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AGENDA

Committee	CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Date and Time of Meeting	TUESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2015, 2.00 PM
Venue	COMMITTEE ROOM 4 - COUNTY HALL
Membership	Councillor Lent (Chair) Councillors Kirsty Davies-Warner, De'Ath, Evans, Goddard, Merry, Sanders and White

1 **Apologies for Absence**

To receive apologies for absence.

2 **Declarations of Interest**

To be made at the start of the agenda item in question, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

3 **Minutes** (*Pages 1 - 4*)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting on 22 September 2015.

4 **Connect Crosslands Children's Home Model of Care** (*Pages 5 - 6*)

The presentation in relation to this item will require the exclusion of the public in accordance with Paragraph 12 of Part(s) 4 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

5 **Regulation 32 Report - Confidential Item** (*Pages 7 - 30*)

The Appendices to this report are confidential by virtue of paragraph 12 of Part(s) 4 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

6 **National Adoption Service Annual Report 2014-2015** (*Pages 31 - 90*)

As part of this item the video presentation to be considered will require the public to be excluded in accordance with Paragraph 12 of Part(s) 4 and 5 of Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972.

- 7 **Education Matters - Looked After Children's Performance in Cardiff School 2014 - 2015** *(Pages 91 - 94)*
- 8 **Q2 Complaints and Representations Report 2015 - 16** *(Pages 95 - 102)*
- 9 **Q2 Performance Summary Report** *(Pages 103 - 112)*
- 10 **Draft Work Programme/Forward Plan 2015 - 2016** *(Pages 113 - 116)*
- 11 **Discussion Item - Feedback on Workshop from 22 September 2015**
- 12 **Corporate Parenting Strategy - Verbal Update**
- 13 **Member and Director Visits to Front- line Teams** *(Pages 117 - 152)*

The Appendices to this report as not for publication in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 paragraphs 12 and 21 of Part 4 and 5 of Schedule 12.

14 **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee is on Tuesday 19 January 2015 @ 2.000pm in Committee Room 4

Marie Rosenthal

Director Governance and Legal Services

Date: Wednesday, 11 November 2015

Contact: Mandy Farnham, 02920 872618, Mandy.Farnham@cardiff.gov.uk

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**22 SEPTEMBER 2015**

Present: County Councillor Lent(Chairperson)
County Councillors Sanders, White and Merry

38 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Evans, Goddard and Joyce

39 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were received.

40 : MINUTES

The Minutes of the 16 June 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson. The Committee also asked that updates on issues raised in the minutes be provided by the respective officers.

41 : QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS REPORT -
QUARTER 1 2015-16

The Committee received a report that covered complaints and representations from 1 April 2015 through to 30 June 2015.

New Welsh Government guidance and regulations in relation to social services complaints and representations came into being on 1 August 2014. This guidance replaced "Listening and Learning" which was introduced in 2006. The significant difference between the previous procedure and the new arrangements was the removal of the stage 3 panel. The new procedures placed the emphasis on the initial local resolution stage – Stage 1, with complainants being offered a discussion to resolve the matter. The second formal stage (Stage 2) provided for independent investigation. If the outcome of Stage 2 did not satisfy the complainant there was recourse to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

The Committee noted that where the complaint related to a looked after child, a child in need or a care leaver the local authority had a duty under the Children Act 1989 to provide an advocate as required.

The Committee were informed of the summary of complaints activity during the period. 58% (26) of the complaints received were in relation to the social worker or the service received. 9% (4) of the complaints received were in relation to finance. 7% (3) of the complaints received were in relation to contact. 7 of the 45 complaints (16%) received during the quarter related to looked after children compared with 6 in Quarter 4. 20 complaints were received regarding the Child in Need Service compared with 18 in Quarter 4. The number of new complaints regarding the Intake & Assessment Service had remained the same at 11.

Members were provided with an example complaint received and resolved this quarter.

Members of the Committee were provided with information on the following:

- Independent Investigations
- Stage 3 Review Panels
- Themes emerging during the Quarter

The Committee was advised that teams were more readily sharing the compliments they received from a variety of sources e.g. service users, professional etc. All compliments were recorded electronically.

The Committee received information on the subject access request. This was a request from an individual to see a copy of the information an organisation held about them, or their children. These requests should be responded to within 40 calendar days of receipt. Children Services received 21 Subject Access Requests in Quarter 1 2015-2016. In addition to this, Children's Services received 28 requests from the Police and 3 requests from Legal Services or other Council's for access to records.

The Chairperson thanked officers for the information provided and invited Committee Members to asked questions.

The Committee was advised that Information Managers would record complaints and referred to the specific social worker for action. Unfortunately as a result of the dynamics of Children Services social workers did not have time to come back into the office to address the complaint. However, if a full response was not possible at that time an acknowledgement would be sent to the complainant. Further, new procedures were being put into place to support mobile working of social workers, which would allow them access to their emails whilst out of the office.

A Duty Worker would prepare the request, processed through a virtual white board with administrative staff providing advice on the process. This was known as interface between business support officers and social workers.

The Committee was advised that most cases preferred responses from the respective social worker. In some instances families did not have access to email, and were not in a position to receive an electronic response. Phone calls could be made but data protection procedures were in place and names could not be left on a answer phone service.

42 : REGULATIONS 32 REPORT - CONFIDENTIAL ITEM

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED – That the public be excluded for the following items of business by virtue of paragraph (s) 12 of Part (s) 4 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Committee noted the content of the report.

The Committee suggested inviting Siobhan Teague to a future meeting with a possible visit to the centre to be put in place.

43 : EDUCATION MATTERS - EXAM RESULTS OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - REPORT TO FOLLOW

The Committee were provided with information on the report of looked after children's performance in Cardiff Schools 2014-2015.

The report provided an initial analysis of educational outcomes for the academic year 2014-2015 of Cardiff Looked After Children (LAC) in Cardiff Schools and identified the main strengths and shortcomings in performance.

The Comparative performance of LAC was addressed and the following information was noted:

- Foundation Phase Outcome Indicator – **Cardiff LAC 2015 – 75%**
- Key Stage 2 Core Subject Indicator – **Cardiff LAC 2015 – 56%**
- Key Stage 4 Level 2+ Threshold – **Cardiff LAC 2015 -15%**

The Committee noted the overall improvements in Cardiff for Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

The Committee was advised that of the factors impacting on outcomes:

- Over the last year there had been a concerted effort to focus on increasing the transparency of data and a robust tracking system was now in place.
- A stronger working relationship between the local authority and the consortium was ensuring that schools receive the appropriate degree of challenge. Challenge advisers had the names of all LAC pupils so that they could challenge individual performance.
- Stronger, effective partnerships with Children's Service had ensured quicker responses to concerns and barriers impeding pupil progress.
- The progress of and provision for Looked After Children was now discussed in Team Around the School (TAS) meetings and ways forward agreed if revisions need to be made.

The Committee was advised there would be further development of Multi agency meetings (MAG) and identification of pupil's underachievement/ barriers to learning. Central staffing would also be reviewed to meet the needs of the growing complex LAC population.

The Committee was informed that all Cardiff Looked After Children educated in Cardiff or out of Cardiff were now included on the tracking system. Termly assessment data would further assist in the early identification of LAC who were achieving below age related expectations.

The Committee noted that a further update on progress would be provided at the next meeting.

Officers drew attention to the data provided and confirmed this was based on 2013 figures. A further update on this data would be provided at the next meeting.

The intention was to incorporate the data into the Corporate Parenting Strategy with detailed outcomes on achievements would be made. Additional training was being provided for School Governors in order to improve their lines of enquiry.

44 : MEMBERS VISITS - VERBAL UPDATE

Officers explained to the Committee that visits had been made by 3 Members to the 0-14 team. The Chairperson confirmed that she had made a number of others visits and would be providing feedback on the visits and the process.

Officers suggested the Committee attend visits to front line teams, possibly every six months and report feedback to the Meeting.

The Committee discussed future visits and dates and Debbie Martin-Jones agreed to co-ordinate these.

45 : DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME/FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of matters for consideration by the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee in 2015/16.

RESOLVED: The Committee considered the suggested work programme for 2015/16 and recommended the following topics.

- Younger Children/ Bright Sparks
- Crosslands

46 : CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY - UPDATE TO FOLLOW

The Committee received a verbal update on the report.

Officers advised that partnership working was taking place between Children Services and Education in order to monitor progress, especially at children in care, with complex needs. Education attainment was improving, especially in areas where children were cared in long term placements.

It was recognised there was a need for an increase in carers and foster carers, including the use of external users and agency care.

The Committee agreed for the report to be circulated to them in order to provide feedback by the 30 September 2015.

The Committee noted the timeline for delivery of strategy.

47 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17 November 2015.

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



CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

17 November 2015

Connect Crosslands Children's Home Model of Care

Reasons for the Report

1. Crosslands Children's home is attending the committee to deliver a presentation about the Home's model of care Connect. The model has been developed to provide the staff team with an evidence based theoretical framework that underpins their practice. The outcome for young people is to make a difference to their lives and life chances by actively promoting real and sustained improvement.

Background

2. The home has developed a model of care that combines the skills, knowledge, resources and commitment of the staff team to deliver identified outcomes
 - a) The model focuses on evidence based practice that implements a theoretical framework and makes links between them.
 - b) The staff team is trained to deliver the Connect model of care.
 - c) The home has a stable and skilled residential workforce
 - d) Recognition that too many young people placement changes exacerbate emotional feelings of loss, separation, abuse and/or neglect; often their past lost, much of it forgotten.
 - e) The Staff team identified that all young people moving into the Home were dealing with unprecedented levels of change that affected every area of their lives and led to poor outcomes.
 - f) The home recognised the uniqueness of each young person and the growing complexity of their needs and experiences had to be considered.
 - g) The challenges these needs present for the staff team and the absence of a single, coherent framework
 - h) Recognition that direct work and emotional literacy supports young people to understand, integrate their past, make sense of their present and develop a clear sense of identity for their future.
 - i) Ensure model of care is compatible with the existing PROACT-SCIPr-UK® Behaviour management programme and Restorative Approaches
 - j) The existing Educational Psychologist drop – in service delivered a range of advice and support to the staff team and created an environment to launch the model.

- k) The staff team trained as emotional literacy support assistants to build their capacity to support the emotional needs of the young people by identifying needs and intervening effectively to create change.
- l) Develop resources and a programme of support (worksheets, books, activities and games) matched to the young people's needs
- m) To ensure mechanisms are in place to monitor and review progress of the Connect model in young people's lives.
- n) To provide opportunities and activities for young people to increase their self esteem and confidence.

Financial Implications

- 3. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

Legal Implications

- 4. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

- 5. The Connect model of care sets out what the staff team will do and how we will work to deliver sustained improvements and placement stability in young people's lives.

Siobhan Teague
Registered Manager
26 October 2015

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



**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
17 November 2015**

Regulations 32 Reports - Confidential Item

The appendices attached to this report are confidential by virtue of paragraph(s) 12 of Part(s) 4 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Reason for the Report

1. The terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee require that the Committee receives Children's Homes Quality of Care Reports.

Background

2. The City of Cardiff Council currently directly delivers a single children's home. That children's home is known as Crosslands. Additional children's home placements are commissioned from independent providers.
3. Regulation 32 (5) of the Children's home (Wales) Regulations 2002 specifies that where the registered provider of a children's home is an organisation, copies of written reports on the conduct of the home shall be supplied to each of the directors or other persons responsible for the management of the organisation.
4. Regulation 32 quality of care reports relating to Crosslands are presented to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee at every meeting.
5. Regulation 32 requires that visits take place at least once a month and may be unannounced.
6. The visits are conducted by an employee of Children's Services who is not directly concerned with the conduct of the home and who is suitable to visit the home, in accordance with part 2c of the regulation.
7. It is specified in part 4 of the regulation, that the person carrying out the visit shall:
 - (a) interview, with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home;

- (b) inspect the premises of the children's home, its daily log of events and records of any complaints; and
 - (c) prepare a written report on the conduct of the home.
8. A copy of regulation 32 reports conducted since the last Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee meeting are attached at **Appendix A** and **Appendix B**.
9. Regulation 32 reports are confidential by virtue of paragraph(s) 12 of Part(s) 4 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and should not be published nor submitted beyond the agreed readership.

Financial Implications

10. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

Legal Implications

11. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

12. The Committee is recommended to note the information contained in the regulation 32 reports.

TONY YOUNG
Director of Social Services

MARIE ROSENTHAL
Director Governance and Legal Services

10 November 2015

By virtue of paragraph(s) 12 of Part(s) 4 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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



**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
17 November 2015**

National and Regional Adoption Service

Reason for the Report

1. This item is presented to The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee:
 - As a theme for information and discussion as part of the Committee's 2015 – 2016 work programme;
 - In response to a letter from Councillor Mel Nott to Council Leaders and Members for Children's Services, dated 27th of July 2015; written in his capacity as and Chair of the National Adoption Service for Wales Governance Board (copy attached at **Appendix A**)
 - To provide an opportunity to review and comment on the implementation and operation of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff (VVC) Regional Adoption Collaborative (Report attached at **Appendix C(B)**).

Background

2. The National Adoption Service was launched in November 2014 to bring together local, regional and national organisations and activities, as a key part of implementing the Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2014.
3. The City of Cardiff Council Cardiff holds the prestigious role of 'host' to the national team for an initial three year period, following success in a competitive process.
4. The 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. The three tier structure is based in local government, with partnership arrangements connecting to services in other sectors. Operation is overseen by a Governance Board and an Advisory Group.
5. Suzanne Griffiths is the Director or Operations. The Governance Board is chaired by Councillor Mel Nott OBE who is the WLGA Presiding Officer. Councillor Sue Lent; Deputy Leader, and Tony Young; Director of Social Services represent The City of Cardiff Council as the host authority on the

Governance Board. Phil Hodgson is the Independent Chair of the Advisory Group.

6. The Service is run in line with regulations in the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015. These regulations set out in detail the aims for the service, including the need to for governance at regional and national levels.
7. Local authorities remain responsible for identifying and meeting the needs of children for whom adoption is the most appropriate plan. The five local collaboratives are responsible for developing and improving services. The National Team coordinates national functions, drives improvement and consistency whilst maintaining strategic and planning links.
8. The letter from Councillor Nott encourages Members to ensure that links with the national and regional Adoption Service are embedded in the Corporate Parenting duties of the Council.
9. The letter highlights the first annual report of the services (copy attached at **Appendix B**) and a video produced by Adoption UK Wales.
10. April 2014 to March 2015 was seen as the inaugural year of the National Adoption Service seeing the set up and first months of operation. The report highlights progress in:
 - Setting up and handing over to the central operations team and regional collaboratives, including building relationships and getting into the media.
 - Collaborating with people who use the services, voluntary adoption services and Health services.
 - Reporting, comparing and understanding data about adoption activity across Wales for the first time, following the introduction of a new performance management system.
 - Consultation exercises, conferences and events to listen to adopted young people and adopters and to identify priorities.
 - Looking specifically at adoption support.
 - Identifying priorities and setting out an action plan.
11. The Committee is encouraged in the letter to make itself aware of the issues highlighted in the attachments, alongside receiving reports about how the service is working to meet the needs of the looked after children in the area, that are to be or have been adopted.
12. A report presented to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee at its 13th of October meeting, detailed progress on the implementation and operation of the National Adoption Service and Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Regional Adoption Services and is attached at **Appendix C**, along with appendices to that report **Appendix C(A) and Appendix C(B)**.
13. Appendix C(B) is the September 2015 progress report of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff (VVC) Regional Adoption Collaborative. The VVC Collaborative comprises the City of Cardiff Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, Merthyr County Borough Council and the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

14. The report summarises:

- The regional governance structure
- Staffing and resources
- Service delivery
- Performance management
- Budget & financial considerations.

Financial Implications

15. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

Legal Implications

16. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

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

TONY YOUNG
Director of Social Services
10 November 2015

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Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service

To Council Leaders and Lead Members for Children's Services

July 27th 2015

Dear colleague

Re: Adoption Services and Corporate Parenting

I write in my capacity as Chair of the National Adoption Service Governance Board to encourage you to ensure that the council has robust links with the service, particularly your local regional service and that these links are embedded in the Corporate Parenting duties of the Council.

As you are aware the National Adoption Service was launched in November 2014 with a considerable commitment by local government in putting the five regional adoption collaboratives plus the office of the Director of Operations in place to improve services. There are early signs of progress as evidenced in the first annual report of the service which is available on the website www.adoptcymru.com This report also contains priorities, a plan and targets for 15/16 which the whole service will be working to.

Alongside this early consultation with adopters and adopted young people has identified a range of issues which have informed priorities. These focus primarily on the support that is available from local government and health services to secure good outcomes pre and post adoption. There is some specific intelligence emerging from research about how the needs of adopted children are met in school which is informing service priorities. Produced by Adoption UK Wales and with input from teachers and adoptive parents in Wales, a video has been produced about the importance of understanding adopted children and their needs in the education environment. This has been made available to education services in Wales and is also available via the following link:

<http://www.adoptionuk.org/walescymru/education-video>

I would encourage you to ensure that your Corporate Parenting Committee / Board makes itself aware of these issues alongside receiving reports about how the service is working to meet the needs of the looked after children in your area that are to be or have been adopted.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Mel Nott
WLGA Presiding Officer
Chair of the National Adoption Service for Wales Governance Board

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Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service

**Achieving More Together /
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd**

Annual
Report
2014 - 2015

Appendix B



Western Bay
ADOPTION SERVICE
GWASANAETH MABWYSIADU
Bae'r Gorrlewin

adoptionuk
ar gyfer pob teulu sy'n mabwysiadu
for every adoptive family



MABWYSIADU
& MAETHU
BAAF
ADOPTION
& FOSTERING



Vale, Valleys
and Cardiff
Adoption | Mabwysiadu
yn y Fro, y Cymoedd
a Chaerdydd



Mabwysiadu
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru
Adoption
Mid & West Wales



after
adoption

Page 37

**Credwch
mewn plant
Believe in
children**
Barnardo's
Cymru



South East Wales Adoption Service
Achieving More Together
Gwasanaeth Mabwysiadu Deddfyrain Cymru
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd!



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
North Wales
**Adoption
Service**
Gogledd Cymru



Cymdeithas Plant Dewi Sant | St David's Children Society

Message from the Independent Chair of the Advisory Group

I was delighted to be appointed as the first Independent Chair of the National Adoption Service Advisory Group in the autumn of 2014.

I am particularly pleased to be presenting the National Adoption Service's first annual report and to acknowledge the importance of the combined leadership of the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru, the Welsh Local Government Association and Welsh Government.

Our aim was to fundamentally change how adoption services are delivered in Wales. I would like to highlight some of our achievements towards that.

- All of the regional collaborations are working. This is a considerable achievement in a time of so much organisational and financial uncertainty.
- The National Advisory Service launch event was well supported by Ministers and attracted media attention to adoption and adoption services.
- The role of City of Cardiff Council in hosting the central parts of the service.
- Our very important relationship with the voluntary sector adoption services is growing and deepening.
- We have a strong partnership with Health, via the Designated Doctor service.
- We have a strong relationship with Cardiff University through CASCADE (Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre, School of Social Sciences) and the Wales Adoption

Study (School of Psychology). We look forward to learning about best practice from their research.

- We have begun to engage with adopters and adopted young people, to find out what matters to them and how they would like to work with us in the future.
- We have established links with important partners such as Education, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, the Children's Commissioner for Wales and The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service.
- We have a better system to collect information about how we are doing. This shows where we need to do better and where we have already improved.

I know we still have much to do. However, I am pleased to acknowledge that a good start has been made - as this report will demonstrate.

Philip T. Hodgson

Phil Hodgson

Independent Chair of the National Adoption Service Advisory Group

Message from the Director of Operations

I felt enormously privileged to be appointed the first Director of Operations for the National Adoption Services for Wales last summer, and also a little daunted by the high expectations that went with it.

The success of the first year is testament to the huge amount of work undertaken by local authorities, the voluntary adoption agencies, Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru, Welsh Local Government Association, managers in the City of Cardiff Council and over the last few months the small central team of the National Adoption Service.

None of it could have happened without the commitment of the Task and Finish group that steered the development, the sterling work of the project manager, Jane Moore, who was employed by ADSSC to develop the national service and funding from the Welsh Government for the first year while arrangements were put in place for the service to be fully funded by local government in Wales.

The model for the National Adoption Service has a unique, collaborative way of organising and co-ordinating adoption service delivery. The model was developed by the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru, the Welsh Local Government Association and the voluntary adoption agencies in Wales. Welsh Government sees it as an important example of delivering services in a very different way, in line with the principles of the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014.

The creation of the National Adoption Service heralds the beginning of a very different relationship

between the statutory and voluntary sectors, a relationship that will need to be further developed into the regional and local arrangements over time.

This report records the work and achievements of the inaugural year of the National Adoption Service. I am very pleased with what has been achieved so far but this is, of course, just the beginning.....



Suzanne Griffiths

Director of Operations



What is the National Adoption Service?

The National Adoption Service was launched in November 2014 during National Adoption Week. It was developed during the previous 18 months under the leadership of a Task and Finish Group (Appendix 1).

The Service is run in line with regulations in the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015.

The National Adoption Service is an umbrella that brings together local, regional and national organisations and activities.

Locally, each local authority identifies and meets the needs of looked after children, including those where a decision has been made that the child should be placed for adoption.

Regionally, local authorities work together within five regional collaboratives. The collaborations have (or will have) strong links with voluntary adoption services, health and education. Section 2 includes information from and about the five regional collaborations.

Nationally, the local authorities collaborate to provide central services and voluntary adoption agencies collaborate as the Strategic Voluntary Adoption Partnership.

The local authorities collaborate to provide:

- a central team, hosted by City of Cardiff Council. This team is headed by a Director of Operations. The start-up costs for the team were funded by the Welsh Government (see Appendix 4).
- a National Adoption Service Advisory Group, including four sub-groups. Appendix 2 has a list of members.
- a National Adoption Service Governance Board. Appendix 3 has a list of members.

- links with national voluntary adoption agencies.
- managing the new Performance Measurement Framework.

Members of the Strategic Voluntary Adoption Partnership played a strategic role in the setting up of the National Adoption Service. They continue to play a key role in the National Adoption Service Advisory Group and its sub-groups, the National Adoption Service Governance Board and the regional collaboratives. The five members are:

- St David's Childrens Society
- Barnardo's
- BAAF Cymru
- Adoption UK
- After Adoption

Section 2 includes information from each of these voluntary organisations.

Report on the 2014-2015 work plan

This first year saw the end of the work of the Task and Finish Group and the launch of the National Adoption Service itself.

This section reports on progress in these key areas:

1. Setting up the central operation for the service and getting it working
2. Developing the regional collaboratives
3. Collaborating with voluntary adoption agencies
4. Collaborating with the people who use adoption services
5. Collaborating with health services
6. Looking specifically at adoption support
7. Making sure there was a smooth hand-over from the Task and Finish Group to the National Adoption Service
8. Developing key aspects of running the National Adoption Service, such as:
 - Building good relationships between staff and managers
 - Getting into the media
 - Developing good relationships with key people outside the National Adoption Service

Setting up the central operation for the service and getting it working

Our goals, which were achieved, were to:

- Appoint the host authority. City of Cardiff Council was appointed.
- Recruit Director of Operations and appoint a Policy Officer, Business and Performance Manager and Administrative Officer. All had started work by 5th January 2015.



- Establish the National Adoption Advisory Group, Governance Board and appoint a Chairperson. Mr Phil Hodgson MBE was appointed as Independent Chair of the Advisory Group. He took up his post fully in April, after a short period of temporary arrangements for the role. Both the Advisory Group and Governance Board are fully operational. The Advisory Group has four sub-groups to take forward the work.
- Commission the All Wales website. This was 'live' in time for November's launch. It includes video and digital real life stories from adopters and professionals. The Task and Finish Group agreed a brand, logo and strap line. In time, they will be used regionally and locally as well as nationally.

Developing the regional collaboratives

We needed to:

- Make sure the regional collaboratives were working by October 2014. All the regional collaboratives were at least partly working by October 2014 thanks to the hard work of many, particularly the Heads of Service from the five regional lead authorities chaired by the Association of Directors of Social Services Lead

Director for Adoption Services. Four regional collaboratives were fully working by 31st March 2015.

- Make sure that children and adults who use adoption services have similar experiences across the regions, and, as far as possible, services are run in similar ways. The five Senior Adoption Managers meet every other month to develop ways of working that can be used in all the regions.

Collaborating with voluntary adoption agencies

Voluntary adoption agencies have played a strategic role in setting up the National Adoption Service and continue to play a strategic role in how it is run.

There are, were or will be representatives on:

- the Task and Finish Group
- Advisory Group and its four sub-groups
- Governance Board
- the interview panels for choosing the Host Authority, the Director of Operations, other staff in the central team and the Independent Chairperson of the Advisory Group
- the management committees of all five regional collaboratives

Representatives were also involved in:

- commissioning the All Wales website
- creating the brand
- the media strategy
- organising the launch event

The Director of Operations met with five representatives of voluntary adoption agencies before taking up her post, and has continued to do so.

Collaborating with the people who use adoption services

Section 3 has details about the work we commissioned to consult adopters and adopted children and young people, and what we learned about their priorities and how they would like to be involved in our work in the future.

We also found out about the current activities across Wales for listening to, talking with and working with people who use adoption services.

Based on this work, we will be making recommendations for the future, including how birth parents could have a say in the work of the National Adoption Service.

Collaborating with health services

Carolyn Sampeys, our Designated Doctor representative, has led this work. A number of workshops have been held to:

- find out about health services for looked after children and adopted children;
- develop and test 'standards' for the role of the medical advisor with adoptive parents;
- develop a plan for how adoption services and medical advisors will work together when they are dealing with adopters, children and matching children with adopters
- create a peer group and peer review process for medical advisors

Looking specifically at adoption support

We held a workshop on 7th July 2014. As a result, a framework has been agreed for providing adoption support services. The Adoption Support Services sub-group of the Advisory Group will take a lead role in taking this work forward.

A smooth hand-over

The Director of Operations and Project Manager (working for the Task and Finish Group) agreed a transition plan. The plan was approved by the Association of Directors of Social Services and the Welsh Local Government Association.

Four sub-groups were set up as part of the Advisory Group to make sure the hand-over was smooth and that work keeps progressing. The sub-groups are led by the Policy and Practice Officer and the Business and Performance Manager from the central team.

The sub-groups are chaired by members of the Advisory Group. The four sub groups are:

- Adoption Support Services
- Media and Marketing
- Common Policies and Good Practice
- Performance Management

Developing key aspects of running the National Adoption Service

Building good relationships between staff and managers

We held a conference in March 2015 for staff and managers who work in or alongside the regional and voluntary sector adoption services in Wales. This was important in helping staff in the wider service to understand what the National Adoption Service is and the implications for their work in the future. The conference was very well attended, feedback was good and we received lots of ideas and suggestions to consider in plans for the future.

Getting into the media

We contracted 'Brighter Comms' (formerly 'CAKE') to:

- manage the PR for the launch of the National Adoption Service
- promote the service
- train staff from the central team, regional collaboratives and voluntary adoption agencies so that they are ready to take responsibility for PR from 1st April 2015

Developing good relationships with key people outside the National Adoption Service

The Director of Operations, Chair of the Advisory Group and Chair of the Governance Board met with the Minister for Health and Social Services, Mark Drakeford AM, and Welsh Government officials. This was a positive meeting and confirmed the priorities for the service.

We held a number of events to tell people about the National Adoption Services, and took part in a number of events and conferences.

We have responded to two key Welsh Government consultations:

- the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015
- regulations that say how to put into practice the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014



SECTION 2

Reports from the regions and voluntary organisations

North Wales Adoption Service



Led by: Wrexham

Comprises: Ynys Mon, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham

Started: 2010

Our operational procedures are working well. We will be able to work well as part of the National Adoption Service.

We are fully staffed and good at keeping our staff. The staff group went to the National Adoption

Service Staff Conference in March. This helped them to appreciate the wider adoption community in Wales.

We have presented our Annual Report for 2014/15 to our Partnership Board, and shared it with other organisations including the courts.

We are revising our partnership agreement, to reflect recent changes in adoption legislation in Wales.

We have three joint panels. These are working together more closely and knowledgeably.

South East Wales Adoption Service



Led by: Blaenau Gwent

Comprises: Torfaen, Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Newport

Started: 1st April 2014. Before this, three of the five local authorities had already been delivering some adoption services together.

We have specialist teams for:

- recruiting and assessing adopters
- family finding (matching adopters and children)
- adoption support

We will review how well it is working at the end of 2015.

Our management committee includes representatives from voluntary adoption agencies, education and health. The committee looks closely at our quarterly performance information.

We have agreed a logo, strapline and vision statement. We are working to make sure all advertising and documents use our branding and National Adoption Service branding.

Our work plan includes:

- organising task and finish groups to look at how the service operates
- reviewing adoption support and adoption panels
- producing practice guidance, for example 'From Enquiry to Approval'

Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative

Led by: Vale of Glamorgan Council

**Comprises: Rhondda Cynon Taff, Merthyr Tydfil,
Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan**

Fully operational: 1st June 2015

We have already done a lot of work to develop joint working arrangements for:

- training prospective adopters
- a joint adoption panel
- sharing approved adopters
- matching children with adopters
- sharing the same policies and procedures

We launched a regional webpage in November 2014 for enquiries about becoming adopters, along with an 0800 number for telephone enquiries.

The service is based in Pontypridd. Staff not already employed by the Vale of Glamorgan were transferred on 1st June 2015. The Regional Adoption Manager and Business Support Manager are already in post. We are recruiting for vacant posts.



We are governed by a Joint Committee and a Management Board. The Joint Committee has councillors from all four local authorities, and the Management Board includes a representative from St David's Voluntary Adoption Agency. We have a legal agreement saying what the collaborative will do and what each local authority will do.

We have a joint budget. For now, budget decisions about placements outside the local authority, adoption support and adoption allowances are still made by the individual local authority.

The service will have three specialist teams:

- recruitment and assessment
- family finding (matching adopters and children)
- adoption support

We expect there will be a high demand on the service. We will keep checking that we have got the right structure to meet that demand.

Barnardo's Cymru

Our Welsh Adoption and Fostering service is long established.

We have bases in Cardiff and Colwyn Bay.

During 2014/15, we continued to recruit adopters and place children with approved adopters.

Our service is smaller than the other services, but we have played a full part in the development of the National Adoption Service and will continue to do this. We have been active in all the sub-groups, and we chair the media and marketing sub-group. We represent voluntary adoption agencies on the South East Wales Adoption Service management committee.

We placed 15 children for adoption in the last year, from both Welsh and English local authorities.

**Credwch
mewn plant
Believe in
children**

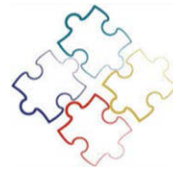


**Barnardo's
Cymru**

Our 2015/16 target is to:

- recruit 17 more adoptive families and place 22 children
- increase the number of children we place from Welsh authorities
- focus on children such as those on the National Adoption Register who are harder to match with adopters, for example sibling groups, older children and children with disabilities

Mid and West Wales Adoption Service



Mabwysiadu
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru
Adoption
Mid & West Wales

Led by: Carmarthenshire

Comprises: Powys, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire

Launched: April 2014. However, three of the four local authorities were already working together to provide some adoption services.

We have regular meetings to develop working across the region.

We have produced new information leaflets. This has helped give us a regional identity.

One priority is to streamline the adoption enquiry process.

The TV programme O'r galon Teulu, which shows the changing nature of the Welsh family, includes adopters in West Wales, both pre and post approval.

We are focusing on how we will work with birth parents, for example:

- setting up a support group
- having a birth parent to speak at preparation training for prospective adopters
- encouraging adopters to meet the birth parent before being introduced to the child (if that is appropriate)

- filming a video clip of a birth parent to use as part of training
- making the postbox contact system clearer (this is a way for letters to be passed between adopted children and their birth family)

We are also focusing on checking and improving the quality of the reports that say whether a child should be adopted and who should adopt them.

We have run training and workshops for children's social workers, managers and independent reviewing officers. We have held activity days for adoptive families across the region.

We have a worker whose sole job is to develop adoption support. This has highlighted challenges in terms of resources and meeting the need for support. The worker is developing links with other services, such as the Education Psychology Service and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. We have surveyed adopters and used what they said to write a new adoption support policy.

Some of our staff are on National Adoption Service sub-groups.

We want more adoptive families and staff to take up learning opportunities. Our training officer is looking at alternative ways to provide learning opportunities.

BAAF Cymru



Our Director is on the National Adoption Service Governance Board and Advisory Group.

We are looking forward to being the voluntary adoption agencies' representative on the Mid and West Wales Regional Partnership Board. We are well represented on the National Adoption Service sub-groups.

During 2014/15 we were awarded two contracts by Welsh Government:

- Wales Adoption Register
- Independent Review Mechanism Cymru

These two services are central to the National Adoption Service.

The Wales Adoption Register

Launched: 4th June 2014

The register has information on children and adopters from the five regions, St David's Children's Society and Barnardo's. This information is critical to helping everyone understand adoption activity in Wales.

In the last nine months we have:

- set up systems for referring children and adopters to the register

- set up the Wales Adoption Register Steering Group
- held consultation meetings with colleagues from voluntary and public sectors
- led an Adoption Exchange day in November 2014

The register has generated 294 potential links.

41 children have found adoptive families as a direct result of the Register, including eight as a result of the Exchange day.

We are looking at the data we have collected, and this will be included in the Wales Adoption Register annual report.

We are constantly looking for ways to make the Register even more effective. We very much welcome the feedback from colleagues about this.

Priorities for the Register are:

- launching the website
- producing user-friendly leaflets for prospective adoptive parents, children and birth parents

Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)

Launched: April 2010

This service can independently review approval decisions when a foster carer, adopter or applicant to foster/adopt is not happy with the local agency's decision.

Our current contract is until 31st March 2016.

In 2014/15, we had 13 applications to the IRM, mainly for fostering decisions. This is the highest number we have had. We also had the first application from a prospective adoptive family.

We have now appointed seven additional Panel members to increase the Panel's diversity.

We have offered workshops to agencies across Wales to explain the work of the IRM.

We plan to revise the information for prospective applicants about the IRM.

We get feedback from applicants and agencies after each case is closed. Overall feedback is very positive. We use less positive feedback to improve our service.

We also give feedback to agencies on good practice to support them to improve their services.

Western Bay Adoption Service



Led by: Swansea

Comprises: Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea

Plans approved: December 2014

Adoption teams relocated to Port Talbot Civic Centre: February 2015

Our model is based on:

- recruitment and assessment
- twin tracking and family finding (twin tracking means a child is fostered by someone who can adopt them if the plan becomes for the child to be adopted; family finding means matching adopters and children)
- adoption support

Staff work across the service as the need arises. As a result, different parts of the service are working together more closely.

We have agreed how we will buy services and we will be buying adoption support services.

Our website is now live. It links with the National

Adoption Service website and the three local authority websites. So far, feedback on our website is positive. Our logo uses the National Adoption Service colour scheme.

A councillor represents our service on the National Adoption Service Governance Board and is attending the meetings.

We are forming a management board. We have agreed representatives from the voluntary adoption agencies, and they attended the first meeting in May. Health and education representatives still need to be agreed.

We are developing policies and operational procedures for the region. These will fit with the policies and procedures of the rest of Wales. We are working on how to listen to and involve people who use our service.

Staff are beginning to settle to this new way of working. We hope this is just the start of a journey to give better outcomes for children, adopters and all those affected by adoption.

Adoption UK

Our role is to support and give a voice to adoptive families and people who want to adopt.

We currently have 350 adoptive family members in Wales who get:

- regular newsletters and magazines
- access to a Wales helpline
- invitations to a network of 11 support groups, which includes specialist groups for adoptive dads, single adopters and Lesbian and Gay adopters

Our Development Manager in Wales is a voluntary sector representative on the National Adoption Service Advisory Group.

adoptionuk

ar gyfer pob teulu sy'n mabwysiadu
for every adoptive family

The first year of the National Adoption Service was all about getting the new structures in place. The challenge for all of us now is to co-produce a service that gives adoptive families the support they need to enable their children to recover and move on from earlier neglect and abuse.

The long term success of the National Adoption Service will rest on whether we can all work together to get the adoption support system working across Wales.

After Adoption

We continue to work tirelessly to promote our perspective that adoption is lifelong, and to make sure that anyone involved in adoption can access our services.

We were delighted to work with others to help set up the National Adoption Service. However, setting up the National Adoption Service has resulted in local authority colleagues focusing on restructuring into regional collaboratives. This, together with the economic environment, has made life uncertain for voluntary sector colleagues.

We see a firm role for the voluntary sector and After Adoption in Wales in the future. The National Adoption Service gives the chance:



- for us to deliver on day to day adoption support
- for us and the people who use our services to have a voice in shaping the future of adoption practice in Wales

The National Adoption Service is creating good links with our Talk Adoption group of adopted young people.

We continue to work collaboratively. We have an ongoing role in the National Adoption Service support sub-group. We are in regular contact with the National Adoption Service central team.

St David's Children Society

Cymdeithas Plant Dewi Sant



St David's Children Society

We play an active role in the National Adoption Service.

In 2014/15:

- 41 Welsh children were placed with adopters we had approved

- 54 couples or single applicants came to pre-adoptive training
- we approved 36 applications to adopt

Our Chief Executive is on the National Adoption Service Advisory Group. We contribute to sub-groups and the regional collaboratives.

SECTION 3

Listening to people and working with them

Listening to adopted young people and adopters

We asked Adoption UK to consult adopters. We asked After Adoption to consult adopted young people.

We wanted to know:

- What current issues concern people?
- How would people like to engage with the National Adoption Service in the future?

Adoption UK and After Adoption have both produced reports. There is also a short video made by the children and young people. The key messages are in this section. You can get the full reports from the organisations.

Listening to professionals

We used discussions at conferences and events to consult with:

- The Wales Family Justice Network
- CAFCASS managers
- Some staff working in or linked to the National Adoption service

We know we need to listen to other people, particularly birth parents.

We have started to look at how different parts of the National Adoption Service listen to people and work with them.

Key messages from adopted young people and adopters

Young people said:

- I want support to understand my emotions
- School doesn't understand adoption
- I want to know about my past & my adoption
- There should be more support around birth family contact



Adopters said they had most issues with:

- Therapy for the child / access to CAMHS
- Getting support in school (primary & secondary)
- Life Journey work
- Contact with birth parents

Young people also said:

- People don't understand adoption
- I have been bullied because I am adopted
- I feel different and don't want to
- I feel there is a lack of support

Adopters also had concerns about:

- Therapeutic parenting
- Adoption allowances
- Statementing when a child has additional learning needs
- Social media
- Child to parent violence
- Sibling contact

Adopters were happier about support before the adoption order than after the order had been made.

Key messages from professionals

Their key messages were about the need for:

- better adoption support
- more choice of placements
- more support for birth parents
- better practice (eg better practice around Life Journey work)

Getting involved in the future

Young people and adopters would be willing to sit on the Advisory Group.

Adopters wanted to get involved by:

- answering surveys, with a preference for on-line surveys
- being consulted during support group meetings
- taking part in focus groups

Adopted young people wanted to get involved by:

- meeting with National Adoption Service staff
- making video blogs

SECTION 4

What we know about adoption activity in Wales

Introduction

This is the first year it is possible to report on data about adoption activity across Wales.

Having reliable data helps improve services throughout Wales as we:

- compare the activities of the five regional collaboratives and (where relevant) the two voluntary adoption agencies that approve adopters
- understand what the data means
- find out the stories behind the data
- compare data from Wales with data from other parts of the UK

The data is from:

- the new Adoption Performance Measurement System (data collection began in April 2014)
- the Wales Adoption Register
- local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies (who provided data from previous years)

Our annual report gives an overall picture of adoption activity in Wales.

This is the first time that the five regional collaboratives and the voluntary adoption agencies have had a chance to compare their activities with those of other agencies. It will take time for everyone to reflect on the data in this section, and think what it means for the future.

A note of caution: it was the first year of collecting many of these data, and we have identified some areas where data collection could be improved. However, the data presented here is reliable and gives a picture of the journeys of children who need to be adopted and adults who wish to adopt.

All data is for the year 2014-2015, unless it says otherwise.

Looked after children

Looked after children may live with foster carers, in residential care, with a family member or with their own parents. They may need to be looked after by their local authority for a short time, or may never be able to return to live with their birth parents. Some of these children will need a plan for a permanent home. For many, this will mean an adoptive family.

The most recent data about looked after children is from 2013-2014. The Welsh Government will publish data for 2014-2015 later this year.

What's the story in Wales?

The number of looked after children in Wales has been going up, year on year (see Figure 1). The rise was less in 2012-2013, and 2013-2014 was the first year where the numbers fell slightly. When we see the 2014-2015 numbers, we will know if the upward trend has changed to a downward trend. We cannot predict how this trend should affect the numbers of adoptions without knowing the reasons why more or fewer children became looked after. As yet, no-one knows this for sure.

Figure 1 Number of looked after children in Wales

Year	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Number of looked after children	5,160	5,410	5,720	5,765	5,755

How does Wales compare to England?

The rate for looked after children (the number of looked after children per 10,000 population) is higher in Wales than in England (see Figure 2)

Figure 2 Rate of looked after children in Wales and England

	Wales	England
2011	85	58
2012	90	59
2013	91	60
2014	91	60

No-one is sure why the rate is higher in Wales than England. Without knowing this, it is hard to interpret any differences in rates of adoption between Wales and England.

From looked after child to adopted child

Looked after children need a plan for their long term future.

If they cannot live with their birth parents, there may be a **“should be placed”** decision by the local authority that adoption is the best plan for them.

The local authority then applies to the court for a **placement order**, allowing them to place the child with approved adopters once a match is found.

After the child moves in with the approved adopters, there is a period of becoming a family before going back to court for an **adoption order**.

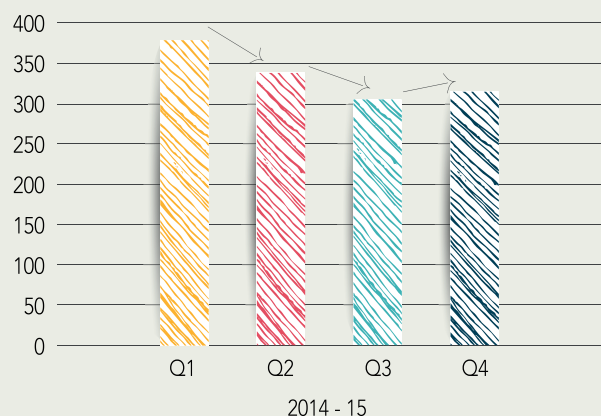
Sometimes, despite a “should be placed” decision or placement order, plans change. This could mean:

- adoption is no longer the best option
- there is no realistic chance of the child being matched for adoption as there are no suitable approved adopters

What we know about “should be placed” decisions

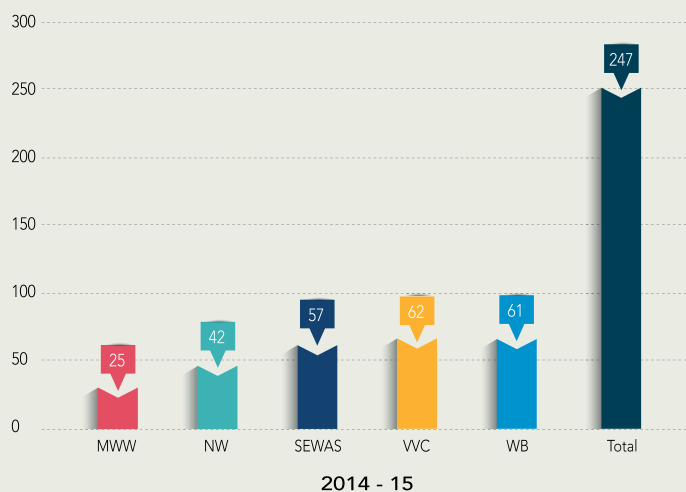
During the year, the number of children with “should be placed” decisions who had not been placed for adoption went down (see Figure 3). On 31st March 2015, 316 children with a “should be placed” decision were waiting for a match.

Figure 3 Number of children with a “should be placed” decision who have not yet been placed for adoption



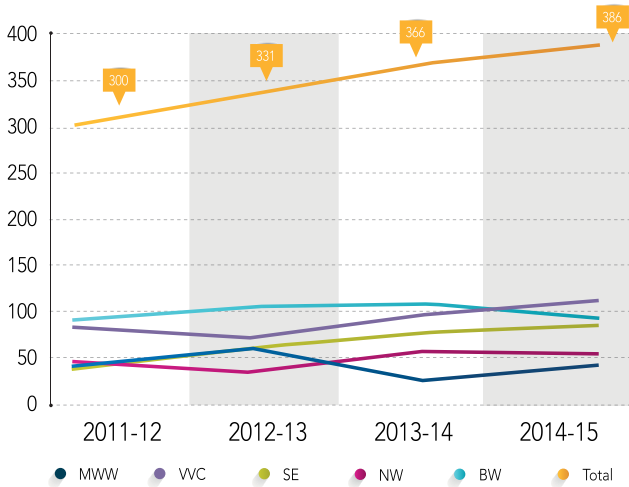
67% of the children who were matched in 2014-2015 were not matched until more than six months after the “should be placed” decision was made. This percentage varied considerably around Wales (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 Number of children matched who have waited longer than 6 months between a “should be placed” decision and being matched for adoption



What we know about being placed for adoption

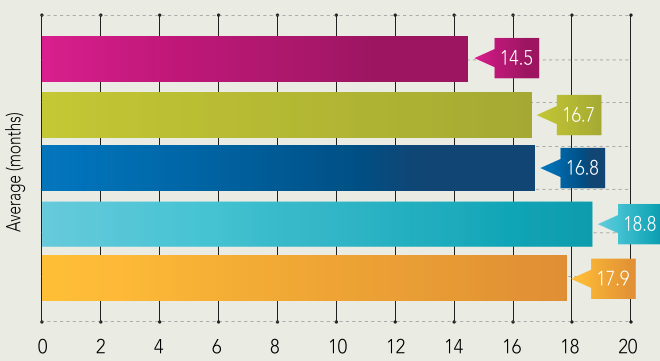
Figure 5 Number of children placed for adoption



386 children were placed for adoption in Wales (see Figure 5). This includes 38 children placed through St David's Children Society and 11 placed through Barnardo's.

On average, it took 16.5 months from becoming looked after to being placed for adoption. The previous year's average wait had been about 26 months. The average wait varied considerably around Wales (see Figure 6).

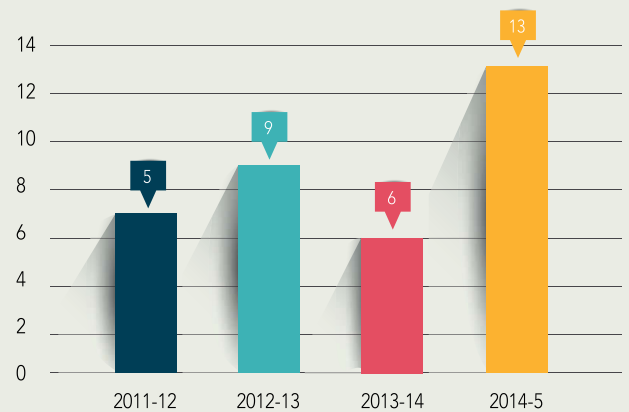
Figure 6 Average time between becoming looked after and being placed for adoption



Almost all placements lead to an adoption. However, for a small number of children and adopters, the placement breaks down before the adoption order (see Figure 7).

Region	Average (months)
WB	14.5
WVC	16.7
SE	16.8
NW	18.8
MWW	17.9

Figure 7 Number of children whose placement breaks down before the adoption order



A small number of adoptions also disrupt after the adoption order. We know that on 31st March 2015, 34 looked after children had previously been adopted.

What we know about children who are still waiting

Children should be referred to the Wales Adoption Register if they are not matched within 3 months of a placement order. This increases the number of possible adopters.

On 31st March 2015, there were 201 children on the register. Most of these children were in the process of being matched.

Only 62 children were still available to be matched. These children were likely to be over the age of five, and wanting to be placed together with at least one brother or sister.

What we know about children whose plan is changed from "should be placed"

This is an area we want to understand better in the future. This is what we know:

- Fewer children had their plan changed in 2014-15.
- The most common reason for changing the plan is that there are no suitable adoptive placements. For these children, the plan is often changed to long term foster care. For some, the change is

because the child is going to live with someone permanently under a Special Guardianship Order or Residence Order.

What do we know about adoption orders?

In 2013-2014, 345 children were adopted. This is 6% of the looked after children in Wales. Both the number of children adopted and the percentage of looked after children who are adopted has gone up over the last few years (see Figure 8).

Figure 8 Children adopted in Wales and England

Year Adopted	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Wales	229	254	246	329	345
As % of looked after children	4.4%	4.7%	4.3%	5.7%	6.0%
England	3,200	3,100	3,470	4,010	5,050
As % of looked after children	5.0%	4.7%	5.2%	5.9%	7.3%

We know that a higher percentage of looked after children are adopted in England (7.3%) than in Wales (6%). We are not sure why this is. It may be due to differences in adoption activities, or it may be due to differences in the needs of children who are looked after.

From first enquiry to becoming an adoptive parent

What do we know about enquiries

Agencies received 1,161 enquiries about becoming adopters in 2014-2015. This is an increase of 27% since 2011-2012 (see Figure 9).

We know that some people made enquiries to more than one agency, so we cannot give a definite number of people who made enquiries.

Figure 9 Number of enquiries about becoming adopters

2011-12	913
2012-13	950
2013-14	1166
2014-15	1161

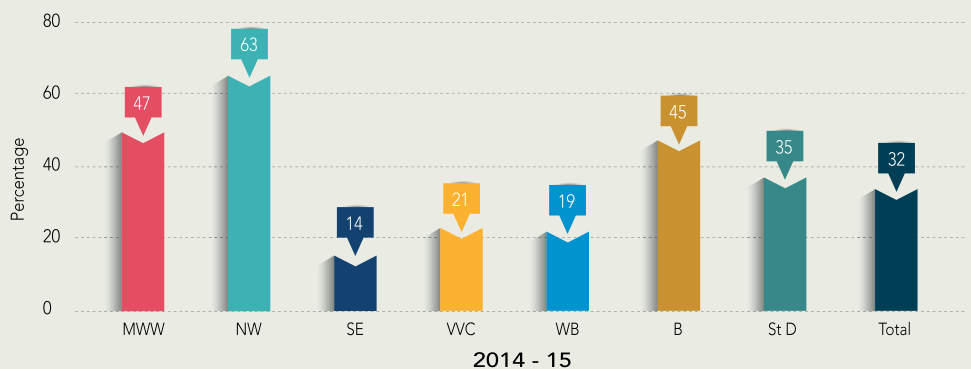
The target is to reply to 100% of initial enquiries within five working days. St David's, Western Bay and Barnardo's all achieved 100% and North Wales was very close to this (see Figure 10).

Figure 10 Percentage of enquiries responded to within five working days

Mid and West Wales	94%
North Wales	99%
South East	90%
Vale, Valleys and Cardiff	90%
Western Bay	100%
Barnardo's	100%
St David's Childrens Society	100%

What do we know about enquirers who don't then apply to adopt?

Figure 11 Percentage of enquirers who don't apply to adopt with that agency



After enquiring to an agency, a person will:

- have an initial visit from the agency to be given more information
- decide whether to make an application to adopt

32% of people who had an initial visit in 2014-2015 did not make an application to adopt with that agency within that year. This varied considerably depending on which agency did the initial visit (see Figure 11).

We need to understand the stories and reasons behind these numbers. We do know:

- some people enquire with more than one agency, and may have applied to another agency
- some may still be thinking and could apply in 2015-2016

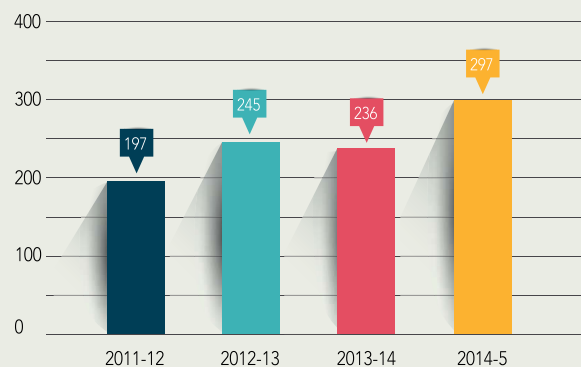
What we know about how long it takes to be approved

Welsh Government guidance says it should take 8 months between that first enquiry and when a person is approved as an adopter.

The average time for Wales as a whole was 9.4 months. However, as Figure 12 shows, the average time varies between under 7 months and over 13 months.

What we know about who is approved

Figure 13 Number of adopters approved



Across Wales, 297 people were approved as adopters. This number has been going up year on year (see Figure 13) and we want to make sure this continues.

Any adopters not matched within three months of approval are referred to the Wales Adoption Register to look for a match with a child looked after elsewhere.

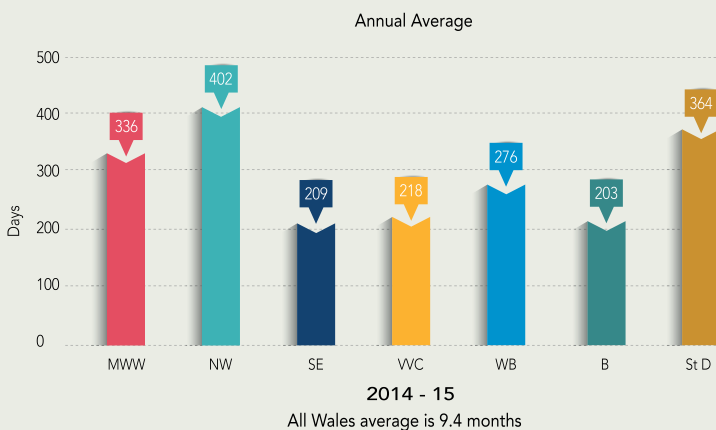
Of the 153 adopters referred to the Wales Adoption Register during the year:

- 75% wanted to adopt just one child who was under the age of five
- 89% were a couple (either heterosexual or same-sex)
- 86% were white

Of the 56 adopters on the Wales Adoption Register on 31st March 2015:

- 87.5% wanted to adopt just one child
- most of these wanted to adopt a child under the age of five.

Figure 12 Average time from initial enquiry to approval as adopters



What the data tells us about who we need to focus on recruiting as adopters

More people are being approved as adopters and there are more children needing adoption.

Currently, most approved adopters want to adopt just one child, and almost all want to adopt a child under the age of eight.

The mismatch is clearest if we look at adults and children on the Wales Adoption Register on 31st March 2015.

- Most adopters want to adopt younger children, but there are fewer younger children needing adoption.
- There are not enough adopters available to adopt older children, especially children from the age of four upwards.
- There are too few adopters available to adopt sibling groups.

Based on this, the National Adoption Service aims to increase the number of adopters who are willing to consider older children and sibling groups.

Other functions of adoption services

What we know about life journey material

Children who are going to be adopted need information about their lives before their adoption.

Under 25% of children had life journey materials before their second adoption review. This is a major concern, because life journey materials are so important for children's long term well-being.

What we know about work with birth parents

Figure 14 Percentage of birth parents offered counselling

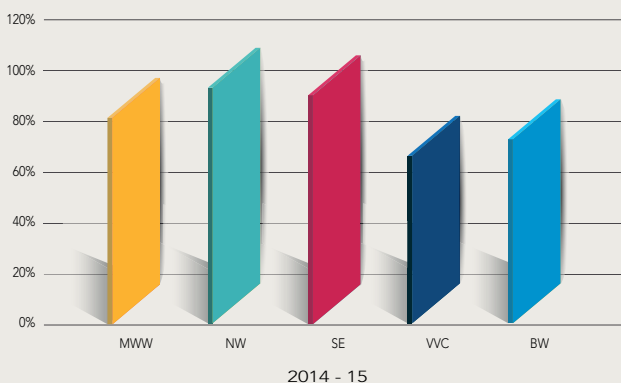
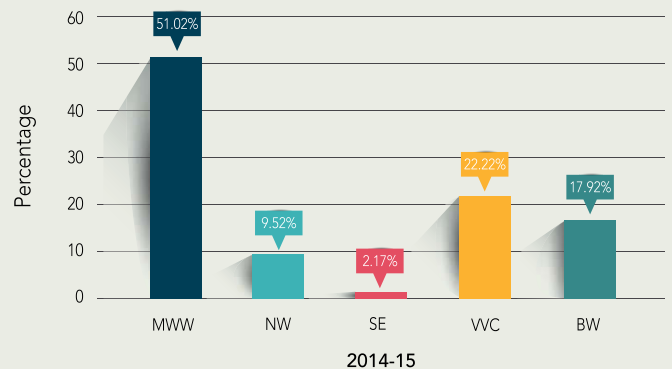


Figure 15 Percentage of birth parents who accept the offer of counselling



Birth parents whose children are to be adopted are entitled to have counselling to:

- explain the adoption procedure
- explain the legal implications of the adoption process
- find out their wishes and feelings about certain matters such as their child's religious and cultural upbringing and future contact

This was the first year of collecting data about whether parents were offered counselling and whether they accepted the offer (see Figure 14 and Figure 15). We have identified an issue with how the data were collected which means we may have under-recorded the number of parents who accepted the offer of counselling. We are changing how we collect the information next year.

What we know about adoption support

We are working out how to measure adoption support activities and setting targets for 2015-2016.

What we know about listening to and working with children and adults who use adoption services

We are working out how to measure these activities and setting targets for this for 2015-2016.

SECTION 5

What needs improving?

A lot has already been done to improve adoption services. A lot still needs to be done.

These are our top priorities.

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.

5. 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.
6. 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.



SECTION 6

What we plan to do

This is the summary of our plan for 2015/16.

During 2015/16, we will write a 3 year plan.

The plan says how we will deal with the issues we identified in Section 5.

We have written a detailed plan as well. Please ask if you would like a copy of the detailed plan.



Priority 1:	What we will do	Success means...	Why it matters
<p>More adopters, including more adopters for sibling groups and older children.</p>	<p>Look at everything from someone's first enquiry to their approval as an adopter. Then develop a model of best practice. And then use the model nationally.</p> <p>Agree a national adopter recruitment strategy.</p> <p>Think of different ways to market adoption, and use those different ways.</p> <p>Change the culture of organisations, and the way organisations do things.</p>	<p>The time between a child going into care and being placed for adoption is 13 months (or less).</p> <p>There are at least 25% more adopters.</p> <p>The average time from first enquiry to approval is 8 months (or less).</p> <p>There are fewer sibling groups and older children waiting for adoption.</p> <p>We have agreed and use the best practice model.</p> <p>We have agreed a multi-media recruitment campaign.</p>	<p>It makes sure we have the widest possible choice of adoption placements.</p> <p>It means children can be placed for adoption with minimum delay.</p> <p>It makes sure all potential adopters get high quality training and assessment without unnecessary delays. This will be true wherever they live in Wales.</p>

Priority 2:	What we will do	Success means...	Why it matters
More children are placed without delays.	<p>Agree and use a national way to find children an adoptive family.</p> <p>Work with local councils to help them plan for children's long term futures.</p>	<p>There is a NAS Family Finding process for all children in Wales who need an adoptive family.</p> <p>No more than 4 out of 10 children wait more than 6 months from a decision that adoption is the best option (a "should be placed" decision) to placement with approved adopters.</p> <p>We have halved the number of children whose plan for adoption is changed.</p>	<p>It means we have got better at matching children with potential adopters.</p> <p>It means the adoption process is working more smoothly. This includes improving how social workers work together.</p>

Priority 3:	What we will do	Success means...	Why it matters
Better adoption support.	<p>Do what is says in our framework for thinking about adoption support services.</p> <p>Make sure everyone knows what has already been agreed about adoption support.</p> <p>Make it easier to get an assessment for adoption support services.</p> <p>Make sure adopters are treated consistently in terms of financial support.</p> <p>Listen to what adopters and children and young people are telling us about their priorities.</p> <p>Agree plans to develop support for adopted children and their parents from health and education services.</p>	<p>All children placed for adoption have been assessed for adoption support services, there is a plan in place, and the plan has been discussed with the adopters.</p> <p>There is a system for adopters to stay in contact with adoption services, if this is what the adopter wants.</p> <p>A newsletter, at least once a year, to all adopters.</p> <p>Adopters say it is easy to get information about adoption support services.</p> <p>We have reviewed ways to get an adoption support assessment.</p> <p>At least 3 out of 4 children placed for adoption have life journey materials before their 2nd adoption review.</p>	<p>It keeps adoption breakdown to a minimum by providing the right adoption support services.</p>

Priority 4:	What we will do	Success means...	Why it matters
Listen to and work with children and adults who use adoption services.	Agree how to do this locally and nationally, and then do it.	<p>We have involved people who use adoption services at the national level.</p> <p>We have held at least one event to listen to, learn from and work with adopters.</p> <p>We have held at least one event to listen to, learn from and work with young people.</p> <p>We have agreed how people who use adoption services will be involved in the running of the five regional collaboratives and the five national adoption voluntary organisations.</p> <p>A full strategy for how to listen to, learn from and work with people who use adoption services.</p> <p>Every birth parent is offered counselling. Make sure at least half of the birth parents accept the offer of counselling.</p>	It consistently provides high quality adoption services throughout Wales.

Priority 5:	What we will do	Success means...	Why it matters
Doing better overall.	<p>Make sure we know how and when to use data and information.</p> <p>Develop better data.</p> <p>Think of ways to measure what is achieved, and not just what is done.</p> <p>Support the work of the Wales Adoption Register.</p>	<p>At least 4 reports a year. The reports are easy to read and use.</p> <p>There is a system for collecting and analysing local and regional information.</p> <p>We have a plan for when the Aspireview contract ends.</p>	It consistently provides high quality adoption services throughout Wales.

Priority 6:	What we will do	Success means...	Why it matters
The National Adoption Service is well run.	We have made sure the national and regional arrangements for running the service are working.	<p>The legal rules for running the service at the regional and national level are being followed.</p> <p>The voluntary sector, health, education and others are fully involved at the regional and national level.</p>	It means local councils, adoption agencies, health and education can work together well.

APPENDIX ONE

Members of the National Adoption Service Task and Finish Group

Organisation	Name	Main job title
Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru	Phil Evans	Director of Social Services Vale of Glamorgan
Welsh Local Government Association	Naomi Alleyne	Director, Social Services and Housing
North Wales Regional Collaborative	Susan Evans	Head of Children's Services Wrexham
Mid & West Wales Regional Collaborative	Stefan Smith	Head of Children's Services Carmarthenshire
Western Bay Regional Collaborative	Dave Howes	Head of Children's & Family Services Swansea
Vale Valley and Cardiff Regional Collaborative	Suzanne Griffiths then Rachel Evans	Head of Children's Services Merthyr Tydfil Head of Children's Services Vale of Glamorgan
South East Wales Regional Collaborative	Tanya Evans	Head of Children's Services Blaenau Gwent
CSSIW	Nigel Brown Ann Ferris Sandy Pearce	Deputy Chief Inspector Area Manager Inspector
Adoption UK	Ann Bell	Development Manager Wales
BAAF	Wendy Keidan	Director BAAF Cymru
St David's Children Society	Gerry Cooney	Chief Executive
Cardiff University	Heather Ottaway	Lecturer in Social Work
Coactiva.com	Richard Morton	Associate
Welsh Government Health and Social services	Heather Payne Emma Coles then Liz Lockwood	DPH - Maternal & Child Health Senior Official
Public Health Wales	Carolyn Sampeys	Designated Doctor

APPENDIX TWO

Members of the National Adoption Service Advisory Group

Independent Chair – Mr Phil Hodgson MBE

Organisation	Name
Director of Operations NAS	Suzanne Griffiths
ADSS Cymru	Phil Evans
WLGA	Naomi Alleyne
North Wales Regional Collaborative	Susan Evans
Mid & West Wales Regional Collaborative	Stefan Smith
Western Bay Regional Collaborative	Dave Howes
Vale Valley and Cardiff Regional Collaborative	Rachel Evans
South East Wales Regional Collaborative	Tanya Evans
Adoption UK	Ann Bell
BAAF	Wendy Keidan
St David's Children Society	Gerry Cooney
CASCADE	Katherine Shelton
Designated Doctor (Public Health Wales)	Carolyn Sampeys
Medical Advisor	In process of being appointed
CAMHS Services	Peter Gore-Rees
Association of Directors of Education in Wales	Owen Richards Ceri Bater
Children's Commissioner for Wales	Andy Wallsgrove
Legal advice	Host LA (City of Cardiff Council)

APPENDIX THREE

Members of the National Adoption Service Governance Board

Organisation	Name
WLGA Spokesperson for Social Services (chair)	Clr Mel Nott
WLGA Deputy Spokesperson for Social Services	awaiting election
North Wales Regional Collaborative	Clr Lloyd Kenyon
Mid & West Wales Regional Collaborative	Clr Darren Mayor
Western Bay Regional Collaborative	Clr Peter Richards
Vale Valley and Cardiff Regional Collaborative	Clr Chris Elmore
South East Wales Regional Collaborative	Clr Haydn Trollope
Voluntary Adoption Agency - BAAF	Wendy Keidan
City of Cardiff Council	Clr Sue Lent
City of Cardiff Council	Tony Young
ADSS Cymru	Phil Evans
WLGA	Naomi Alleyne
Independent Chair of Advisory Group	Phil Hodgson

APPENDIX FOUR

Summary of expenditure 2014/15 (Welsh Government Grant)

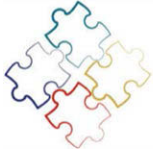
National Adoption Service - Central Team	Amount Identified in Grant	Total Spend 2014 - 15	Variance
Staffing Cost	138,706	72,982.46	65,723.54
One Off Costs	112,000	165,249	53,248.89
Ongoing Costs	12,240	21,814	9,574.29
Totals	262,946	260,046	-2,900.36



Western Bay
ADOPTION SERVICE
GWASANAETH MABWYSIADU
Bae'r Gorllewin



Vale, Valleys
and Cardiff
Adoption | **Mabwysiadu**
yn y Fro, y Cymoedd
a Chaerdydd



Mabwysiadu
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru
Adoption
Mid & West Wales



South East Wales Adoption Service
Achieving More Together
Gwasaneth Mabwysiadu Deddwyrain Cymru
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd I



**Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu**
Gogledd Cymru | **North Wales
Adoption
Service**

Cymdeithas Plant Dewi Sant



St David's Children Society



adoptionuk

ar gyfer pob teulu sy'n mabwysiadu
for every adoptive family



**Credwch
mewn plant
Believe in
children**



Barnardo's
Cymru



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

**National
Adoption
Service**

National Adoption Service Central Team
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Room 327 County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

029 2087 3927

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**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

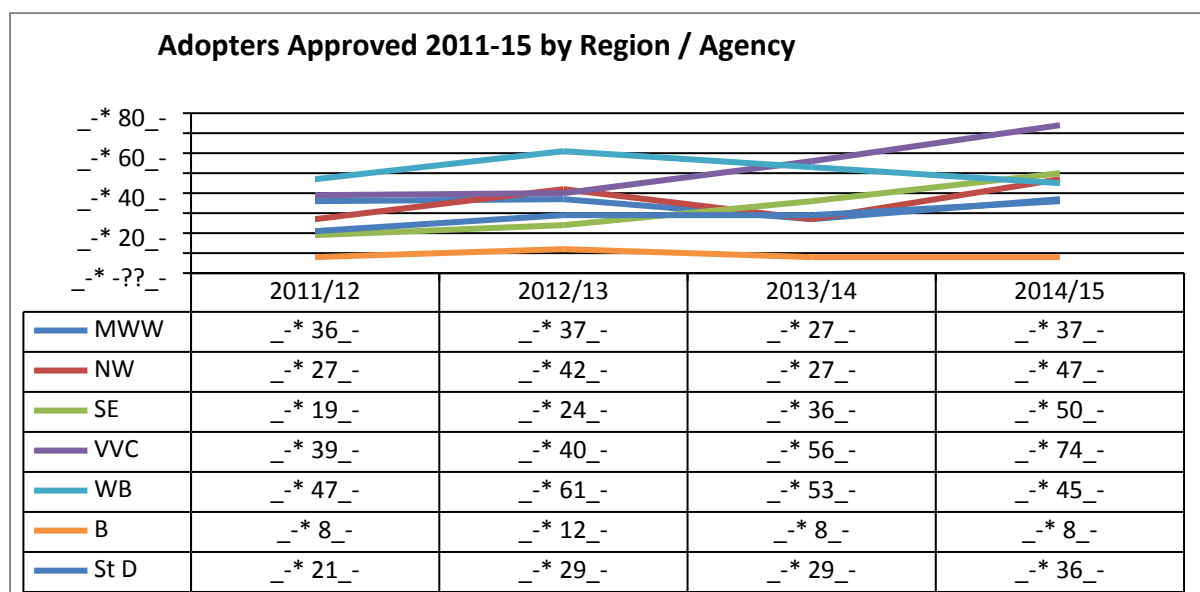
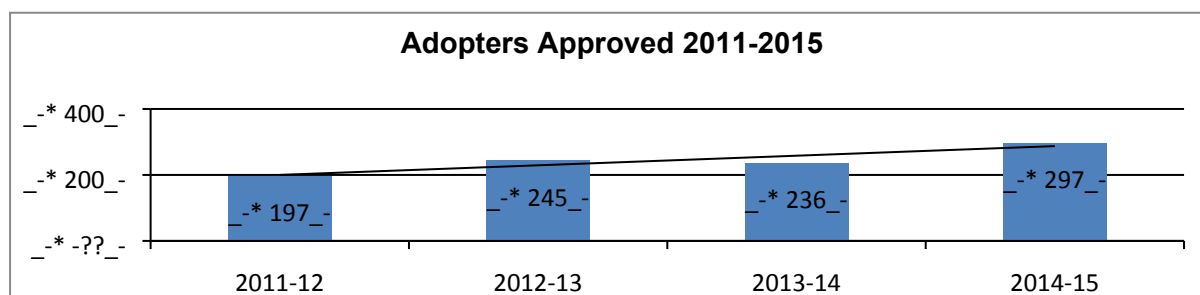
Performance

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.

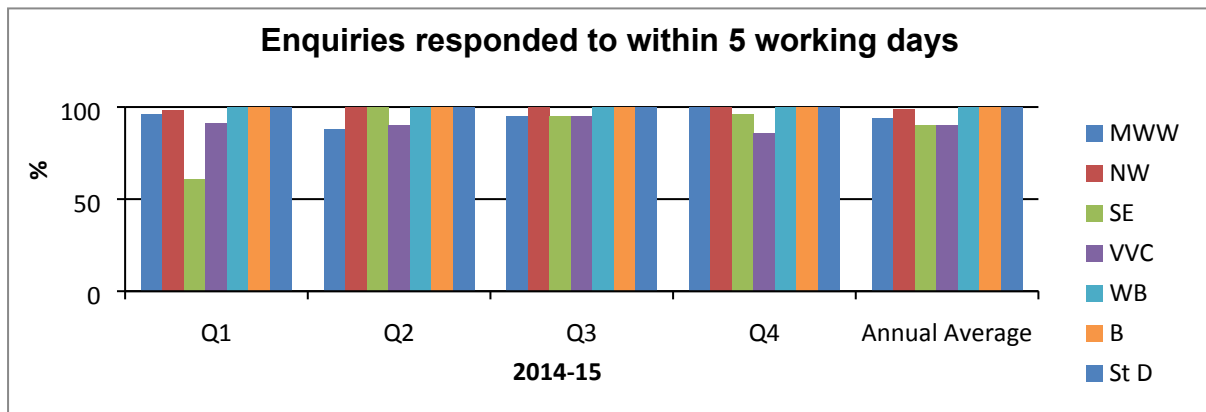
25. This was positive in enabling us to see and understand performance with more confidence than had been possible before. By understanding what the data tells us, the stories behind that data and also the comparative information we will be greatly assisted as we work to improve adoption services in 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;

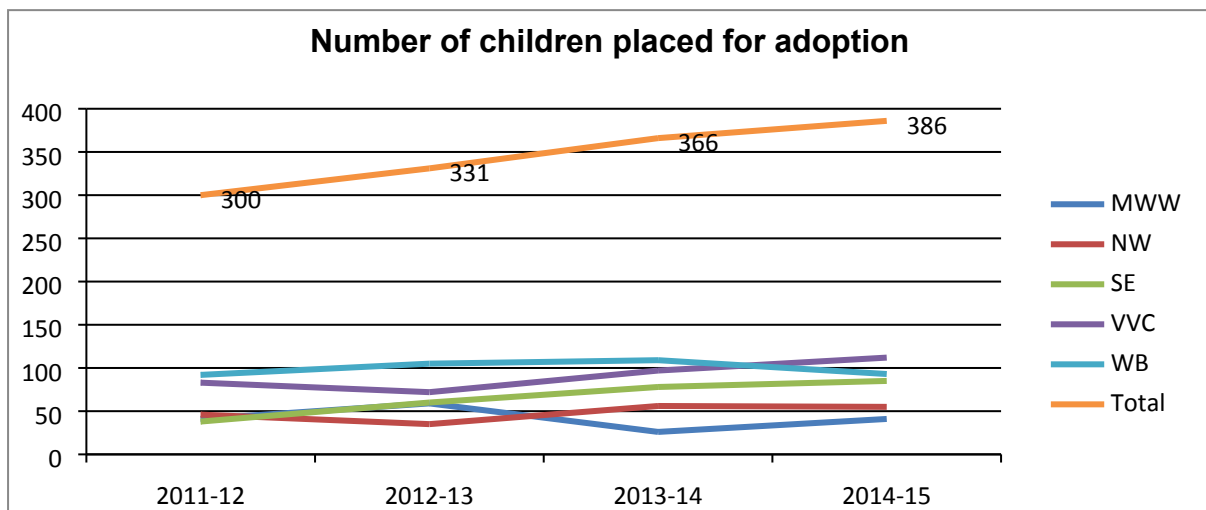
- 26% more adopters were approved in 2014/15 than in the previous year maintaining an overall upward trend in approvals with some regional variations.



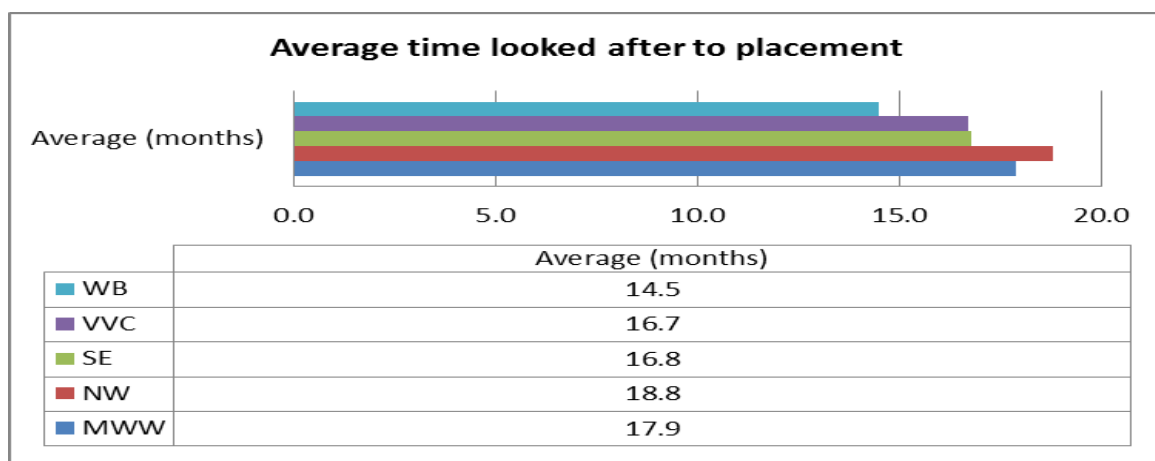
- Some agencies achieve 100% in responding to enquiries in 5 working days and the remaining performance is at 95%



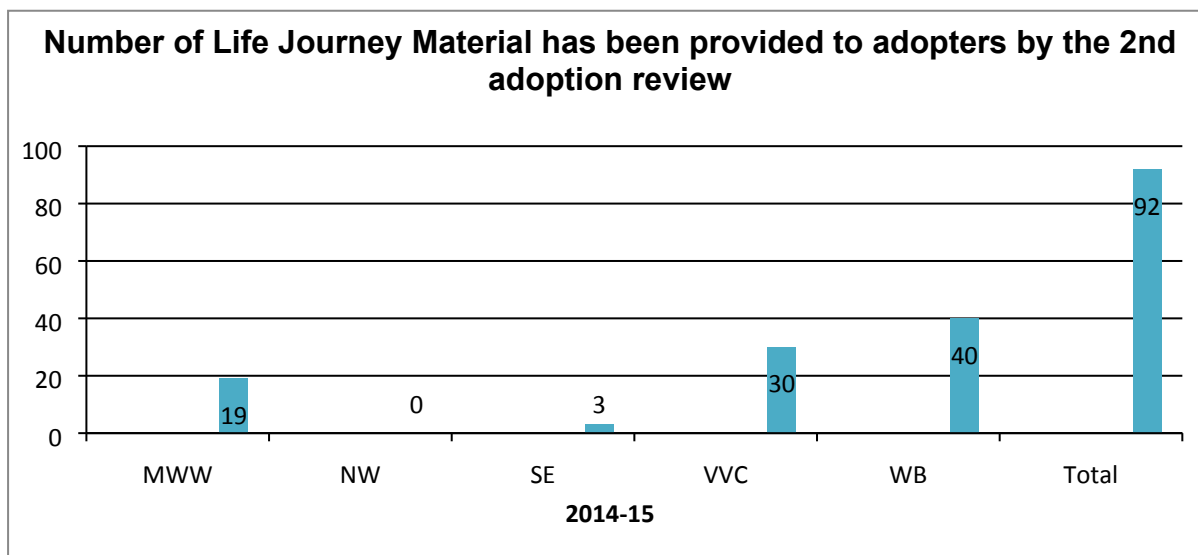
- The number of children placed for adoption has increased for the third year. In 2014/15 386 children were placed for adoption in Wales.



- 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.



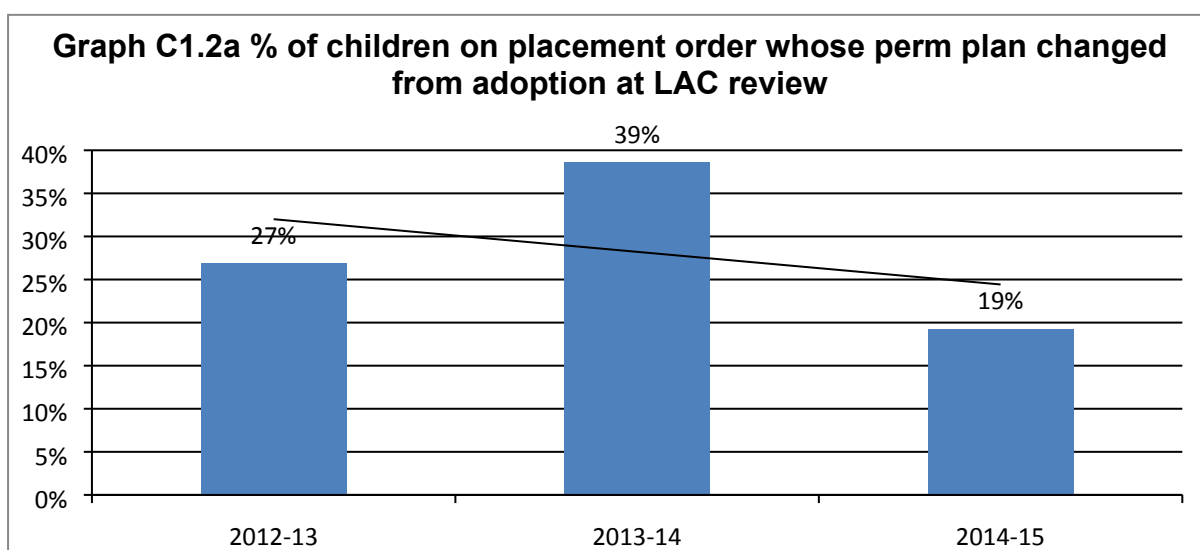
- The level of birth parents who take up the offer of a service is very low, 18% overall across Wales.
- Too few Welsh children and their adoptive parents are receiving life journey material in a timely way (23.8%).



% 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
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95	180	78
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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

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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

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



**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
17 NOVEMBER 2015**

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Looked After Children's Performance in Cardiff Schools 2014-2015

Reason for this Report

1. This report provides an initial analysis of educational outcomes for the academic year 2014-2015 of Cardiff Looked After Children (LAC) in Cardiff Schools and identifies the main strengths and shortcomings in performance. Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 (KS2) and Key Stage 3 (KS3) results are final, based upon actual performance data published by Welsh Government.
2. Key Stage 4 analysis is based upon the provisional results reported by schools. In some aspects the results are still incomplete or awaiting the outcome of appeals. We will also ensure that we report this year on Cardiff LAC educated outside of Cardiff LA. We are awaiting a summary report from Welfare Call the organisation that collects this information for us.

Overview of outcomes of Cardiff Looked After Children in Cardiff Schools

3. These results for the 2014-2015 academic year build on the improvements seen last year. They indicate that the actions put in place to address longstanding shortcomings in provision are now starting to have positive impact on improving outcomes for Looked After Children. Despite this strengthening picture, outcomes at the end of each key stage and especially at Key Stage 4 are still far too low.

Comparative performance of LAC

	Cardiff LAC 2015 provisional	Cardiff FSM 2015	Cardiff All Pupils 2015	Wales Children in need census 2014
Foundation Phase Outcome Indicator	75%	76.7%	86.7%	58%
Key Stage 2 Core Subject Indicator	56%	76.7%	87.8%	59%
Key Stage 3 Core Subject Indicator	38%	66.5%	83.4%	46%
Key Stage 4 Level 2+ Threshold	17.1%	30.7%*	59.4%	17%

Foundation Phase

4. The proportion of pupils achieving the Foundation Phase Outcome Indicator (FPOI) is 75% that is 15 out of the 20 LAC in Year 2. This is an improvement on the previous two years. This compares to the figure of 86.7% of all pupils in Cardiff. The Cardiff LAC attainment 2015 figure is substantially above the latest published Wales LAC figure 2014 of 58%.

Key Stage 2

5. There has been a smaller improvement in the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level at Key Stage 2 than in the Foundation Phase in 2015. The proportion of pupils achieving the CSI was 56%, based on 9 of 16 LAC pupils in the cohort. This is well below the Cardiff figure of all pupils which is 87.8% and just below the Wales figure 2014 for LAC of 59%. 7 of 16 (44%) of this cohort were on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register and 5 of 16 (31%) of these pupils achieved Level 3 in the main indicators.

Key Stage 3

6. The proportion of Looked After Children reaching the expected level at Key Stage 3 (KS3) also continues to increase but remains below that of all pupils at this key stage in Cardiff schools. In 2015 the proportion of pupils achieving the CSI was 38%, 9 of the 24 LAC in the cohort. This is well below the 83.4% of all pupils achieving the CSI in Cardiff. It is below the Wales LAC figure for 2014 of 45%.

Key Stage 4

7. The cohort in Cardiff schools in 2015 increased in size from the previous year from 28 pupils to 35 pupils. There was an improvement in the percentage of pupils achieving each threshold. 6 of the 35 pupils (17.1%) achieved level 2+ threshold compared to the previous year when only 3 pupils achieved this threshold. This matches the percentage of Looked After Children achieving this indicator in 2014 across Wales. 95% of the cohort achieved at least one qualification.

Cardiff LAC in Cardiff Schools KS4 Cardiff LAC in Cardiff Schools KS4

Year	Total pupils	L1	L2	L2 +	All pupils Cardiff	Wales LAC L2+
2013	33	21 (63.6%)	12 (36.4%)	2 (6%)		13%
2014	28	17 (58.6%)	8 (27.6%)	3 (10.3%)	53.9%	17%
2015 Provisional	35	27 (77.1%)	17 (48.6%)	6 (17.1%)	59.4%	

Issues impacting on Outcomes

8. Over the last year there has been a concerted effort to focus on increasing the transparency of data and a robust tracking system is now in place.
9. A stronger working relationship between the local authority and the consortium is ensuring that schools receive the appropriate degree of challenge. Challenge advisers have the names of all LAC pupils so that they can challenge individual performance
10. Stronger, effective partnerships with Children's Services have ensured quicker responses to concerns and barriers impeding pupil progress.
11. The progress of and provision for Looked After Children is now discussed in Team Around the School (TAS) meetings and ways forward agreed if revisions need to be made.

Legal Implications

12. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Financial Implications

13. There are no financial implications arising from this report

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee

- (1) thank the officer for the detailed report;
- (2) consider the report and any areas that they may wish to consider in greater detail as part of its Work Programme.

Nick Batchelor
Director of Education
11 November 2015
CPAC/ GJ/Edu

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



**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
17 November 2015**

**QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS REPORT
QUARTER 2 2015-16**

Reason for the Report

1. The Committee's terms of reference state that it will receive Children's Services Complaints reports.
2. This Quarter 2 Report covers complaints and representations from 1st July 2015 through to 30th September 2015.

Introduction

3. The current Welsh Government guidance and regulations in relation to social services complaints and representations came into being on 1st August 2014.
4. The procedure places the emphasis on the initial local resolution stage – Stage 1 - with complainants being offered a discussion to resolve the matter. The second formal stage (Stage 2) provides for independent investigation. If the outcome of Stage 2 does not satisfy the complainant s/he has recourse to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.
5. Citizens making complaints have a right to be listened to properly and have their concerns resolved quickly and effectively. Children's Services emphasis is on listening to concerns and using this learning to improve services for everyone who uses them.
6. Complaints should be handled in such a way that the complainant is the focus, not the process, and that the particular circumstances of the complainant are

taken into account (including their age or disability). Where the complaint relates to a looked after child, a child in need or a care leaver the local authority has a duty under the Children Act 1989 to provide an advocate as required. All children or young people who make complaints are offered a meeting and all children and families will receive a written response to the concerns they have raised.

7. The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 devotes Part 10 to complaints and this reflects Welsh Government guidance and regulations and the Councils procedures. The Council is mindful that the Act will further promote people's rights and collaborative working will be actively encouraged.

Summary of Complaints Activity During the Period

8.

Item	Q1 2015-16	Q2 2015-16
Number open at start of period	28	28
Number received (overall)	45	23
Number received directly from children and young people	4	4
Number closed	45	26
Number outstanding at end of period	28	25
% responded to within 17 working days	26 / 45 = 58%	12 / 23 = 58%

9. During this quarter Children's Services has seen a reduction in complaints received due to the emphasis on early resolution and it is envisaged that the number could further reduce in Quarter 3.
 - a. 57% (13) of the complaints received were in relation to the Social Worker / Personal Adviser or the service received. 26% (6) of the complaints received were in relation to decision making. The remaining 17% (4) of complaints were in relation to communication, finance and placement.
 - b. 4 complaints were received about the Intake & Assessment Service, compared with 11 in Quarter 1. 7 complaints were received regarding the Child in Need Service compared with 20 in Quarter 1. 8 complaints

were received about the Looked After Children Service compared with 9 in Quarter 1, 4 of which were received direct from looked after children or an advocate. The remaining 4 complaints were in relation to the Personal Adviser Service, Adoption and Protection of Vulnerable Adults.

10. Examples of complaints received and resolved during the quarter are:

A complaint received from a grandmother with concerns for her grandchild, the child's whereabouts and the mother's ability to meet the child's needs. The Team Manager investigated the concerns and visited the grandmother to discuss the issues at length. This complaint was resolved at a local level and gave the grandmother the opportunity to voice her concerns and provide background history which will aid Children's Services involvement with the child.

A complaint received from the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). The advocate was representing a young person who was being looked after. The young person was unhappy that she had not seen her allocated social worker and so was unsure of her long term plan. It transpired that the social worker had been on long term sick so the Team Manager allocated a different social worker who visited the placement to listen to the young person's wishes and feelings. The social worker was able to respond to the young person's anxiety about a forthcoming court appearance and visited regularly to reassure the young person that the necessary steps were being taken to ensure their long term plan was progressing.

Stage 2 Independent Investigations

11. If complainants remain unsatisfied at the conclusion of the informal Stage 1, they are entitled to seek a formal Independent Investigation under Stage 2 of the procedure.
12. At 30th June 2015 there were 6 complaints open at Stage 2. During Quarter 2, 5 of these complaints were closed, although one has since proceeded to investigation by the Ombudsman. One Stage 2 report is in the process of being shared with the complainant. In addition to this, Children's Services are continuing to work with one complainant following receipt of their Stage 2 report

in February 2015.

13.3 new Stage 2 investigations were initiated during the quarter so at 30th September 2015 there were 4 complaints being investigated under Stage 2 of the complaints procedure.

Learning from Complaints

14. Stage 2 reports undertaken by Independent Investigators include recommendations if required. In response, an Action Plan is initiated to ensure that the recommendations are implemented and lessons are learned. An example recommendation from one of the Stage 2 reports that was received during Quarter 2 was that Children's Services have a view on the use of audio recordings in Child Protection cases and that this is translated into a written policy. In response to this, Children's Services are currently exploring the available options.

Ombudsman Investigations

15. Following on from a previous Ombudsman investigation, during Quarter 2 the Assistant Director, Children's Services met with a complainant to discuss the Ombudsman's report and apologise in person. A staff conference is being arranged to share the learning from this complaint and the complainant has agreed to write an impact statement to facilitate the learning. A referral for Child Practice Review has been made and an Independent Management Review is currently ongoing.

Themes Emerging During the Quarter

16. There are no new themes emerging from complaints received during the quarter.

Update on Progress from Themes Identified in Previous Periods

17. The theme emerging from complaints received during Quarter 4 was around social workers not responding to messages and returning calls. This was discussed with Team Managers at a case management meeting early in Quarter 2 and the need for social workers to respond to messages in a timely manner was emphasized. Any issues with individuals will be dealt with through

internal Council procedures. This theme has not re-occurred during Quarter 2.

Early Resolution

18. Five individuals, including service users, other professionals and an advocate have contacted the Children's Services Complaints Officer to share concerns. By placing an emphasis on resolving issues at the earliest possible opportunity, these concerns have been dealt with immediately and therefore have not been opened as a formal complaint. On these occasions, the issues have been brought to the attention of relevant Team or Operational Managers who have acted promptly to address the issues raised to the satisfaction of the individual.

Summary of Compliments

19. Teams are more readily sharing the compliments they receive from a variety of sources, e.g. service users and professionals, although it is recognised that further work is required to ensure that all compliments are captured and reported.

20. 12 compliments were received in Quarter 2 compared with 10 in Quarter 1. A breakdown of compliments by team is provided below. This will help Children's Services build upon positive work and could identify improvements.

Team	No. of Compliments
I&A	3
CiN	7
LAC	2

21. Example of compliments received during the quarter are:

Children's Services staff were highly commended by a High Court Judge for the way in which the Social Workers and Team Manager engaged with the family and the Court process throughout proceedings.

The police lead from the joint Child Abuse Investigation Unit contacted a Team Manager to convey that she was very impressed with the way the Social Worker engaged with a particular family who disguised compliance and previously would not engage. The Social Worker is newly qualified and gained

the trust of the parents which has led to a more positive experience the family and long term plan for the child.

Responses to AM / MP / Councillor Enquiry Letters

22. 8 AM / MP / Councillor enquiry letters were received by Children's Services during the quarter. These included concerns raised by a father of three about being made homeless and childcare for children with disabilities.

Subject Access Requests

23. A Subject Access Request is a request from an individual to see a copy of the information an organisation holds about them, or their children. These requests should be responded to within 40 calendar days of receipt. Some types of personal data are exempt from the right of subject access and so cannot be obtained by making such a request. On receipt of the request work is undertaken to ensure that individuals are only provided with information that they are entitled to receive.

24. Children's Services received 8 Subject Access Requests in Quarter 2 2015-16. Work has been undertaken by Children's Services and the corporate Improvement and Information Management Team to determine the arrangements for managing this work due to the high level of requests and the capacity required to respond in a timely manner. An arrangement for this work to be managed corporately is currently being piloted.

25. In addition to this, Children's Services received:

- a. 2 Subject Access Requests that related to more than one Directorate.
- b. 28 requests from the Police under Section 29 of the Freedom of Information Act. These requests relate to the prevention or detection of crime, or the apprehension or prosecution of crime.
- c. 7 requests from other Councils, Insurance and other agencies (Criminal Cases Review Commission and the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative) for access to records under Section 35 of the Freedom of

Information Act. These requests relate to cases in legal proceedings.

Financial Implications

26. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

Legal Implications

27. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

28. The Committee is recommended to:

- i. To endorse the report.

MARIE ROSENTHAL
Director Governance and Legal Services
10 November 2015

TONY YOUNG
Director of Social Services

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



CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

17th November 2015

**Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee Performance Summary –
Quarter 2**

Reasons for the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide the Committee with information and performance data in respect of Quarter 2 2015-16 to enable the Committee to:
 - a. Understand the factors that impact on outcomes for children in need and looked after children.
 - b. Consider opportunities for improving outcomes for children in need and looked after children.
2. This is the first attempt at a more strategic approach to reporting to Committee. It will be used as the basis for developing future reports that will give Members an understanding of cross cutting issues relating to looked after children both within the Council and wider partnerships.
3. The Quarter 2 report covers the period from 1st July 2015 to 30th September 2015.

Overview of Performance

4. Quarter 2 has been a very positive quarter for Children's Services with continued improvement being achieved in relation to most key indicators. For example, recording of initial care plans for looked after children increased to 81% from 67% in Quarter 1 and timeliness of permanence plans for looked after

children increased from 86% to 97%.

5. Work to progress the Children's Services improvement plan has continued and key areas of progress include:
 - a. Corporate Parenting Strategy - prepared for consultation and targeted for Cabinet endorsement and launch in Quarter 3. Incorporates the Joint Education and Children's Services Looked After Children's Education Delivery Plan.
 - b. Early Help and Preventative Strategy - agreed by Cabinet and public launch prepared with partners for early in Quarter 3.
 - c. Continued reduction in average social worker caseloads - from 18.9 in June 2015 to 17.5 at the end of September 2015.
 - d. Fostering Recruitment Strategy - launched with direct carer involvement and has stimulated significant response from across the city.
 - e. Single Gateway for accommodation for vulnerable young adults - Gateway developed with Communities and is ready for implementation in Quarter 3.
6. In partnership with the Central South Consortium (CSC), Looked After Children Education teams developed a strategic and operational plan. The plan develops capacity in schools and builds on existing good practice across the five local authorities (Cardiff, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Vale of Glamorgan).
7. There are evaluative systems in place to inform these planning arrangements. A large proportion of the Pupil Deprivation Grant is delegated to schools to support the education and inclusion of looked after children. The criteria for eligible spend ensures a targeted approach and the regional plan demonstrates how schools and local authorities are held to account for how they use the grant.
8. A "virtual school" data tracking system for all looked after pupils is now live and provides a profile of every looked after child to include end of Key Stage attainment data, attendance and exclusions. A learning mentor has been appointed to focus on Key Stage 4 attainment and wellbeing. Termly

assessment data will further assist in the early identification of looked after children who are achieving below age related expectations.

9. Further development of Multi Agency Meetings (MAG) and identification of underachievement / barriers to learning is planned. Discussion will take place on a termly basis and support / referral will be targeted appropriately. Schools will be fully involved in this process. Progress after additional input will be assessed and if necessary further intervention put in place until there is evidence that the child is back on track and making progress.

10. There has been some slippage in progress against some of the milestones in the Corporate Plan relating to the Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy and work with Education to improve educational outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. The Cardiff & Vale Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy was delayed at the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. The Director is to intervene and seek urgent acceleration. In relation to work with Education, early indications are that the new Personal Education Plan (PEP) process launched in Quarter 1 has not improved the timely completion and quality of PEPs. Actions to address this involve the OM receiving weekly updates on children accommodated to proactively monitor PEPs.

11. There has also been some slippage in progress against some of the milestones in the Children's Services Plan relating to:
 - a. Enhanced Fostering Scheme - the first young person was placed within the scheme during the quarter. However, from the middle of the quarter concerns about the capacity of the provider to deliver on its commitments prompted the Director to intervene. The provider's initial reaction was positive and signalled an intention to address issues.

 - b. Re-commissioning of the Supervised Contact Service - delay in the invitation to tender will result in later than anticipated implementation. The project plan has been revised and implementation planned for April 2016.

Detailed Commentary – Quarter 2 2015-16

12. The number of children who were looked after at 30th September 2015 (not including those children being looked after as part of a respite care arrangement) was 630 compared with 662 at 30th June 2015 (CS LAC 3e). This represents a rate of 8.6 children per 1,000 in Cardiff, which is lower than the all Wales rate of 9.1 per 1,000 as at 31st March 2014.
13. Initial care plans were in place prior to children becoming looked after in 81.3% (52 / 64) of cases during Quarter 2, compared with 67.0% (59 / 88) in Quarter 1 (SCC/001a). Performance against this indicator has improved in the context of a 38% decrease in the number of children starting to be looked after during the quarter (64 compared with 88 in Quarter 1).
14. 96.6% (57 / 59) of permanence plans were in place by second looked after review in Quarter 2, compared with 85.7% (48 / 56) in Quarter 1 (SCC/001b).
15. 70.3% (359 / 511) of looked after children were placed with independent sector providers at the end of Quarter 2 (CS LAC 44), showing no change from 70.3% (389 / 553) in Quarter 1. The number of children placed in independent sector residential placements decreased from 60 to 55.
16. 61.6% (315 / 511) of children in regulated placements were placed in Cardiff at the end of Quarter 2 compared with 60.4% (334 / 553) at the end of Quarter 1 (CS LAC 58). A further 80 children placed outside Cardiff were within 20 miles of their home address. 9 of the children not placed in Cardiff are placed with relative carers. For some children placement outside the authority is in their best interests, examples include children placed with family members who live outside Cardiff, children placed in specialist placements and some children who are placed in areas that are closer to their home address than some parts of the city.
17. 96.0% (458 / 477) of statutory reviews for looked after children were held within prescribed timescales in Quarter 2 compared with 93.2% (426 / 457) in Quarter 1 (SCC/021). 85.3% (407 / 477) of statutory visits were held in accordance with regulations in Quarter 2 compared with 85.1% (389 / 457) in Quarter 1

(SCC/025 – PAM).

18. All looked after children were allocated to a social worker at 30th September 2015.
19. As at 30th September 2015, 55 children were in external residential placements. Children's Services were solely responsible for funding 30 of these placements with the remaining 25 receiving contributions from Education, Health, or both. The average weekly cost per child was £3,433.31, although this ranged from £2,245 to £5,250. Contributions from Education range from 8% to 27% and Health range from 4% to 50% of the weekly cost - the percentage of the contribution is based upon factors such as how much the provider charges for education and therapy costs, the number of weeks in the school terms, the period of therapy, continuing health care needs and whether the child is statemented.

Detailed Commentary – Annual Outturn 2014-15

20. In 2014-15 performance regarding health assessments for looked after children remained stable with 73.3% of the health assessments due in the year being undertaken, compared with 73.3% in 2013-14 (SCC/039). Performance regarding dental checks improved slightly to 73.2% from 71.1% in 2013-14 (SCC/020). The number of looked after children registered with a GP within 10 working days of the start of a new placement decreased to 41.6% compared with 51.8% in 2013-14 (SCC/040). Performance in relation to GP registration is based on electronic records. It is thought that the level of performance is impacted by under-recording and is not a true reflection of actual performance against this indicator.
21. New mechanisms for recording this information were implemented during the year as part of the launch of CareFirst exemplars for looked after children. It is anticipated that this, along with the implementation of a specialised service for looked after children and care leavers will lead to improvement against these indicators.

22. In relation to the education of looked after children, the overall picture is one of stability / improvement during the year. This has resulted from focussed work over several years to improve outcomes for looked after children, including an increased focus on joint working between Children's Services and the Education Service. It is acknowledged that further work is required to build upon these improvements and joint work across Children's Services and Education is ongoing. Indicators which showed some improvement are detailed below:

- a. Primary school attendance for children looked after in Cardiff schools was 96.9%, compared with 94.7% in 2013-14 (SCC/022a).
- b. Secondary school attendance for children looked after in Cardiff schools was 93.6%, compared with 91.5% in 2013-14 (SCC/022b).
- c. Achievement of the Core Subject Indicator at Key Stage 3 (reaching Level 5 in Science, Mathematics and English or Welsh) increased to 37.0% from 35.9% in 2013-14 (SCC/036).
- d. The average number of fixed term exclusion days for looked after children was 4.9 compared with 6.6 in 2013-14 (SCC/044b). This equates to 185 days for 38 children (compared with 224 days for 34 children in 2013-14). No looked after children were permanently excluded during the year, maintaining the position achieved in 2011-12 (SCC/044a) for the fourth consecutive year.

23. Indicators where performance remained stable are summarised below:

- a. Achievement of the Core Subject Indicator at Key Stage 2 (reaching Level 4 in Science, Mathematics and English or Welsh) was 65.2% compared with 65.0% in 2013-14 (SCC/035).

24. The average external qualifications points score for looked after children decreased to 191 from 216 in 2013-14 (SCC/037 - NSI), although the target of 180 was met.

25. 20.4% of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) were in place compared with 23.9% in 2013-14 (SCC/024). The process for completing timely PEPs was reviewed

and adjusted in order to simplify and speed up the process to enable social workers to have a more realistic chance of completing the process within required timescales. Briefings were provided to social workers, teachers and foster carers jointly, in readiness for implementation on 1st May 2015. Of the 183 children without a timely PEP, 35 have a completed PEP and another 105 have a PEP that is in the process of being completed.

26. Early indications are that the new PEP process has not improved the timely completion and quality of PEPs. Actions to address this involve the Operational Manager for Looked After Children receiving:
- a. Weekly updates on PEP performance.
 - b. Information on children accommodated in the past week in order to proactively monitor PEPs.
 - c. Progress in relation to timely completion of PEPs.
27. During the last financial year Children's Services made good progress to stabilise plans for each looked after child to secure permanent alternative long term placements including the following options:
- a. Adoption
 - b. Long term foster placements
 - c. Moves to best value placements
 - d. Returning children placed out of area back to Cardiff

A significant consequence of securing better permanent placements for individual looked after children is a rise in the number of children experiencing a non-transitional school move and 3 or more placements during the year. 17.8% (68 / 382) of compulsory school age children who were looked after at 31 March 2015 experienced a non-transitional school move during the year, compared with 13.3% (44 / 331) in 2013-14 (SCC/002 - NSI). 10.5% (68 / 650) of children who were looked after at 31st March 2015 had 3 or more placements during the year, compared with 8.3% (51 / 611) in 2013-14 (SCC/004 – NSI/PAM). This approach is in the best interest of the children and is reflected in the overall positive findings of the Looked After Children inspection which took place in 2014, and by the findings identified by the

Independent Support Team around services for looked after children. This is also consistent with the outcome focussed ethos within the new Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. Although this strategy has led to positive outcomes for children, Children's Services did not reflect the likely impact of these moves when undertaking its target setting exercise.

28. In respect of young people entitled to leaving care services, 60.5% (263 / 435) had a Pathway Plan as required in 2014-15 compared with 63.2% (254 / 402) in 2013-14 (SCC/041a - NSI). An additional 57 young people have Pathway Plans that are in the process of being completed. Performance in relation to pathway planning for care leavers has been reviewed and it has been determined that the primary factors affecting performance are plans being started but not completed and young people choosing not to engage. Remedial work is being undertaken to meet the statutory requirement for provision of a pathway plan for all care leavers, including those that do not wish to have them. The work being undertaken includes a review of processes and documents that will be implemented later this year supported by best practice training in September 2015.
29. 39.8% of care leavers had a Personal Adviser compared with 40.0% in 2013-14. Children's Services established additional Personal Adviser posts to secure significant improvement in the completion of pathway plans. The full benefits of this were not realised in year, but we expect significantly improved performance in 2015-16.
30. Children's Services was in touch with 90.5% (57 / 63) of care leavers at the age of 19 during the year, compared with 94.0% (47 / 50) (SCC/033d - NSI). The service attempts to keep in touch with all care leavers as required, however the young people determine for themselves whether they wish to respond and remain in contact. The creation of the Personal Adviser posts referred to above will enable us to improve performance in 2015/16 where young people are content to respond and remain in contact with the service.
31. 91.2% (52 / 57) of care leavers we were in touch with were in suitable non-emergency accommodation (SCC/033e - NSI) compared with 91.5% (43 / 47) in

2013-14. As part of the Council's Organisational Development Programme, additional cross-Directorate resources have been dedicated to improve access to non-emergency accommodation for care leavers. We now have clear lines of communication with colleagues in Housing and a fundamental agreement that all care leavers will have access to appropriate housing and will not be placed in unsuitable accommodation (e.g. bed and breakfast).

32. 56.1% (32 / 57) of care leavers at 19 were in education, training or employment (SCC/033f - NSI) compared with 53.2% (25 / 47) in 2013-14. This exceeded the 55% target. The Council Traineeship Scheme for Looked After Children was launched on 25th April 2014 and has started to have a positive impact on this indicator.

Financial Implications

33. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

Legal Implications

34. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to:

- Consider the contents of the report and report any comments to the Cabinet Member.

MARIE ROSENTHAL
Director Governance and Legal Services
10th November 2015

TONY YOUNG
Director of Social Services

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



**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
17 November 2015**

Forward Plan 2015/16

Reason for this Report

1. To consider the Forward Plan of matters for consideration by the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee in 2015/16.

Background

2. Draft version 0.1 of the Suggested Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee Work Programme 2015 – 2016 was considered at the 22 September 2015 Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee meeting.
3. The programme has been refined and updated since that meeting and returns to the agenda for any further refinement by Committee members.
4. Further scheduling adjustments might be necessary as the year progresses or as new matters of interest arise.
5. The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee's Terms of Reference provide the Committee with responsibility in the following areas:
 - a) To actively promote real and sustained improvements in the life chances of Looked After Children, Children in Need, Care Leavers and children and young people in the criminal justice system and to work within an annual programme to that end;
 - b) To develop, monitor and review a corporate parenting strategy, and ensure its effective implementation through work plans and corporate parenting training programmes;
 - c) To seek to ensure that the life chances of Looked After Children, Children in Need and care leavers are maximised in terms of health, educational attainment, and access to training and employment, to aid the transition to a secure and productive adulthood;
 - d) To recommend ways in which more integrated services can be developed across all Council directorates, schools and other stakeholders to lead towards better outcomes for Looked After Children, Children in Need and care leavers;

- e) To ensure that mechanisms are in place to enable Looked After Children, Children in Need and care leavers, to play an integral role in service planning and design, and that their views are regularly sought and acted upon;
- f) To ensure performance monitoring systems are in place, and regularly review performance data to ensure sustained performance improvements in outcomes for Looked After Children, Children in Need and care leavers,
- g) To receive all relevant Children's Services inspection and annual reports, including: Children's Homes Quality of Care Report; Case Practice Reviews, Fostering Annual Quality of Care Report; Adoption Fostering Annual Quality of Care Report; 4C's Commissioning; Out of Area Annual Report; Annual Report of Brighter Futures (with education); Children's Complaints reports; and Advocacy Annual Report;
- h) To report to the Cabinet at least twice a year;
- i) To make recommendations to the Cabinet where responsibility for that function rests with the Cabinet;
- j) To report to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee as necessary;
- k) To recommend the appointment of co-opted Committee Members for approval by Council;
- l) To develop and undertake a programme of consultation, listening and engagement events with Looked After Children and care leavers, as well as visits to services providing support and advice to Looked After Children, Children in Need and care leavers;
- m) To submit an Annual Report on the work of the Committee to Full Council.

Issues

- 6. The proposed work programme for the Committee reflects the Committee's terms of reference and the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy (currently being finalised).

Legal Implications

- 7. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Financial Implications

- 8. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

RECOMMENDATION

- 9. The Committee is recommended to consider the suggested work programme for 2015/16, as set out in **Appendix A**, and advise officers how it wishes to progress the various items or topics contained therein.

Tony Young
Director of Social Services
10 November 2015

Suggested Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee Work Programme 2015 – 2016

22 September 2015 meeting	17 November 2015 meeting	19 January 2016 meeting	February event	1 March 2016 meeting	24 May 2016 meeting	19 July 2016 Meeting
Workshop	Connect Crosslands Children's Home Model of Care	Working with attachment disorders. External speaker (date tbc)	Event to engage children and young people	Feedback from February event and NYAS participation group	Care leavers	Annual Report
Corporate Parenting Strategy	National and Regional Adoption Service	Health and Education profile of looked after children		Children Placed out of County	Traineeship for looked after children	
		Disabled children				
		Annual report from NYAS Advocacy and Independent Visiting Service				
Education report	Education report	Education report		Education report	Education report	Education report
Regulation 32 report	Regulation 32 report	Regulation 32 report		Regulation 32 report	Regulation 32 report	Regulation 32 report
Q1 Complaints & Compliments Report	Q2 Complaints & Compliments Report			Q3 Complaints & Compliments Report	2015-16 Complaints & Compliments Report	
	Q2 Performance Update			Q3 Performance Update		Q4 and Annual Outturn Performance Update
Members visits	Members visits	Members visits		Members visits	Members visits	Members visits
Forward Plan / Work programme	Forward Plan / Work programme	Forward Plan / Work programme		Forward Plan / Work programme	Forward Plan / Work programme	Forward Plan / Work programme

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CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

17 NOVEMBER 2015

Report of Director of Social Services

Member and Director Visits to Front-line Teams

Reason for this Report

1. To enable the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee (CPAC) to receive and consider the reports of visit to front-line Children's Services Teams and services.

Background

2. The CPAC agreed the need to facilitate visits by Committee Members to services and front line teams as an ongoing part of the Committee's Annual Programme of work. In addition to enabling the Council to comply with Recommendation 41 of the Victoria Climbié Report, these visits provide first hand insight into the operation of social work with children in statutory settings, enhance transparency and accountability and promote effective engagement with the workforce.
3. The following report is a simple summary of the visits undertaken since April 2015 and sets out any thematic messages where these are evident.
4. The report does not purport to cover every issue and it may be that individual authors may wish to draw Committee's attention to issues not highlighted in this covering report.
5. Whilst this covering report is not confidential, the original individual reports which are attached at Appendix I for the benefit of Committee members, are confidential and are not for publication.

Summary of Reports

6. During the period April 2015 and the date of this report there were 10 reports of visits, two undertaken by the Director of Social Services and 8 by Committee Members, Councillors Sue Lent, Jonathon Evans, Eleanor Sanders and Sue White. Some of these Member visits were undertaken singly and some in pairs.

7. The teams visited included the Looked After Children Team (under 14); the Looked After Children Teams (14+); the CAP and Intake Teams; the Personal Advisor Service; Crosslands Children's Home; and the Fostering Service. These visits therefore cover a reasonably good cross section of the service overall, from the point of initial assessment when children are first referred, through more complex assessment and court work, through to the Looked After service, and after care; in effect the whole journey of many children in the system.

Thematic Issues

8. In capturing their overall impressions, authors identified positive messages as well as issues that they were concerned about. Over and above the general impact of pressure and external demand factors, no author identified any direct safeguarding issues as the result of a visit.

Positives - all authors were clearly impressed with the commitment of staff teams overall and were complimentary about particular areas of service.

Positive messages included

- Good morale in the Looked After Service
- Significant improvements reported by staff over the last 2 years
- Very positive working relationships with Housing over the last 2 years
- Similar relationships with Adult Services with the comment that "it feels like one council"
- Impact of the increased Leaving Care Grant
- Stability of the team in Intake and Assessment
- Commitment of foster carers
- Good support provided to foster carers
- Greater sense of 'can do' in fostering service
- Very high standard of practice and care at Crosslands
- Good educational psychology support to Crosslands
- Positive view of mobilisation
- Improved recruitment from agency staff and other L.A.s

9. Issues of Concern - these tended to be grouped around particular staff groups, not unlike the positive comments above. The Children in Need Service in particular evidenced some concerns about morale and pressures. Concerning issues included
 - Worries about capacity in the Children in Need Teams
 - Worries about caseloads 'creeping up'
 - Increasing complexity of cases
 - Imbalances in some teams in terms of having higher proportions of newly qualified social workers
 - Increasing 'no recourse to public funds' cases
 - Pressures around domestic violence
 - The need to improve engagement at transitions
 - Views expressed about the removal of the market supplement
 - Concerns about mobile working and implications for team work
 - Delayed allocation of school places in relation to Crosslands and out of

- county returnees
- Reported negative attitudes of some schools and teachers
 - Level and accessibility of support from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
 - Some issues about practical support for Looked After Children e.g. in obtaining passports and opening bank accounts

Reasons for Recommendations

10. To enable the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee to receive the reports of front-line visits.

Legal implications

11. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Financial Implications

12. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

RECOMMENDATION

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee is recommended to accept the reports of visits to front line teams

TONY YOUNG

Director of Social Services
16 November 2015

Appendix 1 – Member Visit reports.

This Appendix attached to this report is confidential by virtue of paragraph(s) 12 and 21 of Part(s) 4 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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