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## AGENDA

Committee	CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Date and Time of Meeting	TUESDAY, 17 JULY 2018, 2.00 PM
Venue	COMMITTEE ROOM 4 - COUNTY HALL
Membership	Councillor Merry (Chair)  Councillors Bowden, Davies, Hinchey, Jenkins, Lent, Lister, Molik and Weaver

### 1 Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies for absence.

### 2 Declarations of Interest

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

### 3 Minutes (Pages 3 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting.

### 4 Out of Country Inquiry Report (Pages 9 - 64)

Councillor Lee Bridgeman (Chair, Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee) will be in attendance to present the report and answer members questions.

### 5 Cardiff Virtual Tracker

Gillian James (Achievement Leader Closing the Gap) will be in attendance to make the presentation and answer members questions.

### 6 Member Work Streams Update (Pages 65 - 80)

Members to provide an update on their own Work Streams.

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**7 Member Visits Update** *(Pages 81 - 84)*

**The reports in respect of this item are exempt from publication as they contain exempt information of the description contained in paragraph 12 of Part 4 and paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972. The public may be excluded from the meeting by resolution of the Committee pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 during discussion of this item.**

**8 Briefing Reports**

Officers will be in attendance to answer any questions Members may have in relation to the various Briefing Reports.

**a Quarter 4 Complaints & Compliments Report** *(Pages 85 - 92)*

**b Quarter 4 Performance Report** *(Pages 93 - 100)*

**Appendix 1 of this item is exempt from publication as it contains exempt information of the description contained in paragraph 12 of Part 4 and paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972. The public may be excluded from the meeting by resolution of the Committee pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 during discussion of this item.**

**c Crosslands Regulation 32 Reports** *(Pages 101 - 112)*

**This item and the reports are exempt from publication as they contains exempt information of the description contained in paragraph 12 of Part 4 and paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972. The public may be excluded from the meeting by resolution of the Committee pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 during discussion of this item.**

**d Ty Storrie Regulation 32 Reports** *(Pages 113 - 142)*

**This item and the reports are exempt from publication as they contains exempt information of the description contained in paragraph 12 of Part 4 and paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972. The public may be excluded from the meeting by resolution of the Committee pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 during discussion of this item.**

**9 Urgent Items (if any)**

**10 Date of next meeting**

The next scheduled meeting of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee is on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018 at 2.00pm in Committee Room 4.

**Davina Fiore**

**Director of Governance & Legal Services**

Date: Wednesday, 11 July 2018

Contact: Mandy Farnham, 02920 872618, [Mandy.Farnham@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:Mandy.Farnham@cardiff.gov.uk)

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CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

24 APRIL 2018

Present: Councillor Merry(Chairperson)  
Councillors Hinchey, Jenkins, Lister, Molik, Walker and Weaver

94 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Lent.

The Chairperson welcomed Jessica Brown in her capacity as one of the representatives for young people and Advisor.

95 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

96 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

97 : BRIGHT START TRAINEESHIP SCHEME

The Chairperson welcomed Nicola Wood (Looked After Children Traineeship Coordinator) to the meeting. Members were provided with a presentation on the Bright Start Traineeship Scheme, which covered the following points:

- What is the scheme?
- How does it work?
- Training and Support
- Benefits for young people

The Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members asked whether there had been engagement with the Youth Service, and were advised that a meeting took place last week between Bright Start and the manager of the Youth Service. Youth mentors have also come and done a workshop with Bright Start.
- Members noted that it would be good to extend the scope of the service to provide young people with opportunities in areas such as engineering and building, and were advised that training can be provided to external companies, and that Bright Start are currently working with Admiral who are keen to mentor young people.
- Members asked what ages the young people are who are referred to the scheme and how many opportunities there are, and were informed that the

children are mainly between the ages of 16-21, and that there are currently around 25 traineeships. There are 20 young people on a waiting list for a traineeship at the moment and it is important to match opportunities with an individual.

- Members also queried how the process works in conjunction with Social Workers and were advised that Bright Start liaise with the Social Worker of the young person and have access to their risk assessments.
- Members asked whether the link-up on Procurement with Kier is strong enough and were informed that the team are working on this, and on raising awareness for different services to offer placements. For example, the Council has 700 different departments, any of whom could offer a placement. External providers are also keen to work with the scheme. Members noted that there is an opportunity for real living wage procurement suppliers to follow this model.
- Members were informed that the length of placements can vary between 2 weeks up to 8 months in some cases, and that some feed into a corporate apprenticeship role. Most placements are for 3 months, but all placements are reviewed on a monthly basis. At the moment only 2% of traineeships lead to a permanent job, but often the placement is a stepping stone to paid employment elsewhere.
- Members queried whether feedback sessions take place and were advised that feedback is received via focus groups and the NYAS participation group.

Members were informed that the Council continues to receive funding from the Welsh Government (WG) and they have chosen to spend the grant on this scheme. As well as this, a proportion of the St David's Day fund is spent on the traineeships. There is sufficient money in the grants to expand the members of the team and thus expand support to young people up to the age of 25.

## 98 : PERFORMANCE OF CARDIFF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN 2016-2017

Gillian James (Achievement Leader, Closing the Gap) provided Members with an overview of the report on the Performance of Cardiff Looked After Children 2016-17, in which she explained that there have been some improvements, but overall the results for Looked After Children remain too low when compared with their peers.

The Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members noted that Key Stage 4 is a concern, with a higher percentage of looked after children being educated outside of Cardiff and none of the cohort achieving the L2+ threshold. Members were informed that it was a complex cohort; 81% of children had Special Educational Needs (SEN) and 25% had become Looked After within the last two years.
- Members asked what support is given to looked after children and what progression has been made. Officers explained that there is a virtual tracker for looked after children, which contains a profile of the child, their history of

placements and test results. Information is also gathered from *Care First*, to keep the information up-to-date. The names of looked after children are given to Challenge Advisors in schools on a termly basis, who then follow-up if a child is not progressing. Education now have better communication with Children's Services, and have also provided training to School Governor's. The Committee noted that they would like a presentation on the virtual tracker at a future meeting.

- Members were informed that Education are working with other teams to see how they can help looked after children, as it is an issue that impacts lots of areas.
- They will also be working with partners such as Admiral, where graduates will become mentors for some looked after children, and with Full Circle on a six week mentoring programme, which if successful, will be rolled out across Cardiff. University College London have worked with seven schools in Cardiff, researching what works for looked after children. Updates on these projects will be provided to the Committee in future.
- Members asked why there are so many out of county placements, and were informed that the main issue is the lack of foster carers.
- Members noted that the term 'out of county' can be misleading, as some areas of the Vale of Glamorgan are very close to Cardiff for example, and it would be best to strategically bring children closer to home which would cut costs. Officers agreed, but said there is still a lot of work to do with neighbouring authorities and that the best place for children is in Cardiff schools.
- Points 18 and 19 of the report discuss analysing the lack of achievement at KS4 and benchmarking performance against English and Welsh authorities. Members asked whether these findings will be presented to the Committee in future, and were advised that while some of the data may be difficult to obtain, progress will be reported on at the autumn meeting.
- Members highlighted St Teilo's C.W. High School as being a good role model and asked whether there is a case to make certain schools specialists in catering for the needs of looked after children. Officers explained that children should have a choice of which school to attend, and that the aim should be to bring all schools up to the same level as St Teilo's. Members are welcome to visit St Teilo's to see the work they do.

RESOLVED: to note the content of the report.

## 99 : WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE/MEMBER VISITS

Members provided the Committee with updates on their work programmes as follows:

- On the topic of Prevention, Cllr Molik informed the Committee that she has met with Jan Coles, and found it useful to learn more about her role. They discussed the importance of involving School Governors. She also met with

Sarah Woelk, Dan Jones and Alys Jones, but has yet to visit ARC or MASH as dates for a visit haven't been offered.

- Cllr Hinchey updated the Committee on work involving the experience of LAC and outcomes. Around 20 Managers attended a meeting around promoting permanency. The number of Foster Carers still needs to be increased but positive feedback has been received regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. A discussion also took place with Officers around creating more permanent homes in Cardiff. Overall things are progressing well and a plan will be brought to the next meeting.
- Cllr Lent sent her apologies to the meeting, so an update on Specialist Services will be provided at a future meeting.
- Cllr Walker informed the Committee that a session took place around improving the education attainment and achievement for LAC. It was a well-attended and successful session. He added that sharing between schools should be done on a systematic basis. Scotland are doing good things in this area, and it would be good to hear about this at a future meeting.
- Cllr Lister updated the Committee on the work around Corporate Parenting within the Council. He advised that he has written to David Melding AM (Chair of Ministerial Advisory Group) but has not yet had a response. In terms of communication, a newsletter could be sent across the service (including Members) with case studies so that people can be kept up-to-date on the work that is being done. He also highlighted that only a third of Members have completed the essential Corporate Parenting training.

Following these updates a discussion took place to identify the next steps.

RESOLVED:

- That Members will update their Work Plans.
- To plan a schedule of visits to St Teilo's, Rumney Primary School, Crosslands, MASH and ARC.
- That Members will raise awareness of training through Whips.

100 : DISCUSSION ITEM: DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2017-2018

Members discussed the option of delaying the submission of the Draft Annual Report to Council until September 2018. It was noted that the report could include Work Plans going forward and that there are lots of outstanding actions that are currently being dealt with. Overall the report needs to be an accurate reflection on the work done by the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Chairperson liaise with lead Members regarding Work Plans and to agree via email whether or not to delay the Annual Report.



## 101 : DISCUSSION ITEM: FOSTERING FORTNIGHT ( 14 - 25 MAY 2018)

Debbie Martin-Jones (Operational Manager, Specialist Services) provided members with information on the upcoming Fostering Fortnight (14-25 May 2018), which aims to promote fostering in Cardiff. Members were advised that various events will be taking place including a display in County Hall reception one day of each of the two weeks, a radio advert on Capital Radio and the launch of a focus group. Merchandise can be made available and that Members are welcome to get involved.

The Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members noted that it would be good to get support from MP's and AM's and to use social media to promote the event. Officers advised that there will be lots of social media activity.
- Members noted that there could be a stand at Full Council in May.
- Members commented that it would be good to have a roadshow at schools in the future.
- Members were advised that there will be a re-launch of the Foster Carers' Charter during the fortnight, and Members were invited to be involved.

## 102 : BRIEFING REPORTS

The various briefing reports were noted by the Committee.

## 103 : QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Members were provided with Children's Services Performance Overview for Quarter 3 2017/18.

Members noted that the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee's Terms of Reference require the Committee 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.

The Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members asked what the main things to be concerned about are and were advised that there is an increase in the number of Look After Children (although this was projected), a dip in performance of Looked After reviews and an increase in Social Worker vacancies, although new posts have been created and internal transfers have taken place, so this figure is not as bad as it first seems. All of these concerns were anticipated.
- Members were informed that Children's Services sickness and absence is on target.

- Members were advised that overall there are no worrying statistics in the report. Outstanding assessments are monitored on a weekly basis and manager intervention occurs when necessary. There were some delays in convening child protection conferences to allow for Officers to attend Signs of Safety training.

RESOLVED: to note the content of the report.

#### 104 : QUARTER 3 COMPLAINTS & COMPLIMENTS REPORT

Information Report.

RESOLVED: To note the content of the report.

#### 105 : REGULATION 32 REPORTS: CROSSLANDS

Information Report. The item was not for publication in accordance with paragraph(s) 12 of parts(s) 4 and 5 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED:

- To exclude the public for consideration of the report.

To note the content of the report.

#### 106 : REGULATION 32 REPORTS: TY STORRIE

Information Report. The item was not for publication in accordance with paragraph(s) 12 of parts(s) 4 and 5 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED:

- To exclude the public for consideration of the report.

To note the content of the report.

#### 107 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee is on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> July at 2:00 pm in Committee Room 4.



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**An Inquiry Report of the:  
Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee**

# **Out of County Placements**

**May 2018**



**Cardiff Council**

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**Appendix 1** - ADSS Cymru, WLGA and National Adoption Service evidence to the National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee inquiry into Care experienced Children and Young People.

**Appendix 2** - 4C’s 360 degree feedback on staying close to home from Children & Young People.

**Appendix 3** – Placement Finding Process via the all Wales Frameworks

**Appendix 4** - the Local authority Regional/National Commissioning Arrangements via Children’s Commissioning Support Resource (CCRS).

**Appendix 5** – Blaenau Gwent’s Strategy to safely reduce the number of children being looked after

## CHAIR'S FOREWORD

I would like to thank the members of the committee who took part in the task and finish inquiry into out of county placements. I would also like to thank all the witnesses who gave evidence in front of the committee during the process. Last, but not least, Martyn Hutching's support and professionalism during this sometimes difficult and challenging inquiry has been immense and I am truly grateful for this.

This was always going to be a challenging, interesting, thought provoking Task and Finish inquiry. The fact is that this is an issue that is not just affecting our city, it is affecting local authorities across the whole nation. During the process, the committee had the privilege of interviewing young people who had been affected by being placed out of county, so it was not just from an adults or agencies perspective that the outcomes and recommendations are based on. This report's outcomes and recommendations are based on what is best for the young people and what as a committee we feel is the way forward for the local authority; we believe that, in time, the recommendations will have a hugely positive effect on young people and their families. The report will also help Children's Services to continue their improvement in the coming years.

Thanks again to everyone who took part



**Councillor Lee Bridgeman  
(Chairperson)**

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee during its consideration of items for the 2017/18 work programme agreed to undertake a Task & Finish inquiry into “Out of County Placements” later in the year, to be chaired by Councillor Lee Bridgeman.
2. The inquiry was requested by three Cabinet Members, the Committee Chairman and supported by all Committee Members at the work programme forum meeting.
3. This area of activity and expenditure is a very challenging and often volatile one in all local authorities. It is difficult to anticipate a number of key factors including:
  - how many and which children will enter the looked after system each year;
  - what type of placements they will need; and
  - how many children will cease to be looked after;
  - the impact of case law and changes in government regulations.
4. In common with other local authorities, Cardiff has experienced an increase in the number of children with especially complex needs and the rising costs associated with meeting these needs within appropriate placements continues to place pressure on budgets. This cohort of children relates both to those with challenging and complex behaviour and to those with disabilities.
5. Children and young people with challenging and complex behaviours often cannot be maintained within foster placements and require admission to residential care. In certain circumstances these placements will be specialist (for example, where a child is displaying sexually abusive behaviour) and/or require the provision of additional staffing to manage risks associated with the child’s behaviour. Placements of this type can cost over £200k a year.
6. There is evidence of increasing demand for support for older disabled children and young people. Families often manage to cope when children are younger but some of them find it increasingly difficult to do so as the children grow and may become more

challenging or aggressive. Some disabled young people require 24 hour care and support which can be met only in a residential school setting, usually until they reach the age of 19.

7. Cardiff Council, over the past 6 years, has implemented a number of strategies, plans and initiatives to help address the challenges that Children's Services has been facing, these included the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee, the Enhanced Fostering Scheme, Signs of Safety, early intervention and prevention initiatives, Social Worker recruitment and retention initiative and the Cardiff Fostering campaign "Count Yourself in".
8. The Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru's (ADSS Cymru) evidence to the National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee, published on the 29 January 2018 stated that "The majority of children who are looked after are cared for by foster carers where children receive positive and nurturing care in stable placements. Residential care also provides many children with positive care and across local authority and agency providers for both foster care and residential care there are committed, enthusiastic and positive carers."
9. However, the evidence also stated that "the increasing complexity of cases and the growing numbers of children are negatively impacting on both the availability of appropriate placements and the cost of placements. An ageing foster carer population and the increasing costs of providing residential care are draining the sector. Despite the initiatives of the National Fostering Framework, the work of the Welsh Government Residential Task and Finish group, the commitment of local authority placement teams and the work of the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs) the lack of appropriate placements for looked after children is approaching a crisis position. Despite local authorities' strong commitment to ensuring placement choice and stability most have struggled to recruit foster carers in sufficient numbers to provide the range and choice of placements needed, particularly for those young people with challenging behaviour and with additional needs. Local authorities report similar shortages in the independent sector. This apparent deficit in the foster carer market raises complex challenges across Wales. A similar deficit is increasingly apparent in residential provision and particularly in the availability of placements for children presenting with the most complex needs".

## KEY FINDINGS

10. The Inquiry Members reviewed the evidence gathered from discussions with Children's Services Senior Staff, Social Workers, Voices from Care, the Chairman of the Welsh Government Advisory Committee, advice to the Welsh Government from the ADSS Cymru, Fostering Network, the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru, and Pembrokeshire County Council. The Members also reviewed a number of publications and reports. As a result of the analysis and assessment of the evidence gathered throughout the Inquiry the following key findings have been identified:

### **Impact on Children being looked after**

**KF1** The lack of placement provision in Cardiff needs to be addressed;

**KF2** Former Looked After Children often have told us that they value consistency in their relationships with professionals and relatives;

### **Strategic operations**

**KF3** As Corporate Parent, the Cardiff Council has a responsibility to ensure that all looked after children are safeguarded and that their outcomes are improved.;

**KF4** The overwhelming increase in cases coming forward are concerned with neglect with significant increases in domestic violence, issues which are increasingly highlighted as a result of the support that is provided as part of early intervention services;

**KF5** The Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) is focusing on improving outcomes for children by working to three key work-streams 1. Improving Practice, 2. Edge of Care and Risk Assessments, 3. Promoting Permanence. Cardiff Council should continue to work closely with the MAG whilst accelerating its own development agenda.



- KF6** Particularly as Cardiff is the fast growing City and is promoting itself as the a great place to grow up;
- KF7** to review the Corporate Parenting Strategy to reduce the number of Looked After Children is key to help safely reduce the number of looked after children, it should be supported by a clear strategic approach to commissioning and an updated placement strategy, and include more residential specialist provision in Cardiff, , in particular settings for over 14 year olds.
- KF8** There needs to be more collaborative working across Children's Services, and the wider Council;
- KF9** That effective prevention and intervention strategies and improved outcomes are key to reducing numbers of children being looked after. Prevention and intervention work is considered more effective under the full control of children's services;
- KF10** Parents of children who have complex needs children, require specific support services to build their resilience and enable them to look after their children at home.
- KF11** Placement commissioning arrangements should to be reviewed to ensure that the Councils has a fit for purpose system.;
- KF12** In September 2017 the Council had approximately 796 looked after children this has increased from 557 cases in 2012-13; and Members projected that this could reach 920 by March 2019.
- KF13** There is an overspend year on year and is likely to continue for some time, we need to build this into the budget;
- KF14** Savings accrued from invest to save schemes such as moving residential children back to Cardiff can be reinvested into preventative and early help initiatives;

## **Social Worker Workforce**

- KF15** A stable and fully established social worker workforce is key for the well-being of children being looked after as well as the well-being of social workers themselves;
- KF16** The Council must do everything possible, to help recruit and retain children's services social workers;
- KF17** The "signs of safety" model provides the Council with the ideal opportunity to both improve the outcomes for children, well-being of social workers and reduce the number of looked after children and placements.

## **Placements**

- KF18** Cardiff needs to have considerably more placements than it currently has, and where possible should utilise its own housing stock;
- KF19** Monthly reviews of out of county residential placements is undertaken to assess whether the needs and well-being of each Child could be fully met in Cardiff;
- KF20** As Greenhill is the only special school and only takes Boys, Girls have to be placed out of county.
- KF21** To encourage more people to become Foster carers, it has been suggested that the Council should invest in its Foster Carers and identify ways of making working for Cardiff in-house Fostering Service more attractive such as seasonal allowances, pay additional fees and retainers;
- KF22** That where safe to do so, Cardiff should maximise the use of all in house foster carers whenever possible;
- KF23** The key issue that children have to be safeguarded in the setting which best meets their needs and well-being.

- KF24** The increasing complexity of cases and the growing numbers of children are impacting on both the availability of appropriate placements as a result the pre-matching and planning of placements is becoming crucial to the effective placement of Children particularly in emergency situations;
- KF25** There is a high volume of inappropriate referrals to the Council's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub from stakeholders, stakeholders need to be supported to understand when to make a referral to the MASH and when to provide effective early help services;
- KF26** Cardiff is the one of a few authorities in Wales to place 0 – 5 year olds out of county and in independent placements;
- KF27** If you want to reduce out of county placements then you have to change the approach as well as changing provision through an invest to save initiatives;

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Members of the Inquiry Group were tasked to consider plans and proposals to provide improved provision and determine the effectiveness of these improvement in addressing Cardiff high levels of out of county placements. The Task and Finish Group reviewed the evidence gathered from Children's Services, team managers, staff, Children who are looked after, Welsh Government's advisory Panel and other stakeholder groups. Members have identified from the evidence received and key findings, and agreed 20 recommendations for the Cabinet to consider:

### **The Committee recommends to Cabinet that:**

- R1** All Placements must be made in the interests of the Child, minimising the impact on them, their education and well-being. **(KF1 & 2)**
- R2** As Cardiff is the fast growing city and is promoting itself as a great place to grow up, placements should be made, wherever possible in Cardiff. **(KF6)**
- R3** Social Service Directorate should undertake a well-being assessment of all it's Children's Services social workers over the next 12 months. **(KF 15)**
- R4** Social Services Directorate must develop and fully implement a social worker recruitment and retention strategy to encourage new applicants and support to retain staff by 31 March 2019. **(KF 16)**
- R5** As corporate parents, all staff and Councillors, must work in collaboration with all partners to ensure that the safeguarding of all children. **(KF4, 8 & 10)**
- R6** The new management team for People and Communities, to work with the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee to, review the structure and operation of the service to ensure that it is works with all parts of the Council in undertaking their corporate parenting duties, by 31 March 2019. **(KF 3, 10 & 23)**

- R7** it must task officers to review the early help service and reorganise the management and control of all early intervention and prevention initiatives to enable them to be under the control of children's services, within the next 12 months. **(KF 9)**
- R8** A strategic approach to commission placements, to improve outcomes and safely reduce the number of children being looked after, must be developed and implemented as soon as possible. **(KF 7 & 27)**
- R9** It tasks officers in the Social Service Directorate to review the Placement Commissioning arrangements by 31 March 2019. **(KF 11)**
- R10** it continues to implement the Signs of Safety framework, within the next 12 months and provide evidence of its impact.. **(KF 17)**
- R11** It tasks Officers to review, current demand, in to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub to ensure the consistent use of criteria by partners. **(KF 25)**
- R12** Officers must ensure that the placement of 0 – 5 year old, out of county, is only undertaken when it is in the best interests of the Child. **(KF 26)**
- R13** To develop and implement a Placement strategy which should include, to recruit and retain Foster Carers, including, continuous advertisement programme, additional support, allowances, and retainers, to be in place within the next 12 months. **(KF 21)**
- R14** It ensures that a review of all vacant fostering placements, Agency, Council and kingship options, is undertaken to verify that there is appropriate matching and stable placements for all Children being Looked After. **(KF 24)**
- R15** Officers are to develop and implement a building programme of homes for children in Cardiff, utilising every possible agency, as an Invest to save project, within the next 12 months. **(KF18)**
- R16** it ensures that future annual placement budgets must reflect anticipated number of Looked After Children at future year mid-point, to help ensure that Social Services do not overspend. **(KF 12 & 13)**

**R17** Savings accrued from returning children back to Cardiff are reinvested into preventative and early help initiatives. **(KF14, 19)**

**R18** Officer investigate whether Greenhill School could admit Girls to minimise out of county placements. **(KF 20)**

**R19 Action Plan** - The Cabinet Member ensures that an action plan is developed to ensure the implementation of these recommendations within an agreed timescale as part of the response to this report. **(KF 5)**

The Inquiry team also wishes to commend the work of Children's Service management and staff who have developed and implemented many changes over the recent past, which has in some way started to address some of the issues identified in this report.

## EVIDENCE

### Scope of Task & Finish Group Inquiry

11. The Committee reviewed a draft scope for the Inquiry at its first meeting and agreed to the terms of reference of the Inquiry to be:
  - To review the provision of out of county placements, the types of provision, cost and impact on resources
  - To identify gaps in local provision, social services, and education that result in the need to place children out of county.
  - To identify the barriers to providing additional support in Cardiff and the impact on looked after children in being placed outside Cardiff.
  - To consider plans and proposals to provide improved provision and determine the effectiveness of these improvement in addressing Cardiff high levels of out of county provision.
  - To report the findings of the Committee to the Cabinet.
12. Members agreed to hold a number of meetings and to receive the following information:
  - Overview and background – to set the context of the Inquiry and gain an understanding of the policies, plans, proposals and challenges around the placement of Children who are looked after by Cardiff Council.
  - The members also received evidence from The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Children's Services Senior and Social Workers. The inquiry also heard from the following external witnesses, Voices from Care, Fostering Network the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4C's), the Chairman of the Welsh Government "Outcome for Children Ministerial Advisory Group".
  - Members also reviewed a number of documents which had been identified as relevant to the work of this Inquiry.

## **POLICY AND PROCESS FOR THE OUT OF COUNTY PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER**

13. The City of Cardiff Council is committed to providing the highest possible quality service to ensure the safeguarding and protection of children. The Council has a highly professional and dedicated team of social workers and support workers to ensure that all vulnerable children and young people are safeguarded and can grow up in a safe environment,

### **Legislative Framework**

14. The Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014, The Children Act 1989, Adoption and Children Act 2002, Children Act 2004 provides the legislative and regulatory framework. Children (leaving care) Act 2000.

### **Different types of care**

15. Long term and permanent fostering. - Sometimes children will not be able to return to live with their own families. A parent's health may have become worse, or perhaps a child's family has been unable to change in a way that will protect the child from harm. In these situations long-term or permanent fostering will allow a child to grow up in a safe and supported family environment while retaining the important connection with their birth family.

16. Short term fostering. - This can last from an overnight stay to as long as two years. There may be an illness or other problems in the child's family, or a child may have been harmed in some way. The goal is to get the child back to his or her own family care, as soon as possible, or once it is decided they cannot return to their birth family, to help them move on to a permanent substitute family.

17. Parent and Baby - Some parents may need foster carers who can support them and help them care for their babies. They need carers who can teach and encourage them



without taking over their responsibilities as parents. There are also some parent and baby residential care settings (Family Assessment Centres).

18. Respite Fostering - Respite fostering aims to relieve pressure on families who have difficulty caring for their children. By planning ahead and giving their children regular short breaks with the same foster carer, the families are more able to care for their own children long term. Some short breaks are just for the day, while other include overnight breaks. Some occur weekly, others monthly, and some just in the school holidays. This form of foster care can suit people who are not in a position to offer full-time but do not want to make a regular commitment to a child (or children).

19. Residential Care – Residential care for children are provided to ensure the needs of children are met when they cannot live with their own family or in Foster Care.

## Child Protection Process

20. The All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008 sets out the six stages of the child protection process, which are:

- **Referral:** The person taking the referral within social services will record comprehensive details on the appropriate form and seek further information. The police should be notified as soon as possible if it is suspected that a criminal offence has been committed against a child.
- **Initial Assessment:** Social services undertake an initial assessment to establish if the child is in need and requires protection. This should be completed within 7 working days. A strategy discussion may be required following this assessment. The person making the assessment must see the child and speak to or communicate with the child, to an extent where they are satisfied that the child is and feels safe. The initial assessment may be very brief and lead directly to a strategy discussion/meeting, and/or core assessment.
- **Strategy Discussion:** Following the completion of the initial assessment, it may be decided that a strategy discussion is required. Police and social services should share and discuss all information received/gathered and with other

professionals/agencies as appropriate, and decide on the next course of action within 24 hours or without delay if there is immediate concern for the child.

- **Strategy Meeting:** A strategy discussion may agree that a strategy meeting should be held. Those attending a strategy meeting should include police and social services staff, the staff member or professional making the referral, together with other staff members and professionals who can assist in the planning process for the child protection enquiries, if they are to take place. This meeting should be held as soon as possible but no later than a maximum of 8 working days from the receipt of the referral.
- **Child Protection Section 47 Enquiries by Social Services and/or the Police:** At the strategy discussion/meeting, a decision must be made on whether the child protection section 47 enquiries will be undertaken as a single agency or jointly, depending on the seriousness and type of abuse. Information gathered during this formal stage of enquiries should be recorded in the core assessment that can begin before a child protection conference but is unlikely to be concluded by the time the conference meets.
- **Child Protection Conference:** a child protection conference and the preparation and implementation of a child protection plan may follow the child protection section 47 enquiries. The child protection plan will be informed and updated by the core assessment of the child's needs, which runs in parallel with the section 47 enquiries.

## Placement process

21. Children and young people can be put into looked after placements for lots of different reasons. Sometimes it can be because their parents can't look after them properly and it is decided that it's better for them to live somewhere else. This can also happen if a child's parent isn't well, has to go into hospital, or dies. Other children and young people in Looked After placements have birth parents who just couldn't cope, while some have parents who neglect or abuse them.
22. Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children and young people in their own right, are responsible for ensuring that each child or young person

placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs.

23. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies are responsible for ensuring that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.
24. In matching children and young people with carers, responsible authorities are expected to take into account their cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious needs. Matches are intended to be achieved by means of information sharing and consideration involving all relevant professionals, the child and her/his family and potential carers, their families and other children and young people in placement.
25. Written foster placement agreements are intended to contain specific reference to elements of matching which were taken into consideration in agreeing the placement and identify areas where foster carers need additional support to compensate for any gaps in the match between the child and carer.
26. Responsible authorities are expected to provide the foster family with any additional training, support and information required for the particular needs of a child.
27. The introduction of The Placement of Children (Wales) Regulations 2007 and guidance 'Towards a Stable Life and a Brighter Future' requires local authorities to take into consideration the placements arrangements for children looked-after. The legislation pays particular attention to any placements that are proposed to be out side the local authority's geographical boundary.
28. Where this is to be the case the local authority must convene a panel where representatives from Education, Health and Children's Services attend, discuss and agree the proposed arrangements. Where members do not agree, and negotiations have reached an impasse the case can be referred to the Chief Executive of the Local Authority, and the Local Health Board for resolution.

29. The purpose of the panel is:

- To determine that there is no placement in the area capable of meeting the Child's needs or that an out of area placement is more consistent with the child's welfare.
- To satisfy themselves that the child's education and health needs will be met within the placement.
- To agree arrangements for meeting the Child's education and health needs and
- To agree funding for the placement.

30. Panel Membership - The core membership of panel should be consistent, where members would include senior officers from Children's Services (Chair), Local Health Board and Education, who have responsibility for budgets and commissioning services.

Members of the panel:

- Operational Manager, Looked After Children Service
  - Operational Manager, Children in Need Service
  - Senior Achievement Leader or Senior Educational Psychologist, Education Service
- Panel will be supported by - Professional Advisor, Placements Officer, Panel Administration Officer.

31. The Panel Remit is:

- The principle underpinning the panel process is that all arrangements including funding need to be resolved prior to a child being placed, ensuring that all health and education provision is confirmed and available before a child is moved.
- Where the plan is to move a child to an out of area placement the case should be referred to the Out of Area Placements Panel prior to confirmation of arrangements, and prior to the placement being made.
- In the event of a child being placed in an emergency, the requirement is for a referral to be made to panel as soon as practical after the placement yet no later than 25 working days after the date of placement.
- With regard to retrospective cases, any decision to move a child, or for not referring the case to a panel prior to the placement move will need to be evidenced in writing, (including any pertinent reasons) and endorsed by the Assistant Director (for out of area residential placements) or the Operational Manager, Looked After Children Service (for out of area foster placements). A copy of the report will be placed on the child's file.

### 32. The Panel Process

- a) The administrator will be the contact point for all requests for authorisation of Out of Area Placements.
- b) Requests for authorisation of Out of Area Placements should be made using the Request for Out of Area Placement exemplar. Each request must be completed by the Operational Manager, Looked After Children Service.
- c) Case managing services must forward requests for authorisation of Out of Area Placements to the Panel Administrator as soon as it becomes apparent that an out of area placement is likely to be needed for a child.
- d) The Panel Administrator will process requests that are received up to 7 working days prior to panel so that, in consultation with the Panel Advisor, the information can be circulated to the panel members.
- e) The panel will inevitably also need to consider some requests for authorisation that cannot be made within the timescale referred to above. It is essential that such requests reflect circumstances in which it has become necessary for the case management service to forward the request to the Administrator within 7 working days of the panel meeting.
- f) The relevant Operational Manager will feedback decisions to case responsible teams following the panel and prior to minutes being circulated.
- g) Minutes will be distributed after they have been approved by the Panel Chair and recorded on CareFirst.
- h) Children's Services Operational Managers are responsible for ensuring that, in respect of children's placements, planning and appropriate inter-agency consultation and negotiation, is undertaken prior to the panel and the placement being made.

### **Children's Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR)**

33. The Children's Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR) is an e-sourcing tool. Its purpose is to support local authorities to find appropriate placements / care settings for looked after children in Wales. It is a joined-up government initiative, with partners including the Welsh Assembly Government, the Welsh Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Social Services in Wales. The service is hosted by

the Local Government Data Unit; funded originally by the Welsh Government now funded through a Consortium partnership of Local Authorities and Providers.

34. CCSR is centred on a real-time, online database. The database holds details on a large number of accommodation providers - including independent foster agencies, independent children's homes, charitable service providers and residential special schools. In addition to information on the business, the database includes considerable details on their individual care settings. These details – including whether there are vacancies - are updated by providers ensuring local authorities have the most up-to-date information possible.
35. The database also facilitates electronic tendering. Local authorities can securely post information about a child's placement requirements inviting providers to respond with potential placement matches in accordance with a defined timescale. Invitations can be restricted in some way (e.g. only framework placements (see further below) or only foster placements) or left open.
36. Launched in 2006, CCSR increased the speed and efficiency of placement searching whilst at the same time giving local authorities knowledge and access to a much wider market. Prior to its introduction each local authority managed its own list of approved providers. Consecutive searches were conducted by making a series of phone calls to the providers on the list to determine whether they had any potential placements. Electronic tendering effectively allows local authorities to simultaneously search a much large number of providers. This has reduced duplication of effort and generated cost savings, but more importantly, it has meant local authorities benefit from a wider selection of possible placements when considering what represents the best match for a child.
37. Moreover, CCSR has facilitated the sharing of best practice in the development of standardised processes and forms for local authorities to follow when completing searches. These forms enable providers to have a much clearer understanding of the needs of the child when they are considering whether to propose a placement and package of support.

38. CCSR was a critical tool in the development of a common contract to govern the placements of looked after children. The All Wales Pre-Placement Agreement was signed by the 22 Welsh local authorities in 2008. All providers registered on CCSR have been required to agree to sign the Agreement and thereby comply with the conditions contained therein. These included the following expectations:-

- All details of individual care settings are accurate and up to date, including the information on available services and facilities.
- Services and facilities are realistic (e.g. it is inappropriate to say that speech therapy is available through the provision if it is actually provided in the usual way by a local NHS facility)
- Vacancies in provision are updated on at least a weekly basis.
- Only actual vacancies are to be recorded; these will be either those available immediately or those available from a specified date.

39. There are in excess of 200 independent providers registered on CCSR and thousands of individual placements.

40. The fifteen local authorities in South and Mid Wales collaborated further by establishing the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (the 4Cs) in 2012, Pembrokeshire County Council will be joining in April 2018. The 4Cs is a regional commissioning team. It has developed, and now manages, framework agreements for commissioning the following types of placements: i) fostering; ii) residential care; iii) parent and baby foster placements. Following a full procurement exercise in 2012, a total of 30 organisations were successfully validated and entered onto one of the framework agreements. Validation was based on the optimum combination of quality, local capacity and price. North Wales joined the Fostering Framework in 2014 and have the option to use the Residential Framework if need exists. This makes the Frameworks a genuine Welsh Collaboration to improving placement commissioning and contracting.

41. A further procurement exercise was completed in 2016 and the current framework agreements have the option to extend to 2022. Providers have won their place on the framework through rigorous service quality and business scrutiny. Annual quality checks

are completed and all providers are committed to developing their service provision in Wales in response to clear needs analysis presented by local authorities.

42. As signatories to the framework, the local authorities contractually agree to search (via CCSR) for placements with providers on the framework in the first instance. If there are no suitable placements proposed following a framework search then the local authority can open the search to all providers on CCSR. Searches 'off framework' are open to the 200+ providers on CCSR.
43. 4C's links with CIW so that all providers registered have up to date Inspection Reports available and are informed of any care standards concerns. If a provider has care standard or safeguarding issues CCSR can temporarily conceal a provider from tendering for placements until standards have improved.
44. The improved commissioning practices which followed the introduction of CCSR are a key component in local authorities strategies to secure improved placement matches for our looked after children. The Framework is outcomes focussed and participation through a Young Commissioner's programme is at the core of the Framework. Of course identifying a successful match is far more difficult when searches are completed in an emergency. Wherever possible, local authorities try to search for placements in a planned way, while recognising the nature of safeguarding work will always have some same day emergencies, the vast majority of placements can and should be planned to support the best outcomes possible for the child. Guidance on using CCSR recommends running searches for a minimum of 2 -3 days where possible, based on provider feedback of how long it takes to review a tender, complete a thorough matching exercise, discuss matches with potential carers and then tender a child specific rather than generic response.
45. Capacity challenges in the current fostering market extend across local authority, charitable and independent provision. Consortium partners have made a commitment to work together to tackle this issue by working together in Wales. Welsh Government has also recognised these capacity issues through the funding of a National Fostering Framework exercise. Lack of capacity in the fostering market is inevitably having a knock on effect to capacity in the residential market. While the capacity issue is tackled



it is important that all commissioners optimise use of existing capacity and follow best practice guidance in the commissioning process to maximise the potential for good matching despite scarcity of resource. A key element of best practice is optimising the use of CCSR.

46. A substantial investment by 4C's in the upgrade of CCSR commenced in September 2016. There is a 5 Phase Programme which is due to be completed by April 2018. The upgrade includes review and amendment to functionality with user level input plus background systems modernisation.

47. A record of Children's Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR) use will also be required to evidence the attempts by the Placements Unit to identify placements.

## Number of Out of County Placements

### Children's Services

#### Out of County Placements 31/07/17

Placement Type	Total
Children's home outside LA boundary	38
Foster placement with relative / friend outside LA	14
Independent living	4
NHS / Health Trust / medical or nursing care establishment	1
Placed with foster carer provided by LA outside LA	12
Placed with parents / person with parental resp.	10
Placement with agency foster carer outside LA	155
Residential accommodation not subject to Children's Home regulations	1
Residential School	2
Secure unit outside LA boundary (within Wales)	1
YOI or Prison	6
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>244</b>

Number of Cardiff Council fostering places	181
Number of foster care places occupied	92 (as at 30 Sept 2017)

## **Cardiff Council Residential Home**

48. Crossland's Children's Home - Crosslands children's home is currently the only children's home directly provided by The City of Cardiff Council. All children's homes must be registered with the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). Crosslands is registered with CIW to accommodate up to 6 young people aged 11 to 17 years.
49. The registered manager is Siobhan Teague, the responsible individual is Debbie Martin Jones and the registered provider is the County Council of the City and County of Cardiff.
50. A CIW unannounced inspection and took place on the 8th of June 2017 between 2:30 pm and 7:00 pm. The inspection employed the following methodology:
- Viewing the premises and gardens and selected records and documentation.
  - Consultation with young people, residential support staff and managers.
  - Observation of the engagement between young people and staff.
51. The report was published on the 17th July 2017. The findings are summarised in the report as follows:
- "Overall we found that overall the young people are safe, confident and engaged in constructive lifestyles and activities. They are encouraged to express themselves and to develop self-responsibility and the three young people we spoke with, said they like the staff and feel assured by the support they provide them. They enjoy placement stability; staff continuity and consistency and are encouraged to develop relationships and attachments with their carers. 'Normalisation' is promoted along with the rights of the young people to thrive and feel valued. The premises provide well for their purpose; there are a sufficient number of skilled and experienced staff and the arrangements for the management and leadership of the home are robust".

## CIW INSPECTION REPORTS

52. Cardiff Council has been inspected twice in the last 4 years, the first inspection report dated August 2014 was Cardiff Council's element of a National Inspection Safeguarding and Care Planning of Looked After Children and Care leavers, who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviours. This was followed in March 2016 by an Inspection of Children's Services.

53. The National Inspection - Safeguarding and Care Planning of Looked After Children and Care leavers, who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviours, report for Cardiff Council, identified a number of positives but also highlighted a number of areas for improvement these included:

- There had been a placement strategy in place since 2011 from which a delivery plan had been developed. The progress of the delivery plan was tracked quarterly but the strategy had not been updated to reflect the current profile of the looked after population. The authority could improve the effectiveness of service planning and identifying gaps in provision if vulnerability and risk was included in the profile of the looked after population. Apart from the monitoring of the stability of placements there did not appear to be any arrangements in place which would provide an overview of permanency particularly for those 11 years and older.
- Despite good working arrangements, the resilience of the authority's relationship with health services remain overly dependent on children's social services providing funding and resources to assess and meet the therapeutic needs of looked after children and care leavers. Given the size of the looked after population the authority should consider the development of a participation strategy which is more systematic and which outlines the outcomes that could be achieved from such engagement.
- The quality of assessments seen was inconsistent, they were not routinely updated and so did not reflect the current needs of looked after young people.
- The recording of care planning was limited and there was little evidence of how young people were engaged in the process. The format of the plans did not

facilitate easy access to information or engagement and did not have a specific section to record the views of children and young people.

- There was a lack of primary mental health services available for those young people whose wellbeing was compromised but did not meet the threshold for the Children and Young People's Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
- The format for recording risk assessment did not facilitate good organisation of information or analysis. There was little evidence of how risk assessments were shared between partner agencies working on the case or how young people had been engaged in the process. There was an over reliance on the expertise and experience of the operational manager which could be mitigated by the adoption of a more formalised protocol in relation to clarity and consistency around the mechanisms used for risk management. Relevant risk assessment training which was specific to adolescents would improve consistency in this area.
- Good progress had been made in improving arrangements to manage missing children and young people; however there was little resilience in the service which was essentially co-coordinated by a single post. There did not appear to be any contingency to cover staff absence for a service which is essential and deals with a high volume of referrals.
- Workers raised concerns about their uncertainty around the timing of the planned restructure of field work teams to establish a specialist service looked after children. Although staff had been consulted in December 2013 there had been no definite confirmation of when arrangements would be implemented. Social workers were optimistic about the planned changes which they believed would improve continuity for children and young people and improve capacity to carry out direct work.
- I.R.Os felt confident to challenge arrangements for young people and social workers and managers confirmed this was the case. However this was difficult to evidence and inspectors saw examples around of situations which had not been resolved despite the issues being raised appropriately. Consideration should be given to how challenges brought by I.R.O.s could be evidenced and of how outcomes are influenced.
- The authority has plans to include pathway plans in the formal reviewing process but there was no timescale agreed for implementation at the time the inspection took place.

- There were quality assurance arrangements in place but a lack of capacity had impacted on the effectiveness of the system to influence improvement. A particular concern was raised about the quality assurance of 'out of county' placements of which of necessity the authority had a high number. This had identified this issue and that there was a need to strengthen the approach to monitoring commissioning arrangements.
- There had been a lack of stability of placement and continuity of workers for young people in the recent past. These issues were being addressed by the authority but the high demand on the service continued to present a challenge.
- Young people reported that although they had experienced good support from schools, there were some barriers to further education. They were also unhappy about the range of supported accommodation available to them although there were a number of joint initiatives with housing working to improve the options.

54. The Inspection of Children's Services which was published in March 2016 included a number of recommendation for the Council to implement, these included:

#### Providing Direction

- Strong political and corporate support for children's services should be continued in order to achieve the council's vision for children and young people in Cardiff, while continuing to manage the consistent high volume of demand on statutory services.
- The council must strengthen the operational plans to support the effective co-ordination of the remodelling of children's services and its interface with the Early Help Strategy.
- The council should assure itself that arrangements for accommodation and 'agile working' which it was planning to implement will support effective social work.

#### Delivering Social Services

- The workforce strategy should be fully implemented to maximise retention of staff and action taken to promote more timely recruitment of staff.
- The council should consider how it can increase the opportunities for staff to be engaged in the development and transformation of services; and for the voices of children and their families to be included in service planning.
- Staff must have the capacity to complete the training which has been identified to support their professional development.

- The quality assurance framework should be systematically implemented across children's services. This should include management oversight of the quality and frequency of supervision.

#### Shaping Services

- The council must review its arrangements to ensure services can meet the needs of children and young people, particularly for those being subjected to domestic violence.
- A timely review of the effectiveness and the impact on outcomes for people of the remodelling of children's services and its interface with the Early Help Strategy should be included in the planning arrangements.

#### Access Arrangements

- A range of user-friendly information should be developed and made easily accessible for families, children and young people not only with respect to signposting to preventative services but also how children's services carries out its work.
- The council must develop more effective arrangements to ensure that the needs of children and young people are assessed if contacts and referrals about their well-being are repeated.
- The council must work with partners to agree a shared understanding of the threshold for statutory services.
- Careful consideration should be given to how the current effective interface between 'children's access point and the intake and assessment teams' is maintained when the remodelling of the service is implemented.
- Arrangements for children's services staff to access information held on parents who are users of adult services should be reviewed.
- The 'out of hours' arrangements for the completion of 'welfare checks' on children and young people should be agreed with partner agencies.

#### Assessment Care Management

- The quality of plans should be improved to be more outcome-focused and reflect the needs identified in the assessments.
- Work to agree a model of risk assessment should be completed with a strong focus on consistency in risk management.

- More emphasis should be given to recording the views of children, young people and their families.
- The council should review the use of written agreements with families which should only be used within safeguarding or public law outline arrangements. Guidance for social workers and managers for their use should be developed.

55. The actions identified by the Directorate to address all these recommendations were built into the Directorate's Business Plan to enable them to be effectively implemented.

## EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSIONS

56. The Inquiry Members agreed a scope for the inquiry, which included receiving evidence from a number of internal and external stakeholders. The Inquiry also reviewed the content of a number of key reference documents. This information was utilised by the Inquiry members to identify key areas which if reviewed would positively impact on the wellbeing of children who are being looked after out of county.

### Internal Witnesses

57. The inquiry initially invited the Cabinet Member for Children & Families, together with the senior management team responsible for Children's Services and out of county placements, to provide a briefing on the processes, challenges and plans for the future in respect of Out of County Placements of Children who are looked after. This was followed by a visit to a social worker team at Hafan Gobaith, who deal with out of county looked after children to fulfil the council's obligations as a corporate parent, discuss the reasons, in general, for their placement out of county, the challenges of dealing with children who are placed out of county and suggestions to minimise the impact of the extra work. Finally the members wish to understand the work being undertaken to help move children back to Cardiff, where appropriate.

### External Witnesses

58. The Inquiry wished to receive as wide a range of evidence as possible in the short time that this inquiry was planning to work. To this end the Members agreed to invite

- The Chairman of the "Outcome for Children Ministerial Advisory Group" – Mr David Melding AM;
- Fostering Network in Wales – Colin Turner;
- Voices from Care - Christopher Dunn and Aden Richards;
- Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4C's) – Karen Benjamin
- Pembrokeshire County Council - Nichola Jones and Tracy Merritt.



59. The Inquiry Members also reviewed a number of documents which they had been specifically directed to consider by witnesses or Officers.

- Evidence from ADSS Cymru, WLGA and National Adoption Service to the National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee's inquiry into care experienced children and young people (**Appendix 1**);
- 4C's 360 Degree Feedback – staying close to home (**Appendix 2**);
- 4C's Placement Finding Process and Fostering data for Cardiff (**Appendix 3 & 4**);
- Blaenau Gwent's Strategy to safely reduce the number of Looked After Children (**Appendix 5**);
- National Fostering Framework;
- The Councils Marketing Strategy for Fostering;
- Briefing on the management of the market for foster carers;
- Vale of Glamorgan Annual Placement Review;
- Coventry City Council's Redesign of Internal Children's Residential Care Provision.

60. David Melding AM Chairman of the "Outcome for Children Ministerial Advisory Group" was invited to the third evidence gather meeting of the Task Group to explain the work of the Advisory Group, comment on the evidence it has received and reports that the advisory group has produced and in particular the Group was keen to hear about the work on Permanency Planning and Building Stable placements work stream and answer any questions that the Group asked to help better inform the Inquiry.

61. Colin Turner - Director, The Fostering Network in Wales was also invited to the third evidence gathering meeting to explain about the work of the Fostering Network, and in particular the Network work and advice around:

- Recruitment & Retention of Foster Carers
- Your projects and programmes
- The Fostering Framework reports
- Your work with the Ministerial Advisory Group
- Your views on the benefits and challenges of out of county foster care placements

- The challenges facing Local authorities in providing an in-house fostering service, and possible actions to improve provision.
- Any views on the provision of children's homes in Wales.

Together with any Information on the new Fostering Wellbeing programme in partnership with Cwm Taf Social Services and Wellbeing Partnership Board, any areas of concern or barriers to improvement that you feel that the inquiry could help to address, and answer any questions that the Group asked to help better inform the Inquiry

62. Voices from Care were invited to the fourth evidence gathering meeting to present the views on the impact on those in care of being placed out of Cardiff. Two representatives attended where Members asked them to provide the inquiry with any comments around their perception from children who are being looked after of the impact on them of being placed out of county.
63. The Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4 C's) was also invited to the fourth evidence gathering meeting. This organisation was originally formed by the 10 South East Wales Improvement Consortium (SEWIC) authorities, 4Cs was renamed and expanded in 2012 to include five Mid and West Wales authorities. A Board which includes Heads of Children's Services and three Directors govern the 4Cs work programme. In 2012, 4Cs launched the first collaborative social care Frameworks in Wales for Fostering and Residential LAC placement services. These were renewed in May 2016, with the option to run until 2022.
64. Significant progress has been made by the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs) to improve the way local authorities commission looked after children (LAC) placement services. As well as significant cost savings, benefits include improved management information, consistent and secure collaborative tools and processes across authorities to facilitate individual placement matching, contract award and contract monitoring, collaborative risk management, and quality assurance of providers; sustained reduction in prices; and an environment of partnership with the independent sector to commission new sustainable care models.

65. Regional Manager, Karen Benjamin, was invited to this meeting to explain:
- How the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru operates
  - The strategic commissioning process for looked after children
  - Market analysis, shaping and market sounding exercises
  - Social care placements
  - The all wales framework contract
  - any areas of concern or barriers to improvement that you feel that the inquiry could help to address

The Members also asked a number of questions to help better inform the Inquiry, particularly around the management of placements and commissioning of residential homes.

66. The Members were also briefed on the Children's Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR) is an e-sourcing tool. Its purpose is to support local authorities to find appropriate placements / care settings for looked after children in Wales. It is a joined-up government initiative, with partners including the Welsh Assembly Government, the Welsh Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Social Services in Wales. The service is hosted by the Local Government Data Unit; funded originally by the Welsh Government now funded through a Consortium partnership of 4C's and Providers.

67. Nichola Jones and Tracy Merritt from Pembrokeshire County Council were invited to the fifth evidence gathering meeting to share the work that they had been undertaking, as they had been identified as a Council that had developed a number of actions to help reduce the level of out of county placements and help reduce the overall number of children being looked after. They were asked to explain to the Inquiry the key actions that had been implemented in Pembrokeshire County Council that had brought about change and how they can be utilised in Cardiff to improve the outcomes for our children who are being looked after.

## REVIEW OF EVIDENCE

68. The Task & Finish Group undertook a review of all the evidence received and information presented to them and identified a number of key issues which they considered important enough to highlight for the Council to consider to help improve the well-being and outcomes for Children who are looked after and ensure that they are safeguarded and protected. The key areas that the Members identified from the evidence are:

- Impact on the well-being and safeguarding of children and young people who are looked after;
- Strategic operation of the service
- Social Worker workforce issues
- Management of the placement process.

69. They considered each element to identify the key issues arising from the evidence received, following this the Inquiry Members identified the key findings which would be highlighted in the report. A further discussion was had around each of the key findings to identify the necessary recommendation to address each of the key findings from the evidence received. This ensured that the resultant recommendations are clearly based on the evidence received by the Members during the inquiry.

## THE IMPACT OF BEING PLACED OUT OF COUNTY ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

70. The members of the Task Group were quite quickly altered to the impact that being placed Out of County has on Children who are looked after. This issue was first raised by the Assistant Director of Social Service (Children's Services) who directed the Members to the evidence provided by the ADSS Cymru, WLGA and National Adoption Service to the National Assembly for Wales, Public Accounts Committee Inquiry into care experienced children and young people (**Appendix 1**). This evidence includes comments that, "The pressure of the cost of placements is exacerbated by the difficulties in placing children within or near to their home local authority and the lack of consistency in outcomes for children" and "The structural challenges of placements and the resultant failures to adequately meet children's needs is far from achieving desirable outcomes".
71. The Members also heard from Social Workers that they had difficulty accessing and liaising with local services such as Education, Health and other public sector services, when they had Children who had been placed out of county. The social workers explained that often Children had to be placed out of county for safeguarding reasons, such as Child Exploitation, however many others were placed out of county due to the lack of available placements in Cardiff.
72. The Members also commented that as the Welsh Education Curriculum becomes different from the English Education Curriculum, placing Children in England will mean that their Education would be set back considerably should they return.
73. The Task Group specifically invited Voices from Care to provide some views from Children who are looked after. They explained that their experience was that the impact was massive on those children. The Children commented that they lost all contact with friends, and family members. In particular Children often felt that their school was the most stable element of their lives and moving away from their school caused the most distress.

74. Finally the members received from the 4C's comments they had received as part of a 360 degree feedback on Staying close to home. Children had commented quite vehemently about their feelings about being placed out off county and the negative impact it was having on their well-being (**Appendix 2**).

- **KF1** The lack of provision in Cardiff needs to be addressed;
- **KF2** Former Looked After Children often have told us that they value consistency in their relationships with professionals and relatives;

## CONCERN AROUND THE STRATEGIC OPERATION OF OUT OF COUNTY PLACEMENTS

75. The Members acknowledged that it was their duty as Corporate Parents to ensure that Children who are looked after are safeguarded, their well-being supported and provided with the best opportunity in life. The Members reflected on the evidence provided identified a number of areas where the strategic operation of out of county placements could be enhanced to ensure that they have the best outcomes.
76. The Members noted, from the evidence provided by Social Services (Children's services), that there had been an unceasing increase in the number of looked after children over the past 5 years and considered that there was an overwhelming increase in cases of children who needed to be looked after.
77. The Members heard from the Chairman of the Welsh Government Advisory Panel that they were gaining evidence to help them to working towards identifying what the key issues are and how the Welsh Government could improve outcomes. However the Members were informed that this could take up to five years and therefore Cardiff's inquiry should go ahead and would be received as key evidence to help shape the Welsh Government plans.
78. **KF3** As Corporate Parent, the Cardiff Council has a responsibility to ensure that all looked after children are safeguarded and that their outcomes are improved;
79. **KF4** The overwhelming increase in cases coming forward are concerned with neglect with significant increases in domestic violence, issues which are increasingly highlighted as a result of the support that is provided as part of earlier intervention services;
80. **KF5** The Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) is focussing on improving outcomes for children by working to three key work-streams 1. Improving Practice 2. Edge of Care and Risk Assessments, 3 Promoting Permanence. Cardiff Council should

continue to work closely with the MAG whilst accelerating its own development agenda;

81. The Task group was reminded by the Officers from Pembrokeshire County Council that Cardiff is the fastest growing City and is promoting itself as a great place to live. It was also noted that the Council's Corporate Plan "Delivering Capital Ambition" 2018-21, that Cardiff's priority "working for Cardiff" is

- Cardiff is a great place to grow up
- Cardiff has a safe, confident and empowered communities.

It was therefore surprising that Cardiff did not place more children within the County and did not have more residential homes.

82. **KF6** Particularly as Cardiff is the fast growing city and is promoting itself as the a great place to grow up;

83. The Task Group was informed by the Chairman of the Advisory Plan, 4C's, the Fostering Network and Pembrokeshire County Council that Cardiff needed to review its Strategy for placing looked after children, to address the continued increase in cases and to ensure that those Children that need safeguarding are protected. The Members read with interest, Blaenau Gwent's strategy to safely reduce the number of children being looked after (**Appendix 5**). The Members commended the list of management responsibilities included in the strategy and felt that Cardiff should develop and implement a similar strategy.

84. The Members also heard from 4C's that Cardiff should develop and implement an up to date Business Plan and have a comprehensive register of foster carers which identifies all foster carers who have vacancies. The plan should also aim to address the differences in payments and allowances between the private and local authority foster carers, help develop pre-planned placements and improve the support and services to the Cardiff Council Foster Carers.

85. The representatives from The Fostering Network, 4C's and Pembrokeshire County Council also reinforces the need to work collaboratively, wherever possible, with other



Council and to ensure that Foster Carers in each locality are supported and paid the same.

86. **KF7** To review the Corporate parenting Strategy to reduce the number of Looked After Children is key to helping safely reduce the number of looked after children, it should be supported a clear strategic approach to commissioning and an updated placement strategy, and include more residential specialist provision in Cardiff, in particular settings for over 14 year olds;
87. **KF8** There needs to be more collaborative working across Children's Services, and the wider Council;
88. The Members were interested to hear from nearly all the witnesses that prevention and intervention was key to helping reduce the number of children being looked after. It was also highlighted that Councils were finding it difficult to invest in intervention and preventative initiatives with families, due to the increasing number being taken into care.
89. Members also read in the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru (ADSS Cymru) evidence (**Appendix 1**) that there was an overwhelming increase in cases coming forward are concerned with neglect with significant increases in domestic violence, issues which are increasingly highlighted as a result of the support that is provided as part of earlier intervention services.
90. Pembrokeshire County Council highlighted the need to focus more support for parents of children with high needs to enable them to keep their children at home. Pembrokeshire County Council also stated they considered many of the initiatives as "invest to save" and quite quickly provided savings from the initiative.
91. Members were also advised by the 4C's that control over intervention and prevention initiatives should be under the strategic control of Children's Services to ensure that the Child is the focus of the work, and it is targeted effectively.
92. **KF9** That effective prevention and intervention strategies and improved outcomes are key to reducing numbers of children being looked after. Prevention and

intervention work is considered more effective under the full control of children's services;

93. **KF10** Parents of children who have complex needs, require specific support services to build their resilience and enable them to look after their children at home.
94. The Task group was briefed by 4C's on their current projects relating to the Placement Commissioning & Service Development and Placement Referral Social Worker Training. Members were also briefed on the Placement Finding Process via the All Wales Frameworks (**Appendix 3**), and the Local authority Regional/National Commissioning Arrangements via Children's Commissioning Support Resource (CCRS) (**Appendix 4**).
95. The CCSR is centred on a real-time, online database. The database holds details on a large number of accommodation providers - including independent foster agencies, independent children's homes, charitable service providers and residential special schools. In addition to information on the business, the database includes considerable details on their individual care settings. These details – including whether there are vacancies - are updated by providers ensuring local authorities have the most up-to-date information possible.
96. The database also facilitates electronic tendering. Local Authorities can securely post information about a child's placement requirements inviting providers to respond with potential placement matches in accordance with a defined timescale. Invitations can be restricted in some way (e.g. only framework placements (see further below) or only foster placements) or left open.
97. The members were surprised to be informed by 4C's that Cardiff does not enter its data into the CCSR system correctly which prevents analysis of needs data to inform effective commissioning. If the system is used effectively it will allow identification of needs that cannot be currently met and gaps in provision. This in turn allows targeted market shaping which could encourage increased local services and reduce out of area dependency. The method currently used does not maximise finding appropriate placements / care settings for looked after children.

98. **KF11** Placement commissioning arrangements should be reviewed to ensure that the Council has a fit for purpose system;
99. The Members were informed by the Senior Managers of Children's Services that the number of looked after children had increase consistently over the past 5 years. In 2012-13 there was only 557 cases, however by September 2017 there was 780 cases. The Members felt that with this level of increase there could be 920 by March 2019. Members also reflected on the cost of these placements, the Inquiry group noted from the evidence provided by ADSS Cymru that the cost of a local authority foster averaged at £23,000, whilst an independent agency placement averaged at £43,000.
100. **KF12** In September 2017 The Council had approximately 796 looked after children this has increased from 557 cases in 2012-13; and Members projected that this could reach 920 by March 2019.
101. The Cabinet Member for Children's and Families informed the Committee that the growth in the numbers of looked after children has to be built into the budget, and it is having a big impact on children and the Council overall, there is therefore a need to hold our nerve and invest to save to help get numbers down. This was reiterated by Senior Managers from Children's Services.
102. Evidence from ADSS Cymru states that the increase in spend is evidence of the commitment that has been made by Council's to meet the demand being placed on services by the rising numbers of looked after children, however it is becoming unsustainable, with most authorities now anticipating significant overspends.
103. The cost of residential placements is similarly stretched with significant variations. The current lack of placements is contributing to a position where a provider's market is able to charge opaque rates with placements being currently purchased by Welsh local authorities ranging from £2,500 - £16,000 per week (non-regulated placement) regulated placements cannot exceed £11,500.
104. **KF13** There is an overspend year on year and is likely to continue for some time, we need to build this into the budget;

105. **KF14** Savings accrued from invest to save schemes such as moving residential children back to Cardiff can be reinvested into preventative and early help initiatives;

## **SOCIAL WORKER – WORKFORCE CONCERNS**

106. The Inquiry Group found the Social Worker work force to be to be highly professional and hard working. Meeting them at their work place enabled the Members to understand the work, pressures and responsibilities that they faced every day. It was clear that the Social Workers always put the needs of the child first.
107. The Members were informed by all witnesses of the importance of the Council having a full and stable establishment of social workers. Not just to help minimise the case load of each social workers but to improve their well-being. Members also noted that young people had indicated that the continuity of contact with one specific social worker was crucial.
108. The Task Group was also informed that the social worker establishment had been increased frequently over the past few years to help match the demand increases in caseloads, however vacancy rates have remained steady at around 20% for many years.
109. The Task Group asked all the witnesses what could be done to help improve the recruitment and retention of social workers, a number of ideas were put forward, including:
- Designated parking places for social workers in the County Hall car park to enable office visits to be made
  - Golden handshakes to encourage recruitment
  - Bursaries for students to study and then stay in Cardiff Council
  - Reduce case loads
  - Focus on the child not the system
  - Continuous advertising
110. The Members were also aware of the development and implementation of the Swansea model of “Signs of Safety” which Cardiff had started in early 2016. The Members considered that the speedy implementation of “signs of safety” would have

a significant impact on the number of children in care and the demand for placements.

- 111. **KF15** A stable and fully established social worker workforce is key for the well-being of children being looked after as well as the well-being of social workers themselves;
- 112. **KF16** The Council must do everything possible, to help recruit and retain children's services social workers
- 113. **KF17** The "signs of safety" model provides the Council with the ideal opportunity to both improve the outcomes for children, well-being of social workers and reduce the number of looked after children and placements.

## PLACEMENT PROCESS – ISSUES

114. The main concern identified at the start of the inquiry process was an overspend on out of county placements. This concern was also highlighted by three Cabinet Members, together with the Chairman of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee and supported by the whole Committee.
115. The focus of all the evidence gathering was to enable the Inquiry to review the provision of out of county placements, the types of provision, cost and impact on resources. To identify gaps in local provision, social services, and education that result in the need to place children out of county and to identify the barriers to providing additional support in Cardiff and the impact on looked after children in being placed outside Cardiff.
116. The Committee considered the placement of children who are looked after in Residential settings, Special School, Foster Carers, and Foster Placements.

### Residential

117. Most of the witnesses invited to comment on residential placements of children who are looked after, stated that Cardiff did not sufficient accommodation for its young people. Senior Management from Children's service explained that Cardiff has only one residential home, although plans are being made to develop another home for three young people in partnership with a third party.
118. 4C's and Social Workers commented that Cardiff could use its own housing stock to quickly develop residential settings for a number of Children so that they can live near their families, friends and schools.
119. The Members were informed by Social Workers, 4C's, and in feedback from looked after children that children need stability in their placements (**Appendix 2**) they need to be near their original home, where appropriate, and there was a clear need for

more residential settings in Cardiff, in fact it was commented that if Cardiff Council considered Cardiff to be a great place to live and grow up, why do not have more residential settings.

120. Social workers stated that they had great difficulty in placing over 14 year old and specific homes for these would make their work much easier and provide better outcomes for Looked After Children and improve their well-being.
121. The representative from 4C's explained that recently a number of private providers had been invited to Cardiff's Children's Service to identify opportunities to build residential settings in Cardiff, however staff were unable to provide them with details of what they required to progress their plans.
122. Children Service staff informed the Task Group that a monthly review of all out of county residential placements is undertaken to assess whether any placements either residential or fostering has become available in Cardiff which can meet the needs and well-being of a Child. This ensures that the needs and well-being of all residentially placed children is maximised.
123. **KF18** Cardiff needs to have considerably more placements than it currently has, and where possible should utilise its own housing stock;
124. **KF19** Monthly reviews of out of county residential placements is undertaken to assess whether the needs and well-being of each Child could be fully met in Cardiff;

## **Special School**

125. The inquiry was informed that Greenhill School is a day Special School for 56 secondary aged pupils. All pupils who attend Greenhill have Statements of Special Needs in relation to complex Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties. Greenhill also admits pupils with ADHD and other special needs including dyspraxia, mental health or medical needs. The local authority decides which pupils are able to come to Greenhill. Parents are consulted as part of the statementing procedure and the Local Authority also consults with the Head teacher and the



Governors. Currently all the pupils on roll are boys which results in all Girls who have Statements of Special Needs in relation to complex Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties are placed out of county.

126. **KF20** As Greenhill is only special schools and only takes Boys, Girls have to be placed out of county.

## **Foster Carers**

127. The Task group also focussed on the availability of Foster Carers in Cardiff. The Members were informed that as at September 2017 the Council had 181 in-house foster carers, Cardiff also had access to at least 10 local independent providers.
128. The Inquiry was informed by the Fostering Network that Fostering was a market and it needed to be managed so that the Council would get the best out of what is available. Members were informed that Independent Agencies, pay their Foster Carers retainers, when not fostering, additional seasonal allowances and make additional payments.
129. Members also noted in the evidence from ADSS Cymru (**Appendix 1**) that despite local authorities' strong commitment to ensuring placement choice and stability most have struggled to recruit foster carers in sufficient numbers to provide the range and choice of placements needed, particularly for those young people with challenging behaviour and with additional needs
130. The Members were also informed of all the efforts being made by Children's Services to attract more Foster Carers, this included high profile internet search, a communication & media recruitment campaign supported by a "Make the Difference and Foster" project plan. The Members noted the success of the campaign but felt that the campaign needed to be ongoing to build on the previous success.
131. The Members heard from a number of witnesses that the recruitment of Foster Carers could also be enhanced, particular by using Foster Ambassadors, raise profiles in Ward Surgeries, and finders' fees.

132. The Task Group was however surprised and concerned to be informed, by the 4C's, that as at September 2017, Cardiff self-reported only using 92 of the 181 in-house fostering places, it was a concern that Cardiff was placing children Out of County when there was a 50% vacancy rate within Cardiff.
133. **KF21** To encourage more people to become Foster carers, it has been suggested that the Council should invest in its Foster Carers and identify ways of making working for Cardiff in-house Fostering service more attractive such as seasonal allowances, pay additional fees and retainers;
134. **KF22** That where safe to do so, Cardiff should maximise the use of all in-house foster carers whenever possible;

## **Placements**

135. The Task Group noted from the ADSS Cymru advice to the Welsh Government that there was an increasing complexity of cases. Children who are looked after will have experienced forms of loss, abuse and neglect prior to entering the care of the local authority. The increasing number of children being presented with behaviours which families struggle to manage. Together with the wider understanding of the imperative to act to protect children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation.
136. Evidence from Children Services staff, Voices from Care and the Fostering Network highlighted to Members that a child taken into care has to be the right child in the right place at the right time. Most could be placed within the locality to where they presently live, however if there are safeguarding issues, such as sexual exploitation the child has to be placed in a safe place often far away from Cardiff. Ultimately placements have to be made in the best interest of the Child.
137. **KF23** The key issue that children have to be safeguarded in the setting which best meets their needs and well-being.
138. The Members received evidence from the Fostering Network, Voices from Care that placement planning is key to ensuring the best outcomes for Children who are

looked after. In addition advice from the ADSS Cymru to the Welsh Government also stated that the continuous and effective assessment and planning of all available residential and foster placements would not only ensure the best outcomes for Children who are looked after but would also enable better matching when emergency situations occurred.

139. The increase in complexity and number of cases being referred to Children's Services is negatively impacting on the Council's ability to find appropriate placements. The Members also heard from the 4C's that the Council's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), needs to ensure that it is always consistent with the use of thresholds and needs to be effective in signposting cases to the appropriate agencies.
140. The Task Group was also very concerned to be informed that Cardiff is not using a database, which allows users to match children with provision based on a profile of their requirements correctly. This collaborative initiative from the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru, help support all Local Authorities to seek and match children with appropriate Foster Carers (CCSR). The representative from 4C's explained that the data entered by all Authorities must be a set format however Cardiff does not enter the data correctly.
141. **KF24** the increasing complexity of cases and the growing numbers of children are negatively impacting on both the availability of appropriate placements as a result the pre-matching and planning of placements is becoming crucial to the effective placement of Children particularly in emergency situations;
142. **KF25** There is a high volume of inappropriate referrals to the Council's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub from stakeholders, stakeholders need to be supported to understand when to make referrals to the MASH and when to provide effective early help services;
143. The Members were surprised to hear from 4C's, that Cardiff places children aged 0 to 5 Out of County and in independent provision. Members were informed that this practice was very rare in any other authority and was not considered good practice.

144. **KF26** Cardiff is the one of a few authorities in Wales to place 0 – 5 year olds out of county and in independent placements
145. The Task Group also wished to seek from all the witnesses, who had provided advice, comments and suggestions to this inquiry to provide some overview of how Cardiff could change it's provision to enable Children who are being looked after top have improved outcomes and improved well-being from their time in the Cardiff of Cardiff Council.
146. The key themes that the Members identified from these comments was that at present most specialist care was Out of County. The Council should therefore put in place plans and strategies to change its profile of care to provide more specialist care, as an "invest to save" scheme, which should also be part of a comprehensive Placement Commissioning Strategy. This will require a change in approach from the senior managers within the Council as a whole to focus, where safeguarding allows, on providing children who are looked after, with a safe and secure placement within Cardiff that meets their needs, provides the best outcomes, and improved well-being.
147. **KF27** If you want to reduce out of county placements then you have to change the approach as well as changing provision through an invest to save initiatives;

## INQUIRY METHODOLOGY

148. It was agreed by the Committee that the Inquiry would hold a number of evidence gathering meetings with the Officer and key stakeholders.

149. The following Scrutiny Members took part in the evidence gathering during the Inquiry:

Councillor Bridgeman(Chair)	Councillor De'Ath
Councillor Joyce	Councillor Williams
Carol Cobert	

150. The Inquiry team was grateful to the staff and managers in Children's Services for the open and honest advice, comments and suggestions they made.

### **External contributions**

151. The Inquiry also appreciated the advice, comments and openness of the Chairman of the Welsh Government Advisory Group, representatives from the Fostering Network, Voices from Care, the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru and Pembrokeshire Council who attended. The Group also considered papers from the ADSS Cymru and Blaenau Gwent Council.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

153. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications.

## **CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

To scrutinise, measure and actively promote improvement in the Council's performance in the provision of services and compliance with Council policies, aims and objectives in the area of children and young people, including the following:

- School Improvement
- Schools Organisation
- School Support Services
- Education, Welfare and Inclusion
- Early Years Development
- Special Educational Needs
- Governor Services
- Children's Social Services
- Children and Young Peoples Partnership
- Youth Services and Justice
- Play Services

To assess the impact of partnerships with and resources and services provided by external organisations including the Welsh Government, Welsh Government, Sponsored Public Bodies and quasi-departmental non-governmental bodies on the effectiveness of the Council's service delivery.

To report to an appropriate Cabinet or Council meeting on its findings and to make recommendations on measures which may enhance the Council's performance in this area.

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**



Councillor Lee Bridgeman  
(Chairperson)



Councillor Dan De'Ath



Councillor Philippa Hill-John



Councillor Heather Joyce



Councillor Linda Morgan



Councillor Jim Murphy



Councillor Mike Phillips



Councillor Kanaya Singh



Councillor Rhys Taylor

**Co-opted Members:**



**Mrs P Arlotte**  
Roman Catholic  
Representative



**Carol Cobert**  
Church in Wales  
Representative



**Ms Rebecca Crump**  
Parent Governor  
Representative



**Karen Dell'Armi'**  
Parent Governor  
Representative



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**Update on work programme for Corporate Parenting**  
**Advisory Committee**  
**Tuesday 17 July 2018**

Following on from the previous update I provided the Committee with, the OM Lead identified to support my work stream has changed due to Daniel Jones taking up a new position in another Authority. I am yet to meet Dan's Interim replacement to discuss the work stream which I took up last year and am therefore unaware of any progress on potential opportunities to strengthen the Committee's role and Members' understanding of being Corporate Parents.

However, Dan and I previously identified that 'guidance' to Elected Representatives on their role as Corporate Parents was seriously outdated and it was our intention to write to Welsh Government to request an updated version. Cllr Hinchey and I wrote to David Melding AM, as Chair of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Improving Outcomes for Children, with the suggestion of meeting and also for an updated version of the guidance to be produced. I am pleased to note that Welsh Government are reviewing the guidance to Elected Members and that Cardiff will be very well represented by Debbie Martin-Jones on the Task and Finish Group.

In terms of pushing forward with developments I would like to see the following opportunities explored further:

- *speak to Cardiff Youth Council about adding a section to their website (Tools4Life) explaining the Council's role as a corporate parent in a child friendly;*
- *carry out a survey of Members to gain an insight to their understanding of their role as corporate parents, also asking for comments on how we can better improve that understanding;*
- *expansion/repetition of introductory training to Members (only 24/75 Members have undertaken training – 5 of whom are Members of CPAC);*
- *bring case studies to CPAC on a regular basis and share with wider Members through a regular e-newsletter;*

As well as continuing with the strengths of the Committee (reporting to Council, Cabinet representation, attendance at the Brightsparks Awards etc.), I also believe there is an opportunity for the Committee's Terms of Reference to be reviewed. In my opinion this is to ensure that the work of the Committee is both realistic and undertaken, as there are some elements which have not been undertaken in my first year on the Committee (to my knowledge).

It is my intention to discuss the ToR with the Chair of the Committee and then with Senior Management within Children's Services and Democratic Services, and I hope to update the Committee further at our next meeting.

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**Update on work programme for Corporate Parenting**  
**Advisory Committee**  
**Tuesday 17 July 2018**

There has been little more action. I still have not been offered dates for visiting ARCH or MARSH. I was offered a visit to Crosslands, however it didn't work with my work commitment.

In terms of prevention I would like to understand the groundings to the rise in children coming into care. This is a question that I raised at the council meeting recently. But, there was no clear answer to the question. Understanding the number of cases, the problems with each case leading to children moving into care is very important, it would also help understanding why children in care have a disproportionate number of children from minority communities and children with special educational needs. As by understanding the problem we can then try to address them and keep families together.

**Cllr (Dr) Bablin Molik Liberal Democrats Councillor for Cyncoed & Lakeside**  
Deputy Liberal Democrats Group Leader  
Corporate Parenting Advisory Group

25 June 2018

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## **Briefing Paper: The rise in the number of looked after children**

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### **Reason for the report**

This paper has been prepared in response to a request for information from the work-stream lead for the Prevention strand of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee's work programme.

#### **The request:**

*"In terms of prevention I would like to understand the groundings to the rise in children coming into care. Understanding the number of cases, the problems with each case leading to children moving into care is very important, it would also help understanding why children in care have a disproportionate number of children from minority communities and children with special educational needs. As by understanding the problem we can then try to address them and keep families together." (25 June 2018)*

#### **Response:**

The following sections of this report provide information to answer each element of the request:

- The number of cases.
- The problems leading to children moving into care.
- Numbers of children from minority communities and children with special educational needs.

Information about service developments in response to the problems are included in each section. Further information about those services can be obtained through future presentations to the Committee, or from the Officers assigned to support Members work streams.

A key source of information quoted throughout this briefing is the Association of the Directors of Social Services (ADSS) response to the Public Accounts Committee's 'Inquiry on Care Experienced Children and Young People'. That report was presented in evidence at the Welsh Assembly on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2018. It provides a collective view from the All Wales Heads of Children's Services network. The Assistant Director for Cardiff

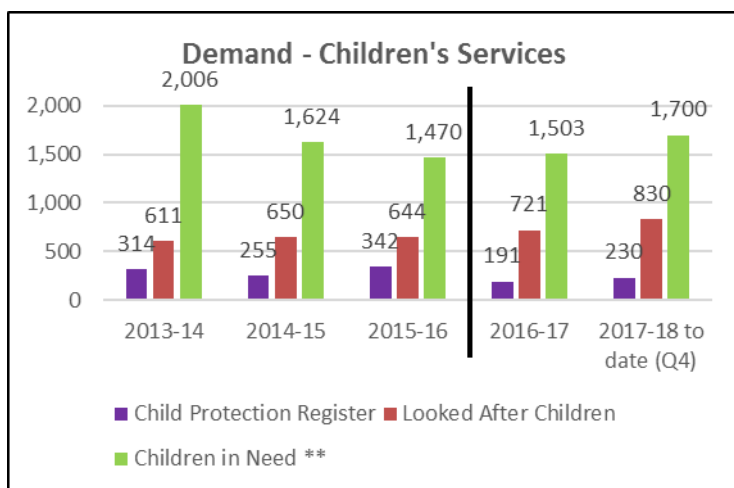
Children's Services was present at the Public Accounts Committee enquiry to provide oral evidence.

### **"The number of cases"**

*"Over the last decade the number of children in the care system in Wales has risen, with a 25% increase in children looked after and a 32% increase in children placed on the child protection register compared with 10 years ago" (ADSS Cymru 2018).*

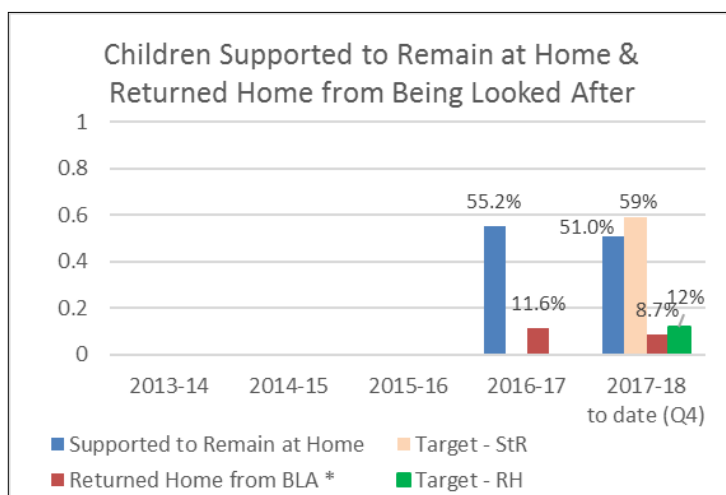
The Quarter 4 Performance figures provided to the 17 July 2018 Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee provide a snapshot of the current situation in Cardiff. The reports include the following information:

- The following chart illustrates the distribution of types of cases managed by Children's Services over time. The increase in the number of looked after children to 830 (from 611 at 31st March 2014) can be seen.



- At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, there were **830 looked after children**, 83 of whom started to be looked after during the quarter. The decisions to accommodate these children have been scrutinised and the Committee can be reassured that the **decisions were appropriate**.
- 51% (864) of the 1,694 children with a Care and Support Plan at 31st March 2018, were being **supported to live at home** (were not being looked after). Compared with 55% in 2016/17.





- The reduction in children being supported to live at home in part reflects the impact of early help on the landscape of the Children's Services caseload. Children who previously would have received services from Children's Services are now being diverted to Early Help, with the more complex cases receiving Children's Services interventions. This results in a "thickening of the soup" with Children's Services managing higher levels of risk.
- During 2017/18, 249 **Care Proceedings** were issued and 218 were concluded compared with 235 and 228 respectively in 2016/17.
- The judiciary have indicated a reluctance to discharge Care Orders, and continue to make new Care Orders as opposed to alternatives such as Supervision Orders.
- **119 children** who were subject to a Care Orders **were in the care of their parents**. These figures reflect a strong emphasis on placing children within the family but within the safeguards a Court Order provides.
- A Placement with Parents team has been established to focus on the management of these cases, and to revoke Care Orders when this is appropriate. In addition to this, a dedicated worker from the Adolescent Resource Centre has been identified to work directly with looked after children who are considered to be ready for rehabilitation home.
- 8.7% (91) of the 1,042 children who were looked after during the year **returned home**.
- **74 children** were placed in care with **connected person / relative carers**.

It should be noted that this situation is not unique to Cardiff. The ADSS Cymru (2018) report states:

*"The total number of children [in Wales] involved in public law proceedings in 2016-17 was 3,012, an increase of 17% on the previous year. Public law applications*

*have increased over the past three years, with a 24% increase since 2014-15. The main driver in public law work is Section 31 (care) applications. Section 31 applications are made to the court by a local authority where it has significant concerns about the safety or welfare of a child, which saw a 25% increase on the previous year. These issues as well as the expectations from the judiciary continue to add to the pressures and burdens being placed on children's services staff, as well as coming with significant costs attached.*

*Of those applications coming before the courts the majority are deemed to be sound applications by both the court and CAFCASS. An enduring criticism of the courts is that the local authority should have sought orders earlier with a perception that the local authorities are failing children by not commencing proceedings”.*

## **“The problems leading to children moving into care”.**

### **1. Loss, abuse and neglect**

The ADSS Cymru report states:

*“The reasons why children become looked after and their needs while in the care system are complex. Children who are looked after will have experienced forms of loss, abuse and neglect prior to entering the care of the local authority. Ensuring they can achieve their full potential and lead happy childhoods followed by enriching adult lives requires compensatory resource and care from all agencies beyond that provided routinely to their peers. Specifically, identification and amelioration of the emotional trauma they have experienced is required as a foundation to their future healthy development. These are complex children, albeit not within the current definition of the SSWB Act” (ADSS Cymru 2018).*

Considerable investment has been made in Cardiff to support teams which work directly with children and young people and their families at intensive and remedial intervention levels. For example in the creation of the Integrated Family Support Team (IFST), Adolescent Resource Centre, Thirteen Plus Team, Pre Birth team, Placement with Parent Team, and the rollout of the ‘Signs of Safety’ approach throughout Children’s Services. Teams work with families to try to prevent children coming into care, work with families to return children home within weeks of becoming looked after as well as work on rehabilitation plans for those children who have been in long term care.

### **2. Increased awareness**

Over time perceptions and awareness of issues have increased. The ADSS report states:

*“Recent high profile scandals have increased our understanding of the likelihood of risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and the wider understanding of the imperative to act to protect children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation has increased referrals. We have seen an increase in the number of initiatives that are aimed at early identification and intervention such as the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) 2015 Act, the evidence based work in respect of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Flying Start and Families First. An unintended impact that we perhaps need to consider is the resulting*

*increase in referrals received by local authorities. Anecdotally, the overwhelming increase in cases coming forward are concerned with neglect with significant increases in domestic violence, issues which are increasingly highlighted as a result of the support that is provided as part of earlier intervention services” (ADSS Cymru 2018)*

In Cardiff investment has been made to proactively tackle the issue of CSE with the creation of a ‘Think Safe’ Team and by dedicating resource to create a team of social workers who specialise in young people aged thirteen plus.

### **3. Understanding root causes**

The ADSS report states:

*“If there is a lack of understanding and a lack of willingness to address the root causes then services will be faced with a never ending and increasing number of these cases for future generations. Simplistically, common root causes if not addressed will exacerbate the situation and if addressed and funded there will still be a ‘backlog’ of those currently affected which also needs funding until the preventative measures have their full effect” (ADSS Cymru 2018).*

In 2015 Public Health Wales in collaboration with Liverpool John Moores University undertook the first Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study for Wales. The study consisted of a national cross-sectional survey of adults resident in Wales. With an overall sample size of 2,028, Welsh adults were asked about their current health behaviours and their exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACE) using an internationally validated ACE questionnaire.

Extracts from the study state:

*“An increasing body of research identifies the long-term harms that can result from chronic stress on individuals during childhood. Such stress arises from the abuse and neglect of children but also from growing up in households where children are routinely exposed to issues such as domestic violence or individuals with alcohol and other substance use problems.*

*Collectively such childhood stressors are called ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences). Exposure to ACEs can alter how children’s brains develop as well as changing the development of their immunological and hormonal systems. Subsequently, those with greater exposure to ACEs are more likely to go on to develop health-harming and anti-social behaviours, often during adolescence, such as binge drinking, smoking and drug use”.*

*Major concerns arise when more than one of these problems is present, as is often the case. It is the ‘multiplicative’ impact of combinations of factors that have been found to increase the risk of harm to children, with family disharmony and domestic violence posing the greatest risk to children’s immediate safety and long-term wellbeing” (Bellisi et al 2015).*

Indeed in recent years awareness of the frequency with which domestic and sexual violence, substance use and mental health problems co-exist, has increasingly become part of Social Worker training. These risk factors are referred to as the ‘toxic trio’ (Hardy,

2018). They have been identified as common features of families where harm to women and children occurs.

An analysis of 139 serious case reviews between 2009-2011 showed that in over three quarters of incidents (86%) where children were seriously harmed or died, one or more of a “toxic trio” played a significant part (Brandon et al 2012 cited by Wirral Safeguarding Board). They are now viewed as key indicators of increased risk of harm to children and young people. Adequate support can reduce, although not necessarily eradicate the risk of children experiencing long-term negative effects of growing up with such problems. (Hardy, 2018)

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study for Wales goes on to explain the cross generational impact of such factors:

*“Experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences means individuals are more likely to perform poorly in school, more likely to be involved in crime and ultimately less likely to be a productive member of society”.*

*“People who experience ACEs as children often end up trying to raise their own children in households where ACEs are more common. Such a cycle of childhood adversity can lock successive generations of families into poor health and anti-social behaviour for generations. Equally however, preventing ACEs in a single generation or reducing their impacts can benefit not only those children but also future generations in Wales”.*

*“This first Welsh ACE survey identifies that substantial proportions of the Welsh population suffered abuse, neglect and other ACEs during their childhood with 47% reporting having experienced at least one ACE and 14% experiencing four or more ACEs. However, the report also outlines a substantive range of policies and programmes that have now been implemented in Wales to both prevent ACEs and identify and intervene where children are already experiencing such stressors.”* (Bellisi et al 2015).

In Cardiff an Early Help Strategy been developed to intervene and attempt to prevent this cycle. This strategy aims to combine the skills, resources and commitment of all professionals in a unified way to deliver two key Outcomes. Those outcomes are:

- Reducing the number of children, young people and families requiring 'remedial' support or intervention.
- 'Narrowing the gap' so that children achieve their potential.

The Implementation Plan for the strategy sets out a wide range of initiatives to support children and families. All are based on national evidence of 'what works'. Many are services that already existed in Cardiff, but which as a result of this strategy enhance their impact because the strategy links their offer and resources with others into a coherent whole. Some are completely new initiatives based on the latest thinking elsewhere in the UK including Leeds, Manchester, Essex, Newcastle and Blackburn and Darwen. The experience of national third sector partners such as Action for Children, Barnardos and the NSPCC have been included. All of the initiatives are designed to help children at the earliest stage of their lives when help can have a profound impact or at the earliest stage when difficulties are emerging - at the first sign of a given problem.

This is a multi-agency approach underpinned by the following principles:

- Wherever possible all children's and families' needs will be met within universal settings (e.g. early years, health visiting, schools, GPs etc).
- As soon as any practitioner is aware that a child has any additional needs he/she will talk to that child and their family and offer advice and support to meet that need.
- Families will be empowered to identify their own problems, needs and solutions. In most cases, outcomes for children will only be improved by supporting and assisting parents/carers to make the changes identified by them with practitioners.

#### **4. Changes in society and emotional wellbeing**

The ADSS report states:

*“As with the rest of the UK the declining emotional well-being and increasing poor mental health of children and young people whilst not fully understood impacts directly on the need for family support as does the increasing number of children being presented with behaviours which families struggle to manage. We can theorise as to the impact of social media, increased bullying, academic expectations and societal fragmentation but the outcome for families is a need for support and an increasingly complex web of difficulties...”*

*...Recent years has seen significant investment in Children and Adolescent Mental Health services (CAMHS) through the Together for Children and Young People Programme (T4CYP), with Welsh Government announcing an additional annual investment of £7.65m in mental health services for children and young people in Wales in 2015. We recognise the fact that CAMHS in Wales are under more pressure than ever before, and in spite of additional investment and staffing, does not have the capacity to meet demand. ....There has been a long standing disconnect between the access threshold applied by CAMHS and the presenting emotional resilience needs of looked after children and care leavers” (ADSS Cymru 2018).*

In recognition of this, Cardiff Children's Services in partnership with Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, have invested in employing a Clinical Psychologist to work with the Looked After Children Service to support social workers to better understand the therapeutic needs of children.

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee received a presentation from the lead Psychologist and Principle Social Worker in January 2018. The emotional health and mental wellbeing of looked after children was identified by members of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee during 2016/17 as an important area to focus on in the future. As a result, the Committee's work programme for 2018/19 includes a focus to improve and support the emotional health and mental wellbeing of looked after children under the 'Specialist Services' theme.

#### **5. The impact of Austerity**

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study for Wales (2015) highlights that:

*“While no communities should be considered free from ACEs, those living in areas of deprivation are at greater risk of experiencing multiple ACEs. In Wales this is being addressed through Tackling Poverty Programmes such as Flying Start; Families First and Communities First. These programmes are targeted at the most deprived communities in Wales” (Bellisi et al 2015).*

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation report ‘Poverty in Wales 2018’ states that Poverty among couples with children has been rising since 2003/06 (Barnard 2018).

Poverty is no longer, and never was exclusive to families living in deprived communities, and those families who are supported by welfare systems are increasingly facing pressures.

Extracts from the ADSS report state:

*““We are seeing unprecedented pressures on families for a range of reasons. Cuts to those services that previously served to sustain family resilience in the face of adversity have meant more families are finding their way through to even more expensive child protection services. Budget reductions in children’s services has seen massive cuts to one off financial support e.g. for gas, electricity, food or bedding and services such as temporary childcare, along with ongoing introduction of welfare reforms and a decade of austerity has amplified the challenges for families and increased their chances of slipping irretrievably into further and more compounded difficulty...”*

*In his Financial Resilience Report, the Auditor General has calculated that between 2010-11 and 2016-17, there was a real-terms reduction of £761 million (17%) in aggregate external finance (core grant) for local government. This has had varying impacts across local public services with some areas experiencing real terms reductions of over 50%, and spending at levels not seen since the 1990s. Pressures are set to continue, with the work undertaken for Wales Public Services (WPS) 2025 on Future Pressures demonstrating that pressures in social services budgets drive around 2.9% growth each year, which is around £47m annually up to 2021-22. This includes increases in LAC as well as the elderly population.*

*The recent draft budget announcement will mean a further reduction in the revenue settlement (Aggregate External Finance) of 0.5% compared with 2017-18. This is in addition to local government’s spending pressures which will total around £212m in 2018-19 which will have to be absorbed by councils...*

*...Many preventative services in local government, such as leisure centres, parks, youth work and community facilities are provided at the discretion of local councils. Unfortunately, in recent years it is these services that have faced the brunt of cuts to local authority budgets as statutory services such as education and social services have been protected.*

*It is imperative that we stem the decline of local preventative services and that we find a way to make some significant investment into new and existing preventative services.” (ADSS Cymru 2018).*

In an article in Community Care dated 3 October 2017, Paul Bywaters emeritus professor of social work at Coventry University, comments that “we continue to see policies that

*increase the numbers of families living in poverty with consequences in terms of access to housing, food and other necessities of life” and asks “Why is there so little attention being paid by government to what is happening and at the very least some research being commissioned into whether there is a relationship between these issues [i.e the number of looked after children]?”*

The professor highlights the lack of data about parent’s income, housing or debt levels *“even though research suggests that these are key social determinants of good enough childhoods”* and that data returns do not show the relationship with neighbourhood deprivation level.

Therefore, whilst it is the professional opinion of Social Services Managers that austerity measures have contributed to the increase in the number of children becoming looked after, and Professor Bywaters indicates that research suggests that there is an association between the factors, he points out that there is currently no data available to confirm this and that it is not yet a matter which is being addressed by government policy.

## **“Number of children from minority communities and children with special educational needs”**

### **1. Children from minority communities**

Children’s Services performance monitoring systems show that 22.5% of Cardiff’s looked after children were non-white on the 31 May 2018.

Welsh government data for the whole (**children and adult**) population indicates that 16.7% of Cardiff’s population were non-white on the 31 March 2018 (based on the Annual Population Survey), but no up-to-date population estimates are published by the Welsh Government for the ethnicity of all children in Cardiff. It is therefore not possible to reliably determine if the number of children who are taken into care are disproportionately from minority communities.

Information provided in previous sections of this report suggest that reasons for children becoming looked after are multi-faceted and suggest that adverse childhood experiences, which might reasonably be linked to deprivation, are a significant contributing reason for children becoming looked after. It therefore makes sense to examine the relationship between poverty and ethnicity. Our ability to do that is however extremely limited.

Welsh Government analysis of datasets provided by the Department of Work and Pensions (Households Below Average Income, Family Resources Survey) indicates that for **Wales** in 2012-13 to 2016-17, 36% of non-white households (by ethnicity of the head of household) were in relative income poverty compared to 22% of white households (Stats Wales 2018). However it should be noted that this data is based on between 100 and 199 responses to the survey and is therefore categorised as being low quality. No data is available at a lower geographical level.

Furthermore, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report ‘Poverty and ethnicity in Wales (2018)’, found that:

- *“There were marked differences in the levels and experiences of poverty amongst interviewees [in the JRF study] – not caused by ethnicity, but by where people lived and the interaction of their human capital, social capital, entitlements and attitudes, thinking and choices.*
- *It is important to look beyond outcomes, which may be associated with ethnicity (such as higher levels of poverty amongst some ethnic groups) to focus on underlying causes”.* (Holtom et al 2018)

In addition, Professor Bywaters from Coventry University, in the article referred to above, provides the following analysis of DfE statistics on looked-after children in England which explains why interpretation of ethnicity data is far more complex than any overarching headline figure:

*“..no data is produced showing the looked after rates per 10,00 children across the different ethnic categories that are used. The commentary to the statistics says that Black and Mixed heritage children have higher rates than White children, and Asian children ‘slightly’ lower rates. But recent research by Coventry University found that Asian rates are around a third those of White children, hardly a slight difference. And, if you take deprivation into account, White children have higher, not lower, rates than those for Black children in the most deprived areas where the majority of Black children live. And there are big differences between the rates for African and Caribbean children”* (Bywaters 2017).

## **2. Children with special educational needs**

Children’s Services do not routinely collect data on the number of children with special education needs becoming looked after.

Professor Bywaters questions the accuracy of information which lead to a perception that children with special education needs / disabilities are disproportionately entering the looked after system:

*“My main concerns here are about the data on disability. If you analyse the data by local authority, the proportions of children recorded as being disabled varies hugely. And it varies systematically and rather unexpectedly with deprivation levels. Low deprivation local authorities report more disabled children than high deprivation local authorities, which seems unlikely or – at least – requires understanding. Disability is another key source of pressure on families, so we need to get this right in order to make appropriate targeted provision”* (Bywaters 2017).

Managers in the Child Health and Disability Service indicate that there are low levels of children who are known to their teams entering care, and those who do become looked after have very high needs. Children with disabilities or special needs tend to receive very large packages of care to keep them at home, based on their assessed needs.

However, the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study for Wales (2015) does highlight that:

*“..recent evidence demonstrates that chronic traumatic stress in early life alters how a child’s brain develops and can fundamentally alter nervous, hormonal and immunological systems development. This can result in individuals whose systems are ‘locked’ into a higher state of alertness; permanently prepared for further*



*trauma.... During school years, the same individuals may display a heightened emotional state of anxiety (ready to fight or always prepared to run away) and consequently be distracted from educational pursuits, resulting in poor educational attainments” (Bellisi et al 2015).*

This in part explains why it is more difficult for looked after children to obtain the same educational achievements as children who have not experienced a traumatic childhood.

## **Conclusion**

Final thoughts on the matters discussed above are summarised in the ADSS report:

*“We know that outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC) do not compare favourably with other children. They are less likely to achieve good educational qualifications, have greater health and housing needs, are more likely to become involved in substance misuse and come into contact with the criminal justice system. However, we must recognise looked after children and their families will have accessed a plethora of universal services and interventions prior to reaching the door of Children’s Services and their needs for the future will reflect their history of less access to resources and greater disadvantages prior to entering public care.*

*The reasons why children become looked after and their needs while in the care system are complex” (ADSS Cymru 2018).*

It can be seen that children enter the care system because they have experienced complex and traumatic forms of loss, abuse and neglect. Increases in rates of children becoming looked after are multi-faceted and equally complex. They are in part a consequence of increased practitioner and public awareness of harm as exemplified by the high profile cases of CSE, in part an increased awareness of the root causes of harm and a desire to intervene earlier to prevent trauma, in part a consequence of changes in society and their impact on emotional wellbeing of children and their families, and in part highly likely to be a consequence of government policies relating to austerity. However, it is not possible to determine scientifically the cause of the increase. The complex data required to do so does not exist. There may be other reasons, which we may become aware over time or in hindsight, or there may be causes that never become apparent.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 12, 21 of Part(s) 4 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**17 July 2018**

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**QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS REPORT  
QUARTER 4 2017-18**

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**Reason for the Report**

1. The Committee's terms of reference state that it will receive Children's Services Complaints reports.
2. This Quarter 4 report covers complaints and representations from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 through to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

**Introduction**

3. The current Welsh Government guidance and regulations in relation to social services complaints and representations came into being on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2014.
4. The procedure places the emphasis on the initial local resolution stage – Stage 1 - with complainants being offered a discussion to resolve the matter. The second formal stage (Stage 2) provides for independent investigation. If the outcome of Stage 2 does not satisfy the complainant, s/he has recourse to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.
5. Citizens making complaints have a right to be listened to properly and have their concerns resolved quickly and effectively. Children's Services emphasis is on listening to concerns and using this learning to improve services for everyone who uses them.
6. Complaints should be handled in such a way that the complainant is the focus, not the process, and that the particular circumstances of the complainant are taken into account (including their age or disability). Where the complaint relates to a looked after child, a child in need or a care leaver the local authority has a duty to provide an advocate as required. All children or young people who make complaints are offered a meeting and all children and families will receive a written response to the

concerns they have raised.

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

### **Summary of complaints activity during the period**

8.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Q4 2017-18</b>
Number open at start of period	18
Number received (overall)	41
Number received directly from children and young people	0
Number closed	37
Number outstanding at end of period	22
% acknowledged within 2 working days	40 / 41 = 97%
% concluded within 15 working days of acknowledgement	28 / 41 = 68%

9. During this quarter, the number of complaints received by Children's Services has seen an increase in complaints to 41 (20 in Quarter 3, 2017-18).
- a. 60% (12) of the complaints received were in relation to the Social Worker or the service received. There were no complaints in relation to finance. 10% (2) of the complaints received were in relation to contact. The remaining 30% (6) of complaints were in relation to other issues including decision-making.
  - b. 7 complaints were received about the Intake & Assessment Service, which is a decrease from 11 in Quarter 3 (17-18). 18 complaints were received regarding the Child in Need Service (3 from young people) which compared with 1 in Quarter 3 (17-18); 11 complaints were received about the Looked After Children Service compared with 2 in Quarter 3 (17-18). The remaining complaints were in relation to Child Health & Disability



Services (1) and we received complaints that were dealt with via the corporate process timescales.

Example of complaints concluded during the quarter are:

***A complaint where we were able to put things right***

Parents of a youngster complained that they had arrived at the venue in which a Child Protection Case Conference would be taking place about their child at the correct time but were informed after one hour that the conference had to be cancelled at the last minute due to an Independent Person not being available to chair the conference. The said that their child was unwell the day of the proposed conference but it was insisted on attending so their views could be shared.

The social worker was informed prior to the conference that this was cancelled but failed to inform the family, thinking that this would be a task completed by the Safeguarding Administration Team. A letter of apology was sent to the family and young person with an explanation that the social worker had been unaware that it was their responsibility to inform of meeting cancellations. The response letter encouraged that they attend the conference when this is reconvened and it was agreed a message will be sent on the day confirming this will be going ahead.

***A complaint where we had no case to answer***

A mother referred her child because she was experiencing difficulties with behaviour management. An Initial Assessment was undertaken and the social worker agreed to provide support to assist the mother with regards to her child's behaviour problems. The mother said she had tried to contact the social worker and had left messages but these were not returned.

The complaint was answered within Welsh Government timeframe and informed the mother what services the child had been referred to for help, it was established that a number of agencies had been in contact with the mother confirming their referral and subsequent involvement. The neuro development team had sent information to the wrong Department which slowed their

involvement with the child and mother but this had been corrected by the social worker.

The social worker received messages from the mother and did contact her and leave messages, unfortunately, neither were available to talk at the same times and there was a period of 2 weeks when the social worker was absent from work. Apologies were made about this.

## **Stage 2 Independent Investigations**

10. If complainants remain unsatisfied at the conclusion of the informal Stage 1, they are entitled to seek a formal Independent Investigation under Stage 2 of the procedure.

11. 5 stage 2 complaints was resolved during Quarter 4. Investigations continue in relation to the other cases.

12. 5 new Stage 2 investigations were initiated during Quarter 4 (17-18) which remained open at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

## **Ombudsman Investigations**

13. There was Ombudsman activity in relation to 1 complaints during the quarter –

- a. The Ombudsman made 3 recommendations which were accepted and responded to and this led to no further action from the Ombudsman

## **Learning from Complaints**

14. Stage 2 reports undertaken by Independent Investigators and reports from the Ombudsman include recommendations if required. In response, an Action Plan is initiated to ensure that the recommendations are implemented and lessons are learned.

## **Themes Emerging During the Quarter**

15. Quarterly complaints reports are shared with managers so any emerging themes can be considered and actions can be taken to improve practice.

16. The only patterns that emerged related to complaints that were in court proceedings so we were unable to answer the complaint. No other patterns emerged that suggest

there are any new thematic issues that need to be addressed.

### **Update on Progress from Themes Identified in Previous Periods**

17. The previously noted issue of social workers not returning calls continues to be the cause of, or an element of, complaints received. The strong message regarding the importance of returning calls continues to be reiterated by senior managers who follow up individual issues that are brought to their attention. The new agile / mobile working arrangements have provided social workers with more flexibility and the right kit to enable them to respond to messages in a more timely way and this will continue to be monitored to seek an improvement in this area.
18. As a result of the following, there is an improved oversight and overall a reduction in the number of complaints being received
  - a. Senior managers have more of an oversight into casework (e.g. by chairing Care Planning Meetings) and challenge practice where it is considered that both parents have not been consulted.
  - b. In the Signs of Safety approach (which maps out a safety network for children considered to be at risk), social workers routinely consider every relationship linked to the child and this will include both parents and extended family.

### **Early Resolution**

19. Children's Services place an emphasis on resolving issues at the earliest possible opportunity, and where these concerns are dealt with immediately they are not opened as a formal complaint. On these occasions, the issues are brought to the attention of relevant Team or Operational Managers who acted promptly to address the issues raised to the satisfaction of the individual. There were a number of examples of this during Quarter 4

### **Review of Complaints in Social Services**

20. An external independent review of the arrangements for receiving, managing and resolving complaints in Social Services was accepted which result in a combined social services complaints unit for both Adults and Children's complaints. Agreement has since been reached that Social Services Complaints will be managed alongside Corporate Complaints, effective from June 2018

## Summary of Compliments

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

22. 22 compliments were received in Quarter 4, which is an increase from 7 in Quarter 3 (17-18). A breakdown of compliments by team is provided below. This will help Children's Services build upon positive work and could identify improvements.

Team	No. of Compliments
Targeted Services	12
Specialist Services	6
Other	4

### Example of a compliment received during the quarter:

"I wanted to say how thankful I am for all the support you have given me. Till the day you came to see me in London, then Birmingham and helped me move back to Cardiff and now today, you have supported me in every step and have always checked upon me to ask how I am and how I'm doing. Last year I had a very hard time and went through a lot with X and you helped me a lot, though my court case and gave me a lot of courage and confidence. I was very lucky that the day X got his sentence you were there by my side. Since I was 19 and got to know you, you understand me very well. I was rude to you at the start which I am truly sorry for, but even then you were calm and patient with me. You have also done so much for my son and have always given me the best advice in my life. I RESPECT you more than anyone in my life. Now its time to say goodbye, I feel so sad and will miss you a lot. Thank you XX"

## Summary for Quarter 4

23. As at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, the service were working with 2787 children and young people and of these:

- a. In total, we received 41 complaints (1.4%), of which, 13 related to Looked after Children (0.4%). 4 were directly from the young person.

- b. 1 of the Looked after Children complaints related to a decision that they must have a HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) vaccination – they were quite clear they did not want this and were not being influenced by their foster carers, clearly stating this was their decision despite being told of the risks.
- c. In total, we received 22 compliments (0.7%).

### **Responses to AM / MP / Councillor Enquiry Letters**

24. 17 AM / MP / Councillor Enquiry letters were received by Children's Services during the quarter. An example of these enquiries was financial assistance for respite care.

### **Subject Access Requests**

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

26. Children's Services undertook the following activity in relation to Subject Access Requests in Quarter 4 2017-18:

- a. 6 requests were received, 5 were responded to on time and within the statutory time frame.
- b. We achieved 83% compliance (40 day deadline)

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

- a. 57 requests from the Police under the 2013 Protocol and Good Practice Model re: Disclosure of information in cases of alleged child abuse and linked criminal and care directions, an increase from 36 in quarter 3 (17-18).
- b. 142 requests were processed in relation to access to requests from other Councils, Probation, Solicitors or Insurance, an increase from 83 in Quarter 3 and 67 in Quarter 2 (17-18).

**Financial Implications**

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

**Legal Implications**

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

**RECOMMENDATION**

30. The Committee is recommended to:

- i. To endorse the report.

**Irfan Alam**

**Assistant Director Children's Services**

**Cardiff Council  
Social Services**

**Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee – Quarter 4 Performance Briefing  
Note**

- At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, we had **830 looked after children**, 83 of whom started to be looked after during the quarter. The decisions to accommodate these children have been scrutinised and the Committee can be reassured that the **decisions were appropriate**.
- Whilst Quarter 4 performance was mixed, the Assistant Director advises that the Committee be **reassured** by the current performance of the service, particularly when taking demand pressures into account.
- **Average social worker caseload** in the looked after children teams is **18.5** compared with 18.9 across the whole of the service.
- 51% (864) of the 1,694 children with a Care and Support Plan at 31st March 2018, were being **supported to live at home** (i.e. were not being looked after). Compared with 55% in 2016/17.
- 8.7% (91) of the 1,042 children who have been looked after during the year have **returned home**.
- In addition to the 91 children who were returned home from care, 119 children were in the care of their parents, but remain subject to a Care Order, and 74 children were placed with relative carers.
- Performance in relation to timeliness of **looked after children's reviews** decreased during the quarter to 90% from 96% in Quarter 3. This, in part reflects the ongoing increase in the number of looked after children and the consequent demand on the Independent Reviewing Service. It also reflects the carry-over of reviews rescheduled from previous quarters. Arrangements are being made to mitigate against future meetings being out of timescale (pressure bid for 2 additional IRO posts and a duty rota to ensure cover).
- Performance in relation to statutory visits to looked after children also reduced slightly to 93% from 95% in Quarter 3. Performance for the year was 94.4%, very close to the target of 95%. This level of performance is considered to be good in the context of the increasing number of looked after children.
- During 2017/18, 249 **Care Proceedings** were issued and 218 were concluded compared with 235 and 228 respectively in 2016/17. All proceedings were concluded within the 26 week timescale.

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CHILDREN’S SERVICES PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW - CPAC  
QUARTER 4 2017-18

At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, we had 830 looked after children, 83 of whom started to be looked after during the quarter. The decisions to accommodate these children have been scrutinised and the Committee can be reassured that the decisions were appropriate.

Whilst Quarter 4 performance was mixed, the Assistant Director advises that the Committee be reassured by the current performance of the service, particularly when taking demand pressures into account.

**Case Study – Rehabilitation Home**

G was 14 when she became looked due to mum being unable to manage her challenging behaviour. G felt unloved and unwanted by her mother, father and family; G had no contact with her father due to him having a new family, despite previously having had a close relationship with him. His absence in her life caused G a significant amount of trauma. G experienced difficulty forming secure attachments due to rejection and this led to her having difficulty forming healthy relationships. This impacted on her education, friendships, self esteem and confidence and led to G becoming vulnerable and aggressive.

G was placed in foster care, however this deteriorated due to G's challenging behaviour and not wanting to accept early curfews. Following the breakdown of her foster placement, G was placed in a residential home with a plan to rehabilitate home.

G was allocated an ARC worker on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2017. The goal was for the family to have better coping strategies to manage all the children's needs in order to avoid the situation from breaking down. This included parenting capacity of parents and stepparents, problem solving, communication, consequential thinking and family relationships.

ARC worked with G and her family on building / strengthening family relationships, reinforcing rules / boundaries and reiterating the safety plan. G found the separation of her parents very difficult and blamed her mother for this, which resulted in their relationship becoming strained. G reported that she wanted to live with her mother and for their relationship to get better. ARC supported G with writing a feelings letter to her dad regarding contact. This was not successful, as Dad did not return a good response however; G handled this well and feels that she has closure.

Issues at school had led to G becoming permanently excluded; ARC supported G in finding educational provision; initially accessing tuition before being accepted into school.

G was rehabilitated home successfully on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017. G is now happy at home; relationships with her mum, mum's partner and siblings have greatly improved. G is doing very well in school, meeting all her targets with attendance at 95% and is set to achieve her GCSEs.

**Case Study – High Cost Placement**

Age 16 birth female identifies as male; weekly placement cost = £4,500

**C needs a placement at distance to prevent unsupervised contact / misper.**

Concern that in unsupervised contact C's mother acts against agreements made to encourage controls on boundaries and access to mobile phone. Dr. requested decreased contact to reduce mum's interference with C's medical support plan. Mum refuses to accept concerns re. conflicting information given to C. Recent contact raised concerns about interactions which seemed unusual and possibly emotionally harmful.

**C needs a placement with ASD trained and experienced staff to design behaviour management plans that take into account ASD diagnosis.**

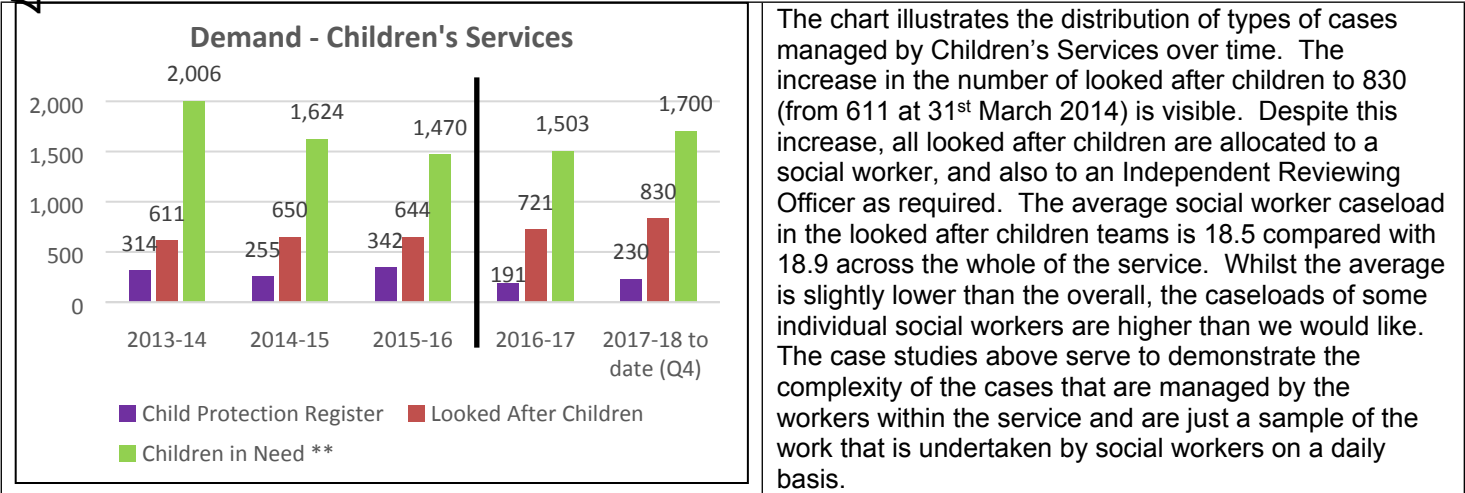
C has been diagnosed with ASD with depressive tendencies, anxious controls and fixated behaviours, alongside a psychologist analysis that DDT support using trauma model is needed. This significantly affects C's relationships with others, as well as inability to negotiate boundaries. Behaviour management and negotiation techniques have proven ineffective in previous placements.

**C needs a placement with therapeutic advice to look at attachment and trauma for behaviour management and life story work into the future.**

C has been significantly affected by history of chronic neglect and trauma. C does not prioritise his personal or dental care, and needs prompting to wash appropriately. C needs structured support to manage his calorie intake. C has demonstrated very limited ability to self-regulate resulting in serious concerns for his development into adulthood. Dr. expressed concern that C would always require adult supervision to prevent his vulnerability causing him serious harm, or his own behaviours in terms of sexualised interaction online becoming a 'forensic' issue.

**C needs a placement to implement strict boundaries and adjustment whilst reviewing impact on C of any changes in his use of social media.**

C is a gentle young man who has many links to young people on social media. However, he struggles with communication when others wish to express themselves, and does not demonstrate empathy or regret readily. This has made relationships at home and in school difficult and C can be isolated and resort to internet communication - resulting in limited education attendance, infrequent contact with family and friends, and the affection and physical contact that can bring. C requires stringent controls on devices to manage sexual content.



Budget update

Service	Budget £000	Outturn £000	Variance £000	Savings Shortfall £000
Children's Services	£48,760	£52,755	+£3,994	£923

The outturn monitoring position for Children Services shows an overspend of £3.996m. The overall overspend position largely reflects growth in the number of looked after children in 2017 and 2018. This impacted directly on the budgets for external residential and fostering placements, adoption and in house fostering and support for care leavers. Numbers of looked after children increased from 725 in March 2017 to 830 in March 2018, an increase of 105 or 14.5%. There was also a significant increase in numbers in the last quarter of 2016/17, with a subsequent full year effect in 2017/18. Between December 2016 and March 2018 numbers increased by 140 (20%). This growth, in turn, led to an increase in external fostering placements with numbers increasing from 339 in December 2016 to 393 in March 2018, an increase of 54. This implies a cost increase in external fostering alone of +£2.1m.

Performance Overview

PIs where performance is at target level, or between target and threshold, include:

- Allocation of looked after children to social workers (100%)
- Timeliness of looked after reviews (90%) and statutory visits to looked after children (93%)
- Looked after children placed in Cardiff (61%) and in agency placements (71%)

Red PIs:	Result	Target
Children supported to remain at home	2017-18 = 51.0% (864 / 1,694)	59%
Looked after children returned home from care	2017-18 = 8.7% (91 / 1,042)	12%
Children engaged in their looked after review	2017-18 = 67.6% (1,148 / 1,698)	87%
Parents engaged in looked after reviews	2017-18 = 61.8% (1,308 / 2,115)	78%
Social worker vacancies	2017-18 = 23.2%	18%

Parent and child engagement in the Looked After Review process is a key principle in the Independent Reviewing Officer practice standards and is a priority focus for the team. Existing consultation forms are no longer fit for purpose so work will be undertaken to produce more meaningful forms, and to ensure that they are consistent with the Signs of Safety approach. Two additional IROs are being recruited in order to reduce current IRO caseloads.

Please note that key actions being taken to improve performance in relation to other PIs are included in the relevant section of this report.

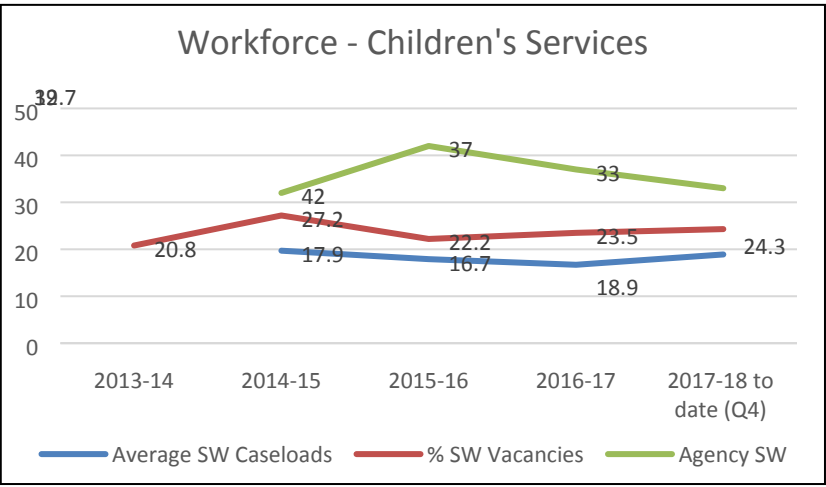
Workforce Data:

Sickness FTE	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2017-18	2017-18 to date (Q4)	2017-18 Target
Children's Services	17.2	13.7	13.8	14.4	13.5	13.0

PPDR compliance	CS
Initiation (2017-18)	91%
Half Year Review	95%
Closure (2017/18)	95%

Total agency staff cost to date – Q4 (Including Cardiff Works)	£2,912,425 (£388,040)
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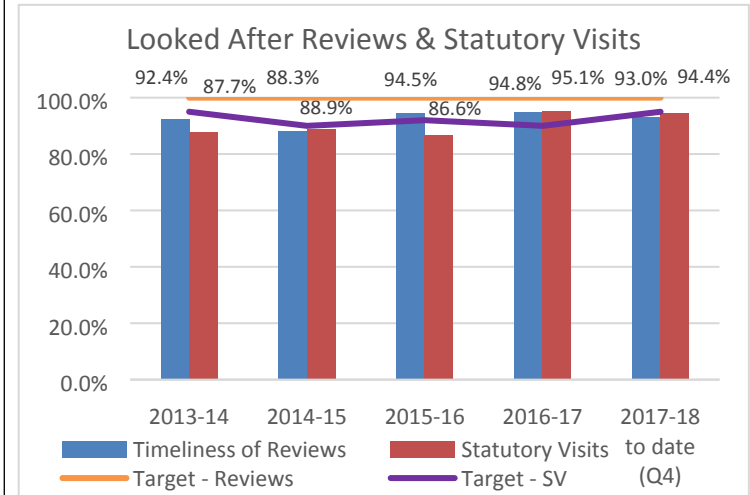
Date	25-29 cases	30+ cases
28.02.14	32	16
31.12.17	9	4
31.03.18	13	5



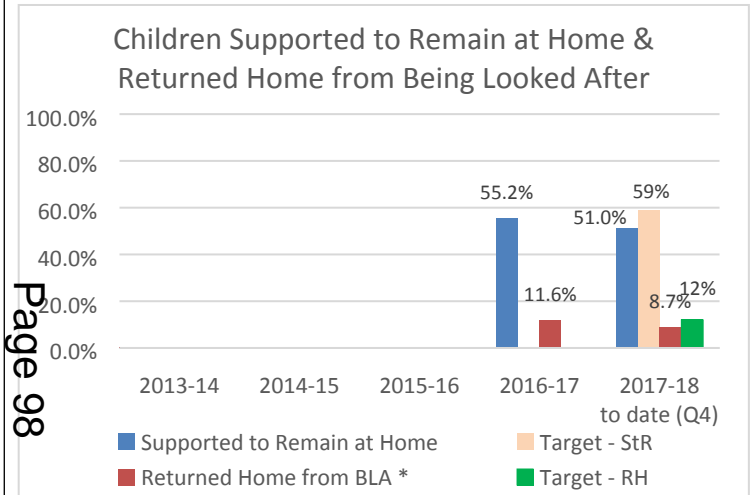
Children's Services have an FTE workforce of 415. Following a period where average social worker caseloads steadily decreased, there was an increase at the start of the year (to 19.7 in June 2017). During Quarter 4, caseloads increased to 18.9 (from 18.0 in Quarter 3) and the position continues to be closely monitored. Social workers with particularly high caseloads are known and arrangements have been put in place to address this - using support from other teams within the service to finalise pending case closures and / or address performance issues.

During the year there was a continued focus on recruitment and retention – the percentage of Social Worker vacancies remained stable at 23.2% from 23.5% in 2016/17, although there was some fluctuation in year with the vacancy rate falling below 20% for the first time since September 2015, to 18.5% in August 2017. Whilst it would appear that the improvement in Quarter 2 was not sustained for the remainder of the year, closer examination shows that existing staff had been appointed to newly created senior roles, leaving their substantive posts as vacancies. Whilst in the past we have generally been able to recruit newly qualified social workers, the retention and development of a stable cohort of more experienced and skilled practitioners has been more challenging and this in turn has greater significance for the sustainability of a safe and effective service. Our growing strength in depth in terms of retention is therefore, a basis for real confidence that our commitment to make Cardiff the destination of choice for social work is beginning to have traction. A number of vacancies have arisen due to internal promotions. If these were excluded, the PI result for the quarter would be a vacancy rate of 20.9%. Addressing the vacancy position continues to be a priority and further improvement is predicted as the newly appointed staff begin to take up post in Quarter 1. During 2017/18, 16 social workers left Children's Services. The primary reasons for leaving were of a personal nature, with small numbers leaving for financial reasons, to join independent fostering agencies and as a result of implementation of management processes (e.g. attendance and well-being). In the context of 163 social worker posts in the service, 16 social workers leaving is reassuringly low.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW - CPAC  
QUARTER 4 2017-18



Performance in relation to timeliness of looked after children's reviews decreased during the quarter to 90% from 96% in Quarter 3. This, in part reflects the ongoing increase in the number of looked after children and the consequent demand on the Independent Reviewing Service. It also reflects the carry-over of reviews rescheduled from previous quarters. Arrangements are being made to mitigate against future meetings being out of timescale (pressure bid for 2 additional IRO posts and a duty rota to ensure cover). Of the Of the 60 reviews that were not held on time, 21 were held within a week, 12 within 2 weeks, 11 within 3 weeks, 3 within 4 weeks, 4 within 5 weeks, 0 within 6 weeks, 4 within 7 weeks and 2 within 8 weeks. 3 still outstanding. Performance in relation to statutory visits to looked after children also reduced slightly to 93% from 95% in Quarter 3. Performance for the year was 94.4%, very close to the target of 95%. This level of performance is considered to be good in the context of the increasing number of looked after children.



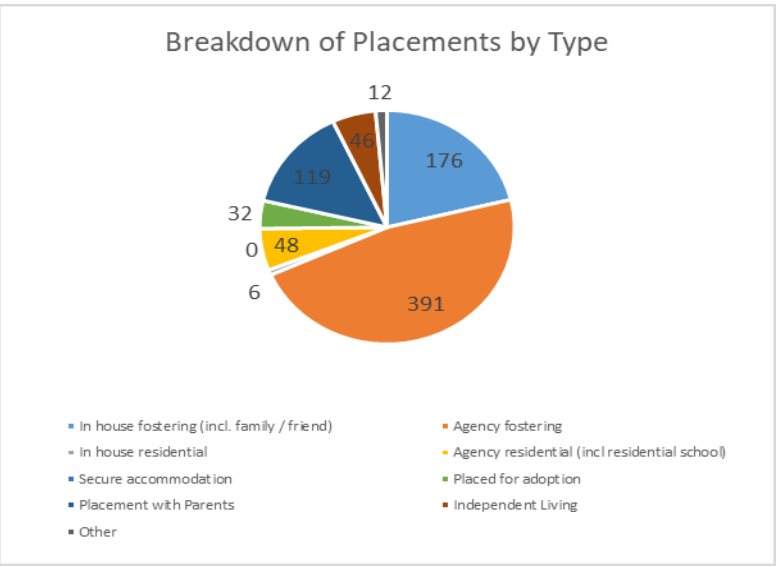
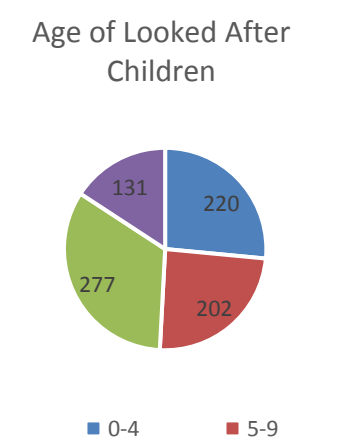
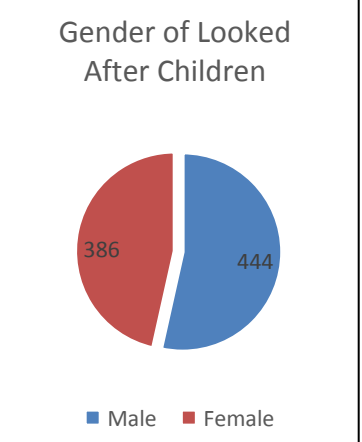
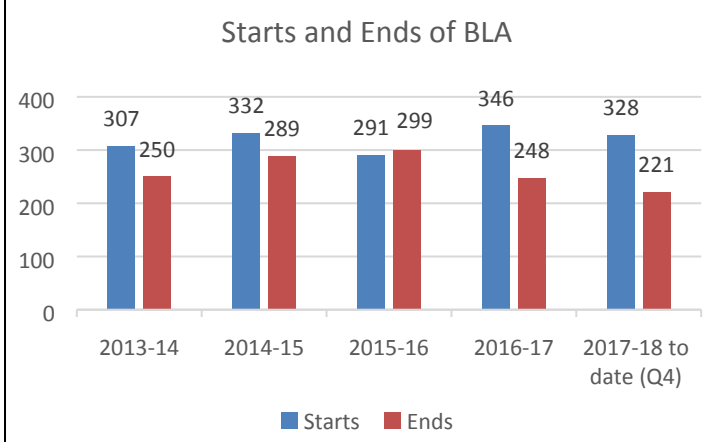
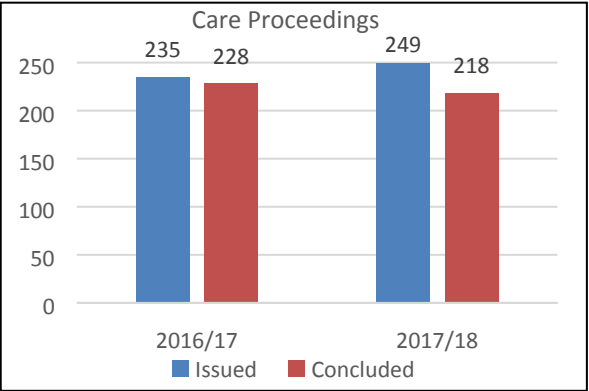
The reduction in children being supported to live at home in part reflects the impact of early help on the landscape of the Children's Services caseload. Children who previously would have received services from Children's Services are now being diverted to Early Help with the more complex cases receiving Children's Services interventions. This results in a "thickening of the soup" with Children's Services managing higher levels of risk.

In addition to the 91 children who were returned home from care, 119 children were in the care of their parents, but remain subject to a Care Order, and 74 children were placed with relative carers. It is noted that our judiciary have indicated a reluctance to discharge Care Orders, and continue to make new Care Orders as opposed to other orders, e.g. Supervision Orders. These figures reflect the strong emphasis we have in placing children within the family but with sufficient safeguards of a Court Order. A Placement with Parents team is being established to focus on the management of these cases, and to revoke Care Orders when this is appropriate. In addition to this, a dedicated worker from the Adolescent Resource Centre has been identified to work directly with looked after children who are considered to be ready for rehabilitation home and 1 young person was rehabilitated home in Quarter 4.

Of the 1,694 children with a Care and Support Plan at 31st March 2018, 864 were being supported to live at home (i.e. were not being looked after).

Of the 1,042 children who have been looked after during the year, 91 have returned home. This PI is cumulative, and performance improved as we progressed throughout the year.

66 **Care Proceedings** were issued in Quarter 4, and 51 were concluded. During 2017/18, 249 **Care Proceedings** were issued and 218 were concluded compared with 235 and 228 respectively in 2016/17. All proceedings were concluded within the 26 week timescale. However, the pressure of completing such complex assessments in a constrained time has an impact on social workers that cannot be underestimated.



**Fostering**

At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, Children's Services had 93 in house foster carers providing 181 placements, a small increase on the 90 carers providing 177 places at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. In addition to this we had 52 approved kinship carers, 10 in house When I Am Ready carers and 23 supported lodgings providers.

**During the year:**

- 162 enquiries received - 59 through the Fostering website.
- 11 mainstream carers approved - considerable improvement on 2016/17 - more placements gained than lost.
  - 50 Connected Persons were presented to panel with 26 new approvals.
    - 570 placement requests - 110 were placed in house.
    - 88 sibling group requests - we placed 11 sibling groups.
      - 9 Private Fostering arrangements commenced.
      - 5 carers recruited from the private sector.

Take up of consultation / feedback forms from carers is low, however, feedback is increasing using Survey Monkey. We will be using Survey Monkey to collect outcomes / good news stories and feedback from carers and young people in preparation for our annual Regulation 42 Quality of Care Report. In 2018/19 we will raise the profile of Fostering for Cardiff through our hubs. Interviews of carers who have moved across from the private sector will be released on social media and there will be representation in County Hall Reception on 15<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> May during Foster Care Fortnight (14<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> May). We will be attending the Ely Festival and have a stand during the Christmas market. We are setting up a Fostering Improvement Focus Group involving foster carers, Councillors and staff.

**Extracts from End of Placement Report received from Social Worker**

*Carer prioritised child's needs and met these needs well. Carer was a pleasure to work with. She was welcoming, communicated well with me at visits, by phone and via e-mail, and was able to promote child's needs. She attended all meetings and contributed appropriately, she ensured that the child attend all health appointments, and worked well with the professionals involved. I was particularly impressed by how she worked with the parents in a sensitive and respectful manner. Carer is a fantastic foster carer and the child received excellent care in the placement.*

**CHILDREN’S SERVICES PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW - CPAC  
QUARTER 4 2017-18**

**Crosslands** is a 6 bed residential home for children aged from 11 to 17 inclusive. Crosslands has adopted the Signs of Safety approach which has merged into the already established **Connect** method. The Signs of Safety model is visual with work products such as the three houses and words and pictures. It is versatile and adaptive which enables Crosslands to merge the key concepts into day to day paperwork using simplistic language.

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During Quarter 4, Crosslands supported admission of a young person to the Children’s Mental Health Hospital, Ty Lydiard. Prior to the young person’s admission, Crosslands initiated referral and support from specialist health services. This included working in partnership with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) who provided weekly Crisis Intervention visits to the young person. This service took time to access and a challenge was communicating the worry and severity of our concerns.

Focus at this time was primarily cantered around the young person’s physical and emotional wellbeing. An identified strength was the home’s record keeping which included observations, peer interactions and food diaries. These prevented further delay in the lengthy process for obtaining specialist support. Another significant strength was the staff team’s ability to attune to the young person’s health needs and use communication skills that promoted professional discussion on behalf of the young person who at times was monosyllabic in her responses. A further complicating factor was the divide in the family, one side who showed ambivalence, denial and minimised health concerns and the other who supported professional worry. Again it was the strength of the staff team who were able to support the young person and maintain relationships between the young person and the family.

Concerns amplified as the young person’s health deteriorated and increase around food and behaviour control were evidently impacting detrimentally on physical wellbeing. Efforts to communicate using the Signs of Safety model were attempted, by visually drawn and written worry and harm statements. These were useful to express professional worry but the young person was unable to recognise or share these. We also used the network building map to highlight quickly any unidentified family connection or significant others to the family. Both parents participated in the exercise separately. The young person became isolated and unwilling to leave the home environment, confined to her bedroom and increased fixation on social media contacts and virtual world connections. Her previous mainstream education provision had become unable to meet her needs due to her lack of engagement and persistent absence. We worked closely with the family; one parent visited the home daily in an attempt to motivate her. Whilst the young person was a patient in Ty Lydiard, Crosslands staff continued to visit regularly, alternating with the family members and keeping a record of communications, decisions and progress made. A strength was that Crosslands was able to strengthen family relationships with the service and ensure that stability was provided to her though consistency and care through visits. Challenges faced during this time were through hospital communication, medical and social care language difference, and lack of clarification about discharge criteria.

Another young person in Crosslands is being supported to prepare for her transition into semi independence - supported lodgings. Over time this young person has been supported to overcome depression, a serious vitamin deficiency, family relation conflict and rejection, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and mainstream education breakdown. The team strengths have been in partnership working with the CSE team and South Wales police which resulted in removal from CSE Services. This month she is due to complete her final year one college exams after being supported back into mainstream education. She is off her depression medication.

Signs of Safety words and pictures helped her to understand her story, involving her father, and supporting information from her social worker. Crosslands have reached out to her father who has not always been present in her life. This has resulted in a strengthening of their relationship and enabling him to be part of her transition. One of the challenges was knowing where to start with words and pictures. What we realised was that this young person had a clear understanding of the circumstances leading to her Special Guardianship breakdown which led to her placement in Crosslands. What she didn’t fully understand was the reason for the initial removal from her biological mother and that’s where we have focussed the work to date. One significant memory of her childhood is a book which staff were able to research and purchase based on her description, staff were able to read the book to her in the presence of her father. Another moment was sharing memories with the young person held by her father and in turn Crosslands sharing her recent memories with him. We used the feelings firework to help relay how the young person emotionally responds to different situations, showing dad a timeline over a year, he was able to recognise the similarities and think of ways he will help her to manage in future.

There were communication barriers between social workers and the family, and Crosslands have helped to reinstall this by persevering and building relationships with the family. This week the social worker will be meeting with the father of the young person to discuss starting Placement with Parents regulations. Crosslands have been working with the families of the young person’s significant others, and have implemented safety and structure around contacts. A significant strength is the young person’s strong relationship with staff which supports her to be transparent about what she is thinking and feeling which builds up her resilience and coping mechanisms. Upon completion of this piece of work the young person will have a fuller understanding of her life experiences, strengthen resilience and secure attachments enabling her to make safe and positive life choices.

During Quarter 4 2017/18 the **Looked After Children Traineeship scheme** was rebranded as the **Bright Start Traineeship Scheme**. 16 referrals were received and 3 of these young people have started Traineeship Placements. An additional 1 young person accepted a paid Trainee role during the quarter.

As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, 48 children were in external residential placements. Children’s Services were solely responsible for funding 34 of these placements with the remaining 14 receiving contributions from Education, Health, or both. The average weekly cost per child was £3,489, although this ranged from £1,800 to £5,300. Contributions from Education range from 4% to 30% and Health range from 15% to 19% of the weekly cost - the percentage of the contribution is based upon factors such as how much the provider charges for education and therapy costs, the number of weeks in the school terms, the period of therapy, continuing health care needs and whether the child is statemented.

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