

WORCESTERSHIRE
CHILDREN FIRST



Welcome to WCF Annual General Meeting 2023

Tuesday 12 September 2023 at 2pm

1. Welcome – Rob Morrison Chair of WCF Board
2. WCF Structure – Vision and Mission
3. Presentation of Annual Report – Tina Russell CEO and DCS
 - Emma Brittain – Director of FFD, Children in Need and Partnerships
 - Adam Johnston – Director of Safeguarding and Children in Care and Care Leavers
 - Mel Barnett – Director of 0-25 All Age Disability including SEND
 - Sarah Wilkins – Director of Education, Early Years, Inclusion and and Education Place Planning
4. Financial statements – Chris Bird Director of Resources
5. Confirmation of Reappointment of Auditors for the coming year
6. Consider any other competent business

Headline Outcomes we have achieved:

- Sustained the progress of key performance and quality of services reflected through our quarterly Quality Assurance, Voice of the Child, Service User feedback and Complaints reports.
- Adoption Inspection - Nov 22 – Good
- Fostering inspection - Feb 23 – Good
- Children’s Homes – 22/23 Good / Outstanding
- SEND Accelerated Action Plan – positive reviews Sept 22 and April 23
- May 23 – Inspection Local Authority Children’s Services – Good overall
- ILAC outcome reflects not just work of 22/23, our third year of operation but of our five year programme of improvement and is the focus of today’s presentation



- Our vision and mission is to: Keep outcomes for Children at the heart of what we do / Value Family Life / Ensure all children receive a good quality education / Protection children from harm and embrace diversity and championing equality and inclusion through our work and services
- During the past year Children's Safeguarding Services and All Age Disability SEND have experienced a continued rise in demand for Support and or Care and Protection.
- Our assessments identify a rise in the complexities of need and risk being experienced by adult parents. The trio of harm, Domestic Abuse, Parental Substance misuse and Mental Health continues to be drivers of abuse and neglect but a rise also in emotional well being concerns for children and young people are also impacting on parenting skills and confidence to meet their own children's needs.
- We experience in Worcestershire a demand for assessment for children with Education Health and Care Needs in line with England averages. We have seen an increasing need for support to parents with children with Autism.
- **Our approach is to support parents to care for their own children well, offering support and services where we need to in order to ensure all the children of Worcestershire feel Happy, Healthy and Safe.**
 - **It is this aim that drives our development and delivery.**
 - **Quality of delivery relies on a quality workforce – Thank You**



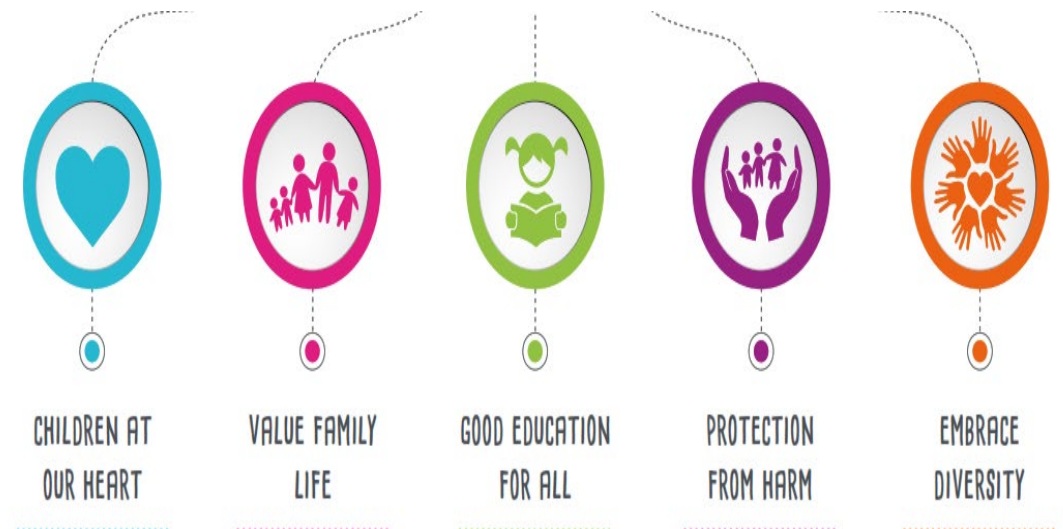
**Inspection of Worcestershire Local Authority Children's Services
15-26 May 2023**

Its official WCF are delivering “Good” quality services



We are making a difference to the lives of Children and Young People in Worcestershire

“Most children’s outcomes improve as a result of family focused, child centered early help and proportionate statutory intervention when in the best interests of children”



The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: Good

Children and families benefit from a **comprehensive range of early help services** in Worcestershire.

Those **referred to early help services or stepped down** have the **right thresholds applied**.

Assessments are thorough, including the views of families and children and multi-agency. **Effective plan of intervention**

However, some children experience delay in their assessment starting, **so early help workers remain in contact with families to ensure they can respond to any change in circumstances**.

Contact and referrals dealt with in a **timely way**. The gaining of **consent** is considered and is **appropriately overridden**

Management oversight is prompt and a clear rationale is recorded for all decision-making.

Multi- agency information-sharing contributes to **appropriate decisions and clear and agreed plans of action**.

For most children, **realistic safety planning is in place** during the enquiries. The majority of **child protection enquiries are detailed and address the child's risks and needs**.

We experience challenges for parents and children in accessing effective early help. More work is needed to ensure this is understood, gaps are identified and we make best use of targeted family support to reduce children needing protection or care interventions

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: good (2)

In child safeguarding services assessments are comprehensive and Social workers ensure they gain an understanding of children's cultural needs and identity as well as experiences, and how risks / concerns impact on children's safety and progress.

The majority of children's plans, whether they need help or protection, consider children's needs and are clear as to the actions needed to address concerns or risks.

When children are the subject of child protection plans, social workers use targeted services that help children understand their circumstances and support parents in reducing risk.

Multi-agency meetings are regular, well attended and contribute to shared decision-making that prioritises children.

“For most children, this results in interventions that make a difference and improve their outcomes.”

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: good (3)

Key areas of additional vulnerability creating risk of harm to children

The response to domestic abuse referrals is well embedded in the FFD. Contacts are managed sensitively to mitigate risk to victims. Social workers obtain information from key agencies which leads to clear analysis of risk to inform the immediate and ongoing safety planning for children.

The response to children at risk of exploitation is coordinated effectively through the 'Get Safe' service. Social workers complete thorough assessments which are shared at regular multi-agency information meetings. Clear plans for intervention and disruption activities.

Children who have been missing receive prompt return home interviews. Detailed plans are developed which lead to successful interventions. There is a swift response to increasing episodes of going missing

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: good (4)

Social workers for disabled children develop positive relationships with them and advocate strongly on their behalf.

Social workers complete comprehensive assessments for these children which consider the child's needs, history and current concerns, as well as the voice of the child.

These lead to effective support and safety plans.

Families with disabled children can access a wide range of services that provide appropriate levels of support to meet their needs.

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection good (5)

Children in need benefit from the Supporting Families First service. This multi-agency SFF support children and families in the way that families identify will help them.

This service is very effective and results in concerns reducing and most children being successfully diverted from care and able to remain living with their families.

When risks increase for children on child protection plans, there is an appropriate escalation into pre-proceedings. This area of work is a strength in Worcestershire and for most children it is effective in reducing risk.

Decisions to bring children into care are appropriate. The application of the Public Law Outline when children come into care in Worcestershire is effective.

These strengths in services are drivers for our next phase of services developments.

Creating more support multi disciplinary roles and greater support for CIN as they step down from Child Protection. More support for children awaiting assessment for Autism including help to coordinate and access specialist and universal support

The experiences and progress of children in care: requires improvement to be good

Most children have **positive and trusting relationships with their social workers.**

Once children come into care, **good decisions are made to work towards achieving permanence for most children.**

Most children are **living in settled and stable living arrangements**, where their **carers understand and meet their needs well.**

Children are supported to keep in touch with important people in their lives and family time arrangements are in line with children's needs and wishes.

Following **thorough assessment**, children return home from being in care when there is progress in their **parents' ability to care for them.**

After they return home, **children are consistently visited to ensure change has been sustained and they continue to be safely parented.**

“As a result, many children in care are making good progress”

All this reflects our aims to support and promote children being cared for by their parents/family.

The experiences and progress of children in care: requires improvement to be good (2)

Most children with a plan for long-term fostering have stability and are matched to their long-term foster carers. These children are making progress both socially and educationally.

Foster carers, including kinship carers, are appropriately assessed, trained and supported.

There is close collaborative working between WCF and the regional adoption agency (Adoption Central England). Adoption assessments, approvals and matching are timely.

Children are prepared effectively and matched with adopters, providing them with security and stability.

Introductions to adopters are well considered and carefully planned at a pace that is right for children.

Children who are adopted are helped to understand their life histories and identities through direct work, sensitively written life-story books and skillfully written later-in-life letters

Our advert for Foster Carers and Adoption !

We need more carers for children with high complex needs – often displayed in violence and self harm. We see the impact a safe, stable nurturing family can have that reduces these risks and behaviors often in a short space of time.

We are recruiting now!

The experiences and progress of care leavers : good

First year of inspection for this to be an independent judgement. What makes Good!

Most care leavers have a positive relationship with their PA.

The majority of **PAs are persistent in maintaining contact with young people** and act as good parents, with most having a 'never give up' attitude which young people value.

Most **care leavers' health needs are met** through a variety of health services.

They are encouraged to seek **support for their emotional well-being**, with PAs making referrals to appropriate services.

Most care leavers are **living in accommodation that is safe and supports their needs**.

They are **well prepared for moving to semi-independent living at 18**.

Care leavers aged 21, and up to the age of 25, continue to receive a service when appropriate to enable them to make good progress in their lives.

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: good

Significant progress has been made in all those areas identified at previous inspections and visits

A permanent senior leadership team in WCF has continued to work effectively with political leaders to improve outcomes for children in Worcestershire. **There is a coordinated drive to improve children's experiences.**

Senior leaders know their service well and are swift to respond to changes in demand or need to improve children's experiences.

Senior leaders have made considerable progress in ensuring that there is now consistent application of thresholds across children's services.

Relationships with key partners are effective and have clear lines of accountability with a culture of being able to safely challenge partner agencies.

There is a **comprehensive development offer for social workers and managers and workers describe the culture "as supportive within and between teams and the senior leadership team as visible and accessible"**.

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: good (2)

Audits are strengthened through the involvement of children, carers and parents and through moderation.

Learning from audits leads to improvements in practice which ensures the effective closing of the loop.

A variety of methods are used to gain feedback from children, parents and carers which influences service developments, together with any learning from complaints.

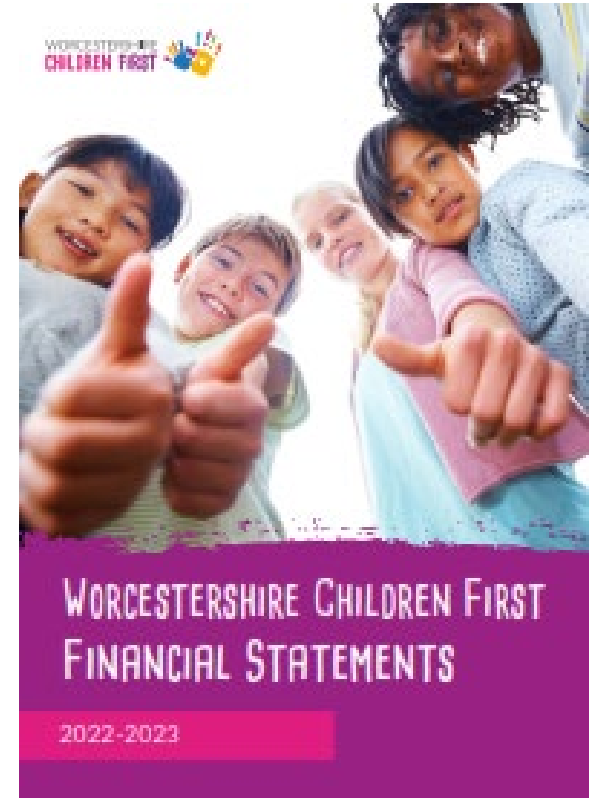
There is a comprehensive development offer for social workers and managers and workers describe the culture as supportive within and between teams and the senior leadership team as visible and accessible.

Ensuring we continue to make the difference to the lives of children and deliver services against our company values continues into our 5th year.

Sustaining the progress we have made, meeting the new challenges and being proactive in development as we learn from what we, and others do well

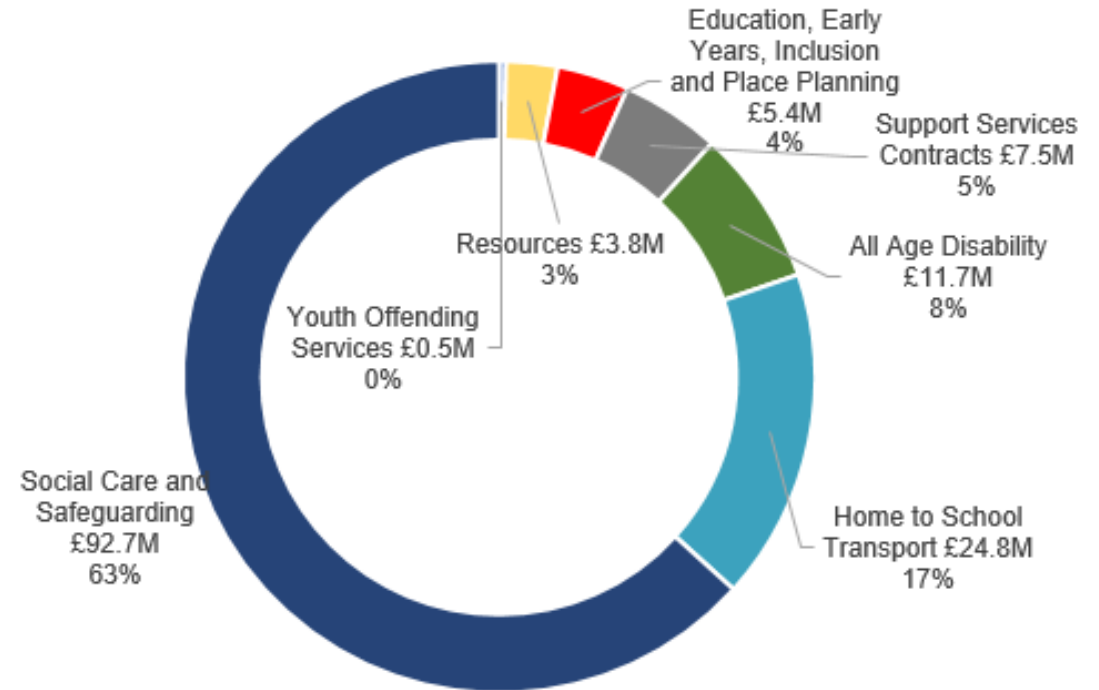
- Company board meetings monthly with contracted key performance indicators and business plan progress reviewed.
- Risk Governance and Audit Board reviewed the 2023/24 Budget in detail prior to approval by the Board, reviewed the 2022/23 financial statements and have received the External Auditor's draft report.
- Annual Audit report for WCF highlights positive co-operation between the Council and the Company
- Continue to meet with the Council with review of performance, finance, successes and challenges across the business and review of support services provided by the Council.
- Relationships with the council are extremely positive and staff from WCF engaging in key strategic groups to ensure efficient and effective joint working and continue the 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 2023.
- Final Audit took place virtually throughout summer 2023 by our external auditors Grant Thornton.
- Anticipated 'Unqualified' opinion – which means clean bill of health.
- WCF Board 25 July 2023 approved draft accounts and delegated authority for final sign-off to CE and DoR
- Accounts will be uploaded onto our website and sent to companies house.



- Turnover of £150.0m (£148.8m total income from WCC including maintained schools).
- Expenditure £150.0m.
- Small surplus of £1.
- WCF hold no fixed assets.
- Support services purchased from WCC £7.5m.
- 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 2022/23.

Net Service Expenditure 2022/23



- 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.

Agenda Item 4



The Audit Findings for Worcestershire Children First

Year ended 31 March 2023

July 2023

Jim Moloney
Director – engagement lead
T: 0121 232 5219
E: jim.moloney@uk.gt.com

Harkamal Vaid
Audit Manager
T: 0121 597 9425
E: harkamal.vaid@uk.gt.com

Ben Stevenson
Assistant Manager
T: 0121 232 5286
E: ben.stevenson@uk.gt.com

Bill Devitt
Director – relationship liaison
T: 0121 232 5174
E: bill.devitt@uk.gt.com





WORCESTERSHIRE CHILDREN FIRST BUSINESS PLAN

April 2023 – March 2024

- Delivery against our WCF 2023/24 business plan.
- Delivery against the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) and associated Delivering Better Value programme
- Delivery against the Corporate plan KPI's for children and families.
- Delivery against our workforce strategy
- Continue our full quality assurance programme across the company to hear the voice of and understand the experience of the child, parent and carers.
- Develop our services proactively in response to deliver including, feedback, Data patterns, financial challenges



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