

WORCESTERSHIRE
CHILDREN FIRST



WORCESTERSHIRE CHILDREN FIRST BUSINESS PLAN

April 2022 - March 2023

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Chairman's Foreword

As we enter our third year of operation as Worcestershire Children First, I think it is appropriate to reflect on our journey to date.

As outlined in the DCS/CEO's foreword we have undertaken a considerable workload under challenging conditions last year and continued to improve. I echo the statement that we will continue to be a learning organisation and alongside our own comprehensive quality assurance programme, we will contribute to a local safeguarding review to consider what lessons can be learnt and what we need to do differently.

I would like to put on record my thanks on behalf of the Board to all staff for their hard work in achieving this milestone and to the Council for their support. I would also like to thank my Board colleagues for their valued input during the year in providing challenge and support to develop services.

Looking forward to the Business Plan for 2022-23, we have an ambitious programme of work, and I am pleased to support the move to developing more innovative ways of working. One of the strengths of WCF is that we deliver on behalf of the Council, services for all children and young people which enables us to develop working methods that combine different disciplines.

The focus on an accelerated improvement plan for our SEND offer is to be welcomed and I look forward to substantive progress in this area and the further development of our trading activities in Learning and Achievement Services.

The County Council continues to operate in a very challenging financial environment, and we await the outcome of the consultation on local government finance reforms, due for consultation in Spring 2022 and the impact on Children's services. WCF is experiencing financial pressures on placements and Home to School and College Transport in particular, however, our close working relationship with the Council has enabled us to not only invest in key services, but to also challenge all budgets to meet our goal of delivering value for money and cost-effective services.

Demand for services continues to increase and this places further financial pressure on the Company and the Council. Our strong governance arrangements have enabled the company to closely monitor budgets and regular reporting to the Board and Council has been maintained. Our financial risk has increased but we are confident that our operating and reporting arrangements will greatly assist in managing the risks of controlling a company with an anticipated annual turnover of £135M. The financial environment and our cost pressures pose risks to the company, however, our commitment to delivering our key goals remains firm.

In conclusion, WCF is in my opinion in a strong position to deliver the plan as outlined, given we have strong leadership, a positive learning culture and a hardworking loyal workforce, complimented by sound corporate governance arrangements to hold the Executive to account. I look forward to all we will sustain and achieve in the forthcoming year.



Rob Morrison
Chair of Worcestershire Children First

Chief Executive Worcestershire Children First and Director of Children's Services for Worcestershire County Council Foreword

The year of 2022-23 will be my second year as Director of Children's Services and Chief Executive of Worcestershire Children First. Whilst on one hand I think "where did that year go" I also look back on what a phenomenal amount of work has been undertaken. I would again like to recognise and thank the children, young people, their parents and carers, the staff of Worcestershire Children First and our partners who during the year have helped us in our mission to make children happier, healthier and safer.

Our work often means working with families at times of challenge and crisis and it requires the identification and management of risk. Using our strength-based approach we work in partnership with families and our partner agencies to provide the support and services needed to promote the health, education and welfare of children.

Throughout 2021-22 we have undertaken approximately 14,000 assessments at the Family Front Door to identify needs, worked with over 13,000 children providing early help and provided support to over 1,000 children on Children in Need plans. We have worked with over 400 children assessed as at risk of "significant harm" where we work with partners to manage risk and implement their child protection plans and we have cared for over 900 children in our care.

The challenges of child focused social work never go away, and I want to acknowledge that the mistreatment or death of any child is unacceptable. I recognise that, whether this happens locally or further afield, there is an understandable public outcry of sadness, anger, and frustration that is often reflected by the news media, as happened during the second half of the year.

Will Quince MP Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families wrote to all Directors of Children's Services on 7th January 2022. This letter was particularly helpful, communicating support and direction for us and our partners in the work we do. It strongly reflects our approach in Worcestershire to prioritise early help and prevention and in taking a child outcome focused approach to risk management when working with families.

It is however with great personal and professional sadness that we have worked with some families where children have suffered serious significant harm in this past year and one child has died. In this and other cases we will contribute to local safeguarding reviews where we will explore what lessons we can learn and we will reflect on the way we work with partners and parents to deliver our services to best promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.

Turning to the year ahead, we have developed our business plan into three key areas. **Sustain & Improve, Innovate** and **Invest**. Knowing ourselves, listening to the experiences of children and families of our services and understanding the impact we are making to the lives of children and young people is our highest company priority.

I am proud and excited to be in a position where we can talk about "sustaining" all we have achieved in the quality and timeliness of social care services, and we continue to commit to being open to learning. In 2022-23 our SEND and Fostering service improvement plans will be a priority and this alongside "investing" in our services we aim to be "innovative" as we continue our journey to deliver the very best Children's Services to the children, young people and families of Worcestershire.



Tina Russell

Chief Executive of Worcestershire Children First & Director of Children's Services for Worcestershire County Council



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

You will see in the **Foreword messages** from our Chair and myself, a reminder of the vision and mission we have set ourselves as a company to achieve within the challenging and changing world in which we continue to work, to deliver the best services we can.

We remain committed to our company values; to keep **children at the heart of everything we do, value family life, provide good education for all, protect children from harm and embrace diversity.**

This year we have welcomed two new Directors to our board, to deliver our social care and safeguarding work, and as we develop our 0-25 all age disability services, we will add another new Director of All Age Disability, whilst maintaining a focus on education improvement, inclusion and planning through the Director for Education. These senior management developments have had one focus: to ensure **we have the right leadership in the right place, with the skills and capacity to take us into our next phase of service development and delivery.**

The plan re-sets out our **Strategic Goals** detailed in our five-year plan 2019–2024.

Knowing ourselves, listening to the experiences of children and families of our services and understanding the impact we are making to the lives of children and young people is our highest company priority. Our section on the Quality Assurance Framework sets out how we will continue to use this three-dimensional approach to all our services through 2022-23.

2022-23 will be our 3rd full year in operation and our plan sets out our priorities for **Sustain & Improve** services, to be **Innovative** and to **Invest** to save and ensure best value.

Sustain and Improve

Our foremost priority is to sustain the significant improvements that we have achieved since we were first rated as an inadequate Children's Service in October 2016. What has been achieved is evidenced through our key performance indicators, our Quality Assurance Programme and our inspection outcomes over the past three years, ultimately reflected in September 2021 with the removal of the statutory direction.

Sustain and Improve

- WCF Fostering Improvement Plan
- WCF Adoption Business Plan
- Permanency in care proceedings
- SEND Accelerated Progress Plan
- WCF Quality Assurance programme
- Review Education and Skills Strategy
- Service Reviews – Resources at Best value
- Care Leavers – Education/Housing and Support

Sustaining such good levels of performance is not something that's achieved at any one point in time, it requires a continuation of hard work, commitment, and dedication of the whole workforce to be achieved and re-achieved every day, every month, and every year. Our quality assurance and business management processes are in place as "business as usual" to ensure we monitor all our activity and the impact and outcomes being achieved for children and young people. We will continue to be a learning and improving organisation and our priorities for improvement are set out above.



Innovate

We are proud to be in a place where we can build on the foundations of good practice and start to innovate.

Innovation means taking that brave step to do something new and different.

As part of our innovations, we will join with regional and national activities to reflect and share our own learning to achieve best practice

Our priority innovations for 2022/23 are set out here.

Innovate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Development of community and overnight short breaks for independent living■ Evaluation and delivery of Family Safeguarding■ Supporting Families First - Children in Need■ Development of the Virtual Head role■ Empower & inform parents in Child Safeguarding processes■ Promote the Emotional Health & Wellbeing of Children in Need and those in Care■ Early Help: Family Hub & Holiday Activity and Food Strategy■ Get Safe / Get There: Reducing exploitation of children■ Create an All Age Disability 0-25 service

Invest

“Money makes the world go around”

We know though it is often in short supply, so taking every possible opportunity for national, regional and local funding opportunities alongside making savings in order to invest and re-invest in our front-line services is our third priority for 2022/23. Our priorities for investment are set out here.

Invest
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Development of WCF Residential Services■ Family Group Conferencing - contingency for care & protection■ Early Years Strategy - improve children’s readiness for school■ Deliver school Capital Programme■ Develop provision and specialist resource for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children■ Commissioning Strategy – best value■ Worcester City secondary school

Our plan outlines our **Three Pillars of Success: Working in Partnership.**

In Partnership with WCC (Worcestershire County Council)

This partnership continues to be one of the foundations of our company we recognise in our plan, not just our own priorities and vision for what we want to achieve for children and families, but how important it is for people to see those children and families as members of the Worcestershire community.

The WCC priorities: **Open for Business, Children and Families, The Environment** and **Health and Wellbeing** are our priorities too for the children and families who are part of the Worcestershire community.

To thrive our children and their families need to have access to economic opportunity, accessible education and employment, to live in an environment that is a good place to live and grow up as a family and the physical and mental health of this younger generation is what is key to reducing need and demand in any long-term plan.

We will be working alongside WCC in the key developments of **All Age Disability Experience and School Place Planning.**



In partnership with our Workforce

Working in partnership with our Workforce is our second foundation to the success of our services. 2021-22 continued to be a “response and reset” as the pandemic continued to sweep through the nation. We saw a continued increase in workload and pressures as we experienced a rise in the demand for help and support. There was an increase in the number of serious harm cases in young children and a rising demand for support and assistance for children with additional needs.

Despite these pressures our workforce overall has remained remarkably stable and committed to Worcestershire Children First; with over 93% permanency in staffing overall, 88% permanency in front line social worker posts and 99% in managerial posts. This stability is an important part of sustaining our continued quality. (All figures are as at quarter 3 2021-22.)

However, “change and turn over” is an inevitable part of an organisation and as such positive and timely recruitment, bringing new people into our services and supporting internal career development of others, also adds a valuable mix of experiences, knowledge, skills and diversity to our workforce which we welcome. This year 2022-23 we have added a fifth value to our vision, which is to recognise and value diversity in our workforce and in our community of children, young people, and families.

In partnership with our stakeholders

The third pillar of success is working in partnership with our stakeholders. This is key to the success to our company and to achieving our aims and aspirations. Whether it is children and young people themselves, their parents and carers or the wide ranging statutory and voluntary professional partnerships, we know how essential it is for us to work together, to share experiences, learning and best practice.

We remain committed and fully engaged at all levels to ensure the voice and experiences of Worcestershire children, young people and families and that of our workforce is heard, taken into account and influences service development.

Starting from our strong stable leadership position in 2022-23 we will invest in **Local, Regional and National Partnerships** to ensure we are at the forefront of sharing best practice and continuing in our own reflection and learning.

Each front facing service area within WCF has its own “business as usual” and a “Priorities Plan on a Page”.

Early Help, Children in Need and Family Front Door:

- Supporting Families First Children in Need: prevention/managing risk in the family and in the community
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing for children in need
- Early Help in the community, targeted vulnerable children and enabling Covid recovery
- Get Safe and Get There – keeping children safe from exploitation

Child Protection and Through Care:

- WCF Fostering Improvement plan – improving quality and sufficiency in Foster Care
- WCF Adoption Agency Business Plan – supporting timely permanency for children in care
- Care Leavers – improving services and ensuring corporate parents and partners priorities
- Family Safeguarding – evaluation and service expansion, working directly with parents to reduce risk of harm and need for care
- Working with parents – helping parents understand thresholds of interventions, impact and outcomes
- Emotional Health of children in care – ensuring children in care and care leavers have timely access to EHWPB services
- Residential Care – development of quality and sufficiency in children’s homes and supported living
- UASC – developing our specialist knowledge and services to unaccompanied asylum seeker children and young people
- Family Group Conferencing – supporting families to use their wider family network for support



Education, Early Years: Improvement, Inclusion and Planning:

- Extension of the role of the virtual head to vulnerable children
- Develop an Early Years strategy to drive forward access and quality in provision to young children preparing them for school
- Development of a new secondary school in Worcester
- Deliver against the school capital planning programme – ensuring sufficiency in school places
- Education and Skills Strategy – ensure the ESS identify care leavers and vulnerable people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- Development of the Integrated Care System – ensuring WCF and Health partners work in collaboration in providing services to children and vulnerable learners

Children with SEND and Disabilities: (All Age Disability)

- Implementation of the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan
- Development of the All Age Disability Services
- Development of community short breaks offer
- Development of shared care/independent living

These are all set out with level 1 and level 2 plans that include milestone activities and outcome measures to be monitored throughout the year.

Finance and Risk Management

The business plan concludes with the company's financial information and our risk management approach.



INTRODUCTION

Worcestershire Children First Business Plan

2022-23 will be the third year of Worcestershire Children First (WCF) delivering children's services across the county of Worcestershire. These services include Early Help and Support to Children in Need, Children's Social Care and Safeguarding, Through Care Services for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, Services for Children with a Disability, SEND services and Education Improvement, Learning and Achievement services.

WCF has an independently registered Fostering Agency providing foster care placements to children in care and we have an independently registered Adoption and Permanency service that works alongside our regional adoption agency "Adoption Central England" whose focus is to ensure we achieve timely permanency for children who have entered the care system.

The company is 100% owned by Worcestershire County Council and delivers its children's services on behalf of the local authority, working with partners across the county to ensure children, young people and families receive the best possible services.

The business plan sets out how we plan to sustain and improve, innovate, and invest during 2022-23.

Vision, Mission and Values

During 2021-22 we extended our values to include a fifth value, 'embrace diversity' to reflect our Company wide focus on Workforce and Culture and our commitment to diversity and inclusion.

OUR VISION

Worcestershire to be a wonderful place for all children and young people to grow up.

WORCESTERSHIRE
CHILDREN FIRST



OUR MISSION

Supporting children and young people to be happy, healthy and safe.

OUR VALUES



CHILDREN AT OUR HEART

We will keep children and young people at the heart of everything we do.



VALUE FAMILY LIFE

We will support and empower parents to care for their own children.



GOOD EDUCATION FOR ALL

We will value education as the best start in life for all children and young people.



PROTECTION FROM HARM

We will act in a professional and timely way to protect children from harm.



EMBRACE DIVERSITY

A progressive culture of championing equality, diversity and inclusion.

WCF COMPANY GOVERNANCE

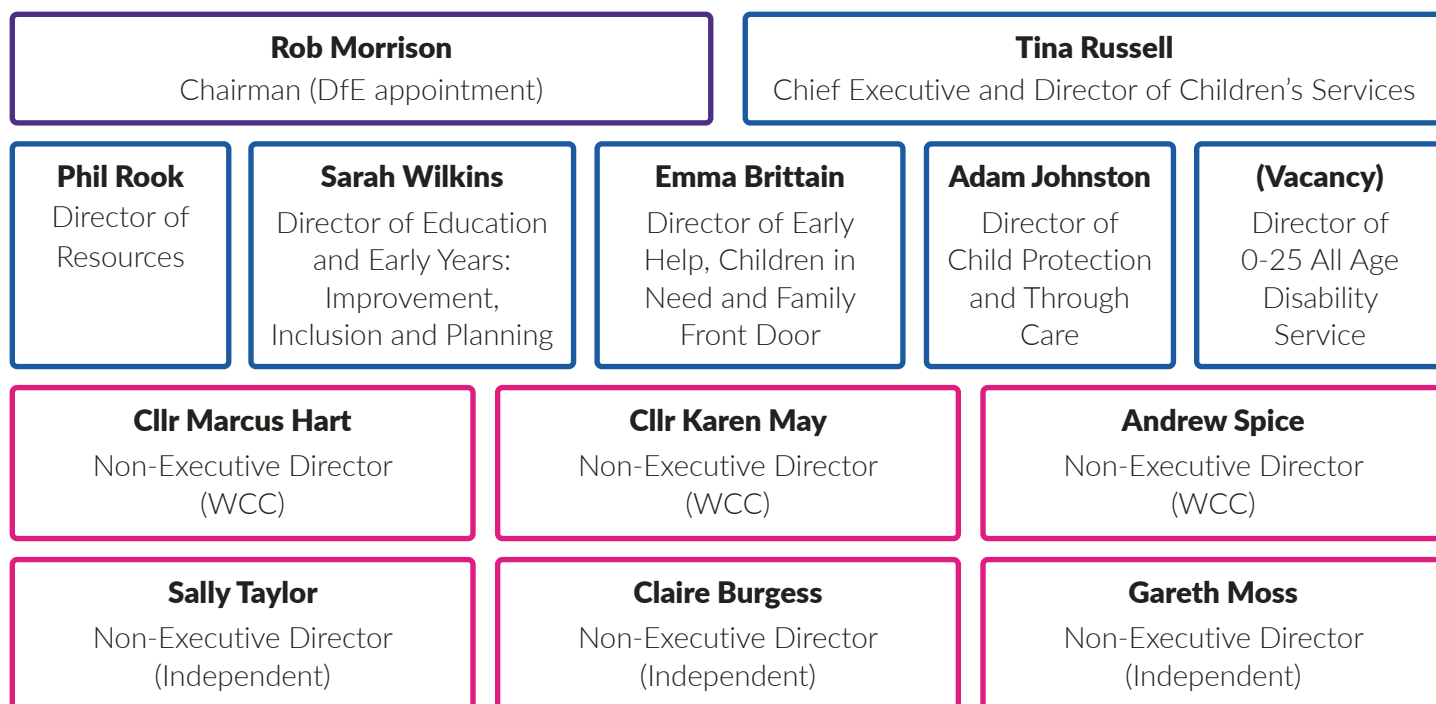
WCF Board Structure and External Governance

As a wholly owned Council Company, WCF has a contractual relationship with Worcestershire County Council to provide statutory children's services. WCF have a 'buy back' arrangement of 14 corporate support services, delivered by the Council with legal agreements.

These contractual arrangements, between Council and Company, are overseen by a Quarterly Review Board and a Performance and Commissioning Group to ensure contract compliance, within the terms of reference of the Company Board (**appendix 1**).

Our contractual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as shown in **appendix 2** hold WCF to account for delivering social care, early help and education services. Similarly, we monitor support from 'buy back' services through Support Service Agreements (SSAs). The formalities are managed day to day by WCC's Commissioning and Partnership Management function, working positively and proactively with WCF's Resources Directorate. The relationship is based on partnership, support, challenge, evidence, and achievement of outcomes. There has been a continued, strong, effective working relationship between WCC and WCF which goes far beyond the formal contractual monitoring arrangements, and these add the most value to improving outcomes for children and young people.

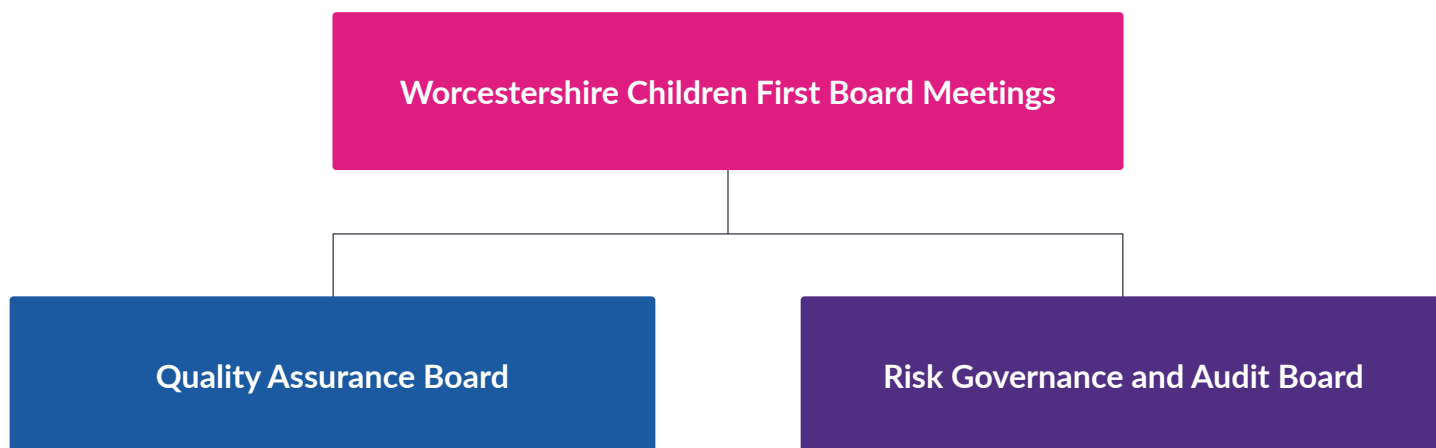
During 2021, WCF saw the appointment of Tina Russell to the joint position of Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services. The Directorship of Sarah Wilkins changed to Director of Education & Early Years: Improvement, Inclusion and Planning. There has been the addition of two new Executive Directors, Emma Brittain, Director of Early Help, Children in Need and Family Front Door and Adam Johnston, Director of Child Protection and Through Care and creation of a further position, Director of 0-25 All Age Disability Services, which is currently vacant. The board currently consists of 12 Executive and Non-Executive Directors with a wealth of public sector expertise in supporting families and communities. Executive Directors are those employed by WCF to lead and manage delivery functions and teams, whilst Non-Executive Directors do not have responsibility for day-to-day operations but provide input and challenge via Board meetings and sub-board meetings throughout the year.



(■ (Pink) denotes Non-Executive Director; ■ (Dark Blue) represents Executive Director.

The Chairman of the Board is a DfE appointment ■ (Purple))

To maintain rigour, WCF's internal governance takes the form of monthly WCF Board meetings (with **an Annual General Meeting** and every third Board meeting held in public when conditions allow). Additionally, there are two subgroups reporting into the Board of Directors focusing on improvement of services; The governance structure for the Board of Worcestershire Children First can be seen in the diagram below:



The Quality Assurance Board

The Quality Assurance Board typically meets four times a year and oversees the quality and performance of our front-line Safeguarding and Education services in improving outcomes for children. This includes actively seeking the views and opinions of children and young people on the impact of our interventions and how we continuously learn and improve to be even better.

The Risk Governance and Audit Board

The Risk Governance and Audit Board typically meets three times a year and maintains an oversight of our governance, risk management, internal control and value for money framework. This Board ensures strategic compliance, management and performance of WCF as a whole with an unwavering focus on children and young people at the heart of our Company's purpose.

Internally, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), who are responsible on a day-to-day basis for running the business, meet regularly to ensure service improvement continues with momentum, and to ensure all areas of WCF have strategic oversight. Regular reporting and monitoring impacts positively on outcomes for children and young people and is the core and demonstrable Company purpose. Their ambition for Worcestershire Children First is to be rated as 'Good' in provision of services.

Each year we will share our company achievement and challenges through our public meetings. This will be an opportunity for our stakeholders, young people, staff and the public to feedback on company performance and inform services.



Strategic Goals - Five Year Plan

Our ambition is to make a positive and sustained difference to the lives of children young people and families and to be able to provide a wide range of evidence to support this achievement. The diagram on this page provides a visual representation of how we plan to develop and improve our services for children, young people and their families over the next five years, and will guide our work in 2022/23 (our third full year in operation):

Years 1 and 2

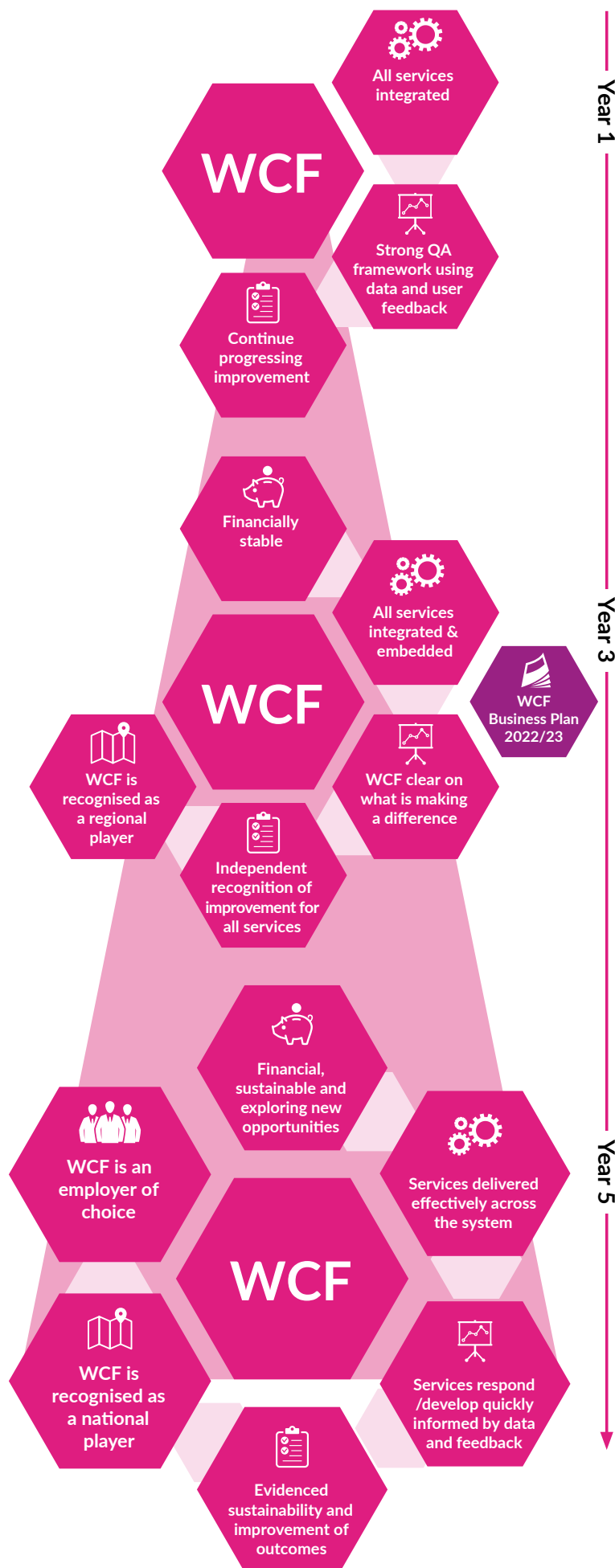
- Service user feedback indicates WCF is making a positive difference to CYPF
- Working under WCF Brand
- Building stable and productive teams, culture and behaviours
- Social care rated Requires Improvement (at point of transfer)
- Commissioner/Provider separation
- Support services tested and operational
- Demonstrate credentials with existing parties and children, young people and families

Years 3 and 4

- Increasing co-creation with children, young people and families
- Work effectively and efficiently within financial envelope
- Evidence of improved outcomes
- Embedding new culture
- Review opportunities for growth within existing services
- Wider strategic relationships developed
- Gain independent recognition of improvement and performance

Year 5

- Achieve sustainability and potentially explore new commercial opportunities
- Improved and evidenced outcomes
- Effective and responsive development
- Council and community are proud of WCF
- Begin review of commissioning intentions
- Integrated, effective partnership working across the system
- Support services sourced effectively



Internal Organisational Structure

Under the Chief Executive of Worcestershire Children First, sit five specific service areas:

Early Help, Children in Need and Family Front Door

- Family Front Door and Partnerships (Contact / Referral and Assessment: MASH)
- Targeted Family Support
- Get Safe Exploitation Team
- Emergency Duty Team
- Supporting Families First Children in Need

Child Protection and Through Care

- Locality Safeguarding (planning for children in need of support and protection)
- Through Care & Sufficiency (care and placement planning for children who are looked after)
- Supervised Family Time Service for children in care
- Residential, Supported Living and Outreach Services
- Children and Young People Participation
- Worcestershire Family Safeguarding
- Case Progression and Permanency Team

Education and Early Years

- Forecasting and planning to ensure enough good education places for children
- Admissions, Governor Services and supporting School Improvement
- Supporting schools, education and early years settings to promote welfare and safeguard children
- Vulnerable Learners – virtual school for looked after children and inclusion services to support and prevent children from missing education

0-25 All Age Disability Service including SEND

- Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) assessment, planning, review and support services
- Children with Disability services children's social care
- Young Adult services for children with disabilities and additional needs (subject to cabinet and consultation outcome at the time of writing)

Quality Assurance

- WCF Head of Quality Assurance (monitoring the effectiveness, quality and timeliness of services through audit, key performance measures and service user feedback)
- Principal Social Worker
- Independent Chairs for Looked After Children and Child Protection

Resources

- Human Resources & Organisational Design
- Funding and policy for Worcestershire Schools and management of Schools Forum
- Financial Management for WCF and Schools
- Commissioning Hub
- IT and management information
- Strategic Business, Transformation and Commissioning
- Traded Services for Education

Business Plan Improvement and Development

As set out in our vision statement the ultimate aim of our company is to provide children and families with quality services and support to enable them to receive a good education and to be safe in their care arrangements and community.

That means working with Education and Early Years providers to ensure children access high quality provision to give them the best start and education opportunity, to enable them to reach their full potential.

In safeguarding terms, it means supporting families with early help and support to reduce risk and harm, ultimately resulting in fewer children being in need of a child protection plan or care. **Appendix 4: Worcestershire Children First overarching business plan 2022-23**

Sustain and Improve

Our foremost priority is to sustain the significant improvements that we have achieved since we were first rated as an inadequate Children's Service in October 2016. What has been achieved is evidenced through our key performance indicators, our Quality Assurance Programme, and our inspection outcomes over the past three years, ultimately reflected in September 2021 with the removal of the statutory direction.

Sustaining such good levels of performance is not something that's achieved at any one point in time, it requires a continuation of hard work, commitment, and dedication of the whole workforce to be achieved and re-achieved every day, every month, and every year. Our quality assurance and business management processes are in place to ensure we monitor all our activity and the impact and outcomes being achieved for children and young people. We will continue to be a learning and improving organisation, our priorities for improvement are set out below.

Sustain and Improve

- WCF Fostering Improvement Plan
- WCF Adoption Business Plan
- Permanency in care proceedings
- SEND Accelerated Progress Plan
- WCF Quality Assurance programme
- Review Education and Skills Strategy
- Service Reviews – Resources at Best value
- Care Leavers – Education/Housing and Support

Innovate

We are proud to be in a place where we can build on the foundations of good practice and start to innovate. Innovation means taking that brave step to do something new and different. This can be a challenge when a natural response to having made such improvement can be to “stay the same” holding on to the stability of that improvement. WCF want to do even better. As part of our innovations, we will join with regional and national activities to both learn and share our own learning and best practice. Our priority innovations for 2022-23 are set out below.

Innovate

- Development of community and overnight short breaks for independent living
- Evaluation and delivery of Family Safeguarding
- Supporting Families First - Children in Need
- Development of the Virtual Head role
- Empower & inform parents in Child Safeguarding processes
- Promote the Emotional Health & Wellbeing of Children in Need and those in Care
- Early Help: Family Hub & HAF Strategy
- Get Safe / Get There:
Reducing exploitation of children
- Create an All Age Disability 0-25 service

Invest

“Money makes the world go around”

We know though it is often in short supply so we will take every possible opportunity for national, regional and local funding, alongside making savings in order to invest and re-invest in our front-line services. Our priorities for investment are set out below.

Invest

- Development of WCF Residential Services
- Family Group Conferencing - contingency for care & protection
- Early Years Strategy - improve children’s readiness for school
- Deliver school Capital Programme
- Develop provision and specialist resource for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children
- Commissioning Strategy – best value
- Worcester City secondary school

Three Pillars of Success



1. Working in Partnership with WCC

Working in Partnership with WCC (Worcestershire County Council) continues to be one of the pillars to success of our company we recognise in our plan, not just our own priorities and vision for what we want to achieve for children and families, but how important it is for people to see those children and families as members of the Worcestershire community.

The WCC priorities: **Open for Business, Children and Families, The Environment** and **Health and Wellbeing** are as important for the children and families that we work with as they are part of the whole Worcestershire community.

To thrive our children and their families need to have access to economic opportunity, accessible education and employment, to live in an environment that is a good place to live and grow up as a family and the physical and mental health of this younger generation is what is key to reducing need and demand in any long-term plan.

As a Council wholly owned company WCF and WCC have an interdependent relationship through the contractual delivery of children's services by the company and 'bought back services from the Council. We acknowledge WCC Priorities in our Business Planning to ensure we align with core areas of focus and access opportunities available for collaboration with our key stakeholder. WCF also have service delivery links with the People Directorate in terms of adult social care, community development and public health.

We demonstrate our wider commitment to multi-agency working via membership at other strategic partnership groups including:

- Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Health and Wellbeing Board and its Children and Young People Strategic Partnership
- Safer Communities Partnership
- Worcestershire County Domestic Abuse Forum
- All Age Disability Partnership
- Education Partnerships

We will be working alongside WCC in the key developments of WCC priorities.

All Age Disability

WCF are working with WCC to develop an improved all age disability experience, through provision of a joined-up offer of support and coordination of services for those children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs. This is underpinned by the new SEND Strategy and Action Plan and our joint commissioning and partnerships with health through the Integrated Care System.

We will be bringing the services of SEND for children together along with our social care disability team and young adults services to work under a single leadership and a coordinated geographical footprint across the County.

Our aim is to offer longer term life and independence planning for children and young people into adulthood without a sharp change in their support at transitional ages of 18 (social care) or 25 (education). Support will be planned early, with young people and their families/carers to ensure ongoing achievement and sustainment of their independence.

Our work will seek to embed arrangements for 'preparing for adulthood' from the earliest years, supporting young people with SEND to feel included in the community, achieve employment, experience independent living and have housing options, good health, friendships and relationships.

The corresponding benefit for both WCF and WCC is to ensure a better predictive understanding of plans for young people and assurance of ongoing costs and effective support and services of what they need when they get older.

Customer Service access to Council Services and Communications

We will work in partnership with the Council in reviewing our customer service experience and making improvements to meet the needs of Worcestershire's residents. Focusing on the digital accessibility, we will adopt effective customer service and utilise digital technology to ensure greater access and enhancement to our services.

Integrated Well-Being – Community Development

WCC continue to develop the Here2Help service. It has supported thousands of people in Worcestershire with emergency food parcels, medication collections, food collections and delivery. It has also grown the volunteering offer and strengthened relationships with districts, partners and the Voluntary Community Service, who have worked together to provide a One Worcestershire response.

Following the success of the service, WCC is now building on the opportunity to evolve the service into an Integrated Wellbeing Offer with a vision to offer all residents that are in need, early intervention and prevention, empowering and enabling people to find their own solutions within their community-led services to reduce the impact on statutory services.

The progression of this is looking at how we provide a partnership approach to the delivery of both virtual and community location-based advice, support and services for both adults and children. The delivery of Early Help and support in our communities to children and young people is a key priority for the Early Help Partnership and this includes being part of the regional work looking at the role and delivery of the Family Hub model.

Digital Strategy - Worcestershire is a place where staff members, people, communities and businesses can flourish digitally

WCF recognise the opportunities that present in WCC's Digital Strategy 2021-23 and fully support the digital vision to use modern technologies to fundamentally improve how we support our staff, communities, businesses, and visitors. Digitalisation can enable the streamlining of delivery of our services so they can be provided in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible to our children, young people and families. The installation of video conferencing units in our meeting rooms at County Hall and off-site locations supports our hybrid model of face to face and remote working for all teams. We will continue to maximise technology to develop self-service systems for parents and carers, with the introduction in 2022 of a free school meals eligibility checking service, and an automated system for in-year school admissions, and a new e-store for traded services for schools and settings.

Development of our Commissioning Strategy

The WCF Commissioning Hub was launched in October 2021. Our company-wide consistent approach using the hub model ensures we are:

- meeting the needs of children and young people
- maximising value for money when we make placement decisions
- securing savings or avoiding additional costs through effective procurement
- quality assuring the services and provision we commission
- seeking continuous improvement in the way services are delivered
- meeting statutory timescales
- reporting within forecasted budget
- Managing within our financial agreed budget

School Place Planning

WCF works in partnership with WCC and other partners to forecast, plan and deliver to the right level of school places in education planning areas, as population levels grow and contract. We also work together to monitor and maintain the corporate estate of schools, prioritising programmes of work to keep our school properties maintained and safe. Key to this is securing funding for expansion via government, council and housing growth sources. Work this year includes the expansion of places in some schools, creation of permanent accommodation to replace temporary accommodation, progress a coordinated approach to the organisation of schools in the Pershore area, improve our sufficiency of the right specialist provision for children with SEND and secure the next steps towards a new secondary school for Worcester.

2. Working in Partnership with our Workforce

Our Workforce continues to be a second pillar to the success of our services.

Our workforce is our most valuable asset to successfully deliver services that make a positive difference for our families in Worcestershire. We strive to be the 'employer of choice' for children's services staff, and we approach this through a culture that values the impact that our staff have in improving children's lives. We have high expectations and have created the conditions where professional expertise is valued and can flourish, where everyone is empowered to act and supported to succeed.

2021-22 continued to be a response and reset as the pandemic continued to sweep through the nation. We saw a continued increase in workload and pressures as we experienced a rise in the demand for help and support. There was an increase in the number of serious harm cases in young children and a rising demand for support and assistance for children with additional needs.

Despite these pressures and national challenges on recruitment, our workforce overall has remained remarkably stable and committed to Worcestershire Children First; with over 93% permanency in staffing overall, 88% permanency in front line social worker posts and 99% in managerial posts. This stability is an important part of sustaining our continued quality. (All figures are as at quarter 3 2021-22.)

However, “change and turn over” is an inevitable part of an organisation and as such positive and timely recruitment, bringing new people into our services and supporting internal career development of others, also adds a valuable mix of experiences, knowledge, skills and diversity to our workforce which we welcome. This year 2022-23 we have added a fifth value to our vision, which is to recognise and value diversity in our workforce and in our community of children, young people and families.

In July 2021 we launched our Workforce Strategy, which sets us out as an organisation of high challenge and high support. The strategy focuses on the following workforce foundations:

- Health and Well-being
- Recruitment and Retention
- Diversity and Culture
- Leadership and Management
- Building Skills for our Future Workforce

Our staff conference was held in November 2021, and we launched our 5th Company Value – Embrace Diversity, to reinforce our commitment to continue to develop a progressive culture in which we champion equality, diversity and inclusion. Our Diversity and Inclusion Collective invites all staff to participate in a monthly forum of discussion, learning and development.

In 2021 we introduced our annual Voice of the Workforce (VOW) survey; a system health check and a barometer of our services that enables staff to share their views and feedback on the strengths and areas for development to support continuous improvement. The survey was completed by 61% of the workforce and its findings support the key priorities of our quarterly Workforce Board.

We structure our service planning using an End-to-End approach; this ensures we think whole service, ensuring all staff across our teams and service areas are included and outcomes for children are prioritised, wherever they are in their journey through our services.

Our Workforce Strategy is underpinned by our robust Quality Assurance programme. Using the Key Performance Indicators, Audit and feedback from children, young people and families we will improve our understanding of how the strategy is supporting us to deliver good quality services in relation to:

- Staffing stability – permanency and sickness
- Voice of the child – quality of practice through audit
- Participation and inclusion – recruitment and service development
- Compliments and Complaint - outcomes and learning

Quotes from the workforce

91% of staff said that the new smart ways of working, such as virtual technology/blended office & home working have supported them to undertake their job effectively.

92% of staff said they felt Worcestershire Children First was an inclusive organisation and was proactive in promoting anti-discriminatory practice.

93% said that their direct line managers were visible, approachable, and responsive, and 92% said they received dedicated supervision and review of their performance.

99% of our Social Work Workforce said that they use a strength & relationship approach in their practice with children and families.

3. Working in Partnership with Stakeholders

This is the third pillar key to our company achieving success. Whether it is partnership with children and young people themselves, their parents and carers, or the wide-ranging agency partnerships we know how valuable and essential it is for us to work together, to share experiences, learning and best practice.

The following are the priority formal partnerships led or attended by Worcestershire Children First:

Local Partnerships

- **WSCP** – DCS is member of the Executive Board with Get Safe and QAPP subgroups led by WCF
- **HWBB and all associated ICS partnership forums** – DCS and Director membership at all groups
- **Children & Young People Partnership – subgroups Early Help Partnership / All Age Disability (previously SEND) and Emotional Health and Wellbeing Collaborative** – WCF Executive leadership representation at all groups
- **Local Family Justice Board (LFJB)** – DCS and AD for Care Proceedings and Permanency
- **Sharing practice learning and what works: Models of success** – The Supporting Families First team is a WCF multi-disciplinary team that has built a new model of working directly and intensively with both adults and children to bring about changes within families facing multiple and complex challenges, often in crisis. The positive outcomes achieved by this approach are significant and therefore Dudley has asked us to work with them intensively on developing and implementing this model of working within their Local Authority's work with families. WCF have seconded a Practice Manager to Dudley to support this regionally.

Regional Partnerships

Worcestershire Children First is a fully engaged member of the regional DCS group with committed membership through the range of subgroups and the regional improvement alliance.

- **Early Help** – Co-Chair WCF Director of CIN, Early Help and Family Front Door
- **ADCS, link to family hub and troubled families** – Co-Chair WCF Director of CIN, Early Help and Family Front Door. The regional ADCS group which has both the Family Hub model and Supporting Families agenda as its key priorities. This forum looks at service delivery and models of practice across the West Midlands region; how these influence and shape the services that our children and young people receive, developing best practice delivery across the region but also here in Worcestershire.
- **Quality and Practice** – WCF Directors of CIN and Through care
- **Education and SEND** – WCF Director of Education
- **Principal Social Work Network** – WCF Principal Social Worker
- **Strategic Performance Network** – WCF DCS sponsor and WCF Senior Data analyst
- **Safe Centre** – Worcestershire tri member representative LA
- **Dudley Supporting Families First** – intensive work with Dudley on developing and implementing the WCF Supporting Families First model of working
- **Quality Assurance Practice & Procedures Group (QAPP)** – Multi-Agency Quality Assurance is also a key area of our work, where regular multi-agency auditing, feedback and KPI analysis is undertaken, to learn about the effectiveness of our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, this work is driven through the Safeguarding Partnership and the Quality Assurance Practice & Procedures Group (QAPP).

National Partnerships

- **National Improvement Alliance** – WCF DCS lead for West Midlands
- **MASH – National working group (lead by ACC Jones West Mercia Police)** – DCS and Director membership on working group and subgroups
- **Research regarding supporting families and care prevention (Newton Europe)** – WCF one of six LA/Trust engaged for deep dive
- **Research into structural change in children's services (LGA Research)** – WCF one of six selected ADMs

- **Introducing greater transparency in, including media access to, the work of the family courts (ADCS led by Justice McFarlane)** – WCF Assistant Director for Care Proceedings and Permanency
- **LGA – early years strategy work** - Worcestershire is one of 12 local authorities working with the Local Government Association (LGA) to develop an Early Years Strategy. The support involves mapping current supply of services for pre-birth to five, alongside current childcare provision and identifying what our gaps and challenges are. The key strategic outcomes will be identified alongside priorities. The LGA will then support with consultation to create the most effective design for the services to meet the priorities. The Strategy development will include the diverse childcare sector of the County, health commissioners and providers and partners.
- **Secretary of State for Education’s Attendance Action Alliance** – the Children’s Commissioner’s Office is carrying out an attendance audit of local authorities. Following on from the SEND inspection report noting the effectiveness of the Missing Monday’s forum, WCF has been invited to take part in a ‘deep dive’ exercise to understand how multiple agencies can work together in local areas to identify children who have dropped out of education and deliver interventions to support them.



WCF Quality Assurance Framework

Worcestershire Children First have developed and appointed to a new post of Head of Quality Assurance, this role oversees the Quality Assurance work of Social Care & Safeguarding, Early Help and SEND Services. Our Quality Assurance Framework has three dimensions:

- **Key Performance Indicators:** Analysis of our business and performance information on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual basis – this enables us to understand how much we are doing and how timely we manage this work
- **Feedback from Children, Young People and Families:** We are committed to understanding the experiences of our work and services directly from children and families; we strive to learn from these experiences and build it into our future practice. We bring this learning together from Compliments and Complaints, but we also have a programme of quarterly feedback mechanisms to hear about children and families' experiences – this supports us to understand the impact of our work and the difference we are making
- **Audit Activity:** Completion of case file audits (using a peer and moderation approach) and targeted audits; each area of the service has a programme of quarterly audits – this supports us to know the quality of our practice

Multi-Agency Quality Assurance is also a key area of our work, where regular multi-agency auditing, feedback and KPI analysis is undertaken, to learn about the effectiveness of our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, this work is driven through the Safeguarding Partnership and the Quality Assurance Practice & Procedures Group (QAPP).

Throughout 2021-22 we have developed our Quality Assurance approach for SEND with the introduction of a new case file audit programme and feedback mechanisms, a focus of 2022-23 will be consolidating this work. Each service area will have a report on the key learning from both qualitative and quantitative findings and enables us to learn as a service and to continue to improve services for children.

Quality Assurance and Scrutiny

We promote and engage with rigorous internal and external scrutiny and quality assurance (QA) mechanisms, to ensure we deliver high-quality service provision through:

- WCC Corporate Parenting Board
- WCC Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership
- SEND Improvement Board

In 2022-23 WCF will be pro-actively preparing for Ofsted and DfE Regulatory inspections for children's local services. This includes:

- Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)
- Residential Children's Homes
- Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)
- Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI)
- Regulatory Inspections of Schools
- Local Area SEND
- Adoption Service

In 2021 Ofsted undertook a focused Inspection Visit to Children's Social Care evidencing independent validation of our work, in respect of our quality assurance framework they said:

"The quality assurance framework is a strong area of practice, well embedded internally and across the safeguarding partnership. In particular, the audit approach is very effective. Children's case file audits are well moderated and identified actions followed through to completion, making a real time difference to improving interventions in case work. Collective learning from quality assurance activity, including extensive child and family feedback, is used well to inform service improvement"



Feedback from Children, Young People and Families include:

"I love living with my dad, my care order is now discharged, and I am no longer looked after. I am pleased about this" (child)

"Talked to me making me understand that some of my choices were not great but she also told me she was proud of me for knowing my future and securing a place at college, she never talked down to me I felt listened to" (young person)

"Asked the questions that were needed rather than asking irrelevant questions. She reassured me and made me feel comfortable. Conversations were recorded accurately" (young person)

"The worker has been both nurturing and direct when it has been needed, her knowledge in so many areas are astounding but most of all her understanding and compassion at a time when I felt like giving up will never be forgotten. Outstandingly supportive, deeply knowledgeable and one of the most beautiful natured people I have had the privilege to get to know" (Foster Carer)

"You have made an impact on my life all the time we have met up, you were and always will be someone I trust and remember for the rest of my life" (Child)

"I just wanted to say a massive THANK YOU for your positive communication and patience re all the documentation for the EHCPs and SEN questions. There was much. It was so reassuring being understood, to be listened to and dealt with positively" (Parent)

"I just wanted to pass on my gratitude with regards to the work the Social Worker has completed with myself and the boys. She's a credit to the social care sector. She's so kind, empathetic, and sincere. She's always gone above and beyond for my boys; they have benefited from all of her hard work. I'll always be grateful for her coming into our lives, as she's been an integral part of our journey as a family. She has managed to renew my trust in social care! I just wanted to pass this on to you as her manager" (Parent)

"Oh, my goodness, yes yes yes! The school rang me before I saw your email and since then I have spoken to them. We are thrilled about it, so much that I cried!! Thank you for doing more for us than any other caseworker has ever done for us. Not just for this but your lovely caring attitude" (parent)

Between 1st April – 31st December 2021, 272 families gave us direct feedback on the experiences of their services, what families told us evidences to us that how they have experienced our services has been sustained from the previous year. They told us:

- 97% of families felt that they were given opportunities to share their views and opinions.
- 95% of families said that their worker (Social Worker, Early Help Family Support Worker, Personal Advisor) listened to their child's views.
- 95% of families said that they felt included within the assessment and/or plan for their child.

The next section of this business plan sets out how each individual service area within WCF has its own business as usual plan of activity and "Priority Plan on a Page" to ensure we deliver against our 2022-23 business plan.

Early Help, Children in Need and Family Front Door Priorities

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Area of priority	Milestones
Supporting Families First - Children in Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of new Autism parenting support worker to support families in the community. Webstar: demonstrating impact and outcomes for children, young people and their families. Prevention of escalating risk into child protection and needing to become Looked After where safe and appropriate to do so. Development of the Family Group Conferencing model for WCF families.
Emotional Health & Wellbeing – for children in need through to those in care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development and expansion of the emotional health and wellbeing offer in Supporting Families First to include 2 FTE higher intensity emotional health and wellbeing workers. Joint initiative between WCF and health delivering an emotional health and wellbeing workshop to FSW in schools across the six districts.
Early Help in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement the Worcestershire Holiday, Activity and Food strategy. Engaging hard to reach children and young people and supporting community connection via providers. Launch the virtual Worcestershire Family Hub page on WCC website and register this. Work with partners, Here 2 Help and regional Local Authorities on the development of Worcestershire’s Family hub model. Continue to demonstrate impact and outcomes for the Supporting Families agenda reaching our Worcestershire target, increasing the engagement of partners. Further develop the evidence base of partnership community based early help delivery.
Get Safe – Get There	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective use of intelligence and profiling of the GET SAFE / Get There cohort. Ensure the GET SAFE approach adapts and develops to meet the challenges of this abuse.

Measures

- Communication to parents in the medium of animated film to engage and aid their understanding of what we do.
- Strong positioning of WCF to submit business cases to future DfE grants to support innovation and service development.

Child Protection and Through Care Priorities

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Area of priority	Milestones
WCF Fostering Improvement Plan	<p>See the fostering improvement plan – appendix 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Safer caring plans and risk assessments ■ Notifiable events ■ Quality Assurance and performance ■ Safer recruitment/foster carer – workforce development ■ Voice of the child and views and experiences of parents ■ Foster carer recruitment, assessment and support and the voice of foster carers ■ Approval/matching foster carers
WCF Adoption Agency Business Plan	<p>WCF VAA Workstreams are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Permanency Plans and development of Post Adoption Contact ■ Early Permanence/Foster for Adopt ■ Quality Assurance/Improving Child Permanency Reports/Role of Adoption Panel, Feedback and Performance ■ Safer Recruitment & Workforce development ■ Voice of child & voice of Adoptive parents/Birth Parents/ & Adoptive Birth Children ■ Adoptive Parents Recruitment, Assessment & Support ■ Adoption Decision Making Process & Matching
Permanency in care proceedings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Refresh the Family & Friends Policy ■ Conversion of 38 cases form Kinship to Special Guardianship Order (SGO) ■ Discharge of 18 Care Orders (12 families) and placement with parents' placements ■ Complete care proceedings with SGO permanency outcome

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Area of priority	Milestones
Care Leavers – Education/ Housing and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Implementation of DfE Mark Riddel’s Peer Review recommendations ■ Development of a IRO transition protocol from care to pathway plans ■ Appointment of a dedicated IRO for complex pathway planning transitions ■ Corporate Parenting Board sub-groups to be developed to deliver on Pledges to include young person and elected member representation ■ Business conference events to be held for each district to address EET ■ Develop and launch district housing pilot to increase housing provision and employment support ■ Review the House Project support to Care Leavers transitioning to independence and build a Worcestershire model ■ Evaluate outcomes of Complex Care Leavers Project alongside District Housing and social landlords to expand tenancy offer
Evaluation and delivery of Family Safeguarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Secure investment for expansion of WFS ■ Recruit to new posts ■ Revise working protocol to reflect expansion and working within locality teams ■ Quarterly evaluation reports ■ Identify data (reduction in LPLO and Care) on which to base future base funding ■ Launch of Domestic Abuse Strategy & newly re-commissioned DASS, IDVA & DRIVE services – April 2022 ■ Launch of newly re-commissioned Domestic Abuse Training – April 2022 ■ Joint Adult Activity with West Mercia Police focused on timely receipt of Domestic Abuse Notifications
Empower and engage parents understanding in the Child Safeguarding processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Produce video for parents to enable an understanding of safeguarding processes from Section 47 through to care proceedings ■ Develop cultural safeguarding practice to effectively risk manage alongside families and partners and avoid successive placement breakdowns for CYP

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Area of priority	Milestones
Emotional Health & Wellbeing – for children in need through to those in care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Audit focused on EHWB element of Health Assessments with health partners ■ Section 117 step down process for CYP to be embedded ■ Review and amalgamation of EHWB/MH boards and working groups to inform ICS and collaborative approach (see Developing an Integrated Care System below)
Development of WCF Residential Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop 1 bed children's home with DFE capital bid funding ■ Review remuneration for residential staff to address recruitment and retention difficulties ■ Live action plans to be maintained, shared and reviewed between WCF homes (to include triangulation of care plans with behavioural/safety plans and risk assessments) ■ Standards and SOP's for each WCF semi-independent provision to be implemented and impact measured ■ Develop partnership(s) with external provider(s)
Develop provision and specialist resource for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Regional NTS development around exodus of UASC from 'shire counties to metropolitan centres ■ Consideration around specialist development of vacant provision ■ Explore UASC offer in Redditch to encompass accommodation, education and community links
Family Group Conferencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Secure investment for the development of a FGC ■ Launch of FGC

Measures

- Evidence of best value in commissioning placements for residential education and children in care
- % of children in care in foster care
- % of children in foster care placed in an internal foster care provision
- Completion of residential new build and refurbishments to increase in house residential provision for mainstream and unaccompanied children and young people
- % of children homes judged to be good or outstanding
- % of health assessments completed in time scales with the quality of improved quality of assessment of emotional health and well-being needs supporting timely access to appropriate services for looked after children
- Increase the % of children exiting care with SGO

- Reduced the number of children placed with Parents
- % of children who achieve permanency out of the care system within 12 months of being received into care
- Stabilising of the high needs deficit and reduction in high needs spend associated with placements
- % of care leavers who are in EET and living in suitable accommodation
- Launch of the family group conferencing service

Education, Early Years Improvement, Inclusion and Planning

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Area of priority	Milestones
Extension of the role of Virtual Head Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop and share outcome data profile for children with a social worker ■ Completion and findings of the joint project Virtual School and Supporting Families First ■ Toolkit, good practice, and training involvement for target schools
Early Years Strategy - improve children's readiness for school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Completion of the Early Needs Assessment findings and analysis ■ Findings of the Early Needs Assessment applied to the Strategy outline ■ Co-production of the priorities with stakeholders ■ Creation of the action plan ■ Collection and analysis of Foundation Stage attainment data (2022) ■ Completion of LGA project
Worcester City Secondary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Complete land purchase for site ■ Appointment of construction design and build contractor ■ Successful completion of competition process for Academy sponsor ■ Plan for further CYP engagement and involvement in scheme for design and build

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Area of priority	Milestones
Deliver against the school planning Capital Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Confirmed and prioritised funded capital maintenance programme ■ Wolverley CE Secondary School – permanent accommodation scheme ■ Confirm and share recommendations for Pershore Pyramid and progress ■ Confirm plan and agree timescales for Bromsgrove expansions ■ Confirm and agree special provision plan to respond to SEND Accelerated Progress Plan
Review Education and Skills Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Alignment of strategy document to other WCC/WCF current strategies and plans ■ Alignment of strategy ethos and actions to the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan ■ Completion of audit of each objective against current practice to identify gaps ■ Consultation with stakeholders of actions needed to close identified gaps. ■ Complete Strategy review with response and plans following publication of Education White Paper (2022 tbc) ■ Review and implement year 2 plan of Exclusion and Alternative Provision review
Developing an Integrated Care System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ WCF representation on relevant levels of governance and programme boards ■ Development of outcome-based commissioning activity ■ Confirm workplan/intentions for CYP joint commissioning group

Measures

- Baseline and improvements in the foundation stage attainment for early years children
- Increased take up of funded places for 2-year-olds to above England averages
- 4/5 schools judged to be good or outstanding by Ofsted standards
- % of vulnerable children (i.e. they are subject to a social work plan) who are excluded or missing in education being less than national averages
- Increase in joint commissioning arrangements
- Communication for families in mixed media form completed for accessibility and understanding of education actions and processes e.g., exclusion, managed moves

0-25 All Age Disability Service and SEND

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Area of priority	Milestones
SEND Accelerated Progress Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Address the variation in the skills and commitment of some mainstream schools to provide effective support for children who have SEND ■ Increase the range of suitable specialist provision to meet the identified needs of children and young people ■ Improve relationships with parents and carers and the level of engagement, co-production, and collaboration ■ Improve the quality of EHCPs and contributions from health and social care along with the process to check and review the quality of EHCP plans
All Age Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Transformation to SEND 0-25 Partnership Board to drive leadership and developments ■ Recruit to Director position ■ Complete formal consultation with staff (subject to Cabinet recommendations) ■ Implement reorganisation to new operating model ■ Implement evaluation recommendations from Year 9 onwards review toolkit ■ Launch and monitor impact of travel training approach
Development of Community short breaks offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Re-commissioning of community short breaks to extended reach and availability
Development of shared care independent living preparation offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Complete and progress business case for the re-commissioning of Greenhill Lodge for community support, overnight breaks, respite, and independence provision

Measures

- Development of community and overnight short breaks for independent living
- Delivery of the accelerated action plan for SEND services receiving favourable reports in relation to progress made against the four priority areas
- Launch of the 0-25 All Age Disability structure and staff transfer to WCF
- Reduction in the percentage of children with disabilities received into care in an unplanned way
- Communication to parents in the medium of animated film completed and available for all parents accessing 0-25 all age disability services

Quality Assurance Priorities

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Area of priority	Milestones
Children’s Social Care & Safeguarding (inc. Early Help, FFD & Child in Need and Child Protection & Through Care)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sustain all managers and group managers undertaking a quarterly programme of case file audits, moderations, and targeted audit activity ■ Sustain our feedback mechanisms to hear about children & families experiences ■ Continue to strive to improve services and quality of practice from our learning to improve outcomes for children & families ■ Learning presented through newsletters and reports evidencing our sustained and improving practice – outcomes for children ■ Innovate a new virtual tool for children and young people to share their views and feedback on their experience of our work called “Have Your Say!” – this is in replace of Mind of My Own and will go live in April 2022 ■ Innovating our audits to include the development of ‘Embracing Diversity into Audits and Feedback’ – go live January 2022 and we will see the outcomes and learning from this from April 2022 onwards ■ Independent validation through focused visit or ILACs Inspection and our annual conversation with Ofsted
Worcestershire Children First Fostering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Milestones and measures connected to the WCF Fostering Improvement Plan ■ Independent validation through Ofsted reinspection visit on progress of our improvement plan ■ Establish a programme of lead/peer and moderated audits on the quality of interventions, support & supervision of foster carers – audit areas will be connected to key areas of Fostering Improvement Plan ■ Establish opportunities for children, young people, birth parents and foster carers to share their experiences of our services through audits and targeted feedback ■ Learning presented through newsletters and reports evidencing our learning both quantitative and qualitative, share this learning to close the learning loop and evidence impact & improved outcomes for children
Residential Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A programme of quarterly case file audits, to include visits to children’s homes by Registered Managers and moderated by Group Managers to evidence the experiences of children within our care settings ■ Opportunities for children & young people in our care to share their experiences of living in our residential settings ■ Monthly independent visitor visits to our residential settings with reports on strengths and areas for focus by the RI and RM ■ Independent validation through Ofsted Inspections of our residential & short-breaks settings

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DIVERSITY

Area of priority	Milestones
Safeguarding Quality Assurance (IROs, CP Chairs & LADO Service)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sustain a programme of monthly mid-way audits by IROs & Chairs for children on CP Plans and Care Plans ■ A programme of quarterly targeted audits, annual practice observations and annual diagnostic interviews with IROs/Chairs to quality assure the work of SQA, our impact and learning ■ Opportunities for children & young people and their families to share their experiences of our services through mid-way audits and targeted feedback surveys ■ Opportunities for partner agencies to share with us their experiences of conferences, reviews, and the MOA Service through targeted surveys ■ Feedback mechanisms will also include 'End of Placement Feedback' and 'Learning from Disruptions'
SEND / All Age Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Milestones and measures connected to the SEND APP ■ Consolidation of the audit programme piloted in 2021 – new Education, Health & Care Plans ■ Development of the audit programme to include annual reviews & Year 9 reviews – April 2022 onwards ■ Development of wider Service User feedback mechanisms to hear about children & families experiences of our services – quarterly programme of targeted feedback opportunities ■ Development and appointment of a SEND Complaints Officer, the role will centralise complaints tracking in SEND Service, they will also investigate and respond to Stage 1 complaints as well as identifying learning and supporting practice development. ■ Development of learning briefings/newsletters and presentations to share learning across the services ■ Development of learning guides/seven-step briefings on learning from Quality Assurance for partner agencies ■ Independent Validation through DFE and NHS England Monitoring Visits
Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Opportunities for all staff to share their views through the annual 'Voice of the Workforce Survey' ■ Engagement with the annual 'LGA Social Work Survey' and undertaking our own Social Work health check ■ All staff engagement with the WCF Staff Conference ■ Development of specialist leadership and management training, resources, and information ■ Development of workforce plans and career pathways, including apprenticeships and succession plans for service areas across WCF

Measures

- Quality assurance analysis reports evidencing:
 - » Children and young people tell us they feel listened to, safe in their care placements and that interventions make a difference to their lives
 - » Audits evidence sustained good practice and continuous improvement
 - » KPIs remain stable and or above England averages
- Outcomes of the workforce strategy staff tell us:
 - » they feel valued, supported and developed as a workforce
 - » workloads and caseloads are manageable
- % Of staff permanently employed
- % Of social work staff permanently employed



This section describes the resources to run Worcestershire Children First (WCF), agreed funding arrangements for 2022/23 with indicative contract sums for 2023/24 and 2024/25 reflective of current forecast demand. The figures are indicative at this stage as the Council is currently reviewing its Medium-Term Financial Plan and is awaiting the outcome from consultation on local government finance reforms, due for consultation in Spring 2022.

The key driver for WCF is to sustain and improve our services to ensure the best outcomes for children, not cost reduction or income generation. However, given the current challenging financial context and to mitigate future cost pressures the company focuses on trading with schools through our Learning and Achievement Services and efficient use of resources to ensure value for money. The budget for 2022/23 is in full alignment with the Council's Budget setting process and this was considered and agreed by the Worcestershire Children First Board on 20 January 2022 and Worcestershire County Council's Cabinet on 3 February 2022.

Summary of Financial Information

The agreed contract sums are shown as two separate elements, net funding from WCC base budget and grants passed through to the company to arrive at the gross contract price, and with Sales, Fees and Charges to arrive at the total company turnover. These are shown in Table 1 below.

Contract Sum	Original Budget 2021/22	Original Budget 2022/23
	£000	£000
Net Budget funded by WCC	106,583	109,143
Other Funding passed through:		
Funding added to contract (Grants / Income / Reserves)	18,865	25,778
Total Gross Cost funded by WCC Contract	125,448	132,462
Sales, Fees and Charges	1,995	2,459
Total Gross Cost	127,443	134,921

The contract sum includes external funding that would be required to be transferred to the Company, on top of the Council 'Net Budget', to fund the gross expenditure requirements of Worcestershire Children First. The net budget includes the cost of Support Services that are purchased from the County Council £7.5m in 2022/23.

Service Budgets

The total gross expenditure budget 2022/23 financial year is **£135m**. In development of the financial model and as part of the development of the business plan for WCF, a detailed review, analysis, challenge, and scrutiny has been completed by finance staff, the WCF Board and as part of the agreed governance arrangements in the contract and agreed by both the Chief Financial Officer of the council and the Director of Resources for WCF.

2022/23 Service Gross Expenditure Budgets

In November Will Quince MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families confirmed that the Statutory Direction placed on Worcestershire County Council has been lifted and we have formally moved to the "support and supervision" period. This is a key milestone in our improvement journey and demonstrates the significant progress made in safeguarding and the services for vulnerable children in the County despite huge financial pressures in Children's Services.

The budget for 2022/23 includes a continued commitment by the council to invest £7.9m to improve outcomes for children and young people (up to the age of 25) in Worcestershire.

	2022/23 £m	Comments
Funding ongoing children's social care placement pressures	5.9	Reflects gross increases in potential demand for numbers of cases and inflation for cost placements
Pay inflation	1.3	Staff inflation 3% across 2021/22 and 2022/23 noting the pay award for 2021/22 offer has been made but not agreed.
Prices Inflation	0.7	Contract inflation, including SEND and Home to School Transport costs
Total Gross	7.9	
New Funding		
WCF will in part be funded for 2022/23 by use of Social Care Grant plus the one-off Services Grant	(5.6)	The 2022/23 budget funds the agreed potential costs faced by WCF for the coming year. The in-year budget will be monitored carefully to assess any recurrent pressure. The net budget will be uplifted in 2023/24 if the one-off grant is removed and the demand remains. This is expected to be revised base budget starting position of at least £4.1 million.
Net base budget change	2.3	

A further £1.9 million of one-off funding has already been set aside as an earmarked reserve for potential placement pressures that could arise following recovery from the pandemic to mitigate an increase in demand.

A draw down has not been required in the last three financial years due to the strong leadership, good practice in the service and careful financial management. However, during the past year, the associated impact of the pandemic has resulted in increased demand and costs for support, protection, and care services, including for children with special educational needs which has risen locally in line with the national picture. Therefore, the financial risk has increased.

It should be noted that in these tables, certain assumptions have been made in respect of growth, savings, and inflation. For inflation, assumptions are in line with WCC MTFP. Utilities such as gas and electricity have also been inflated over the period, by amounts that again are in line with the WCC MTFP.

In terms of demand growth, the budget reflects the latest agreed monitoring position, which incorporates trend analysis and a revised monthly forecast which is reviewed in detail. This means that the budget includes the most recent estimate of increases/decreases across all placement types over the period.

Table 2: Recurrent operating costs WCF (2022/23)

Ref.	Service	Staffing	Premises	Transport	Other Non-staffing	Total Gross Expenditure
		£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
A	Resources Directorate	4,356	1	21	9,069	13,447
B	Social Care Directorate	29,359	444	717	60,581	91,101
C	Education and Early Year Directorate	8,664	214	644	2,055	11,577
D	Home to School Transport	216	0	17,990	83	18,289
E	Youth Offending Services	0	0	0	507	507
F	Total Gross Expenditure	42,595	659	19,372	72,295	134,921

Note - £2,459k of Sales, Fees and Charges income outside of the main WCC contract gives WCF a net budget of £132.462m (the contract sum in Table 3)

Table 3: Contract Price for WCF, over- time

Ref.	Service	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
		Current	Original	Indicative	Indicative
		£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
A	Resources Directorate	12,075	13,159	13,422	13,690
B	Social Care Directorate	81,480	90,718	96,533	102,463
C	Education and Early Year Directorate*	13,196	9,789	9,984	10,184
D	Home to School Transport	18,190	18,289	19,455	20,644
E	Youth Offending Services	507	507	507	507
F	WCF Contract Sum	125,448	132,462	139,901	147,488

* Early Help transferred to Social Care from Education and Early Years (EEY) in 2022/23 and CWD budgets expected to transfer from Social Care to EEY in 2022/23 which is not reflected in above table.

2022/23 Funding Sources and Contract Funding Reconciliation

Latest 2022/23 Contract Funding Reconciliation		Funding	
2022/23 Gross Expenditure Budget			134,921
Non-WCC Sales, Fees and Charges		2,459	
WCC Gross Contract Sum			132,462
Funded By:	Dedicated Schools Grant	6,437	
	One-off Services Grant 2022/2023	5,600	
	Public Health Ring-Fenced Grant	850	
	Other Grants	7,440	
	Other Income	316	
	HTST Income	1,497	
	Capitalised Revenue	608	
	Funding from Reserves	571	
Total non-base budget funding passed through Council		23,319	
Total External Funding			25,778
Council Base Budget 2022/23			109,143

The service element of the contract value is the 'gross budget' shown above, less the Sales, Fees and Charges income which could be recovered directly by the Company.

The 2022/23 budget is challenging and broadly sufficient in terms of meeting current service demands, however there are ongoing demand pressures in both the Placements and Provision budget, and Home to School and College Transport. Budget monitoring and variance analysis is reported monthly by the Company and will be used to regularly update the 3-year projection of Company budget. This model of forecasting has been used for two years and has proved to be accurate and reliable.

Transfer of Reserves

The company budget has an element of funding from reserves which will be passported as income, however Children's Services specific reserves will be held on the Council's balance sheet. The use of the reserves to fund activity will be agreed annually through the annual budget setting process or in year through the agreed change request process.

Transfer of Assets and Capital

There is no physical transfer of assets to WCF, and the Company will not hold a capital budget. The Company will lease all buildings, including furnishings and fittings, from the Council. The rental charge for property will be for a peppercorn rent.

Where the Company identifies a desired use of capital funds for investment, the Director of Resources will submit a business case requesting funds to the Council.

If the Council agrees the capital funding through its normal Capital Processes, any asset created as a result will be an asset owned by the Council.

VAT

As part of company set up, we scoped requirements for PS Tax VAT/Tax advisors for advice to WCC and WCF. The conclusion following a review of the business case and contractual documentation by our advisors was the contract between WCF and Worcestershire County Council will result in a single supply of taxable services by WCF to the Council.

Further Tax Implications for the Company

We reviewed our tax status, and this has been confirmed by HMRC that confirmation that the provision of services from Worcestershire Children First to Worcestershire County Council does not constitute a trade for corporation tax purposes. Any surplus on other activities within an accounting period is subject to UK Corporation Tax which is currently 19%. The Treasury announced in March 2021 that the intention of the current Government is to increase the Corporation Tax rate to 25% by April 2023. This will have a future impact on the tax charges for Worcestershire Children First.

Cashflow

WCF cashflow remains healthy and is spread relatively evenly from month to month. A cashflow forecast has been carried out during implementation and been reviewed constantly since go-live. Working capital has been steady (with an average balance of £27M in 2021/22). Cashflow will be managed carefully by the company to ensure it can meet its financial obligations.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk Management and Business Continuity Planning are a vital part of the Company's success to consider and mitigate (where possible) inherent (unmanaged) and residual (managed) risk. This involves an informed understanding of the effectiveness of controls and actions in place subject to ORCT principles (Objective, Risks, Controls, Tests). WCF are representatives at Worcestershire County Council's (WCC) Corporate Risk Management Group (CRMG) who implement Corporate Risk Management and Business Continuity arrangements for critical services across all aspects of the Council's activities.

WCF maintains the Company risk register, which will be scrutinised at the Risk, Governance and Audit Board:

- Serious harm or death of a child/young person
- Reputational risk as a result of receiving a poor Ofsted inspection rating
- Failure to act in the interests of children and young people - keeping them safe or planning for permanence
- Financial pressure on resources due to increased demand on Children's Placements
- Uncertainty of future funding arrangements (2022- 23 onwards) for local government which impacts financial strategy for the company
- Business continuity failure in critical services
- Insufficient staff capacity, capability and productivity - recruitment and retention
- Education for all children in Worcestershire including school financial pressures, home to school transport costs, management of the Dedicated Schools Grant on behalf of the Council, changes to school organisation and SEND
- Future government strategy around SEND and High Needs Funding arrangements (managed on behalf of council)
- Additionally, risks are captured as part of transformational projects.

Our risk management and business continuity framework, alongside our performance monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms, support our commitment to provide rigorous quality services, improving outcomes for our children and young people in Worcestershire.



CONCLUSION

The Business Plan for Worcestershire Children First details our Company information and priorities for the year ahead acknowledging the challenges and how we continue to respond to sustain and improve, innovate and invest in our services in 2022-23.

We are proud of our improvements and acknowledge there is still more to do, we will always strive to understand the voices and experiences of our children and young people and actively welcome feedback via:

YourSay@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk



APPENDIX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE: WORCESTERSHIRE CHILDREN FIRST (WCF) BOARD

Introduction

The Board of Directors is responsible for exercising all the powers of Worcestershire Children First set out in the Articles of Association, however, may delegate any of those powers to a sub Groups of the Board or to an Executive Director.

The principal role of the Chairman is to manage and provide leadership to the Board of Directors of WCF. The Chairman is accountable to the owner and DfE for the management of WCF, through the Chief Executive for company duties but not the Statutory Director of Children's Services responsibilities.

Membership

The members of the Board shall comprise of the Chairman, the non-executive directors and executive directors.

Attendance

Only members of the Board shall be entitled to attend meetings. Wider representation will be via invitation only.

Quorum

No business shall be transacted at meetings of the Board unless the Chair, two executive directors, two non-executive directors, (one independent non-executive director and one council non-executive director) are in attendance. A duly convened meeting of the Board at which a quorum is present shall be competent to exercise all or any of the authorities, powers or discretions vesting or exercisable by the board.

Meetings of the Board

The Board shall meet on a monthly basis, at a location that will be determined by the Board. Formal Board meetings will be held monthly with every third meeting held in public (Members of the public shall be entitled to attend such Board meetings but, shall not be entitled to speak or vote at such Board meetings). Additional meetings may be called where there is a business requirement to do so to support decision making.

Minutes of Meetings

All formal Board meetings will be minuted together with clear resolutions of the Board. A record of attendees will also be provided together with any apologies received. A higher level record of informal meetings will be held to summarise attendance, apologies and general discussions.

The Chairman shall ascertain, at the beginning of each meeting, the existence of any conflicts of interest and minute them accordingly.

Duties

The duties of the Board are to:

- i. Determine (within the overall policies and priorities of WCF) and keep under review the company's strategic direction in accordance with the member views of the company
- ii. Determine the company's key financial objectives in accordance with the member views
- iii. Monitor performance against clear objectives, business plans and budgets in respect of:
 - » Quality of Services
 - » Finance
 - » Operational performance - workforce

- » Risk management
 - » Matters that may materially affect the reputation of the Company
 - » Income, future growth and development of the company
- iv. Ensure appropriate financial stewardship through effective value for money, financial control and financial planning and strategy
 - v. Approve and keep under review the WCF's annual revenue budget
 - vi. Approve and keep under review WCF's arrangements for the management of risk
 - vii. Approve the Annual report and Accounts and other statutory submissions
 - viii. Approve a Schedule of Matters Reserved to the Board and Scheme of Delegation
 - ix. Receive and consider reports from Sub Groups
 - x. Review and, if appropriate, agree changes in the terms of reference for Sub Groups

Sub Groups of the Board

The Board may establish and delegate powers to formally constituted Sub Groups. Sub Groups established by the Board shall include:

- Risk, Governance and Audit Board
- Quality Assurance Board



APPENDIX 2: KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

Performance Dashboard: 1 - 31 January 2022

Children Looked After

at month end

902



Subject of Child Protection Plan

at month end

421



Children in Need

at month end

763



Children and YP with an EHCP

at month end

4,612



Indicator	This Month	KPI Status	Min. Target	Stat. Neigh.	Preceding three months		
					Nov	Oct	Sep
A: (KPI-SC1) Referrals - Level 4 decision within 24 hours	81.3	●	52.30		●	●	●
B: (KPI-SC2) S17 Assessments completed within 45 days	83.9	●	75.60	81.0	●	●	●
C: (KPI-SC3) Proportion of Children Subject to CP Plan with Plan in Place	96.7	●	80.00		●	●	●
D: (KPI-SC4) ICPCs completed within 15 days	88.7	●	67.80	85.0	●	●	●
E: (KPI-SC5) Proportion of children who became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time within 2 years	36.7	●	27.30		●	●	●
F: (KPI-SC6) RCPCs completed within timescale	100.0	●	87.90	93.0	●	●	●
G: (KPI-SC7) Proportion of children subject to a Child Protection Plan seen within 20 days	94.5	●	77.00		●	●	●

Indicator	This Month	KPI Status	Min. Target	Stat. Neigh.	Preceding three months		
					Nov	Oct	Sep
H: (KPI-SC8) % Children Looked After Reviews in timescale	91.1	●	80.90		●	●	●
I: (KPI-SC9) Looked After Children with up to date Care Plan/Pathway Plan	99.3	●	73.00		●	●	●
J: (KPI-SC10) % Looked After Children who had a visit (in person) within timescale (30 days/60 days)	90.4	●	85.00				
K: (KPI-SC11) % Children Open for assessment or plan without an allocated worker for 5 days	0.3	●	1.00		●	●	●
L: (KPI-SC12) % of Care Leavers open to services with an up to date pathway plan (age 18-25)	64.1	●	52.40		●	●	●
M: (KPI-EH1) % of annual target reached for successful claims under the "Troubled Families" programme	87.7	●	66.20		●	●	●
N: (KPI-ED1) Percentage of EHCP requests received where review decisions have been made within 6 weeks	100.0	●	80.00		●	●	●
O: (KPI-ED2) Percentage of Education Health and Care Plan decisions made within 16 weeks	14.3	●	60.00		●	●	●
P: (KPI-ED3) Percentage of Education Health and Care Plans completed within 20 weeks	7.0	●	60.00		●	●	●
Q: (KPI-ED4) Percentage of Statutory Advice Reports (all types) for EHCP Needs Assessment submitted within 6 weeks of request sent	41.0	●	80.00		●	●	●
R: (KPI-ED6) Percentage of looked after children of school age with an up to date Personal Education Plan	100.0	●	80.00		●	●	●

Key to KPI Status

- Green - KPI is at or above target
- Amber - KPI is below target, but not for three consecutive months, so action plan not triggered
- Red - KPI is below target and has been for three consecutive months, triggering action plan

APPENDIX 3: WORCESTERSHIRE CHILDREN FIRST OVERARCHING BUSINESS PLAN 2022-23:



**CHILDREN AT
OUR HEART**



**VALUE
FAMILY LIFE**



**GOOD EDUCATION
FOR ALL**



**PROTECTION
FROM HARM**



**EMBRACE
DIVERSITY**

This next year 2022-23 will be our 3rd full year in company. Our foremost priority is to sustain the significant improvements that we have achieved since we were first rated as an inadequate Children's Service in October 2016. What has been achieved is evidenced through our key performance indicators, our Quality Assurance Programme and our inspection outcomes. Ultimately reflected in September 2021 with the removal of the statutory direction.

Sustain and Improve

Sustaining such good levels of performance is not something that's achieved at any one point in time, it requires a continuation of hard work, commitment and dedication of the whole workforce to be achieved and re-achieved every day, every month and every year. Our quality assurance and business management processes are in place as "business as usual" to ensure we monitor all our activity and the impact and outcomes being achieved for children and young people. We will continue to be a learning and improving organisation and our priorities for improvement are set out below.

Innovate

We are proud to be in a place where we can build on the foundations of good practice and start to innovate. Innovation means taking that brave step to do something new and different. This can be particularly challenging when you've been in such a difficult place and have achieved so much, a common and understandable reaction is to hold on to those achievements and stay the same, but we know how important it is to innovate. The below lists the areas of innovation that are our priorities for 2022-23.

Invest

Through 2022-23 we will invest in our own services. Invest means ensuring that we deliver our services at best value, make savings where possible and take up funding opportunities, working alongside WCC to invest in order to improve and develop our frontline services to children and families.

Sustain and Improve	Innovate	Invest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ WCF Fostering Improvement Plan ■ WCF Adoption Business Plan ■ Permanency in care proceedings ■ SEND Accelerated Progress Plan ■ WCF Quality Assurance programme ■ Review Education and Skills Strategy ■ Service Reviews – Resources at Best value ■ Care Leavers – Education/ Housing and Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Development of community and overnight short breaks for independent living ■ Evaluation and delivery of Family Safeguarding ■ Supporting Families First - Children in Need ■ Development of the Virtual Head role ■ Empower & inform parents in Child Safeguarding processes ■ Promote the Emotional Health & Wellbeing of Children in Need and those in Care ■ Early Help: Family Hub & HAF Strategy ■ Get Safe / Get There: Reducing exploitation of children ■ Create an All Age Disability 0-25 service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Development of WCF Residential Services ■ Family Group Conferencing - contingency for care & protection ■ Early Years Strategy - improve children's readiness for school ■ Deliver school Capital Programme ■ Develop provision and specialist resource for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children ■ Commissioning Strategy – best value ■ Worcester City secondary school

APPENDIX 4: WORCESTERSHIRE CHILDREN FIRST FOSTERING IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Worcestershire Children First Independent Fostering Agency Improvement Level One Plan 2021 -2022

Requirements - Fostering Service Regulations		Recommendations - National Minimum Standards
Regulation 3.1: Statement of purpose and children's guide	Regulation 27: Foster Carer approval and agreement meet regulation.	Standard 13: Recruiting and assessing foster carers who can meet the needs of looked after children
Regulation 8.1: Registered person – general requirements	Regulation 31: Register of Foster Carers	Standard 15: Matching the child with a placement that meets their assessed needs
Regulation 11 (a): the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times.	Regulation 35: Review and monitoring of quality of care. Voice of the Child. Consultation with Child about the care they receive.	Standard 16: Statement of purpose and children's guide
Regulation 18.4: A written record is made of any complaint or representation, the action taken in response to it, and the outcome of the investigation.		Standard 21: Supervision and support of foster carers
Regulation 20: Safer Recruitment of Staff and Panel Members	Regulation 36: Notable events. Notification, management, and updates.	

Fostering Improvement Workstreams Improvement & Business Sponsor: Maria White | Change Manager: Liz Dutton

Workstream 1	Workstream 2	Workstream 3	Workstream 4	Workstream 5	Workstream 6	Workstream 7
SAFER CARING PLANS & RISK ASSESSMENT (Reg 11, 36 & Std 15)	NOTIFIABLE EVENTS (Reg 11, 36)	QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PERFORMANCE (Reg 3.1, 8.1, 18.4, 31 & Std 16)	SAFER RECRUITMENT/ FOSTER CARER -WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (Reg 20)	VOICE OF THE CHILD & VIEWS AND EXPERIENCE OF PARENTS (Reg 35)	FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT & SUPPORT AND THE VOICE OF FOSTER CARERS (Std 13, 21)	APPROVAL / MATCHING FOSTER CARERS (Reg 27 & Std 15)
LEAD: Geraldine O'Donnell Manager: Debbie Carroll Membership: Independent Reviewing Officer, Children and Young People, Foster Carers, Learning and Development	LEAD: Debbie Carroll Manager: Susan Fletcher, Laurie-Mo Gullachsen Membership: Local Authority Designated Officer, Emergency Duty Team Manager, Business Analyst	LEAD: Susan Fletcher Manager: Geraldine O'Donnell/ Debbie Carroll Membership: Independent Reviewing Officer, Children and Young People	LEAD: Sharon Hurley Manager: Doe Goodwin/Serina Hadley/Louise Parker Membership: Foster Carer, Through Care Services, Learning and Development Team, Worcestershire Children First Comms Team	LEAD: Caroline Sutch Manager: Susan Fletcher/Alison Williams/Sharon Hurley/Louise Parker Membership: Children and Young People, Independent Reviewing Officer, Foster Carer, Looked After Children Team Manager, Fostering Social Worker	LEAD: Alison Williams/ Carol Barker Manager: Caroline Sutch Membership: Foster Carer, Children and Young People, Worcestershire Children First (Comm)	LEAD: Carol Barker/ Louise Parker Manager: Susan Fletcher Membership: APPROVALS: Panel Chair and Vice, Chair, Panel Members, Panel Adviser, Agency Decision Maker, Team Managers Matching: Team Managers, Children and Families Social Worker

Workstream Membership

- Children & Young People
- Foster Carers
- Independent Reviewing Officer
- WCF Safeguarding Social Workers
- WCF IFA Social Workers

- WCF Business Team/Liquid Logic
- WCF Management Information
- WCF Communications Team
- WCC Learning & Development

- WCC HR Operational & Delivery Team/Social Work Opportunities
- Virtual School Headteacher
- SEND and Vulnerable Learners
- Fostering Panel Chair & Fostering panel

Cross Cutting Themes

Safeguarding

Quality Assurance

Communication

Performance and Monitoring

APPENDIX 5: SEND ACCELERATED PROGRESS PLAN (SEND APP) 2022-2023

Worcestershire Local Area SEND Accelerated Progress Plan (SEND APP) 2022-2023

Project Sponsors: DCS and CEO of WCF; Chief Executive, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) | **Business Lead:** Director of All Age Disability (0-25) | **Programme Lead:** Early Help Partnership Development Officer

Worcestershire's Vision for SEND

"In Worcestershire we want all children and young people with special educational needs and / or disabilities to be truly seen and respected as individuals and to be the best they can be." Draft SEND Strategy 2022 -2025

Key Concern Workstreams

Workstream 1	Workstream 2	Workstream 3	Workstream 4
<p>MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS</p> <p>THE VARIATION IN THE SKILLS AND COMMITMENT OF SOME MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE SEND</p>	<p>SPECIALIST PROVISION</p> <p>THE LACK OF SUITABLE SPECIALIST PROVISION TO MEET THE IDENTIFIED NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE</p>	<p>PARENTS AND CARERS</p> <p>FRAGILE RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS AND CARERS AND A LACK OF MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT AND CO-PRODUCTION AND COLLABORATION</p>	<p>QUALITY OF EHC PLANS</p> <p>THE POOR QUALITY OF EHCPS AND LIMITED CONTRIBUTIONS FROM HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE ALONG WITH THE PROCESS TO CHECK AND REVIEW THE QUALITY OF EHC PLANS</p>
<p>LEAD WCF AND HEALTH: Assistant Director Education Quality (Worcestershire Children First), Lead for Children and Maternity (CCG)</p> <p>Membership: Parent carer forum (FiP) and WAC and stakeholder groups, School Phases (First and Primary, Middle, Secondary and High – for LA maintained and Academies), Special Schools, Worcestershire Children First, CCG, SENDIASS</p> <p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CYP's SEND are identified early in educational settings and robust plans are in place to address these. CYP's progress is monitored against clear outcomes and their plans are adapted accordingly ■ CYP attend mainstream schools with effective and consistent inclusive practice which ensures their needs are understood by all staff, they access full time educational provision including extracurricular activities and they make good progress across all aspects of their development. ■ CYP experience successful transitions between educational placements which result in good attendance, achievement and progress. ■ CYP attend schools who have accessed support and embedded training and development learning opportunities to support them to meet their needs 	<p>LEAD WCF AND HEALTH: SEND Group Manager (Worcestershire Children First), Lead for Children and Maternity (CCG)</p> <p>Membership: Parent carer forum (FiP) and WAC and stakeholder groups, Special School, Specialist Provision Forum, Worcestershire Children First, CCG, SENDIASS, HWHCT</p> <p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CYP with SEND receive effective full time educational provision. Where a change of placement is required, this happens without delay ■ Parent carers are clear about the outcomes their child's educational placement are working towards and their progress towards these. ■ Parent carers understand how we make our decisions about educational placements in SEND ■ Parent carers and CYP can say how their preferences have been taken into account in decisions about educational placements and there is regular and timely communication throughout the decision-making process ■ Parent carer confidence in the local offer to meet their child's needs is increased so that more early years children with EHCPs transition into mainstream education at statutory school age ■ To have an effective Graduated Response including planning and sufficiency for individual long-term needs ■ There is a sufficiency of education provision in the Local Area for CYP who's needs should be met in a specialist setting 	<p>LEAD WCF AND HEALTH: Children with Disabilities Group Manager (Worcestershire Children First), Lead for Children and Maternity (CCG)</p> <p>Membership: Parent carer forum (FiP) and WAC and stakeholder groups, Service user by experience x2, YP Participation Officer, Worcestershire Children First, Worcestershire County Council, CCG, SENDIASS, HWHCT</p> <p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Deliver to our co-production charter ■ Parent carers understand how CYP's special educational needs are identified and assessed in schools and EY providers and the support available to these settings ■ Parent carers have confidence in our mainstream schools being inclusive and all schools delivering the identified provision in the child's plan, and they know how to seek help if they have concerns. ■ Parent carers are able to contribute and coproduce the draft EHC Plan ■ Parent carers are involved in and understand the SEND improvement work the Local Area is taking and the impact of this work across education services and settings, health and social care. ■ Parent carers understand how their views and experiences are being used to improve arrangements for SEND in Worcestershire 	<p>LEAD WCF AND HEALTH: SEND Group Manager (Worcestershire Children First), Senior Manager for SEND (CCG)</p> <p>Membership: Parent carer forum (FiP) and WAC and stakeholder groups, CAMHS, SEND case workers, SEND Senior case worker, ASWP Adult SC, FE Partners, Worcestershire Children First, Worcestershire County Council, YP Engagement Officer, CCG, SENDIASS, HWHCT</p> <p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CYP have EHCPs which accurately reflect their aspirations, needs, the outcomes they are working towards, and the provision required to achieve these across education, health and social care. From Year 9, this includes these EHCPs include a focus on Preparation for Adulthood. ■ CYP's and parent carers' views are clear and up to date in EHCPs. ■ CYP's EHCPs are reviewed on an annual basis and any amendments agreed are made in a timely way so that plans accurately reflect current needs, provision and outcomes

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