

Agenda

Cabinet

Date: **Thursday 15 October 2020**

Time: **2.30 pm**

Place: **online meeting**

Notes: Please note the time, date and venue of the meeting.

For any further information please contact:

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Agenda for the meeting of Cabinet

Membership

Chairperson Councillor David Hitchiner, Leader of the Council
Vice-Chairperson Councillor Felicity Norman, Deputy Leader of the Council

Councillor Ellie Chowns
Councillor Pauline Crockett
Councillor Gemma Davies
Councillor John Harrington
Councillor Liz Harvey
Councillor Ange Tyler

Agenda

		Pages
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive any apologies for absence.	
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive declarations of interests in respect of Schedule 1, Schedule 2 or Other Interests from members of the committee in respect of items on the agenda.	
3.	MINUTES To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2020.	11 - 26
HOW TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS		
<i>The deadline for submission of questions for this meeting is:</i>		
<i>9:30am on Monday 12 October 2020.</i>		
<i>Questions must be submitted to councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk. Questions sent to any other address may not be accepted.</i>		
<i>Accepted questions and the response to them will be published as a supplement to the agenda papers prior to the meeting. Further information and guidance is available at https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/getinvolved</i>		
4.	QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC To receive questions from members of the public.	
5.	QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS To receive questions from councillors.	
6.	FOSTERING AND ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORTS 2019/20 To review the Adoption and Fostering services performance report and approve related documents. <i>Deferred from 24 September 2020.</i>	27 - 56
7.	ENDORSEMENT OF THE HEREFORDSHIRE CULTURAL STRATEGY 2019-2029 That Cabinet approves the endorsement of the Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2019-2029.	57 - 92

The Public's Rights to Information and Attendance at Meetings

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic Herefordshire Council will be holding remote meetings in accordance with the latest regulations¹. Details of how to observe virtual meetings are set out below. Access to agenda, minutes, decision notices and other documents will be via the Herefordshire Council website or by contacting the Governance Support Team on 01432 260201 / 261699 or at governancesupportteam@herefordshire.gov.uk

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- Inspect agenda and public reports at least five clear days before the date of the meeting.
- Inspect minutes of the Council and all Committees and Sub-Committees and written statements of decisions taken by the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members for up to six years following a meeting.
- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting. (A list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
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- Have access to a list specifying those powers on which the Council have delegated decision making to their officers identifying the officers concerned by title.
- Copy any of the documents mentioned above to which you have a right of access, subject to a reasonable charge (20p per sheet subject to a maximum of £5.00 per agenda plus a nominal fee of £1.50 for postage).
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¹ The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

Recording of this meeting

Please note that filming, photography and recording of this meeting is permitted provided that it does not disrupt the business of the meeting.

Members of the public are advised that if you do not wish to be filmed or photographed you should let the governance services team know before the meeting starts so that anyone who intends filming or photographing the meeting can be made aware.

The reporting of meetings is subject to the law and it is the responsibility of those doing the reporting to ensure that they comply.

The council is making an official recording of this public meeting. These recordings form part of the public record of the meeting and are made available for members of the public via the council's web-site.

Guide to Cabinet

The Executive or Cabinet of the Herefordshire Council consists of a Leader and Deputy Leader and six other Cabinet Members each with their own individual programme area responsibilities. The current Cabinet membership is:

Cllr David Hitchiner (Leader) (Herefordshire Independents)	Corporate Strategy and Budget
Cllr Felicity Norman (Deputy Leader) (The Green Party)	Children and Families
Cllr Gemma Davies (Herefordshire Independents)	Commissioning, Procurement and Assets
Cllr Ellie Chowns (The Green Party)	Environment, Economy and Skills
Cllr Liz Harvey (It's Our County)	Finance and Corporate Services
Cllr Pauline Crockett (Herefordshire Independents)	Health and Adult Wellbeing
Cllr John Harrington (It's Our County)	Infrastructure and Transport
Cllr Ange Tyler (Herefordshire Independents)	Housing, Regulatory Services and Community Safety

The Cabinet's roles are:

- To consider the overall management and direction of the Council. Directed by the Leader of the Council, it will work with senior managers to ensure the policies of Herefordshire are clear and carried through effectively;
- To propose to Council a strategic policy framework and individual strategic policies;
- To identify priorities and recommend them to Council;
- To propose to Council the Council's budget and levels of Council Tax;
- To give guidance in relation to: policy co-ordination; implementation of policy; management of the Council; senior employees in relation to day to day implementation issues;
- To receive reports from Cabinet Members on significant matters requiring consideration and proposals for new or amended policies and initiatives;
- To consider and determine policy issues within the policy framework covering more than one programme area and issues relating to the implementation of the outcomes of monitoring reviews.

Who attends cabinet meetings?

On the next page you will find a layout plan of the room showing who is sitting where. Coloured nameplates are used which correspond to the colours on the plan as follows:

	Members of the cabinet, including the leader of the council and deputy leader – these are the decision makers, only members of the cabinet can vote on recommendations put to the meeting.
	Officers of the council – attend to present reports and give technical advice to cabinet members
	Chairmen of scrutiny committees – attend to present the views of their committee if it has considered the item under discussion
	Political group leaders attend to present the views of their political group on the item under discussion. Other councillors may also attend as observers but are not entitled to take part in the discussion.

**The Seven Principles of Public Life
(Nolan Principles)**

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Herefordshire Council

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held as Online meeting on Thursday 24 September 2020 at 2.30 pm

Present: Councillor David Hitchiner, Leader of the Council (Chairperson)
Councillor Felicity Norman, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairperson)

Councillors Ellie Chowns, Pauline Crockett, Gemma Davies, John Harrington, Liz Harvey and Ange Tyler

Cabinet support members in attendance Councillors Jenny Bartlett, Peter Jinman and Yolande Watson

Group leaders / representatives in attendance Councillors Alan Seldon, Terry James, Bob Matthews, Trish Marsh and William Wilding

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance Councillors Elissa Swinglehurst, Diana Toynbee and Jonathan Lester

Other councillors in attendance: Councillors Jeremy Milln and Nigel Shaw

Officers in attendance: Director for economy and place, Director for children and families, Solicitor to the council, Chief finance officer, Director for adults and communities, Interim Head of Legal Services and Director of public health

168. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies from members of the cabinet.

169. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

170. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

171. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 9 - 10)

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 1 to the minutes.

172. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS (Pages 11 - 14)

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 2 to the minutes.

173. HEREFORD LEISURE POOL RE-OPENING

The cabinet member commissioning, procurement and assets introduced the report. She noted the importance of the leisure pool to the whole community and the need to reopen as soon as possible. She also stated that this was not the right location for a pool for the longer term and alternative locations needed to be considered.

In discussion of the report cabinet members noted:

- The importance of the pool to the whole community in Hereford and to the wider county;

- The council's insurers had confirmed that subject to work taking place they would continue to insure the pool building;
- The works to the power supply should ensure that the pumping system was more resilient in the future and would mitigate against future flood events;
- Advice had been sought from the council's own experts and from the insurer to make sure that the works were appropriate, compliant with standards and that all due processes had been followed in costing the proposals;
- Some of the repair work would have been necessary within the next couple of years but the opportunity was being taken to bring these forward alongside works required by the flooding;
- The council would be explicitly taking account of risks arising from the increasing frequency and severity of significant weather events in future decision making.

Group leaders and representatives were invited to give the views and queries of their respective groups. Key points were noted as:

- Finding an alternative site would be challenging and would take some time, in the meantime the importance of getting the existing site re-opened was recognised;
- Regular maintenance of assets was important and the council should be mindful of what further works might need to be done on the current building in light of the amount of spend;
- The tenant was involved in the process to agree the scope of works and were picking up their costs.

In addition to the recommendation set out in the report the cabinet member commissioning, procurement and assets proposed that authority be delegated to the director for economy and place to progress procurement of the works.

The cabinet member finance and corporate services proposed an additional recommendation that a new location for the Hereford leisure pool be investigated as part of the update of the core strategy. The cabinet member commissioning, procurement and assets amended this to also include reference to the development of the leisure strategy.

Both additional recommendations were seconded by the cabinet member health and adult wellbeing.

It was agreed:

- (a) To recommend to Council the addition of a new capital budget to fund uninsured regulatory and essential works required at the Hereford leisure pool to be funded by existing budgets wherever possible and, failing that, new prudential borrowing not expected to exceed £505k;**
- (b) that authority be delegated to the director for economy and place to procure and undertake the necessary works; and**
- (c) that the review of the core strategy and leisure strategy considers the location of a leisure pool in Hereford.**

174. MAJOR CONTRACT PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The cabinet member commissioning, procurement and assets introduced the item. A typographical correction to the report was noted in that the current public realm contract ended in November 2024, not 2020 as stated. The cabinet member highlighted that:

- it was good practice to review contracts, particularly when they were as large as the public realm contract;

- the reduction in the number of staff in technical services had eroded the council's ability to rely on its own technical advice and to have constructive tension in the contract;
- taking on board the recommendations from the audit report the council would be able to achieve value for money;
- the council could always look to improve the performance of such contracts.

The chief finance officer explained that:

- a number of external partners had contributed to the review, the report presented to cabinet consolidated the feedback received;
- the advice was that the contract was a good one overall, with some fine-tuning required to improve performance as an ongoing process;
- an action plan was being drawn up to ensure that the points raised were addressed.

In discussion of the report cabinet members noted that:

- the council had received assurance that the contract was a good contract of its sort with the flexibility and scope necessary to deliver a good service and long-term relationship with the contractor;
- the council needed to be a good customer and the report highlighted how the council could improve in that regard;
- concerns had been raised by parish councils and members of the public regarding a lack of testing of value for money through regular external tendering and the report stated that works under £250k had automatically passed to Balfour Beatty in the past;
- there was a balance to be struck between economies of scale and value for money but it was felt that there should be more opportunities for local businesses to benefit from council contracts under the work to take forward progressive procurement and achieve social value;
- there was disappointment that it had taken so long to have a good review;
- the action plan would be shared with cabinet members and it would be sensible to review progress against that at an appropriate time;
- the proposed changes arising from the review were intended to be cost neutral as investments in staffing should deliver better value for money in the longer term;
- there were already some vacancies in the team and part of the response to the review would be ensuring that those recruited to these roles had the right skills and experience.

Group leaders and representatives were invited to give the views and queries of their respective groups. The review was generally welcomed and key points were noted as:

- SMART objectives should be used in the action plan;
- The contract needed to be monitored to ensure that value for money was obtained;
- Council staff should be located in council buildings to create to ensure appropriate separation from employees of the contractor;
- There could be greater focus on the environmental impact as contractor emissions were a major part of the council's carbon footprint and future works needed to consider resilience to increasing climate variability;
- The contract was often raised at parish council meetings as a point of concern;
- The smaller contracts needed to demonstrate value for money and not slip through.

The cabinet member health and wellbeing proposed that parish councils be included within the reference to improved communications.

The cabinet member infrastructure and transport proposed that a progress review be brought back to cabinet after six months.

Both additional recommendations were seconded by the cabinet member commissioning, procurement and assets.

It was agreed that:

- (a) **The suggested improvements are implemented in a timely manner to improve the performance of the major contracts for Public Realm services and Property and Facilities Management services, specifically:-**
- a. **Build technical knowledge within the Council**
 - b. **Improve internal and external (parish council) communication and education**
 - c. **Increase the involvement of the procurement team**
 - d. **Set up a contract management framework**
 - e. **Consider an appropriate Contract Management System (CMS); and**
- (b) **Cabinet undertake a progress review in six months' time.**

175. QUARTER 1 BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The cabinet member finance and corporate services introduced the report. She highlighted that the period covered ran to the end of June and that the situation had moved on since then. The impact of the coronavirus epidemic was clearly shown in relation to increased cost pressures and lost income.

Key points of the report included:

- Substantial shifts in priorities to tackle the impact of the coronavirus;
- A net projected overspend of just £4m was credible and creditable in the circumstances;
- The council was grateful for the support received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government;
- The format had been adjusted to match that of the county plan;
- New graphics and data had been introduced which it was hoped would provide useful extra information.

The head of corporate performance set out further detail including that:

- Details of the revenue position were set out in appendix 1 with most of the overspends and shortfalls in income due to COVID-19;
- The capital budget was forecasting an 89% capital spend for the year, again a large proportion of the underspend was due to the virus;
- All savings for 2020/21 had been achieved or were in the process of being delivered;
- The sections were themed to the county plan and highlighted progress on key pieces of work within each.

In discussion of the report cabinet members noted that the forthcoming delivery plan would add points to future performance reports, particularly in relation to the environment. Officers were commended for their efforts in responding to the coronavirus epidemic and partners such as schools were also recognised.

Group leaders and representatives were invited to give the views and queries of their respective groups. The challenges of COVID-19 and impact on the council's finances were recognised. It was also noted that:

- In response to a query the S151 officer confirmed he was satisfied that the council had sufficient reserves to continue with its business and noted that government grants were being received on a regular basis which made the financial situation quite fluid;
- It was alarming that all the planned savings for 2021/22 were currently rated amber or red;

- Capital allocations to address phosphate levels in the county's rivers were welcomed;
- The roll out of support packages during the coronavirus epidemic was commended;
- The council should not spend money on ideas or projects the council could not now afford during the epidemic;
- Additional measures on the environment would be welcomed.

The leader of the council noted the impact of the coronavirus and commended the way officers of the council had responded. He reported that feedback from businesses in his ward had been very positive in the way that grants had been rolled out. Herefordshire had relatively low average income levels and it was encouraging to see that the government was aware of the support needed.

It was agreed that:

- (a) Cabinet reviewed performance and financial outturn for quarter 1 2020/21, as set out in appendices 1 - 9, and did not identify any additional actions to be considered to achieve future improvement.**

The meeting adjourned from 4:21pm to 4:30pm.

176. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The cabinet member finance and corporate services introduced the item. She explained that a new plan on a page had been created as part of the refresh of the performance management framework which pulled together a number of items. The risk management plan identified risks at every level and how these were managed and reported. A project management approach would be taken to all aspects of the councils work and a cycle of do – monitor – review would be embedded more deeply into how the council operated on a day to day basis.

The head of corporate performance highlighted key points of the report including:

- The framework sought to improve upon and strengthen the previous version which had been adopted in 2016;
- The development of the one page plan was aligned with the new county plan;
- Staff across all directorates had been consulted to understand their experience of the previous framework and how to make it easier to share with officers, the one page plan was a response to this;
- Risk was now aligned to the solicitor to the council and the management plan contained more definitive escalation criteria that clarified where action must be taken and where it might be accepted as business as usual;
- There would be greater internal checks and balances as part of the risk process and the opportunity to add in comparisons with similar councils;
- The audit and governance committee had discussed the draft documents and their comments had been incorporated;
- Work was taking place to plan how to launch the new framework within the council including making it part of the induction process for new staff;
- Service business plans would now require self-evaluation prior to development of action plans which would include identification of meaningful 'SMART' actions.

The leader of the council stated that the document would help with recruitment as it gave a clear overview of the council.

Group leaders and representatives were invited to give the views and queries of their respective groups. The new document was welcomed as clear and understandable. It was noted that:

- It was suggested that PESTLE could be used as a tool alongside use of SMART targets;

- Some typographical errors were highlighted;
- Risk management was felt to be vital to the council;
- It was suggested that training on the new plan be made available for councillors as well as staff.

The chairman of the audit and governance committee commented that the new framework provided a natural transition to a more comprehensive and cohesive approach and that it was important that officers used the document as a tool rather than view it as a management overhead.

It was agreed that:

- (a) The Performance Management Framework, at appendix 1, is approved;**
- (b) Delegation is given to the Solicitor to the Council, to update the Risk Management Plan annually; and**
- (c) Delegation is given to Assistant Director Corporate Support, to update the Service Business Planning Guidance annually**

177. CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY 2020 - 2023

The cabinet member children and families introduced the report. She noted that all councillors and officers were corporate parents and that everyone would want to ensure that the children and young people in the council's care were happy, fulfilled and had the best possible opportunities for a good quality of life. The strategy outlined how the council would work with partners to achieve this. A 16-plus champion had recently been appointed who would support this work and look to develop opportunities for children and young people with experience of care.

The head of looked after children highlighted the key points of the strategy including:

- An aim to ensure that children and young people in care had the opportunity to achieve the same or better than their peers;
- The corporate parenting panel had worked to develop the new strategy including representation from foster carers and from the children in care council;
- The key priorities broke down the main areas where the council wanted to see improvements in outcomes;
- The care leavers covenant was a new approach for the council and fitted with a national initiative which looked to improve outcomes for care leavers specifically;
- The council hoped to work with local businesses and the third sector to ask them to sign up to their own covenants saying what more they could do to improve outcomes from care leavers;
- Amendments had been made following recommendations from the children and young people scrutiny committee.

In discussion of the report cabinet members noted that:

- while it was sometimes necessary to reflect the terminology used in legislation, feedback from young people was that they did not like the term 'LAC' so there was an effort to use language they were more comfortable with;
- alternatives to the term 'corporate parenting' were discussed and would be raised with the corporate parenting panel;
- the coronavirus had forced young people in care to spend more time with their foster families, while some had found this period challenging others had found it beneficial in providing stability;
- the epidemic had also seen a reduction in the availability of foster placements and this remained a concern through the autumn and winter;
- Each of the leads for the priority areas would develop a detailed action plan which would be reported back to the corporate parenting panel.

The impact of instability in social worker assignments was discussed. It was felt that as this was something the council was struggling with it should be included more explicitly in the strategy. The cabinet member finance and corporate services proposed that recommendation (a) in the report be altered to reflect that the draft strategy would be amended to expand upon the priority to provide a safe and stable home, instead providing a safe and stable life.

Group leaders and representatives were invited to give the views and queries of their respective groups. The strategy was welcomed and key points were noted as:

- it was suggested that creative sources should have more input to young people's lives;
- there had been good improvements in attainment and resolving accommodation issues;
- in addition to mandatory corporate parenting training, all councillors were routinely invited to attend meetings of the corporate parenting panel as a means of understanding its work and an annual update on the strategy would be reported to cabinet;
- other methods of providing training and raising awareness were being explored;
- attainment and ambitions were captured as part of the personal education plan review meetings with each child and used to support children and young people for example through participation with particular projects or work experience;
- it was queried whether the strategy should be more explicit about the aim to enable children to leave care as soon as possible but the head of looked after children explained that this was already captured in other documents such as the children and young people plan and that the corporate parenting strategy focussed on achievements for children while in care;
- early intervention was key and the council worked closely with the police, the new domestic abuse hub was still in the early stages but was proving effective and investment had been made in early help services ;
- the appointment of a champion for the 16 to 25 age group was welcomed;
- it was suggested that the strategy could reference active support for alternatives to care and explain where to find more information in other policy and strategy documents.

The vice chair of the children and young people scrutiny committee welcomed the fact that young people had been involved in drawing up the strategy. She highlighted that the scrutiny committee had sought a number of points of clarification which had been addressed, supported the use of plain English as much as possible and shared the concerns about staff turnover and recruitment of foster carers.

It was agreed that:

- (a) the draft corporate parenting strategy 2020 – 2023 (appendix A) is approved as amended to expand upon the safe and stable life;**
- (b) Cabinet agrees to receive an annual report on Corporate Parenting to enable progress of the strategy to be monitored; and**
- (c) Cabinet agrees the Care Leavers covenant (appendix B) is approved.**

178. FOSTERING AND ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORTS 2019/20

It was agreed that this item be deferred to the next meeting of the cabinet.

179. TALK COMMUNITY STRATEGIC APPROACH

The cabinet member health and adult wellbeing introduced the report and highlighted the key points:

- Talk community was becoming increasingly integral to the council's business and developing its identity;

- It was recognised as a new way of working in partnership with communities and would be a launch pad for future partnerships;
- The programme provided central coordination during the emergency phase of Covid and during the winter floods;
- It was an all-ages approach which built on the strengths based model already in place in adults and communities.

The assistant director talk community programme explained that:

- The approach had been evolving over the previous 12 to 18 months and had started to become an established way of working with communities;
- It supported the council's prevention agenda to manage demands for health and social care services;
- The appendix to the report gave an overview of where talk community hubs were and where they were looking to be established,;
- Partners in the health system and communities had endorsed the approach.

In discussion of the report and proposed approach cabinet members noted that:

- The talk community business element had started earlier in the year and focussed on how businesses could support their employees and signposting to services;
- There were many directions this approach could take, building on the volunteer networks that were active during the coronavirus epidemic and the flooding in the winter;
- The joint strategic needs assessment and data from the research team should be used to help identify priority areas and scrutiny committees were encouraged to use the data to lead policy shaping;
- The council's data was shared with communities as part of partnership working but the approach also made use of intelligence from within communities;
- It was important to set out a timeline of key deliverables moving forward;
- The approach synchronised well with action to strengthen families and reduce the need for intervention including children being taken into care.

Group leaders and representatives were invited to give the views and queries of their respective groups. The concept was welcomed and it was noted that:

- Further work was needed to communicate the approach to more communities, this would be part of the engagement plan;
- The push to make use of existing assets as part of the strategic approach was welcomed;
- the use of wider networks of care could be explored including intergenerational activities, this would create a wider economy of care where many more organisations and individuals were involved in providing care;
- hubs already in place were well received and providing a useful service.

The chairperson of the adults and wellbeing scrutiny committee explained that overall the committee were very positive about the strategy and welcomed the application of a strengths based approach. The scrutiny committee had noted that the approach was flexible, consolidated existing offers and encouraged communities to support one another.

It was agreed that:

- (a) the Talk Community strategic approach and its implementation be approved and;**
- (b) authority be delegated to the director for adults and communities to take all operational decisions necessary to ensure adoption and implementation of the proposed Talk Community programme and plan, within available**

revenue and capital resources, subject to further governance when required.

The meeting ended at 5.56 pm

Chairperson

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 24 September 2020

Question 1

Mr P McKay, Leominster






To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

The Highways Map for the Local Street Gazetteer, <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/travel-transport/highways-public-rights-way-map>, shows the table of Maintenance Responsibility codes under the heading of Road Status. Could this be corrected, and Road Status then shown as three sets of codes, with option to switch between them, being Highway Dedication, Street Surface and Maintenance Responsibility? This would result in a more informative presentation of the Local Street Gazetteer map, and conform with reply by cabinet member transport and roads to question to Council December 2015 that will continue to work to make as much information as possible available online. Assuming that was agreed, could you also provide some indication of when this map may be viewable in this format?

Response

Thank you for your question. Currently the highways and public rights of way map Local Street Gazetteer sets out information using the following five codes:

Local street gazetteer

Code	Road status	
1	Maintainable at public expense	
2	Prospectively maintainable at public expense	
3	Neither 1, 2 nor 4	
4	Maintenance responsibility is to another highway authority	
5	Street outside scope of EToN (including permissive streets)	

We aim to provide as much highway information online that is available and these codes describe maintenance responsibilities.

The addition of further information and codes can always be considered and if there were benefits this information could be added subject to resource and funding being available to do so. Happy to look at your suggestion in more detail. The website would be then updated and be available to the public.

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 24 September 2020

Question 1

Councillor Yolande Watson, Kerne Bridge Ward

To: cabinet member infrastructure and transport

In October 2019, Herefordshire Council resolved that: the executive is requested to write to government to ask them to review the policy regarding part 3 class Q (General Permitted Development Order as amended) applications under the General Permitted Development Order. In light of the response received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government dated 2nd July 2020 will the cabinet member seek to put in place a condition that any class Q permitted developments have an agricultural tie placed on them to help provide much-needed homes for family members and agricultural workers, and consult the local community on removing a permitted development right by making an Article 4 direction?

Response

As you will be aware from MHCLG's reply in July 2020, the agricultural to residential permitted development right is seen by the government as an important measure to support our rural communities and help provide much-needed homes, including – but not just for - family members and agricultural workers. The government has also made it clear that they believe it makes best use of existing buildings for our housing supply. These Part Q applications are therefore Prior Approval applications where the development proposed is considered to be permitted development, subject to a number of criteria that need to be satisfied. If these criteria are satisfied, then the council would normally have no option other than for prior approval to be granted.

That said, I am happy to further consider the government's comment (below) about removing this permitted development right by making an Article 4 direction to allow Class Qs to be dealt with like any other planning application where it was felt that it was necessary to protect the local amenity or wellbeing of an area. However, this would in practice be quite difficult to justify, unless in a designated area for example. I would be happy to have officers discuss this with you and Cllr Swinglehurst further to understand the framework template we might use to consider such exceptions and the implications of making an Article 4 direction.

'Where it is felt that it is necessary to protect the local amenity or wellbeing of an area, the local planning authority can consult the local community on removing a permitted development right by making an Article 4 direction. This then requires a planning application which the local planning authority can determine in accordance with its local plan'.

Question 2

Councillor Nigel Shaw, Bromyard Bringsty Ward

To: cabinet member infrastructure and transport

On 21st July the 151 officer of Shropshire County Council wrote to the Herefordshire Council 151 officer to demand the repayment of £3,843,609-71 due to the LEP following this administrations halting of the South Wye link road project. Has a reply been sent and, if so, can this reply and the original letter now be put in the public domain, in the interests of openness and transparency?

Response

A letter was received on 21 July 2020 from Shropshire County Council and a response was sent on 4 August. Both of these documents are attached as appendices to this response.

Supplementary question

Thank you for publishing both of these letters and I do wish the S151 officer well in the line of defence chosen whilst noting that the sum has already been possibly earmarked from the financial resilience reserve. The leader previously stated the council was not in a position to proceed with the southern link road after the election. I've now shared with him evidence that a re-procurement could have been started in May 2019. Last summer I drew the attention of the S151 officer and the leader to the clawback terms of the LEP grant, LEP board waited until six months after the election to 26 November 2019 for announcing it would be reallocating funding allocated to the SWTP unless the council could provide assurance that it was proceeding with the project by 17 January 2020 and the assurance was not given. The project review was going to report last year, then in the New Year, then in July and we're still waiting. Will you accept that under your leadership you've risked this £3.8million bill to the residents of Herefordshire and are you also gambling with a further £12 million of revenue costs from the bypass? Is this the real reason for the dilly dallying of the delay so that these sums don't crystallise in the accounts?

Response

Leader of the Council: that's a very complex question. The first point you make about evidence it could have been placed – I have to say I haven't followed that through yet and I'm yet to be satisfied that that is an accurate representation.

Cabinet member infrastructure and transport: I don't share Councillor Shaw's view that we could have retendered in time and I find it interesting that Councillor Shaw, who was cabinet member at the time for finance didn't push the previous administration at the time to release that information and to cancel that process much more quickly. I find it extraordinary they waited such a long time to do it and I can only imagine that there was an election coming up and there was some political embarrassment. When we came in we had immediately to try and preserve the planning permission and then discover the issue with failed procurement and then and to try and do our own review. We're perfectly entitled to do all those things. The money as the previous administration has stated was a grant and there have been questions to cabinet and to council where members of the previous administration have responded as such. The review will be finished at the end of this month and it'll be going to scrutiny in the next couple of weeks.

Cabinet member finance and corporate services: It's my understanding that even if it was possible for us to commence a re-procurement we did not have sufficient time available to conduct that procurement, award the contract and for the road to be built before the money needed to have been spent and that was the problem that we inherited from Councillor Shaw's administration and we've been dealing with it ever since. I'd be very grateful if he'd actually just admit that there was a major mess up under his and his colleagues' watch rather than continuing to pick away at the mess that we're having to try and resolve.

Question 3

Councillor Jeremy Milln, Central Ward

To: cabinet member finance and corporate services

In future could we please commonly include a measure for the historic environment in the Environment Scorecard at Appendix 7? This to track our stewardship of our heritage assets including listed buildings, archaeological sites and conservation areas much as we do our natural resources. In respect of scheduled monuments and grade I and II* listed buildings at risk information is obtainable from Historic England.

Response

The Environmental Scorecard is primarily designed to report on performance measures protecting the natural environment, rather than the built one. However, the planning team does monitor the performance of both the Building Conservation team and the Archaeology team at monthly service performance meetings. This management process tracks monthly performance measures which assess the number of both building conservation and archaeological consultations responded to within the specified planning deadline. In this way we ensure that the stewardship of our heritage assets are protected and are effectively considered in the determination of planning applications.

Supplementary Question

My initial question concerned appendix seven, which is the environment scorecard where data provided by the intelligence unit is but it is rather narrowly defined as being the natural environment, and my plea really was simply to ask for data on the historic environment as well. The question was not answered, instead I had a question answered which seemed to suggest that I was questioning the professional performance of officers in planning and conservation which I was not doing. So my supplementary is simply a restatement of my initial question - can we look at having recognition of our stats on how we're performing in terms of our stewardship of the historic environment? For example we've got 64 conservation areas but no real understanding of their condition and whether they're declining or whether they're improving. Historic England records basic data on those at risk and for example those of Kington and Ross are at risk and in declining condition but it was a slightly more subtle assessment of how we're doing for the historic environment in that score card that it was a plea for.

Response

I apologise to Councillor Milln for giving a response that wasn't an answer to his question. I'm very happy to meet with him to discuss this matter further. I agree that it is very important that we take great care of and husband properly our historic assets and our listed buildings and I also agree that it's not presently clear that we have a sound understanding of their current condition or how we might measure how well we're looking after them. All of those questions I'm very happy to explore further.



Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	Thursday 15 October 2020
Title of report:	Fostering and Adoption Service Annual Reports 2019/20
Report by:	Cabinet member children and families

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To review the Adoption and Fostering services performance report and approve related documents.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) the performance of the adoption service as outlined at appendix A to this report be reviewed, any risks to achievement of objectives noted and relevant mitigating actions approved; and
- (b) the performance of the fostering service as outlined at appendix B to this report be reviewed, any risks to achievement of objectives noted and relevant mitigating actions approved.

Alternative options

1. Under the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2014 and Fostering 2011 Cabinet should receive updates on the management, outcomes and financial state of

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Gill Cox, Tel: 01432 383738, email: Gill.Cox@herefordshire.gov.uk

Herefordshire Council's adoption and fostering services; it is open to Cabinet to identify additional or alternative actions to improve performance, but in doing so regard must be had to the resource implications of additional actions

Key considerations

2. The annual reports set out the activity and performance for the Adoption Service and Fostering Service during 2019-20.
3. The Adoption Service is responsible for recruiting, assessing, training and supporting adopters; matching children with adopters who can meet their needs and supporting those affected by adoption either as a child, adopter or birth family of an adopted child.
4. Herefordshire joined the Adoption Central England (ACE) on 1 July 2019 and became part of the regional service in accordance with government expectations.
5. Key achievements for the Adoption service include:
 - Smooth transition to joining ACE
 - Development and effectiveness of the Early Permanency hub in reducing drift and delay for children with a care plan of adoption
 - Increase in foster to adopt placements.
6. Improvement plans for 2020/21 focus upon:
 - Pre-birth planning and increase in children placed in foster to adopt placements
 - To improve timeliness of children placed for adoption
 - Adopted children and their family are provided with a life story book and later life letter within 2 weeks of their Celebration hearing
7. The Fostering Service is responsible for recruiting, assessing, training and supporting local authority foster carers to provide a home for children and young people who are looked after. Children become looked after because their parents have been assessed as unable to meet the needs of their children, in most cases due to abuse or neglect.
8. Key achievements for the service include:
 - Increasing the number of children placed with in-house foster carers
 - Increasing the number of children leaving care for permanency via Special Guardianship Order (SGO)
 - Improving the training offer to foster carers
 - Adapting the service to meet needs and support foster carers during Covid-19
9. Key priorities for improvement during 2020/21 are:

- Increase the number of general Herefordshire Intensive Placement and Support Service (HIPSS) and Sleepover scheme foster carers and the number of supported lodgings providers
- Increase the number of children who are long-term matched with their foster carers
- Increase the number of children leaving care for permanency via SGO

Community impact

10. Within the County Plan it is a council priority to “strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together”. The fostering and adoption services support the council in achieving its ambitions in key strategies in the corporate plan, health and wellbeing strategy and children and young people’s plan.
11. Adoption provides a permanency option for looked after children and so, where it is in the child’s best interests, enables children to become part of a family outside of the looked after system. Ensuring every looked after child achieves permanency is a key part of the Corporate Parenting strategy with adoption a key element of this.
12. Fostering provides a safe and secure home for looked after children enabling them to recover from trauma and supporting them to reach their potential. Providing sufficient local carers able to meet these needs is a key priority within the Corporate Parenting strategy.

Equality duty

13. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the ‘general duty’ on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
14. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying ‘due regard’ in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. The adoption and fostering services welcome applications from all sectors of the community and is ambitious in seeking placements for children whatever their level of need. The fostering and adoption services need to increase the diversity of approved foster carers and adopters. Neither service have sufficient carers from Black and Minority Ethnic groups to match with children and young people in care. There is a particular gap in relation to foster carers from a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller background. The service is focussing upon increasing the number of children and young people placed with kinship foster carers so that children and young people are able to live with those from the same background as themselves.

15. All foster carers completed mandatory diversity training to ensure that they have an understanding of the importance of understanding the impact of discrimination and what they can do to ensure the needs of children and young people are understood and met. It is important that all children and young people are supported to develop a positive sense of identity.

Resource implications

16. For 2019/20 the adoption service budget was £837k. At outturn the service had an underspend of £30k due to a combination of staffing vacancies and reduction in spend on adoption allowances.
17. The adoption service generated income of £27k from selling placements to other local authorities and spent a total of £90.75k on purchasing adoptive placements resulting in a net cost to the authority of £63.75k. This expenditure and income relates to decisions prior to joining ACE. The need to purchase adoptive placements is much reduced as the service now has access to prospective adopters across the ACE region and any purchases required outside of ACE are met by a budget held within ACE.
18. The fostering service had a budget of £5,124k with an outturn position of being overspent by £109k. This relates to the need to provide more in-house placements than was budgeted for. This does mean that it would have cost more in external placements if we had not used in-house placements as we are required to provide placements for each of our looked after children. The increased spend on placements was off-set to some extent by underspends on staffing due to vacancies during the year.
19. The external fostering budget which is used to fund independent fostering agency, residential placements and the Herefordshire Intensive Placement Support Service (HIPSS) had a budget of £6,690k with an overspend of £751k. This budget is under pressure due to the very high numbers of looked after children in the service resulting in there being insufficient placements available in house. The service continues to work hard at recruiting carers and in reducing the number of children who are placed in residential care.

Legal implications

20. The National Minimum Standards are issued by the Secretary of State under the Care Standards Act 2000 and detail the conduct and standards required for Adoption and Fostering Services and as such are taken into account during inspections by Ofsted.
21. Standards state that the executive side of the local authority:
 - receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency
 - monitor the management and outcomes of the service in order to satisfy themselves that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users;
 - satisfies itself that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration; and
 - the executive formally approves the statement of purpose and reviews them at least annually.

Risk management

22. Without an effective adoption service, looked after children would spend longer in the care of the local authority. This would be detrimental to their wellbeing and life chances. If the support needs of adoptive families are not met, children may return to the care system. An effective adoption and looked after children's service is important to ensure that we are able to offer a robust and timely approach to securing permanence for children unable to be brought up safely within their own families and to ensure access to services that will best support their individual needs.
23. Without an effective fostering service children who need to be looked after by the local authority may be placed away from their own community. This can cause disruption to their education and relationships with their families and friends.
24. If recruitment targets are not met, there is a risk of increased dependence on independent agencies and residential units located further away from a child's networks incurring higher costs and budget pressures.

Consultees

25. The reports were presented to the children and young people's scrutiny committee on the 27 July 2020 and the committee confirmed their support for the reports to be submitted to cabinet for their approval.

Appendices

Appendix A – Adoption Service annual report 2019-20

Appendix B – Fostering Service annual report 2019-20

Background papers

None identified

Adoption Service Annual Report 2019-20

OFSTED Registration: SC057941

1. Executive summary

The adoption service is considered to be a well performing area of Children's social care. This report sets out performance and achievements during 2019/20 and priorities for 2020/21.

The service joined the regional adoption service, Adoption Central England (ACE), as planned on the 1st July 2019. Full year data from ACE is not yet available and so performance information as at the end of quarter 3 is included to enable comparisons across the ACE region.

2. Introduction

Under the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2014 (NMS), Cabinet should receive updates on the management, outcomes and financial state of the adoption service; it is open to Cabinet to identify additional or alternative actions to improve performance but in doing so regard must be had to the resource implications of additional actions.

The NMS are issued by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000 and are issued for use by Ofsted who take them into account in their inspections.

Standard 25.6 states that:

The executive side of the local authority:-

- receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency every six months;
- monitor the management and outcomes of the service in order to satisfy themselves that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users;
- satisfies itself that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration.

All local authorities were required to be part of a regional adoption agency, or to have delegated their adoption functions to a RAA, by 2020. Following Cabinet approval Herefordshire joined ACE on the 1st July 2019. ACE is a partnership between Warwickshire, Coventry, Solihull, Worcestershire and Herefordshire.

The service operates on a "Hub and Spoke" model of service delivery. The service is hosted by Warwickshire County Council which operates as one "Hub" with a second "Hub" across the south of the region. There are offices ("Spokes") in Coventry, Solihull, Warwick, Worcester and Hereford.

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.

Herefordshire chose to establish an Early Permanence Hub on the 1st July 2019 using resource that had previously been used within our adoption team. This Hub is based within our Child Protection and Court team and provides support to Social Workers and a link with ACE to ensure children's plans for adoption progress without delay.

3. Children

After four months of being looked after, all children should have a plan for permanence ratified at their second LAC review. When the plan is for adoption, a child's permanence report (CPR) outlining the family history, the child's needs and why adoption is the intended plan, is prepared by the child's social worker and presented to the agency decision maker (ADM). If the ADM decides adoption is the appropriate plan, this will become the care plan put to the court.

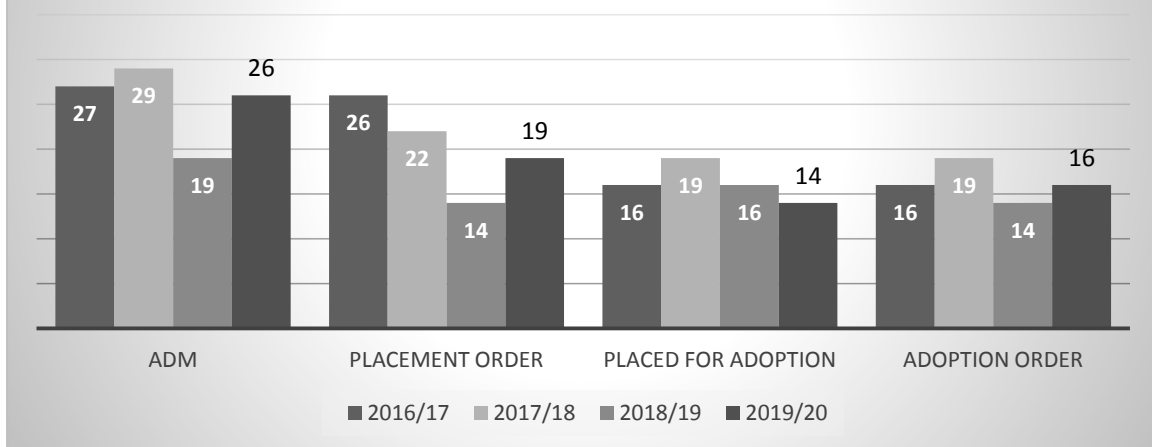
A child can only be placed for adoption if a court has granted a Placement Order or the parents have requested that their child is adopted and given their permission.

It is accepted that the younger a child is when placed for adoption, the better the outcome and local authorities are urged to consider placing children with approved adopters who are also approved foster carers so that the child does not have a change of carers, such a placement is commonly known as a "foster to adopt placement". If this is not possible, an appropriate match with prospective adopters should be identified as soon as possible, ideally by the time permission to place the child for adoption has been obtained.

In 2019/20 the ADM for Herefordshire adoption agency decided that adoption should be the plan for 26 children; plans for 6 of these children subsequently changed. This was an increase from 19 in 2018/19 but more in line with previous years.

19 Placement Orders were granted which is an increase from 14 in 2019/20 but again only a little lower than previous years.

ADM decisions, Placement Orders granted, children placed for adoption and Adoption Orders granted 2016-20



14 children were placed with adoptive families, which included 1 sibling group and two children being matched with their foster carers. 16 adoption orders were granted during the year.

As of 31st March 2020 there were 16 children where a Placement Order had been granted but they were not yet matched. The children who had been waiting the longest are a sibling group of 4 who had their Placement Order granted in September 2018. Their foster carers are currently being assessed as prospective adopters for the children.

No adoption disruptions have occurred this year.

4. Early permanence hub

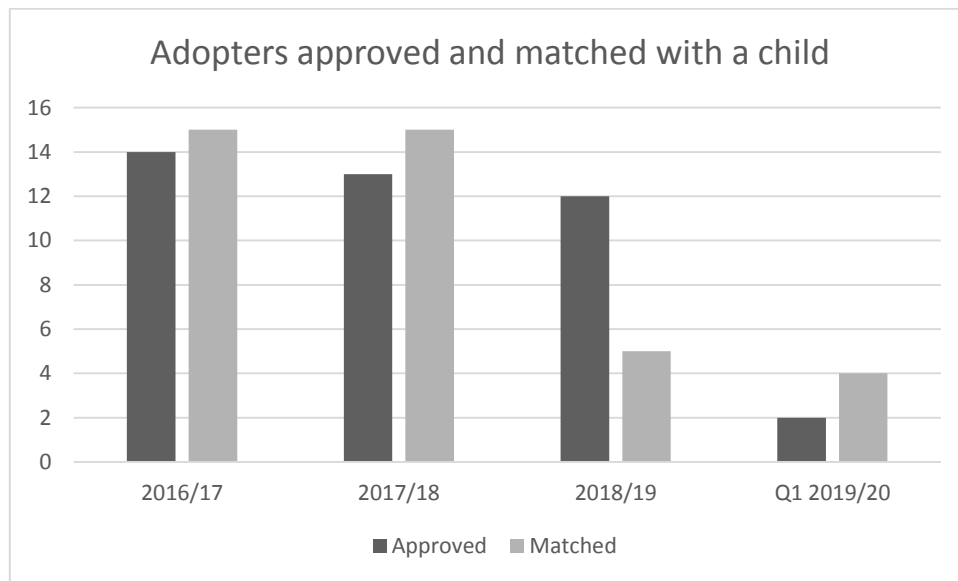
The Early Permanence hub is based within the Child Protection and Court teams and consists of a Senior Social Worker, a Family Support Worker and a Child and Adolescent therapist. All of these posts were part of our Adoption Service prior to joining ACE. It was identified during the planning for implementation that a number of important functions undertaken by our previous adoption service were not within the service specification for ACE. This included the Child and Adolescent therapist preparing children for adoption, quality assurance of adoption reports, tracking of children with a plan for adoption, matching of children who are not “hard to place” and support and quality assurance of adoption support plans.

The Early Permanence hub has proved invaluable in supporting the work of adoption – ensuring that assessments and reports are of good quality, family finding is completed in a timely way and children are well prepared for their move to adoptive families.

5. Recruitment and assessment of prospective adopters

The assessment process for adopters is in two stages with the expectation that the first stage is completed within two months and the second stage within four months, though prospective adopters can take up to 6 months between the two stages if they choose.

In quarter 1 of 2019/20 two families were approved as adopters. 8 families had been approved through Stage 1 and 5 families were approved but not yet formally matched with a child.



ACE have a target of approving 125 adopters during the year. At the end of quarter 3 there were 70 prospective adopters approved and so the target was unlikely to be met. Only 17% of adopters completed stage 2 of the assessment within the target of 4 months and 41% within 5 months. This is an area for improvement within ACE.

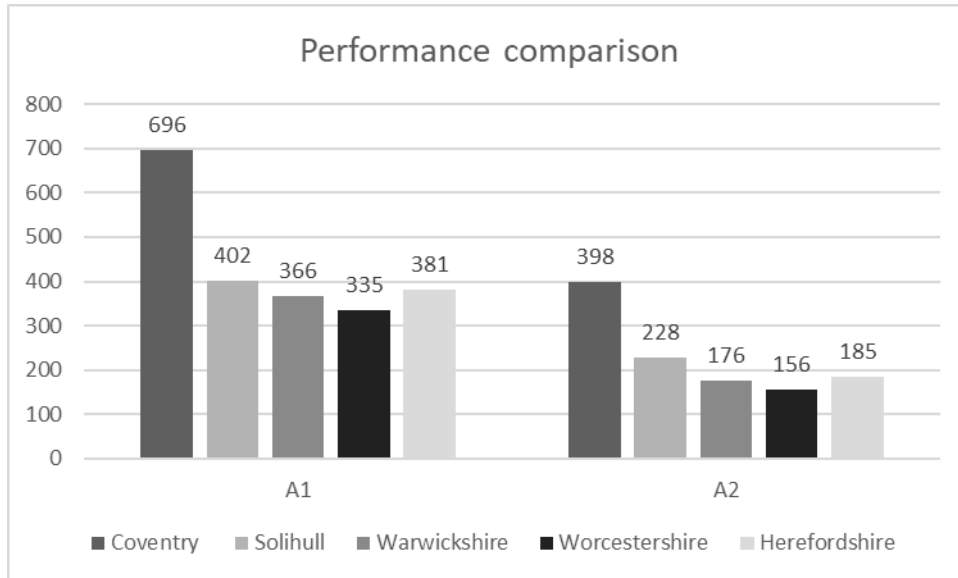
However, the number of inter-agency placements made by ACE during the year is low with just 5 at the end of December 2019 which demonstrates that ACE are able to match most children from the pool of ACE approved adopters. During 2018-19 Herefordshire alone purchased 6 inter-agency placements so as anticipated joining ACE has resulted in a greater choice of adopters for Herefordshire children.

6. Performance and quality assurance

Regional and national data for 2019/20 is not available for comparison at the time of writing. However the graphs below shows performance for April to December 2019 within the ACE region in relation to key national performance indicators. Herefordshire is achieving better than the national indicators.

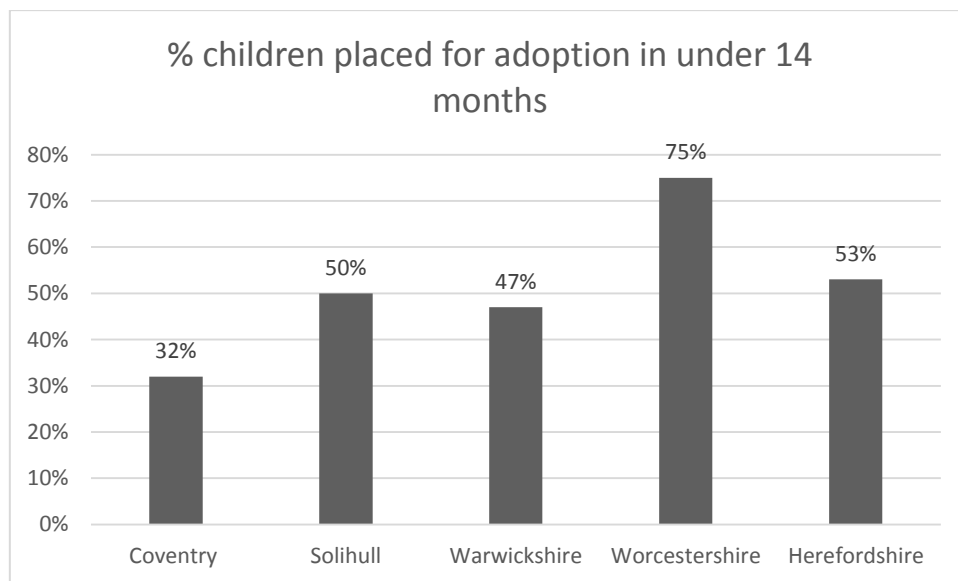
A1 – Number of days between the date child became looked after and date they are placed for adoption. Target is below 468 days.

A2 – Number of days between the Placement Order being granted and the match being approved. Target is below 244 days.



Herefordshire is a long way above the national target for the third performance indicator.

A3 – Percentage of children who are placed for adoption in under 14 months from the date they become looked after. Target is 100%.



Herefordshire has continued to have a large number of adopted children who have had to wait for life story books and later life letters. On the 31st March 2020, 37 children were waiting for these important pieces of work. Work to reduce the backlog has been slow during this year due to increased numbers of looked after children and the consequent demand for supervised contact which has to be prioritised by the looked after children’s support team. Additional resource has been agreed for the team and the recent Covid-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity for staff to work almost full-time on life story work as direct contact for children is not taking place. It is anticipated that the backlog will be cleared by 30th June 2020 and thereafter will be monitored closely to ensure that this difficulty does not re-occur.

7. Progress on key priorities for 2019-20

- Transition of the current adoption team into the regional adoption agency – this was achieved smoothly to timescale.
- Development of the early permanence hub to support and promote timeliness between court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family – Early Permanency hub is fully staffed and is effective in supporting care planning for children with a care plan of adoption and reducing delay.
- Improve early permanence planning to increase numbers of children placed in fostering to adopt placements - 4 children were placed in foster to adopt placements which increased from two during 2018/19.
- Improved timeliness of life story books and later life letters and quality of child permanence reports – there remains a significant backlog of life story books and later life letters although this has reduced a little during the year. Plans are in place to eliminate the backlog by end of June 2020. The support provided by the early permanence hub is effective in supporting Social Workers to produce child permanence reports of a good standard. Further work is required to enable Social Workers to produce reports of the standard required with less support from the early permanency hub.

8. Key priorities for improvement during 2019-20

- Pre-birth planning and increase in children placed in foster to adopt placements
- To improve timeliness of children placed for adoption
- Adopted children and their family are provided with a life story book and later life letter within 2 weeks of their Celebration hearing

Gill Cox

Head of service for looked after children

Fostering Service Annual Report 2019-20

OFSTED Registration: SCO56304

1. Executive summary

Priorities for the Fostering Service were set out in the 2018/19 annual report were to:

- Increase the number of carers approved; HIPSS, General and Supported Lodging providers – there has been a reduction in the number of approved general and HIPSS carers and the number of supported lodgings providers has stayed the same.
- Increase the number of available beds with current cohort of carers – the number of beds has increased amongst foster carers and supported lodgings providers.
- Improve retention through improving benefits package available to foster carers – the review of fostering allowances is currently being completed and recommendations will be presented to Cabinet in the autumn.
- Eleven children left care having achieved permanency in special guardianship arrangements – the same number as in 2018/19 and at the end of the year a further 13 applications had been completed.
- Increase placement stability – this has improved from 10% in 2018/19 to 8% in 2019/20 of children with 3 or more moves in the last 12 months and from 71% in 2018/19 to 74% in 2019/20 who have remained in the same placement for over 2 ½ years
- Increase in support for SGO – support group is now meeting regularly and successful applications for funding of therapeutic support made.
- Development of training programme – therapeutic parenting and online resources – additional £11k invested in foster carer training and on-line courses are now available
- Mosaic workflow upgrade completion – completed.
- Update foster carers charter – not yet completed.

Progress in important areas has been made but the Service has not met the target in the sufficiency strategy of reducing reliance on independent fostering agencies with the split between agencies and in-house placements worsening from 64%/36% in 2018/19 to 62%/38% in 2019/20. This is due to the number of children in care having increased during the year.

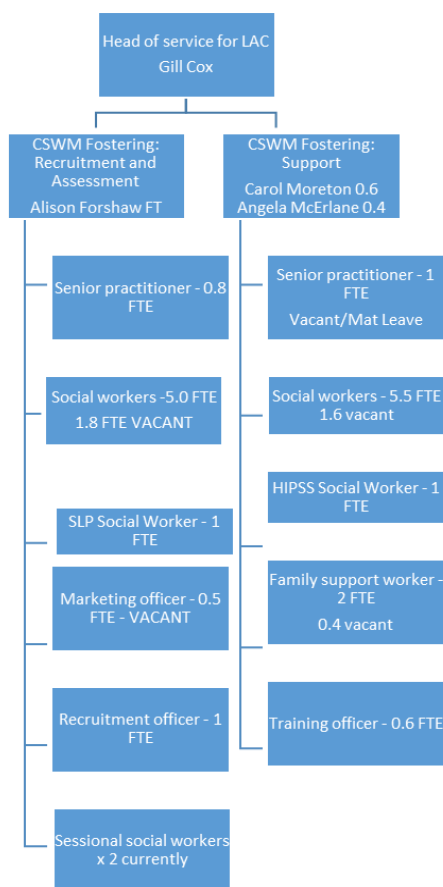
2. Introduction

This report complies with Standard 25.7 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards which sets out the condition that the Fostering Service Manager will monitor and report to board members and management members about the management, outcomes and financial state of the fostering service every three months.

3. Establishment

In February 2019 the Fostering Service was structured into an Assessment team and a Support and Supervision team. This was to enable greater focus and reduce the impact of competing priorities. During 2019/20 the team has embedded these changes.

The team structure is set out below.



This year the Fostering team has had a much higher than usual pattern of staff turnover and absence. Three staff members have left the team for career development opportunities which is really positive – including joining Herefordshire Intensive Placement Support Service (HIPSS) and promotion to other teams within Children’s Social Care. The team has also been affected by some periods of long-term absence of a Social Worker and Marketing officer.

Consequently some foster carers have had several changes of Social Worker during the year. This is a concern for retention of foster carers particularly when this is echoed with changes in children’s social workers.

During the year the Fostering Assessment team took on responsibility for all viability assessments of connected persons and a 0.5 FTE post was transferred from the Child Protection and Court team for this purpose. This has relieved pressure from the Child Protection and Court teams where recruitment is much more challenging than in the Fostering teams.

At the end of March 2020 the team had Social Work vacancies of 1.8 full-time equivalent in the Assessment team and 1.6 in the Support and Supervision team. One Senior Practitioner was on maternity leave and in addition there were vacancies of 0.4 family support worker post and 0.5 marketing officer post. Vacancies within the Assessment team are at least partially compensated for by the use of sessional assessing Social Workers.

4. Recruitment and Assessments of foster carers

The applications received are set out in the table below. Applications for general carers are slightly lower than for last year and are also lower for the specialist services including HIPSS and Sleepover

scheme. This is despite the number of fostering enquiries having increased from 191 in 2018/19 to 279 in 2019/20. Applications increased marginally from 21 in 2018/19 to 22 in 2019/20. So although it is positive that more enquiries are being received further work is required to successfully translate these into applications and approvals. Comparative data for 2019/20 is not yet available.

Carer type	New applications 2018/19	New applications 2019/20
General	14	13
HIPSS	2	0
Kinship	18	16
Sleepover scheme	3	0
TOTAL	37 approved	29 approved

Recruitment activity has been focussed on developing our social media reach as well as maintaining our face to face events. Analysis shows that most of our enquiries start in response to social media activity or via our website. Development of social media strategy has been particularly important following Covid restrictions on public face to face events.

Our Recruitment Officer successfully set up a Herefordshire Fostering Service Facebook page which went live in January 2020. The aim is to focus on further developing our digital marketing profile and training has been identified to develop the skills of our Recruitment Officer. Of the 279 enquiries during 2019/20 138 came from social media channels.

An example of a recent post is shown below.



Due to the long-term absence of the teams marketing officer during the year business support recruited on a temporary basis to support the marketing and recruitment activity. The post became vacant at the end of March. This post is being reviewed and will be recruited to during 2020/21.

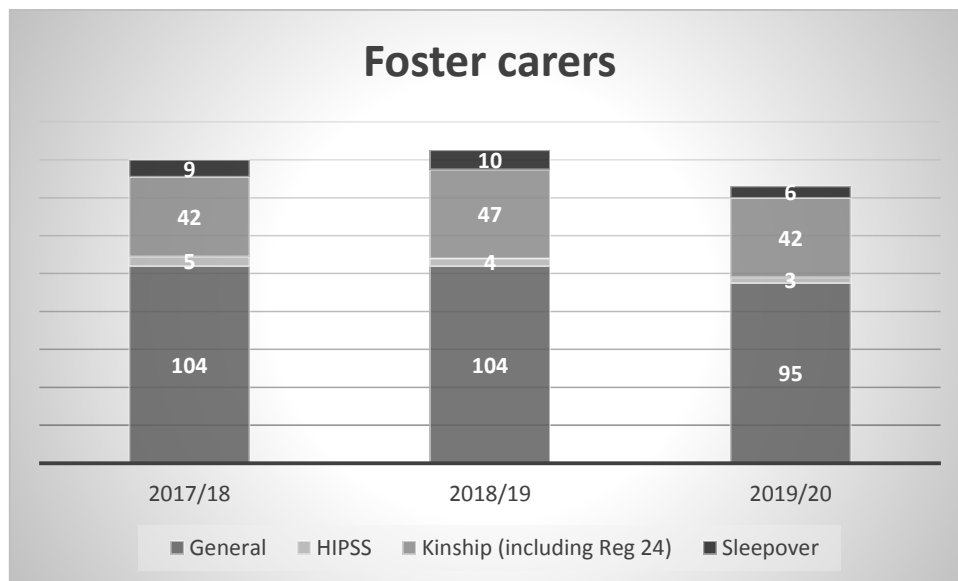
Research from Fostering Network shows that most new carers have values that include “a strong desire for fairness, a keen sense of what is right or wrong and are concerned about society. They are self-assured, have a high level of self-efficacy and will be the first to respond to what they see as a moral call to action.” [Why Foster Carers Care, 2015](#). Our strategy is to make our Fostering Team

more accessible and friendly and to share real stories from young people and foster carers helps attract foster carers with these values.

The team is an active member of the Midlands Recruitment forum where ideas and good practice is shared. During the year the team have advertised in the Herefordshire Times and had a local radio advertising campaign but no direct enquiries resulted from these although they may have helped to raise awareness about fostering.

5. Foster Carers

The graph below shows the number of different types of approved foster carers. Details regarding the changes in numbers are in the sections below. Regulation 24 enables friends or family of a child to be temporarily approved as a foster carer whilst a full assessment is completed.



General Foster carers

General foster carers are approved to look after other people’s children where they are unable to be safely cared for by their parents or a family member or friend. General foster carers provide emergency, short-term, long-term and respite care. Respite carers are available to offer planned breaks for foster carers and in some cases emergency breaks. General foster carers usually live within Herefordshire and enable children to remain living locally close to family, friends and enabling continuity of education and social activities.

There is an increasing trend in the number of newly approved foster carers being approved as respite carers initially arising from applicants wishes. This may be in recognition of the complexity of fostering and wishing to try fostering to see what the impact is on family life before committing to full-time placements.

Ofsted data for 2018-19 reports that nationally there has been a 2% growth in recruitment which has reversed previous trends of declining figures. There has been a national increase in Independent Fostering Agencies approving foster carers as short-term, long-term and respite carers instead of the approach taken more often by local authorities, including Herefordshire, of specifying a narrow approval for carers of often only respite, short-term or long-term. Our Fostering service will adopt a

more flexible approach similar to IFA's in 2020/21. Nationally the data set indicates that foster carers are being approved for fewer children.

The impact of Covid-19 is significant in that a lot of foster carers are older and have underlying health conditions that make placements more difficult. Health concerns are affecting approximately 15 fostering households which equates to 16% of general foster carers. As we ease out of lockdown there is significant work needed to reassure and reactivate some, especially respite carers.

Retention

There have been 13 resignations of general foster carers during the year compared with 30 during 2018/19. Reasons for resignations are:

- Three transferred to IFA's. Reasons provided related to better financial support and support to birth children.
- Eight resigned due to a changes of circumstances which included a range of issues relating to health, moving home, changing employment and impact on carer's own family.
- One carer was de-registered due to concerns about the quality of their practice.
- One carer resigned following a Special Guardianship order being granted.

The fostering service competes with the independent sector. Information from neighbouring authorities shows that fees and allowances within the local authority have gradually become less competitive and so a review is currently being completed which will recommend changes and increases to fees and allowances. It is anticipated that new proposals will be made to Cabinet in the autumn.

Additional investment of £11,000 for training of foster carers was agreed during the year. This has enabled the purchase of an on-line package of training and development of the training programme to offer more advanced and bespoke courses to develop the skills of our foster carers. This responds to the feedback from our foster carers who wanted more flexible training options (including on-line) and a more diverse training offer.

Inevitably changes of staff and vacancies have impacted on the continuity and quality of the support provided by the team. Concerns about the impact of staff changes have featured regularly in feedback from foster carers who have left the service and in annual reviews. The team have reviewed the support provided to newly approved foster carers and all are now allocated a family support worker in addition to a Social Worker to ensure that they are well supported at the start of their fostering career.

HIPSS carers

Herefordshire Intensive Support Service (HIPSS) is a commissioned service from Action for Children to provide therapeutic support to specialist carers offering young people opportunity to 'step down' from residential care into family based care and wider consultation and wrap around support to placements at risk of disruption and escalating care costs. HIPSS carers are paid an enhanced fee in recognition of the skill, training and commitment required to focus on the needs of our most challenging young people. A social work project co-ordinator provides the link between the HIPSS service and the Fostering Team.

The scheme has a target of having 8-10 designated carers. In the last year the number of approved HIPSS carers has reduced from 4 to 3. The original model for HIPSS was that children and young people moving from residential to HIPSS placements would move on again after a 12-18 month period. To the credit of our HIPSS carers they have not wanted children and young people to have a further move and have committed to providing long-term permanency to young people through long-term matching and providing staying put placements. Consequently the number of approved carers will reduce again during 2020/21 unless new carers are recruited and approved.

It is also acknowledged that all HIPSS carers have experienced varying levels of 'burn out' having been with the scheme since its inception.

Unfortunately no new HIPSS carers have been recruited during the year. Efforts continue to encourage experienced existing foster carers to consider becoming HIPSS carers and to target those in the community who have existing skills and experience of working with young people who have experienced abuse and trauma.

Within the review of allowances a proposal to offer an enhanced fee for HIPSS placements will be considered for foster carers who may not wish to become dedicated HIPSS carers but may consider offering a placement for a specific young person who could step down from residential care.

HIPSS also provides "wrap-around" support to foster carers which mirrors the model of support that they provide to HIPSS carers. This intensive support is targeted towards children and young people who would be at risk of being placed into residential care if their placement broke down. Wrap-around support is made available to in-house and IFA foster carers. This aspect of the service has been very successful with 18 placements supported in this way and of these 3 young people are now in residential care. Feedback from foster carers and social workers is extremely positive about the impact of this support in sustaining placements.

"HIPSS are a fantastic service not only for foster carers but also for young people, they are always there, for the good and the bad. They get you to really think about things from a different perspective and always listen without judgement." (Foster carer)

"Words cannot describe them, they are the loveliest people alive. They are so amazing and caring, rally loving, unreal". (Young person about his HIPSS carers)

HIPSS provides regular foster carer clinics which have now been extended to support Special Guardianship Order carers. During the year 41 consultations have been provided to carers and the team around the child.

HIPSS have provided training to foster carers as follows:

- PACE and Healing through play x 2
- Mindfulness x 4
- Foundations for attachment training (4 day course) x 2
- Foundations for attachment refresher for foster carers and staff

Since Covid-19 pandemic HIPSS have been providing a weekly virtual café for all staff on topics including attachment theory, harmful sexual behaviour, therapeutic parenting and motivational interviewing.

Kinship carers

A Connected Person is defined as "A relative, friend or other person connected with a child. The latter is someone who would not fit the term 'relative or friend', but who has a pre-existing relationship with the child. It could be someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity such as (for example) a child-minder, a teacher or a youth worker."

Relative is defined as "a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent."

In Herefordshire and other local authorities a connected person is often referred to as a Kinship Carer.

As directed by Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 if a decision has been made that a child needs to become looked after and needs to be placed immediately with alternative carers the child can be placed with a 'connected person' and a temporary approval of the connected person can be made following initial safeguarding checks. The temporary approval can last for up to 16 weeks (with an extension of up to 8 weeks to be used in exceptional circumstances). During this 16 week period a full assessment of the carers is made as for any other foster carer. Pressure from court timetables impacts and much shorter periods are assigned to completing these assessments usually 8 – 10 weeks.

During the year, 16 kinship households were approved and on 31st March 2020 there were 3 kinship households temporarily approved under Regulation 24. The number of approved kinship foster carers increased from 44 to 56 during 2019/20 which represents a 27% increase.

During the year 13 kinship households resigned:

- 8 when an SGO was granted
- 2 following successful reunification of children to their parents
- 2 placements ended when carers were unable to meet needs of the child
- 1 converted to a staying put placement when the young person turned 18

So all but 2 of these resignations were for positive reasons.

Prior to completing a full assessment a viability assessment is completed on prospective kinship carers. This enables the service to identify if there are clear reasons why a connected person would not be approved as a foster carer and ensures that the families fully understand and consent to the assessment and the requirements of any approved foster carer. During 2019/20 the team have completed 83 viability assessments and 32 full kinship assessments. Of the 32 the reasons for not approving related to risk identified within the assessment, withdrawal, child being reunified with their parents or placed with an alternative family member where assessments may have been completed on two or more different connected persons for the same child/ren.

Sleepover scheme carers

The Sleepover Scheme provides family-based overnight short break care to children with disabilities who ordinarily live at home with their parents. These children are not looked after. The Sleepover Scheme is based within the Children with Disabilities team to ensure good communication with the team supporting children who use the scheme. At the end of March there were 6 approved Sleepover Scheme foster carers providing breaks to 5 children under the Sleepover Scheme, 2 looked after children for regular respite and 2 full-time looked after siblings placed in an

emergency. During the year 5 carers resigned and 1 household withdrew having made the decision to offer a long-term full time Shared Lives placement instead. There have been no new Sleepover Scheme Carers approved over the past year. Two assessments were started but one subsequently transferred to the Fostering Team due to carers wishing to pursue full-time caring role, and the other is progressing under the Sleepover Scheme and will be taken to panel during the next financial year. Recruitment to the scheme is a priority for 2020/21.

Where possible carers are dual approved as sleepover and respite carers to meet the needs of children living with their parents and those who are looked after. Complementing the fostering team in identifying respite placements for children with disabilities who are looked-after has always been an important function of the Sleepover Scheme. It has been a challenge to develop and increase capacity within the Sleepover Scheme by increasing the number of placements offered by one caring household. Most Sleepover Scheme Carers want to offer one placement to one child wanting to maintain a balanced lifestyle which incorporates some care for the Sleepover scheme.

The Sleepover Scheme continues provide a Sleepover Scheme Carer’s Group facilitated by the Sleepover Scheme Project Co-ordinator and Family Support Worker. Attendance at the carer’s group is often low due to carers more often than not having other employment and agreeing a time to suit all can be challenging. Carers are encouraged to attend mandatory training and due to some of the medical conditions of our young people, training is provided by colleagues in health usually on a child specific basis. Occupational Therapy assessment services are purchased privately on a case-by-case basis due to a lack of capacity in local NHS provision making all take-up of referrals much delayed and way outside the timeframe for placement planning.

In July the Project Coordinator moved to a different role, initially on a temporary basis, leaving the position unfilled until the end of the year. The post was appointed to but it was several months before the candidate could start. Then, as the year was drawing to a close, the Covid-19 pandemic hit, leaving the UK Government with little option but restrict movement for all. Shielding letters affected some of the young people accessing the scheme and all overnight support was placed on hold. Notwithstanding this the Family Support Worker did a fantastic job in keeping the scheme alive, during times of uncertainty. The Project Coordinator post is now recruited to and so plans to grow the scheme again will be a priority during 2020/21.

	Year 1 (2016-17)	Year 2 (2017-18)	Year 3 (2018-19)	Year 4 (2019-20)
No. of Enquiries	86	17	10	13
No. of Carers Approved	6	6	2	0
Carer withdrawn/resigned (drop-off)	1	2	1	5

Number of Placed Children: 5 (Sleepover Scheme)

Year	2016/17				2017/18				2018/19				2019/20			
Quarter	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

No. of Children	1	4	3	3	6	5	6	8	8	9	9	8	8	7	6	5
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Regulatory requirements to complete an annual review of foster carers have not been maintained during the time that the Sleepover scheme co-ordinator post has been vacant and this is a priority during 2020/21. Relationships and management oversight by the Fostering service need to be strengthened to ensure that this situation is not repeated.

Throughout the challenges, feedback on the Sleepover scheme remains positive from children, families and foster carers.

Special guardianship

The local authority has had increased focus during 2019/20 on supporting children who could be cared for outside of the looked after system to achieve permanency via a Special Guardianship order (SGO) where this is assessed to be in their best interests. An SGO gives parental responsibility to the carers which is shared with the child's parents. It allows them to make all day to day decisions for the child. Where children are settled with carers who are well equipped to meet their needs this is an excellent option for children who are no longer required to have the intrusion of social work visits, health assessments, education meetings and LAC reviews.

During 2019/20 there were 11 looked after children who left care when an SGO was granted which is the same as 2018/19. Assessments of the carers are completed by the Fostering Assessment team.

In the last annual report we identified the emerging impact of a changing focus of permanence via Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) for children this has continued through the last period with 13 further children now cared for under SGO arrangements. At the end of March a further 17 assessments had been completed with applications to Court ready or made to Court. The team had also completed an assessment for a private SGO application. This work will continue as a priority during 2020/21 with plans for at least a further 17 applications planned during quarter 1.

The local authority now offers a generous financial support package that maintains the level of financial support for foster carers if they are granted an SGO following feedback from carers that this was the main reason for not wishing to make an application. This is increasingly encouraging general and IFA foster carers to apply for orders that were traditionally seen as a route for kinship carers. Consequently this does impact upon the number of approved foster carers but will correlate with children leaving care.

New SGO carers have a review every 3 months during the first year and thereafter an annual review. In addition to financial support the service co-ordinates a monthly SGO support group, includes SGO carers in all training available to foster carers and commissions a support service for SGO carers that offers specialist on-line and telephone advice including during evenings and weekends.

The service is in touch with 89 known SGO families and as the number of SGO carers increases capacity to support all of these families is restricted. Opportunities to develop a dedicated Social Work resource to support these family's needs to be explored.

The team have successfully secured over £20k financial support for specialist therapeutic interventions for Special Guardianship families this year from the Adoption Support Fund. During Covid-19 further funding was made available by government and so this has contributed to the cost

of the commissioned SGO support service and enabled 6 Special Guardianship families to attend specialist training provided by Barnados at a cost of £9k.

6. Staying Put carers

All young people in foster care are offered the opportunity to remain living with their foster carers when they reach the age of 18 if this is what they and their foster carers want. This is called “staying put” and again these placements are not foster placements but are an important part of supporting children in care to make a successful transition to independence.

Department for Education data reports that 58% of care leavers “stay put” with their carers at the age of 18 with 30% remaining at aged 19.

The service has 4 Staying Put carers who are no longer approved foster carers and 5 Staying Put carers who are also approved foster carers. In total there were 11 young people in Staying Put arrangements at the end of March.

Three young people have remained in Staying Put placements until the age of 21 when their placement has either converted to Adult Shared Lives scheme, they have moved onto supported accommodation or remained with the carers as a private arrangement.

During 2020/21 the financial support available to Staying Put carers will be reviewed to encourage the development of independent living skills of young people and reduce dependence upon carers.

7. Supported lodgings

Supported lodgings providers (SLP) are not foster carers but are approved to offer placements for young people aged 16 to 21 to develop their independence skills ready for living independently.

Supported lodgings providers have a shorter assessment than foster carers, but this includes independent references, DBS checks, health and safety checks and all are required to have their own safe care agreement. They are approved by the fostering Agency Decision Maker (ADM) outside of panel processes.

During the year a decision was made to annually review all Supported lodgings providers. The process for this is in line with that undertaken for foster carers – seeking of feedback from providers and workers for the young people placed as well as the young people themselves. Health and safety assessments are reviewed, safe caring plans updated and a review report completed.

Work has been undertaken to review and update the documents used relating to SLP agreements between providers and the Local Authority as well as the documents used when placements are made. This has involved consultation with other Local Authorities, the 16+ Team and SLP providers. The young people and provider agreement have been piloted with young people recently. Currently legal advice is being sought. This process has been challenging in trying to ensure the documents are legally compliant and accessible and understandable to young people. This work will be completed during 2020/21.

A Supported Lodgings provider handbook is been compiled and will be rolled out by September 2020.

In response to the recent Covid-19 pandemic, we have explored the option of a temporary extension to one SLP provider to afford us an additional resource which can be accessed for homeless young people / care leavers in an emergency. Another provider (previously an approved foster carer) has

been willing to renew her fostering approval to offer foster placements for the duration of the Covid-19 crisis if this is needed.

Fortunately, the SLP placements have generally been stable throughout this period with only 3 unplanned breakdowns occurring. However sadly we have lost 2 valued SLP placements in annex accommodation as the provider wished to provide Shared Lives placements instead. The payment for Shared Lives is £450 per week, which is equivalent to the highest level of need in SLP.

The OFSTED checklist is now completed for all new referrals to ensure that young people have no identified care needs requiring a regulated placement before transitioning to SLP placements.

For 2020/21 the focus will be on expanding the SLP provision in Hereford. One assessment for a new SLP placement is currently underway. Recruitment events have been held which current providers have been involved in. They have also written their own 'story' which has been used in online adverts, leaflets and the Sunshine radio voice adverts. Social media presence during Covid-19 has been increased and has included a film that care leavers have put together. In addition Truth Be Told a film collaboration with other Local Authorities includes an older teens story, very relevant to the role of SLP's and supporting care leavers. The film has been shared again recently during Fostering Fortnight.

Capacity compared to last year:-

Data	31.3.19	31.3.20
Number of households approved to offer Supported Lodgings	18	17
Number of full time SLP beds approved	30	31
Number of respite SLP beds	4	2
Number of YP in SLP placements	21	22

Vacancies are due to:

- 2 vacancies due to family bereavement / shielding due to COVID
- 2 beds are being used currently for Shared Lives placements
- 4 being used for foster placements
- 3 with no suitable match

Capacity within the service has increased by 2 beds this year. The target within the sufficiency strategy is to provide 40 SLP beds by 2020 and this target has not been achieved.

The SLP support group continues to develop well and are actively engaged in service development e.g. contributing to the development of a Supported Lodgings Providers Practice Handbook. 16+ team members have an open invitation to join this group and do so as and when possible.

8. Fostering panel

Written by Panel chair

Panel membership has remained largely stable during the last 12 months, with the welcome additions of Kirsty Gardiner as the lead for children in care health team and Mel Williams who has returned after a short period of retirement, into the role of independent panel member, bringing her educational experience with her. Panel membership has been boosted by social work representatives to include Bonnie Preece, Nita Saran and Katie Pullin, ensuring that panel remains

quorate at all times. The Panel brings a range of skills and experiences, and has been able to hone and consolidate these skills. Foster panel remains open to future council members whom may wish to take the role of champion for looked after children.

The panel is independent of the Local Authority and as such its remit is to make recommendations on whether applicants are suitable to foster, and if current foster carers should be re-approved. It also has a quality assurance and monitoring role in terms of the work of the fostering service. The majority of cases heard by the panel are either new applications, including from 'connected persons' and first reviews of foster carers, but panel also considers reviews post allegation, brief reports (where a concern has arisen partway through an assessment) and a variety of other matters. Of the 29 new assessments heard 16 were for kinship assessments, so 55% of all new assessments brought to panel were kinship assessments.

During the year the panel has considered some highly complex and contentious situations, two of which resulted in a request by the applicants/foster carers for an independent review by the Independent Review Mechanism. The Local Authority recommendation was upheld in both cases.

It is also noted that with the revised support offer for SGO's, this has proved more popular, and more foster carers have felt confident to take this step, this has resulted in 22.5% of the resignations from the role of Foster Carer being due to moving to special guardianship status, and is a good news story for stability for the child.

Fostering Panel training was held in January, and focused on some of the emerging themes from the previous 12 months. This included:-

- Connected Person Assessments - legal advice from Victoria Gould, and the role of Foster Panel and the interdependencies with the Court.
- Challenging the values and judgement of Panel Members and professional challenge
- Clear rationale for decision making and linkages to the National Minimum standards.

Outcomes of the training included reflections of previous cases and rationale for decision making. Also Panel have introduced a tracker to capture actions required by workers where panel have requested specific tasks be completed.

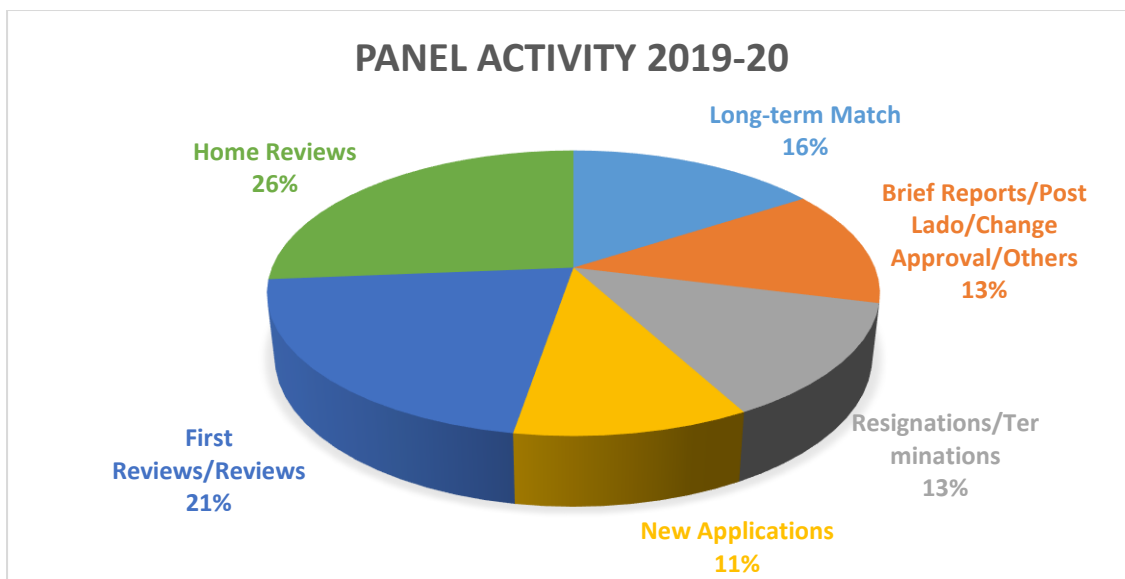
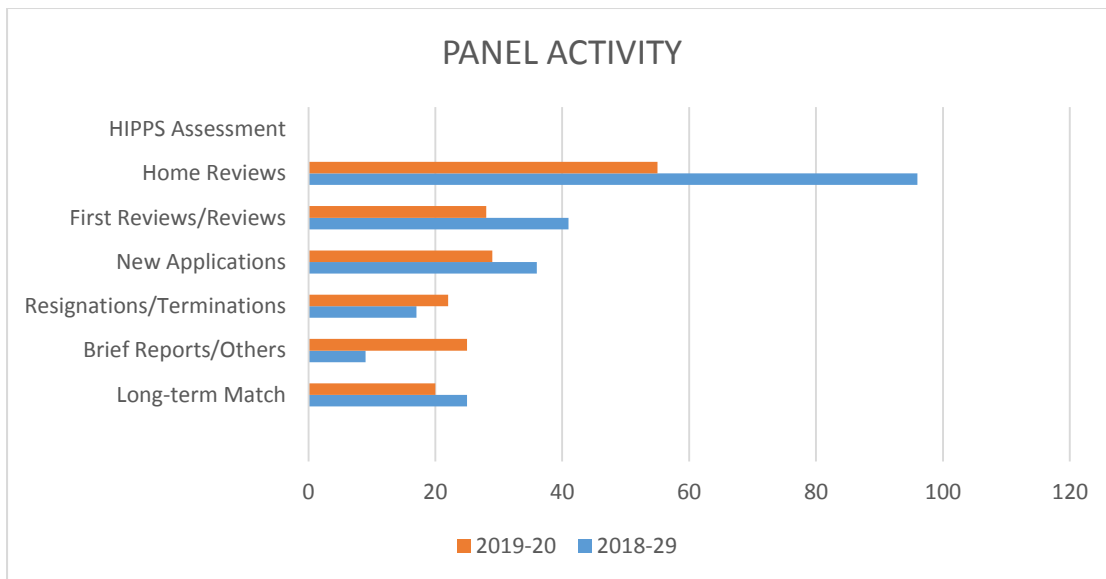
Foster Panel members are eager to make the experience welcoming for Foster Carers, and have had much positive feedback from Foster Carers. It is noted and has been mentioned in feedback the low presence of males (1) on the Foster Panel. Panel is also committed to strengthening its recommendations with clearer references to the National Minimum Standards.

Panel Minutes are now a step in Mosaic, so this part of the pathway is contained within the care management system, where previously it was a word document.

The Foster Panel held its first virtual Panel at the end of March as lockdown commenced, to ensure it could still carry out its role.

Panel Activity 2018/19	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Total
Long-term Match	6	5	5	4	20
Brief Reports/Post Lado/Change Approval/Others	5	4	8	7	25
Resignations/Terminations	5	6	1	15	27
New Applications	4	9	4	12	29

First Reviews/Reviews	8	12	2	6	28
Home Reviews	10	16	9	20	55
HIPPS Assessment	0	0	0	0	0



9. Training

The service delivers training to foster carers from a range of providers including the Fostering team, Council partners, some external training and new online training. Some training is delivered at weekends and evenings to reach carers who are working or struggle with child care commitments.

In response to last years identified need/competition from IFAs to expand our training resources to foster carers a further 11k was invested to set up and develop an online package of training and to increase the range of face to face training offered.

The online training offer has been very successful and resulted in a 65% increase in the number of carers who have maintained required mandatory training in Safeguarding, Diversity and First Aid. This has been timely in relation to Covid-19 and the face to face training restrictions that have resulted. First Aid training for new and renewing carers could not be provided on-line at the end of the year but an online paediatric course has now been sourced).

'...the training was really good, there was lots to think about and I felt really prepared for what fostering was going to be like and the things we've got to learn!'

(Feedback from prospective foster carer about Preparation to foster training)

10. Performance and quality assurance

Placement sufficiency

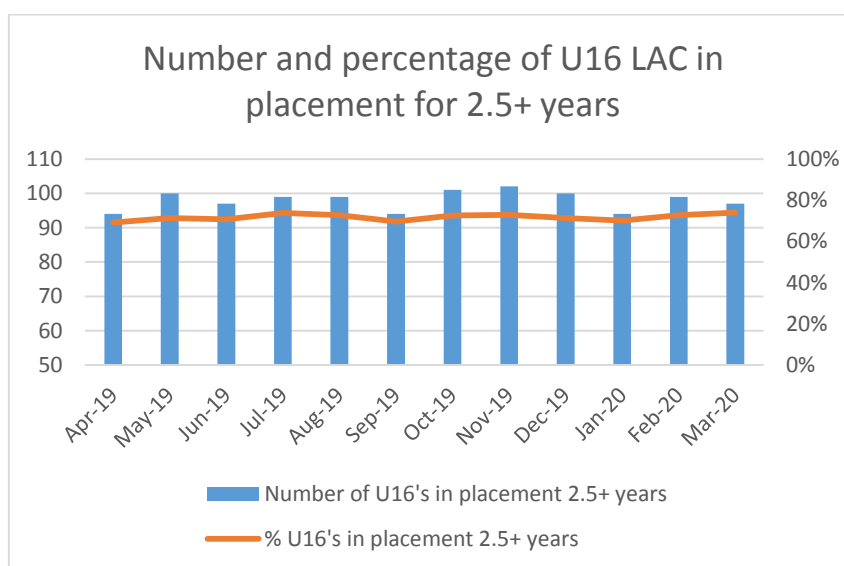
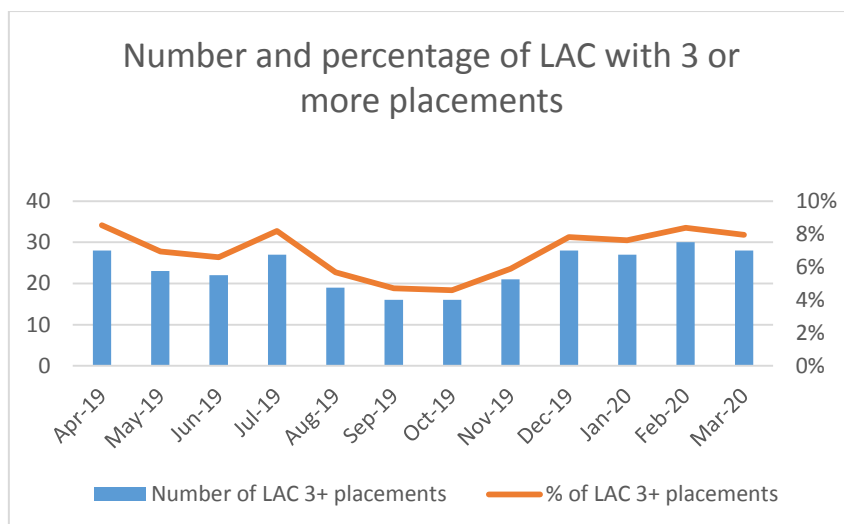
Department for Education (DfE) figures for 2018/19 report an increase in the looked after children population of 3% with an overall 6% increase since March 2015. Herefordshire continues to have a high number of looked after children and has seen numbers increase from 334 in March 2019 to 352 in March 2020. National data is not yet available however regional data shows that rates of looked after children have increased from an average of 82 per 10,000 to 83.1 per 10,000 whilst Herefordshire has increased from 92 to 97.5 per 10,000 in the same period. Nationally the split between local authority and IFA placements is 65%/35%.

Although the numbers of carers has reduced the placements available have slightly increased. On 31st March 2019 170 placements were available with 96 filled and 74 vacant (56% filled). This compares with 31st March 2020 when 182 placements were available, 114 filled and 68 vacant (63% filled). This year is comparable with Ofsted published data that nationally 63% of fostering places were filled. This may seem a very low figure but many approved places will be unavailable as carers are only available part-time for respite placements; are approved for more placements than they have bedrooms for sibling groups or are taking a break for a range of reasons.

Placement stability

Herefordshire's performance is good for placement stability. This is a key performance indicator nationally and performance is consistently better than the national average.

At the end of March 8% of children in care had 3 or more placements during the year comparing with a national average of 10% and 11% for statistical neighbours. 74% of children in care had been in their placement for at least 2 ½ years compared with a national average of 69% and 67% for statistical neighbours. Both of these measures are impacted by the high numbers of children in care and as increasing numbers of children in stable placements leave care via an SGO it is likely that performance will decrease. Therefore there is no room for complacency and further work to reduce placement moves is required.



Long-term matches

There were 20 long term matches approved during 2019/20. A review in March 2020 identified 44 children with a care plan of long-term fostering where there had been delay in progressing the long-term match. This is a priority for improvement within early 2020/21.

Practice concerns

There were 16 Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) contacts received regarding general foster carers during 2019/20 compared with 21 in 2018/19. Of these 10 did not meet LADO threshold - 8 contacts were practice related and addressed by the service and for 2 contacts advice was given.

The other 6 (3 households) the LADO threshold was met, allegations were substantiated and reviews were presented to fostering panel. As a result of reviews one fostering household was re-approved with a change in their matching, one household is completing a plan of work and will be further reviewed in 6 months' time and one case is outstanding.

There were 8 LADO (4 households) contacts received regarding kinship foster carers during 2019/20 compared with 4 last year. Of these in 3 cases the threshold was not met, in 3 cases the allegations were unsubstantiated and in 2 cases (1 household) the allegation was substantiated and subsequently reviewed by fostering panel.

Complaints and compliments

The service has received two complaints from foster carers and two from special guardians during the year.

The foster carers complaints were regarding poor communication and another relating to finance and support for a respite placement. Both were resolved without requiring formal resolution and learning around checking carers understanding of policies explored with the team.

One complaint from a special guardianship related to a financial allowance and for a period of months prior to an award being made – this was upheld and payment was made. The second related to compensation relating to family information shared in court proceedings which was settled by the legal team.

The team have received some really positive compliments during the year. Examples include:

“I want to take this opportunity to thank yourself Louise Easton and the few other fostering social workers (Katie Straughan and Charlie Dean) we have had the privilege to help us along our journey you have all held all our hands when need and encouraged and guided us to become connected, kind, considerate, empathetic and in tune carers/parents. We thank you with the whole of our hearts and your all be a special piece of our life’s for EVER! So thank you all”

“At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude for those who have lighted the flame within us”. Special thanks to Georgina Thompson.” (Family support worker)

11. Foster carer representatives

The foster carer representatives have continued to meet on a monthly basis with the Fostering service managers to improve communication and resolve any issues at an early stage. A fostering representative is a member of the Corporate Parenting panel and so is able to communicate issues between the groups.

This foster carer representative organised a summer party, Halloween and Christmas party and established a new carers support group in the community prior to lockdown. There is an active WhatsApp group to keep carers in touch and supporting each other. The foster carers newsletter is sent out bi-monthly although has increased to monthly in response to Covid-19.

12. Progress on key priorities during 2019-20

Priorities from last year’s annual report were:

- Increase in number of carers approved; HIPSS, General and Supported Lodging providers – there has been a reduction in the number of approved general and HIPSS carers and the number of supported lodgings providers has stayed the same.
- Increase in number of available beds with current cohort of carers – the number of beds has increased amongst foster carers and supported lodgings providers.
- Improve retention through improving benefits package available to foster carers – the review of fostering allowances is currently being completed and recommendations will be presented to Cabinet in the autumn.

- Increase in children achieving permanency in special guardianship arrangements – eleven children left care having achieved permanency in special guardianship arrangements – the same number as in 2018/19 and at the end of the year a further 13 applications had been completed.
- Increase placement stability – this has improved from 10% in 2018/19 to 8% in 2019/20 of children with 3 or more moves in the last 12 months and from 71% in 2018/19 to 74% in 2019/20 who have remained in the same placement for over 2 ½ years
- Increase in support for SGO – support group is now meeting regularly and successful applications for funding of therapeutic support made.
- Development of training programme – therapeutic parenting and online resources – additional £11k invested in foster carer training and on-line courses are now available
- Mosaic workflow upgrade completion – completed.
- Update foster carers charter – not yet completed.

13. Key priorities for development during 2020-21

- Recruitment and retention of foster carers:
 - Reviewing scheme of fees and allowances for all foster carers
 - Recruiting to all vacant posts and reducing turnover of staff
 - Continue to develop recruitment strategy increasing number of approvals reducing reliance on independent fostering agencies and residential placements
 - Review process for completing statutory DBS and medical checks
 - Adapt support and training to meet needs of carers in a “Covid secure” way
- Improve stability for children and young people:
 - Continue work to support children and young people to leave care via an SGO where it is in their best interests
 - Ensure all children are long-term matched without delay
 - Explore options to further develop support for SGO carers
- Prepare children and young people for independence:
 - Implement new savings policy and deduct savings for children and young people “at source” so that all children and young people in care have savings when they leave care to support their move to independence
 - Work with 16+ team to implement independence checklist
- Performance improvement
 - Develop a “fostering scorecard” to enable more effective monitoring and improvement within the Fostering service.



Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	Thursday, 15 October 2020
Title of report:	Endorsement of the Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2019-2029
Report by:	Cabinet member commissioning, procurement and assets

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

All wards

Purpose

That Cabinet approves the endorsement of the Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2019-2029.

The Cultural Strategy reflects the approach to supporting arts, culture and heritage as stated in the Herefordshire Council County Plan 2020-2024

The Cultural Strategy provides a basis for collaborative working and for supporting bids for external funding to support the sustainability and development of the arts, culture and heritage sector in Herefordshire.

Recommendation

That:

Cabinet agrees to endorse the Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2019-2029 to inform and support its work with the arts, cultural and heritage sectors in the county.

Alternative options

1. Cabinet could choose not to endorse the Cultural Strategy. This could have a limiting impact on future funding bids and also send a negative message to the arts, culture and heritage sector. This may also have a negative effect on the reputation of the council amongst the arts, culture and heritage sector both in Herefordshire and more widely. Failure to endorse the Cultural Strategy may also lead to missed opportunities to support wider growth and development in other sectors such as tourism and local creative industries.

Key considerations

2. The council has been an active member of the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership for a number of years.
3. Through its membership of the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership and support for other projects such as Herefordshire's A Great Place, the council has had a central role in the development of the Cultural Strategy.
4. The strategy has five priority objectives. These are Herefordshire as a Great Place providing a resilient cultural infrastructure supporting people who live work and visit the county; listening to children and young people and connecting them to creativity and culture; building and supporting vibrant and creative economies; ensuring the arts and culture are available to everyone; and raising Herefordshire's national and international profile through cultural tourism.
5. Each of these priorities align with and support the council's wider social, economic and cultural priorities as outlined in the Herefordshire Council County Plan 2020-2024.
6. Endorsement of the strategy will provide extra support for potential funding bids to promote investment in creative skills and talent.
7. Endorsement of the strategy will complement the forthcoming report on 'Developing Cultural Places and Spaces in Hereford City'. This report has been commissioned by the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership.
8. Hereford has secured a place in the Government's Towns Fund programme which brings the opportunity to secure up to £25m in funding. One of the strands in the programme is arts, culture and heritage. Endorsement of the strategy would strengthen any future funding bids to support arts, culture and heritage in the city.
9. In endorsing the Cultural Strategy, council supports the opportunities this presents for encouraging further development of cultural activity that interacts positively with the natural environment, as well as providing a framework for those operating in the cultural sector to review further their carbon footprint.
10. Following the development of the Cultural Strategy, Arts Council England has awarded Herefordshire Cultural Partnership £20,000 to establish a Cultural Compact for the county. The council's commitment to Herefordshire Cultural Partnership and its support since 2017 for the Herefordshire's A Great Place programme and its part in the development of the Cultural Strategy was identified in the bid for this funding. The Cultural Compact

Project will run from October 2020-December 2021 and will be managed by the Rural Media Company on behalf of Herefordshire Cultural Partnership. As well as developing a three year business and investment plan to deliver the Cultural Strategy's priority objectives between 2022 and 2025, it will also support capital investment schemes such as the Towns Fund bid in Hereford and the Heritage Action Zone in Leominster. The Compact will also address issues around digital connectivity and inclusion, health and well-being, equality and diversity. Endorsement by the council of the strategy will be another indication of commitment to involvement in and support for this work.

Community impact

11. Endorsement of the Cultural Strategy would evidence the message contained in the Herefordshire Council County Plan 2020-2024 which places art and culture at the centre of the Council's plans for Herefordshire. Within this plan, there is a stated commitment to working with the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership to ensure that Herefordshire continues to build on our many strengths and successes.

Environmental Impact

12. The council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
13. Whilst endorsing the Cultural Strategy will have minimal environmental impact, consideration will be made to minimise resource use in line with the Council's environmental Policy through avoiding the use of paper and printing and by officers using webex or active travel methods to attend meetings wherever possible.

Equality Duty

14. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
15. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
16. The Cultural Strategy takes a positive view of equality with several examples included in the document. In the overview to the 'What do we mean by culture?' section on page 6,

the strategy recognises ‘the need to increase participation and promote inclusion in cultural and creative activity’

17. One of the main strands of the Cultural Strategy is Cultural Democracy, emphasising that the arts and culture are for everyone. One action listed is to ‘Address barriers to participation and improve access to arts and cultural experiences’
18. Inclusion and diversity is one of the five cross-cutting themes of the Cultural Strategy as identified on page 26 of the document. This will be used as criteria for evaluating and developing projects by the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership. Specifically, this will provide support for organisations to develop creative opportunities for individuals and groups who experience isolation or discrimination.
19. The Cultural Strategy references Herefordshire Council strategic documents including ‘Herefordshire’s Children and Young People’s Plan’ and ‘Herefordshire Health and Well Being Strategy: Be well, keep well, live well. Endorsement of the Cultural Strategy will provide an opportunity to link in with these strategic documents and develop opportunities to work with Public Health.
20. Endorsing the Cultural Strategy would demonstrate that Herefordshire Council takes its Equality Duty seriously by supporting the above points and would provide a connection between the Cultural Strategy and the Herefordshire Council strategic documents mentioned.

Resource implications

21. Endorsement of the Cultural Strategy has no direct implications on resources.

Legal implications

22. There are no direct legal implications in endorsing the Cultural Strategy.

Risk management

23. No risks have been identified in endorsing the Cultural Strategy.

Consultees

24. No formal consultation has been required for this decision but positive discussions have taken place with Arts Council England and organisations represented on the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership. Consequently, there is a consensus that endorsement of the Cultural Strategy by council would be a progressive step for arts, culture and heritage in the county.

Appendices

Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2019-2029

Background papers

None

HERE FORD SHIRE

Cultural Strategy 2019–2029

‘Great places are places of anchorage with a sense of stability, places of possibility, places of connection, of learning and of inspiration.’

— Charles Landry, 2016



Welcome **4**

1

INTRODUCTION

What do we mean by culture?
And why do we need a cultural strategy? **8**

Overview **9**

2

VISION & PRIORITIES

Our vision **14**

Our priority objectives:

Priority one: Great Place **17**

Priority two: Children & Young People **18**

Priority three: Creative Economy **19**

Priority four: Cultural Democracy **20**

Priority five: Cultural Tourism **21**

3

MAKING IT HAPPEN

2019/20 Action Plan **24**

Cross-cutting themes **26**

Delivery **27**

Herefordshire Cultural Partnership **27**

4

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

Policy references **31**

WELCOME



**Culture is the
key to what makes
Herefordshire the
wonderful county that it is.**

Successful counties are not just those that are economically sustainable. Their success is grounded in their high quality of life, their distinctive cultural identity, and their creative and entrepreneurial vibrancy.



Bromyard Speed Festival

Herefordshire is the fourth most sparsely populated county in England and yet remarkably compact with five historic market towns equidistant from Hereford City, creating not only virtual but physical ‘hub and spoke’ opportunities. Together with its varied and dramatic landscape, its historic buildings, agricultural heritage, and its nationally recognised black and white villages the county boasts a unique sense of place.

Culture is the key to what makes Herefordshire the wonderful county that it is, reflecting and communicating its distinctiveness and uniqueness. Engagement in cultural activity is a vital ingredient in the life of our community and the region as a whole, and plays an important part in enhancing the civic pride of our county.

Today Herefordshire has a rapidly growing variety of arts and cultural activity, an energetic music and festival scene, a thriving community of artists and craftspeople, a distinctive and in some senses unique food and drink culture, and vastly unexploited potential for a visitor

economy based on the county’s natural beauty and cultural heritage. The Government’s Industrial Strategy singles out the creative industries as being key to the UK’s growth, and notes that the sector is typified by small and micro-businesses. With its rapidly growing range of creative SMEs from artists to craft cider producers to digi-tech entrepreneurs, Herefordshire is well placed to benefit from the Government’s stated desire to support the growth of this sector.

This Cultural Strategy has been produced by Herefordshire Cultural Partnership (HCP), which comprises the county’s key cultural organisations, Herefordshire Council, the local business community, and a wide range of arts and heritage groups from across the area. The strategy has been informed by in-depth local consultation, a three-month online survey, an Arts Council funded consultancy, and research into national and international good practice.

We heartily invite you to work with us to make Herefordshire a great place to live, work and visit.



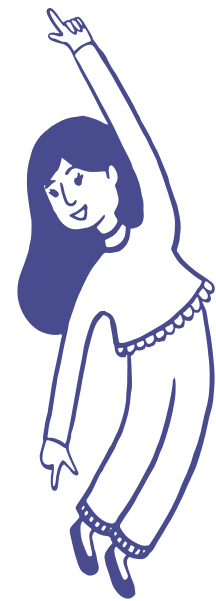
2Faced Dance
Photo credit: Luke Evans



1

INTRODUCTION

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY CULTURE? & WHY DO WE NEED A CULTURAL STRATEGY?



The Garrick Singers, a collaboration between The Courtyard Centre for The Arts, The Music Pool in Hereford and the community.

Successful areas are recognised by their quality of life, by strong communities, their creative vibrancy, and cultural identity, all of which underpins an area's economic performance and national and international standing.

Culture is taken to be the broad framework that defines how people live and that which gives their lives value and meaning. It encompasses creativity, imagination, ambition, joy and wonder, and is normally though not necessarily expressed through creative activities and institutions.

The Herefordshire Cultural Strategy focuses on arts and heritage and includes a wide range of activity: performing arts, literature, music, crafts, visual and digital arts, photography, design, architecture, fashion along with our creative businesses, and the buildings and facilities where we access culture – museums, arts centres, theatres, churches, village halls, cinemas, libraries, archives, galleries. We include too our wonderful natural environment, gastronomy, and the creative activities that take place in our open spaces.

Although we are not treating culture so broadly as to include shelter, health, education, sport, nutrition

or social welfare, culture is now recognised as an essential and powerful basis for their effective provision and enhancement.

This strategy seeks to identify, expand and make more accessible the range of opportunities for residents and visitors to Herefordshire to experience and enjoy the arts and heritage that surround them. It is a means by which a wide range of relevant partners – individuals, organisations, businesses and institutions – can work together to achieve outcomes that will improve the lives and prospects of our communities, and enhance a sense of place and identity through increased awareness of our heritage.

The Cultural Strategy runs with the grain of other county strategic plans including Herefordshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy; Invest Herefordshire; Children and Young People's Plan etc. Importantly it provides the basis for planning and undertaking ambitious actions to bring about change, and the means for effecting that change through collaborative working, bids for funding, planning and organisation.

OVERVIEW

In the text, “we” stands for all of us – individuals and organisations in the voluntary sector, the business sector, funders, strategic and elected bodies.

Herefordshire’s UK City of Culture 2021 bid confirmed what most Herefordians already know – that Herefordshire’s cultural ecology comprises a remarkable and rich range of arts and heritage activity, creative business, buildings, organisations, and outstanding natural assets.

There is undoubtedly much on which to build, however our conversations and research highlighted a wide variety of issues that individuals and groups in the county wanted to see addressed:

- ▶ The need to support and nurture talent, including local artists working across all genres and art forms;
- ▶ The need to build a stronger and more visible creative economy;
- ▶ The need to increase participation and promote inclusion in cultural and creative activity;
- ▶ The need to engage more effectively with children and young people;
- ▶ The need to raise the profile of Hereford and Herefordshire as a great place to live, work and visit.

These are just some of the issues that have informed the priorities laid out in this Cultural Strategy.



Hush Now Hidden Women from Feral Productions
Photo credit: Adam Knight



This Cultural Strategy serves as a starting point from which a carefully managed set of interventions and investments into arts, heritage and culture can be developed. It proposes actions, based upon wide consultation, that have the potential to bring about real change for Herefordshire communities.

Consultation has told us that widening participation in the arts and heritage, including for children and young people, is essential for a healthy and productive society. So too is the planning and investment in creative skills, leadership and management necessary to sustain our cultural institutions. We know that together we must do more in key areas such as tourism and cultural enterprise – visitors to the county bring important revenue streams as do the establishment of new creative businesses. We recognise the huge commercial opportunities that have opened up over the last few years, and the access to new cultural experiences that digital technologies now offer almost everyone. New models of delivery and co-operation could breathe new life and generate new uses for our cultural and civic buildings.

We recognise that we have proposed a wide range of ambitious actions to deliver the vision and outcomes, and not all of them can be achieved at once. However, through collaboration and cross-sector partnerships we are confident that over the coming years delivering against these priorities will be transformational, inspiring and enriching the lives of those who live and work in Herefordshire, and those who visit or seek to settle in the county.

To ensure that the Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2019–29 remains relevant and reflects the views of local communities we will be regularly asking for your input to the following year’s action plan. To widen our consultation and add momentum to the Cultural Strategy, Rural Media is leading on behalf of HCP the Herefordshire’s Great Place project, sponsored by Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England. The Great Place project has launched the ‘Big Conversation’ which aims to enable everyone to shape, grow and celebrate our cultural identity.

THE BIG CONVERSATION COMPRISES...

- ▶ A content rich web platform www.the-shire.co.uk hosting a virtual network and consultation, together with profiling key arts and heritage projects;
- ▶ An online culture data hub offering publicly accessible up to date information on cultural organisations, audiences, issues and trends;
- ▶ An annual culture conference will offer inspiration and ideas, opportunities to hear about progress, best practice from elsewhere in the UK and Europe, and plans for the year ahead;
- ▶ An events and seminar programme bringing together smaller groups to debate and address specific issues and themes.







2

VISION AND PRIORITIES

OUR VISION

For Herefordshire to be a culturally vibrant, prosperous and sought after county in which to live, work and to visit. Hallmarks of the County will be its glorious landscape, its heritage and history, its diverse creative and cultural offer and its sense of ambition.

The Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2019–29 lays out how we can maximise the county’s cultural assets. Our emphasis is on partnership working, talent development, cultural education, participation, creative enterprise, and national and international profile. Reaching new audiences and developing new ways of working to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from involvement in cultural activities.

This strategy places investment in culture at the heart of civic pride, place, health & wellbeing, and economic growth. For it to achieve its vision it is important that the action in this strategy remain flexible and consultative in order to stay fresh and embrace new ideas, people and technologies.

By 2029 we will have worked with our partners to deliver the following five outcomes...

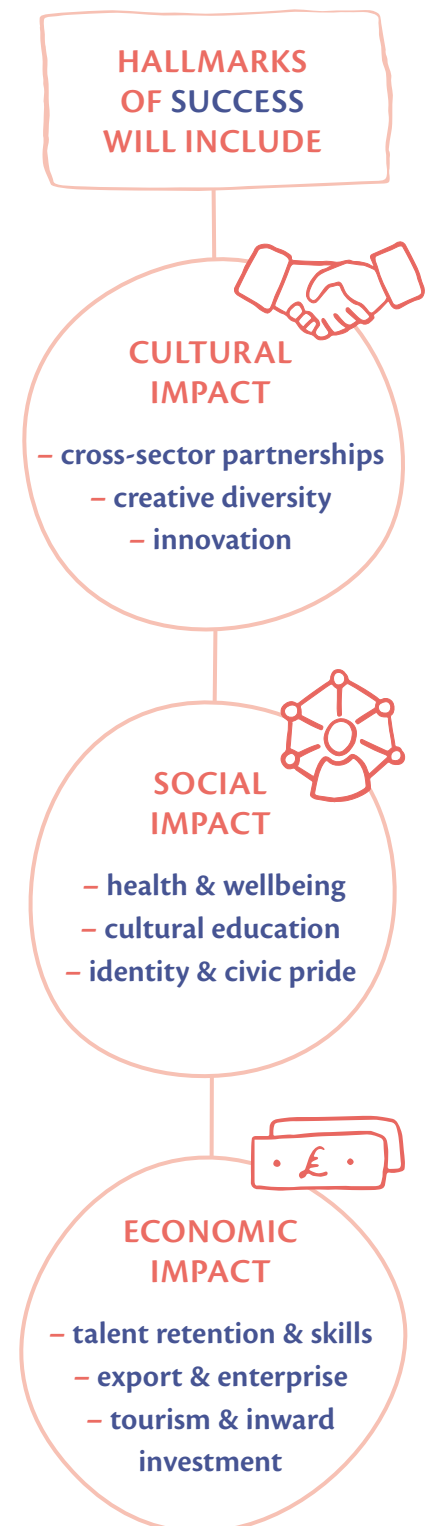
1. Herefordshire will have a connected and sustainable cultural infrastructure underpinned by a creative workforce offering high quality arts and heritage activity and experiences available to all residents and visitors.

2. Herefordshire’s rural communities will have the opportunity to be fully engaged and proactive in shaping, participating and growing the county’s cultural offer.

3. All children and young people in Herefordshire will have access to high quality contemporary cultural education and career development opportunities.

4. Culture and the creative industries will play a distinctive role in contributing to the economic success of the county and region.

5. Herefordshire’s cultural profile and offer will attract national and international audiences, visitors, and new businesses.



OUR PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

1 GREAT PLACE

A resilient cultural infrastructure that makes Herefordshire a great place to live, work and to visit

2 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Listening to children and young people, and connecting them to culture and connectivity

3 CREATIVE ECONOMY

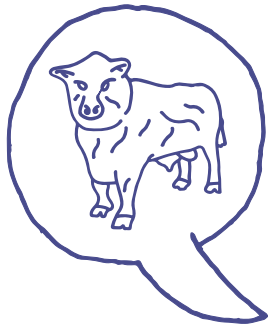
Building and supporting vibrant creative enterprises

4 CULTURAL DEMOCRACY

The arts and heritage are for everyone

5 CULTURAL TOURISM

Raising Herefordshire's national and international profile



PRIORITY 1 GREAT PLACE

A resilient cultural infrastructure that makes Herefordshire a great place to live, work and to visit

The sustainability and development of Herefordshire’s cultural organisations is key to the county’s growth and wellbeing. It will be essential over the coming years that Herefordshire is able to offer a contemporary cultural experience supported by its professional arts and heritage organisations. Arts Council recently confirmed support of over £3,000,000 to the county’s major arts organisations for 2018–22. Further investment through project funding, including by Heritage Lottery Fund, for a range of artists, arts and heritage organisations over the same period will significantly add to this figure.

Herefordshire Council has pledged support for the work of HCP and to the priorities laid out in this Strategy. Key to this collaborative working will be finding innovative ways of sustaining the County’s libraries and heritage assets; and widening their appeal and attracting new audiences.

We will...

- ▶ Establish the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership (governance, membership, capacity) as the lead cultural development body for the county.
- ▶ Strengthen partnership working across the cultural sector, and facilitate innovative links with the private, public and voluntary sectors.
- ▶ Work with Herefordshire Council and other stakeholders to facilitate greater community ownership of assets and spaces for cultural purposes, including creation of a Hereford City cultural quarter.
- ▶ Develop new funding models and financial instruments to support Herefordshire’s cultural infrastructure.
- ▶ Support cultural tourism by promoting a programme of festivals, events and exhibitions distinguished by innovation and diversity that enhances the rural experience.
- ▶ Strengthen digital communications about culture across the County including new approaches to the use of cultural data.





PRIORITY 2

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Listening to children and young people, and connecting them to culture and connectivity

Cultural and creative learning is a vital part of any education. It gives children and young people the confidence and capability that they will need in a world and economy that depends upon the skills that it provides. It is a basic building block in building the future of the UK.

However, according to a 2018 BBC survey creative arts subjects are being cut back in many secondary schools in England. Schools reported that the increased emphasis on core academic subjects, together with funding pressures, were the most common reasons for cutting back on resources for creative subjects.

Other factors can impact on young people failing to engage, or be excited and challenged by for example a performance, or acquisition of new digital creative skills, including socio-economic background, mental health, or caring responsibilities. In Herefordshire rural isolation can also be a major inhibitor to participation.

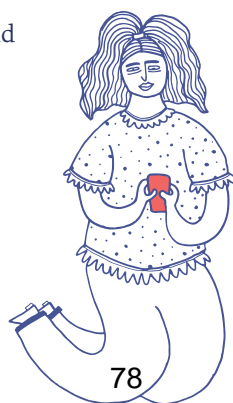
The Cultural Strategy aims to increase the opportunities for children and young people within formal and informal education settings to take part in a wide range of accessible arts and heritage activities, and to find their creative voice.

Hereford College of Arts and Hereford Sixth Form College are exemplary hubs of creative further and higher education and training, and the county's new university has committed its support to cultural enrichment across the county.

We aim to make a real difference for children and young people, including those who currently have fewer opportunities to experience the richness of the county's diverse arts and cultural resources.

We will...

- ▶ Support strategic initiatives that seek to establish a cultural offer based on shared resources, new partnerships and place-making activities that give children and young people the chance to visit; experience and participate in high quality arts and heritage activity.
- ▶ Work closely with schools and colleges through project co-production and curriculum development to attract and support a diverse range of students.
- ▶ Support and train young people to lead the development of their own cultural events.
- ▶ Support children & young people to develop their talent and participation by investing in places where they can explore, rehearse, and create new work and learn new skills.
- ▶ Strengthen relationships with Arts Council's Specialist Support Organisations (SSO) including Arts Connect, and promote participation in Arts Council's Cultural Education; Arts Award, and Arts Mark programmes.
- ▶ Broker relationships with national cultural organisations in order to bring inspirational projects, performances, and exhibitions to the county.
- ▶ Maximise children and young people's engagement and participation in culture through curation, production and distribution of digital content.





PRIORITY 3

CREATIVE ECONOMY

Building and supporting vibrant creative enterprises

The UK has one of the largest, most successful and fastest growing creative industries sectors in the world; based on a long tradition of cultural expression through music, literature and the performing and visual arts; now includes advertising, architecture, design, publishing and fashion industries, and the film, media and video gaming sectors.

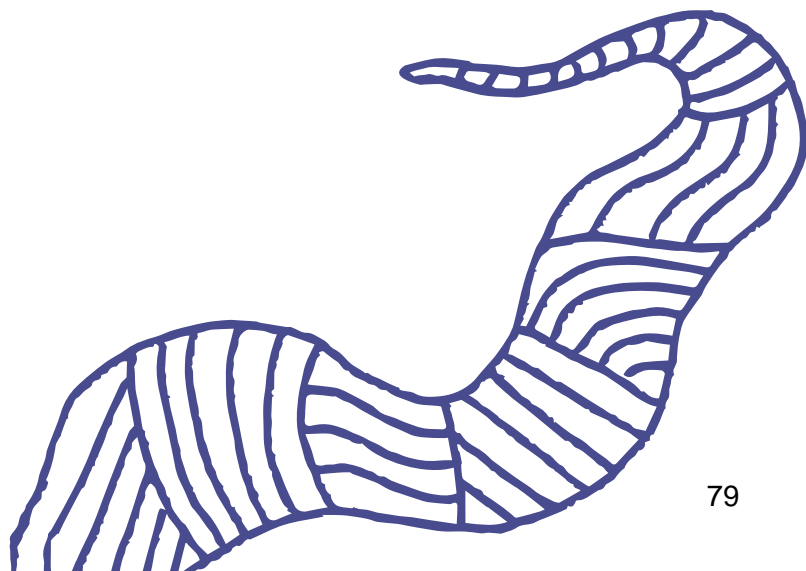
These new creative businesses are well suited to playing a key role in growing Herefordshire's economy and social vibrancy. They are mainly high value micro businesses, have minimal impact upon the natural environment, attract and retain young talent, and motivate employers to up-skill and invest in new technology.

Furthermore, research shows that creative jobs support all other economic sectors; will be more resistant to automation; and that those working in creative jobs have higher levels of wellbeing.

Outcomes from the Cultural Strategy will be a stronger and a more visible creative economy supported by the development and retention of creative and entrepreneurial talent.

We will...

- ▶ Ensure that development of creative industries inform economic policy and priorities including of Herefordshire Council, Marches LEP and Midlands Engine.
- ▶ Work closely with Herefordshire Business Board and Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber to map local creative businesses, understand better their needs, and agree a common vision for their support and promotion.
- ▶ Create more pathways into training in arts, heritage and culture, and career opportunities in the broader creative and knowledge economy.
- ▶ Increase the scale and diversity of the creative workforce in Herefordshire.
- ▶ Support the regeneration of underused buildings to provide 21st Century offices, studios, exhibition and meeting spaces for cultural entrepreneurs, cultural production and fabrication.
- ▶ Establish a county-wide network for artists and cultural organisations to collaborate and develop new enterprises, products and services.
- ▶ Create a 'business booster' network to provide access to high quality advice for start-ups and small enterprises on exporting, intellectual property (IP) and access to finance.





PRIORITY 4

CULTURAL DEMOCRACY

The arts and heritage are for everyone

Culture gives people a sense of belonging within our towns and villages. A broad range of human creativity that is in some shape or form about 'making art' takes place outside the professional arts or creative industries. This strategy recognises the vital importance of publicly supported arts, heritage and cultural activity, but understands well that everyday creative activity in communities is often overlooked. In Herefordshire this activity takes very many forms: choirs, writing groups, photography clubs, local festivals, weaving and painting classes, play-schemes, local history talks, etc.

The term Cultural Democracy describes an approach to arts and culture that actively engages everyone in deciding what counts as culture, where it happens, who makes it, and who experiences it. This strategy will ensure that the thousands of people in Herefordshire that are participating in creative activity as a regular part of their lives are recognised and better supported.

The digital revolution has increased levels of participation in informal cultural and creative activity. It has created new networks and forms of interaction, transformed the production and distribution of cultural content and allowed new forms of arts and culture to emerge.

It is clear that for local people to celebrate and strengthen their communities through creative and cultural activity they require places to meet, skills, connections and funding. Through new engagement initiatives, training and digital tools we will increase participation in arts and heritage, and promote inclusion in cultural and creative activity.

We will...

- ▶ Strengthen the connections and networks within and between local communities through highlighting informal arts and heritage activity on the web platform www.the-shire.co.uk.
- ▶ Support and promote the value of inter-generational initiatives that connect young artists with the knowledge, contacts and resources of older residents.
- ▶ Address barriers to participation and improve access to arts and cultural experiences through programmes such as Herefordshire's a Great Place.
- ▶ Raise awareness and understanding of the social, health and economic value of local arts and heritage activity in rural areas within local & national policy and among donors and investors.
- ▶ Provide access to information, artist networks, and resources for use by community groups to enhance community events and attract visitors.
- ▶ Attract new investment for locally driven place-based activity that demonstrates local skills and knowledge, and the rich cultural assets of our county.



PRIORITY 5

CULTURAL TOURISM



Raising Herefordshire's national and international profile

Herefordshire's outstanding natural beauty, its picturesque market towns and villages, its rural and agricultural heritage, its location and easy access from major cities of Birmingham, Bristol and Cardiff all create the potential for the county to become a prime visitor destination. While tourism is vitally important to the County's economy, generating £450m from over 5 million visitors each year and sustaining the equivalent of 7,000 full time jobs, cultural tourism only accounts for 1% of visitor activity.

The Herefordshire Destination Plan 2018–22 outlines a vision for the future for tourism in the county, and a set of priorities, together with actions and timeframes by which achieve the anticipated outcomes. Through working closely with the lead Destination Management Organisation (DMO) and Herefordshire Council, the Cultural Strategy seeks to support the growth of cultural tourism in the county.

The largest medieval map of the known world, the Hereford Mappa Mundi attracts visitors from across the globe. Already festivals and events such as Ledbury Poetry Festival, Borderlines Film Festival, and Three Choirs Festival attract national and international visitors. In March and April 2018 the cascade of individual ceramic poppies that formed the Weeping Window installation at Hereford Cathedral attracted 190,000 visitors. To name just a few creative companies with strong international links: 2-Faced Dance Company and Fetch Theatre regularly tour work into Europe and the Far East. It is by development of high profile events and product, and improved promotion of such cultural assets and product that Herefordshire will find its rightful place on the national and international map.



We will...

- ▶ Encourage communication between cultural organisations and the responsible body for destination management and marketing.
- ▶ Work collaboratively with the Destination Management Partnership to extend Herefordshire's engagement with national and international visitors.
- ▶ Enhance the rural experience by effective digital marketing of festivals, events and exhibitions.
- ▶ Build upon the reach of Herefordshire's cultural organisations to highlight the investment potential and attractions of the county.
- ▶ Encourage and support national and international working in our creative industries through knowledge events and incentivised schemes.
- ▶ In partnership with the DMO and other strategic bodies promote Herefordshire's cultural attractions nationally and internationally.
- ▶ Support artists and content producers to create 'visitor pathways' that powerfully reveal Herefordshire's deep rural tangible and intangible heritage, thereby adding momentum to the county's ambition for cultural tourism.
- ▶ Identify and attract investment to support international co-commissions, touring and residencies with high profile artists.



Louis Parker-Evans and Sam Buswell in *What The Moon Saw*, performed by 2Faced Dance
Photo credit: Luke Evans



3

MAKING IT HAPPEN

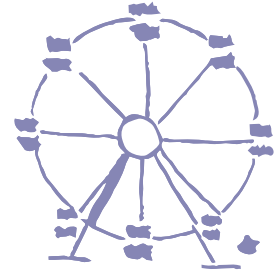
2019/20 ACTION PLAN

April

Launch HCP website
www.the-shire.co.uk.

May

Herefordshire Cultural Strategy is available on www.the-shire.co.uk & is shared across the region.



2019

June

Create / Fuel, a one-day conference connects and inspires young creatives. This is the 2nd Pride of Place conference supported by The Elmley Foundation.

Establish a youth collective with a passion for cultural events.

July

Great Place project funds five creative projects that bring digital technology, arts, heritage and communities together through Hidden Gems grant scheme.

September

Launch Business + Culture Working Together campaign and seminars with H&W Chamber of Commerce.

Support the Creative Connections Herefordshire network to develop a long term plan & goals.

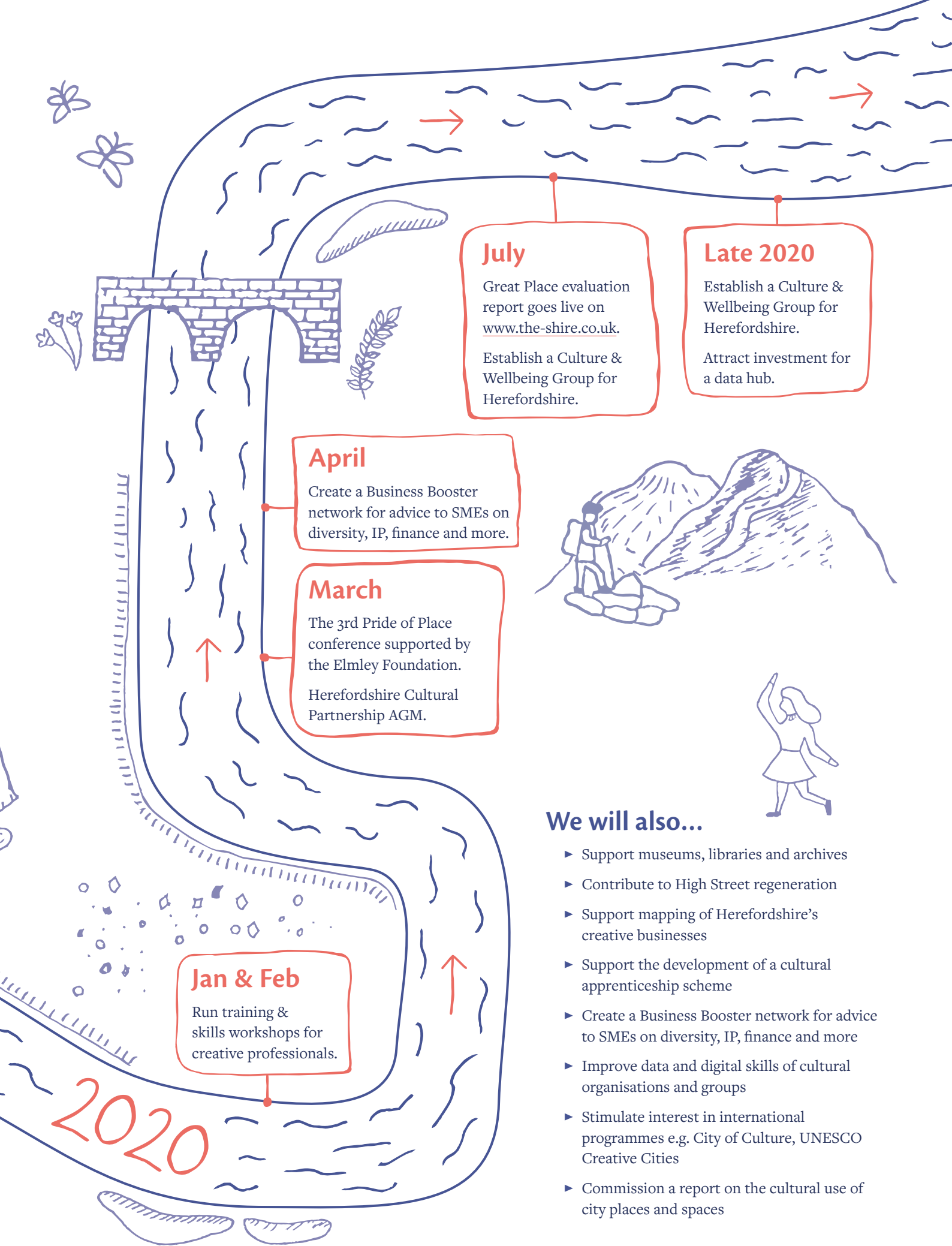
Launch Directories of festivals, events & exhibitions on www.the-shire.co.uk.

December

Appoint independent chair + new board members to Herefordshire Cultural Partnership.

Late 2019

Represent creative industries on regional cultural panels.



July

Great Place evaluation report goes live on www.the-shire.co.uk.

Establish a Culture & Wellbeing Group for Herefordshire.

Late 2020

Establish a Culture & Wellbeing Group for Herefordshire.

Attract investment for a data hub.

April

Create a Business Booster network for advice to SMEs on diversity, IP, finance and more.

March

The 3rd Pride of Place conference supported by the Elmley Foundation.

Herefordshire Cultural Partnership AGM.

Jan & Feb

Run training & skills workshops for creative professionals.



We will also...

- ▶ Support museums, libraries and archives
- ▶ Contribute to High Street regeneration
- ▶ Support mapping of Herefordshire's creative businesses
- ▶ Support the development of a cultural apprenticeship scheme
- ▶ Create a Business Booster network for advice to SMEs on diversity, IP, finance and more
- ▶ Improve data and digital skills of cultural organisations and groups
- ▶ Stimulate interest in international programmes e.g. City of Culture, UNESCO Creative Cities
- ▶ Commission a report on the cultural use of city places and spaces

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

A number of cross-cutting themes that align closely with local and national policies will be mapped on to our strategic priorities, and will be used as criteria for evaluating and developing projects and activities.



PARTNERSHIP WORKING

1. Effective collaborative working, information sharing and action is the fundamental key to making best use of resources, taking in both public and private sector partners. The Herefordshire Cultural Partnership will play a critical role in fostering greater partnership working.



DIGITAL INNOVATION

2. Prosperity and the development of new and digital technologies will be the key to attracting and retaining people in Herefordshire, and in turn providing support for local cultural organisations and the activities that they could develop. Mapping of existing provision and digital capability and activity will be key to evidencing the social and economic value of the cultural sector to the County.



HEALTH & WELLBEING

3. Recognise that exciting and engaging cultural activities and experiences support better lives. We will encourage and support cultural organisations to prioritise in their planning and programming health and wellbeing outcomes.



INCLUSION & DIVERSITY

4. Support for organisations to develop creative opportunities for individuals and groups who experience isolation or discrimination, including those with less opportunity to participate due to geographical isolation and/or socio-economic circumstance.



LIFELONG LEARNING

5. For cultural activities in all forms to be a catalyst for learning at any age. Increasing higher and further education places, along with vocational training such as cultural apprenticeships will be integral to the county's economic and cultural development.



Borderlines Film Festival's gala opening
Photo credit: Matthew Evans

DELIVERY

Key to success will be forming new cross-sector partnerships and coalitions, and demonstrating the value of culture to strengthening the health and wellbeing of our communities, attracting and retaining talent, and delivering new investment and economic growth.

Updates of progress and activity will be published on the new Herefordshire culture website www.the-shire.co.uk along with useful resources related to our vision and strategic priorities.

HEREFORDSHIRE CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Herefordshire Cultural Partnership (HCP), which comprises members of the county's cultural organisations, Herefordshire Council and business community, has produced the Herefordshire Cultural Strategy on behalf of the whole county, and will be responsible for driving the strategy forward. HCP's role is to:

- ▶ Champion Herefordshire's cultural strategy and cultural ambition
 - ▶ Oversee the development and delivery of the cultural strategy, producing an annual action plan with specific objectives and targets
 - ▶ Support strategic programmes and identify key initiatives to deliver the Cultural Strategy action plan
- ▶ Take collective responsibility for ensuring that cultural funding is allocated properly and against agreed priorities
 - ▶ Develop a shared framework for monitoring performance and progress against key targets and outcomes
 - ▶ Monitor activity against the Cultural Strategy's Strategic Objectives and Key Actions and publish an annual review
 - ▶ Examine and respond to local, regional, national and international environments and policies to ensure that the Cultural Strategy's vision and objectives remain valid





Yinka Shonibare CBE's *Creatures of the Mappa-Mundi*. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery. Meadow Arts commission, 2018. Photo credit: Stefan Handy



4

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

- ▶ Strategic policy context for cultural development in Herefordshire – see overleaf
- ▶ About Herefordshire (social & economic profile, and cultural assets) – see www.the-shire.co.uk/about
- ▶ Herefordshire Cultural Partnership Board Members – see www.the-shire.co.uk/herefordshireculturalpartnership
- ▶ Action Plan 2019 (Yr1) & 2020–21 (Yrs2&3) – download at www.the-shire.co.uk/herefordshireculturalpartnership





POLICY REFERENCES...

- ▶ [Industrial Strategy: building a Britain fit for the future \(White Paper\)](#)
- ▶ [Independent Review of the Creative Industries](#)
- ▶ [Partner, Investor, Champion: An introduction to the Arts Council's role in place-making \(Arts Council England\)](#)
- ▶ [Herefordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy Be Well, Keep Well, Live Well \(Herefordshire Council\)](#)
- ▶ [Invest Herefordshire Herefordshire's Economic Vision \(Herefordshire Council\)](#)
- ▶ [Herefordshire's Children and Young People's Plan: Giving children and young people a great start in life \(Herefordshire Council\)](#)
- ▶ [National Portfolio Organisations 2018–20 \(Arts Council England, How we invest public money\)](#)
- ▶ [Basis for Cultural Education Guide for the future of school-based and extracurricular cultural education](#)
- ▶ [A blueprint for growth. Creative Industries Federation response to the government's consultation: 'Building our Industrial Strategy'](#)
- ▶ [Experimental Culture: A horizon scan for the arts and culture sector \(NESTA\)](#)
- ▶ [Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth The 2015 Report by the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value](#)
- ▶ [Cultural Democracy In Practice by 64 Million Artists with Arts Council England](#)
- ▶ [DCMS: Culture is Digital](#)
- ▶ [Rural Herefordshire Destination Plan 2018–22](#)

A full list and links to the above policies and documents which inform the Herefordshire Cultural Strategy 2019–29 can be found online at www.the-shire.co.uk/herfordshireculturalstrategy.

Read more at www.the-shire.co.uk.

Get in touch...

#HfdsCulture

**Illustrations by 2019 Hereford
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