



Shropshire Council
Legal and Democratic Services
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND

Date: Tuesday, 1 November 2022

Committee:
Cabinet

Date: Wednesday, 9 November 2022

Time: 10.30 am

Venue: Shrewsbury Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

You are requested to attend the above meeting. The Agenda is attached

There will be some access to the meeting room for members of the press and public, but this will be limited. If you wish to attend the meeting please email democracy@shropshire.gov.uk to check that a seat will be available for you.

Please click [here](#) to view the livestream of the meeting on the date and time stated on the agenda

The recording of the event will also be made available shortly after the meeting on the Shropshire Council Youtube Channel [Here](#)

Tim Collard Assistant Director - Legal and Governance

Members of Cabinet

Lezley Picton (Leader)

Gwilym Butler

Dean Carroll

Rob Gittins

Kirstie Hurst-Knight

Simon Jones

Richard Marshall

Cecilia Motley

Ian Nellins

Your Committee Officer is:

Amanda Holyoak Committee Services Supervisor

Tel: 01743 257714

Email: amanda.holyoak@shropshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Disclosable Interests

Members are reminded that they must declare their disclosable pecuniary interests and other registrable or non-registrable interests in any matter being considered at the meeting as set out in Appendix B of the Members' Code of Conduct and consider if they should leave the room prior to the item being considered. Further advice can be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

3 Minutes

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 19th October 2022, to follow

4 Public Question Time

To receive any questions from members of the public, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 14. Deadline for notification is not later than 5.00 pm on Thursday 3rd November 2022.

5 Member Question Time

To receive any questions from Members of the Council. Deadline for notification is not later than 5.00 pm on Thursday 3rd November 2022.

6 Scrutiny Items

7 Annual Health and Safety Report 2021/22 (Pages 1 - 30)

Lead Member – Councillor Gwilym Butler – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Resources

Report of James Walton – Executive Director of Resources

8 Fostering Service Annual Report April 2021-March 2022 (Pages 31 - 48)

Lead member: Portfolio Holder for Children and Education

Contact: Tanya Miles, Executive Director - People

9 Together4Children Annual Report April 2021-March 2022

Lead member: Portfolio Holder for Children and Education

Contact: Tanya Miles, Executive Director – People

Report to follow

10 Corporate Parenting Annual Report April 2021-March 2022 (Pages 49 - 104)

Lead member: Portfolio Holder for Children and Education

Contact: Tanya Miles, Executive Director - People

11 Annual Report of the Local Authority Designated Officer

Lead member: Portfolio Holder for Children and Education

Contact: Tanya Miles, Executive Director - People

Report to follow

12 Electric Vehicle Chargers for Residents without Off-street Parking (Pages 105 - 112)

Lead member: Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Contact: Mark Barrow, Executive Director – Place

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Committee and Date

Cabinet

9th November 2022

Item

Public

ANNUAL REPORT ON HEALTH AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE FOR 2021/2022

Responsible Officer Carol Fox - Occupational Health, Safety & Wellbeing Manager
Tim Tearle – Senior Health & Safety Officer
e-mail: carol.fox@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: (01743) 252814
tim.tearle@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: (01743) 252819

1. Synopsis

This report reviews the health and safety performance for 2021/22, detailing the key health and safety challenges for the Council, progress on last year's Annual Report and identifies key priorities for 2022/23.

2. Executive Summary

Progress with Action Plan for 2020/2021

Whilst heavily impacted by the Covid Pandemic positive progress has been made with the completion of the actions for Shropshire Council arising from the Action Plan for 2021/2022. Some of the key actions where progress has been made are:

Some auditing/inspections and Covid security arrangement inspections took place, both face to face and via Teams. As a priority the Health and Safety Team were again heavily involved in reviewing Covid risk assessments for both schools and non-school premises. Many reviews were carried out for schools to support when restrictions were lifted.

To implement new and revised Health & Safety guidance and arrangements into Service Areas to ensure it is communicated to all employees.

To engage and retain services across the Council and externally with associated Service Level Agreements in place.

Please see **appendix 1** for detailed information on progress with the 2021/2022 plan.

3. Recommendations

Note the contents of the report; particularly noting:

Good progress has been made during 2021/2022 on managing health and safety across the Council.

- Reportable employee accidents to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) have decreased and minor accidents have increased compared to last year's figures.
- Service Areas and the Health & Safety Team work well together.
- The Council continues to maintain a good relationship with the HSE.
- The Health & Safety Team were involved with various aspects of the floods, including advice, support and PPE advice.
- The team started to resume business as usual activities to a pre-pandemic level as restrictions started to ease. The team had some capacity issues this year due to staff changes from a retirement and also some significant absence issues.

Agreed Actions for 2022/2023:

The key actions for Shropshire Council are:

- The Health & Safety Team to continue with the ongoing work involved with the Covid recovery, but with a priority focus on business-as-usual activities recognising the pandemic work is diminishing.

Collaborative working with New Ways of Working Group to:

- Ensure we have office space available for employees to access
- Home working allowance to off-set some of the increased costs
- Signposting to information, e.g. financial wellbeing management

Key actions from 2021/2022 have been extended into 2022/2023 to include:

- The Health and Safety Team to work with Service Areas to produce and implement Health & Safety management systems including policies, procedures and arrangements
- Continual development of external contracts with associated Service Level Agreements (SLA) in place.
- To fulfil contractual monitoring and support to Academies and customers under Service Level Agreements
- To engage with Service Areas to ensure that health and safety compliance is in place and to review Self-Monitoring Checklist to ensure roll out to Premise managers.

- Raise awareness of workstation assessments in particular agile working brought about by Covid and which will form part of the Council's working practices going forward.
- Rollout of new workstation Healthy Working system.
- To continue to implement the Wellbeing Plan and continuing staff wellbeing events throughout the year.
- Support 'Leap into Learning' development for e-learning health and safety awareness courses across service areas.
- Revised and simplified auditing plan for schools to enable more schools to be visited annually going forward. This has been launched and is working well.

REPORT

4. Risk Assessment & Opportunities Appraisal

The development and delivery of the Council's Health and Safety Policy and associated arrangements and risk assessments are the key process in managing the Council's Health and Safety Risks. The opportunities and risks arising are assessed on an ongoing basis and whenever legislation changes or there is reason to review in light of Health and Safety incidents. The detailed Health and Safety performance information that follows and is included in the appendices gives a summary of what the Council has implemented currently and plans for the coming year.

Health & Safety Performance Information

4.1. Reactive Safety Performance

Detailed in **appendix 2** is performance information regarding reactive monitoring, where incidents have occurred and proactive monitoring to show what is being done to ensure that the Council has robust systems in place to prevent injury and ill-health. Council Health & Safety Officers continue to work closely and regularly with the HSE in respect of reactive and proactive work.

The Health and Safety Executive encourage employers to include reporting on health and safety performance in their annual reports as part of the drive to manage and reduce work-related injury and ill-health.

4.2. Health and Safety Investigations

The Health and Safety Team continue to investigate and follow up accidents. The majority of these investigations were related to accidents, which were reportable under legislative requirements and were either a full investigation with recommendations or a follow up after an accident to ensure that corrective action had been put into place. The nature of the investigations included: Please see **Appendix 3**

4.3. Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Involvement and Enforcement Activities

During 2021/2022, the Health & Safety Team submitted a RIDDOR for a choking fatal incident at a day centre and had some enquiries from the HSE and Police and this is an ongoing matter. For HSE contact with schools please see **appendix 4**.

4.4. Work-related Absences

For details on work related stress and musculoskeletal disorders please see **appendix 5**

Proactive Safety Monitoring

4.5 Health and Safety Team - Advice and Guidance

Please see **appendix 6** for brief details on advice and guidance given by the Health and Safety Team and Crime Prevention Officer.

4.6 Health and Safety Audits

For details please see **appendix 7**.

4.7 Health and Safety Monitoring

For details about Health and Safety monitoring undertaken please see **appendix 8**.

4.8 Fire Safety

For details about Fire Safety including support and liaison with the Fire Service please see **appendix 9**.

4.9 Health and Safety Training

For details about Health and safety training courses delivered by the Health and Safety team please see **appendix 10**.

4.10 Health, Safety and Welfare Group

For details about the Health, Safety and Welfare Group please see **appendix 11**.

4.11 Occupational Health - Workplace Wellbeing

For details of the work undertaken by Occupational Health please see **appendix 12**.

5. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report. There may be future financial implications in respect of the Actions for 2022/2023 although these will be approved by Senior Managers before they are progressed, most notably relating to the provision of work equipment for staff working agilely.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1 The report has no effect on climate change outcome currently. Going forward, if extreme weather events become more prevalent, this may impact on Health and Safety Issues for both staff and the public.

7. Conclusions

This report indicates that the health and safety performance has been maintained and managed well over the last twelve months, balancing both Covid requirements and business as usual activities, and please request approval for the action plan for 2022/2023.

The next twelve months will continue to see new challenges in light of the Covid 19 implications and the resultant financial climate. It is important to maintain focus on sensible risk management so that risks can be managed sensibly, appropriately, and proportionately.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

None

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Gwilym Butler Portfolio Holder Resources

Local Member

N/A

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Progress with Action Plan for 2021/2022

APPENDIX 2

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APPENDIX 3

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Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Involvement and Enforcement Activities

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Work-related Absences

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Health and Safety Team - Advice and Guidance

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Health and Safety Audits

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Fire Safety

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Health, Safety and Welfare Group

APPENDIX 12

Occupational Health - Workplace Wellbeing

This report demonstrates five of our organisational principles in action



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APPENDIX 1

Progress with Action Plan for 2021/2022

Detailed information on progress with the 2021/2022 plan follows.

Review of Health & Safety Arrangements to ensure up to date and relevant to organisation - Arrangements are being updated in line with project plan, which is based on level of risk.

Production of Annual Health & Safety Performance Report for senior management and elected members – Data collated, report completed and submitted to relevant stake holders, directors, Portfolio holder and signed off at Cabinet on 20th October 2021.

Audits – Scheduled and targeted audits across the council in line with Audit Programme Document - Although again heavily impacted by Covid, some auditing /inspections and Covid security arrangement inspections took place, both face to face and via Teams. The Health and Safety Team, as a priority, were mostly heavily involved in reviewing Covid risk assessments carried out by schools and non-schools and additionally, to support the wider opening of schools.

To work with Property Services Group (PSG) on a list of summer works construction activities for inspection over the summer school holiday period and to ensure compliance with CDM - Programme of visits undertaken to higher risk projects by officers from the Health & Safety team. Recommendations and observations similar to previous years were made. Again, protection of skylights and site security were some issues requiring action.

To engage and retain services across the Council and externally with associated Service Level Agreements in place to support their obligations and responsibilities for health and safety. To explore further opportunities with town and parish councils - Service Levels Agreements for schools (maintained and academy) are in place. The team continue to carry out work for academy and town/parish council clients this year, although have by necessity pulled back slightly from this work in order to focus on the significant works Covid generated and to get back up to speed on corporate priority.

APPENDIX 2

Reactive Safety Performance

Accident and Violence Statistics

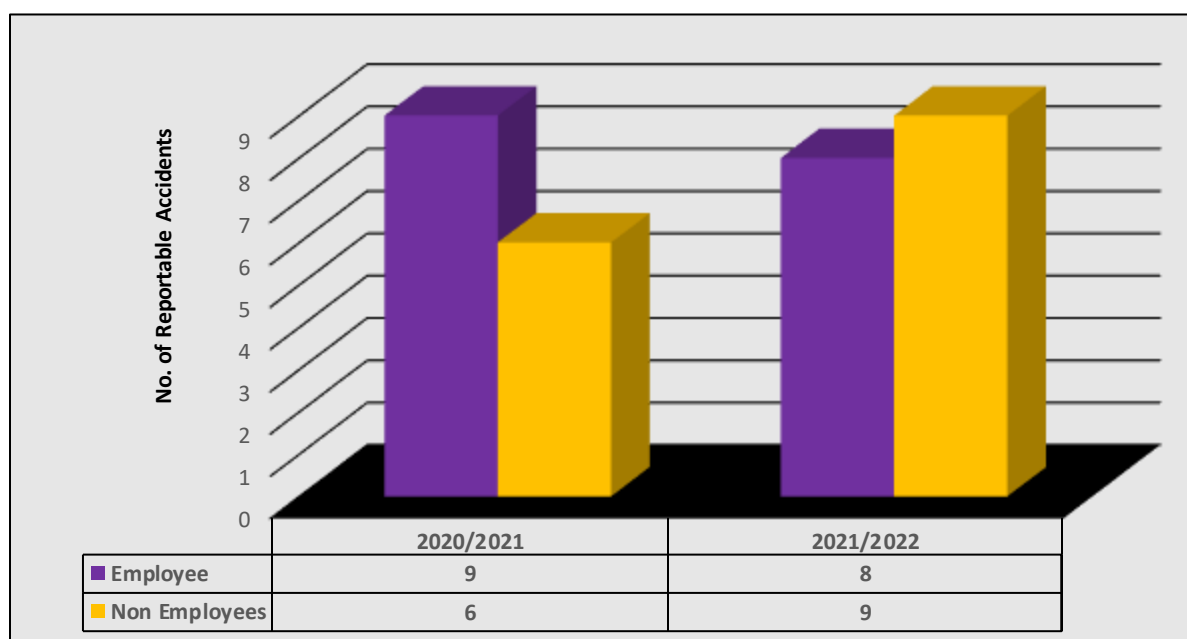
ERP our online Incident Form module is used to enable a simple and consistent approach to reporting and recording of accidents within Shropshire Council and to increase the scope and use of statistical information.

All accident forms are sent online into the Health and Safety Team via ERP so that remedial action to prevent a reoccurrence can be monitored by a Health and Safety Officer and if necessary, advice and support can be given to implement further reasonable actions.

The Health and Safety Team acts as the Council's statutory reporter of accidents, which are required to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive. This ensures that accurate information is passed to the HSE in a timely manner and if further information is required the Health and Safety Team is the first point of contact.

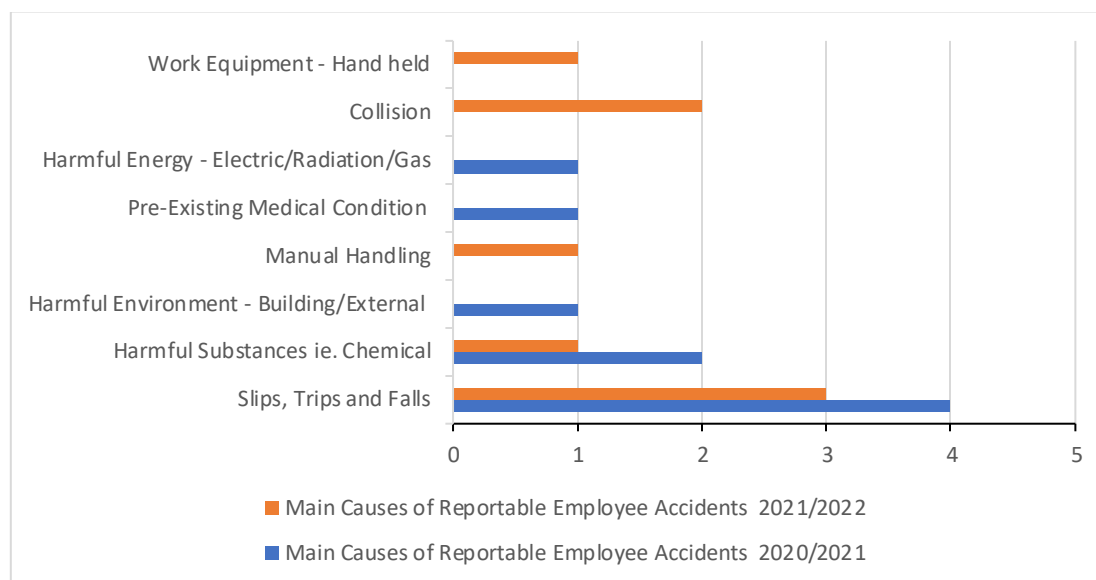
The number of reportable incidents to the HSE for employees has decreased compared to the data from 2020/2021 from 9 to 8. The number of incidents related to non-employees has increased from 6 to 9. See Chart below.

Number of Reportable Employee Accidents for 2020/2021 and 2021/2022



The main causes of the reportable employee accidents to the HSE are Slips/Trips/Falls 3 (38%), Collision 2 (25%), Chemicals/Substances 1 (13%), Manual Handling - People/Children 1 (13%), Work Equipment - Hand held 1 (13%). See Chart below.

Main Causes of Reportable Employee Accidents for 2021/2022

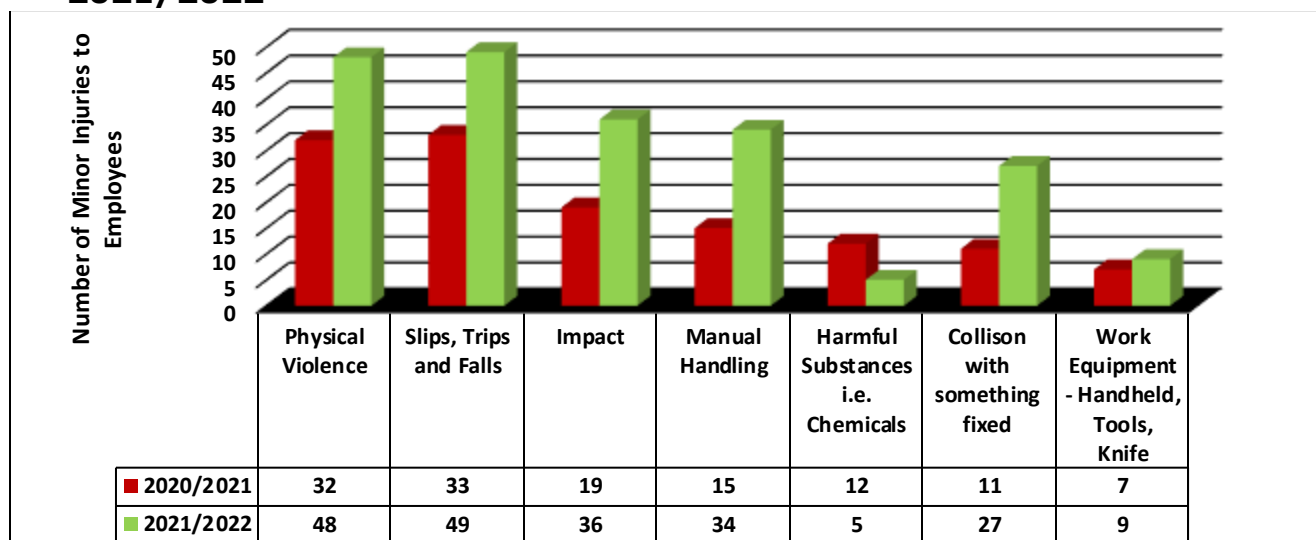


This year, Shropshire Council had 645 accidents in total, comprising 17 RIDDORS (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013), 454 minor accidents and 191 near-misses. The previous year's figure was 431.

There were 454 minor accidents reported in total (274 last year), 249 to employees (153 last year), 47 to service users (43 last year), 27 to visitors (4 last year), and 113 to pupils (68 last year). The remainder were low numbers, 18 in total, (6 last year) in the categories, 'agency staff' 7, 'contractor' 4, 'volunteers' 2 and Employed by External Client 5.

The main causes of the minor injuries to employees were Slips, Trips & Falls 49 this has decreased from 33 last year, 48 violent incidents 32 last year, 36 Impact (19) last year, 34 manual handling (15) last year, Harmful Substances i.e. Chemicals 5, 12 last year, Collision with something fixed 27, 11 last year, Work Equipment - Handheld, Tools, Knife 9, 7 last year. See Chart below.

Main Causes of Minor Injuries to Employees for 2020/2021 and 2021/2022



Of the 48 violent incidents to employees, the majority of these incidents were related to the challenging behaviour of service users and pupils in adults with learning disabilities service areas or Special Schools that resulted in minor injuries being sustained, i.e. bruises, bites, scratches. These areas monitor behaviour very closely and have behavioural plans in place.

The remaining incidents related to the behaviour of pupils in mainstream schools and incidents reported by staff working operationally in areas such as Parking Warden Services, Housing Options, Benefits, and Customer Services.

Management of violence and aggression training is available at differing skill levels to deal with actual and potential violence and aggression. The majority of this training is job specific and tailored to manage the challenging behaviour of pupils and service users. Some higher risk teams utilise the Stay Safe app to monitor staff out in the field.

Manual handling training is available to staff to highlight the importance of risk assessing hazardous manual handling activities and ensuring safe systems of work are in place. This training has been revamped to include practical elements in line with HSE guidance.

The Health and Safety Team will continue to review each online accident form and ensure that remedial action is put into place to prevent a reoccurrence and undertake investigations as necessary.

APPENDIX 3

Health and Safety Investigations

The nature of investigations included:

IP tripped over some play equipment, causing them to fall on their face, without putting out their arms. Injury preventing the injured person from working for more than 7 days. A review of the risk assessment was undertaken. All equipment is to be safely and securely stored away from doorways and areas that could cause an accident.

A painted steel 'hockey stick type' street lighting column collapsed and fell onto a parked car at the side of the roadway injuring one of the vehicles passengers who was in the process of getting out of the vehicle. The remaining lighting columns in the street were inspected. An action plan was implemented for a program of re- inspections and non-destructive testing of painted steel lighting columns.

The IP attended a Day Centre for adults with learning difficulties. They were eating their lunch under supervision and appeared to have difficulty swallowing. Staff assisted administering back slaps which initially appeared to have relieved the situation. Abdominal thrusts were also administered following further back slaps and an ambulance called. The IP was treated at the scene and taken to hospital by ambulance staff. Unfortunately, the IP passed away. Internal investigation completed. At HSE's request, this report and further additional information has been forwarded to the HSE to support HSE's further fact finding relating to the incident which remains ongoing.

There were also a number of slip, trips and fall incidents in premises that the team looked into and followed up. The Health and Safety Team were able to provide advice on additional control measures. Service Area teams have been very responsive to any recommendations put forward and have implemented remedial action.

APPENDIX 4

Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Involvement and Enforcement Activities

As noted previously in Appendix 3 following the fatality of a Service user who attended a Centre for adults with learning difficulties. At The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) request, following the Health & Safety team investigation, a report and further additional information has been forwarded to the HSE to support HSE's further fact finding relating to the incident which remains ongoing.

The HSE have had no significant dealings with schools since early last year, having completed a number of Covid-related spot-checks and audits previously.

APPENDIX 5

Work-related Absences

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations requires every employer to conduct risk assessments for health and safety hazards, including work-related stress. The HSE have developed Stress Management Standards to represent a set of conditions that reflect high levels of health, wellbeing and organisational performance. The Standards can be used to identify any gaps in performance and develop possible solutions.

2. Managers are encouraged to undertake a stress risk assessment when local stress issues are identified and then implement an action plan. A Stress Risk Assessment Toolkit, which is part of the Stress Management Policy, is available to managers to help them with the risk assessment process.
3. Stress training is available via LEAP. With courses aimed at managers and employees to look at how to recognise signs of stress and to instigate strategies for dealing with and managing stress.
4. A Counselling Service, Network of Staff Supporters (NOSS), is available to offer confidential support to employees who feel that they would like to discuss personal and work-related concerns. Mental Health First Aiders are operational across the council and the current list of previously trained employees has been added to the Intranet pages. The council's Wellbeing function also offers some support in relation to stress.
5. The percentage of stress related absences has fallen by 5.12% from 16.8% to 11.68%. The number of employees taking a period of absence due to Stress (which includes anxiety, depression and mental health) was 412 employees this year (11.6% of all employees who took a period of sickness absence between April 2021 to March 2022) compared to 319 employees for the same period last year (14.1% of all employees who took a period of sickness absence). Targeted work continues between Human Resources Advice and Project Team, the Occupational Health Team, the Health and Safety Team and the NOSS Counselling Service to try to reduce stress related absences through the use of the Stress Risk Assessments, action plans and training for managers. All support mechanisms are based on identifying work related and personal stress at an early stage and taking early intervention through referral to the Occupational Health Team, access to a Counselling Service and instigating an action plan.
6. The percentage of absences relating to musculoskeletal disorders has fallen by 5.07% compared to last year's figure from 30% to 24.93%. For Musculoskeletal 421 employees (which equates 11.9% of all employees who took a period of absence between April 2021 to March 2022) compared to 338 (14.9% of all employees who took a period of absence last year). A scheme of early referral to a Physiotherapy

Service through the Occupational Health Team continues to try and support employees with musculoskeletal disorders. Over the year 13 staff were referred for fast track Physiotherapy. Manual Handling training continues to be offered and manual handling accidents related to work activities are investigated and monitored to make sure that remedial action is put into place.

APPENDIX 6

Proactive Safety Monitoring

Health and Safety Team – Advice and Guidance

A Duty Safety Officer System continues to be used within the Health and Safety Team to allow employees and managers across the Council to access telephone and email advice from a Safety Officer, with the response time based on the level of risk.

The Health and Safety Team continue to review the Corporate Health and Safety Policy and arrangements and update when necessary. Many of the health and safety arrangements were reviewed and updated this year.

The Health and Safety Team continue to work closely with service areas to provide advice, bespoke training and monitor activities to ensure that risks are being managed sensibly and proportionately.

The Crime Prevention (CP) function is part of the Health and Safety team and covers all aspects of Shropshire Council premises, property and staff. Crime Prevention contributes to the Authority's participation in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Section 17. Crime Prevention promotes and assists Shropshire schools with the *Safer School* scheme and this includes academy schools and more recently, independent schools. Over 140 Schools have been accredited a *Safer School* and more are working to the accreditation.

From a corporate perspective, CP supports the health and safety team with policies, arrangements and also advises/contributes with the Council security guarding/intruder alarm contracts. The CP role continues to have a strong role in issues relating to buildings or staff safety at Council properties.

APPENDIX 7

Health and Safety Audits

Despite Covid, the team continued business as usual activities but trying where possible to carry these out via Microsoft Teams. As part of the preparation for reopening of services/premises, some site visits were undertaken by officers to review Covid arrangements and support premise managers with completion of risk assessments and procedures ahead of opening.

Although heavily impacted by Covid, some auditing/inspections took place, both face to face and via Teams. The Health and Safety Team were heavily involved in reviewing both school and non-school Covid risk assessments and additionally, to support the wider opening of schools. Some Health and Safety remote audits were also completed for Academy Schools and external contracts with SLA's, bringing in additional income.

Audits and inspections were based on a prioritisation of risk, i.e., a response to incidents and specific request from senior managers to review the premise health and safety arrangements.

The school audit has been streamlined to make it a quicker process for both school and auditor which enables more schools to be visited in a year.

Reports on the findings of Health and Safety Audits and Inspections were sent to key people with health and safety responsibilities in service areas and key concerns were discussed and noted at the Corporate Health, Safety and Welfare Group. The Premise Manager instigates an action plan to meet any recommendations made.

APPENDIX 8

Health and Safety Monitoring Schools

With COVID-19 pandemic still prominent, it meant Shropshire Council (along with many other organisations) had to adopt new and innovative ways of working to support our services and ensure they continued to be compliant

In order to support schools, the Health & Safety team provided revised guidance and support in reviewing Covid risk assessments in line with changing government guidance. The team worked closely with public health, senior officers in Children Services and liaised regularly with Trade Unions to discuss, advise and support with employee matters.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) had no significant dealings with schools during the period, having completed a number of Covid-related spot-checks and audits previously.

School Construction Projects

As in previous years, a number of visits were undertaken by the Health & Safety Team (9 site visits) to assist Property Services Group (PSG) with the monitoring of their construction projects. Fewer projects were undertaken and limited availability of Officers to undertake visits over Summer break – hence smaller number of inspections.

In addition, all PSG surveyors undertake monitoring of contractors/contracts.

Topics of concern can be summarised as follows:

Hot works management.

Asbestos management issues.

Work at height.

Site Security and awareness of the need to maintain.

Availability of RAMS/CPP.

The Health & Safety Team and PSG continue to meet at regular intervals.

Self-Monitoring Checklists are available to premises to self-assess their level of compliance with the Councils Health and Safety Policy and guidance. The Health and Safety Team use the self-monitoring documentation to select and undertake health and safety audits through the year of premises and teams based on the outputs from the self-monitoring process.

Schools in particular are very committed to undertaking the local assessments usually with active input from Governors. Other Service Areas do undertake the Self-Monitoring, but completion has been sporadic and this is attributed to the restructuring of services and will be addressed by the Health and Safety Team.

Service Level Agreements

The Health & Safety Team continue to provide services on contract via Service Level Agreements (SLA's) with a number of Academy Schools and also externally with a range of partner organisations.

APPENDIX 9

Fire Safety

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 places responsibility for fire safety at any particular premises on the “responsible person” i.e. the employer and/or the person who has control of the premises.

Support, advice and training is made available to premises managers in all council buildings regarding fire safety and particularly the technical aspects of fire risk assessments. Throughout the year, compliance monitoring is undertaken with respect to all premises, which are owned, occupied or used by the council – including schools – to ensure that our statutory duties are being properly carried out.

Regular and close liaison with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) continues and has proven to be an effective way of dealing with issues, which arise from their audits of council premises. Shropshire Council now has a Statutory Compliance officer – Fire Safety, who is the key point of contact with Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service. This has helped to ensure that to date; no school or council premise enforcement notices or prohibition notices have been served. Below is a summary of Fire Safety key points:

Ongoing is SFRS interest in all premises over 18m as they classify these as high risk, irrespective of what the premises is used for.

Weeping Cross Depot had a SFRS audit, both Shropshire Council and Veolia were audited and each received audit letters, the depot was deemed broadly compliant, however there were a number of issues raised requiring attention, which PSG, department managers who have a store there, and Veolia have actions to undertake. Work is progressing. Shropshire Council has had a fire risk assessment carried out for the whole premises which was one of the actions.

Shifnal Primary School received a SFRS audit. It was deemed broadly compliant but the Nursery at Shifnal Primary School received actions that required attention

Likewise, Mardol House received a broadly compliant audit report, but with a number of issues raised which required attention.

The Building Safety Bill has received Royal Ascent. This is an enabling act and a range of Regulations will come into force over the next 12-18 months.

Shropshire Council now requires that a PSG approved fire risk assessor conducts all of its’ fire risk assessments. Internal assessors are no longer deemed competent. The Corporate Landlord premises have been split into a high and low risk category. All premises categorised as high risk have received a

fire risk assessment conducted by an external PSG approved
fire risk assessor.

Fire safety improvement work continues at Shirehall.

APPENDIX 10

Health and Safety Training

1. A full range of health and safety courses have continued to be provided during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. With face-to-face courses being delivered with regards to social distancing, Government guidance, and specific premises procedures. These necessary precautions have resulted in some instances, with courses being delivered, but with smaller numbers of delegates per session. As the restrictions were removed, the number of courses increased along with an increase in delegate numbers per training session.

Over the year, 131 courses were delivered to 753 delegates.

Courses have been reviewed to reflect the nature of risk within the Authority and external clients. This included Hot Working activities, reflecting a general wide concern within the Insurance sector and the one-day IOSH Managing Safely Refresher Course. Although this course's availability is currently being confirmed by IOSH, it is likely to be open to individuals who have completed the full IOSH Managing Safely Course within the past three to five years.

Microsoft Teams (MST) was found not to be as successful as hoped as a platform for the delivery of health and safety courses. Some aspects which arose were: poor signal reception both at Shirehall and staff locations e.g., home premises and workplaces; a lack of interaction with delegates compared to face-to-face training and delegates undertaking work activities at the same time as receiving the training, also possibly leading to a lack of interaction.

Health and Safety Workshops / Training

2. Health and Safety Workshops resumed this year. 4 workshops specifically developed for Head Teachers, Business Managers and School Governors were scheduled, however 2 were cancelled due to staff absences. The team opted to run these 2 via Microsoft Teams and these were well attended. The workshops covered a range of topics including legal updates, compliance issues, risk assessment, incident investigations, health and safety training, etc. plus any questions the candidates wanted to ask.

In addition to this, 6 School Governor Training sessions were run this year.

First Aid training

3. First Aid courses continued to run, with standard courses and refreshers delivered. Course delivery was amended in line with guidance from UK Resuscitation Council with revised protocols to counter Covid risk, particularly around eliminating contact with expired air.

There were 59 First Aid training courses delivered, attended by 468 delegates.

e-Learning

4. The Health & Safety Team facilitate a small range of health and safety courses through e-learning modules on Cardinus and LEAP. This style of learning supports our employees by allowing them to undertake training at a time and pace that is convenient to their work patterns.

Leap into Learning Health & Safety e-learning modules have been available since early 2017 when the Learning Pool platform was launched. Over the previous years there was a significant rise in uptake as more modules were added. Courses now tend to get added on an ad hoc basis. Last year 3946 modules were completed over the 12-months from April, however only 1842 were completed this year. The previous year figure included 1940 completions of the Return to Work module, which was a new module produced when staff had to come to work during lockdown etc. This year there were only 115 completions of Return to Work hence the reduced figure.

Online Workstation Assessment Tool

5. The software system for undertaking online intranet-based risk assessment and training continues to be used. The software allows cost effective and accessible training to be available. This negates the

necessity for employees to leave their workstation to undergo training and to complete a workstation risk assessment.

We launched a new version of the system ("Help with Temporary Homeworking and Healthy Working"). With Covid lockdowns again introduced by the Government, many staff worked from home, so this tool provided staff with an awareness of homeworking and the opportunity to take immediate action to address issues where possible. This was only a temporary awareness course for staff and it was felt no longer considered fit for purpose. Therefore, since January 2022, if a member of staff reports they have an issue with their workstation via their Line Manager, we have started to roll out a new module called Healthy Working (HW) for staff to complete, hence the HW figures are low. There is a project underway to implement a new Healthy Working module which will be fully launched to staff later in 2022.

Number of users 2748

Completion of Temporary Homeworking Assessment	1512
Completion of Temporary Homeworking Training	1512
Completion of Healthy Working Training (new)	135
Completion of Healthy Working Assessment (new)	135

APPENDIX 11

Health, Safety and Welfare Group

1. The Group met twice with both meetings being virtual meetings due to Covid to consult with Trade Union colleagues and Service Area representatives on health and safety matters. The group receives progress updates from the Health & Safety representatives and a report from the Health and Safety Manager on health and safety performance, accidents, briefings on new legislation and progress with agreed targets. The meetings are well attended with focus given to strategic health, welfare and safety matters and proactive work, which improves knowledge and performance. The Terms Of Reference were reviewed this year.

APPENDIX 12

Occupational Health - Workplace Wellbeing

1. Line Manager Mental Health Awareness and Resilience training commenced in October 2021. Workshops ran until mid-February 2022 - 12 sessions were delivered with 107 attending. 6 virtual sessions running from 24th January - 17th February were postponed due to Omicron activity taking priority for many managers and teams.

Training came to an end between May and July, when four face to face sessions were delivered.

The course was aimed at raising manager awareness of the importance of mental health and removing the stigma that can be associated with it. It also provided an opportunity to look at manager resilience and that of teams.

Menopause guide (for employees and line managers) launched in October 2021, along with an educational video from Henpicked (leaders in this field) aimed at all staff. Work continues on enhancing support in this area - including launching a Support Group, providing training (via our Integrated Care Service partner) for line managers and employees, and offering menopause appointments to employees via Occupational Health Advisors.

In November 2021, some of our Mental Health First Aiders and Wellbeing Champions (14 in total including 3 male colleagues) trained to become Menopause Champions.

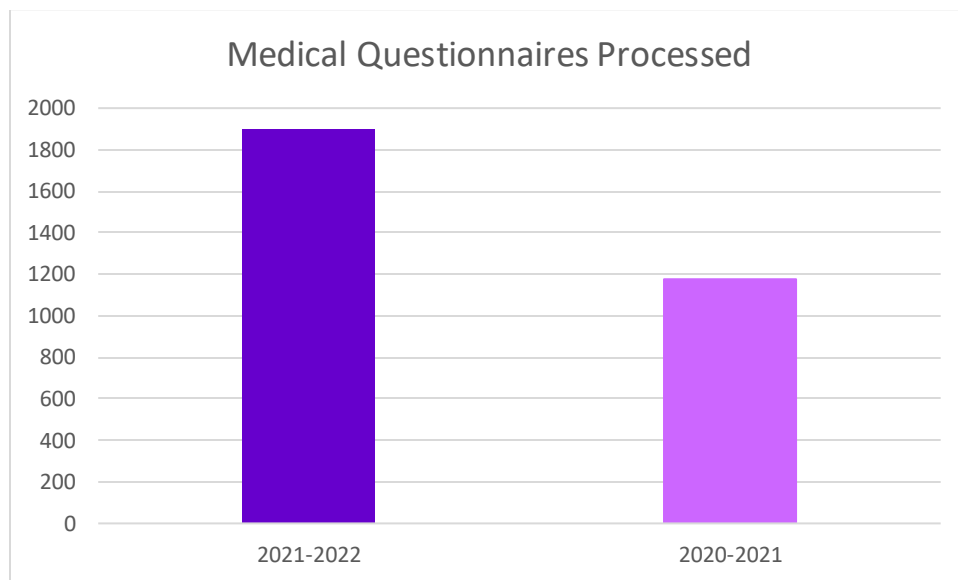
The Occupational Health Team was recently awarded Thrive at Work accreditation (Foundation Level) from the West Midlands Combined Authority. The Team continue their Thrive journey by now embarking on Bronze Level accreditation.

Access to Work, a programme of coaching support for mental health was launched and implemented in April/May 2021. This initiative continues to be promoted at intervals. Employees were invited to partake in a virtual sign up day in August 2022 which provided the opportunity to have a one to one briefing session and fast tracking to the programme.

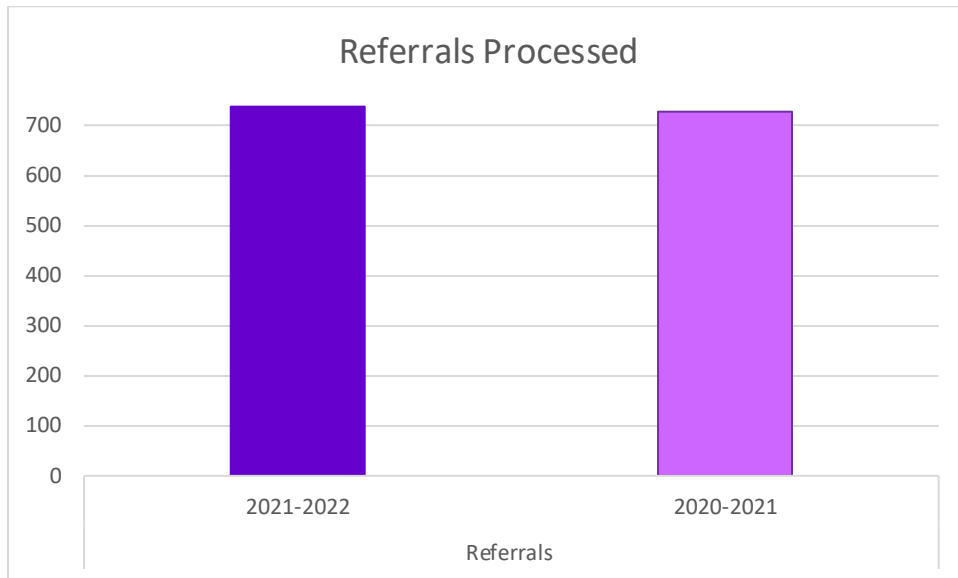
We now have 17 Wellbeing Champions across the directorates to support colleagues by signposting them to and promoting the wellbeing resources and support available to staff.

In February 2022 we teamed up with HSBC to provide a financial digital wellbeing package of support which includes monthly webinars on a range of key topics including pensions, budgeting, managing debt, savings, and a newly added webinar addressing the cost-of-living crisis, along with the offer of a free half an hour financial health check. This package of support will continue for the foreseeable future and continues to be promoted frequently in CEO briefings.

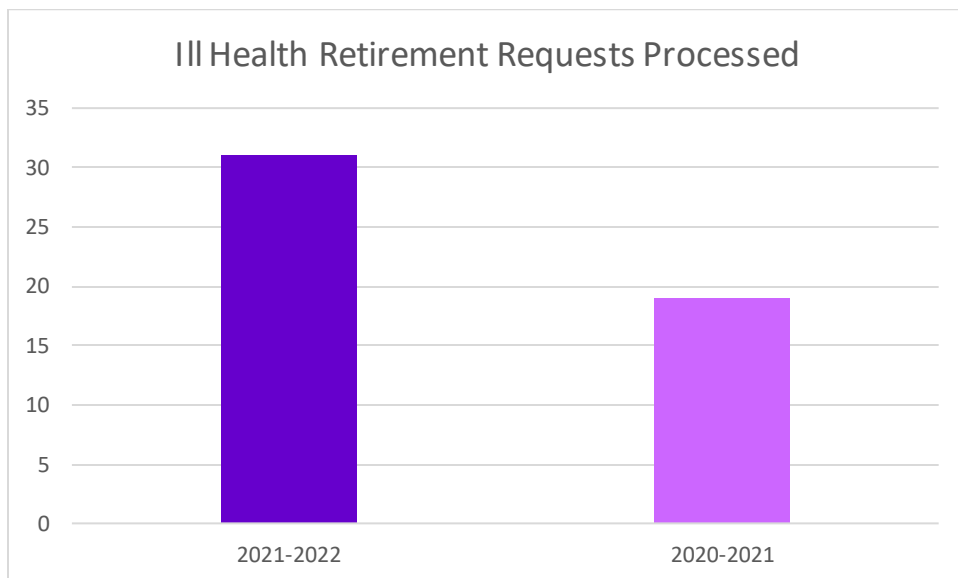
Occupational health processes relating to ill-health, absences and equality health checks for employment support.



Occupational health processed 1899 medical questionnaires for post-employment clearance from 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022, compared to 1176 in the previous year. This process ensures that any health conditions or equality issues are supported through risk assessment and reasonable adjustments.



737 occupational health management referrals were processed during the period 1st April 2021- 31st March 2022, compared to 727 in the previous year. This provides both the manager and the employee with support during times of ill health which may have resulted in an absence for work too.



There was a significant increase in requests for ill health retirement consideration, with requests increasing from 19 (April 2020–March 2021) to 31 (April 2021 - March 2022). 1st April –31st March –reference periods. It is possible that this increase may be connected with the COVID Pandemic.

355 Boots flu vouchers were distributed to eligible staff as part of the 2021-2022 flu campaign compared to 330 in 2020/21.

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<u>Committee and Date</u>

<u>Item</u>
<u>Public</u>

Annual Fostering Service Report April 2021-March 2022

**Responsible
Officer**

Tanya Miles

e-mail: Tanya.miles@shropshire.gov.uk Tel:

Fax

1. Synopsis

This report provides an overview of the activity, data and performance of Shropshire Councils Fostering Services known as Children's Placement Services from the 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. This report is for information and no decisions are required.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 Fostering services are a regulated activity provided by either a Local Authority or an Independent Fostering Agency. The service is regulated under The Children Act 1989 & 2004; Care Standards Act 2000 and the Fostering Service Regulations 2011.

In line with the increase in children looked after by Shropshire Council, there has been a significant increase in work for the fostering service, especially from a connected carer perspective.

The service has succeeded in recruiting 7 mainstream foster carers to provide care for children looked after, this is lower than for the overall number of mainstream foster carers recruited during 2021-2022. This mirrors a national trend in lower numbers of people coming forward to foster. In contrast the service approved 39 connected carer households who are now providing care and accommodation for 63 children related or connected to them. In addition, there were 12 households approved to provide supported board and lodgings placements to young people who are post statutory school age.

At the end of the financial year, there were 70 mainstream fostering households and 112 connected carer households.

The growth in connected carer arrangements is further evidenced by the number of new connected carer viability requests. A viability assessment is a short assessment that assesses the viability of an applicant having the required knowledge and skills to be assessed as a connected carer for a child known to them. It considers their relationship to the child, their understanding of the family circumstances and their ability to provide safe care for a child in the short term whilst a more in-depth assessment is completed. For this period there were 230 requests, which is a 15% increase on last year's number of 200 viability referrals and a 142% increase on 2019/20 figure of 95 viabilities.

There were 5 resignations from mainstream households, resulting in a small net gain in placement capacity.

9 children were matched long-term to their foster carers at fostering panel and 14 Special Guardianship orders were granted for children looked after.

Key strengths of the fostering service continue to be an experienced and robust workforce, the availability of wrap around support to foster carers and our developed training offer to mainstream and connected person foster carers. This all aids placement stability for children looked after and prevents unplanned moves for children and young people.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet is requested to consider the information in this report and support the work of Shropshire's Fostering Services (as set out in more detail within the Appendix) in fulfilling the Council's statutory and regulatory requirements.

REPORT

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

(NB This will include the following: Impact on Children and Vulnerable Adults, Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community and other Consultation)

4.1 Impact on children and vulnerable adults

Children and young people should have the opportunity to remain living in their local community close to their family, friends, schools, and recreational activities. To meet the needs of these children and young

people fostering recruitment is targeted to those living in Shropshire and in the immediate surrounding area.

4.2 Risk Management

Foster carer provision is a key aspect of our safeguarding responsibility for Shropshire children and young people. Without a clear focus on foster carer recruitment and retention, the risks from a financial and legal perspective would be significant. We would see a significant increase in cost for foster placements from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) and an increase in our use of external residential provision and we would be unable to deliver on the statutory requirements and regulations governing local authority fostering services.

4.3 Human Rights

Children and young people have a right to be safe and to feel safe. If this can't be achieved within their birth family, we must provide high quality foster placements so children can be safeguarded.

Foster carers have the right to receive a good service from their fostering provider, this includes the provision of timely assessments, robust support and training, access to independent support and advocacy and where appropriate help and assistance for them to secure permanence for the children they are caring for.

4.4 Equalities

All children and young people requiring a foster placement need foster carers who can support their access to health services, educational placements and support their ongoing relationships with birth family members and peers.

Connected carers are entitled to the same level of service provision as mainstream foster carers, but their support needs are often different, and so there needs to be flexibility in the system to be able to respond to the different needs of all carers.

Shropshire is a provider of regulated fostering services. In addition to our statutory duties to children looked after, there is also the requirement to legally respond to Shropshire residents who request an assessment for private fostering or an assessment for special guardianship to secure permanence for a child residing with them.

4.5 Community

Fostering recruitment provides opportunities for the community to become foster carers offering care to children and young people from within their own community.

4.6 Consultation

The Fostering Service consults widely with carers on the introduction of any changes to service delivery, this is supported by Shropshire Foster Carer Association (SFCA)

Young people are always consulted on their care plans and whilst the children in care group (CiC) was seriously disrupted through Covid, low level activity and consultation has continued.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 . The placements budget which includes spend on fostering placements is closely monitored by our finance business partner and through our internal placement monitoring panels. In addition to improved outcomes for children and young people, fostering placements are generally delivered at a lower cost to the Council than alternative approaches.

6 Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1 There is a wider benefit to having children living locally in local approved foster homes. This reduces the need for excessive mileage and carbon costs to travel to see children living at distance and reduces the time needed to undertake such visits.

7 Background

7.1 Remit of the fostering service

Fostering Services are highly regulated. The remit is recruitment, assessment, and support of mainstream and connected person fostering households. All foster carers require the approval of the Agency Decision Maker following a recommendation from fostering panel on their suitability to foster and all are subject to an annual review of their suitability to foster. An agency decision maker is defined as being a senior social work officer in the local authority who is qualified and suitably experienced to make decisions on suitability of applicants to foster. For Shropshire, this position is held by both the service manager for fostering and the Assistant Director.

Regulated activity comprises of the following key components; annual foster carer review or sooner where there are concerns, supervision and support visits, frequency determined by the individual needs of the carer, unannounced visits, regular renewal of DBS and medical checks, completion of personal development plans and monitoring of up-to-date training.

In addition to foster carers who directly care for children looked after, as a statutory service, there is also a duty to work with private fostering and members of the public seeking a special guardianship order for a child in their care.

7.2 Service Growth

There has, in line with the growth in numbers of children looked after been significant growth in activity for the fostering service, and this is particularly evident in the growth of the number of connected carer viability assessments and approvals. Connected carers are usually grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings of close friends where often there is a level of disfunction in the family dynamic which has necessitated the involvement of children's services. These placements require high levels of support, supervision, and oversight. The judiciary will always be involved in connected carer placements, and as a result, this work takes priority over the approval and support of mainstream fostering.

To ensure we also continue to grow our mainstream foster carer resource, the service is always striving to recruit more carers by using innovative marketing campaigns and by ensuring we are competitive with independent fostering agency agencies with competitive pay rates, robust training packages and regular support and supervision.

The significant rise in the number of connected carer arrangements has required service investment to create a team to work specifically with this cohort, the primary objective is to progress as many connected carer arrangements as possible through to the granting of a Special Guardianship order, which secures legal permanence for children and young people.

Service priorities for the coming year 2022-2023 include the launch and embedding of Mockingbird, launch and embedding of the new Kinship to Permanence Team, the progression of permanence plans for children and young people, to retain a skilled and robust workforce and to grow our internal foster care resource to provide more local placements for the children and young people of Shropshire. Explanation of Mockingbird can be found in the body of the annexed report.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Kirstie Hurst-Knight

Local Member

All members

Appendices

Appendix 1: Fostering Service Annual Report 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022

APPENDIX 1



Children's Placement Service Annual Report 2021-22

May 2022

Team Managers: Karen Scardifield and Karen Pountney
Service Manager: Lisa Preston

1. Introduction

Children's Placement Service (CPS) continues to be a busy service. We have continued to maintain our core of skilled and dedicated foster carers and an equally dedicated and skilled team of social workers. The combination of these two factors continues to provide excellent outcomes for our looked after children that are placed with our foster carers. There have continued to be some challenges, most notably the rise in the connected carer assessments which are court directed. Whilst the team continues to rise to this challenge, this can detract from the recruitment and assessment of mainstream foster carers.

The purpose of this report is to provide further context to this but also to give an overview of activity and updates to practice initiatives such as permanence forum and Mockingbird

2. Overview of Activity of CPS

i..1.1.1 The purpose of the service is to provide a comprehensive range of safe and stable foster placements with approved foster carers to meet the needs of children who are looked after by the local authority.

i..1.1.2

i..1.1.3 To achieve this, the service aims to recruit, assess, train, support and supervise foster carers who have the appropriate skills or experience to provide quality placements.

The pool of Shropshire foster carers continues to include placements for a wide range of children and young people, from pre-adoption babies, through to the more challenging teenagers, and respite carers and placements specifically for children with disabilities called Family Based Shared Care.

In addition to assessing and supporting in house mainstream foster carers, the service also assess Family and Friends connected person's foster carers. To do this, the work is timetabled and completed within Public Law Outline timescales and court directions.

The service also assesses potential Special Guardians and produces Special Guardianship reports for Looked after Children and Non-Looked after Children, as well as managing private fostering referrals and assessments.

3. In House Foster Carer assessments & Recruitment

There have been ongoing developments to the fostering recruitment process over the last 12 months. The digital approach to information events has been maintained and enhanced as this proved successful through covid 19.

We have enhanced new digital mediums, new access-points to engage with the prospective carers and increased child specific recruitment and step-down campaigns for children needing to move out of residential care.

3.1 Multi point for entry

We have continued with information sharing events for perspective new carers on a digital platform offering a virtual information event and 'drop-ins' via social media platforms.

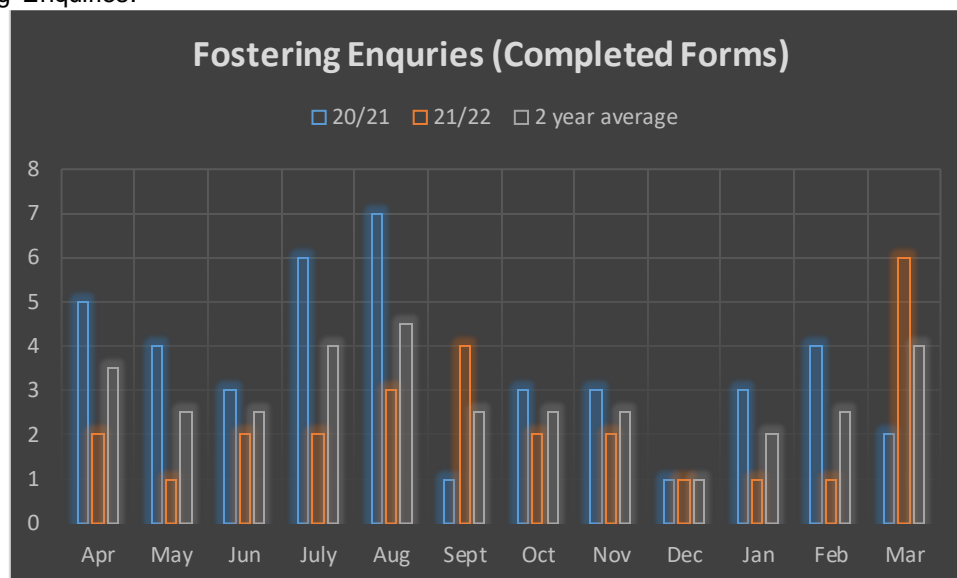
The response to this approach has also shaped the specific marketing campaigns that have been developed for this year and the following year.

Digital

Digital marketing continues to be our main source of activity. We have maintained some pay-per-click marketing to endeavour to appear as high as possible on Google search. Twitter but more specifically Facebook has been used to really develop micro targeted communications.

Targeted adverts within the Facebook platform utilising geographic targeting, demographic targeting and behavioural targeting have been utilised. These adverts present themselves also in sister platforms such as Messenger and Instagram. There will be a mix of 'low-interest' and 'high-interest' self-populating enquiry forms, Messenger-click-throughs and also tailored sub-landing pages. This approach makes fostering recruitment more personal, more tailored and more cost effective. The graph below highlights the growth we have had this year in foster carer enquiries.

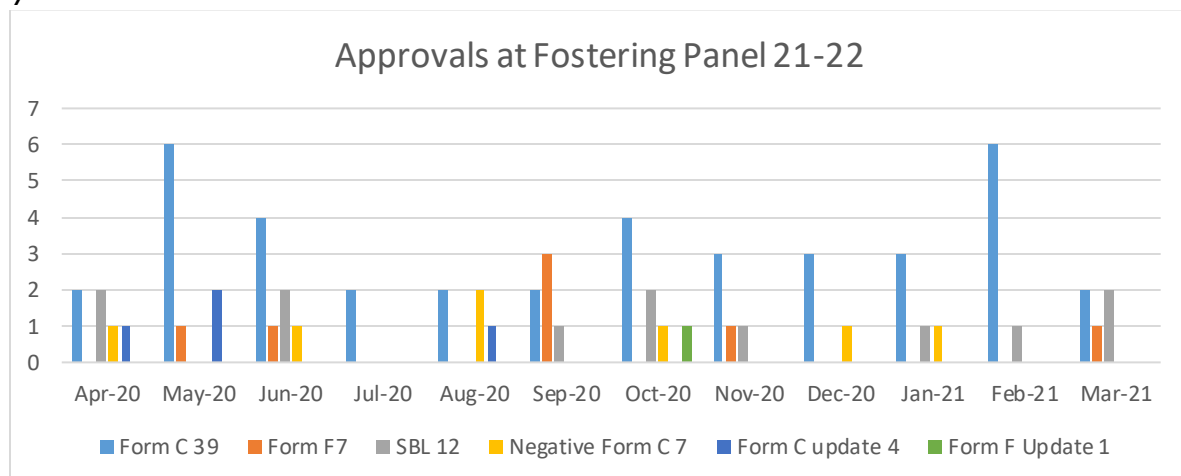
Fostering Enquiries:



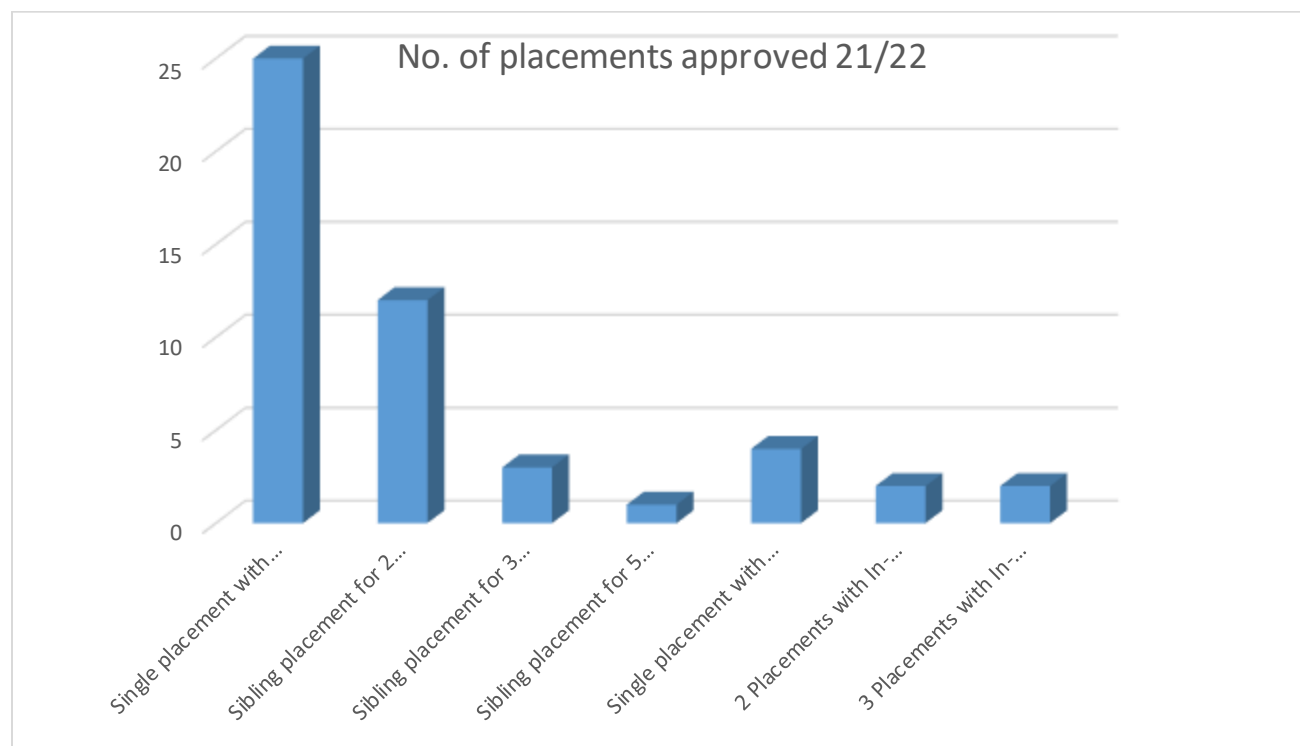
4. Approval Data

- 6 mainstream Foster Carer households were presented at Fostering Panel during this time compared to 39 Connected Person Foster Carer households. This demonstrates the on-going challenge in being able to use resource to recruit and assess mainstream carers when there is such a high demand for connected person foster carers. The connected person foster carer assessments are often complex and within very tight court timescales, it is inevitable therefore that these are prioritised. However, they often take up the majority of social worker's time. Also shown below is the number of SBL approvals.

7



In this period placement availability in fostering households was as follows:



This chart shows us the high number of looked after children that have been able to be placed within the wider family due to the assessment of connected persons. This has been in line with the children's care plans. In total, 63 looked after children were able to be placed with connected person foster carers. Negative fostering assessments are also required under regulations to be presented to panel if they have entered stage 2. In this period, we have had 7 negative outcome assessments presented to panel, reasons have included collusion with birth parents, lack of motivation and lack of insight and engagement.

There remains a consistent need for carers for teenagers, sibling groups and disabled children. We alter our recruitment drives and questionnaires to meet the needs of a wide variety of children, but these key areas prioritised. We are also doing this in line with recruiting carers for our Stepping stones project. Our Shropshire Foster Carer Association (SFCA) continues to be a driving force in Foster Care development. The SFCA were not able to run face to face events during COVID restrictions and this had an effect on foster carers ability to share peer support and interaction. However, since COVID restrictions were relaxed face to face events have taken place and more key events planned. The SFCA continue to meet regularly with the service management team to contribute to developments and advocate for the carers. The SFCA representatives will also be involved in new projects that are emerging bringing the foster carer voice to the fore.

There were **182** Fostering Households on the 31st March 2022 (including in house foster carers and Connected Person foster carers). This is divided into 70 mainstream fostering households and 112 connected person households. This overall number did not include 26 connected persons foster carer households which are under Reg 24 temporary approval.

Placement Beds



- Connected Persons placement beds 157
- Mainstream Foster Carer placement beds 95
- External Residential beds 49
- External fostering beds 138
- Internal residential placements 10
- Semi-independence 33
- External Residential Schools beds 9

5. Connected Persons Foster Carer Assessments

Prior to the presentation of a Connected Person foster carer household to panel, a viability assessment will have determined if they can meet the basic requirements of fostering regulations. If this is positive, then they will proceed to the full assessment which can last from between 12 weeks to 16 weeks. During this time a child may be placed with the applicant/s under Temporary Approval, but this cannot last beyond 16 weeks.

We have again assessed an increasing number of Connected Person Foster Carers throughout the 2021-22 period and continue to experience a high demand for viability assessments. The number of new connected carer viability requests for this period is 230 which is a 15% increase on last year's number of 200 viability referrals and a 142% increase on 2019/20 figure of 95 viabilities. There continues to be requests for viabilities and assessments for families which are located out of county and sometimes out of the country.

The Regional Connected Carer protocol agreed by the local Family Justice Board members continues to be difficult to embed with pressure to complete assessments in an unrealistic timeframe.

6. Supported Board and Lodgings

This type of provision falls outside both children's and adult's regulatory frameworks, due mainly to the emphasis on "accommodation-based support" rather than "care." It is used as a stepping stone to independence, and only ever when it's in a child's best interests. For some children, it's the right choice such as those who do not wish to live with a foster family or in a residential home. For some unaccompanied asylum-seeking children this can be the right option, but not for all.

During this period 12 (11 for specific young people/transferred from foster carers) households were approved at panel to become SBL providers.

7. Staying Put

Staying Put is where young people over the age 18 remain in the care of their foster carers until the age of 21. This is not the same as a foster placement. The young person staying put, who must be a former relevant child, is no longer a looked after child. They are a young adult and a care leaver. They are entitled to support as a care leaver and will be allocated a personal advisor who is part of the Leaving Care Team. The foster carer is no longer acting in the capacity of foster carer for that young adult; they are their 'former foster carer'.

In the year 2021-2022, 20 young people who were looked after turned 18 in this period, 4 males and 16 females. 9 of these remained as 'staying put' or SBL with their former Foster Carers.

Post 18 Arrangement 21/22



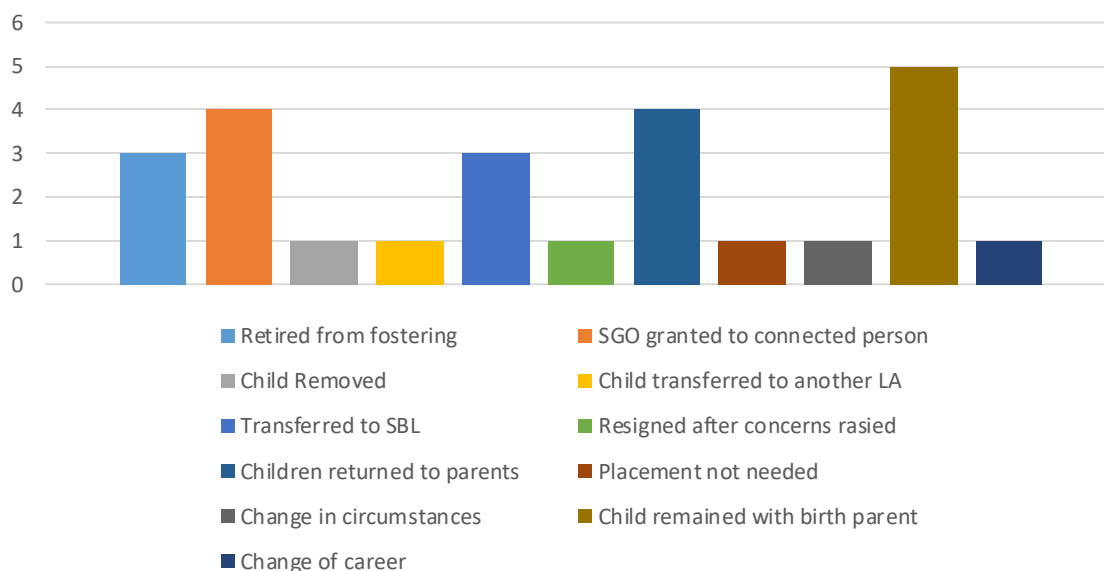
- Remained with current carers under Staying Put or SBL
- Independent arrangement with formalised support
- Transferred to adult services
- Living with wider family and not wishing for support
- Moved in with partner
- Missing

8. Resignations

Resignations from Fostering come from both In House Foster carer and Connected Person Foster carers for a variety of reasons.

Between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022, we had 25 foster carer households' resignations from 20 Connected Person Households, and 5 In House Foster Carer Households.

Reasons for Resignation 21-22



9. Foster Carer Annual Review

All approved fostering households are required to have an annual review of their suitability as carers within one year of their approval. Thereafter reviews should occur each 12 months or whenever the fostering service provider consider it necessary or appropriate to safeguard the welfare of any child who has been placed with that carer, but at intervals of not more than a year. 131 reviews took place between 1st April 2021 and the 31st March 2022. 57 of these reviews which took place outside of timescales, however for some this was only a few days. The reason for this has been due to carer forgetting the reviews, some carer ill health, 2 carers reviews delayed due to having cancer treatment not being well.

10. Matching

In this period, 9 children were matched with their carers. Out of these 3 children were matched with in house foster carers, and 6 children were matched with external foster carers which continues to demonstrate the commitment to the permanency of the children in local authority care which is in line with our Permanence policy and demonstrates the foster carers commitment to the children in their care.

11. Placement moves

During this period, there were 17 children who had experienced more than 2 placement moves. Children who experienced 2 placement moves may have been moved from an emergency placement to a short/long term placement, moved from a foster care placement to a family member or moved from a short-term placement to a long term or permanence option therefore this data is only covering those children who have experienced more than 2 moves.

The data from this period does not lead us to any solid conclusions around age and placement disruption and has shown that there is little evidence that gender plays a part on placement disruption. However, it is noted that babies under 1 year of age have experienced the most placement moves in this period.

12. Private Fostering

Private Fostering is an arrangement made for a child under the age of 16, or under 18 if a child has a disability, to be cared for by someone other than a close relative for 28 days or more.

A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for him has done so for fewer than 28 days and does not intend to do so for longer than that. Privately Fostered children are not deemed to be 'looked after' and are not necessarily a child in need.

By the 1st April 2021, there were 4 private fostering arrangements on-going from the previous year, and a further 2 new PF arrangements assessed between 1st April 2021 and the 31st of March 2022.

Out of the 2 Private Fostering arrangements assessed in 2021/2022

- 1 was closed as it was not deemed a PF arrangement due to no parental consent as both birth parents were deceased. The adult caring for the young person went onto apply for an SGO.
- 1 Private positive fostering assessment completed and presented to suitability panel.

There has been a reduction in requests for assessment of private fostering arrangements. There has been no request from educational placements which may be an indication of the impact of COVID on international students.

13. Special Guardianship Orders

The service undertakes Special Guardianship Assessments for children in our care and this is their identified permanence option or if directed to do so by the Court. In addition, where children are not Looked After and reside within Shropshire, the service will undertake Special Guardian Assessments upon request.

Post Order support is available for all Special Guardians, this year we have grown the support offer to include access to 'Kinship' organisation and have recruited to a permanent senior practitioner to support the existing social work post. Assessments for therapeutic work can be funded through the Adoption Support Fund for children who have been previously Looked After prior to the order being granted.

Between 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022 18 SGO's were granted and of these 14 were for children looked after.

14. Foster carer training 2021-22**Pre-approval Training**

All prospective foster carers making an application to foster are required to complete a preparation course entitled Skills to Foster as part of the assessment process.

Whilst face-to-face training was suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we continued to offer Skills to Foster training on a virtual platform – this was delivered to 7 delegates. All potential carers were assessed and approved at fostering panel, however two carers have since resigned from fostering.

The activities and exercises that are completed during the Skills to Foster programme, along with the home practice activities, account for 40% of carer's Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS). These must be completed by foster carers within their first year of fostering.

Skills to Care training has been delivered for all pre-approval connected carers. This training has been well received, with 48 delegates attending on either a face-to-face or virtual basis. We have experienced an increase in the number of connected people attending induction training courses since the pre-approval programme was first introduced. Delegate feedback is that the training helpful, supportive and a positive way of meeting other people who are going through the same process. This has encouraged connected carers to engage in further training following their approval at fostering panel.

Induction Training

Induction training, for both mainstream and connected carers, currently consists of 8 key courses, all to be completed within the first 12 months following panel approval. First Aid and 'Raising Awareness of Safeguarding and Protecting Children' are normally the first two areas of training we encourage new carers to complete.

To support Training, Support and Development Standards, and ensure that they are completed in a timely manner, the following induction courses have been matched to both sets of TSDS requirements:

- Family Time
- First Aid
- Raising Awareness of Safeguarding and Protecting Children
- Safer Caring
- Solihull Approach – Understanding your Child

The remaining areas of mandatory training are provided as online learning, via our account with The Training Hub – these are:

- Medications
- Online Safety
- Reporting and Recording

Core Training

There are 12 'core' training courses within our training and development strategy:

- Allegations
- Attachment
- Challenging Behaviours
- Children's Health
- CSE
- Domestic Abuse Briefing
- Education and SEN
- Exploitation
- Learning Disability Awareness
- Loss and Bereavement
- Moving Children on to Adoption
- Solihull Approach – Understanding Trauma

Education and SEN training has been on hold, pending the reorganisation of the Virtual School Team. However, four new courses have already been agreed for the 2022/2023 training and development programme – see ‘future plans’.

All other areas of core training have been well attended over the past year -via face-to-face and virtual training. Evaluation feedback from each of these core courses demonstrates that carers find them useful and informative:

Our enhanced training is available to all carers, and covers some more specialist areas of delivery:

- Cultural Awareness and Separated Children
- Life Story
- Resilience
- Self-Harm
- Staying Put
- Working with Transgender young People

Evaluations suggest that carers continue to find the enhanced training element of the offer very useful and supportive in their understanding of their roles.

Future Plans

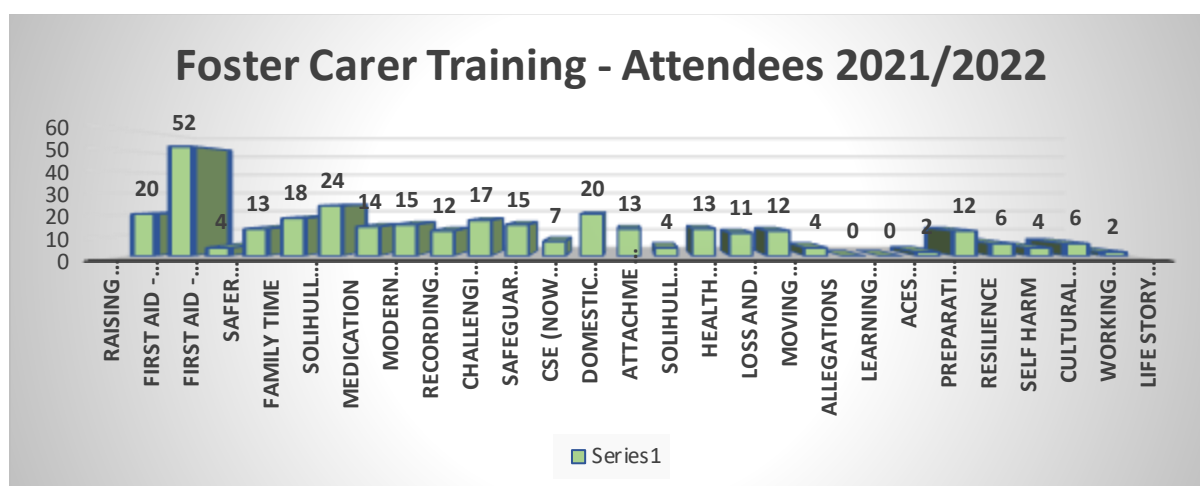
Although most of our training has returned to face-to-face delivery, we have recognised the importance and benefits of virtual training over the last couple of years. Therefore, in the future we will continue to include an element of virtual training, making engagement easier for our out-of-county carers, and those with travel difficulties or work commitments. We continue to recognise face-to-face training as the most effective platform for learning, so this is encouraged wherever possible.

New training has already been agreed for the 2022/2023 training and development programme – this is mainly in response to gaps in our plan, current needs which have been identified, and requests from our carers. New training includes:

- Dream, Believe, Achieve (aspirations beyond school)
- Emotion Coaching
- Making a Difference at PEPS
- Non-Violent Resistance (replacing Behaviour Management)
- The ABC of Special Educational Needs
- Therapeutic Play

Other plans for 2022/2023 include:

- A return to our ‘partnership’ work with other authorities.
- A review of our training evaluations – how we can better measure the impacts of our training.
- Collaborative work – investigate ways of sharing training with other areas of the Learning and Development Team, and with colleagues from the adult training sector.
- Attendance – investigate ways of improving attendance levels for connected carers (non-mandatory training).
- Data Reporting – review the ways in which our training data is captured and recorded.
- Review ‘Reporting and Recording’ training, with a view to replace it with something that is more personal to Shropshire.
- The purchase of iPads has been approved to support some carers who have not been able to engage in any virtual training, due to a lack of appropriate equipment.
- Annual Training Questionnaire for Carers – distribute and evaluate responses.
- Review all training for effectiveness and suitability on an on-going basis.



16. Participation

Throughout the lockdowns and restriction period young people continued to be supported 1:1, walking outdoors was the main activity although some young people chose home visits when possible. Peer Supporters met monthly to complete the training programme; then continued to meet to maintain contact and support each other. Groups gradually started to meet again from Aug 2021, we met for walks; 1:1 support continued.

Vouchers purchased from Jump-in as we went into lockdown were used with 2 small groups of young people during Sept-Oct 2021.

Peer supporters and the Band-build group joined together for a Christmas Dance Party. Peer Supporter used this as a trial run for a session they planned to deliver for younger children during Feb half-term; unfortunately, this had to be postponed as the Christmas event for Foster families was rescheduled for the same date.

Between Dec 21 – April 22 a small group of young people participated in the Hidden Waterways Project – this was an Intergenerational project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund focusing on creatively interpreting people's memories & stories and community history to encourage community engagement and increase investment and positive attitudes towards the canal restoration. Young people (11-17 years) were invited to combine archival information with cutting edge technology such as animation, film making, photography, traditional arts; and music in creative workshops. The group chose to do a Photography project; two professional photographers worked with the group; on Sunday afternoons we walked the old canal paths taking photographs of the changing landscape. Another application to Youth Music was submitted in conjunction with the Hive; this was successful, and young people are starting to put their names forward to join the next Podcast Project due to start in June this year and run until Summer 2023.

We are now in the process of recruiting for the next Peer Supporters.

17. Permanency

Permanency Forum has been up and running since April 2018. Permanency Forums have been established to support social workers in their permanence planning for children.

Impact of Covid on Permanency planning.

The analysis indicates the following impact where Covid restrictions on family and community-based supports and capacity in the system to progress plans:

- An increase in the number of children becoming looked after, including through police powers and emergency protection orders
- Capacity of social workers impacting on discharge of Care Orders in favour of SGO
- An increase in the number of children remaining at home under ICO for longer than the 26 weeks' timescale whilst final plans are made

Impact for children

Permanence planning is well embedded in practice in Shropshire and is effective in preventing delay. Planning for our children who are unable to live safely with their parents is progressed speedily and where there are delays, the reasons for this are known.

Permanency forum has enabled senior managers to have oversight of both permanence decisions and the progression of care plans.

The presence of the Senior IRO enables the link to be maintained with IRO's oversight of plans.

The Permanency Co-ordinator continues to meet with individual social workers and their managers where any drift or delay has been identified to assist in putting plans back on track. This may be through advice or 'hands on' support to family find for children who are not yet in their permanent placement, or to complete CPRs or Together or Apart assessments.

18. Mockingbird

Together4Children Regional Adoption Agency are piloting Mockingbird in all four partner agencies. Mockingbird is a new way of supporting foster carers and empowering them to support each other through the development of constellations with 8-10 families in each with one hub carer and one liaison worker supporting them all. Telford were the first to go live, we have three foster families linked into this constellation, so far feedback has been extremely positive with children and carers enjoying making new relationships and attending new social events. We appointed our liaison worker at the end of March 2022, and we are now in process of recruiting our hub carer to support a Shropshire constellation which will have three Telford families linked into it. This is an exciting development for Shropshire and one where we are expecting really good results in the support of more foster carers.

19. OFSTED

In February 2022, Shropshire council underwent its ILACS inspection. The overall judgement was 'Good'. The children looked after judgement, which focuses specifically on fostering was judged to be 'Good'. Inspectors found; that increasing numbers of children were benefitting from SGO's, viability and connected carer assessments were timely and SGO plans were tailored to enable children to stay in their wider family and that overall children lived with foster carers who are well trained and skilled to meet individual needs. Foster carers were given the opportunity to inspectors and all spoke highly of the support they had received from the service.

20. Conclusion

The service continues to retain a skilled and dedicated cohort of In-House Foster Carers, who like all, have had to deal with the pressures both practically and emotionally of COVID. We continue to have growing numbers of viabilities with a 100% increase and a growing number of connected persons assessments which prevent the service being able to concentrate on recruitment of mainstream carers. With the continuing high numbers of connected persons assessments this can also lead to a requirement of a high level of placement support from the fostering support worker, targeted youth worker and carer intervention specialist support. If a connected family are not able or willing to proceed to permanence through SGO then this support continues for a number of years. We continue to offer a good training package to our new and existing carers, and feedback on this is positive.

21. Our priorities in the coming year will be:

Team

- To retain settled teams and to embed a new growth area for a Kinship to Permanence Team. The aim of this team is to provide a clear focus on progression to SGO in a timely way with dedicated workers supporting families on this journey.
- To continue to embed the Mockingbird model of practice and to make this more available to even more carers.
- To maintain the physical safety and emotional welfare of the staff during and post COVID and to gradually move back to a balanced model of home working and office base.

In House Fostering

- To continue to increase the amount of Foster Carers to meet demand. This will be achieved with the introduction of an apprentice post to support marketing and recruitment activity.
- To review our use of social media-based technology to develop our marketing strategies.
- To encourage, where appropriate, families to seek permanence through SGO with the appropriate support.

Permanence

- To continue to make full use of the permanency tracker and permanency coordinator, and permanency forum to ensure all children's plans are tracked, progressed and monitored.

Foster Carers

- To ensure that all foster carers, including connected persons foster carers are completing TSD's within the allotted time frame
- To continue to encourage and enable foster carers to participate in and see the importance of attending training to develop their knowledge and skills to support the children in their care.
- To ensure that carers are supported through the COVID period and the period of readjustment that will follow. This will entail a move back to physical events, most notably training events and social events for children and young people and their carers.
- To encourage foster carers to be ambitious for their fostering career and recognise the difference they can make to the lives of all children from 0- 18 years.





<u>Committee and Date</u>
Cabinet
9 November 2022

<u>Item</u>
<u>Public</u>

CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2021-MARCH 2022

Responsible Officer

Tanya Miles
e-mail: Tanya.miles@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 255811

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. During 2021-2022 the Corporate Parenting Board and lead member for Children have supported the Children and Safeguarding Service and wider Council in achieving a 'GOOD' outcome from the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Services (ILACS) in February 2022.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 In our Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in February 2022 we were assessed as delivering a GOOD service for our looked after children and care leavers. Ofsted praised the dedication and commitment of the staff and the Council for the investment in our children and young people looked after.
- 2.2 Ofsted Inspectors endorsed our own self-assessment, demonstrating that we know ourselves well. We know what we need to do to improve and aim to become OUTSTANDING.
- 2.3 Areas of good and outstanding practice for children looked after and care leavers identified included that:
 - Children are listened to and included in plans about them. They are encouraged to make lifelong links.
 - Our improved tracking and initiatives to ensure children can live in a permanent safe, and stable home throughout their childhood and beyond.

- Increase in the number of children who have ceased to need to be looked after either through return to their birth parent, or to be with a connected family member or carer through Special Guardianship, or to be adopted by another family;
- The majority of children who needed to remain looked after in 2021-2022 were able to live in stable and safe homes with only a small number experiencing 3 or more moves;
- The Virtual School was instrumental in preventing exclusions of looked after children and improved the quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs). There remains a higher proportion of our children looked after with Education, Health & Social Care Plans (EHCPs) than in the general child population of Shropshire.
- Most children have their annual health checks in timescale and our care leavers are all offered a 'Health Passport'.
- The Independent Reviewing Service has good oversight of children looked after.
- Young people who are care leavers get on well with their Personal Advisors and are helping to shape service developments.

2.4 Key issues and challenges included that:

- There had been a continued growth in our children looked after and care leavers. population between April 2021 and end of March 2022.
- In terms of numbers and rates of children looked after, Shropshire is above the national average and statistical comparators as at end March 2022. Forecasting ahead - there had continued to be an increase in the number of children looked after since end March 2022 although this is at a slower rate and includes an increased number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people;
- The impact of Covid continued to be felt through 2021-22 in terms of stress on families leading to injuries to children, neglect and family breakdown, alongside ongoing Court delays in making decisions about children's plans for their future.
- Our approach with families where there are safeguarding concerns needs to be more restorative to reduce risks and increase safety factors to enable more children to remain at home without state intervention.
- The introduction of the Government National Transfer Scheme to enable all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to be looked after arriving at ports by boat has had an ongoing impact on our numbers.
- The low return rate of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs), (a way of asking carers to feedback about the emotional well being of children they care for) challenges in collating data from the mental health services, and lack of suitable local services for children and young people experiencing emotional and mental health difficulties remains a challenge, impacting on our ability to fully understand and address the emotional wellbeing of all our children looked after.

- 2.5 The Local Authority is a learning organisation and seeks continuous improvement for services and outcomes for Looked After Children. The increase in the number of children needing to be looked after poses significant challenges in terms of improving outcomes for children looked, most importantly, in ensuring children experience stability and are supported to achieve timely permanence.
- 2.6 The development of Stepping Stones, the revised Public Law Outline pathway and the revised Special Guardianship Support offer have been reported to the Corporate Parenting Board as integral to supporting more families to care for their children without the need for undue state intervention through becoming or remaining looked after.
- 2.7 We are working closely with health partners to address the pathways for the emotional and mental health needs of children and young people to be identified early and timely interventions put in place. Our Early Help offer is also being revised to ensure families can receive the right support at the right time, preventing higher levels of need.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Members to approve the Annual Corporate Parenting Report for 2021-2022.

REPORT

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

(NB This will include the following: Impact on Children and Vulnerable Adults, Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community and other Consultation)

4.1. Risks

- 4.2. The growth in number of children needing to be looked after has an impact on the availability of suitable homes and carers to look after the children and meet their needs, especially locally. This is exacerbated by a national shortage of foster carers and suitable provision.

- 4.3. Children may have to be placed further away from their home, impacting adversely on their family time with birth parents, extended family and friends.
- 4.4. The challenge of sourcing the right support for children looked after impacts adversely on their mental and emotional health through to adulthood, and this can make it harder to ensure they can live locally and with carers who can meet their needs.
- 4.5. The lack of a base for care leavers to meet impacts on their ability to form friendships and alliances with other care leavers and to participate face to face in activities and information events that support their preparation for adulthood.
- 4.6. **Opportunities**
- 4.7. The growth in 'Stepping Stones' will provide for more children to remain within their birth families, and be returned more quickly and safely to the care of their birth families should they need to be looked after.
- 4.8. The restorative approach using the Public Law Outline should reduce the need for legal intervention.
- 4.9. The new Kinship Team should enable more connected carers to look after children in their own family with the right support, whilst reducing the need for unnecessary statutory intervention.
- 4.10. The development of the 'crisis mental health pathway' and earlier access to mental health resources jointly with health partners provides an opportunity to support children 'on the edge of care' and who have become looked after where their past trauma impacts on their mental and emotional health.
- 4.11. The new residential home for 16/17 year olds will enable at least 4 young people who need additional support, at any one time, to live locally and be guided and prepared for adult life.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The cost of providing care and support for the increased number of children looked after will increase the financial spend of the Council as this is a statutory duty.
- 5.2. Whilst the emotional and mental health needs of children looked after are being met, this is at a cost to the Council until the pathways to access services via health resources can be resolved with health partners.

- 5.3. The statutory duties of the local authority towards children and young people and care leavers need to be carried out and this will have implications for staffing numbers in terms of qualified social workers, family time workers, fostering and adoption services, and independent reviewing officers.
- 5.4. The Stepping Stones initiative is aimed at spending resources to save in the longer term. This has been the case in 2021/22.
- 5.5. The government provides recompense to the local authority that covers the care costs for asylum-seeking children. However, the recompense for care leavers who are former asylum-seeking children does not always cover their support costs as many have delays in the Home Office granting 'leave to remain' status. This impacts on their right to work or claim any benefits.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. There are no direct implications arising from this report in respect of climate change.
- 6.2. However, there are opportunities to educate our children looked after and care leavers and those caring for them on the impact of climate change and how they can make changes in their own lives and access any support available to make such changes in terms of their accommodation or lifestyle.
- 6.3. The Council could consider what resources and advice may be made available to carers of children looked after and their carers, and care leavers in this respect.
- 6.4. There is an impact on fuel costs for families and social care staff visiting children placed at a distance.

7. Background

- 7.1. All local authorities have statutory duties to children looked after and care leavers, and towards children who have previously been looked after and are now adopted or subject to Special Guardianship.
- 7.2. These duties are laid out in legislation-mainly the Children Act 1989; Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010; Children and Young Persons' Act 2008; Children and Families Act 2014
- 7.3. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 sets out the Corporate Parenting Duties of all local authorities to the children and young

people in their care, including the seven Corporate Parenting principles.

- 7.4. Local authorities also have a statutory duty to promote the education of children looked after.
- 7.5. Partner agencies and professionals also have a duty to work in partnership with the local authority to promote the health and wellbeing of children looked after and meet their corporate parenting duty. This includes health, housing, police, probation, and youth offending services.

8. Additional Information

- 8.1. The Annual Corporate Parenting Report 2021-22 (inc. Appendices 1,2 and 3) should be read in conjunction with the Annual Reports in respect of Fostering, Adoption and the Independent Reviewing Service.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. The local authority services to our children and young people looked after and our care leavers are demonstrated to have been GOOD in 2021-22.
- 9.2. There are increased financial and resource implications, as set out in section 5, arising from the number of children looked after and who will be eligible to be supported as care leavers where the local authority has a statutory duty.
- 9.3. Steps are in place to enable more children to remain or return to the care of their family and local community.
- 9.4. There is an active partnership and plans in place to work with health partners for the pathways for children looked after to be able to access the right mental health support at the right time.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Cllr Kirstie Hurst-Knight

Local Member

All Members

Appendices

Appendix A – Shropshire Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2021-2022
(with its appendices 1, 2 and 3)

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LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

SHROPSHIRE CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

Charter for Children in Care & Care Leavers

The council should use these priorities when they are making decisions that will affect young people's lives. This document aims to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what the council should do to be good corporate parents. This charter will try to ensure that all children in care and care leavers have equal access to services, support and life opportunities.

My Health

Offer me advice and opportunities to help me be healthy. Give me easy and open access to health services, including sexual and mental health.

Education, Work and Training

Provide me with a suitable education, a budget if I choose to go onto university, and help seeking employment, training or education. Shropshire Council should continue to provide young people in care the chance to do work experience with the council as if it was the 'family firm'.

My Social Life

Make my life fun! Provide opportunities and activities for me to take part in.

Support

Support me in my endeavours. Offer me practical and financial support. Give me access safe people to turn to when I am upset or angry, and the chance to talk things through with someone who is not part of the council.

Inform Me

Explain to me what my rights are. Tell me what I'm entitled to and what I can ask for at different points of my life. Give me clear information about myself and my time in care when I want it.

Moving On

Plan for the future with me clearly, and be ready to put support in place if things go wrong. Prepare me before it's time to move on, with things like life skills, cooking, driving and money management.

Generally

Respect me and treat me fairly, and as an individual. Be honest and don't make promises you can't keep. Do your best to promote children in care and make sure they don't get a bad name. Acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of children in care.

My Voice

Listen to my views and opinions. Put my needs and feelings at the heart of all decisions about me. Ask me what I think and I want to do. If you don't agree then tell me why.

My Home

Give me carers who are people-friendly and a home that is appropriate to my individual needs. Offer me a home where I can be safe and happy, not just a bed. Don't forget about me if I live far from home. Help me to move onto independent living when I am ready.

www.safeguardingshropshireschildren.org.uk/lac

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Introduction

Shropshire's Corporate Parenting Steering Board brings together a number of elected members, senior agency representatives and practitioners, and representatives of our children looked after and care leavers, to ensure children and young people in our care, and those who are care leavers, are supported to have high aspirations and achieve their full potential. The Board has a key role in ensuring that the Local Authority and its partners are discharging their responsibilities towards children and young people who are looked after and who are leaving our care to become adults.

Annual Report

The Annual Report 2021/2022 provides an overview of the work undertaken by members of the Board during the year 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022. The report ensures that full Council has an appreciation of the achievements of our children and young people looked after and care leavers, and also some of the challenges they face. It highlights the work of the Council and partners and of the oversight of the Board in support of our children and young people looked after and care leavers, charting progress made alongside barriers and plans for the year ahead.

We are all Corporate Parents, and this report ensures the needs and voice of our children and young people is heard and taken into account in the plans we make and resources we use as a Council and with our partners.

We continue to work hard to hear and respond to the voice of our Looked After Children and Care Leavers and continue to apply the test of *"would this be good enough for my child....."* when considering our Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

6th September 2022



Corporate Parenting Principles

- Act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
- Encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings, and take them into account
- Make sure they have access to services
- Make sure children and young people are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work
- Promote high aspirations and try to secure the best outcomes for them
- Prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs that councils do and when a child, for whatever reason, can't safely stay at home, it is up to us as the local authority to step in and give them the care, support and stability that they deserve. This isn't just up to the lead member or director of children's services – we need everyone looking out for our most vulnerable children and young people, and every councillor has a role to play in embedding the corporate parenting principles and doing all they can to support children in care to live meaningful and fulfilling lives.'

*Councillor Judith Blake, Chair, LGA Children and Young People Board
LGA Corporate Parenting Resource Pack (November 2019)*

SHROPSHIRE

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Foreword



Councillor Kirstie Hurst-Knight
Cabinet Member for Children's Services & Education

As Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education it is my pleasure to introduce this Annual Report of Shropshire's Corporate Parenting Steering Board (2021/22), which I now chair.

During 2021-2022 the Corporate Parenting Steering Board has supported the Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Service and wider Council in achieving a 'GOOD' outcome from the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Services (ILACS) in February 2022.

Our Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum and the feedback we receive from our children and young people through various means, play an integral part in our service development. This annual report charts the work they have been doing alongside the achievements of all of our children and young people for whom we are their Corporate Parents. I would like to express my sincere thanks to them for their help and commitment.

This Annual Report provides a summary of the business of The Corporate Parenting Steering Board sub-groups throughout 2021-2022 and includes an overview of the themes presented, extracts from the reports and accompanying actions which form an over-arching action plan. We know we still have a lot to do to improve the lives of our children and young people looked after and our care leavers, but with the support of the Board and as committed Corporate Parents, we are passionate about taking our journey forward together.

KHurst-Knight

SHROPSHIRE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

3

Headlines for 2021-2022

We are GOOD Corporate Parents 😊.

In our Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in February 2022 we were assessed as delivering a GOOD service for our looked after children and care leavers. Ofsted praised the dedication and commitment of the staff and the Council for the investment in our children and young people looked after.

Ofsted Inspectors endorsed our own self-assessment, demonstrating that we know ourselves well.

We know what we need to do to improve and aim to become OUTSTANDING.

Appendix 1 Full Ofsted Report

Areas of good and outstanding practice for children looked after and care leavers

- Children are listened to and included in plans about them. They are encouraged to make lifelong links.
- Our improved tracking and initiatives to ensure children can live in a permanent safe, and stable home throughout their childhood and beyond.
- Increase in the number of children who have ceased to need to be looked after either through return to their birth parent, or to be with a connected family member or carer through Special Guardianship, or to be adopted by another family;
- The majority of children who needed to remain looked after in 2021-2022 were able to live in stable and safe homes with only a small number experiencing 3 or more moves;
- The Virtual School was instrumental in preventing exclusions of looked after children and improved the quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs). There remains a higher proportion of our children looked after with Education, Health & Social Care Plans (EHCPs) than in the general child population.
- Most children have their annual health checks in timescale and our care leavers are all offered a 'Health Passport'.
- The Independent Reviewing Service has good oversight of children looked after.
- Young people who are care leavers get on well with their Personal Advisors and are helping to shape service developments.

Key Issues and challenges

SHROPSHIRE

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

- There had been a continued growth in our children looked after and care leavers. population between April 2021 and end of March 2022.
- In terms of numbers and rates of children looked after, Shropshire is above the national average and statistical comparators as at end March 2022. Forecasting ahead - there had continued to be an increase in the number of children looked after since end March 2022 although this is at a slower rate and includes an increased number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people;
- The impact of Covid continued to be felt through 2021-22 in terms of stress on families leading to injuries to children, neglect and family breakdown, alongside ongoing Court delays in making decisions about children's plans for their future.
- Our approach with families where there are safeguarding concerns needs to be more restorative to reduce risks and increase safety factors to enable more children to remain at home without state intervention.
- The introduction of the Government National Transfer Scheme to enable all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to be looked after arriving at ports by boat has had an ongoing impact on our numbers.
- The low return rate of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs), challenges in collating data from the mental health services, and lack of suitable local services for children and young people experiencing emotional and mental health difficulties remains a challenge, impacting on our ability to fully understand and address the emotional wellbeing of all our children looked after.

Plans going forward

The increase in the number of children needing to be looked after poses significant challenges in terms of improving outcomes for children looked, most importantly, in ensuring children experience stability and are supported to achieve timely permanence.

The development of Stepping Stones, the revised Public Law Outline pathway and the revised Special Guardianship Support offer have been reported to the Corporate Parenting Board as integral to supporting more families to care for their children without the need for undue state intervention through becoming or remaining looked after.

We are working closely with health partners to address the pathways for the emotional and mental health needs of children and young people to be identified early and timely interventions put in place.

Our Early Help offer is being revised to ensure families can receive the right support at the right time.



Participation and the Voice of our Children and Young People

Feedback through Mind of My Own

Mind of My Own is a web-based feedback App with a variety of different ways for children and young people to share their views and express themselves to communicate with professionals, making sure they are heard. The Apps have facilities to support children and young people to communicate in over 100 languages and can enable children and young people to communicate in different ways if they have a learning difficulty or learning or physical disability.

152 statements were received from children through Mind of My own in 2021-22.

Although it is encouraging that young people are beginning to utilise the app, significant progress will need to take place in order for young people's views to be regularly collated and impactful. In total the app was utilised on 128 occasions in 12 months. This is on average 11 statements a month, when on average 40-50 meetings are arranged by the IRU each week.

The majority of statements received from young people are positive, with 94% children and young people being positive about where they lived. The majority of those that responded negatively were 17 years +. The majority of young people, 88%, were also positive about their local area. Of 131 children and young people responding, 69% of them felt positive and only a very small proportion reported feeling unsafe or scared. Children and young people looked after who reported to feel scared stated this related to a risk they felt within their local area or bullying in school, and not related to their home.

Continued activity will be taking place to encourage the use of Mind of My Own in 2022-2023, including all Looked after children over the age of 8 years being written to in order to inform them how to use Mind of My Own.

Feedback from Coram Voice Advocacy and Independent Visiting Service

Shropshire Children's Social Care's advocacy service had been provided by Coram Voice since 2012. In the period 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022 63 children and young people have received community advocacy support reporting 102 issues and 7 have had Independent Visitor matches. This represents just over 10% of our CLA young people who have received an

SHROPSHIRE

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

advocacy service. 46% of those utilising the advocacy service are between 12 years and 16 years and 37% are 17+years.

Advocacy

In 2021 to 2022 54% of referrals for advocacy came from social services, 22% from other professionals, 14% were self-referrals and 10% were from relatives/friends. It is the aim that in 2022-2023 all Children who are Looked After are informed of their right to an advocate on a regular basis.

In terms of users of the service:

- 46% of children and young people accessing advocacy support were aged between 12-16 years old.
- 49% of children and young people access the advocacy service identified as Female.
- 86% of children and young people accessing the advocacy service identified as White British.
- 75% of children and young people lived in the Shropshire area.
- 33% of children and young people were on a Care Order.
- 22% were on Child Protection Plans.
- 54% of referrals were received from Children's Social Care from Social Workers, Independent Reviewing Officers or Child Protection Chairs.

Although most children and young people looked after and care leavers report a positive experience, for those who used the advocacy service, there have been more children and young people reporting concerns around their Social Worker or Personal Advisor, which includes not feeling listened too, actions not being completed, being unable to make contact with their worker or disagreeing with decisions being made. More children and young people have also been asking around the formal complaints process or support in making a complaint.

Across 2021-22 children and young people have asked for support from an advocate for 102 issues.

"They put me on it (Deprivation of Liberty Order-DOLS) as a way to control me. They would bring up DOLS in conversations long before it was put in place. I think they were threatening me with it."

"I want to have a PA again and help around my council tax"

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"I kept asking for support for my mental health but wasn't getting any"

"I would like my Social Worker to help me get my prescription, chase my counselling appointment and to see someone about my eyes and ears"

As we reach end of the 2021-22 financial year we are delighted to see an increase in the number of children and young people access advocacy support and a high number of advocacy issue being resolved to the satisfaction of the child.

Independent Visiting

It has been a disappointing and challenging year for the IV service following the Covid pandemic. The lockdowns and restrictions brought into place during the previous year restricted face to face contact and group events. This made it difficult to form new matches. At the beginning of 2021-22 restrictions began to lift, this meant existing matches were able to get back to going out for visits. However, we have seen a decline in referrals in 2021-22, with none being received. This concern has been raised in review meetings with the interim Principal IRO at Shropshire. The Principal IRO has been working alongside team managers to promote the IV service with Social Workers and IROs to see how we can increase referrals. We have also been sending out information on the IV service to the Social Work teams to remind them of the service. Of the matches that have continue during the year, at the beginning of 2021-22 there were 7 IV matches, over the course of the year this has reduced to 4 matches follow 3 matches coming to an end. These 4 matches have continued are going well and will carry on into 2022-23.

Support through the Children in Care Council

Throughout the lockdowns and restriction period young people continued to be supported 1:1, walking outdoors was the main activity although some young people chose home visits when possible.

Peer Supporters met monthly to complete the training programme; then continued to meet to maintain contact and support each other. Groups gradually started to meet again from Aug 2021, we met for walks; 1:1 support continued.

Vouchers purchased from Jump-in as we went into lockdown were used with 2 small groups of young people during Sept-Oct 2021.

Peer supporters and the Band-build group joined together for a Christmas Dance Party. Peer Supporter used this as a trial run for a session they planned to deliver for younger children during Feb half-term; unfortunately, this had to be postponed as the Christmas event for Foster families was rescheduled for the same date.



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Between Dec 21 – April 22 a small group of young people participated in the Hidden Waterways Project – this was an Intergenerational project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund focusing on creatively interpreting people's memories & stories and community history to encourage community engagement and increase investment and positive attitudes towards the canal restoration. Young people (11-17 years) were invited to combine archival information with cutting edge technology such as animation, film making, photography, traditional arts; and music in creative workshops. The group chose to do a Photography project; two professional photographers worked with the group; on Sunday afternoons we walked the old canal paths taking photographs of the changing landscape. Another application to Youth Music was submitted in conjunction with the Hive; this was successful, and young people are starting to put their names forward to join the next Podcast Project due to start in June this year and run until Summer 2023. We are now in the process of recruiting for the next Peer Supporters.

Care Leavers' Forum and feedback from 16-25 year old young people looked after and care leavers

The Care Leavers' Facebook page continued to be hosted by the Care Leavers' Ambassador, promoting the Care Leavers' Local Offer and events-virtual and face to face for care leavers. This was a challenge through COVID and beyond due to the lack of a base, but we have persisted.

16 and 17 year old looked after young people and care leavers post 18 met with Jill Boak, the Government Youth Homeless Advisor on 16th June 2021*. She was so impressed with their willingness to meet and share their views.

The National Care Leavers' Week in October 2021 was an opportunity for care leavers to share their challenges and successes and to promote opportunities for care leavers across the Council.

During this week 16 and 17 year old looked after young people and care leavers, including some of our unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, came together to meet with members of the Corporate Parenting Board, including the Lead Member and Deputy Lead Member, and the Director of Children's Services and senior managers.

Feedback to senior officers and members and to the Youth Homeless Advisor were very similar:

- Generally young people feel that Shropshire Council tries to look after them very well and there is a good 'Local Offer'.
- However, too many young people are not able to find a post-18 home close to family links or access to work opportunities especially as there is a shortage of 1-bed accommodation.

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- Some young people found they could only be offered a home at a distance from Shropshire due to their level of need.
- Transport across Shropshire is a challenge, so if you do live a distance from family and friends this can be very isolating.
- Access to the right emotional or mental health services was variable, depending on where you live and the transition pathway from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health Services was difficult.
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people who felt settled in an area such as Wolverhampton or Birmingham found there were barriers to them being able to access priority housing in those areas post-18.

A small group of care experienced young people are providing input into the service development of our 16+ care home. Their feedback has been invaluable in holding up a mirror to our services to challenge our thinking about how it feels to be 'looked after'.

Look out for feedback next year on 'How is that even a thing?' in respect of the different expectations and rules that children and young people have to negotiate in state care that do not exist for children and young people living within their own family.

The Care Leavers' Covenant and renewal of the Corporate Parenting Pledge

In February 2022 the Full Council accepted the proposals for the Council's Care Leavers' Covenant Offer and Councillors renewed their Corporate Parenting pledge to uphold the Children Looked After and Care Leavers' Charter.

The Corporate Parenting Board

Aims and Principles: The responsibility of being a Corporate Parent is the shared responsibility of the Council as a whole. The aim of the Corporate Parenting Board is to ensure that the Council, supported by our partners, fulfils its responsibilities in terms of improving outcomes for children and young people looked after and care leavers.

The term 'Corporate Parenting' is used to describe the responsibility of the local authority in fulfilling its role of caring for children in care and young people leaving care. The role of Corporate Parent is a legal responsibility given to local authorities under the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004.

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The Children and Safeguarding Service is accountable for achieving these best outcomes for children in care, on behalf of the Council but Corporate Parenting responsibilities extend to:



- ✓ All Shropshire Council departments and partner agencies;
- ✓ Community NHS Trust, Clinical Commissioning Group, Foundation and or Hospital Trusts;
- ✓ West Mercia Police;
- ✓ National Probation Trust;
- ✓ Schools, Academies and Further Education colleges

'Corporate Parenting'

In reality the range of potential partners is as wide as the number of agencies and organisations within the area.

Role: The role of the Corporate Parenting Board is to ensure our children and young people looked after and care leavers are supported to have high aspirations, achieve their potential and have good outcomes. Integral to this is the responsibility of members to advocate for our children and young people and assist in developing and delivering services, irrespective of the agency they represent. To do this, the Corporate Parenting Board has identified key areas to focus upon for improving outcomes for children and young people looked after and care leavers. Our priorities include improving engagement and participation in plans about them, with children looked after and care leavers, promoting the importance of health and wellbeing, improving educational attainment, and identifying greater opportunities from which to support our care leavers into work and adult life.

Accountability: The Corporate Parenting Board is accountable to Full Council. As a standing item, the Board will submit this Annual Report to the Full Council.

See appendix 2 for details of The Corporate Parenting Board and sub-groups

Corporate Parenting Board priorities identified for 2021-22:

The following priorities were identified in the last Corporate Parenting Board Report 2021/22:

- Sign up to the Care Leavers' Covenant

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- Progress Stepping Stones to reduce the need for children to be looked after or residential care if this is not required
- Work with health and education partners to improve access to the right support at the right time
- Develop the pathway for transitions to adulthood with partner agencies and services
- Increase opportunities across the Council and with partners for care leavers to be in education, employment and training post-16
- Increase opportunities for children looked after and care leavers to contribute to service and policy development

What we achieved:

- Full Council approved the proposals for Shropshire's Care Leavers' Covenant Offer in February 2022 and all Councillors were asked to renew their Corporate Parenting Pledge.
- The Stepping Stones project was developed and progress reported to the Corporate Parenting Board showing the initial impact of diverting children from needing to be looked after and supporting children to 'step down' from residential care to live with a family again. Further investment has been agreed for 2022/23 and reports on progress and impact will be made to the Corporate Parenting Board.
- Ofsted feedback in February 2022 confirmed that the emotional and mental wellbeing of children looked after were being met, but with considerable investment by Children's Services that could not be sustained. A joint initiative has been started led by health partners to improve the pathways for children and young people looked after and on 'the edge of care' to access the right mental health support at the right time.

Reporting

Throughout the year the Corporate Parenting Board received the following reports:

- Fostering Annual Report 2021/22
- Annual Adoption Report from Together4Children 2021/22
- Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report 2021/22
- Health of Children Looked After Annual Report Q1-4 2021/22
- Virtual Head Teacher's Annual Report (Sept 20-Aug 21)
- Children in Care Council quarterly updates
- The Coram Voice Annual Report (advocacy and independent visiting) 2021/22

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In addition, presentations were received regarding the following:

- Children Looked After and Care Leavers core data
- Summary of Ofsted findings
- National Care Leavers' Week- Celebration of achievements and promotion of opportunities for Shropshire's care leavers
- Update on Stepping Stones project
- Update on Care Proceedings and the use of the Public Law Outline

The Corporate Parenting Board also had sight of the following reports:

- A report was presented to Cabinet to provide an update on the National Transfer Scheme for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (September 2021)
- A report was presented to Full Council to approve Shropshire's Care Leavers' Covenant Offer (February 2022).
- A report was also received by the Shropshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Functions of the Corporate Parenting Board (November 2021).

Core Performance Data April 2021-March 2022

Headlines

- The number of children looked after has risen in Shropshire since the onset of the Covid pandemic and we are now above the national and statistical neighbour average:
 - 31 March 2020 there were 399 children looked after
 - 31 March 2021 there were 504 children looked after
 - 31 March 2022 there were 609 children looked after
- The number starting to be looked after has increased faster than the number ceasing to be looked after, even though the number ceasing has risen faster than in previous years before 2020:
 - 2020-21-total starting 213; total ceasing 94
 - 2021-22- total starting 241; total ceasing 130
- The 3 main reasons for the rise in the number of children looked after are:



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- The rise in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking (UASC) young people via the National Transfer Scheme. At the outset of 2020 Shropshire had 8 UASCs and by the end of March 2022 there were 33.
 - The rise in the number of children needing to be looked after due to significant harm. This rose through 2020/21 during Covid. 212 children were subject to care proceedings at the end of March 2021 but through 2021/22 this has started to see a decrease again to 178 by March 2022.
 - The rise in the number of children living with connected foster carers. Since 2020 the number of children looked after with a connected carer has risen from 91 households (119 children) in March 2020 to 137 households (193 children) in March 2022.
- The stability of our children looked after remains in line with national average and statistical neighbours, although, as in previous years, there are a small number of children who have experienced too many moves (3+).
 - We remain in line with national average and statistical neighbours in respect of the majority of our children having their annual health assessment in timescale (92%).
 - Our Personal Advisors continued to keep in touch with 97% of our care leavers, and supported them to be in suitable accommodation. The number in Education, Employment and Training (EET) dropped slightly from 65% 2020 to 55% in 2021, although, as this is data taken as a snapshot on a particular date, numbers can fluctuate. We remain in line within the national average and statistical neighbours.

See Appendix 3 for data charts

Progress in 2022

- With the input of Stepping Stones and pro-active social work, alongside partner agencies resuming 'business as usual', we have started to be able to support an increased number of children to return safely home to a parent.
- We have started to 'turn the curve' with children living with their connected carers as we enter 2022 with a higher number of connected carers being supported to be Special Guardians.

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Summary of Annual Reports

Independent Reviewing Service



The Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Service was presented to The Corporate Parenting Board in September 2022 and provided contextual information, emerging trends and themes. It highlighted good practice and areas for improvement.

The service maintains a level of appropriately qualified, skilled and experienced permanent staff to deliver a high-quality service. IROs and social workers have been innovative in ensuring that CLA reviews take place in a timely way during COVID-19 and more CLA reviews have taken place as a series of meetings rather than a single meeting.

Children and their parents and carers continue to be encouraged to participate and share their views with their IRO to ensure their care plans reflect their wishes and feelings, even if this is not the agreed way forward for the child.

As part of the Quality, Performance and Assurance service the IRU provide robust Quality Assurance, reporting any individual issues through the Dispute Resolution Process (DRP) and any thematic issues through the IRU line management. IROs and Child Protection Chairs meet on a weekly basis with the Principal IRO for Group DRP Supervision. All formal (red), informal (amber) and unresolved DRPs are discussed, to ensure that scrutiny is being carried out and close the loop. A quarterly DRP report is completed to ensure that the loop is closed on this quality assurance and any thematic issues from DRPs are identified.

Core data for Children Looked After Reviews

- All children had an allocated IRO for their 1st Review.
- A total of 1393 Reviews were held for children looked after in 2021/22 compared to 1251 in 2020/21.

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- Children contributed to their Review in person (face to face or virtual), feedback using Mind of My Own or paper consultation feedback forms, or through an independent advocate provided by Coram Voice.
- The majority of Reviews were held in timescale.
- Children had their proposed permanence plans in place by their 2nd Review.
- Escalations were made to progress care plans for children when IROs noted drift or delay or a gap in services.

Developments in 2021-22

The service has now gradually moved towards face to face Child Looked After reviews, in line with current removal of COVID restrictions and the location of the meeting is reviewed on a child by child basis. Supervision for IROs will begin to be face to face in Q1 of 2022 to 2023 and team meetings will take place face to face.

IROs have promoted the use of Mind of My Own, an online resource for children to express their views. In 2021/22 152 Mind of My Own statements were received by children and young people contributing to their voice about their care.

Fostering Service

The Annual Fostering Service Report (2021/22) was presented to the Corporate Parenting Board at the meeting in June 2022.

The purpose of the service is to provide a comprehensive range of safe and stable foster placements with approved foster carers to meet the needs of children who are looked after by the local authority.

To achieve this, the service aims to recruit, assess, train, support and supervise foster carers who have the appropriate skills or experience to provide quality placements.

The pool of Shropshire foster carers continues to include placements for a wide range of children and young people, from pre-adoption babies, through to the more challenging teenagers, and respite carers and placements specifically for children with disabilities called Family Based Shared Care.

In addition to assessing and supporting in house mainstream foster carers, the service also assess Family and Friends connected person's foster carers. To do this, the work is timetabled and completed within Public Law Outline timescales and court directions.

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The service also assesses potential Special Guardians and produces Special Guardianship reports for Looked after Children and Non-Looked after Children, as well as managing private fostering referrals and assessments.

Key messages:

When Shropshire was inspected by Ofsted in February 2022 the Fostering Service was judged as Good.

- 7 mainstream Foster Carer households were presented at Fostering Panel during this time compared to 39 Connected Person Foster Carer households.
 - There were **182** Fostering Households on the 31st March 2022 (including in house foster carers and Connected Person foster carers). This is divided into 70 mainstream fostering households and 112 connected person households. This overall number did not include 26 connected persons foster carer households which are under Reg 24 temporary approval.
- The number of new connected carer viability requests for this period is 230 which is a 15% increase on last year's number of 200 viability referrals and a 142% increase on 2019/20 figure of 95 viabilities.
 - During this period 12 (11 for specific young people/transferred from foster carers) households were approved at panel to become Supported Board & Lodgings (SBL) providers.
- In the year 2021-2022, 20 young people who were looked after turned 18 in this period, 4 males and 16 females. 9 of these remained as 'staying put' or SBL with their former Foster Carers.
- In this period, 9 children were matched with their carers. Out of these 3 children were matched with in house foster carers, and 6 children were matched with external foster carers.
- During this period, there were 17 children who had experienced more than 2 placement moves, although some of these moves were for positive reasons such as a move to an adoptive family.
- By the 1st April 2021, there were 4 private fostering arrangements on-going from the previous year, and a further 2 new private fostering arrangements assessed between 1st April 2021 and the 31st of March 2022.



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- Between 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022 18 Special Guardianship Orders were granted and of these 14 were for children looked after.

Developments in 2021/22

Recruitment- There have been ongoing developments to the fostering recruitment process over the last 12 months. The digital approach to information events has been maintained and enhanced as this proved successful through COVID restrictions.

We have enhanced new digital mediums, new access-points to engage with the prospective carers and increased child specific recruitment and step-down campaigns for children needing to move out of residential care.

Mockingbird-Together4Children Regional Adoption Agency are piloting Mockingbird in all four partner agencies. Mockingbird is a new way of supporting foster carers and empowering them to support each other through the development of constellations with 8-10 families in each with one hub carer and one liaison worker supporting them all.

Special Guardianship- Post Order support is available for all Special Guardians, this year we have grown the support offer to include access to 'Kinship' organisation and have recruited to a permanent senior practitioner to support the existing social work post.

Shropshire Foster Carers Association (SFCA)- The SFCA was not able to meet face to face during COVID restrictions but has started to again this last year. They continue to meet regularly with the service management team to contribute to developments and advocate for the carers. The SFCA representatives will also be involved in new projects that are emerging bringing the foster carer voice to the fore.

Actions going forward include

- New training has already been agreed for the 2022/2023 training and development programme
- Business Case for new Kinship to Permanence Team approved and is now in place

Appendix 4 Full Annual Fostering Report 2021/22

Adoption

Shropshire is a member of the Together4Children Adoption Service alongside, Telford & Wrekin, Staffordshire and Stoke. Adoption Services are delivered from a joint Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire Hub.

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Together4Children is responsible for the recruitment, training, approval and support of prospective adopters and adoptive families, finding and matching of prospective adopters for children needing an adoptive family, and adopted adults/birth parents counselling and support.

Shropshire Children's Services remain responsible for identifying our children who may need an adoptive family, preparation of Child Permanence Reports and Agency Decision Making to determine whether adoption is the right plan for a child, taking the legal action necessary to secure permanence through adoption when this is the right plan and supporting children and birth families through the adoption process up to the making of the Adoption Order.

The numbers of children that are referred to the service has continued to increase as has the number of Shropshire children placed for adoption and ultimately had adoption orders granted. Together4Children has continued to evidence some good work in placing children with prospective adopters the majority of which have been sibling groups which indicates their effectiveness as a team in ensuring that sibling groups are, where they can be, placed together.

An Annual Adoption Report was presented to the Corporate Parenting Board at the meeting in June 2022 from Together4Children -Annual Adoption Report Part 2 – Partner LA
Additional Annual Report Information to Shropshire

Key messages:

When Shropshire Council had an Ofsted inspection in February 2022, the Adoption Hub Team had the opportunity to showcase the good work that they have done with Shropshire children this year and have maintained the judgement as Good.

- The numbers of Shropshire children in need of adoption have been rising over the last three reporting years as can be seen in the data. This year there have been significantly higher numbers of Shropshire children placed for adoption.

Children	19/20	20/21	21/22
No. of Children for whom an ADM Decision (Plan of Adoption) was made	21	26	28
No. of children Placed for Adoption	12	13	20
No. of Children for whom an Adoption Order was granted	7	8	12



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- Out of the **20** children that were placed for adoption during this year **16** were placed with a sibling.
- Due to delays with the Courts during COVID restrictions, at the end of March 2022 there were still 19 Shropshire children placed and waiting for adoption orders.
- There has been an improvement in timeliness for Shropshire children from the date they became looked after to adoption over the last 12 months.
- There has been a significant increase during the last 2 years in the average time it takes to place a child for adoption once we have the legal order in place to do so
- There were 13 Shropshire children at the end of Q4 2021/22 with a Placement Order who had not yet moved into a prospective adoptive home. However, only 1 child had not been matched with prospective adopters.
- The children who we were actively family finding for at the end of March 2022 were all single children. Most of these children were of white British ethnicity with only 1 child being from an ethnically diverse background.
- Fortunately, Shropshire children have not experienced any adoption disruptions in 2021/22.
- Plans changed away from adoption (following the Agency Decision) for a total of 15 children in 2020-21.
- 7 Shropshire children were placed under early permanence arrangements (Foster to Adopt) in 2021/22.



Developments in 2021/22

The reasons for there being a longer time to place a child with their adopters are an indication of the higher numbers of children in need of an adoptive family than previously and indicates the ambitions of Shropshire Council to make adoption a viable permanency option for more children.

There is also a longer time to wait to get a match onto Adoption Panel than in previous years -this is currently on average around 4 months, and waiting for the ADM decision now takes longer than previously due to the complexities of being part of a Regionalised adoption agency.

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Together4Children has continued to work closely with the permanence coordinator to have a collective understanding of the children in need of adoption and so she understands the profiles of adopters coming through.

Actions going forward include:

- Increase the recruitment and approval of prospective adopters to increase the choice of match for a child/sibling group
- Develop an Adoption Pathway so that social workers are clear on the actions required and timescales to increase the timeliness and quality of decision-making and matching

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Health:

The quarterly reports from the Health sub-group were presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in June, September and December 2021 and March 2022. The following key issues and risks were highlighted regarding:

- Initial Health Assessments (IHAs)

In Q.1 & 2 IHA timescales were between 60-90%. The target is 80%. A new process for requesting initial health assessments was introduced in 2021 in Shropshire. There were 'teething' issues that resulted in a significant dip in performance in Q.3 and 4. However, this has now been addressed.

- Review Annual Health Assessments

Performance for Review HAs remained high at around the target of 90%.

There can be delays in completion of Health Assessments for children placed out of area.

Consent for IHAs can be problematic if not gained at the point the child becomes looked after.

There is a challenge in gathering information to inform an Initial Health Assessment for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people being transferred directly from port due to the speed and lack of assessment of needs at that time.



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- Dental checks

There has been a decrease in the number of children able to access a dentist post-Covid, although this was gradually increasing by the end of Q.4

- Immunisations

The Looked After Children Health Team now record all children who are fully immunised, those partially immunised and those with an unknown immunisations status which more accurately reflects the cohort immunisation status.

The Community immunisation team are restoring the service, delivering and administering Immunisations to school age children. Immunisations for the under 5s are administered by the GP.

Looked After Children Nurses provide training to Foster Carers which promotes understanding, raises awareness and compliance of Immunisations.

With agreement from the Designated Nurses, HPV data is now collated within the overall data for Immunisations.

- Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs)

These are sent on an annual basis to the carers of children looked after. The responses are scored to provide a measure of a child's emotional and mental health as experienced by their carers. SDQs should be shared with the Looked After Children Nurse to inform the Annual Health Assessments. There remains a historic low rate of return in Shropshire and so the completion was promoted in 2021. There was an increase in Q1 and Q2 to 60% but this declined dramatically in Q.3 and Q.4 with no obvious reason found.

- Access to Child Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

This did not form part of the Health LAC Dashboard in 2021/22, although data had been requested by the Health sub-group.

In Shropshire the CAMHS is known as BeeU. Referrals to BeeU for children looked after are made through Space for Conversation which is a consultation between a BeeU representative and the specialist therapeutic social worker in our Fostering Services, with the child's social worker and sometimes also their carer.

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In February 2022 it was established that there had been 100+ Space for Consultation conversations in 2021, with a small % resulting in referral to BeeU.

- Health Passports for care leavers

The Looked After Children's Nurse and Designated Dr offer a final health appointment to all young people looked after before their 18th birthday to discuss their health history and ongoing health needs. Even if the appointment is declined, a letter is sent to each young person as they approach their 18th birthday with their health history as recorded. for them to keep.

- Feedback from children and carers

236 children and young people and their carers gave feedback to the Looked After Children health professionals in 2021/22 using the Meridian feedback tool. Some comments:

'first assessment so didn't know what to expect. felt relaxed and comfortable'

'Brilliant! Thank you'

'felt listened to and supported'

'it was good and a relaxed assessment'

'Excellent timing and supportive!'

'I enjoyed talking to Sarah about training as a Paramedic'.

'Talking to the Nurse about my health and emotional wellbeing - I felt listened to'.

'talking about potty training (Carer)'

'The Nurse answered all my questions – thank you'

Developments in 2021/22

- From December 2021 all Health Assessments completed by SCHAT LAC Nurses are offered in person (face to face) appointments for RHA. All Care Leavers are contacted directly by a Looked After Children's Nurse and offered face to face appointments for both RHA and Health Passports.
- A risk assessment tool was developed by the Named Nurse Looked After Children in order to support decision making when appointing to virtual/in person assessments. This is no longer in use as all Looked After Children are offered in person assessments.
- The Team have developed and implemented electronic Audit tools to quality assure Review Health Assessments and Health Passports – quality standards are categorised as GOOD or REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT. All RHAs and Health Passports completed by the SCHAT LAC Team have been rated as GOOD through Quality Assurance and Audit process.

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- Face to face Foster Carer training is scheduled for Shropshire Foster Carers from March 2022 to March 2023.
- The Team are now offering additional after school/early evening appointments for RHAs to minimise disruption to education for Care Leavers and young people aged 14 years plus (year 10-13).

Looking Forward:

Looked After Children Health Team:

- Checklist developed as aide memoire for social workers to complete all tasks needed to ensure children looked after have a timely and informed health assessment

Led by the newly formed Integrated Care Board (ICB) and jointly between Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin:

- Working group to progress a Crisis Care Mental Health Pathway for children and young people
- Working Group to review the Mental Health of Looked After Children using the I Thrive model

Children's Services:

- SDQ improvement action plan

Regional:

- Intensive Residential Outreach Care (IROC) consultation

This service is being rolled out to Shropshire from October 2022 to support the avoidance of admission to inpatient care for children looked after or 'on the edge of care' and to support their rehabilitation to community-based residential or other form of care in the community from hospital.

Education:

The last Annual Report from the Virtual School covers the academic year September 2020-July 2021.



Key Messages:

Attendance:

Overall attendance for all key stages for the 5 half terms is 88%.

By key stages this is:

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- KS1 – 92%
- KS2 – 90%
- KS3 – 88%
- KS4 – 77%

During the first half of summer term 2021 14% of pupils missed time in school due to covid requirements.

Inclusion:

- 20 pupils (6%) received Fixed Term Exclusions. This is lower than in previous years however not comparable due to Covid.
- 2 of these were permanently excluded with 2 further permanent exclusions avoided.
- In September 2020 there were 14 pupils on part time timetables. 12 of these pupils had an EHCP. 7 of these pupils had been on reduced time in education during the whole period. 5 of these were appropriate due to emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils are only briefly on the monitoring list while waiting for a placement at TMBSS or during a transition period into a new school or setting.
- 8 pupils were without a school placement during this period including the 2 pupils who received permanent exclusions. All were secondary age.
- Only 1 pupil has been in unregistered provision this year.

Attainment

Shropshire children looked after achieved just below the National CLA indicator for Combined for those predicted to achieve Expected Standard or above – but in progress Shropshire children in care progressed better than other children in care in the West Midlands and nationally.

There were 32 out of 36 young people in year 11 who had Teacher assessed grades for GCSEs. This was a national response to the COVID restrictions to ensure fairness across the UK.

Indicator	Level 4+ in English	Level 4+ in Maths	Level 4+ English & Maths	5 or more Level 4 and above
Total number	14	13	13	16

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Percentage	43.7%	40.6%	40.6%	50%
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End of Key Stage 2 'Predicted Performance Outcomes' for SSD903 cohort *

Indicator and predicted outcome	Reading	Writing	Maths
Average progress score	+2.8	+2.81	+2.69

*Children did not undertake SATS in summer 2021

Education, Employment and Training post 16

- Successes include - one young person progressing to University to study Law, two young people going onto Access to Higher Education programmes, 19 young people progressing onto or have completed Level 3 courses and 9 young people progressing onto Level 2 programmes
- In June 2021, 81% of the post 16 cohort had full or part time education, employment or training. The overall NEET figure at this time was 17.7% for 16-18 year olds.
- Of the 36 young people in year 11, 94% were forecast to be EET

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

- Every looked after child of school age has a PEP within their first term of being looked after
- The Virtual School supported social workers to complete PEPs through COVID restrictions and most PEP meetings were still being held virtually through the 2020/21 academic year.

Cultural Entitlement

Band Hive Summer 2021- Eight young people aged 14-15 attended a music workshop at the Hive over 4 days which culminated in a performance on the last day. This was well attended by Foster Carers, Social Workers and VS staff. I was able to attend - and it was a joy to see the young people perform the songs they had written, as well as some covers and a drumming piece.

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Outback to Basics day lead by Smash Life-The children who attended this 'forest school' day thoroughly enjoyed it and engaged fully with the activities and the 'youth work' aspects of the day. The day was supported by VS staff and there is potential for similar activities in the future.

Developments in 2021/22

Cornovii and Morris – <https://shropshire.gov.uk/looked-after-children/shropshire-virtual-school/future-career-insights-for-the-virtual-school/>

This has been successfully launched and we are now tracking uptake and use of these resources. This collaborative effort has been part of Cornovii putting in place a social contract as part of the wider Corporate Parenting response. We see this as a legacy resource and will continue to encourage all our young people to access it.

Early Years PEPs -were a high priority for development in terms of improving completion and quality. In terms of PEPs in general, we set a target for 60% of PEPs being of good or outstanding quality for the new academic year 2021-22.

Use of Pupil Premium + (PP+) Government funding- PP+ was used to buy in allocations from the Educational Psychology Service for individual assessments, longer term work to support children and the attachment/trauma aware training. It was also used to commission Aspire who mentor our year 10 and 11 students when they need additional personalised support to work towards a robust post 16 EET plan.

Looking Forward

- Establish clear data baselines and reporting templates/processes for attainment and progress (including end KS2 performance predicted outcomes and SSD 903 reporting), attendance, progression and PEPs.
- To enhance data integrity for attendance, attainment & progress and PEPs.
- Use data analysis to further inform draft School Development Plan – and create Task and Finish groups.
- Fast track recruitment to PLAC/CIN posts and to establish baseline data for CIN and CP indicators
- New VS HT to meet key leaders in the LA
- Seek Virtual School Twitter account
- Begin development of participation, including competition for young people to design Shropshire VS logo.
- Revisiting the Terms of Reference for the Governing Body



Conclusions

This year 2021-22 has been challenging as the country emerged from COVID 'lockdown' with families and professionals in a less resilient place than before and trying to come to terms with the impact of the loss of loved ones, reconnecting with family and friends, financial pressures and services gradually resuming 'Business as Usual'.

As Corporate Parents we have tried to support our children and young people and their families and carers, but have continued to respond to safeguard more children through legal intervention and children needing to become 'looked after', although there are signs this is reducing as we enter 2022-23.

There have been increasing pressures to find safe and suitable homes for children with reduced choice as numbers increased. Despite these pressures our evidence in terms of data and feedback from Ofsted shows we continue to care for our looked after children and young people and care leavers to a GOOD standard.

Feedback from our children and young people tells us where we need to improve and we are listening.

Corporate Parenting Developments planned for 2022-2023:

Reducing the need for children to become looked after and returning children back to birth families when possible:

- The 'Stepping Stones' project has received Council support for significant investment and development to prevent more children from needing to be looked after;
- Shropshire is part of a West Midlands Regional development to improve the Public Law Outline pathway, to prevent the need for families to experience undue legal intervention in their lives;
- Develop further the 'pathways to permanence'

Increasing support for children and young people who have experienced trauma and poor mental health:

- Development of a 'Crisis Pathway' with health partners for young people experiencing poor mental health



LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

- Progress the Action Plan to improve mental health services to children and young people looked after with health colleagues

Increasing options and support for young people moving to adulthood:

- The new registered provision for 16/17 year olds to support them towards adulthood is now planned to be open in January 2023
- Develop a specific Joint Housing Protocol for care leavers
- Shropshire is part of the West Midlands development of a Regional Offer to care leavers;
- A base for our care leavers to meet together and with their Personal Advisors and to deliver Preparation for Adulthood training, support and advice
- Relaunch of the Care Leavers' Covenant with partners across Shropshire

Inspection of Shropshire local authority children's services

Inspection dates: 7 to 11 February 2022

Lead inspector: John Roughton, Her Majesty's Inspector

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Requires improvement to be good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

Children in Shropshire are benefiting from the high aspirations of senior leaders for their services to continue to improve children's lives. Since the last inspection, leaders have improved performance and concentrated on getting their preferred practice model and effective processes in place to support managers and social workers to improve experiences for children.

Leaders in Shropshire know themselves well. They are making good use of data and management information and learning from quality assurance to inform service planning and developments within the local authority and across the partnership. However, despite this, there are some areas where progress in responding to or resolving known issues has not been quick enough, for example, the application of the Public Law Outline (PLO) and the domestic abuse triage arrangements.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, children's services have continued to provide a high level of support for all children, including ongoing face-to-face visits to promote their safety and well-being. Where partners were otherwise deployed, the local authority stepped up to ensure that children's needs and risks were responded to. Care leavers in particular have benefited greatly from the enhanced support of their personal advisers.

What needs to improve?

- The effective application of the pre-proceedings stage of the PLO, and the local arrangements for the family group conference service.
- The sufficiency of local placement options.
- The partnership response to the emotional health needs of children in care.

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: requires improvement to be good

1. Children in need of help and protection are identified quickly at the single 'front door' (Compass). There is a proportionate response to contacts and referrals. Prompt decision-making is informed through agency checks, consideration of history and discussions with parents. Thresholds between early help and social care are well understood by all the agencies and are appropriately applied, which ensures children get the right help at the right time to meet their needs. Greater consistency needs to be applied to the gathering and recording of ethnicity data to ensure a full understanding of children's potential needs.
2. There has been disruption to the established partnership between children's social care and the police in making triage decisions about domestic abuse. In recent months, the police have withdrawn from these arrangements and have been making these decisions unilaterally, only referring the high-level risk concerns to children's social care. This means that information is not always recorded about the impact of domestic abuse incidents on children, either current or historic, to inform safe and effective decision-making now or in the future. It is of concern that this issue has only been resolved during the inspection.
3. In the majority of cases, decisions to hold strategy meetings are made appropriately. These meetings take place promptly and are well attended by partners, informing clear plans. Health colleague attendance had been identified as inconsistent and funding has now been agreed for two dedicated health workers to join Compass.
4. Single and joint investigations are necessary and proportionate. These are well recorded, with clear rationale for decision-making and evidence of management oversight, confirming appropriate next steps to support and protect children.
5. Children benefit from effective multi-agency working to identify those who are vulnerable to exploitation or are being exploited. Child exploitation triage meetings are in place to review intelligence from the police and exploitation risk assessments, and make decisions which lead to strategy discussions, advice and information or ongoing work and review. The impact of these processes is helping professionals to be informed about risks to individual children, to map activity and networks and undertake disruption and preventative work with children and families to prevent escalation.
6. When children go missing from home, return home interviews (RHIs) are conducted appropriately and effectively by workers from the child exploitation

team. This ensures exploitation risks for these children are identified as soon as possible. Effective collaboration and timely information-sharing are helping to protect vulnerable adolescents, through early interventions or disruption activity. Risks from exploitation that continue to adulthood are now being considered through a pilot project with the adult safeguarding board, so that young people are treated as victims and appropriate support and diversion are provided.

7. Out-of-hours services work effectively with partner agencies to ensure children are protected. Joint visits are completed with police in a timely way and children are seen alone to understand their views. Out-of-hours workers have access to most of the appropriate services they require. Leaders have recently reviewed the current model for out-of-hours provision and identified areas for improvement and enhanced technology to support practice, with new arrangements planned from April 2022.
8. Comprehensive assessments accurately reflect children's and families' experiences. Social workers engage effectively with children and families, using the local authority's preferred model of practice to identify strengths and risks, and are sensitive to individual's identities. Assessments in the disabled children's team are very thorough and provide a detailed understanding of the children's health needs and level of functioning. Parenting capacity, external support, views of parents and the views and observations of children are explored well, leading to appropriate decision-making.
9. Children who present as homeless are well supported. They are appropriately assessed and are offered the right help to remain living at home or are accommodated in suitable alternative placements, including section 20 accommodation where appropriate. Children are made aware of their rights and entitlements and receive the right level of help to promote their welfare.
10. Children in need benefit from well-coordinated and effective partnership working in response to their identified needs. Social workers build positive relationships with children and families, making use of a range of tools and techniques to ensure children's wishes are understood and inform planning. Child in need plans are reviewed regularly and effectively, and are outcome-focused and mainly timebound.
11. Child protection work is demonstrating that children are benefiting from child protection plans which are focused effectively to bring about positive change. Core groups are held regularly, and the plans are used effectively to monitor progress. Plans are, for the most part, realistic and outcome-focused, which means that children and their families are being helped to make progress and reduce risk.
12. Visits to children on plans are child-focused and purposeful. They address relevant issues, celebrate success and make observations of parent and child interactions, as well as gathering children's views.
13. There are delays in establishing family group conferences to explore extended family and community resources. This does not support finding the best

solutions for children to remain living with their families and increases the risk of children needing to come into care.

14. Children are not benefiting from the effective application of the pre-proceedings stage of the PLO and, as a result, some children at risk of harm experience delay in securing safe, permanent care. These children have been exposed to neglect or even injury as a result of a lack of authoritative practice and professional curiosity regarding their circumstances. Decisions to consider PLO are being made too late, letters before proceedings are of poor quality and PLO plans are not consistently reviewed or progressed. Letters before proceedings are overly complicated and do not make it clear to parents what they need to do to ensure that their children remain in their care. During this inspection, senior leaders have acknowledged these issues and produced a comprehensive action plan in response.
15. The local authority designated officer (LADO) service in Shropshire responds promptly and robustly to concerns about adults in a position of trust who present risks to children. The LADO service is working effectively with the police and other partners. It coordinates the work of agencies and reviews progress in investigations, ensuring that all actions are concluded so that children are safeguarded. The LADO service is proactive in ensuring its role is understood and are involved in training newly recruited social workers and in running safer recruitment training for partners across Shropshire.
16. Effective tracking systems allow leaders to have oversight of those children who are missing education and those who are home educated. These systems lead to escalation to the education welfare service when elective home education is not in children's best interests in terms of promoting their welfare, or when children are missing. This service works closely with parents and children to ensure that children's welfare is promoted.

The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers: good

17. Children do well once they come into care. They are making progress and are provided with support to develop their hobbies and interests. Issues of children's culture and identity are carefully considered and appropriate support provided to meet these needs. When children in care are at risk of exploitation, careful consideration is given to where they live and how they can be safeguarded.
18. Children in care are visited regularly and according to their need. Social workers know children very well and many of them have long and well-established relationships with the children, which enable them to better understand their needs. Social workers undertake direct work with children to build relationships, explore feelings and gather their views effectively.
19. Some children have experienced significant issues with their mental and emotional well-being through the pandemic. Their needs in relation to this are not consistently well met by appropriate health provision. The local authority is

mitigating the impact of this through spot purchasing of tailored support to meet individual children's needs and through its own provision. Leaders are working persistently with the clinical commissioning group and health providers to commission services to address this gap.

20. Children's care plans are detailed and specifically focused, with timescales for monitoring progress or completion. Health assessments are routinely taking place and health needs are captured and addressed in children's plans. Plans are helping children to make positive progress in response to their identified needs.
21. There has been a recent dip in RHIs taking place following incidents of children going missing. This hinders a full understanding of risks and the development of strategies to prevent further exposure to harm. Leaders have close scrutiny of this issue and are responding, ensuring that RHIs are routinely prioritised and undertaken and help to support children's safety, through careful analysis of the factors leading to their going missing.
22. Independent reviewing officers (IROs) know children well and maintain contact between reviews. In most cases, IROs are having a positive impact on progressing and escalating concerns, to make a difference for children.
23. New initiatives to address sufficiency issues in Shropshire are being implemented and developed, particularly for those children with complex needs. Significant investment in increasing capacity in residential and semi-independent provision is starting to provide more options for children in care and those approaching adulthood to live more locally, nearer to universal services and family support.
24. Children are benefiting from the effective coordination of permanence arrangements, with more children secured in long-term fostering arrangements and planned moves back into area from out-of-county residential placements.
25. There are increasing numbers of children benefiting from special guardianship orders (SGOs). Viability and connected carer assessments are timely, ensuring there is no delay for children. The provision of pre-SGO advice is clear and this helps inform carers' decision-making. As a result, SGO plans are tailored to meet the needs of individual children and their permanence is being secured in their extended family networks where possible.
26. Children live with foster carers who are well trained and are skilled in meeting their individual needs. The preparation, training and assessment of prospective foster carers enables them to have an understanding of the complexities surrounding the fostering task. There is a clear framework of training for all foster carers. A mainstream foster carer recruitment strategy is in place, however, managers are not on target to meet this year's recruitment goal.
27. Children are benefiting from permanence through adoption and there has been an increase in the number of foster to adopt approvals and older children and sibling groups being matched with adopters. Adopters are positive about the support provided throughout the adoption process. Careful planning ensures

that children's moves are completed sensitively and enables adopters to build meaningful connections with their children.

28. The virtual school and partners work well together to ensure that children in care receive the educational support they need to succeed. Individual children are making strong academic progress. Older children are being helped and supported into higher education, training and employment opportunities, including the council's own apprenticeship scheme, as appropriate to their needs.
29. Children leaving care in Shropshire receive excellent help and guidance from enthusiastic and passionate personal advisers (PAs), who are tenacious in supporting young people to make positive changes to help them to progress in their lives. Pathway plans are collaborative and dynamic, prioritising the areas of work which are the most important to children and young people. They show how risk and behaviours are challenged and support young people to think about what needs to be done to make further progress.
30. The local offer for care leavers is comprehensive and effective. It includes support with housing, finances, the development of a new care leavers hub and dedicated careers advice. Despite the pandemic, there has been substantial improvement in the numbers of 17- and 18-year-olds in employment, education or training and an improving picture for those aged 19 to 21. Apprenticeships offered by the local authority are paid at a rate which supports young people to be able to live independently.
31. Care leavers who spoke to inspectors unanimously agreed that PAs in Shropshire provide them with exceptional support, tailored to their individual needs. The PAs have been working with their young people for many years and it is this level of consistency and reliability that the care leavers value highly.

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

32. The lead member, chief executive and director of people have made a significant change to the culture of the organisation, with a shift towards people-focused priorities and a clear emphasis on improving outcomes for the most vulnerable members of society. Political leaders are bringing children to the front and center of the council's business. Representation on the corporate parenting board reflects a whole-council commitment to championing children in care and care leavers.
33. Elected members and senior leaders recognise that early help provision has been cut back too far in the recent past, which in part may be reflected in the increased numbers of children coming into care. There is a renewed commitment to investing in preventative services, for example, the 'stepping-stones' service, with a focus on earlier intervention and edge of care support already having a positive impact on supporting children and families. Increased investment in the fostering service is enabling more children to be appropriately cared for under special guardianship arrangements.

34. Partnership arrangements, in particular with health organisations, are focused on the benefits to vulnerable children of early prevention. Leaders are working closely with the clinical commissioning group and health providers to ensure that children with complex emotional needs have access to responsive services within timescales to make a positive difference.
35. Despite frequent communication with police partners, the local authority had not been able to influence a speedy and positive outcome to the lengthy absence of a joint domestic abuse triage arrangement. While this has been reinstated during this inspection, continued work with police partners is needed towards the earlier resolution of such issues as they emerge.
36. Performance data is largely accurate and used effectively by leaders and managers throughout the organisation. Regular performance and quality assurance reports and meetings focus not only on compliance but also on what the findings indicate about the experience of the children, informing audit priorities and practice improvement.
37. Quality assurance arrangements are strong, with a comprehensive approach to learning from audit. There is effective learning from thematic audits. Good communication and training with workers to share learning is helping to improve practice, for example, in testing threshold decision-making in section 47 inquiries.
38. While children's voices routinely inform their own plans, the participation of children in influencing strategic planning is not as sufficiently developed as that which leaders aspire to. In response, a project is starting which will involve children in its steering group and have children's representation at the corporate parenting board, with children actively informing future strategic plans. A care-experienced care ambassador is now employed, supporting children to attend the Care Leavers Forum and working with elected members to raise awareness in the local economy. This is leading to increased work experience opportunities for children in care and care leavers.
39. There is a comprehensive workforce development strategy, helping to build a staff group working to the local authority's practice priorities. Increased numbers of practice educators are being trained to take on more students, newly qualified workers, 'Step-up' students and trainee social workers. Leaders are aware of the need to recruit more experienced social workers due to the current imbalance in the workforce and have invested in a targeted recruitment campaign starting in March 2022.
40. Social workers in Shropshire are benefiting from an organisational culture in which they feel valued and supported, and benefit from a wide range of learning and development opportunities available to them.
41. While social workers report receiving good and regular supervision, this is not reflected in the recording. This means that children may not understand the monitoring of progress against their plans and the rationale for decisions affecting them when they choose to access their records later in life. Leaders have commissioned a comprehensive training programme to support managers

and workers in their recording of supervisions. This had been paused during the pandemic but is now due to restart in the spring of 2022.

Pre-publication

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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SHROPSHIRE

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Appendix 2 Shropshire Corporate Parenting Board

SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS' CHARTER



Charter for Children in Care & Care Leavers

The council should use these priorities when they are making decisions that will affect young people's lives. This document aims to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what the council should do to be good corporate parents. This charter will try to ensure that all children in care and care leavers have equal access to services, support and life opportunities.

My Health

Offer me advice and opportunities to help me be healthy. Give me easy and open access to health services, including sexual and mental health.

Education, Work and Training

Provide me with a suitable education, a budget if I choose to go onto university, and help seeking employment, training or education. Shropshire Council should continue to provide young people in care the chance to do work experience with the council as if it was the 'family firm'.

My Social Life

Make my life fun! Provide opportunities and activities for me to take part in.

Support

Support me in my endeavours. Offer me practical and financial support. Give me access safe people to turn to when I am upset or angry, and the chance to talk things through with someone who is not part of the council.

Inform Me

Explain to me what my rights are. Tell me what I'm entitled to and what I can ask for at different points of my life. Give me clear information about myself and my time in care when I want it.

Moving On

Plan for the future with me clearly, and be ready to put support in place if things go wrong. Prepare me before it's time to move on, with things like life skills, cooking, driving and money management.

Generally

Respect me and treat me fairly, and so an individual. Be honest and don't make promises you can't keep. Do your best to promote children in care and make sure they don't get a bad name. Acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of children in care.

My Voice

Listen to my views and opinions. Put my needs and feelings at the heart of all decisions about me. Ask me what I think and I want to do. If you don't agree then tell me why.

My Home

Give me carers who are people-friendly and a home that is appropriate to my individual needs. Offer me a home where I can be safe and happy, not just a bed. Don't forget about me if I live far from home. Help me to move onto independent living when I am ready.



www.safeguardingshropshireschildren.org.uk/lac

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Appendix 2 Shropshire Corporate Parenting Board

SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL CORPORATE PARENTING PLEDGE

Every good parent knows that children require a safe and secure environment in which to grow and thrive. As parents we want to protect and support our children against the dangers and risks of life. Parents are ambitious for our children and we want them to reach their potential. As good parents we celebrate and share in the achievements of our children and, as young people, we want to set them on the road towards adulthood with all the guidance, support and opportunities we can provide.

A child who is cared for by the Council has the right to expect everything from a corporate parent that would be expected from a good parent.

This means as a Council we will:

- Know our children, their needs, talents and aspirations and promote their interests
- Hold high aspirations for their future and expect the best for and from them
- Take an interest in their successes and problems and show our pride in their achievements, and celebrate them
- Listen to their views and ensure they influence practice, service developments and policy.
- Ensure they are consulted about their own lives and plans
- Recognise, support and respect their identity in all aspects
- Ensure our children attend their education regularly
- Promote and support high academic achievement by working with our schools and carers to ensure that the needs of our children are understood and met
- Support their health and emotional well-being and resilience
- Support transition to adult life and promote their economic prospects & prepare them to become responsible citizens
- **and most importantly....** as Corporate Parents we will preface all our thinking, planning, actions and decisions with:

“would this be good enough for my child.....”



Appendix 2 Shropshire Corporate Parenting Board

THE CORPORATE PARENTING PRINCIPLES

Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 states that local authorities must have regard to the seven Corporate Parenting Principles identified in the Children and Social Work Act when exercising their functions in relation to children and young people looked after and care leavers:

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people;
2. To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
3. To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
4. To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
6. For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
7. To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

SHROPSHIRE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

ROLE

- High Support and High Challenge to ensure effective undertaking of the Corporate Parenting Responsibility – holding to account on behalf of the council.
- Clear line of sight on practice and what good practice looks like and assure selves it is delivered, including the role of the IRO.
- Scrutiny and oversight of performance, outcomes and impact for children and young people of the work of the Local Authority and key partners.
- Lead the culture and share the message about Corporate Parenting responsibilities.
- Lead the narrative – these are our children, good enough parenting that would be good enough for our own children.

MEMBERSHIP

Chair-Lead Member for Children

Director of Children's Services

Assistant Director of Children's Services



Appendix 2 Shropshire Corporate Parenting Board

Deputy Lead Member for Children

Other Member representation

Virtual School Head

Officers representing Children's Services

Representative of Children in Care Council

Care Leaver's Champion

Partner agency representatives from Health

Youth Offending Service

Foster carer representative

STRUCTURE & FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

- CPB to meet every 12 weeks
- Sub-groups to meet 4-6 weekly and drive the programme of work priorities
- Led by an officer from the partnership, Chaired by Member Champion.
- Annual Forward Plan for each sub group to report a 'deep dive' progress report.
- 6 monthly focus on the outcomes of Quality Assurance Activity – led by IRO's
- Annual meeting with Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum
- Annual Meeting focus of success and outcomes, with extended invite to partners.

SUB-GROUPS

- Participation
- Aspirations
- Virtual School Governing Body
- Health
- Stability
- Care Leavers' Local Offer

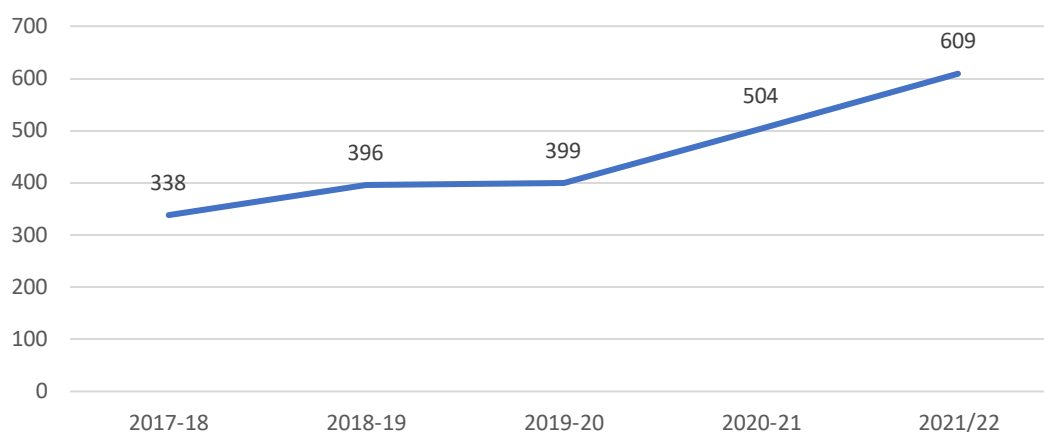
SHROPSHIRE

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Appendix 3 Data Charts Children's Social Care Performance 2021-22

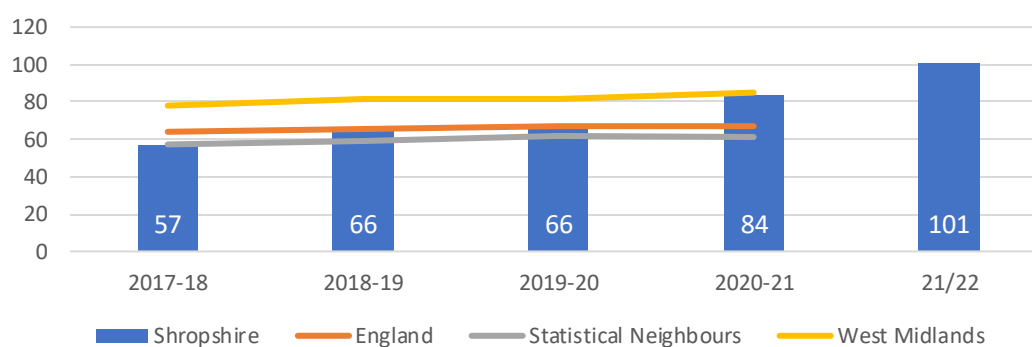
Children looked after – number and rate.

Children looked after - numbers at year end



2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021/22
338	396	399	504	609

Children looked after - rate per 10,000 Under 18s



	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021/22
Shropshire	57	66	66	84	101
England	64	65	67	67	
Statistical Neighbours	57	59	62	61	
West Midlands	78	82	82	85	

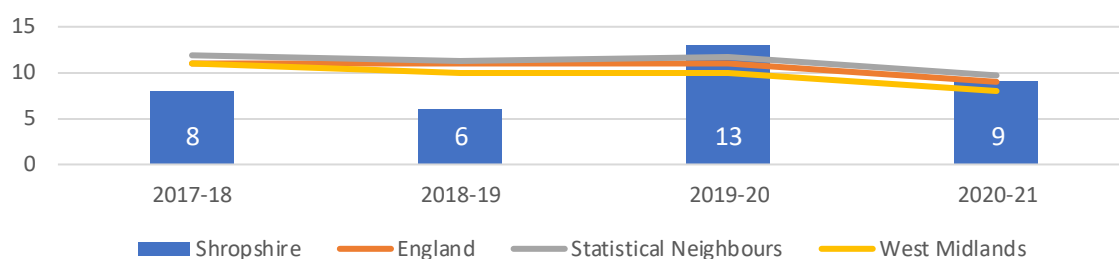


LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Appendix 3 Data Charts Children's Social Care Performance 2021-22

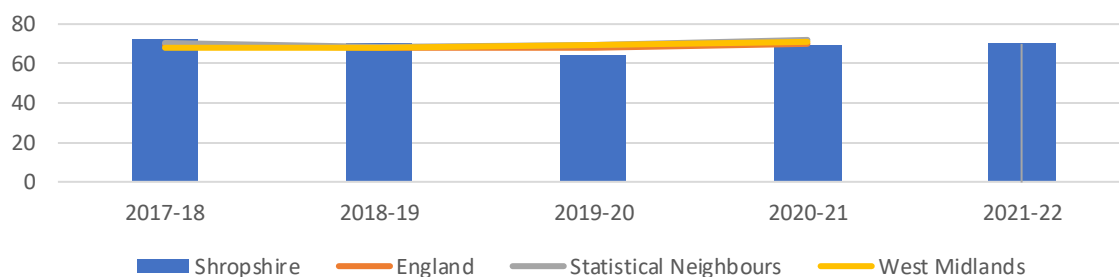
Children looked after – placement stability

Children looked after - short term placement stability (% CLA with 3+ moves in 12 months)



	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021/22
Shropshire	8	6	13	9	8
England	11	11	11	9	
Statistical Neighbours	12	11	12	10	
West Midlands	11	10	10	8	

Children looked after - long term placement stability (% CLA 2.5 years in same placement for 2 years)



	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021/22
Shropshire	72	70	64	69	70
England	69	68	68	70	
Statistical Neighbours	70	68	70	72	
West Midlands	68	68	69	71	

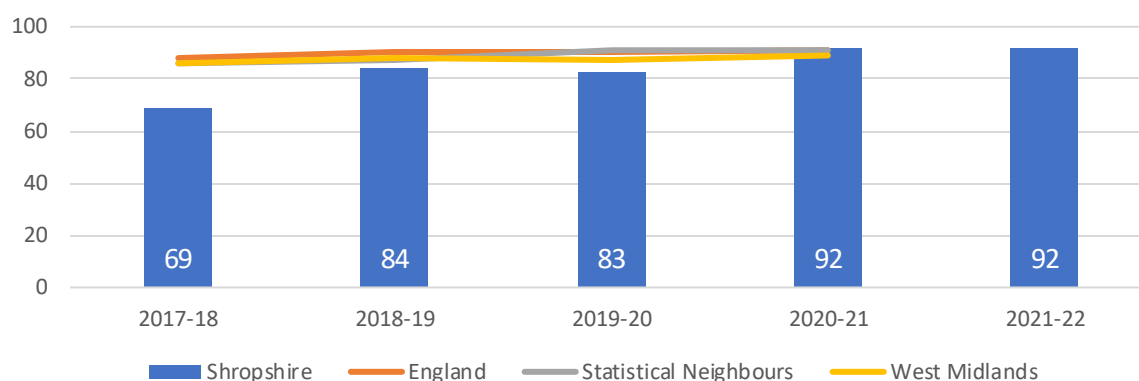
SHROPSHIRE

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Appendix 3 Data Charts Children's Social Care Performance 2021-22

CLA Health

Children looked after - percentage of children who had their annual health assessment

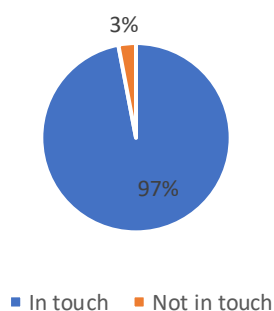


	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021/22
Shropshire	69	84	83	92	92
England	88	90	90	91	
Statistical Neighbours	86	87	91	91	
West Midlands	86	88	87	89	

Care Leavers – year end 2021/22

	In touch	Not in touch
Shropshire	97%	3%

Care Leavers aged 19/20/21 - in touch



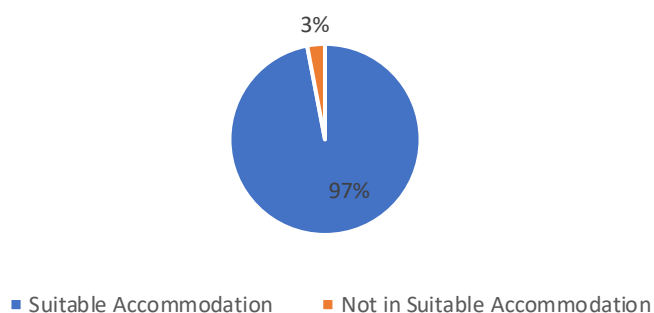


LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Appendix 3 Data Charts Children's Social Care Performance 2021-22

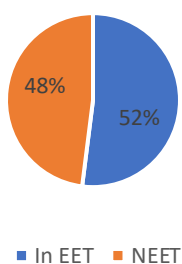
	Suitable Accommodation	Not in Suitable Accommodation
Shropshire	97%	3%

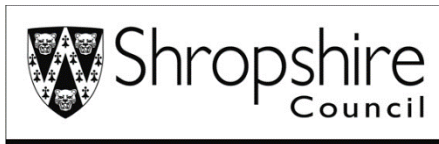
Care Leavers aged 19/20/21 - in suitable accommodation



	In EET	NEET
Shropshire	52%	48%

Care Leavers aged 19/20/21 - in education, employment or training





<u>Committee and Date</u>
Cabinet 9 November 2022

<u>Item</u>
<u>Public</u>

Electric Vehicle Chargers for Residents Without Off-street Parking

Responsible Officer Adrian Cooper, Climate Change Manager
e-mail: adrian.cooper@shropshire.gov.uk

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 Shropshire Council has received one of the largest grant awards from the Government's On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) 2022-23. Authority from Cabinet is now sought to enter into the contract for the installation work as a matter of urgency.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. Shropshire Council made a full application to the Government's On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) 2022-23 in June 2022, following acceptance of an earlier Expression of Interest. The bid was drafted with our existing technology partner, Connected Kerb, with whom we have already been working to install 50 EV charge points in various locations over the last 12-18 months, using grant monies from earlier phases of the same grant programme.
- 2.2. A grant offer letter has now been received for 60% (£0.903m) of the gross project value of £1.505m. The remaining match funding (£0.602m) has been secured from a combination of the CIL Strategic Fund and highways budget.
- 2.3. This is one of the largest grant awards from this programme to any UK local authority and will allow us to install 270 EV chargers in 40 locations across Shrewsbury, our market towns and some smaller settlements like Clun and Prees. Most of the installations will be in our car parks, although some will be in street kerbsides. Each of the installation locations will host between 4 and 12 individual 7.4KW charge points (see table below).
- 2.4. The project is designed to provide infrastructure which would not be provided by a commercial operator and is specifically intended to make provision for households who might otherwise be discouraged

from making the transition to an electric vehicle because they are unable to fit their own charge point at home (flats, terraced streets, tenanted property etc.).

- 2.5. In preparation for the submission of the bid for funding, Connected Kerb originally priced for the work required in March 2022 but they have agreed to delay any increase in prices to reflect inflation until Friday 11 November to allow for the appropriate authority to be sought from Cabinet.
- 2.6. The Executive Director of Place has written to all members of Council to make them aware of the grant award and to provide a basic briefing about the project and proposed installation sites. There has also been positive press coverage of the grant award.
- 2.7. In view of the urgent need to sign the contract by 11 November 2022 (to avoid significant additional cost) the Call in and Urgency Mechanism in paragraph 17 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules will need to be applied to ensure that the contract can be entered into within the required timescale i.e. by 11 November 2022.
- 2.8. The consequence of this is that this decision will not be able to be "called in" in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

3. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 3.1. Agree the use of £0.6m of match funding from Council budgets for a contract to install an additional 270 electric vehicle charge points in 40 locations across Shropshire.
- 3.2. Note the receipt of £0.903 million in grant from the Government's On-street Residential Charge-point Scheme.
- 3.3. Authorise the entering into of an installation contract between the Council and Connected Kerb, the basic terms of which are set out in this report.

REPORT

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. The climate crisis is a serious threat to the lives of millions of people both globally nationally and locally. The mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation measures to build resilience is now

urgent and essential to prevent the worst outcomes of the climate crisis.

- 4.2 The climate crisis therefore represents a significant strategic risk to Shropshire and the delivery of Council and public services. This risk is most likely to manifest itself in terms of financial impacts (e.g. operating costs, impacts on the Shropshire economy) and impacts on the health and well-being of staff and residents as service users.
- 4.3 Taking active steps to establish strategic infrastructure to support a rapid transition to low carbon travel enables the Council to make a demonstrable contribution to reducing the carbon footprint of the wider county.
- 4.4 An Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA) has previously been carried out which indicated that the adopted corporate Climate Strategy and Action Plan, which includes support for electric vehicle charging infrastructure, is likely to have a positive effect on all groups in society and is intended to do so, given its objective of addressing Shropshire Council's contribution to the climate emergency. The infrastructure proposed is specifically intended to benefit households who are unable to fit EV chargers at home and might otherwise be discouraged from making the transition to an electric vehicle. This is likely to include a significant number of individuals with protected characteristics who will thereby benefit from this project.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) grant is for 60% (£0.903m) of the gross project value of £1.505m. The remaining match funding (£0.602m) has been secured from a combination of the CIL Strategic Fund (£0.300m) and highways budgets (£0.302m)
- 5.2. Connected Kerb are being contracted to install, operate and maintain the chargers for a period of 15 years. Finance colleagues have confirmed that the proposed contract provides the best return for the Council and results in total income over the term through a 50% profit share with Connected Kerb to deliver payback of the Council's match funding investment within 10 to 11 years.
- 5.3. Revenue savings as part of the Commercial Services Savings have been built into the Place Directorate savings plan to reflect the proposed profit share.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1 **Energy and fuel consumption:** The installation of a large number of additional electric vehicle chargers is expected to improve confidence in the availability of charging infrastructure and support the planned transition to low carbon vehicles, particularly for

residents who do not have access to their own charging equipment at home.

- 6.2 **Renewable energy generation:** The proposed installation of a large number of additional electric vehicle chargers has no direct implications for renewable energy generation, although there may be opportunities to link charging infrastructure to council-owned renewable energy generation facilities in future.
- 6.3 **Carbon offsetting or mitigation:** The installation of a large number of additional electric vehicle chargers on streets and in existing council-owned car parks is not expected to provide any opportunity to capture and store carbon and to mitigate the effects of climate change on biodiversity.
- 6.4 **Climate Change adaptation:** The installation of a large number of additional electric vehicle chargers on streets and in existing council-owned car parks will ensure that the infrastructure being installed is designed and located to remain resilient in the face of the challenges of more extreme weather events.

7. Background

- 7.1. Shropshire Council started to install public charging infrastructure in its car parks over 2 years ago. To date, we have installed:
- A. 2 rapid EV chargers (50Kw), one in church Stretton Easthope car park and the second in Ludlow Galdeford car park, both 100% grant funded by the DfT.
- B. Working as part of a consortium with Samsung, Connected Kerb & Octopus Energy, a further 25No 7Kw EVCP were installed as part of the 100% funded national 'Agile Streets' project, in:
- Shrewsbury, Abbey Foregate car park
 - Oswestry Oak, Street car park
 - Whitchurch, Brownlow Street car park
 - Bridgnorth (Low Town), Severn Street car park
- to allow residents without access to off Street parking to charge. This project has recently won an award as the 'Best Consumer Proposition (Utility and Energy)' at the 2022 national Electric Vehicle Innovation & Excellence Awards.
- C. The installation of a further 25No. 7Kw EVCP is currently underway using 75% Government grant (OZEV Phase 1) in:
- Shrewsbury, Frankwell quay car park
 - Market Drayton, Queen Street
 - Bridgnorth (High Town), Listley street south car park
 - Ellesmere, Cross street car park
 - Bishops Castle, Harley Jenkins street car park
 - Mill Street Ludlow

- 7.2. The current contract would significantly strengthen access to EV chargers for residents without access to home charging equipment across most of Shropshire by installing EV Chargers in the following locations:

	Settlement	Place Plan	Site Name	Postcode	No. of Chargers
1	Albrighton	Albrighton	High Street (Crown Hotel)	WV7 3JA	5
2	Albrighton	Albrighton	High Street	WV7 3JU	4
3	Bridgnorth	Bridgnorth	Innage Lane	WV16 4HL	12
4	Bridgnorth	Bridgnorth	Listley Street North	WV16 4AW	6
5	Broseley	Broseley	Bridgnorth Road	TF12 5JB	8
6	Broseley	Broseley	Dark Lane	TF12 5LH	5
7	Church Stretton	Church Stretton	Easthope 1-4	SY6 6BL	4
8	Church Stretton	Church Stretton	6 Essex Road	SY6SAS	4
9	Cleobury Mortimer	Cleobury Mortimer	Childe Road West car park	DY14 8GH	6
10	Cleobury Mortimer	Cleobury Mortimer	Childe Road (East)	DY14 8PB	6
11	Clun	Bishops Castle	High Street	SY7 8LJ	4
12	Craven Arms	Craven Arms	Corvedale Road	SY7 9NE	8
13	Gobowen	Oswestry	Rail Station	SY11 3QN	10
14	Highley	Highley	High Street	WV16 6LF	8
15	Highley	Highley	25 Woodhill Rd	WV16 6HF	8
16	Ludlow	Ludlow	Broad street	SY8 1NH	8
17	Ludlow	Ludlow	Corve street	SY8 1DN	4
18	Ludlow	Ludlow	Galdeford Zone A	SY8 1QB	8
19	Market Drayton	Market Drayton	Frogmore Road	TF9 3EB	8
20	Much Wenlock	Much Wenlock	Falcons Court car park	TF13 6PG	6
21	Much Wenlock	Much Wenlock	St Mary's Lane car park	TF13 6HD	6
22	Oswestry	Oswestry	Wat's Drive	SY11 1ET	8
23	Oswestry	Oswestry	Lloyd Street	SY11 1NL	8
24	Oswestry	Oswestry	Edward street	SY11 2BL	8
25	Prees	Whitchurch	Church Street	SY13 2DK	6
26	Shifnal	Shifnal	Aston Street car park	TF11 8DW	10
27	Shifnal	Shifnal	56 Broadway	TF11 8AJ	8
28	Shifnal	Shifnal	Victoria Road	TF11 8AW	6
29	Shrewsbury	Shrewsbury	Bainbridge Green	SY1 3QS	6
30	Shrewsbury	Shrewsbury	131 Copthorne road	SY3 8NA	6
31	Shrewsbury	Shrewsbury	93 New Pk Rd	SY1 2RT	7
32	Shrewsbury	Shrewsbury	79 Bishop Street	SY2 5HA	6
33	Shrewsbury	Shrewsbury	Abbey Foregate	SY2 6BS	8
34	Wem	Wem	Mill Street car park	SY4 5DD	6
35	Wem	Wem	Aston Street car park	SY4 5EP	10

	Settlement	Place Plan	Site Name	Postcode	No. of Chargers
36	Whitchurch	Whitchurch	George Street	SY13 1NY	4
37	Whitchurch	Whitchurch	Castle Hill	SY13 1BG	6
38	Whitchurch	Whitchurch	Newtown	SY13 1DE	6
39	Whitchurch	Whitchurch	Sherrymill Hill	SY13 1XA	6
40	Whitchurch	Whitchurch	St John's Street	SY13 1QT	8

- 7.3. The proposed locations have been carefully selected using a number of factors including: the availability of suitable Shropshire Council owned car parking, geodemographic profiling to model propensity to use an electric vehicle, traffic flows, number of residents without access to off-street parking and the availability of existing EV chargepoint installations already completed or planned to date.
- 7.4. Of course, in the run up to Government 2030 ban on new petrol and diesel cars, further charging infrastructure will be required in order to support the transition to low carbon vehicles in Shropshire. Shropshire Council has recently commissioned a draft Public EV Charging Infrastructure Strategy from consultants which we hope to publish shortly. The strategy includes detailed modelling of demographic and travel demand data to help us to identify communities who have the greatest current propensity to move to use of an EV and will help us to identify where additional provision will need to be made in future phases of work.
- 7.5. Shropshire Council will own the infrastructure built as part of this project and the earlier phases of work outlined above. Connected Kerb are being contracted to operate and maintain the chargers for a period of 15 years. Owning the infrastructure means that Shropshire Council, rather than a commercial operator, is able to exercise more control over the tariff rates for charging. Charges usually take the form of a modest charge to supplement the cost of supplying the power being consumed.
- 7.6. Most of our EV chargers currently charge a flat fee of £0.35 / KW and charge at a maximum rate of 7.4KW (just like a home charger). This means that an average 60KW electric vehicle would cost around £21 to charge fully, but this would take around 8 hours (often overnight). Our charges are broadly consistent with many supermarkets, but considerably cheaper than motorway services. However, a few of our chargers also offer a cheaper £0.19 / KW rate for charging at off-peak times when the power supplied to us is also cheaper.
- 7.7. There are no membership or connection fees, but to use the charging infrastructure, users need to register with Connected Kerb and download an App or send for an electronic card: <https://www.connectedkerb.com/drivers> which will then allow them to access all the many hundreds of chargers operated by Connected Kerb across the UK. Shropshire Council's webpages will be updated

to provide appropriate advice and guidance regarding the use of the new chargers.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1. This significant grant award and the contract required to deliver the new infrastructure have provided Shropshire Council with an excellent opportunity to foster a faster transition to low carbon personal transport for many residents, especially those who might otherwise be discouraged because they have no access to charging equipment at home.
- 8.2. In view of the urgent need to sign the contract by 11 November 2022 (to avoid significant additional cost) the Call in and Urgency Mechanism in paragraph 17 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules will need to be applied to ensure that the contract can be entered into within the required timescale.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Ian Nellins
Local Member All
Appendices None

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