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GOHEBIAETH YN DILYN CYFARFOD Y PWYLLGOR

Pwyllgor PWYLLGOR CRAFFU PLANT A PHOBL IFANC

Dyddiad ac amser y cyfarfod DYDD MAWRTH, 5 RHAGFYR 2023, 4.30 PM

Gweler isod gohebiaeth anfon gan Gadeirydd y Pwyllgor ar ôl y cyfarfod , ynghyd ag unrhyw ymatebion a gafwyd

Am unrhyw fanylion pellach, cysylltwch â scrutinyviewpoints@caerdydd.gov.uk

11 **Mod Gov Corespondence following Committee Meeting**(*Tudalennau 3 - 24*)

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn fwriadol

Date: 16 January 2024

My Ref: CYP/SPR_Dec23



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Councillor Ash Lister
Cabinet Member for Social Services (Children's)
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Ash,

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5 DECEMBER 2023 – SCHOOLS PANDEMIC RECOVERY UPDATE

Please accept my thanks on behalf of the Committee for attending the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to provide us with the opportunity to receive Quarter 2 Children's Services performance. Please pass on my thanks to Deborah Driffield.

The comments, observations and recommendations below were captured during the Committee's discussion at the Way Forward. Please note that additional comments on the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative Annual Report is also included in this letter, which was discussed during the "Committee Business" Agenda Item.

Staff Vacancies and Sickness Absence

The Committee wishes to commend the Service in vacancy rates being below target at Q2. Members were pleased to receive the news of stability within the workforce and will continue to support and champion you in this area.

The Committee asked for reasons behind sickness absence in the Service, and whether there were strategies to improve this. Members were satisfied with the response given in relation to this, but will continue to monitor closely in quarterly reports.

Child Protection Register

Members welcome the improvements in relation to the Child Protection Register (CPR). Members heard that an audit/deep dive into increases around re-registration, and therefore **request** details of the audit, including timelines, so that we can receive the output from this review in due course.

Placements

Members asked a question relating to the Courts process in relation to kinship care and were satisfied with the response that systems were in place and that there is robust support against Teams in this area.

Accommodation Strategy

Members enquired about the funding of the accommodation strategy and the impact of the removal of profit from care. Members heard that there was a need to build expertise in relation to commercial sector and third sector activities, via a scoping exercise. At our meeting in May 2024, we will be looking at the effectiveness of innovations introduced in Children's Services, and therefore **request** that an update in this area be provided at this meeting.

Challenges and Pressures

Members asked for an update on the continued pressures faced by the Service, and whether these were in certain areas, such as workforce, performance management, ability to share best practice etc. Members were satisfied with responses received including progress in relation to the Academy; the challenges of a "new" workforce; the importance of partnership working; the change in culture and a move towards collecting more qualitative data and information; and the complexity of cases continuing to be a key challenge. Members also heard about a Front Door Review and would therefore **request** that the output of this review be included in the update to CYPSC in May 2024.

We also asked questions in relation to S.47 and well-being assessments. Whilst we welcome the improvements, we note that results are still below target. We therefore **request** that an update be provided on this issue, to include some narrative on how the Service intends to bring these assessments in line with targets.

Care Leavers

Members asked questions in relation to 23 care leavers not being allocated Personal Advisors; and what challenge that presented. In addition, Members also enquired about the number of care leavers being NEETS after a year. Members heard that

Personal Advisors had been moved into Adult Services. Therefore, we **request** that the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Director of Adult Services (copied into this letter) provide a review/report on this issue, so that we can be assured that young care leavers are being appropriately supported during the transition period in this area.

Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative Report 2022/23

The Committee welcomed the VVC Annual Report for 2022/23. Given the increasing budget pressures going forward, Members **request** some narrative on the likely challenges and impact on the VVC in 2024/25.

To **recap**, we are requesting:

1. Agreement to attend the May CYPSC meeting to update Members on the following:
 - Accommodation Strategy – building expertise in relation to commercial sector and third sector activities
 - Front Door Review - the output of this review.
2. Receive an update in relation to S.47 and well-being assessments in response to this letter. This should include some narrative on how the Service intends to bring these assessments in line with targets.
3. Receive a report from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services and the Director of Adult Services on the Personal Advisor Service in order to provide assurances that young care leavers are being appropriately supported during the transition period in this area.
4. Provide details of the audit/deep dive into increases in CPR re-registrations, which should include timelines, so that we can receive the output from this review in due course.
5. A narrative on the likely challenges and impact of budget pressures are likely to have on the VVC in 2024/25.

There are no formal recommendations arising from this letter.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN

Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: CYPSC Members
Sarah McGill – Corporate Director and Director of Social Services
Deborah Driffield – Director of Social Services
Cllr Norma Mackie – Cabinet Member for Social Services (Adults)
Jane Thomas – Director of Adults, Housing & Communities
Angela Harris - Regional Adoption Manager, VVC
Tim Gordon and Jeremy Rhys – Media and Comms

Date: 16 January 2024

My Ref: CYP/SPR_Dec23



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Councillor Sarah Merry
Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Sarah,

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5 DECEMBER 2023 –
SCHOOLS PANDEMIC RECOVERY UPDATE**

Please accept my thanks on behalf of the Committee for attending the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to provide us with the opportunity to receive an update presentation on the Schools Pandemic Recovery. Please pass on my thanks to Melanie Godfrey; Phil Norton; and Jennie Hughes.

The comments, observations and recommendations below were captured during the Committee's discussion at the Way Forward.

UNICEF Child Friendly City Accreditation

The Committee wishes to pass on its congratulations to yourself, Cabinet colleagues and officers on the Council being the first City in the UK to be awarded Child Friendly City status. We would be very interested in receiving a briefing on this issue some time in the future and will liaise with you and the Director accordingly to arrange this.

General Comment

Due to the impending joint inspection which includes Education & Lifelong Learning, we agreed that the December meeting be an update from the Council on issues relating to Schools Pandemic Recovery, with only points of clarification and requests for more information being sought during the Q&A session. It has been agreed that a meeting of this Scrutiny Committee on the 12th March 2024 will be dedicated to this issue, where Members will receive a more detailed update from a range of witnesses.

Therefore, this letter highlights issues raised by Members at the meeting, with requests for further information to be provided either:

- In response to this letter; or
- At the meeting on the 12th of March 2024.

Governance

Throughout the presentation and the Q&A session, Members heard about the Efficiency Board; School Budget Forum; Children & Young People Safeguarding and Recovery Board; Fresh Start Panel etc. At its meeting on the 12 March 2024, the Committee **requests** that it be provided with a map/chart of the range of groups; how the groups work together; and who is involved in each group.

Electively Home Educated (EHE) Pupils

A number of questions on this issue was raised by Members. This included:

- Legislation around EHE – particularly the one visit per year
- Views on the challenges EHE presents to schools and the LEA, including enforcement
- Whether a Cardiff specific analysis had been undertaken relating to the numbers of pupils known to be EHE; those identified as having additional learning needs; any particular areas of the city affected etc.
- Whether there was a bank of tutors to provide support for EHE children
- Challenges of returning EHE pupils to school, particularly to those schools which have spaces and their own challenges
- EHE Team capacity

Members agreed that they would **request** to receive further information on EHE at the 12th March meeting of this Committee, including detailed information on the numbers of pupils known to be EHE; those identified as having additional learning needs; and any particular areas of the city affected (shown on a map).

Attendance

At the meeting, a study undertaken by Public Health Wales was referred to. Members would **request** that a copy (or link) of the report be provided to the Committee in response to this letter.

Members also **request** that further details of school attendance be provided at the 12 March meeting.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

Members asked a number of questions around ALN at the meeting. This included:

- The process and timelines of the process
- Monitoring and tracking of the process
- Details of ALN placements, and how ALN placements had been allocated

Members **request** that further details of the above be provided at the March meeting.

Members were also informed that an Estyn report on ALN was available. Therefore, Members **request** that a copy of the report (or a link to it) be provided in response to this letter.

Strategic Recovery Plan

At a previous meeting, Members requested that they be provided with details of a long-term strategic recovery plan for schools and education. Members have yet to receive this, and therefore request that this be provided at the earliest opportunity, and that a timeframe be provided in response to this letter.

School Budgets and Finances

Members asked a number of questions relating to financial pressures facing schools, particularly the one third of schools already in deficit. Members were informed that this was currently being monitored by the Schools Budget Forum and would **request** that details of this be provided at the March 2024 meeting.

Community Engagement

Members were informed of a Community Engagement Plan, centred around community focussed schools and clusters, and would **request** that further information on the Plan be provided at the March 2024 meeting.

To **recap**, we are requesting:

In response to this letter:

- A copy of the PHW report on **attendance** be provided.
- A copy of the Estyn Report on **ALN** be provided.

- **Strategic Recovery Plan** – a timeframe for the development and implementation of a long-term recovery plan be provided.

At the 12th March 2024 meeting:

- **Governance** - a governance map/chart of the range of groups; how the groups work together; and who is involved in each group be provided.
- **EHE** - receive further information on the numbers of pupils known to be EHE; those identified as having additional learning needs; and any particular areas of the city affected (shown on a map).
- **Attendance** - Members also requested that further details of school attendance be provided at the 12 March meeting.
- **ALN** – further details of the effectiveness of the monitoring and tracking of the process; and details of ALN placements, and how ALN placements had been allocated.
- **School Budgets and Finances** – details of financial pressures, school budgets (including deficits) be provided.
- **Community Engagement Plan** - further information on the Plan be provided at the March 2024 meeting.

There are no formal recommendations arising from this letter.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', written over a light grey rectangular background.

COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN

Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: CYPSC Members
Melanie Godfrey - Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
Suzanne Scarlett (Partnerships & Performance Manager, Education & Lifelong Learning);
Phil Norton (Achievement Leader Targeted Support, Education & Lifelong Learning)
Jennie Hughes – (Senior Achievement Leader Inclusion, Education & Lifelong Learning)

Claire Deguara – Cabinet Support Office
Melanie Jackson – PA to the Deputy Leader
Helen Eager - PA to the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning
Tim Gordon and Jeremy Rhys – Media and Comms
Gavin McArthur – Chair, Governance & Audit Committee

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn fwriadol

**SWYDDFA CYMORTH Y CABINET
CABINET SUPPORT OFFICE**



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Fy Nghyf / My Ref: CE:0046129
Eich Cyf / Your Ref: CYP/SPR_Dec23
Dyddiad / Date: 02 April 2024

Councillor Lee Bridgeman
Chairperson, Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Lee,

Re: Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee – 5 December 2023 – Children’s Services Quarter 2 Performance

Thank you for your letter dated 16th January 2024, on behalf of the members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to you.

Your feedback is once again appreciated and I am pleased to offer the update below for members, as requested.

1. Agreement to attend the May CYPSC meeting to update Members on the following:

- **Accommodation Strategy – building expertise in relation to commercial sector and third sector activities.**
- **Front Door Review - the output of this review.**

I can confirm that we agree to meet to discuss the accommodation strategy and the Front Door review at the May CYPSC meeting.

2. Receive an update in relation to S.47 and well-being assessments in response to this letter. This should include some narrative on how the Service intends to bring these assessments in line with targets.

Improving performance in relation to the timeliness of section 47 investigations has been identified as a key priority for Children’s Services, and this is reflected in its inclusion in the Corporate Plan for 2024-27. Targeted work has resulted in caseloads at Intake & Assessment reducing by 19% (945 in December to 769 in February). The performance huddle process has been refreshed and has played a key role in reducing the number of

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GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg, Saesneg neu'n ddwyieithog. Byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn ôl eich dewis, dim ond i chi roi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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old overdue assessments from 104 in November to 13 in February. Officers will continue to monitor progress closely using Power BI reports as the focus turns from clearing the backlog to improving the timeliness of the current investigations. A target of 60% has been set for the Corporate Plan with step targets of 30% in Q1, 40% in Q2 and 50% in Q3.

3. Receive a report from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services and the Director of Adult Services on the Personal Advisor Service in order to provide assurances that young care leavers are being appropriately supported during the transition period in this area.

As requested, please find attached a report on the Personal Advisor (PA) Service (appendix 1). Although the PA Service has relocated to the Adults, Housing & Communities directorate, I remain the Cabinet Member with portfolio responsibility for this service.

4. Provide details of the audit/deep dive into increases in CPR re-registrations, which should include timelines, so that we can receive the output from this review in due course.

Please find attached a report (appendix 2) which provides details of the Children's Services Thematic Audit as requested.

5. A narrative on the likely challenges and impact of budget pressures are likely to have on the VVC in 2024/25.

The budget pressures and required savings have been discussed and carefully considered by VVC Management Board and Joint Committee since November of 2023. The Joint Committee held in December 2023 deferred agreeing the budget for 2024-25 until the outcome of the budget settlement from Welsh Government was known. An extraordinary meeting of the Joint Committee was held on the 5 February 2024. The meeting considered four options for savings and agreed that for 2024-5 a 5% saving in VVC'S core budget should be made. This equates to a saving of £98,701.

The level of savings required will be more difficult to achieve and the service is now developing a plan to address the best mechanism to achieve these savings. This will involve some reduction in the overall establishment by utilising some posts which will become vacant by April 2024. In addition, the plan will consider whether there are any other elements of the non-pay budget which may be reduced. These elements have been rationalised during this financial year to achieve the 3% savings and wherever possible will be further streamlined to achieve the reduction of budget for 2024-25.

Any reduction in establishment will inevitably impact upon service delivery as the staffing structure within the service has been developed to undertake the range of delegated functions which are the responsibility of VVC. In addition, there is a continuing need to improve VVC's performance in respect of their core functions of placing children in a timely manner, recruiting adopters, and providing adoption support services. The

reduction in staffing will impact upon these core functions and it will be necessary to review our service needs to determine where best to reduce capacity.

During the past year the region has experienced a reduction in the number of adopter enquiries received and therefore the number of those enquirers who go on to be approved as adopters. This may enable VVC to reduce capacity within this arm of the service although this will have an impact if adopter enquiries increase. Over recent years VVC has performed well in terms of the recruitment of adopters and as a result a significant number of children have been placed within the region, thus reducing the reliance upon external placements which incur a fee.

As a service we recognise the constraints placed upon Local Authority budgets and the challenges required to achieve savings. Within this context, it is therefore imperative that we consider carefully where best to reduce the budget whilst also endeavouring to minimise the impact upon service delivery. We will be in a better position to assess impact upon the service once the plan is in place.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ash Lister', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Y Cyngorydd / Councillor Ash Lister
Yr Aelod Cabinet dros Wasanaethau Cymdeithasol (Gwasanaethau Plant)
Cabinet Member for Social Services (Children's Services)

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn fwriadol

BACKGROUND

The PA Service relocated to the Adults, Housing & Communities service area in July 2023, following a review of the PA Team in early 2023. The review found the service to be under increasing pressure, including the growing number of young people coming through the service, increased complex needs of young people, existing high caseload numbers of Personal Advisors, the expectation for Personal Advisors to 'do and be everything' for the young person, the requirement for Personal Advisors to be experts in everything they support their young people with, the increased number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children requiring support, the introduction of Welsh Government's Universal Basic Income Pilot and the challenge of transitioning young people from Childrens Services to Adult Services through to achieving independence.

The Personal Advisor Team has a duty to coordinate the provision of service to ensure the young person's needs are being adequately met, this includes the young person's health and wellbeing, and provision of services accessible to them. **Education, training, and employment**; Pathway plans must have an explicit focus on career planning, taking into account the young person's aspirations, skills, and educational potential. **Financial capabilities and money management** and finally **Immigration status** of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) and former UASC. Planning transition to adulthood for UASC young people is a particularly complex process that needs to address the young people's care needs in the context of wider asylum and immigration legislation and how these needs change over time.

Once a young person turns 18, the Personal Advisor team takes over lead responsibility for the young person; as young adults, the team supports them to make their own decisions and choices by providing them with advice and guidance. Many of the young people open to the PA Team are being supported in three main areas of their lives:

- Helping to prevent homelessness, by assisting to find safe, affordable and suitable accommodation.
- Helping to secure education, training or employment opportunities.
- Helping to manage their money and bills.

ADVICE SERVICE

The review highlighted a clear link between the support being provided by the PA Team, to that of the Advice Service within Adults, Housing & Communities. The Advice Service is made up of three separate areas:

- Housing Advice; the team has dedicated Young Person's Prevention Officers who support young people to remain in their homes through mediation where safe to do so, and carry out homeless assessments, helping to access accommodation through the Young Person's Gateway. Housing Advice also includes the Private Rented Sector team, identifying suitable PRS properties and can financially assist with bond and rent in advance payments. There is also support available through this team for young people who are struggling to meet their rent payments.

- Into Work Advice Service; the Youth Mentoring team provides support to young people who are looking to return to education, get in to training or find employment. There are specific projects which support Care Experienced young people, namely the Bright Start and Bright Futures projects. Bright Start is a paid work experience project where young people are matched with paid placements in an employment sector they are interested in. The Bright Futures project focusses on young person's health and wellbeing, supporting care experienced young people who suffer from anxiety and low self-esteem. Financial support is available through this team to remove barriers to employment and funding for training courses. Where employment is not an option for young people, the team can also secure volunteering opportunities to increase confidence and employability.
- Money Advice Team; the Money Advice Team has a dedicated Young Person's Money Advice Officer who provides complete benefit health checks, ensuring that the person is receiving everything they are entitled to. The Advice Officer is able to help with income maximisation, grants and discounts, debt advice and applying for benefits including Universal Credit, Disability benefits and Personal Independence Payments. The team is also able to support with Food and Fuel Poverty and can access emergency vouchers to support people out of crisis. The team have also been supporting Care Experienced young people who joined up to the Welsh Government's Universal Basic Income Pilot

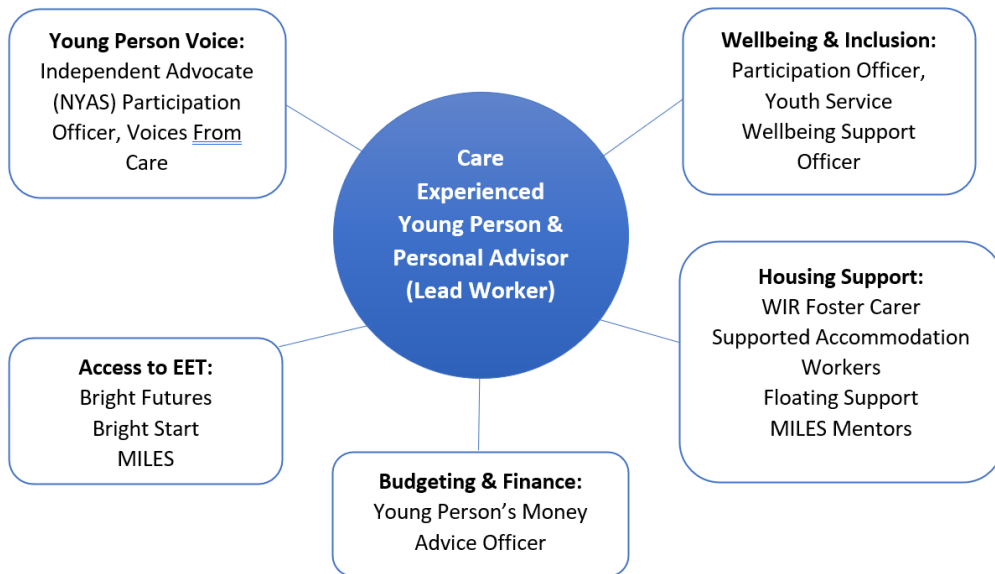
Aligning the PA Team to the Advice Service has helped to create stronger links between to the two areas, relieving pressure on the Personal Advisors to provide each type of advice and the need to be the lead worker for each young person. Removal of duplication of support for young people will allow the PA Team to concentrate on young people with more complex support needs.

REVIEW OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S NEEDS

Since the relocation of the PA Team, a review of all open cases has been carried out and referrals made to each of the Advice Teams for young people to receive expert advice in housing, money and debt and employment and education. This has helped to reduce caseloads of the Personal Advisors, and has allowed them to focus on young people with more complex needs and those needing intensive support. Aligning the service has allowed the newly joined up teams to provide a holistic and cohesive approach of being able to address the needs of the young person with a wrap around of services. The Young Person's Multi-disciplinary Team is also accessed for those young people with more complex needs to prevent homelessness, and Transitions Services can be accessed more readily and prevent delays in the young person accessing Adult Services.

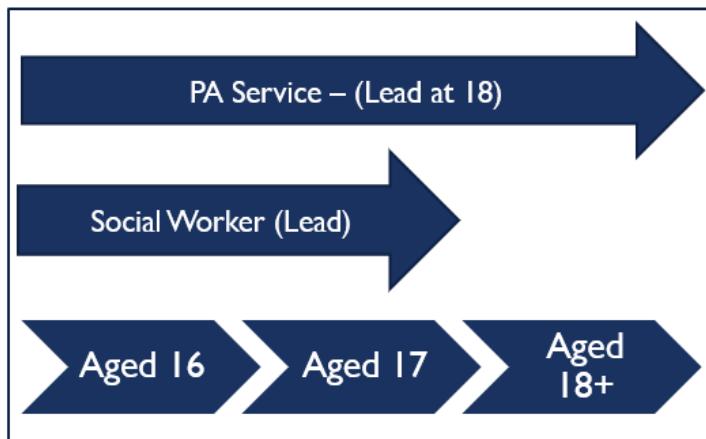
ALLOCATION OF PERSONAL ADVISORS

Advice Team Around the Young Person



This does not include any other support young people might be receiving depending on their individual circumstances, i.e., Adult Social Services, PMHT or Probation, among others.

Putting the Young Person at the centre of support with the Personal Advisors being their advocate and utilising the Advice Services to provide support in key areas, has meant the PA Team has been able to carry out earlier working with young people, allocating pre-18 years old, to support a smoother transition into Adult Services. As of 29th February 2024, over 400 young people are open and allocated to the Personal Advisor Service, with all 17 year old care experienced young people allocated a Personal Advisor. Work will continue to improve referrals to Advice Services and other key partners, with the aim of allocating young people a Personal Advisor at 15 ½ years old, so that support runs in parallel with the Children Services Social Worker, and the Personal Advisor has input in to the young person’s Pathway Plan at the earliest opportunity.



NEET CARE LEAVERS

Statistics compiled by Welsh Government shows that 40% of Care Leavers aged 19-21 years old are NEET (2021 statistics), compared to 18% of non-care leavers.

The Into Work Advice Service's Bright Futures project, a project specifically for care experienced young people who are NEET – not in education, employment or training, provide a wraparound service to young people to help support them closer into employment or education. Bright Future Mentors provide wellbeing support to overcome emotional barriers and assist young people with their journey towards employment or education; providing one to one support and pre-employment training, to ensure they do not become NEET again.

As each care experienced young person turns 16 years old, an automatic referral is sent to the Bright Futures team, regardless if they are still in education. The team has built strong links with the new Virtual Headteacher, responsible for the move on and engagement of Care Leavers. The Bright Futures team are now based in secondary schools across the city to work with care experienced young people who are at risk of becoming NEET.

The Bright Futures has engaged with over 110 care experienced young people from April 2023 to the end of February 2024. To date:

- 15 young people have been supported into employment
- 8 young people have been assisted back in to full time education
- 23 young people have completed training courses
- 28 young people are on Bright Start trainee placements
- 9 young people have completed volunteering placements
- 69% of these young people have remained in education, employment or training after 12 months.

FUTURE PLANS

Future plans for the PA Team includes:

- Closer working with Adult Social Services, specifically around transition, safeguarding issues and post 18 care support; this will support the Personal Advisors and young people to transition over to Adult Social Services should this support be required.
- A joined up approach for move on accommodation plans for young people who are at risk of homelessness or who are homeless. This includes planned placements, training tenancies, utilising the Private Rented Sector Team to secure suitable PRS accommodation and identifying specialist accommodation for young people.
- Exiting the Universal Basic Income Pilot; working with the Money Advice team to ensure young people are no worse off leaving the pilot, making sure young people are supported to claim Universal Credit or other benefits and are not at risk of falling behind with rent payments.

- Care Experienced Young Person's Offer; launching Cardiff's Local Offer via a dedicated website/App/Virtual Youth Hub, which will outline a young person's support and financial entitlement.
- Securing additional funding to support the increasing number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) coming in to the city. Pressure still remains on the team to allocate UASC Young People as a priority due to their age at which they enter the service.
- Compliance; setting up monthly monitoring to measure the number of outstanding Pathway Plans, unallocated young people, frequency of contact from PA Team, referrals to Advice Services/partner services etc. to ensure young people are being supported towards independence.
- Care Orders/Placed With Parents; working with Childrens Services to identify and close care orders where appropriate, relieving resource and financial pressures on both Childrens Services and the PA Team. This will require input from both areas, with legal advice required.
- Working with the Cardiff Further Education Trust Fund to guarantee a £2,000 bursary for each care experienced young person attending university.

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn fwriadol

Children's Services Thematic Audit – Child Protection Registration (January 2024)

Scope:

Cardiff Children's Services along with our Safeguarding Partners, and in discussion with the Regional Safeguarding Board, made a decision to complete a focused Child Protection Audit, to consider the 2 themes:

- Theme 1- Children who have had multiple registrations on the Child Protection Register, which for the purpose of this audit is considered to be 3+ registrations.
- Theme 2- Children who were placed on the Child Protection Register and removed at the first review (within 3 months of being placed onto the Child Protection Register)

Context-

Over the last 3 years, approximately 6.5% of children on the Child Protection Register have been placed on the Child Protection Register twice before (3+ Registrations). Whilst the figures for this year are currently slightly lower (4.5% up to quarter 3), we are keen to understand whether anything could have been done differently at previous stages to support learning.

In the last year (2022-2023) we saw an increase in children that were placed on the Child Protection Register and removed at the first review Child Protection Conference (within 3 months). This increased from 34% of all de-registrations to 43% of all de-registrations. Whilst 2023-2024 is predicted to be lower (currently 29%), this remains a relatively high number and we are keen to understand the reasons for this and to support learning as well as decision making.

Reason for undertaking Audit:

As a Safeguarding Region it is important to understand Safeguarding in our area and whether we are consistently making the right recommendations about placing children on the Child Protection Register, as well as when it is the right time for them to come off of the register. The decision to place a child on the register, as well as taking them off is a multiagency one, which is made at a Child Protection Conference with our safeguarding partners, which include Health, Education and the Police.

A child can only be placed and remain on the Child Protection Register if there is considered to be an ongoing risk of 'significant harm'. In many cases successful work can be undertaken to work with parents on a Care and Support Plan basis, which is a voluntary pathway, when the level of risk does not reach the 'significant harm threshold'.

Where a child has had multiple registrations, it is important to understand whether the multiagency decision making was appropriate or if there is any learning to support all agencies that engage in decision making.

Similarly, children that are placed on the Child Protection Register but are then deregistered at the first 3-month review could indicate that they didn't need to be placed on the Child Protection Register in the first instance, and a Care and Support pathway would have been preferable, or that the child was removed from the Child Protection Register prematurely. To have confidence and support learning between our safeguarding region, we made the decision to review a cohort of children that were deregistered at the first review conference.

Methodology:

A cohort of 35 children between the ages of 0 to 17 are being audited, which were drawn from across all the Practice Teams in Cardiff and reflected the range of ages of children on the Child Protection Register and the criteria for their registration

16 cases related to children who had been removed from the Child Protection Register at first review during **November 2023** and 19 cases related to children who had three or more periods of registration as of the **22nd December 2023**.

An audit tool has been created and is being used to evaluate both the decision making and outcomes for all 35 children in line with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and Practice Standards.

Timescale:

The thematic audit was agreed by the Children's Services Management Team in **December 2023**. The audit is nearly complete, with all cases having been reviewed using the audit tool. The Provisional findings will need to be discussed as a next step with practitioners, the Children's Services Management Team and Statutory partners. Thematic learning from the audit will then be included within the Regional Safeguarding Boards Delivery Group Meeting on the **26th February 2024**.

Findings, learning and recommendations from this discussion will then be included in the audit report and we will be in a position to present this report to the Scrutiny Committee from the **15th March 2024**.

Matt Osborne

Operational Manager
Safeguarding and Reviewing Hub