

The City of Cardiff Council

Corporate Parenting
Advisory Committee

Annual Report
2016/17

Chair's Foreword

I am very pleased to be able to report that as expected and as I advised members in the previous Annual Report, the 2016-17 year has been a much more productive year than 2015-16. This reflects the fact that a settled committee was much better placed to focus on the Corporate Parenting Strategy and on ensuring that it has impact for looked after children and young people and care leavers.

This report provides a strong basis for reassuring all stakeholders of the priority that Cardiff Council and its partners, give to the needs of looked after children and care leavers and I am particularly pleased to be able to demonstrate that our corporate parenting priorities for disabled children have translated into substantive change on the ground.

I am also aware however, that this report represents the start of a longer-term journey, that much still remains to be achieved in terms of improving outcomes and that this is a complex challenge for professionals and members alike.

Finally, I would wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and determined commitment of staff and partners in support of looked after children, young people and care leavers.

Councillor Sue Lent

Chair, Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee

Director's Overview

This Annual Report demonstrates a strong and shared commitment by members, officers and partners to improving outcomes for children who are in need of social services support and in particular for looked after children and care leavers. Despite a challenging context, in which the number of looked children has continued to grow throughout the year, it is pleasing to see that overall performance has been improving in key areas. More tangibly and with the support of partners, we have been able to achieve some significant milestones in terms of strategic development and the introduction of new services to support children and young people. This includes the implementation of the 'When I am Ready' scheme, the establishment of the National Autism Service model, the launch of a Disabled Children's Index, a re-launch of the Fostering brand, the establishment of an Adolescent Resource Centre service and much more besides.

A second full year of the operation has enabled the Committee to increase momentum and to act with greater confidence and a closer understanding

of what it takes to be a good Corporate Parent. In addition to supporting good progress in the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, the committee is now turning its attention to a new and creative approach to further strengthening direct engagement with looked after young people and care leavers. This approach will be designed in keeping with the key principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and in support of Cardiff's aspiration to become a 'Child Friendly City' so that children and young people can themselves, directly shape what we, as corporate parents can do, to help looked after children thrive.

Tony Young

Director of Social Services

Background

Corporate Parenting

The term “corporate parenting” indicates that the local authority has the same interest in the progress and attainment of looked-after children as a reasonable parent has for their own child.

The Welsh Local Government Association Corporate Parenting Workbook states:

“...good corporate parenting only happens when elected members and officers are working together to protect and promote the interests of looked-after children”.

The overarching objective of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee as stated in the terms of reference is:

“To seek to ensure that the life chances of looked after children, children in need and are 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”.

Children’s Rights

The rights of children and young people must be upheld in accordance with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, the Children Act 2004, Children Act 1989, the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:

- ✓ All departments and all levels should put children’s interest first (article 3).
- ✓ Special attention should be given to any children who are suffering discrimination (article 2).
- ✓ The active and informed participation of children as citizens and rights holders should be promoted (article 12.)

These principles are central to Corporate Parenting.

Governance

A Corporate Parenting Panel was established in Cardiff during 2007 as a good practice mechanism to support the discharge of the Council’s responsibilities. That Panel had no statutory role or formal decision making powers.

In 2014 the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee undertook a joint Inquiry to consider:

- ✓ Ways to raise the profile of corporate parenting.
- ✓ The role of the Panel.
- ✓ Lines of accountability.

As a result of the recommendations arising from the inquiry, a formal Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee was created to replace the Panel. The Committee met for the first time on the 8th of October 2014.

As a Committee, the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee has a remit:

- ✓ To advise and make recommendations to the Cabinet or Council (pursuant to s.102 (4) of the Local Government Act 1972) with regard to the discharge of corporate parenting functions.
- ✓ To ensure that Corporate Parenting has a role and status within the Council.

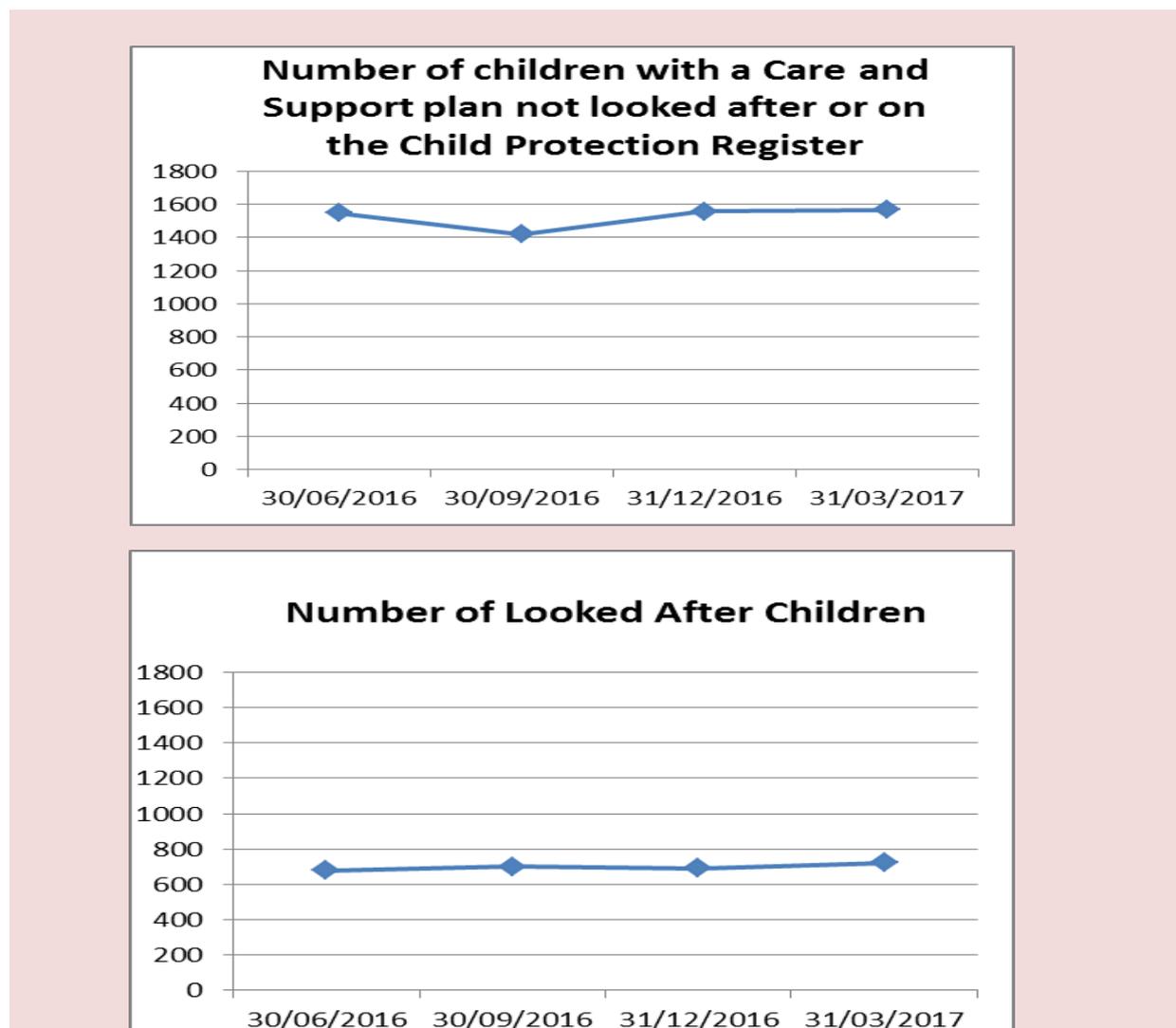
Terms of Reference

The Committee operates within the following terms of reference, first approved by full Council on the 24 July 2014:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 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; | 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 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; |
| b) To develop, monitor and review a corporate parenting strategy, and ensure its effective implementation through work plans and corporate parenting training programmes; | h) To report to the Cabinet at least twice a year; |
| 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; | i) To make recommendations to the Cabinet where responsibility for that function rests with the Cabinet; |
| 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; | j) To report to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee as necessary; |
| 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; | k) To recommend the appointment of co-opted Committee Members for approval by Council; |
| 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; | 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. |

The Population

The following charts show the scale of the Committee’s responsibility in terms of the number of children with Care and Support Plans, and looked after children during 2015-16.



The number of children with a **Care and Support plan not looked after or on the Child Protection Register** was 1566 on the 31st of March 2017.

55.5% of the children with a **Care and Support Plan** on the 31st of March 2017 were **being supported to live at home** (i.e. were not being looked after).

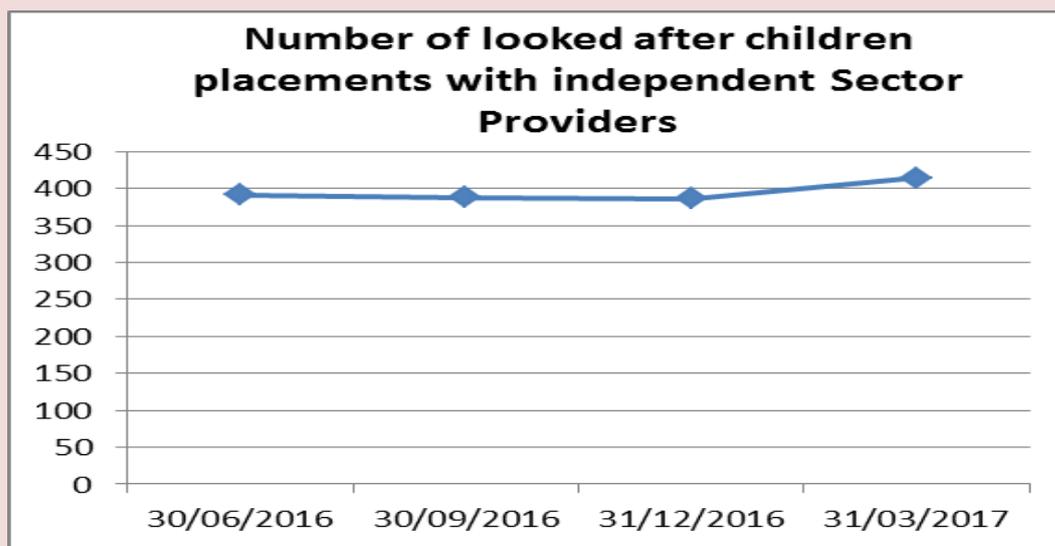
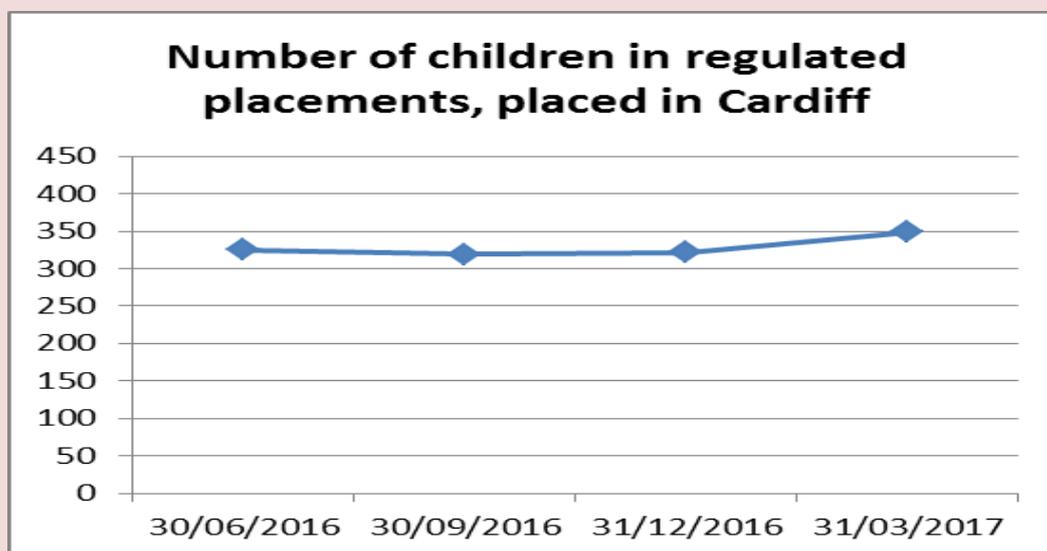
The **number of looked after children** rose from 644 at the 31st of March 2016 to **721** at the 31st of March 2017 (not including those children being looked after as part of a respite care arrangement).

This represents a **rate of 9.8 children per 1,000** in Cardiff, which is above the all Wales rate of 9.0 per 1,000 as at the 31st of March 2016.

The number of children **placed with relatives or being looked after under Placement with Parents regulations** rose from 112 at 31st of March 2016 to **134** on the 31st of March 2017.

11.5% of looked after children **returned home from care** during 2016/17.

The following charts show the circumstances of looked after children.



The number of **children in regulated placements, placed in Cardiff** was 349 on the 31st of March 2017. This was 63.5% of children in regulated placements.

For some children a placement outside Cardiff is in their best interest. 85 of the children **placed outside Cardiff** were within 20 miles of their home and 5 were placed with relative carers.

The number of **looked after children placements with independent Sector Providers** was 414 on the 31st of March 2017. This was 75.3% of looked after children.

At the 31 March 2017, 52 children were **in external residential placements**.

Children's Services were solely **responsible for funding 33** external residential children's home placements with the remaining 19 receiving contributions from Education, Health or both. The average weekly cost per child was **£3,459**, although this ranged from £1,800 to £5,300. Contributions from Education range from 3% to 14% and Health range from 1% to 15%.

11% (79 / 721) of looked after children experienced **more than 3 placement moves** in 2016/17, which was within the 12% target. This figure was partly a result of concerted efforts to ensure that all children were suitably placed and returned from out of area placements where appropriate.

13% (56/421) of looked after children experienced **non-transitional school moves** in 2016/17, which was within the 16% target.

Primary school attendance for looked after children was **96.9%**, just short of the 98% target.

Secondary school attendance for looked after children was **94.5%**, just short of the 96% target.

35% of **Personal Education Plans** (PEPs) were in place compared with 27.6% in 2015/16.

The percentage of looked after children achieving the **Core Subject Indicator at Key Stage 2** (reaching Level 4 in Science, Mathematics and English or Welsh) was **73.1%** (19 / 26) compared with 50.0% (39 / 78) of all children who need care and support.

The percentage of looked after children achieving the **Core Subject Indicator at Key Stage 4** (achieving GCSE grades A* - C in Science, Mathematics and English or Welsh) was **18.2%** (8 / 44) compared with 18.4% (16 / 87) of all children who need care and support.

Of the **children who left care** in 2016/17, **86.09%** (99/115) were **in suitable accommodation** at the time they left care.

Of the total number of **care leavers**, **17.3%** (56/324) experienced **homelessness** during the year. This is a new performance indicator so we do not have comparator data. The figure is thought to be related to the wider increase in homelessness.

Of the children who were **care leavers** in 2015/16, **58.5%** (55/94) were engaged in **education, training or employment** one year after leaving care. This is a new performance indicator so we do not have comparator data. The Traineeship scheme is being expanded and links are being made to broader Council opportunities. This should lead to improvement in future years.

Attendance

Meetings

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee had an agreed schedule of meetings during 2016/17. The Committee met on the following dates:

- ✓ 24 May 2016, 19 July 2016, 13 September 2016, 22 November 2015, 21 March 2017.
- The scheduled 17 January 2017 meeting did not proceed due to insufficient attendance.

Membership

Membership of the Committee was decided by full Council. There were potentially 9 seats, but not all were filled. Seats were allocated on a politically proportionate basis, and included 3 Cabinet members. Membership and attendance are detailed in the following table:

COUNCILLOR REPRESENTATIVE		ATTENDANCE	
		Meeting s: Possible	Meetings: Actual
Sue Lent Chair	Deputy Leader. Cabinet member for Early Years, Children and Families. Labour	6	6
Daniel De'Ath	Cabinet member for Skills, Safety & Engagement. Labour	6	2
Jonathan Evans	Labour	6	3
Susan Goddard	Labour	6	1
Heather Joyce	Labour	6	0
Sarah Merry	Cabinet member for Education Labour	6	3
Eleanor Sanders	Independent	6	3
Susan White *Resigned from the Council 28 November 2016	Labour	3	3

Meetings were also attended by a core group of senior managers from Children's Services and Education along with a representative from the commissioned Advocacy Service provider. They attended in the capacity of advisors to respond to questions. Invited guest speakers presented to the Committee. Individual young people were invited to attend meetings during the latter part of the year to observe and advise whilst the Committee considered how best to routinely obtain the views of young people at meetings on an ongoing basis. Further information is provided on those discussions and decision in the following section of this report.

Summary of Business

A diagram which depicts the relationship between Committee activity and the terms of reference during 2016-17 is presented in Appendix A. The following sections relate to that structure.

Engagement

The Committees’ terms of reference require its members to hold events and undertake visits. Also to ensure 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 to act upon feedback. The Committee may also recommend the appointment of co-opted Committee Members for approval by Council. The following table lists the engagement mechanisms used during 2016-17. Further details on each item are provided below.

Mechanism	Dates	Detail
1. NYAS representative advisor	April 2016 – March 2017	Attended meetings to advise the Committee.
Care leaver representative advisor	November 2016 – March 2017	Attended meetings to observe.
Agenda item. Title: “Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee membership and attendance of advisors”	21 March 2017	Report including legal advice to inform the Committee’s decision.
2. Events	19 July 2016	Feedback to the Committee from the 12 March 2016 listening event.
	9 December 2016	Bright Sparks award ceremony.
3. Member visits	11 April	• Out of County Children’s Home (Ynys y Bwt House).
	1 November 2016	• Targeted Services including Child Health and Disability Team and Agile Working (3rd floor County Hall).
	4 October 2016	• Rumney Primary School.
	16 November 2016	• The Youth Offending Team.

1. Attendance of advisors at meetings

The Committee’s 2015-16 annual report included recommendations to increased engagement with young people at meetings and co-opt new members on to the Committee in order to build upon the previous year’s consultation experience and to extend participation beyond Council Members and Officers.

Further to the already regular attendance of a representative of the Council’s commissioned children’s advocacy service provider (NYAS) and ongoing discussion about the need to

engage young people in meetings, two young people attended the November 2016 committee meeting to observe.

This attendance of young people arose from the presentation of findings from the 2016 care leavers listening event, and discussion at the November 2016 meeting where it was suggested that young people and Health services should be represented at meetings in the future.

A report was presented at the March 2017 meeting (deferred from January), including legal advice to inform the Committee. The purpose of the report was to enable the Committee to formally consider its membership and meeting attendance arrangements to ensure that there is appropriate provision for the inclusion of all relevant advice, views and information.

It was proposed that two young people should replace the representative from the commissioned advocacy service as regular advisors, and that a nominated representative from the University Health Board should also be invited to supplement the existing range of advisors to take forward the implementation of recommendations from the 2016-17 annual report. The recommendation was endorsed.

2. Events

The Committee received feedback at the July 2016 meeting on the 12 March 2016 listening event. The event was attended by:

- ✓ 13 young people aged between 14-25
- ✓ 3 Councillors from the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee
- ✓ The Director of Social Services
- ✓ Children's Services Operational Manager for Targeted Services
- ✓ Education Achievement Leader
- ✓ Housing representatives
- ✓ Looked After Traineeship Coordinator
- ✓ Personal Advisor
- ✓ 2 Staff from Crosslands Children's Home
- ✓ A facilitator from NYAS

The report detailed a number of recommendations including a request to improve access to advice and support services, financial support and housing / accommodation, to which Officers provided Members with a response. Members raised the following themes as a result:

- ✓ Ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of and access to Personal Advisors and Social Workers.
- ✓ The desire to have young people to represent looked after children and care leavers at Committee meetings.

Members of the Committee were pleased to attend the Bright Sparks ceremony where young people were awarded with certificates and medal in recognition of their achievements. The event was planned by 6 young people who presented awards to winners aged between 5 and 23 who had been nominated by their Social Worker or Personal Advisor. Awards for best service provider, best foster carers and most supportive school were also given. Bright Sparks started in 2006 and has been an annual event since.

3. Member visits

Between April 2016 and March 2017 visits were made to the following services by Committee Members:

- ✓ Out of County Children's Home (Ynys y Bwt House).
- ✓ Targeted Services including Child Health and Disability Team and Agile Working (3rd floor County Hall).
- ✓ Rumney Primary School.
- ✓ The Youth Offending Team.

The range of visits represented a cross section of services and reflected developments during the year. Visitors were impressed with the children's home, commenting on the commitment of staff, their approach and the family environment. Visitors were also impressed with the passion and commitment of the school they visited, which was an example of good practice. Visitors felt that whilst they had a good range of discussions with Children's Services staff during their visit to the Targeted Services teams at County Hall there was scope to spend further time with these teams in the future.

The Annual Programme

The Committee's terms of reference require it to develop and work within an annual programme 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. The following items were presented to the Committee during 2016-17 and constitute its programme.

Presentations	Dates presented	Guest speaker
1. Trainee Scheme for looked after children	22 April 2015	Project Manager
2. Looked After Children Education Team (LACE)	22 April 2016	Acting LACE coordinator. Youth Mentor for looked after children.
3. When I'm Ready (WIR) Scheme	13 September 2016	Care Leavers Accommodation Service Team Leader.
4. Staff Workload	21 March 2017	Team Manager Looked After Services.

1. The Trainee Scheme for looked after children

The Committee received a presentation from the Traineeship Co-ordinator and two young people who gave an account of their experience of the scheme. In response to the request of young people and comments made at the Committee's March 2016 listening event, the scheme was rebranded during the year to remove the words 'Looked After Children' from the title, and the Committee were informed that an online launch and app were planned.

A support worker was recruited to work alongside the co-ordinator during the year, and that support worker attended a Committee meeting to observe proceedings as part of their induction programme.

Discussion at the Committee meeting identified that there needs to be greater follow up / support to ensure that young people remain on the scheme since only half of those referred had actively engaged in the process. A protocol for appropriate referral was being developed and decisions were being made about how young people should be prioritised. A greater focus on minority groups was planned to improve diversity. Approaches to Council Directorates that hadn't offered placements were continuing.

Key achievements of the service

During 2016/17 there were 56 looked after children referred to the Traineeship scheme and 48 young people went on to engage with the scheme.

Of the 48 young people, 31 started in a traineeship placement and 7 accepted an apprenticeship.

Currently there are a total of 8 Apprentices, one having started prior to the beginning of the year.

2. The Looked After Children Education Team (LACE)

At the May 2016 meeting, Members were provided with a presentation outlining the work of the team, education funding for looked after children, attainment data and designated teacher training days. The Pupil Deprivation Grant and the process for setting education attainment levels were discussed. This scheme will give young people the time and support to develop the necessary skills and resilience to make a successful transition to adulthood.

Key challenge

The majority of the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) for 2016/17 was given directly to schools via the Education Consortium (Cardiff, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan).

This had implications for the small Looked After Children Education (LACE) team supporting schools in Cardiff as there were previously additional posts funded from the grant. The team is now struggling to meet demand.

3. The When I'm Ready (WIR) Scheme

The When I am Ready (WIR) scheme is part of the local authorities new legal duties under the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014, which came into force during April 2016. The scheme enables young people in foster care to continue to live with their former foster carers under a different arrangement either after they turn 18, until the age of 21 or until the young person ends an agreed programme of education or training after their 21st birthday.

Key achievements of the service

The pilot phase of the When I am Ready scheme ran between January 2016 and the 31st March 2017. Work to embed the When I am Ready service into ongoing service delivery continues. The service has been re-located and is now managed within the Fostering Service.

Since January 2016, 32 young people between the ages of 15.9 years and 18 years were referred for information regarding a possible When I'm Ready arrangement with their carers. So far, 17 young people/carers have been taken onto the WIR scheme. 9 are planning to remain in education and go on to university. 4 young people have moved on from the When I'm Ready scheme in a positive way to alternative accommodation.

Numbers of referrals continue to rise and there are at least 6 more When I'm Ready assessments planned before the end of 2017/18.

Members received a presentation at the September 2016 meeting and sought clarification on the situation if a young person does not want to remain in foster care and for young people in residential care. Officers advised that looked after children including homeless young people can be provided with supported lodgings from the age of 16. Young people in residential care have to move to foster care if they wish to participate in the scheme. It was clear that one model does not fit all young people and consideration was being given to creating a preparation programme to assist young people making the transition.

4. Staff workload

A Team Manager from the Looked After Service attended the 21 March 2016 meeting. They presented examples of cases which illustrated the pressures that social workers face. The

examples provided assisted Members in understanding some of the issues that had arisen during discussions of other items during the year. Details are not for publication in accordance with paragraphs 12 and 13 of Part 4, and paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12 Local Government Act.

Inspection & Annual Reports

The Committee's terms of reference require all relevant Children's Services inspection reports and annual reports to be presented to the Committee. The reports are specified in the terms of reference. The following table lists the reports presented during 2016-17. Further details on each item are provided below.

Inspection Reports and Annual Reports	Meeting	Subject
1. Children's Services and Education Services inspection and annual reports	19 July 2016 19 July 2016 13 September 2016	CSSIW Children's Services Inspection January 2016. Estyn monitoring visit January 2016. Estyn Report – raising attainments, achievements and aspirations.
2. Children's Homes Quality of Care Reports	24 May 2016 19 July 2016 13 September 2016 22 November 2016 21 March 2016	Regulation 32 visits
3. Annual Quality Assurance Report for Crosslands Children's Home	22 November 2016	A review of the quality of care in accordance with Regulation 33 of the Children's Homes (Wales) Regulations 2002.
4. Case Practice Reviews	None	None were published during the year.
5. Fostering Annual Quality of Care Report	None	-
6. Regional Adoption Service Annual Report	22 November 2016	Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Regional Adoption Service Annual Report for period 1 April 2015 -31March 2016
7. 4C's Commissioning	None	-
8. Out of Area Annual Report	19 July 2016	2015/16
9. Annual Report of Brighter Futures (with education)	None	Brighter Futures was disbanded prior to the 2015-16 year.

1. Children's Services and Education inspection reports

Cardiff Children's Services underwent a focused Inspection by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) between the 11th and 25th of January 2016. The findings were published on the 23rd of March. The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee was briefed on the findings during July 2016. The inspection looked at access for children and

young people and families who require a wellbeing assessment or care and support, and a review of the effectiveness of the interface between preventative and statutory services.

Key achievements of the service

Members were advised that the findings of the Children's Services inspection were positive and that the recommendations would be incorporated into business planning.

Cardiff School Services was subject to an Estyn monitoring visits on the 25th and 29th of January 2016. The Committee was briefed on the findings during July 2016.

Key achievements of the service

Estyn found that Cardiff had made specific progress against the recommendations of the February 2014 visit and was no longer in need of significant improvement or further follow up activity.

A more detailed presentation was made to the Committee in September 2016 summarising rising attainments, achievements and aspirations for looked after children. Members were pleased to receive the presentation and noted the positive references to the work undertaken by the authority.

2. Children's homes quality of care reports (Regulations 32 visits)

Crosslands Children's home is the only children's home directly delivered by the City of Cardiff Council. Regulation 32 of the Children's home (Wales) Regulations 2002 requires monthly visits by an independent person and written reports on the conduct of the home. The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee received the Regulation 32 reports by virtue of its role in representing the responsibility of the authority as a corporate parent.

The reports outlined visits which included interviews with residents, managers and staff, inspections of the premises, inspection of the daily log of events and inspection of the record of complaints.

Key achievements of the service

No significant issues were raised during 2016-17. The Committee resolved in May 2016 to send a letter to staff at the Children's Home to acknowledge the good work being done.

Details are not for publication in accordance with paragraphs 12 and 13 of Part 4, and paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12 Local Government Act.

3. Annual quality assurance report for Crosslands children's home

The report provided a review of the quality of care offered by Crosslands Children's Home during the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 33 of the Children's Homes (Wales) Regulations 2002. The Registered Manager operates and maintains a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the quality of care as set out in the regulations. The aim of producing the report was to inform and drive improvements in the quality of care provided to the young people living in the home. There were no questions from the Committee.

4. Case practice reviews

No Child Practice Reviews were reported to the Committee during 2015-16.

5. Fostering annual quality of care report

This item was deferred from the draft programme.

6. Regional adoption service annual report

The requirement to provide an annual review of the Adoption Service is set out in Regulation 22 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and section 15 (c) of the Adoption and children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015. Whilst the report provided to the Committee was for the 2016-17 year, the narrative and some of the data applied to the period from the formation of the Collaborative on the 1st of June 2015 to the 31 March 2016.

Key achievements of the service

The Regional Adoption Service annual report concluded that at the end of the reporting period there was emerging evidence to demonstrate that collaborative working was beginning to enable a unified, consistent approach to service delivery and easier identification of need and gaps in provision. Overall the region had performed well in certain key areas and managed a large volume of work and demand for services during its first year. Positive outcomes could already be seen in the timely placement of children, the recruitment of adopters and an improved service to birth parents.

The Committee's discussion centred on the need to improve life story work. Cardiff specific data will be requested by the Assistant Director for the 2017-18 agenda item.

7. 4C's commissioning

No reports were presented during 2016-17.

8. Out of area annual report

The 2015-16 Out of Area Annual Report was presented to the July 2016 meeting. This report was presented to comply with the requirements of The Placement of Children (Wales) Regulations 2007 and the associated statutory guidance 'Towards a Stable Life and a Brighter Future'. Local authorities are required to have an inter-agency panel, comprising of senior representatives of Education, Health and Children's Services to consider any proposals to place children out of area. The report provided information about the circumstances in which out of area placement arrangements had been made to meet children's needs.

The report stated that out of area placements can be divided into three broad categories:

- ✓ Placements that address shortcomings in the local placement availability.
- ✓ Placements that provide a level of specialist care not available in Cardiff.
- ✓ Placements for children whose needs are such that they need to be located away from their local area.

Key achievements of the panel

In the 12 months covered by this report the panel considered 294 placements.

Over the year:

2 placements were funded on a tripartite basis by Children's Services, Education Services and the University Health board.

17 placements were funded on a bipartite basis between Children's Services and Education.

10 placements were funded on a bipartite basis between Children's Services and the University Health Board.

The remainder of the placements were funded by Children's Services.

The report provided a profile of the children considered by the panel:

87 children and young people for whom the Panel considered Out of Area Placements had a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

37 of the children and young people were identified as requiring Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). 7 placements were made outside the local CAMHS area. 3 young people needing out of area placements were receiving CAMHS services from the Cardiff based Community Intensive Treatment Team (CITT) immediately prior to the placement being proposed. The CITT is a consultant psychiatrist led service for children who would otherwise be placed in a specialist hospital.

The Panel dealt with placements for 11 children whose needs met the criteria for continuing health care.

The report indicated 79 fostering placements, 19 respite placements and 26 residential placements were presented retrospectively to the Panel. Retrospective requests to fund placements was identified as the main issue in the report.

The committee was invited to comment, raise questions or seek clarification. Members sought reassurance around the retrospective agreement of some placements and were reassured that those placements were appropriately scrutinised and only made in urgent circumstances. The challenge of meeting the need for increasing numbers of residential placements was discussed, and officers advised that there are currently no plans for the authority to increase in house residential provision. The local authority's only in-house residential children's home, Crosslands Children's Home, was continuing to provide a high standard of care. Members were keen to ensure that advocacy is available to looked after children who are placed out of county.

9. Annual report of Brighter Futures

Having achieved its objective of improving the relationship between Children's Services and Education Services, The Brighter Futures group was disbanded before 2015-16.

Alternative arrangements have been in place since before the start of 2016-17. Those arrangements now include:

- ✓ Regular joint Education and Children's Services senior management meetings.
- ✓ Education representatives sit on the Out of Area Panel.
- ✓ Education representatives attend a Social Services Managers Meeting to review Out of Area placements.
- ✓ Monthly meetings between managers in the Looked After Children Service and the Looked After Children Education Team.
- ✓ Termly training sessions for Looked After Children Designated Teachers.

Monitoring Performance

The terms of reference for the Committee require the Committee to regularly review performance data and ensure performance monitoring systems are in place to achieve sustained improvements. The following table lists the reports presented during 2015-16. Further information on the reports is provided below.

Performance reports	Dates presented	Subject
1. Regular Education report	24 May 2016 19 July 2016 13 September 2016 22 November 2016 21 March 2017	Looked After Children Education Team (LACE) – see above. Estyn monitoring visit – see above. Estyn Report – see above. Outcomes 2015/16 Promoting the Achievement of Looked After Children (PALAC)
2. Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Performance Report	24 May 2016 22 November 2016	The role, function and activity of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service
3. Children’s Services Performance report	19 July 2016 13 September 2016 22 November 2016 21 March 2016	Quarter 4 of 2015/16 Annual Outturn 2015/16 Quarter 2 of 2016-17 Quarter 3 of 2016/17
4. Children’s Complaints and Compliments reports	24 May 2016 13 September 2016 22 November 2016 21 March 2017	Quarter 4 of 2015/16 Quarters 1 of 2016/17 Quarter 2 of 2016/17 Quarter 3 of 2016/17
5. Advocacy Report	13 September 2016 21 March 2017	Monitoring service provision and findings of the provider.

1. Education report

An Education report was presented at each of the five Committee meetings. The report either formed part of the Committee’s programme (e.g. the Looked After Children Education Team presentation), part of a combined Children’s Services and Education update (e.g. inspection findings) or a monitoring update (e.g. Outcomes 2015/16 and PALAC). The performance of Education Services was considered to be an essential component in meeting the needs of looked after children.

2. Independent Reviewing Officer performance report

The report included information about the role, function and activity of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) service. The function of the IRO service is to provide robust challenge to social work teams regarding cases where the quality of care plan is not good enough or has gone into drift. It was noted that the IRO’s have specific responsibility to escalate concerns about Looked After Children through a dispute resolution process which can lead to the involvement of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service

(CAFCASS Cymru) and legal action. There were a number of significant developments in the period leading up to the second report of the year. Those included:

- ✓ A change in legislation i.e. the introduction of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act.
- ✓ The permanent appointment of a new Operational Manager for Safeguarding.
- ✓ The introduction of the Signs of Safety framework for social work practice.
- ✓ A significant increase in the number of looked after children entering the system.
- ✓ The receipt of unaccompanied asylum seeking children from Calais.
- ✓ The number of children placed for adoption doubled.

Key achievements of the service

The reports indicated that:

Work was underway to develop reviews for Young Adults 18+ years in response to the When I'm Ready requirements, which facilitates young adults to remain in their foster placement to continue in full time education or training.

The service is keen to further strengthen children's participation in reviews. The IROs are currently communicating with other Local Authorities and gathering examples of good practice in effective communication and engagement with Looked After Children.

Lunch and learn sessions for IROs and the CAFCASS team had a positive impact on the relationships and communication between IROs and Children Guardians.

In an effort to raise awareness and a better understanding, the IRO service would be attending social work team meetings.

Regular IRO and Manager forums were to take place to discuss cases and general practice with the aim of achieving better partnership working.

The trends in performance were discussed along with developments intended to make the service more responsive, for example dispute resolution protocol and agile working. Committee members sought reassurance that the increase in numbers of looked after children and number of out of county placements were appropriate and received an explanation and reassurance from the presenting officer.

3. Children's Services performance report

The purpose of this report was to help the Committee to understand the factors that impact on outcomes for children in need, looked after children and consider opportunities for improving outcomes.

Members scrutinised the figures and commentary presented in performance reports over the year and asked for explanations around specific areas of performance. Members were advised that there had been some continued progress but also some slippage and some recording issues.

2016/17 was a unique transitional year for performance management, due to the introduction of new performance reporting requirements and the National Outcomes Framework associated with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. The new reporting requirements created a number of completely new performance indicators (PIs) whilst some

of the previous PIs were retained. This made year on year comparison more complex and more difficult to reach conclusions.

The Directorate's view was that overall performance has been positive during the year in the context of increasing demands and complexity:

The increase in demand was from 644 looked after children at 31st of March 2016 to 721 at the 31st of March 2017.

There was an improvement in the timeliness of statutory visits to looked after children from 87% (1,537 / 1,774) in 2015/16 to 95% (1,933 / 2,033) in 2016/17, which is in excess of the 90% target.

94.8% of statutory reviews for looked after children were held within prescribed timescales during the year.

There was a small decrease in the timeliness of child protection reviews from 100% (1,017 / 1,019) in 2015/16 to 99% (1,000 / 1,012) in 2016/17 overall. However, the timeliness of initial and review child protection conferences had returned to 100% by the end of the 4th quarter 2016/17.

Key achievements of the service

Work to progress the Directorate's commitments in the Corporate Plan:

The Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Strategy had enabled significant progress to be achieved in ensuring that children and young people were protected, were supported to break away from sexual exploitation and recover from their experiences, along with disrupting people and places of concern and creating better awareness of the issue in the night economy. The work had raised the profile of Cardiff across Wales and the UK as a beacon of good practice.

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was established as a new arrangement for managing referrals. Early indications was that this response to safeguarding children and adults was more effective.

The new Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 came into force on the 6th of April 2016. It provides the legal framework for improving the wellbeing of people who need care and support, carers who need support, and for transforming social services in Wales. The Council is working on the implementation of the Act and the associated National Outcomes Framework during 2016/17. Specialist training on the Act was completed by 1,183 members of staff during the year. Changes in practice are becoming evident across teams, but it is too early to be able to objectively determine the impact.

Key challenges

The percentage of social worker vacancies in Children's Services increased slightly from 22.2% in 2015/16 to 23.5%, however work to improve recruitment and retention resulted in a more stable workforce with less need to rely on agency staff.

Members expressed concern that whilst vacancy rates remain stable, the rate is quite high. They asked questions to understand the position in relation to recruitment and retention of children's social workers. Officers advised that some of the vacancies had been created by internal promotions and transfers which supported career development and staff retention. Recruitment initiatives remain ongoing.

Members stressed the importance of ensuring that budgets are protected and sought reassurance that savings were both reasonable and realistic. Discussion highlighted that there must be a commitment to providing the best placements for children at the same time as recognising the importance of Early Help.

4. Complaints & representations report

Reports summarised complaints, compliments, subject access requests and representations activity, including details of independent investigations, ombudsman investigations, identified themes and learning.

Key achievements of the service

Children's Services received 31 compliments during 2016/17.

Children's Services received 128 complaints during 2016/17, a 5% decrease on the 135 complaints received during 2015/16. 9 complaints were received direct from children and young people (or an advocate) during the year compared with 20 in 2015/16.

Stage 1 complaints are resolved effectively which meant that only a small percentage of complaints (8%) proceed to Stage 2 or the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.

There were 6 Stage 2 investigations initiated in 2016/17 compared with 9 in 2015/16. There were 6 referrals to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales, compared with 4 in 2015/16.

The following themes were identified:

- ✓ Staff not returning calls / responding to messages / poor communication.
- ✓ Complaints around quality of care, e.g. service delivery / missed calls.
- ✓ Case management and review e.g. unhappy with service provided by social worker, delay in responding to service request and / or assessment outcome.
- ✓ Financial matters, e.g. needing to repay overpayments of Housing Benefit.
- ✓ Issues relating to contact between looked after children and their families.

Members asked questions and sought clarification. They were advised that measures are in place to resolve issues. The difficulty in attributing reasons to the fluctuation in rates of complaints over time was attributed to normal fluctuation rather than any underlying cause.

5. Advocacy quarterly report

The Cardiff Advocacy and Independent Visiting Service (provided by NYAS Cymru) reported to the September 2016 and March 2016 meetings.

The reports focussed on the promotion and development of the service, emerging themes, issues, recommendations made to Children's Services, participation and consultation work, feedback from children and young people and delivery of the independent visiting service.

Details of the reports were not published in accordance with paragraphs 12 and 13 of Part 4, and paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12 Local Government Act.

Key achievements of the service

The majority of referrals were to work with children in the child protection service, followed closely by looked after children and young people. A smaller number of referrals were received to work with children in receipt of Care and Support, and Care Leavers. There were referrals from unaccompanied asylum seeking young people for advocacy and/or appropriate adult representation in the age assessment process.

Integrating Services

The Committee's terms of reference require it to recommend ways in which more integrated service can be developed across Council directorates, schools and other stakeholders.

Key achievements

A regional Partnership Board (RPB) was established under the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. The Board analysed existing work streams and agreed future priorities.

The Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Population Needs Assessment was published.

Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Councils approved a recommendation to merge their Training and Development Teams into a Regional unit.

Integrating services was also taken forward under aspects of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, which is detailed in the following section of this report.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy

The terms of reference require a corporate parenting strategy.

A Corporate Parenting Strategy was drafted by Mangers in Children's Services in consultation with colleagues in Education and the University Health Board during 2015-16. The strategy was formally endorsed by the Council's Cabinet on the 19th of May 2016, and published as paper documents as well as a separate summary document, both available in English and in Welsh during 2016-17. The Strategy will be formally launched to the new Council during 2017-18.

The Strategy is structured around nine principles. Progress against each is summarised as follows:

1. Effective early intervention and prevention

Effective early intervention and prevention enables more children to remain at home. The Cardiff Partnership launched the Early Help Strategy in October 2015. The strategy sought to ensure that children receive help at the lowest level of intervention that is safe and effective, and to maximise the impact of social work intervention and family support.

Key achievements of the strategy

33 people from schools and third sector organisations were trained as part of the Joint Assessment Family Framework (JAFF) pilot during 2016/17.

Families First commissioned work to engage with families about the kind of support and services they want, with the aim of improving early help arrangements and co-produce a 'step down' service that will reduce the amount of time families are open to Children's Services.

The JAFF continues to be refined and developed. The intention is that it will be used by the Early Help Service as a form of proportionate wellbeing assessment.

The pilot identified issues which mean that it will be difficult to roll out the JAFF in schools as first envisaged. However, this information helped to inform a schools working group which then started to explore alternative ways to establish a clear 'graduated response' to the needs of children and their families.

The findings from the research are being used alongside information from other stakeholder engagement and the JAFF pilot to inform service development and plans for commissioning the new Families First programme.

Families First started to work with Children's Services to develop plans for an Early Help Front Door through an extension of the current Team Around the Family and Families First Freephone arrangements. This is intended to provide an alternative, earlier point of entry to support for families which will reduce the numbers of contacts to the MASH assessed as 'no further action' for Children's Services. This will be a central element in the provision of Information, Advice and Assistance under the Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. It will also incorporate new step down arrangements.

2. Safely reducing the number of looked after children

The Strategy acknowledges that there is a difficult balance to strike between ensuring children are safeguarded with their needs being met by their families and the need to intervene effectively when children are in need of protection.

Cardiff Children's Services is committed to delivering the Signs of Safety risk assessment model to underpin its practice. The approach is a relationship-grounded, safety organised, child protection framework designed to help families demonstrate strengths over time.

Key achievements of the strategy

Implementation of Signs of Safety continues to progress at a pace with timely achievement of milestones.

Cardiff Children's Services has developed an Adolescent Resource Centre (ARC) service. The ARC provides intensive support for young people at risk of becoming looked after, who present such challenges that they would otherwise be placed in costly external agency placements. A feature is integrated support from a range of partners, such as the Youth Service, Youth Offending Service, Education, Health and Housing.

Key achievements of the strategy

The Adolescent Resource Centre (ARC) team has been recruited and undertaken a comprehensive 6 week induction programme. The team is working from Youth Service centres until a permanent base can be secured.

3. Promoting permanency

During 2016/17 there was a rapid and sustained increase in placements of children with parents following Court decisions. Children who are placed with their parents require a high level of support that is different to the support required by children in other placement types.

Key achievements of the strategy

Funding was secured through a financial pressures bid to create a team of social workers to work with children placed at home and subject to Care Orders under Placement with Parents Regulations.

Success in supporting more looked after children to live with their parents means cost is reduced significantly compared to placements away from their home.

4. Providing high quality placements

Key achievements of the strategy

The in-house Fostering Recruitment Campaign was refreshed with the launch of the 'Count Yourself In' campaign in February 2017.

This campaign targeted single people, same sex couples and disabled people who think they would not be eligible to foster.

Joint working between Children's Services and Education is focussing on the return of looked after children from out of area placements, planning future provision.

5. Continuing to improve services for children with disabilities, including short break care

There is evidence that children with disabilities are more likely to become looked after, remain in care for longer and have a higher risk of being placed inappropriately compared to non-disabled children. To address this, an integrated multi-agency programme of work is underway to reshape services for children and young people with disabilities across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

Key achievements of the strategy

- ✓ Launch of the Disability Index.
- ✓ Scoping of opportunities to regionally recommission services for disabled children across the Families First programme.
- ✓ Developing an all age regional Integrated Autism Service.
- ✓ Developing a model to support integrated respite provision between Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and Cardiff Council.
- ✓ Securing an additional 2.54 million from Integrated Care Funding to progress the integration of services for children with complex needs and adults with learning disabilities across the region
- ✓ Commissioning regional pilot services to support early intervention approaches for children with neurodevelopmental conditions (ASD/ADHD)
- ✓ Commissioning regional pilot service to support parents with a learning disability to reduce the number of children in care proceedings for this group.

6. Improving the education, attainment and achievement for all looked after children

Key achievements of the strategy

Seven schools in Cardiff are undertaking action research with the University College London under the 'Promoting the Achievement of Looked After Children programme'. The aim is to establish evidence of good practice to improve the achievement and attainment of looked after children. Results will be available in 2017/18.

The Achievement Leader and Looked After Education team have pupil progress meetings to discuss pupils that appear to be underachieving and ensure that schools put additional support and intervention in place.

7. Improving and supporting the emotional health and mental wellbeing of looked after children

It is more likely that looked after children are more likely to experience emotional and mental health issues than children living with their birth families. Young people can be let down by a system that does not always recognise their behaviour as a sign of distress and fails to provide them with support to develop secure attachments to their carers.

Key achievements of the strategy

Funding has been identified by the Council and University Health Board to employ a dedicated full time psychologist for looked after children.

The emotional health and mental wellbeing of looked after children has been identified as an area for the corporate Parenting Advisory Committee to focus on in 2017/18.

8. Providing young people leaving care with appropriate preparation for adult life, taking account of all of their needs including their well being

The Council is committed to supporting young people who remain in foster placement post 18 in line with the When I'm Ready guidance. Further details on When I'm Ready are provided in the Annual Programme section of this report.

For young people who are not able to remain in foster care, either because their foster carers do not wish to participate in When I'm Ready or because the young person needs an independent living experience, the Council provides a Supported Lodgings scheme. The scheme offers emergency placements for up to two weeks as an alternative to a hostel during a crisis, and long-term placements for young people who are looked after or homeless for up to a year. The scheme helps young people develop skills for independent living and move on to independence. Supported Lodgings provides a safe, family environment for young people to mature emotionally and practically as they begin to take on greater responsibility.

Key achievements of the service

The Supported Lodgings scheme has increased capacity from 13 providers to 19 over the last year, providing 26 placements, with 2 more being assessed. There are an additional 12 Supported Lodgings arrangements for specific individuals. These are either ex foster carers (from prior to When I'm Ready coming into place), or connected persons who have offered supported accommodation to a young person they know.

Further recruitment of carers is planned using marketing and social media over the summer and autumn months.

9. Strengthening the role of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee.

The Committee's terms of reference require it to make recommendations where appropriate. During March 2017, at the end of the Committee's term, committee members met to decide upon the legacy statement they wished to leave the new administration.

Members stated that the main aspiration of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee had been:

- ✓ To raise the profile of looked after children across the Council.
- ✓ To make sure that the Council's responsibility to looked after children was acknowledged, owned and acted upon.
- ✓ To draw in professionals who would not otherwise be involved.

Reflecting on performance against the vision, members felt that they had:

- ✓ Familiarised themselves with the needs of and resources available to looked after children.
- ✓ Listened.
- ✓ Identified appropriate challenges.
- ✓ Acted as a critical friend.
- ✓ Celebrated progress.
- ✓ That the awareness of Cabinet had been increased by having three of its members participating in the Committee, including the Deputy Leader as Chair.

- ✓ That the Education Services representative had acted in concert with Children's Services and become a valued advisor to the Committee. They could see that joint working had improved.
- ✓ Plans were in place to further extend the number of advisors to include young people and representatives from the University Health Board.

Key achievements against the previous year's recommendations

Committee members were conscious to adhere to the role of the Advisory Committee as set out in its terms of reference during the year. They were conscious to avoid duplicating the activity of the Scrutiny Committee.

Minutes of meetings were forwarded to the Scrutiny Committee chair to strengthen communication.

Child and adolescent mental health was identified as a desirable area for future focus, and decisions were made to invite young people and a representative of the University Health Board to be regular advisors at future meetings.

However there was room for improvement. Member felt that:

- ✓ The Committee had been unable to act on a cross-party basis because of vacancies not being filled.
- ✓ That the Committee was over dependent on Members with knowledge or experience of the subject area.

Looking to the future, the following suggestions were made:

- ✓ Attendance of members from across political parties.
- ✓ Greater emphasis on promoting wider understanding among elected members that the lives of looked after children are enhanced by partnership working.
- ✓ Greater emphasis on all elected members understanding and committing to their responsibilities as corporate parents.

Appendix A

The relationship between Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee activity and the terms of reference during 2016-17

Terms of Reference

f) To ensure **performance monitoring systems** are in place, and regularly review performance data to ensure sustained performance

Terms of Reference

a) To actively promote real and sustained improvements in the life chances of Looked After Children, Children in Need, Care Leavers and children and

