

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL: July 2011

**Performance report in respect of Services for Looked after
Children 2011**

AGENDA ITEM: 7

Reason for this Report

1. This report provides information for the Corporate Parenting Panel on Cardiff Children's Services performance in respect of services for looked after children in the year 2010/11.

A copy of information for the year 2010/11 is attached at Appendix 1.

Background

2. Local authorities in Wales provide information annually to the Welsh Government on their performance in respect of children looked after by the authority. The government requires authorities to provide this information against key national performance indicators.
3. "Corporate Parenting" is the term used to describe the responsibilities of local authorities in respect of children looked after by a local authority, and young people leaving its care. The role of the corporate parent is to seek for children who are looked after by a local authority the outcomes that every good parent would want for their own child.
4. Cardiff Council has a Corporate Parenting Panel, established in January 2009, that oversees the development and implementation of its Corporate Parenting Strategy.
5. Children's Services is the Service area with lead responsibility for implementing the Council's role and responsibilities as corporate parent for Looked After Children.
6. Cardiff's Looked after Children overall population has remained relatively stable in the last three years ranging from 506 to 530. However the numbers of children becoming looked after has varied during this period. For example in Quarter 4 2007/2008, 44 children started to be looked after, compared with 39 children in Quarter 4 2008/9, 71 in Quarter 4 2009/2010 and 65 in Quarter 4 2010/2011.
7. Over the same period the number of unaccompanied children seeking asylum who have become looked after in Cardiff has reduced reflecting a

reduction in referrals of children to Children's Services by the UK Border Agency.

8. The key national indicators relate to the statutory guidance and regulations issued by government in respect of looked after children and address performance in respect of:-
- Case allocation
 - The need for care plans to be in place at time of the child's first placement
 - Timeliness of statutory reviews for looked after Children
 - Timeliness and content of visits to Looked after children within statutory timescales
 - Information about the location of children's placements, whether this is within/outside the local authority's area.
 - The need for a permanence plan to be in place by the time of the second statutory review of the child's care plan (the second review should take place not more than 4 months after a child becomes looked after)
 - Information about how the health needs of looked after children are met.
 - Information about how the education needs of looked after children are met.
 - Information about the number of changes of placements looked after children have.
 - Information about how the authority keeps in touch with young people when they leave care:-
 - Pathway Plans for care leavers
 - Information about accommodation, education, training and employment for young people leaving care.

Issues

9. The increase in children becoming looked after, referred to above, involves increases in activity/workload that can impact on performance. For example it is associated with increased activity related to assessment, care planning and review, placement finding, statutory visits, arrangements for contact between children and their families, liaison with education and health services, and legal proceedings when this is necessary to safeguard children.
10. Several of the key performance indicators related to looked after children have targets set at 100% reflecting that they are based on requirements in respect of the management of the individual case of each looked after child. Achieving the 100% target can be particularly challenging. For example if statutory looked after children reviews have to be deferred to enable key people to attend this has an impact on performance against the indicator in respect of timeliness of reviews.
11. Performance information against many of the indicators is now collated electronically and this means that activities that have taken place without being recorded electronically are not captured. The service area continues to promote the importance of timely electronic recording of activity through supervision and training and development of staff.

12. While information in respect of some areas, for example statutory visits and permanence planning, is not yet collated electronically use of exemplars developed to support practitioners in electronically recording these activities will enable this to take place in future as they become more fully embedded in practice.
13. Performance against some indicators requires further analysis so that its significance can be understood, for example the number of non transitional school moves seems high in comparison with the number of placement moves for looked after children and the reasons for this need to be established.
14. In some areas, for example the availability of the initial care plan at the time of the child's first placement, the educational attainment of looked after children, engagement of care leavers in education training and employment, and timely development of Personal Education Plans; performance requires further attention. This will be taking place within the framework of the "Better Outcomes for looked After Children and Care Leavers" project which is being reviewed to incorporate use of the Results Based Accountability, RBA, approach to achieve demonstrable improvement. The project will also address improvements in respect of the indicators in respect of healthcare, for example dental checks and health assessments.
15. The Better Outcomes project will provide regular progress reports for consideration by the Corporate Parenting panel and the project programme Boards for Education and Children's Services.
16. Performance standards have been maintained or improved against a number of Performance Indicators. Some of these are referred to above but they also include the allocation of social workers to looked after children, timeliness of statutory reviews, engagement of children and parents in reviews, placement of children within the city and/or close to home.

Recommendation

17. Members are invited to note the content of the performance report and agree to receive a similar report on an annual basis.

**Childrens Services
July 2011**