



Walsall Council

Corporate Parenting Board

Meeting to be held on: **Monday 4 July, 2022 AT 6.00 PM**

Meeting to be held: Council House, Walsall.

MEMBERSHIP:

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

ADVISOR

Alison Jones (NHS Walsall CCG)

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

ITEMS FOR BUSINESS

1.	Introductions and Apologies	
2.	Substitutions	
3.	Minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2022.	<u>Enclosed</u>
4.	Introduction to Corporate Parenting Board, role, remit, legislation and responsibilities	<u>Enclosed</u>
5.	Young People Engagement	<u>Enclosed</u>
6.	Quarter 4 performance data	<u>Enclosed</u>
7.	Virtual School annual report 2020/2021	<u>Enclosed</u>
8.	Work Programme	<u>Verbal</u>
9.	Date of Next Meeting Monday 5 September, 2022.	

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

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

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

Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)

Access to information: Exempt information

Part 1

Descriptions of exempt information: England

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

Corporate Parenting Board

Monday 4 April 2022 at 6.00 p.m.

Conference Room 2, Walsall Council House

Board Members Present:

Councillor T. Wilson (Chair)
Councillor Hicken
Councillor K. Ferguson
Councillor F. Mazhar
Councillor M. Nazir
Councillor K. Sears

Officers Present

Elise Hopkins	Director, Customer Engagement
David Hughes	Children and Young Persons Champion
Colleen Male	Director, Children's Social Work
Jo Manning	Group Manager
Jivan Sembi	Head of Service (Children in Care, Provider and Care Leaving Services)
Lorraine Thompson	Head of Virtual School
Sally Rowe	Executive Director Children's Services

Young person representing the Children in Care Council.

Welcome

At this point in the meeting, the Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone present. He also noted that the meeting to the papers, which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information system (CMIS) webpage. It was noted that a Shadow Board was held directly prior to the meeting to seek the views and experiences of young people.

40/21 Introductions and Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Alison Jones (Advisor to the Board), Councillors Worrall and Murphy.

41/21 Substitutions

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

42/21 Minutes

A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2022, were submitted.

(see annexed)

Resolved (Unanimous)

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2022, copies having previously been circulated to each Member of the Board, be approved and signed by the chairman as a correct record.

43/21 Young People Engagement

The Children's and Young Persons Champion presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). Members were informed that feedback had been received on a care leavers website and app, it was noted that this feedback indicated that there was not a large demand for the development of an app – with young people indicating a preference for a website.

The first session of total respect training had taken place, and was delivered by two care leavers with good feedback received. Future sessions were planned. Members were informed that new referrals to the Children in Care Council had been received from the 'Mocking Bird'.

A Young Person in attendance asked for clarification on the term ESOL (English as a second language). In response to a question from a Member the Young Persons Champion stated that funding had been secured for an additional care leaver ambassador.

The Chair asked the Young People in attendance for their opinion on the value of a care leaver app, in response the Young People stated that group chats existed already, and suggested face to face advice would be preferable. The pros and cons of a website compared to an app were acknowledged.

A Member asked for feedback on the UASC group, the Children's Champion described ongoing work which included considered interpreters and identification of best practice. The group would be established within 6-8 weeks, officers stressed that young people were being encouraged to get involved with current groups. It was agreed that this would be considered by the Board in 12 weeks.

The Director for Communications stated that the Directorate were designing a contract for refugee and migrant support for adults and their families. It was suggested that support for young people could be incorporated into this contract if needed. The Director suggested that a report on how UASC were supported was considered by the Committee at a future meeting to ensure that the Board were sighted on wider issues. (Jo Manning).

Members agreed that thanks should be given to Foster Carers for their hard work during the pandemic, on behalf of the Board.

The Chair asked for an update on language that cares, the Director stated that the words that would be banned had been agreed and consideration was now being given to how this would be rolled out and the profile of the work raised with staff.

The provision of a free leisure pass was discussed, and the potential for a leisure pass to be provided across the West Midlands Combined Authority, and the Children's Champion was asked to follow this up.

The Chair congratulated a Young Person in attendance for gaining employment. It was agreed that a lanyard and ID badge for representatives of the Children in Care Council (attending the Board) be progressed.

Resolved

- That the Young People Engagement Report is noted.
- That the Corporate Parenting Board writes to the WMCA to request support.

44/21 Increasing Employability for care experienced young people and those not in education, employment and training (NEET).

Officers presented the report and highlighted that salient points (annexed). The Board were advised that this was an ongoing challenge, however the Authority was aspiring to have a higher number of young people in education employment or training. A multi-agency group meet and the report sets out a number of measures to assist young people securing employment education or training.

The Authorities performance in this area was considered within the context of the pandemic which had provided further challenges. The Board were informed that a NEET action group identified those young people who would need support to become work ready, this group met monthly.

The focus remained on this area as the service was keen to raise aspirations of young people.

The Head of the Virtual School described the work of the small team, which had the aim of removing barriers to young people preventing them accessing employment, education or training. The careers adviser in the service left

employment with the authority and consideration was being given to whether this should be replaced – as schools also provided this service.

A pre-apprenticeship programme had been developed to prepare young people for work, this was a 12 week paid apprenticeship. There were currently 9 young people in apprenticeships at the Council.

The Board were informed of the 'Aspire to University' programme, as part of this 40 young people were allocated a mentor and were taken to university open days.

A Young Person questioned if further support could be provided to those young people struggling with independence, Officers described current support available and agreed that the Authority should be seeking to engage them.

A Young Person questioned if more resources were invested into services, if it would prevent young people becoming looked after by the Authority. The Director responded to state that the Authority was working hard to support families through the family safeguarding model. The key outcomes of this were that more children remained with their families. It was suggested that young people from the Children in Care Council and Corporate Parenting Board Members were invited to the West Locality to meet staff there and experience the model in practice.

Officers described the work being done to support young people into employment or training. It was noted that there were slightly more young people attending university than last year.

A Member suggested that Elected Members could assist the service to access employment opportunities within local businesses

Resolved

That the report be noted.

45/21 Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report

The Board considered the draft Corporate Parenting Board Report.

Resolved

That the Corporate Parenting Board be approved for submission to Council.

46/21 Work Programme

The Chair asked Members to consider the priorities for the Board in the coming municipal year.

Resolved:

That Members considered the following areas to be of high priority:

- Increasing employability for young people not in education employment or training
- Young People Engagement
- Performance data
- Heath passports
- Emotional Wellbeing of Young People
- Virtual School assurance report.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 6.25 p.m.

Signed

Date

Introduction to the Corporate Parenting Board



Walsall Council

Page 10 of 31 **PROUD** OF OUR **PAST** OUR **PRESENT** AND FOR OUR **FUTURE**

Training Aims

- **Brief History of the Board**
 - **Role**
 - **Membership**
 - **Remit**
- **Children in Care Council explained**
 - **Corporate Parenting Strategy**

Why do we have a Board

Duty

The council has a duty to 'safeguard and promote the welfare of each child they look after'. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for looked-after children and young people, and care leavers. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 sets out seven principles

Whilst not a statutory requirement, most local authorities establish a Corporate Parenting Board to assist the Council in continuing to fulfil its legal obligations and responsibilities.

The leadership and commitment of Elected Members in their role as Corporate Parents is of critical importance in achieving good outcomes for children and young people in care.

The 7 Corporate Parenting Principles

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 sets out seven principles that we need to follow:

1. To act in the best interests and promote the physical and mental wellbeing of children and young people.
2. To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
3. To consider the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
4. To help those children and young people gain access to, and make best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
5. Seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.
6. For those children and young people to be safe and stable in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
7. To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living

Role of Elected Members

All Elected members, when elected to represent their ward, becomes a corporate parent as part of their role.

When a child or young person cannot live with their birth family for whatever reason and becomes looked after, parental responsibility transfers to the local authority; this is referred to as corporate parenting.

As corporate parents for our most vulnerable children – those who are looked after by the local authority, or those who have left local authority care , the whole Council, as their corporate parent, has a responsibility to ensure that we have the same aspirations and interest in their progress as any parent would have for their own child.

Current Arrangements

Council – May, 2018

- Established the Corporate Parenting Board as a politically balanced, non decision making meeting of Council to provide clear governance, responsibility and accountability;
- Chaired by Portfolio Holder;
- Chair of Children's Scrutiny a member of the Board
- Serviced by Democratic Services

Role

To assist the Council fulfil its legal obligations and responsibilities towards children looked after and leaving care by providing strategic direction to ensure they are effectively supported to reach their potential.

Membership

7 Members of the authority as determined by the Council to include:

- The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Chair);
- The Chair of Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Chairman and Vice Chairman

The Chairman shall be the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services. The Vice-Chairman will be appointed at the Annual Council meeting for the municipal year.

Advisors to the Board:

Director of Social Work

Director of Customer Engagement

CCG - Designated Nurse for Children in Care

Head of Virtual School

Substitution

Substitute members may be nominated to the Committee in accordance with paragraph 4 of the Council procedure rules (Part 4).

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board shall:

- (1) Provide clear strategic direction in relation to corporate parenting to improve the outcomes and life chances of looked after children and care leavers.
- (2) Ensure that Walsall Council and Partner agencies have a joint commitment to corporate parenting in order to achieve continuing improvements in outcomes for our children and young people in care and care leavers.
- (3) Make a demonstrable commitment to prioritising the needs of looked after children and young people.
- (4) Set objectives for monitoring the work of and evaluating the progress of the Officer level 'Operational – Corporate Parenting Steering Group'.

Remit continued

- (5) Develop and sustain clear linkages with Children in Care Council, 'Council 4 Kids', Walsall Safeguarding Children's Board, Walsall Foster Care Association and Partners to include the Police, the NHS and education providers and others.
- 6) Approve a work plan with clear aims and objectives which reflect the terms of Walsall's Corporate Parenting Pledges.
- (7) Monitor progress on outcomes and performance indicators for children in care and those who have left care.
- (8) Submit reports to the Council, the Executive, Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee or such other body as the Board considers appropriate or necessary.

Remit continued

- (9) Submit an annual report to Council in April each year.
- (10) Listen to, consult with and involve looked after children and care leavers and their carer's in the assessment, development and delivery of services, including inviting them to act as advisers to the Committee on a regular basis.
- (11) Develop knowledge and be aware of the experiences and concerns of looked after children and care leavers.
- (12) Promote achievement and acknowledge the aspirations of children and young people and show ambitions and aspirations for all looked after children and care leavers.
- (13) Champion the provision of Council based work placements and apprenticeships for looked after young people.
- (14) Monitor the effectiveness of the Virtual school.

The Children in Care Council

The Corporate Parenting Board works closely with the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers Forum. Both groups involve children and young people who are currently in our care or have left the care of the local authority.

They help to advise members and officers in Walsall about their experiences of the care, what is important to them and shape and influence the services they receive.

A participation action plan is in development and will be ready for presentation at the next Corporate Parenting Board for your consideration. It is also proposed that if members are in agreement we review the effectiveness of how the Board engages with the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers' forum and make proposals for what this may look like moving forward.

The Children in Care Council

So how do we do this in Walsall?

The CICC meets twice per month with the Children's Champion. This gives them a unique opportunity to get to know other care experienced young people and to share stories and experiences to help them understand the world around them and move forward. They enjoy attending the CICC and speak positively about this bespoke opportunity to connect with each other. We invite and welcome guest speakers. All YP that attend feel the group and attendees is very important to them.

Many different teams, managers and professional make contact with the Children's Champion to ask for the voice of the CICC. We get involved with lots of important projects and help inform and influence decision making at all levels.

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The Children in Care Council

For example:

- Interview Panels
- Feedback on processes, forms and ways of working eg Health and IRO's
- Designing and developing the set up of new residential homes
- Training for professionals; social workers and foster carers
- Reviewing the core offer
- Developing other parts of the council such as SEND, Health and SFS

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Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024

- During 2020 we talked to our looked after children and care leavers about their expectations of us as corporate parents. Through these conversations we developed a promise to our young people. In implementing our corporate parenting strategy, we need to be mindful of Our Promises and do the utmost to act by them.
- Taking account of the **Seven** corporate parenting principles and Our Promises we have made to young people; we have identified **Five** priorities for our corporate parenting strategy.

Our promise for young people 5-11 years



The Promise Younger children 5 – 11 years

Sometimes children are not able to live with their parents and so they may need to be placed in our care. When this happens, there are a number of things that we will do to make sure that you are safe and well cared for. We call these our 'promises to you'.

Education

- We promise to help you to play and learn at a school that is right for you
- We will help you join clubs and after school activities near to where you live
- We will help you to make friends
- We will tell you how well you are doing and let you know how proud we are of you

Keeping you safe

- We promise to make sure you live somewhere safe where there will always be someone to take care of you
- We will make sure you can keep things that are important to you like your favourite toys.
- We will make sure you always have someone that you can talk to when you are feeling sad
- We will listen to what you like and don't like

Keeping you healthy

- We will make sure you stay well and can see a Doctor when you are poorly
- We will help you to eat healthy food and drinks that will make you grow big and strong
- We will help you to be happy and feel good about yourself
- We will help you to play safely outside and enjoy exercise

Keeping in touch

- We promise to help you to understand the reason why you are in care and will keep a story of your life for you to look at
- We promise to help you keep in touch with your family and friends, if it is safe to do so.
- We will help you stay in touch with Foster Carers and friends if you want to and will tell you if this can't happen
- We will make sure that you have a social worker that you can talk to

Our promise for older children 12- 15 years

The Promise Older children 12 - 15 years



Every child in our care will be treated fairly and respected as individuals. We will always seek to do everything we can to support and inspire you to be the best you can be. Through everything we do, we will help you to develop strong and meaningful relationships with your family, friends, carers, teachers and social workers so that you are given the very best support available.

Education and Training



- We promise to make sure that you have the best education possible and help you to plan for your future
- We promise to help you to enjoy new experiences and develop your own interests and hobbies
- We promise to celebrate your achievements and tell you how proud we are of you
- We promise to try and make sure that you don't have to change school
- We promise to make sure that you get all the help and support you need to learn, achieve and succeed

Keeping you safe



- We promise to provide you with a safe and comfortable place to live
- We promise to listen to you and involve you in decisions that affect your life.
- We promise to help you feel safe, both in and out of your home.
- We promise to encourage and support you to express your views
- We promise to provide you with a trusted adult that can help you if you are feeling worried
- We promise not to do anything that will make you stand out as a child in care

Keeping you healthy



- We promise to support and encourage you to have a healthy lifestyle
- We promise to make sure you are cared for by people who can keep you safe and healthy and will teach you how to learn to look after yourself as you get older.
- We promise to help you to access a range of leisure activities
- We promise to listen to any health issues you may have and will help you to get the support you need

Keeping in touch



- We promise to help you to understand the reason why you are in care
- We promise to help you keep in touch with your family and friends, if it is safe to do so.
- We promise to respect you as individuals and listen to what you want
- We promise to help you keep a record of important events, achievements and people in your life that are important to you
- We promise to help you take part in things you want to do such as school trips and fun activities

Our Promise for young people aged 16 to 25 years

The Promise Older children and Care Leavers aged 16-25

By listening to our care experienced young people, we have developed a list of 'Promises' that form our Pledge to you as children in our care. A pledge is an important part of running a service for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. It tells Children and Young People what we promise to do for them as their Corporate Parents.

Education, Training & Employment



- We promise to help you with your education and with finding the right employment and training opportunities.
- We promise to encourage and support you into college or university and give you clear information about the support you can expect.
- We promise to ensure that you have opportunities for work experience and employment such as apprenticeships and traineeships.
- We promise to support you to have different experiences and access to activities that may interest you

Keeping you safe



- We promise to help you to decide where you want to live and will help to keep you safe and comfortable
- We promise to help you to stay with your foster carers if this is possible.
- We promise to help you to manage your money and ensure you have financial stability ready for your future
- We promise to help you to get important documents like passports and driving licence
- We promise to pay for your council tax, even if you live outside of Walsall Council
- We promise to provide you with opportunities to build your confidence so that you are able to make your own decisions about your safety

Keeping you healthy



- We promise to help you to access health services and have access to your health passport
- We promise to go with you to health appointments and support you if you need it
- We promise to help you to access local leisure facilities to help you keep fit and well.
- We promise to make sure you have someone to talk to or can access support with your mental wellbeing

Keeping in touch



- We promise to help you to keep in contact with people that are important to you
- We promise to celebrate your achievements with you
- We promise to respect you as individuals and have high aspirations for your future
- We promise that you will always have someone to contact



Walsall Council



Our five priorities (1)

1. Influence and Involvement

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

2. Safety and Permanency

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

3. Mental and Physical Health and Wellbeing

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

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Our five priorities (2)

4. Education and Employment

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

5. Transitions and Independence

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

Our proposed plan has key actions

- Key reports to the Board
- Increase the involvement more young people to shape and influence services.
- Respect Training is in place.
- Review our Sufficient Strategy.
- Review our Staying Put Policy.
- Continued focus on Permanence and it is robust.
- Continued focus on the health and emotional wellbeing of our children in care and care leavers.
- Continued focus on education and employment of children in care and care leavers
- Continued focus on transitions and independence

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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 8th September 2021.

Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board:

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

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

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

Recommendations:

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

Background papers:

Previous Young People Engagement reports.

Corporate Parenting Pledges

The Walsall Promise for all Children in Care and Care Leavers

Resource and legal considerations:

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

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced seven Corporate Parenting Principles and 2 of the principles focus on the involvement and participation of children and young people:

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

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

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

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

Citizen impact:

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

Environmental impact:

None.

Performance management:

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

Reducing inequalities:


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

Consultation:

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

Contact Officer:

Full Name – David Hughes

 . 01922 650555/ 07787 284682

Email: david-j.hughes@walsall.gov.uk

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

1.1 Total Respect Training Offer

To date we have delivered 4 sessions and continue to get positive feedback from the attendees. Our Director Colleen has reinforced with staff that this is mandatory training for all staff working with young people and we get a real good mix of people attending our training. For example we can get heads of service, directors and group managers sitting alongside social workers, foster carers and family support workers. This is unique within the world of training and brings such value and creative thinking.

In addition to the two young people that were originally trained with David and Sophia we have now delivered a train the trainer course where three new care leavers are now qualified to deliver Total Respect with us making a total of 5 care experienced young adults. They are doing such a great job and get great feedback during and after the course.

Here are just a few of the positives that come from this training:

- Increased confidence and self-esteem for our young adults
- Increased awareness for attendees on Childrens Rights and how to promote them
- Considerations for change in policy and process
- Additional financial support for care leavers
- Work experience which can be used for job applications
- Sharing best practice ideas across multi-agencies
- Time for reflection for staff and change in culture
- Unlocking new skills and developing care leavers

1.2 Language that cares:

We continue to spread the word and promote the use of more caring language within Walsall. We have presented at several meetings across children's services as well as attended Walsall College to speak to multi-agency partners and presented at many management meetings.

We now have a steering group which consists of 10 professionals spreading across 8 different areas within services for children which include:

- Practice and Partnership Development
- Corporate Parenting
- Police (Violence Reduction Unit)
- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
- Black Country Women's Aid
- Early Help
- Youth Justice
- Special Educational needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Our first meeting will be held on the 29th June with all partners and young people. We will continue to be dedicated in changing language which will make a big difference to all young people accessing services within Walsall.

One of our more recent developments is a Poem which gets some key points across in a creative way.

1.3 Trip for the Council4Kids

On the 22nd of April we treated our group to a trip to the Lights Cinema in Walsall. We watched 'The Bad Guys'. The group loved the film and enjoyed spending time with each other out in the community.



1.4 Hot topics for Care Leavers

Through our conversations with care leavers we have started collating a list of some of the top things that our care leavers worry about so we thought we would bring this to the board. These things have been generated through one to one conversations, group work and via our WhatsApp group chat:

- Mental Health and wellbeing
- Living alone and isolation
- Budgeting and getting by; All these things have gone up - cost of living, household bills, food shopping, travel as well as other increases. How do we begin to cope and manage?

I have raised the above with our group manager and managers within the Transitional Leaving Care service and we are now working on addressing these concerns both on an individual basis as well as looking at our wider offer. Some really good work is underway to consider our full range of support to our care leavers to make them feel reassured and settled. The Personal Advisors do an awesome job of identifying schemes and sharing these with colleagues so that we ensure that all young people are able to access these benefits and entitlements. Further work and support will be added to our ongoing work within our independent workshops.

1.5 Welcome Pack

We are working closely with our Independent Reviewing Officers on the welcome pack. These are for all children when they come into care. There is lots of information in there about some of the processes and our rights which are all explained in a child friendly way. The intended purpose is for it to be used to provide us with information but also for us to use it as a regular form of communication so our foster carers and staff from social care have more understanding on things about me, which are important to me. We also feel that this can follow us on our journey if we have to move from one home to another or have new social workers or foster carers so we don't have to keep repeating our story. We would like for these to be both printed and electronic.

Here is a sneak peek on what the welcome pack looks like:



1.6 Life Skills Course for Care Leavers

Our life skills course is in its 3rd week and is jointly delivered with staff from TLC Service. So far it has been really successful. The group have really bonded and formed some good friendships that we hope will last increasing their social networks. The discussions have been really insightful from our

young people, they are teaching us and sharing the things with us that we should worry about. The group are learning from each other and sharing experiences as they are all at different stages in their own journey.

There is 1 young person in the group who all of the others look to for advice as she has been really honest about the pitfalls about living alone and the things that haven't gone so well for her. She will be a great mentor and we are really encouraging and supporting her to do this.

1.7 **Good news stories! Proud of our Care Leavers and our Transition Leaving Care Team**

We have another 11 young people going to university this September. We currently have 14 young people who remain at University. 6 of them complete their degrees this summer.
1 of our young people has secured a work visa and will shortly be leaving to go to Australia, she is excited and nervous and has asked her Personal Advisor to stay in touch with her. Her Personal Advisor is offering to visit her.
1 of our care leavers in the army has just got back from Canada where he has been training with the Canadian Army. He is very motivated and ambitious and whilst he loved the experience he does like to come home to his carers who alongside his personal advisor are his champions.
After a lengthy difficult process 1 of our young people has got his leave to remain. He says that this is the best news and is grateful to all the people who have, and continue to support him.
1 of our care leavers who got their 1 st class honours degree in 2020 in film studies has gone on to secure a job with the BBC! This was following a very competitive interview and her beating 140 candidates! She will be working at the studios in London, her long term goal is to become a script/screen play write and what better place to start her career.
2 of our young males have started apprenticeships in nurseries pursuing a career working with children.
1 of our young people will be dancing at the Commonwealth Games, she studies drama & dance and is really excited about this opportunity.
1 of our young people has been successful in obtaining an administration apprenticeship for Walsall with our Member of Parliament Eddie Hughes – she has a keen interest in politics and feels this will be her start in this field.
1 of our former Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker care leavers has completed an electrician course; English is not his first language but he has excelled and is on his way to achieving a great career.

Another of our former Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker care leavers who has not been granted leave to remain has been given the right to work in the UK. He has already started 2 jobs and will be supported now to have his own tenancy without the worry of us potentially ending our financial support at 21 and having to access Home Office support.
Week commencing the 6 th of June we had 2 of our young people move into their first home's both have settled well and started decorating making it home!
1 of our young people has started a business customising trainers – on the advice of her Personal Advisor she approached the Princes Trust who have helped her with a business plan and provided her a mentor. She has approached rapper 'Central C' to ask him to wear her trainers as a way of advertising and endorsement. She's awaiting his reply!
2 of our young people in custody are doing brilliantly. They both have jobs and are working towards qualifications that will help them upon release. 1 of these young people has received a national award for the work he has been doing whilst in custody. We have a young person who left custody last week – he left with a folder of certificates & qualifications and is determined that he wants to be employed and not return to custody.
5 of our young people have formed a football team to take part in the homeless world cup in August.... training starts now!
All our Personal Advisors are making sure care leavers are accessing their entitlements, from the council tax exemption to wider offers such as South Staffs Water discount. They are always keeping a listening ear for any offers care leavers can access and in helping them apply. They are currently looking out for the TalkTalk offer that is being piloted in Liverpool currently.

- 1.8 The Children's Champion and Care Leaver Ambassador** will shortly be moving into the Safeguarding and Review service area, it is hoped that they will benefit from aligning with the work of our Independent Reviewing officers in understanding and promoting the voice of the child and also build strong links with our practice development team. The new group manager for Quality and Practice, Jenny Cockcroft has a specific remit to drive forward the participation agenda for our children and young people. A participation action plan is in development and will be ready for presentation at the next Corporate Parenting Board for your consideration.

It is also proposed that if members are in agreement we review the efficacy of the current approach taken by the Corporate Parenting board in engaging the children in care council and care leavers' forum and make proposals for what this may look like moving forward.

As part of this we would want to meet with Councillor Wilson and any other member of the board who would like to be part of this review, seek to learn from national best practice and hear from the children and young people

about how they would like it to be structured moving forward; the proposals from this would then be presented to the Board for their consideration.

1.9 Dates for the diary

Council 4 Kids group dates:

This group continues to be held once every other week. The members of our group welcome guest speaker and are happy for managers or elected members to pop along and say hello if they wish.

Care Leavers Group:

Our care leavers group continues to meet twice per month. We run one face to face session per month and one virtual session. Our care leavers are happy to see guest speakers at their meetings and would be happy for any managers or elected members to pop into their meetings if they wish.

David Hughes
Children's Champion

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

Please Note: Quarter 4 figures are provisional up until the publication of the Children in Care return figures.



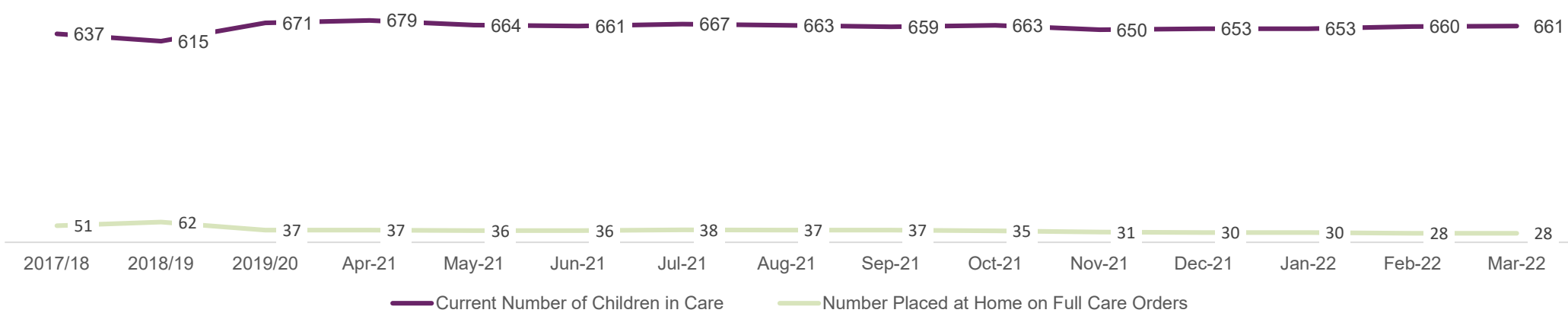
Walsall Council

PROUD OF OUR PAST OUR PRESENT AND FOR OUR FUTURE

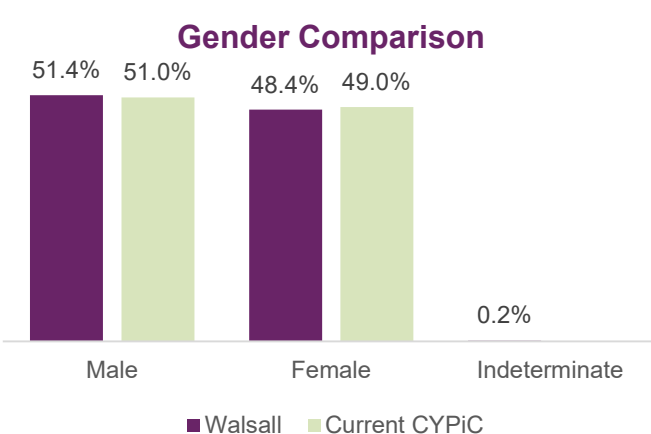
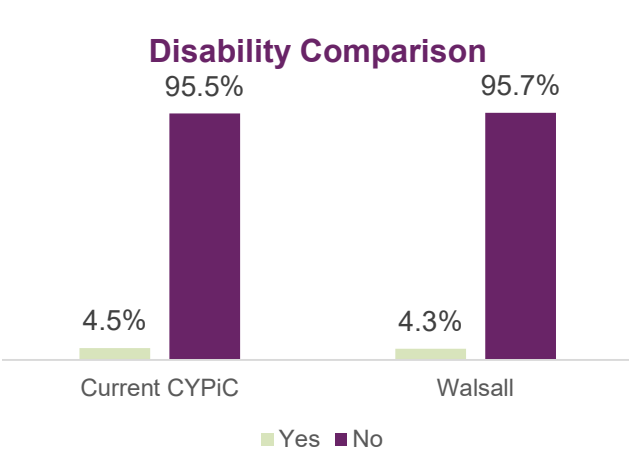
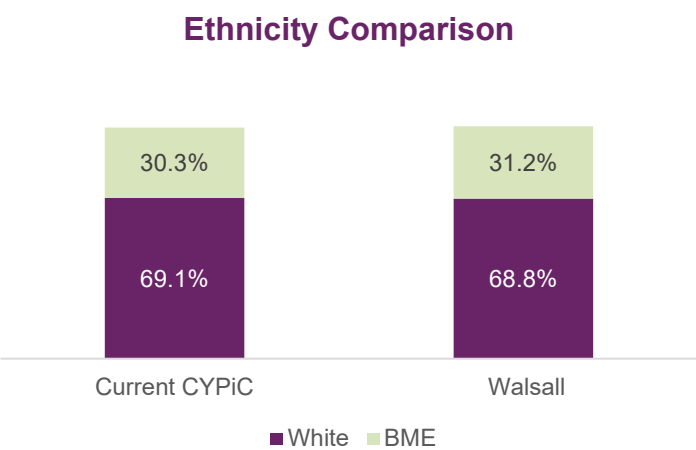
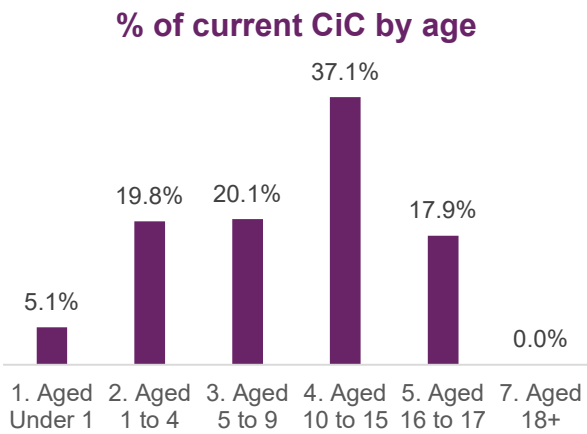
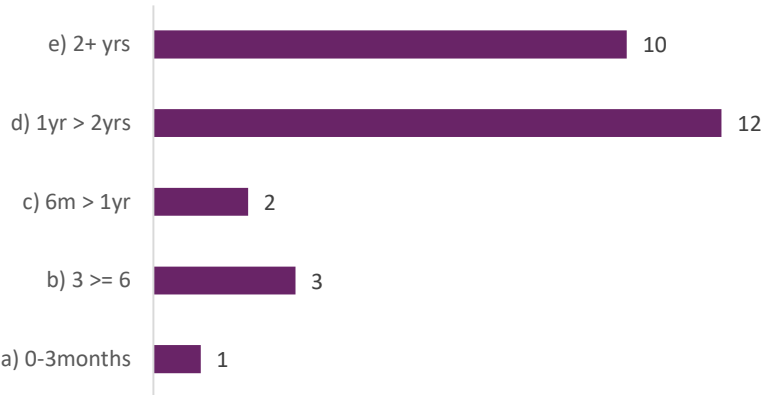
Current Children in Care (CiC) Profile



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



Length of Time placed at home on full care orders

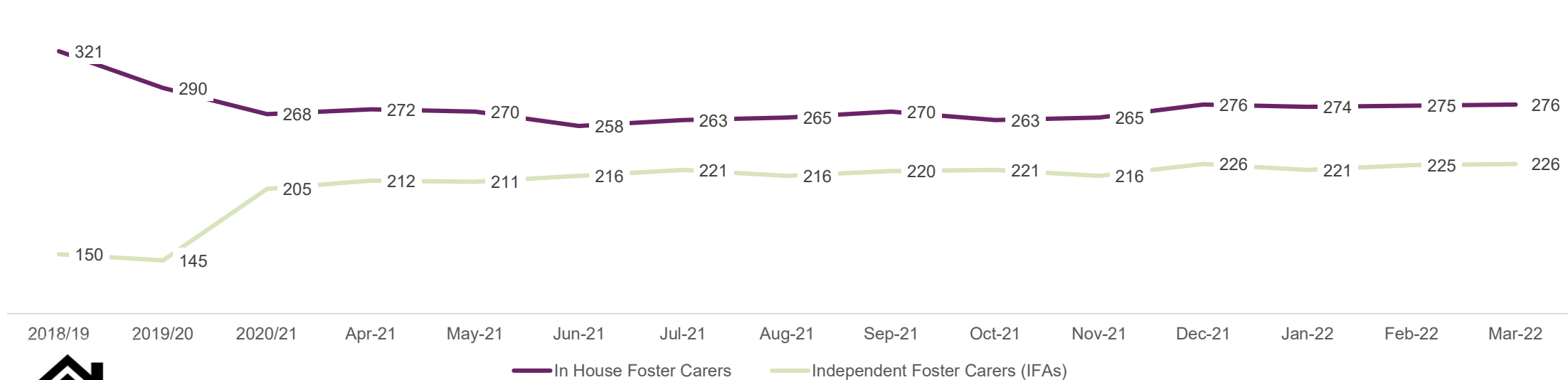


Commentary

Demographic data has been taken from the 2020 mid-year population estimates. A slightly lower proportion of Children in Care are from BME backgrounds compared to the Walsall Child and Young Person population (0-17s). A slightly higher percentage of Children in Care have a disability (5.2%), compared to the overall 0-17 population (4.3%). A slightly higher percentage of Children in Care are male (51.4%) compared to the overall 0-17 population of Walsall (51.0%).

The current Children in Care population has continued to decrease slightly from 670 at the end of 2020/21 to 661 at the end of Q4 of the current year (2021/22). The current rate of 95 per 10,000 remains below that of our statistical neighbours but is still higher than the 2019/20 England and West Midlands averages. We currently have 28 children placed at home on full care order, this is a slight decrease from 30 at the end of Q3. 22 of the 28 have been placed at home for over a year. Work is continuing with the courts to revoke care orders for children who are placed at home where appropriate.

Breakdown of Foster Placements (12 Month Rolling)



The number of CiC placed with in house foster carers and IFA's has increased but remains fairly stable.



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

86

13.3%

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

% CiC 3 or more placements in a year

48

7.3%

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

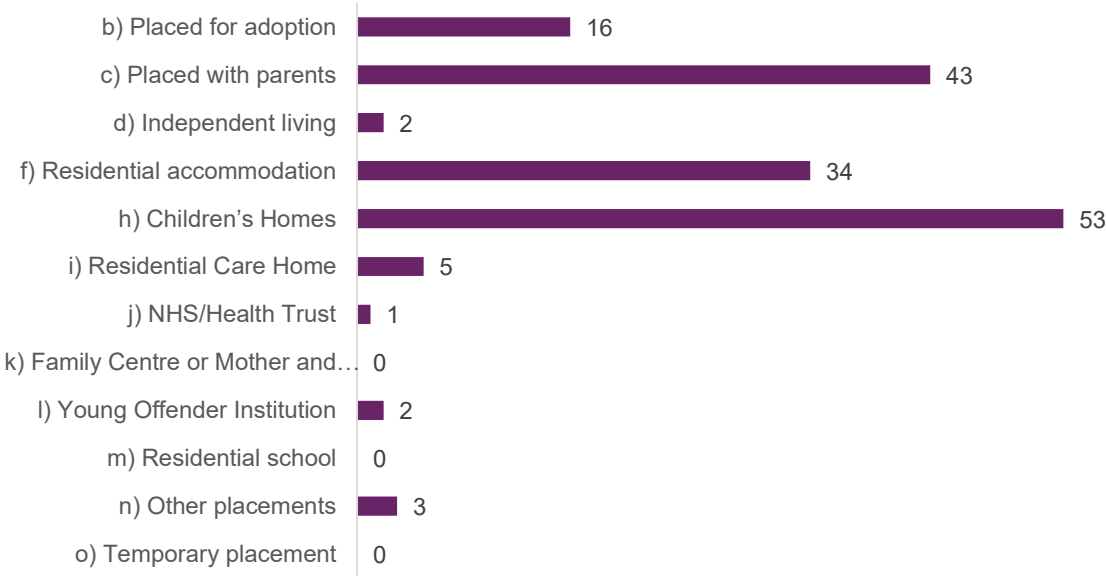
% of CiC in same placement for over 2 years if CLA for over 2.5 years

207

67.2%

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

Current CiC by Placement Type (non-fostered)



Commentary

Trends for children placed with in house foster carers have remained stable during the fourth quarter of 2021/22. Currently Walsall has 276 children placed with in house foster carers, slightly higher than the out-turn for the previous year. Walsall has 226 children placed with independent fostering agencies. This figure has remained the same as at the end of quarter 3, slight fluctuations during the year but has remained fairly constant during the reporting period.

13.6% of Walsall's CiC are placed 20 plus miles from their home address this is an increase on the 2020-21 out-turn.6.5% of the CiC population have had 3 or more placements within a year. This is an slight decrease on the 2020-21 out-turn. The percentage of CiC in the same placement for over 2 years if CiC for over 2.5 years (67.2%) is also improving but remains slightly lower than regional and statistical neighbour averages for 2020/21.

Statutory Visits and Reviews



% Visits undertaken to timescale

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

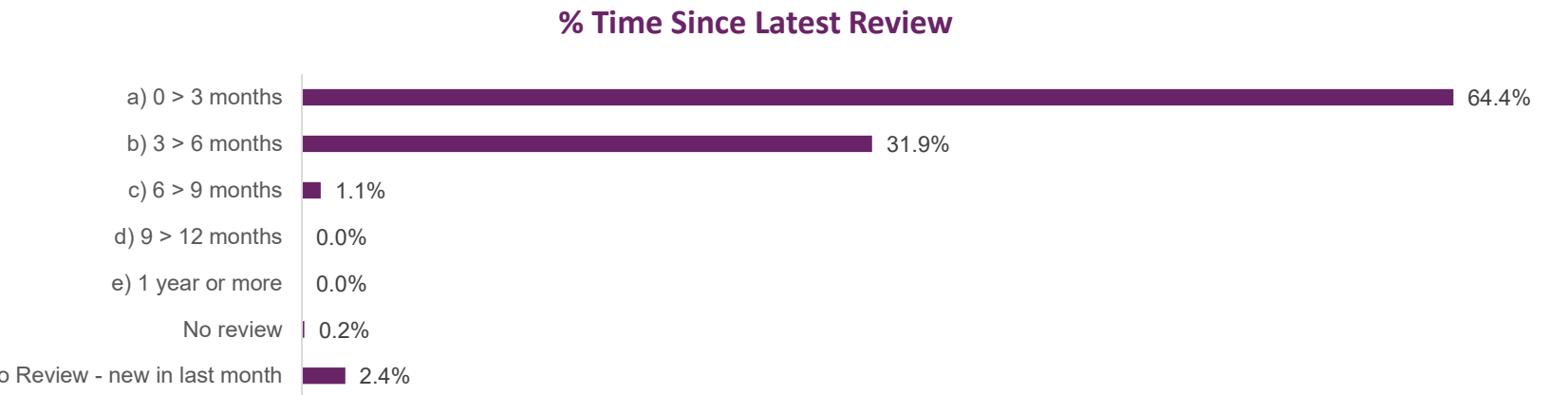
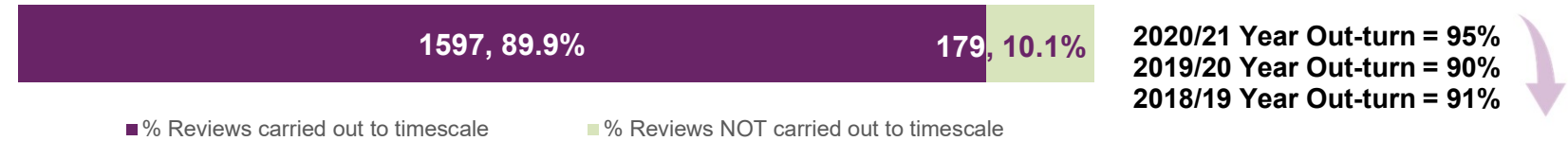
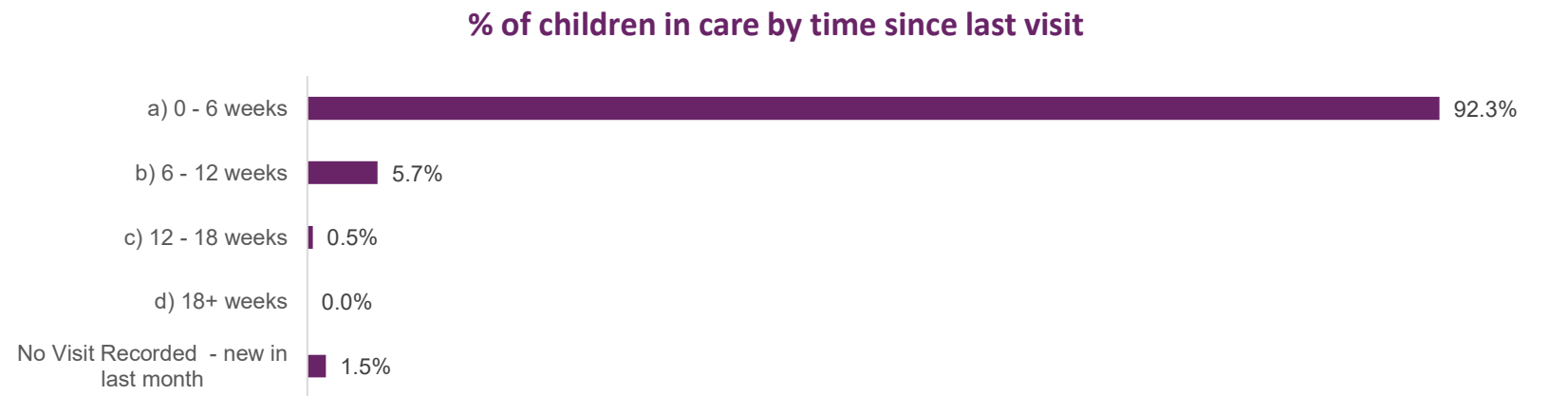
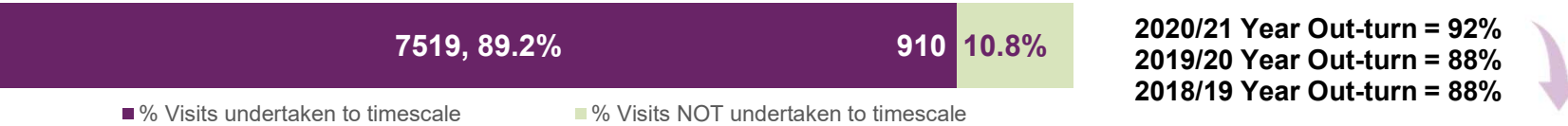
Time Since Last Visit Undertaken	Number	%
a) 0 - 6 weeks	610	92.3%
b) 6 - 12 weeks	38	5.7%
c) 12 - 18 weeks	3	0.5%
d) 18+ weeks	0	0.0%
No Visit Recorded - new in last month	10	1.5%
Total	661	100.0%



Reviews carried out within timescale (12month Rolling)

Where reviews for children looked after are carried out within timescale

Time Since Latest Review	Number	%
a) 0 > 3 months	426	64.4%
b) 3 > 6 months	211	31.9%
c) 6 > 9 months	7	1.1%
d) 9 > 12 months	0	0.0%
e) 1 year or more	0	0.0%
No review	1	0.2%
No Review - new in last month	16	2.4%
Total	661	100.0%



Commentary

The proportion of CiC where a statutory visit has been undertaken to timescale in accordance with the child’s plan is 89.2% with 92.3% seen within 6 weeks of the previous visit or coming in care. There were 10 CiC with no visits recorded as 31th March 2022, these are new children who have entered into care during the month.

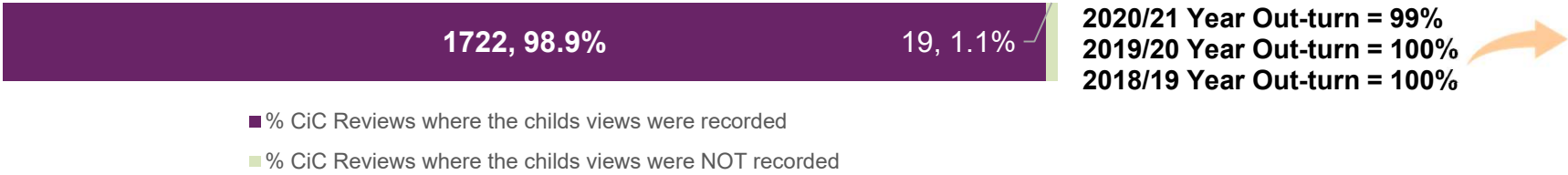
89.9.% of reviews have been undertaken within timescales. 96.4% of current Children in Care have had a review within the last 6 months. 0.2% (1) children currently have overdue reviews, however, this review will have been completed on time and will be in the process of being recorded (IROs have 20 working days from the date of review to write their reports).

Views of the child



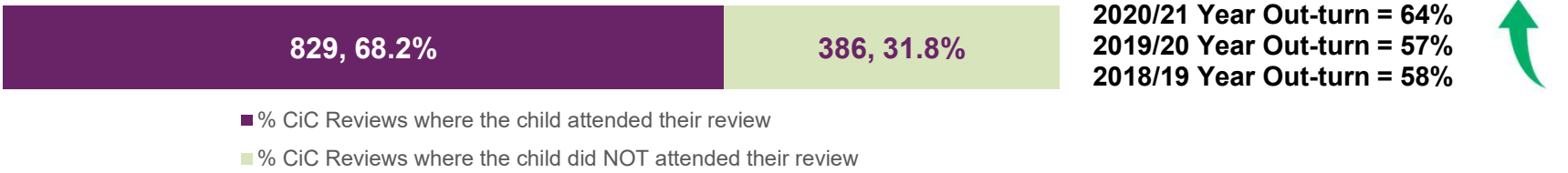
% CiC Reviews where the childs views were recorded (12 month rolling period)

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



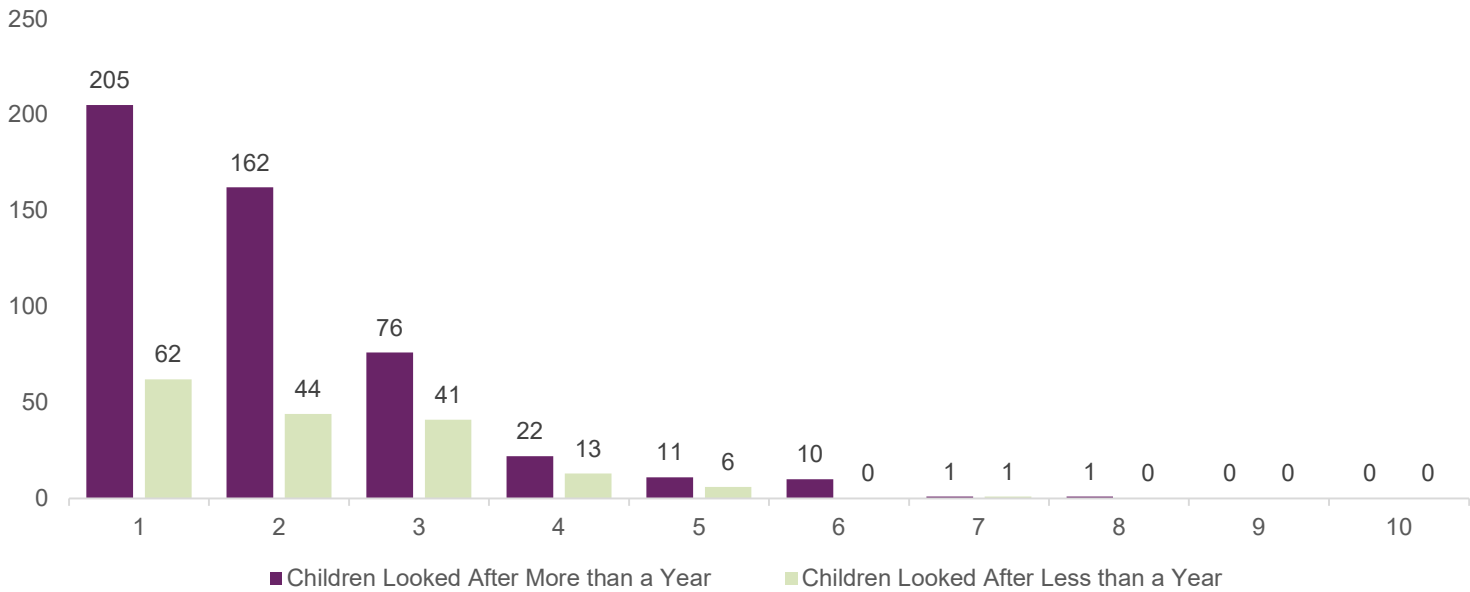
% CiC Reviews where the child attended their review (12 month rolling period)

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



Type of Participation at Review (12 month rolling period)	Number	%
PN0 - child under 4 at time of review	443	N/A
PN1 - child attends and speaks for themselves	745	58.6%
PN2 - child attends and an advocate speaks for them	37	2.9%
PN3 - child attends and conveys their views non-verbally	18	1.4%
PN4 - child attends; does not speak for themselves / convey their views	26	2.0%
PN5 - child does not attend but asks advocate to speak for them	76	6.0%
PN6 - child does not attend but conveys their feelings to the conference	264	20.8%
PN7 - child does not attend nor conveys their view to the conference	27	2.1%
Total Reviews	1715	
No Participation Code Reported	19	1.5%

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



Commentary

The child's views were recorded at 98.9% of CiC reviews. This is slightly lower than the out-turns for the previous three years, but remains very positive performance.

68.2% of children attended their review in the previous 12 months. This is a significant increase compared with previous years and has been supported and enabled through the increased use of technology.

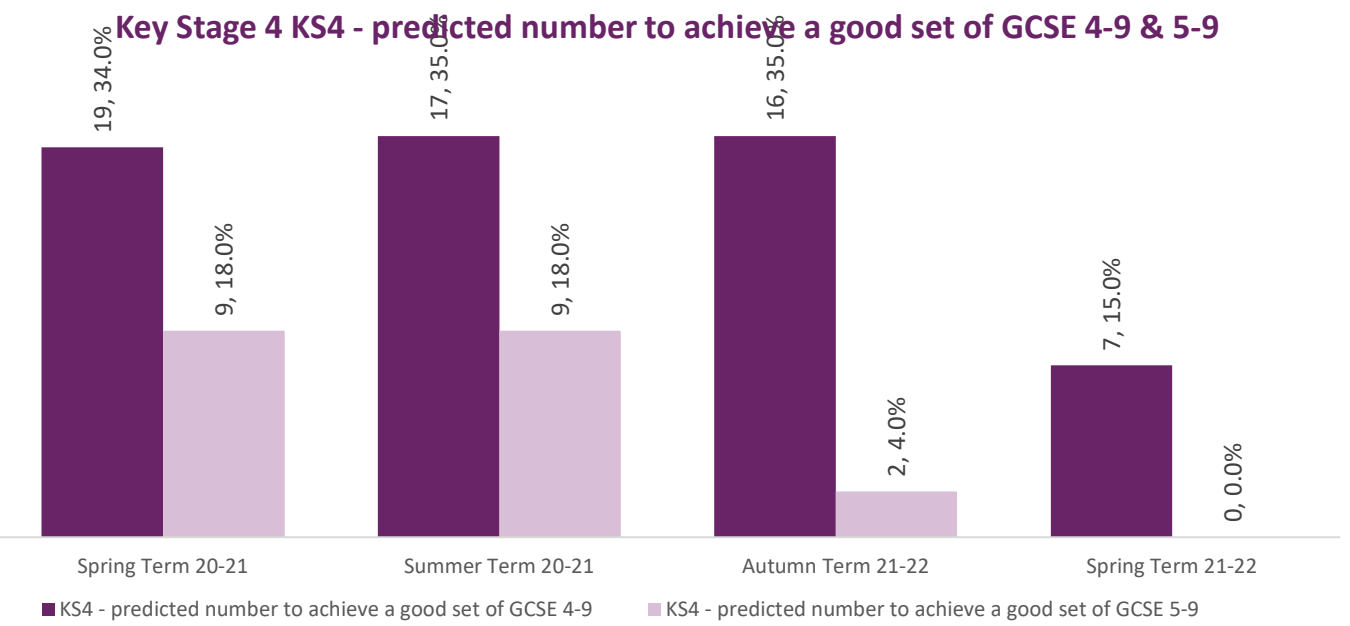
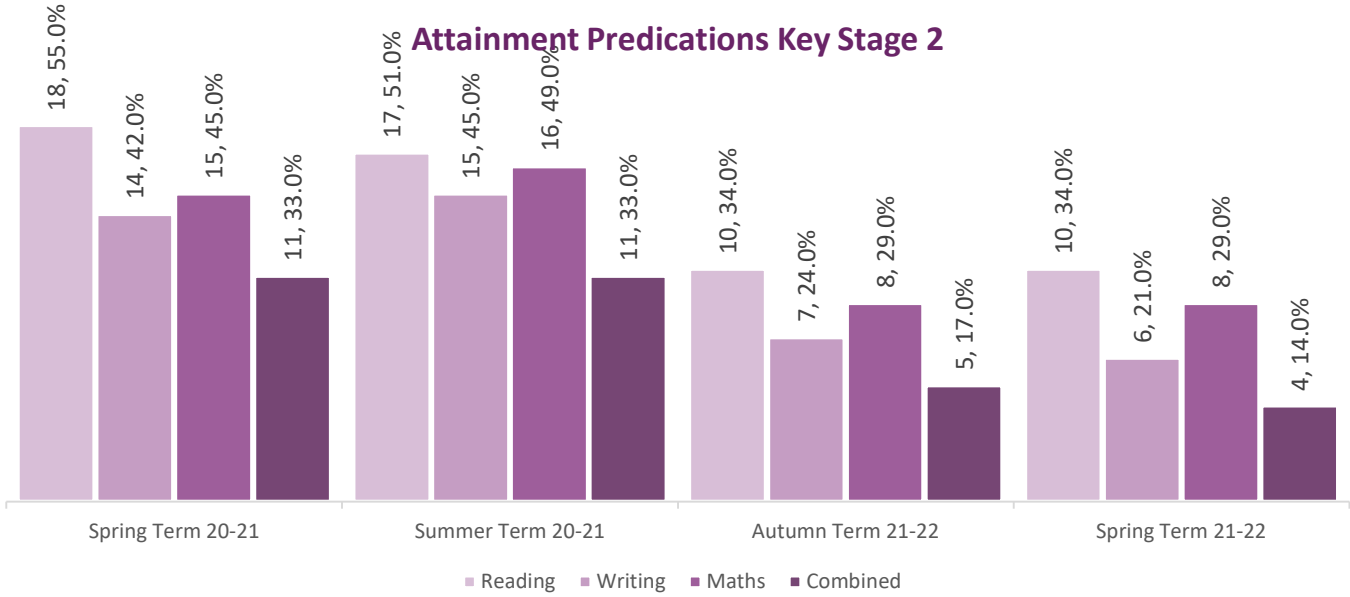
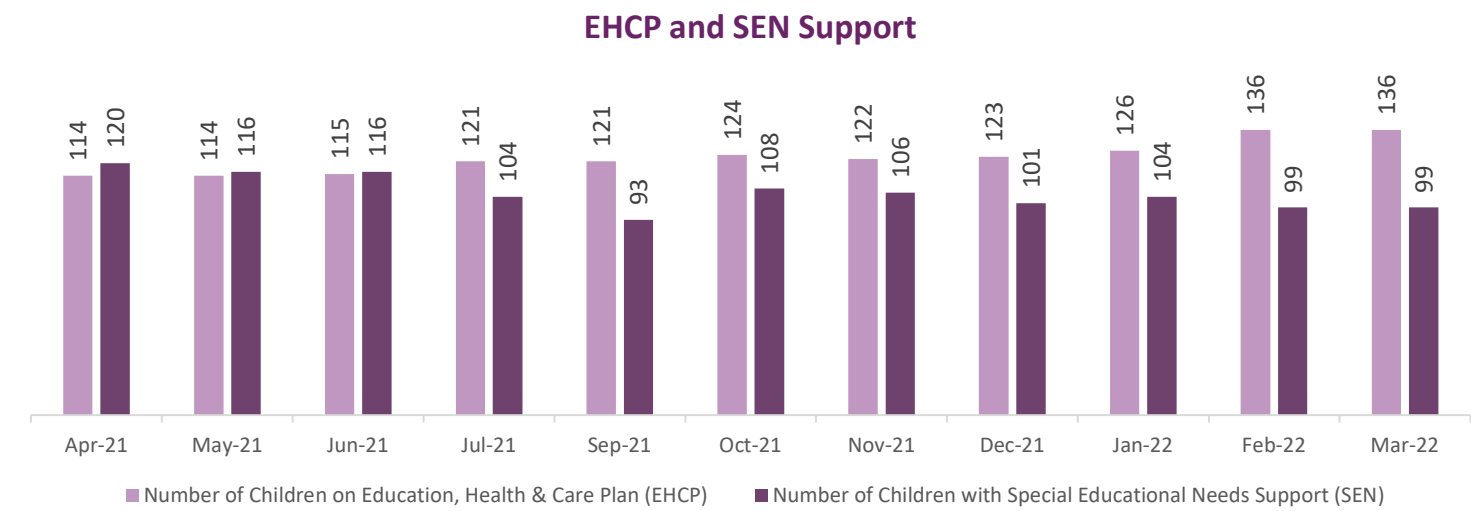
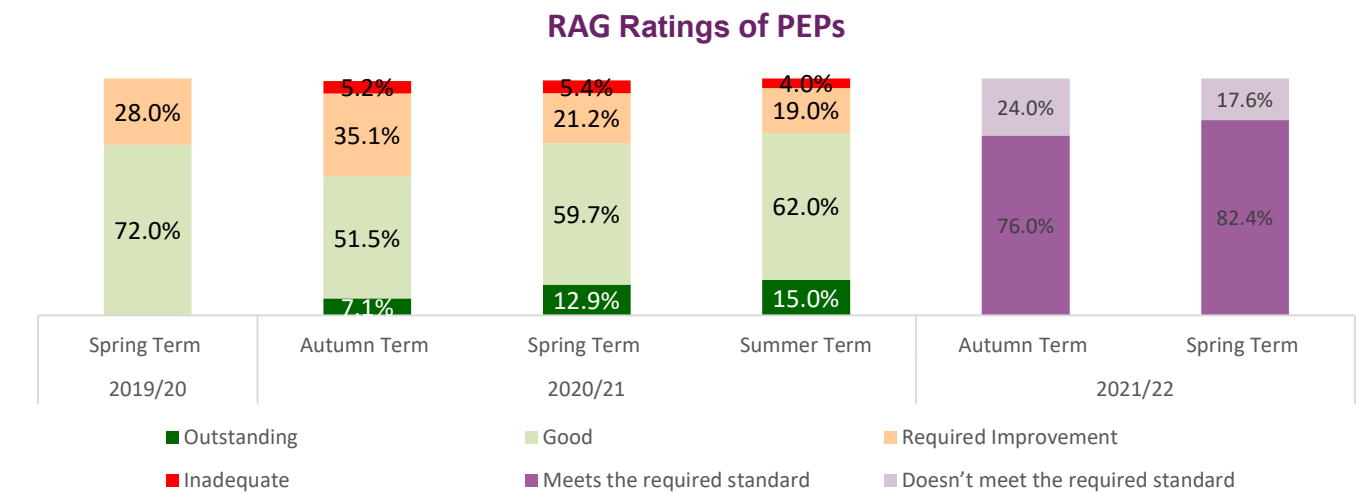
The number of children experiencing a change of social worker has increased slightly compared to the previous quarter. The number of CiC for more than 1 year who have remained with the same social worker for the past 12 months is 205. This has increased slightly from 215 at the end of the previous quarter.

Education



RAG Ratings of PEPs

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



Commentary

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

KS2 -The percentage of children predicted to achieve the expected level of attainment for KS2 combined in reading, writing and maths in spring 2021-22 was 14% which is a significant decrease compared to spring 2020-21 (33%).

KS4 -The percentage of children predicted to achieve a good set of GCSE (4-9) reported in spring 2021-22 was 15% which is a decrease compared to spring 2020-21 (15%). The percentage of children predicted to achieve a good set of GCSE (5-9) reported in autumn 2021-22 is 4% which is a significant decrease compared to autumn 2020-21 (13%).

The number of children with an EHCP has been increasing throughout the year and is at 136, compared with 114 in April 2020.

The number of children with SEN support has decreased from 114 in April 2021 to 99 in March 2022, September 2021 (93) was the lowest month in the year.

Health and Well-being

% Initial Health Check Completed in Timescale



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

% of CiC with Up to Date Health Assessments

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

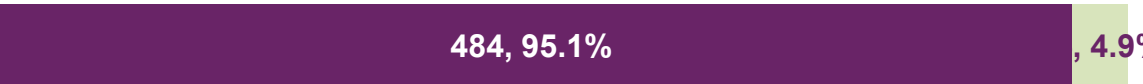


% of CiC with an up to date dental check

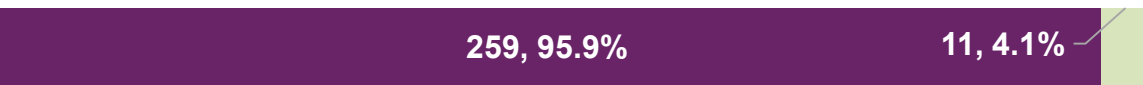
Where the child is over 5 and has been in care for over a year



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



2020/21 Walsall = 85%
2019/20 Walsall = 80%
2019/20 West Midlands = 87%
2019/20 Stat Neighbours = 90%
2019/20 England = 90%



2020/21 Walsall = 43.0%
2020/21 Walsall = 92%
2020/21 West Midlands = 33%
2020/21 Stat Neighbours = 33%
2020/21 England = 40%



Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

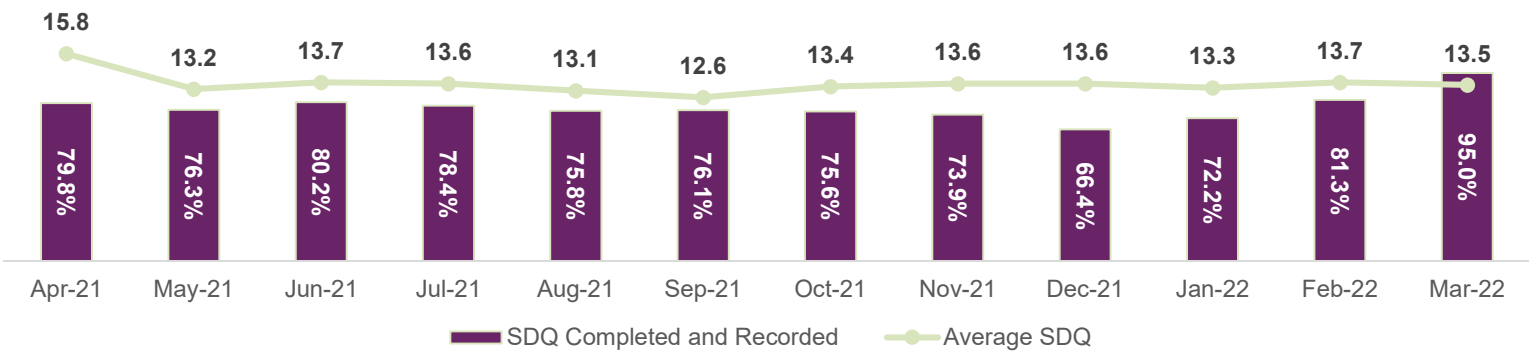
The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire should be completed for every child looked after for at least 12 months and aged 5 to 16 years-old.

Average SDQ Score
13.7

Breakdown

Score	Considered	Number	% of those eligible for SDQ	% against all Children Looked
Score 0 - 13	Considered Normal	237	53%	37.3%
Score 14 - 16	Borderline	56	13%	8.8%
Score 17 - 40	Cause for Concern	155	35%	24.4%

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

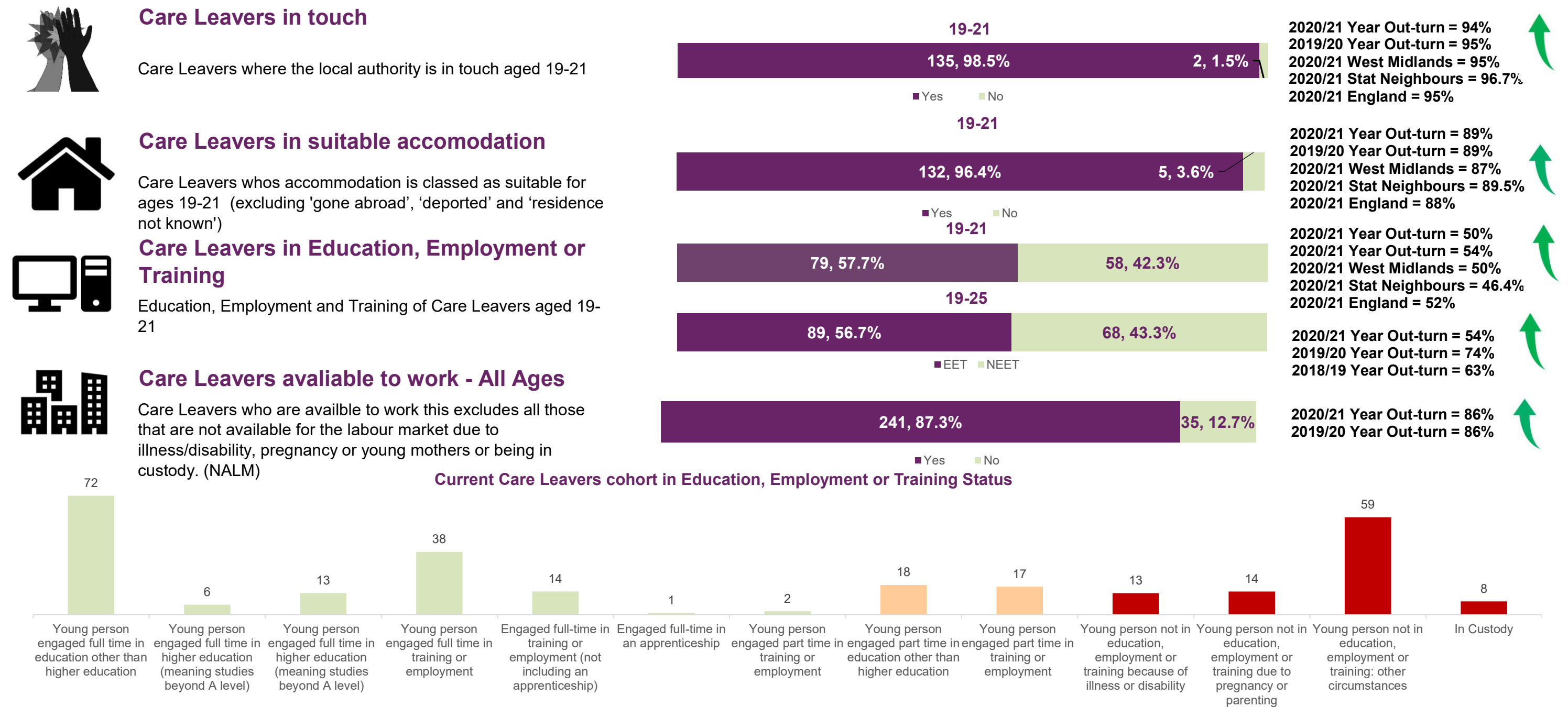


Commentary

Performance shows that the vast majority of children in care have up to date health checks just under 95.1%, compared to 85% at the end of 2020/21. There has been a positive increase in the percentage of children whose initial health checks are done on time 76.9% currently compared to 75% at the end of Q4 2020/21. Social Care and Health colleagues continue to work closely together to ensure that processes for notifying health when a child enters care are robust and the finalisation of health assessments is timely. Similarly a high and climbing proportion of children have up to date dental checks. This is a significant improvement on 2020-21 and indicates that the backlog in dental checks as a result of Covid has been cleared.

The proportion of SDQ's completed and recorded has increased significantly to 95%, compared to 79.8% April 2021. The average SDQ score is currently 13.7. This has decreased from 15.8 in April 21. 155 children currently have an SDQ score that suggests there may be a cause for concern in their emotional and mental well-being based on the answers they gave to the questionnaire.

Care Leavers

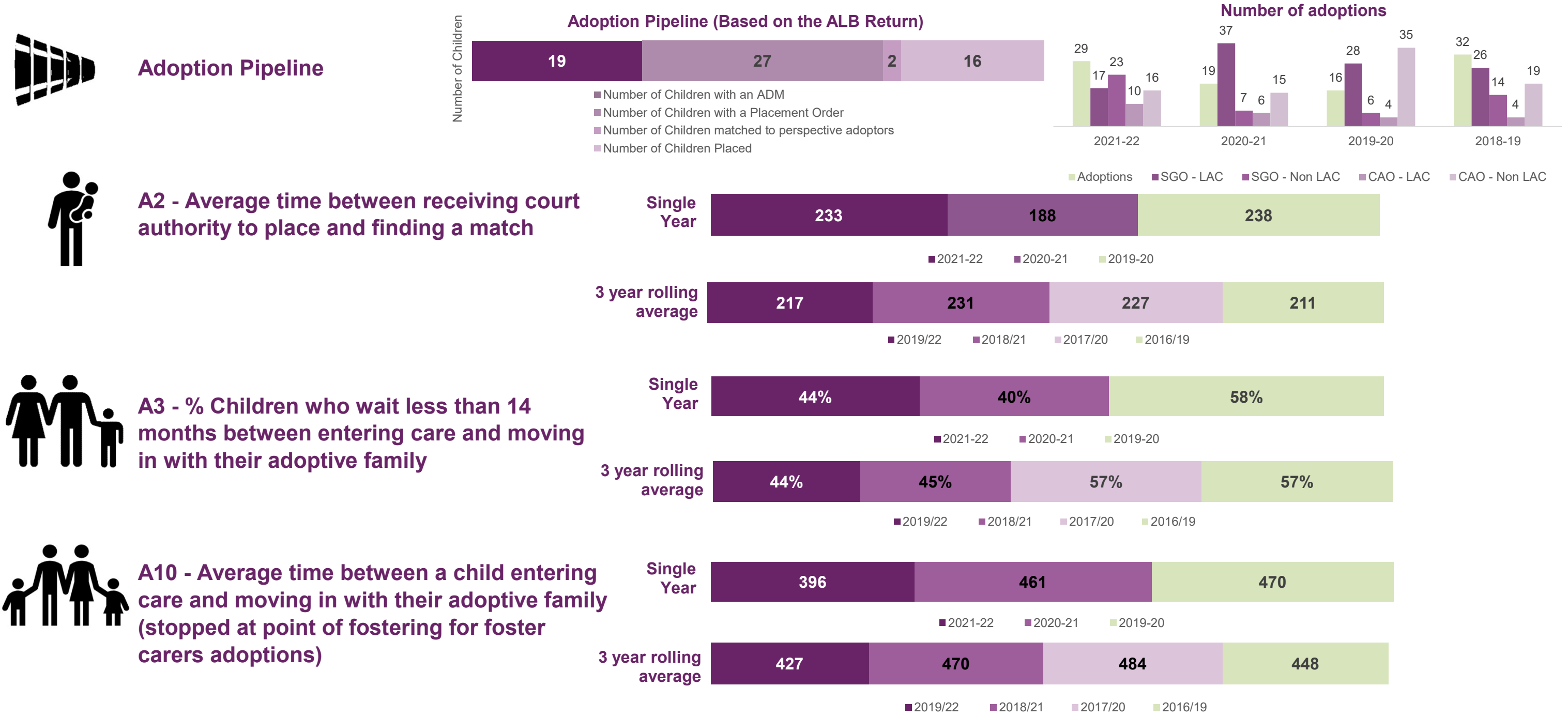


Commentary

The percentage of 19-21 year old care leavers in education, employment or training at the end of quarter 4 of 2021-22 was 57.7%. This has increased compared to last years out turn of 50%. The 19-25 cohort has also seen an increase during quarter 4, with 56.7% care leavers in Education, Employment or Training compared with the 54% 2020/21 outturn.

87.3% of care leavers are available to work - excluding those not available for the labour market (NALM) due to illness, disability, pregnancy or being a young mother or because they are in custody. 8 of Walsall's care leavers are currently in custody. The number of of care leavers in suitable accommodation remains high - of the five 19-21 year olds that are not in suitable accommodation, all 5 are in custody.

Adoption and Permanency



Commentary

There were 29 adoptions during 2021/22 this based on the latest ALB data. In 2020/21, 19 were children were adopted, this was an 28.3%

So far during the current year, children had a longer wait than in 2020/21 between receiving court authority to place and finding a match - this was 233 days compared to 188 days in 2020/21. 44% of Children wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. Between April 2021 and March 2022, 40 Children have ceased to be looked after due to special guardianship orders (17 - LAC and 23 - Non LAC) and 26 due to child arrangement orders (10 - LAC and 16 - Non LAC).

Virtual School Annual Report

Executive Summary:

Local authorities have a duty under the children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their care. This includes a specific duty to promote the child's educational achievement, wherever they live or are educated.

The Virtual school Head (VSH) is responsible for ensuring that the local authority effectively discharges its statutory duty to promote the education of children in care

Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board:

The purpose of this report is to outline the activity of the Virtual School and report on the 2020-21 educational outcomes of Walsall's children in care and the work carried out to support children and young people during the Covid pandemic

Attainment and attendance data contained in this report is for children who were in the care of Walsall Council for a year or more as at 31 March 2021.

Recommendations:

That:

The Board is asked to note the Corporate Parenting responsibilities of the Council with regard to promoting the educational achievement of children in care and children previously in care

The report be read with an understanding that the COVID19 pandemic has affected all measures this academic year and outcomes are only available for Year 11 students and based on Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). There are no reported outcomes for EYFS, KS1 or KS2 again this year.

Background papers:

The Virtual School Annual report 2020/21
The Virtual School Offer

Corporate Parenting Pledges

- We promise to help you to play and learn at a school that is right for you

- We promise to make sure that you have the best education possible and help you to plan for your future
- We promise to help you to enjoy new experiences and develop your own interests and hobbies
- We promise to make sure that you get all the help and support you need to learn, achieve and succeed
- We promise to help you with your education and with finding the right employment and training opportunities.

Resource and legal considerations

Local authority duties to improve the educational outcomes of children and young people are set out in the following legislation:

Children Act 1989, as amended by The Children and Families ACT 2014 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, as amended

The Children and Families Act 2014 amended the Children Act 1989 to require local authorities in England to appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked-after children, wherever they live or are educated. That person (the VSH) must be an officer employed by the authority or another local authority in England.

Local authorities have a duty **under section 23ZZA of the Children Act 1989 (inserted by section 4 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017)** to promote the educational achievement of previously looked-after children in their area by providing information and advice to any person that has parental responsibility for the child;

Performance management

As part of the Council's annual cycle of Employee Performance Reviews, all members of the Virtual school have non-negotiable objectives related to pupil outcomes.

Reducing inequalities:

All pupils receive appropriate levels of support and funding to achieve successful educational outcomes.

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

State here the council corporate plan priorities that this issue links to and supports.

Citizen impact:

State here the impact on the public, specific service users and other stakeholders.


Environmental impact:

State here the potential environmental impact of the scrutiny exercise

Consultation:

Access & Inclusion Senior Management Team
Virtual School Management Board

Contact Officer:

Lorraine Thompson- Virtual School & Vulnerable Groups Lead
 . 01922 652837
Lorraine.thompson@walsall.gov.uk

1. Introduction

The Virtual School Annual Report 20/21 outlines the full activity of the Virtual School. This report provides an executive summary of the work carried out by the virtual school in the 2020/21 academic year.

2. Headline Outcomes

There were 50 young people in the Year 11 reporting cohort, which consisted of:

- 30 (60%) boys and 20 (40%) girls.
- 24 (48%) had identified SEN.
- 14 (28%) had an EHCP,
- 36 (72%) were on the roll of a mainstream school
- 3 (6%) attended a maintained/academy Special School
- 11 (22%) attending an Independent Special School.

We are delighted to report that not only did we see further improvements from the 2020 GCSE results but the 2021 GCSE results were the best ever GCSE results reported for children in care

The number of young people gaining 5 or more 4-9 GCSEs (or equivalent) passes has increased from 29% in 2020 to 38% in 2021. This was better than regional, national and statistical neighbour reported outcomes

We have also seen a rise in the number of young people achieving 5-9 GCSEs from 15% in 2020 to 19% in 2021. Again this was better than regional, national and statistical neighbour reported outcomes

3. Attendance & Exclusions

Due to the pandemic the attendance of our looked after children does not give a true reflection of their engagement in education. Although our children and young people were allowed into school, many carers chose to educate children at home during the second lockdown. The government had changed the attendance reporting, and children in care were marked as authorised absence.

The overall rate of attendance for our children in in 2021 was 83.65%

We continued to have no permanent exclusions in 2021. We challenge any school which considers permanent exclusion, and implement appropriate support and intervention, using Pupil Premium Plus funding to avoid the exclusion.

In the 2020/21 academic year 37 children received at least 1 fixed term exclusion. This is a slight increase on the 2019/20 figure of 35.

This figure is below the regional and national average but reducing exclusions is a focus for improvement for the virtual school.

4. Quality Assurance of PEPs

The majority of PEPs in 20/21 academic year were held virtually. This allowed the virtual school key workers to attend a higher number of PEPs. The team attended 630 PEP meetings in the 2021 academic year.

The number of PEPs completed within time scales were 99% in the autumn term, 90% in the spring term and 96% in the summer term. The majority of those not completed within time frames were due to PEPs not being signed off before the end of term rather than PEPs not taking place. We still have work to do to ensure PEPs are completed within timescales. School are allocated two weeks from the date of the meeting to the completion of the PEP form

We continue to quality assure our PEPs and provide support and training to assist settings, schools and colleges to improve the quality of their PEPs.

The quality of PEPs improved from 58.6% being rated as good or outstanding in the autumn term to 72.6% in the spring term and 77% in the summer term.

5. Pupil Premium Plus

The Virtual School's main budget is the pupil premium plus which is devolved to the local authority and is used as seen appropriate by the VSH to improve outcomes for children in care.

The local authority received £1,193,605.00 pupil premium for the 2020/21 financial year. In line with our pupil premium policy we continued to deliver a needs based model of allocating pupil premium funding.

We continue to review our services to ensure we are meeting the educational, social, emotional and personal needs of our children in care and young people. This year, as well as commissioning a wide range specialist provision through the use of pupil premium we updated our Virtual School offer.

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

We also use pupil premium funding to provide enrichment activities to our children and young people. Some of the projects funded this year include:

Early Years Enrichment Pack- a pack of activities and resources for parents/carers to use to support the development of our children in aged 3-5 years

Summit2Success – A programme for year 7 & 8 students which runs for 9 weeks throughout the summer term with a focus on building resilience, confidence and social skills.

Artslink Project - Artslink was set up in 2018 by the consortium of 14 Virtual Schools across the West Midlands to enable all children in care across the West Midlands to access a range of experiences and opportunities that enables them to develop their interests and talents.

Walsall Virtual School

Annual Report

2020/2021



Walsall Council

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Executive Summary

Throughout the whole of the 2020/21 academic year and including the Covid 19 lockdown period the Virtual School has continued to support all children in care. We have continually reviewed our work to ensure we continue to deliver our statutory duties and provide effective support to all children and young people.

The overall number of school age children in care has increased slightly over the last 12 months from 568 in 2020 to 573 at the end of July 2021.

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

Our ePEP has been amended to capture information on how the disruption of Covid 19 has impacted on the child's education and what intervention is being put in place to support this

With the majority of PEPs taking place on line, our staff have been able to attend more PEPs and work alongside designated teachers to improve the PEPs. We have continued to see improvements in our PEPs, especially in early years and primary schools with 94% of the PEPs being rated good or better in the Summer term.

Due to the closure of schools in March 2020, national curriculum assessments and statutory collections for this year were cancelled. For the purpose of this annual report we have included EYFS, KS1, and KS2 attainment predictions based on information provided by schools in the spring term 2021 alongside attainment data from the last 3 academic years. **The 2021 predicted data is for information purposes only and will not be used to make direct comparisons or for benchmarking outside of this report.**

The number of children predicted to achieve a GLD at the end of reception increased by 15% on the previous year. The number of children predicted to achieve ARE in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 1 improved slightly in reading and stayed the same in writing and maths.

The number of children predicted to achieve the expected level of attainment at the end of KS2 increased slightly from 48% to 51% in reading but decreased from 48-45% in writing and 52%-49% in maths.

At Key stage 4 we have seen an increase in the number of young people gaining 5 or more 4-9 GCSEs (or equivalent) passes from 29% in 2020 to 38% in 2021. We have also seen a rise in the number of young people achieve 5-9 GCSEs from 15% in 2020 to 19% in 2021.

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

We continue to raise awareness of the impact of trauma and unmet attachment needs with our schools. To date we have 31 schools involved in the project and a further 14 due to join the project in September 2021

To improve the emotional wellbeing and enhance school stability we have commissioned a CAMHS practitioner to sit within the Virtual School.

Purpose of the report

The purpose of the report is to outline the activity of the Virtual School and inform the Virtual School Management Board about the educational outcomes for Walsall's children in care 2020/2021. The report reflects on achievements and identifies areas of development to achieve the best outcomes for our children in care.

Contextual data in this report is for all children in care as of 31st July 2021.

Attainment data in this report is for children who have been in care for 12 months or more as of 31st March 2021.

Context

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

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

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

Previously looked-after children are those who:

- are no longer looked after by a local authority in England and Wales (as defined by the Children Act 1989 or Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) because they are the subject of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order; or
- were adopted from 'state care' outside England and Wales. 'State care' is care provided by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other organisation whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

The duty applies to children who are in early years provision (secured by the local authority under section 7(1) of the Childcare Act 2006) and continues throughout the compulsory years of education where the child is in provision funded in part or in full by the state.

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

The VSH should:

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

It is the responsibility of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services to ensure that these duties are met.

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

The Role of the Virtual School

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

- Coordinating and quality assuring all Personal Education Plans (PEP).
- Monitoring and challenging schools to make effective use of Pupil Premium in line with the 'Pupil Premium Grant 2020 to 2021 Conditions of Grant and Pupil Premium: Virtual Heads' Responsibilities
- Tracking the academic progress, attendance and exclusions of all children in care
- Using our tracking data to highlight individuals who are not on target to achieve their predicted outcomes and providing them with additional educational support.
- Ensuring children with special educational needs or disabilities are supported appropriately.
- Implementing a range of targeted interventions to raise academic standards.
- Providing support and challenge to students, schools, social workers and carers.
- Ensuring effective transition between schools or specialist providers.
- Encouraging our young people to have high aspirations about their futures and remove barriers to further education.
- Leading training for foster carers, designated teachers, school governors and staff , and delivering bespoke training for alternative learning providers.
- Celebrating Achievements

Links to Walsall Strategies

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

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

To support these pledges the Virtual School has:

- Further developed our pre apprenticeship scheme to provide a 12 week package of support to our children in care and care leavers which includes a monthly wage, funding for transport & equipment and the allocation of a mentor
- Worked closely with all our schools to ensure first day provision is put in place for any children in care who receive a fixed term exclusion.
- Provided apprenticeship opportunities to three care leavers
- Enabled all year 11 students to have access to additional tuition to support their GCSEs
- Ensured that when a looked after child moves school they are placed in a good or outstanding school if it is the best school to meet their holistic needs
- A robust attendance monitoring process in place to ensure that children in care do not miss education
- Through targeted use of Pupil Premium provided focussed support to children in care working just below their expected levels of attainment or requested additional support with their learning
- Developed a Corporate Mentoring Scheme
- Further developed our Attachment Aware Schools Project

The Virtual School Team (as of 31st July 2021)

The Virtual School is a multidisciplinary team of dedicated professionals who provide support and guidance to our children and young people in a variety of ways

Staff roles and responsibilities:

Role	Responsibility
Virtual School and Vulnerable Groups Lead	Provides strategic leadership
Education Advisor x 2 (primary and secondary)	The Education Advisors monitor the attainment and progress of children in care and allocate appropriate resources where needed. They are also responsible for ensuring pupil premium is used effectively to improve educational outcomes
Key workers x 6 (EYFS, Primary x 2, secondary x 2, Post 16)	Key workers model and coach strategies to improve outcomes, attend PEP meetings, provide advice and guidance to parents/carers and social workers in relation to improving education. Key workers also work alongside designated teachers to help facilitate and improve personal education plans
Mentors	Mentor work alongside young people to develop appropriate relationships to engage, motivate and remove barriers to learning. Our mentors also support children in care through transitions
Tutors	Tutors provide tuition in or out of school and either face to face or online. Our tutors also support parents and carers with home learning activities
Careers Advisor	Careers Advisor provides information, advice and guidance to young people aged 14-19 in relation to their career aspirations. She supports young people making a transition to HE and FE and works alongside out NEET young people to identify appropriate post 16 provision
Education Liaison Officer	Our Education Liaison Officer has lead responsibility for previously children in care, children under Youth Justice and other vulnerable groups. They also provide specialist advice to schools where children and young people are at risk of exclusion
SEN Casework Officer	Our SEN Casework Officer works part time in the SEN assessment team to enable us to have a better oversight of those children and young people undergoing a SEN assessment and avoid any drift an delay in the EHCP process
PEP/Attendance Coordinator	The PEP/ Attendance Coordinator manages our ePEP process and tracks and monitors the attendance of our children and young people
Speech & Language Therapist	Our Speech and Language Therapists (SaLTs) support schools and carers, provide training and work directly with children and young people to maximise their communication skills.
Educational Psychologist	Educational Psychology Services are commissioned to support looked after and previously children in care who are experiencing social and emotional difficulties within the school or care placements
CAMHS Practitioner	The primary role of the CAMHS practitioner is to support education placement stability by delivering direct support to designated teachers, teachers and support staff to increase and improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health provision for looked after and previously children in care

The Virtual School Advisory Board

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

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

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



The Virtual School cohort- A profile of our learners

As of 31st July 2021 there were 623, 3-18 year olds who were on our role. This is a significant increase on the 2019 cohort due to all year 13 students being kept open to the VS until the end of the academic year. The cohort was made up of 55% male and 45% female. 48% of children are educated in Walsall and 52% educated outside of Walsall. Of those children educated outside of Walsall, 78% are educated within the West Midlands.

Year Group	Phase Summary	No. of LAC	Male	Female	Walsall School	OOB School	SEN Support	EHCP
-2	81	26	15	11	19	7	0	0
-1		32	12	20	19	13	4	0
R		23	12	11	16	7	4	2
1	183	23	14	9	14	9	5	3
2		29	12	17	16	13	6	4
3		22	13	9	15	7	8	4
4		38	26	12	16	22	9	9
5		33	18	15	16	17	7	6
6		38	22	16	23	15	10	12
7	245	32	14	18	17	15	8	9
8		39	17	22	24	15	7	9
9		56	27	28	22	30	10	16
10		55	28	27	26	29	13	14
11		63	40	23	25	38	9	15
12 & 13	116	116	70	46	30	36	4	18
Total	623	623	340	283	298	325	104	121

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

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

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

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

As of 31st July 2021:

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

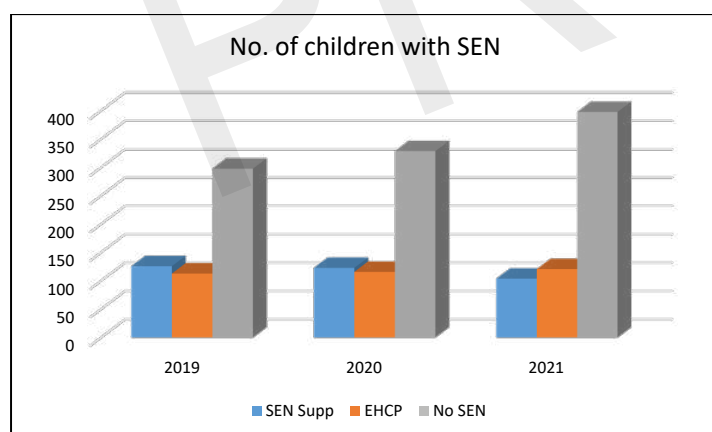
This figure has stayed the same as last year due to Ofsted inspections not being carried out throughout the Covid Pandemic.

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

Special Educational Needs

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

At the end of the 2020/21 academic year there were 121 (19%) children in care with an EHCP and 104 (17%) on SEN support. In Walsall 225 (36%) Of our learners have an identified special educational need.



Children in care are 3 times more likely to have social emotional and mental health (SEMH) as their primary needs than their peers. This is reflective in Walsall where 53 (44%) of our C & YP have SEMH as their primary need.

Due to the high number of requests for an EHC assessment and the specialist intervention required to ensure we were meeting the needs of all our children and young people with special educational needs, we decided to co-locate one of our key workers into the SEN assessment team for 16 hours a week. This enabled closer working between the SEN team and Virtual School and reduced the amount of drift and delay when children in care go through the graduated response. This pilot was so successful we created a full time SEN Casework Officer within the Virtual School who continues to work within the SEN team.

The Virtual School Lead attends the SEN panel and EHC Panel Placement Panel to advocate for children in care when additional funding or a change of placement is required.

Attainment and Progress

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

The 2020/21 predicted outcomes are for children in care who have been continuously looked after, for at least 12 months, up to and including 31st March 2021, by Walsall local authority.

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

As part of steps taken to fight the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), the Department for Education announced that all exams due to take place in schools and colleges in England in summer 2020 were cancelled and that there will be no publication of any school or college level educational performance data based on tests, assessments or exams for 2020.

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

Following concerns about the standardisation of A level results, the government and Ofqual announced on 17th August that key stage 4 (and key stage 5) students would receive their centre assessment grade (CAG) or, if higher, the standardised grade awarded by the exam boards for 2020/21.

Performance tables will not be published by the Department for Education (DfE) for 2020/21.

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

Key stage 4 grades were collected on GCSE results day.

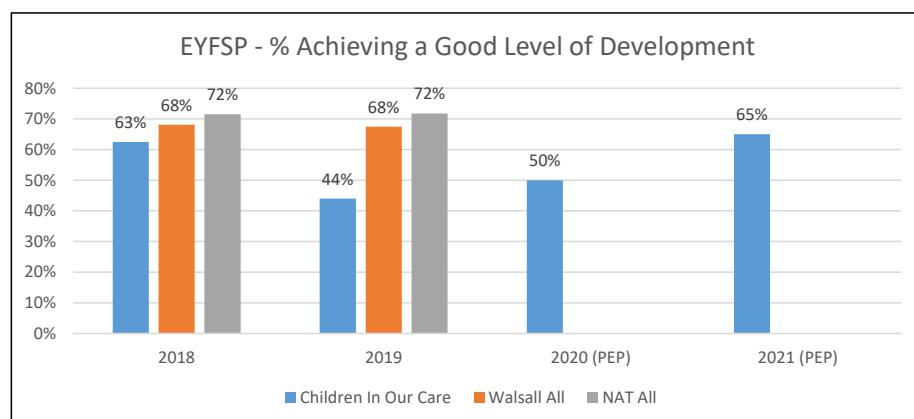
Currently, the validated 2021 outcomes for children looked after is scheduled to be released in March 2022.

Academic outcomes

Due to the closure of schools in March 2020, national curriculum assessments and statutory collections for this year were cancelled. For the purpose of this annual report we have included EYFS, KS1, and KS2 attainment predictions based on information provided by schools in the spring term 2021 alongside attainment data from the last 3 academic years. **The 2021 predicted data is for information purposes only and will not be used to make direct comparisons or for benchmarking outside of this report.**

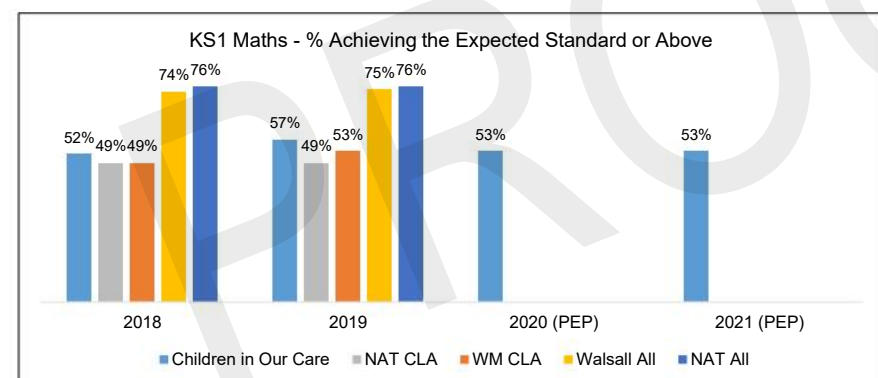
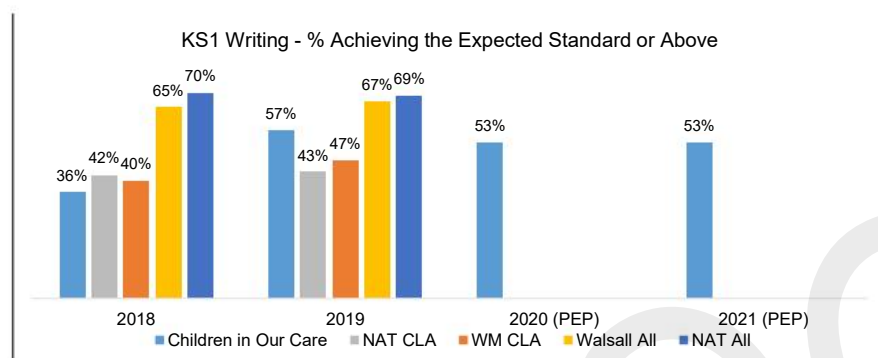
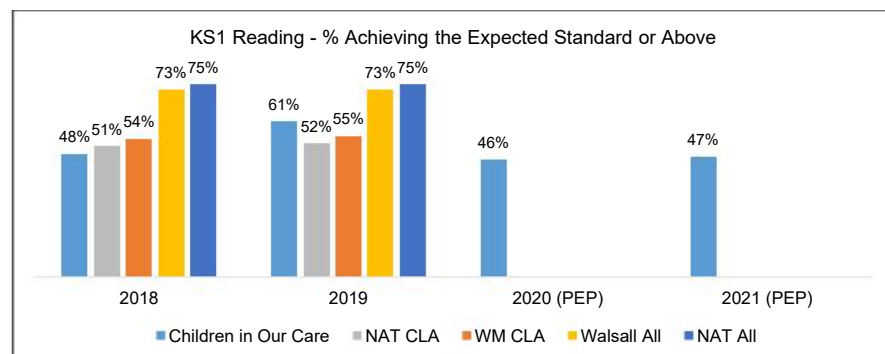
How well do our children do in Early Years

The chart below shows the number of children in care who have been in care for 12 months or more as of 31st March and who have achieved a good level of development at the end of reception 2018-19 and those predicted to achieve a GLD based on school data collected at the end of the spring term 2020-2021.



How well do our children do in Key Stage 1

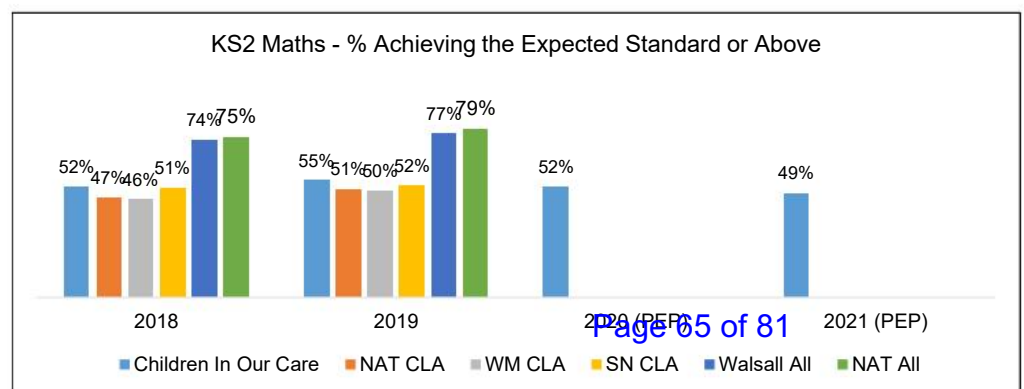
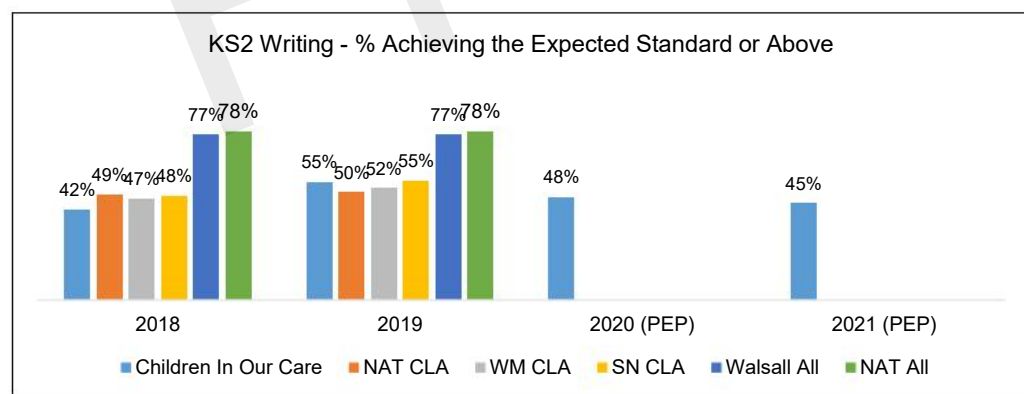
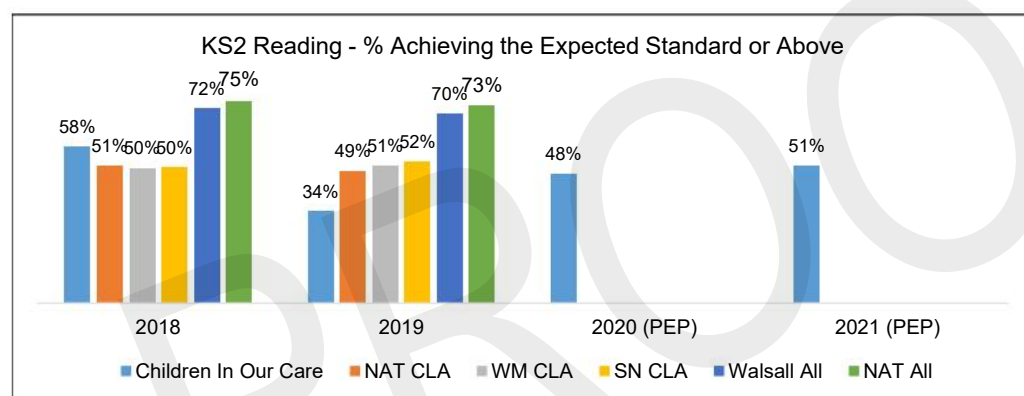
The charts below shows the number of children in care who have been in care for 12 months or more as of 31st March and who were predicted to achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at the end of the spring term 2020-2021.





How well do our children do in Key Stage 2

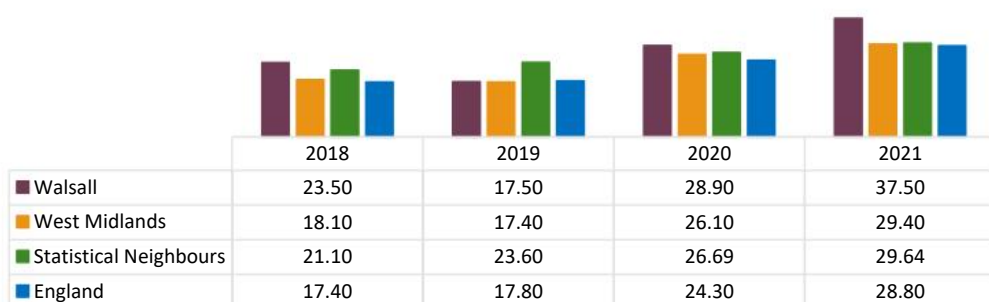
The charts below shows the number of children in care who have been in care for 12 months or more as of 31st March and who were predicted to achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at the end of the spring term 2020-2021.



How well do our children do in Key Stage 4

The charts below shows KS4 GCSE results of looked after young people who have been in care for 12 months or more as of 31st March 2021.

% of CLA Achieving 9-4 Pass in English and Maths



% of CLA Achieving 9-5 Pass in English and Maths



CLA Key Stage 4 - Average Attainment 8 Score



Attendance and Exclusions

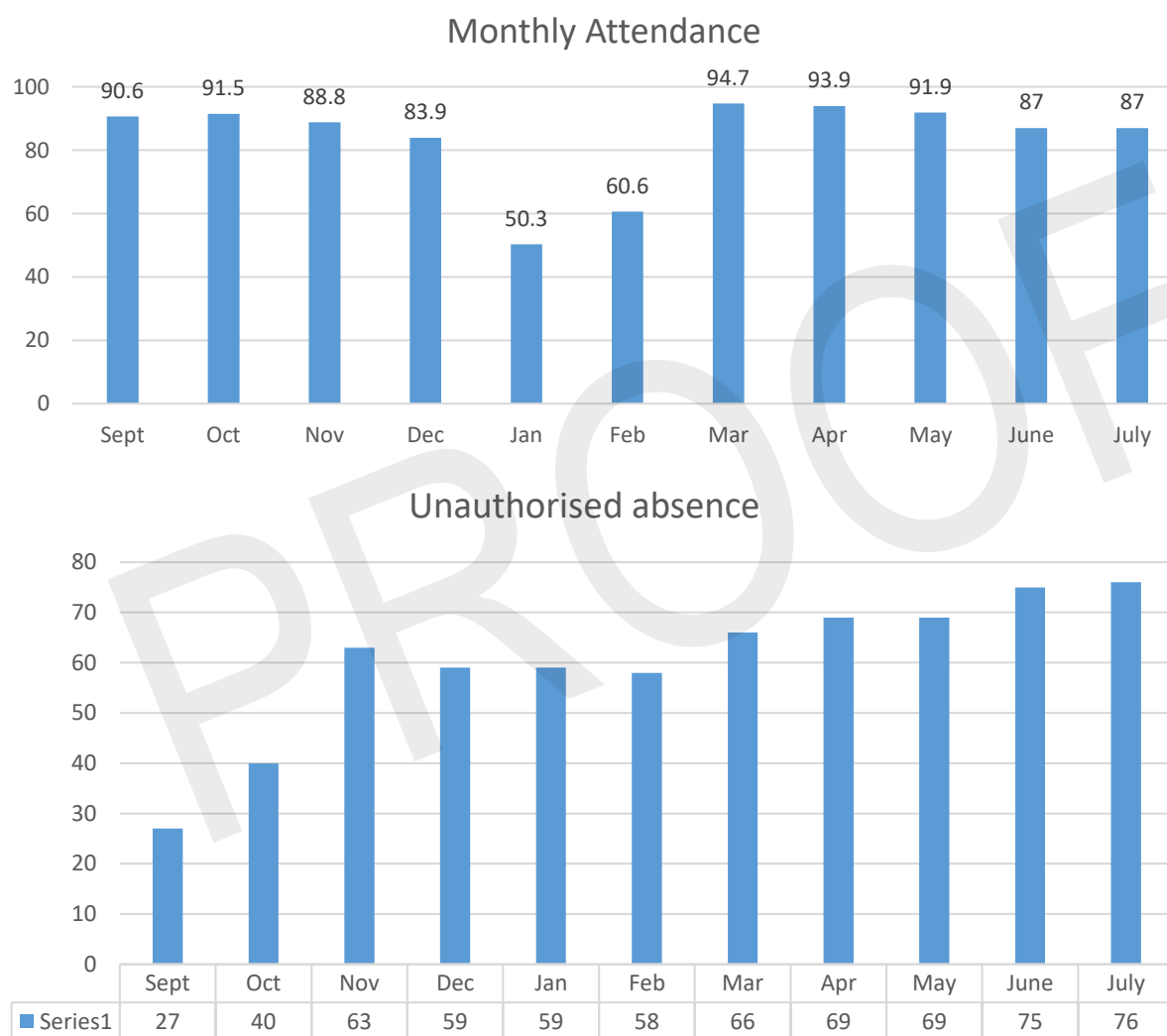
Due to the pandemic, attendance data has not been published nationally since 2019

Due to the pandemic the attendance of our children in care does not give a true reflection of their attendance. Many carers chose to educate children at home during the second lockdown and as the government had changed the attendance reporting, they were not awarded an attendance mark.

The overall attendance rate for our children in 2020 was 83.65%

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

The chart below shows the monthly attendance of our children in care aged 5-16



The chart below shows the accumulating number of children and young people who had at least 1 unauthorised absence

In order to address the unauthorised absence figure, we introduced weekly monitoring meetings to highlight any young person who had an unauthorised absence. Absences were addressed with school and carers and actions were identified and implemented to help support any anxiety-based school absence.

In some instances school miscoding was identified, this was challenged by our Attendance Officer.

Exclusions

Permanent exclusions

There have been no permanent exclusions since 2005. The Virtual School team work closely with schools to prevent any issues reaching crisis point and explore appropriate alternative options better suited to meeting the need of the young person.

We challenge any schools which consider permanent exclusion, and implement appropriate support, using Pupil Premium Plus funding to avoid the exclusion.

Fixed term exclusions

In the 2020/21 academic year 37 children received at least 1 fixed term exclusion. This is a slight increase on the 2019/20 figure of 35.

This figure is below the regional and national average but reducing exclusions is a focus for improvement for the Virtual School.

Every effort is made to prevent exclusions and Virtual School staff work closely with schools to find alternative options to an exclusion.

Although we are notified of the exclusion straight away it is normally after schools have made the decision to exclude. One-off exclusions are difficult to prevent, particularly for children out of the borough although we receive notifications through our attendance monitoring this is after the schools have made the decision to exclude. We do expect schools to inform us prior to an exclusion, but this is still an area for improvement.



Key Stage 5

The Virtual School are responsible for children in care up to the age of 18.

Priority is given to ensure all young people at the end of KS4 have a suitable identified destination and remain in employment, education or training.

Our secondary key worker attends all year 11 PEPs to ensure those who are at risk of becoming NEET have appropriate intervention in place

We use our Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI) in key stage 3 and 4 PEPs to provide early identification of any young person who would be at risk of NEET

Our careers advisor now works with young people from year 9 to ensure they have the right advice and guidance to support them into their chosen post 16 career path

The Virtual School Head also chairs the monthly NEET Action Group (NAG) where all young people aged 16-25 who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET are discussed

We aim to get the best outcomes for our care leavers by working with them as individuals, ensuring wherever they are placed, they are engaged in education, employment or training commensurate to their ability and aspirations. Each individual young person receives support and guidance towards their desired destination. For those young people moving on to university, the Virtual School has continued to remain involved at each step of the process.

The table below shows the post destination of all children in care in year 12 and 13 as of the 31stth March 2021.

2020/21 post 16 destinations	Number
6 th Form	17
6 th Form (specialist provision)	10
College	58
Training provider	12
Employment	2
Apprenticeship	2
NEET seeking EET	15
Total	116

Care Leavers Apprenticeship Programme

The Apprenticeship Programme for Care Leavers was specifically established to provide those Care Leavers who are interested in pursuing a career with the local authority, the experience and qualifications needed to secure permanent employment and so achieve adult independence and economic wellbeing.

The Programme provides care leavers with the opportunity to access paid work through an apprenticeship for a fixed-term period (normally 13 – 18 months) during which time they can gain confidence, learn new skills and gain qualifications

To ensure all young people on apprenticeships received the right support we have developed a Pre-Apprenticeship offer to all care leavers, this includes:

- A 12 week paid trial to ensure the apprenticeship is right for the young person before an official sign up
- A named mentor to support them through the duration of the apprenticeship
- A clothing/equipment allowance to ensure they are fully equipped when starting the apprenticeship
- Help with travel costs to and from the work placement
- Tuition support to help with maths/English element of the apprenticeship

11 young people were engaged on or due to start an apprenticeship as on 31st July 2021.

Placement stability

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

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

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

In 2020/21 59 children in care moved school, of these

- 49 moved school due to a placement move
- 3 young people requested a move of school
- 2 young person moved to avoid a permanent exclusion
- 5 young people moved due to a change in the SEN needs

Personal Education Plans

Since adopting the electronic PEP in 2019, we have seen a significant improvement in the quality of our PEPs. We now have a robust PEP document that is a comprehensive and evolving record of the child's education journey.

The majority of PEPs in 20/21 academic year were held virtually. This allowed the Virtual School key workers to attend a higher number of PEPs. The Virtual School teams attended 630 PEP meetings in the academic year.

The number of PEPs completed within time scales were 99% in the autumn term, 90% in the spring term and 96% in the summer term. The majority of those not completed within time frames were due to PEPs not being signed off before the end of term rather than PEPs not taking place. We still have work to do to ensure PEPs are completed within timescales. School are allocated two weeks from the date of the meeting to the completion of the PEP form.

We continue to quality assure our PEPs and provide support and training to assist settings, schools and colleges to improve the quality of their PEPs.

The quality of PEPs improved from 58.6% being rated as good or outstanding in the autumn term to 72.6% in the spring term and 77% in the summer term.

An evaluation of our PEPs was completed at the end of the academic year, this highlighted

- 20 of our schools had no PEP rated requires improvement or inadequate in 20/21
- 59 of our schools had no PEP rated RI or inadequate in the summer term
- 100% of all PEPs in Walsall Early years provision were rated good or better
- Our quality assurance process is time consuming
- Staff quality assurance was inconsistent
- More of our out of borough PEPs were rated RI or inadequate
- The majority of our RI and inadequate PEPs are secondary school PEPs

This piece of work has enabled us to identify where we need to focus to further improve our PEPs.

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



Pupil Premium Plus

The Virtual School's main budget is the pupil premium plus which is devolved to the local authority and is used as seen appropriate by the VSH to improve outcomes for children in care. The local authority received £1,193,605.00 pupil premium for the 2020/21 financial year.

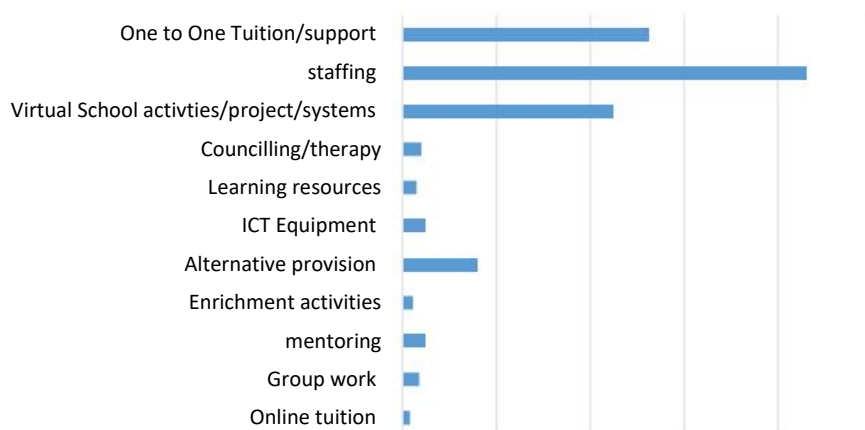
In line with our pupil premium policy we continued to deliver a needs based model of allocating pupil premium funding.

We continue to review our services to ensure we are meeting the educational, social, emotional and personal needs of our children in care and young people. This year, as well as commissioning a wide range specialist provision through the use of pupil premium we updated our Virtual School offer.

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

The tables below provide a breakdown of activities funded through pupil premium.

Pupil premium spend



Virtual School Projects funded by pupil premium

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

Artslink Project

Artslink was set up in 2018 by the consortium of 14 Virtual Schools across the West Midlands. Its mission is to create a high-quality arts and cultural offer which all children in care across the West Midlands can access. The Artslink offer is underpinned by a model of a progression pathway which provides a range of experiences and opportunities that enables children in care to develop their interests and talents.

Aspire 2 Uni (A2U)

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

The scheme is an awareness-raising programme with the aim of increasing the number of Looked-after children achieving successful outcomes pre and post-16 and consequently entering university.

To support young people to progress to higher education, Aspire2Uni designs and delivers a programme of informative and engaging outreach activities that give the young people more information and advice about what university is about, how to get there and what to study. They also offer work experience opportunities and support young people to achieve their qualifications by providing mentors and a tutor if needed.

There are currently over 40 young people on our Aspire 2 university programme. We have 7 cohorts running at present from Years 7- 11. Each cohort has 3 outreach activity days a year, 1 per term. Covid 19 has limited the number of face to face activities but online activities have still been available.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a book gifting programme for children aged 0-5 operated by the Dollywood Foundation, Dolly Parton's own charity. Their mission is to inspire a lifelong love of books and reading by placing books into the hands of children.

All children enrolled in the Imagination Library programme receive a free book every month from birth until their 5th birthday.

First News

First News is a weekly newspaper aimed at 7 to 14-year-olds that aims to get children and young people talking about the news in an easy to understand and non-threatening way. The weekly Newspaper covers issues that are relevant to children and which specifically affect them with a mix of world and UK news and loads of fun stuff, such as entertainment, games, animals, sport and puzzles. Using news as a foundation to learning develops children's ability to identify and understand the way facts are presented, explore detail in-depth and evaluate information accurately. All children ages 9-13 receive a weekly copy of first news through their door.

Storytime Magazine

Reading for pleasure is so important it's now part of the national curriculum, and magazines for children play an important role in that, as well as books. This is why we have subscribed to the magazine for all children in years 1-4. Each magazine is packed with brilliant tales for both boys and girls and each magazine includes a pack of resources relevant to each edition. The magazine is delivered monthly directly to the child's home address.

Magazine subscription

Pictures, short stories and activities open the door to the most reluctant readers, so to encourage our young people in KS4 to continue reading and help spark their interests, we offer all our young people in years 10 & 11 a free annual subscription to a magazine of their choice

Summit2Success

Summit2Success is a project we run for Year 7 & 8 students. The project runs for 9 weeks and has a focus on building resilience, confidence and social skills. As well as the weekly sessions, the group attend one day at an outdoors centre and finish off the course at a weekend residential. Young people are identified through their PEP and given the option to attend.

Early Years Enrichment Pack

Early education and care can have a huge educational and emotional impact both short and long term. We have created a pack of activities and resources for carers to use with our youngest children to support their development. We work with carers, parents and social workers to model how to use the resources. There is a range of fun activities designed to stimulate enjoyment while developing key skills. The pack is delivered termly to the child's address.

Book in a Bag

We have developed our own book gifting programme for children in primary school. These children will receive books with carefully crafted activities to go with them to cultivate a continued love of reading. They will receive their book in a bag once every term.

Attachment Aware Schools Project

As part of the local authority's Building Resilient & Inclusive Communities & Schools (BRICS) Project have developed our own Attachment Aware Schools Project. The project aims to increase awareness of trauma and attachment in relation to children's behaviour and learning.

The project is now in its second year and as of 31st July 2021 31 schools are involved in the project.

5 schools have achieved their Platinum award, 9 have achieved their gold award and 18 are working towards their Bronze award.



Support for previously children in care and young people

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

We currently have 319 previously children in care attending a school in Walsall. This is an increase of 25 since last academic year.

- 146 ceased to be looked after through a Special Guardianship Order
- 136 ceased to be looked after through adoption
- 21 ceased to be looked after through a Child Arrangement Order
- 16 ceased to be looked after through a Residency Order

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

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

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

Although we have relatively small numbers of UASC in Walsall, the number of young people arriving into Walsall has increased slightly over the last 12 months to 14 young people classed as UASC.

In order for to provide support to this cohort of young people our English tutor completed a Training English to speakers of other languages course which has enabled enable her to deliver ESOL courses to children and groups of children in addition to their school or college lessons. Additional English sessions were delivered during the school holidays.

All children in care with English as their second language receive a laptop to help with communication and to enhance their studies. They also receive a Pearson (Nimbl) tablet. The tablet provides young people with access to a whole library of interactive resources especially designed to help them with their school work.

Training for professionals

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

In the 2020/21 academic year the following training was delivered to schools, social workers and foster carers

- Identifying and supporting care experienced children with communication needs in early years
- Identifying and supporting care experienced children with communication needs in primary
- Identifying and supporting care experienced children with communication needs in secondary
- Study skills support
- How to use Dr Karen Treisman resource to support emotional wellbeing
- An introduction to Trauma & Attachment
- How to use the SDQ
- Person centred training
- Solution circles training



Celebrating Achievement

Due to the Covid outbreak it was not possible to hold the annual celebration events.

Virtual School staff have sent termly praise/well done post cards to children and young people for achievements identified in their personal education plans.

Covid 19/Summary

Throughout the whole of the 2020/21 academic year and including the Covid 19 lockdown period the Virtual School has continued to support all children looked after. We have continually reviewed our work to ensure we continue to deliver our statutory duties and provide effective support to all children and young people.

We encouraged our children to attend school to support their education, maintain routines and prevent additional strains on placement with children not being in school. This meant that our children who attended school, especially in the summer term of 2020 and spring term of 2021, were taught in very small group sizes with high levels of adult support. We were aware that children would need support to adjust to all children returning to school, and through the PEPs and Virtual School knowledge of the children offered individualised support to schools on how to manage this change. Educational psychologist support has also been used to support this process using pupil premium.

Where children were not attending school, we worked closely with schools, carers, parents and social workers to ensure that all children had access to appropriate educational provision. We also supported parents/ carers to access other online learning, including our online learning platforms, Reading Eggs and Doodle Maths.

We continued to ensure that every child had a termly PEP, which was quality assured by Virtual School staff. Our ePEP has been amended to capture information on how the disruption of Covid 19 has impacted on the child's education and what intervention is being put in place to support this. The Young Person's Section of the PEP was also amended to gather pupil views of the impact of COVID on their education, and ensure their voices were part of the planning process moving forwards.

Virtual School team have analysed attainment and continue to ensure that appropriate provision is in place for each child to limit the impact of the pandemic. This will include tuition from our Virtual School tutor for children in Years 2, 6 and Reception, tuition offered to all year 11 children, and then further tuition via the PEP for any child who would benefit from this support. Academic mentors have also been identified for some children in secondary school.

We have also worked closely with schools to support any collection of evidence for EHCP requests. The pandemic meant that some of this collection of evidence was limited, and so we have attended PEPs for children who are not making expected progress to ensure appropriate SEN provision is in place and if not, appropriate next steps are made.

We are aware of the impact the COVID pandemic may also have on the social, emotional and mental health needs of the children in our care. With this in mind, we have planned a number of school and carer training sessions to be led by our Educational Psychologists and new CAMHS practitioner. Our Speech and Language Therapists will also continue to share their knowledge and expertise in training sessions for school, parents/carers and social workers.

Case studies

1. Supporting the emotional health and well-being of a primary aged looked after child

Child's core experiences

CB has been in care for 2340 days due to neglect, and parental drug misuse and domestic violence. CB and her younger sibling were placed in a connected person's placement for 5 years after the Care Order was enforced, however this ended recently due to ongoing concerns. In June 2020 CB and her sibling were placed with a foster carer and have appeared relatively settled since this move.

School Context

CB is in year 5 in a mixed gender primary school for children aged between 3 – 11 years old. This school has capacity for 315 students, of these 5 are Walsall Children in care (LAC). The school has an Ofsted rating of 'Outstanding' (May 2016). The Designated Teacher (DT) is very proactive in seeking support for the LAC, and promotes good communication between the professionals involved.

Child's needs at school

CB is currently working below age related expectations in Maths, Literacy, and Reading. The school have identified that CB struggles with sound recognition (phonics) and spelling, and this has caused CB to have some reluctance to engage in literacy work. CB prefers to demonstrate her understanding verbally. CB also struggles with her times tables due to difficulty retaining information. CB continues to practice time tables and reading with her carers and in addition, interventions have been put in place in school to bridge this gap. CB is now making progress towards achieving age related expectations in Maths and Reading.

CB is on the SEN register at school and receives extra support for this.

CB has struggled with her social skills since moving to a new school. She has difficulty communicating her feelings and regulating her emotions. This can lead to CB having emotional outbursts in school including shouting/screaming in class and has made some of CB's peers wary of her. CB has formed some friendships but she needs to develop skills to maintain and repair relationships with her peers.

CB has good attendance in school, although has had to isolate a number of times due to COVID-19. Whilst isolating, CB completed the school work with the support of her carer.

There are some concerns about CB's Social, Emotional, and Mental Health, her SDQ score is in the 'Very High' range, and she has difficulty managing her emotions. CB has recently transitioned to the school and therefore relationships with staff are still fairly surface level. Staff have indicated that at times CB is reluctant to follow instruction, and is quite focused on retaining control of the situation.

Control Chart to help with control issues, and make CB feel more comfortable in following instruction.

Intervention

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

- Emotion Coaching to develop emotional intelligence, and improve communication and relationships with peers and school staff. Using Emotion Coaching resources, including emotion fans, empathy work, and problem solving, as well as modelling.
- Mindfulness to address issues with self-confidence, self-esteem and provide solutions to anxiety. Supported by self-esteem activities (Butterflies of positivity) and mindfulness strategies to manage anxiety.
- Zones of Regulation to develop self-regulation skills, manage sensory needs and improve ability to problem solve.

The SMART goals of this support were:

- To recognise when growing distressed and use language to express this to an adult 2-3 times a week
- To use mindfulness strategies to manage feelings of distress, reducing outbursts in class to 1-2 times a week
- To use friendship skills to repair relationships with peers, resulting in the initiation of one meaningful relationship

The expected outcomes of this support are for CB to notice and communicate her feelings with school staff and peers and use strategies to manage these emotions, leading to improved relationships with schools staff and peers.

Child's Views of the support

CB explained that she had enjoyed the sessions, and that together the mentor and her had explored Emotions and Friendships. She had also enjoyed learning how to play 'Dobble'

Impact of Intervention

In total 11 sessions were completed with CB. This was increased from the original 10 planned due to issues with COVID-19. The DT felt that an extra session was needed to support CB through the lockdown period.

CB engaged with the mentor support well and has benefited from the sessions. CB's communication skills have improved, she can comfortably discuss how she is feeling and reflect on the reasons behind her emotions. The DT reiterates this, reporting that CB has not had any further emotional outbursts but instead has been communicating with her teacher and TA about her

Initially CB found it very difficult to take instruction, she demanded control over the sessions and preferred giving instruction. Over time CB began trusting the mentor more, and also benefitted from the 'Responsibility Chart'. This allowed CB and the mentor to delegate responsibilities, for example; Reading, Spelling, Choosing Game. This reduced conflict in the session and lessened CB's concern about taking instruction. CB is now much more comfortable in taking instruction, and is willing to be led through an activity. This also means that CB is more comfortable with receiving assistance with her work and is more open to correction with her reading or spelling.

The DT has reported that CB has formed a very good relationship with the teaching assistant in her class, and responds positively to teachers.

CB's relationship with her sibling remains strong and she has been able to manage conflicts within this relationship well. The mentor and CB have explored negative thought patterns, and this has enabled CB to reflect on conflicts with her sibling in a healthy way. CB has been able to identify how the conflict made her feel, and counter the statements with facts she knows to be true. This can be challenging and needs to be rehearsed, therefore this work should be continued

2. Supporting the educational attainment in Key stage 2 and transition to secondary school

Child's Core experiences

KL has been in care since July 2020 due to neglect, experiencing significant emotional harm and was at risk of physical harm in her mother's care. There were no family members suggested to care for KL so she was placed with a foster family. KL had stability within that placement while parental assessments were taking place with a view to KL possibly being placed with father.

School Context

KL is in year 6 in a mixed gender junior school for children aged between 7 – 11 years old. This school has capacity for 240 students, of these 2 are Walsall Children in care (LAC). The school has an Ofsted rating of 'Good' (January 2017). The Designated Teacher (DT) is very proactive in seeking support for the LAC and has attended Virtual School training to support her professional development

Child's Needs at school

KL is just about working within Age Related Expectations in maths, reading and writing but due to her lack of self-confidence is finding it difficult to maintain these levels. However, school and Virtual School tutor felt that with additional support KL was capable of achieving ARE.

KL is a quiet girl who takes time to form a relationship. Once she feels confident with a person, she begins to share her thoughts and opinions. She has a group of set friends. She is extremely polite and enjoys 1:1 tuition sessions. She is very keen to learn new concepts. During the first part of lockdown, she remained at home. She returned to school in May.

It was decided in the summer term, that as the Virtual School tutor had built a strong relationship with KL, the tuition would also involve some transition work to prepare her for secondary school.



Intervention

1:1 Tuition was identified by the Virtual School Education Advisor to support KL with her maths and literacy. Tuition started on 14th September 2020 and continued for the academic year 2020-21. It was reviewed termly, but each time was felt that it was having a positive impact and it would support KL to have tuition for another term. The tuition was for an hour per week, split into 40 minutes for maths and 20 minutes for reading/writing. The tuition was expected to improve her confidence so that she can meet or exceed Age Related Expectations by the end of the academic year.

Child's View of support

KL enjoys the 1:1 tuition sessions and often comments about how much she has learnt. She is methodical in her work and comments about the new strategies she is learning. She has informed the tutor that she could use these strategies in her class lessons. She was pleased that she achieved 39 out of 40 questions in her Maths Test, which was conducted in class. She said that some of the concepts we had covered were in the test which made her feel more confident. She is beginning to recognise how much she can achieve.

The DT was also pleased with her progress. During her time at home during lockdown, KL chose to write a story book which she has completed with support and guidance from Virtual School tutor. KL wrote a 50 page plus story and completed illustrations. She is very proud of this achievement and enjoys talking about this.

KL's view of transition was that:

- She is nervous and excited at the same time
- She is worried about what the new people she meets will think of her. She said 'ages ago I felt upset and insecure about myself. But I'm not that worried. My life has changed so much(She mentioned being in care) and I'm not the quiet ne now
- When asked if she was worried about her education and not achieving predicted grades, KL said, "Not really, I did well in my SATS and I didn't think I would do well because of everything that happened

However, following the support she shared that she was happy with her support and transition to secondary school, and said, "I think because my new school is smaller than a lot of secondary schools this has helped me as I don't like big groups. When asked if she was worried about her education and not achieving predicted grades, KL said, "Not really, I did well in my SATS and I didn't think I would do well because of everything that happened.

Impact of Intervention

KL ended Key Stage 2 working comfortably at Age Related Expectations in reading, writing and maths

With support from school and the Virtual School tutor, KL was able to access Reading Eggs and Doodle Maths (Virtual School online learning platforms) regularly which supported her learning.

At the end of year 6, KL was awarded the class award prize. Only two children from each class are chose each year, so it's a big achievement.

Her secondary school reports that she has settled in well and coped well with the transition to secondary school.

3. Improving the educational outcomes of young people in KS4

Child's Core Experiences:

AJ has been in care since Feb 2020. She has lived in one foster placement since coming into care. She has lived with her sister in the foster placement since they came into care. She has 3 brothers and 1 sister but she doesn't live with any of her siblings.

School Content:

AJ has been to one secondary school. She didn't move school when she came into care and she has been at her current secondary school since year 7. AJ has no SEN needs. Her school has 9 other Walsall CLA. It has an RI OFSTED rating and 1429 young people on role between the ages of 11-19.

Child's needs at school:

AJ enjoys going to the gym. She is good at sports. She was on the athletics team at school. She had academic mentor support from school during Y11, and extra support from the GCSE PODS. She had a good group of friends at school and during year 11 had very good attendance. She had good behaviour and engages with the school behaviour system well. This improved since she came into care. Prior to that her behaviour was a concern.

Intervention:

At her first PEP Virtual School identified that she was capable of gaining grade 4 for both English and Maths, but was working below that grade in both areas. In consultation with AJ, school, home and social worker we put in an hour of English tuition via an external agency; and an hour of Maths tuition via our internal Virtual School tutor. Tuition started on the 12/1/2021 and finished on the 5/5/2021.

Child's view of support:

She reported struggling with English throughout her time in Y11 so appreciated the sessions. She engaged fully with them and all the reports say that she had a fantastic attitude to learning as she asked for the tutor to send her additional work. This shows that she was happy with the sessions.

Impact of Intervention:

AJ attended the vast majority of her tuition sessions. Both tutors reported that she was fully engaged and working well throughout. They reported that she was achieving the targets that were set as she worked through the sessions. She passed her English and Maths GCSE's and went on to a L2 Apprenticeship at a Primary School. She needed 4's to get onto the apprenticeship. Virtual School also sourced and funded a safeguarding course that she had to complete in order to gain her place on the apprenticeship. She completed the course.



4. Supporting young people with mental health issues during Covid 19

Child's Core Experiences:

LR has been in care since Jun 2019. She lived with her Mum for some of this time and then a short term foster placement, followed by a longer term foster placement where she has been since Oct 2020. She has lived with her sister in the foster placement since they came into care. Her younger sister has recently moved out and LR has stayed with the same carer.

School Content:

LR has been to 2 schools. One primary and one secondary. She has been at her current secondary school since year 7. LR Has had an EHCP since Dec 2017. The primary need is for Cognition and Learning. She has 15 hours TA support, regular mentoring sessions and support from her school hub if she wants it. The school has an OFSTED rating of 'Good'. They have 8 other Walsall CLA. They have 1489 children on roll of mixed gender between 11-19 years old.

Child's needs at school:

LR loves outdoor activities such as running, street dancing and boxing. She was on the athletics team at school. She enjoys seeing her friends at school but also enjoyed home learning during lockdown. LR had additional Maths support from a TA at school during year 10. She also has a school mentor and key person to speak to at school. She has a good group of friends at school and during year 10 had very good attendance. She has good behaviour and engages with the school behaviour system well.

Intervention:

Virtual School Offer ensured that she had mentoring sessions, in school and face to face, once a week to address the need identified in her PEP during lockdown. She told staff that she felt depressed and had headaches during lockdown. The mentoring was put in place to address this. There was a slight delay/disruption due to school bubbles and ways of working, but the mentoring started in Oct 2020. There was an attempt to do online/phone call sessions when in person couldn't take place, but that didn't work, so sessions re-started in person when they could. The mentor and DT communicated well so that our mentor was aware of any issues that had taken place in the week between sessions.

Child's view of support:

LR has attended her mentoring sessions as often as she could given the covid lockdowns and outbreaks at school. LR has always been engaged in the sessions and keen to attend. Her feedback was as follows:

I feel like it helped me and gave me a free mind after. It just helped me in areas I needed to improve on. I will take away the worry jar with me because after that it gave me positive thoughts and gave me a happy mood. Also I would take the sense with me because it helps me feel less worried and less negative and also makes me feel more confident as well.

Impact of Intervention:

The social worker has reported that the sessions have been helpful, and LR reported that she wanted a second block of support, following lockdown. As the mentor works for Virtual school they will be able to support longer term, as she moves into Y11. The sessions helped her transition back into school following the disruption of covid. It helped her stay settled in school and get things off her chest so that she could be open to learning at school following the sessions. She also learnt about mindfulness, communication, and managing anxiety via work that was completed with the mentor.

PROOF