Corporate Parenting Panel

Date: Wednesday 12 October 2022
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: Microsoft Teams

Membership

Councillor Jeff Morgan (Chair)
Councillor Peter Gilbert
Councillor Caroline Phillips
Councillor Marian Humphreys
Councillor Penny-Anne O'Donnell
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse

Items on the agenda: -

1. General

(1) Apologies

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

(3) Minutes of the previous meeting 5 - 12

2. Children in Care Council - Update 13 - 20

3. Performance Data (to include update from SWFT) 21 - 22

4. Warwickshire Adoption Report & ACE Report 23 - 96

5. Warwickshire Children in Care Health Service 97 - 114

6. Development of the Work Programme for 2022/2023 115 - 118

7. Good News Stories

Officers to put forward good news stories for children looked after, care leavers or foster carers.

8. Any Other Business

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 28th November 2022 at 10am

Future Meetings

- 16th January 2023 @ 10am
- 27th March 2023 @ 10am

Proposed Dates for 2023/2024

- 19th June 2023 @ 10am
- 18th September 2023 @ 10am
- 13th November 2023 @ 10am
- 15th January 2024 @ 10am
- 25th March 2024 @ 10am

Monica Fogarty
Chief Executive
Warwickshire County Council
Shire Hall, Warwick

Disclaimers

Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests
Members are required to register their disclosable pecuniary interests within 28 days of their election of appointment to the Council. Any changes to matters registered or new matters that require to be registered must be notified to the Monitoring Officer as soon as practicable after they arise.

A member attending a meeting where a matter arises in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest must (unless they have a dispensation):

- Declare the interest if they have not already registered it
- Not participate in any discussion or vote
- Leave the meeting room until the matter has been dealt with
- Give written notice of any unregistered interest to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting

Non-pecuniary interests relevant to the agenda should be declared at the commencement of the meeting.

The public reports referred to are available on the Warwickshire Web https://democracy.warwickshire.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1

COVID-19 Pandemic
Any member or officer of the Council or any person attending this meeting must inform Democratic Services if within a week of the meeting they discover they have COVID-19 or have been in close proximity to anyone found to have COVID-19.

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Corporate Parenting Panel

Monday 13 June 2022

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members
Councillor Jeff Morgan (Chair)
Councillor Caroline Phillips
Councillor Marian Humphreys
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse

Officers
Shinderpaul Bhangal, Corporate Parenting (Team Leader - Participation)
John Coleman, Assistant Director - Children and Families
Nigel Minns, Strategic Director for People
Sharon Shaw, Service Manager - Corporate Parenting Service
Chris Baird, Interim AD for Education
Andy Carswell, Democratic Services Officer
Liss Phillips, Family Support Worker
Ian Donnachie, Children in Care 14-18 years Apprentice
Alisha Howe, Fostering Team Apprentice
Deena Moorey, Virtual School Head
Umar Teerab, Family Support Worker
Marie Dionisi, Family Support Worker
Melissa Rose, Operations Manager – Safeguarding
Deborah McGarvey, Non Social Work Operational Team Leader

Others Present

Jackie Channell, Head of Safeguarding – Warwickshire
Angela Richardson, Designated Nurse – Children in Care

1. General

(1) Apologies

There were none.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

2. Children in Care Council - Update

Ian Donnachie told members the Warwickshire Youth Conference was held on 21 April, with many workshops and activities taking place. It was noted there was a lower number of attendees from Nuneaton and Bedworth. Shinderpaul Bhangal said 26 young people had already registered to attend before the information on attendees was collected in greater detail. There had been a focus on promoting the event in North Warwickshire, and there were eight young people from this region who had planned to attend but had to drop out late on.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse said he had attended a meeting recently where the Youth Conference had been mentioned, but people were unaware of the feedback from the event. Shinderpaul Bhangal said a report was being drafted and would be circulated in due course. It contained a number of recommendations that had been proposed by the young people who had attended. John Coleman the team who had arranged the Youth Conference deserved praise and congratulations for the amount of work that had taken place to organise such a successful event. He said it had been led by young people for other young people. It had been the first in-person conference to have taken place for a few years.

Alisha Howe provided an update on the young inspectors. She reminded the Panel that in September the team had viewed 12 accommodations around the county and a report on their findings was created. One of the properties was not up to standard, and since the report was completed the kitchen had been refurbished and improved. A new inspection of the 12 accommodations that had been looked at was planned to take place 18 months after the first one. Sharon Shaw added that properties were inspected by the quality assurance team on a regular basis, and the young inspectors carried out additional checks on top of these.

Liss Phillips told the Panel about the brothers and sisters event that took place at the Myton Park offices on 12 April. This had been arranged after feedback from the Children in Care Council meetings, where siblings who were not in the same placement had asked why they had not been placed together. The event was arranged so the siblings could see each other. Around 50 young people with foster carers attended for a range of activities and games, and also a barbecue. Barnardo's had attended and officers promoted the work of the charity. A survey was sent out to those who attended who had a sibling they had been separated from, and the feedback would be reviewed and discussed at the August Senior Leadership Team meeting. Initial feedback said the young people would like this to become an annual event.

Responding to a question from the Chair, Liss Phillips said the team was trying to find out from the feedback how many young people were in a sibling group that had been split up. It was agreed this information would be circulated to members once known.

Councillor Caroline Phillips asked if, historically, the Council had tried to keep sibling groups together. She said she was aware of a situation where five children had been taken into care, but the children had not been allowed to return home after the mother had rehabilitated herself. Sharon Shaw said there was a commitment to keeping children within their family and as many options as possible would be explored, such as care being provided by a member of their extended family. Social workers had to have regard for the children's circumstances and needs changing over the years. In cases where siblings were separated, an assessment would be undertaken to make sure it was the right thing to do. With larger sibling groups it was difficult to find a placement for them all together; however Sharon Shaw said a placement had recently been

found for a group of five siblings. When it came to returning home from care, the child's wishes needed to be taken into consideration. Sharon Shaw said there were instances of children saying they did not wish to return to their family home, and if there were clear reasons then this viewpoint needed to be respected. Councillor Marian Humphreys said she was aware of a case where a successful adopter had also adopted a younger sibling who had been born during the adoption process. She mentioned this to highlight there was a desire to keep siblings together as much as possible.

Liss Phillips provided an update on 'Watch Your Words', which was a booklet that promoted more positive language relating to children in care, explained acronyms and jargon, and contained a section on victim blaming. It was to help children in care understand the language used in their files, and to help them understand what was happening in their care meetings so they could ask the right questions. The booklet had now been completed after six months of work and would be launched on 27 June. It would be shared with schools, police and other stakeholders. John Coleman said the contents had been reviewed by him and members of the Senior Leadership Team, and it was intended for a copy to be available to every member of staff. There was a communications plan regarding sharing it amongst the police, NHS and partner agencies.

Marie Dionisi said the barbecue evenings had been relaunched at Myton to coincide with the monthly Youth Forum and Children in Care Council meetings. They took place on the second Thursday of each month. Allotments had been created at Myton and young people attending the meetings were being encouraged to use them and do some gardening. The possibility of further allotments being developed at the Old Mayor's House, with a view to them being used by young people at the weekend, was being explored.

Liss Phillips said Easter egg hampers and meals were distributed to children in care during April, following help from Stacey Bains from the Churches Across Warwickshire group and donations from businesses.

Liss Phillips said she and Umar Teerab had been invited to a police scrutiny panel meeting at the headquarters at Leek Wootton. They had viewed bodycam footage of police interactions with people. Liss Phillips explained she was given options of which footage she would like to view and she generally chose interactions involving people under the age of 25, and those taking place in North Warwickshire and Rugby. Feedback would be provided on how the situations were handled and this would be fed into the training for the individual officer involved and the police force generally. Opportunities were available for people to go on patrols with officers. Liss Phillips said the intention was to involve young people who did not have a good experience with the police, in the hope it would provide them with a better relationship. Responding to a question from Councillor Humphreys, Liss Phillips said the intention was to try and set up a scrutiny panel for each district of Warwickshire. Councillor Humphreys said she would like to attend the scrutiny panel meetings.

Regarding apprenticeships, Shinderpaul Bhangal reminded the Panel that Warwickshire was represented in a regional participation network. The network had agreed to create a guide for care experience apprentices for those aged 16 and over. The Warwickshire representatives had taken the lead in a subgroup that was created to prepare the guidebook. A 16-page document outlining good practice for creating apprenticeships had been produced and endorsed by the network, and was now being shared across the 14 local authorities involved with a view to being used as a way of benchmarking good practice in promoting opportunities for care leavers.

Marie Dionisi said the Connect and Go team had successfully applied for a grant through the Department of Transport. The grant would be used to supply an electric-powered nine-seater minibus to be used across Coventry and Warwickshire, and a small vehicle to be used in the Nuneaton area, as part of a pilot scheme aimed at tackling a vulnerability and loneliness. It would help young people attend events they might not otherwise be able to get to. It was explained the minibus would be used in Coventry as some of Warwickshire's children in care lived there.

Liss Phillips said the April meeting of the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum had been attended by Kim Evans from Barnardo's and a representative of the Children's Commissioner, to highlight the work they did. Feedback from the meeting suggesting transport and connectivity for young people was an issue, and improvements could be made to the drop-in sessions. Recent meetings had also explained about what life would be like for care leavers after the age of 25. Feedback on this had been sought and the findings would be presented to the Senior Leadership Team in due course. Liss Phillips said consideration was being given to separating the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum to make it easier to do age appropriate activities, with a view to increasing participation.

Umar Teerab said workshops had taken place for foster carers, who were shown videos taken by young people outlining what they considered a good foster carer to be and what was not.

Sharon Shaw said there was a refugee celebration event on 22 June at the Heart of England. A series of films that had been made by children in care would be shown on 22 and 23 June at Northgate House. These had been funded through the West Midlands Migration money. Trips to Bournemouth and Blackpool and taken place, and future visits to Wembley and Snowdon were planned.

The Chair thanked officers for everything that had been happening, saying they should be proud of the work they were doing for Warwickshire.

3. Virtual School Head Report

The item was introduced by Deena Moorey. She said last September offers had been made to all those in Years 11, 12 and 13 who had applied. However not everyone had been able to sustain the offer they had been made. Deena Moorey said an increased amount of work was taking place with the various education settings to see what could be done to ensure the young people kept on with their placements. One theory was youngsters were seeing adults working from home and would rather do that than have to travel into a setting, or be working and earning money instead of attending college. Improving dropout rates was a focus because it had been noticed it was a trend.

The university explorers and artwork across West Midlands projects had both been going well. There had also been a project for the designated teachers, allowing them to develop and promote their leadership skills with a view to improving outcomes for vulnerable learners. Three well-attended sessions had already taken place and a further three were planned. Conferences looking at the child in need agenda would take place in October, aimed at the designated teachers and safeguarding leads. A sports leadership course took place over Easter with the help of Coventry City Football Club, which had resulted in all but one of the attendees earning a qualification.

Regarding attainment, Deena Moorey said it was anticipated there would be gaps in the foundation stage for children who would be finishing Reception class due to learning time lost as a result of

Covid-19. This was in line with what was expected nationally, although it was expected that the gap would not be as prominent in later year groups. An update on attainment levels would be provided in the autumn term once the SATS and GCSE data had been validated and was available.

Attendance at training sessions had improved now that they were returning to being done face to face. There had been a lot of changes to who was the designated teacher within the various schools over the previous two years, and now all of them had had access to the training programmes. Deena Moorey highlighted that Warwickshire's pupils were above the national average in terms of the number who were attending schools with a good or outstanding Ofsted rating. Attendance levels were over 90 per cent in most year groups, but some concerns remained over attendance rates of children in Years 9, 10 and 11.

Councillor Roodhouse said he would be raising the issue of school attendance at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the following day. He said he had been on a national call recently and it had been suggested some children had not returned to school and were continuing to be home schooled. Deena Moorey said new statutory guidance on attendance would be introduced from September 2023 but Warwickshire County Council was already working on implementing the changes.

Councillor Marian Humphreys said complaints from residents suggested that some children had actively sought to get suspended from school. She also said there were insufficient resources in schools to provide enough support to children who needed it. She said she was aware of a case where an eight-year-old had been sent home from school as there was no provision to deal with them. Chris Baird said schools would try a range of approaches, including bringing in additional support. However much of the funding for this type of support came from the high needs block, and there was national pressure to provide for this and a number of local authorities were overspending on provision. Chris Baird said there were some emerging issues around emotional wellbeing and mental health and programmes of support were being worked on, some of which had a specific element aimed at preventing exclusions. Deena Moorey said there were two secondary schools that had recently experienced a large number of suspensions and meetings with headteachers were planned with an aim at providing a resolution. Members were told that the schools were in Nuneaton and Leamington. Councillor Humphreys said the parents who had raised concerns with her were parents of primary school children. Deena Moorey said it was for schools to provide positive solutions to the situation and ensure appropriate allocation of resources, while acknowledging that funding levels were tight. Training and development was available to schools to help. Members were told primary schools would not be allowed to suspend pupils by 2030.

Councillor Humphreys stated her belief the situation arose partially because primary schools only employed one SENCO, and that all teachers should be given training on special educational needs. She said if the SENCO was unavailable then issues would not be resolved. Councillor Phillips stated her belief some schools had poor practice in place relating to special educational needs, with some using what amounted to punishment rooms. Deena Moorey stated there was little of this taking place in Warwickshire.

Deena Moorey explained two additional funding allocations had been in place for pupil premium plus this year, one for tuition and the other for general education recovery. She said the Virtual School had combined the two revenue streams and, rather than allocate the amount given,

enabled schools to ask for the exact amount they needed. Much of this had been used for supporting young people's social, emotional and mental health. Many children in care did receive some additional tuition, but Deena Moorey said this figure was lower than the Department for Education would have liked. She explained that for the 2022-23 school year the Virtual School would be operating an opt out rather than an opt in model for tuition to ensure it reached more children.
Deena Moorey added that completion rates of personal education plans remained high.

Warwickshire had not been successful in its application for funding from the post-16 pupil premium pilot. Birmingham, Worcester and Staffordshire had all been successful in their applications.

4. Briefing on Boys In Care

Sharon Shaw said a question had been asked about why there was a disproportionately high number of boys in care. The data had been analysed and it was found that 85 of the boys were unaccompanied asylum seekers, which made up 10.4 per cent of the total children in care population. If this group was not included in the figures then the percentage of boys in care was lower than statistical neighbours.

Councillor Phillips asked if any Warwickshire-based asylum-seeking children would be getting sent to Rwanda, and if this could be objected to. John Coleman said this was not something the Council had any control over. Although it was intended to send some families to Rwanda, there was no indication that there were any plans to send unaccompanied children. Warwickshire had recently agreed to house six unaccompanied asylum seekers who had been held at hotels in Kent.

5. Update on Children's Homes

Sharon Shaw told members that the first children's home had been built and an open day launch for neighbouring residents had taken place. Once registered with Ofsted the home was scheduled to open by the end of September. It would be a home for four young people between the ages of eight and 12. Staff were looking to identify young people out of area who could move back to Warwickshire to the home.

The process of setting up the second home was now underway. This would be in the Leamington area and comprise of two buildings, which would be for young people aged 12 and over. Sharon Shaw said one of the buildings would be used as an emergency provision for two young people, which would avoid young people having to go to emergency duty carers. An offer had been accepted on a third property in Nuneaton, which was intended to be used by children with social and emotional health needs, while the planned fourth new home would be for children with disabilities.

Sharon Shaw said part of the process of setting up the new homes entailed engagement with social and care workers, borough and district councils, and people living in the locality. She said it was important to have neighbours onside from the outset as that could result in people looking to find fault with the new homes.

6. Update on District and Borough Care Leaver Pledge

John Coleman drew members' attention to the end of the report in the agenda pack, which contained the wording of a pledge that the Council had asked all districts and boroughs to sign up to. The report and pledge were due to be agreed by the chief executives of the districts and boroughs at a meeting on 26 April but there was insufficient time to discuss the item. but at the last on the day they found they didn't have any time to talk about this item. The item was then moved to a meeting on 9 June but members said they wanted to discuss the pledge in private. John Coleman said he felt this meant not everyone agreed with all of the elements of the pledge. He asked if anyone had any comments on the pledge, and encouraged members to contact their district or borough council on the subject. John Coleman reminded members that each council had a statutory requirement to publish a local offer, and agreeing the pledge would enable the districts and boroughs to be compliant with this. He said the pledge applied to all care experienced young people, not just those who lived in Warwickshire.

Responding to a point raised by Councillor Phillips, John Coleman said the report had been co-written by Jane Grant, the head of housing at Nuneaton and Bedworth Council, who had been supportive and believed the contents of the report was achievable. Councillor Roodhouse said he had been trying to find out information from Rugby Borough Council but nobody had responded to him.

John Coleman said he had held a number of meetings with all the heads of leisure but stated his belief they had not been productive. He said the exception had been with North Warwickshire Council, who had agreed to provide 17 free leisure passes. He said it had been proposed that the County Council would pay for the Council Tax element and the districts and boroughs had been asked to pay for the leisure passes. He stated his belief this was not unreasonable and highlighted that in Hertfordshire the ten district and borough councils were paying for the council tax and leisure passes.

7. Performance Data

Sharon Shaw drew members' attention to the fact the number of children in care was continuing to decrease as the courts were now working post-Covid and were able to process cases. Additionally support could now be better provided through the family group and conference workers, which enabled staff to either reunite or keep children remaining at home, and the stay team that worked with adolescents to encourage them to stay home. There had been a decrease in the use of using agency foster carers. Sharon Shaw drew members' attention to the fact that more than 60 per cent of children in care were aged ten or over.

Sharon Shaw said there had been an increase in the number of initial health assessments taking place. However the most recent data available came from March. Sharon Shaw said there were 11 episodes of missing children. Many of these children went missing on a very frequent basis, whereas others were a one-off. Angela Richardson said she was working on improving pathways for information sharing and hoped that in future data could be supplied between the CCG and care providers in a more timely manner.

Responding to a question from the Chair, Sharon Shaw said Section 20 Order related to providing voluntary accommodation for teenagers, and this would often be given at the request of parents while an interim care order was produced. A full Care Order would give shared parental responsibility between the local authority and the family. In some instances the Council could still place a child back at home in a placement with their parents but more likely they would be put into

a foster placement. Additionally there was a Placement Order, which allowed the Council to place a child up for adoption.

Regarding the frequently missing children, Sharon Shaw said regular multi-agency meetings with the police, health and education services took place to share information and try to draw up plans. Sometimes it was necessary to obtain an order that allowed the Council to remove the child from where they were. For example there was a young person who was believed to frequently go to a traveller's site and an order would be required to remove them from that site.

8. Forward Plan

John Coleman said a report on special guardianship orders was ready to be discussed at the next scheduled meeting on 6 July. It was agreed the next meeting would focus solely on this topic.

Sharon Shaw said the report from ACE and the Warwickshire adoption report would be ready for a meeting in September and Angela Richardson said the SWIFT annual report for health should also be ready. John Coleman said a report on timescales for mental health assessments, particularly for those over the age of 16, would also be ready for a September meeting.

Councillor Roodhouse asked if more time could be spent discussing episodes of missing children and the processes involved, to give reassurance to members that they were working. Sharon Shaw suggested inviting a representative of the police to join the discussion after Councillor Roodhouse said it could tie in with exploring child exploitation.

9. Good News Stories

Angela Richardson told the Panel she was now the designated nurse for children in care, which was a role that had not previously existed as a separate entity. Her work would cover Coventry and Warwickshire and would mean there was an increased capacity to carry out work relating to children in care. The Chair said the Council was looking forward to working with her in the future.

10. Any Other Business

There were no other items to discuss.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 6 July.

The meeting rose at 11.37am

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Chair

Corporate Parenting Panel

CiCC & Voice, Influence and Change Team Update

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Panel note the work of the Children in Care Council (CiCC), Care Leavers Forum (CLF) and the Voice, Influence and Change Team (Participation).

1.2 That the Panel acknowledge the work that continues to take place with young people.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 This is a standing item on the Corporate Parenting Panel agenda which updates members on the work of the CiCC and CLF.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 There are no significant financial implications to consider at this stage.

4. Environmental Implications

4.1 There are no significant environmental implications to consider at this stage.

5. Supporting Information

5.1 This update covers the period from 31st May to 17th September 2022.

5.2 ***Refugee Celebration Week:***

Refugee Celebration Event – 20th June 2022

Hired the Heart of England Conference Centre in Fillongley. 118 young people, foster carers and professionals attended the event to celebrate together. The theme of the week was ‘Healing’.

John Coleman and Cllr Jeff Morgan spoke at the event and we heard from Harvir Singh who has produced the three films documenting the journeys of our young people seeking asylum. The first of these three films was shown at the event (My Experiences of Arriving in the UK), followed by an awards ceremony to celebrate some key accomplishments by our young people. Young Refugee of the Year award was also presented to Eliza Yeng. After the awards, everyone shared a meal together and then music was played by Aman and Levi. The young people loved dancing!

Refugee Celebration Film Event for Professionals – 22nd June 2022

On the 22nd June, 51 professionals met at Northgate House to view the three films that have been produced documenting the journey of our young people seeking asylum.

Film 1: My experience of arriving into the UK
Film 2: My experience of the support that I have received
Film 3: My experience of settling into life in the UK

Mati Hotak and Umar Teerab spoke about their experiences and introduced Films 2 and 3. Harvir Singh (the producer of the films) spoke about his experiences of making the films and introduced the first film.

There were opportunities for people to network and socialise before and after the event.

Moving forwards, the films have now been edited and uploaded to YouTube. They will be distributed across the organisation and further afield for use in training and development, and with young people on their own journeys.

My first experience of arriving in the UK

My experience of the support I have received

My experience of settling into UK life

5.3 Staff Conference - Feedback

The Voice, Influence and Change team had a slot at the staff conference on Friday 15th July to talk about the work that we do and how we are listening to and responding to young peoples' voices.

Liss opening the section by giving an overview of the work that participation does and introduced a video (produced by Harvir Singh) giving snapshots of all the young people engaging with activities and events. Alisha then spoke and talk about the voice of the young people and some of the issues that they are talking about currently.

Umar then spoke about our young people seeking asylum and the work that we do with them. He also introduced a film being made by Ian Donnachie which showed young people telling us about their experiences of support they have received with some suggestions of how to improve. This film is still being finished and edited by Ian. Ian himself then came and spoke about SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and the work that Sam Craven is completing with parent carers and young people with disabilities.

Mati Hotak then spoke about the youth conference that was held in April and introduced a short film made about the event. To finish, Alice and Zoe from the youth council spoke to the staff team about the youth conference, youth council and youth council elections that are due to take place in 2024.

Why are you doing the job that you do now?

Participation Film: to be shown
Youth Conference Video: https://youtu.be/WbvkQN9B5mU

5.4 Bournemouth Trip – 31st May 2022

12 families and children attended the Bournemouth Trip on May 31st (during the half term break). The ages of the children ranged from 5-14. Children and families were picked on up on minibuses from South and North Warwickshire. All the children had an opportunity to play in the sand, build sandcastles and some were even brave enough to enjoy a swim in the cold sea. Staff encouraged the children to join in with a game of cricket on the beach.

Staff and children all enjoyed an ice cream and fish and chips. One of the boys said he particularly enjoyed the arcade and the fish and chips! He seemed to also enjoy burying some of the staff in the sand!

Before the trip had ended, children were given the chance to mooch around Bournemouth town centre and purchase a souvenir.

5.5 Refugee Football –

31st July – Milton Keynes

On the 31st July, Warwickshire hosted a football match between our Warwickshire Refugee football team and the Refugee Football team from Milton Keynes. The pitch was hired at St Nicholas Park for an 11 a-side match.

Both teams played well and it was close, with our Warwickshire Young People sealing the victory 8 goals to 6.

The young people all had a fantastic time and were very respectful of one another. New friendships could also have been made.

Milton Keynes have invited Warwickshire to their home pitch for another friendly match on 16th October.

West Midlands 5-a-side tournament

On the 17th September, our football team took part in a 5-a-side tournament in Solihull again 7 other teams from local authorities across the West Midlands. Our Warwickshire team played fantastically and won all their matches in the round robin stage of the tournament.

After a tough match in the semi-finals, they also sealed a victory and then faced Wolverhampton in the final. They played well but did lose to Wolverhampton, but sealed 2nd place in the tournament and received a trophy and individual medals.

Wolverhampton are proposing to host the next care leaver football tournament next year.

5.6 ***Housing Related Support work***

Throughout July and August, we worked with the housing commissioner to collate some feedback from young people across Warwickshire about their housing related support that they have received.

This involved producing Mentimeter surveys for each accommodation area and those accessing floating support. We also visited one accommodation block face to face and had direct conversation with young mothers in accommodation.

The feedback that was received has been sent back to the commissioner and will be used in future funding bids and projects of work.

5.7 Care Leavers Forum (CLF) Updates

All Care Leavers Forum meetings are now taking place face to face. From July, we have also started using Myton to host the meetings to give us more options for food and to keep the costs down.

The following items were discussed at the June and July CLF meetings:

June – Life after 25 Part 2
7 young people in attendance. Zoe Friend from Leaving Care came and spoke about options after 25 and the process of leaving the Leaving Care team.

July – Mental Health Support
9 young people in attendance. We were hoping Kooth would be able to come to this meeting but they had no availability. From this meeting, what the young people raised around mental health has been brought to SLT with further actions being considered.

September
9 young people attended for a 'welcome back' social including fish and chips and games and activities.

5.8 BBQ and Mental Health training at Select Care – 9th August

On 9th August, a BBQ was held for our young people seeking asylum who live in the Select Care accommodation in Birmingham. Around 30 young people were in attendance and enjoyed sharing in food and company together.

After the BBQ, 22 young people then attended a Mental Health Support session focussing on sleep and how to achieve a good quality of this.

5.9 Harry Potter Trips – 31st August and 2nd September

31st August – 16 young people in care aged 10-15 years
2nd September – 12 young care experienced young people aged 16-25 years

Both trips to the Harry Potter Studios in Leavesdon went very well and were fully attended. The young people enjoyed going around the studios, being with their peers and having a fun day out during the summer holidays. They all brought a packed lunch for the journey there and ate together at a service station stop on the way home.

The trip also provided the opportunity some siblings who do not live together to spend the day with each other.

From both trips, young people became interested in being members of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and the Care Leavers Forum (CLF).

6. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

6.1 An update report to be presented to the next Corporate Parenting Panel.

Appendices

None.

Background Papers

None.

	Name	Contact Information
Report Author	Deborah McGarvey	deborahmcgarvey@warwickshire.gov.uk 077990 400006
Assistant Director	John Coleman	johncoleman@warwickshire.gov.uk
Lead Director	Nigel Minns	nigelminns@warwickshire.gov.uk
Lead Member	Jeff Morgan	jeffmorgan@warwickshire.gov.uk

The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): none
Other members: none

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Corporate Parenting Panel

(as at September 2022)

817 Children in Care

An increase of **3 Children in Care** since August 2022

Children in Care Placement Type

WCC Foster Carer (inc Family and Friends carers)

320 children (39.2%); which is a decrease of 9 children on the previous month end.

Placed for Adoption

20 children (2.4%) of all CIC at 30 September; the same number as the previous month

Agency Foster Carer

192 CIC (23.5%); a decrease of 7 children since 31/08/2022

Residential Establishment

81 children (9.9%); an increase of 1 child since 31/08/2022

No. Children in Care - Monthly trend

	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22
ALL CiC (**Including** Asylum Seekers)	808	+ 12	+ 1	- 2	- 5	+ 3 → **817**
ALL CiC (Excluding Asylum Seekers)	722	+ 7	+ 1	- 0	- 8	-13 → **709**

At 30 September 2022, Warwickshire's Children in Care population increased by 3 to 817, whilst the no. of CiC excluding asylum seekers decreased by 13 to 709.

670 CiC target for 2022/23 — 670

Legal Status of Children in Care as at 30 September 2022

52.3% (427) of CiC are on a **Full Care Order**; this is a decrease of 6 children since 31/08/2022

14.2% (116) of CiC are on an **Interim Care Order**; this is the same number of children as the previous month end.

4.9% (40) of CiC are on a **Placement Order**; this is a decrease of 3 children since 31/08/2022.

28.5% (233) of CiC are subject to **S20 Accommodation**; this is an increase of 12 children) since 31st August 2022.

Leaving Care Activity Status

As at 30 September 2022, of those Relevant and Former Relevant Care Leavers (aged 16 - 21) ...

- **83.9%** had a contact within the last 8 weeks
- **78.7%** were in suitable accomm odation
- **54.3%** were in EET (Employment, Education & Training)

CiC out of county

as at 30th September 2022

21.3%

(**174**) of CiC were placed outside the LA boundary and more than 20 miles from where they used to live

NB. Please note that this is a quarterly measure

CiC 'Missing' or 'Away from placement without authorisation'

32 children in care were missing (103 missing episodes)

During August 2022 there were **103 episodes** of a child missing or away from their placement without authorisation. This related to **32 individual children** with **19 children** having multiple missing episodes during the month.

Gender

61.6% (503) Male

38.2% (312) Female

2 'Indeterminate'

Ethnicity

1/4 (26.4%) of Children in Care (Including Asylum Seekers) are **Minority Ethnic (216)**;

73.6% (601) are of White ethnicity

Allocated Team

13.2% (108) of Children in Care are Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

7.5% (61) are allocated to the Children with Disability teams

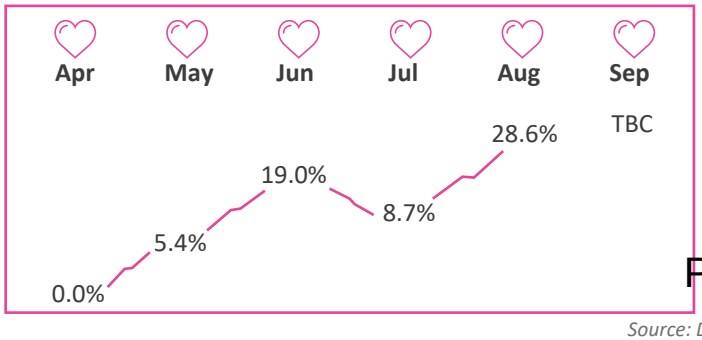
24.0% (196) are allocated to the CiC 14-18 Years Team

88.5% of Children in Care at 30 September 2022 have had a '**completed**' health assessment in the last 12 months

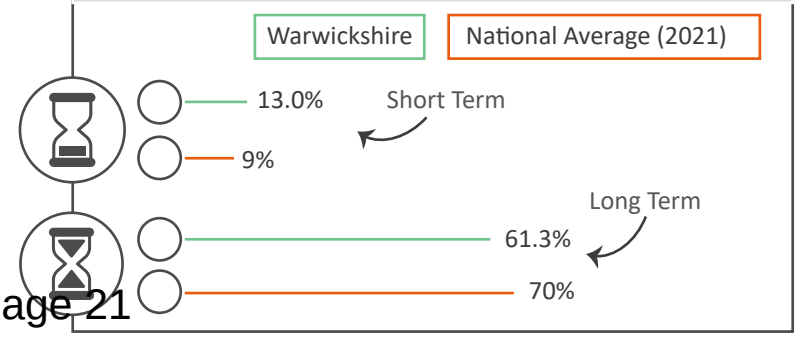
Age breakdown of the 817 children

2.6% (21)	15.3% (125)	16.9% (138)	34.4% (281	30.8% (252)
0 years old	aged 1 - 4	aged 5 - 9	aged 10 - 15	aged 16 - 17

% of CiC accommodated during the month (**who remained accommodated**) and who had their **IHA within 20 working days** (Monthly trend)



Short Term / Long Term Placement Stability of Children in Care as at **30 September 2022**



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Agenda Item 4

Annual Report of the Adoption Service 2021-2022 for Warwickshire County Council

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Caitlin Burrows – Permanency Social Worker

Date: July 2022

CHILDREN & FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE

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1. Introduction

This is the Warwickshire County Council adoption service report for the period April 2021 - March 2022. It provides an overview of adoption activity and performance. Warwickshire delivers adoptions services with the regional adoption agency – Adoption Central England (ACE) which has been operational since 1 February 2018. This is in accordance with national policy that all local authority adoption services are required to be part of a regional adoption agency by 2020. This report is to be read alongside the ACE Annual Report and the annual report from ACE Adoption Panel.

As a local authority shared services hosted by Warwickshire County Council, ACE provides the following services:

- Recruitment, preparation and assessment of adoptive parents.
- Family finding and specific recruitment.
- Matching support and post order support to adoptive families for 12 months.
- Non agency adoption - the provision of information and court reports.
- Assessment of need for adoption support including requests to the Adoption Support Fund.
- Direct support to adoptive families including therapeutic interventions.
- Training for adopters and support groups.
- Independent Birth Parent Support Services -Family Connexions
- Training for social workers.
- Duty and advice service.
- Co-ordination of Adoption Panels across the region.

This arrangement allows for a greater strategic approach to adopter recruitment widening the potential pool of adopters for children. Adoption support services have been enhanced including the provision of therapeutic interventions that are delivered and coordinated more consistently and effectively across the region.

The local authority engagement with ACE is underpinned by a Hosting and Partnership Agreement and through the governance arrangements and partnership working there is the opportunity to ensure that the best possible outcomes are secured for children in a timely way and that adoptive families receive high quality support when they need this.

2. Local Authority Update

Over the past year, Warwickshire adoption service has made progress in the following areas:

- We continue to place children in adoptive placements, once a Placement Order is granted and our figures remain lower than the 3-year national average.
- Fostering for adoption is considered for children where appropriate and this ensures that children receive stability and permanence at the earliest opportunity.
- We continue to be successful in placing sibling groups, ensuring that children have the opportunity to maintain their sibling relationship preventing them from experiencing further trauma by being separated from their brother or sisters. We have successfully achieved adoption for 8 sibling groups with adopters including 2 sibling groups of 3 and 6 sibling groups of 2.
- We have developed a positive working relationship with the Agency Decision Maker and ACE.
- We regularly review the children who have been subject to a Placement Order.
- Despite the ongoing impact of a global pandemic our number of children placed for adoption decreased slightly to the previous year however the number of children adopted increased.

3. Service Activity

In summary, during 2021/22:

- 36 children (up 13 from 2020/21) were subject of the decision that they should be placed for adoption
- 22 children (down 7 from 2020/21) were made subject to a Placement Order by the court
- 16 children (down 14 from 2020/21) were matched with prospective adopters
- 24 children (down 4 from 2020/21) were placed with adopters
- 34 children (up 6 from 2020/21) were made subject to an Adoption Order by the court.
- No disruptions happened (down 2 from 2020/21)
- 11 Change of Plans/ Review of Plans (down 2 from 2020/21) were completed which enabled alternative permanency options to be progressed

Overall children's performance:

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Number of children adopted	23	28	34
Number of children placed with adopters	28	28	18
Number of children with an ADM & awaiting match	46	29	37
Number of disruptions	0	2	0

The above figures indicate that in the last 12 months although the number of children placed with adopters has reduced there has been an increase in the number of Adoption Orders being granted. Seven of the children who were adopted during this year had been living with their adopters for over 2 years (one child was adopted by his foster carers having lived with them since 2017 and one child who moved to his adopters in 2018). This explains why more Adoption Orders were granted than decisions that children should be placed for adoption.

As shown below, there have been 22 Placement Orders secured in the last 12 months, which continues the year on year decrease from the 49 Placement Orders granted in 2017/18.

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Total No. of Placement Orders Granted	49	31	30	29	22

The national figures are not yet available for 2021/22 but figures recorded nationally for year ending 2021 show a fall in adoption numbers by 18%, a further fall from the 2020 numbers and SGOs have increased by a further 2% compared to 2020. Whilst there has been an increase in both Adoption Orders and SGOs in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21, the national trend has been evident in Warwickshire over the last 5 years with an overall decrease in Adoption Orders and an overall increase in SGOs and CAOs. It is possible that historically the children who left care on an SGO may have been placed for adoption.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Adoptions Orders	70	46	34	23	28	34
Special Guardianship orders	26	33	18	31	37	46
Child Arrangement Orders	11	2	15	10	4	16

Last year there was a considerable decrease in the number of Agency Decisions being made, this is likely to be due to the delays within court processes as a result of Covid-19. However, as the courts have progressed matters, we can see an increase in the number of Agency Decisions being made this year with a rise to 36. The Permanency Social Worker meets regularly with the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) to identify children where there is a possibility of early permanence to ensure there is no drift in care planning and tracking plans.

Data for Adoption Orders granted in 2021/22:

Age at AO (Years)	Total No. of AOs Granted	%
Under 1	0	0%
1 to 4	23	68%
5 to 9	11	32%
10 to 15	0	0%
16 and over	0	0%
Total	**34**	**100%**

Gender	Total No. of AOs Granted	%
M	24	71%
F	10	29%
Total	**34**	**100%**

Ethnicity	Total No. of AOs Granted	%
White British	30	88%
White and Black Caribbean	3	9%
White Other	1	3%
Total	**34**	**100%**

Sibling Groups?	Total No. of AOs Granted	%
No	16	47%
Yes*	18	53%
Total	**34**	**100%**

* Refers to two sibling groups of 3 and six sibling group of 2 children

Of the 34 children who were adopted between April 2021 and March 2022, 24 were male (71%) and 10 (29%) were female. This is the largest split we have seen in the last 3 years (2020/21 was 57% male and 43% female and 2019/20 was 52% males and 48% female). The national data for this time period is not currently available.

It is evident from the chart above that the largest proportion (68%) of Warwickshire adoptions are for children aged 1 to 4 years old. In the year April 2021 to March 2022, 23 children adopted were aged between 1 and 4 years of age when the Adoption Order was granted and 11 were aged 5 to 9 years. There were no children under the age of 1 or over the age of 10 adopted in Warwickshire in 2021-2022.

There continues to be a clear majority of White British children being adopted in Warwickshire however this is of no bias as this high percentage is in line with the high percentage of White British children who were made subject to a Placement Order the

same year. Therefore, this shows the consistency in the ethnicities of children that have been placed for adoption and successfully adopted. This also demonstrates that Warwickshire have a commitment to securing permanency for children of all ethnicities though adoption.

No. of Placement Orders by Ethnicity:

Ethnicity	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
White British	41	26	27	28	16
White and Asian	2	0	1	0	0
Any other Mixed Background	3	0	0	0	0
Any other White Background	1	1	1	0	2
White and Black Caribbean	1	3	0	1	2
Any other Asian Background	1	0	0	0	0
White and Black African	0	1	0	0	2
Any other Ethnicity	0	0	1	0	0
Total	**49**	**31**	**30**	**29**	**22**

Of the 34 children who were adopted in 2021/22, 2 individual children were adopted by their foster carers, 1 couple were assessed by ACE as adopters and the other couple made a private application. These figures are in addition to the children who are placed in Fostering for Adoption homes which are mentioned below. This is a very positive outcome for young people who have established secure relationships with their carers and do not have to experience a move providing them with consistent care. Warwickshire continue to support foster carers through this process where it is assessed as being in the child's best interests.

Fostering for Adopt

Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, 6 children were placed for fostering in Fostering for Adoption placements and during the same time period 5 children who were in a Fostering for Adoption placement had their placement changed from a fostering placement to an adoptive placement. There has been a reduction in the use of Fostering for Adoption placements in line with a reduction in all adoptive placements however when this is the right plan for children Warwickshire continues to use

Fostering for Adoption placements to minimise disruption and change for our children and these placements are successful in securing positive outcomes for our children.

Children Awaiting a Match

There are 37 children who have an ADM decision but have not been placed or matched in comparison to 29 last year. This includes 15 children who do not have a Placement Order and are still in care proceedings where active family finding won't be taking place. This doesn't include the two children who are in an Fostering for Adoption Placement awaiting an ADM decision and formal match and have been discarded from this figure as they are both relinquished babies who don't have an adoption decision yet. The table below shows the breakdown of the status of children awaiting matches for the last 3 years.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Awaiting Match - No Placement Order	18	6	13
Awaiting Match - With Placement Order	18	16	19
In FFA Placement - Awaiting Formal Match (with Placement Order)	2	1	1
In FFA Placement - Awaiting Formal Match (No Placement Order)	1	2	2
In FFA Placement - Awaiting Formal Match & ADM Decision	0	0	2
Awaiting Change of Plan	7	3	2
Awaiting Private Adoption Order	0	1	0
Total	**46**	**29**	**39**

We have continued to maintain a consistent approach to ensure that when a change of plan is required there is no delay in achieving this and a process is in place to advise the Agency Decision Maker when children require a change of plan so that this can be completed in a timely manner. It is evident in the figures above that our approach ensures there are less children awaiting a Change of Plan decision.

The number of children in Warwickshire who are awaiting a match has increased by 8, this remains a relatively low number in comparison to the years before which supports the evidence that the number of children with a plan of adoption continues to decline.

Data for children with a Placement Order but not yet living with their adopters

During 2021/22, 20 children had a Placement Order granted and were still awaiting a match (see breakdown table above). Please note, as of 31 March 2022, included in the 20 children is one child that was living in an FFA placement, and eight children were linked but had not yet attended matching panel. This leaves 11 children who we are actively family finding for at the end of 2021/22, inclusive of six Placement Orders granted in March 2022. The breakdown data of these children is shown below.

Age at 31/03/2022 (Years)	Children with PO not yet placed	%
Under 1	1	5%
1 to 4	13	65%
5 to 9	6	30%
10 to 15	0	0%
16 and over	0	0%
Total	**20**	**100%**

Gender	Children with PO not yet placed	%
M	13	65%
F	7	35%
Total	**20**	**100%**

Ethnicity	Children with PO not yet placed	%
White British	15	75%
White and Black Caribbean	2	10%
White and Black African	2	10%
Any other ethnicity	1	5%
Total	**20**	**100%**

Disability	Children with PO not yet placed	%
No	20	100%
Yes	0	0%
Total	**20**	**100%**

Sibling Groups?	Children with PO not yet placed	%
No	7	35%
Yes*	13	65%
Total	**20**	**100%**

* Includes 5 sibling groups of 2 and 1 group of 3 however the sibling group of 3 were being adopted separately.

The data for children awaiting a match, above, shows a similar trend to the last two years. It is evident that the highest need for adopters are for male children between the ages of one to four years old and for sibling groups. Of the twenty children with Placement Orders 6 are recorded as being slightly older aged five to nine. Therefore, alongside general family finding consideration should continue to be given to targeting adopters that can meet the needs of older children with experiences of trauma and more complex needs.

Family Finding

Family finders from ACE are identified for the following groups of children:

- Sibling groups
- Black and minority ethnic children
- Children who are disabled or have other additional needs
- Children who are aged five or over at time of placement
- Children who have been waiting for some time.

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic and national restrictions, ACE have not been able to hold any face to face family finding events or national exchange days where Warwickshire children have been able to be featured. However, six children have been able to attend covid secure activity days on 5 separate occasions. One child attended 3 activity days within this year before a Change of Plan was considered.

ACE initially family find within their ACE approved adopters for 12 weeks following the making of the Placement Order. ACE continues to subscribe to ‘Link Maker’ from Spring 2021 ACE now use ‘Link Maker’ for all of their adopters and children waiting for a match. All Warwickshire children with a Placement Order are featured on ‘Link Maker’ following the making of this order. Alongside ‘Link Maker’ there is also a ‘children who are waiting’ booklet which is shared with adopters and discussed during assessment and training. The various matching forums have been successful in matching children with adopters.

Following this 12 week period, if funding has been agreed for an inter-agency search, alongside continuing to search within ACE, family finding expands to the West Midlands Collaboration. This is an arrangement with the Regional Adoption Agencies

and Voluntary Adoption Agencies across the Midlands that when adopters cannot be found within the agency, the first search for interagency adopters is within the region. The West Midlands Collaboration is an agreement which facilitates interagency placements in a timely manner, ensuring appropriate and comprehensive support is in place for the families. ACE meet with the West Midlands Collaboration on a monthly basis to share information of children waiting for adopters and promotes family finding groups within the regional area.

This year, ACE and Warwickshire have piloted Linking Meetings which take place once the Social Workers have visited the prospective adopters. These meetings allow space for the Child's Social Worker, the Permanency Social Worker and representatives from ACE to discuss, reflect and evidence the reasons for progressing or not progressing a match. This also provides an opportunity for the team to plan the next stages of the adoption journey for the child to prevent drift between linking and matching panel.

Brothers and Sisters

'Together or Apart' assessments of brothers and sisters underpin and support decisions to place brothers and sisters together or apart and maintain meaningful relationships. Warwickshire has been successful in placing 8 children in 4 sibling groups of 2 between April 2021 and March 2022. In addition to these sibling groups, 2 other children were placed with adopters who had previously adopted a sibling and therefore grow up living with a brother or sister in their adoptive home. Given that sibling groups are amongst the "harder to place" groups this is extremely positive.

Warwickshire are in support of the exceptional payments which ACE make to support the placement of brothers and sisters together. This highlights Warwickshire's and ACE's commitment and recognition of the importance of the relationships between brothers and sisters as this relationship can provide a source of continuity throughout a child's lifetime and can often be the longest relationship they experience. It is extremely positive that over half of the children placed for adoption in Warwickshire this year were placed with their brothers and/or sisters and evidences the excellent working relationship between ACE and Warwickshire in securing permanency for our children.

ACE provide a mandatory training module specifically on adopting siblings which all prospective adopters attend. This is run monthly and at this training, prospective adopters are shown profiles of sibling groups who are waiting for matching.

Interagency placements

An interagency placement occurs when a local authority places a child with an adopter approved by another agency (either local authority, voluntary adoption agency or another regional adoption agency). A fee is paid to cover the cost incurred by that agency in recruiting, assessing, approving and family finding that adopter along with an element of for adoption support. Interagency placements are often used for “hard to place” individual or groups of children.

This year, of the 18 children placed with adopters, Warwickshire have needed to use 3 inter-agency adopters for 3 sibling groups of 2. The remaining 12 children were placed with ACE adopters (11 adoptive placements including 2 foster carers who were assessed by ACE). Although the majority of children are placed with ACE adopters we have been required to increase the use of interagency placements to meet the needs of our children, particularly sibling groups. As mentioned above, the creation of the West Midlands Collaboration offers more local support for interagency adoptions. Using ACE adopters is the preferred choice as it enables adoptive families to access the intensive support services through ACE and receive support from a familiar agency, however if this is not possible, placing children with adopters from within the West Midlands Collaboration also ensures there a comprehensive support package and good information sharing.

Disruptions

In the previous 12 months, Warwickshire has not experienced any adoption disruptions.

Permanency Social Worker and Through Care Panel

Through Care Panel regularly reviews all children in care whose plan for permanency has not yet been achieved. A tracking system that includes the monitoring of pre-proceedings, and care proceedings through Child Decisions Meeting and progress of

placement orders by Throughcare Panel is now well embedded and representatives from ACE are invited to the panels.

The addition of a Permanency Social Worker enables regular, consistent oversight of care plans allowing for collaborative working between ACE and Warwickshire and information being provided to senior leadership for management oversight. The Permanency Social Worker has been in post for two years. provides monthly updates to the Senior Leadership Team to ensure there is management oversight and meets regularly with the ACE Family Finding Team and the Agency Decision Maker.

4. Service Performance

The scorecard showing Warwickshire's average performance is detailed on page 15. Warwickshire's three average for 2017-2020 remains lower than both the national average and the statistical neighbour's average in all areas.

The three year average of children entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (2017-2020) has decreased in Warwickshire by 16 days and remains below the same three year national average and statistical neighbours. However, the figure for 2021-22 shows a significant increase to 554 days (in comparison to 354 days in 2020-21).

As mentioned above, Warwickshire's three year average for the time (in days) between a child entering care and Warwickshire receiving court authority to place a child, for children who have been adopted in in 2021/22 remains lower than the national and statistical neighbour's average. However, Warwickshire average for 2021/22 was 358 days (an increase from 306 days in 2020/21) which is higher than both Warwickshire's and the national three-year average for 2017-2020.

Warwickshire children adopted between April 2021 and March 2022 the average number of days between a child being granted a placement order and being matched to an adoptive family is 232 days which is a significant increase from the previous year which was 111 days however the three year average (2017-2020) remains below the three year national average. It should be noted however that Warwickshire has continued to be aspirational and been committed to identifying adopters for older

children and sibling groups, this is likely to increase our timescales as they are harder to place children. It continues to be our view that if adoption is the most appropriate placement for a child all avenues should be explored even if this means our timescales are slightly longer.

It is likely that some of this delay is as a result of the court delays due to the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to the court delays, the children who have been adopted this year includes 2 sibling groups of 3 children and 6 sibling groups of 2 children and a further 3 children with additional needs. It should be noted that 6 of the children were residing with their adopters for over 3 years before the Adoption Order was granted which will have greatly impacted on the average. Furthermore, one sibling group of 2 children had experienced a disruption in 2020 and therefore this has impacted on their timescales as this was their second adoptive home.

The scorecards below show how Warwickshire monitor their performance against their own 3 year average and a national 3 year average:

DFE Adoption Scorecard Measure	Definition	Q4 2021/22 (01/04/2021 - 31/03/2022)	DfE Adoption Scorecard 3 Year Average (2017 to 2020)	DfE Adoption Scorecard 3 Year Average - ENGLAND (2017 to 2020)	DfE Adoption Scorecard 3 Year Average - Stats Neighbour Average (2017 to 2020)
A10: BLA-PFA	The average length of time (in days) between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family, for children who have been adopted **in Q1-Q4 2021/22.** **The indicator is adjusted for foster carer adoptions, in that if a child was adopted by their foster carer, the time considered is stopped at the date the child moved in with the foster family.**	554 days	327 days	367 days	346 days
A2: PO-Match	Average time (in days) between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family, for children who have been adopted for children who have been adopted **in Q1-Q4 2021/22.**	232 days	126 days	175 days	162 days
A20: BLA-PO	Average time (in days) between a child entering care and a local authority receiving court authority to place a child, for children who have been adopted **in Q1-Q4 2021/22.**	358 days	229 days	256 days	238 days

CHILDREN & FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE

5. Service Plan 2022-2023

Under the Adoption Regulations, the local authority retains its responsibility for the provision of the adoption service in its area. In partnership with ACE the local authority plans to improve and develop its adoption practice in the following key areas:

- Promoting ongoing contact between brothers and sisters who do not live together in an innovative way which maintains positive family relationships.
- Offer permanency training to all social workers within Warwickshire
- Improve the standards of the Child Permanence Report in line with piloting the new version of the Child Permanence Report.
- All children to receive good quality Life Story Work and Later Life Letters in a timely manner from their Allocated Social Worker or with support from the Life Story Work Team and the implementation of Therapeutic Life Story Work for some children.
- Promoting a change in culture and approach to Family Time, considering direct and indirect contact with birth family as a norm and considering open adoptions as a care plan, particularly where the risk is low or can be managed, in a commitment to family values and restorative practice.
- Continue to promote Fostering for Adoption and ensure social workers consider all alternative options and complete pre-birth assessments. This will ensure that permanence is considered at an early stage for children when this is appropriate.
- Develop robust Adoption Support Plans which are relevant to individual children and their needs.
- Further analysis of the ALB data to ensure that learning from children whose adoption took longer than the national average targets is collated and disseminated with the aim of improving the time taken between obtaining a Placement Order and matching panel.

6. Appendices

1. 2021-2022 ACE Annual Report
2. 2021-2022 ACE Panel Annual Report

Adoption Central England

Annual Report 2021-2022

Adoption Central England Annual Report 2021-2022

1. Introduction

1.1 Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council joined with Warwickshire County Council (the host) on 1 February 2018 to form Adoption Central England (ACE). The service was joined by Herefordshire Council on 1 July 2019. ACE is a local authority shared service and was the seventh regional adoption agency to become operational in the country.

1.2 This is the fourth annual report providing a summary of activity and developments within ACE that covers the 4-year period up to 31 March 2022. It can be read alongside the ACE Adoption Panel Annual Report 2021-2022.

2. Background Information

2.1 Following legislation arising from four Department for Education (DfE) policy papers on adoption, the Regionalising Adoption paper published in June 2015 spelt out the government's expectations for all local authorities to be part of a regional adoption agency and 'Adoption: A vision for change' (April 2016) committed to deliver a radical, whole system redesign by regionalising adoption services by 2020. ACE was established with the overarching aim to '*provide an innovative and relationship focussed service for children, adoptive families and others affected by adoption. This is by offering lifelong support, based on up to date practices and interventions and supported by modern technology'.*

2.2 ACE works in close partnership with the local authorities and other services to:

- Ensure that a wider pool of prospective adopters is ready to meet children's need to be loved, nurtured, protected, and understood,
- Ensure that adopters understand, accept, and can meet children's needs and provide a secure relationship within which they can thrive,
- Increase the levels of adoption for children waiting to be adopted,
- Reduce the length of time those children wait to be adopted,
- Improve/ensure attachment and trauma informed post adoption support services to adoptive families.

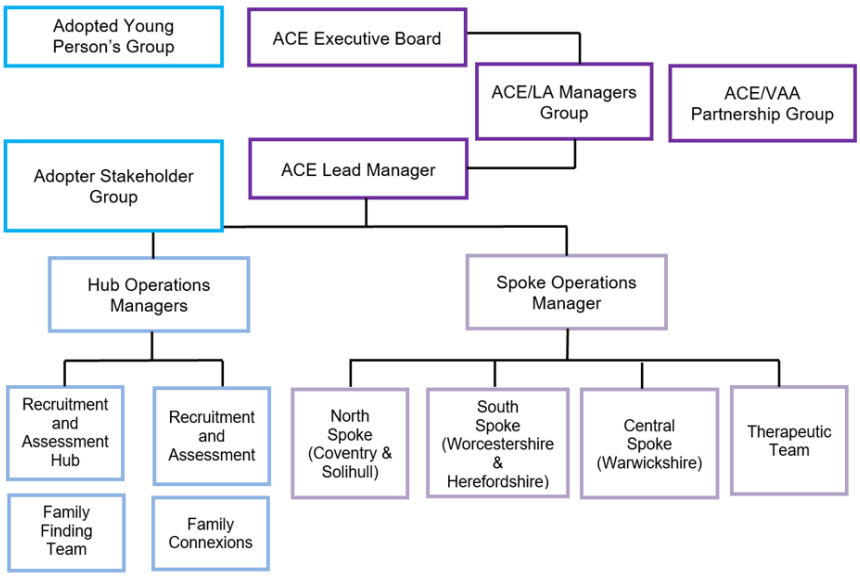
2.3 In March 2018 the ACE Executive Board supported the recommendation that ACE should become a service underpinned by **Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP)**. This approach ensures that relationships and emotional connection are at the heart of services and all aspects of the organisation are informed by DDP principles. In January 2021 ACE became the first adoption service to be DDP certified.

2.4 Since 1 November 2019 ACE has delivered the regional adoption support service for birth families – **Family Connexions**. Other services provided include non-agency (stepparent) adoption information, counselling and court assessments and birth records counselling for adopted adults.

2.5 The work of the regional adoption agency has continued to be affected by the coronavirus pandemic throughout 2021-2022 that has resulted in staff members working from home and delivering some services online. This has impacted upon adopter recruitment also. It is evident that many more adoptive families are dealing with the impact of the pandemic as it has affected the mental health of their children.

3. Staffing

3.1 The ACE structure is as follows:



3.2 ACE delivers services through a Hub and Spoke model. The Hub activities are concerned with the recruitment, preparation, and assessment of prospective adopters. Staff introduce and model for prospective adopters information about attachment and developmental trauma and the key DDP principles. The DDP attitude of PACE (playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy) is

demonstrated throughout this process. The same staff are also involved in matching children with adopters and provide support for 12 months after the adoption order is granted.

3.3 The Spokes, north, central and south are located within the local authority areas. They offer a duty service, undertake assessments of need for adoption support, process and commission therapeutic services through the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund, work directly with families who require social work services, provide birth records counselling to adult adoptees and complete non-agency adoption assessments for the court. Staff work in ways that focus on maintaining openness with families and enhancing family relationships, safety, and connection. Staff work flexibly across the region according to local need and demand.

3.4 As on 31 March 2022 there are **96** people working in ACE as follows:

ACE Managers	9.45 FTE
Hub social workers	15.26 FTE
Family Finding Team - social workers	3.4 FTE
Family Connexions – social workers	3.33 FTE + 0.81 social care worker
Spoke social workers	17.7 FTE
Therapeutic Team – social workers incl. Therapeutic Life Story Work Practitioners	3.93 FTE
Family support workers supporting the Spokes	2.62 FTE
Social Worker – Adopter training lead	0.81 FTE
Business support and related roles	13.25 FTE
Adoption Panel Advisors – social workers	1.49 FTE

3.5 The service has three small specialist teams:

The **Family Connexions Service** has 3.33 FTE social workers and 0.81 FTE family support workers. The aim of the service is to provide a range of support services including information to birth family members when adoption has been formally identified as the plan for the child.

The **Therapeutic Team** delivers therapeutic interventions to families who have high levels of assessed needs, and this can be on an individual or group work basis. The workers frequently work alongside other social workers either within ACE or from the local authorities. Two further social workers have been

awarded the Diploma in Therapeutic Life Story Work which complements the interventions delivered through the Therapeutic Team.

The **Family Finding Team** is a small group of ACE social workers who work very closely with the child's allocated social workers in efforts to secure adoption for children with priority needs.

3.6 ACE has dedicated a part time social work post to lead on adopter training. This includes the adopter preparation programme and post approval training, the majority of which is delivered by ACE social workers. The post approval programme covers:

- Introductions and Early Days
- The First Year – Parenting with PACE
- Talking and telling about adoption – The importance of identity, and Life Story Books
- Eat Sleep and Play
- Psychological Health in Adopted Children and Adolescents
- Self-Harm Workshop
- Identity and contact in adoption.

3.7 The business support functions are supported by a part time data analyst who works closely with the local authorities, and an Adoption Support Fund finance officer who processes all the financial transactions that underpin the provision of therapeutic interventions to adoptive families across the region. The Contracts Manager supports the arrangements for the Framework Agreement for Therapeutic Interventions.

3.8 In October 2021 the service inaugurated its **Clinical Psychology Service** through the appointment of a part time clinical psychologist. This is a 2-year service funded from ACE reserves. The service aims and objectives are to:

- Improve early and longer-term placement stability,
- Improve adoptive parent/child relationships,
- Offer timely support to adoptive parents to feel able to manage challenges and risks,
- Improve prospective adopter understanding of children's need and enhance the matching process,
- Enhance the confidence and skills of ACE staff to understand and support adoptive families,
- Contribute to the effective delivery of services through co working and training with ACE staff.

3.9 The first report on this service is attached as **Appendix 1.**

3.10 As a DDP certified service the 80% target set for ACE social workers to be trained at DDP Level 1 has been exceeded. As on 31 March 2022, **77** social work and related staff had DDP level 1 training (**96%**). **15** staff are trained at DDP 2 and lead on embedding and mentoring staff within the ACE service on DDP principles and practices, including the adoption panel membership. One social worker is progressing the DDP practicum. The DDP ethos and practice within the service is supported by the commissioned DDP consultant/trainer for 23 days a year.

4. ACE Performance

4.1 The performance of ACE against the **ACE Service Improvement Plan 2021-2022** is summarised in **Appendix 2**. This identifies 24 actions of which 16 have been assessed as completed or by their very nature are ongoing. Most notable are the development of the ACE website, the appointment to the ACE Clinical Psychology Service, the ongoing focus on DDP informed practices, engagement of adopted young people, the progress in relation to early permanence – fostering for adoption, low disruption levels and the development of adopter training and support. There are 6 actions to progress further covering practices around contact in adoption, adopter recruitment and assessment timescales, the development of the enhanced support care scheme and engagement with mental health services.

4.2 The two areas for ongoing attention are the interagency usage, which is intrinsically linked to the ACE Adoption Sufficiency Strategy, and how to address and support adoptive families more effectively, in a multi-disciplinary way where foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) features.

4.3 The performance of the regional adoption service needs to be seen in the context of the overall numbers of children who are coming forward with a plan for adoption. In 2021/22 there was an increase in the number of children with an adoption decision. Whilst there is variation between the local authorities in 2021–2022, **148** children had an adoption decision compared with **129** in 2020-2021 representing a **13% increase**.

4.4 Positively of the children with adoption plans **83% (96/116)** have been matched with ACE approved adoptive parents. This is consistent with previous years and positively as at 31.3.2022 of those children subject to a placement order, only **8** children across the region did not have a suitable family identified for them as detailed below:

Children with a placement order (PO) not yet placed	80
PO, matched, awaiting move in date	10
PO waiting, link identified	37

PO waiting, link identified- foster carers with whom child currently living being assessed/applied to adopt	1
PO waiting, link identified, - adopters of older sibling being assessed	
PO waiting, no link, active family finding, open for consideration by other agencies, via Link Maker/other matching tool	8
PO waiting, active family finding, not open to other agencies for consideration	12
PO waiting, no link, FF stopped - 7 private adoptions by foster carers / 4 change of plans / 1 family member came forward	12

4.5 At the same time ACE approved **74** adoption households, consistent with the previous year and many have been earmarked for matching with ACE children. ACE has a subscription to Link Maker – a national database that allows approved adopters to consider children from other areas and vice versa.

4.6 To increase potential placement opportunities, ACE has developed a collaboration with regional adoption agencies and voluntary adoption agencies in the Midlands forming the **Midlands Together Collaboration**. More children have secured families regionally which allows easing of arrangements for adoption support in the longer term.

4.7 The Executive Board receives a quarterly performance management report that outlines performance against key criteria including:

- Overview of children - numbers, adoption decision and adoption orders made and timeliness of actions against national scorecard measures,
- Number of early permanence – fostering for adoption placements,
- Number of children placed with ACE adopters,
- Enquiries about adoption and prospective adopters at each stage of the process,
- Timeliness of adopter assessments,
- Interagency placements made and number of placement disruptions.

It is the intention that the performance report will be extended to monitor the timescales between placement order and matching and the completion of life story books.

4.8 The **ACE Business, Performance and Service Improvement Plan** has several measures aligned with service priorities to ensure that a wider pool of prospective adopters is ready to meet children's needs, to reduce the length of time those children wait to be adopted, and to improve/ensure attachment and trauma informed post adoption support services to adoptive families.

The following provides a summary of performance against these measures:

Measure	Performance 2021 - 2022	3-year average 2019 - 2022
To place 90% of ACE children with ACE approved adopters.	83%	82.6%
To move children more quickly to early permanence through the development of fostering for adoption (FfA).	17	21
To recruit 40 households who are able to meet the needs of older children, sibling groups and harder to place children including fostering for adoption. Note: some households meet more than 1 criteria.	81	70
To increase the number of households who enquire about adoption through ACE – target 660.	531	566
To approve 125 households.	74	80
To improve the assessment timescales for prospective adopters – stage 2 assessments within 4 months. Note: 51% completed within 6 months.	8 (11%)	12.3%
To reduce the number of children who experience an adoption placement disruption.	2 households (3 children)	2 households

4.9 This shows that during the year, consistent with previous years, ACE can place more than 80% of children with ACE approved adopters. During the period of coronavirus pandemic there has been a decline in the number of adopter enquiries and approval timescales continues to be an area for attention. Adoption disruption levels remain low.

4.10 The following summary shows performance against national measures and England average scores:

	Measure	DfE scorecard – 3 year	2021-2022 ACE average	ACE 3 year average

		England average		
A 10	For children adopted in the year, average length of time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family	426 / 367 days	**412 days**	385 days
A 2	The average time between placement order and deciding the match to an adoptive family	121/175 days	**180 days**	183 days

4.11 During 2021-2022 more children were adopted across the region at **132** an increase from 92 children 2020/21. Their average timescale from becoming looked after to moving to their adoptive families was within the national target timescales but below the England average.

4.12 Other key performance highlights during this period are:

- Embedding early permanence – fostering for adoption for children continues to be relatively strong with local authorities demonstrating greater confidence in this option for children where rehabilitation is considered unlikely. However, this remains an ongoing area for awareness raising and training. All ACE adopters are required to consider fostering for adoption with the option to 'opt out'.
- The number of children placed with ACE approved households remains high evidencing that ACE is successfully recruiting adoptive families for children needing placement. More prospective adopters can consider children in specific harder to place groups.
- Despite an apparent reduction in enquiries to adopt the number of households proceeding through the process has remained consistent.
- Adopter approval timescales have slightly deteriorated. There has been some delay in obtaining the required references and due to coronavirus and the impact of online working has necessitated additional visits to the applicants thereby extending timescales.
- Adoption placement disruptions are lower than the previous years but there has been a corresponding increase in Learning Reviews which take place where the child is matched but not placed for adoption or when a fostering for adoption arrangement does not continue to adoption matching. See separate report – **Annual Report from Disruption and Learning Reviews 2021-2022.**

- Adoption timeliness from receipt of the placement order to matching (A2) has improved and is 5 days out of line with the England average, whereas A10 performance has deteriorated possibly due to a multiplicity of factors including court timescales.

4.13 Another area of achievement has been the successful placement of children for adoption including sibling groups of brothers and sisters together. The Executive Board continues to support the initiative of a guaranteed settling in allowance for ACE adopters of sibling groups of 3 or more children. This is used flexibly within the first year of placement thereby providing a financial cushion for the adoptive household as they make the necessary adjustments and changes to their lifestyle.

4.14 Areas for attention during 2022-2023 will be:

- To increase adopter enquires, approval and assessment timeliness.
- To reduce the reliance on interagency adoption placements from 17% to 12% of placements
- To maintain low levels of adoption disruptions.
- Continue to focus on fostering for adoption and the development of services and support around such arrangements.
- Continue to attract prospective adopters from under-represented groups and diverse communities.
- To understand and explore areas where adoption timeliness for children could be improved.

5. Adoption Support

5.1 Adoption support remains an area of importance within ACE and an increasing area of work. As on 31.3.2022 of the **735** allocated support cases, and where these related to direct support to adopted families, **254** were supported at tier 3/4 and **327** families at the lower-level tiers 1/2 where intervention and support is primarily delivered from an external therapeutic provider.

5.2 The service also provides Birth Records Counselling to adopted adults and the significant number of enquiries resulted in **128** applications for counselling.

5.3 There has been a gradual increase in non-agency adoption notifications following a decline in 2020-2021.

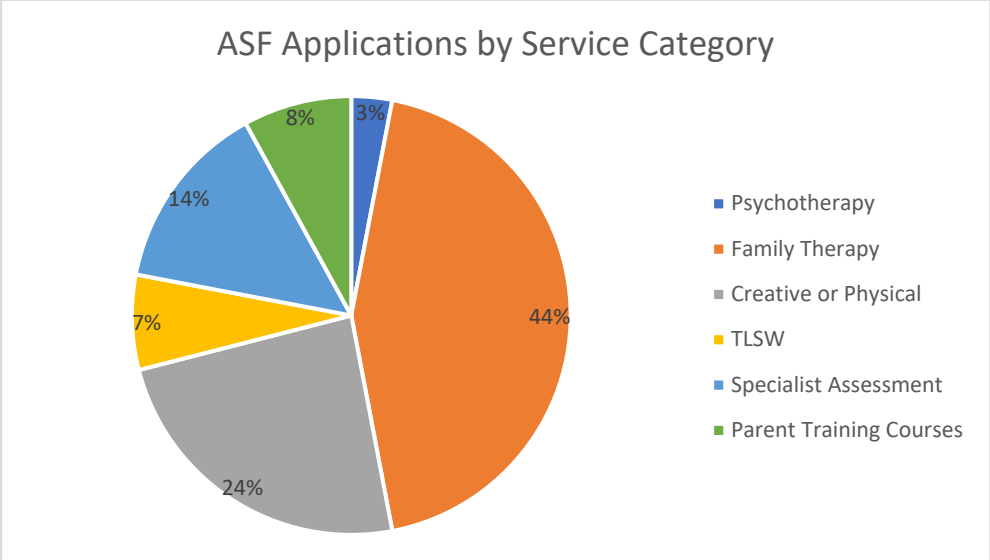
5.4 The Spoke adoption support teams have observed an increase in adoptive families presenting with concerns for the mental health of their children. Also, the service, in collaboration with Family Connexions, has become more involved in supporting adopted young people to re-establish contact with birth family members.

5.5 Applications to the national Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund have remained high, reflecting the ongoing needs of these families, some who have struggled significantly over the past 2 years. During 2021-2022 the following were made:

Type of application	Amount	Number of applications	Number of children	Number of families
Individual family applications	£1,416,811.00	480	572 children	437 families
ACE Therapeutic Team	£109,205.00	47	192 children	136 families
Therapeutic Group applications	£57,572.00	12	133 children	97 families

5.6 The ACE **Framework Agreement for Therapeutic Providers** was extended during this period and now has an approved list of **40** accredited providers.

5.7 The types of support most frequently required by adoptive families have been:



These interventions are mainly aimed at helping their children settle and build security within the family, dealing with developmental trauma and how to parent therapeutically. Addressing child on parent violence has also featured and a programme of intervention is delivered by the ACE Therapeutic Team.

5.8 The Therapeutic Team offered the following interventions during 2021-2022:

- Therapeutic parenting and sensory integration
- Non Violent Resistance - NVR
- Parent child attachment play- PCAP.

5.9 The **Adopters Newsletter** has been produced on a quarterly basis and sent to over 750 households and ACE managers continue to meet with the Adopters Stakeholder Group at quarterly intervals.

6. Services to birth relatives – Family Connexions

6.1 Family Connexions provides a range of services to birth family members who can be supported in the following ways:

- 1 to 1 emotional and relational support, offering opportunities to have their experience accepted, understood and to have access to advice during and after the adoption process.
- An explanation of the adoption process.
- Support with the practical aspects of the adoption process, including support with letterbox contact and/or meeting with adopters. Practical guidance is combined with support around emotional impact.
- Advice regarding future life planning including signposting to other universal support services.
- Group sessions for birth parents and extended family members across the ACE region.
- Support with any direct contact or reunification plans requested by the adopted child and their adoptive parents.

6.2 The service is well embedded as at year end 2021-2022 the following number of referrals was received representative of the 5 local authority areas:

Local authority	No. of referrals	No. of current cases being worked
Coventry	13	92
Solihull	6	21
Warwickshire	9	95
Worcestershire	14	70
Herefordshire	5	49
Out of ACE	1	4
Total	48	**331**

7. Quality assurance and inspection

7.1 ACE has a range of quality assurance arrangements in place that includes:

- Case file auditing by managers introduced February 2021.
- Learning from complaints and representations.
- Robust staff recruiting practices including induction.
- Regular supervision and annual appraisal of all staff.
- Opportunities for staff exit interviews.
- Quarterly performance management reports presented to the ACE Executive Board.
- Feedback to ACE and local authorities on the quality of reports presented to the adoption panel - see Adoption Panel Annual Report.
- Framework Agreement for external providers delivering therapeutic services to adoptive families.
- User feedback through the Adopters Stakeholder Group, training events, adoption panel.
- Managerial oversight of reports and countersigning.
- Feedback from local authority partners and other stakeholders through various forums.
- Follow up of all adopter enquirers who do not proceed through the process.
- Timescales for key activities in the adopter journey from enquiry to approval.
- Observed practices.
- The Adoption Support Fund Review Panel.
- Regular reviews of the DDP Action Plan including staff surveys.
- External validation through local authority OFSTED inspections.

7.2 The first **Case File Audit Report** identified the following areas for attention:

- More timely recoding and sharing of post placements.
- To improve recording of managerial oversight/decisions.
- The completion of quarterly summaries.
- To comply with recording in the MOSAIC workflow as opposed to case notes.
- To show greater evidence of the adopter's voice/child's views and wishes.

Further work is required on the audit form to ease completion and relevance.

7.3 During the past year ACE has been part of one **OFSTED** inspection that took place in Warwickshire County Council and was published in February 2022. The overall assessment was good and reported:

'Warwickshire is the host authority for the regional adoption agency. Strong quality assurance processes, operating in conjunction with the authority's own

internal monitoring systems, provide regular opportunities to reflect on and develop practice. This supports positive outcomes for children and adopters'.

7.4 The ACE **Adopter's Annual Survey** 2021 was sent out in June and ACE was delighted to receive **74** responses – approximately 10% of people who receive the ACE **Adopter's Newsletter**. Survey respondents were from across the ACE region with the majority from Warwickshire and Worcestershire. Approximately half of the respondents (38) were families currently receiving an adoption support service, 13 households were with the hub teams and 23 families were not receiving services at the present time.

7.5 Positively half respondents access the ACE **website** and majority found the specific information they were seeking. Respondents were asked to rate the relevance, usefulness and appearance of the website and the average score across these areas was **3.64** out of 5. Whilst a lower number of respondents were prospective adopters, **the Adoption Preparation Groups** were rated on average **4.25** and the assessment process as **4.2.**

7.6 Six families had had a child placed with them since 1 April 2020 and 5 reported the process to be '*very good – it went well,'* this was despite the arrangements we put into place due to the coronavirus pandemic. All six reported the relationship with their social worker as '*very good'* as was attendance at the Adoption Panel Matching meeting, transitions and the support received once the child was placed. Arrangements for contact and letterbox could be improved as could life story books.

7.7 The survey asked about **DDP – Therapeutic Parenting** and 49 adoptive parents felt that they had enough information about DDP, and examples were provided on how this approach had helped them to parent in a PACE-ful way. 25 respondents required further information.

7.8 Most respondents (43) had contacted ACE for an adoption support service in the period 1.4.2020-31.3.2021 reporting their key concerns as:

- Child on parent violence
- Educational issues
- Attachment and relationships with their child
- Concerns about their child mental health/self-harm
- Child's social relationships
- Contact and letterbox.

7.9 The areas for development that are the joint responsibility of the local authorities and ACE are around the areas of:

(i) Contact and Letterbox

(ii) Delays in receiving an adoption support services
(iii) Training
(iv) Across agency working.

7.10 Some improvements have already been put into place such as the ACE **Training Programme** that has been accessible from the ACE website since 1 April 2022 and the **Spoke Review of Duty Processes** that should improve efficiency. Contact and cross agency working remain priority areas for attention in the coming year.

8. Practice Improvements

8.1 ACE supports adoption practices through the **Adoption Checklist** and associated practice guidance developed and shared with local authority teams. These serve to complement existing procedures and outline approaches to adoption work based on current best practice and research.

8.2 Practice Guidance is available on:

- Early Permanence – Fostering for Adoption
- Name changes for children placed for adoption
- Foster carers who wish to adopt
- Preparing children for adoption
- Supporting transitions to an adoptive family
- Relinquished babies
- Later Life Letters.

8.3 Other more recent developments have included work led with the local authority Special Guardianship Teams in producing preparation training modules and an information leaflet.

9. Diversity and Inclusion

9.1 ACE continued to give attention to diversity and inclusion and maintains the **Black Lives Matters Conversation Group**. The service has developed its inclusivity statements of intent and have encouraged training and development opportunities and team discussion, learning and awareness. The guidance notes aligned with the Adopters Assessment Report have been amended to ensure that cultural sensitivity is addressed and further changes to assessment formats are planned.

9.2 The service will be reviewing how diversity is reflected on its website and will make changes. ACE subscribes to **New Family Social** a specific organisation that supports same sex couples wishing to foster or adopt and has membership to **Intercountry Adoption Centre** that supports overseas adoption.

10. Disruptions

10.1 An adoption disruption is where the child has been matched and placed with adoptive parents and where the placement did not proceed to the making of an adoption order. During this period there were 2 adoption disruptions concerning 3 children. One was an interagency placement for 2 children, the other concerned a single child with an ACE approved adopter.

10.2 During this period 5 **Learning Reviews** took place. Three reviewed circumstances where transitions ended prior to placement and two related to fostering for adoption when the court determined an alternative plan for the child. See **Annual Report of Disruptions and Learning Reviews 2021-2022**.

11. Complaints, compliments and representations

11.1 There was one complaint during this period relating to the delay a family experienced in accessing a specialist assessment for their child. During the same period 53 compliments were received, a summary is attached as Appendix 3.

12. Staff Development and Support

12.1 The Workforce Development Plan covers the period 2020 - 2023 and during this period has primarily focused on:

- Working with adopters who are professionals – 25 June 2021 – full-service event
- Safeguarding children living with foster carers, adopters and special guardians: Learning from Case Reviews 2007-2019.
- Why We Need to Talk About Neglect? - Mandatory for all social workers.

12.2 There have been occasional training and development opportunities for some staff members which have been subject specific, and staff have been encouraged to observe and learn from each other.

12.3 Teams and individuals also have regular consultation with a DDP Consultant to focus on incorporating DDP into practice and since October 2021 training plans have been developed as part of the ACE Clinical Psychology Service.

13. Overall impact and future plans

13.1 ACE is an established regional adoption agency now entering its 5th year. It has:

- A brand identity and has relaunched its website in 2021.
- Achieved DDP certification, maintains and promotes DDP informed practices.
- Embedded early permanence – fostering for adoption.
- Continued to place most children with ACE approved adopters.

- Widened the range of support services available to adoptive families including the ACE Clinical Psychology Service.
- Maintained diversity in its recruitment of adoptive families.
- Developed a comprehensive post approval training package for adoptive parents.
- Continued to engage with adopters as key stakeholders including an annual survey.
- Strengthened quality assurance through revisions to the governance arrangements and the introduction of file auditing processes.

13.2 During 2021/2022 the service was delivered over the allocated budget and reserves were drawn upon. The financial demand and costs were in respect of interagency placement budget and a strategy going forward is to be addressed by the ACE Executive Board. This will be an ongoing area of pressure.

13.3 Areas for further development in 2022-2023 are:

Service level plans

- To explore opportunities for adoptive parents to support the training and development of prospective and approved adopters.
- To implement a range of measures to capture the views of children and young people about the services received and to facilitate their contribution to service delivery.
- To support measures that change the approach to contact in adoption including Practice Guidance on Contact. To consider skills-based training on assessing and implementing contact plans for social workers.
- To extend and deliver a range of training and learning opportunities for local authority social workers on:
  (i) Permanence through adoption (regional training)
  (ii) Child Permanence Reports (local authority specific training)
  (iii) Contact and identity in adoption (regional training)
  (iv) Preparing children for adoption and life story work and books (regional training)
  (v) Care planning - considering the permanency options (regional and LA specific)
  (vi) Supporting foster carer to prepare child for adoption and understanding the adoption process (local authority specific training)
  (vii) Early Permanence through Fostering for Adoption (LA specific training)
  (viii) Family finding, matching and supporting children in their adoptive home (regional training).
- To work with local authority partners to achieve the Early Permanence Quality Mark. **See Appendix 4.**

- To consider how our DDP approaches are inclusive and respect cultural sensitivity and differences.
- To use opportunities to innovate practice around fostering for adoption to include training and support around parental contact.
- Implementing mandatory training for Fostering for Adoption applicants and those considering priority children.

Recruitment plans

- To implement the Adopter Recruitment Sufficiency Plan looking at recruitment from diverse communities, for sibling groups and children with health/developmental needs.
- To receive 600 enquiries about adoption and assess 100 households within improved timescales.
- To reduce reliance on interagency placements to 12%.
- To introduce measures to monitor the timeliness between the adoption decision for a child and matching – the National minimum Adoption Standards introduce a 6-month timescale.
- To work across the West Midlands in further embedding and raising standards of practice around fostering for adoption.

Support plans

- To maintain adoption disruption levels to below 2% of placements.
- To put in place support through the provision of the **Enhanced Support Scheme** and extending support and training family and friends.
- To explore assessment, support and services where foetal alcohol syndrome is or maybe evident, are enhanced including the provision of information for adoptive parents.
- To strengthen relationships and partnership working to ensure that the mental health needs of adopted children are recognised and considered in service planning and delivery.
- To pilot the use of outcome assessment tools in the delivery of therapeutic interventions.
- To introduce the revised Spoke Duty process.
- To extend adopted young people support groups across the region.
- To extend birth parents support groups across the region.

14. Conclusion

14.1 The most significant achievements during the past year have been ongoing recruitment, matching and placement of children for adoption during coronavirus restrictions that have required a flexible approach to working practices. The service has met its targets in many areas (See **ACE Service**

Improvement Plan 2021-2022). The service has responded to heightened needs of adoptive parents whose children are showing greater levels of mental health needs. Relationships with virtual schools across the region are well established and the ACE Clinical Psychology Service adds to the range of support services available. ACE has supported staff to develop greater expertise in sensory integration therapy and this will be incorporated more widely into practice, alongside the support available from the two staff who have achieved their Diploma in Therapeutic Life Story Work.

14.2 ACE is pleased with the ongoing engagement of adoptive parents in the service, the respectable response to the annual survey and the launch of the website which has been positively received.

14.3 As the impact of the coronavirus pandemic has lessened ACE is moving towards more face-to-face engagement with prospective and approved adopters and their children. ACE is embracing the philosophy of agile working for ACE staff, at the same time as encouraging regular and meaningful engagement with each other. These provide important opportunities for supporting and motivating each other to deliver the best possible service and response to all the various ACE service users and stakeholders.

Brenda Vincent - Lead Manager
Adoption Central England

Appendix1

Clinical Psychology Report

Phoenix%20Psychology%20ACE%20Feedb

Appendix 2

Report against the Service Improvement areas for 2021 - 2022

Action	Update	Rating
To launch the updated ACE website incorporating podcasts illustrating different areas of the service and experiences and reflecting the ACE ethos.	The ACE website has been updated and relaunched	Completed
To act on the findings of file auditing processes across the service.	Case file auditing has been introduced and the first report received. Further amendments are required to the auditing templates	Ongoing
To use recruitment opportunities to establish a more diverse workforce if possible.	ACE has enjoyed relative staff stability so there has been limited recruitment opportunities. This requires ongoing attention	Progressing
To update the Equality Impact Assessments.	Separate EIAs have been completed for the Hub and Spokes	Completed
To appoint a clinical psychologist to the service.	The ACE Clinical Psychology has been in pace since 1.10.2021	Completed
To progress the BLM action plan.	ACE continues to review, monitor and review the progress of it BLM action plan	Ongoing
To disseminate our learning about the DDP certification process.	ACE has offered opportunities to provide advice and support both within the region and within the wider adoption sector	Ongoing
To explore opportunities for adoptive parents to be recruited as trainers within the service.	Adoptive parents support training events, and this action is under review	Progressing
To implement measures to gain the views of children and young people about the services received.	Connections have been made with adopted young people and their support groups are re-establishing post covid. Also changes to the assessment of need processes will be placing a stronger emphasis on the views of adopted children and young people.	Ongoing
To support measures that change the approach to contact in adoption including Practice	Tools have been introduced and this remains a focus of attention within	Progressing

Guidance on Contact and to give consideration to skills-based training on assessing and implementing contact plans for social workers	ACE and with local authority partners. Training is due to be delivered to social workers and practice guidance is still be developed.	
To implement the Adopter Recruitment Sufficiency Plan looking at recruitment from diverse communities, for sibling groups and children with health/developmental needs. To receive 600 enquiries about adoption.	The recruitment strategy has focussed on priority areas and most ACE children have had families identified for them. However, ACE has received fewer adopter enquiries during this period.	Ongoing
To recruit 100 household and improve adopter approval timescales	ACE did not meet the recruitment set - the impact of the coronavirus is a factor, coupled delays in receiving references and complex issues to be addressed within adopter assessments.	Progressing
To continue to work with the local authorities in reducing delay in placing children from the point that the placement order has been granted by the court.	Effective arrangements are in place for tracking children and progressing adoption plans. Timescales have been affected by court delays and issues arising in the planning for children	Ongoing
To further increase and embed fostering for adoption setting targets for both ACE and local authorities	In partnership with the local authorities ACE has successfully placed an increasing number of children on a FfA basis	Ongoing
To extend placement choice for children by working with regional partners through the Midlands Together Collaboration.	The Midlands Together Collaboration arrangements have become embedded and there is evidence that interagency placements are more likely to be secured within the Midlands region.	Ongoing
To reduce reliance on interagency placements to 12%.	Interagency usage increased during this period – however positively more children with priority needs have secured families. The impact of this is to be considered in the 2022-2023 Adopter Recruitment Sufficiency strategy	Requires attention
To offer a surgery style service to adoptive parents about ‘talking’ about adoption and life story books.	This service is available to adoptive parents by the Therapeutic Life Story Work trained social workers	Completed
To publish the updated Adoption Support Offer.	Completed and on the ACE website	Completed
To reduce adoption disruption to below 2% of placements	Achieved – 2 disruptions concerning 3 children. One interagency placement of 2 children and a single child placed with ACE adopters	Achieved
To put in place support through the provision of respite/day care support drawing upon the potential of family and friends	Strategy in place to develop training and support for family and friends and enhanced support care for adoptive families.	Progressing

To draw together and produce and publish the ACE training programme for adopters that will include a range of training opportunities including webinars and podcasts e.g. Principles of PACE	A comprehensive training programme is now available through the ACE website	Completed
To act on the findings of the ACE Annual Adopter Survey.	The survey identified 4 main areas for attention that have all progressed well during this period. The areas for attention were contact/letterbox, timeliness of adoption support, training opportunities and across agency working	Ongoing
Practices around assessment, support and services where FAS is or maybe evident are enhanced including information for adoptive parents.	This has not progressed due to the interagency nature of the activity and will need to be considered further with health partners	Requires attention
In partnership with other services, to explore how support for families where mental health issues feature can be improved.	This in part has been achieved trough the ACE Clinical Psychology Service. However, the mental health needs of adopted children still need to be more recognised within CAMHS provision	Progressing

ALISON - I really appreciate your support and guidance, thank you for talking over the possible issues with me this morning before my meeting with the family - it would have been far less productive. As you have less contact with the families you may not always feel the positive impact/intervention but you do make a positive difference thanks for your time and wisdom

HANNAH - We couldn't have asked for a better social worker. You are fantastic at your job, so kind, thorough and supportive - thank you for making our dreams come true, we will be forever grateful to you

LOUISE AND MELISSA - Thank you for the presentation last night. It was the perfect balance of information and professionalism but with a lot of passion and emotion, we came away knowing so much more about the process and what the team is like and how deeply you feel about adoption

RUBA - Thank you for allowing me to call if I ever need to and for offering that support to me, also for understanding my frustrations and the fact I do find things difficult to deal with at times. You done more than enough to help me and that means a lot Thank you

H shared how supportive GAYE has been and how 'she is always there and responsive'

KATIE - I just wanted to thank you for the sensitive way you dealt with my enquiry

'A' shared with me the many challenges she is having accessing support and how Leah has been her 'rock' and really doesn't know how she would have got through these last months without her consistently advocating for her family and getting to know them. They feel seen and heard

I want to compliment Danielle on sorting a Mosaic query for me when I was on duty. Despite Danielle being busy all day she took the time to respond to my query and sort it out as soon as possible which then helped to save any unnecessary delay for the next duty worker

Feedback in a meeting today about how RAJ's intervention had been (or at least attempted, female adopter not willing to engage) with the adopters on her case that is about to disrupt, both in terms of how quickly she got on board and her intervention

NICKI - S has written o me to highlight the invaluable help and support you have recently provided and I wanted to thank you and your colleagues so much on both his and my own behalf. It is clear you have offered a compassionate, caring and professional service which has enabled the experience of contact through the Letterbox scheme - Jesse Norman, Member of Parliament

Extremely helpful and considerate SALLY is great to go through the documents with . she is both professional and encouraging and interested in the information

SHAIFALI - We as a family wanted to thank you for supporting us through the process. We appreciate all the hard work you have done in the report and making this adoption possible. You have shown great kindness and understanding towards us

JESSICA - is the most competent social worker we have ever met, she was always professional, understanding, caring and friendly. We felt in good hands with her. She understood our family and was able to help us improve as adoptive parents, we always felt she had our back. She has outstanding communication skills and in our view Jessica is one in a million.

I am not sure how many of your team stay well past 5pm on a Friday but this is exactly what Melissa H did - she is a real asset to your team, and I wanted to formally record this fact

We are just so glad we entered the journey however bumpy and we are so so privileged that you chose us for T. We appreciate all the steps you took to protect us given our previous heart ache and loss. We have no regrets. With all our thanks for what you do. Katie and Alison and the service of ACE - you are all stars in our eyes

ROSIE - went out of her way and was very supportive. There were details in my birth records which I was unaware of which was most helpful. The follow up call was so important to me. This is a very good service

'A' speaks very highly of LEAH, she feels understood, supported, and connected to Leah, she trusts her and appreciates everything she does for her

SHARMAINE - is brilliant her help is much appreciated

From ACE we have received support and advice via LARA who has great understanding of the boys difficulties, school support and the demands this puts on us emotionally, physically and financially. The availability to have Lara available to talk through situations has been invaluable.

KAREN has been amazing over the last 2 weeks. Her support has kept us going. She understood where we were emotionally and ensured that we were looked after. She checked in with us frequently. We often had no words to describe how we were but she was just 'there' supporting us and seemed to understand. We took great strength from her support

I observed ACE Panel yesterday and it was useful, firstly there were discussions about DDP questions - which was really interesting and would be good to discuss with ADMS generally at the regional meeting, as we need to understand this more to support my questioning within ADM

This is from the adoptive father after the meet up with birth mum..... Thank you so much for organising the meet up with J. It went well and was better than expected. The way in which it was possible for us all to interact with each other in a very natural way shows great sensitivity on the part of both of Beth and Michelle. I am sure there are always uncertainties with such matters but in fact it was a very successful visit

AMANDA B - has been unfailingly helpful and we really appreciate the way she has supported us. She's a great listener and we value her input and experience

I was very impressed by the way panel works, with empathy to support the prospective adopters, sensitive preparation with framing and asking questions and deciding if they would be directed at the applicants or social works. I think the thorough and in-depth exploration and examination of aspects of the assessment of the adopters and of the match between the adopters and the child helped the panel members to make well informed balanced recommendations.

EMILY - once we are over the line as approved adopters we really look forward to sharing our journey with you. We couldn't have hoped for a better social worker to take us on

SHAIFALI - has been brilliant and we find her support invaluable

Appendix 4

https://quality-mark.earlypermanence.org.uk

Adoption Central England

Report of the Adoption Panel

1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

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Introduction by a Panel Chair

This opening report marks four full years of Adoption Central England (ACE) as a Regional Adoption Agency and the continuation of a constantly developing adoption panel and an efficient and effective adoption panel team.

The adoption panel has continued operation for a full second year virtually (online), and this has been with increased confidence and skill. This includes pre-meetings with adopters and their social workers, the use of break-out rooms and the sharing of documents online. As a result of these two years of experience of working virtually, ACE is participating in a research project led by the University of Worcester into the effectiveness of online panel meetings.

The panel continue to give feedback on all reports presented to panel. This feedback continues to acknowledge the continued high standard of Adopter Assessment Reports (AARs): in this year they were rated as 94% good or outstanding. The panel continues to give feedback on Child Permanence Reports (CPRs), Adoption Placement Reports (APRs) and Adoption Support Plans (ASPs). These reports have improved overall but continue to need additional work to reach an overall higher standard. There is, however, ongoing training on writing CPRs delivered by ACE and the participating Local Authorities.

It is gratifying to see that there has been a large increase in the number of social workers offering feedback to panels which was 62 returns in 2021/2022 as against 26 in the previous reporting year. This is very helpful feedback in assisting panels to continue to develop.

A new foster carer report was updated this reporting year and panel have read some excellent reports from those most closely connected to the children awaiting placement for adoption.

ACE is supporting the participating local authorities to continue to develop the policy of Fostering to Adopt (FFA) placements. This supports approved adopters to accept placements early before court proceedings are complete and to continue as foster carers until a Placement Order is agreed. This policy enables children to be placed as early as possible and in the majority of cases reduces the number of placement moves a child has to experience. Support and training are offered to support this practice.

The adoption panel chairs continue to meet with the ACE senior team and the panel team quarterly which is valuable to the continuing development of the adoption panel

and associated processes. In 2021/2022 the panel chairs and ACE managers have begun to meet with Agency Decision Makers (ADMs). Agency Decision Makers have begun to observe panels and have given positive feedback about the thoroughness with which panels quality assure all matters coming to panel and it is agreed that this will continue with two-way feedback in the future as general practice.

The Panel Advisers continue to recruit members to the panel who represent diversity e.g., people from Black, Asian, and different ethnic minorities and people from the LGBTQ+ communities especially those with adopter or adoption experience. The panel team have also recruited social workers with adoption and fostering experience and foster carers to add balance and better representation to panels.

An extremely interesting development in 21/22, and based on three years of operating as ACE, is the 'Recalibration Agenda '. In brief, this is about panel members focussing on the weight of evidence from assessing social workers and moving away from simply interviewing and questioning adopters themselves and or panels just seeing how they 'come across' in the meetings when they have already contributed so much to the development of the AAR. Panel members continue to work on developing this more balanced process.

Given that the online panel process to a certain extent inhibits face-to-face contact with other panel members and the staff of ACE, six-monthly in-person gatherings and learning events have been introduced. These events have proved very helpful in 'getting to know' people more directly.

Panel chairs and members continue to be committed to be part of the process of securing permanency for children who have a plan for adoption. We are also committed to be part of developing a strong and committed Regional Adoption Agency.

Avriel Reader, Adoption Panel Chair

Context

All adoption agencies are required by law[1] to have an adoption panel, the key role of which is to provide independent scrutiny of the proposals presented by an adoption agency. The panel is asked to determine whether all the issues have been appropriately clarified and whether the proposal is sound, and to make a recommendation to an Agency Decision Maker (ADM) accordingly.

In April 2018, the Government's programme for the regionalisation of adoption services that heralded the creation of Adoption Central England (ACE) brought together the work of the adoption panels of Worcestershire County Council (now Worcestershire Children First), Warwickshire County Council, Coventry City Council and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council into one single panel. With Herefordshire Council joining ACE in July 2019, the ACE Adoption Panel now considers adoption proposals for children from five local authorities, together with applications made to ACE from individuals and couples, residing in or close to those local authorities, who wish to adopt a child or children.

This is the **fourth** full year report of the ACE Adoption Panel since it became a single panel on 1 April 2018.

Constitution and Operation of the Adoption Panel

The Adoption Agencies Statutory Guidance requires that each adoption agency must maintain a 'central list' of persons whom it considers suitable to be a member of an Adoption Panel. The Panel's business can only be conducted if at least 5 members are present, including the Chair and a social work representative. Panel members have secure online access to adoption reports at least 5 working days before the panel meeting and submit their individual feedback on the quality of those reports beforehand. Panel Meetings are conducted via Microsoft Teams on Monday and Thursday mornings, and typically consider a maximum of 3 items (4 in exceptional circumstances).

The central list membership stands at 42 active members – i.e., those who have attended at least one Panel during the reporting period - as on 31 March 2022 (see Appendix B).

A priority has been achieving greater representation of our diverse area through recruitment of panel members from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and the LGBTQ+ communities. We have successfully been working towards this aim, securing increased representation within the panel membership including three new male panel members, a member who identifies as LGBTQ+, three members from within the BME communities and a foster carer member. This targeted recruitment work continues, as we aim to offer more diverse and bespoke panels that better reflect the children and families with whom we work.

[1] Principally, the Adoption and Children ACT 2002; Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005; Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011; Statutory Adoption Guidance 2013; Draft 2014 Statutory Guidance; National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2011 and 2014.

During this reporting period, ACE has welcomed 9 new members to the Central List and received resignations from 3 members (see Appendix B). All independent panel members are offered a modest fee for their participation and are required to attend an annual appraisal and at least one training event per year. Panel Training is described in Appendix C.

All attendees to an Adoption Panel are invited to share feedback on their experience via a Microsoft Form sent to each individual after the meeting. Observers – who may also be agency decision makers – are invited to share their comments on the meeting immediately afterwards. All feedback is collated by the panel advisers and shared within the agency and with panel chairs at regular meetings. See Appendix D.

Summary of Adoption Panel Activity, 2021-22

Proposals made to the Adoption Panel are presented in three key reports, read in advance by Panel members. The reports are:

- **Adopter Assessment Report (AAR):** this report presents a case that the applicants are suitable to adopt and is prepared by an assessing social worker employed by ACE.
- **Child's Permanence Report (CPR):** this report makes the case that a child's plan for permanence should be adoption. It is prepared by the child's social worker and will have informed both the decision of the local authority's agency decision maker (the ADM) and the family court that adoption is the only plan for the child. The CPR also serves as a life story resource for the adopted child and their family.
- **Adoption Placement Report (APR):** this report presents the case that a particular child should be matched with a particular family and includes a plan describing how the child and family are to be supported. This report is prepared by the child's social worker and the adoption social worker.

Panel meetings in 2021-22

	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
Number of meetings	80	71	44	42
Platform	Online	Online	In Person [2]	In Person
Maximum number of cases	3-4	3	5-6	6-7
Cases considered	173	169	185	184
Cancelled Panels	16 (17%)	11 (13%)	6 (12%)	4 (9%)

[2] Online panels commenced on 30 March 2020, following the implementation of national lockdown measures on 23 March, and have remained so since lockdown measures lifted.

Suitability to Adopt ('Approvals')

At meetings held between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, Panel considered 'suitable to adopt' proposals, representing 75 households. Families applying to ACE to adopt were drawn from the agency's constituent local authorities:

Adopters' Local Authority	Number of households 2021-22	Number of households 2020-21	Number of households 2019-20	Number of households 2018-19
Coventry City Council	**6**	**13**	12	27
Herefordshire Council	**13**	**3**	6	-
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	**2**	**6**	7	11
Warwickshire County Council	**23**	**21**	33	27
Worcestershire County Council	**21**	**19**	31	20
Non-ACE local authority	**10**	**15**	7	7
	75	**77**	97	92

Of the 75 applications presented to Panel:

- 72 families were recommended to the Agency Decision Maker as 'suitable to adopt'. There were two instances where a recommendation was deferred, and the case then re-presented at panel leading to positive recommendations.
- **1** family's suitability to adopt was reviewed.
- 2 families were *not* recommended as suitable to adopt following a 'Brief Report' from the assessing social worker and agency detailing the reasons why (known as the 'qualifying determinations').
- **All** but one of Panel's recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker were ratified (Panel did not recommend re-approval of one family where the ADM decided to approve.)

Of the 72 positive recommendations:

Profile of Adopters		2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
First applications		62	56	80	61
Subsequent applications		10	19	14	22
Household	Single adopters	6	7	8	11
	Heterosexual couples	55	60	-[3]	-
	Same-sex couples	11	8	-	-
Ethnicity	White British or White European households	62	64		-
	Asian or Mixed Asian/White households	5	9		
	Black Caribbean or Mixed Black Caribbean/White Households	1	1		
	Other ethnicity	4	1		
Offer	Foster carers	3	5	8	9
	Willing to consider FFA	32	26	-	-

[3] - denotes data not collected by Panel Team during this reporting year

Matches for Adoption

At meetings held between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, the ACE Adoption Panel considered 91agenda items concerning matches for a total of 115 children. Two agenda items concerned different matches for the same child, while one was a proposed match that neither the panel recommended, nor the local authority ADM based on the recommendation of the panel.

Positive recommendations were therefore made for **89 proposed matches representing 114 children**.

Child's Local Authority	Number of matches 2021-22	Number of matches 2020-21	Number of matches 2019-20	Number of matches 2018-19
Coventry City Council	**20**	**25**	22	-
Herefordshire Council	**9**	**16**	8	-
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	**10**	**7**	8	-
Warwickshire County Council	**16**	**23**	19	-
Worcestershire County Council	**34**	**20**	29	-
	89	**91**	86	85

Profile of placement		**Number of matches 2021-22**	**Number of matches 2020-21**	Number of matches 2019-20	Number of matches 2018-19
Number of children	1 child	**68**	**75**	75	-
	2 children	**17**	**12**	7	-
	3 children	**4**	**4**	4	-
Total		**89**	**91**	**86**	**85**
Where age	0-12 months	**28**	**36**	-	-

of oldest child matched	12-24 months	**27**	**23**		
	2-4 years	**15**	**20**		
	4+ years	**19**	**12**		
Total		**89**	**91**		
Type of adoption	Mainstream adoption	**68**	**72**	55	64
	Fostering for Adoption	**16**	**15**	25	15
	Foster carer Adoption	**5**	**4**	6	6
Total		**89**	**91**	86	85
Ethnicity of children (by placement)	White British	**78**	**72**	-	-
	Gypsy, Roma, Traveller	**3**	**2**		
	Any other White Background	**1**	**2**		
	Asian or Asian British	**-**	**1**		
	Black, Black British, Black Caribbean, Black African	**-**	**-**		
	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups (White and Black Caribbean White and Black African White and Asian any other Mixed or multiple ethnic background	**7**	**14**		
Total		**89**	**91**		

Plan of adoption for a relinquished child

Child's Local Authority	Number of plans 2021-22	Number of plans 2020-21	Number of plans 2019-20	Number of plans 2018-19
Coventry City Council	**1**[4]	**5**	0	-
Herefordshire Council	**0**	**1**	0	-
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	**0**	**0**	0	-
Warwickshire County Council	**3**	**0**	0	-
Worcestershire County Council	**1**	**0**	0	-
Total	**6**	**6**	0	4

Placement Disruptions

The Adoption Panel has been informed of 2 placements for adoption that disrupted before the making of an adoption order, and 3 agreed matches that were halted during transitions. Panel were also advised of 2 instances where a child placed under Fostering for Adoption arrangements did not progress to a match for adoption.

[4] Plan of Adoption for twins

Quality Assurance

"Adoption panels provide quality assurance feedback to the agency every six months on the quality of the reports being presented to the panel. This includes whether the requirements of the Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005 have been met, and whether there is a thorough, rigorous, consistent and fair approach across the service in the assessment of whether a child should be placed for adoption, the suitability of prospective adopters and the proposed placement"

Adoption: National Minimum Standards, 2014, 17:2

Adoption Panel Members provide individual feedback on the quality of adoption reports in advance of the panel meeting. **When reviewing the** Adopter Assessment Report**, Panel members rate its** clarity, length, attention to detail, the extent to which the voices of any children in the home are heard, the sufficiency of the evidence and the depth of the social work analysis. **Consideration is also given to the extent to which the core themes of Dyadic Developmental Practice are evidenced in the report: does it describe the agency's preparation of the applicants for therapeutic parenting, and the applicants' understanding? Feedback is provided to the assessing social worker via their manager shortly after the Panel meeting.**

Panel members also rate the coherence and detail with which a child's journey to permanence through adoption is described in the Child Permanence Report ('CPR') while the Adoption Placement Report ('APR') is rated for the clarity with which the rationale for the proposed match is presented, as well as the detail and scope of the Adoption Support Plan contained therein.

Aggregated and/or bespoke feedback on the quality of the Child's Permanence Report and Adoption Placement Reports is shared with the agency's constituent local authorities both on request and in six-monthly reports to the local authority Heads of Service. Case-specific feedback is shared with local authority social workers and managers as necessary.

Panel feedback on the quality of the Adopter Assessment Reports

Adopter Assessment Report	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-2019[5]
Number of reports evaluated	77	77	91	35
Average rating (1: poor; 2: requires improvement; 3: satisfactory; 4: good; 5: outstanding	4.05	3.98	-	-
Where evidence of DDP informing assessment is satisfactory, good, or outstanding	99%	96%	-	-
Rated as requiring improvement	0%	0%	17%	26%
Rated as good or outstanding	94%	61%	57%	-
Rated as satisfactory, good, or outstanding	100%	100%	83%	74%

Panel members' feedback included:

"This was an excellent report, succinct without leaving out sufficient detail. A comprehensive picture of this family emerged throughout the documentation, and it was apparent that some extremely difficult and sensitive conversations had taken place. However, notwithstanding this, the social worker did not shy away from difficult content nor recommendation. Very impressive."

"Report left me with no huge questions and a good sense of the couple. The information gathered from applicants, referees and checks was triangulated well."

"Excellent report which fully explored the couple's motivation to adopt. The potential challenging issues were explored by the social worker offering good analysis and evidence. The adopter voice was very present."

[5] Feedback process implemented part-way through reporting period, from 26.11.2018

Panel feedback on the quality of matching reports

1. Child's Permanence Report (CPR)

Child's Permanence Report	2021-22 n=91 reports	2020-21	2019-20[6]	2018-19[7]
Average rating (1: poor; 2: requires improvement; 3: satisfactory; 4: good; 5: outstanding	3.82	3.72	-	-
Rated as requiring improvement	1%	9%	36%	42%
Rated as good or outstanding	47%	41%	28%	-
Rated as satisfactory, good, or outstanding	99%	91%	64%	58%

Panel members' feedback included:

"It is a very thorough account of M's life and decisions that led to the adoption."

"Section 13 - Social worker's analysis of the child's needs and the implications for their future placement - does not reflect the boys' needs now and in the future at all."

"A lot of information is missing e.g., birth mother history and minimal information on birth father especially FS, Limited information to understand rationale for ICO initially and long delay. limited information on the assessments undertaken. Contact arrangements unclear."

"Social Worker produced a very informative document for child appreciation day, but it will be important to ensure information is cross referenced and included in the CPR as there is valuable information to recorded considering future access to records."

"Excellent, comprehensive and fluent report. A very difficult life story emerged in a factual, non-emotional manner. Report was of a particularly high standard."

[6] Feedback on 73 out of 86 reports
[7] Feedback process implemented from 26.11.2018 and pertains to 24 matches

2. Adoption Placement Report

Adoption Placement Report	2021-22 n=91	2020-21	2019-20[8]	2018-19[9]
Average rating (1: poor; 2: requires improvement; 3: satisfactory; 4: good; 5: outstanding	3.74	3.67	-	-
Rated as requiring improvement	2%	5%	35%	42%
Rated as good or outstanding	42%	37%	28%	-
Rated as satisfactory, good, or outstanding	98%	95%	65%	58%

Panel members' feedback included:

"It was very helpful to see the careful deliberation at the time the FFA placement was made, I don't think I have seen that evidenced so clearly before and it was reassuring to see that all involved considered the long term as well as short term implications of the placement".

"The APR does not explain why this family is best of 19 considered, other than that they are siblings who have not met and have a 7-year age difference. I would have liked to see how this family, and no other, is able to meet L's needs now, and into adulthood and beyond. I was surprised L was not placed under FFA regulations but was expected to wait, in foster care, to be matched with adopters of her much older sibling, who used to care for him as a child looked after".

"There is a lot of detail in the report, and I can see that there has been analysis by the Adoption Social Worker about the risks and vulnerabilities of this match. I can see the details of the strengths and why this match has been proposed."

It might have been helpful to know why LA are bringing this match to panel, as B has no attachment figure at almost two, presents as 'independent' i.e., significantly avoidant, and she is being matched with a family where independence in young children is sought, and neither parent appear to wish to prioritise B's attachment by staying at home longer. I worry this might be a disruption factor, as is a presence of

[8] Feedback on 73 out 86 reports
[9] Feedback process implemented from 26.11.2018 and pertains to 24 matches

two birth children. It's very positive referral for emotional support has been sought and there is a plan of careful introductions.

Quality of Reports: Discussion

Adopter Assessment Reports

Over the past year panel members have frequently commended the assessing social worker for high-quality, thorough, and analytical assessments, deeming none to require significant improvement. Where panel members suggest improvements, they include

- more succinct reports
- greater analysis of vulnerabilities, to add balance and avoid 'advocacy-style' reports
- capturing the voice of children already in the family
- greater attention to evidencing capacity to parent siblings
- more evidence of in-depth discussion about Fostering for Adoption with reasons for adopters' decision
- clearer evidence, with examples where possible, of applicants' understanding of therapeutic parenting

Child Permanence Reports

Panel members have noticed that where social workers are supported with the preparation of the CPR – through agency advice from ACE, social worker training and dedicated permanency managers, the general quality of the CPR has improved, e.g.

- Reports are updated following the making of Care and Placement Orders to aid matching
- Reports increasingly evidence the Local Authority's exploration of wider family members during its care planning
- Reports reflecting progression in thinking about contact after adoption, including direct contact between siblings and where risk-assessed, birth parent.

However, with adoption being a relatively uncommon feature of a front-line worker's caseload, the quality of reports remains variable. Panel members highlight the key areas for improvement as:

- Birth Parents' own histories**: Where** known and shared sensitively and with consent, an account of a birth parent's own childhood and adolescence can go a long way to help an adopted child and their adopters understand why that parent was unable to meet the child's needs
- Consideration of a child's siblings, whether adopted, looked after or with birth family and evidence of proper consideration given to the relationship or potential for relationship between the adopted child and their brothers and sisters. Information about siblings is often scant or out of date, and sometimes missing altogether (more often paternal siblings) despite evidence that their carers have been spoken to during care proceedings.

- The impact and meaning of the child's experiences: The social worker's analysis of the child's needs and the implications for their future placement) needs to evidence a deeper appreciation of the impact of the child of their harmful experiences, both at the time and in the future, using research and professional expertise to anticipate and describe the therapeutic capacity required of the child's adopters.
- Language: In some instances, greater care needs to be taken in writing a report that will be read by the child when older. Panel members would challenge use of the term 'forever family', and the suggestion that 'anonymity is a benefit of adoption', and query unsubstantiated assertions that the 'birth parents clearly love the child very much'. Social workers are sometimes asked at panel to reflect on whether vivid descriptions of disturbing adult behaviour or quoted expletives are helpful, or conversely whether social work jargon such as 'chronic neglect' provides enough explanation to the child about the reasons they were removed from their family.
- Change of name and child's identity: Panel members are concerned where a decision to change a child's name appears not to have been properly considered nor authorised by a senior manager, or where a child's ethnicity/cultural background has not been fully explored or described.

Adoption Placement Reports

Panel members' key concerns arising from the Adoption Placement Report are

- Family finding and the rationale for the match: how why was this family chosen for this child or children? Panel members look for reassurance that the huge responsibility of selecting a family for the rest of a child's life has not been undertaken casually or hastily but rather with the greatest of care and proper accountability
- The risk of over-optimism and sufficiency of the Support Plan: Panel members are particularly concerned where they suspect a child's needs have been minimised and the adopters' parenting capacity exaggerated, coupled in some instances with a 'wait and see' approach to commissioning therapeutic support when a need is already evident. The panel members who are adoptive parents are particularly attuned to the challenges of parenting traumatised children and will often express concern about a lack of hypothesis and proactivity in the support plan.
- Ownership of contact proposals, particularly where direct contact is proposed with a birth parent, or with siblings placed elsewhere, where support to build relationships between families will need co-ordination and social worker oversight.

Foster Carer Reports

Panel members read and rate the reports of the child's foster carer closely, acknowledging that, of the team around the child, it is the foster carer who is in the best position to advise prospective adopters around what to expect when caring for the child. The quality of foster carer reports varies from the excellent, detailed, reflective

and attachment and trauma-aware, to the brief and superficial. Panel will commend a helpful report to the supervising social worker, while looking to ACE and its local authority partners to continue to develop more joined up practice between fostering and adoption professionals. A key innovation in 2021-22 has been ACE's development of a revised Foster Carer Report template which seeks to capture the key domains around caring for the child in greater depth.

Panel Priorities for 2022-23

Goal	Outcomes towards goal
To contribute where appropriate to ACE's Service Improvement Plan 2022-23 and its 5 key priorities, i.e. • To increase adopter recruitment and the timeliness of assessments with a focus on recruiting families for black and ethnic minority children, sibling groups and children with health and developmental uncertainty, • To improve placement timeliness through effective tracking and matching and embedding early permanence through fostering for adoption, • Extending the range of adoption support services, • Developing collaboration and partnership working with local authorities, health and education services, adoptive parents, adoption support providers and regional and voluntary adoption agencies.	• The provision of an effective adoption panel that makes sound and evidenced recommendations, provides expert advice, and contributes to the development of adoption policy, procedures, and practice.
To continue to recalibrate panel to fulfil its statutory role as independent scrutiny of adoption proposals, through further development of the professional knowledge, skills and effectiveness of panel and its members, using training resources available and mindful of feedback from all stakeholders	• Ongoing programme of 'bitesize' and accessible training events • Annual conference 2022 focusing on professional judgement

(adopters, social workers, agency managers, panel members, decision makers)	
To develop panel members' understanding of Early Permanence, in line with national and regional priorities	• Delivery of further training • Panel minutes evidence deeper understanding of Early Permanence when considering approvals and matches
To develop panel members' cultural competence and understanding of diversity to inform their non-biased consideration of adoption proposals	• Delivery of further training • Recruitment of panel members to Central List to represent communities served by ACE
To keep panel arrangements under review, including chairing, sufficiency of panel slots, frequency, efficiency of meeting, Teams updates, information leaflets and directory of panel members	• Regular internal meetings between Lead/Operational Managers, Hub Managers and Panel Team • Quarterly meetings with Panel Chairs • Review panel leaflets • Publish directory of panel members to LA partners • Key messages from University of Worcester research into efficiency of online panels: report pending.
To contribute to the pilot of a new Child's Permanence Report template	• Focus groups and feedback forms
To provide opportunities for panel members and social workers to learn together side-by-side	• Shared training events
To report to Panel Members on the outcome of matches	• Twice-yearly in-person gatherings at which Hub Manager invited to present
To further develop professional relationships with ACE's local authority partners, including Agency Decision Makers and Operational Managers	• ADMs welcomed to observe panel meetings • Panel adviser report to LA managers' meetings • Improved channels of communication with LA managers to ensure that quality assurance feedback is properly directed • Recruitment of LA social workers to the Central List

Brenda Vincent

Lead Manager, ACE
ACE

Kate Moon

Panel Adviser,

Katie Nabbs

Panel Adviser, ACE

Appendix A: Review of priorities 2020-21

Goal	Outcome in 2021-22
A focus on equality, diversity and inclusion are increasingly evident in both the profile of any panel, and its practice.	Three panel members of non-White British ethnicity and one panel members from LGBTQ+ community have been recruited to the Central List. Panel members have attended training in EDI.
The voice of the child to be heard more clearly in panel's considerations	The child's photograph is shown at the start of a consideration of a match. Further consideration to be given to value of a 'child's question', drawn from the newly developing adopted young people's groups provided by ACE Spokes.
Panel's contribution to Adoption Central England's Service Improvement Plan, 2021-22 and its key priorities of • increased adopter recruitment • improved timeliness of adopter assessments • recruiting families for black and ethnic minority children, sibling groups and children with health and developmental uncertainty. • Timely placements • Embedding Fostering for Adoption	ACE and the Panel Team offered 80 panel meetings to the adoption agencies, representing 2 panels of 3 agenda items per week, with the option of a fourth item or additional panel in exceptional circumstances to ensure timely placements. Panel minutes evidence attention given to the of timeliness of both adopter assessments and matches, as well as a concern that opportunities for a child to benefit from a Fostering for Adoption placement are not missed. Panel members' readiness and ability to consider the needs of the priority groups will be the subject of ongoing review, with further training in key issues being provided.
Adjusting to a post-pandemic way of working while ensuring the robustness and credibility of the panel role.	Online panel meetings continue as a time and cost-efficient medium for all parties, while the limitations of virtual vs in-person meetings are discussed and addressed through panel member surveys, feedback from attendees, Chairs' meetings, updated IT guidance, developments in

	Microsoft Teams, in person gatherings and research.
Further developments in working relationships across the agency and its partner local authorities to facilitate effective quality assurance processes, with the shared goal of ultimately improving outcomes for children whose plan has to be adoption.	Panel Adviser reports to 6-monthly meetings of LA managers, sharing quality assurance feedback gathered from panel.
The recruitment of social worker Panel members with specialist fostering and post-adoption support knowledge to join the Central List.	Panel Advisers have followed up expressions of interests in joining Panel from three social workers with relevant experience, none of whom were able to progress their applications due to pressures of work. This remains an ongoing challenge.
Improved feedback response rates from stakeholders, particularly social workers	62 Feedback forms from social workers attending panel were received in the reporting year, compared to 26 in the previous year. Panel Advisers devised and delivered a workshop for children's social workers: "What to Expect at Panel".
Reporting to Panel on the outcome of matches	A presentation on the outcome of recent matches was given by Hazel Howard, Team Manager, at the in-person Panel Gathering on 3 November 2021. It is hoped that this can be repeated at least annually.
Ongoing consolidation of DDP in Panel practice	DDP supervision sessions have been offered to Panel Chairs and members.

Appendix B: Central List of Panel Members

As on 31 March 2022

***New member joining in 2021-2**

Chairs

Margaret Powell, Independent Chair, adoptive parent, Vice-Chair of a fostering panel and member of the Independent Review Mechanism

Heather Tobin, Independent Chair, member of a fostering panel, adoptive parent and retired senior police officer

Avriel Reader, Independent Chair at ACE and another regional adoption agency, and retired Head of Children's Services, Worcestershire County Council

Stuart Watkins, Independent Chair at ACE, Chair of a fostering panel and Home for Good, retired Service Manager in Adoption and Fostering, Worcestershire County Council

Medical Advisors

Dr Emma Thompson, Agency Medical Advisor, Paediatrician, Children, Young People and Families, Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (membership on hold during pandemic)

Dr Lucy Coker, Agency Medical Advisor, Senior Trust Specialist in Community Paediatrics, South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Viji Krishnamoorthy, Agency Medical Advisor, Paediatrician, C&W Partnership Trust

Dr Tanya Thangavelu, Agency Medical Advisor, Specialist Doctor, Community Paediatrics, University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Sudha Arun*, Agency Medical Advisor, Children in Care Team, Herefordshire

Social Work Members

Emma Wooldridge, Social work member and Family Finding Social Worker, ACE

Parveen Nagra, Social work member and Post Adoption Social Worker, ACE

Claire Coutts, Independent social work member, Children and Families Social Worker

Liz Newman, Social work member and Team Manager, Stratford Children's Team,

Warwickshire Children's Services

Deborah Roden, social work member and Social Worker in Connected Persons Team,

Warwickshire Fostering

Cornelia Heaney, social work member, Operations Manager Assurance and Practice

Improvement - Children & Families, Warwickshire County Council

Dr Peter Unwin, social work member, former foster carer, and social work academic

Natalie Baldwin, Adoption Social Worker for another RAA

Caroline Stirk, Adoption Social Worker in another RAA, adoptive parent

Independent Members

Andrea Candlish, retired health visitor and regular carer of grandchildren

Bob Duthie, adoptive parent, former board member at Adoption UK, retired banker

Catherine Lloyd, adopted person, author, former leader and advocate in education, social care and mental health settings, panel member and board member for another adoption agency.

Charlotte Shadbolt, adoptive parent of four children, former

Chris Gilbey-Smith*, independent member, adoptive parent, actor, and former lawyer

Dave Linton*, independent member, local authority foster carer

Elaine Stratford, adopted person and senior health professional

Faye Abbot* elected member, councillor at Coventry City Council

Janis McBride, retired primary head teacher, fostering and adoption in family

Joanne Russell-Miller, adoptive parent, and human resources manager

Marian Mound*, independent member, retired adoption social worker

Marion Humphries*, elected member, councillor at Warwickshire County Council

Mark Bayfield, adoptive parent

Natasha Sutton, adoptive parent, and teacher

Nigel Pendleton, adoptive parent and foster carer, Warwickshire County Council

Patrick Fox, social worker in commissioning for Children's Services, adult services, and Approved Mental Health Professional, adopted person.

Rob Rogers, adoptive parent, educationalist, clergy, and counsellor

Sa'ddiya Mayet*, intercountry adoptive parent

Sharon Bent, adoptive parent and retired police officer

Taras Spyczak*, independent member, adoptive parent

Yasmeen Qazi*, independent member, adoptive parent, former social worker

Non-voting attendees

Kate Moon. Panel Adviser (30 hours)

Katie Nabbs, Panel Adviser (25 hours)

Melissa Rose, Operations Manager, ACE Hub, and relief Panel Adviser

Louise Hathaway, Operations Manager, ACE Spokes, and relief Panel Adviser

Claire Duncombe, Panel Administrator (full-time)

Jacquie Keir, Panel Administrator (part-time)

Appendix C: Panel Training

Annual Conference, 29 September 2021 on 'Teams'

Contact and Communication in Adoption: Learning from the Experiences of Adoptive Families'

Led by Julie Young, Senior Research Associate at the Centre for Research on Children and Families, University of East Anglia, the session explored the crucial role of adoptive parents in family communication around adoption, and the importance of acknowledging their child's connection to their first/birth family. Julie shared findings from research on contact in adoption and discussed the implications for contact planning and preparing adoptive parents to help children make sense of their adoption story in a safe and beneficial way

Overall, the event was positively received by 23 panel members.

'Bitesize' Series

Developed to optimise the new opportunities created by virtual platforms, the 'Bitesize' programme of training workshops lasting 1-2 hours and held on Microsoft Teams has continued. Sessions held in 2021-22 include:

- Dyadic Development Practice, with Dr Billy Smythe (29 April 2021and 10 March 2022)
- Post-Adoption Support, with Louise Hathaway, Operations Manager at ACE (13 May 2021)
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, with Dr Joanna Kemp, EDI Adviser, Warwickshire CC (18 June 2021)
- Adoption Disruptions, with Brenda Vincent, Lead Manager, ACE (19 July 2021)
- Panel Members' Conversation Group, with Panel Advisers (1 December 2021)
- ACE's Family Connexions Service, with Margaret Meredith and Beth Wade (1 February 2022)

In-Person Panel Member Meetings, 3 November 2021

In recognition of the loss of face-to-face contact and challenge to collaborative working that a virtual platform has imposed on panel members, the agency now offers 6-monthly in-person meetings provided a minimum of 12 panel members can attend. The first meeting, held near Warwick, was attended by 15 panel members and the panel team, and included presentations by ACE lead manager, Brenda Vincent about the development of ACE's work, by Emma Wooldridge on the work of the family finders, by team manager, Hazel Howard, on outcomes for a number of children matched since the start of ACE, and by panel advisers Kate and Katie on the 'recalibration' of the panel role.

Appendix D: Feedback on the effectiveness of the Panel

From Prospective Adopters

Prospective adopters are invited to complete a short online questionnaire about their experience of attending the Adoption Panel: a new question reflecting the virtual format was added during the global pandemic in 2020.

Questions to prospective adopters	Approvals 2021-22 77 cases	Match 2021-22 91 cases	Approvals 2020-2021 77 cases	Match 2020-2021 91 cases	Approvals and matches 2019-20 185 cases	Approvals and matches[10] 2018-19 184 cases
Response rate	44%	40%	51%	42%	24 %	11%
Number of responses	34	36	39	38	44	
Attended on first date offered	62%	61%	67%	61%	61%	
None, or very few technical glitches with online attendance	79%	86%	79%	95%	-	-
Panel ran early, on time or less than 15 minutes behind	71%	64%	77%	79%	43%	-
Thought questions were relevant	91%	92%	90%	95%	84%	93%
Overall experience of attending Panel was negative	3%	3%	5%	0%	11%	-
Overall experience of attending Panel was neutral	6%	3%	5%	3%	15%	-
Overall experience of attending Panel was positive	91%	94%	90%	97%	74%	93%

[10] Paper questionnaire sent to applicants by post

Happy to attend a virtual Panel again, or neutral	85%	83%	95%	100%	-	-

Sample of feedback from prospective adopters:

"The panel members were very welcoming and professional. All the questions were clearly formulated. The Chair of Panel Adviser was extremely good and efficient in her role. Our social worker and the child's social worker were of great support for us during the meeting."

"Through this process we are encouraged to understand each case and child is difference, think it would be beneficial if panel members also remember this when asking certain questions around decision making. One particular panel member came across a little too strongly with their own thoughts on a situation that left us feeling pushed into a corner about a delicate situation we'd already worked through with other professionals."

"It was a really positive experience. I had previously thought it was a box ticking exercise but have completely changed my mind on this. They were so helpful, experienced, clearly on our side and asked astute questions that showed they noticed things that were missing or needed to be done or that were hadn't considered or that might help us. To be honest, I'd have loved to have kept in touch with some panel members!"

From Social Workers

Social workers attending the virtual Panel either to support an approval or match are invited to complete a short online questionnaire about their experience.

Questions to social workers	Approvals and matches 2021-22 173 cases	Approvals and matches 2020-2021 169 cases	Approvals and matches 2019-20 185 cases	Approvals and matches 2018-19 184 cases
Number of responses	62	31	40	25
Response rate (percentage of cases for which feedback submitted)	36%	18%	22%	14%
Case started within 30 minutes of advertised time	76%	87%	67.5%	52%
Thought questions to SW were relevant or extremely relevant[11]	81%	84%	85%	96%

[11] 10% replied that they were not asked any questions

Thought questions to applicants were relevant or extremely relevant	81%	94%	87.5%	100%
Thought Chairing of meeting was 'good' or 'excellent'	92%	87%	-	-
Experience 'better than expected' or 'Excellent/very positive'	70%	77%	-	-

Sample of feedback from social workers:

"This was a very positive experience. I felt the chair was very warm and this was reflected well across panel (which can be difficult virtually) It was lovely that panel members had recognised and gave positive feedback on our child focus."

"I think more clarity over what is wanted from a question. I recognise panel has a very difficult job and they have such a lot to read through, but I did feel that the panel had maybe focussed on FFA with not fully allowing a clear answer. I also understand that this is my perspective and so it is subjective."

"Whilst it is important to clarify points it is not necessary to continue to probe to try to get a different answer than the one given. This was not a pleasant experience for myself or the adopters and in some ways overshadowed the joy of being matched. It was positive that the chair stepped in."

"No further improvements needed. Panel was on time and went smoothly. As a student, I felt nervous initially, but all panel members were very friendly and welcoming, which eased me into the meeting."

From Agency Decision Makers

The template used by decision makers at ACE and its five partner local authorities asks

Is the Decision Maker satisfied that the Panel considered the case appropriately?

and invites them to offer feedback in writing on the Panel process, as described in the Minutes of the Panel meeting.

In **all** cases, the agency decision maker was satisfied with the Adoption Panel's consideration of the proposal placed before it, with many using the feedback opportunity to express appreciation:

> **"The process was sufficiently robust and thorough. I commend panel for meeting the social workers separately to address queries relating to the**

Prospective Adopters' assessment and CPR" (ADM Herefordshire, 1 November 2021)

"I am satisfied that the panel have undertaken a thorough examination of the evidence and information presented to them and followed due process with regard to reaching a decision on the match." (ADM, Solihull, 18 June 2021)

"I am satisfied that Panel were robust and thorough in their decision-making process. Strengths and vulnerabilities were discussed, and Panel were unanimous in support of their recommendation that the match should go ahead". (ADM, Coventry, 25 November 2021)

Agency Decision Makers who observed a panel meeting offered the following feedback:

"Really impressed. Really robust, a lot of challenge. It was really obvious that you had all read the papers, done your due diligence, and thought about the questions. It was thorough and challenge with the social workers and adopters was done in a sensitive way.

I liked the way you chaired it …giving people opportunity to say what they needed to say or add.

It was helpful to observe in terms of what you pick up in the papers – for me in that first case picking up those issues in terms of chronology, use of text messages, how we ensure the CPR is a document for the child and how social workers write that. Reflecting on what you picked up in terms of the child's voice and that we evidence that... Important that we and the child have the full picture." (ADM, Worcestershire, 31 March 2022)

I observed ACE Panel yesterday and it was really useful, firstly there were discussions about DDP questions... which was interesting and would be good to discuss with ADMs generally at the regional meeting, as we need to understand this more to support my questioning within ADM.

On the first child [match] I got to feel proud of our timeliness on Fostering for Adoption ...and it was lovely to see the baby and adopter...

The panel were really robust around the second child considered... exploring delay, siblings, matching .... there really was a lack of clarity in the CPR to understand all these issues. The questions were careful and kind, providing opportunity to gain the necessary information to recommend a match. I really saw the shift from what was in the paperwork to exploring the issues to a point of resolution, with vulnerabilities. It was skilful chairing alongside the diversity of the experiences of the panel too.

(ADM, Warwickshire, 17 March 2022)

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Agenda Item 5

NHS
South Warwickshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Report Summary			
Report to	Clinical Governance Committee	**Date of Meeting**	11 May 2022
Report Title	Looked After Children (LAC) Annual Report	**Agenda Item**	5.7
Executive/ Non-Executive Lead	Fiona Burton, Chief Nursing Officer	**Report Author(s)**	Carla Elliott. Named Nurse Children in Care, Warwickshire
Report Previously Discussed at	Audit and Operational Governance Group Family Health Division on 26 April 2022.		

Purpose of the Report		
This report is provided to present the evidence of the Children in Care (CiC) Teams operational activity of how the statutory health needs of Warwickshire children and young people (CYP) residing in care are met.	For Approval	
	For Discussion	
	For Information	√

Recommendations and Action Required
The Committee is asked to receive and note this report.

Impact *(is there any impact arising from the report on the following?)*			
Quality	√	Equality	
Finance	√	Risk	
Performance	√	Compliance	√
Workforce		Legal	

Applicable Quality Improvement Priorities			
Elective Hub		Health Inequalities	
Electronic Patient Record (EPR) Mobilisation		Patient Portal	
Children and Young People in Crisis		Remote Monitoring Technology	
Maternity Workforce		Living Well with Cancer	
Autism Strategy			

Trust Values *(which of the Trust Values is the report helping to deliver?)*			
Safety	√	Compassionate	√
Effectiveness	√	Trusted	√

Relationship to the Board Assurance Framework (BAF) and Risk Register	
Are any existing risks on the BAF/Risk Register affected?	
Identify the BAF/Risk Register risk ID and description – explain how the risk has been affected – reduced or increased as a consequence of the evidence within the report – N/A	
Do you recommend a new entry to the BAF and/or Risk Register is made as a result of this report? If yes, describe the new risk – N/A.	

South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust

Report to the Clinical Governance Committee – 11 May 2022

Looked After Children (LAC) Annual Report

Executive Opinion and Assurance

This is a reassuring report that provides information regarding the Children in Care (CiC) team recovery and improvement work over the past year from what was a very challenging position. I would recommend that the Committee congratulate the lead nurse for this recovery and her leadership in this. It would be useful to understand how assured the lead nurse is in this sustained recovery given the ask from out of area and the increasing numbers of adoptions and asylum families in the area.

Fiona Burton
Chief Nursing Officer

Executive Summary

This year has proven difficult for the CiC Service. There has been a complete turnover of both nursing and administrative staff following extended periods of long-term sickness and vacancies, including senior management. This period caused a significant backlog of health assessments being offered and completed; this was recorded on the risk register. The new Named Nurse for CiC and the new team have worked through a recovery plan and have completed all of the required actions and are now working towards restoration, continuing to recognise gaps and potential risks

As with many teams, there has been significant change and adaptation due to the Covid 19 pandemic and for a short period of time all health assessments were carried out virtually, however from July 2021 face to face appointments were offered to all children and young people (CYP). Health outcomes for Children in Care (CiC) have demonstrably improved over the last year and impetus has been sustained during the pandemic. All health providers, clinical staff and social care staff have worked very hard to adapt to new ways of working and engaging with children and families. Agencies have worked well together in challenging times to meet the needs of CiC and to keep foster carers informed and up to date.

This report sets out the CiC Teams activity and progress over the past year.

The report incorporates:

- Key activities within the Trust and the challenges of providing a service during a period of team instability and continued change, alongside the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic.
- A review of the current quality assurance methods used to ensure CYP are receiving a high standard of service delivery.
- A demonstration of the increase in demand upon the services delivering care to CYP across Warwickshire.
- Performance data for Initial Health Assessments (IHA) and Review Health Assessments (RHA) delivery for April 2021- March 2022.

- Plans in place to ensure there is evidence of continued strategies to further improve the service for CiC.

Introduction

Looked after children are amongst the most vulnerable groups in society. It is well recognised that children often come into care with poorer physical and mental health than their peers, and that longer term outcomes are also worse for them. Supporting health needs and recognising looked after children as individuals helps to overcome disadvantage, improves life chances and assists children to reach their full potential.

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is legally defined as 'looked after' by a local authority if he or she:

- has accommodation from the local authority for a continuous period of more than 24 hours
- is subject to a care order (the CYP is in the care of the local authority)
- is subject to a placement order (part of the adoption process)

The terms looked after child (LAC) or child in care (CIC) are used interchangeably and mean the same thing. Looked after children are, by legal definition, under 18 years of age.

The Local Authority becomes the Corporate Parent but all professionals around the child have corporate parenting responsibilities.

Warwickshire CiC

The CiC population within Warwickshire, is a mix between those who originate from this area and those who are under the care of other Local Authorities living in this area.

Data provided to the CiC team from Warwickshire Local Authority evidences the increase in numbers of CYP entering the care system. The table below indicates that from March 2020 to March 2022 the total amount of CiC increased by 148 CYP with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) increasing by 47.

Overall Numbers of Children in Care at Year End

	31/03/2020	31/03/2021	31/3/22*
Warwickshire CIC (including UASC) at 31 March	754	860	822
Warwickshire CIC (excluding UASC) at 31 March	681	776	728

*Data for 2021/22 is provisional as it has not yet been quality assured as part of the LA returns process to the government.

Age Breakdown of Children in Care at year end (Grouped)

Age Group	31-Mar-20	31-Mar-21	31-Mar-22*
Under 1	42	33	36
1 – 4 years	119	145	124
5- 9 years	130	161	133
10 – 15 years	263	313	297
16 – 17 years	200	208	232
Total Children in Care	**754**	**860**	**822**

*Data for 2021/22 is provisional as it has not yet been quality assured as part of the LA statutory returns process to the government.

The data for Adoption Medicals will be included in all future reports.

The Children in Care (CiC) team complete statutory Initial Health Assessments (IHA) and Review Health Assessments (RHA) for CiC.

Initial Health Assessment (IHA) – this is a statutory health assessment that is required to be completed within 20 working days for all children and young people (CYP) coming into care. This is completed by a Paediatrician.

Review Health Assessment (RHA) – these are undertaken 6 monthly for children aged under 5 years and 12 monthly aged 5 years until their 18th birthday. These are completed by a Children in Care (CiC) Nurse/Health Visitor/School Nurse or a Paediatrician if clinically indicated.

Public Health England commission RHA's to be completed by School Nurses (Connect for Health) for Warwickshire children who attend a Warwickshire school and Health Visitors, children 0-5 years of age (both Warwickshire and Non-Warwickshire) who reside in the county. The CiC team are commissioned to conduct IHA's and RHA's for all CYP living within a 20 mile radius of Warwick and Nuneaton that do not fit into these acceptance criteria's.

Statutory Health Assessments are an opportunity to assess a CYP physical and mental health status, review the health care plan and provide health promotion advice, information, and counselling. Older children need advice on lifestyle choices, drugs, alcohol, and sexual health.

The Children in Care Team Paediatricians carry out all Warwickshire CYP Adoption Medicals. These are conducted in clinics where a full medical examination and consultation will take place.

How do we know we are safe?

Staffing

The CiC Team have now worked through a significant period of instability caused by long term sickness and vacancies. Staffing has been a priority over the last 8 months and it has been fundamental to recruit to both nursing and administration posts and manage the long standing sickness. Staffing levels are now near to reaching a full established team and there are plans to increase both nursing and administrative staff with developmental roles which will ensure that there are opportunities for staff with no CiC experience to learn the role and progress.

All staff have access to regular clinical and peer supervision.

The CiC Team have continued to work efficiently and effectively to deal with the challenges as discussed above as well as the pressures Covid 19 has produced and continue to provide a reliable and consistent service to ensure that the health needs for all CYP living in Warwickshire are met and health plans provided.

Raising the CIC Team Profile

It has been a priority to raise the profile of the CiC Team across both the organisation and outside agencies to ensure we are contactable to that we are approached for support and information sharing as needed. The CIC Team have established a single point of contact with one direct telephone number which is documented on all emails and appointment letters. The Intranet has been updated with this as well as all team member's names.

Mandatory Training/Appraisals

There is a 100% compliance with both training and appraisals and all appraisals for next year are all booked.

Health Assessments

The Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) of offering and completing an Initial Health Assessment (IHA) within 20 working days are now being met and all assessments are booked as face to face appointments. The data for this report is captured by a mixture of manual and electronic spreadsheets. In January 2022, the CiC spreadsheets were transferred to an electronic system.

From the information captured, 215 assessments were requested and 185 IHA's have been recorded as completed between April 2021 and March 2022 and 658 RHA assessments were requested and 484 have been recorded as completed between April 2021 and March 2022.
Older CYP are more likely to decline their health assessment, however a robust health plan is always provided by the CiC Nurses.

Rag Rating RHA's for level of complexity

The Specialist Nurses attend allocation meetings weekly to rag rate the RHA requests and then book in priority order. This framework is used to capture and gain an improved

understand of the impact of working with CYP who have complex and continuing health needs. It is important to note that all children who come in care, whether they require a basic or intensive level of support, have most likely been exposed to harm and trauma. Therefore, compared to their peers and the general population they will have additional complexity.

Quality Review of Initial and Review Health Assessments (IHA) (RHA)

This is a process to ensure that the standard of the health assessment meets the national guidance and to ensure that reports are of a high quality for our children and young people to support their health needs. The aim is to provide a feedback sheet which will provide the practitioner with specific guidance to update their report.

Audits include all Health Visitors RHA's, all out of area RHA's, a sample of 10 School Nursing RHA's every month, the CIC nurses quality review each other's complex reports and the Named Nurse and CCG will audit a sample of the CiC Nurses RHA's from April 22.

All out of area Initial health assessments are quality reviewed by the CiC Pediatricians.

All health assessments are disseminated to the Local Authority/GP and Carers/Young Person. Themes are then shared with the health practitioner/teams as part of the quality improvement programme.

The CiC Team are now meeting the targets for ensuring that all young people are mental health, sexual health, substance misuse, dental and optician referred and or signposted as appropriate when required.

Adoption Medicals

The request for adoption medicals have increased significantly and the next report will show an even bigger increase. These are prioritised appointments and are all offered within the required timeframe. There were 72 requests for Adoption medicals April 2021 – March 2022.

Incidents

There were 2 incidents reported in January 2022. These were both breach of information;

- A General Practitioner (GP) surgery sending the CiC Team another patients details; the GP Operational Manager contacted immediately and the wrong information shredded.
- A child's health assessment was filed in the wrong child's secure CiC Team shared drive folder; this was removed immediately. The CiC team only, have access this shared drive.

All incidents are actioned and any lessons learnt are shared with the team.

Covid

The team continue to work with a mix of agile and home working. PPE is worn at all clinical visits. All staff are fully vaccinated.

What has improved since the last annual report?

Staffing and Team Building

It has been imperative to complete a period of intensive work around staffing and team building. Prior to August 2021 there were a number of unresolved HR and staffing issues registered on the risk register. There has been a comprehensive recovery plan completed with the actions achieved. See Appendix 1 for the Recovery Action Plan. There has been a successful recruitment drive and the long term sickness managed with the long standing risk over 12 months closed and removed from the risk register.

The CiC Team have now been allocated communal office space that enables all of the team to work together rather than in 3 separate offices.

Team Building sessions have been organised for the whole team with the second session booked for May 17th 2022. This session will concentrate on Team visioning, reflection and action planning our future working together and next steps.

KPI Data

A new dashboard, which is still in its early stages of development is currently being trialled. The dashboard takes its feed from the CIC spreadsheet which is manually populated by the CIC admin team, so currently the data that we see is reliant on accurate input on the spreadsheet. The user is able to toggle between IHA and RHA data and also between the different areas – Appendix 2 shows an example of the RHA data dashboard. The dashboard is based on the current KPIs and will update automatically, as an entry is made on the spreadsheet. This will make capturing the KPIs in the future more streamlined and accurate and also allow month by month performance accessible.

What has made us most proud since our last Annual report?

Staff Resilience

We have now worked through a recovery plan working through a backlog of health assessments dating back to March 2021; the team have shown commitment to the responsibility of their role and working together to;

- Meet the KPI's of offering a health assessment within 20 working days.
- Raising the profile of the Children in Care Team
- From January 2022, CiC Specialist Nurses have provided a higher level of support and supervision to the Health Visitors and School Nurses.
- Provide monthly training to all staff who complete a health assessment.
- Building good links/networking with SWFT Staff, the Local Authority and many other outside agencies.
- 100% attendance at all required meetings, both internally and externally.

Team Structure/Developmental Posts

There is currently some restructuring of the team; once the job descriptions are written, the team will be advertising for a Band 6 CiC Nurse and a Band 2 Clerical Post. These post will offer staff developmental opportunities within the CiC team as well as providing a marked improvement in service provision, improved joint working with the Local Authority and better outcomes for the CYP and their carers.

Team Building

We are following a team building programme with SWFT Organisational Development Department. We have a follow up session 17th May 2022 and this will involve the team exploring and working on a team vision.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Nurse

In March 2022 our full time UASC Specialist Nurse commenced post. This is a new post that has been developed to provide a seamless service to these CYP whilst working within the Children in Care Team. Our UASC Nurse will work closely with the Local Authority UASC Team to ensure that these CYP are assessed and are provided with a health plan and support. As this is a new post, the next report will have more information to share.

What are we worried about since our last Annual Report?

Validated Data

This report has covered an overview of the latest data as it has been difficult to collect the figures from the spreadsheets. Appendix 2 is a KPI reporting template that is collected quarterly and shared with the CCG. The report I have sent is for the months December 2021/January 2022 and February 2022 as the health assessment figures for March 2022 are not completed. This data was collated manually so there is no assurance that this is a true data reflection of the CiC Teams work. I am assured that this is a good estimate. The next governance and annual report for information on Q1 will be collated from the electronic dashboard so I am confident that we will be reporting up to date/accurate information.

There has been a significant increase in the number of children and young people entering care and demand for health assessments have increased. In January 2022, there was influx of over 40 requests sent to the team from the Local Authority in one week due to a backlog, this was additional to the other RHA's that were also due/requested. This has meant that meeting the 20 working day deadline was difficult to achieve. COVID has also been a factor in meeting the deadlines as both staff and carers have had to postpone some assessments.

The RHA Part A (request for health assessments) on occasions have to be sent back to the Local Authority to be updated with consent or change of placement for example, this can cause a delay in meeting the deadline.

SWFT Health Visiting Service is experiencing significant staff shortages and are struggling with completing the RHA's currently. The CiC Team are working closely with the Health Visiting Teams that are struggling and will endeavour to support them in completing the RHA's.

The School Nursing Service has some vacancies and the Lead for RHA's within this service has left and are struggling to fill that vacancy. The CiC Team have provided a Link Nurse and meetings to support are held twice weekly.

Backlog of completion of Health Assessments

There is a significant backlog of Warwickshire children and young people (CYP) placed in Birmingham, Staffordshire and Shropshire waiting to have their Health Assessments booked.

This has been raised as a risk with the CCG and a plan has been devised after reviewing our service capacity. As a short term solution, there has been an agreement that for the months of April/May/June 2022, the CiC Team will provide extra clinics to reduce the backlog. This will ensure that 18 CYP that have been waiting in excess of 20 weeks for their IHA will have their health need assessed and a health plan.

Conclusion and Priorities going forward

The CiC Team have now worked through a significant period of instability and staffing levels have increased due to a successful recruitment drive. Team building remains paramount with away day sessions over the next year booked. There are plans to employ both nursing and administrative staff into developmental roles which will ensure that there are opportunities for staff to join the team with no CiC experience.

The CiC Team have continued to work efficiently and effectively to deal with the challenges as discussed above, as well as the pressures Covid 19 has produced and continue to provide a reliable and consistent service to ensure that the health needs for all CYP living in Warwickshire are met and health plans provided.

Priorities;

- Continue to develop and support the team by following the recruitment plan, enhanced supervisor and team building programme.
- Review of the current Service Specification. This was last reviewed in 2019. There has been recruitment within the CCG with a new position, Designated Children in Care Nurse. The Service Specification will be a joint working task.
- To attend the quarterly held Health of Looked after Children operational group meetings (HeLAC) which the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) will be reinstating this year to address and ensure a multi-agency response in addressing health outcomes for Looked after Children ensuring collaborative working and good communication.
- To update the Integrated Care Record which will bring access to key health and social care data.
- Training – to complete a new ESR e learning package in completing a health assessment for all staff required to complete a RHA.

- Review and update the Rag rating/service levels of the RHA's.

- Patient feedback; the team are currently researching the feedback forms as there has been issues/ non-compliance with carers and the CYP completing them due to the time it takes with the amount of questioning plus there is also a questionnaire about emotional health that also needs to be completed so it is felt by practitioners that these current feedback forms need to be condensed and bespoke. there are plans to trial 'smiley faces' from May 2022

- To work with the CCG to revise both the questions, parameters and wording of the KPI's as some of them do not reflect and capture the true data. For example; the completed assessment will be those requested in the previous quarter data.

- To review the Leaving Care summaries /Health Passports to ensure they reflect the correct information required by the young person for any future health needs with up to date signposting to services.

Appendix 1

Administrative Processes Recovery Plan; August 2021 - October 2021

Objective	Measures	Timeframe	Progress
Immediate priorities were felt to be the admin email inbox as this holds all the requests for and dissemination of Health Assessments, Adoption Medicals, and general queries.	The CIC Team attend a weekly Priority and Risk Planning meeting; this meeting is minuted and shared with the team and management The Admin Team have an overview of the emails and they have been categorised so that they can be filtered and easily found by subject The health assessments date back to mid July 21. The KPI's will not be met for these, and this is captured on the Risk Register. Once the email folder is up to date, we will also be able to monitor if the LA are sending the requests in a timely manner so that we can action by informing them of such data.	October 21 for all actions to be completed.	**August 3rd, 2021, the estimated figures were;** 228 emails; 33 for dissemination 22 for Initial Health assessments 44 for Review Health assessments. 0 Adoption Medical requests. **September 14th, 2021, the estimated figures were;** 111 emails 116 for dissemination 27 for Initial Health assessments 49 for Review Health assessments. 0 Adoption Medical requests. 217 All about Me Minutes. **October 19th, 2021 the estimated figures were;** 22 emails 37 for dissemination 16 for Initial Health assessments 21 for Review Health assessments. 0 Adoption Medical requests. 347 All about Me Minutes. All adoption medicals are dealt with immediately so no referrals will be waiting.

Objective	Measures	Timeframe	Progress
This risk was documented on the Risk Register in June 2021.			**October 21** Risk has been removed from the Risk Register. The contact details on all paperwork now state Named Nurse in place of a name. CIC Team have established a single point of contact with one direct telephone number, this is now on all emails and appointment letters. The Intranet has been updated with the new Nurses names and single point of contact and this information was communicated to the Trust via Epulse The admin team have had a member of staff return from long term sickness. Admin is now working at full establishment. Admin are organising priorities daily – health assessments are being disseminated to staff. The inbox is now streamlined and the emails are prioritised
The CIC Nurses are receiving minutes from the Local Authority (LA) 'All About Me Meetings'. On occasions there can be 8-10 a day. This process needs to be	The CiC team are liaise with the Local Authority to understand these minutes and then create a storage of documentation process.		There is a process now where the LA send these minutes to the Nurses generic inbox but once Admin are in a better position these will be sent to the admin inbox. A process

Objective	Measures	Timeframe	Progress
handed over to the Admin Team	Discuss with SWFT Information Governance Team		is currently being written for this and will be shared once we have had confirmation from IG that these notes are not required to be uploaded onto Lorenzo. The CIC Nurses are keeping a record of the amount sent and the figures are added to our data sharing information at our weekly work stream priority and risk meetings **October 21** Admin are uploading all minutes to the CYP health folder on the shared drive
To identify/understand/ risk assess and action the IHA's and RHA's to ensure that they are meeting the KPI's	To review and update the Chasing Spreadsheets on a weekly basis. Work through the data and input. Looking at ways of analysing data electronically. There is a data document that is shared every evening with the CCG by the Local Authority with up-to-date CIC numbers. This has been requested to be shared with the CIC Team.		Admin are updating the spreadsheets as they deal with the HA's. These spreadsheets are currently not up to date. Plan to update the spreadsheets to ensure that up to date data and KPI targets can be shared with the CCG and LA Admin Staff are transferring all relevant information into the child's folder when the request is processed. GP requests are also added to the child's folder as it is received preventing delay in feedback.

Objective	Measures	Timeframe	Progress
			Some requests for HA's are being made prior to the 6-week window by the Local Authority (LA). We agreed that this would be attributing to our failure to meet the 28-day KPI so have agreed that Admin will monitor the email inbox for HA's that have been requested too soon and send them back to ask for them to be sent back to us when required. This process will be monitored and reviewed. **October 21** There has been work completed on the streamlining of the spreadsheets. There is a plan for these spreadsheets to be electronic.
Reduce no of outstanding disseminations	These health assessments are all sent to Social Workers/Carers and GP's. post completion		0.2 WTE Admin Bank staff worked during September and October 2021- this has had a significant impact in the reduction of the HA's waiting to be disseminated (see data at the top of the document) **October 21** This remains a priority and there is a marked reduction in the backlog – plan to keep this strategy to clear the backlog.

Objective	Measures	Timeframe	Progress
Ensure that data is available for the Audits to be completed.	There has not been a Quality Review Audit carried out since March 2021. With the dissemination process being behind there are currently no HV/SN HAs uploaded to be audited.		All out of area Quality Reviews are being completed. With the dissemination paperwork now available, the Quality Review Audits for the HV, SN and CIC Nurses will commence November 2021.
Positive team, by supporting cultural change, equality, and ensure that the team have appraisal and mandatory training.	Work with Organisational development to enhance team dynamics and team working Support staff attendance at work through adherence to sickness management policy and SWFT Health and Wellbeing strategy.		1:1's have been set up with the Admin Team Appraisals were out of date so have been booked for November 2021. Mandatory training up to date for the Admin Team – 1 member who has been on long term sick now has all his booked in to complete. AL is booked and a grid is used by the team to check prior to requesting to ensure that where possible there is only one Admin Team member on AL at one time. Team building session booked for 15th November 21 – this will be a series of sessions over the next 12 months.

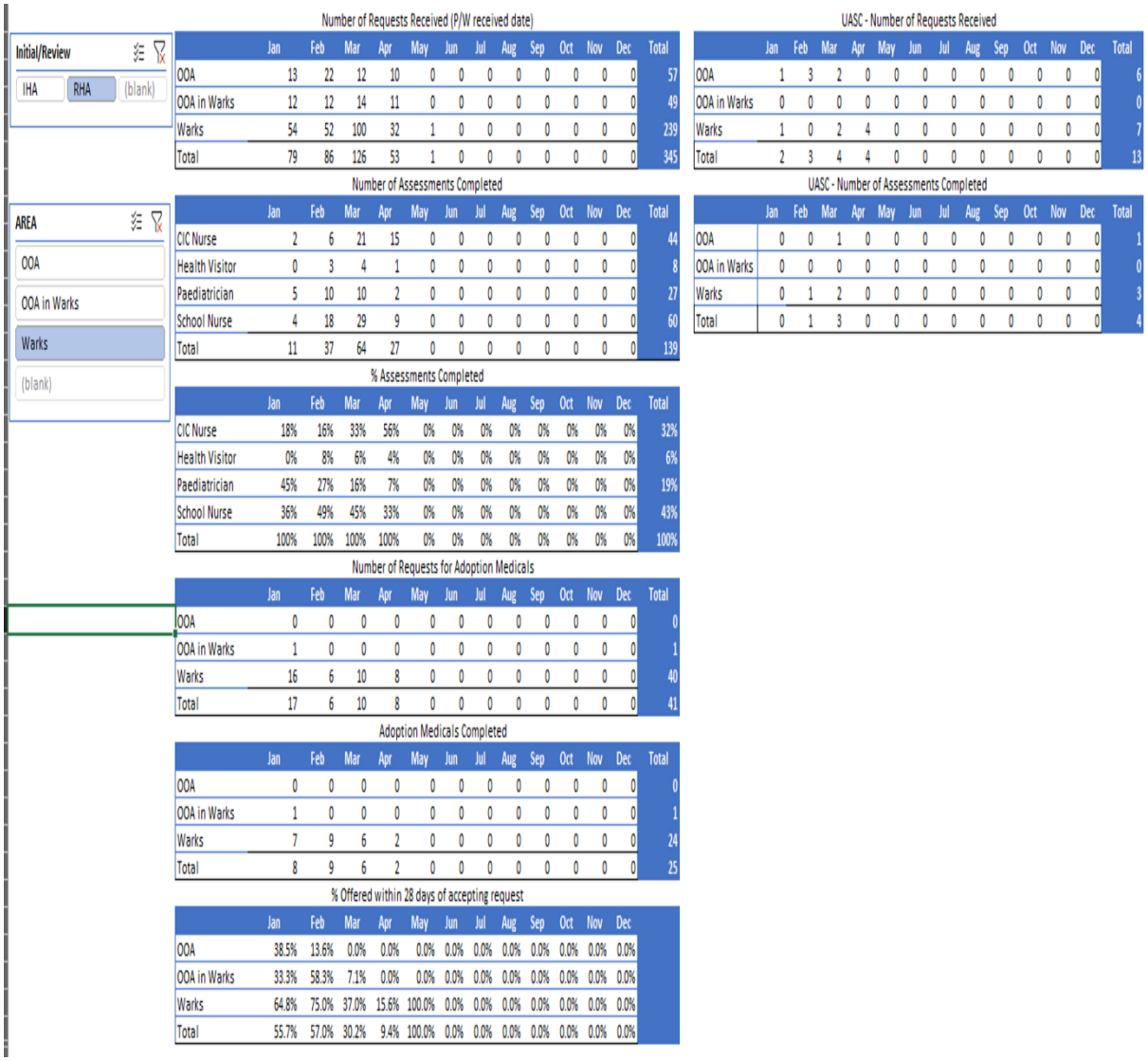
Appendix 2

KPI Quarterly Report template – October/November/December 2021

Oct/Nov/Dec 21	**Target**	**Warwickshire children In county**	**Warwickshire children out of county**	**Non Warwickshire** (living in Warwickshire from another area who Warwickshire LAC team are asked to see)
No. of IHA referrals	N/A	55	43	2
No. of referrals for RHAs	N/A	111	43	35
No. of referrals for Adoption Medicals	N/A	18	N/A if carried out by out of county teams.	0
No. of adoption reports written	N/A	15	N/A if carried out by out of county teams.	0
No. and % of RHAs undertaken by school nurses	N/A	66	N/A if carried out by out of county teams.	0
		38 % (135 Warks +38 OOA in Warks = 173 - Combined total)		
No. and % of RHAs undertaken by health visitors	N/A	19	N/A if carried out by out of county teams.	6
		14% (135 Warks +38 OOA in Warks = 173 - Combined total)		
No. and % of RHAs undertaken by CIC nurses	N/A	32	N/A if carried out by out of county teams.	30
		36 % (135 Warks +38 OOA in Warks = 173 - Combined total)		
No. and % of RHAs undertaken by Paediatricians	N/A	18	N/A if carried out by out of county teams.	2
		12 % (135 Warks +38 OOA in Warks = 173 - Combined total)		
% of IHAs offered within 28 days of accepting the request**	95%	97%	N/A if carried out by out of county teams.	No up to date information
% of RHAs offered within 28 days of accepting the request**	95%	76%	N/A if carried out by out of county teams	No up to date information

Appendix 3

Dashboard example for RHA KPI Data – January 2022/December 2022



Initial/Review: IHA | RHA | (blank)

AREA: OOA | OOA in Warks | Warks | (blank)

Number of Requests Received (P/W received date)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
OOA	13	22	12	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	57
OOA in Warks	12	12	14	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	49
Warks	54	52	100	32	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	239
Total	79	86	126	53	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	345

UASC - Number of Requests Received

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
OOA	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
OOA in Warks	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Warks	1	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Total	2	3	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13

Number of Assessments Completed

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
CIC Nurse	2	6	21	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	44
Health Visitor	0	3	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Paediatrician	5	10	10	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27
School Nurse	4	18	29	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	60
Total	11	37	64	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	139

UASC - Number of Assessments Completed

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
OOA	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
OOA in Warks	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Warks	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Total	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4

% Assessments Completed

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
CIC Nurse	18%	16%	33%	56%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	32%
Health Visitor	0%	8%	6%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%
Paediatrician	45%	27%	16%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	19%
School Nurse	36%	49%	45%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	43%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Number of Requests for Adoption Medicals

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
OOA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
OOA in Warks	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Warks	16	6	10	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40
Total	17	6	10	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	41

Adoption Medicals Completed

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
OOA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
OOA in Warks	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Warks	7	9	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24
Total	8	9	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25

% Offered within 28 days of accepting request

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OOA	38.5%	13.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
OOA in Warks	33.3%	58.3%	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Warks	64.8%	75.0%	37.0%	15.6%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	55.7%	57.0%	30.2%	9.4%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

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Corporate Parenting Panel
Work Programme 2022

Updated 3 October 2022

Item	Report detail	Date of Meeting
Update from CICC and Care Leaver Forum	Receive an update from children and young people from the CICC and Care Leaver Forum.	* Standing items for every meeting
Performance Data	Report which includes key data regarding CLA & Care Leavers	
Development of Work Programme for 2020/2021 and Forward Plan information	To consider proposed work programme & future areas of work for the panel; including information from the forward plan with items relevant to the remit of the panel	
Good news stories	Officers to put forward good news stories for CLA, care leavers & foster carers.	
Report from the Virtual School Head	• **Spring Term** (March/April) - annual report • **Summer Term** (July/August) - school stability, exclusions, attendance, PEP completion rates for the academic year, Post 16 overview • **Autumn term** (November) - data forecast for the academic year, Post 16 EET destinations	**tbc**
Performance SWFT Data	Quarterly performance information from SWFT to be added (health data and assessment data) to the regular performance data report. (Jackie Channell)	Standing Item every 6 months –due **12th October 2022**

Report detail	Date of Meeting
• To consider the need and timescales for care leavers and CLA receiving a CAMHS/RISE service and a report into the process for mental health assessments (Zoe Mayhew)	***To be rescheduled***
• ACE Report/Warwickshire Adoption Report • Warwickshire Children in Care Health Service	• 12th October 2022 (Rescheduled from 19/09)
• The Vanguard Project (rescheduled from February 2022) • SGO Policy Impact and Report	• 28th November 2022
• SWIFT Annual report for health • Timescales for Mental Health	• 16th January 2023
	• 27th March 2023

Actions from the previous meetings/Additions to the work programme

- County Line – a police representative will be asked to attend
- Child Exploitation – suggest that this is a one item only agenda
- Partnership working with District and Borough colleagues - A Charter with shared objectives will be presented to the panel after April 2022
- Review into the turnover of Social Workers to identify any trends (John Coleman).
- Invitation to be sent to a representative of the Police to join a discussions in relation to missing children (Sharon Shaw).

Information circulated to Members outside of meetings

None currently

Items included on the Forward Plan relevant to the remit of the Panel:

The remit of the panel is to secure elected member and cross-organisation support and commitment for delivering improvement services and better outcomes for looked after children, young people and care leavers: *(updated 05/09/2022)*

Decision	Description	Date due	Decision Maker
SEND and Inclusion Home to School Transport	Approval is sought to conduct a Public Consultation for the proposed changes to SEND and Inclusion Home to School Transport	14 October 2022	Portfolio Holder for Education
SEND and Inclusion Service Reviews	A request is being made for a Public Consultation on the changes of the local offer of SEND provision via the Service Reviews	14 October 2022	Portfolio Holder for Education

- **Future Meetings - 2022/23**

  - 28th November 2022 at 10am
  - 16th January 2023 at 10am
  - 27th March 2023 at 10am

Proposed Dates for 2023/24

- 19th June 2023 @ 10am
- 18th September 2023 @ 10am
- 13th November 2023 @ 10am
- 15th January 2024 @ 10am
- 25th March 2024 @ 10am

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