

The CIC Health Team consists of a Named Nurse for CIC, who has the responsibility for coordinating provision of clinical services for children, providing advice and expertise to fellow professionals. There are also two Nurse Advisors, one of which works with primarily supporting transition and leaving care.

The team not only complete and follow up on the health needs of children but some of their other duties include:

- Support training and supervision for health care staff on the needs of Children in care.
- Quality Assurance of health assessments.
- Audit and performance monitoring.
- Report writing and analysis.
- Development of key policies and pathways with multi-agency professional
- Support Children and young people to access health services
- Offer support to foster carers/residential settings
- Offer expert health advice and signposting
- Offer emotional health support programmes, and work in association with other health services, school health, sexual health, and teen pregnancy advisors.

### 4.0 Statutory Responsibilities.

Initial and Review Health Assessments (IHA & RHA) are commissioned from Walsall Healthcare Trust (WHT) as the Health Provider by the ICB. However, the process requires close working between health and Local Authority colleagues in relation to information sharing, supporting attendance at appointments and reporting. The agreed Key Performance indicators with WHT stipulates the delivery of 85% of IHA's and 85% of RHA's within statutory timescales. RHA's service provision for children placed out of the borough is commissioned from external providers over a 20-mile radius with the WHT CIC Team coordinating requests and assuring quality.

#### 4.1

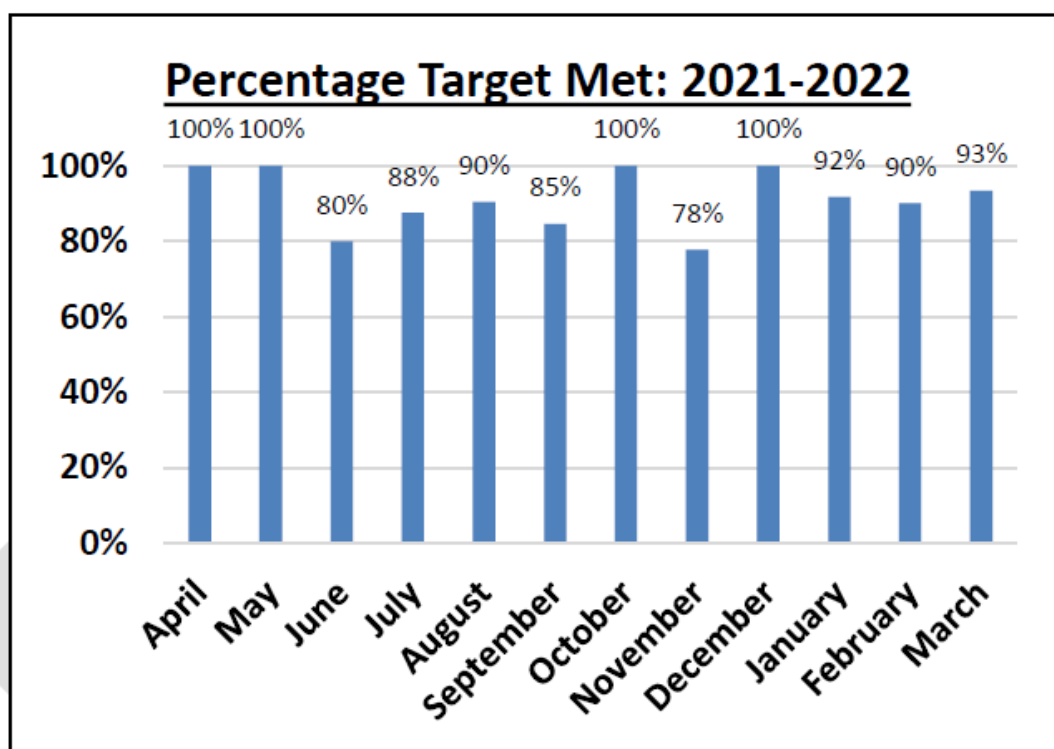
#### Numbers of Walsall Children Entering Care 2020-21

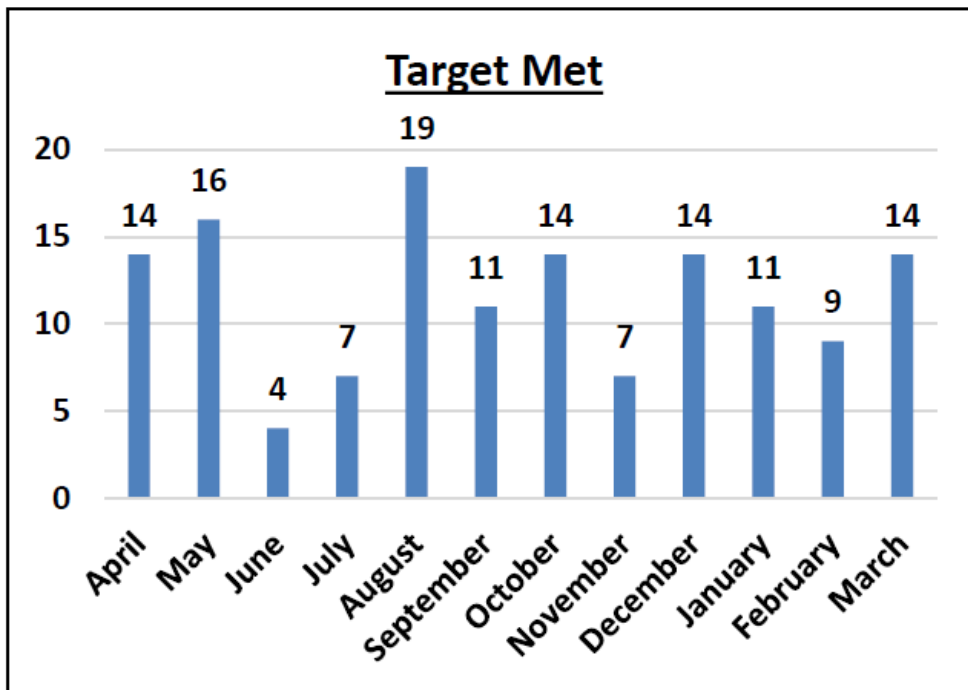
WHT CIC Health team were notified by Walsall Local Authority and other authorities of 151 children entering care from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

#### 4.2

#### IHA Data 20/21

#### Numbers of children requiring an Initial Health Assessment 2020-21 (WHT Data)





As previously indicated, current commissioned requirements are targeted at 85% of the Initial health assessments, within 20 working days (28 days total of entering care), of coming into care, this target is was increased to 85% for 21/22 across the black country ICB. The cohort seen within 20 working days of entering care is at 92.7% over the year in Walsall.

Completion rates are reported monthly to the ICB via contract performance reports, and this is reviewed by the Designated Nurse for CIC. Exceptions are all reported to the ICB if children and young people are not seen within the 20-working day requirement, with full details of the reasons and any mitigation.

There were some children not seen with the timescales. There are sometimes challenges in meeting the requirements, this year to date this has included-

- Late notifications of entering care (not within 5 days)
- Carers overlooked the appointment
- Children absconded/missing/refused
- Extended hospital stays
- Children cancelled due to CV19 (originally booked within timescale)
- Increase in numbers of Children coming into care (20 clinic slots per month)

### 4.3

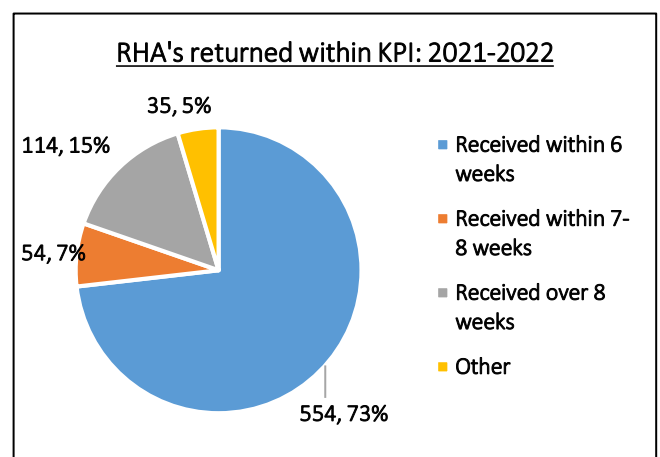
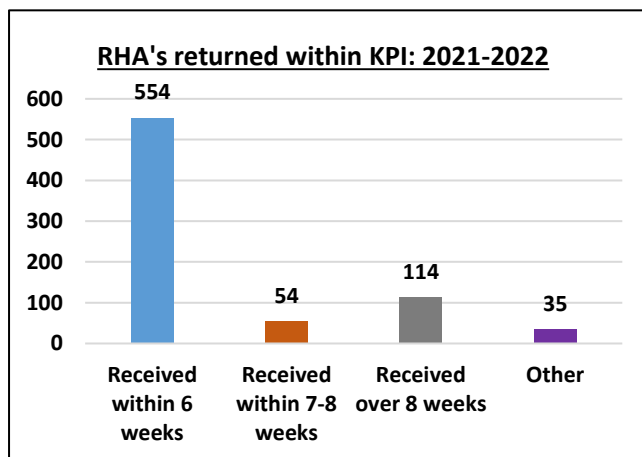
#### Review Health Assessments

In Walsall, the model for Review Health Assessments (RHA's) is that children and young people of 5 years and over are seen annually by a School Health Advisor or Nurse Advisor from the CIC health Team. Children under the age of 5 years old are seen by a member of the health visiting service every 6 months. This provides a degree of choice for young people and assists in accessing some of the harder to reach and non-engaging children and young people. The RHA performance of the commissioned target is 85%. Although the quality of both IHA and RHA has remained high, the timeliness within which RHA has not always been achieved. This has largely been related to out of area children not being picked up in a timely manner. Walsall CIC health team attempted to go further afield in some of these cases to prevent delays however this was not the case with all children. There were 757 review health assessments required in 2021/22.

A dashboard has been developed by the Black Country Designated Nurses for CIC, which reflects the KPI's for services commissioned by the ICB, this has been implemented for the purposes of reporting from 21/22 across the Black Country to standardise reporting and reduce variation.

### 4.4

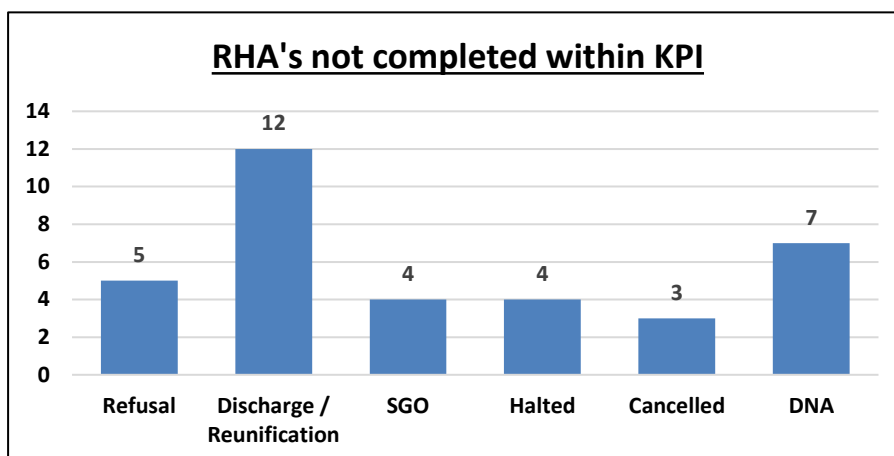
The table below demonstrates individual team activity in relation to RHA's during 2021-22



There were 554 completed Review health assessments returned within the six-week KPI equating to 73%.

There were 19 reviews were not required due to

- Cancellations from placing authorities/children moving out of the borough
- Special Guardianship Orders granted
- Children were discharged/ reunification back to family prior to RHA appointment date



There were 5 refusals to complete their assessment from children, in these instances the team advise the child we will notify the Local authority of the refusal and collate health information which is shared appropriately with the allocated social worker on their behalf.

## 5.0

### **Information sharing across the health economy**

Data is collected on the input of health information from General Practitioners. The provider received completed requests from GPs of shared health information to inform the initial health assessment.

## 5.1

### **Developments and improvements of processes in practice.**

- Electronic requesting of health assessments by the Local Authority to improve timeliness is in place.
- Good access to the Local Authority dashboards by CIC health team to improve information gathering is in place.
- Health and Social Care have regular meetings to address reporting issues.
- The provider has given assurance to the ICB that there is capacity to be flexible if numbers of Children coming into care increase above the current allocated clinic slots.

## **6.0 Health of Children in Care Strategic Group.**



## 6.1

This group meets to monitor and improve the delivery of health outcomes for looked after children. Its aims to ensure Walsall ICB are meeting statutory duties under the 'Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked-after Children' (2015) statutory guidance. It focuses, on not only children placed locally but also the health needs of CIC placed outside of area/borough and that their needs are being met. All partners, providers and relevant commissioners attend meetings as agreed, in order to provide a holistic system for the provision of health care for Children in Care. (Due to sickness, one meeting was cancelled.)

## 6.2

The Designated Doctor and Designated Nurse for Children in Care have identified Priorities for the next 12 months 2021/2022 for consideration at this forum.

- 1- Review Pathways for transition to adult services for care leavers.
- 2- Develop a pathway with regards to young people placed in therapeutic care homes to assess the suitability of those placements from a health perspective.
- 3- Strengthening the relationship between CIC and Primary Care including support of medicals for fostering and adoption.
- 4- Development of Care leavers APP
- 5- Review access for neuro-developmental pathways.
- 6- Business case for free prescriptions for care leavers.

## 6.3

The Designated Nurse CIC is vice chair of the regional CIC forum, and a member of the NHSE National Group. Attendance at this forum will enable the ICB to:

- Participate in clinical service planning and delivery for our CIC cohort on a national level.
- Debate and be involved in developing clinical recommendations that improve services for CIC nationally.
- Be involved in innovate new models of care and service delivery

## 7.0 Covid-19 Pandemic

From the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2021 Walsall healthcare Trust had Implemented a full restoration plan to get services back to face-to-face. All assessments are completed face to face now although we did learn new ways of engaging harder to reach children and young people.

## 8.0 Dental health

**8.1** The percentage of up-to-date dentals checks completed had been declined because of Covid-19. Despite last year the proportion of CIC having had their teeth checked by a dentist fell substantially, this has begun to recover. No child however should experience any discomfort and Carers should follow national guidance around when to seek help. This continues to be closely monitored through statutory health assessments, and 100% of cases identified where a child needs a dental intervention are addressed and actioned within their

health plan. Any issues that have arisen and in need of escalation have been addressed by the Designate Nurses across the Black Country ICB, who have liaised directly, and effectively, with dental practises. NHS England have been doing work around CIC pathways which will come into effect in 2022/23.

## **9.0 Immunisations**

### **9.1**

All health assessments for children and young people will record immunisation status, any immunisations required will be chased with the relevant health agencies.

## **10.0 Adoption/Fostering Medicals**

### **10.1**

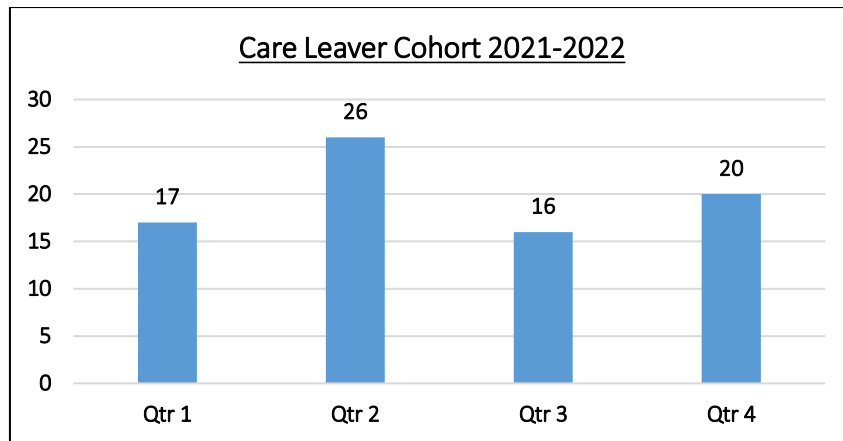
The Named Doctor and Designated Doctor for CIC are Medical Advisors and provide advice to prospective adopters, adult health reports for fostering and adoption, Child adoption medical reports, and attend adoption panel as expert health advisors.

General practitioner's complete adult adoption and foster carer medical forms. Following completion of the medical forms, these are reviewed by the medical advisor and a summary report and recommendation for the suitability to become an Adopter/foster carer is made. In 2021/22, a review audit was completed on the quality of these assessments, and this will be presented at the GP forum by the medical advisors

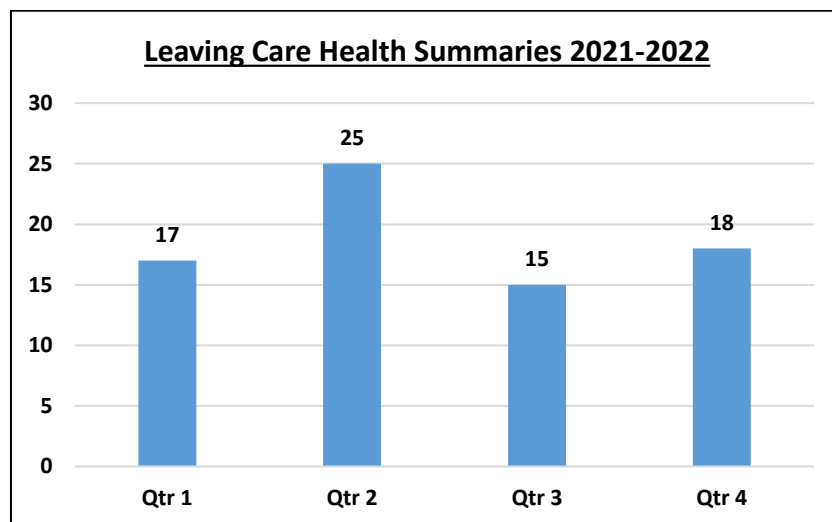
There remain some challenges in getting general practitioners to complete these forms as a priority. However, the ICB has worked closely with Adoption at heart and the local authority to ensure these processes have remained business as usual.

## **11.0 Leaving Care Health Summaries.**

**11.1 Care Leaver Summaries/Health History documents** - Care leavers should be equipped to manage their own health needs wherever possible. They should have a summary of health records (including genetic background and details of illness and treatments), with guidance how to access a full copy if required. Walsall had 79 young people leave care in 21/22, the cohort has increased by 35% this year.



The 2021-22 Cohort has an 35% Increase from the previous Cohort 2021-2022. (51 Young People left care the previous year)



The provision of leaving care summaries to all looked after young people prior to leaving care at 18 years of age is not currently monitored at a national level but is outlined in guidance. (Promoting the health and wellbeing of Looked after Children 2015) There is now a KPI added to the performance-reporting dashboard to gather this data for 21/22.

## 12.0

### Key Achievements 2021-22

- ✓ Maintenance of the robust delivery of the operational service ensuring the safe delivery of health assessments
- ✓ Refresh of care leavers health passport document – agreement to progress APP
- ✓ Strategic input into the Corporate Parenting Board.

- ✓ The Designated Nurse for CIC Chairs is the co-chair of Regional CIC Health Group and represents the Midlands Region at National Meetings.
- ✓ Audits continued to be completed demonstrating high quality standardised practice.
- ✓ Development of resources to support GP's.
- ✓ Development of film to prepare children to attend IHA's.
- ✓ Standardised practice across the Black Country to reduce variation.

## 18.1

### Key health priorities for the coming year, 2022-2023 are:

- ✓ Delivery of ICB statutory duties as a commissioner and a host ICB for CIC in Walsall.
- ✓ Walsall Healthcare trust to continue to monitor any performance issues and to ensure partnership working and engagement with Commissioners (ICB and Public Health) to achieve mutual KPI's
- ✓ Review of current service specification of CIC teams across the Black Country and consider increase in team resource
- ✓ Delivery of all aspects of the Children in Care team Physical service specification by Walsall Healthcare Trust.
- ✓ Strengthening the Children in Care Health Assessment and Special Education Needs pathway (Education and Health Care Plan). Working with education to have health input on the pep system.
- ✓ Relaunch of Strategic Health of Children in Care Group.
- ✓ Develop adequate robust data regarding the health of Children in Care when they enter care to inform the appropriate commissioning decision making.
- ✓ Health Exploitation meeting – Continue to raise awareness of any themes and trends identified to specifically CIC cohort.
- ✓ All children to have health regularly checked and continue to enhance our monitoring of emotional well-being and health trends to inform on-going healthcare provision.
- ✓ Continue to support the sexual health needs of children or inclusion of details regarding teenage pregnancy and teenage parenthood (girls and boys).
- ✓ Support the specific needs of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children- develop current pathway

## 19.0

### Service user engagement and feedback – Health Champions.

The CIC health team are members the Mini Influencers and the Influencers group to offer their clinical support and advice to these children and young people. This feedback can help shape and develop health services for our children and young people.

