



# Worcestershire Education and Skills Strategy

Ensuring a good education for every  
child in Worcestershire.

2019-24

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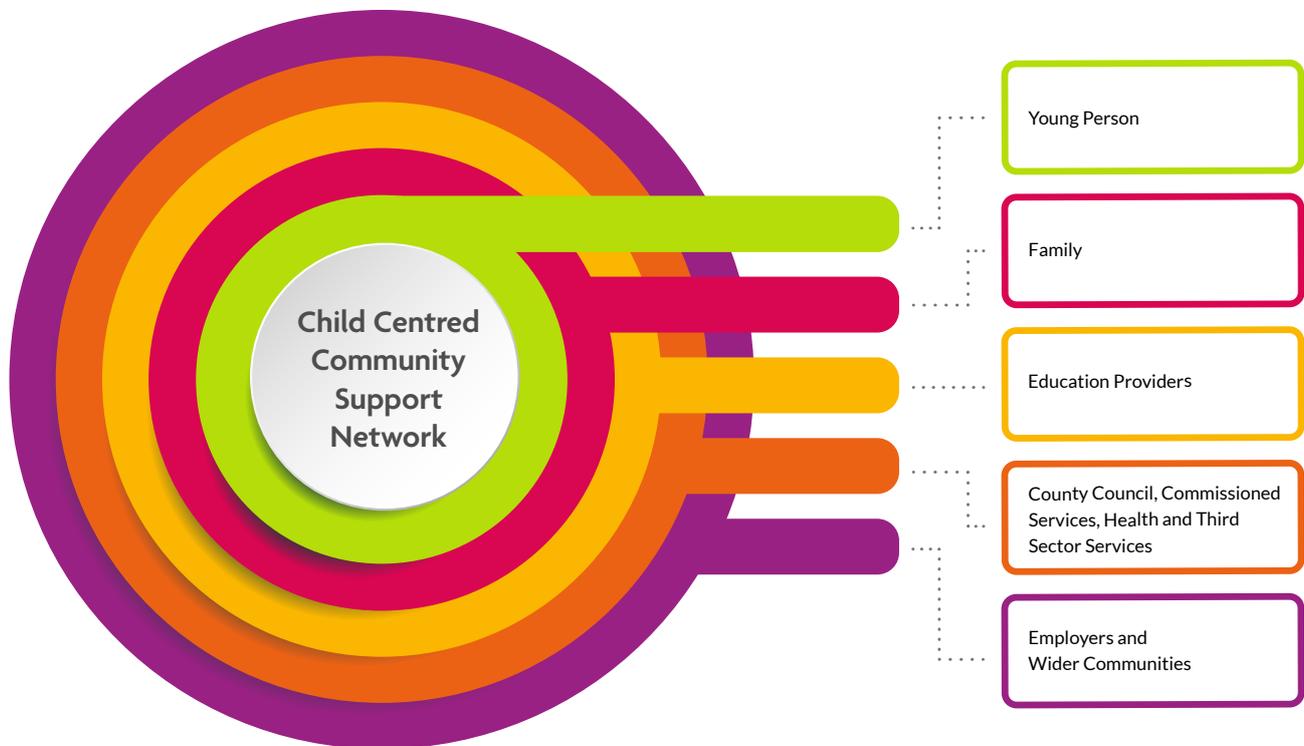
## 2. This strategy

- Establishes our educational aspirations for all children and young people;
- clarifies roles in a complex education and skills system and sets out how successful collaboration can occur to achieve our ambition and share the risks and opportunities of the changes ahead; and
- will lead to the development of an action plan setting out how we will initiate change and achieve the objectives detailed.

## 3. How we will lead this

We can only achieve our ambitions for children and young people if there is leadership throughout and across the system. The whole system must own this strategy and contribute.

This strategy must be a holistic, systems-based approach which successfully joins up different services, partners and professionals. The intention is to create a system which centres the child in a community-based support network. The successful implementation of this model will ensure an enhanced delivery of services and an improved educational experience for children and young people.



1. Highly motivated, well performing and ambitious education providers (early years, schools, colleges and training providers) united and proud to work together for the good of all children and families;
2. a curriculum and approach which inspires and helps children and young people develop the skills, knowledge and attributes to become successful citizens;
3. more education places in outstanding providers;
4. improved capacity, skills and knowledge supporting our vulnerable learners;
5. self-sustaining stable community-based arrangements to secure long term improvement and outcomes;
6. sustained support arrangements to ensure our children and young people receive the best start in life;
7. time to work this through together to foster and develop partnerships; and
8. accountability in an environment of empowerment and facilitation.

## 4. How we will work together

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The behaviours and approaches which will help us are those which are:

- **inclusive** - this strategy relates to and includes all children and all types of education provider;
- **collaborative** - by working together rather than in competition, we will get the best out of our resources and skills and share the load;
- **trusting** - by listening to each other and being inquiring in our thinking we will base future decisions on the best available evidence and knowledge;
- **energetic** - enthusiasm and energy drives change. Our children need better outcomes rapidly. Passive acceptance of the status quo won't lead to the change we want to see;
- **honest** - by being open about challenges, opportunities and performance we can effect change and support each other's success;
- **challenging** - by challenging within a culture of respect, we will ensure that passivity and unrealistic assumptions have no place in Worcestershire; and
- **aspiration** - instilling a faith in the benefits of education for every child and young person.

Underpinning all of this is an expectation of excellence and equity for every child and young person in Worcestershire with all parties taking an interest in every stage of a child or young person's education and skills life.

## 5. Quality Collaboration

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We want to encourage a change in the education environment to foster greater collaboration. There is a tension in doing this, as there are different views between providers about the best ways to improve and the financial situation means that some providers are experiencing greater financial difficulties than others.

However, we believe that quality collaboration for improvement is the most effective way to achieve the best outcomes for our children and will create a sustainable education system.

There are many examples of successful collaboration in Worcestershire and elsewhere, as well as many forms of collaboration.

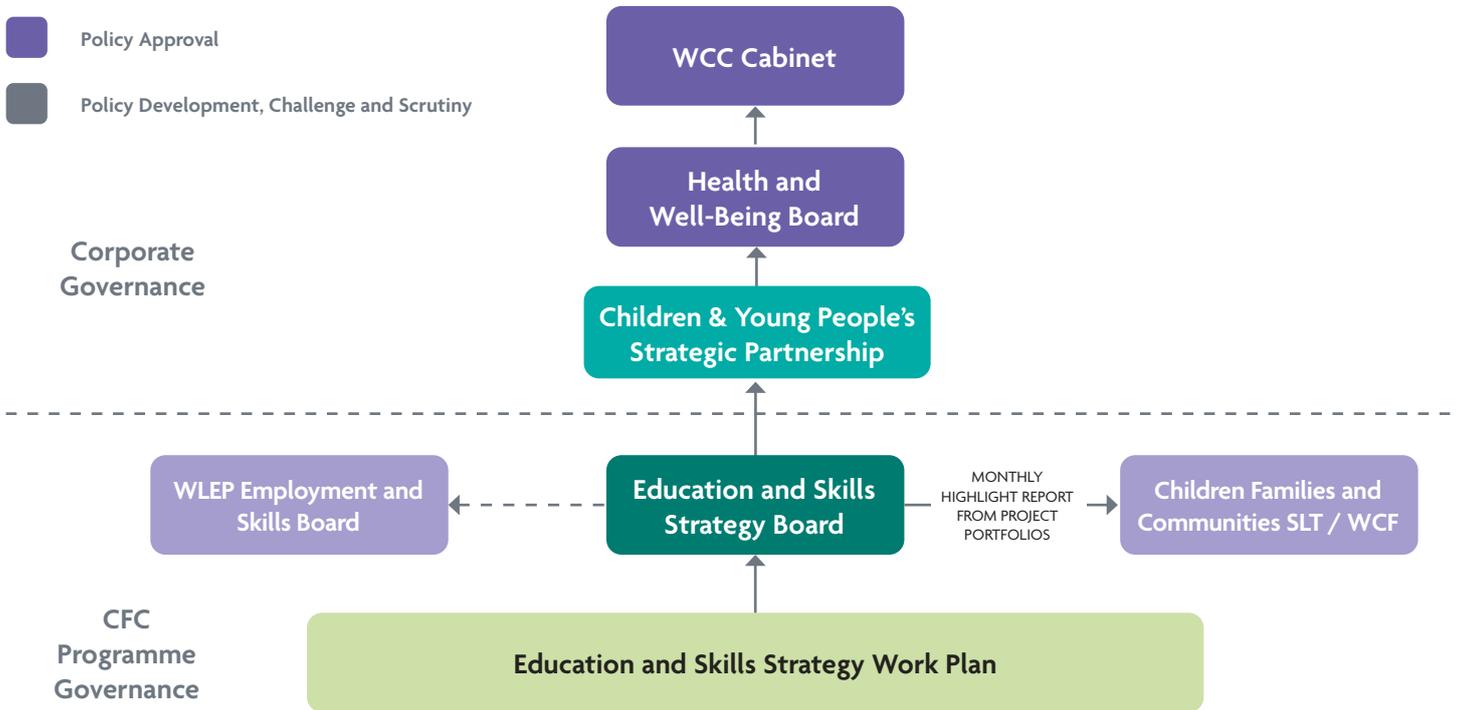
Using the skills of our further education and higher education partners such as the University of Worcester, we will learn from best practices here and elsewhere, to put in place collaboration which works.

Worcestershire County Council, through Worcestershire Children First, will play its part in brokering effective collaborations and where appropriate, share information to improve outcomes.





## Education and Skills Governance Model



### The Education and Skills Strategy Board will:

- oversee the successful delivery of this strategy in terms of activity and resource;
- hold to account the different leaders in the system for their performance and behaviours on behalf of every child and young person;
- build the energy and commitment throughout the system in Worcestershire;
- take a strategic and long-term view of the changes necessary; and
- work with other decision makers to invest in the future of education in Worcestershire.

### Locality arrangements will:

- work to enable education providers to collaborate within districts and across education phases;
- engage with their local communities to build community commitment and engagement in education;
- have high ambitions for every child and young person; and
- engage local employers in the career's strategy and curriculum.

### Thematic groups

- these will be set up as appropriate, addressing specific themes for learners according to identified need and priority. For example, to address the highest prevalent SEND area of need (currently speech and language needs in early years) and the progress and attainment of vulnerable groups of children.

## **Worcestershire County Council through Worcestershire Children First will:**

- enable, broker and facilitate collaboration;
- take a strategic long-term view of the importance of education;
- commission effectively;
- work to secure sustainability, resilience and pace; and
- champion children and young people.

## **The principles of this system are that it:**

- expects equity and excellence for every child;
- believes that no one institution is more important than the outcomes for children and families;
- is sector led with education providers helping each other through peer to peer support;
- sees improvement as a habit, not a goal;
- delivers a balance of support and challenge to empower schools, colleges and communities;
- builds capacity through networks;
- shares the best practice;
- eliminates underperformance;
- researches and commissions; and
- embraces innovation.

## **7. What do we want to achieve?**

### **Objective 1: Highly motivated, well performing and ambitious education providers<sup>1</sup>**

Education progress and attainment is not yet good enough in Worcestershire and there are too many school exclusions: in the 2012-13 academic year, there were a total of 48 completed exclusions, which by the 2018-19 year had increased to 113. Worcestershire's permanent exclusion rate at all school types 0.11% is better than the average for the West Midlands (0.13%) but is slightly above national levels (0.1%). Our fixed exclusion rate at Secondary Schools (5.24%) is significantly better than West Midlands (8.95%) and National levels (10.13%) and additionally, Worcestershire's children have significantly lower than average days lost per exclusion at 2.96 days, in comparison to National (4.41), West Midlands (4.23) and an average of Statistical Neighbours (4.94).

There are also concerns about rising numbers of children and young people electively educated at home. At the end of April 2019, there were 761 recorded children and young people who are electively educated at home in Worcestershire. Since September 2018 there have been 222 children who are no longer electively educated at home. However, the number of referrals from 2016/17 onwards has increased significantly and delays have been identified with the time frame in which assessments are completed.

The current situation is unsustainable within the current financial forecasts. We want to reverse this long-term trend and create positive, sustainable arrangements. This will take time but is possible with a concerted and coordinated effort.

### **What we want to see by 2024:**

#### **For children and young people:**

- all education outcomes in top quartile nationally;
- nine out of ten schools to be good or outstanding; and
- design a whole system response to minimise permanent exclusions.

<sup>1</sup>See appendix pages 4-6

- effective and consistent use of fixed term exclusions;
- improved transitions between schools, colleges and other education providers;
- the number of children electively educated at home reduced by 30% from current baseline, because families have confidence in Worcestershire's school system;
- the appropriate use of alternative provision and an increase in successful integration;
- improvement across all aspects of social mobility; and
- improve achievement to match national average with ambition to go further.

### **For education providers:**

- all schools and colleges to be part of a sector-led improvement collaborative in their districts;
- research schools/teaching schools or equivalent acting as hubs for developing best practice overseen by a governance group;
- effective governance in every school with a sufficiency of school governors;
- five-year revenue financial plan for every school and a five-year area plan for revenue and capital investment;
- schools and other education providers engaged, working together with local communities, involving parents / carers and families, engaged in system-wide approaches (such as Signs of Safety and the Early Help Offer); and
- all secondary schools and FE colleges meeting Gatsby benchmarks<sup>2</sup>.

### **How we will do this:**

- introduction of district coordinated arrangements, through Worcestershire Children First facilitating local arrangements;
- schools and Worcestershire County Council working collaboratively together to achieve the agreed outcomes;
- self-sustaining networks for school improvement governed by memoranda of understanding between providers;
- development of appropriate curriculum, training, development which shows greater financial sustainability and impact on outcomes for children;
- the development of an early years strategy concentrating on readiness for schools as well as sufficiency of places;
- development of integrated in-school mental health and social care provision targeted to areas with greatest issues;
- implement further training and guidance for all settings to improve transitions;
- development of contextual safeguarding and restorative practice approaches to ensure the underlying issues affecting behaviour are addressed and all aspects of safeguarding children and young people are considered ; and
- supporting careers enterprise and careers hub initiative to partner with schools' ambition.

## **Objective 2: A curriculum and approach which inspires<sup>3</sup>**

In January 2019, Ofsted published their new proposed inspection framework. There will be an added focus on reducing teachers' workload, with leadership encouraged to maintain support and awareness of key pressures affecting staff.

The current curriculum is not yet meeting the needs of all children and young people. The new Ofsted framework and the economic ambitions of the County create the environment for curriculum development throughout Worcestershire. Our ambition to deliver a curriculum approach that inspires, is mirrored in the direction Ofsted has taken.

Central to Ofsted's new direction is a teaching curriculum which goes beyond exam preparation. Ofsted have identified the importance of a broader curriculum, which does not mistake 'badges and stickers' for learning and substance. This shift toward a more holistic approach when assessing school quality, takes issues of social mobility and deprivation to its core.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/careersportal/info/25/the\\_8\\_gatsby\\_benchmarks](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/careersportal/info/25/the_8_gatsby_benchmarks)

<sup>3</sup> See appendix page 7

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hmcis-commentary-october-2017>

## What we want to see by 2024:

Using the freedoms and flexibilities which exist, education providers are successfully working together with the intention to develop and implement a broad and balanced curriculum. It enables the development of skills as well as knowledge to be relevant to every individual child and young person, each district area, which will meet the needs of our economy moving forward.

Each district area would identify their unique needs within an overall context of Worcestershire, for example for:

- arts/sports;
- financial;
- mental health;
- social mobility;
- training and development; and
- technology.

## How we will do this:

- establish a thematic group to consider best practice in curriculum design;
- through the district groups consider unique needs and assets of community and employers;
- develop an integrated Post 16 offer; and
- understand the needs of our current and future labour market.

## Objective 3: More education places in good or outstanding provision<sup>4</sup>

The education provision and place planning landscape are complex. Most schools are maintained by Worcestershire County Council however, most children in Worcestershire are educated in academies which are independent and do not follow the national curriculum.

In the Early Years and Post-16 sectors, most places are provided by the independent, private and voluntary sectors.

Although the birth rate is forecast to stabilise, new housing developments up to 2030 and beyond will increase the number of education places required and will potentially lead to the redistribution of children as families move into new developments. Our latest population predictions for Worcestershire sees a forecast birth rate of 5,991 in 2022, which is below the rate of actual births in 2016. We are forecasting an increase of 4.9% total residents due to housing.

After successive years of increasing numbers of children entering primary school these numbers have now peaked and further pressure on primary school places is not anticipated. The increased number of primary school children will add pressure on secondary school sufficiency, as they progress to secondary school education.

## We want to see by 2024:

To maintain a viable and stable education system we want to see:

- 9 out of 10 pupils to receive their first or second school preference;
- children from vulnerable groups continue to have equity of access to their preferred school (baseline to be set);
- all children who need admittance during the school year are offered provision within 20 days;
- every child subject to the fair access policy (which enables children to move schools or access a school place at times other than the normal school entry points) should be given provision without delay; and
- home to school travel time is typically no longer than 45 minutes.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix Objective 3, pages 8-12

## How we will do this:

- maintain clarity of forecasting at school, district and county-wide levels, outlining rolling five-year forecasts supported by ten-year projections where possible, using planning, housing and general population data, maintaining or improving the current good 1 and 3 year forecast accuracy levels;
- district groups to discuss forecasts and planned changes whether for individual schools / wards or led by the council and produce district level plans for 1,3,5 and where possible, 10 years;
- establish clarity of funding sources and funding requirements to create a multi-stream financial plan which would enable the council and education providers to collectively:
  - lobby for national capital funding from government;
  - strategically plan capital grants;
  - strategically plan contributions from developers and other infrastructure projects;
  - identify potential community fund-raising activity;
  - identify income from land sales and rentals; and
  - identify any other sources of capital contribution; and
- county wide and district focus on fair access arrangements to oversee peer support to help decision making about individual children and for robust direction arrangements where places are not identified and accessed.

## Objective 4. Building skills for our future workforce<sup>5</sup>

The Worcestershire economy has a high proportion of small and medium sized businesses; schools and colleges are preparing young people to be global citizens as well as contributing to the future economy.

### By 2024 we want to see:

- better Skills and Workforce Planning;
- high quality technical education
- strengthened relationships between Businesses, Further Education Colleges and Schools by having a business relationship with every school including curriculum experiences from Y4 onwards;
- increased employability of all young people, particularly those with SEND; and
- no more than 3% of young people aged 16-19 not in education, employment or training, with a focus on those young people least likely to access jobs (e.g. young people with SEND).

## How we will do this:

Through the existing arrangements and the district groups we will:

- understand the needs, now and in the future, of our local labour market initiative;
- increase apprenticeship opportunities and promote apprenticeship frameworks to businesses;
- enhanced higher level education ;
- high quality technical education;
- increase private sector investment in skills;
- build a clearer picture of the skills required;
- increase opportunities created under academy status to develop relationships between schools and business;
- address youth unemployment by meeting NEET prevention strategy 2017/2021 targets;
- building better mechanisms to identify job opportunities and support local recruitment at all levels;
- help small businesses recruit;
- support the work of the Careers and Enterprise Company to implement Gatsby benchmarks across all secondary schools and further education settings; and
- support implementation of employer encounters to all children and young people from year 7 onwards.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix pages 13 - 16

## Objective 5. Improved capacity, skills and knowledge surrounding our vulnerable learners<sup>6</sup>

### Vulnerable learners

There is a need to change and review support systems and approaches to accelerate the achievement and progress of vulnerable learner groups. Educational outcomes across Worcestershire typically improve year on year across all key stages, which means addressing differences in attainment for vulnerable children and young people requires improving outcomes at a greater rate than that of their peers.

Worcester City has the highest percentage of vulnerable learners for most vulnerable learner groups, including children accessing free school meals, children from an ethnic minority group, learners with child protection plans, and looked after children. Wychavon is the district with the highest overall number of children from vulnerable groups.

### We want to see by 2024:

- an increase in the percentage of children with a good level of development in early years;
- improved educational outcomes and positive destinations for all vulnerable children and young people relative to their peers;
- reduce differences in achievement at all stages;
- stronger partnership working across children services, education settings and families in Worcestershire;
- a centralised referral system for effective monitoring and tracking, with clear timeframes for intervention;
- all schools complete their statutory returns to Worcestershire County Council; and
- the Local Authority continues to raise awareness of children missing education through procedures, practices and training.

### How we will do this

- successful implementation of the Vulnerable Learners Framework;
- the Early Help strategy will be embedded, further integrating early intervention support and good practice in Worcestershire as part of a community-based support network;
- the Early Years strategy, which focuses on school readiness and early identification of SEND and vulnerable learners, is embedded, further integrating support and good practice in Worcestershire;
- optimise take up and implementation of Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) funding to ensure improved outcomes for disadvantaged children in Early Years settings;
- by providing high quality support, challenge and training to settings, schools and colleges, the Worcestershire County Council will build capacity and maximise the impact of available resources for narrowing attainment differences and improving the progress of our most vulnerable learners; and
- integrated assessment across all education phases to improve early identification and intervention where children and young people's life circumstances change.

### SEND<sup>7</sup>

In 2019, there are a total of 87,862 pupils in Worcestershire of which 2,643 (3%) have an Education Health and Care plan. In Worcestershire, there is a higher proportion of Early Years children with additional Speech, Language and Communication needs than nationally and a lower proportion of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder or who have a moderate learning difficulty.

<sup>6</sup> See appendix pages 17-19

<sup>7</sup> See appendix page 18

For children with additional needs, there is added importance for effective multi-agency working and policy on delayed/accelerated transfers. There is a need to develop the capacity, skills and knowledge available in local employers for young people with SEND to improve employment opportunities.

In March 2018, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Worcestershire to judge the effectiveness of our SEND provision. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) determined that a Written Statement of Action was required because of significant areas of weakness in Worcestershire's SEND provision. In response, WCC published the Worcestershire Local Area Written Statement of Action<sup>8</sup>. The action plan lays out how the Council and Clinical Commissioning Group will work together with partners, parents/carers, young people and school leaders, to improve outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Central to the SEND improvement plan involved understanding and implementing support according to a 'graduated' approach – a four-part cycle through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised with a growing understanding of the pupil's needs and what support is required to ensure good progress and outcomes. The Graduated Response<sup>9</sup> has been developed for settings and partner agencies, to use as a tool to improve SEND support.

Implementation of the SEND reforms have been overseen by the SEND Improvement Board, reporting to the Children and Young People's Sub Group of the Health and Well Being Board. This partnership approach aims to improve the engagement of all agencies and ensure we work in a collaborative way to identify and meet the needs of children in Worcestershire.

## **We want to see by 2024:**

- inclusion across all education provision;
- accurate and timely identification of children with SEND;
- speech and language development programme from birth/community/public health using evidence-based approaches;
- special schools as centres of excellence working with mainstream education settings to support inclusion; and
- diminishing the difference in attainment for groups of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners.

## **How we will do this:**

- encourage and support reflection by school leaders on their contribution to more inclusive schooling in Worcestershire. We want to see creativity and innovation leading to less movement of children and young people in and out of schools, and more stability in their lives as they live and attend schools close to home; and
- implement the Worcestershire SEND Written Statement of Action and redesign and reallocate funding from the High Needs Block.

## **The outcome of this will be:**

- the Local Offer is accurate, available, informative and useful to enable children, young people and families to access help and information at the earliest possible opportunity;
- improve and embed the Graduated Response so needs are identified at the earliest point with appropriate support put in place;
- children and Young People's needs are assessed and met in a timely and purposeful manner;
- we will establish effective partnerships and joint understanding of need, responsibility and impact; and
- children and young people are supported by a workforce that achieves the best possible outcomes, through effective engagement and coproduction. A multiagency workforce shares a culture which promotes inclusive practice, equipped through knowledge and skills.

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/10224/send\\_action\\_plan.pdf](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/10224/send_action_plan.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/graduatedresponse>

## Objective 6. Improved Social Mobility for all Children and Young People<sup>10</sup>

There are issues in Worcestershire for children and young people from less affluent backgrounds. In 2017 the Social Mobility Commission found that all of our districts, except for Bromsgrove (48th of 324), needed to improve<sup>11</sup>. Worcester (277th), Wyre Forest (273rd) and particularly Wychavon (310th), which is the poorest performing district in the West Midlands, require action to ensure all of our children receive the best start in life.

Wychavon District Council, as part of their promise to tackle social mobility in the district, held a summit with partners in 2018. This led to a plan of action and a fund for improving social mobility. Wychavon District Council has launched a social mobility grant<sup>12</sup>, are investigating further funding opportunities, such as the Business rate pilot scheme and have commissioned Babcock Prime to provide further support in developing their plan.

Our partner Babcock Prime is working on early years language issues, with a focus on the 'word gap', which particularly affects children from disadvantaged backgrounds and children with additional needs.

The focus of the education strategy on addressing educational underperformance for every child will play a part in improving social mobility. The involvement of the University of Worcester in the governance arrangements and in a strategic relationship with schools and colleges will bring their expertise and success in working with the Stoke Opportunity Area to bear<sup>13</sup>. The emphasis on post 16 and the skills agenda will engage employers more effectively in opening opportunities for children and young people.

### What we want to see by 2024

- demonstrable improvement in social mobility in district areas currently underperforming .

### How we will do this

- learn from the successes of Wychavon's social mobility action plan and develop other plans across the county through locality arrangements; and
- build on Wychavon's progress focussing on early years, transition points and the word gap.

## Objective 7. Training and the education workforce<sup>14</sup>

The delivery of this strategy is dependent on many thousands of staff in early years provision, schools, colleges and training providers, in the council, in Worcestershire Children First and in other related sectors. Several parts of this strategy will need to be supported by good workforce planning and development

The great majority (97.7%) of teachers in Worcestershire, possess Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), which amounts to 3,594 qualified teachers. Of those teachers who are not qualified, 25.4% are on the route to attaining Qualified teacher Status. The pupil to teacher ratio in Worcestershire is 17.3, which compares favourably with the West Midlands region (18.1), and statistical neighbours such as Warwickshire (19.1). The percentage of schools in the county reporting either a vacancy or a temporarily filled post is 5.8%, which is considerably lower than for the West Midlands region (9.7%) and nationally (11.1%).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See appendix page 20

<sup>11</sup> The Social Mobility Commission's State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain, available from: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/662744/State\\_of\\_the\\_Nation\\_2017\\_-\\_Social\\_Mobility\\_in\\_Great\\_Britain.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662744/State_of_the_Nation_2017_-_Social_Mobility_in_Great_Britain.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.wychavon.gov.uk/wychavon-social-mobility-grant>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.worcester.ac.uk/about/academic-schools/school-of-education/services-for-schools/education-leadership-and-learning/collaboration-with-stoke-on-trent-headteachers.aspx>

<sup>14</sup> See appendix page 21

<sup>15</sup> School Workforce Census November 2018  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-workforce>

## What we want to see by 2024:

- the proportion of unfilled or hard to recruit to vacancies in early years, schools, post 16 providers and the council reduced by 50% from current baseline;
- a well-qualified, sustainable workforce which is well supported and developed; and
- a self-improving system led approach which is facilitated and developed within the Worcestershire County Council.

## How we will do this:

- establish a basic education workforce analysis at district and county level to understand future needs, vacancies and skills of the education workforce to deliver against the plans in this strategy;
- support high flyers to ensure our best young minds can achieve their ambitions in Worcestershire;
- establish a new relationship with local Higher Education Institutions and Further Education Colleges;
- establish a strategic relationship with the Education Endowment Foundation and similar; and
- identify the training and continuous professional development needs to deliver this strategy.

## 8. Links to other Strategic documents

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This is a high-level strategy which supports the following Worcestershire County Council Children and Young People's Plan priorities:

- Support children to have the best start in life and be ready for learning;
- provide access to a quality and appropriate education/learning experience for all;
- improve outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people;
- prepare young people for adult life; and
- support young people, parents and carers to overcome the barriers to sustained employment.

It relates to several other strategies, policies and plans, including:

1. Worcestershire County Council's Corporate Plan "Shaping Worcestershire's Future"
2. Worcestershire's Children and Young People's Plan 2017-21
3. Worcestershire Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) 2017-21
4. Worcestershire's High Needs Commissioning Review Plan 2018 – 2022
5. Worcestershire County Council Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2018
6. Good education places for all Worcestershire children Worcestershire County Council's School Organisation Plan 2019-2024
7. Worcestershire Health & Well-being Board's **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Profile on Children with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) in Worcestershire**
8. SEND Written Statement of Action – Improvement Plan
9. Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership 2018 Annual Report
10. WCC Engineering and Manufacturing Strategy 2017-2021
11. Apprenticeship Growth Operational Plan 2017 – 2019
12. WCC NEET reduction and prevention strategy 2017-2021

It needs to optimise the influence and resource of other strategies and improvement agendas to ensure that we are working to a person-centred agenda, to impact with success and deliver the ambition of Worcestershire to be safe from harm, reach their full potential, make a positive contribution in their communities and live healthy, happy and fun filled lives.

## 9. Glossary

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**FE** – Further Education

**NEET** – Not in Education, Employment, or Training

**SEND** – Special Educational Needs and Disability

**CME** – Child Missing Education