



County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2000

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2000

AGENDA

Committee	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date and Time of Meeting	TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2015, 4.30 PM
Venue	COMMITTEE ROOM 4 - COUNTY HALL
Membership	Councillor Richard Cook (Chairperson) Councillors Boyle, Chaundy, Gordon, Morgan, Murphy, Dianne Rees and Lynda Thorne, plus one vacancy

Mrs P Arlotte (Roman Catholic representative), Carol Cobert (Church in Wales representative), Ms Catrin Lewis (Parent Governor Representative) and Mrs Hayley Smith (Parent Governor Representative)

*Time
approx.*

- | | | |
|----------|--|---------|
| 1 | Apologies for Absence | 4.30 pm |
| | To receive apologies for absence. | |
| 2 | Declarations of Interest | 4.30 pm |
| | To be made at the start of the agenda item in question, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct. | |
| 3 | Minutes (Pages 1 - 8) | 4.30 pm |
| | To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of 15 September 2015. | |
| 4 | Budget Monitoring Panel - Month 4 Budget Monitoring Report (Pages 9 - 16) | 4.35 pm |

This report enables the Committee to consider the outcome of the Committee's Budget Monitoring Panel's consideration of the Cabinet's Month 4 budget monitoring report with reference to the information relating to Education and Children's Services.

- (a) Scrutiny Officer to briefly introduce the report;
- (b) Members to discuss the outcome report from the panel

meeting and agree any issues for further consideration.

5 Correspondence Report (Pages 17 - 62) 5.15 pm

To provide the Committee with copies of the correspondence sent and received since July 2015.

- (a) Scrutiny Officer to briefly introduce the report;
- (b) Questions from Committee Members.

6 National Adoption Service for Wales and the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff (VVC) Regional Adoption Service (Pages 63 - 88) 5.30 pm

This report provides the Committee with the opportunity to review and appraise the progress made in implementing and delivering the National and Regional Adoption Service within Cardiff.

(a) If a Third Sector organization submits a question on the topic of adoption that the Chair of the Committee agrees will be considered at the meeting, a representative of that organization will ask the question at this point.

(b) Suzanne Griffiths, Director of Operations, National Adoption Service will introduce the report on the National Service and Rachel Evans, Head of Children's Services for the Vale of Glamorgan and Angela Harris, Regional Adoption Manager will introduce the briefing report on the VVC regional adoption service and both will be available to answer questions;

(c) Councilor Sue Lent (Cabinet Member, Early Years, Children & Families and Deputy Leader) and Tony Young Director of Social Services will be in attendance to answer any questions Members may have;

(d) Questions from Committee Members..

7 Way Forward 6.15 pm

8 Date of next meeting

Marie Rosenthal
Director Governance and Legal Services

Date: Wednesday, 7 October 2015
Contact: Paul Burke,
029 2087 2412, PaBurke@cardiff.gov.uk

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 SEPTEMBER 2015

Present: Councillor Richard Cook (Chairperson), Councillors Boyle, Chaundy, Gordon, Murphy, Dianne Rees and Lynda Thorne

: Co-opted Members: Mrs P Arlotte (Roman Catholic representative), Carol Cobert (Church in Wales representative) and Mrs Hayley Smith (Parent Governor Representative)

23 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Morgan and Catrin Lewis (Parent Governor Representative)

24 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairperson reminded Members of their responsibility under Part III of the Members’ Code of Conduct to declare any interest in general terms and to complete personal interest forms at the start of the meeting and then, prior to the commencement of the discussion of the item in question, specify whether it is a personal or prejudicial interest. If the interest is prejudicial Members would be asked to leave the meeting and if the interest is personal, Members would be invited to stay, speak and vote. The following declarations were made:

Name	Item	Nature of Interest
Councillor Boyle	CHAD Inquiry Update	Personal – Councillor Boyle has a child with ASD
Hayley Smith	Families First – Annual Report was a witness at the Committee and	Hayley Smith’s line manager so Hayley Smith withdrew from the meeting when this item was discussed.

25 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee meeting of 14 July 2015 and of the Joint Scrutiny meeting of 29 July were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

26 : EDUCATION PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 1 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT AND PROVISIONAL SCHOOL RESULTS

The Chairperson welcomed Sarah Merry (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) and Nick Batchelar (Director of Education and Lifelong Learning).

The Chairperson invited Councillor Merry to make a statement. Councillor Merry informed the Committee that results have improved on the previous year and staff

and pupils should be congratulated. It is pleasing that there has been consistent improvement across all levels. For a number of indicators improvement has been greater than it has been in local authorities across Wales. However, there is no room for complacency. The performance of children in receipt of free school meals (FSM) has improved but the performance of Looked After Children (LAC) is of some concern, as are the figures on suspensions and exclusions. The local authority has shown that it is prepared to act decisively where there are shortcomings in leadership. There has been some good work on partnerships.

The Director gave a presentation on the Corporate Performance Report, following which the Chairperson invited questions from the Committee.

The Committee asked what the local authority and the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service are doing to bring about major improvement in relation to performance on the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs). The Committee was advised that there is no complacency around NEETs. The data shows that action is being taken. From an unacceptably high starting point there has been a steep decline in the numbers of NEETs. Last year only Newport had better performance than Cardiff. The Vulnerability Assessment Tool is now being used. The local authority has taken action in schools where there has been poor performance on NEETs due to poor leadership. Data on individual young people is now being shared across organisations and commissioned partners will provide appropriately targeted support.

The Director was advised by the Committee that it has been reported that there have been some delays in placing children in primary schools and the Committee asked if Education has sufficient resources. The Committee was advised that all parents who have children going into Reception year at primary school have, in each case, received offers of places at two schools. A number have turned down the places offered and their appeals are being processed. The number of applications for in-year places has increased in Cardiff this year and this has led to an increase in the number of appeals.

The Committee asked whether appeals are being heard and what the timescale for hearing them is. The Committee was advised that there has been a rise in applications and this has put demand on the Admissions team and other staff. There are various reasons for appeals and the Director advised the Committee that he could provide further information on this if required and that there is a statutory timescale for dealing with appeals, all of which would be processed within the statutory timescale.

The Committee expressed its concern about the time it takes to carry out consultations in relation to the Schools Organisational Plan (SOP). Consultations can take over a year to complete. The Committee was advised that the SOP is a very big programme, both in terms of capital and workload. The team has been expanded. There was some concern about capacity to deliver and so mitigating action was taken. There has been no slippage in the published timetable of consultation.

The Committee asked whether the Youth Service will be able to keep up its programme of support to those young people who are at risk of becoming NEET and was advised that its area-by-area programme of support has moved ahead.

The Committee asked whether budget reductions pose a risk to the ability of schools to sustain improvements in performance. The Committee was advised that there will have to be further economies in schools budgets and the local authority will have to work with schools to achieve greater efficiencies. The local authority is being more robust with schools on how they use their budgets. In some cases the local authority has withdrawn the delegated budgets of schools that have large deficits.

The Committee noted that there has been particularly poor performance in three schools and asked what action is being taken and what evidence is there that it is working. The Committee was advised that Estyn had made recommendations in relation to improving safety in schools and improving behaviour and school environments in order to support learning. Estyn carried out a monitoring visit in June and has indicated in a letter that there have been some improvements in these areas. The focus must now be on teaching and the Director advised the Committee that he has observed some improvement in that. There is capacity to deliver better outcomes but this can not be done overnight as previously there had been year-on-year of endemic failure in performance.

The Director briefed the Committee on the report on provisional school results, after which the Chairperson invited questions.

The Committee asked whether there are difficulties in recruiting teachers and was advised that there is a national shortage of very good maths teachers. There are some very good maths teachers in some of Cardiff's schools and discussions have been held with headteachers with the aim of promoting best practice across the system.

The Committee asked whether enough is being done to attract talented leaders to Cardiff's schools. The Committee was advised that more could be done on this. The Consortium is taking steps to improve leadership development but it is a problem across Wales. There is a need for a more tailored approach to the developing school leadership and the local authority is working with the Consortium on this.

The Committee noted that even though results have been improved targets have still not been met and asked whether the targets were realistic. The Committee was advised that good schools set ambitious targets. Schools are asked to report based on their expected outcomes at a number of points through their cycle and this year saw more schools getting much closer to their projected outcomes.

The Committee noted that there are some schools whose performance is slipping and was advised that in a number of schools the slippage was attributable entirely to performance in maths, which was not as good as expected. The local authority is commissioning a maths specialist to identify what needs to be done in those schools.

The Chairperson thanked the Cabinet Member and the Director for attending the meeting, for their presentation and for answering questions from Members.

AGREED: That the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee writes to the Cabinet Member highlighting the issues raised during the Way Forward discussion.

27 : CHILD HEALTH AND DISABILITY (CHAD) INQUIRY REPORT UPDATE

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sue Lent (Cabinet Member, Early Years, Children & Families and Deputy Leader), Irfan Alam (Assistant Director, Children's Services), Eve Williams (Action for Children) and Sarah Woelk (Operational Manager, Intake & Assessment).

The Assistant Director presented the report, following which the Chairperson invited questions from the Committee.

The Committee noted that there has been a review of the process for the use of purchase orders (CP12s) and asked whether managers are now being stricter on expenditure. The Committee was advised that the CP12 is now aligned with the care plan, so every time the care plan is reviewed the purchase order is reviewed as well.

The Committee asked how the service ensures that people are aware of the services that they could have access to and was advised that one way in which awareness is promoted is through the Cardiff & Vale Parents Federation. The local authority has a duty to publicise services and this has not always been done well. One concern was the lack of a register of children who might be entitled to access services.

The Committee asked if there are any problems putting eligibility criteria in place and was advised that there are not any particular problems in this but the priority has been the action plan, to make sure the service is as good as it can be. There is a need for Cardiff Council to work with The Vale of Glamorgan local authority to try to align eligibility criteria across the two areas.

The Chairperson thanked the Cabinet Member, officers and Eve Williams for attending the meeting, for their presentation and for answering questions from Members.

AGREED: That the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee writes to the Cabinet Member highlighting the issues raised during the Way Forward discussion.

28 : FAMILIES FIRST ANNUAL REVIEW 2014/15

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sue Lent (Cabinet Member, Early Years, Children & Families and Deputy Leader), Rachel Jones (Operational Manager - Partnerships & Citizen Focus), Sara Payne (Barnardo's/Cadam Service) and Eve Williams (Action for Children/Disability Focus Service).

Having declared an interest for this item, Hayley Smith withdrew from the meeting.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement. Cllr Lent informed the Committee that the annual review is encouraging. The only concern is that the Team Around the Family thresholds are quite high, and so Families First is working with families that are borderline in terms of their needs, families who in other areas would be catered for by other types of service. This means that Families First

is not working with families with a lower level of need and these families would also benefit from the services that can be provided.

Rachel Jones (Operational Manager - Partnerships & Citizen Focus), Sara Payne (Barnardos / Cadarn Service) and Eve Williams (Action for Children / Disability Focus Service) gave a presentation, following which the Chairperson invited questions from the Committee.

The Committee asked whether there is a mechanism for measuring effectiveness across the participating organisations and a common reporting policy, so that the success of Families First can be fed back to the Welsh Government. The Committee was advised that the means by which outcomes are measured are robust. The local authority is working with Families First, Communities First and Flying Start to achieve 'joined up' reporting. If the programme continues post March 2017 the intention is that these approaches will be embedded.

The Committee asked whether there is scope in the programme to remove providers whose service is not working, providers that are under-performing and not meeting targets. The Committee was advised that there is scope to do this and it has been done, using the performance data as evidence but always working constructively with the providers to ensure maximum impact and value for money.

The Chairperson thanked the Cabinet Member, the Operational Manager, Sara Payne and Eve Williams for attending the meeting, for their presentation and for answering questions from Members.

29 : CHILDREN'S SERVICES - QUARTER ONE PERFORMANCE AND THE ANNUAL OUT-TURN FOR 2014/15 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chairperson welcomed Sue Lent (Cabinet Member, Early Years, Children & Families and Deputy Leader), Tony Young (Director of Children's Services) and Irfan Alam (Assistant Director, Children's Services).

This report set out performance data outlining progress against the objectives aligned to the social theme for the quarter ending 30 June 2015 and the annual out-turn for 2014-15.

The Director presented the report, following which the Chairperson invited questions from the Committee.

The Committee suggested that in the report the figures given on performance in relation to recording of decisions on referrals do not indicate that performance is improving in this area, as although the percentage figure makes it seem as if performance has improved, the actual number of referrals has gone down. The Director advised the Committee that performance on this has been better, although a smaller number of referrals could perhaps be taken as a sign of success in itself. The Director advised the Committee that the measure on the timeliness of referral decisions is one that has been set by the Welsh Government and is not one that he would have chosen.

The Committee commented that figures from the Data Unit – Wales would suggest that the service is not doing as well as the report to the Committee indicates and

asked which should be believed. The Director advised the Committee that Children's Services is not concentrating on the performance indicators that Data Unit – Wales has been looking at. It has been more important to improve the service from the position that it had been in. The indicators used by Data Unit – Wales may not be well-constructed. The Director advised that the CSSIW, in his most recent meeting with them, had confirmed that performance was heading in the right direction and at an appropriate pace, given the level of risks being managed.

The Committee informed the Director that it has been reported that social workers in some teams, such as the Children In Need team, have high caseloads. The Assistant Director advised the Committee that a representative number of individual cases have been reviewed and it was found that caseloads are appropriate and manageable and in line with teams in other parts of the service. The Children In Need team is not a special case. Intake & Assessment is also under pressure, as is the Youth Offending Team.

The Committee was also advised that data suggests that the levels of recruitment to social worker posts is healthy. Also, a team of seven social workers is being recruited to form a pool of social workers, from which vacancies that arise can be filled immediately. If a worker from the pool is appointed to another post then another social worker will be recruited for the pool. This arrangement will mean that social worker vacancies can be filled quickly and fewer agency social workers will have to be used.

The Chairperson thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for attending the meeting, for their presentation and for answering questions from Members.

AGREED: That the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee writes to the Cabinet Member highlighting the issues raised during the Way Forward discussion.

30 : WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

This report was presented by Martyn Hutchings (Principal Scrutiny Officer).

This report provided the Committee with the outcome of its consideration, at a forum meeting of the Committee, of the many issues that it could scrutinise. The resulting prioritised list has been detailed in the calendar, which was included in the report for consideration and approval.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) To consider the information set out in paragraph 10 of the report and agree the proposed Work Plan Timetable for 2015/16 as set out in Appendix C.
- 3) To agree to set up a performance Member panel and a Budget monitoring Member panel, in accordance with Part 1 of the Scrutiny procedure rules, with authority for the Chair and Operational Manager (Scrutiny Services) to approve the report for presentation to the Cabinet Member.

- 4) To agree to undertake the Task & Finish Group Inquiries as set out in paragraph 11, in accordance with Part 1 of the Scrutiny procedure rules. with authority for the Chair and Operational Manager (Scrutiny Services) to approve the report for presentation to the Cabinet Member, and to seek nominations for the Sexual Exploitation of Children inquiry and a potential CIL joint sub-committee inquiry.
- 5) To seek nominations for the membership of the performance and budget monitoring panels as set out in paragraph 7.

31 : WAY FORWARD

During the Way Forward discussion the Committee agreed the content of the letter that the Chairperson would send to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee, highlighting the issues raised and comments made in relation to the agenda items that had been discussed during the meeting.

32 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on 13 October 2015 at 4.30pm in Committee Room 4, County Hall.

The meeting closed at 6.05pm.

The meeting terminated at 6.05 pm

This page is intentionally left blank

**CITY AND COUNTY OF CARDIFF
DINAS A SIR CAERDYDD**

13 OCTOBER 2015

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**BUDGET MONITORING PANEL: MONTH FOUR BUDGET MONITORING
REPORT 2015/16**

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with an update on the outcome of the first meeting of the Budget Monitoring Panel recently established by the Committee. This meeting focused on a review of the month four budget monitoring Cabinet report.
2. To seek agreement to investigate any of areas for more detailed scrutiny and report any issues to the relevant Cabinet Member and Director.

Background

3. On 15 September 2015, the Committee agreed their work programme 2015/16. As part of this process, Committee Members considered the Wales Audit Office's September 2014 *Corporate Assessment of Cardiff Council* report and the subsequent advice to scrutiny committees to aim to achieve Committee meetings that last no longer than three hours. Whilst the Committee should maintain robust and appropriate levels of scrutiny across its terms of reference, it should seek to ensure that agendas are of a manageable size, and that work occurs outside Committee meetings. Committee Members agreed in principle with this approach and agreed to aim to achieve this, with the option to adjourn a Committee meeting if more time is required than originally anticipated.
4. To assist this approach, Committee Members decided to establish a Budget Monitoring Panel to scrutinise budget monitoring reports ahead of Committee meetings, bringing reports back to the Committee with issues of concern or

suggestions for further in-depth scrutiny, for agreement by the whole Committee. The Committee also approved the Chair and Operational Manager (Scrutiny Services) to approve its own report, for presentation to the Cabinet Member, should the Panel wish to do this.

Outcome of October 2015 Panel Meeting

5. The Budget Monitoring Panel, consisting of Cllrs Richard Cook, Chaundy, Derrick Morgan, Murphy and Thorne, met on 6 October 2015 to discuss and review the month four budget monitoring and projected overspend for both the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate and Children's Services, together with the detailed projection of the achievement or otherwise of each of the approved set of budget savings. A report summarising this work and the Panel's recommendations is attached at **Appendix A**.

Further Scrutiny

6. Members may wish to agree to undertake further budget monitoring panel meetings shortly after each Cabinet budget monitoring report is published, and to report any comments or concerns to the following Committee meeting.

Way Forward

7. Committee Members will have the opportunity to discuss the information provided in this report and appendix, and agree a way forward with regard to any issues the Panel has recommended for the Committee to consider.

Legal Implications

8. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

9. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to discuss the information provided in this report and appendix and:

- i. Agree to report any issues or concerns to the relevant Cabinet Member and Director; and
- ii. Agree any areas for further investigations.

MARIE ROSENTHAL

Director of Governance and Legal Services

7 October 2015

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE BUDGET MONITORING PANEL NOTES – 6 October 2015

Panel Members in Attendance – Councillors Richard Cook (Chairperson), Chaundy, Derrick Morgan, Murphy and Thorne

The Panel held its first meeting on 6 October to review and evaluate the recently published month 4 budget monitoring Cabinet report and associated documents. The meeting was held in advance of the October Committee meetings to enable Members to identify any issues which they wish to scrutinise in detail and develop any lines of inquiry they may wish to report to Committee at its meeting on 13 October.

The Members were provided with copies of the Education and Lifelong Learning and Children's Service's financial information from the 2015/16 Budget Book, Month 4 Budget Monitoring Cabinet report including the update on 2015/16 budget savings, dated 17 September 2015. These papers enabled the Members to analysis the key areas of spending in Education and Children's Services, as well as their progress in achieving the savings agreed by Council in February. Members also discussed the comments added to the budget savings table explaining the Departments progress being made in achieving the agreed savings.

The Head of Performance, Resources and Services for Education was invited to expand on a number of issues highlighted in the Month 4 savings matrix, and expand on some of the comments that Finance had put into the budget matrix.

The Panel initially agreed that the focus of this meeting should be on those areas which were showing a projected overspend as at Month 4, and Members would review the papers to identify those areas that were showing projected overspends or underachievement of the agreed budget savings. The Panel highlighted the following budget saving areas, which they felt required further clarification, from the Cabinet Member and or Directors:

Corporate

Members expressed their concern that the projected budget showed a number of savings unlikely to be achieved, which seemed to indicate that a more robust assessment of achievability needed to be undertaken, prior to approval, to ensure that decisions are made on the correct information.

Members did not understand why the draw down of the contingency budget of £950,000, had already been included in the budget monitoring narrative. The Panel felt that the contingency budget should only be allocated and approved by Cabinet at the year end, should it be needed.

Education

The Panel questioned the deteriorating position in respect of delegated schools' balances, and the risk that it represented. Members sought assurance that appropriate actions have been put in place to ensure that all school deficits are addressed within a reasonable timescale. Members did however wish to receive further information on the actions being taken in respect of Cantonian High and Michaelston Community College and Glyn Derw High School "federated" in 2011.

Members also requested details of the discussions being undertaken to review Cardiff Council's contribution to the funding of the Central South Consortium in future budgets. Members were of the opinion that the Consortium should contribute to the savings required by the commissioning Councils.

Line 134 Staff Realignment and Restructure – Members expressed concern that the finance comments against this saving stated that “Whilst some savings have been achieved there is a level of uncertainty in respect of the full level of savings”. Members noted that this saving had been put on hold, due to the Estyn inspection, however the Panel considered that this saving must be fully achieved by the end of this financial year and requested details of how the full saving would be achieved.

Children's Services

Line 203 Payment by Results Looked after Children & Rehabilitation Project Year 1- Members requested further information on the barriers in achieving this saving, further details of the on going review of all out of county placements to identify other savings and plans to ensure that this budget saving is fully met.

Line 212 Business Support Review (Lean Review) - The Panel were concerned that it didn't seem to the Members that robust challenge of this proposal had been undertaken prior to it being included in the Budget proposals, as the Finance comment now indicated that this saving would not

be achieved. Members requested information on how the Department would be seeking alternative actions to ensure that this saving is fully achieved.

Line 217 Market and Demand Management of Commissioned Residential Services – Members expressed concern that the finance comment stated that there was some doubt as to whether the whole targeted savings will be achieved in 2015/16. Members requested further explanation on why they saving would not be achieved and what alternative actions were being developed to ensure that this saving is fully achieved.

Budget Realignment - The Panel expressed concern that Children's Services had consistently had budget realignments. In 2015/16 this amounted to £2.4M to meet on-going pressures on the budgets for external placements, leaving care support costs and adoption allowances. The Panel agreed to undertake a further investigation into these areas of consistent overspend at the next panel meeting.

Following consideration of all the information, the Panel agreed to recommend that the Committee:

- Hold another Panel meeting to investigate further the projected overspend in respect to external placements for looked after children, leaving care support costs and adoption allowances.
- Writes to the relevant Cabinet members with their concerns that the panel has around the Month 4 budget monitoring projections, as indicated above.

Martyn Hutchings
Principal Scrutiny Officer
7 October 2015

This page is intentionally left blank

**CITY AND COUNTY OF CARDIFF
DINAS A SIR CAERDYDD**

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

13 October 2015

CORRESPONDENCE UPDATE – INFORMATION REPORT

Background

1. Following most Committee meetings, the Chair writes a letter to the relevant Cabinet Member or Officer, summing up the Committee's comments and recommendations regarding the issues considered during that meeting.

Issues

2. The key points raised in the Committee's letter are taken from the way forward discussion at the end of each meeting and captured in the minutes of the meetings. Responses are evidenced in future reports or copied to Members if specifically requested. A summary of all letters sent and responses received is attached at **Appendix A** together with an indication of whether the consideration of the issues resulted in any further action being required. Also attached at **Appendix B** is a copy of all correspondence sent and all responses received since the Committee's meeting in July 2015.

Legal Implications

3. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be

within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

4. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to note the content of the letters contained in the appendices.

MARIE ROSENTHAL

Director Governance and Legal Services

7 October 2015

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Correspondence Report summary 2015 - 16

Committee date	Recipient	Subject	Response Required	Response date	Response received	Future Action
9 June 2015	Cllr Lent	Children's Services delivery Plan Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub	Reprioritise actions to enable actions to be completed as soon as possible Make every effort to sustain the current caseload averages Committee to be kept informed of plans to investigate any alternative service provisions. Provide further progress reports on the development of the MASH	23 July 2015	Response – Officers will consider how best to achieve this when they develop the 2016/17 delivery plan This is a clear priority – caseloads remain at an average of 18.9 Committee will be provided with an early opportunity to consider new proposals or thinking about service development These will be scheduled into the Committee's calendar	
9 June 2015	Cllr Merry	Education Delivery Plan	To amend the Plan to: Clearly identify a long term strategy for school improvement Reprioritise the actions		Work is underway with Head teachers to develop the strategy for the next phase of school improvement The implementation of	

		Needs	<p>so that those that can be completed quickly are shown as such</p> <p>Review the categorisation of pupils to reflect their first language and not ethnicity</p> <p>Include in future to include an action on training of school governing bodies</p> <p>Provide to a future meeting a report on the Council's traineeship and how it can help Needs</p> <p>Provide a report to a future meeting on the progress being made by the Cardiff Partnership Board on its work stream Engagement and Progression.</p>	<p>the Business Plan is prioritised with timescales reflecting those actions which are most important</p> <p>Both ethnicity and English as an additional language are use in tracking and reporting pupil attainment</p> <p>Action to strengthen governor training is being taken forward</p> <p>A further report on NEETs and the Youth Service will be presented in May 2016</p> <p>Partnerships will be included in the May 2016 report</p>	
--	--	-------	--	--	--

Committee date	Recipient	Subject	Response Required	Response date	Response received	Future Action
14 July 2015	Cllr Lent	Social Services and Well Being Act Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee	Members requested the disaggregation of the self assessment data, across the three organisations involved in implementing the action plan That the resource implications of the Act must be included in regular monitoring reports Committee recommended that the lack of scrutiny arrangements of the partnership Board must be reported back to Welsh Government That the Committee's report should be presented to Council That future agendas be sent to the Scrutiny Committee members	23 July 2015	As advised the self assessment tool is of limited value in assessing readiness for the Act. It is therefore not an appropriate use of management capacity to undertake the disaggregation. The Director will ensure regular reports, with a more manageable format that provide a better degree of measurability. There is nothing to prevent full and robust public scrutiny in the context of the Council and its Partners. The development of the above reports will take this into account. This will be arranged This is agreed and will be implemented	

Committee date	Recipient	Subject	Response Required	Response date	Response received	Future Action
14 July 2015	Cllr Merry	Youth Guarantee	<p>The Committee requested a further update on the scheme in a years time</p> <p>Cttee recommends that the Cabinet makes representations to Careers Wales to continue to undertake the vetting process and data base for work placements</p> <p>Estyn Rec 2 -</p> <p>Future exclusion reports must include the data for each school</p> <p>Governors of schools with high levels of fixed term exclusions must have specific training on alternatives to exclusions</p> <p>Joint support provided by challenge advisors and education officers to schools with high exclusions should be reviewed to ensure its</p>		<p>Further updates will be presented in July 2016</p> <p>A copy of a welsh government letter to Head Teachers outlining the changes in the remit of the work undertaken by Careers Wales and the reasons for these changes</p> <p>School level data will be provided in future reports</p> <p>A targeted training programme has been put in place</p> <p>Challenge advisors and officers now have formal meetings regarding exclusions</p>	

		Estyn Rec 4 .	<p>effectiveness</p> <p>Urgent action is taken to ensure that the Council satisfies Estyn in reducing exclusions</p> <p>Members a more detailed report on the Prevent Strategy later in the year</p>		<p>The views of Estyn on reducing exclusions will be reported in October.</p> <p>Further information on the Prevent Strategy will be presented later in the year.</p>	
29 July 2015	Cllr Elsmore & Cllr Lent	Director of Social Services Annual Report 2014-15	<p>Recommend that the report be amended to include a statement about how the areas for development will lead to improved performance and how many performance indicators it is expected will be improved in 2015-16 as a result of the work undertaken.</p> <p>Recommend that the Future Challenges for Adults Services be amended to include the need to improve performance in the care planning pathway, given</p>		<p>The report has now been approved by Council and included the following statement</p> <p>“The draft Director’s Report was considered at a joint meeting of the Children & Young People and Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committees on 29 July 2015 and has been amended in light of feedback from members”.</p>	

			<p>that there has been underperformance in this area for 2014/15, and note Tony Young's commitment to do this.</p> <p>Recommend that the role scrutiny committees are playing in supporting improvement in social services is acknowledged and detailed in the report.</p> <p>Recommend that the Adult Services areas for development are amended to articulate the specific improvements that are proposed for each area they relate to. recommend that also include actual numbers in brackets, so that readers can understand the scale of performance change</p> <p>recommend amend to include target lines, so that readers can easily</p>			
--	--	--	---	--	--	--

			<p>see whether performance is on track or adrift from performance targets.</p> <p>recommends that correct the use of English in the first and fourth bullet points.</p> <p>recommends that the wording of the second paragraph (P31) be improved to make it clearer what support is provided to the 7,626 people cited in this paragraph.</p> <p>recommend that expand the area for development 'Improve collaborative working with partners' (P38).</p> <p>recommend that the wording will be amended (P40) regarding 'Ensure no further growth in the number of children entering the looked after system'</p>			
--	--	--	--	--	--	--

			<p>Request details of how progress in delivering the areas for development will be regularly monitored.</p> <p>Request a breakdown to show the services received by the 7,626 people cited as receiving support (second paragraph, p 31)</p> <p>Request details of the changes to policy and/ or practice that have happened as a consequence of using complaints as a learning opportunity</p>			

			<p>key stages;</p> <p>Details of the actions being implemented to address the inconsistencies in teacher assessments</p>			
15 September 2015	Cllr Lent	<p>Child Health and Disability progress report</p> <p>Families First Review</p>	<p>Recommended that you consult and implement the new Child Health and Disability eligibility criteria as soon as possible;</p> <p>Recommends that regular consultation meetings are undertaken with children and their carers who use the Child Health and Disability service;</p> <p>That you and officers lobby the Welsh Government to ensure that the Families First funding and packages continue to be provided post 2017;</p> <p>That future corporate performance quarterly</p>		Awaiting a response	

		Quarter one Performance	reports include the relevant performance indicators published by the Wales Data Unit and publicised by the Welsh Government; and Provide details of the use of the contingency budget for Children's Services.			
--	--	-------------------------	---	--	--	--

Inquiry Letters

Outcome Letter date	Recipient	Subject of Investigation	Key Findings and Recommendations	Response date	Response received	Future Action
1 December 2014	Cllr Magill	Recruitment and Appointment of Local Authority School Governors	<p>Cardiff's Recruitment and Appointment Process</p> <p>School Governing Bodies must have the appropriate Skills</p> <p>Ward Councillors</p> <p>Role of Governors</p>	29 December 2014	Cabinet supported the recommendations and Council agreed to establish a Governor Appointment panel	Phase two of investigations to be undertaken late spring.

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/MJH

11 June 2015

Councillor Sarah Merry
Cabinet Member - Education and Skills
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW



County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Dear Sarah

Thank you for attending your first meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 9th June 2015 to help introduce the **Education Delivery Plan 2015-17 and Consortium Business plan 2015-16**, as well as the **Progress Report on Neets**. I would also like to thank Nick Batchelar, and his officers for their presentations and contribution to the two agenda items. During the consideration of the reports and answers to Members' questions, the Committee identified a number of comments concerns and recommendations detailed below.

Education Delivery Plan 2015-17 and Consortium Business plan 2015-16

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to be presented with the Departments Delivery Plan 2015-17 and its linkage with the Consortiums Business Plan 2015-16, Members were reassured by the officers that both plans provided the necessary actions to deliver the improvements in outcomes for Cardiff's pupils that the Council and Estyn requires. The Committee also welcomed the robust challenge and dialogue that Education and the Consortium are having; to ensure that the appropriate level of support is provided by the Consortium to Cardiff's Schools.

Members did however highlight that many of the actions in the delivery plan were programmed to be delivered over 4 quarters. Members felt that it would be more effective if actions were prioritised so that the most important and achievable actions were implemented in a much shorter timescale, and that future delivery plans should reflect this approach.

In reviewing the details in the Plan the Members highlighted their concern about the categorisation of pupils. Members felt that ethnicity was not the issue for educational attainment but pupil's first language. Members therefore suggested that the pupil's first language should be used for pupil categorisation. Members noted the Officers agreement and requested that this be looked at for future data analysis.

Members inquired about the implementation of the School Organisation Plan, suggesting that a standardised approach to building new schools could be developed. Members were please to be informed that a standardised approach was to be used in future, enabling schools to built quicker and cheaper.

Members expressed concern that the Education Delivery Plan did not clearly detail the development of a long term strategy for school improvement. The need for this strategy had been highlighted by the Estyn inspector at the Committee's May meeting and was needed to enable Education to be ultimately assessed as excellent. Members noted the Director's comments that schools were taking on more responsibility for the improvement agenda, but Members felt that the delivery plan needed to clearly evidence the development of a long term strategy to ensure that education moved to a judgment of excellent by Estyn. Members recommended that this must be included in the delivery plan as soon as possible.

The Committee commented on the level of training for Governors, and suggested that bespoke training to individual, or groups of schools, would be more useful in addressing real issues in particular schools. Head teachers should also be reminded to share all relevant performance documentation with their governing body to ensure that Governors are fully aware of all necessary information. The Committee therefore suggested that future Education Delivery plans should say something about training of school governing bodies.

Neets

Members welcomed the work that was being done to reduce the numbers of Neets in the City. The Committee suggested that the Council's Traineeship Scheme for looked after children and care leavers could also be used to help Neets gain work experience. Members would like a future report on Neets to investigate how this can be done.

The Committee noted that schools were expected to address the level of Neets from their schools, in partnership with the Council and Consortium. Members therefore requested a progress report on the Cardiff Partnership Board's work stream - Engagement and Progression - 'Reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training', be presented to Committee after the summer break.

I hope that these comments, advice and recommendations, detailed above will be of use and support in improving outcomes for Cardiff's pupils. The Committee looks forward to receiving the requested additional information listed above together with a positive response to this letter within the next month.

To recap, this letter requests several actions, requests for information and recommendations, as follows and requires a response:

- To amend the Delivery plan to :
 - Clearly identify the development of a long term strategy for school improvement, both as an aspiration for 2015-17 as well as specific actions;
 - Reprioritise the actions so that those that can be completed quickly are show as such;
- To investigate the possibility of reviewing the categorisation of pupils to reflect their first language and not ethnicity;
- In future to include an action on training of school governing bodies;

- Provide reports to a future meeting on the Committee on:
 - the development of the Council's traineeship to help Neets and
 - a progress report on the Cardiff Partnership work stream – Engagement and Progression;

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Cook', with a long horizontal line underneath it.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK
Chair – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: Nick Batchelar – Director of Education and Lifelong learning
CC: Carol Jones– Assistant Director of Education and Lifelong learning
CC: Suzanne Scarlett – Performance Manager
CC: Cheryl Cornelius – Cabinet Support Manger

**CABINET SUPPORT OFFICE
SWYDDFA CYMORTH Y CABINET**

My Ref / Fy Ref: CM31210

Your Ref / Eich Ref :

Date / Dyddiad: 5 October 2015



County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Cllr Richard Cook
Chair of Children and Young people Scrutiny Committee
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
Cardiff
CF104UW

Dear / Annwyl Richard,

Thank you for your letter of the 11 June 2015 following the meeting of the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee on 9 June 2015.

Education Delivery Plan 2015-17 and Consortium Business Plan 2015-16

The Committee noted the reference made by Estyn in the March 2014 monitoring visit to the longer term strategy for improvement. Work is under way with Headteachers to develop the strategy for the next phase of school improvement in Cardiff. The Committee will appreciate the immediate need to maintain a clear focus on the current plans which are designed to deliver improvement in the timespan of the Estyn monitoring period 2014 - 2016.

I can assure Committee members that the implementation of the Business Plan is prioritised with timescales reflecting those actions which are most important.

With regard to ethnicity, I would like to reassure the Committee that both ethnicity and English as an additional language (EAL) are used at a national and local level in tracking and reporting pupil attainment. Action to strengthen training for school governors is being taken forward.

NEETS

I note the Committees work plan includes a report on NEETS and the Youth Service to be discussed at Scrutiny in May 2016; this will include an update on Cardiff partnerships and their work in this area.

Yours sincerely
Yn gwyir

**Cllr /Y Cyng Sarah Merry
Cabinet Member for Education/
Yr Aelod Cabinet Dros Addysg
Member for Cathays /
Aelod Dros Cathays**





County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Date 12 June 2015

My Ref SS/CYP/MJH
Your Ref:

Councillor Sue Lent
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Families, Children and Early Years
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Sue

Thank you for attending Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 9 June 2015 to help introduce the **Children's Services Delivery Plan 2015/17** and **Briefing on the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and Managed Team**. I would also like to thank Tony Young and Irfan Alam for their full and honest answers that were provided at the meeting. During the consideration of the reports and answers to Members' questions, the Committee identified a number of comments concerns and recommendations which they asked me to write to you.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES DELIVERY PLAN 2015 - 17

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to be briefed on the Department's Delivery Plan for the next two years. Members did however question why the plans actions were always split over four quarters. Members noted that some major changes in service provision did take up to a year to develop, consult and implement. However the Members still considered that the actions should be prioritised so that those that could be implemented quickly were identified as such.

Members discussed the future sustainability of the caseload averages they understood that demand can be unpredictable; however the Committee recommended that the Department makes every effort to sustain the current caseload average.

Members discussed at some length the impact of the forthcoming budget settlements and the resourcing decisions to be made. The Committee requested that it is kept informed, as early as possible, as to the identification and development of any alternative service provision for Children's Services.

MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH) and MANAGED TEAM

MASH

The Committee appreciated the update and details of the progress being made in developing the MASH, Members noted that a project manager would be appointed soon. As a result the Members requested a further report prior to the Mash becoming operational.

Managed Team

Members wished to thank the officers for the detailed briefing on the operation of the Managed Team. Members were pleased to hear that only 45 cases out of the original 313 cases were being handed back to the mainstream teams. Officers reassured the Committee that the transfer of these cases would not have a major impact on the Social Workers caseloads, but this did not leave much flexibility for future changes in demand. Members agreed that they would continue to monitor average case loads to assess the impact of any changes in demand.

I hope that these comments, advice and recommendations, detailed above will be of use and support in improving outcomes for Children in need. The Committee looks forward to receiving the requested additional information listed above together with a positive response to this letter within the next month.

To recap, this letter requests several actions, requests for information and recommendations, as follows and requires a response:

- Reprioritise the actions, in future delivery plans, so that those that can be completed quickly are shown as such;
- To make every effort to sustain the current caseload average;
- To involve the Committee in the identification and development of any alternative service provision for children's service as early as possible.
- Provide a further progress report on the MASH prior to it becoming operational.

Yours sincerely



COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK
Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: Tony Young, Director of Children's Services
Irfan Alam, Interim Assistant Director of Children's Service
Kim Brown, Service Manager, Policy and Performance
Melanie Jackson - Personal Assistant to Deputy Leader

**SWYDDFA'R DIRPRWY ARWEINYDD
DEPUTY LEADER'S OFFICE**



County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Fy Nghyf / My Ref: CM31211

Eich Nghyf / Your Ref: SS/CYP/MJH

Dyddiad / Date: 23rd July 2015

Councillor Richard Cook
Chairperson
Children and Young people Scrutiny Committee
Cardiff Council
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Annwyl / Dear Cllr Richard Cook

Re:- Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee 9 June 2015

Thank you for your letters of 12th June and 20th July following my attendance at the C&YP Scrutiny Committee on 9th June and 14th July respectively and for member's kind comments regarding officers' contributions.

In relation to the issues committee identified in these two meetings and the requests arising from debate I am able to respond as follows:-

Meeting on 12th June

- *Reprioritise actions in future delivery plans to highlight those than be completed quickly* - Officers will consider how best this could be achieved when preparing the 2016/7 Business Plan within the parameters of the corporate template.
- *Make every effort to sustain the current caseload average* – This is accepted and is already a clear priority for the Directorate. I am pleased to be able to advise you that at the time of writing caseloads remained at an average of 18.9 as at 30 June.
- *Involve the committee in the identification of alternative service provision as early as possible.* – Officers will ensure that the committee has an appropriate early opportunity to consider any new proposals or thinking about the development of the service.

ATEBWCH I / PLEASE REPLY TO:

Swyddfa'r Dirprwy Arweinydd, Ystafell 525, Neuadd y Sir, Glanfa'r Iwerydd, Caerdydd CF10 4UW
Ffôn (029) 2087 2501
Deputy Leader's Office, Room 525, County Hall, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff CF10 4UW
Tel (029) 2087 2501



- *Progress reports on the MASH* – These will be scheduled into the committee's calendar at appropriate stages, in liaison with Martyn Hutchings.

Meeting on 14th July

Social Services & Well Being Act

- *Disaggregated self-assessment data; that resource implications are more clearly identified.* As advised by officers, the self assessment tool is thought to be of very limited value in assessing readiness for the Act. Although the completion of the assessment had some benefit in terms of raising awareness it was a very onerous task. Given these factors it would not be sensible or an appropriate use of scarce management capacity to undertake a wholly separate exercise to enable data disaggregation. It remains very important to enable members to assess readiness and progress in relation to the Act and the Director will ensure that regular reports are provided to committee with a view to developing a more manageable format that facilitates a better degree of measurability and where possible links this to resource implications more clearly.
- *Reporting back to Welsh Government concerning scrutiny.* I am not very clear what is meant by this or how it relates to the in-committee debate but would advise that there is nothing to prevent full and robust public scrutiny in the context of Cardiff Council and its partners, in relation to the Act; indeed the significance of the Act is such that I would encourage it. The development of an approach as set out in the previous paragraph will take into account the need to enhance scrutiny accordingly.

Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee CPAC

- *The presentation of the CPAC report to be presented to Council* – This will be arranged
- *CPAC Agendas for all future meetings to be sent to C&YP Scrutiny Members* This is agreed and will be implemented.

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely

Susan J. Lent

Councillor / Cynghorydd Sue Lent
Deputy Leader / Dirprwy Arweinydd
Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children & Families
Aelod Cabinet Dros Y Blynyddoedd Cynnar, Plant a Theuluoedd

Date 20 July 2015

My Ref SS/CYP/MJH
Your Ref:



County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Councillor Sue Lent
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Families, Children and Early Years
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Sue

Thank you for attending Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 14 July 2015 to help introduce the **Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2014 progress report** and **Corporate Parenting Advisor Committee report**. I would also like to thank Tony Young and Nichola Poole for their full and honest answers that were provided at the meeting. During the consideration of the reports and answers to Members' questions, the Committee identified a number of comments concerns and recommendations which they asked me to write to you.

Social Services and Well Being Act – Progress Report

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to be briefed on the work being undertaken in implementing the regulations and guidance issued by the Welsh Government. Members fully appreciated the vast amount of work that has been undertaken to complete the self assessment tool kit across Cardiff Council, the Vale of Glamorgan, and Cardiff & Vale University Health Board. Members were also pleased to note that it has become apparent that the Welsh Government was allowing some flexibility in the timescales included in the Guidance.

The Members did however question, why, in the completed form, there was some insufficient or poor evidence available to make an assessment. Members noted that these were composite assessments; however the Committee requested that, for Children's Services data, the data should be disaggregated across the three organisations, so that the Committee can assess Cardiff Council's input and seek to investigate further.

Members also expressed some concern that the Governance arrangements indicated in the Act and Guidance which did not include the Scrutiny of the Integrated Health and Social Care Partnership Governance Board. Members felt that this was a clear deficiency in the Governance arrangements, and Members recommended that this must be reported back to the Welsh Government as part of the consultation exercise.

Finally Members expressed some concern that the Welsh Government were indicating that the implementation of the Act's regulations would be cost neutral. The Committee requested that the resource implications must be included as part of the regular monitoring reports, presented to this Committee.

CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Committee welcomed the presentation of the work of the Committee, noted the overview of the work undertaken from October 2014 to April 2015 and that its first full Annual Report will be produced in April or May 2016.

The Members commented that the Committee had not been embedded into the Council's normal democratic processes, in particular, the publication of committee meetings and their agendas, however the Committee was pleased to hear that the Director was addressing this with the Director Governance and Legal Services. The Committee considered that the timely publication of Committee agendas and papers was crucial to highlighting the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities. The Members also suggested that the report should be presented to Council in order to continue to raise the profile of corporate parenting and to enable all Council members to be made aware of the work that has been undertaken by the Committee.

The Committee also requested that the agenda for all future Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee meetings should be sent to Martyn Hutchings, Scrutiny Services, so that he can ensure that the members are aware of each meeting.

I hope that these comments, advice and recommendations, detailed above will be of use and support in improving outcomes for children in need and corporate parenting. The Committee looks forward to receiving the requested information listed above together with a positive response to this letter within the next month.

To recap, this letter requests several actions, requests for information and recommendations, as follows and requires a response:

- Disaggregated the self assessment data, across the three organisations, so that the Committee can assess Cardiff Council's input and seek to investigate further;
- Members recommended that the lack of scrutiny arrangements of the Partnership Board must be reported back to the Welsh Government;
- that the resource implications of the Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2014 t on Children's Service, must be included as part of the regular monitoring reports, presented to this Committee;
- that the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee report should be presented to Council.
- That the agenda for all future Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee meetings should be sent to members of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Yours sincerely



COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK

Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: Tony Young, Director of Children's Services

CC: Nichola Poole, Regional Lead, Sustainable Social Services

CC: Cheryl Cornelius – Cabinet Support Manger

CC: Melanie Jackson - Personal Assistant to Deputy Leader

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/MJH

20 July 2015

Councillor Sarah Merry
Cabinet Member - Education and Skills
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW



County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Dear Sarah

Thank you for attending the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 14th July 2015 to help introduce the **Youth Guarantee – Implementation Report** and the **Estyn recommendations 2 and 4 - update**. I would also like to thank Carol Jones, and her officers for their presentations and contribution to the two agenda items. During the consideration of the reports and answers to Members' questions, the Committee identified a number of comments concerns and recommendations detailed below.

Youth Guarantee – Implementation Report

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to be briefed on the Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework key elements, which includes the Youth Guarantee offer. Members also noted progress being made in implementing the scheme so that the Guarantee will be introduced to Year 11 pupils in September 2015 with the expectation that young people will sign on in September 2016.

The Committee discussed at length Cardiff's approach to the implementation and requested a further update this time next year. Members were however surprised to hear that Careers Wales were not now providing one to one careers advice to pupils, but were expecting schools to provide the advice. Members agreed with the officers that this was a detrimental step and requested that you monitor the situation, to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged.

The Committee were also informed that Careers Wales were not now vetting businesses for work placements but expecting Schools to ensure that businesses undertook the vetting. In addition Careers Wales had also withdrawn its work placement data base. Members considered that both these tasks were fundamental to the work of Career Wales and helped ensure that pupils are able to identify the most appropriate career. The Committee recommended that as Cabinet Member you make representation to Careers Wales to continue both tasks or investigate alternative provision to ensure pupils are not disadvantaged.

Estyn Recommendations 2 & 4

Members welcomed the report on the progress being made to address these two recommendations together with the honest and open answers to the Members

questions. As the Committee had scrutinised Neets at its last meeting the Members focused of the Exclusions element of Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 2 - Exclusions

Members noted the progress being made in addressing the level of fixed term exclusions across Cardiff's schools, however, following the Committee's consideration of the report, officer advice, and answers to member's questions, the Committee asked me to write with the following comments, advice and recommendations.

The Committee questioned at some length the level of exclusions in schools, particular those which were causing concern. Members requested that future reports must include the data for each school. Members also commented on the responsibility of the Governing Body on managing the level of exclusions in their school. The Committee recommended that the Governors of schools with high levels of fixed term exclusions must have specific advice on managing exclusions and on alternatives to exclusion.

The Committee was informed that the Challenge Advisors were directed to help support schools in reducing exclusions however members felt that Challenge Advisors do not necessarily have the correct skill set to have a positive impact. The Committee recommended that the joint support with education officers should be reviewed to ensure that effective support is provided.

Given the figures presented to the Committee Members expressed grave concern, that this element of the Estyn recommendation 2 may not be adequately achieved. The Committee therefore recommended that urgent action is taken to ensure that the Council satisfies Estyn in respect of this recommendation.

Finally the Committee noted that fixed term exclusions are not always the most appropriate action and alternative actions would be more appropriate. Member requested that a report be provide to Members via the Scrutiny Officer, explaining what alternatives could be used by schools.

Recommendation 4

The Committee welcomed this update and noted the detailed partnership work being undertaken. Member did however request a more detailed report on the "Prevent Strategy" to be presented to Committee later in the year.

I hope that these comments, advice and recommendations, detailed above will be of use and support in improving outcomes for Cardiff's pupils. The Committee looks forward to receiving the requested additional information listed above together with a positive response to this letter within the next month.

To recap, this letter requests several actions, requests for information and recommendations, as follows and requires a response:

- To receive a further update on the Youth Guarantee this time next year;
- Recommends that the Cabinet makes representation to Careers Wales to continue to undertake the vetting process and data base for work placements, as well as the careers advice to pupils or investigate alternative provision to ensure pupils are not disadvantaged;
- Future exclusion reports must include the data for each school.
- Recommends that the Governors of schools with high levels of fixed term exclusions, must have specific training on alternatives to exclusions;
- Recommends that the joint support provided by Challenge Advisors and Education Officers in schools with high exclusions, should be reviewed to ensure that effective support is provided;
- Recommends that urgent action is taken to ensure that the Council satisfies Estyn in reducing exclusions across all Cardiff's schools.
- Members requested a more detailed report on the "Prevent Strategy" to be presented to Committee later in the year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Cook', with a horizontal line underneath it.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK
Chair – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: Nick Batchelar – Director of Education and Lifelong learning
CC: Carol Jones – Assistant Director of Education and Lifelong learning
CC: John Fabes, Achievement Leader 14 – 19
CC: Phillip Norton, Achievement Leader Targeted Support
CC: Cheryl Cornelius – Cabinet Support Manger



My Ref / Fy Ref: CM31767

Your Ref / Eich Ref :

Date / Dyddiad: 5 October 2015

Cllr Richard Cook
Chair of Children and Young people Scrutiny Committee
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
Cardiff
CF104UW

Dear / Annwyl Richard,

Thank you for your letter of the 20 July 2015 following the meeting of the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee on 14 July 2015, addressed to Councillor Sarah Merry as Cabinet Member for Education and Skills.

Youth Guarantee – Implementation Report

I note the Committee requested they receive a further update on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee during next year and I will ensure officers provide the Committee with an update in July 2016.

You recommend that Cabinet make representation to Careers Wales to continue to undertake the vetting process and data base for work based placements as well as providing careers advice to pupils. I attach for information a copy of a letter distributed to Head teachers across Wales from the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology, Julie James, outlining the changes in the remit of the work undertaken by Careers Wales and the reasons for these changes. I will ensure the committee are kept informed of any further the developments.

Recommendation 2- Exclusions

Members requested that future reports include individual school data on the level of exclusions.

I am able to confirm that school level data is available and updated every half term and will be made available to the Committee in future reports. The Committee recommended that training be provided to Governing Bodies of schools with high level fixed term exclusions. A targeted training programme for Governors has now been put in place for schools with high levels of exclusions. In addition Challenge Advisers from the Central South Consortium now have formal meetings with officers of the local authority regarding exclusions to ensure that they are able to address this in their work with schools.



As you will be aware Estyn will be monitoring progress in reducing exclusions in October and their views will be reported to the Committee.

I note your request for further information on the Prevent Strategy and will ensure a report is presented to the Committee later this year.

Yours sincerely
Yn gwyir

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Merry". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'M'.

Cllr / Y Cyng Sarah Merry
Cabinet Member for Education /
Yr Aelod Cabinet Dros Addysg
Member for Cathays /
Aelod Dros Cathays

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr Groves

31 July 2015

Councillor Susan Elsmore & Councillor Sue Lent
Cabinet Members
c/o Room 520
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW



Dear Colleague

Joint Children & Young People and Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 29 July 2015

Many thanks to you and officers for attending the above meeting for the scrutiny of the draft Director of Social Services Annual Report 2014-15. This letter captures the agreed comments, observations and recommendations of Committee Members which we trust will assist preparation of the final Report. In line with our questions at the meeting, these are split into three sections: overarching points; those that relate solely to Children's Services; and those that relate solely to Adults Services.

Overarching issues:

Overall, Members recognise the picture presented in the Report, in terms of:

- Improving performance in Children's Services, declining performance in Adult Services and the need to significantly improve performance in both areas;
- The areas identified as Future Challenges and areas for development;
- The gathering strategic momentum that underpins the reshaping of Children's Services and Adults Services with a greater emphasis on preventative services; and
- The alignment of Children's Services and Adults Services into one Directorate, with the anticipated benefits that this will bring for service users, their families and the Council.

Members are pleased to hear that the section on the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014 will be strengthened before the report is submitted to Cabinet.

Members note that next year's report will be more outcome-focused and that the new performance framework being developed as part of the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014 will support this. In the meantime, Members recommend that the report be amended to include a statement about how the areas for development

will lead to improved performance and how many performance indicators it is expected will be improved in 2015-16 as a result of the work undertaken. This will manifest the link between this report identifying areas for improvement and improvements being made.

With regard to the processes in place to monitor the implementation of the areas for development, Members note the answers given explaining the Corporate Performance Management processes, including Star Chamber, Challenge Forum etc. However, Members believe that these will not cover all the areas for development that are detailed in this report and wish to understand how progress in delivering these will be regularly monitored; please detail these processes in the response to this letter.

With regard to the need for the report to include the following: '*Corporate and political support and scrutiny*'. Members refer to our letter from last year, (attached at Appendix D to this meeting's papers), where we noted that Tony Young committed to '*articulating more clearly the close working with Cabinet Members and the support he feels comes from the whole Council for Social Services.*' We feel that this point is still valid. The Statutory Guidance explicitly states that the report should cover '*Corporate and political support and scrutiny*' and our view is that this report does not sufficiently reflect the scrutiny that happens in Cardiff. Members feel that the report will be strengthened by acknowledging the role scrutiny committees are playing and recommend that this is done; there are ample examples of scrutiny providing support to drive improvement in Social Services and across the Corporate body and one cited at the meeting, but not alluded to in the report, is our joint Inquiry into tackling human trafficking.

Finally, in order to make the Report more robust and accessible, in terms of grammar and syntax changes required, Members recommend:

- Page 7 – correcting the use of English in the first and fourth bullet points
- Use of percentages – to also include actual numbers in brackets, so that readers can understand the scale of performance change e.g. page 23 references changes in performance for housing looked after children and it would be clearer for a reader if actual numbers were also provided.
- Graphs/ Tables – amend to include target lines, so that readers can easily see whether performance is on track or adrift from performance targets.

Children's Services:

Members note that, when asked to identify the significant challenges facing Children's Services, Tony Young listed the following:

- Performance in relation to Initial Assessments
- Performance in relation to Children being seen by Social Workers
- The need to increase preventative work
- The need to strengthen governance arrangements.

Members asked several questions regarding Safeguarding. Members were pleased to hear officers recognise the need to improve performance in this area, especially given the new legislation in place on these matters, but were concerned that little progress seems to have been made on this (in Social Services) over the year, with regard to Female Genital Mutilation, Honour-Based Violence, Forced Marriage, Human Trafficking and Radicalisation. Members were disappointed that officers appeared unaware of which Cabinet Member and senior officer are leading work on these issues. As clarified at the meeting by ourselves, the Cabinet Member is Cllr De'Ath and the senior officer is Martin Hamilton. Members note the commitment of officers to attend Cllr De'Ath's recently established working group re Human Trafficking.

Members were also keen to understand the processes in place to hear from children that receive social services and are pleased to hear the intention to hold a Listening Event, in recognition of the success of the one previously held by the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. Members were also pleased to hear the commitment to use complaints as a learning opportunity and to report complaints via the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee. Members would like to receive details of the changes to policy and/ or practice that have happened as a consequence of using complaints as a learning opportunity and request that examples be provided in the response to this letter if possible or in future performance reports to the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee if more time is needed to furnish the information.

Members were pleased to hear Tony Young acknowledge that the wording for the area for development, 'Ensure no further growth in the number of children entering the looked after system' (listed on p40) is too strong and recommend that the wording will be amended prior to the report being taken to Cabinet.

Adult Services:

Members note that, when asked to identify the significant challenges facing Adults Services, Tony Young listed the following:

- The need for effective budgetary control
- The need to increase preventative services
- The need to improve performance re: Carer's Assessments; Delayed Transfer of Care; and Direct Payments.

Members recommend that the Future Challenges for Adults Services be amended to include the need to improve performance in the care planning pathway, given that there has been underperformance in this area for 2014/15, and note Tony Young's commitment to do this.

Members welcome Tony Young's commitment to bring the Annual Report of the Cardiff and Vale Safeguarding Adults Board 2014/15 to the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee and ask that he liaise with scrutiny services to ensure that this is programmed appropriately.

Members were pleased to hear Tony Young agree to expand the area for development 'improve collaborative working with partners' (listed on page 38) to make it clearer which partners are covered by this and with what intent. Members believe that a similar approach is needed for other Adult Services areas for development, as currently three or four areas for development are repeated across several sections and they are very general in nature. Members therefore recommend that the Adult Services areas for development are amended to articulate the specific improvements that are proposed for each area they relate to.

Members asked several questions relating to the number of people receiving Adult Services and have the following points to make in relation to this:

- Please provide a breakdown to show the services received by the 7,626 people cited as receiving support (second paragraph, page 31) and, subsequently, improve the wording of this section of the report.
- Note Councillor Elsmore's statement that referrals to day centres are taking place and the referral process has not been closed
- Note Councillor Elsmore's commitment to liaise with officers to ensure that G.P. surgeries are aware that the referral process has not been closed, given Councillor Murphy's point that surgeries in his ward are not referring as they believe the referral process has stopped.
- Note the answers from officers that, where a client has been reabled to the point of no longer requiring social services, the route back to social services if their condition deteriorates relies on them being referred by their G.P., a community group or family member.

Members will explore the issues relating to day centres when carrying out pre-decision scrutiny of the proposed day opportunity strategy, currently scheduled for October 2015.

With regard to the questions asked about whether carer's views are sought on mental health services, Members wish to highlight the recent scrutiny research report (re mental health service users and carers) that has been sent to Councillor Elsmore and officers; we hope that this is of use to you.

Finally, Members plan to scrutinise several of the areas detailed in the Report during 2015-16 and we look forward to seeing the improvements detailed in this report, including those flowing from establishing one social services directorate. On a separate note, Members are pleased to note Irfan Alam has accepted the role of Assistant Director, Children' Services and wish him well in this post.

This letter requires a response as it contains the following recommendations and requests:

- Recommend that the report be amended to include a statement about how the areas for development will lead to improved performance and how many performance indicators it is expected will be improved in 2015-16 as a result of the work undertaken.
- Recommend that the Future Challenges for Adults Services be amended to include the need to improve performance in the care planning pathway, given that there has been underperformance in this area for 2014/15, and note Tony Young's commitment to do this.
- Recommend that the role scrutiny committees are playing in supporting improvement in social services is acknowledged and detailed in the report.
- Recommend that the Adult Services areas for development are amended to articulate the specific improvements that are proposed for each area they relate to.
- Use of percentages – recommend that also include actual numbers in brackets, so that readers can understand the scale of performance change
- Graphs/ Tables – recommend amend to include target lines, so that readers can easily see whether performance is on track or adrift from performance targets.
- Page 7 – recommend that correct the use of English in the first and fourth bullet points.
- P31 –recommend that the wording of the second paragraph be improved to make it clearer what support is provided to the 7,626 people cited in this paragraph.
- P38 – recommend that expand the area for development 'Improve collaborative working with partners'.
- P40 - recommend that the wording will be amended regarding 'Ensure no further growth in the number of children entering the looked after system'
- Request details of how progress in delivering the areas for development will be regularly monitored.
- Request a breakdown to show the services received by the 7,626 people cited as receiving support (second paragraph, page 31)
- Request details of the changes to policy and/ or practice that have happened as a consequence of using complaints as a learning opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Cook', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK
Chair – Joint Children and Young People and Community & Adult Services
Scrutiny Committee

Cc: Tony Young Irfan Alam Sarah McGill Stuart Young
Kim Brown Amanda Stokes Melanie Jackson Claire Deguara
Jo Watkins

Bernard McDonald – Area Manager Cardiff, CSSIW

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/MJH

18 September 2015

Councillor Sarah Merry
Cabinet Member - Education and Skills
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW



County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Dear Sarah

Thank you for attending the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 15th September 2015 to provide an opening statement and answer questions on the agenda item **Quarter one performance and Provisional School Results 2014/15**. I would also like to thank Nick Batchelar for his introduction of the report and answers to Members questions. During the way forward section of the meeting the Members' considered the information in the report and answers to their questions, and identified a number of comments, concerns and recommendations for your consideration, as detailed below.

Quarter 1 performance

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to be presented with the Directorates Quarter 1 performance report. Members were pleased to read about the progress being made to improve the performance of all areas of Education. In particular Member commented on the improved performance in respect of Neets, which had been in decline. Members noted that many of the problems were now being addressed and performance had improved. The Committee also considered that the new data sharing protocol, across organisations, should further help reduce the number of Neets.

Members did however question the primary schools admissions procedure, as some Members were aware of a cohort of pupils who were still not attending school as places had not been found. Members noted the Directors comments that all pupils had been offered a school place, however a number of appeals were still being processed and they will all be completed within the statutory time scale. The Committee requested a further update on the outcome of the appeals, to Members, following the 30 days statutory time scale. Furthermore Members would like a breakdown of the numbers of Primary and Secondary school children who as of 16th September 2015 had not yet attended school because of appeals, or that they had not yet accepted an offered place.

A Member expressed concern that in the Q1 performance reports, corporate risk section, the School Organisation Programme (SOP) was shown as "red/amber". The Director stated that the "red/amber" risk was due to capacity issues in achieving the ambitious timescales for project delivery. The Committee requested assurance that

additional management actions would be put in place to ensure that the SOP programme would be fully implemented.

Members, when questioning the poor performance of certain school causing concern, were informed by the Director that Estyn had recently sent a letter about Eastern High, stating that improvements had been made. The Committee requested that they receive a copy of this and any other similar letters that Estyn send in respect of their monitoring visit to any schools causing concern.

Provisional School Results

Members welcomed the continued and sustained improvements in the overall results, however, Members did express their wish for further improvements, across all performance measures, to ensure that every Cardiff school is a good school where learners achieve well.

The Committee did however express considerable concern that the performance of pupils, in Mathematics, was the most significant area that needed improvement, particularly in certain schools. The Committee recommended that you and the Director of Education ensures that the Central South Consortium immediately implements appropriate measure to bring about significant improvements in results in Mathematics across all key stages, and in all schools.

The Committee also expressed its concern that teacher assessments were inconsistent across schools. The Committee requested details of the actions being proposed by you, the Director of Education and the Central South Consortium to address this issue.

Finally the Committee wished to inform you that they approved their work programme for the year, as required by the Constitution, and I have attached, for your information, a copy of the work programme calendar so that you and your officers are aware of the issues that the Committee will be seeking to scrutinise at each meeting.

I hope that these comments, advice and recommendations, detailed above will be of use and support in improving outcomes for Cardiff's pupils. The Committee looks forward to receiving the requested additional information listed above together with a positive response to this letter within the next month.

To recap, this letter requests several actions, requests for information and recommendations, as follows and requires a response:

- A further update on the outcome of the admission appeals, following the completion of the 30 day statutory timescale for an appeal hearing, and the numbers of pupils who have not yet attended school because of appeals or pressure on the admissions process;

- Assurance that additional management actions would be put in place to ensure that the SOP programme would be fully implemented;
- A copy of the recent Eastern High Estyn letter;
- Details of the measures being implemented to bring about significant improvements in results in mathematics across all key stages; and
- Details of the actions being implemented to address the inconsistencies in teacher assessments.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Cook', with a horizontal line underneath it.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK
Chair – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: Nick Batchelar – Director of Education and Lifelong learning
CC: Cheryl Cornelius – Cabinet Support Manger
CC Nichola Hayward – Resources Manager
CC Paul Burke – Committee Clerk



County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Date 18 September 2015

My Ref SS/CYP/MJH
Your Ref:

Councillor Sue Lent
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Families, Children and Early Years
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Sue

Thank you for attending Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 15 September 2015 to help introduce the Child Health and Disability progress report, Families First Annual Review and Quarter 1 Performance Information. I would also like to thank Tony Young and his officers, as well as Rachel Jones, Sara Payne (Barnardo's) and Eve Williams (Action for Children) for their full and honest answers that were provided at the meeting. During the consideration of the reports and answers to Members' questions, the Committee identified a number of comments, concerns and recommendations which they asked me to write to you.

Child Health and Disability progress report

The Committee were pleased to receive the update on the Department's progress in implementing its development plan and addressing the Committee's inquiry recommendations. Member noted that the disability team was now more stable and that the take up of direct payments had improved.

Members were however concerned that there was still a lot of partnership work to be undertaken and that the eligibility criteria had still not been developed. Members recommended that the department consult on and implement the new criteria as soon as possible.

Finally the Committee were disappointed that regular consultation meetings with children and their families or carers were not occurring. The committee recommends that these should be started straight away, so that Children's Services can ensure that the service and support provided is appropriate and effective.

Families First Annual Review

The Committee were extremely impressed with the work that the Annual Review report highlighted. Specifically impressive is the partnership working, the clear monitoring of the packages and presentation of outcomes achieved, the willingness to take difficult decisions to change providers when outcomes are not achieved and the flexibility that

enables gaps in the delivery being identified and then funding re-allocated to fill the gaps. Members noted the clear positive impact of the packages and felt that they might also be having an impact on school attendance (anti bullying and "connect" courses) and Children's Services referrals (Disability Focus).

Finally the Committee recommended that you and Officers must lobby the Welsh Government to try to ensure that the funding and packages continue to be provided after the present funding programme ends in 2017.

Quarter 1 Performance Information

The Committee welcomed the number of key improvements shown in the report's performance indicators.

The committee noted that the PI "recording decisions on referrals" performance was reported as having improved from 85.8% in Q4 to 89.8% in Q1, however the number of referrals had reduced by 16%, which should have enabled the staff to deal with considerably more cases. Therefore Members were concerned that this PI had not improved more rapidly, and would expect to see an improvement at Q2, if the number of referrals continues to fall.

Members also questioned why the indicators used by the Wales Data Unit had not been included in the corporate monitoring report as these PI's were being publically report by the Welsh Government. The Committee recommended that future corporate performance reports must include those indicators published by the Wales Data Unit, to enable them to be closely monitored.

Members also questioned the number of cases that social workers currently had, as they had been informed that some had over 25 cases whereas the average was 18.9 as reported in the corporate performance report. The Director informed the Committee that an analysis had been undertaken and some social workers did have case loads of 25 however those cases were appropriate for the social workers and he was satisfied with the level of caseloads across all social workers. Members noted that social worker case loads were now more manageable and also welcomed the development of a pool of social workers, to help reduce the need for agency workers and help to eliminate the establishment gaps, which inevitably occurs during the recruitment process.

Members also discussed the current and forecasted budget position for Children's Services for this year and requested clarification of whether the contingency budget had already been fully used in Q1.

Finally the Committee wished to inform you that they approved their work programme for the year, as required by the constitution, and I have attached, for your information, a copy of the work programme calendar so that you and your officers are aware of the issues that the Committee will be seeking to scrutinise at each meeting.

I hope that these comments, advice and recommendations, detailed above will be of use and support in improving outcomes for children. The Committee looks forward to receiving the requested information listed above together with a positive response to this letter within the next month.

To recap, this letter requests several actions, requests for information and recommendations, as follows, and requires a response:

- Recommended that you consult and implement the new Child Health and Disability eligibility criteria as soon as possible;
- Recommends that regular consultation meetings are undertaken with children and their carers who use the Child Health and Disability service;
- That you and officers lobby the Welsh Government to ensure that the Families First funding and packages continue to be provided post 2017;
- That future corporate performance quarterly reports include the relevant performance indicators published by the Wales Data Unit and publicised by the Welsh Government; and
- Provide details of the use of the contingency budget for Children's Services.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Cook', with a horizontal line underneath it.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK
Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: Tony Young, Director of Children's Services
Rachel Jones, Operational Manager - Partnerships & Citizen Focus
Melanie Jackson - Personal Assistant to Deputy Leader
Irfan Alam – Assistant Director of Social Services

**CITY AND COUNTY OF CARDIFF
DINAS A SIR CAERDYDD**

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 October 2015

**NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE AND VALE, VALLEYS & CARDIFF
REGIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE - PROGRESS REPORT**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the National Adoption Services for Wales which is hosted by the City of Cardiff Council and the opportunity to review and comment on the implementation and operations of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff (VVC) Regional Adoption Collaborative (copies attached at **Appendix A & B**). The briefing report sets out the key information about the National and Regional services together with some performance information for the period 2011 – 2014 and specific performance information for 2014 – 15.

Background

2. The Committee has previously scrutinised the National and Regional Adoption Service proposals at its meeting in December 2014. Members supported the key principles contained within the proposals, but expressed some concern about the role of this scrutiny committee in the governance of the National and VVC Regional Adoption Service, to ensure that plans are put in place to optimise performance monitoring and future service delivery.
3. As a key part of the implementation of the Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2014, the National Adoption Service for Wales has been created to bring together existing local government services into a three tier system, with partnership arrangements for services provided in other sectors, to co-ordinate and deliver adoption services in a different way. These tiers are:

- local authority level – where all local authorities will continue to identify and meet needs of children for whom adoption is the most appropriate plan;
- regional level – where five local authority collaboratives have been created to deliver agreed adoption functions and develop operational links, as appropriate, with voluntary sector and other services to develop and improve service delivery; and at
- national level – a small team to co-ordinate and drive improvement and consistency, while maintaining strategic and planning links with Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) and the delivery of certain national functions.

The National Adoption Service is probably most accurately described as a network of interdependent services operating at local, regional and national levels through local government and the voluntary sector.

4. A task group, led by the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru and the Welsh Local Government Association, developed the necessary arrangements for the National Service. Shortly afterwards the City of Cardiff Council was awarded the host status for the central team.

National Adoption Service for Wales

5. A briefing papers on the National Adoption Service for Wales is attached at **Appendix A** and provides a detailed description of:
 - **Structure and Role of the Central Team.** This includes a description of the main functions of the central team as set out in the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) directive 2015.
 - **Governance Arrangements** for the Governance Board and an Advisory Group, and their respective roles and reporting / scrutiny arrangements.

- **Performance of the National Adoption Service**, this provides details for the service's first year, April 2014 – 2015 and is based on primary data collated for the Adoption Performance Management Framework procured from the Welsh Government.
6. The Performance data compares each of the regional collaborations: Mid and West Wales (MWW), North Wales (NW), South East Wales (SE), Vale, Valleys & Cardiff (VVC), and Western Bay (WB). The Service has used the data to inform service targets, which link to the key priorities for 2015 / 16.
 7. The British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Cymru announced on 31 July 2015 that in the face of significant changes and prevailing economic conditions, it has sadly not been possible to sustain the Wales Adoption Register and the Independent Review Mechanism Cymru. Subsequently the work and staff from BAAF Cymru have become part of the National Adoption Service for Wales.

Vale, Valleys and Cardiff (VVC) Regional Adoption Collaborative

8. The VVC Collaborative which comprises of the City of Cardiff Council, Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC, Merthyr Tydfil CBC and the Vale of Glamorgan Council is one of the five regional collaboratives. In March 2015, the Welsh Government published the Joint Adoption Arrangements (Wales) Directive 2015, which prescribed the regional areas and the governance structures for the Service.
9. The report summarises of the overall performance of the regional service and relevant targets, copy attached at **Appendix B**. The report also includes:
 - a. Governance Structure
 - b. Staffing and resources
 - c. Service delivery
 - d. Performance management
 - e. Budget & financial considerations.

Scope of the Scrutiny

10. The Report will provide the Members with the opportunity to review the progress made in the management and operation of the National and Regional Adoption Service. Members may wish to evaluate the following aspects of the reports:
- a. What are the key outputs and outcomes measures being used;
 - b. How well has the VVC Regional Service progressed against the targets and performance measures;
 - c. What has changed as a result of the new model and how do we know;
 - d. Whether the role of this Committee in scrutinising the performance of the VVC Regional Collaborative is appropriate;
 - e. What are the plans for the Wales Adoption Register now it is managed by the National Adoption Service and
 - f. What are the plans for the future for the VVC Regional and National Adoption Service.

Way Forward

11. Suzanne Griffiths, Director of Operations, National Adoption Service for Wales will present the National Adoption briefing and performance report, and Angela Harris, Regional Adoption Manager, VVC, will present the report on the implementation and performance of the regional collaborations following which they will all be available to answer questions Members may have. Councillor Sue Lent, Cabinet Member for Families, Children and Early Years, and Tony Young, Director of Social Services will also be available to answer any questions.
12. Cardiff's Scrutiny Function is piloting arrangements for third sector organisations to ask questions on relevant topics at Scrutiny Committee meetings. If a third sector organisation submits a question around adoption at this meeting and the Chair is willing for the question to be asked, a representative of the third sector organisation will be invited to the Committee to ask the question at the start of this agenda item.

Legal Implications

13. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

14. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. These financial implications will need to be considered before any changes are implemented. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members review the information contained in **Appendices A and B** together with any additional information provided at the meeting and submit any comments, concerns or recommendations about the services to the Cabinet Member for discussion with the Director of Operations and or Regional Manager.

MARIE ROSENTHAL

Director of Governance and Legal Services

6 October 2015

National Adoption Service for Wales

Reason for this Briefing

1. To update the Children and Young Person's Scrutiny Committee for the City of Cardiff Council about the National Adoption Service for Wales (NAS) and the role Cardiff plays in hosting the central elements of the service.
2. A linked briefing focussing on progress in the local element of the NAS, the Regional Adoption Collaboration of which Cardiff is a member (Vale, Valleys and Cardiff), is being separately prepared.

Background

3. The cabinet of the City of Cardiff Council were advised in a report on July 14th 2014 that following a competitive process Cardiff had been awarded the prestigious role as the 'Host' local authority for the central elements of the new National Adoption Service for Wales.
4. As a key part of the implementation of the Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2014 the National Adoption Service for Wales has been created bringing together existing local government services into a three tier system, with partnership arrangements for services provided in other sectors, to co-ordinate and deliver adoption services in a different way. As previously advised these tiers are:
 - local authority level where all local authorities will continue to identify and meet needs of children for whom adoption is the most appropriate plan;
 - regional level where five local authority collaboratives have been created to deliver agreed adoption functions and develop operational links, as appropriate, with voluntary sector and other services to develop and improve service delivery; and at
 - national level a small team to co-ordinate and drive improvement and consistency alongside maintaining strategic and planning links with VAA's and the delivery of certain national functions.

The National Adoption Service is probably most accurately described as a network of interdependent services operating at local, regional and national levels through local government and the voluntary sector.

5. Significant work on the national service as a whole was undertaken by a multi-agency Task and Finish group led by the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru (ADSSC) and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) with a project manager who was employed by ADSSC. Officers from the City of

Cardiff Council worked very closely with these groups to make the necessary arrangements to 'host' the service.

6. Very shortly after the City of Cardiff Council was awarded host status, arrangements were put in place to make the necessary appointments for the Director of Operations, staff and the Independent Chair of the National Adoption Service Advisory Group as well as the practical arrangements for office space and services etc. During December and January all four members of the central team took up post with the team becoming operational from January 5th 2015 working to the transition plan that had been agreed.
7. The National Adoption Service itself was formally launched at the Senedd, on November 5th 2014 during National Adoption Week. At the end of November the first formal meeting of the National Adoption Service Advisory Group took place and it has met bi-monthly since then. Similarly the National Adoption Service Governance Board met for the first time in February 2015 and will meet 5 times during 2015.
8. The Welsh Government funded the central elements of the service for the inaugural year (2014/15) while arrangements were put in place for it to be fully funded by local government in Wales going forward. From April 2015 funding for the central elements of the service, a top slice of the Revenue Support Grant, will be passported from the WLGA to the host local authority for the costs associated with establishing and operating the management and oversight functions of the National Adoption Service on behalf of local government.
9. Subsequently new regulations have been issued to underpin the arrangements. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015, known as 'The Directions Powers', were issued on March 13th 2015 for immediate implementation. These regulations set out in detail the aims for the National Adoption Service and the arrangements, including for governance, that need to be in place at both regional and national levels.
10. Within these regulations, regulation 6 sets out the requirements for all local authorities in Wales to collaborate with each other to carry out their adoption functions. Collaboration is specified at two levels together with the necessary governance arrangements:
 - nationally – all local authorities together to provide management and oversight of certain specified functions via a host local authority;
 - regionally – the 'footprint' for the regional adoption collaboratives is set out together with a detailed outline of what should be included in the partnership agreement for each collaborative.

The structure & role of the central team,

11. The team is based in County Hall of the host authority, the City of Cardiff Council and consists of:

- Suzanne Griffiths – Director of Operations
- Martina McCrossan – Policy and Practice Officer
- Wendy Carroll – Business and Performance Manager
- Tom Wood – [part-time] Administrative Assistant

Website: www.adoptcymru.com

12. The Director of Operations and the small team is appointed by the host authority to fulfil a range of functions related to the management and oversight of the National Adoption Service in line with the aims of the Service. The regulations, The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 specifies that these functions must include the following:

- Production of an annual work programme for the National Adoption Service and the Advisory Group which must include priorities, targets, financial plans and a budget;
- Monitoring and analysis of performance data from the regional collaboratives;
- Setting out the actions to take to address any issues which require improvement;
- Submission to the Governance Board of a six monthly interim progress report on 31 December and an annual progress report on 30 June each year to include
 - an analysis of the work programme previously approved by the Governance Board,
 - a financial report and analysis of the expenditure in relation to the central elements of the service,
 - an analysis of the reports received from the regional collaboratives and their performance,
 - what needs to be improved with proposals and
 - plans for how this is to be achieved that link back to the board aims of the service.
- Promotion of best practice and a culture of continuous improvement throughout the National Adoption Service;
- Establishing and maintaining a website for the National Adoption Service;
- The co-ordination of preapproval training courses for prospective adopters;
- The co-ordination of adoption support services;
- Managing the staff required to assist in carrying out the functions of the Director of Operations.

Governance arrangements - nationally

13. At national level local government must establish a Governance Board and an Advisory Group with terms of reference that are in line with the regulations and reviewed annually. There is also an expectation that local government ensures that the Governance Board, the Advisory Group and the Director of Operations are resourced sufficiently to perform their functions and achieve the aims of the National Adoption Service as well as having adequate financial and accounting procedures.
14. The membership of the Governance Board is set out, consisting mainly of elected representatives; it must include a representative of each of the regional collaboratives and a chairperson. In addition 'best endeavours' must be used to ensure that the following become members of the Governance Board:
- (a) the WLGA spokesperson for Health and Social Services;
 - (b) the WLGA deputy spokesperson for Health and Social Services;
 - (c) the mayor or the executive leader (or a deputy for these roles) of the Host Authority;
 - (d) the independent chairperson of the Advisory Group; and
 - (e) a representative of the registered adoption societies.

All these representatives are in place, with the Board being chaired by Cllr Nott OBE the WLGA Presiding Officer.

15. The role of the Governance Board is to provide strategic direction in the development and delivery of the National Adoption Service, having regard to any advice from the Advisory Group and the Director of Operations. This includes approving the annual work programme, ensuring that the views of all stakeholders are represented effectively, monitoring and overseeing performance, the quality of engagement with registered adoption societies and service users at both central and regional levels, the budget and financial management, compliance with the Directions Powers and ensuring that due consideration is given to the need for Welsh language in planning and delivery of adoption services throughout Wales. It is also the responsibility of the Governance Board to make copies of reports available to Welsh Ministers and notify Welsh Ministers of any issues regarding the National Adoption Service which, in its view, need to be drawn to their attention.
16. The Advisory Group is comprised of professionals and experts in the field of adoption and other linked disciplines and has an Independent Chair who is appointed by local authorities via the WLGA. The individuals and the organisations that they represent have a lead role or interest in providing, supporting or developing adoption services in Wales.

17. The role of the Advisory Group which is to provide professional advice and support to the Governance Board to inform the overall strategic direction of the service as well as supporting the operation of the service, ensuring it promotes best practice and notifying Welsh Ministers of any issues it considers should be drawn to their attention.
18. The membership of the Advisory Group is also specified and must include a representative of each of the regional collaboratives and an independent chairperson. In a similar way to the Governance Board it is expected that 'best endeavours' are deployed to ensure that the following become members of the Advisory Group:
- (a) a representative of the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru (ADDSC);
 - (b) a representative of the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW);
 - (c) a representative of the WLGA;
 - (d) three representatives from registered adoption societies;
 - (e) a legal adviser from the Host Authority;
 - (f) a Designated Doctor (appointed by the Public Health Wales National Health Service Trust with specific responsibilities in relation to safeguarding the welfare of children and in relation to children looked after by a local authority);
 - (g) a medical adviser appointed by an adoption agency;
 - (h) a representative of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS);
 - (i) a service user representative;
 - (j) a legal advisor from the host authority; and
 - (k) a representative from a Social Research Centre (CASCADE).

The entire above are in place, with Mr Phil Hodgson MBE appointed as the Independent Chair. Since becoming established the Advisory Group has agreed that a representative of the Children's Commissioner should become a member with observer status and that links be created with CAFCASS Cymru.

19. The current arrangement is that the Director of Operations, the Chair of the Governance Board and the Independent Chair of the Advisory Group meet with the Minister for Health and Social Services twice a year. To date two meetings have taken place.

Governance arrangements regionally

20. This will have been considered in previous reports to the City of Cardiff Council where the arrangements for the regional collaborative were agreed.

21. Governance at the regional level stems from the written partnership agreement that must be in place between the local authorities in the collaborative. A wide range of matters are prescribed for inclusion in the partnership agreement as well as there being provision for additional matters, relevant to local circumstances, to be included. The regulations cover in some detail a range of matters relating to the governance and service delivery of the collaborative as well the relationship between the regional collaboratives and the central / national elements of the service and in particular reporting and provision of information to the Director of Operations, the Advisory Group and to the Governance Board.

Update on performance of the National Adoption Service

22. April 2014 to March 2015 is seen as the inaugural year of the National Adoption Service straddling as it does much of the set up phase and the first few months of the National Adoption Service being operational. A decision was taken that an annual report would be produced for 2014/15; this was published on July 16th 2015 receiving a good response and positive media coverage. The full report, and a short / young people's version, is available on the website

<http://www.adoptcymru.com/en/news-and-events/annualreport>

23. The report notes that a great deal had already been achieved in terms of:
- a. All the regional collaborations were providing services jointly; four fully functioning with the fifth due to be very early in 2015/16;
 - b. The central elements of the service established and effectively operating;
 - c. The very important relationship with the voluntary sector adoption services that operate in Wales being maintained and maturing;
 - d. A strong partnership with Health, via the Designated Doctor service, forged leading to the development of standards and quality assurance mechanisms;
 - e. Arrangements for learning from best practice and research in place due to the establishment of a strong relationship with Cardiff University through both CASCADE (Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre, School of Social Sciences) and the Wales Adoption Study (School of Psychology);
 - f. Engagement with adopters and adopted young people finding out what the current issues were for them and how they wished to engage with the service going forward;
 - g. Being able, through the new Performance Measurement Framework, to identify where improvement is needed but also demonstrate the improvements that had already been made

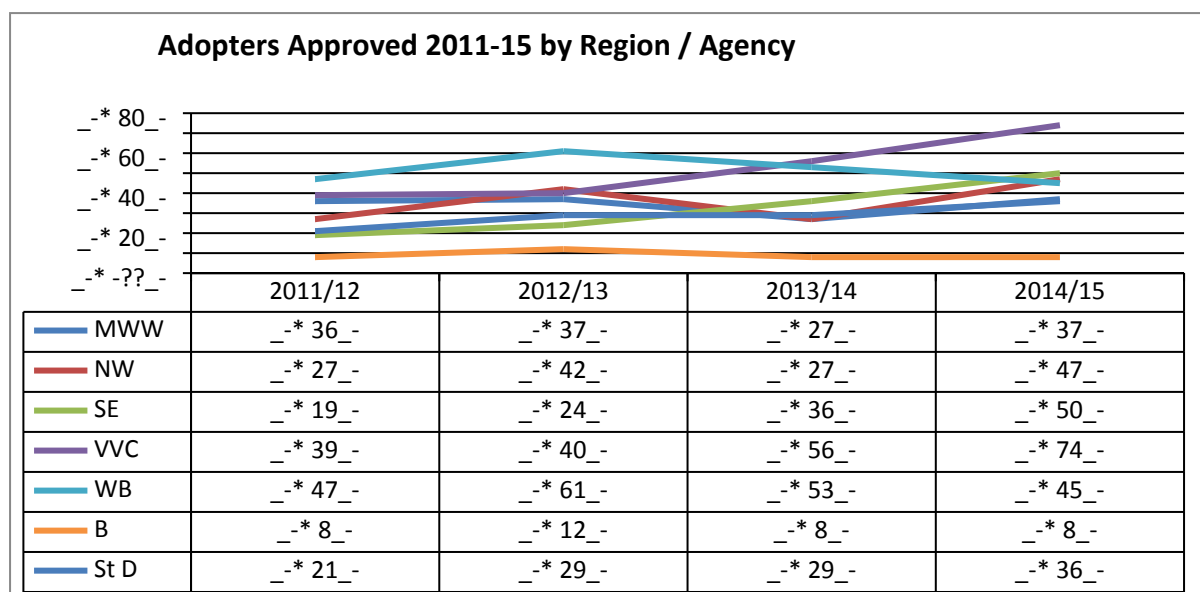
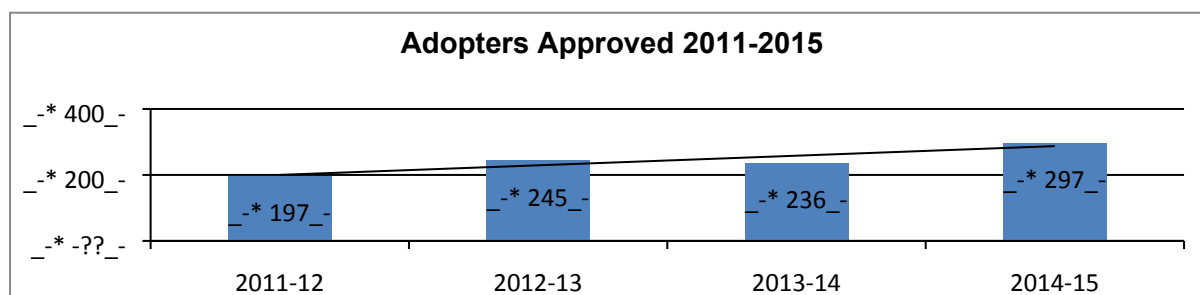
Performance

24. It was possible to provide a comprehensive overview of the performance of adoption services for the first time. This was based primarily on data collected for the new Adoption Performance Management Framework which was procured by Welsh Government and commenced data collection in April 2014. Regions and Voluntary Adoption Agencies in Wales also provided some historical data to inform the identification of trends over time.

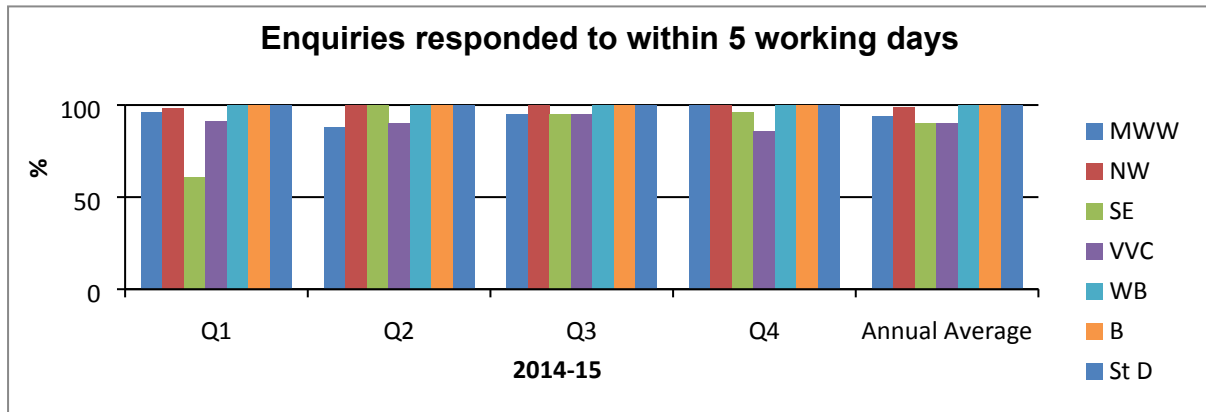
25. This was positive in enabling us to see and understand performance with more confidence than had been possible before. By understanding what the data tells us, the stories behind that data and also the comparative information we will be greatly assisted as we work to improve adoption services in Wales. It was also a time for a cautionary note in that this is the first time that this data has been available to agencies, their first opportunity to interrogate it and consider fully what is telling us particularly in relation to the comparisons between agencies.

26. The highlights from the performance reports were as follows;

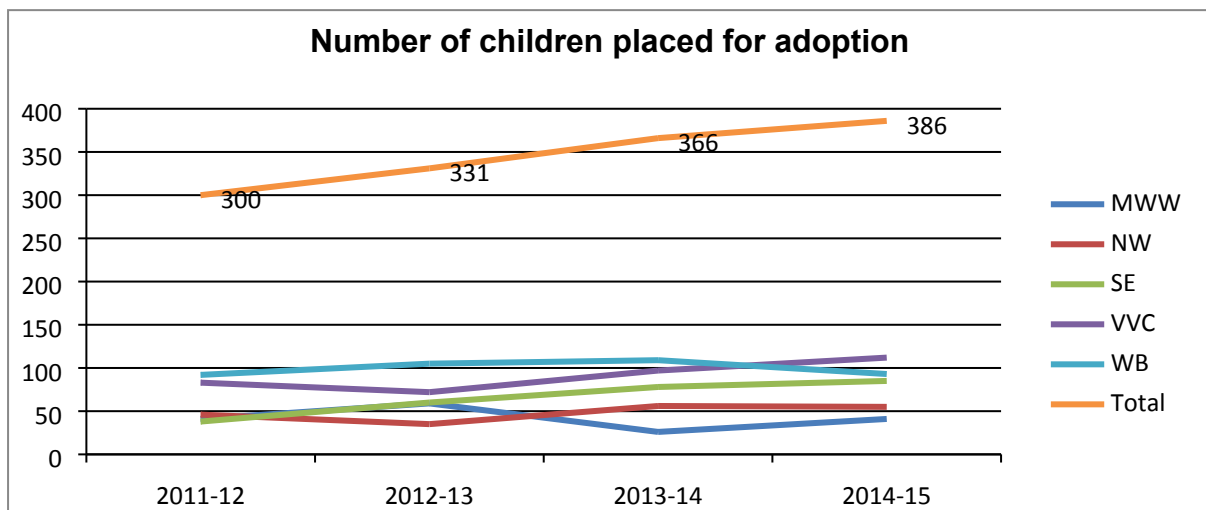
- 26% more adopters were approved in 2014/15 than in the previous year maintaining an overall upward trend in approvals with some regional variations.



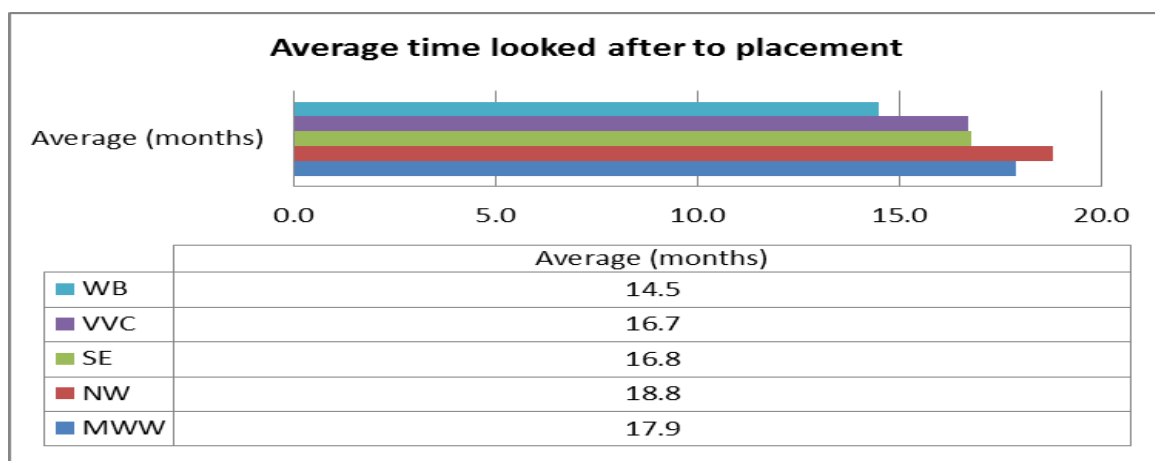
- Some agencies achieve 100% in responding to enquiries in 5 working days and the remaining performance is at 95%



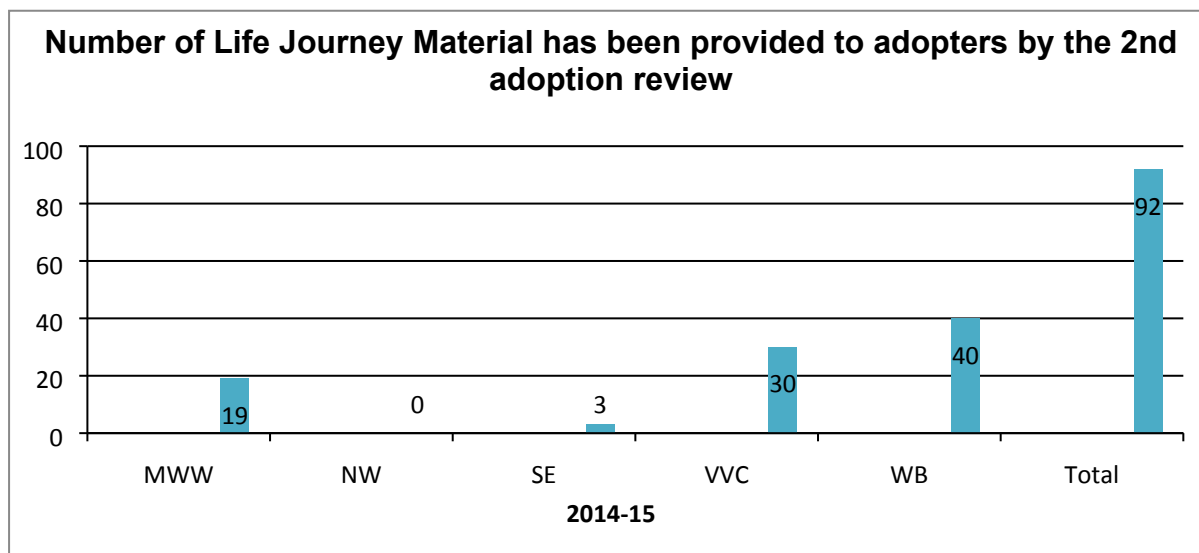
- The number of children placed for adoption has increased for the third year. In 2014/15 386 children were placed for adoption in Wales.



- The average time it takes for a child in Wales to be placed for adoption (from the point of most recent looked after episode) has shortened by 10 months to 16.5 months or 1 year 4.5 months from 2 years and 3 months.



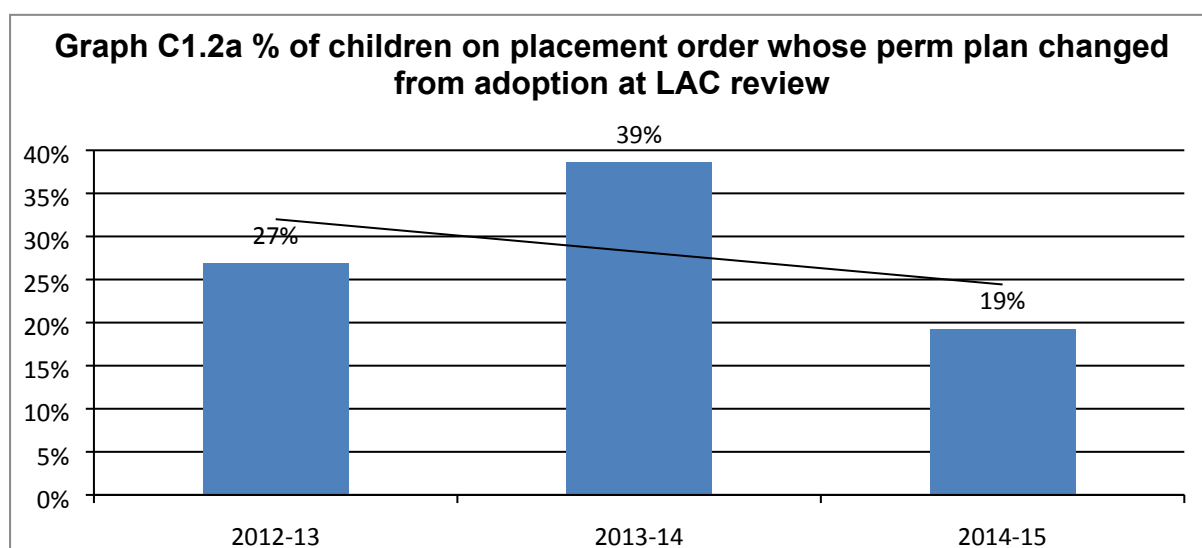
- The level of birth parents who take up the offer of a service is very low, 18% overall across Wales.
- Too few Welsh children and their adoptive parents are receiving life journey material in a timely way (23.8%).



% of Life Journey Material has been provided to adopters by the 2nd adoption review

	MWW	NW	SE	VVC	WB	Total
Total	46.34%	0.00%	3.53%	26.79%	43.01%	23.83%

- Fewer children had their plan for adoption changed this year (78 compared to 180 in the previous year) but we would still wish to see a further reduction in this.



2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
---------	---------	---------

95	180	78
----	-----	----

27. We have used the data to inform service targets for 15/16 which link to the priorities which are outlined below.

- We need more adopters who can meet the needs of children waiting for adoption, particularly for children over the age of 4 and sibling groups.
- There is more work to do to improve how children and families are matched. We have speeded this up, but too many children still wait more than 6 months for a match. Too many children have their care plan changed from adoption because we cannot find an adoptive family for them. We do not have an agreed system that works well for matching children with a family. We aim to develop a system, and also address some practical matters such as getting life story work done.
- A lot of work needs to be done to improve adoption support services. This is going to be challenging because of the cuts to public services. At the very least, we need a way for adopters to keep in touch with the adoption services if they want to. It would be a step in the right direction if adopters had an annual contact or information bulletin from the adoption service, were told what support is currently on offer and the process for accessing support was easier.
- Everyone needs a way to get involved and have a say about adoption services. This applies to work with individuals, how we check the quality of services and how we run services. Both children and adults need a way to get involved. We will need to do some further development work on this, alongside doing what adults and young people have already told us. We need to find out why we are not doing well at involving birth parents, and think of how to do this better in the future.
- Research has been published about the quality of services, from the perspective of adopted children, young people and their parents. The research has some important and difficult messages for us. Everyone involved in adoption services needs to hear these messages. We all need to take the messages into account as we make changes.
- The Welsh Government is developing work around looked after children. We are watching this work. We recognise that we have a role to play in this. In particular we have a role in promoting good practice about attachment and resilience in children, and in planning for permanent futures.

28. There is a detailed plan which is being worked on to meet the priorities and targets

Suzanne Griffiths
 Director of Operations
 National Adoption Service for Wales
 August 2015

This page is intentionally left blank

Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative

Progress Report September 2015

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of the establishment of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative for the Management Board, Joint Committee and relevant Scrutiny Committee.

Background

Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) which is comprised of the adoption services of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC, Merthyr Tydfil CBC and Cardiff Council is one of five regional Collaboratives which form part of the National Adoption Service in Wales (NAS). The background and rationale for the development of the Collaborative can be found in reports to Cabinet in each of the partner local authorities during November and December 2014.

In March 2015, Welsh Government published the (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015, known as “ The Directions Powers “, which prescribe the regional areas and the governance structure for the service at a national and regional level.

The first report of the National Adoption Service for 2014-15 was published in July 2015 which contains a summary of the overall performance of the service and targets for improvement.

VVC became operational on the 1 June 2015 when adoption staff transferred to the employment of the Vale of Glamorgan Council under TUPE transfer arrangements and to their central operational base at Ty Pennant in Pontypridd. The accommodation is leased from RCT on a licence basis. A formal Licence Agreement has been drawn up and duly signed.

The merger of the adoption services within the region on this date was the culmination of much co-ordinated effort and joint working on the part of all partners in progressing the plan to implement the service.

The Regional Adoption Manager, Business Support Manager and other newly created managerial positions within the structure took up post on this date.

The Legal Agreement underpinning the operation of the Collaborative was signed and took effect from 1 June 2015.

Progress Update

Governance structure

In line with the requirements outlined in the Directions Powers, the Steering Group formed to oversee the implementation of the Collaborative was established as the Management Board in July 2015.

The Board meets bi-monthly and is attended by the Heads of Children's Services for the four authorities and the Regional Adoption Manager. It is chaired by the Director of Social Services for the Vale of Glamorgan. The Director of St David's Voluntary Adoption Agency sits as a member of the Board representing the Voluntary Adoption Agencies. The Medical Adviser from Cardiff and the Vale University Health Board and the LAC Education Co-ordinator for the Vale of Glamorgan joined the Board in September providing representation from the health and education sector.

The first meeting of the Joint Committee, comprised of a lead Member from each of the partner authorities and attended by the four Heads of Service and the Regional Adoption Manager took place on 16 September 2015. The Collaborative is unique in having a Joint Committee structure to provide overall governance. The role and function of the Joint Committee is specified in the Legal Agreement along with the reporting mechanisms.

The Joint Committee will agree the draft budget and the Annual Collaborative Plan by 31 December each year. There is also a requirement under the Agreement for an Annual Review of the Collaborative to be undertaken within 3 months of the end of the financial year and for this Review and an Annual Report prepared by the Regional Adoption Manager to be submitted to the Joint Committee.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 2015 and thereafter meetings will be held twice a year.

The Progress Report was approved by the Management Board and Joint Committee.

Staffing resources

Staff recruitment has been an immediate priority and challenge for the Collaborative. Prior to and since implementation, significant effort and time has been devoted to recruiting to the vacant posts created by the merger, both in terms of Social Worker posts and Business Support positions with the aim of filling the gaps as soon as possible.

Gradually posts have been filled so that the Business Support Team is now fully staffed and Social Worker appointments have been made. Six permanent Social Work posts have been filled since June plus one temporary maternity cover position. An offer has been made in respect of another permanent post. Currently two maternity cover vacancies remain unfilled and a further temporary vacancy is pending to cover another maternity absence. Discussion is now taking place as to

the most appropriate means of covering the shortfall, but it is unlikely that a full staff complement of permanent staff will be in place for some time.

However, the keen and consistent interest shown in the posts advertised, both from within the partner authorities and externally has resulted in VVC being successful in drawing upon a range of experience in respect of the appointments made. Some of the staff require to be developed in adoption work but bring vital skills and experience in other areas of practice. It is therefore hoped that by balancing skills, knowledge and experience and developing the enterprising attitude demonstrated by the staff to date, a solid workforce will be established to deliver the work of the region.

Service delivery

The staffing position has meant that the full implementation of the agreed Service Delivery Model according to specialist functional teams has been delayed until the service is fully staffed. The Managers appointed to lead these teams are working to the specialist areas but they also share a range of tasks, such as providing agency advice to the local authority Agency Decision Maker and Adoption Panels.

The level of demand for the service remains high with a consistent stream of enquiries from prospective adopters and a number of children being referred for adoption, although there has been some reduction in numbers reflecting the national trend. The service received some backlog of work from the partner authorities, particularly in the area of Adoption Support with the result that referrals for the Collaborative were received on the first day of operation.

Despite the shortfall in staffing, service delivery has been maintained with emphasis being placed upon reducing disruption for service users wherever possible and trying to provide continuity of service. Social Workers have retained their existing caseloads but new work has had to be allocated across the whole staff team regardless of their particular specialist preference. Recruitment of prospective adopters and family finding for children requiring adoptive placements has been prioritised according to need but there remains a waiting list for Access to Birth Records referrals and requests for Intermediary Services. Business Support roles have been re-aligned to specialist areas to provide consistency and economies of scale.

The management team within VVC has focused attention upon developing support structures for staff and operational processes and procedures in order to provide a more streamlined co-ordinated approach. This work is not yet complete but a plan is in place to progress this. A clear process for co-ordinating the adoption referral and decision making process for children across the region has been agreed and relayed to all Heads of Service and local Childcare Teams. Further work is underway to

establish the regional Adoption Panel with the aim that it will become fully operational from October 2015.

In order to maintain and develop strong working links with local authority teams the Regional Adoption Manager and other Managers within VVC have met with relevant teams to explain the background to the National Service and remit of the Collaborative. These meetings have provided a further opportunity to cascade the procedural changes which have been agreed since implementation.

Priorities

The National Adoption Service has set a number a number of priorities which include recruiting more adopters for siblings and older children, placing children for adoption more quickly, providing better adoption support and engaging more effectively with adults and children who use adoption services. VVC has developed a detailed workplan which reflects national and regional priorities and the actions proposed within the Collaborative to meet these priorities. A copy of the workplan has been submitted to the Director of Operations for the National Service as per requirements.

Performance management

Since April 2014, performance within the Collaborative has been reported on a quarterly basis against the Performance Management Framework developed by Welsh Government. The Director of Operations' report highlights consistent performance for VVC in certain key areas, in particular the recruitment of prospective adopters and the placement of children for adoption, recruiting and placing the highest number in Wales in 2014-15. 74 adopters were approved in this period and 112 children placed for adoption.

Data from Quarter 1 2015-16 (1 April 2015 – 30 June 2015) has been produced and analysed. The data set is split in relation to three main areas: children, adopters and birth parents.

The significant data in relation to children indicates that 20 were matched with adoptive parents during this period and 21 were placed for adoption. The indicators in relation to the timeliness of the process for children from decision making to placement demonstrate that the region has performed well. Of concern however, are the number of children (13) who have waited over six months for a placement and although this number has reduced, the need to place children more quickly is a key action point for the Collaborative.

In respect of prospective adopters, 26 initial enquiries were received in this period and 12 adopters were approved. A high conversion rate from enquiry to approval was recorded. Again regional performance in terms of the timeliness of the process was positive with overall performance being reported just below the national target. One area of improvement noted, is in relation to the response to enquiries within 5 days where the region reported a 96% return. It is hoped, however, that now regional systems are in place to co-ordinate a timely response that this figure will increase by the next reporting period.

Performance in relation to the delivery and take up of birth parent counselling remains low and is a clear priority for the region. It is hoped that the change in practice across the service whereby birth parent counselling is offered as a matter of course will significantly improve performance. Another area which requires improvement relates to the provision of Later Life material for children at their second adoption review. This area, however, relates directly to local authority practice and requires the Collaborative to develop close working links with local authority teams to ensure that this objective is met.

The Quarter 1 data set has been considered against data from the same period last year and although this represents a downturn in certain key areas, such as adopter recruitment and the placement of children, this must be seen in the wider context of the impact of regional re-organisation, staffing shortfall and national trends. Other Regional Collaboratives have reported a dip in their performance during their first year of operation whilst services were being established and resources put in place. Additionally, there has been a reduction in the number of children being referred for adoption and in the number of adopter enquiries on a national level which has impacted upon regional performance. A comparison between the data returns for VVC against other similar regions supports this view. The performance of VVC during Quarter 1 compares favourably with other regions and exceeds some which are more established.

As VVC was not fully operational during the first quarter, individual reports from the four local authorities were compiled. VVC will now take over the administration and co-ordination of future reporting, although initially may have to continue to source some of the data relating to children specifically from the responsible local authority.

Performance against the performance indicators set for adoption is currently being monitored via managerial reporting mechanisms, staff supervision and analysing the factors contributing to performance within the region on a regular basis.

Budget and financial considerations

A first year indicative budget was agreed for the Collaborative. A breakdown of expenditure to date was presented to the Management Board and Joint Committee

in September 2015. Close monitoring arrangements are in place to monitor expenditure via monthly budget reports and meetings between the Regional Adoption Manager and Accountant.

The pooled budget does not provide for Adoption Allowances, external agency placement fees and Adoption Support packages. Decisions in relation to funding these matters are referred back to the designated officer in each of the local authorities for agreement following assessment by the Collaborative. The administration of these payments will be undertaken by VVC from January 2016 once all the practical arrangements are in place to undertake these payments on behalf of partners.

Adopter expenses incurred during introductions to children being placed are currently being met from the VVC budget. In the longer term it is envisaged that this expenditure alongside the areas not currently contained within the regional budget will be managed through an equitable formula agreed by all partners.

The regional technical group comprised of finance officers from the four authorities is scheduled to meet in October 2015 to review the budget and plan for the second year.

An internal audit review of the Collaborative was undertaken by Bridgend and Vale Partnership. A report in respect of Part One of the audit process was produced in September 2015. The report concluded “that *the effectiveness of the internal control environment is considered to be sound and therefore **substantial assurance** can be placed upon the management of risks*”. A copy of the report has been circulated to regional partners.

Summary

The establishment of the Collaborative represents significant organisational change both for staff and for the way adoption services were formerly delivered. This has posed challenges but considerable commitment has been demonstrated by all staff to maintain business continuity throughout this period of change and in order to minimise the disruption for service users. There is evidence that the service is now beginning to go through a period of consolidation and that it is stabilising. The introduction of new staff to the region and the commitment shown to meet the staffing shortfall has had a positive effect in developing ownership of the Collaborative amongst staff and in promoting regional working.

The immediate priorities for VVC are to continue to embed and maintain the service and to maintain current performance levels. In the longer term once staff are in place and staff new to adoption practice are fully equipped to undertake the role, it is

anticipated the benefits of collaborative working will be further evidenced and performance levels enhanced.

Angela Harris
Regional Adoption Manager
September 2015

This page is intentionally left blank