

13 October 2015

**Walsall Self Assessment of Children's Social Care and Safeguarding
(including performance data)**

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor Eddie Hughes – Care and Safeguarding

1. Summary of report:

- 1.1 This report is one of a regular pattern in which key performance information about the Children's Social Work and Safeguarding service is submitted to the Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The data is provided at **Appendix 1** and covers the period up to the end of Quarter 1 of the current year, i.e. 30 June 2015. The purpose of this report is to highlight and provide commentary on those items that appear most significant.
- 1.2 Members will be aware that, following Ofsted's "inadequate" judgement of the service in 2012, a number of processes were put in place. They included the establishment of an Improvement Board, which was disbanded after the 2013 "adequate" judgement and the lifting of the Government's Improvement Notice in July 2014. In the Spring of 2015, officials from the Department of Education visited Walsall. They were satisfied with the service's improvements which led directly to the Minister, Edward Timpson MP, writing to say that Walsall was making good progress and that no further government monitoring was required. The removal of these various arrangements makes this Panel's role in monitoring and challenging performance all the more important.
- 1.3 Our last report to this Panel was in June 2015 and took the form of a presentation of the key issues (rather than an analysis of the full data set). It therefore included some information that is not available in that data. The issues raised were generally positive and that remains the case three months on from that time. The one exception to this is that the reduction in social work caseloads to an acceptable level has not been sustained. The summer months have seen an increase in demand for our services, and especially in the complexity of the cases being presented. This is not apparent from the measures included in the **Appendix**, but average caseloads have increased from 20 to around 24. Changes in context and external factors such as welfare benefits are likely to continue that trend. Children's Services and our partners are aiming to counteract at least some of that with new efforts to prevent the escalation of situations to the point where they need a social work response.

This is particularly improved and effectiveness of range in availability increased. Early Help Services which support families and meet their needs earlier to prevent them getting to a point of needing social care intervention. Those developments and improvements are being reported separately to this Panel.

2 Recommendations

2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide detail and context in respect of a set of varied performance indicators, rather than to attempt to give a single overall rating. Despite that, officers believe that the general trend continues to be positive. It is also the case that intelligence from other processes is needed to provide a rich picture of the quality of our services. For that reason we continue to conduct regular case file audits and reviews of particular areas of practice to measure and inform our continued service improvement. We currently have focused improvement workstreams to:

- Increase the number of permanent social workers and reduce agency staff
- Reduce re-referral rates to the Initial Response Service
- Reduce timescales for adoption
- Reduce numbers of children needing to become looked after
- Improve the range and quality of Early Help Services
- Reduce repeat Child Protection Plans

2.2 It is recommended that, after discussing any items of interest to its Members, the Panel notes the content of this report.

Background papers:

Although reference is made within the report to action plans that the service is working on, the only directly relevant paper is the spreadsheet showing the dataset. That is attached as an **Appendix** to this report.

Reason for scrutiny:

This Scrutiny Panel receives regular reports (at least twice each year) on the key headline performance indicators of the Children's Social Care service. This serves two principle purposes: It provides information to Members about the general quality of the service and whether its trend is positive or negative. In addition, it enables examination of specific areas of performance, including those which benefit from an understanding of the context or of some of the detail that lies behind the statistics. In some cases that examination may lead to particular lines of enquiry which the Panel wishes to pursue through further work.

Resource and legal considerations

The report itself contains only data and analysis. It makes no particular recommendations for action which would have any impact on resources. Some of the data presented relates to the way in which the service meets its statutory expectations. However, there are no specific legal considerations arising from the report.

Citizen impact

The report describes the performance of services that are provided to parents and children in Walsall. However, the report itself makes no proposal which would impact on citizens.

Environmental impact

There is no such impact arising from this report.

Performance management

The report is explicitly concerned with the performance of the services it covers.

Equality Implication


There is no such impact arising from this report, though the services it relates to are predominantly delivered to people from groups that are disadvantaged as a result of such factors as age, poverty and disability.

Consultation

This report contains and explains information taken from performance management systems. That information is used in various ways across the service, which may involve the views of stakeholders. However, the report itself requires no consultation with citizens, staff or partners.

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Report

1. Analysis of Attached Data

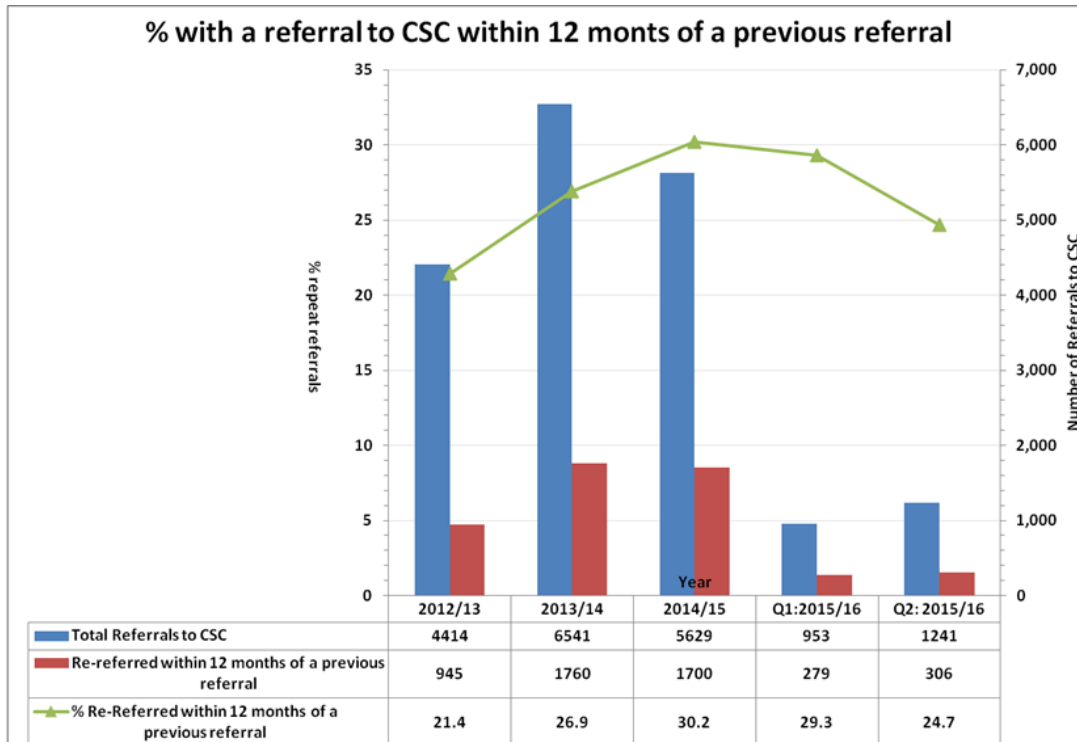
1.1 Early Help data (1.0) suggests there has been a significant reduction in assessments conducted. However, there is good reason to believe that this is a consequence of the way that many domestic abuse cases were classified and recorded in the previous year. An improvement plan has been delivered to ensure that professionals across all agencies know when to seek an Early Help assessment and when single agency support is provided which does not need a multi-disciplinary assessment. The reduction has therefore been in cases where the requests were inappropriate, which cuts wasted effort out of the system and allows for better attention to the cases where Early Help input is really needed. Re-requests for Early Help within a 12 month period have increased from 17.8% to 20.5%. Consultation with professionals and case file audits have identified that 'non engagement' of families, lack of a 'whole family' response that treats the underlying causes and a lack of confidence by professionals reluctant to hold risk resulting in them escalating enquiries are the main causes of re-referrals.

The planned move to locality working will ensure more effective conversations between professionals and across the partnership, better and more inclusive decision making and crucially secure more appropriate responses and packages of support to help families early on without the need for statutory intervention. Current recording mechanisms do not allow accurate reporting and understanding of the impact of Early Help. The implementation of Mosaic will aid this process.

1.2 Front Door (2.0) Perhaps the biggest recent change in Walsall's data has been the reduction in the number of referrals to the service. Officers have previously informed this Panel that the rate of referral had for one month, almost a year ago been the highest in the country. This was believed to be a reflection of other agencies being unwilling or unable to manage low level risks. That meant that most of the cases presented to our "front door" through the Initial Response Service required no further action from social care services. Members will see that the rate of referral has almost halved from its peak during 2013-14. However, the number of cases requiring social work attention and intervention has not reduced. The situation has improved as the result of various factors, which includes a series of workshops that have been held over recent months to re-confirm and provide professional development on Walsall's thresholds for intervention from social care. These have been positive in that they have shown that there is generally a good understanding by partner agencies about whether and when a situation needs to be referred to Children's Social Care. The improvement in the way we receive, screen and respond to contacts made to us is expected to further improve with the implementation of the MASH (the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) in October 2015.

We have a measure for the proportion of children that are the subject of more than one referral in a 12-month period to the Initial Response Service (IRS). The dataset

shows that this remains high at 30%. That could indicate that cases are being closed prematurely, before sustained change has been effected in a family. However, although the percentage has remained constant, it is of a much smaller number of referrals. The graph on the following page shows this more clearly. Although this is a quarter 1 report, this chart does show that the improvement has been sustained in quarter 2.



Re-referrals do suggest shortcomings in systems, so this has been the subject of some detailed analysis which has led to some conclusions and actions. These include:

- Updating assessments immediately prior to considering whether to close or “step down” a case to ensure that the decision is properly informed;
- Ensuring that the “step down” of any case in which a child has recently been subject to a Child Protection Plan is gradual and recognises the particular circumstances of the child and its family; and
- Following “step down” enabling Early Help colleagues to more readily link back into the social work service if necessary, to avoid the need to use a re-referral as a way of stepping the case back up.

We oversee and monitor re-referrals on a monthly basis to confirm actions are being effective in reducing the re-referral rates.

1.3 Assessments (3.0) Those referrals that do require social work input lead to an assessment of needs being conducted by a social worker. In April of this year we adopted a change that has been instituted in most other areas following new Government guidance. That saw a shift from the conducting of a two-stage process (an Initial Assessment followed by a Core Assessment) to one single assessment.

This means that the data presented about the former process can largely be ignored. The timeliness of Single Assessments is still measured and monitored, though the timescale for them is flexible (up to 45 days) to recognise that different types of case require different depths of response. All but 2.1% of all assessments are conducted within the 45 day period, though we naturally aspire to achieve 100% timeliness. We need to ensure that this includes completion within the target date set by social care staff.

1.4 Child Protection (4.0) Over the last quarter the number of children subject to a child protection plan increased from 357 to 372. Two of our Group Managers and a senior police officer regularly audit decision making related to this. The system is also monitored closely by those who chair Child Protection Conferences. These monitoring exercises have not found any shift in our thresholds, which suggests that an increasing number of children are at risk of significant harm. The added concern is that such children are more likely to become Looked After, such that an increase in one could preface a rise in the other.

There have been increases in both the number of children becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) that lasts for over two years or is a repeat of a previous instance of having such a plan. Neither figure is high relative to Government expectations; Walsall's rate is towards the middle of the range in both 14/15 and Q1 15/16. An increase in either can suggest that the multi-agency work designed to keep children safe is not as effective as it could be or having the required impact. For that reason, this is an issue that we keep a close eye on; for example, we will regularly audit a number of these cases to see whether they reveal any shortcomings that need to be addressed.

1.5 Looked After Children (5.0) The number of Looked After Children remains a concern in Walsall and the cost of providing care for such children is high and constitutes the greatest pressure on our budget. Elected Members have supportively acknowledged that, in comparison with local areas, statistical neighbours and benchmarks, numbers in Walsall are what might be expected for Walsall's socio-demographic factors, but that cannot be allowed to lead to complacency. If it is safely possible for a child to remain with parents then they should be supported and enabled to care for them. A number of strategies are in place to support families care for their children for example through the Edge of Care team, and to reunite families as quickly as possible where this is safe and right for the child.

If children do need to be Looked After, and if there is no realistic possibility of them returning safely to the care of their parents, then they deserve and need to be adopted. The number of children being placed for adoption is increasing in Walsall. If children are to be adopted then it is best for them if that is achieved without undue delay. Much national emphasis has been placed on this and it is pleasing to report that timescales are beginning to improve in Walsall. This is a focus and priority of the work of the Service. It has included some recent regional work with the Courts

and CAFCASS (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) which Walsall is leading on.

It is heartening to report an improvement in all but three of the 16 measures of educational attainment by Looked After Children. The achievement in respect of good GCSE passes is especially welcome. Caution has to be applied in drawing conclusions from one single year – because the relatively small numbers in each cohort mean that results can change without suggesting a trend – but the fact that the improvements are across almost all Key Stages is very positive.

1.6 Youth Offending (7.0) In previous reports we have mentioned that our Youth Offending Service is seen as performing very well in comparison to most others. The quarter 1 figures show that this has not only been maintained but improved upon. As the graph shows, the number of young people entering the criminal justice service for the first time continues to fall significantly.

1.7 Health Outcomes (8.0) Members will be aware that the issue of childhood obesity is being led by the Health and Wellbeing Board. The latest statistics show that the need for action on this problem certainly continues as the upward trend has unfortunately been maintained, to the extent that four out of ten school children are now measured as overweight or obese in Year 6. Teenage conception rates show a declining rate. The good reduction from 2012 to 2013 has been maintained, but not significantly improved in 2014. Further reduction in teenage conception rates is a priority of the Children and Young People's Partnership.

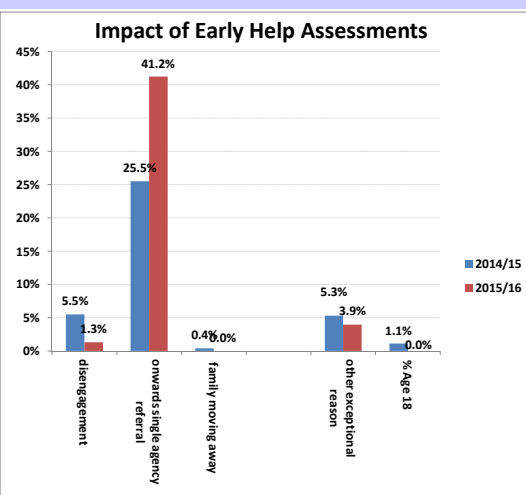
1.8 Staffing/Workforce (9.0) The figures relating to social work staffing showed some small improvement in quarter 1, with the proportion of vacant posts and the number of agency staff both falling. Members of this Panel will recall that at its last meeting officers reported the range of challenges to recruiting permanent full-time staff. Officers are continuing to pursue new ideas for attracting staff and we will continue to report on the impact of these at future meetings of this Panel.

1.9 Complaints (10) The final data in this set shows how many complaints have been received. The proportion of complaints received in Quarter 1 is lower than last year and shows a positive downward trend. However, this is a topic which deserves to be measured by more than numbers. With that in mind recent changes have been introduced which will enable us to report on the outcomes and learning from complaints. We therefore plan to be able to share with the Panel a more complete picture of the changes we have made in response to the results of complaints investigations at a future meeting.

1.0 Early Help

Charts for Selected Areas

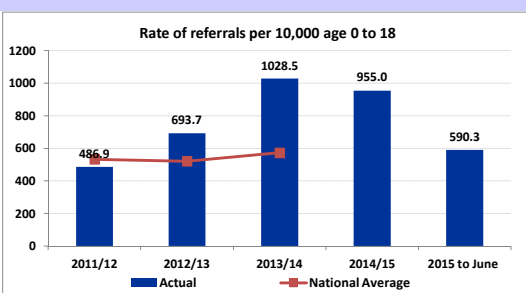
	Mar-14 Eng	Mar-15	YTD Jun 15
Early Help request rate per 10,000 CYP	n/a	233.4	140.6
% Re-request rate for Early Help within 1 year	n/a	17.80%	20.50%
% Early help interventions ceasing due to escalation to Children's Social Care	n/a	18.4%	5.3%
% Early help interventions ceasing due to needs being met	n/a	43.7%	48.1%
% Early help interventions ceasing due to disengagement	n/a	5.5%	1.3%
% Early help interventions ceasing due to onwards single agency referral	n/a	25.5%	41.2%
% Early help interventions ceasing due to family moving away	n/a	0.4%	0%
% Early help interventions ceasing due to other exceptional reason	n/a	5.3%	3.9%
% Age 18	n/a	1.1%	0%



2.0 Front Door

	Mar-14 Eng	Mar-15	YTD Jun 15
Number of referrals to children's social care received	657,800	6,167	953
Referral rate per 10,000	573	955.0	590.3
↔ % re-referrals in 12 months (SB)	24.9	30.2	30.0
CiN rate per 10,000 CYP (excluding LAC and CPP)	234.6	238.1	tbc

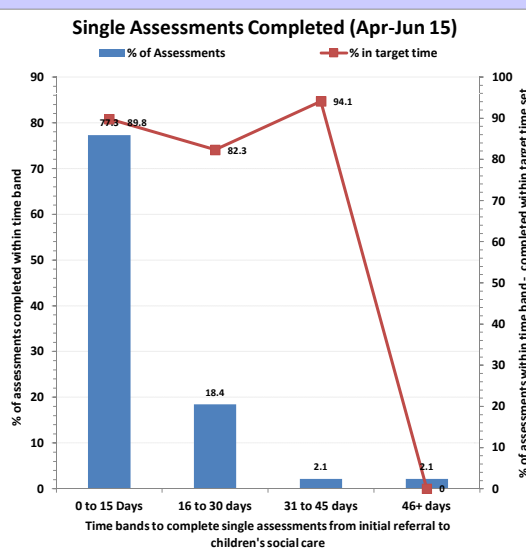
A child is deemed to be in need is when an assessment by children's social care leads to further action and closes when a service being provided ceases.



3.0 Assessments

Assessment Timeliness	Mar-14 Eng	Mar-15	YTD Jun 15
↗ % Initial Assessments (IA) completed <= 10 days (BB)	69.6	87.1	94.2
↘ % Core Assessments (CAs) completed <= 35 days (BB)	72.8	91.7	74.5
% Single Assessments completed within target date set by social care staff (BB)	n/a	n/a	86.4
% Single Assessments completed 0 to 15 days (BB)	n/a	n/a	77.3
% Single Assessments completed 16 to 30 days (BB)	n/a	n/a	18.4
% Single Assessments completed 31 to 45 days (BB)	n/a	n/a	2.1
% Single Assessments completed 46+ days (BB)	n/a	n/a	2.1

Initial Assessments and Core Assessments disbanded from 1st April 2015; replaced with Single Assessments. 1 Initial Assessment and 18 Core Assessments, remain on 1st July 2015. Outstanding Initial (52) and Core (139) assessments are returned in the table above, which started before 1st April 2015.



4.0 Children on a Child Protection Plan

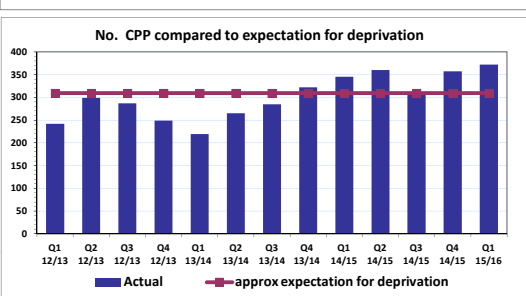
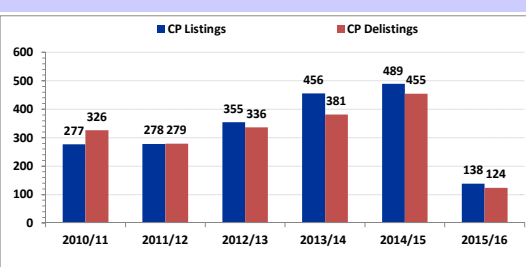
Child Protection Plans	Mar-14 Eng	Mar-15	YTD Jun 15
No. Child Protection Plans (CPP) at the end of year	48,300	357	372
No. de-listed during the year	54,400	455	124
No listed during the year	59,800	489	138

The June figure for Walsall has risen to 372 (57.6 per 10,000 age 0 to 18). In Quarter 1: there were 138 CP Listed and 124 de-listed giving a substantial increase in the number currently subject to a plan. This would be predicted to cause an increase in LAC numbers.

CPP Rate per 10,000	Mar-14 Eng	Mar-15	YTD Jun 15
CPP Rate per 10,000	42.2	55.3	57.6

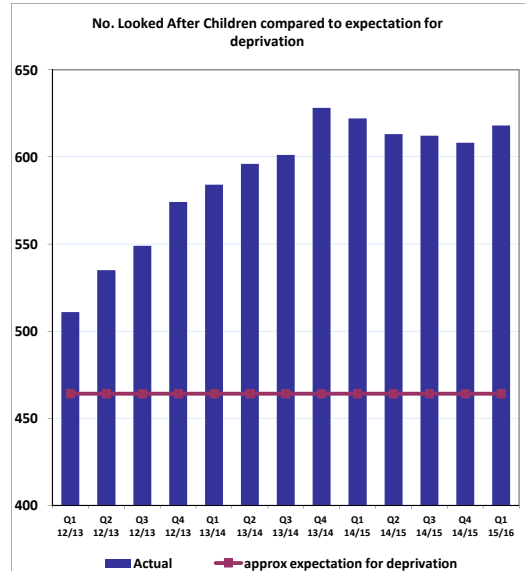
Repeat CPPs	Mar-14 Eng	Mar-15	YTD Jun 15
↘ % children with 2 nd or subsequent CP plan within 2 years of a previous plan	n/a	4.1	8.0
↘ % of CPP subject to a second or subsequent CPP	15.8	11.9	13.8

10-15% is considered as ideal for subsequent CPP plans ever. Walsall's rate is shown to be towards the middle of this range in both 14/15 and Q1: 15/16.



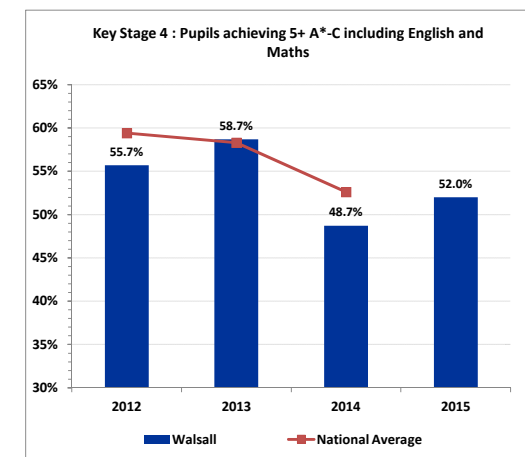
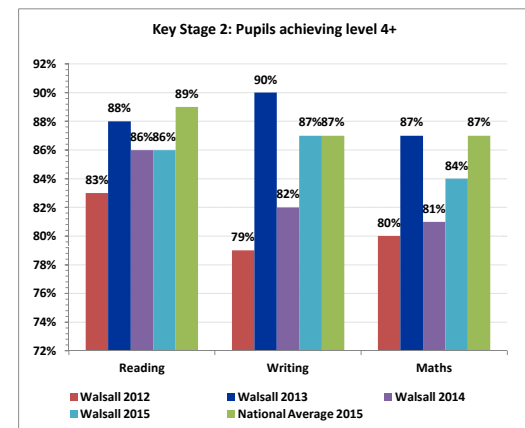
5.0 Looked After Children/ Adoption

	Mar-14 Eng	Mar-15	Jun-15
Numbers of Looked After Children	68110	608	618
LAC Rate per 10,000 CYP	60.0	94.1	95.7
↔ Long Term Stability of LAC (% in care 2.5 years in same placement 2 years) (BB)	67%	68.5%	66.1%
↔ % LAC 3 or more placements in 12 mths (SB)	11	10	9.7
↗ Average time from Entering Care to being adopted (Days) (SB)	n/a	877	862
↗ Of those adopted, Average time from Entering Care to moving in with adopted family (Days) (3-year average)(SB)	628	599	523
↘ Of those adopted, Average time between receiving court authority to place a child and deciding on a match to a family (Days) (3-year average) (SB)	217	168	176
↗ Of those adopted, % Children who wait less than 18 months between entering care and moving in with their adopted family (3-year average) (SB)	51	60.6	67.1



6.0 Education - attainment/attendance

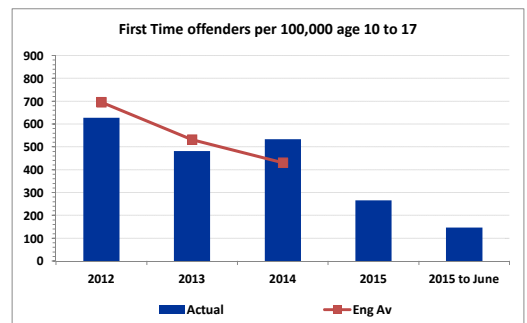
(NB: 2014 results are provisional and likely to be amended by the validated results (Autumn 2015))	2015 Eng	2014	2015 provisional
↗ Early Years : Pupils Working at a Good Level Of Development (BB)	66%	53%	61%
↗ Phonics : Achieving the Expected Level (BB)	77%	75%	79%
↗ Key Stage 1 (Level 2b+) : Reading (BB)	82%	80%	81%
↗ Key Stage 1 (Level 2b+) : Writing (BB)	72%	66%	67%
↗ Key Stage 1 (Level 2b+) : Maths (BB)	82%	77%	78%
↘ Key Stage 2 (Level 4+) : Reading (BB)	89%	87%	86%
↗ Key Stage 2 (Level 4+) : Writing (BB)	87%	83%	87%
↗ Key Stage 2 (Level 4+) : Maths (BB)	87%	81%	84%
↗ Key Stage 2 (Level 4+) : Combined RWM (BB)	80%	73%	75%
↔ Key Stage 2 : Reading 2 Levels Progress (BB)	91%	89%	89%
↗ Key Stage 2 : Writing 2 Levels Progress (BB)	94%	92%	95%
↗ Key Stage 2 : Maths 2 Levels Progress (BB)	90%	85%	86%
↗ Key Stage 4 : Pupils achieving 5+ A*-C including English and Maths (BB) (new count method 2014)	53.4%*	48.7%	52.0%
↗ Key Stage 4 : English 3 Levels Progress (BB)	tbc	63%	65%
↗ Key Stage 4 : Maths 3 Levels Progress (BB)	tbc	56%	61%
Key Stage 5 : Average Points per Candidate (BB)	696.0	695.4	tbc~
↘ Key Stage 5 : Average Points per candidate: School Sixth Forms (BB)	775.3	766	715.7*
Persistent Absence (Secondary School) (SB)	6.3%	6.7%	5.4%
↗ % of schools rated good or outstanding (BB)	80%	70%	74.4%
	2013/14 Eng	2013/14	2014/15 provisional
↘ % of fixed period exclusions expressed as a percentage of the school population (SB)	3.5% (269,480)	4.0% (1,880)	4.1% (1,851)
↘ % of pupils receiving permanent exclusions (SB)	0.06% (4950)	0.12% (60)	0.14% (64)



NB: The percentage of fixed period exclusions includes pupils who have received more than one exclusion in the time period. In 13/14, 1,880 exclusions were received by 1,040 pupils (2.2% of the school population - comparing with 1.8% nationally). Compared with 14/15 where 1,851 exclusions were received by 922 pupils (2.0% of the school population). 371 pupils received more than 1 fixed-term exclusion from 1.9.14 to 20.7.15.
 *- The school's KS5 results tend to improve from what is collected on results day to what gets published by the DfE this compares to 695.4 collected on results day in 2014. ~ - Walsall College data isn't collected on results day. *- England figure 2014

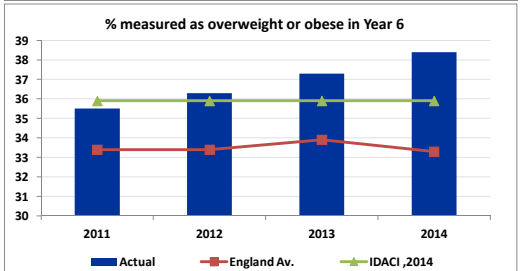
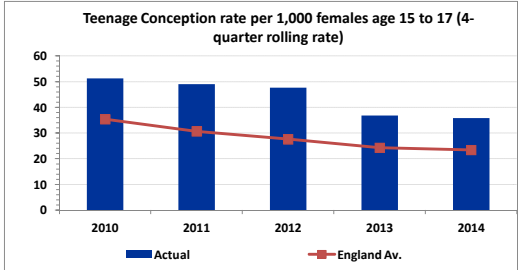
7.0 Youth Offending / Participation/ Positive Activities

	2012/13	2014/15	YTD 2015/16
↗ First Time offenders per 100,000 age 10 to 17	425	343.7	145.6
Re-offending rate	0.76	0.75	n/a*
Numbers of Young People engaged in Positive activities (nb. generous counting rules)	19310	7160	4,242
Rates of anti-social behaviour	2344	869	423
↗ 16 18-year-olds who are not in education, training or employment (NEET)	6.4%	4.4%	4.0%
*- Reported one quarter in arrears due to waiting time between offence and conviction.			



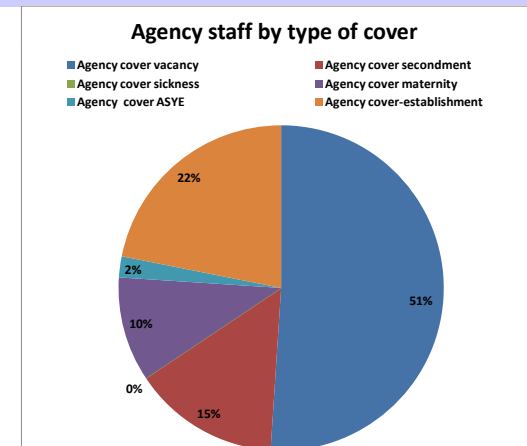
8.0 Health Outcomes

	2012	2013	YTD 2014
↗ Teenage Conception Rate * (SB)	47.6	36.8	35.8
	2012	2013	2014
% measured as overweight or obese in Reception (SB)	24.2	23.9	24.0
↘ % measured as overweight or obese in Year 6 (SB)	36.3	38.4	40.0
* Data is reported 5-Quarters in arrears. The latest available for 2014 is the 4-quarter rolling rate from July 2013 to June 2014.			



9.0 Staffing / Workforce

	Mar-13	Mar-15	Jun-15
↗ Vacancy Rate - the number of vacant social worker posts as a % of all SW posts (SB)	13.2	28.5	27.4
Turnover Rate - the number of social workers leaving as a % of workforce establishment on 1st April (SB)	10.5	15.8	18.5
↘ Average number of days lost to Sickness Absence by social workers. (SB)	16.5	13.0	14.7
	Mar-14	Mar-15	Jun-15
Number of Agency Staff - Headcount (Snapshot)	58	53	49
Numbers of Agency Staff - FTE (SB)	54.7	52	48
51% of agency cover is for vacant posts. There is no agency cover for sickness. There are also 13 NQSWs in post on 31st March 2015.			



10.0 Complaints received relating to CYP

Complaints	Mar-13	Mar-15	YTD Jun-15
Complaints Stage 1	116	124	19
Complaints Stage 2	8	2	0
Complaints Stage 3	0	2	0

Legend

Direction of travel from previous period:	
↗	improved in performance
↔	Maintained level
↘	deteriorated in performance
BB	bigger is better
SB	smaller is better