

WORCESTERSHIRE
CHILDREN FIRST



WCF Annual General Meeting 2021

Thursday 30 September 2021 at 2pm
Held virtually

1. Welcome – Rob Morrison Chair
2. Presentation of Annual Report – Tina Russell CEO
3. Financial statements for 2020/21 – Phil Rook Director of Resources
4. Confirmation of Reappointment of Auditors for the coming year
5. Department for Education Statutory Direction update – Paul Robinson WCC Chief Executive and Paula Furnival WCC Commissioner
6. WCF Structure 2021/22 – Board Members
7. Consider any other competent business

- Annual Report and financial statements we are about to review today are available on WCF website
- www.worcschildrenfirst.org.uk



- Worcestershire Children First (WCF) year of operation through unprecedented impact of Covid.
- Despite the changes and challenges brought about by the pandemic, we responded to the needs of Worcestershire children, young people and their families.
- Whilst some delays overall we have achieved success against our business plan.



WCF ANNUAL REPORT
2020/21

Social Care and Safeguarding 2020/21

Area	Service Area	Priority	Outcome
Ofsted Recommendations July 2019 and additional areas for improvement	Family Front Door and Partnerships	The engagement of partners to deliver early help to families and to ensure that this help is timely	QA work completed through work of Family Front Door and WSCP QAPP – very positive outcomes.
		Assessments of need for 16 and 17 year olds who present as homeless, including whether they should come into care of the Local Authority. Young People should be clear about this option.	Targeted Family Support and EIFS merged into FFD. Revised model of working completed. Independent validation of achievement evidenced in Ofsted Focused Visit to FFD June 2021.
	Safeguarding	The quality of intervention with families, where there is a risk that children may be received into care if the right support and guidance is not available. (Edge of Care – Supporting Families First)	Supporting Families First successful implementation and year one evaluation completed. 92% success rate in care prevention development of SFF approach to children in need 2021/22.
		The timely availability of family support when children have a plan to leave care and return home.	Delays in permanency and rehabilitation planning due to Covid. Audit identifies case of delay progressed latterly. Priority in business plan 2021/22.
	Through Care	The availability of a dedicated pathway to the provision of mental health services for children in care.	Partnership group continued including: Joint case review learning events and presentation to CYSP and Feedback to national protocol on cross border MH services to children in care. Priority for 2021/22
		Provision of Personal Assistants (PAs) for care leavers when they reach the age of 17.	Completed merger of Outreach and PA service, coordination of roles and specialism to prevent duplication and ensure all YP aged 17 had allocated worker.
		The availability of suitable accommodation and timely interventions that ensure that care leavers, including those aged over 18 years, are not placed in bed and breakfast accommodation or become homeless.	No use of B&B for under 18's and monitored for those over 18 with short term emergency.
	Safeguarding Quality Assurance	Learning from the breakdown of placements for children by the holding of timely disruption meetings.	Completed. Review of process and co-ordination of Disruption mtgs and Consolidation meetings.
	All	Sustaining improvement and building consistency in good practice	Completed evidence in through year KPI/SU feedback and Audit.

Area	Service Area	Priority	Outcome
Service Area Business Development and Improvement Plans	Family Front Door and Partnerships	Thresholds and Partnerships	Threshold application a concern through Covid impact. Concerns raised through WSCP
		GET SAFE – identification and management of children at risk of exploitation.	Launch of Get Safe year 2 completed. WSCP Get Safe action plan implemented.
	Safeguarding	Development of Specialist Family Support Service	Review of service completed. Service support children in CP plans and no waiting list.
		Quality and Timeliness of Court Work	LFJB data remains high although Covid impact caused some delays, addressed 2021/22
	Through Care	Sufficiency of Placements	Completed: Sufficiency Strategy completed and signed off at Cabinet.
		Review Integrated Services for Looked After Children (ISL) and Emotional Health & Well Being Service Development	ISL review delayed due to Covid impact and priorities for all agencies
		Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) Business Plan and Inspection	IFA registered.
	Safeguarding Quality Assurance	Organisational Review of CWD and SEND	CWD & SEND services development continues under SEND action plan and CWD service review following appointment of interim CWD group manager. KPI's improved
			All Age Disability board created, and consultation project lead appointed who has led development.
	Safeguarding Quality Assurance	Are we making a difference? Outcome Measures – impact on children's lives	QA programme impacted successfully through 2020/21. Evidence of good outcomes in increased audits and SU feedback with increased positive outcome in both. KPI's maintained through 2020/21
Improving the quality and timeliness of plans, effective use of Dispute Resolution Process (DRP)			
Understanding service user experience, Child Protection and Looked After Children's Processes			
All	Financial Management, Savings and Efficiencies		

Area	Service Area	Priority	Outcome
Innovation	Family Front Door and Partnerships	Social Work Student in Practice (POP)	Completed. Student in place, supported FFD and schools in early management of Covid. POP forms part of workforce 2021/22
	Safeguarding	Family Safeguarding	Projects implemented – progress on track
		Repeat Proceedings and Child Removals (PAUSE Project)	
	Through Care	Regional Fostering Developments	Development on regional commissioning HUB with fostering framework.
Safe Centre Regional Secure		Revised progress on Safe Centre in reflection of regional priorities and developing ways of working to prevent care and secure. New groups established 2021/22	
Safeguarding Quality Assurance	Practice Managers – Research in Practice	Completed and supported workforce learning through 2020/21	

Social Care and Safeguarding 2020/21

- QA work completed through work of Family Front Door and WSCP QAPP – good outcomes KPI / SU Feedback and audit.
- Targeted Family Support and EIFS merged into FFD. Revised model of working completed.
- Supporting Families First (SFF) successful implementation and year one evaluation completed. 92% success rate in care prevention. Development of SFF approach to children in need 2021/22
- Delays in permanency and rehabilitation due to Covid. Audit identified cases progressed latterly. Priority in business plan 2021/22.
- Sufficiency Strategy for our placement for children in care completed and signed off at Cabinet.
- Independent Fostering Agency registered. Inspection September 2021.
- Mental Health for Young People Partnership group continued though some delays: Joint case review learning events and presentation to CYSP. Priority for 2021/22 in HWBB / WCF and Children and Young People Strategic Partnership.
- Completed merger of Outreach and PA service, coordination of roles and specialism to prevent duplication and ensure all YP aged 17 had allocated worker. No use of B&B for under 18's and monitored for those over 18 with short term emergency.
- Completed review of disruption meetings and consolidation meetings to reduce placement breakdown.

Social Care and Safeguarding 2020/21

- Threshold application a concern through Covid impact. Concerns raised through WSCP about Children and Families access to effective Early Help.
- Launch of Get Safe year 2 completed. WSCP Get Safe action plan implemented.
- Review of service Family Support completed. This services supports children on CP plans and no waiting list.
- Care proceedings timeliness remains good overall although Covid impact caused some delays. Audit identified case / issues addressed in 2021/22 business planning.
- CWD & SEND services development continues under SEND action plan and CWD service review following appointment of interim CWD group manager. KPI's improved in Children with Disabilities.
- QA programme impacted successfully through 2020/21. Evidence good outcomes in increased audits and SU feedback with increased positive outcome in both. KPI's maintained through 2020/21.
- Completed. Student in place , supported FFD and Schools in early management of Covid. POP forms part of workforce 2021/22.
- Family Safeguarding and PAUSE project both Projects implemented – progress on track.
- Completed evidence of positive outcomes through the year in KPI/SU feedback and Audit.

Education and Early Help 2020/21

Service Area	Priority	Outcome
Sufficiency and Place Planning	Ensure that there is a process in place to manage sufficiency of education places and forecasting, to include the following provision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> early years mainstream specialist post-16 	Appointment of new Group Manager linking into Corporate Asset Strategy Planning. Cabinet approval in for provision of new Secondary School in Worcester in February 2021 as part of our annual plan
	to include new provision of - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mainstream specialist AP provision 	
	Academy conversions	WCF continue work with and support schools to work to this government agenda of Academisation.
Education Support and Effectiveness	Early Years Strategy development and delivery	Early Years lead appointed.
	School Improvement leadership and recruitment	Delayed due to Covid in progress for 2021/22 business planning
	Education Strategy School Improvement at district level	
	Management of in-year school admissions	Total in-year applications processed from 01/06/2020 to 31/05/2021 was 3348, compared to 2135 in the previous period. Development of a new Fair Access Protocol led to the placement of 13 children in the 2020/21 academic year, compared to none in the previous year.
	Education Sector response to COVID-19 Pandemic	This strategic group met regularly throughout the pandemic providing regular support, steer and decision making with key educational leaders to ensure continuity of and access to education.
	Plan Governor recruitment, development and quality assurance	Delayed in Covid now in progress for 2021/22

Service Area	Priority	Outcome
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Vulnerable Learners	SEND Improvement Programme including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Offer Early Years Inclusive Practice Continuum of SEND Provision Continuing health care needs for CYP with SEND Coproduction, quality and review process of annual review of EHCPs management of high level needs funding Post 16 graduated response Transition, support service 	The SEND Improvement Board and workstream leads continued to meet throughout the COVID-19 period and meetings are attended by the DfE Advisor and NHSE adviser who remains supportive of our approach and progress. We have continued to complete new assessments for EHCP's within timescales and improved review timeliness. A comprehensive quality assurance and learning programme is part of 2021/22 priorities.
	Review of Alternative Provision and Medical Education service	Cabinet agreed the future delivery approach in March 2021 following co-production on the future approach with relevant stakeholders
	Review and Publish Children Missing in Education (CME) Strategy, including process for tracking children and suitability of EHE	Data is now collated and reviewed regularly by an operational team "missing Mondays" and senior managers through the Leadership work programme
	Educational Outcomes for Looked After Children, and previously Looked After Children	100% Personal Education Plans completed for statutory school age Children Looked After (CLA). Increase in percentage of CLA making expected progress against their own targets and approach to learning.
	Strengthen links with Social Care and SEND	CWD and SEND senior managers have come together to do the groundwork for the planned All Age Disability service. This has included workshops and learning about each other's role and responsibilities in legislation and practice approach

Education and Early Help 2020/21

Service Area	Priority	Outcome
Education Safeguarding	Develop the WSCP Headteacher steering group	Completed. Group has representatives of all provision and meets regularly
	Improve the Skills and confidence of schools to manage safeguarding, including. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce Training DSL Network Quality Assurance audit programme (KCSE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 210 schools bought into Service Level Agreement in academic year 2020/21 Designated Safeguarding Lead network includes 925 staff from 279 schools (includes independent schools and FE Colleges) The DSL Networks meet termly and every half term local networks run by DSL champions facilitated by WCF education safeguarding team QA visits - 36 safeguarding self-assessment reviews were undertaken by the Education Safeguarding Leads with schools in the first 2 terms of 2020/21
	To ensure schools' compliance with WSCP Child Protection procedures	511 Audits completed. A moderation programme through WSCP underway
	Operation Encompass Phase 2	Launched. This introduced a more detailed level of information sharing for schools and results in timely and appropriate action to support children in school.

Service Area	Priority	Outcome
Early Help Partnerships	Enhancement of the Early Help Offer across partnerships	<p>This was a priority from the ILACS inspection July 2019. Ofsted focused visit of July 2021 said of our Early Help</p> <p><i>"The local authority has made strong progress in improving the quality of practise for children and families in receipt of services at its family front door since the inspection in June 2019. The early help partnership is now well engaged with the delivery of services, and most schools in Worcestershire have an early help offer, we spoke to the needs of their community".</i></p> <p><i>"Children and families assessed as not requiring a statutory social work response by the family front door are stepped down to early help services or signposted appropriately, ensuring a timely and proportionate response. Most children who need early help support receive a service that is multi-agency, reflective and responsive to Childrens needs. Children benefit from creative direct work and the voice of the child is considered in early help assessments".</i></p> <p><i>"Leaders have developed seamless referral and transitional arrangements to ensure that children and families experience minimal delay within the front door so that children gain the right service at the right time".</i></p>
	Troubled Families	The 2020 payment by results programme achieved 93% of the programme target for the year (494/533). This is an improvement on the previous phase of 12%.
	Implement and Embed Reducing Parental Conflict (Harmony at Home)	Initial programme launch and engagement was followed by the delivery of Train the Trainer sessions to practitioners across the early help partnership. A multi-agency reference group has been established and they helped to co-produce a localised "Harmony at Home" toolkit of resources and web based content for practitioners' ongoing use.
Early Help Partnerships and Social Care & Safeguarding	Implementation of Liquidlogic	The system was successfully implemented in the Spring and is now operational across Social Care and Early Help

Education and Early Help 2020/21

- Cabinet approval for provision of new Secondary School in Worcester in February 2021 as part of our annual plan.
- Development of a new Fair Access Protocol led to the placement of 13 children in the 2020/21 academic year – children getting back into education.
- This strategic group of head teachers steered regular support, steer and decision making to ensure continuity of and access to education for children.
- The SEND Improvement Board and workstream leads continued progress and monitoring of actions to improved throughout COVID-19 period including DfE Advisor and NHSE Advisor monitoring who remain supportive of our approach and progress.
- We have continued to complete new assessments for children with EHCP's within timescales and improved review timeliness .
- A comprehensive quality assurance and learning programme for the EHCP assessment is part of 2021/22 priorities.
- Cabinet agreed the future delivery approach for education of children too ill to attend school in March 2021 following co-production on the future approach with relevant stakeholders.
- Data is now collated and reviewed regularly by an operational team “Missing Mondays” and Senior Managers, children missing education and identified more quickly and supported to access education and return to school.

Education and Early Help 2020/21

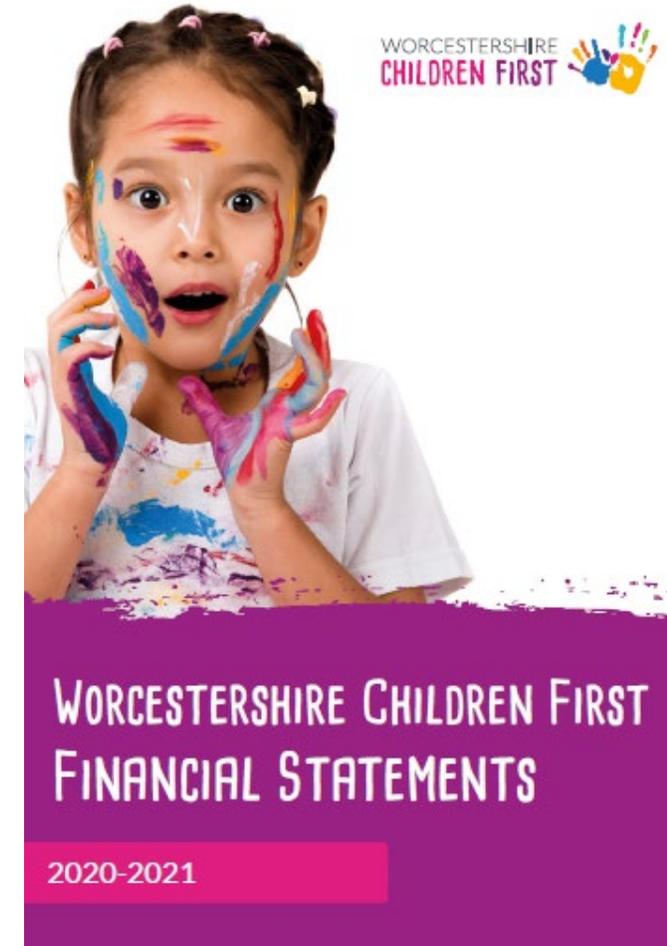
- 100% Personal Education Plans completed for statutory school age Children Looked After (CLA).
- Increase in percentage of CLA making expected progress against their own targets and approach to learning.
- CWD and Senior Managers have come together to do the groundwork for the planned All Age Disability service.
- 210 Schools bought into Service Level Agreement for Education Safeguarding in academic year 2020/21.
- Designated Safeguarding Lead network includes 925 staff from 279 schools (includes independent schools and FE colleges).
- The DSL Networks meet termly and every half term local networks run by DSL champions facilitated by WCF Education Safeguarding Lead to share good practice and learning.
- Operation Encompass launched. This introduced a more detailed level of information sharing for schools and results in timely and appropriate actions by schools to support children experiencing domestic abuse .
- The Early Help Partnership is now well engaged with the delivery of services, and most schools in Worcestershire have an early help offer.
- The 2020 payment by results programme for Troubled Families achieved 93% of the programme target for the year (494/533). This is an improvement on the previous year.
- Initial programme launch of Harmony at Home was followed by the delivery of Train the Trainer sessions to practitioners across the early help partnership workforce.

Quality Assurance in Children's Social Care & Safeguarding

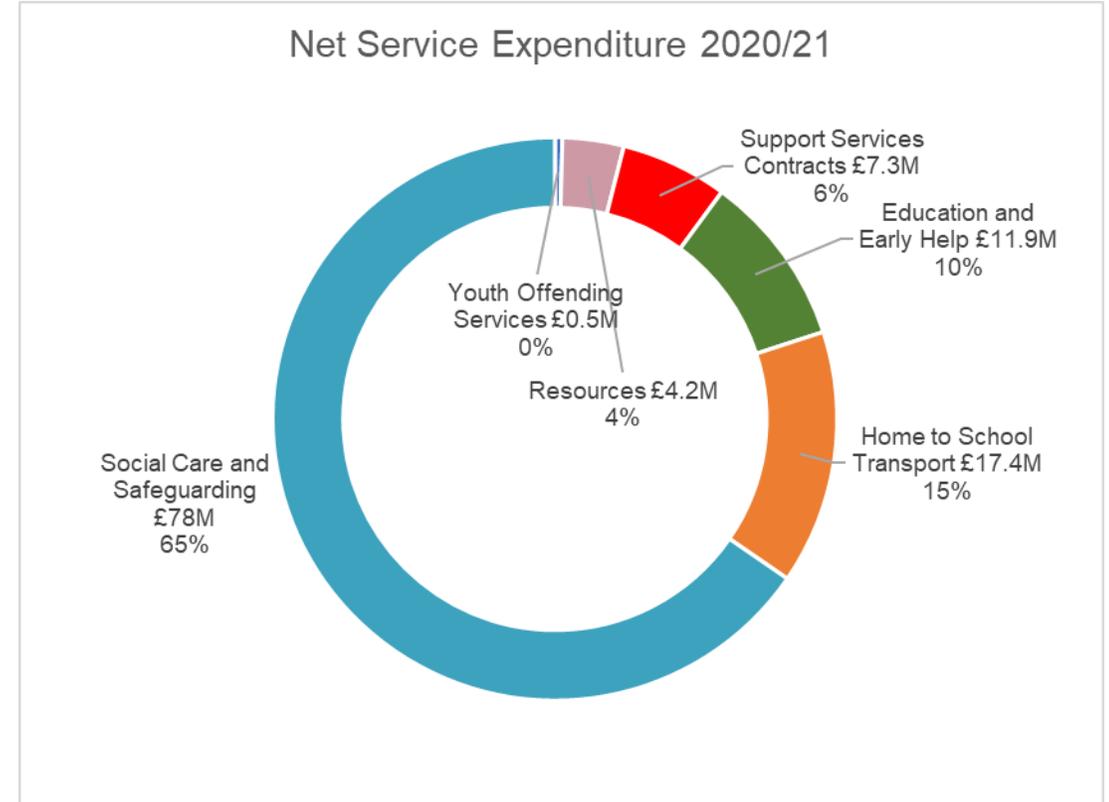
- **Key Performance Indicators** – Data headline – demand, timeliness, management of risk and outcomes for children & young people.
- **Service User feedback** – Knowing how our services are experienced by children, young people and their parents.
- **Audit** – Qualitative information on quality of work and experience of children, parents/carers and professional.
- Praise for our QA framework and approach from Ofsted.

- Company board meetings have been held monthly throughout covid and updated business plan in August 2020 to reflect challenges covid impact.
- Quality Assurance Board has carried out focused analysis of both Social Care and Safeguarding and Education and Early Help Directorates.
- Risk Governance and Audit Board reviewed the 2021/22 Budget in detail prior to approval by the Board, reviewed the 2020/21 financial statements and external audit report in detail.
- Continue to meet with the Council and DfE met with review of performance, finance, successes and challenges across the business and review of support services provided by the Council.
- Relationships with the council continue to be extremely positive and staff from WCF engage and are member of key strategic groups to ensure efficient and effective joint working and continue transparent reporting to elected members.

- WCF separate legal entity.
- Owned and controlled by Worcestershire County Council.
- Financial Statements prepared under FRS102 and compliance with Companies Act.
- Financial statements for 12 months activity to 31 March 2021.
- Final Audit took place virtually from 29 April 2020 by Grant Thornton.
- Unqualified opinion – which means clean bill of health.
- Approved by WCF Board 26 July 2021.
- Accounts on our website and sent to companies house.



- Turnover of £119.7m (£117.4m contract price).
- Expenditure £119.2m.
- Small surplus transferred to retained earnings £0.5m.
- WCF hold no fixed assets.
- Support services purchased from WCC £7.3m.
- Cash position healthy.
- Consolidated into WCC Group Financial Statements.
- WCF not responsible for pension deficits prior to 1 October and pay contributions set by actuary 18.6% in 2020/21 and for period to end 2022.



- Grant Thornton are our external auditors, who are also the council's external auditors which helps as we use same financial systems and processes.
- Separate engagement partner and independent.
- Good working relationship and built knowledge of company, processes, and systems.
- Pressure in audit market to complete audit on time.

Commercial in confidence

 Grant Thornton

**The Audit Findings
for Worcestershire Children First**

Year ended 31 March 2021
30 June 2021

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- **Business Plan 2021/22 sets out priorities – approved by Cabinet in March 2021.**
- Continue to be agile and adapt to make sure we respond to the needs of Worcestershire children, young people and their families.
- **Working in partnership with Worcestershire County Council** – this includes developing an all- age disability experience, improving customer access to services, integrating wellbeing, digitalisation, and strategic capacity planning.
- **WCF ‘a whole service working together’** –with a focus on commissioning, quality assurance and finance.
- **Our workforce, our foundation** – encompassing health and wellbeing, recruitment and retention, diversity and culture, leadership and management, and building skills for our future workforce.
- **Our new management structure** taking into 2021/22.

WFC Board Structure 2021/22



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



**Public Questions/
Comments can be
sent to
kwalsh@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk**