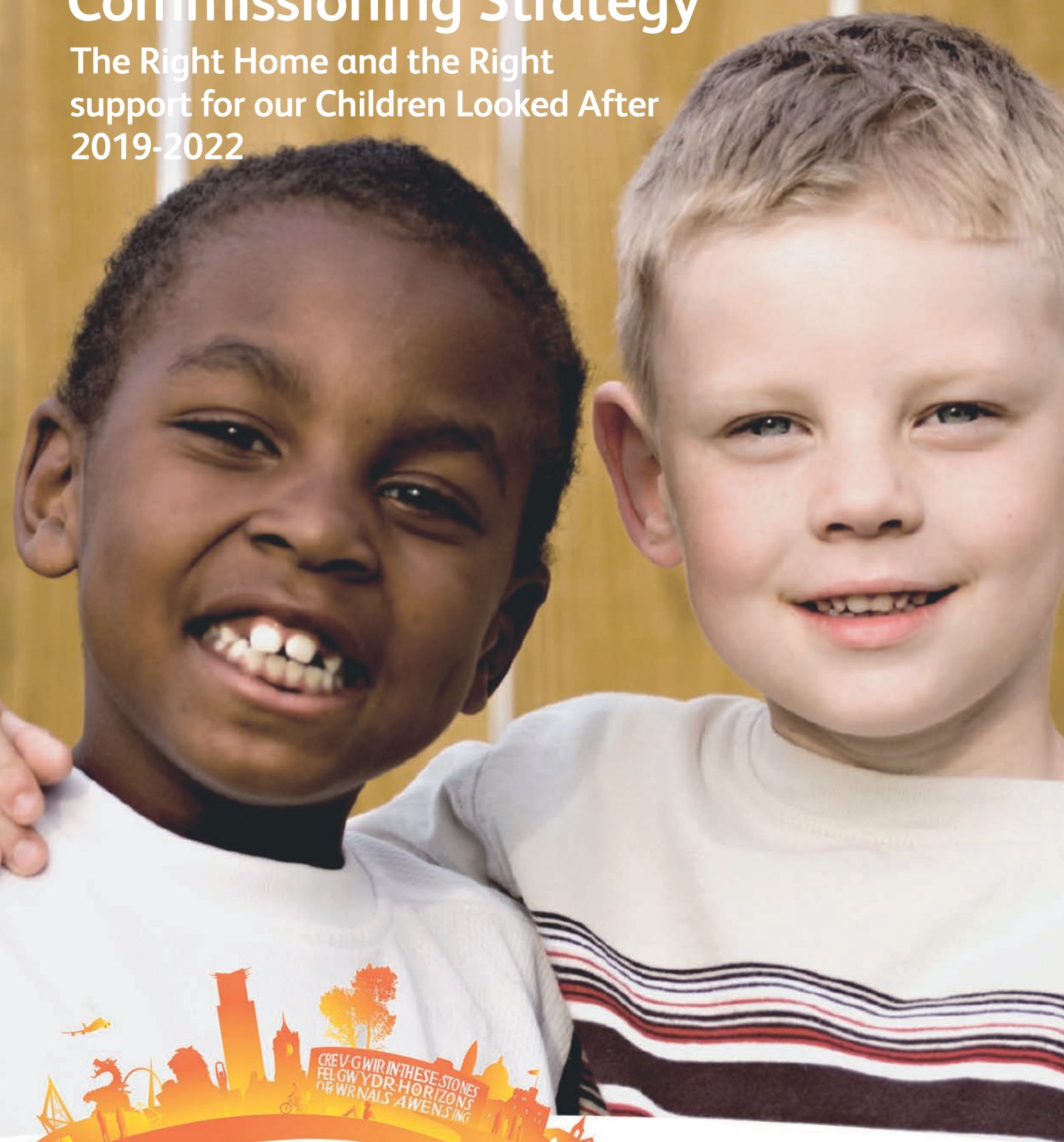


Social Care Commissioning Strategy

The Right Home and the Right
support for our Children Looked After
2019-2022





Index

Foreword	2
----------	---

Section

1	• Introduction	4
2	• The Cardiff Children's Service Strategy	6
3	• Commissioning Strategy - The Welsh Context - The Law	10
4	• Together we are stronger - Working in Partnership	14
5	• What key Stakeholders tell us?	18
6	• What does the data tell us?	22
7	• Current Provision	28
8	• Needs Analysis	34
9	• Financial Analysis	36
10	• Analysis and Key Messages	38
11	• Children's Services Commissioning Priorities	40
12	• Our Commissioning Approach	46
13	• Next Steps	48



Foreword

I am delighted to introduce Cardiff's Children's Services Commissioning Strategy for support and accommodation for children, young people and families over the next three years. The scope of this strategy is the range of services we need to develop to meet the needs of children, young people and families where:

- children are at risk of becoming looked after
- children are looked after and,
- children are leaving care

The strategy emphasises Cardiff Council's commitment to children's rights and ensures we are in a position to effectively fulfil our role as corporate parents.

We will ensure that we work alongside children, young people and families in designing and developing the right support, in the right place at the right time. We will develop local services, which are within the boundaries of Cardiff and work with housing, health, education and other partners to develop the right quality and range of services.

The strategy identifies clear priorities and outcomes we will deliver alongside practice improvements and work-force developments through the 'Cardiff Children's Services Strategy: Delivering Excellent Outcomes'. The strategy provides direction on the arrangements we will put in place and services we will commission to achieve the following commitments:

- We will strive to safely reduce the rising number of children and young people looked after.
- We will increase the number of children and young people supported to live safely with their families.
- We will reduce our reliance on services away from Cardiff where these are not in the best interest of the child and young person.
- We will increase the numbers of kinship carers.
- We will increase the number of Cardiff Council Foster Carers.
- We will work positively with Independent Fostering Agencies.
- We will increase the range of local residential services to meet children with more complex needs.
- We will improve the way we commission services.

The services we wish to develop are based on a clear assessment of current and future needs strategy provides an analysis of the numbers and needs of children at risk of becoming looked after and children who are looked after by the Council.

The strategy will inform the way we work with a range of providers and the social care market as a whole, providing clear direction and a framework for engaging with service providers so that they can respond effectively to the strategic priorities identified in the strategy. The strategy will also inform implementation plans that will deliver the actions required to achieve the priorities in a timely way. It will provide the Council's Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee with a clear way forward to improve outcomes for children, young people and families in respect of support and accommodation.

Most importantly, the strategy provides the basis for our children, young people and families to receive the right services in the right place at the right time and to achieve better outcomes, and live better lives as a result.



Councillor Graham Hinchey
Cabinet Member for Children and Families



Introduction

Cardiff Council are pleased to present our commissioning strategy for children and young people who are in the care of the Council and require additional support and accommodation.

We have worked together with children, young people, parents and carers, to understand their experience and what matters to them. We have met with key Providers from the independent and third sector to ensure we understand their offer and to develop an ongoing dialogue take place to shape what is available.

This commissioning strategy sets out our clear direction for the future. It outlines our vision, describes the policy and legal context, analyses our current data and outlines our future priorities. Our priorities are the key issues that need to be addressed in the forthcoming years in order to respond to the needs of our most vulnerable children, young people and their families. This includes ensuring there is sufficient capacity and an appropriate range of provision to meet their needs.

Purpose – Why have a Strategy?

The purpose of the strategy is to describe Cardiff Council and key priorities. Its aim is to ensure sufficient options for supporting vulnerable children, young people and their families. As such it outlines the work we want to undertake to develop local and regional services to support our children, young people and their families.

Our Vision

Cardiff Children's Services Strategy (2019-2022) outlines a dynamic and progressive vision for children's social services. It states:

"In all cases, we will adopt in the city a 'Think Family' approach which looks at the family as a whole and co-ordinates support across the public services, tailored to each family's needs and strengths. Supporting Vulnerable Children and Families Parents have the most significant influence on children and on their future lives. Outcomes for children are best when they are supported to grow and achieve within their own families, own communities and in Cardiff. "

This will be supported by a range of services which places an emphasis on prevention and early intervention to give children the best possible outcomes and better manage the pressure on public services.

“Being in care made my life better by having a safe house and a bedroom”

This commissioning strategy contributes to this vision by looking to facilitate with partners a range of services and options which improve outcomes and support more children and families to stay together whilst providing the highest quality services when that is not possible. Wherever appropriate the term 'home' is used as our children and young people prefer this term to 'placement or unit'.

Aim – What do we want our strategy to do?

Our aim is to build, reshape, and expand our current provision, services and homes for children to improve the outcomes of our most vulnerable children, young people and families. Implementation of this strategy will be in line with the key principles in the Cardiff Social Services Strategic Commissioning Framework in diagram 1.

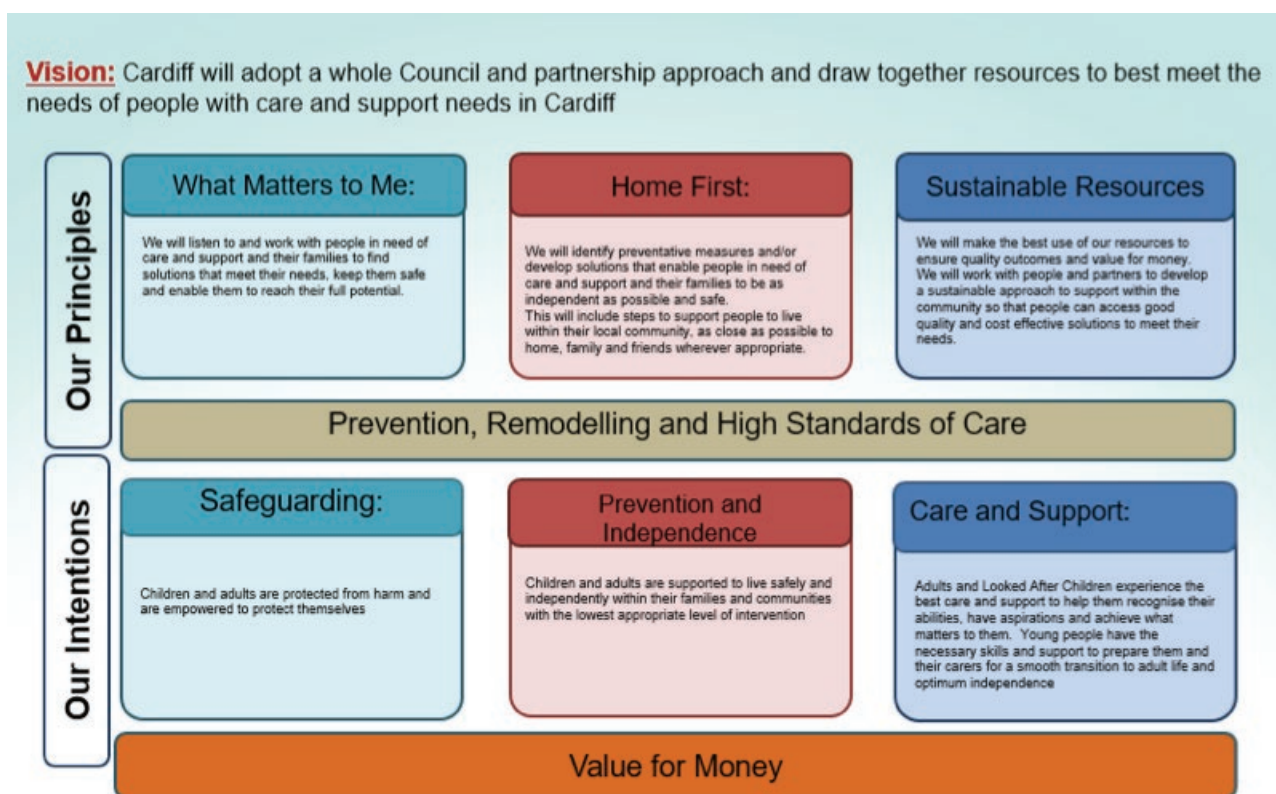


Diagram 1

“I want to be listened to”



The Cardiff Children's Service Strategy

In July 2019 Cardiff Council's Cabinet approved 'Delivering Excellent Outcomes' (2019-2022). This is a 3 year strategy that outlines key priorities and changes that will take place over the next three years. This commissioning strategy delivers a key priority within the overall strategy for Children's Services. The sum of this effort will deliver the Council's Capital Ambition commitments that Cardiff 'is a great place to grow up for the most vulnerable children'.

Supporting Children, Young people and their Families – Our Model

Parents have the most significant influence on children and their future lives. We are adopting a 'Think Family' model, which looks at the family as a whole, and co-ordinates support across the public services, tailored to each family's needs and strengths. This approach is informed by our awareness of the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACE) on both the children and parents we work with and our interventions are evidence-based and informed by the impact of trauma.

Supporting Children, Young people closer to Home

We will, whenever it is safe to do so, support children and young people to remain with their birth family or extended family and avoid the need for children and young people to become looked after. We are committed to developing services that wrap around families, extended families and carers to respond to needs earlier and prevent their escalation.

It is our priority to ensure we will find safe ways to work alongside families to enable them to parent their children and protect them from harm. We also recognise we need to support good substitute family care (foster care) when it is not possible for a child or young person to remain with their own families. In most circumstances, it is important that children and young people maintain positive contact with their own families, friends, school and communities. This is why we are committed to developing services closer to Cardiff. On the occasions when it is not possible for children to be safe and protected in or close to Cardiff we will commission the highest quality service. The safety and well-being of our children and young people will always have the highest priority.

“Staff are very supportive and I can always talk to someone”

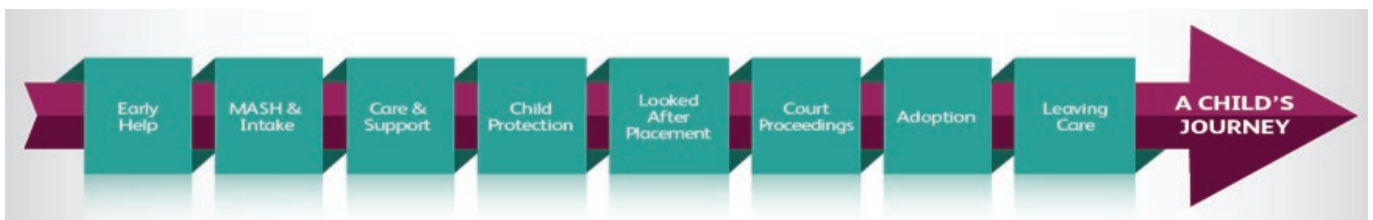






Supporting Children, Young people and Families – Intervening Early

We want to shift the balance of care so that by intervening earlier we prevent the escalation of need. Our aim is to support more children, young people and families through early help services and to reduce the number of children who become looked after. We will be commissioning the right services to the right capacity and at the right stage of the child's journey so we are able to meet needs through the least intensive intervention and as early as possible. This ambition is reflected in our Early Help Strategy.



Graphic 2 – the Child's Journey.

Better Outcomes – what success looks like?

Delivering Excellent Outcomes' aims to shift the balance of care and achieve the following outcomes for the children, young people and families of Cardiff. We will:

- Safely reduce the number of children and young people looked after,
- Increase the number of children and young people supported to live safely with their families,
- Reduce our reliance on out of area placements,
- Increase the number of kinship carers,
- Increase the number of local authority Foster Carers,
- Work differently with Independent Fostering Agencies,
- Develop the range of residential placements to meet more complex needs,
- Develop our commissioning and procurement capability and capacity,
- Develop further our understanding of our vulnerable children, young people and families.

Achievement of these outcomes is how we will evaluate the impact of this 3 year strategy



Commissioning Strategy

- The Welsh Context - The Law

The main pieces of legislation related to this strategy are the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) Act 2014, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (SSWBA) 2014 requires on local authorities and health boards requiring them to promote the well-being of those who need care and support or carers who need support. It outlines key duties to ensure:

- People have control over what support they need, making decisions about their care and support as an equal partner,
- New proportionate assessment focused on the individual,
- Carers have an equal right to assessment for support to those who they care for,
- Easy access to information and advice is available to all,
- Powers to safeguard people are stronger,
- A preventative approach to meeting care and support needs is practised,
- Local authorities and health boards come together in new statutory partnerships to drive integration and service change.

There are some elements of the SSWBA that directly relate to children, young people and their families including the following duties on local authorities to ensure:

- That there is sufficient accommodation for all types of children who are looked after,
- That placements are made within their own areas, unless it is not reasonably practical to do so or there are overriding reasons for placing the child out of authority, the primary reason being safeguarding,
- Support is within the service, and the location that best enables them to achieve positive well-being outcomes. For most children this means in or close to Cardiff as this means they can maintain their relationships with their family, friends, school, community and health services
- All decisions on the right accommodation/placement and support service will be made with the child or young person's best interest.
- Care and Support planning including achieving permanence is a key consideration from the very start.





The overarching principles for the SSWBA are:

- To support people who have care and support needs to achieve well-being,
- People are at the heart of the new system by giving them an equal say in the support they receive,
- Partnership and co-operation drive service delivery,
- Services will promote the prevention of escalating need and the right help is available at the right time.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on Public bodies, including health and social services, to make sure that when making their decisions they take into account the impact they could have on people living in Wales in the future. This Act requires them to:

- Work together better,
- Involve people reflecting the diversity of our communities,
- Look to the long term as well as focusing on the now,
- Take action to try and stop problems getting worse, or even stop them happening in the first place.

Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 set the new statutory framework for the regulation and inspection of social care services, in other words how social care services are going to be assessed for their quality and impact they make.

Together We are Stronger- Working in Partnership

.....

The legal, policy and local strategic context all stress the important of partnerships and working differently across public sector partners, the third and independent sector.

Our work with partners is a central tenet in our delivery of more care support and accommodation options in order to see an improvement in outcomes for children and young people.

The SSWBA describes the outcomes, which all partners need to work together to achieve for Children and Young people;

- Being Safe,
- Having somewhere suitable to live,
- Being involved in decisions that impact your life,
- Having friends,
- Being part of good, strong communities,
- Having every chance to do well in education, training, worked-based earning and employment,
- Feeling good about your life,
- Being able to grow up happily and successfully,
- Being well looked after,
- Having access to appropriate health care.

Cardiff Children's Services Strategy (2019-2022) placed a strong emphasis on the importance of working together in partnership. It states:

"Public and third sector partners including teachers, health practitioners, doctors, nurse, allied health professionals, mental health practitioners, social workers, youth workers, third sector practitioners, early years practitioners and play workers will work together to deliver a joined-up approach to enable the right conversations to take place at the right time, between the right people and for solutions to be found at the earliest possible stage, particularly for the most vulnerable children and families."

This commissioning strategy, and the work that follows will be an expression, in practice, of this vision for partnership working. Joint planning and delivery with our partners is essential to delivering the best outcomes for children.

Cardiff – A Child Friendly City

Cardiff is one of five Cities in the UK developing, in partnership with UNICEF UK, as a 'Child Friendly City'. This means we place the rights of children and young people at the heart of all our policies and strategies; we involve children and young people in decision-making and commit to addressing barriers, which limit their lives. This development will involve all partner organisations placing Children's Rights at the centre of the commissioning approach.





.....

Working with Providers

This strategy also signals the ongoing desire of Cardiff Council to work collaboratively with providers to ensure an open and mature relationship. This proactive dialogue will engage providers in the development of key aspects of commissioning including the development of future provision and the analysis of current needs. They have an important perspective to bring to the shaping of future provision.

Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs)

Cardiff is a member of this important national consortium which is a strategic commissioning alliance between Welsh Local Authorities to support commissioning needs in respect of fostering and residential homes for children. Where it makes sense, Cardiff will be a key partner in developing regional and national solutions for children's provision.

Vale and Vales Regional Adoption Collaborative

This is a collaboration between the Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and Merthyr Tydfil Local Authorities. It delivers all the functions related to securing and supporting permanence adoptive families for children when an adoption order is the care plan endorsed by the Family Court.

“Not comfortable as we have to share a bedroom. 4-7yrs”



What key Stakeholders tell us?

.....

This section sets outline the messages received from key stakeholder regarding our Children Looked After. It will start from the child and young persons' perspective and then hear from the view of our staff and external providers.

What's important to Children and Young people?

From the information gathered from the consultations, surveys and engagement exercises with children and young people in care key messages have been identified:

- They do not like the term 'placement' or 'unit'. They want a place they can call 'home'.
- Young people want regular review contact arrangements,
- They want to understand why decisions have been made,
- Children want to feel included and understand why they are in care,
- Children and Young people want to be trusted and feel involved in activity planning,
- When care planning they want staff to be aware of gender differences
- They want opportunities to improve people's feelings about their appearance and body image.
- They want more opportunities to benefit from being in the outdoors.
- Most Children and young people have good relationships with their carers.
- The vast majority feel safe in their setting.
- Most feel positive about their futures.
- They would like access to the internet.
- Most children and young people want to stay in their local are.
- They want to remain close to their families, friends and local communities.
- They want to remain in contact with carers after they have left for ongoing support.

There are some very important themes within these messages which need to inform our commissioning strategy going forward. These themes could be summarised as 'meaningful involvement', 'having positive experience', 'their emotional well-being' and their desire to 'stay close to home'.

We have used the following engagement mechanisms to understand the views of children and young people:

- Bright Spots Survey of 255 children looked after (September 2018)
- Cardiff Council Social Services Annual Report consultation (April 2019)
- Consultation with children and young people living in Cardiff Council Residential Provision (May 2019)
- Child Friendly City Consultation (July 2019).





What our providers tell use?

The Council has been engaging individually and in workshops with both Fostering and Residential Providers.

The overriding messages was a willingness to work even more closely in partnership, with the Council. A number of important messages emerged through these discussions.

- Understanding of the importance of children and young people being placed close to home where appropriate to do so.
- Providers have a range of experience, skills and knowledge that can help in the development of services.
- Willingness to engage in shared learning and development.
- A shared challenge on recruiting Foster Carers.
- Providers would like a more planned approach for young people leaving care.
- A need for an ongoing dialogue.
- Providers want to understand how needs and demand is changing.
- The importance of the partnership between the Council and Providers.
- There could be further improvements in the placement process.
- Providers willing to consider alternative commissioning arrangements.
- The need to further develop our understanding of Children Looked After needs.
- Some children and young people have more complex needs and we need to understand this further.

This feedback clearly shows the market of providers wanting to engage in an ongoing dialogue with the Council, looking at shared challenges and looking for solutions that best meet the changing needs of children and young people in Cardiff.

Our vision is to have a vibrant provision in Cardiff able to meet the changing needs of our children and young people in a flexible and responsive way.

What our Staff tell us?

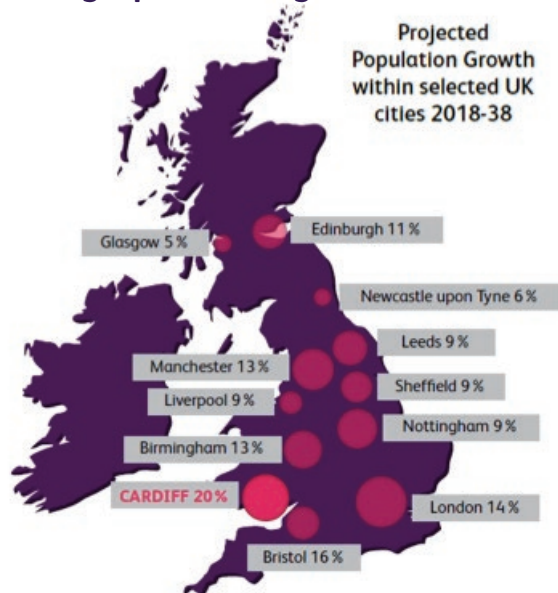
Engagement with staff have further helped in terms of understanding the changing needs of our children and young people. Key messages included:

- Demand is increasing,
- It is more difficult to find suitable homes for our children and young people,
- There are more sibling groups needing support,
- Some children and young people have more complex needs
- We want to be able to offer more support to families
- We want to help bring families together again
- We need to improve out processes

What does the data tell us?

In this section we will review some of the key data related to Children Looked After in Cardiff.

Demographic Changes



Our population is changing

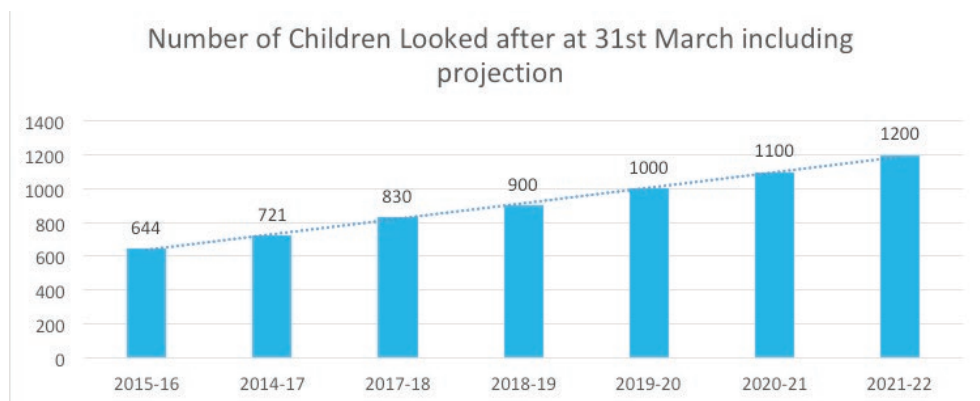
Over the next 20 years, it is projected Cardiff's population will increase faster than other Cities in the UK.

This means our children and young people's population (0-19) will increase from 88,280 in 2017 to 107,630 in 2035, an 18% increase.

This will create additional demand simply due to the additional numbers of children, young people and families in Cardiff. If the pattern of demand was to remain as it currently is this would mean an 18% increase in demand.

Graphic 3

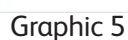
Projection of Demand.



Graphic 4

There has been a 35% growth in Children looked after since 2014. This is the 6th highest growth in Wales and we have the largest number of Children looked after.

The figure below shows that the rate of children looked after in Cardiff is slightly lower than might be expected when rates of deprivation are taken into account across Wales.



Ethnicity

660

1

22

30

41

20

7

6

2

2

6

2

4

8

14

17

6

20

28

6

38

Any other ethnic origin (please specify)

Any other mixed background

Asian - any other background

Asian British

Bangladeshi

Black - other background

Black African

Black British

Black Caribbean

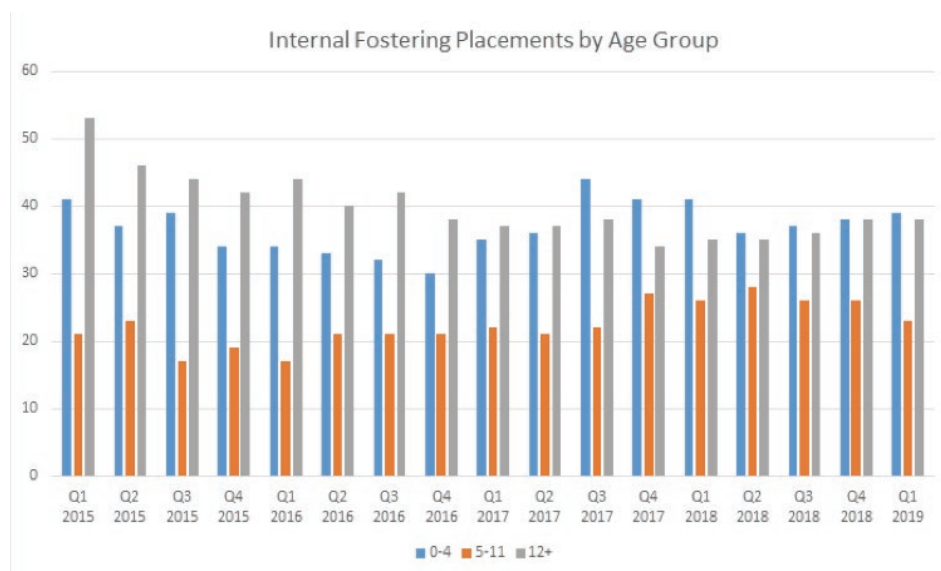
Chinese

Graphic 6



Age

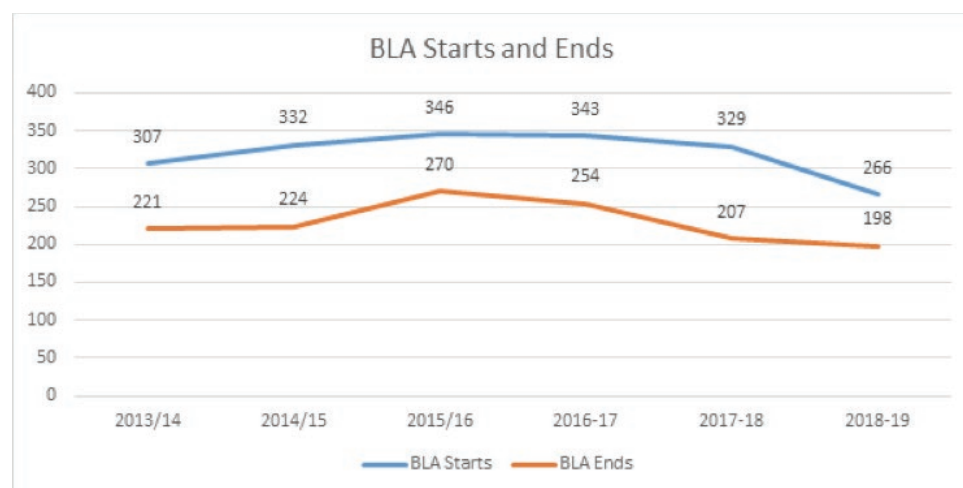
The table below shows the age composition of our Children Looked After.



Graphic 7

Becoming Looked-After and ending being looked after

The graph below shows the difference between the number of children and young people becoming looked after and those ending being looked after.

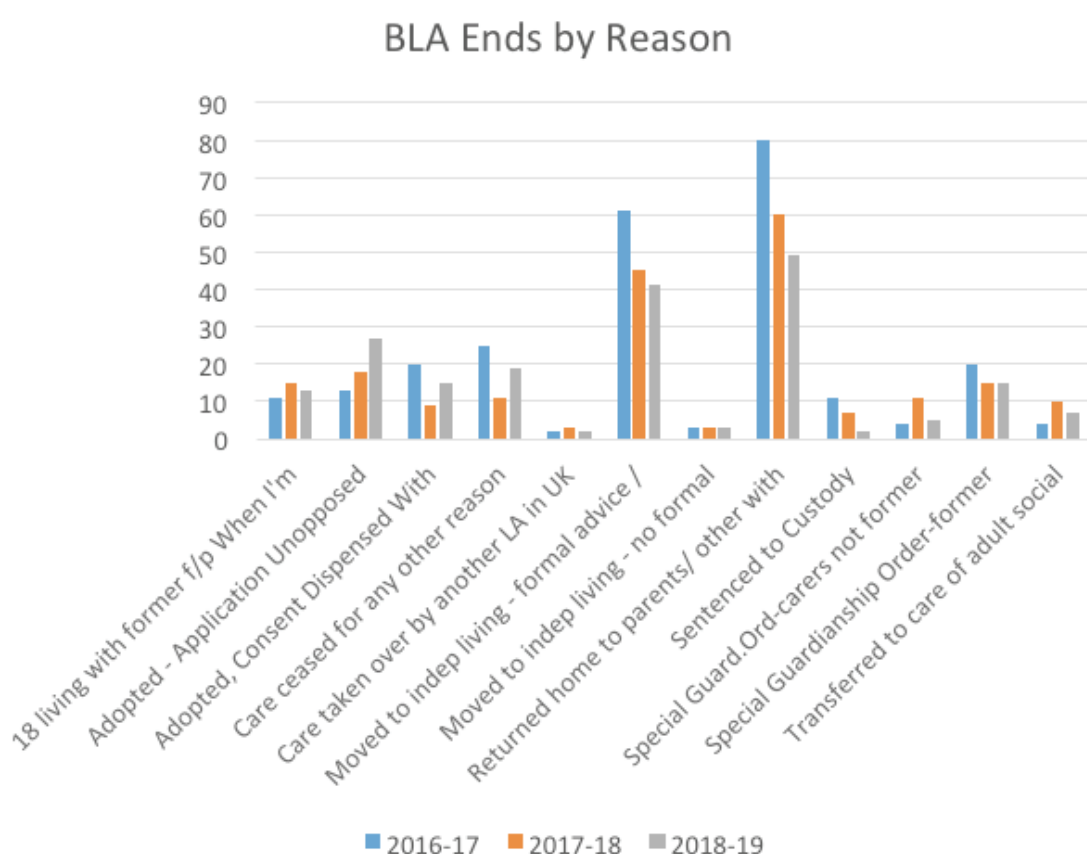


Graphic 8

The year on year growth was 77 from 2016 – 2017, 109 from 2017 to 2018 and 70 from 2018 to 2019. This closely relates to the gap between those becoming looked after (BLA) and ending care as 89, 122 and 68 in the equivalent years. In other words the upward trajectory reflects more children becoming looked after than those ending being looked after.

Destinations after ending care.

It is also important to consider the destinations of young people ending care. The graphic below shows that at the end of being Looked-After young people are favouring independent living or returning home to parents or other family members.



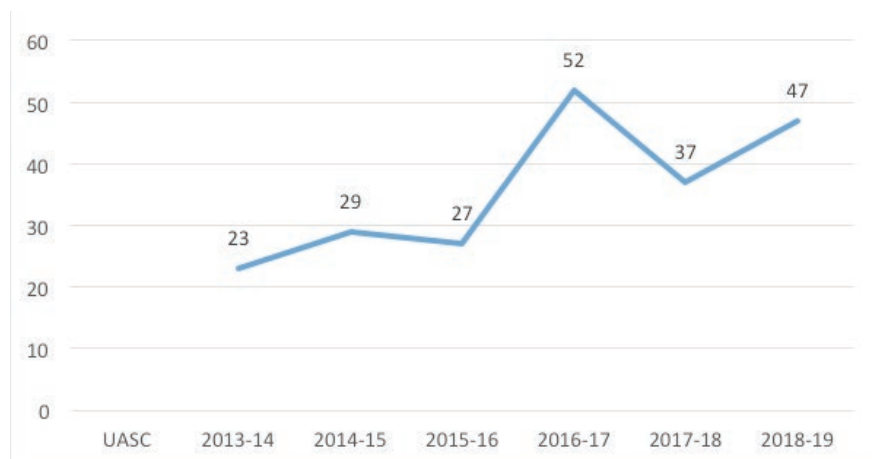
Graphic 9

“In foster care I was treated like the other children”



Increasing Complexity (a)

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC)

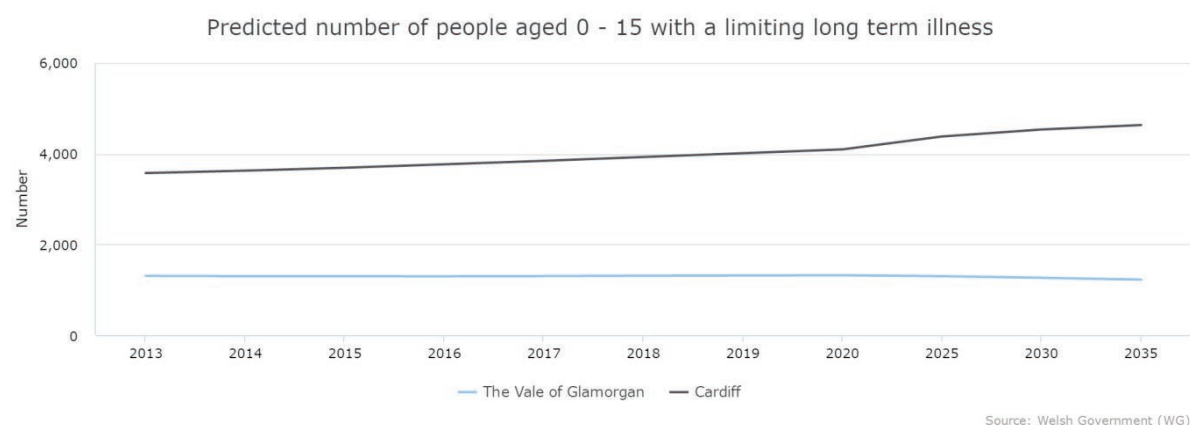


Graphic 10

The graph above shows the increasing trajectory regarding UASC children and young people. It is difficult to predict the future trajectory for this cohort of young people. It is clear that this cohort bring a different and more complex set of issues in securing appropriate accommodation and support

Children with Disability

The number of children and young people aged 15 and under with a long term illness is projected to increase significantly over the next 20 years, with a period of particularly high growth from in 2020 onwards. A similar increase is projected for rates of severe disability in Cardiff.



Graphic 11

Current Provision

Where do Cardiff Children and Young People live?

There has been a 35 % growth in Children looked after since 2014. This is the 6th biggest growth in Wales and we have the largest number of Children looked after.



Graphic 12

Our Children and Young people live in a wide range of places homes mainly in Wales and England. Living closer to home has many benefits including maintenance of family and friendship relationships, remaining close to their communities and being able to attend local schools and access health services. There are circumstances where it is appropriate for a child or young person to live away from Cardiff. Our aim, is to year on year see more of our children and young people living closer to home.

What are their kinds of Homes?

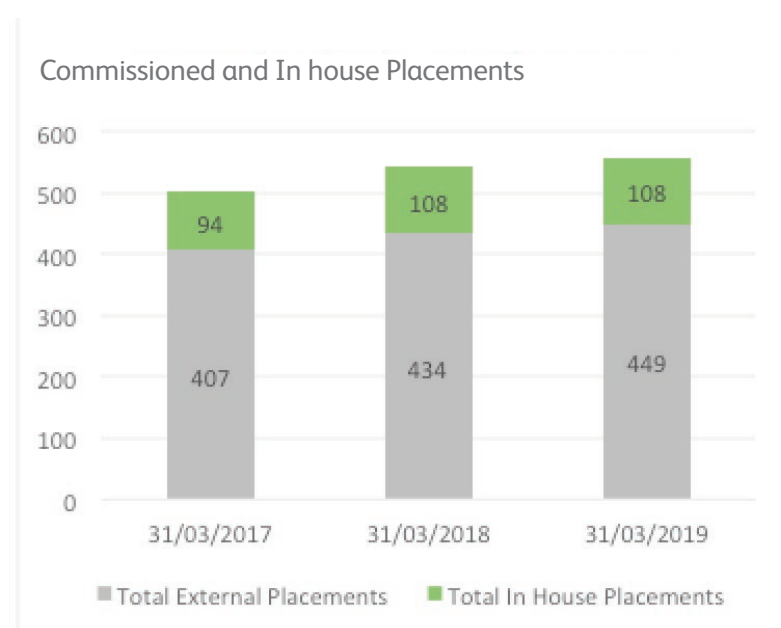
The table below shows the type of homes our Children Looked After are living in. It shows that there is an increasing numbers of children and young people living with their own families or with people connected to their own families, 'placed with parents' or in kinship arrangements. It shows a consistent pattern of use regarding Cardiff Council fostering families, adoption and Independent Foster Agencies (IFAs). It shows an increasing use of residential homes over the last two years.



Placement	31 st March 2017	31 st March 2018	31 st March 2019
Kinship	41	74	101
In house fostering	89	102	101
Agency fostering	361	391	391
Residential	55	54	70
Placed With Parents	93	119	142
Independent Living	58	46	41
Placed for adoption	20	32	33
Other	4	12	21
Total	721	830	900

Graphic 13

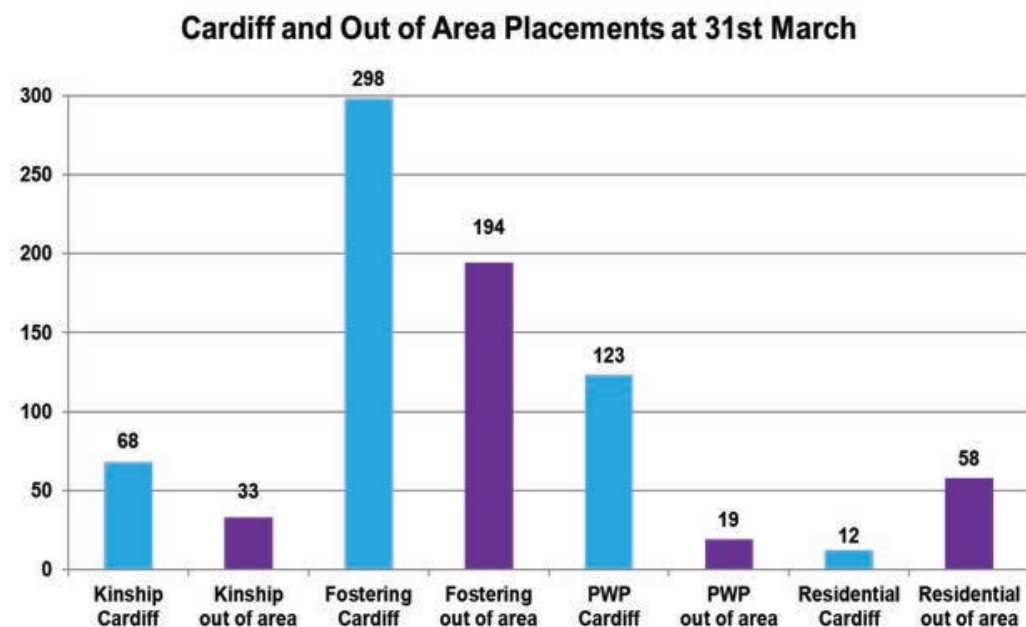
Comparison In-house and Commissioned Services



Graphic 14

Over the last three years there has been a consistent pattern of children and young people living with Cardiff Council foster carers and increasing the use of commissioned providers. While our aim is to significantly increase our number of internal foster carers we also recognise the important role our external providers play in securing homes for our children and young people.

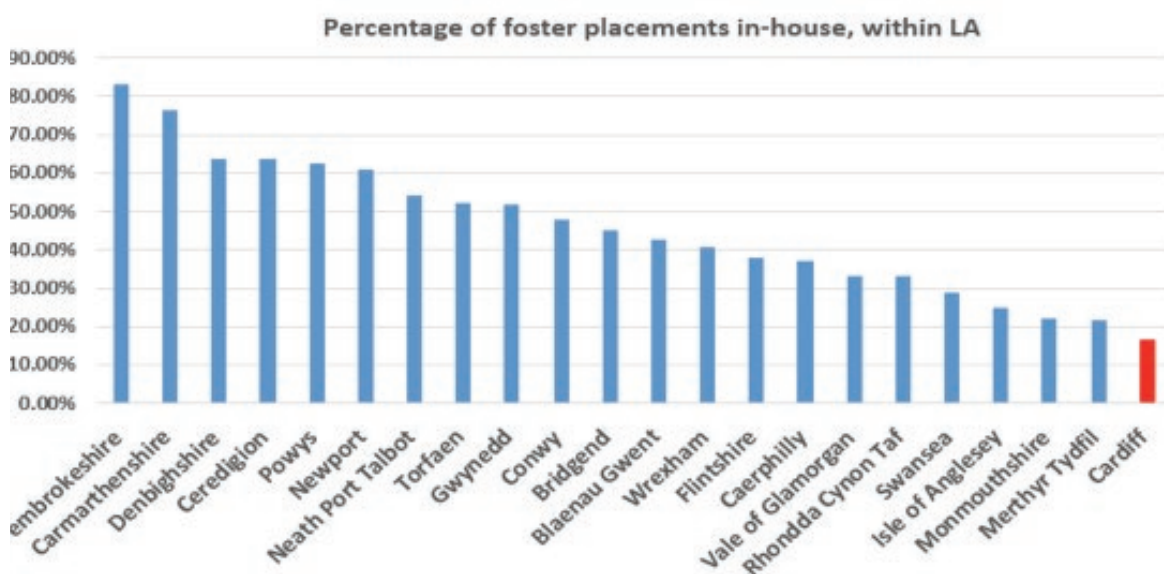
Out of Area placed Children Looked After



Graphic 15

Fostering

Cardiff Council amongst Welsh authorities in having a low level of in-house fostering. Growing Cardiff Council fostering has a significant focus and there has been some success with starting to attract new Foster carers. This needs to accelerate considerably in the next 3 years.



Graphic 16

Out of Area Residential Care

58 of the 70 Cardiff children living in residential homes were living outside of Cardiff at the end of 2018/19. 64 children were supported by private providers and 6 in Cardiff Council provision. Children looked after are living in 20 different locations out of area with 43 different providers.

The table below highlights that the Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan region has significantly lower levels of therapeutic provision in for children and young people than in other parts of Wales. This means that to meet more complex needs of children and young people there is a reliance on services away from Cardiff. Development of therapeutic services require a joint approach from social services, health and education partners.

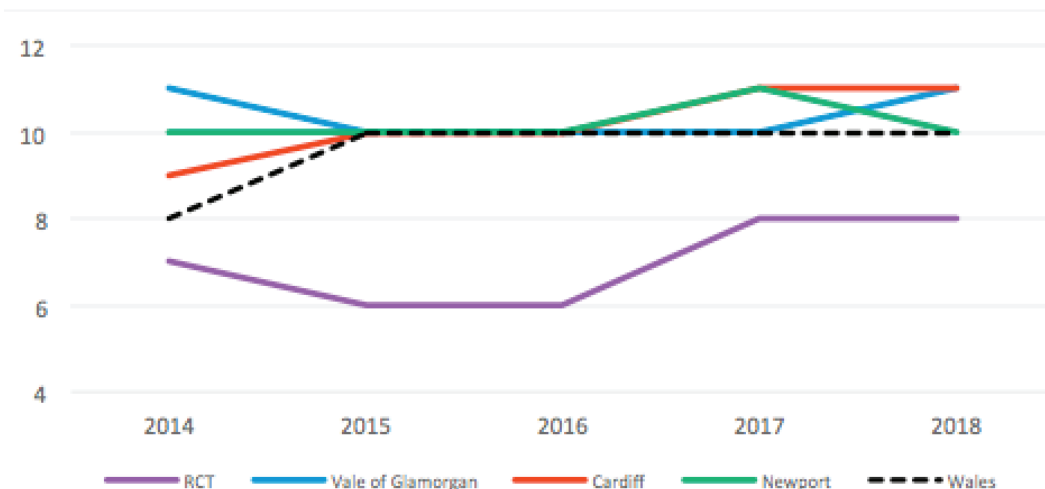
Number and percentage of beds by region and provision type (December 2017)

Region	General therapeutic and specialist care		Short break / respite service		Disability only	
	Beds	% of region	Beds	% of region	Beds	% of region
North Wales	119	60%	28	14%	51	26%
West Wales and Powys	85	61%	29	21%	25	18%
Western Bay	77	73%	21	20%	7	7%
Cardiff & Vale	23	26%	28	32%	36	41%
Cwm Taf	37	70%	12	23%	4	8%
Gwent	60	76%	9	11%	10	13%

Source: Data Cymru; Childrens residential profile of Care Wales -Care providers' statement of purpose analysis

Graphic 17

Percentage of children experiencing 3 or more placements in a year



Graphic 18

The data above shows that the numbers of children experiencing 3 or more placements is slightly higher than the Wales average which has been creeping up since 2016. This is important both as a cause of additional demand but very important for the well-being of our children and young people.

Secure Orders

As of March 2019, there were 5 Cardiff children and young people living in secure welfare settings. There is one secure setting in Wales and it can be difficult to source accommodation in a secure setting in an emergency. Cardiff children have been accommodated in Scotland as well as England in 2018/19.

Supported Housing

In October 2015 the Young Person's Gateway was launched in Cardiff, to offer housing solutions for young people aged between 16 and 21. The service is available to young people to whom the Council has a duty through social services or homelessness legislation.

The Gateway enables young people aged over 16 years to access mediation services, supported housing and specialist floating support services.

Quote from a young person in a Cardiff Council residential care home when asked what their preferred situation would be, sums up the importance for young people living close to Cardiff



Needs Analysis

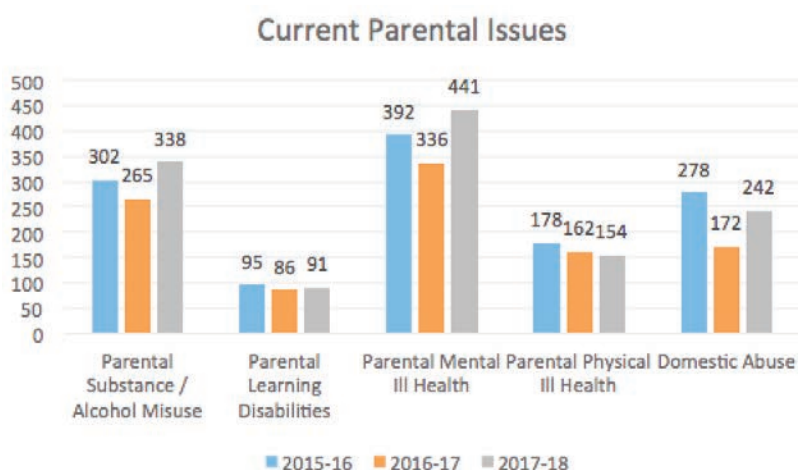
In analysing need we have used three sources of data.

- The Children in Need Census (March 2019) which while it is a good indicator of the needs of vulnerable families in Cardiff. A mini-review of 100 cases has taken place for children and young people referred for a fostering or residential placement. Lastly, a focus group has taken place drawing from key managers across the Directorate.

Children in Need Census

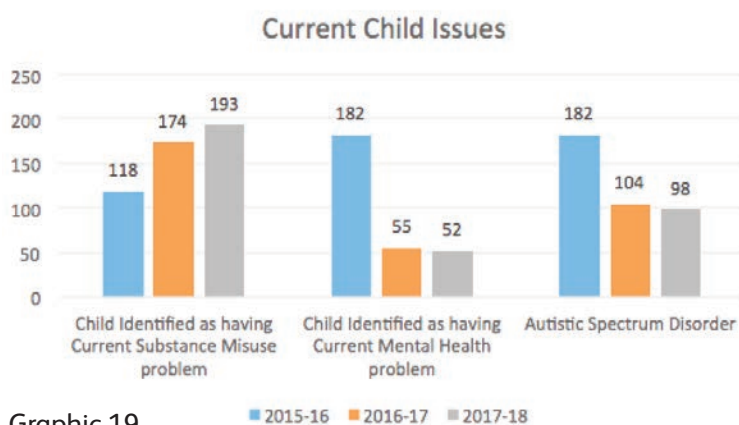
The two diagrams below highlight the key challenges facing families evidenced in the Children in Need Census. There are some important messages.

For parents there are consistent issues regarding their mental health, use of substances, and experience domestic abuse.



Graphic 18

For our children there are also issues regarding their mental health needs and substance misuse. There is also a consistent message about the number of children and young people with autism.



Graphic 19

Key Themes from the review of 100 referrals for Residential and Foster Care

In order to understand the needs of our children and young people who are referred for fostering or residential services, a detailed desk-top audit has taken place of 104 referrals. This has identified some important key themes. Of the sample 18 were living in residential provision and 86 were living with foster families. Of the residential homes 14 were standard residential homes, 3 non-standard and 1 was a mother and baby placement. Of the Fostering families, 64 were standard family placements, 9 were for solo carers placements, a further 9 were for sibling placements, and 4 were mother and baby placements.

In terms of their demographics:

- 50 were female and 54 male. 19 % were aged under 5, 17 % were aged between 6 and 10, and 45 % were between 11-15 years old, and 17 % were over 16.
- In terms of ethnicity 68 % were categorised as white British, 12 % were Asian, 9 % Black and 9 % from Mixed backgrounds.
- Seventy-three had English as their first language
- Five were unaccompanied asylum seekers.

There were a variety of needs evidenced in the review;

- domestic violence (8),
- unaccompanied asylum seekers (10)
- fostering placement breakdown (9),
- new born, 2 children were yet to be born and 5 were new-born. Two were cases of drug dependency.
- There were 21 cases of absconding behaviour.
- Mental health was a significant issue; Self-harm 11 cases. 7 were identified as having therapeutic care needs (3 of these were Residential placements and 4 Fostering). 6 had made threats or attempts at suicide
- CSE was a factor in 19 cases: 7 children had experienced current or historical CSE; while a further 12 cases were identified as vulnerable to or at risk of CSE
- 11 were identified as having substance misuse issues. In 7 of these cases cannabis was stated to be the drug abused, while others were unspecified.
- 14 had been or had shown potential to be violent, towards staff or other children.
- Special Needs: 4 were identified as having an ASD and 3 were indicated to have SEN issues

What do our staff say regarding this mini-needs analysis?

As part of the development of this strategy, a staff focus group assured the conclusions regarding the needs of our children and young people. Broadly, they were in agreement with the broad outline of needs contained within this section with five additions. The additional issues were raised by the workforce:

- They thought there should be a greater emphasis placed on behaviour and emotional issues being a key need especially in the 11-15 age group.
- There seem to be more sibling groups being looked after.
- They thought there were significant mental health needs being partly masked by different labels and professional perspectives.
- The needs of children and young people are complex and multi-faceted.
- Needs are becoming more complex which is reflected in the range of needs being described.

Conclusion

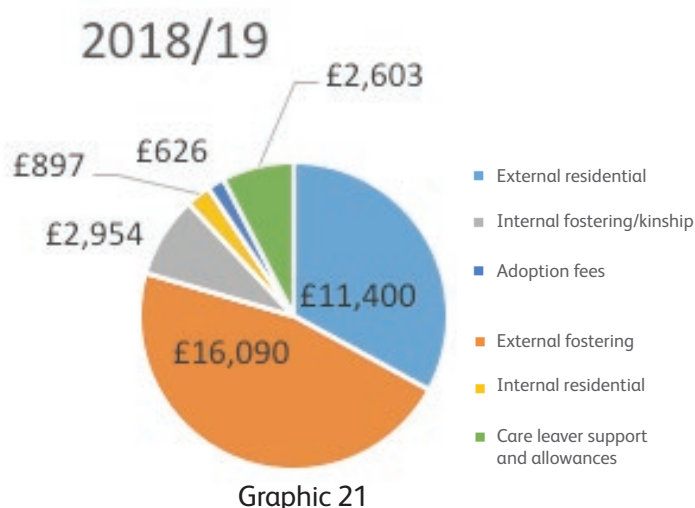
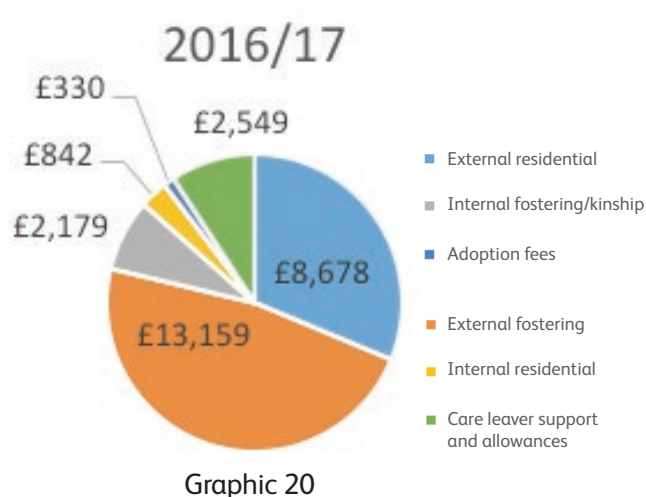
There is a great deal of synergy between the Children in Need survey, staff and provider views and the needs of our Children Looked After from the desktop analysis. There is a consistent picture on the range of needs.

Financial Analysis

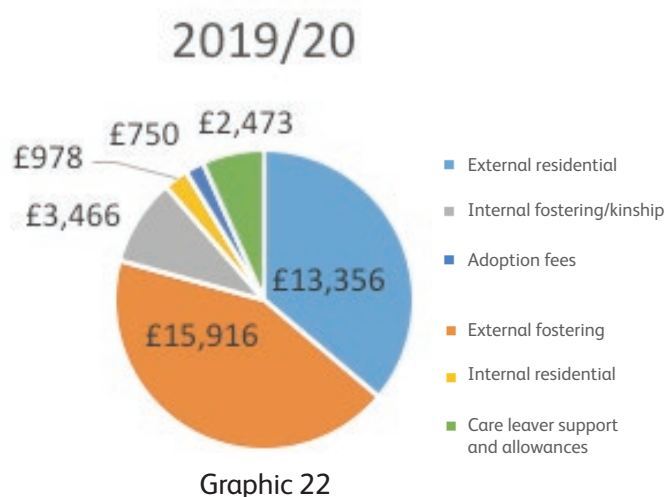
The figures below show the changing nature of the investment in our Children Looked After over the last three financial years. For 2019/20, it is a projection of spend based on the first 6 months of the financial year.

The financial analysis is clear to see, there have been three key changes over the last three years:

- An increasing spend on internal fostering/kinship care year on year,
- An increasing use, year on year, of residential provision which reflects the increasing complexity of young peoples' needs,
- During the first two years there is increasing use of external fostering reflecting the increasing demand. In the last year this has levelled off with the increase in the use of residential options.



For parents there are consistent issues regarding their mental health, use of substances, and that domestic abuse is a key feature in the lives of a significant proportion of our children and young people in need.





Analysis and Key Messages

Why are the numbers increasing?

Analysis suggests the following reasons for the increase in Children looked after:

- The population of children and young people is increasing,
- There are fewer children and young people ending care than starting care,
- There has been an increase in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)
- The increased use of Care Orders by the Family Court of children living with parents and kinship carers whilst retaining their looked after status.
- There is lower use of Special Guardianship Orders
- There are low numbers of revocation of Care Orders
- There is impact of substance misuse, mental health and domestic abuse.
- There is increasing complexity in terms of the needs of children and young people looked after.

Analysis of where we are now?

The information set out in this strategy has highlighted the following issues with the current range of services, across the whole child's pathway:

- There is an imbalance between in-house and externally commissioned services.
- There are too many out of area placements made for reasons of local sufficiency rather than in the child's best interest.
- There is a high degree of stability for most children but evidence that children with more complex needs who become looked after in an emergency experience more unplanned moves.
- There is limited therapeutic residential provision in the Cardiff area resulting in the need for out of area services for children with more complex needs.
- Specific needs around sibling groups, different age groups and ethnicity and cultural background need to be considered.
- There is no specific support for Special Guardianship Order and kinship care arrangements.

“I want to live in Cardiff.
I've been all over Wales
and it doesn't work”





Children's Services Commissioning Priorities

The Children Services Strategy (2019-22) reflects a genuine partnership in which all are committed to:

The picture is clear to see, there have been three key changes over the last three years:

- 'Narrowing the gap' so that children looked after children achieve their potential.
- Improving services so that fewer children need enter the looked after system.
- Listening to children looked after and improving their experience of care wherever possible as a result.

Our commissioning priorities set out below reflect our commitment to working in partnership to improve outcomes for our children looked after.

The Cardiff the 'Corporate Parenting Strategy' sets out the shared vision of the Cardiff Council and the University Health Board for children looked after.

'A child who is cared for by the Council has the right to expect everything from a corporate parent that would be expected from a good parent. Every good parent knows that children require a safe and secure environment in which to grow and thrive. Parents protect and support their children against the dangers and risks of life. Parents are ambitious for them and want them to reach their potential. Parents celebrate and share in their achievements.'

This Commissioning strategy aims to contribute to this vision with a particular focus on 'safe and secure environments in which to grow and thrive and parents protect and support their children against the dangers and risks of life'. It will contribute through focusing on seven key commissioning intentions.

Commissioning Intentions: 'the right homes for our Children Looked After'

Our analysis of need, and the experiences of our young people, has enabled us to develop the following commissioning priorities:

Over the next three years we will:

1. Complete the reshaping of **early help and support** to families to prevent the escalation of needs and reduce the need for alternative homes including Family Group Conferencing prior to any child becoming looked after.
2. Where it is safe to do so, we will look to bring our children and young people back closer to Cardiff, using a Re-unification Framework to support children to return safely to their own families, as we know this achieves better outcomes for them.
3. To respond to the **therapeutic and mental health and well-being needs** of Children Looked After, their parents and carers through the development of a range of therapeutic service with partners.
4. Reshape our respite provision to offer flexible short break opportunities including emergency provision for children with disabilities, and other children young people and families.
5. Redesign our Local Fostering service in order to increase our numbers of Cardiff Foster Carers homes for children
6. Increase the availability of local placements through our collaborative market engagement with providers to shape provision to better meet the needs of our children and young people.

-
7. To commission and develop **additional internal residential provision** in Cardiff to enable flexibility especially for complex cases.
 8. To further develop accommodation **sufficiency for vulnerable young people and those leaving care**
 9. To further develop our **understanding of the needs** of this important group of children and young people by completing a detailed needs analysis.

As this commissioning programme is implemented provision will be accessible to all young people based on their own unique set of circumstances, including; young carers, those affected by disability and ill health, those affected by adverse childhood experiences, those from BME communities and those affected by any form of exploitation including unaccompanied children seeking asylum.

These 9 commissioning intentions are explained in more detail below. This strategy gives the overview of priority commissioning projects over the next 3 years as well building upon the excellent work already underway.

1. Early Help and Support to Families

- **Priority 1:** Complete the reshaping of early help and support to families to prevent the escalation of needs and reduce the need for alternative homes and consistent with the Early Help Strategy.
- **Aim:** Develop a range of support services for families, including kinship and SGO carers, available as and when required and addressing the needs of the children, young people, carers and parents.
- **Result:** A flexible and responsive support services for families available as and when required including Family Group Conferencing
- **Progress:** This will include the commissioning of Family Group Conferencing currently underway.
- **Financial Assumption:** The reduction in demand due to less family breakdowns.

2. Our Children and Young people closer to Cardiff

- **Priority 2:** Where it is safe to do so, we will look to bring our children and young people back closer to Cardiff, using a Re-unification Framework, as we know this achieves better outcomes for them.
- **Our Aim:** To embed the NSPCC Re-unification Framework within Children's Services and with 3rd sector partners.
- **Result:** This will drive forward the rebalancing of care strategy to ensure children return to live with their families following a period of being looked after in a timely manner and where it is in their best interest to do so. This will include reviewing existing and recent placements.
- **Progress:** The training and beginning of this work is taking place in November with further training planned for early in 2020.
- **Financial Assumption:** Reduction in unit costs by moving from higher cost to lower cost placements.

3. Therapeutic and Mental Health Support

- **Priority 3:** To further respond to the therapeutic and mental health and well-being needs of Children Looked After, their parents and Carers.
- **Our Aim:** Develop a Therapeutic Interventions able to support children, young people, parents, carer and the social care workforce.
- **Result:** to provide direct intervention to children and their families including the whole spectrum of substitute carers (from emergency short break carers to adopters). The service will also provide consultation, support and training for staff and carers including parents.
- **Progress:** Further work is underway as part of the regional partnership working and funded through ICF.
- **Financial Assumption:** Mental health support will reduce family difficulties and reduce demand due to family break-down.



4. Reshaping Respite and Short Break Provision

- **Priority 4:** Reshape our respite provision to offer flexible short break opportunities including emergency provision for children with disabilities.
- **Our Aim:** Reshape our current respite care provisions to offer flexible, sessional and time limited short break opportunities.
- **Result:** To provide a new model of short break support, including sessional support, to respond to the needs of vulnerable families and children with disabilities and linking with domiciliary models in adult social care.
- **Progress:** Work is already underway regarding the re-provision of Ty Storrie and moving to a short break rather than respite model of care.
- **Financial Assumption:** Demand will be reduced through more flexible short-break opportunities which will reduce family distress and potential break-downs.

5. Our Fostering Service

- **Priority 5: Redesign our Local Fostering service in order to increase our numbers of Internal Foster Carers and ensure the placement process is fit for purpose.**
- **Our Aim:**
 - a) To ensure we have increased numbers of carers to meet the needs of all children that are placed in an emergency, or on a short term assessment basis until clear permanency plans are established. This includes developing foster carers with more specialist skills.
 - b) To provide alternative substitute family arrangements including; private fostering, kinship care, special guardianship, generic fostering and Safer Families Together.
 - c) To review the current Placement process to ensure it is fit for purpose going forward.
- **Result:**
 - a) Increased numbers of carers able to meet the needs of our vulnerable children and young people.
 - b) A compliant placement process able to manage demand and delivering value for money placements.
- **Progress:** Increased recruitment of additional Foster Carers is already underway and further Social Work support has been added to the Placement team to add assisting with increasing demands for placements.
- **Financial Assumption:** To ensure we have more alternatives to IFA fostering placements through more internal and alternative types of fostering placements.

6. Increase the availability of local placements

- **Priority 6:** Increase the availability of local placements through our collaborative market engagement with Providers to shape provision to better meet the needs of our children and young people.
- **Our Aim:** To refocus of the relationship between the Local Authority and Independent Fostering Agencies.
- **Result:** To build a resilience across the sector by working in partnership to meet the needs of our children where they will best be met within a fostering family with a view to permanence. This will include a tiered approach to matching needs with resources so that the children with the highest needs are matched with the carers with the highest levels of expertise.
- **Progress:** engagement with Providers is already taking place and a more positive and collaborative relationship is being established.
- **Financial Assumption:** To develop the market of providers to ensure that there are more local and cheaper options for placement in or near to Cardiff.

7. Additional Internal Residential Provision

- **Priority 7:** To commission/ develop additional residential provision in Cardiff to enable flexibility especially for complex and emergency cases.
- **Our Aim:** To increase our residential capacity in the Cardiff area so Children's services have more flexible generic residential provision available.
- **The Result:**
 - a) Commission a range of furnished family homes across Cardiff, from existing Local Authority housing-stock, which can be utilised on a flexible basis by Children's Services. The additional 5 provisions will include:
 1. An assessment service that can provide step up and step down provision for young people to ensure that they have robust permanency plans in place.
 2. A flexible provision used when there is an emergency placement needed.
 3. An alternative to secure provision
 4. additional in-house Childrens' Homes similar Crosslands that is based on the same philosophy and model.
 5. Services that provide support and accommodation for older children/ young people who are working towards independence.
 - b) Alongside the new homes we will create a skilled and experienced workforce that have the skills to achieve positive outcomes and sustain placements
- **Progress:** One house has already been identified and will shortly be available to Children's Services.
- **Financial Assumption:** Ensure we have purposeful cost effective residential provision in Cardiff, reducing the length of time of residential care and the need for out of area placements.



8. Adolescent Provision

- **Priority 8:** To further develop accommodation sufficiency for vulnerable young people and those leaving care.
- **Adolescent Resource Team**
- **Our Aim:** Considerable progress has already been made regarding the regional project developing the Cardiff Adolescent Resource provision across the region.
- **Progress:** To further develop the provision particularly linking to the needs for additional residential provision offering short breaks and assessment space for the most vulnerable young people.
- **Young Carers pilot support project**
- **Our Aim:** To pilot young carer provision to ensure their needs are assessment and signposted to appropriate services. The pilot will address the needs of young carers who need additional family support.
- **Progress:** The YMCA has been commissioned to deliver this for the Council. This will be established for 2020.
- **Young people Leaving Care Accommodation**
- **Our Aim:** To commission additional supported housing accommodation for young people leaving care. To build on the young person's gateway to ensure we have sufficient accommodation with support for care leavers and young people who cannot live with family and friends or independently, including Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who are subject to Age Assessments.
- **Progress:** A new Gateway has already been put in place with colleagues in the Housing team. There is additional need for capacity with regard to the most complex young people who have accommodation needs.
- **Financial assumption:** Additional young people-focused and cost effective provision within Cardiff.

9. Needs Analysis

- **Priority 9:** To further develop our understanding of the needs of the current and future needs of this important group of children and young people by completing a detailed needs analysis.
- **Our Aim:** In order to further develop provision to meet needs it is important we develop a more detailed understanding of our children and young people's needs.
- **Result:** A set of needs assessments on key cohorts including placements resulting from; placement breakdown, children on the edge of care, and children with disabilities going into residential provision.
- **Progress:** An initial start has taken place drawing on consultation with children, young people and social care staff to gather a better analysis. In addition work has been completed to understand the increase in residential placements.
- **Financial Assumption:** A more detailed needs analysis will enable better matching between our vulnerable children and young people and the additional provision needed.

“I am very grateful and extremely lucky, to have loving and caring foster carers who have made me feel a part of their family”



Our Commissioning Approach

Commissioning can take place at many levels or scales, from micro (individual) to macro (Cardiff wide). There will be an optimal level of commissioning for all services – our task is to identify at what level commissioning should take place in order to meet need in the most efficient and effective way. This commissioning strategy is focused on both the individual child looked after and the provision we need across Cardiff to respond to their needs.

Our commissioning approach will strive to ensure we commission confidently, working in partnership with providers of quality services and partner organisations, engaging in continuous improvement resulting in services, which respond to the needs and aspirations of service users and carers.

Diagram 4 shows some of the key actions that are involved in our commissioning approach. Depending on the specific commissioning task different aspects of the commissioning cycle will be used.



Graphic 22 IPC commissioning model

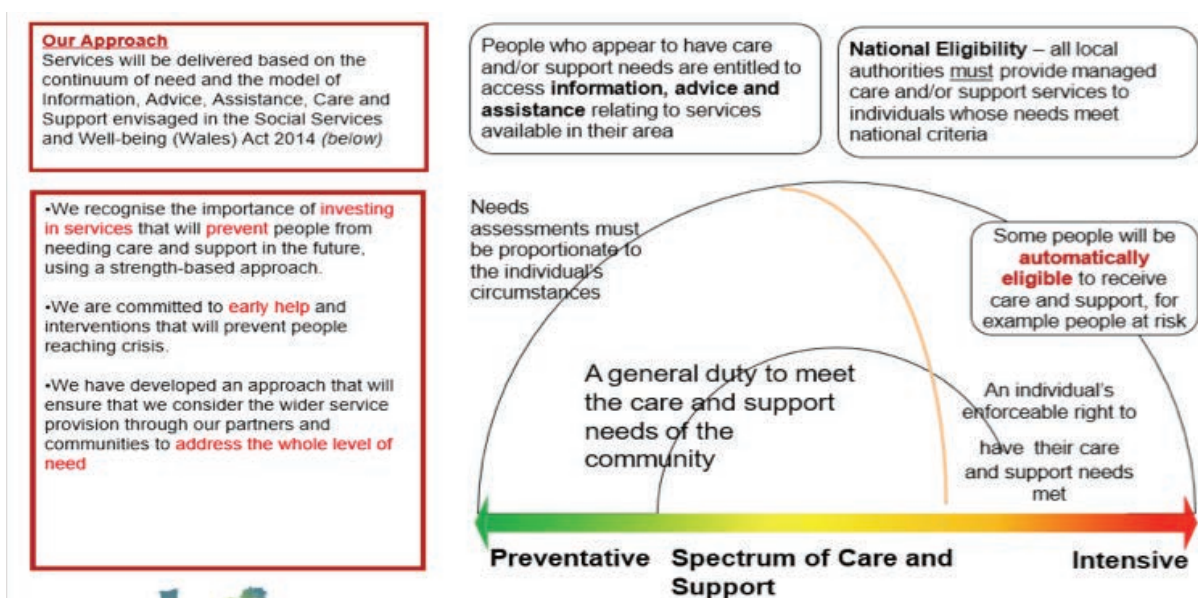
The key principles that drive our approach to commissioning are that all commissioned provision should be:

- Informed and listen to the voice of our children and young people,
- child centred, family focused, strength based and restorative,
- evidence based and trauma informed,
- appropriately skilled Carers,
- flexible and responsive,
- best value for money,
- outcome based.

Whether we are commissioning a service for an individual, or for a client group, it is essential that a common approach is used. This involves:

- Engaging with and taking ownership of a needs analysis,
- Using the business planning process to monitor our commitments,
- and basing our commissioning plans around meeting those commitments,
- Establishing what we can and can't provide and the risks of service failure,
- Gaining clarity over the finances available now and in the future,
- Joint planning with other authorities and partner organisations,
- Understanding and stimulating the Market,
- Maintaining robust monitoring and reporting to ensure quality assurance,
- Decommissioning services where there is no longer a need, or the need can best be met using an alternative approach.

Services will be delivered based on the continuum of need and the model of Information, Advice, Assistance, Care and Support envisaged in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (diagram 4)



Graphic 23

Next Steps

The next phase of this commissioning strategy will be the development of an implementation plan. A considerable amount of this work has already been started and the programme will build on this strength. A programme management approach will be put around the 9 priorities. The programme will involve 9 work-streams reflecting the priorities and small teams of key staff will lead the work.

The governance of this programme will be through the existing Social Services Commissioning Board which meets monthly and is chaired by the Director of Social Services. A number of the priorities will involve partner agencies and they will be invited from the outset.

We will define success in five key ways:

- Improved outcomes for our Children and Young people looked after,
- A stabilisation and then gradual reduction in demand for alternative family placements,
- More children and young people placed in Cardiff,
- A reduction in the use of residential placements,
- Better value for money.



