



2023

Worcestershire Children First  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

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# FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE



**Rob Morrison**  
Chair, Worcestershire  
Children First



**Tina Russell**  
Chief Executive of  
Worcestershire Children First  
and Director of Children's  
Services

We are proud to share our Annual Report in follow up to our business plan for 2022/23.

Staff delivered an ambitious programme of work to achieve our stated aims against challenging conditions, due to increased demands in service and financial constraints.

The demand for support, protection and care continues to be high, with rising numbers of children seeking additional support through education, health and care plans and those needing to be supported, protected and cared for in the absence of family. Workforce challenges in some key roles have meant we have had to be innovative and creative. We have met these challenges head on and have maintained 90% permanency in our staff across WCF, with 86% permanency in qualified social work roles and 96% in our management roles.

Against this backdrop, in May 2023 Ofsted undertook a full Inspection of Worcestershire's Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) and we were delighted to receive an overall judgement of Good. This outcome reflects the hard work of staff in our continuous journey of improvement since the last inspection in June 2019.

We have also been recognised through our Ofsted inspections for adoption/permanency services and for fostering services, both graded as delivering "Good" services. Our short breaks services to children with additional needs have been rated "Outstanding" and "Good" and our children's home has provided a continued safe and caring home life for children with high level needs, despite extreme challenges in staff capacity.

We have made recognised progress against our SEND Accelerated Action Plan, and we have continued to be a high performing service against our social care and safeguarding statutory Key Performance Indicators.

2023/24 will be our fourth full year in full company.

**Our company values to Keep Children at Our Heart, Value Family Life, Provide Good Education For All, Protect from Harm and Embrace Diversity are the basis for our approach to working with families. We continue to develop a WCF culture where our employees embrace our vision, mission and values, diversity, and inclusion through everything they do.**

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### About Worcestershire Children First

2022/23 was 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, 0-25 All-Age Disability Services, 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.





## Our vision, mission and values

Our values reflect our Company wide focus on putting children at the heart of everything we do 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.



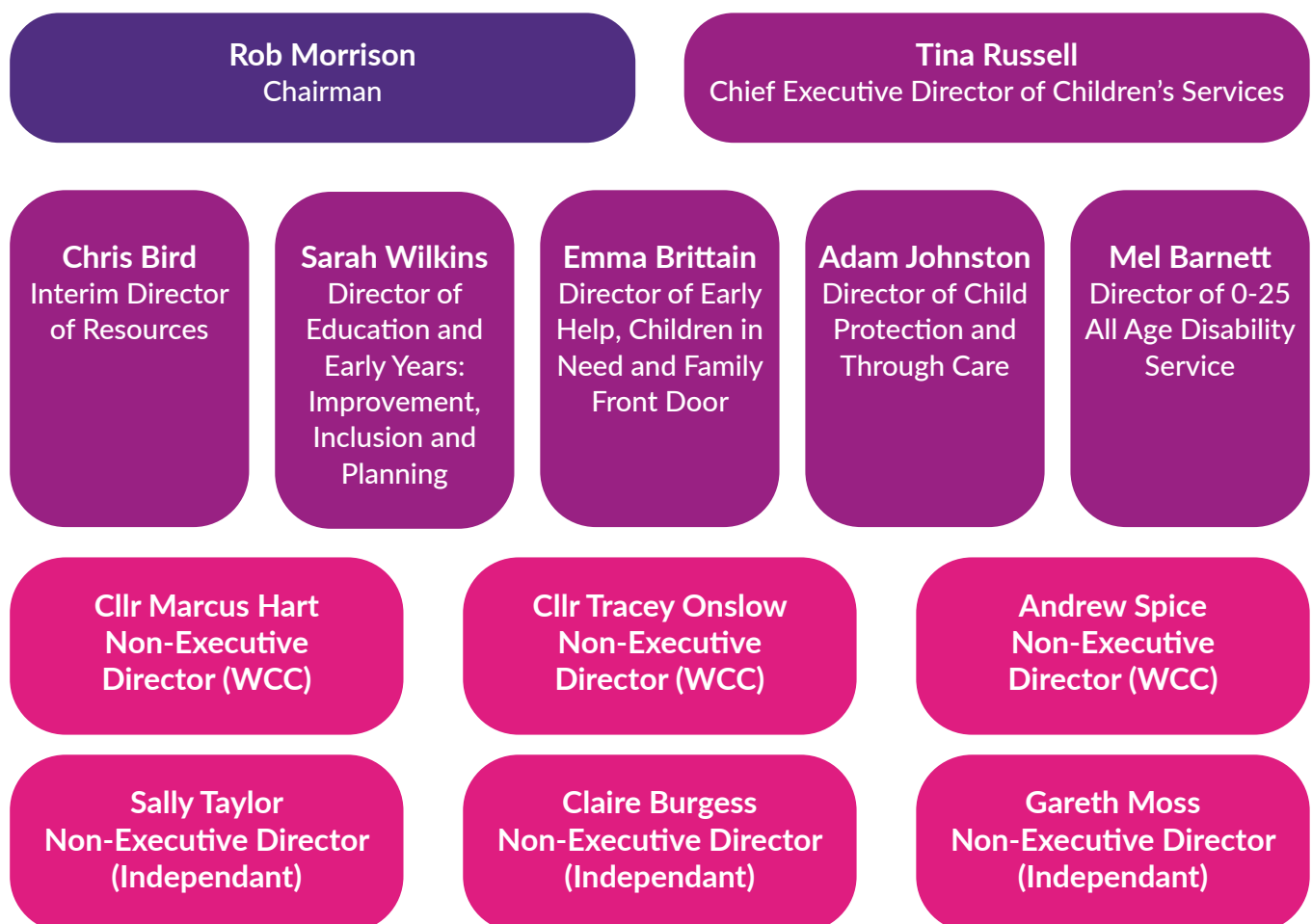
# 3. WCF COMPANY GOVERNANCE




## Internal Governance

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.

The governance structure is below:



-  (Pink) denotes Non-Executive Director;
-  (Purple) represents Executive Director.
-  (Dark Purple) The Chairman of the Board is a DfE appointment

To maintain rigour, WCF's internal governance takes the form of monthly WCF Board meetings with an **Annual General Meeting**. Additionally, there are two sub-boards reporting into the Board of Directors focusing on improvement of services;



## The Quality Assurance Board

The Quality Assurance Programme undertakes “deep dive” reviews of the quality and performance of our frontline 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 outcome reports are reported back to full board for scrutiny.

## 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. This was achieved In May 2023 following a full Inspection of Children's Services by Ofsted (ILACS), with WCF rated as ‘Good’ overall.

**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.**

# 4. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Under the Chief Executive of Worcestershire Children First, sit five specific service areas, underpinned by our workforce and quality assurance activity.

## 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
- PoP Student Programme

## Child Protection and Through Care

- Locality Safeguarding (planning for children in need of support and protection)
- Through Care: Children Looked After and Care Leavers
- Supervised Family Time Service
- Residential, Supported Living and Outreach Services
- Children and Young People Participation
- Worcestershire Family Safeguarding

## 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

## 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
- Business Development
- Traded Services for Education

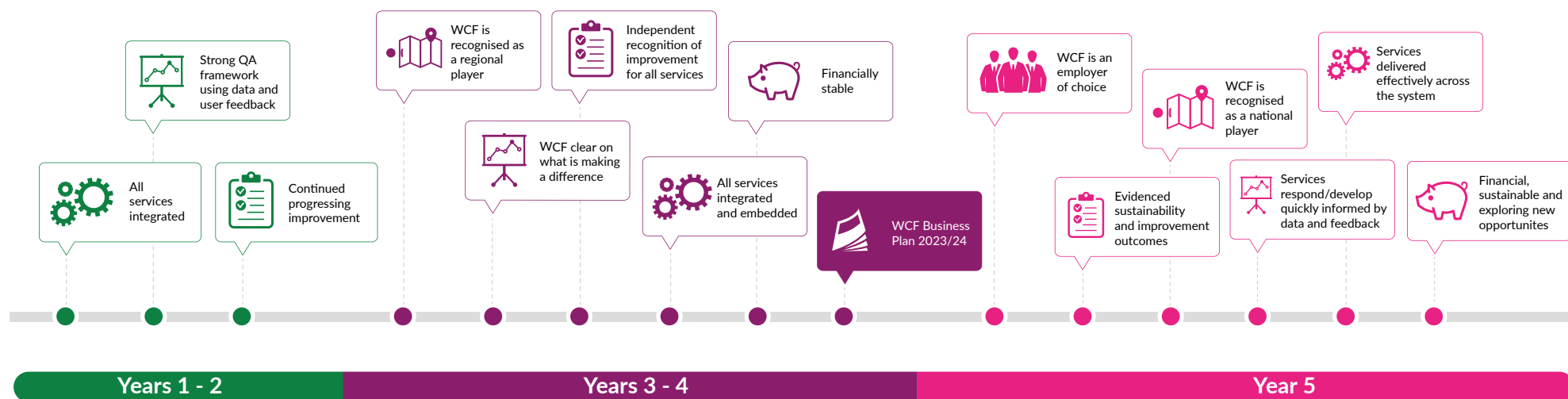
## Quality Assurance & Workforce

- WCF lead for Quality Assurance
- Diversity and Inclusion Group
- Workforce Board
- Case Progression and Permanency Team
- Principal Social Worker
- Independent Chairs for Looked After Children and Child Protection



# 5. STRATEGIC GOALS - FIVE YEAR PLAN

Under the Chief Executive of Worcestershire Children First, sit five specific service areas, underpinned by our workforce and quality assurance activity.



## Years 1 and 2

- Increasing co-creation with children, young people and families
- 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

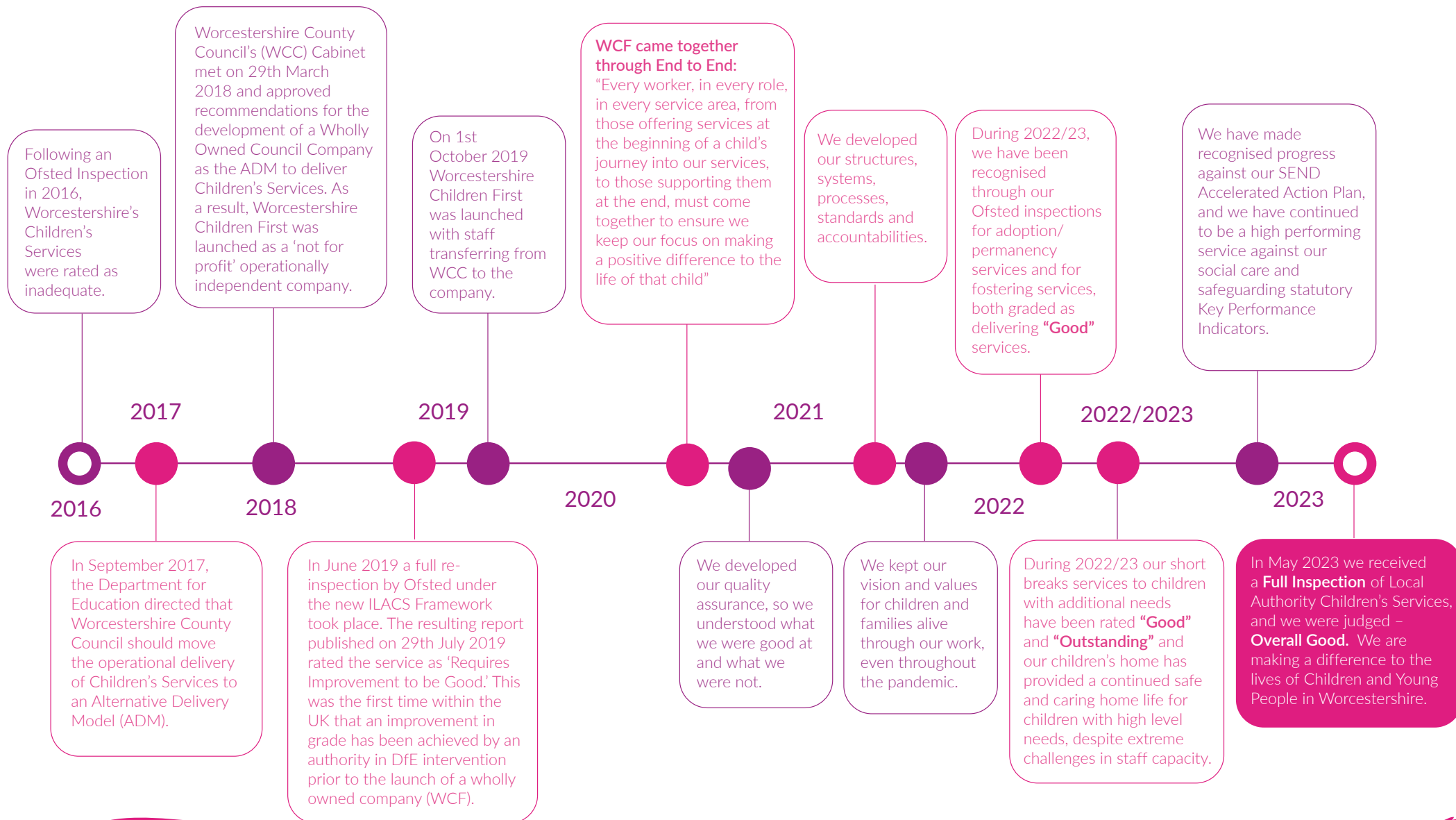
## Years 3 and 4

- Increasing co-creation with children, young people and families
- Work effectively and efficiently within financial envelope
- Evidence of sustained outcomes
- Embedding new culture
- Review opportunities for growth within existing services
- Wider strategic relationships
- 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 proud of WCF
- Begin review of commissioning intentions
- Integrated and effective partnership working across system
- Support services sourced effectively and provide value for money

# 6. OUR JOURNEY



# 7. SUMMARY OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES INSPECTIONS 2022/23

## Ofsted Inspection WCF Voluntary Adoption Agency – June 2022

Ofsted said; “There are clear processes in the agency for the progression of private adoptions. Prospective private adopters who contact the agency feel welcomed and valued by them. Assessments completed by social workers in the agency are timely and detailed. A prospective private adopter told the inspector that a social worker in the agency was supportive and helped them and the child understand the assessment and court process. This helped them feel reassured about the adoption journey for them and the child.”

**Inspection Outcome: Overall Good**

## Ofsted Inspection Kidderminster Short Breaks (Moule Close) – September 2022

Ofsted said; “A strength of this home is how staff work with families to make sure children have the best possible care and an enjoyable time during their stay. Staff consider children’s likes and interests so that activities can be planned which children will enjoy. A child-centred approach enables children to feel safe and comfortable during their stays. Children feel listened to and know their views are valued.”

**Inspection Outcome: Overall Good**

## Ofsted Inspection WCF Independent Fostering Agency - February 2023

Ofsted said; “The responsible individual has taken the lead in overseeing the management and progression of the service. She is ambitious for the staff, children and kinship and foster carers, and has a clear vision for the future of the agency. She has a stable team of staff, who are also invested in progressing the service. Team managers have taken lead roles in areas that require development. Together, they continue to work to implement plans and drive-up standards.”

**Inspection Outcome: Overall Good**

## Ofsted Inspection Vale Lodge Children’s Home - February 2023

Whilst there was a lot of work done to continue to improve, the home’s staffing challenges were recognised and of the care provided Ofsted said; “Children have built positive relationships with a small number of staff who know them well. Staff were observed to be calm, patient and understanding of children’s complex needs and emotions. Overall, children make progress with their education. Children are provided with opportunities to express their wishes and feelings through their day-to-day care.”

**Inspection Outcome: Requires Improvement**



### Ofsted Inspection Providence Road, Short Breaks - March 2023

Ofsted said; “The children’s home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children’s home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection, and care.”

**Inspection Outcome: Overall Good**

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### SEND Accelerated Progress Plan DfE review - March 2023

The DfE said; “In relation to the work around co-production, over the last twelve months there has been an increase in parental representation across the various workstreams and participation in engagement events, to shape service delivery.”

“In September 2022, school representatives felt they were included in the work streams, and it was recognised that there had been a positive shift in working relationships between WCF and partners. These relationships were reaffirmed by the work being led by schools in partnership such as, the Wyre Forest Project, improving engagement with local GPs and the regularly held Headteacher briefings.” Next review - September 2023.

**Review Outcome: The evidence provided, alongside the feedback from partners, demonstrated the range of actions in place to continue and accelerate improvement.**

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### Full Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) – May 2023

**Ofsted said; “Most children’s outcomes improve as a result of family focused, child centred early help and proportionate statutory intervention when in the best interests of children.”**

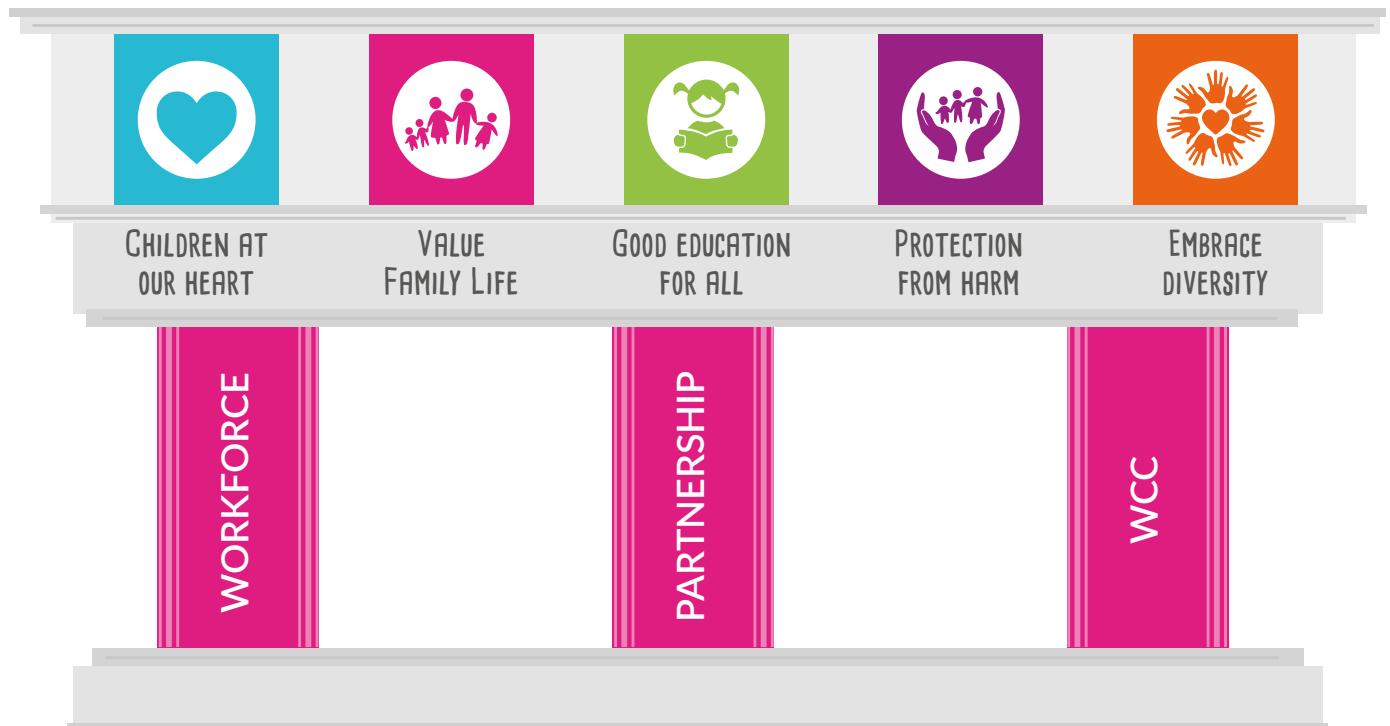
**Inspection Outcome: Overall Good**

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# 8. THREE PILLARS OF SUCCESS

## Our Values



## Working with our Workforce

**Our Workforce is our first pillar to the success of our services.**

Our workforce is our most valuable asset in successfully delivering services that make a positive difference for our children and 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 we have created the conditions where professional expertise is valued, risk management is well supported at appropriate levels through the organisation and there is a comprehensive learning and development programme in place.

Our Workforce Strategy is underpinned by our annual Social Work Health Check and the Annual Voice of the Workforce Survey, which includes the whole of Worcestershire Children First. This system "health check" is a barometer of our services to find out staff's views on our strengths and areas of development/focus.

**"Making a difference" is our aim;  
"High support and high challenge" is our approach;  
"Children at the heart" is our objective**

## The survey questions have been developed and aligned to the five pillars of the Workforce Strategy; these are:

- Health and Wellbeing.
- Recruitment and Retention.
- Diversity & Culture.
- Leadership & Management.
- Building Skills for Future Workforce.

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 aim is to build a workforce which has personal and collective resilience with physical and emotional health and wellbeing at the centre of everything we do. There is a dedicated Health & Wellbeing Hub where staff can access information, resources, and services which include mindfulness, mental health first aiders, bereavement support and carer support.

**We ensure all staff have a performance and wellbeing review each year and for some mid-year. This is an opportunity to both review and reflect on performance but also individuals' emotional, physical, and mental wellbeing to ensure the right support is available to all staff. The 2022-23 year-end staff performance review cycle saw 91% of employees had a rating of successful or higher.**

In December 2022 we held our second whole Company staff conference; the conference was held over 3-days and over 500 staff attended or engaged in the range of thank you, wellbeing and career development events. We will be holding our annual staff conference in October 2023.

The Diversity and Inclusion Collective meet monthly and have an open invitation to all staff across WCF with a mixed representation from across the different service areas that regularly attend the meetings. The aim of the group is to promote anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices, disability awareness and sharing of information.

Worcestershire County Council (WCC) learning and development team provide learning solutions and work in partnership with WCF, to manage the delivery of a training plan derived from the annual learning needs analysis. We have a core offer we present through our learning & development brochure.



“Our aim is to build a workforce which has personal and collective resilience with physical and emotional health and wellbeing at the centre of everything we do”

## Working with our Partners

This is the second pillar key to our company achieving success.

Whether it is partnerships with children and young people, 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

- **Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP)** – Director of Children’s Services (DCS) is member of the Executive Board with Get Safe and Quality Assurance Practices and Procedures (QAPP) subgroups led by WCF
- **Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) and all associated Integrated Care System (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 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
- **Assistant Directors for Children’s Services (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, Policy & Procedures Group (QPPG)** – WCF Directors of CIN and Through Care
- **Education and SEND** – WCF Director of Education and Early Years: Improvement, Inclusion and Planning
- **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
- **Workforce Regional Group** - WCF Principal Social Worker

## Working 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
- Health and Wellbeing

These 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 health and wellbeing 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 stakeholders. 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
- Integrated Care Board
- Worcestershire County Domestic Abuse Forum
- All Age Disability Partnership
- Education Partnerships



**“To thrive, our children and their families need to have access to economic opportunity, accessible education and employment”**



## 9. WCF QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

Worcestershire Children First have developed a Quality Assurance programme, which is applied across all service areas - Social Care & Safeguarding, Early Help and All-Age Disability 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.

Our 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).



# VOICE OF THE CHILD 2022/23

“Living at Nanny & Grandads  
is amazing”

“They are kind and friendly, they help me.  
They moved to a larger house so we could  
keep living with them long term. I feel happy  
and safe there”

“If I was worried  
about anything I  
would talk to her  
(the Social Worker)”

“He came to talk to me about the  
reasons why I went missing and  
what could be done for me not to  
want to do that again.”

“It has been so nice talking  
about autism, I have learned  
my lesson, it was great. I  
would like to say I am proud  
of myself for being able  
to independently do this  
work. I have never been  
this happy in so long.”  
(child)

“To my social worker, Ben  
and other support network  
I want to say a big thankyou  
to you too, I believe you all  
have gone above and beyond  
to help me and for that I am  
really grateful, and I do really  
appreciate it”

“We just wanted to say how much our family  
appreciates all the hard work and effort (you  
and your team) have put in on our behalf to  
secure a good outcome for X”  
(Parent)

# 10. BUSINESS PLANNING 2022/23

The following pages provide an overview of our areas of priority and the achievements and progress made during 2022/23 for Early Help, Children in Need and Family Front Door; Child Protection and Through Care; Education, Early Years Improvement, Inclusion and Planning; 0 – 25 All Age Disability Service and SEND and Quality Assurance.

## Early Help, Children in Need and Family Front Door priorities 2022/23

Area of priority	Outcome
<b>Supporting Families First</b> - Children in Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Supporting Families First model of support and intervention is achieving positive outcomes for children and young people. Demonstrating that not only is our assessment of need in the Family Front Door identifying the right children in need and edge of care, but the multi-disciplinary model of working intensively with families makes a difference to the outcomes we can achieve for the family.</li> <li>• Consistently 99% of children and young people have been able to remain at home with their families where it is safe to do so, with the necessary changes being made to enable this to be a safe and positive home environment. If additional help and support is needed longer term, this is provided by community early help services through the “Family Plan”.</li> </ul>
<b>Emotional Health &amp; Wellbeing</b> - for children in need through to those in care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the Summer of 2022, WCF Early Help and Education worked with schools and health to deliver emotional health and wellbeing workshops targeted at family support workers in schools. This work was further expanded in March 2023, with schools to look at the accessibility of emotional health and wellbeing for children in school who have these identified needs. This is due to the February 2023 analysis of presenting needs from contacts and requests for service, where emotional health and wellbeing is the one of the top three presenting factors referred to Worcestershire Children First.</li> </ul>

Area of Priority	Outcome
<b>Early Help in the community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2022 we developed and now deliver as business-as-usual, Early Help training by the partnership to the partnership every quarter to co-ordinate with the levels of need training. 224 professionals have accessed this training in year 1.</li> <li>• We now hold annual “Early Help in your Community” events across the 6 districts for professionals to network and share their services and support available to partners to promote “Early Help is everyone’s business”. These took place in June 2022 and again in February and March 2023.</li> <li>• We launched our “Virtual Family Hub” which is a web-based family hub for families and professionals to access needs led Early Help resources and support. WCF use social media and links to other agencies websites such as schools to ensure the resource is publiced and accessed. This is now registered with the National Centre for Family Hubs.</li> <li>• We worked with our commissioned provider and community partners to deliver Holiday Activities and Food to 17,500 individual children and young people across the Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday 2022, using DfE HAF funding.</li> </ul>
<b>Get Safe – Get There</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GET SAFE has continued to be a partnership subgroup of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership. The group has maintained good partnership engagement and has continue to focus “GET SAFE” across the level of need, ensuring early identification and support is available alongside high-risk proactive protection.</li> <li>• We have launched Get There to both professionals and young people. This is the 16 – 25 years approach to GET SAFE. 18-25 years is focused on our care leavers and SEND young people only.</li> <li>• We have reached and engaged more children and young people through our communication plan, education settings and community groups, learning from what we have already achieved in 2021 to date. Young people tell us that they now understand how people groom or use them to carry out criminal acts and how they can pretend to be your friend and will harm them.</li> </ul>





## Child Protection and Through Care Priorities

Area of priority	Outcome
<b>WCF Fostering Improvement Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Worcestershire Independent Fostering Agency was registered October 2019 and inspected September 2021. The service was graded Requires improvement overall with an inadequate rating for management and leadership. February 2023 saw a reinspection with a judgment of Good in all areas.</li> </ul>
<b>WCF Adoption Agency Business Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During 2022-23 we have reviewed our adoption service in line with the 7 workstreams identified within our service plan.</li> <li>In June 2022 Ofsted judged the WCF Voluntary Adoption Agency as 'Good'. They found that social workers in the agency:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- listen to children's wishes and feelings</li> <li>- include children in assessments and</li> <li>- keep children informed about the adoption process.</li> </ul> </li> <li>They found that managers match children well to adopters and that this is done in a timely way and that we look at requests for financial support from adopters and provide this to help children and adopters based on individual need and circumstances.</li> </ul>
<b>Permanency in care proceedings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have reviewed our Family &amp; Friends policy and increased financial payment to carers professional fees and in addition increased fees further for those caring for young people aged 11+ to promote foster family care for this harder to place group of young people entering care.</li> <li>As part of WCFs new Special Guardianship Offer (SGO), we reviewed the existing SGO support plan template during the spring 2022 to ensure it reflected the services and sources of support now available to SGO holders. The Permanency Planning and Support team is now the central place for accessing all help and advice to carers once a SGO is made.</li> <li>In 2022/23 we have seen a further increase in Care Order discharges, with 30 during 2022/23. This compared to 13 during 2020/21 and 20 in 2021/22 in part reflecting court delay due to Covid. This is a result of our continued targeted work to ensure "permanency and rehabilitation" for children is recognised as important for the individual child and family and progressed in a timely way. Progress in this area is monitored via our Monthly Court Data Report.</li> </ul>

Area of Priority	Outcome
<b>Care Leavers - Education/ Housing and Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) members have designed in collaboration with the Participation team a series of Pledges. The Pledges constitute a commitment from CPB members to actively promote and contribute to the resolution of challenges young people face. Pledges include seeking to attract new foster carers to WCF; actively celebrating young people's achievements and success and supporting work experience and job opportunities.</li> <li>• The pledges have led to the appointment of elected members as District Champions with a focus on areas such as Employment, Education and Leisure and Culture. Champions are actively participating within CPB, feeding back to members and sharing opportunities to support looked after children and care leavers across districts.</li> <li>• We have commenced a working group on supporting Care Leavers around education, employment and training and developed an action plan.</li> <li>• The complex care leavers project continues to successfully operate, although the original funding has discontinued.</li> <li>• WCF utilised DfE funding in creating two specialist housing PA posts. These workers liaise closely with the Complex Outreach Workers and PA peer group in providing guidance and advice, challenging District partners as appropriate and in holding more complex care leaver cases where the risk of homelessness is an issue.</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation and delivery of Family Safeguarding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through our analysis we can see that our Public Law Outline (PLO) pre-proceedings data shows an increase in the number of cases taken to pre proceedings and a rise in the percentage that are being successfully diverted. An audit of these cases was undertaken to inform our culture of practice to ensure that we are applying the PLO process appropriately and making effective use of the child protection process and adding value of the family safeguarding service and the general management of professional anxiety.</li> <li>• Audit outcome shows us we can make better use of the child protection processes to bring about the same changes giving families a less bureaucratic and anxious experience. Reducing workload for social workers, Legal Services and Courts will be an additional benefit and this is part of our 2023/24 business priority plan</li> <li>• Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2025 was launched in March 2022. This strategy sets out the joint vision, priorities, and commitments of Worcestershire County Council and the Partnership Board, of which WCF is a member. The overall aim of the Strategy is to prevent and reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse and ensure that all those impacted by domestic abuse have the right support, when they require it.</li> <li>• We have worked with WCC and partners to review the Domestic Abuse Training for Children &amp; Adult staff in WCF/WCC, and we have refreshed the learning objectives. The new Domestic Abuse training offer launched in April 2023. We will evaluate the training impact on workers' awareness and confidence working with domestic abuse.</li> </ul>

...

Area of Priority	Outcome
...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During 2022/23 timeliness of Domestic Abuse Notifications from the Police continues to be an area of concern identified by audit and by police's own data reports. Escalated and now overseen by Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) executive and Quality Assurance Partnership (QAPP) we have been proactive to respond to a build-up of backlogs, active support by WCF in the front door in portal and development of "information sharing" process, joint WSCP funding for additional capacity are examples of how we have worked as a partnership to address issues.</li> </ul>
Empower and engage parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area of work not progressed due to other priorities</li> </ul>
Development of WCF Residential Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WCF operate three children's homes in total:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providence Road in Bromsgrove (6 bed home providing short breaks for children with disabilities)</li> <li>- Moule Close in Kidderminster (4 bed home providing short breaks for children with disabilities)</li> <li>- Vale Lodge in Evesham (4 bed home for children with disabilities)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Our short breaks services to children with additional needs have been Ofsted rated "Outstanding" and "Good" and our children's home has provided a continued safe and caring home life for children with high level needs, despite extreme challenges in staff capacity.</li> <li>• Vale Lodge now has a Registered Manager and an Assistant Unit Manager in post – positions WCF struggled to fill for a significant period.</li> <li>• Records such as impact risk assessments, safety plans, medication administration sheets and staff rotas have been standardised across the 3 homes. This is to ensure uniformity and consistency in practice, as well as utilising templates positively commented upon by Ofsted.</li> <li>• Utilising DfE capital grant fund monies we have created a specialist one bed children's home for young people with high complex needs of self-harm or violence where we have struggled to find suitable emergency care.</li> <li>• The Riddings was closed December 2022 following irresolvable difficulties in matching young people with challenging behaviour and a lack of support within the local community. All staff have been successfully redeployed to alternative suitable posts within WCF.</li> <li>• All 25 WCF supported living provision have Individualised Statements of Purpose (SOP) detailing the type / location of property and how young people will be supported and how their feedback will be sought and incorporated into the provision's development. Alongside this, WCF has developed and implemented its own Practice Standards for semi-independent supported living.</li> </ul>

Area of Priority	Outcome
<b>Develop provision and specialist resource for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WCF have accommodated 74 new Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) this year – taking our total cohort to 88 UASC end of year 2022/23 a significant increase from 30 March 2022. This represents 8% of the total Looked After Children population.</li> <li>• There are 78 care leavers who were initially accommodated as UASC and remain supported by our Care Leaver Team.</li> <li>• Feedback is gathered via regular Social Work, Outreach and care leaver PA visits; health assessments; audit activity and young people surveys. The pattern of feedback is suggestive that in the main our UASC feel physically healthy and safe but in terms of their emotional health and associated wellbeing, the picture is more mixed. This can be broken down into 2 broad areas: emotional health impacted through the trauma of their journey and lived experience and emotional health impacted by a sense of isolation in identified placement provision. The latter being far more prevalent.</li> <li>• Young People have access to appropriate services to help deal with trauma and WCF has made links as necessary with the Red Cross to source information around wider families. Outreach Workers and PA's assist young people on an individual basis in recounting and mapping their journey with a 'life story' approach.</li> </ul>



## Education, Early Years Improvement, Inclusion and Planning

Area of priority	Outcome
<b>Extension of the role of Virtual Head Teacher</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worcestershire Virtual School (WVS) work tirelessly to support and challenge schools to provide inclusive environments for our children, alongside building strong working relationships with partners and stakeholders and our broader initiatives:</li> <li>• TIAAS Pathway.</li> <li>• Trauma Informed Schools (TIS) programme.</li> <li>• Extensive early advice and guidance to schools with repeat suspensions to avoid permanent exclusions</li> <li>• Involved in the RSA Preventing School Exclusions project which has been rolled out to schools.</li> <li>• Half-termly meeting with WCF Safeguarding Lead to ensure repeat suspension schools are highlighted.</li> <li>• CIN/CP cohort data now accurate - schools with repeat suspensions identified for advice and guidance.</li> <li>• Attended Vulnerable Learners Team meetings to ensure that suspensions/exclusions for CIN/CP cohort prioritised.</li> <li>• Advice/support offered to social care on the new DfE Suspension/Exclusion guidance. FAQs in development.</li> <li>• Complex CIN and Core Group meetings attended where there is a risk of permanent exclusion, to ensure robust target/s set to support the pupil.</li> </ul> <p>A joint project between WVS and WCF Supporting Families First Team now refines collaborative working practice. Key themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the needs and barriers of the CIN/CP cohort must be more prominent in school</li> <li>• CIN/CP cohort behaviours and attendance challenges should be supported early</li> <li>• parents of this cohort must be engaged by schools</li> <li>• availability of educational information to social care colleagues and effective communication is needed between school and social care</li> <li>• Case studies of good collaborative practice between schools and social care shared with schools through DSL network meetings, CIN/CP meetings, and regular network meetings.</li> </ul>
<b>Early Years Strategy - improve children's readiness for school</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of the Early Needs Assessment findings and analysis</li> <li>• Findings of the Early Needs Assessment applied to the Strategy outline</li> <li>• Co-production of the priorities with stakeholders</li> <li>• Creation of the action plan</li> <li>• Collection and analysis of Foundation Stage attainment data (2022)</li> <li>• Completion of LGA project</li> </ul>



Area of priority	Outcome
<b>Worcester City Secondary School</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Academy Sponsor was appointed.</li> <li>• Negotiations to purchase the land are ongoing, pre-planning engagement was concluded.</li> <li>• WCF work closely with WCC and Academy Sponsor to ensure progress continues in a timely manner.</li> <li>• WCF continue to engage with existing Worcester City Secondary Schools to mitigate the demand for school places ahead of the new school opening in September 2026.</li> <li>• John Graham Construction Limited has been awarded the contract to design and build the school. They have appointed Glancy Nicholls Architects to do the design.</li> <li>• The design is currently being developed by the contractor for submission of a planning permission application to Worcestershire County Council as the County Planning Authority in early autumn 2023.</li> </ul>
<b>Deliver against the school planning Capital Programme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wolverley CE Secondary School permanent expansion scheme for 180 PAN is well underway. The accommodation is on site and is due to be completed mid-September for the school to move into.</li> <li>• Pershore Pyramid re-organisation - HM Treasury have approved the funding required to create the additional places for Year 7 children at Pershore High School. Currently work is being undertaken to include these additional places in the building plans and understand how long it will take to complete the building project (DfE feasibility). WCF are working with all schools in Pershore to ensure the next steps are determined and planned for.</li> <li>• Bromsgrove expansions – WCF are working with Middle and High Schools in Bromsgrove to understand the options for expansions to meet demand. A new First School is planned to meet the major housing growth, and mitigation options are being considered at some First schools ahead of this delivery. Cost and timescales are likely to be increased due to the PFI nature of several of the schools.</li> <li>• The 2022/23 SEND Provision Plan has been progressing, including increase Special School places, open new Mainstream Autism Base provision, reviewing Nursery Assessment Provision and agreeing the specification for new Enhance Early Years provision, with a tender due to go live August 2023. Additional Post 16 SEND provision has been approved at three colleges, likely for Sept 2024 delivery.</li> </ul>
<b>Review Education and Skills Strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment of strategy document to other WCC/WCF current strategies and plans</li> <li>• Alignment of strategy ethos and actions to the SEND Accelerated Action Plan</li> <li>• Completion of audit of each objective against current practice to identify gaps</li> <li>• Consultation with stakeholders of actions needed to close identified gaps.</li> <li>• Complete Strategy review with response and plans following publication of Education White Paper (2022 tbc)</li> <li>• Review and implement year 2 plan of Exclusion and Alternative Provision review</li> </ul>
<b>Developing an Integrated Care System</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WCF representation on relevant levels of governance and programme boards</li> <li>• Development of outcome-based commissioning activity</li> <li>• Confirm workplan/intentions for CYP joint commissioning group</li> </ul>

## 0-25 All Age Disability Service and SEND

Area of priority	Outcome
<b>SEND Accelerated Action Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have successfully completed our 18-month review of our Accelerated Progress Plan (APP). The evidence provided, alongside the feedback from partners, demonstrated the range of actions in place to continue and accelerate improvement</li> <li>• As part of our APP, we have developed a Data Dashboard for the four workstream areas</li> <li>• This is reviewed as a partnership on a bi-monthly basis and is used to inform local area and internal developments</li> <li>• We have reviewed staffing establishment and have invested in additional staffing capacity</li> <li>• We have co-produced with parents and schools our Engaging with Parent Carers. A free toolkit for Worcestershire Schools. The purpose of the toolkit is to support schools to build positive relationships with their parents and carers of children with SEND.</li> <li>• We have coproduced and developed our Coproduction E Learning Module which will be rolled out to staff.</li> <li>• We have published our Local Offer Feedback Report 2020-22. The report detailed a You Said We Did Section.</li> <li>• We have published our SEND Parent Carer Survey Spring 2022 Executive Summary of Results Update. The report detailed the analysis of the feedback and identified the areas of development.</li> </ul>
<b>SEND/All Age Disability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have created a dedicated Director of 0-25 All Age Disability and appointed to the post March 2022.</li> <li>• We have developed a new 0-25 service that strengthens and enables a more co-ordinated and integrated offer to children, young people, and their parent carers. The new service incorporates:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Special Educational Needs and Disability service (SEND)</li> <li>- The Inclusion Support Service (SEND)</li> <li>- The Children's Social Care Children with Disability Team (CWD)</li> <li>- The Social Care Young Adults Team (YAT)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The new service has been designed to:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve the experience for young people and their families.</li> <li>- Improve information sharing and coordination of assessments and plans for its service users.</li> <li>- Build stronger relationships with the child, young person, and their families, which leads to a more person-centred approach to provide greater consistency for families and avoid information getting lost.</li> <li>- Ensure preparing for adulthood can run through the entire service, with a broader and better understanding of resources/support for the 17+ cohort.</li> <li>- Achieve greater collaboration and ownership of the Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) and CYP future planning</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Area of Priority	Outcome
...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The development of the All Age Disability service has been informed and designed in response to what could be described as an “ongoing conversation” (engagement events, complaints, national parent carer feedback) that has consistently raised concerns about having to tell their “story” more than once, multiple meetings, navigating the different teams and services, and missing the aspiration of the 2014 Child and Family Act of working to a single Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Development of Community short breaks offer</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are integrating short breaks groups and activities within ‘Ready Steady Worcestershire’ to create a seamless join up between Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) to increase the range and availability of places for children with additional needs across the County.</li> <li>The new contract for the management of the HAF programme on behalf of WCF will include the management of Short Breaks Groups and Activities from 2024/25.</li> </ul>



## Quality Assurance Priorities

Area of priority	Outcome
<b>Children's Social Care &amp; Safeguarding (inc. Early Help, FFD &amp; Child in Need and Child Protection &amp; Through Care)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During 2022/23 across Social Care &amp; Safeguarding we completed 117 Case File Audits</li> <li>• In our 2022 Social Work Health Check, practitioners and managers told us:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 92% receive direct feedback regarding Quality Assurance Activity</li> <li>- 94% receive regular information on Quality Assurance through End-to-End Presentations, Team Meetings and Newsletters</li> <li>- 98% have access to training &amp; CPD opportunities to support them in their role and do their best work</li> </ul> </li> <li>• We heard feedback from 978 children and young people from social care and safeguarding. From feedback received:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 93% of children looked after felt their emotional health and wellbeing is being supported</li> <li>- 100% of children in WCF fostering placements felt carers support them with their education</li> <li>- 100% of Care Leavers felt listened to and understood by their Personal Assistant</li> </ul> </li> <li>• We received feedback from 453 families in social care and safeguarding:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 96% of families felt that they were given opportunities to share their views and opinions.</li> <li>- 94% of families said that their worker (Social Worker, Early Help Family Support Worker, Personal Advisor) listened to their child's views.</li> <li>- 92% of families said that they felt included within the assessment and/or plan for their child.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Worcestershire Children First Fostering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have been recognised through an Ofsted inspection in February 2023 for delivering 'good' fostering services.</li> <li>• We have taken the learning and well-embedded principles of our Social Care &amp; Safeguarding Quality Assurance Framework into WCF Fostering – establishing service specific Frameworks to include audit and feedback programmes, including a QA quarterly report.</li> <li>• In Quarter 2 of 2022/2023 we developed &amp; introduced new child &amp; young person feedback from those in WCF Fostering Placements. Of 39 children who shared feedback with us, 100% of children and young people told us:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carers support them with their education</li> <li>- Carers support them to keep in touch with people who are important to them</li> <li>- They are able to speak to carers about things that are worrying them</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Area of Priority	Outcome
<b>Residential Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly independent visitor visits to our residential settings are continuing, with reports on strengths and areas for focus. A proactive relationship has developed with the Independent Visitor who has helped to instil consistency in Registered Manager oversight and approach as is evident in the Ofsted judgements against the homes.</li> <li>• Our short breaks services to children with additional needs have been rated “Good” and “Outstanding” by Ofsted.</li> <li>• Whilst there was a lot of work done to continue to improve at Vale Lodge, Ofsted recognised the home’s staffing challenges and of the care provided Ofsted said; “Children have built positive relationships with a small number of staff who know them well. Staff were observed to be calm, patient and understanding of children’s complex needs and emotions. Overall, children make progress with their education. Children are provided with opportunities to express their wishes and feelings through their day-to-day care.”</li> <li>• Using DfE grant funding, we have refurbished a specialist one-bedroom children’s home for young people with high complex needs of self-harm or violence where we have struggled to find suitable emergency care.</li> </ul>
<b>Safeguarding Quality Assurance (IROs, CP Chairs &amp; LADO Service)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IROs have continued throughout 2022/23 to provide a consistent service to children who are looked after.</li> <li>• CLA reviews remain timely, with an average of 93% of reviews held in time to date.</li> <li>• We had an average of 97% of children and young people participating in their reviews and an average of 70% attending their meeting through the year to date.</li> <li>• CLA reviews have been chaired using a variety of approaches and in line with children’s wishes and feelings. This may be through a series of meetings, face to face meetings or virtual meetings – or a combination of both.</li> <li>• We have undertaken a targeted survey with our looked after children on our IRO Service. 100 children &amp; young people shared their views with us. they told us:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 92% told us that they had an opportunity to speak with their IRO before your looked after review – the further 8% said they chose not to speak with the IRO</li> <li>- 91% said the IRO helped them understand their role</li> <li>- 92% said that they understood the plan from the review and what everyone will do next</li> <li>- 90% were you given the opportunity to share your views and opinions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Our conference chairs and Social Work Teams continue to work well together, with 99% of all reviews and 95.6% of all initial conferences in time, both are sustained and improved practice from the previous years.</li> <li>• Children’s participation in our conferences is a strength with 99% of our meetings having child participation and 15% (this year to date) where children have attended their conference.</li> </ul>
<b>SEND / All Age Disability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have embedded our Quality Assurance and Audit Processes. This includes producing quarterly reports to the SEND Management team, dissemination of learning to Case Work Officers and Managers, which includes case studies as part of learning workshops and closing the loop activity.</li> <li>• We have implemented quality assurance measures as outlined in the Accelerated Progress Plan covering KPI/Audit and Service User Feedback and we have developed a data dashboard to provide reporting on Key Performance Indicators.</li> </ul>

...



Area of Priority	Outcome
...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have co-produced with parents and schools our Engaging with Parent Carers. A free toolkit for Worcestershire Schools. The purpose of the toolkit is to support schools to build positive relationships with their parents and carers of children with SEND.</li> <li>• We have published our SEND Parent Carer Survey Spring 2022 Executive Summary of Results Update. The report detailed the analysis of the feedback and identified the areas of development.</li> <li>• Appointed a SEND Complaints Officer to centralise complaints tracking in SEND Service. They investigate and respond to Stage 1 complaints as well as identifying learning and supporting practice development.</li> <li>• A DfE review of the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan took place in March 2023, which concluded “the evidence provided, alongside the feedback from partners, demonstrated the range of actions in place to continue and accelerate improvement.”</li> </ul>
Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff had the opportunity to share their views through the annual ‘Voice of the Workforce Survey’</li> <li>• In December 2022 we held our second whole company staff conference; the conference was held over 3-days and over 500 staff attended or engaged in the range of thank you, wellbeing and/or CPD events.</li> <li>• The Diversity and Inclusion Collective meet monthly and have an open invitation to all staff across WCF. The aim of the group is to promote anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices, disability awareness and sharing of information.</li> <li>• 1671 training places were accessed for Social Care and Safeguarding specific training events between April 2022 – March 2023</li> <li>• 263 places on management and leadership training events were attended</li> <li>• Apprenticeships – 28 were progressing their qualification between April 2022 – March 2023 (excl. Schools)</li> </ul>



# 11. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

## Finance, Performance and Governance

Our financial resources, performance and governance arrangements are overseen by the Interim Director of Resources, Chris Bird. The Interim Director of Resources and team have successfully guided the company through its fourth year of trading returning a very small profit.

In 2022/23 the company's turnover for the period was £150M making a small profit of £1. The company is an admitted body to the Worcestershire Pension Fund. The cost of pensions in 2022/23 was £5.619M and the contribution rate was 18.6%. The financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 25 July 2023, an extract is included in this report.

Worcestershire Children First Support Services (ICT, human resources, payroll and facilities management services etc) are provided by Worcestershire County Council. The value of these contracts was £7.4M for the 2022/23. The table below breaks down the £150m turnover by different funding sources.

Profit and Loss Account and Other Comprehensive Income	2021-22 (£)	2022-23 (£)
Income from WCC for main contract	125,374,900	137,098,300
Income from WCC for 2021/22 Pay Award paid in March 2022	726,054	-
Income from WCC for 2022/23 Pay Award above budgeted 1.25%		1,670,888
Income from WCC for HTST Contribution September 2022		1,045,355
Income from WCC to cover overspend in 2022/23		6,601,364
Other Income	3,190,429	3,632,077
<b>Total</b>	<b>129,291,383</b>	<b>150,047,985</b>

## Finance, Performance and Governance

<b>Profit and Loss Account and Other Comprehensive Income</b>	<b>2021-22 (£)</b>	<b>2022-23 (£)</b>
<b>Turnover</b>	<b>129,291,383</b>	<b>150,047,985</b>
Cost of sales	(121,733,890)	(142,972,812)
<b>Gross profit</b>	<b>7,557,493</b>	<b>7,075,173</b>
Other operating expenses	(7,506,200)	(7,454,200)
Operating profit / (loss)	51,293	(379,027)
Interest Receivable	5,062	379,028
Profit before taxation	56,355	1
Tax on profit on ordinary activities	(5,585)	-
<b>Profit for the financial year</b>	<b>50,770</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>Worcestershire Children First - Balance Sheet 31st March 2023</b>	<b>2021-22 (£)</b>	<b>2022-23 (£)</b>
Current Assets		
Debtors	3,566,537	4,357,371
Cash at bank and in hand	13,674,295	11,277,018
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>17,240,832</b>	<b>15,634,389</b>
Liabilities		
Creditors; amounts falling due within one year	(16,101,106)	(14,494,662)
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>(16,101,106)</b>	<b>(14,494,662)</b>
<b>Net Assets / (Liabilities)</b>	<b>1,139,726</b>	<b>1,139,727</b>
Capital Reserves		
Retained Earnings	1,139,726	1,139,727
<b>Equity</b>	<b>1,139,726</b>	<b>1,139,727</b>

Company Secretary: Chris Bird

Auditors: Grant Thornton

Company Number: 11447965

# 12. RISK

**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) Chief Officer Group (COG) who are responsible for the 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 (2023- 24 onwards) for local government which
- 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.

# 13. WORCESTERSHIRE CHILDREN FIRST BUSINESS PLAN 2023/24

Our Business Plan for 2023/24 is published on our website which sets out our ambitions and priorities and outlines how we will deliver services for children, young people and families in Worcestershire.

[Download: WCF Business Plan 2023/24](#)

## Company-wide priorities for 2023/24

We must recognise the importance of sustaining the timeliness and quality of practice that we have achieved to date. This day-to-day work, now “business as usual” is as important to sustain as it is to meet our new priorities.

**WCF has a comprehensive Quality Assurance Programme.** This is described in detail in the business plan document. Quality assurance has three domains; firstly how we ensure we have understood the voice and experience of the child and the parent carers, secondly the Key Performance Indicators which monitor our workload and timeliness of our workflow and thirdly audit activity which reflects our quality of practice. These remain key to our business plan priorities.

**Our Business Plan is reflective and aligned to key national reform programmes** to improve outcomes and experiences for all children and young people across education and care including the Children’s Social Care Implementation Strategy, the Special Educational Needs and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan and considers the upcoming Academies Regulation and Commissioning Review.



### Our priorities for 2023/24 are:

- Sustain stability within the workforce, deliver high support and challenge and be the employer of choice
- Prevent risk and needs escalating for vulnerable children and those who are “Children in Need” of support
- Progress to achieve our vision for our 0-25 All Age Disability Service
- Support, guide and enable schools and education providers to deliver high quality, inclusive education provision
- Make effective use of child protection processes to bring about timely and sustained change for children
- Ensure looked after children have high quality, stable placements and timely outcomes for permanency
- Ensure we make progress against our school place sufficiency to meet short and longer-term demand
- Ensure our Care Leavers have the best start for independence.



# 14. APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Worcestershire Children First – Company Key Performance Indicators Month 01/03/2022 – 31/03/2023

### Children Looked After

At Month End

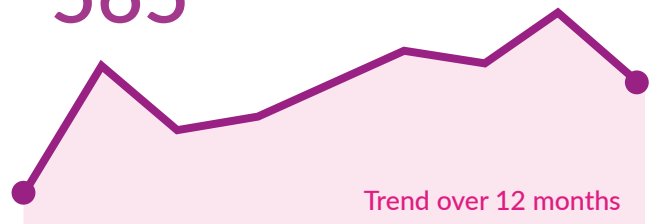
1005



### Subject of Child Protection Plan

At Month End

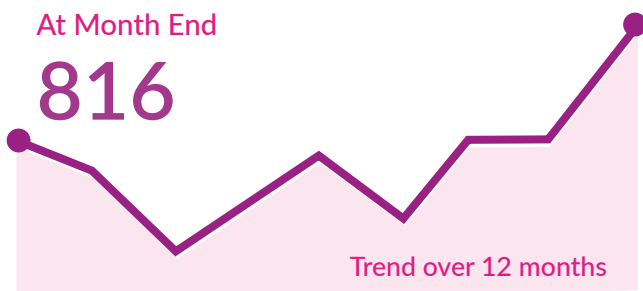
565



### Children in Need

At Month End

816



### Children and YP with an EHCP

At Month End

5070



Indicator	Target	Mar 22	Jun 22	Sep 22	Dec 22	Mar 23
A: (KPI-SC1) Referrals - Level 4 decision within 24 hours	52.3	●	●	●	●	●
B: (KPI-SC2) S17 Assessments completed within 45 days	75.6	●	●	●	●	●
C: (KPI-SC3) Proportion of Children Subject to CP Plan with Plan in Place	80	●	●	●	●	●
D: (KPI-SC4) ICPCs completed within 15 days	67.8	●	●	●	●	●
E: (KPI-SC5) Proportion of children who became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time within 2 years	27.3	●	●	●	●	●
F: (KPI-SC6) RCPCs completed within timescale	87.9	●	●	●	●	●
G: (KPI-SC7) Proportion of children subject to a Child Protection Plan seen within 20 days	77	●	●	●	●	●
H: (KPI-SC8) % Children Looked After Reviews in timescale	80.9	●	●	●	●	●
I: (KPI-SC9) Looked After Children with up to date Care Plan/Pathway Plan	73	●	●	●	●	●
J: (KPI-SC10) % Looked After Children who had a visit (in person) within timescale (30 days/60 days)	85	●	●	●	●	●
K: (KPI-SC11) % Children Open for assessment or plan without an allocated worker for 5 days	1	●	●	●	●	●
L: (KPI-SC12) % of Care Leavers open to services with an up to date pathway plan (age 18-25)	52.4	●	●	●	●	●
M: (KPI-EH1) % of annual target reached for successful claims under the "Troubled Families" programme	100	●	●	●	●	●
N: (KPI-ED1) Percentage of EHCP requests received where review decisions have been made within 6 weeks	80	●	●	●	●	●
O: (KPI-ED2) Percentage of Education Health and Care Plan decisions made within 16 weeks	60	●	●	●	●	●
P: (KPI-ED3) Percentage of Education Health and Care Plans completed within 20 weeks	60	●	●	●	●	●
Q: (KPI-ED4) Percentage of Statutory Advice Reports (all types) for EHCP Needs Assessment submitted within 6 weeks of request sent	80	●	●	●	●	●
R: (KPI-ED6) Percentage of looked after children of school age with an up to date Personal Education Plan	80	●	●	●	●	●

## 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



Worcestershire Children First is the company responsible for delivering children's services across the county of Worcestershire. Our vision is for Worcestershire to be a wonderful place for all children and young people to grow up.

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