

West Midlands Team Excellence Awards 2025



WEST MIDLANDS ADCS NETWORK



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Special Individual Award



Welcome

Hello and welcome to the West Midlands Team Excellence Awards 2025 — an event dedicated to celebrating the incredible people who make a difference in children's services every single day.

Across our region, teams work tirelessly to support children, young people, and families — often in ways that go unseen outside their own service. Today is our chance to shine a spotlight on that work, to say thank you, and to share the stories that remind us why we do what we do.

Every local authority here will be presenting their Team of Excellence — a group of colleagues who have gone above and beyond this year. There is no overall winner, because every team being recognised has already achieved something truly outstanding.

This year, we're also introducing something new: our very first Special Individual Award. This honour goes to someone whose personal contribution has made an extraordinary impact. It's a wonderful way to acknowledge that alongside our amazing teams, individual acts of dedication can inspire us all.

I hope those teams here to be celebrated leave today feeling proud — of your own role, of your colleagues, and of what we achieve together across the West Midlands. Here's to our teams, our individuals, and the shared commitment that brings us all together.



Nigel Minns
Chair – West Midlands ADCS Network &
Executive Director for Children and Young People
Warwickshire County Council



Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team

The team has the sole responsibility for recruiting and assessing all potential foster carers for Herefordshire Council.



By successfully recruiting more foster carers, we are directly addressing the ongoing challenge of children's placement shortages. This, in turn, allows us to provide quality care for vulnerable children and gives them the best opportunity to thrive. Every additional foster carer recruited means a better, brighter future for the children who need it most.

Their achievements include:



142% increase in fostering enquiries compared to the previous year 2024/25



166% increase in approved mainstream foster carers which is more than double the number approved in 2023/24.



At the end of March this year, 12 households were going through the assessment process, with 4 expected to be presented to the fostering panel in the first quarter of 2025/26.



Strengthened community links through partnerships with the Diocese of Hereford, SSAFA and a county-wide book trail which has given out over 200 books



An annual activity plan full of exciting events for fostering families.



A new and improved training offer for foster carers with a new e-learning platform and in person training with nationally known trainers.

USP that sets them apart

Despite a national reduction in foster carers and Herefordshire rated as an inadequate local authority by Ofsted, resulting in significant negative media attention, the team has shown a high level of resilience throughout. Their hard work and dedication to children and young people in Herefordshire has achieved incredible results in recruiting more foster carers across the county.

Impact for the children and young people of Herefordshire

72% of children in care in Herefordshire are now placed in fostering arrangements. This is above both the national average of 67% and the statistical neighbour average.

Impact for the council

For the council the impact of this team's work has enabled children's services to come in under budget and demonstrate a tight financial grip in challenging financial times and thus ensuring for taxpayers their money is being spent judiciously.





Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Welcome to...

Telford & Wrekin Council's **Voice and influence team**

What is the core function of the team:

This team is a cohesive unit that shares a common ethos of **magnifying lived experience and participation across services.**

It includes our Volunteer Coordinator, Children's Champion, Parent Participation Lead, and Voice of the Child Apprentices.

The team's impact:

The team's impact is visible across the Borough. They've supported youth-led forums such as VOICE, Leavers Come First, and Kinship 8-14, creating safe spaces for dialogue and advocacy. Real Voices, Real Stories, pizza-making sessions, and Pride celebration events have fostered connection and confidence among lived experience young people and parents.

Training programmes in advocacy, safeguarding, and reflective practice have further empowered participants, with **measurable outcomes in confidence and service navigation.**

What sets this team apart is their unwavering belief in the power of participation. Through courageous conversations and inclusive leadership, **they create space for ideas to flourish and change to be driven by those who live it.**

What they have achieved over the last year:



Over the past year, the team has made significant strides in **ensuring children, young people, parents, and carers are not only heard but actively involved in shaping the services that affect them.** Their work is governed by the Children and Young Person's Participation Strategy, launched in 2024, which sets out a renewed focus on increasing engagement and translating lived experience into practice development.

A standout achievement has been the recruitment of four **Voice of the Child Apprentices, young adults with lived experience of the care system**, who are matched with senior leaders across the Council. These apprentices have led participation planning, launched newsletters and social media channels, and represented the borough at national forums, including Parliament. Their involvement in reverse mentoring has **brought fresh perspectives to corporate parenting and helped shape services beyond children's care.**

The team also supports the Dandelion Group, a collective of parents and carers whose grassroots advocacy has evolved into a nationally recognised model of co-production. Their work has influenced service design, including the creation of a reflective journal for parents navigating the Public Law Outline (PLO) process. The group has also co-led the development of the updated parent/carers participation strategy and contributed to regional co-production efforts with the Department for Education.

Volunteer roles have been expanded and refined to support the Voice and Influence agenda. These include:

- Next Chapter Mentors:** Care leavers matched with mentors for emotional and practical support.
- Family Hub Volunteers:** Supporting families across play sessions, advice drop-ins, and parenting programmes.
- Peer Parent Support:** Volunteers with lived experience helping others navigate services.

One USP that sets them out from the crowd:

The team ignites the power of every voice to shape a better future. Through **courageous conversations, inclusive leadership, and purposeful influence**, our team creates space for ideas to flourish, perspectives to be heard, and change to be driven by those who live it.



Igniting the power of every voice to shape a better future.



ADCS TEAM EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2025

Youth Voice Team (Participation and Engagement)

The Youth Voice Team are a very small team consisting of only two paid members of staff. They support children and young people who are looked after or care experienced to share their views and ideas with professionals, to shape and influence practice across the organisation.

What they have achieved over the last year:

- ✓ Encouraged new young people into groups by providing opportunities to make and share food, play games, make friends and have fun!
- ✓ Supported the Youth Cabinet to undertake Make Your Mark surveys to gather the views of young people across the county.
- ✓ Coordinated young people's involvement in organising activity days, artwork displays, museum exhibitions and maintaining an allotment.
- ✓ Influenced social work practice by promoting language that cares and ensuring children remain at the heart of service delivery.
- ✓ Coached young people to be on interview panels and join the Corporate Parenting Board to drive items such as supporting WiFi access for all care leavers.
- ✓ Set up a group for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children to create a safe and inclusive space for young people to share their experiences, challenges and strengths.

The impact for our council:

Participation in interview panels has brought a fresh perspective to recruitment. Attendance at meetings has raised the profile of our young people – ensuring that how we work, and the services we procure, keep children at the heart.

The impact for children and young people in Worcestershire:

The voice of our care experienced children has enabled the Local Authority to shape how support is delivered. Language has been a focus this year - young people have shared how important it is that the language we use is accessible, respectful, and reflective of their experiences. As a result, there has been a positive shift in how social workers and other professionals communicate, both in meetings and written reports.

These opportunities have given young people exceptional experiences that has built their confidence and skills – reinforcing that their voices matter and can lead to real change.



worcestershire
county council

Youth in Sight Team

About the Team

Youth in Sight is a co-produced, multi-disciplinary pilot supporting adolescents with complex needs through early, integrated intervention. Developed by Walsall Council and Walsall Together, it unites health, social care, and family support professionals to reduce hospital admissions and out-of-borough placements. Using a trauma-informed, strengths-based, whole-family approach, the team delivers tailored support that empowers families and improves outcomes. The AMBIT model guides reflective, adaptive practice. Early results show fewer Tier 4 admissions, more children staying safely at home, and significant cost savings through effective planning and intervention.



Key achievements

- **Targeted Support and Positive Outcomes:** Since April 2024, Youth in Sight supported 11 young people with complex care needs and 2 additional children via the Family Help Service. Six remained safely at home, avoiding costly placements, while five in care received tailored mental health and emotional regulation support, and four showed reduced levels of need.
- **Innovative Family Engagement:** The team uses upcycling and free resources to create safe, welcoming spaces for families.
- **Long-lasting impact:** Since a review in April 2025, two more young people were successfully reunified with their families. One support package was stepped down, and a residential placement was stabilised through effective mediation.

How has it helped young people?

"I'm really happy to move into supported accommodation from residential care. I didn't think I would be ready, but I have worked with my social worker and youth worker and now have the confidence to move.

"My social worker has helped me by coming with me to visit the new place. I will be able to cook my own Jamaican food, have my own bathroom and a double bed. I'm going to try again with school and I am going to sixth form in September. I'm really happy with things and I feel much better about everything.

What our parents say

"Our social worker is doing great. She is opening our minds to see and handle things differently. She has shown us how to look closer into our son's brain and figure out where everything stems from."

"Youth in Sight have supported me well. There were times where I wanted to give up, but the support I was given gave me the strength to carry on."

"Everything is going well with me and J, I feel that I've seen a change in him and the social worker has been working well with J. It feels the social worker is part of the family because of how she has helped us. I have felt heard, and J feels he is being listened to. The youth worker is fantastic, he is brilliant. He has done a lot for J, he always goes above and beyond."

Impact on wider organisation

£921,704 in savings achieved since August 2024, with a 2025/26 target of £1.72 million. These savings are calculated through avoided and reduced costs of residential placements, especially for children not already in care.



Walsall Council



Strengthening Families Service

Supporting babies, children and young people with multiple needs through coordinating Multi-Agency Support



Maintaining a Child and Family Centred Approach

Ensuring the child's voice and lived experience are central to all discussions and decisions.



Coordinating Multi Agency Support

Enabling the family and professionals to co-produce a personalised support plan



Communication and Information Sharing

Acting as the main point of contact for the family and professionals involved.



Compassionate, Collaborative Support

fostering resilience and positive connections



Promoting the right help at the earliest opportunity

Supporting families to prevent, where possible, the need for statutory services.



Monitoring and Reviewing Progress

Monitoring progress against the agreed plan and adapt support as and when needed.



The Strengthening Families Service is built on the ST*R model, promoting strengths-based, trauma-informed, and relationship-focused practice.



Stronger Collaboration

30% of work co-delivered with Children's Social Care, highlighting a more unified and effective approach to support.

Positive Impact

Families report meaningful improvements, with many feeling "truly heard" for the first time.

Practice Development

89% of 36 practice reviews showed good or better outcomes for children and young people.

External Recognition

Ofsted praised the service's direct work and positive outcomes, highlighting improved well-being and relationships.



77%

of babies, children, and young people do not require further multi-agency support within a year of intervention.

Young people report stronger family relationships, improved wellbeing, and feeling genuinely heard - often for the first time - making the support both empowering and transformative.

Solihull Council – Attendance Team

Success

- Implemented the “Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024)” statutory guidance, ensuring compliance with Local Authority duties despite limited resources and no additional funding.
- Restructured the Attendance Team to align with updated expectations on LA’s, enhancing our ability to provide high-quality service to schools and parents.
- Team morale and wellbeing have significantly improved, as evidenced by a 30% increase in staff engagement at team meetings and a 25% rise in positive survey responses. This has led to the development of our “Support First” core offer to schools.
- Successfully implemented and launched the National Framework for Penalty Notices (school attendance), including an internal system redesign, resulting in a 20% increase in compliance rates.
- Enhanced engagement and collaboration with key stakeholders, including schools, health partners, and parents, shaping policy and service offer.
- Introduced pre-EHE meetings leading to a 44% reduction in EHE where meetings were held.
- Launched an EHE Facebook page to establish a communication channel with EHE groups, sharing updates and resources.
- Children Missing Education numbers have decreased by 50%, largely due to streamlined processes, procedures, and a co-produced policy with partner agencies. Our dedicated, high-morale team, providing consistent support and challenge, has significantly reduced the duration children spend out of education.

Impact across the Council

Enhanced Reputation: By demonstrating high morale, dedication, and a commitment to children’s education, the Council builds a strong reputation as a caring and proactive organisation. This has led to increased trust and support from the community.

Improved Outcomes: The team’s efforts to go above and beyond in advocating for children’s right to education has led to improved attendance rates and academic performance. This reflects positively on the Council’s ability to deliver effective services.



**Working
for Children
and Families
in Solihull**



Coventry's Education Capital Strategy Team has gone above and beyond over recent years.

The team has not only managed unprecedented demand for school places, it has also taken on extra responsibility in supporting a scheme to deliver seven new children's homes in the city, which will improve the lives of young people in care.

Creating Bulge Classes to cope with unexpected and unprecedented demand

Coventry has been one of the country's fastest growing cities, receiving the highest basic need capital allocation in the country in April '25. This growth has impacted in-year migration levels in Coventry resulting in approximately 1,100 net statutory school age in-year admissions in 22/23 and a further 1,100 in 23/24.

This growth could not be predicted as it was not linked to birth rate or housing developments, and the team has had to work closely with schools across the city to negotiate and add in 17 primary and secondary bulge classes during the 22/23 and 23/24 academic years.

This is in addition to the continued delivery of Phase 3 of a major secondary expansion project in the city (starting in 2018) and SEND expansion projects totalling over £130 million.

Helping create new children's homes to improve young lives

On top of the heavy workload, the team has also taken on the responsibility of supporting the Residential Children's Services Strategy, which will deliver an additional seven children's homes in the city.

This will enable the Council to provide residential care within Coventry and reduce the number of children and young people placed out of city due to a lack of available local provision - enabling them to maintain their education, contact with their families and access to their local community.

How the team has coped

None of this great work would have been possible if the team did not work collaboratively with colleagues across the council to deliver innovative cost-effective capital projects that respond quickly to changing needs.

They have met tight timescales and deadlines by negotiation and troubleshooting, whilst keeping schools and other partners well-informed and on-side.

It has been a true team effort that has made a difference to many families across the city, ensuring school places and keeping vulnerable young people in care close to home, family, friends and education.



We're **proud to be driving real change** in **school attendance** across Sandwell—supporting schools, families, and young people to overcome barriers and build brighter futures.



What we do

Our team works closely with schools to tackle persistent and severe absence. Through targeted support, multi-agency collaboration, and creative engagement, we help families navigate challenges and re-engage with education.

Key Achievements

- **Attendance up:** Sandwell's overall attendance reached **93.2%**, now matching the national average for the first time in years.
- **Persistent Absence down:** Reduced consistently from 2023 when it was 23.67%. Persistent Absence is currently 19.72%
- **Innovative support:** Our Attendance Solutions Panel brings together partners to find tailored solutions for complex cases.
- **Strong school partnerships:** Regular Targeted Support Meetings ensure schools feel supported and empowered.
- **Creative engagement:** A joint project with DECCA using jewellery-making has helped young people express themselves and reconnect with learning—one student even sold her creations for charity.
- **Cross-service collaboration:** We work with Youth Justice, Horizons, and DECCA to support young people known across services.
- **Strategic impact:** We play a key role in Sandwell's Educational Neglect Strategy, aligning efforts across council services.

The Difference We're Making

Young people are beginning to feel they belong in school, with renewed confidence and aspirations.

Schools know they're not alone—they have a committed, proactive team behind them.





Team Excellence Awards 2025

Submission for Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS)

Core Function

To ensure that all children referred to the Trust receive services that are appropriate to their needs, informed by the voices of the children and their families, and with a thorough understanding of the identified risks. Children requiring urgent attention are given priority, and all children are progressed in a timely manner to ensure that referral outcomes are not delayed.



What we've achieved over the last year

- Over the past year, not only has the demand for services significantly increased, but the team has also faced additional challenges, a significant one being the development and implementation of an online portal. Despite these challenges, CASS has consistently maintained high performance in their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- CASS workers have led additional training sessions to ensure that CASS functions at a high standard and also to support wider teams within the Trust. Managers and Heads of Service have reached out to partner agencies, providing them with training and additional support to understand the 'Right Help, Right Time' threshold document.
- CASS have also built positive relationships by attending partner agencies' team meetings and away days.
- CASS has been proactive participants in the Trust's Wellbeing Week, leading sessions for colleagues across the Trust to improve their welfare, include an Escape Room and gardening activities.

TOTAL emails received July 2024 to June 2025 = 141,129 - an average of 11,761 emails a month.
TOTAL calls received July 2024 to June 2025 = 42,519 - an average of 3,543 calls per month.

Why do we stand out from the crowd?

CASS ensure all children's referrals are triaged and any that require urgent intervention that day, receive it. CASS try to build trust with families by being open and honest with them where possible and being relational albeit at times they only have a short time to achieve this.

What has been the impact for children and young people in the area?

As advocates for children, we prioritise their best interests in all decisions we make. Our unwavering commitment involves making thoughtful decisions, speaking up when necessary, and involving families in the decision-making process to foster a sense of inclusivity and understanding. Our approach to decision-making is multifaceted. We consider various aspects, from the immediate needs of the children to the long-term impacts of our decisions. We believe in being fearless in our advocacy, challenging the status quo when it does not serve the best interests of the children. Involving families is crucial to our process. We ensure that parents and carers are well-informed about the next stages for them and their children.

What has been the impact for your Trust?

Children who live within the West Midlands have a joined-up approach, in addition CASS provides a consistent approach to children, families and partners to ensure we are always working with the right children in need of our support.

The School Organisation team is part of Children's Services within the City of Wolverhampton Council. The team are responsible for ensuring sufficiency of school places in the city. This is carried out through:

1



complex pupil forecasting

2



monitoring in-year demand/growth in pupil numbers

3



partnership working with schools and Academy Trusts

4



managing multiple capital schemes that provide value for money

IMPACT IN THE LAST YEAR:

Every year the team have to predict the number of children that will require a place in Reception year. **Their forecast this year was incredibly accurate at 99%.**

Pupil numbers are continuing to grow in Wolverhampton, meaning we are seeing ongoing pressure on school places. The team have worked tirelessly to introduce **an additional 539 places** (the equivalent of more than 17 forms of entry) across 26 mainstream primary and secondary schools, including the planning and delivery of eight capital schemes - providing sufficient places for our growing population. Further capital schemes are in the pipeline.

The team are also delivering SEND spaces in the city through the expansion of existing special schools and the introduction of Resource Bases and SEN Units. Over the past year, the team has worked hard to help plan how these services will be delivered across the city focused on the creation of a joined-up education system that supports children to attend mainstream schools in their local area whenever possible.

RESILIENCE AND TENACITY

In the face of ever rising demand, the School Organisation team have shown incredible resilience and tenacity as they have worked tirelessly to find solutions across the city.

As a team they leave no stone unturned when working with schools and Academy Trusts to add additional capacity into the city's schools.

The team are utterly committed to helping children in the city achieve their best possible outcomes, and it is this sense of purpose that keeps them motivated and feeds their resilience.

IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE:



Some 97% of schools in Wolverhampton are now rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted, the highest ever, and considerably above the regional and national average.

Our children are able to access high quality school places that enables them to thrive and achieve their best possible outcomes - and capital investment is giving them modern learning spaces in which they can learn effectively.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL:

As well as helping drive up education standards, there has been a longer term financial impact for the council.

Over the last five years the capital schemes that the team have delivered have been effectively managed and have regularly been delivered at below national average costs, leading to a cost avoidance of £34m when measured against the national benchmarks.

This has eliminated the need for the council to provide any additional funding through borrowing and therefore not added any additional financial burdens at a time when council finances are stretched.

Youth Justice Service

Staffordshire County Council

The Staffordshire Youth Justice Service delivers preventative and statutory services to prevent offending by children. The service has a dedicated Prevention Team, which is aligned with the statutory functions of youth justice.

Impact of the Turnaround Programme

The Turnaround Programme supports each child as an individual, matching them with community providers for one-to-one sessions and group work. This helps them explore different roles such as leader, coach and helper. By working closely with Youth Justice Services, commissioners, and the voluntary and community sector, we've been able to offer a wider range of culturally relevant and accessible activities.

The programme has also reduced school suspensions, lowered Child in Need and Early Help cases, and cut the risks of child exploitation.



320+ children supported



90% avoided further contact with the Youth Justice System or reoffending



£1.7 million in cost savings

"This is a great achievement and a reflection of your dedication, professionalism, and commitment to improving outcomes for children and families. Your achievements are a testament to what is possible when we work together with purpose and passion."

Alan Webster, Deputy Director for the Youth Justice Policy Unit

61% of children stepped down from needing intensive Children in Need support

40% of children achieved a risk reduction to low or no risk at the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) panel

92% of children remained out of the Early Help /social care system

70% of children had no further suspensions or permanent exclusions

85% of Early Help cases closed successfully

Public Feedback

"You've worked to get him the right education and safety support. For our family, you've helped us to protect ourselves from others."

"I wish there was something like this for kids earlier, rather than having to wait until they get into trouble."

"With your involvement, 'A' has found a purpose in life which is really helping his confidence and self-esteem."

Children in Care team



Core Function

The Children in Care Team is a countywide service supporting children and young people up to age 18 with a plan of permanence. This includes those in foster care, residential homes, supported accommodation, and placements with connected family members. The team also supports safe reunification with families where appropriate and ensures children are central to all care and pathway planning and their voices are heard.

Best Practice (Our USP)

The Children in Care Team excels through a relational and restorative approach, building trust with young people through consistent, meaningful relationships. Fun and creative engagement activities, such as zoo visits, go-karting, Christmas celebrations and park outings, help strengthen bonds beyond visits. In Warwickshire, we build on this by creating meaningful opportunities for separated siblings to reconnect and make lasting memories. Our increased number of Family Support Workers play a vital role, offering practical and emotional support, including life skills, healthy relationships, and ensuring young people have essential documentation. Specialist roles, including Consultant and Permanence Social Workers, ensure high-quality planning and oversight. The team fosters a supportive culture with monthly "good news" updates, collaborative decision-making, and a strong focus on staff wellbeing.

Impact on Children and Young People

- Greater emotional stability and improved mental health through consistent, trusted relationships.
- Increased engagement in education and training, with more children achieving qualifications and pursuing aspirations.
- Improved outcomes for care leavers, including reduced homelessness and increased employment.
- Stronger sense of identity and belonging through life story work and active participation in Warwickshire's well-established and highly attended Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum whereby children and young people can discuss issues they find important and ensure their voices are heard.
- Children report feeling heard, respected, and cared for, with feedback highlighting the team's compassion and commitment.
- The team actively encourages young people to chair their own All About Me Review meetings, promoting ownership and ensuring the review accurately reflects their individual needs and experiences.

"Kerry is honestly the best social worker I've ever had. I feel like I have a future. I've never felt this happy, and she is a massive part of the reason why." A young person supported by the Children in Care Team

"Nicola knows everything about me and she is my family, she is my main person and does everything for me". A young person supported by the Children in Care Team

Impact on Warwickshire County Council

The Children in Care Team contributes significantly to Warwickshire's strategic priorities by:

- Reducing long-term costs through improved placement stability and reduced reliance on high-cost residential care.
- Supporting the Child Friendly Warwickshire vision by embedding child-centered practice across services ensuring every child and young person is happy, healthy, heard, safe, and skilled.
- Promotes multi-agency collaboration and continuous service improvement.

"The CIC Team are the 'A team' of WCC, always representing children to the very best of their ability." Legal advocate

Achievements 2024-25

- Since September 2024, 14 young people moved into independent accommodation through the House Project, gaining stability and life skills.
- 2 foster families secured Special Guardianship Orders, providing permanent homes for children in their care in the last 12 months.
- 6 Care Orders were discharged, enabling children to safely return to their parents in the last 12 months.
- 14 young people under Section 20 were successfully reunited with family members in the last 12 months.
- 14 young people transitioned from residential care to semi-supported living, promoting independence and reducing reliance on high-cost placements.
- 80+ young people received direct support from Family Support Workers, including life story work, emotional regulation, exploitation awareness, and transition planning.
- Young people celebrated for achievements in education, music, sport, and employment, such as scholarships, apprenticeships, and creative projects.
- Participation in national events like VE Day celebrations in London, creating lasting memories and boosting confidence.



We want all children in Warwickshire to be...



HEARD



SAFE



HEALTHY



SKILLED



HAPPY

What is the core function of the team:

The Youth Support Team plays a pivotal role in shaping and delivering youth work across Shropshire. The team is responsible for developing the local Youth Strategy, coordinating the Youth Offer, and delivering a wide range of direct interventions with young people.

Core functions include detached youth work in local communities, targeted PSHE and group-based programmes in schools, specialist youth work with vulnerable groups, and universal youth drop-in provision across the county.

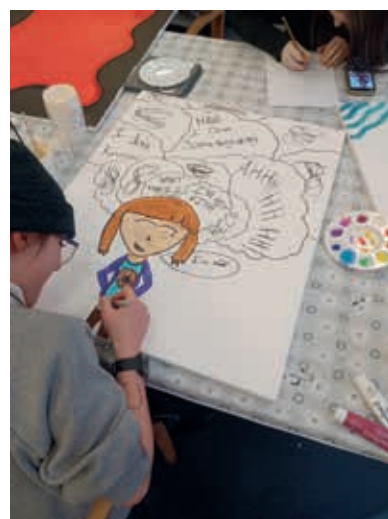
Operating with a clear preventative ethos, the team bridges strategic development with frontline delivery, ensuring that youth work in Shropshire is both grounded in real needs and guided by long-term vision.

What they have achieved over the last year:

Over the past year, the team has significantly influenced both the structure and substance of youth services in Shropshire. Highlights include:

- Development and launch of the Shropshire Youth Strategy, providing a clear framework for sustainable, inclusive youth work countywide.
- Successful application to the Local Youth Transformation Fund pilot, positioning Shropshire as a national example of innovative, locality-led youth provision.
- Delivery of high-impact youth programmes addressing masculinity, mental health, relationships, and digital safety in school and community settings.
- Delivery at scale, In Quarter 4 alone, the team delivered 160 youth work sessions, with 1,473 meaningful contacts logged.
- The “Below the Belt” programme engaged 117 young men across 11 school-based workshops, tackling themes like masculinity, emotional literacy, pornography, and healthy relationships.

Expansion of youth drop-in services and trusted relationships in areas of high need, alongside new youth sessions created in response to emerging community contexts. These achievements reflect the team’s ability to turn strategy into action, building services that are responsive, relational, and grounded in youth voice.



Children with Disabilities Team Stoke-on-Trent

This is a relationship-based service supporting children with significant disabilities and the families who love them. We tailor our approach to each child's unique way of communicating and experiencing the world – from first contact through to direct work, short breaks and planning for adulthood.



We deliver core social work services – timely assessments, planning, reviews, short breaks and direct payments – with the child's experience at the centre. Families value continuity, with one social worker often supporting the child from allocation to transition. Every child has a clear communication profile and practitioners share 'about me' profiles so children know who is visiting and what to expect.

Ofsted (May 2025) praised our care planning as thorough, child-specific and informed by each child's preferred ways of communicating. Families say support is timely, coordinated and genuinely personalised.

We're a creative team – using photobooks, picture histories, pen portraits and digital tools like Mind of My Own to help children express themselves and hold onto important memories. Our records reflect warmth and deep practitioner knowledge.

Partnership is central. Co-location with Education and Health enables quick, joined-up action – whether that's securing a classroom adaptation, arranging therapy or fine-tuning a short break plan. Multidisciplinary planning focuses on children's needs, not processes.

We've improved visit timeliness and assessment timescales. Monthly Community Lounges keep feedback flowing. Families report consistent, respectful support – even in crisis. Our child-friendly language is influencing wider practice.

We're working with Adult Services to make transitions earlier and smoother – ensuring trust and clarity continue into adulthood.

These everyday habits are visible in reviews, records and – most importantly – in children's progress.



SEND, CDT, Tipton Road and Emotional Wellbeing Service

The team works with children and young people with SEND to live happy, healthy lives, supporting them to achieve their aspirations in their home and education provisions.

Support is offered to children and families in a variety of ways, with co-production at the core. Co-production has been integrated into the heart of all processes and a lot of work has taken place with young people and families to ensure their voices are heard and valued.

Key achievements over the last year

- Clear improvement in the Area SEND inspection from the previous full inspection in 2019
- A 'good' inspection outcome from Tipton Road Children's Home
- Embedding the 'four cornerstones of co-production' with Dudley Parent Carer Forum and in partnership with health
- Positive feedback from Ofsted and parent carers and improved partnership working as a whole

The impact on children and young people

The team has improved outcomes for children and young people by having support and provision which meets their needs, at the earliest point, through to the most complex. They have also been able to provide an improved training offer to internal carers and improved engagement from care experienced young people with emotional wellbeing support.

Benefits to the organisation

There has been a clear improvement in communication both on a strategic and a delivery level. By implementing and embedding the Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision Guidance, practitioners and families across education, health and care are using common language and ensuring that SEND knowledge and understanding has developed across the Council.

In addition, with the development of reunification work in the Emotional Wellbeing Service, it is anticipated that the number of children in care will reduce in the long term.



SAM NEATH

**CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL**

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP CUP

2025 TOURNAMENT IN NUMBERS

200

PARTICIPANTS

20

**TOWNS
REPRESENTED**

1

**PREMIER LEAGUE
STADIUM**

FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS: SAM'S JOURNEY

Sam is a Young Persons Advisor within the REACH Leaving Care service in Wolverhampton. The concept of a care leaver football tournament originated when Sam, who was supporting a care leaver in Walsall at the time, noticed that the young person had stopped playing and attending football matches upon turning 18. Sam recognised this as a potential consequence of transitioning to semi-independence after leaving care, an issue likely to be affecting others in similar situations.

In response, Sam set up a football team around this young person, which subsequently evolved into a local tournament. Since 2022, the Championship Cup has grown significantly, driven by Sam's passion and determination. The tournament has seen participation from over 400 young people with care experience over the years, and this year alone, 200 young people (comprising 20 teams) from across the country competed in a national tournament held at the Molineux Stadium.

LETTER OF SUPPORT



I am writing the below on behalf of Wolves Foundation for Sam Neath's nomination for a Team Excellence Award. Sam's work with us has been simply transformative. Two years ago, our work in the care experienced space was none-existent. Through Sam's innovation, drive and collaboration we have taken this to building a much stronger partnership with City of Wolverhampton Council. His leadership in creating and delivering the National Championship Cup football tournament for care-experienced young people has had a profound impact - not only on the individuals involved, but also on how we as a city approach inclusion, empowerment, and community building.

His ability to inspire, organise, and advocate for care-experienced young people is exceptional. He is a credit to Wolverhampton Council, to the Wolves Foundation, and most importantly, to the young people whose lives he continues to change.

Tom Warren, General Manager



IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



Young people explained how the tournament had helped them. **Ubi**, from Wolverhampton Warriors, said: "If you play in a team, it gives you life experience and it helps you to build confidence. Some of us aren't that confident; playing sports gets me out of my comfort zone and gets me interacting with people that I wouldn't usually talk to."

Shahla, who represented the Derbyshire team, added: "It definitely helps my mental health. Being a care leaver, you are quite singled out in life, so this helps us get out and feel less isolated."

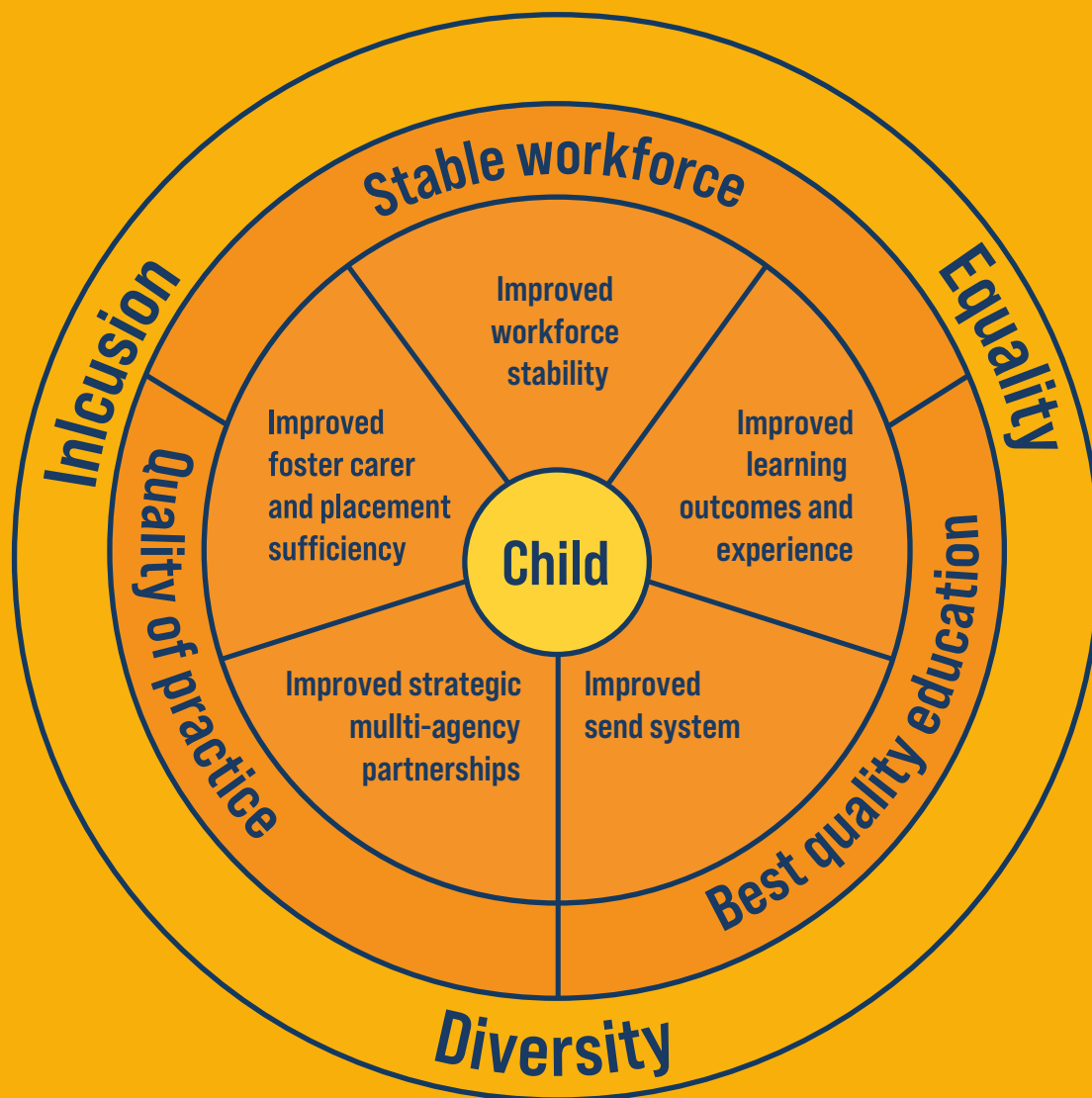
Councillor Jacqui Coogan, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education, said: "We were delighted to support this annual event which once again proved the old adage that football can be more than just a game."

"For some, it can be an escape and a breath of fresh air, and the day enabled these young people - who have already faced so many challenges in their lives - to not only showcase their talents on the pitch of one of England's most prestigious sporting venues, but also to demonstrate their resilience and spirit off it."

Warinder Juss, MP for Wolverhampton West, celebrated the success of the tournament with his fellow MPs in Parliament, adding that "recognising and celebrating the potential of our young people in this way can empower them to thrive for themselves and for our communities."

Robert Macpherson from the Department of Education said: "Congratulations on hosting such a great event - it must have taken so much time and effort to organise."

A **Redcar and Cleveland** representative described it as a "day they will remember for a long time", while a representative from the **Stoke-on-Trent** side added: "It was a fantastic experience for everyone involved, and we're genuinely grateful to have been included."



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