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## AGENDA

<b>Committee</b>	CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
<b>Date and Time of Meeting</b>	TUESDAY, 28 JANUARY 2020, 2.00 PM
<b>Venue</b>	COMMITTEE ROOM 4 - COUNTY HALL
<b>Membership</b>	Councillor Merry (Chair) Councillors Bowden, Driscoll, Hinchey, Hopkins, Jenkins, Lent, and Lister.

### 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 - 6*)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meetings on 17 September (to follow) and 18 November 2019

## **Presentations**

### 4 **Out of Area Placements Briefing/Update** (*Pages 7 - 18*)

### 5 **Corporate Parenting Strategy Consultation Update** (*Pages 19 - 28*)

### 6 **Voices from Care Presentation**

### 7 **Education Item - Performance of Cardiff Looked After Children 2018-2019 Information Report** (*Pages 29 - 34*)

## **Reports**

### 8 **IRO Report** (*Pages 35 - 52*)

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

- 9 **Children's Services Quarters 1 & 2 Performance Report** *(Pages 53 - 70)*
- 10 **Children's Services Quarters 1 & 2 Complaints Report** *(Pages 71 - 82)*
- 11 **Member Work Streams** *(Pages 83 - 86)*
- 12 **Member Visits** *(Pages 87 - 92)*
- 13 **Forward Work Programme** *(Pages 93 - 96)*
- 14 **Briefing Papers** *(Pages 97 - 114)*
  - 1 VVC Adoption Annual Report
- 15 **Urgent Items (if any)**
- 16 **Date of next meeting**

The next scheduled meeting of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee is on Tuesday 17 March 2020 @ 2.00 pm

**Davina Fiore**

**Director Governance & Legal Services**

Date: Wednesday, 22 January 2020

Contact: Mandy Farnham,

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

CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

18 NOVEMBER 2019

Present: Councillor Merry(Chairperson)  
Councillors Bowden, Driscoll, Hinchey, Hopkins and Lister

90 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jenkins and Lent and from Committee Advisor, Rose Whittle.

91 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

92 : MIND OF MY OWN APP

The Chairperson welcomed Matt Osborne (Service Manager, Mind of My Own) to the meeting.

Members were provided with a presentation outlining the usage of Mind of My Own App and services, and their integration into the Social Services sector in England and Wales.

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

- Members sought clarification as to what would happen should communication be made via the App late at night or that the communication was urgent and were advised that there is a process whereby reports are screened. Contact will be made thereafter. There will be an implementation plan for the training of staff.
- Members discussed the age of children able to use the App. It was noted that younger children and those with additional needs sometimes struggle to express their views. The app helps them share their views, wishes and feelings via images whilst using Mind of My Own Express.
- Members noted that feedback had been sought from other authorities using the App - Gloucester and London which as positive.

93 : FOSTERING WELLBEING PROGRAMME PRESENTATION

The Chairperson welcomed Colin Turner (Director, The Fostering Network in Wales) and Elizabeth Bryan (Programme Manager, The Fostering Network in Wales) to the meeting.

Members were provided with a presentation, which also included a [video](#), outlining information about the programme which is funded by Welsh Government and deliver

by 'The Fostering Network'. It was noted that a programme pilot was run in the Cwm Taf region between 2017 – 2019. There will be a roll out phase across Wales,

The Fostering Network in Wales was awarded nearly a million pounds of funding by the Welsh Government. The Welsh Government raised concerns about the number of children in foster homes. A pilot programme in conjunction with Cym Taf Social Services is currently in progress to determine the best support practices and Fostering Wellbeing Pioneers, however an evaluation report will not be ready for several years.

The Fostering Network in Wales are rolling out the programme in phases by across Wales and the establishment of a Programme Board is the next stage for Cardiff. It is hoped that this will be established before Christmas with Masterclasses arranged for the spring. The objective of each masterclasses will be to enable foster carers and supervising social workers to gain the skills, competence and confidence needed to help inspire and equip children and young people to fulfil their potential.

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

- Members confirmed their support of the programme.
- Concerns were raised about the financial pressures on schools who have a number of children who are looked after; schools cannot afford to do the work they would like to do. Members were advised that there would be investment in the programme.
- Members discussed the nature of the masterclasses to be provided and were keen to ensure that that knowledge will be widely shared. Foster Carers will be recruited as programme pioneers, as well as the skills and experience they have, they will receive training and support to help them cascade learning. This will aid sharing resources and understanding local issues.
- Members expressed concern that Foster Carers are still not feeling valued and queried whether involvement in this programme could lead to some form of recognised qualification. Members were advised that Foster Carer Pioneers would receive some payment and whilst there is not a qualification at the moment but they are trying to provide a mapping document.

#### 94 : LOCALITY WORKING PRESENTATION UPDATE

The Chairperson welcomed Natasha Hilderley (Interim Operational Manager, Specialist Services) to the meeting.

Members were provided with a detailed presentation outlining the new locality model for Children's Services. Cardiff will be split into three areas, with each area having an operational manager; Cardiff North, Cardiff East and Cardiff South.

The goal is to deliver excellence and to improve a child's journey by aligning services to the model. The areas were analysed; looking at deprivation, policing, education and health as a result the three key areas were established.

Currently Cardiff North has 718 cases, Cardiff East 877 cases and Cardiff South 791 cases.

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

- Members expressed their support and for the model and locality model regions that have been created.
- Members discussed the need for joint working, particularly between Social Workers and Education. Members were advised that the change in model was a new start, the three areas are as big as some authorities.
- Members raised the need for funding for children who are looked after, it was noted that the PDG for looked after children is administered by the consortia. Members welcomed the opportunity of hearing from the Consortia as to how that funding is allocated.

#### 95 : NYAS RESIDENTIAL REVIEW

The Chairperson welcomed Elly Jones (Service Manager, NYAS) to the meeting.

Members were provided with a presentation - an update on the NYAS participation service – 'participation means listening to children and taking their views meaningfully into account. All children should be supported to freely express their opinion; they should be both heard and listened to'.

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

- Members discussed the involvement of young children and the feedback provided. It was noted that small focus groups were formed with young people to discuss the service provided by Social Workers, the quality of the support provided, the contact provided and the aftercare support for care leavers. It was also noted that young people have been taking part in the interview process with in the service.
- Members queried the nature of changes as a result of the participation and were pleased to note that there were tangible outcomes and that the listening events provided a good source of feedback.

#### 96 : CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

Members discussed the draft Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2017 – 2018.

RESOLVED: To approve the draft Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee's Annual Report subject to two slight amendments in relation to attendance and the number of Care Proceedings concluded.

97 : MEMBER VISITS

This item was deferred to the next meeting of the Committee in January 2020.

98 : MEMBER WORK STREAMS

Members were provided with some brief information about topics for Member Work Streams, which coincide with priorities from the Strategy.

99 : FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the updated Work Programme.

100 : QUARTER 1 CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT

Delayed for next month's agenda.

101 : QUARTER 1 CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMPLAINTS REPORT

Delayed for next month's agenda.

102 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were tabled at the meeting.

103 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next scheduled meeting of the Committee is on Tuesday 28 January 2020 at 2.00 pm

The meeting terminated at 16.30



# Childrens Services Placements January 2020

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Agenda Item 4

# Placements

- Themes for placements
- Data as at 21.01.2020
- Location of placements based on type
  - ❖ Residential
  - ❖ Kinship Care
  - ❖ In house foster carers
  - ❖ Independent Fostering Agencies
- Issues
- Work in progress – in house residential provision
- Next Steps





# Themes for Placement

- Exploitation/High risk behaviour
- Abuse and Neglect
- Drug & alcohol
- Terminally ill parents
- Domestic violence
- Sexual Abuse



# Children Looked After as at 21.02.2020

County	External Fostering	External Residential	Independent Living	In-house Fostering	In-house Residential	Kinship Care	Other	Placed for Adoption	Placed with Parents	Secure	Grand Total
Angus		1									1
Blaenau Gwent	3	3									6
Bradford									1		1
Bridgend	33	5	1				3	3	1		46
Caerphilly	14			1			1				16
Cardiff	198	8	43	89	6	95	7		147		593
Cardiganshire	13	3				1					17
Ceredigion	5										5
Cumbria		1									1
Essex							1				1
Gloucestershire			1								1
Herefordshire		1									1
Leicestershire	3										3
Leigh							1				1
Liverpool		1									1
London							5				5
London Borough of Croyden	1										1
London Borough of Ealing		1									1
London Borough of Hounslow							1				1
London Borough of Lambeth							1				1
Merthyr Tydfil				2							2
Monmouthshire	2	1								2	5
Neath Port Talbot	4	9									13
Newport	20	1					2		3		26
Norfolk		1									1
Northamptonshire										1	1
Pembrokeshire	6	3							1		10
PFA								48			48
Powys							1		1		2
Reading	2										2
Rhondda Cynon Taf	33	10		1		8			6		58
Salisbury		1									1
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council									1		1
Shropshire		3									3
South Gloucestershire	1										1
Swansea	6	9				2			2		19
Torfaen	13					1			2		16
Vale of Glamorgan	29	10		5		5			2		51
West Midlands		2									2
Wiltshire		1					1				2
Wokingham		1									1
Grand Total	386	76	45	98	6	128	11	48	169	1	968

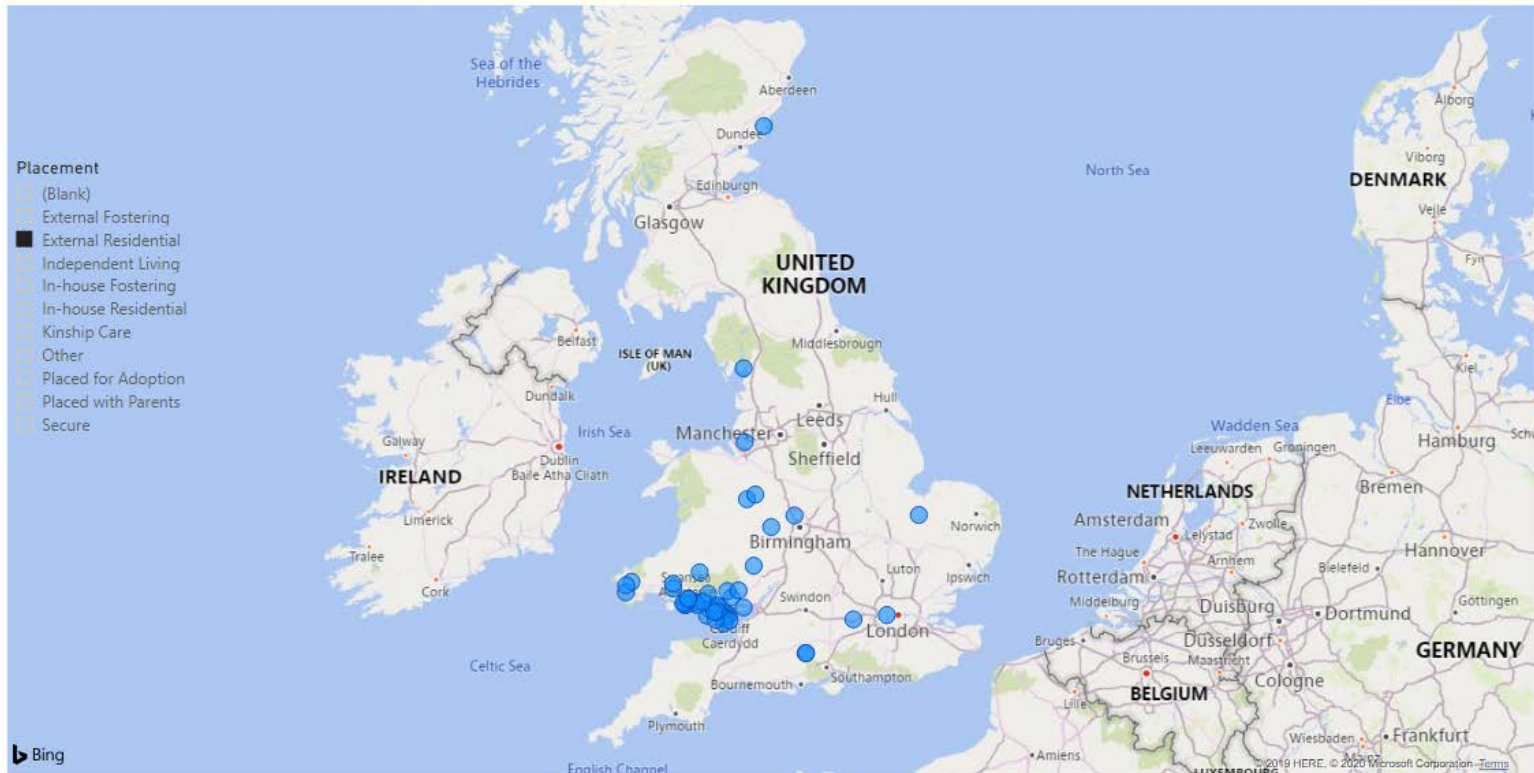
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# Locations – Residential

Current Population - Placement Postcodes

76



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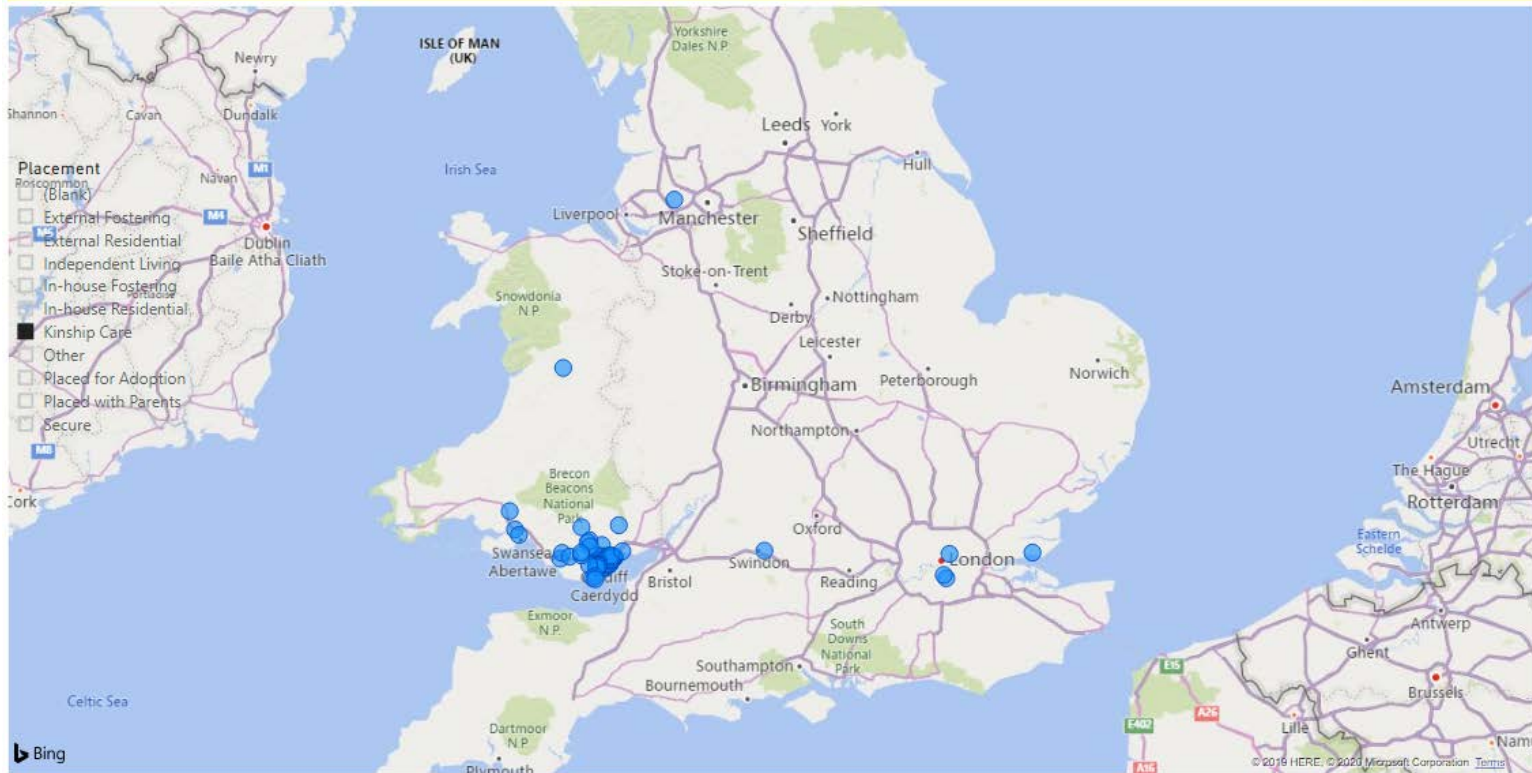
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# Location - Kinship

## Current Population - Placement Postcodes

127

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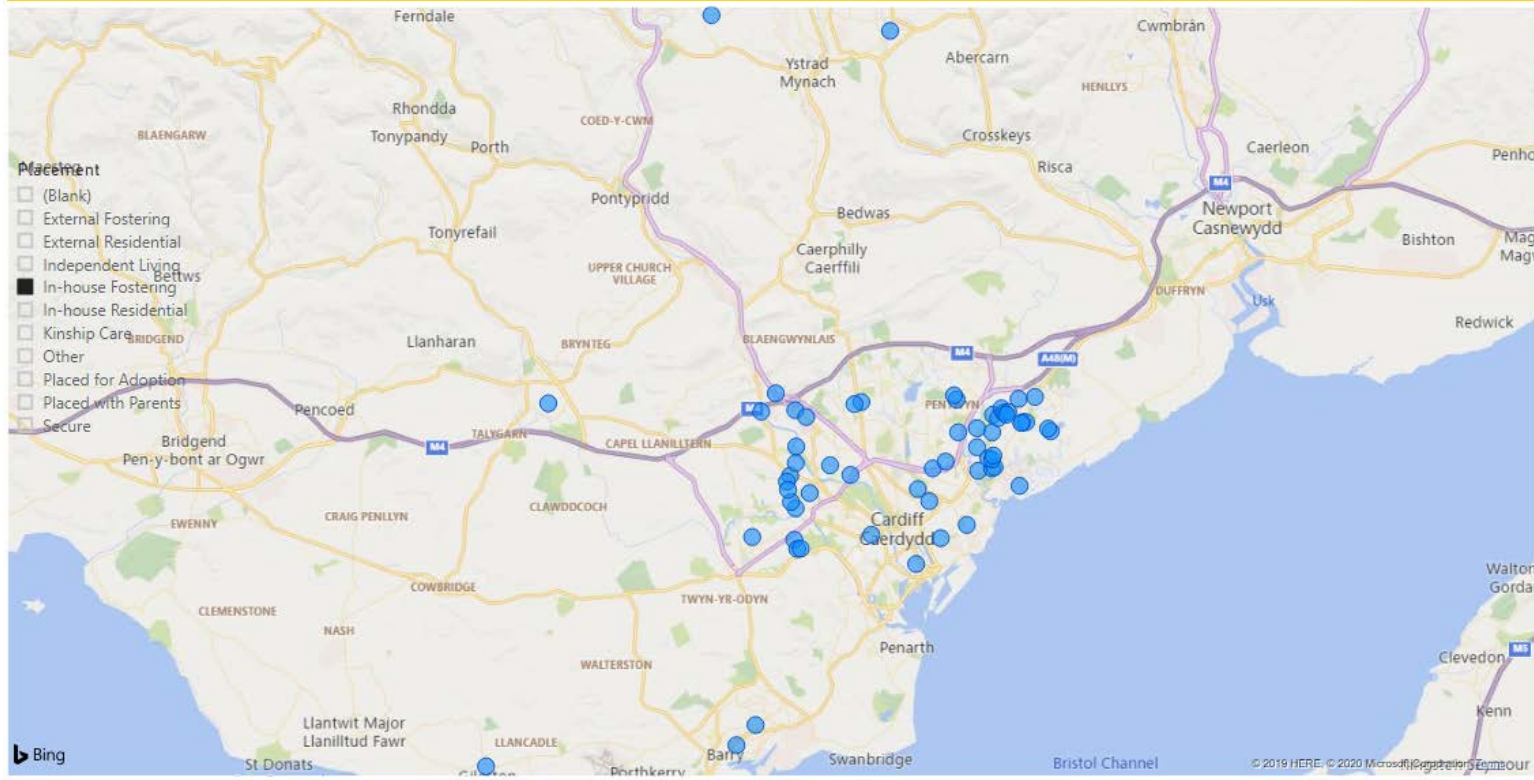


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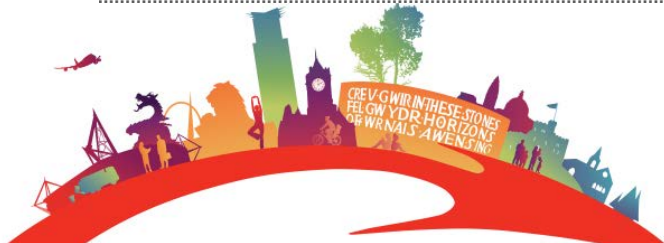
# Location – In House Foster Carers

Current Population - Placement Postcodes

98



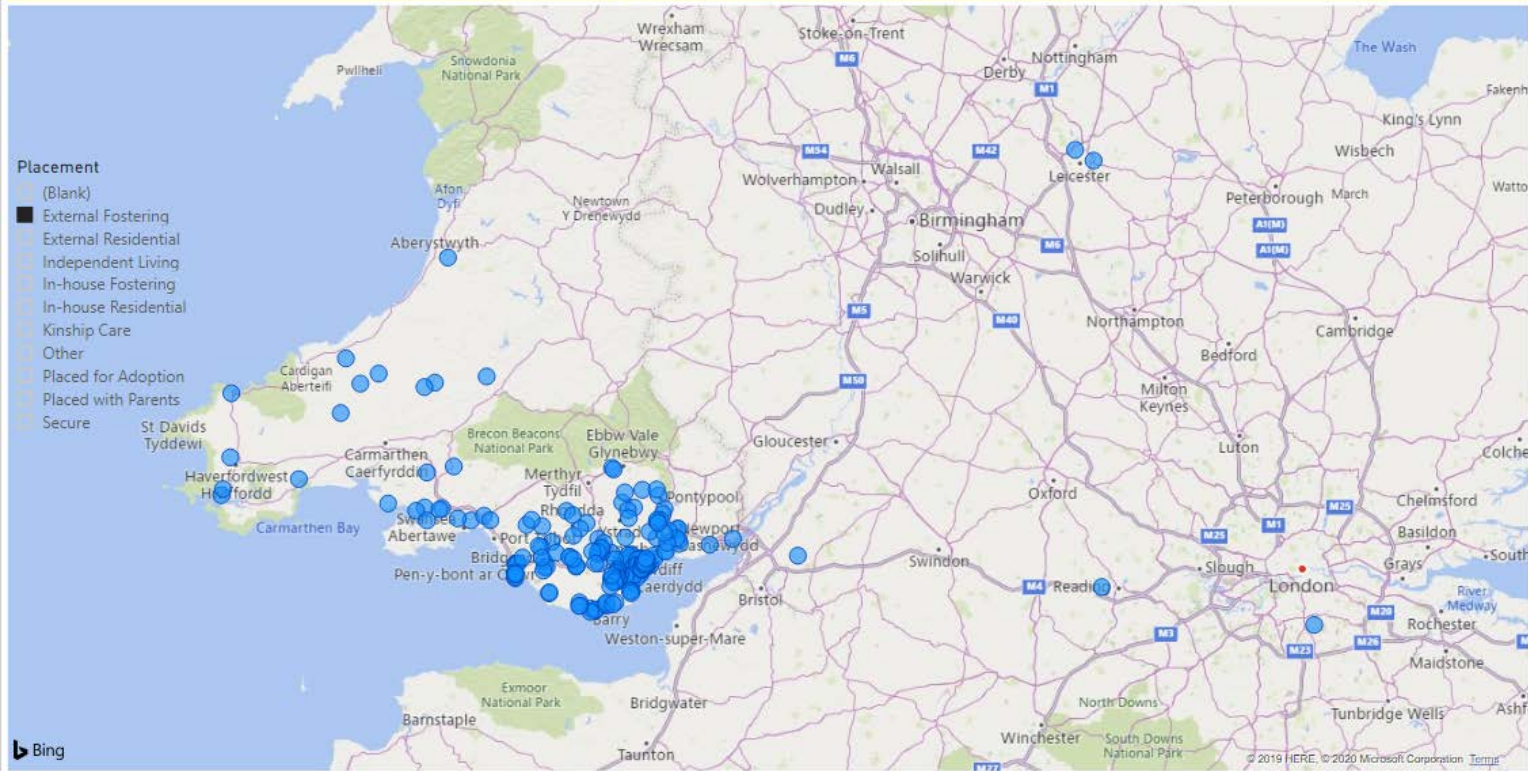
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# Location – Independent Fostering Agencies

Current Population - Placement Postcodes

385



# Issues

## Capacity issues across the piece

- Insufficient numbers of in house foster carers
- Reliance IFA foster agencies
- Placements are often vacancy led

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# Work in progress

Sharing the vision of local placements for local children

- Actively recruiting in house foster carers (31 being assessed as at 21.01.2020)
- Working with IFAs and local residential providers to:

Develop relationships

Introduce planning and forecasting

Cardiff placements for Cardiff children





# Work in Progress – in house residential provision

- Work underway to develop a in-house assessment unit by September 2020
- 4 bed provision within the City
- Opportunity to assess children/young persons need over 12 week period
- Needs led assessment avoiding crisis driven moves



# Any questions ?





# Corporate Parenting Strategy

## CPAC Update 28.01.20

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Agenda Item 5

# Vision

*Listening to care experienced children about what matters to them. This helps us to shape what we do and improve care experienced children's lives*



# Context

- *Children Act 1989 and 2004*
- *UNCRC*
- *Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014 places a collective duty to safeguard and promote the life chances of looked after children:*
  - To safeguard and promote the wellbeing of each looked after child (S78)*
  - To promote the wellbeing of care leavers (s104-118)*
- *We have a commitment to ensure children thrive in our care*



# Cardiff - A Co-Produced Strategy

*Placing Children and young people front and centre of what we do*

- 5 – 11 years old
- 11 – 16 years old
- Out of County
- Residential – internal and external
- Kinship and Placement with Parents
- Semi Supported (16 – 17 years)
- Adult care leavers
- Children with Disabilities / Additional Needs
- Parents and family carers
- Foster Carers
- Stakeholders including building links with VFC

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# How we are engaging

- *You said we did...* embedding participation into the heart of corporate parenting
- Consultations (individuals and groups) – creative based approaches to form the template for ongoing co-production
- C&YP led
- Creative means - avatars / digital based means
- Digital CYP strategy
- Jenga activity bricks
- Physical representation of homes and communities
- Signs of Safety – house of hopes, house of worries, house of dreams
- Collaborative - Bright Sparks, NYAS, Art Council Wales, Child Friendly City



# Corporate Parents Together

- Providers
- Health
- Education / training / work and lifelong learning
- Foster Carers
- Parents
- Elected Members
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector
- Police
- Housing
- Leisure and social opportunities





# Timescales

- February – Consultations Complete
  - Stakeholder sessions
  - Literature review
- March – Strategy Writing and Co-production Group Session
- April – CMT and CPAC Draft Strategy
- May – Scrutiny and Cabinet
- May – Launch of the Strategy



# Welsh Government Review – National Context

- WG review of corporate parenting across public services linked to Taking Wales Forward to *‘examine ways of ensuring looked after children enjoy the same life chances as other children and if necessary reform the way they are looked after’*.
- Seeks to strengthen the commitment of local authorities and partners across the public sector and extend corporate parenting for care experienced children e.g health, education and housing to improve outcomes and life chances by working together
- Priority areas identified are educational outcomes, homelessness and accelerated independence amongst care leavers and they are more likely to have children taken into care, strengthening edge of care services
- Connects to the development of our new corporate parenting strategy therefore its imperative the committee is aware of the national work.

<https://gov.wales/extending-corporate-parenting-across-public-services-looked-after-children-html>



# Welsh Government Review

- Programme of engagement and activity over the next 12 months with a focus on *doing things differently* with greater accountability, partnership working in whole sector approach :
  - Consultation with CYP and agencies
  - Voluntary charter – CYP led
  - Strengthening and extending legislation
  - Key portfolio areas:

Health

Education /skills/education and lifelong learning

Housing

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## National statistics

- 47% care leavers returned home 2018-2019
- 11.5% care leavers experienced homelessness
- 53% of all care leavers are in education, training or employment 12 months after leaving care



# Next Steps

- Corporate Parenting worker – job creation
- Bright Sparks support participation moving forward and development of participation framework
- Forge stronger links with Voices from Care and NYAS - advocacy
- Start using the information from the strategy to influence service i.e social and leisure opportunities
- You said, we did approach
- Action plan to underpin the strategy moving forward



**BRIEFING REPORT****PERFORMANCE OF CARDIFF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN 2018-2019****CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 28 JANUARY 2020**


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**Performance of Cardiff Looked After Children 2018-2019**


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**Background**

1. Educational outcomes for children and young people in Cardiff have improved over the past five years, reflecting the focus on education as a key priority for Cardiff at the heart of the Council's Capital Ambition:

*"A good education provides the best start in life and remains the surest route out of poverty. We will continue to improve and invest in our schools and to make sure that every child has the best possible start in life."*

2. In October 2019, the council launched 'Cardiff 2030: a ten year vision for a capital city of learning and opportunity', building on progress made since the launch of 'Cardiff 2020' in 2016.
3. Against this overall improving picture, 'Cardiff 2030' highlights the continuing importance of focused action in a number of areas, including the continuing need to improve educational outcomes for Looked After Children.
4. This report provides an analysis of educational outcomes for the academic year 2018/19 for children in the care of Cardiff Local Authority and identifies the main strengths and shortcomings in performance. It also sets out future key actions.

**1. Introduction**

This report provides an analysis of the educational outcomes for the academic year 2018-2019 of Cardiff Council Looked After Children in years 2, 6, 9 and 11:

- Cardiff Council Looked After Children educated in Cardiff Schools
- Cardiff Council Looked After Children educated in schools or settings that are out of county

The children identified as Looked After for the purposes of this report are those identified by Children's Services on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2019. The cohort is constantly changing due to adoption and children moving in and out of care. There has been a

continual increase in the Looked After population over the last five years, increasing by a third during that time and now well over 950 children/young people.

## **2. Overview of outcomes of Cardiff Looked After Children**

Whilst there have been some improvements for children who are looked after in Cardiff, the results remain too low when compared with their peers. Outcomes for children who are looked after and who are educated in a Cardiff School are higher than if they are educated out of county at all key stages.

	<b>Cardiff Corporate Parent 2016</b>	<b>Cardiff Corporate Parent 2017</b>	<b>Cardiff Corporate Parent 2018</b>	<b>Cardiff Corporate Parent 2019</b>	<b>CLA In Cardiff Schools 2016</b>	<b>CLA In Cardiff Schools 2017</b>	<b>CLA In Cardiff Schools 2018</b>	<b>CLA In Cardiff Schools 2019</b>	<b>Wales CIN Census 2017</b>
<b>Foundation Phase Outcome Indicator</b>	71.4% (15 out of 21 pupils)	53.8% (14 out of 26 pupils)	69.4% (25 out of 36 pupils)	57% (28 out of 49 pupils)	84.6% (11 out of 13 pupils)	68.8% (11 out of 16 pupils)	75.0% (18 out of 24 pupils)	77% (20 out of 26 pupils)	61%
<b>Key Stage 2 Core Subject Indicator</b>	70.4% (19 out of 27 pupils)	76.7% (23 out of 30 pupils)	84.2% (32 out of 38 pupils)	70.83% (34 out of 48 pupils)	68.4% (17 out of 19 pupils)	80.9% (17 out of 21 pupils)	91.2% (31 out of 34 pupils)	75% (27 out of 36 pupils)	69%
<b>Key Stage 3 Core Subject Indicator</b>	57.1% (20 out of 35 pupils)	52.9% (27 out of 51 pupils)	70.7% (29 out of 41 pupils)	68.75% (33 out of 48 pupils)	50% (8 out of 16 pupils)	73.3% (22 out of 30 pupils)	71.9% (23 out of 32 pupils)	71.4% (20 out of 28 pupils)	60%
<b>Key Stage 4 Level 2+ Threshold</b>	15.2% (7 out of 46 pupils)	0% (cohort 53 pupils)	14.3% (7 out of 49 pupils)	7.6% (6 out of 79 pupils)	12.5% (4 out of 32 pupils)	0% (cohort 19 pupils)	25.0% (6 out of 24 pupils)	9.6% (5 out of 52 pupils)	12%

## **Comparative performance of Looked After Children**

### **3. Foundation Phase (FPh)**

There were thirty-six children who were looked after by Cardiff LA in year 2 at the time at the end of March 2019. Twenty-three of these children were educated outside of Cardiff, twenty-six in Cardiff schools. The proportion of Cardiff Looked After Children reaching the expected level was greater if in a Cardiff school than if educated in a school in another area. The overall percentage for all Cardiff Looked After Children reaching the expected level was 12.4 ppt below the previous year.

### **Special Educational Needs in Corporate parenting Year 2 cohort**

<b>SEN status</b>	<b>Foundation Phase Total SEN</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>School Action Plus</b>	<b>School Action</b>
<b>2018/19 In Cardiff Schools</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1 (1 under assessment)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2018/19 OOC</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

#### **4. Key Stage 2 (KS2)**

There were forty-eight children who were looked after by Cardiff LA at the end of March 2019. Twelve of these children were educated outside of Cardiff in mainstream schools, thirty-six in Cardiff schools. Thirty-four of the forty-eight children achieved the CSI, 13.1 ppt down on the previous year. The children who were educated in Cardiff schools did better than children educated out of county with 75% achieving the CSI. When compared to the latest published Children in Need (CIN) Cardiff children are doing well at this key stage with attainment above the all Wales average figure of 69%.

### **Special Educational Needs in Corporate parenting Year 6 cohort**

<b>SEN status</b>	<b>Key Stage 2 Total SEN</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>School Action plus</b>	<b>School Action</b>
<b>2018/19 in Cardiff Schools</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6 + 1 under assessment</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2018/19 OOC</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>

#### **5. Key Stage 3 (KS3)**

There were forty-eight children looked after by Cardiff in Year 9 at the end of March 2019. Twenty children were educated out of county and twenty-eight educated in Cardiff schools. There was an overall decrease of 1.95 ppt of Cardiff Looked After Children achieving the CSI. However, the increase in those children achieving this indicator if educated in a Cardiff school was more or less maintained from the previous year. This is 11 ppt above the All Wales figure.

### **Special Educational Needs in Corporate parenting Year 9 cohort**

<b>SEN Status</b>	<b>KS3 Total SEN</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>School Action plus</b>	<b>School Action</b>
<b>2018/19 Cardiff Schools</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2018/19 OOC</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

## 6. Key Stage 4 (KS4)

Seventy-nine young people were looked after in Year 11 at the end of March 2019. This compared to forty-nine in the previous year. Twenty-seven of these young people were living and educated out of Cardiff many in specialist settings with fifty-two educated in Cardiff schools or Cardiff located alternative provision.

62% of the seventy-nine young people were on the SEN register and 28% of them had a Statement of SEN. This level of having a Statement is at least seven times more than a normal population sample. The main area of Special Educational Needs identified for this cohort is Behavioural, Emotional and Social needs.

There were twelve young people out of the seventy-nine who did not achieve any qualifications. Of these twelve, three were in independent living. One of these young people had been in 12 placements and one in 8 placements since coming into care. One young person was in prison and one has profound learning difficulties. Two children were undertaking ESOL courses and one child had refused all endeavours to engage him in education. Twenty six (33%) came into care between 2017 and 2019. Of these twenty six young people, fifteen did not reach the Level 1 threshold and eight did not get any qualifications.

There are six Looked After young people who are not in education, employment or training at this time.

Year	Total pupils	No quals sat	Not enough quals to meet threshold	L1	L2	L2 +
2018/19	79	12 (15%)	23 (29%)	39 (49%)	13 (16.5%)	6 (7.5%)
In Cardiff	52	7 (13.5%)	13 (25%)	20 (38.5%)	7 (13.5%)	5 (9.6%)
OOO	27	5 (18.5%)	10 (37%)	6 (22%)	1 (3.7%)	1 (3.7%)

SEN Status	KS4 Total SEN	Statement	School Action plus	School Action
2018/19 In Cardiff Schools	25	9	13	4
2018/19 OOO	24	13	8	3

## 7. Attendance

The attendance of Looked After Children educated in Cardiff schools in the primary phase is very good. At the end of Foundation Phase, the percentage attendance is 94.80%. For Key Stage 2, it is 94.89%. The overall primary attendance figure is 94.76%.



The attendance of looked after children educated in the secondary phase is significantly below that of all pupils. At the end of Key Stage 3, the percentage attendance is 87.12%. For Key Stage 4, it is 73.25%. The overall secondary attendance figure 93.8%.

The drop in attendance through the key stages links directly to the drop in overall attainment.

Stage	Sum of Attendance	Sum of Unauthorised	Sum of Possible Attendance	% Attendance	% Unauthorised
<b>Foundation Phase</b>	<b>14395</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>16390</b>	<b>87.83%</b>	<b>4.14%</b>
-2	606	16	928	65.30%	1.72%
-1	4612	496	5673	81.30%	8.74%
0	9177	166	9789	93.75%	1.70%
<b>Key Stage 1</b>	<b>23473</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>24761</b>	<b>94.80%</b>	<b>1.20%</b>
1	13371	219	14154	94.47%	1.55%
2	10102	77	10607	95.24%	0.73%
<b>Key Stage 2</b>	<b>46158</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>48646</b>	<b>94.89%</b>	<b>0.81%</b>
3	10742	78	11124	96.57%	0.70%
4	9597	31	9987	96.09%	0.31%
5	12779	162	13335	95.83%	1.21%
6	13040	125	14200	91.83%	0.88%
<b>Key Stage 3</b>	<b>32729</b>	<b>555</b>	<b>37566</b>	<b>87.12%</b>	<b>1.48%</b>
7	10767	69	11820	91.09%	0.58%
8	11583	95	13225	87.58%	0.72%
9	10379	391	12521	82.89%	3.12%
<b>Key Stage 4</b>	<b>29509</b>	<b>2916</b>	<b>40285</b>	<b>73.25%</b>	<b>7.24%</b>
10	11514	505	14544	79.17%	3.47%
11	17995	2411	25741	69.91%	9.37%
<b>Post-16</b>	<b>4873</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>7744</b>	<b>62.93%</b>	<b>10.98%</b>
12	3922	836	6594	59.48%	12.68%
13	951	14	1150	82.70%	1.22%

## **8. What we are doing well**

- We have focussed on increasing the transparency of data and a central robust tracking system. Our central Virtual tracker is being used effectively to track Looked After children. This was highlighted by Estyn as excellent practice.
- We have stronger working relationship between the local authority and the Challenge Advisors in the Consortium ensuring that schools receive the appropriate degree of challenge. They are updated on a regular basis to the number and year group of Looked After Children in their schools. Any particular concerns are raised in termly meetings.
- Stronger, effective partnerships with Children's Services have meant quicker responses to concerns and removal of barriers impeding pupil progress.
- Education teams have all committed pledges to support Looked After Children in their joint role as Corporate parents.
- A new PEP format and a new system of responsibility for completing PEPs by designated teachers in schools was initiated in September 2019. This will be an on-going development priority but already there are improvements to note. Historically

only 20% of Looked After Children on the system had a PEP at any one time. As of January 2020 76% school age children have a PEP dated within the last year and 57% of these have a new format ePEP. These are being monitored closely to identify support needs and involvement of all key stakeholders.

### **9. Further actions to improve the outcomes for Looked After Children**

- The LACE team in Cardiff will work closely with the Consortium Lead for Looked After Children to ensure schools in Cardiff benefit from additional support and training from the region.
- Education will work closely with Children's Services to re-launch an effective Corporate Parenting Strategy that fully engages and reflects the views of Young People that are in local authority care.
- Further commitment from all Education teams will be formalised to ensure they have Looked after Children as a priority on team plans and they are clear about their role in improving their outcomes
- Working with partners to provide additional mentoring support for Looked After Children in Cardiff schools will be explored further and a stronger focus on Looked after Children's well-being needs and mental health will be a priority.
- We will analyse in greater depth the reasons behind KS4 lack of achievement and identify changes that can be made and additional support that can be given.
- Additional staffing to support Looked After Children within the Education Directorate will be explored and the work on improving and monitoring the PEPs to identify underachievement will be central to improving the performance of Looked After Children.

**Gill James (Achievement Leade (Key Groups) Education**

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

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**23 January 2020**

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**Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Monitoring Report – January 2020**

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**Reasons for the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with information about the role, function and activity of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service.
2. The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee's terms of reference require the Committee to regularly review performance data and ensure performance monitoring systems are in place to achieve sustained improvements.
3. The Committee receives a report from the IRO service twice a year.

**Background**

4. Local authorities are required by law to appoint an Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) to every child who is looked after. They monitor care plans, convene and chair reviews for children subject to care orders, accommodated voluntarily, placed with foster carers, in residential or secure establishments, living with kinship carers or placed for adoption. Their role is to ensure that each care plan clearly sets out the help, care and support each child needs and takes full account of each child's wishes and feelings.
5. Independent Reviewing Officers have specific responsibility to escalate concerns about Looked After Children through a dispute resolution process. If the concern cannot be resolved within the line management structure, the process allows escalation to the Chief Executive and ultimately to the Children and Family Court

Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS Cymru) to consider legal action if necessary.

6. The January 2020 monitoring report is attached at Appendix A and provides an overview of the service, its workload and performance information.

### **Financial Implications**

7. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### **Legal Implications**

8. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

9. The Committee is recommended to note the information contained in the report; and make any observations or comments.

**Claire Marchant**  
**Director of Social Services**  
**23 January 2020**

# The Independent Reviewing Officers Monitoring Report January 2020

## Independent Reviewing Role:

The role and function of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and the Local Authority in relation to care planning for Looked After Children are set out in the following –

- *The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014* sets out the main functions of the Care Planning Process and IRO
- *The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015* - sets out the detail of the IRO's role
- *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, Part 6 Code of Practice*- elaborates on the regulations and explain the role and function of the IRO in further detail.

The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is a statutory function within each Local Authority. Each authority must appoint a person (IRO) in respect of all Looked After Children known to the authority. The IRO role is key to improving outcomes for children in care, it is a legal requirement and an important process in determining decisions affecting a child's future and, increasingly, IRO's are being called to account for the robustness of these decisions. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 challenges Local Authorities to do things differently and to improve consistency and quality of practice, ensuring that children and young people are seen, heard and play a meaningful part in the decisions that are made about them and in determining their own wellbeing and outcomes.

Recent Practice Standards produced by the Association for Fostering and Adoption (AFA) Cymru and the Welsh Government for reviewing Looked After Children carefully considered the 2014 Act and provides guidance for IRO's and Local Authorities. It summarises a number of issues relating to the role of the IRO that are useful to include here:

- *The IRO's role is to monitor, that is keep an overview of the child's case, not just at formal review meetings, but between review meetings as well.*
- *During the reviewing process the IRO has a duty to look at how the child has been looked after and how the care plan is progressing*
- *As the IRO does not have the power to overrule the Local Authority decision making process, there has to be some way of showing that they are concerned about the progress of a child or young person's case or a decision made in relation to a care and support plan. The local authority should have a dispute resolution process by which IRO's can make senior managers in the local authority aware of their concerns, with a view to resolving them. If that internal process does not work, then the IRO may refer to CAFCASS Cymru.*
- *The role of the IRO carries with it personal responsibility for carrying out his or her functions. In a case in 2012, **A & S v Lancashire CC [2012]***

***EWHC 1689 (Fam)*** it was clarified that the IRO may be held personally responsible for:

- a) *Identifying if a child or young person's human rights are being infringed;*
- b) *Ensuring that the local authority acts upon the recommendations of the LAC Review;*
- c) *Referring to CAF/CASS if the child/young persons' human rights are infringed or significant recommendations of the review are not acted upon.*

Personal responsibility carries with it the possibility of being personally liable for damages (compensation) to be paid to the child if the IRO is held to be in breach of his/her statutory duties.

### **Purpose of reviews**

The IROs role is to monitor, both at formal Looked After Review meetings and in between as well. The purpose of the review meeting is to consider the plan for the child, monitor progress and enable decisions to be made. Part 6 of the Social Services & Well-Being Act (Wales) 2014 relates to Looked After Children and the role of the IRO. Under this part of the Act it is a statutory requirement for each Looked After Child to have an effective Care and Support plan that meets their day to day long term needs and which identifies the outcomes for the child, and also demonstrates the multi-agency plans to meet the child's needs. The plan achieves this by setting objectives for work with the child, birth family and caregivers in relation to the child's developmental needs. These needs include health, education, emotional wellbeing and behavioural development, identity, family and social relationships, social presentation and self-care skills.

Since the implementation of the SSWBA 2014 children who are 'voluntarily accommodated' are done so under Section 76 (formally section 20 of the Children Act 1989). This is usually on a short term basis due to a difficulty at home or where the young person is over the age of 16 and under some circumstances presents as homeless. The Child and Family Courts have recently offered guidance that effectively enables Local Authorities to make greater use of S.76 without needing to make an application to Court for an Order. There are presently 101 children voluntarily accommodated (increase from 81 in December 2018). Children who are voluntarily accommodated still need to be reviewed carefully and the IRO's look to ensure that this is on a short term basis only or, if rehabilitation is not possible, that the Local Authority seeks legal advice in a timely way to secure a legal order for the child.

### **Frequency of Reviews**

Looked After Reviews are held within 28 days of a child becoming Looked After. The first review then needs to take place within 3 months and the subsequent reviews take

place at least every 6 months for the duration of the child remaining looked after. Where there has been a placement disruption or a significant other change (for instance moving from a foster placement to a residential placement) the review will be brought forward. In the case of children being placed for adoption, the same timescales are adhered to.

As outlined above within the updated legislation, guidance and case law, there is now a duty for the IRO to continually monitor the child's plan and particularly where there are issues of concern or drift. Where there are issues or concerns there is a need to robustly challenge the plan. In practice, this means that there is significant work that the IRO needs to do on a frequent basis to ensure that they remain in contact with the child's social worker, reviewing the child's records and monitoring the progress of the plan.

### **The Reviewing Service**

The Safeguarding and Reviewing Service is responsible for coordinating and chairing Child Protection Conferences as well as independently chairing and reviewing children who are Looked After. The staffing establishment includes 15.5 members of staff employed as Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) with an additional IRO post that exclusively reviews families open to the Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS). All IRO and Child Protection (CP) chairs in the service are able to undertake dual functions chairing Looked After Children reviews and/or Child Protection Conferences.

The Independent Reviewing Officers are mostly all experienced social workers, however there have been some new additions to the team. A combination of experienced staff and new recruits has meant that the team has remained knowledgeable and innovative. One of the main challenges however, has been ongoing sickness in the team. At one point in 2019, there were five members of staff on long-term sickness leave. We have worked closely with HR People Services and Occupational Health to support staff back into work; however, it placed additional pressure on the other team members. Agency workers were brought in to help cover some of the staff absence. There are currently two members of staff on long-term sick leave, with one due to return in February 2020. One experienced member of staff is shortly about to go on maternity leave and another will be retiring in April 2020. Therefore supporting staff will remain a focus in the near future.

The team is mostly all agile as meetings and reviews take place in the community (such as Hubs), children's homes or public buildings local to the placement. Whilst the reviewing service is based at County Hall, the IRO's rarely attend there except for specific meetings and supervision. As such, the work can be quite isolating, given the nature of the role. The team have recently explored and put into place alternative ways of coming together to share knowledge and support one another, which whilst relatively early on appears to be working well to promote staff wellbeing.

There has been an increase in the number of children Looked After in the last year from 882 children to the current number of 972 (nearly 10% increase in 12 months). There has also been an increase in the number of children on the Child Protection

register from 199 in December 2018 to the current figure of 250 (20% increase). The increase in the number of children on the Child Protection Register is not a concern in itself as 199 was considered to be very low for a City the size of Cardiff and compared with other authorities of a similar size. The rising number of children we are working with in the Safeguarding and Reviewing Service has placed additional pressure on staff workloads.

We currently have 324 children placed outside of the authority; this has increased from 303 in December 2018 and 249 in December 2017. This means that 33% of our Looked After Children are placed outside of the Cardiff area. Whilst this can be for planned reasons, for instance children placed for adoption or with a family member, it is also linked to a shortage of foster and residential placements in the area. With so many children currently placed out of area, there are significant time commitments involved in undertaking out of area reviews. Some children are placed a considerable distance from Cardiff, such as the North of England, West Wales and London. This is a recognised national issue, however the senior management team consider that there are opportunities to further develop in house provisions in Cardiff. The Commissioning Team in Children’s Services has been expanded and an accommodation strategy is being advanced within Children’s Services to develop foster and residential placements in Cardiff.

There has been a lot of change in the Directorate over the last 12 months linked to the current restructure. This has involved the Children’s Services teams, Targeted Services and Specialist Services, moving to localities in the East, West and South of the City. There has also been a restructure of senior management, with the addition of more Operational Manager capacity. There is no longer an Operational manager in the Safeguarding and Reviewing Service, and instead the Service Manager for the Independent Reviewing Officers and Conference Chairs now reports directly to the Assistant Director. The move back into locality teams has been welcomed by most staff, including IRO’s, as it enables workers to link closely with communities and local services. Social Workers were initially concerned that Looked After Children would not be prioritised in generic locality teams. Reassurance has been given that there will remain Looked After teams in each locality, however there will be more flexible arrangements so that children can remain allocated to the right social worker.

Any significant change or restructure can be disruptive. There have been considerable social work vacancies over the last year, most notably in the Looked After teams. The Senior Management Team are acutely aware of the staffing difficulties and have met intensively, with a focus on developing strategies to support the workforce. In the immediate term, this has involved employing agency social workers and commissioning a managed team. They have also met regularly with social workers and managers to provide information, updates and listen to feedback whilst the restructure proceeds. In the medium and longer term, the Senior Management Team is working on the ‘offer’ Cardiff Council provides to new recruits and retaining existing staff through the support it gives.

The following table includes figures on the changes of social worker children have had over the last year:

**Changes of social worker in last year**

%	Narrative
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27.88%	Stayed with same worker
29.15%	Had 1 change of worker
23.71%	Had 2 changes of worker
11.89%	Had 3 changes of worker
5.38%	Had 4 changes of worker
1.41%	Had 5 changes of worker
0.31%	Had 6 changes of worker
0.28%	Had 7 changes of worker

These figures include all children open to Children’s Services. Children who are Looked After are more likely to have had changes in social worker, because of the vacancies and new staff that have been brought in to help. We are working on a dataset to be able to monitor this specifically for Looked After Children. The situation should improve over the next 12 months as the teams settle into their new localities and with the ongoing recruitment and retention work. As outlined above, the Independent Reviewing Officers role is vital in these circumstances in minimising drift. They are often the person that has had the longest relationship with the child, young person or their family. Coordinating reviews in timescale has also been much more challenging and required more work for the IRO, as the new social worker often has other commitments organised and needs briefing on the child’s plan.

There are two Service Managers in the Children’s Services Safeguarding and Reviewing Service. Matt Osborne is responsible for the management of the Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Conference Chairs. Lynda Gallagher manages the Education Safeguarding Service, Professional Concerns Allegations and has involvement in Corporate Safeguarding in the Council. In previous years there had been concern raised regarding the number of changes of Service Manager for the Safeguarding and Reviewing Service, however the Service Manager arrangements have remained stable over the last year. This has helped provide stability to the team.

Cardiff Children’s Services remains committed to utilising and imbedding the Signs of Safety approach. The Signs of Safety framework is part of the wider change programme within the service that is designed to significantly improve our ability to achieve better outcomes for the children and families we work with. All IROs and Safeguarding officers have completed the relevant Signs of Safety Training. Work has been undertaken with IT and the Signs of Safety QA Practice Lead Officer to develop a suite of forms and correspondence which embeds the Signs of Safety strengths based approach across all parts of the IRO and Conference Chair Service. Reviews place a great emphasis on strength based practice and planning. Including the voice of the child is critical and the new forms and system better enable reviewing officers to capture this.

### **Regional Safeguarding Children Board**

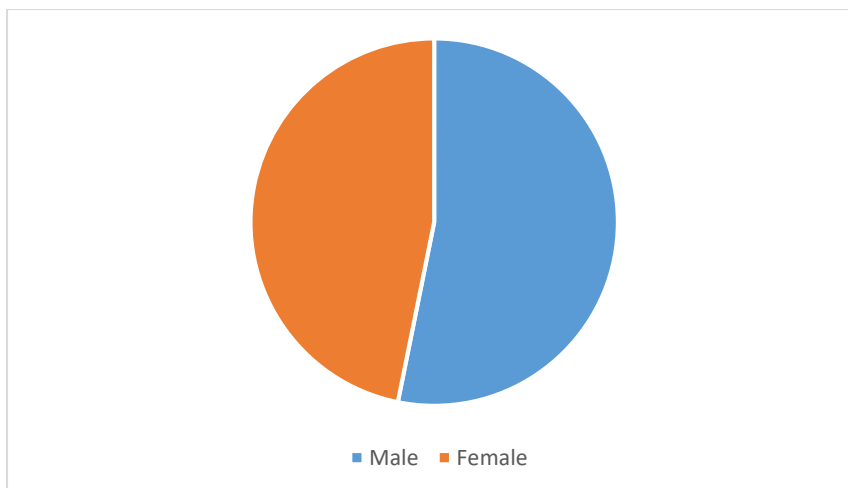
The IRO and Conference Service is expected to report to the Cardiff and Vale Regional Safeguarding Children Board on a regular basis to ensure that any issues within the

service which may impact negatively on children and their families are addressed regionally. The Board is a forum responsible for the following:

- Multi-agency strategic partnership arrangements in the region
- Has a statutory duty to hold all agencies to account for their safeguarding responsibilities in line with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- Lead, co-ordinate and ensure the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding practice in the region
- Challenging relevant agencies in an area so that there are effective measures in place to protect children and adults who are experiencing harm or who may be at risk as the result of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm; and there is effective inter-agency co-operation in planning and delivering protection services and in sharing information.

As part of the Board's functions, they undertake a scrutiny role in the child protection process and must be informed of any concerns as regards children who are in the child protection or looked after children process. As part of this work, the Board is currently developing a suite of data across the region which will monitor any delay or drift, or any professional dispute resolution necessary in all looked after children cases. The Children's Audit Sub-Group of the Board are also developing audit tools to assess the effectiveness of the IRO service. The Services Managers for the Independent Reviewing Officers in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan both sit on this sub-group and are part of the discussions.

## Looked After Children Performance Information



### Gender

Male	500	51.44%
Female	472	48.56%

The Looked After Children Population at the end of December 2019 was 972. This is a significant growth from 882 in December 2018. This is an increase of 90 children, or approximately 9.25%, and has placed additional demands on all teams. Several trends have been identified through case audits and population analysis that explain these increases. These include:

- There has been a general population rise in Cardiff, which is set to continue.
- Increased complexity, including Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who require Age Assessments.
- Better recognition and coordination of referrals and concerns by partner agencies, such as Schools, Police, Education and Health.
- The Court making greater use of a legal process to place children at home with a parent under Placement with Parent Regulations [PWP], which is referred to further below. These children and families often require intensive work and it can be difficult to evidence satisfactory progress to the Court that there has been sufficient change that would warrant discharging the order. Whilst the order remains in place the Local Authority has the same statutory duties as any other Looked After Child.
- The increased level of staff turnover has inevitably led to drift, despite the new social workers and managers doing what they can to minimise delay.
- There has been a trend in younger children becoming Looked After, which has meant that unless rehabilitation or permanence by other means can be achieved (for instance a Special Guardianship Order), then children will remain Looked After for longer.
- Reduced number of children on the Child Protection Register. In recent years, there has been a trend that the number of children on the register has decreased against a corresponding pattern that children Looked After has increased. The number of children on the Child Protection Register has increased steadily over the last year to the current figure of 250, which is considered a positive development.

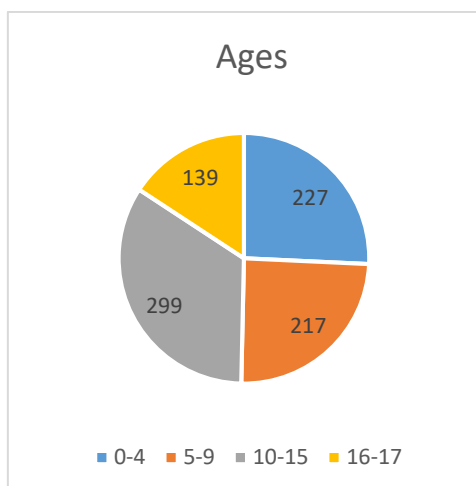
Cardiff Council has developed focused panels, all chaired by an Operational Manager with a renewed examination and scrutiny on the planning for children and families. These include:

- Public Law Outline- looking at legal planning and intervention
- Resource- coordinating support for children and families
- Admissions Panel- scrutinising the plan for children who need to become or have recently become looked after on an emergency basis
- Brighter Futures- Reviewing all children placed out of area, including high cost placements.
- Residential Panel – Reviewing effectiveness of children in residential placements
- High Risk Panel- Reviewing those children considered to have very complex needs or at being placed at high risk.

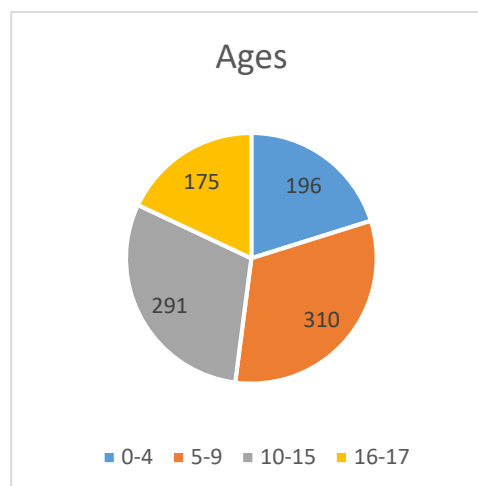
In addition, Cardiff Council has invested in Early Help Services to provide support to children and families without the need for formal Children's Services intervention. A

coordinated effort is also being made to refer all children into wider edge of care arrangements such as the Rapid Response and the Adolescent Resource Centre (ARC) as a means of preventing the child from ending up in the formal care process. There are currently 48 children in Cardiff receiving support from the ARC, which is an increase from 36 children at the same time as last year.

## Ages of Looked After Children 2018



## 2019



Age	2017	Percentage	2018	Percentage	2019	Percentage
0-4	219	27.5%	227	25.74%	196	20.16%
5-9	188	23.6%	217	24.60%	310	31.89%
10-15	250	31.4%	299	33.90%	291	29.94%
16-17	139	17.5%	139	15.76%	175	18.00%
Total	796		882		972	

Whilst there has been an overall increase in the number of children Looked After, there has been small decrease in the number of children aged 0-4 and 10-15. The children aged 5-9 will need to be a particular focus for Cardiff Council over the next year, as they could remain looked after for many years. The reviewing service and the case management teams will need to closely scrutinise the care plan for these children to try to ensure that they remain the most effective.

## Start and End Becoming Looked After

YEAR	Starts	Ends	Difference
2017	335	217	118
2018	280	189	91
<b>2019</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>96</b>

The table above shows that there were 96 more children who started to be Looked After than ceased to be. The figures remain broadly the same as the previous year; however both sets are quite a lot lower than in 2017.

## Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

We have had 17 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) come into care during the last six months, which is broadly the same as in the same period last year (16 children). The Local Authority has previously worked closely with the Home Office and Welsh Government in offering Care and Support to UASC. There are currently 26 UASC children open to the Local Authority. A number of these children have required age assessments as their age has been disputed by the Home Office. These are complex assessments, which the Local Authority is completing using strict guidance.

## Number of children who have had 3 or more moves

<b>2015/16</b>	64/644	9.90%
<b>2016/17</b>	79/725	10.90%
<b>2017/18</b>	77/830	9.28%
<b>2018/19</b>	86/900	9.56%

As the figures show there has been a small increase, both in numbers and percentages of children who have experienced three or more placement moves in 2018/19. This is against a context of more children becoming looked after. This figure includes a percentage of children who have moved from out of county placements back into the authority area. The Reviewing Service continues to support children and social workers to ensure that placements offer stability and are meeting their individual needs. These children will be monitored continuously to ensure that all children have a greater degree of permanency and stability.

## Children placed for adoption between 01/01/19 - 31/12/19

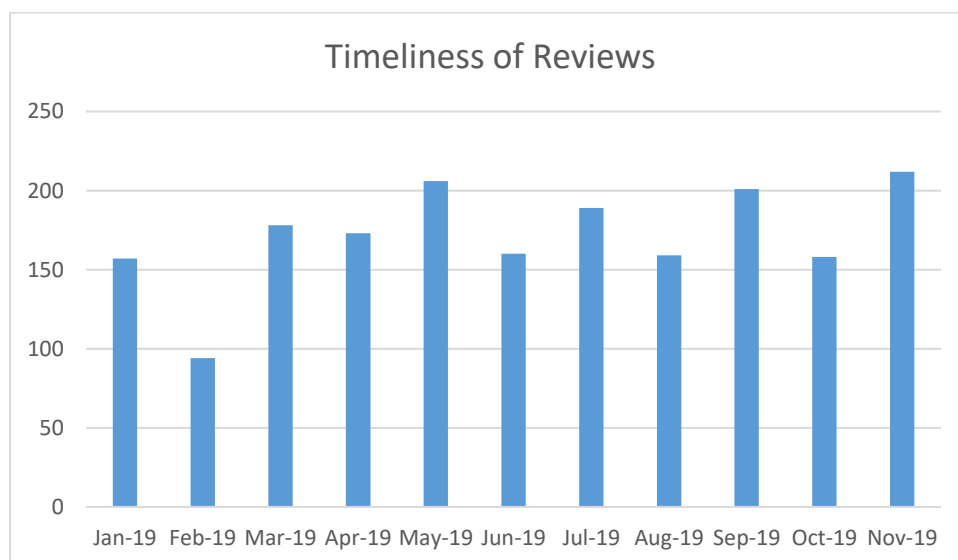
Age	Female	Male	Total 2019	Total 2018	Total for 2017
0-4	27	14	41	30	35
5-9	4	1	5	3	2
Total	31	15	46	33	38

A total of 49 children were placed for adoption between January 2019 and December 2019. This is an increase from the previous year, which is a positive development. There remains disparity between the numbers of children placed for adoption within the 5-9 age range, which is part of a national trend and emphasises the need to focus our best practice to increase the chances of older children being considered and eventually adopted.

## Timelines of Looked After Children Reviews

### Timeliness of LAC Reviews

	Late	On Time	Total	%
Jan-19	52	157	209	75.12%
Feb-19	16	94	110	85.45%
Mar-19	20	178	198	89.90%
Apr-19	16	173	189	91.53%
May-19	25	206	231	89.18%
Jun-19	18	160	178	89.89%
Jul-19	29	189	218	86.70%
Aug-19	22	159	181	87.85%
Sep-19	41	201	242	83.06%
Oct-19	47	158	205	77.07%
Nov-19	15	212	227	93.39%
Dec-19	Not available			
TOTAL	301	1887	2188	86.3%



The number of reviews taking place on time over the last year (86%) has decreased slightly since 2018 (91%). The main factors impacting on timeliness include; the rise in the number of Looked After Children; social work vacancies or change of social worker; IRO sickness; and late notification that a child has become Looked After.

Timeliness of Looked After Children reviews is essential to ensure no child or young person has their welfare compromised due to the delay or cancellation of a review. A Service or Operational Manager must approve a review going outside of timescale. Where reviews do not take place within timescale, they usually fall within a few days or at the latest within the month. In these circumstances the IRO will continually

monitor the child by remaining in touch with the social worker, child (where appropriate) and other professionals.

The IRO team and the adoption team have worked closely together to improve adoption reviews. Timescales remain the same, but in many cases these placements are usually out of county arrangements, and this has an impact on capacity for IRO's and can affect caseloads. IRO's ensure they remain the chair for children until adoption is fully completed.

## Placement with Parents

There are currently 168 children subject to a Care Order and living with their parents under Placement with Parent (PWP) Regulations. All of these children must be reviewed by an IRO in the same way as any other Looked After Child. There has been a rise of 38 (23%) PWP cases compared to the previous year (130).

Cardiff is in a unique position with a higher than national average number of children subject to Placement with Parent Regulations. Whilst other Local Authorities have reported increases, Cardiff has the highest number in Wales by quite some distance. Usually these arrangements are ordered by the Court. There is a significant amount of additional work in reviewing children placed at home with their parents, as by virtue of the Court Order, there are often considerable support needs. There is also an expectation that the Independent Reviewing Officer should review these children more closely. As outlined elsewhere in this report, the PLO Panel is reviewing these children periodically to consider whether there is a need for a Care Order to remain in place.

## Out of Area Placements

Placement Type	Total for 2017	Total for 2018	Total for 2019
Children's home outside LA boundary	45	49	61
Foster placement with relative / friend outside LA	7	28	30
Placed with foster carer provided by LA outside LA	8	15	10
Placed with parents / person with parental resp.	14	15	22
Placement with agency foster carer outside LA	140	188	189
Residential School	1	4	6
Secure unit outside LA boundary (within Wales)	2	3	1
Youth Offending Institution or Prison	3	1	4
Independent Living	0	0	1
Grand Total	222	303	324

The above table provides a breakdown of children currently residing in out of area placements at the end of December. Whilst there is still a significant number of children placed with agency carers outside of the Local Authority, the increase is relatively small. The largest increase is in the number of children placed in a residential placement (12 additional children). This reinforces the work being done in the Accommodation Strategy to develop more in Cardiff options. The Brighter Futures



Panel continues to look at the appropriateness of all placements outside of the Cardiff area. This is represented by Childrens Services senior management and representatives from Education and Cardiff & Vale Health Board.

## **IRO Resolution of Problems and Auditing**

The Independent Reviewing Officer has an important duty in monitoring individual cases and checking children's plans. A key feature of the IRO role is that they should provide an independent perspective uninfluenced by managerial or resource pressures of the Local Authority. The IRO service provides robust challenge to social work teams regarding cases that have gone into drift or where the quality of care planning is not good enough. The IRO's are employees of the council and there is a delicate balance required of all Local Authorities to ensure that the IRO's remain impartial.

If an IRO believes that the practice of the Local Authority is detrimental to the child's welfare, they have a duty to challenge the Local Authority. They can highlight both positive and negative issues that affect children, ensuring that children's views are heard. They should be able to evidence how their role has made a positive difference to the child and help improve life chances of the children they are involved with.

The Local Authority has an active Dispute Resolution Protocol (DRP) in place. This enables issues to be addressed via a formalised document that is retained and responded to within the Carefirst system. These comments on good practice and concerns are looked at and used to evaluate practice, policies and procedures. Following a Looked After review the IRO completes documentation that outlines whether a child's care plan is effective in meeting their needs. This information is then reported and collated centrally. Where there are general low level issues of concern, this gets reported and the social worker/team manager are asked to respond and address these issues. Where there are more serious issues, the Protocol is raised as described above.

Occasionally, this challenge has met with some resistance from social workers or managers. Where matters have not been resolved satisfactorily they will then be escalated to an Operational Manager and then Assistant Director for consideration and resolution. Ultimately a referral can be made directly to CAFCASS if the IRO cannot seek resolution, however this is rare. In an effort to raise awareness and a better understanding of the IRO role and duties, the IRO service will be attending social work team meetings to discuss the role of the IRO and enhance working relationships.

There have been 107 IRO DRPs that have been raised over the last 12 months. 76 of these were at the Social Worker and Team Manager Level, 21 were escalated to an Operational Manager and 4 to the Assistant Director. These have resulted in agreements to progress the cases discussed effectively. In the same period 188 reports were raised reporting good practice.

The two main causes for the IRO raising a concern relate to Care and Support Plans not being updated within timescale and delay in seeking or discharging a legal order. Greater scrutiny is being given to the use of legal orders through the PLO Panel and

the IRO is able to make recommendations that the child/family is referred directly to this panel. More reliable data about the effectiveness of Care and Support Plans has been developed, which now allows Case Management Teams to more closely monitor completion of Care and Support Plans without the IRO needing to raise a concern.

It is a statutory requirement for IRO views to be included within all care plans submitted to Court. Whilst this practice has not been widely adopted across Wales, Cardiff has embedded this into operational practice. The IRO is given a copy of the Court Care Plans and relevant assessments concerning a child prior to being the documentation being filed to the court and their views are recorded in all court care plans.

## **Pathway Plans**

IRO's also chair pathway plan reviews for Young People from age 16 to 17 years who had previously been Looked After. Reviews now also take place regularly for Young Adults 18+ years in response to "When I'm Ready" for Young Adults who want to remain in their foster placement or continue in full time education or training. Many young people do not wish to have a review when they are over the age of 18. Where this is the case the IRO must satisfy themselves that the young person has made an informed choice and offers the young person advice about how to get in touch with the IRO in the future if they wish to change their mind.

## **Consultation with children and young people**

The IRO ensures during the reviewing process that wishes and feelings of the child/young person are sought and they are encouraged to participate in their review. Parents and foster carers are able to contribute to the review process, and also ensure that younger children also have an opportunity to discuss their feelings about the reviewing process and their experiences in foster care.

At a Looked After Review and especially when a child or young person is present, IRO's always end the review with a celebration of what has gone well and what has been achieved. It is encouraging that the most recent Practice Standards and Good Practice Guide developed by the Association for Fostering and Adoption (AFA) Cymru and the Welsh Government for reviewing Looked After Children remarked on this.

IRO's are encouraged to meet with a child or young person before each review and where appropriate between reviews for an 'IRO visit'. The purpose of this is to ensure; they are happy in the placement; have the opportunity to share their views independently; and to consider if there are any issues of concern. The service is keen to strengthen children's participation further in reviews. Work is being completed to develop a good practice recording template, so that we can measure the frequency of these IRO visits. A number of reviews have been 'chaired' by the child themselves with support from the IRO.

Children and Young people are currently sent consultation forms prior to each Looked After Review. Not all young people want to fill in these consultation forms and there have been a number of comments such as, "it feels like homework". In keeping with

the Councils priority to utilise '21<sup>st</sup> Century Technology', Cardiff Children's Services are commissioning a purpose designed 'App' that helps young people communicate their views about how they are feeling, what support they need, and tell social workers and IRO's what is important to them. They can do this either with support or on their own at any time and using any device (tablet, phone or computer). Once operational, the views of children and young people will feed directly into Looked After Reviews.

In last year's IRO report, it was recommended that the Service Manager for the Reviewing Service will work with the Service Quality Assurance Officer post, which was vacant at the time, to undertake quality assurance visits to young people. Regular meetings have been diarised to review performance.

#### **Next Steps:**

- Prioritise the participation and engagement of children and young people within their Looked After Reviews
- Develop a good practice recording template to encourage IRO visits
- Implement and imbed the Mind of My Own app to replace outdated modes of communication with young people and their families
- Closely review the plans for children placed at home under PWP to consider support or ensure that the need for a legal order remains
- Review timeliness and quality of Care and Support Plans
- Work with the Senior Management and Case Management Teams to support the restructure
- Develop a legal process so that IRO's can seek independent legal advice (as recommended in the IRO Practice Standards and Good Practice Guide)
- Work with Human Resources to address the long term sickness issues
- Review the Mobile and Agile Working arrangements of IRO's including the efficacy of an alternative base to support a whole team approach

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# Children's Services Performance Report – Children Looked After Quarter 1 2019-20



### What's working well?

- Soft launch of **Early Help Gateway** in April - recruitment process for Family Support element of the Cardiff Family Advice Service completed and staff training and development is in progress. Staff morale is good and positive feedback has been received from families. Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) visited the Family Support Service in April 2019. The feedback received in their annual letter noted that “early help preventative measures had undergone significant development over the past 12 months ... We observed a team culture where the voice of the child is central to practice. We heard about work with families where positive outcomes were achieved, and saw examples of extremely positive feedback from families who had received interventions.”
- **Children's Services Strategy “Delivering Excellent Outcomes”** developed with engagement with children and young people from the Bright Start Forum, 11 Plus Team and the Adolescent Resource Centre in readiness for consideration by Cabinet early in Quarter 2.
- **Fostering Fortnight** was held during Quarter 1 to raise awareness of the in house fostering service and recruit new foster carers to Cardiff. At present, the number of children in in house fostering remains relatively stable, although the number of enquiries has increased - there were 15 full assessments ongoing at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

### What are we worried about?

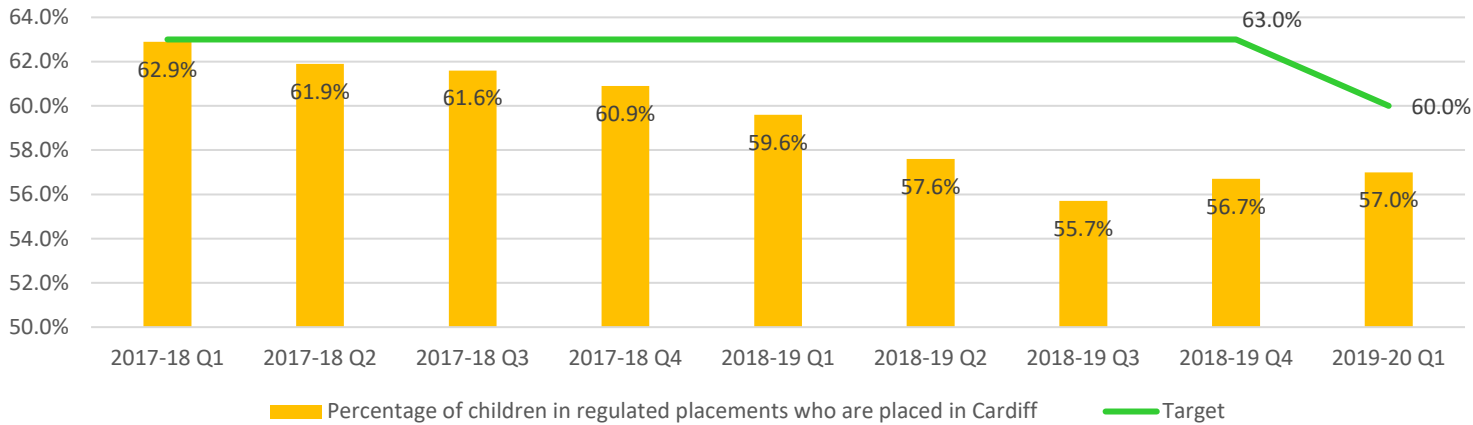
- The **interface and relationship between MASH / Support4Families and Family Help / Gateway** needs strengthening to ensure consistent and correct step up and step down mechanisms.
- More work to do fully embed **rights and participation** in everything we do from practice to strategy and to communicate effectively.
- Supply of the **right type of services** for our most vulnerable children, including the lack of appropriate placement provision, scarcity of residential and foster care provision in a timely way to meet the needs of children and young people with more complex needs.
- **Social Worker vacancies in Children's Services** - for Quarter 1 stand at 31.6% and result in an over reliance on agency social workers.
- Capacity within the **Independent Reviewing Officer Service** to complete timely children looked after review reports is challenging.
- **Challenges in the Children Looked After Service** as the service prepares to move into a locality model.
- Management of **demand and complexity** of caseloads.
- Numbers of **children waiting for adoption** 12 months after Placement Order made (51, 31 of whom are not yet placed).

## What do we need to do?

- Continue to work with the Institute of Public Care to explore **best practice procedures** and embed these into the service.
- Implement the **Mind Of My Own app** which will give young people an instant and convenient way to express their views, wishes and feelings, and social workers a smart way to record them.
- Implement the priorities in the **Commissioning Strategy**, including development of emergency placement options.
- A post to drive forward **recruitment and retention** was recruited to during Quarter 1 and a second post that will focus on workforce planning activities was also appointed to in the same recruitment process. Staff will be in post in Quarter 2 to support the delivery of the recruitment and retention strategy. New **secondment scheme** has been introduced with very good progress made - additional places have been offered and taken up by unqualified staff wishing to undertake the social work degree.
- **Independent Reviewing Officer service** action plan under review.
- Proposal being developed to address **challenges in the Children Looked After Service** by bringing in a targeted team to take cases of workers who are on sick or maternity leave or otherwise not covered. This will relieve the pressure on duty and support social workers to ensure that existing care plans are up to date and reflect the needs of the young person.
- Continue embedding **Signs of Safety**.
- Adoption Services now have a clearer understanding of the **children on Placement Orders** where plans need to be reviewed. We also are now more effectively utilising early linking and matching tools to ensure harder to place children can be placed within families earlier.
- Implement **new staffing structure and locality working**.

# Key Performance Indicators

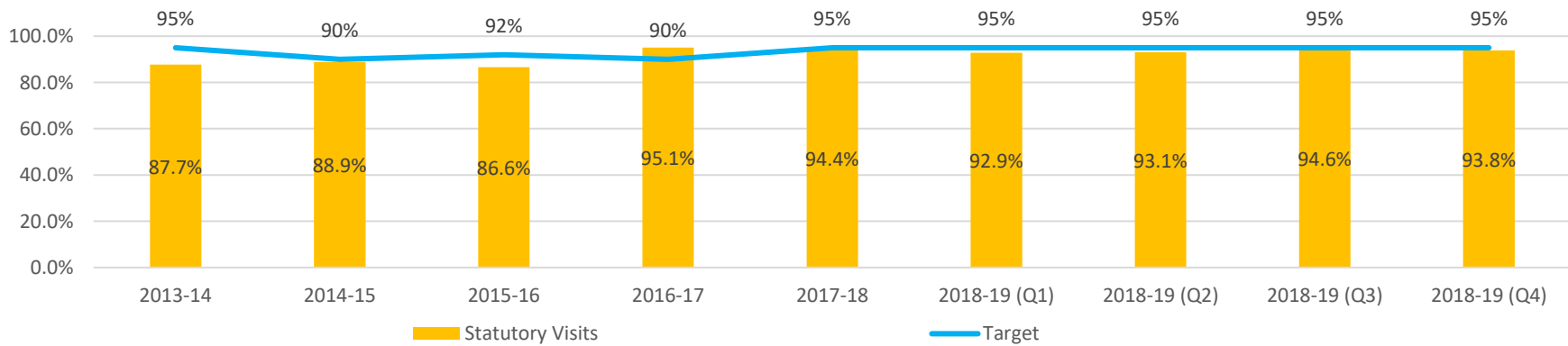
## CS LAC 58 Percentage of children in regulated placements who are placed in Cardiff



CS LAC 58 The percentage of **children in regulated placements who are placed in Cardiff** = 57.0% (385 / 676) The PI counts only children placed within the LA boundaries and excludes children placed in neighbouring authorities close to their home area and attending Cardiff schools. Please see page 23 for a breakdown of placements.

Page 56

## SCC/025 The percentage of statutory visits to children looked after due in the year that took place in accordance with regulations



N.B. Quarter 4 2018/19 data is provisional, Quarter 1 2019/20 is pending



## Children Looked After

What's working well?	What are we worried about?	What do we need to do?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children Looked After (CLA) service has started operating as one service, no longer 0-14 and 14+, this gives them more cohesion and removes the transfer of young people to a new social worker at age 14.</li> <li>Expertise is developing within the CLA service in readiness for the move to locality teams. Workers are starting to specialise in areas such as working with young men on the edge of homelessness, Child Sexual Exploitation and supporting children to know how to protect themselves, and adoption / life story work. These specialist workers will work alongside case managers to enrich the team and support case managers to have confidence with challenging work. Also intended that this will support targeted interventions to expedite safe return home for CLA.</li> <li>Cardiff are the lead authority for a new Personal Adviser group that has been started up in the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff area to share good practice across the region. The group was set up by Cardiff to facilitate discussion with other Local Authorities to explore best practice. The</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delay in updating CareFirst when children become looked after / change placement. This needs to be resolved to ensure whereabouts of child are up to date and accurate and to support the development of real time reporting.</li> <li>Supply of the right type of services for our most vulnerable children, including scarcity of fostering and residential provision for children and young people with more complex needs. This has resulted in a high number of children and young people placed out of area and children being placed in inappropriate provision, e.g. 14 out of 36 new agency residential placements from January – June 2019 were because no fostering placements were available. This has a significant impact on the Children's Services overspend.</li> <li>Processes to step children down from being looked after need further development.</li> <li>High numbers of children looked after placed with parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practice guidance for social workers under development. Management instruction to be issued.</li> <li>Implement the priorities in the Commissioning Strategy, including development of emergency placement options.</li> <li>Systematically review out of area placements, agency placements and in house fostering placements.</li> <li>Shift the balance of care to ensure that children's needs are met with the lowest safe level of statutory intervention.</li> <li>Review systems in place to ensure all opportunities for family (kinship) placements are explored.</li> <li>Senior managers to meet with providers to shape the market.</li> <li>Implement reunification planning – work scheduled to start in Quarter 2.</li> <li>Dedicated team to review placements with parents will be at full complement in Quarter 2.</li> </ul>

other authorities are looking to Cardiff who have made some really positive developments in this area recently, including:

- Group of care experienced mums supported to set up their own Mother and Baby group.
- Work being undertaken with the Department for Work and Pensions regarding Universal Credit and entitlements for young people.
- Work to teach life skills and support independence for care leavers; currently using limited facilities available at Hafan Gobaith; hoping to expand this work when PA Service moves to the Adolescent Service.

Corporate Comms supporting the recruitment of foster carers with increased media activity on various social platforms (15 full assessments ongoing at the end of Quarter 1).

- Improved performance management of Fostering Services via monthly performance reports.

- Permanency planning for children and young people is under developed.
- Numbers of children waiting for adoption 12 months after Placement Order made (51, 31 of whom are not yet placed).
- Delay in obtaining Adoption Orders for children placed for adoption.
- A number of children with significant needs are not receiving the right education provision - this is more problematic for children placed out of county.
- Links need to be made with learning development and training academy to further promote the educational and vocational attainment potential of every care leaver.
- Challenges in the Children Looked After Service as the service prepares to move into a locality model resulting in the percentage of children looked after allocated to a social worker falling from 100% to 97.7% at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019.
- Need to ensure correct recording of school information on CareFirst in readiness of

- Develop robust permanency planning arrangements.
- We now have a clearer understanding of the children on Placement Orders where plans need to be reviewed. We also are now more effectively utilising early linking and matching tools to ensure harder to place children can be placed within families earlier.
- Systems are under development to capture this information at review to reduce drift.
- Joint Children's Services and Education Management meetings to be introduced to dovetail education into our planning at earlier stages within the child's journey and support effective monitoring of this.
- A strategy to engage and disseminate what needs to happen will be formulated to ensure that educational and training need and unmet need are addressed at the earliest opportunity.
- Proposal being developed to address challenges in the Children Looked After Service by bringing in a targeted team to take cases of workers who are on sick or maternity leave or otherwise not covered. This will relieve the pressure on duty and support social workers to ensure that existing care plans are up to date and reflect the needs of the young person.

transfer responsibility for PEPs to Education in September.

- The following are unavailable this quarter:
  - % of parent / person with PR who were engaged regarding their child’s looked after review.
  - % of children/ young people who were engaged regarding their looked after review.

- Address delays in minutes being completed for children looked after reviews.
- Develop a clear plan around how we intend to engage with children and young people and their families and how we can support meaningful participation. We can link this into the Child Friendly Cities programme.

**Key Stats**

934 children looked after.

71 starts of being looked after this quarter.

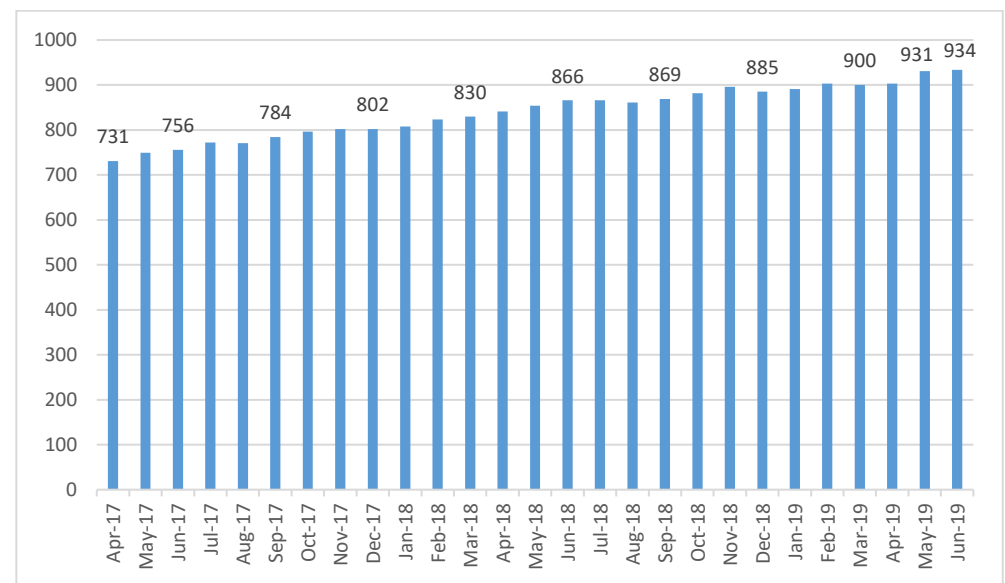
39 ends of being looked after this quarter.

385/ 676 (57.0%) children looked after in regulated placements are placed within Cardiff, increasing to 78.1% when taking neighbouring authorities into consideration.

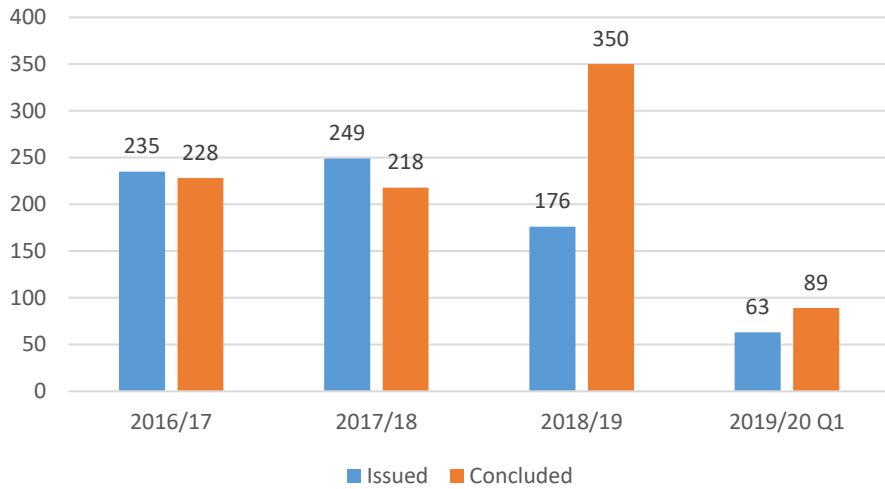
97.7% of children looked after allocated to a social worker.

Permanence secured for 7 children through adoption since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.

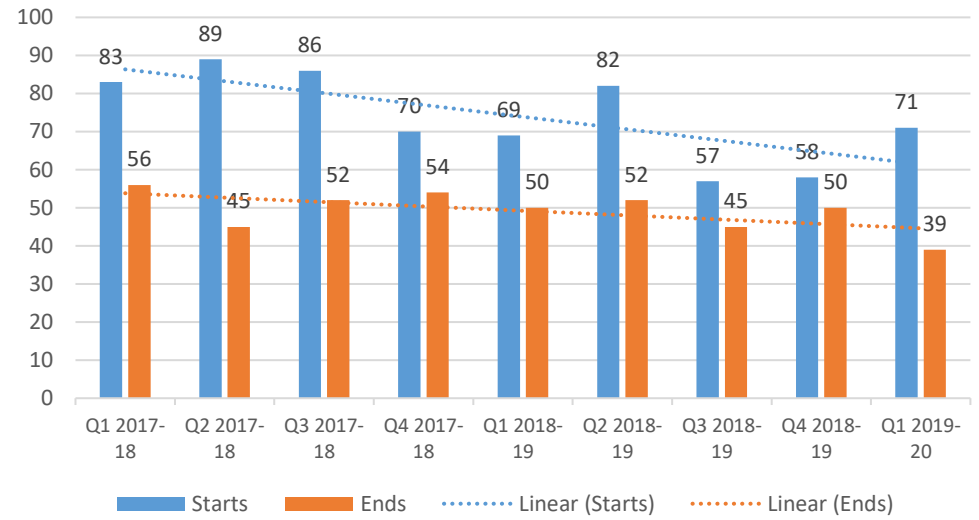
**Number of children looked after**



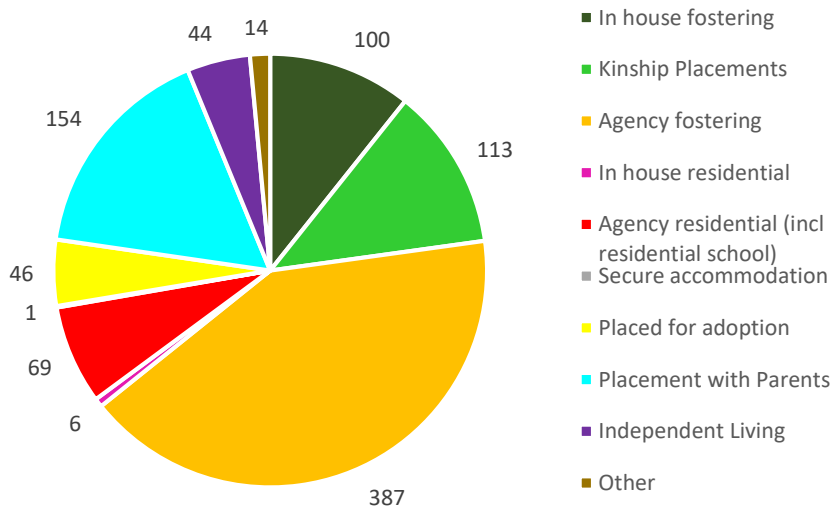
### Care Proceedings issued and concluded during year



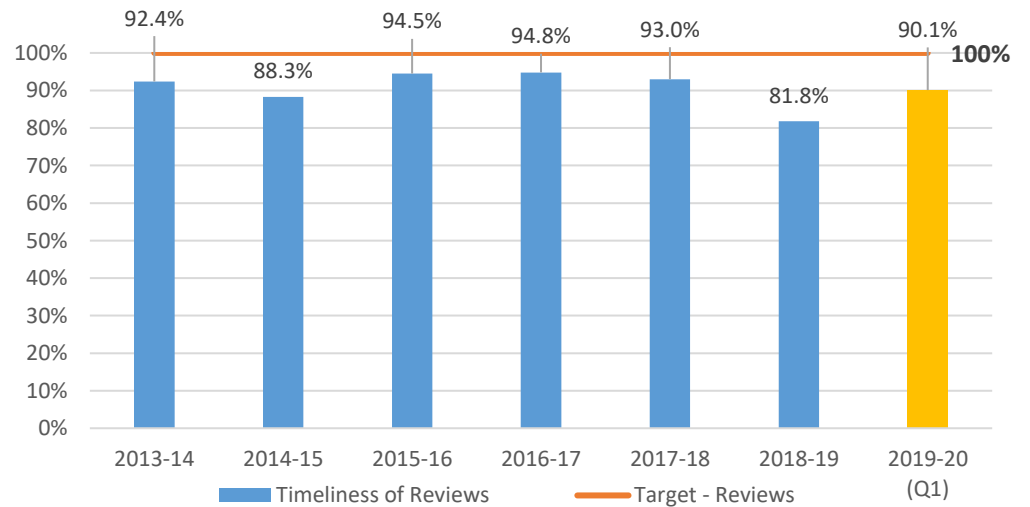
### Starts and ends of being looked after



### Breakdown of placements by type

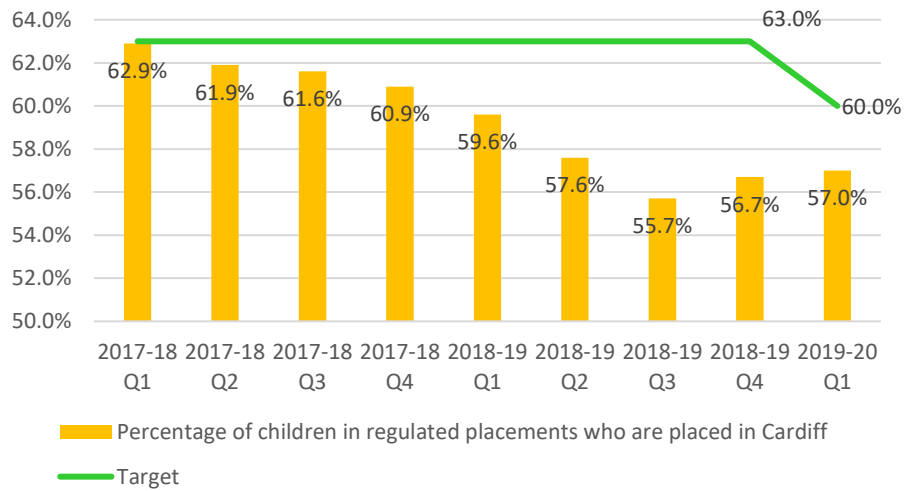


### Timeliness of Children Looked After Reviews

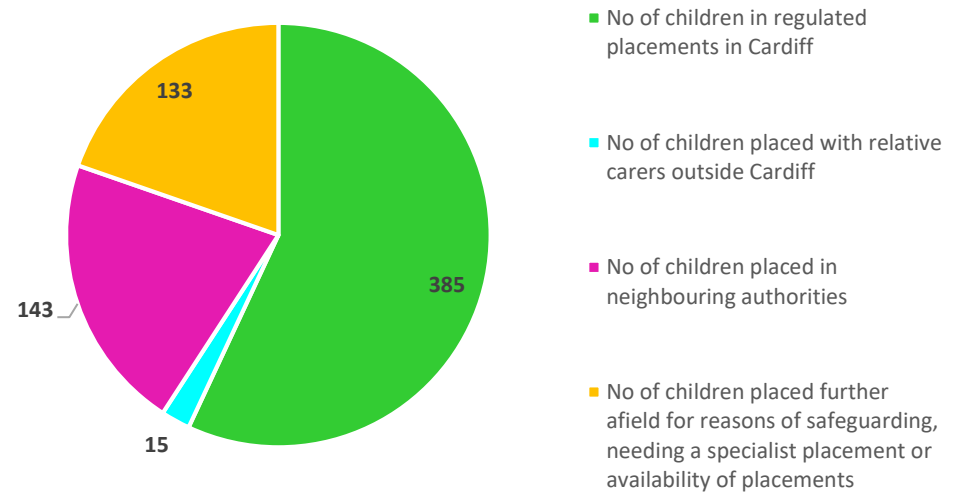


N.B. Quarter 1 2019/20 data is provisional

### Percentage of children in regulated placements who are placed in Cardiff



### Breakdown of all children in regulated placements



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# Children's Services Performance Report – Children Looked After Quarter 2 2019-20



### What's working well?

- The new '**Wales Safeguarding Procedures**' have been finalised and will be launched in partnership with Welsh Government (WG) and Cardiff and Vale Regional Safeguarding Boards place during National Safeguarding week 2019 (18<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> November). Assembly Ministers will be in attendance at the launch. An 'app' that will give access to a digitalised version of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures will be released simultaneously.
- A **Think Again ! Tackling Exploitation event** was held whereby young people from schools across Cardiff came together at County Hall to showcase their presentations on Child Exploitation. The event was split into two parts - with the presentations in the morning and the launch of the Cardiff Council funded YMCA Cardiff SHOT *Think Again!* report and accompanying video in the afternoon. The Think Again ! project worked with young people who had experienced child exploitation to gather their thoughts and feelings to evaluate services they had accessed as a result of their experiences. The project culminated with a creative and impactful video that won a Youth Excellence Award.
- The **Adolescent Resource Centre** is becoming a regional service with the Vale following a successful Integrated Care Fund bid, as the Vale are impressed with the provision.

### What are we worried about?

- **Recruitment and retention of social workers** – percentage of social work vacancies are not improving despite low caseloads.

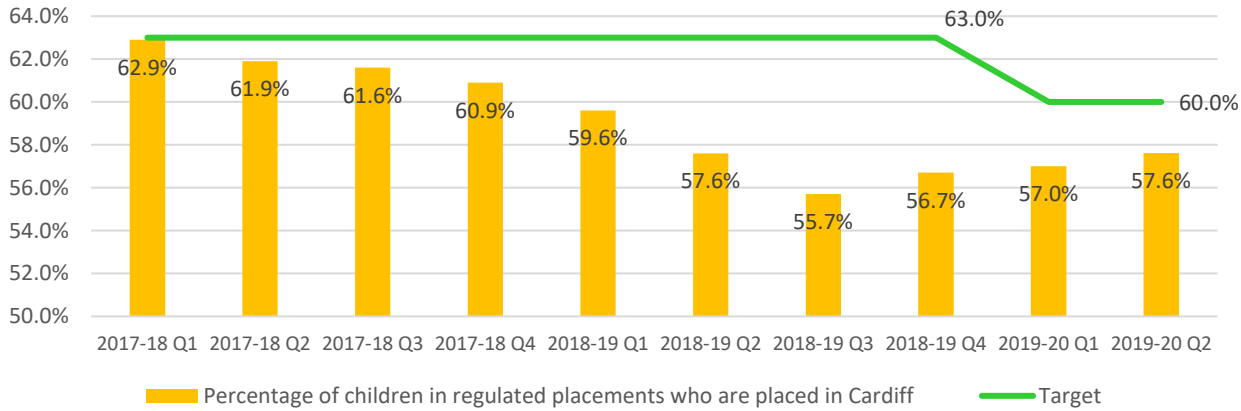
### What do we need to do?

- A post to drive forward **recruitment and retention** has been created and the post-holder took up post during the quarter. Work has commenced to centralise and introduce controls around agency workers. Timescales around the recruitment process are improving and a significant number of offers of appointments have been expedited through to offer / start date. A regular Thursday afternoon interview window has been introduced to enable dynamic booking of candidates into interview slots. This has increased throughput of candidates into the time to recruit workflow. During Quarter 2 there have been 11 new starters and 13 leavers with another 14 with start dates next quarter. Next steps include pulling together assets and identifying additional requirements to build a 'Social Work Cardiff' brand, and developing a process for recruiting into hard to fill roles and talent-banking candidates with support from HR. Consideration will also need to be given to the structures within Cardiff social work teams to ensure they reflect the complexity of social work in the city.



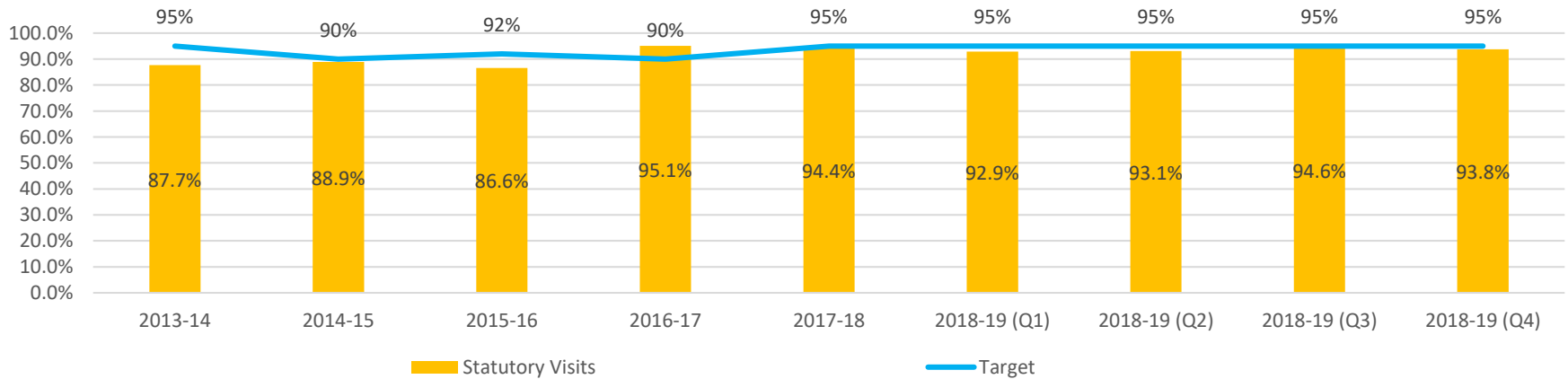
# Key Performance Indicators

## CS LAC 58 Percentage of children in regulated placements who are placed in Cardiff



CS LAC 58 The **percentage of children in regulated placements who are placed in Cardiff** = 57.6% (386 / 670). The PI counts only children placed within the LA boundaries and excludes children placed in neighbouring authorities close to their home area and attending Cardiff schools. Please see page 7 for a breakdown of placements.

## SCC/025 The percentage of statutory visits to children looked after due in the year that took place in accordance with regulations



N.B. Data for Quarters 1 and 2 is pending

## Children Looked After

What's working well?	What are we worried about?	What do we need to do?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media and online marketing is impacting on the volume of enquiries (28 full assessments ongoing at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019).</li> <li>• Meetings have taken place with fostering agencies to discuss ongoing relationships with Cardiff and to consider opportunities for fee discounts based on volume. Quarterly meetings are scheduled going forward.</li> <li>• Steering group established to take forward the development of a new residential children's home for young people aged 16-19. The National Youth Advocacy Service are developing proposals for how best to secure young people's engagement in the process.</li> <li>• Dedicated children's commissioning capacity has been secured on an interim basis to progress priority areas. The <b>Children's Commissioning Strategy</b> has been revised following further input from the Children's Management Team and will be presented to Cabinet in November 2019.</li> <li>• Work commenced with Education to begin the process of Education taking on responsibility for the preparation of Personal Education Plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work needs to be progressed with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities in Cardiff in relation to fostering and adoption.</li> <li>• It is important that we have oversight of all the services we are procuring and so we can ensure robust contract management going forward.</li> <li>• There are still a number of children for whom education provision is lacking.</li> <li>• High number of children placed out area experiencing delay in education provision</li> <li>• Delay in implementation of revised Pathway Plan.</li> <li>• Supply of the right type of services for our most vulnerable children, including scarcity of fostering and residential provision for children and young people with more complex needs.</li> <li>• Permanency planning for children and young people is under developed.</li> <li>• Numbers of children waiting for adoption 12 months after Placement Order made (68, 28 of whom are not yet placed).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted campaigns required for Foster Carers to reflect Cardiff's diversity especially Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.</li> <li>• All procurement activity to be undertaken through the Social Services commissioning team.</li> <li>• Continue to work with colleagues in Education to look at how we can more effectively and robustly seek to promote the educational needs of children looked after.</li> <li>• Implement new Pathway Plan document when requirement regarding Pathway Assessments has been confirmed.</li> <li>• Implement the priorities in the Commissioning Strategy, including development of emergency placement options.</li> <li>• Develop robust permanency planning arrangements.</li> <li>• We now have a clearer understanding of the children on Placement Orders where plans need to be reviewed. We also are now more effectively utilising early linking and matching tools to ensure harder to place children can be placed within families earlier.</li> </ul>

- Consistent representation on residential and resource review panels is working to ensure the children looked after are known to Education and support is shared across all services.
- Compliance with Court timescales has improved and we will continue to develop our Care Planning Practice Guidance to support social workers to progress cases through the Court process in a timely manner.
- The integration of the Bright Sparks Service into the Into Work Service is an opportunity for education and training opportunities to be expanded for children looked after. The young people have been able to access the Bike Scheme and now use their bike to attend their various work placements. One of the young people will not use public transport due to personal issues so having a bike to get around has really benefitted him.
- Dedicated team to review Placements with Parents in place. Potential for Cardiff to be part of a pilot with the Child and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) in relation to expediting discharge of Care Orders where appropriate to be considered early in Quarter.

## Key Stats

936 children looked after.

65 children started to be looked after in the quarter (down from 71 in Quarter 1). These children comprised 9 sibling groups and 33 individuals. The average number of children starting to be looked after was 1.55 (1.54 in Quarter 1 and 1.34 in 2018-19).

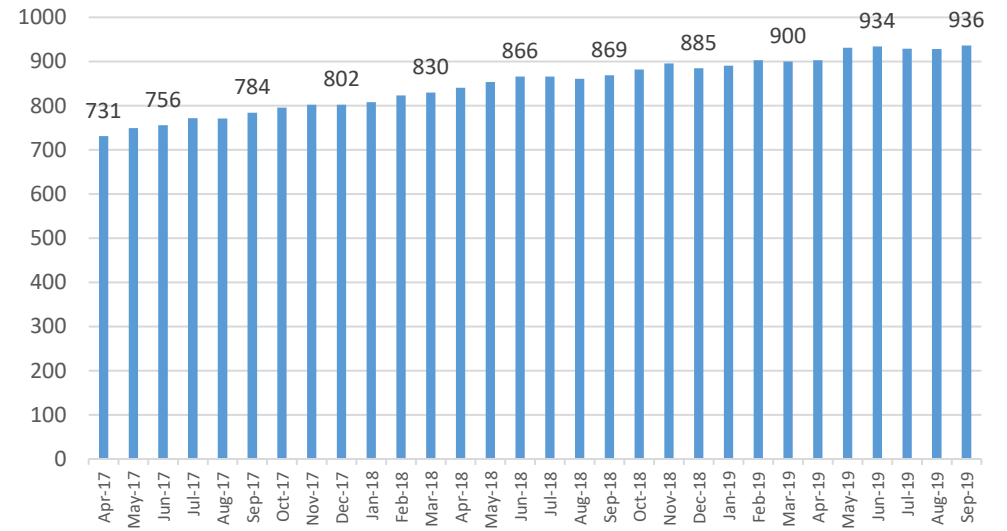
64 ends of being looked after this quarter.

386/ 670 (57.6%) children looked after in regulated placements are placed within Cardiff, increasing to 77.8% when taking neighbouring authorities into consideration.

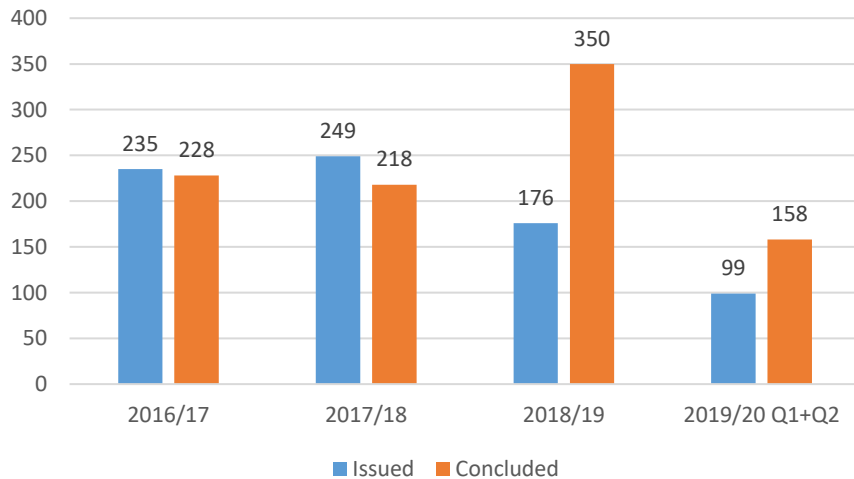
100% of children looked after allocated to a social worker.

Permanence secured for 19 children through adoption since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.

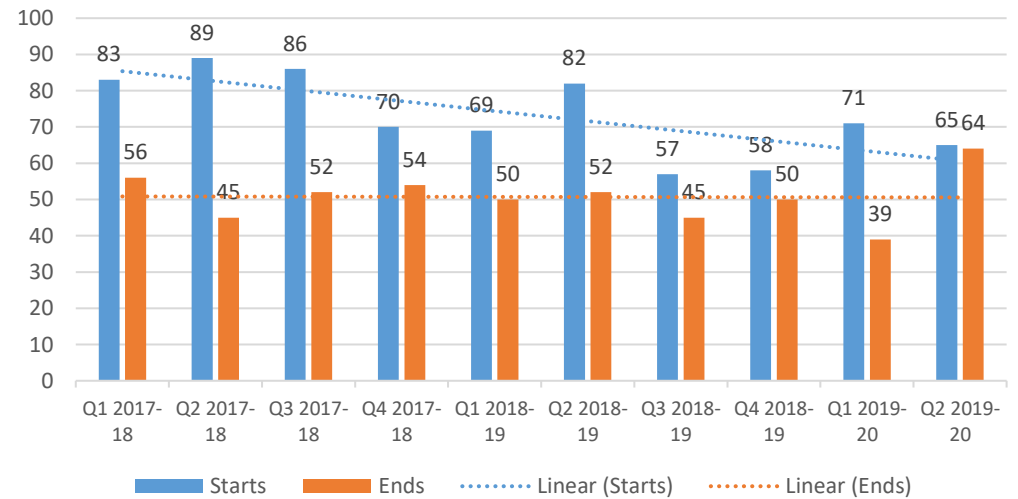
## Number of children looked after



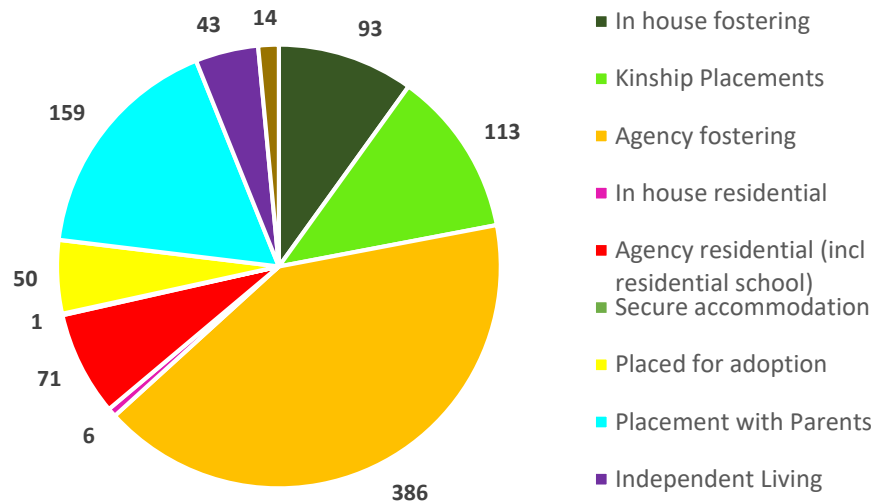
## Care Proceedings issued and concluded during year



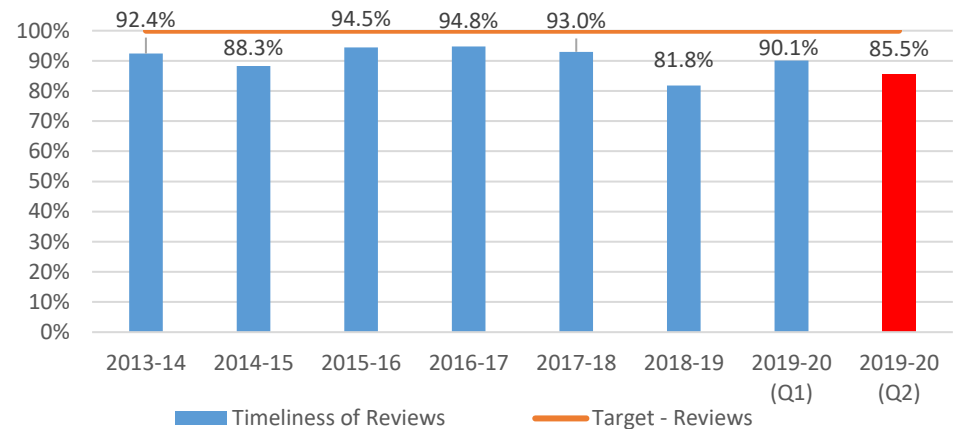
## Starts and ends of being looked after



### Breakdown of placements by type – as at 30.09.19



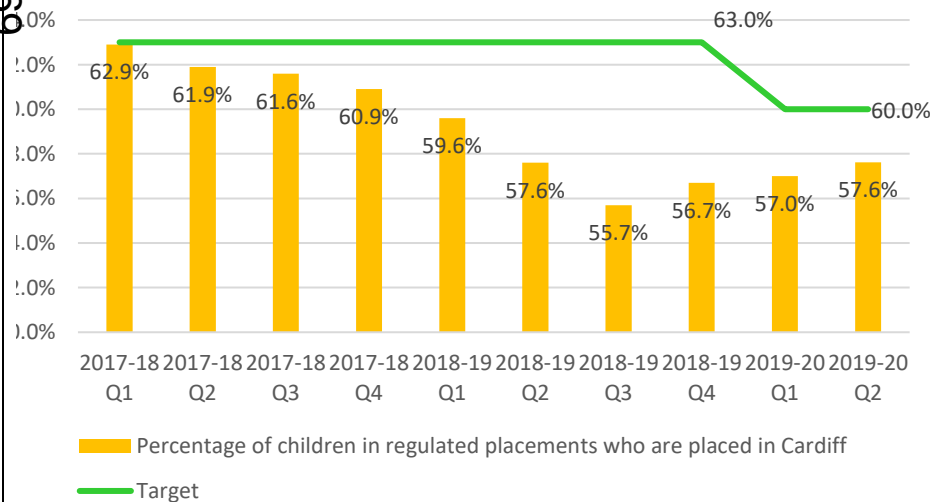
### Timeliness of Children Looked After Reviews



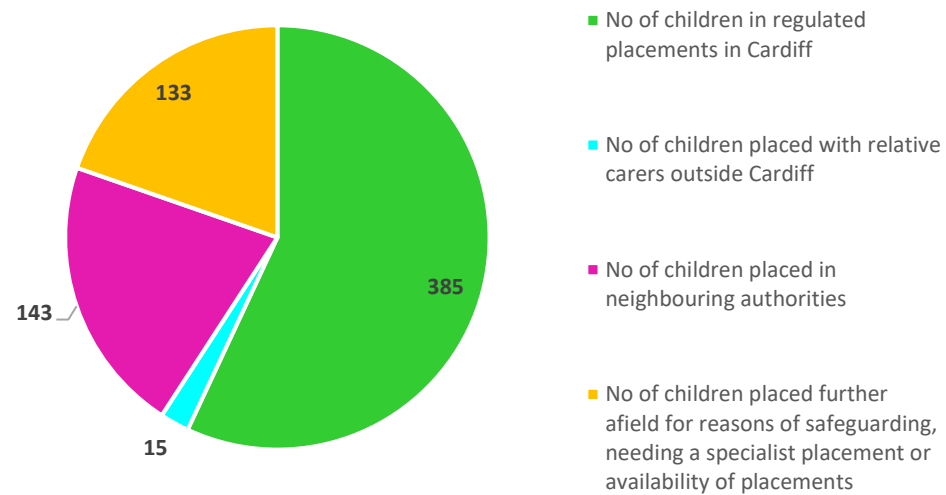
N.B. Quarter 1 and 2 2019/20 data is provisional

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### Percentage of children in regulated placements who are placed in Cardiff



### Breakdown of all children in regulated placements – as at 30.09.19



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

**CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**20<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

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**QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS REPORT  
QUARTER 2 2019-20**

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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 2 report covers complaints and representations from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019

**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.

Item	Q2 2019-20
Number open at start of period (01/07/2019)	2
Number received (qtr. 2)	37
Number received directly from children and young people	5
Number closed during quarter 2	36
Number outstanding at end of period (30/09/2019)	3
% acknowledged within 2 working days	100%

9. During this quarter, the number of complaints received by Children's Services was 37, a decrease of 2 from Q1.
  - a. Of the 37 complaints received, 12 of the complaints received were in relation to the Social Worker or the service received, a decrease from 20 recorded in Q1. A further 12 were disputing decision-making, a slight increase from Q1 were 11 were recorded. 3 complaints were received alleging a delay in providing service and 2 alleging inaccurate information being recorded.
  - b. 13 complaints were received regarding the Child in Need Service, a slight decrease from Q1 (14). 13 complaints were received regarding the Looked after Children Service compared with 15 in Q1. Complaints regarding the Intake & Assessment Service remained static as 7 complaints were recorded in both Q1 and Q2. There were 2 complaints recorded under the Council's Corporate Complaints procedure.



Examples of complaints concluded during the quarter are:

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

A complainant felt unsupported by Children's Services and had concerns over the Special Guardianship Order process

The Operational Manager discussed the issues with the complainant. From this discussion, the Operational Manager was able to discuss the concerns further with the Team Manager and Social Worker and put plans in place to improve the working relationship. The Operational Manager later received confirmation from the complainant that the situation had improved.

The complainant reported that she and the Social Worker were working well together and she had taken legal advice in regards to the Special Guardianship Order process, following the discussion.

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

A complainant was unhappy with the way a young person's placement move had been managed and the standard of communication between professionals and the young person

The Council accepted that this had been a stressful time for the young person and that communication around the move had been inconsistent. An Operational Manager addressed these issues by reminding staff about the importance of effective, consistent and accurate communication. Staff were also asked to always be mindful of how information is shared with young people to ensure that they feel secure.

**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.

11.3 Stage 2 complaints were initiated during Quarter 2.

### **Ombudsman Investigations**

12. There were 0 Ombudsman investigations in relation to complaints during this quarter.

### **Learning from Complaints**

13. Action Plans are initiated after each Stage 2 investigation to ensure that the recommendations are implemented, lessons are learned and themes recognised. Issues about staff conduct are sent to an Operational Manager to consider.

### **Themes Emerging During the Quarter**

14. Quarterly complaints reports are shared with managers so any emerging themes can be considered and actions can be taken to improve practice. Outside of this avenue the Complaints Manager can highlight issues to an Operational Manager.

15. There were no specific themes that emerged during this quarter.

### **Early Resolution**

16. 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. During this quarter there were 19 enquiries, the issues in these were brought to the attention of the relevant Team or Operational Managers who acted promptly to address the issues raised to the satisfaction of the individual. This prevented 19 complaints being formally opened as stage 1 complaints, resolving the issue at the earliest opportunity.

### **Summary of Compliments**

17. 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.

18.19 compliments were received in Quarter 1. A breakdown of compliments by teams is provided below. This will help Children's Services build upon positive work and can assist in identifying improvements

<b>Team</b>	<b>No. of Compliments</b>
Targeted Services	12
Specialist Services	4
Other	3

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

From Resource Panel to Social Worker

Resource panel noted last week that you have obviously put in a lot of time and effort into supporting xxxx to return home to her mother and due to your hard work and commitment there has been a good outcome for xxxx. Thank you!

**Summary for Quarter 2**

19. As at the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019, the service were working with 2,877 children and young people and of these, we received:

- a. 37 complaints, a slight decrease from Quarter 1. 5 were directly from the young person, the same as Quarter 1
- b. 19 compliments.

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

20. 18 AM / MP / Councillor Enquiry letters were received by Children's Services during the quarter, a decrease of 3 from Q1.

21. Requests for Information from statutory agencies:

- a. 150 requests were received and responded to on time, this compares to 177 received in Q1.
- b. 0 were completed outside of the statutory time frame.
- c. 0 requests were withdrawn

d. There are no new requests in process at the time of writing.

22. The turnover has to be rapid due to the nature of the enquiries. Of these:

- a. 67 requests were from the Probation Service asking if there are children living in a household with individuals who have been bailed or will be etc. and wanting background information
- b. There were 20 requests from other Local Authorities' Children's Services Departments
- c. 63 requests were received directly from other services such as HMRC, Education and Health Services.

### **Financial Implications**

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

### **Legal Implications**

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

## **RECOMMENDATION**

25. The Committee is recommended to:

- i. To endorse the report.

**Deborah Driffield**  
**Assistant Director Children's Services**

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**QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS REPORT  
QUARTER 1 2019-20**

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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 1 report covers complaints and representations from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019

**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.

Item	Q1 2019-20
Number open at start of period (01/04/2019)	14
Number received (qtr. 1)	39
TOTAL complaints	39
Number received directly from children and young people	5
Number closed (30/06/2019)	37
Number outstanding at end of period (30/04/2019)	2
% acknowledged within 2 working days	100%

9. During this quarter, the number of complaints received by Children's Services was 39, a decrease of 17 from Q4.
  - a. Of the 39 complaints received, 20 of the complaints received were in relation to the Social Worker or the service received, an increase from Q4. 1 complaint related to placements and 4 regarded a lack of communication, 3 were in relation to contact, a slight decrease from Q4. 11 were about decision making.
  - b. 7 complaints were received regarding the Intake & Assessment Service, which is a decrease from Q4. 14 complaints were received regarding the Child in Need Service, a slight decrease from Q4. There was 1 complaint regarding the PA service, 1 for Safeguarding and 15 complaints were received regarding the Looked after Children Service compared with 18 in Quarter 4. There was 1 corporate complaint.

Examples of complaints concluded during the quarter are:

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

We received a complaint from a foster carer who felt that they were not getting the support they needed for their foster child.

The Operational Manager discussed the issues with the foster carers. An assessment was planned with a specialist assessment in relation to the emotional and psychological wellbeing of the child.

A request was made to Health and Education for an assessment of needs to ensure that the correct provision was in place regarding the child's additional needs. The Social Worker also arrange regular respite for the family.

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

We received a complaint from a parent who was unhappy about the number of times their family had been referred to Children's Services.

We explained that, while we are aware that being referred to Children's Services can be distressing, Children's Services are required by law to act on all referrals that are made to them regarding the wellbeing of a child.

**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.

11.3 Stage 2 complaints were initiated during Quarter 1.

**Ombudsman Investigations**

12. There was 0 Ombudsman activity in relation complaints during this quarter.

### **Learning from Complaints**

13. Action Plans are initiated after each Stage 2 investigation to ensure that the recommendations are implemented, lessons are learned and themes recognised. Issues about staff conduct are sent to an Operational Manager to consider.

### **Themes Emerging During the Quarter**

14. Quarterly complaints reports are shared with managers so any emerging themes can be considered and actions can be taken to improve practice. Outside of this avenue the Complaints Manager can highlight issues to an Operational Manager (as above).

15. There were no specific themes that emerged during this quarter.

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

16. In Quarter 4 there was an increase in complaints from young people via advocates. This theme did not continue in Quarter 1, there were just 5 complaints from young people.

### **Early Resolution**

17. 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. During this quarter there were 27 enquiries, the issues in these were brought to the attention of the relevant Team or Operational Managers who acted promptly to address the issues raised to the satisfaction of the individual. This prevented 27 complaints being formally opened as stage 1 complaints, resolving the issue at the earliest opportunity.

### **Summary of Compliments**

18. 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.



19.25 compliments were received in Quarter 1. A breakdown of compliments by teams is provided below. This will help Children's Services build upon positive work and can assist in identifying improvements

<b>Team</b>	<b>No. of Compliments</b>
Targeted Services	16
Specialist Services	6
Other	3

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

##### From Llamau to Personal Adviser

*Recently we have been working with XX XXX (PA) supporting a YP at our Fields Park Road project. I would like to make you aware how impressed I have been with XX and the way that she has worked in partnership with Llamau. I thought it was important to highlight good practice and it is a great example of how multi agency works to support a YP at a time of crisis.*

#### **Summary for Quarter 1**

20. As at the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019, the service were working with 3,103 children and young people and of these, we received:

- a. 39 complaints. 5 were directly from the young person, a decrease from Q4 when 10 were recorded.
- b. 25 compliments.

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

21.21 AM / MP / Councillor Enquiry letters were received by Children's Services during the quarter, an increase of 7 from Q4.

22. Requests for Information from statutory agencies:

- a. 177 requests were received and responded to on time, this compares to 156 received in Q4.

- b. 0 were completed outside of the statutory time frame.
- c. 0 requests were withdrawn
- d. There are no new requests in process at the time of writing.

23. The turnover has to be rapid due to the nature of the enquiries. Of these:
- a. 90 requests were from the Probation Service asking if there are children living in a household with individuals who have been bailed or will be etc. and wanting background information
  - b. There were 23 requests from different Council's Children's Services Departments
  - c. 64 requests were received directly from other services such as HMRC, Education and Health Services.

### **Financial Implications**

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

### **Legal Implications**

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

### **RECOMMENDATION**

26. The Committee is recommended to:
- i. To endorse the report.

**Deborah Driffield**  
**Assistant Director Children's Services**

<b>Work stream</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Visits</b>
Health	<p>Overview of services available to CYP and CLA How Health work with the Council in the provision of services across Social Services and Education</p> <p>Mental health services – primary, secondary, CAMHS and secure hospital settings</p> <p>Out of area issues – transferring health care/CAMHS</p> <p>Health Assessments for looked after children</p>	<p>T.B.C with health</p> <p>Visit Settings including early help</p> <p>Looked After Child Nurse Team</p>
Education training and employment	<p>Improving outcomes for looked after children</p> <p>Support for Care Leavers</p> <p>EOTAS</p> <p>Out of County or outside of statutory education (placement based education)</p> <p>SEN – are CLA getting access to this and IEPs</p>	<p>Schools which our Looked after Children attend</p> <p>Understanding core data</p> <p>PRU and core data</p> <p>Community tuition venues</p> <p>Visit and understand Into work services</p>
Placements	<p>Understand the number of young people placed out of area</p> <p>Understanding work streams on the new provisions being developed?</p> <p>In house fostering Services</p>	<p>Visit to in house and external provision in Cardiff and Out of Area provision</p> <p>Visiting kinship Visiting reflect Visiting placement with parents with team.</p> <p>Meet with the fostering team</p>

	Adoption	Meet with placement team Meet with IFA  Meet with the VVC
Emotional and behavioural development	Restorative edge of care  Supporting families early help  Wellbeing and resilience initiatives  Therapeutic services	Visit adolescent services  Meet with Avril early gateway Meet with support for families  Understand what's out there, link in with targeted and specialist mental health/emotional wellbeing services (3 <sup>rd</sup> sector and statutory).  Visit CLA Psychologist
Care leavers	Leaving care and pathway planning	Meet with the personal advisors service  Visit voices from care
Accommodation	YP Gateway – provision and capacity  Move on accommodation for care leavers  Access to community services – what's available	Visit housing and 3 <sup>rd</sup> sector projects  Consult with care leavers and visit 3 <sup>rd</sup> sector and PA services  Understand what is out there
Family and social relationships	How do CYP feel about current contact provision and their care plans  Attending participation groups CYP and Parents group	Visit Current provision – Swanstaff  Listening to children/young people  Via Childrens Services, NYAS and Voices from Care

	Promoting equality and social inclusion	Families First – services available  Building on access to leisure activities such as Winter Wonderland
Children’s services	Workforce development recruitment and retention  Children with additional needs	Meet with Liz Beg Meet with university  Meet with CHAD Understand Placement provision available Visit residential provision Visit Headlands Transition to Adults Services and CHC / CC  Visit current externally commissioned services Visit Advocacy Visit Bright Sparks Voices from Care
Social and leisure opportunities		Access to leisure activities and social opportunities- build on initiatives such as Winter Wonderland

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**Report of Director or Elected Member Visit to Front-line Service within Children's Services (VCI Recommendation 41)**

<b>Matters to be considered</b>	<b>Visit details and outcomes</b>	<b>Additional Comments including any follow up action required or taken</b>
<b>Individual(s) visiting setting</b>	Fenella Bowden	Visit with Cllr Sarah Merry
<b>Author of report</b>	Fenella Bowden	
<b>Date of Visit</b>	16.01.20	
<b>Date of Report</b>	16.01.20	
<b>Date reported to CPAC</b>		
<b>Setting Visited</b>	Eastern High School	
<b>General description of visit – e.g. number of staff (approx) involved in meeting visitor; number spoken to and engaged in discussion; whether the visit involved service users and/or carers</b>	I met with several members of staff at the school including the Deputy HT; SENCo, & Safeguarding officer. The purpose of our visit was to see for ourselves the work that the school is doing to support our looked after children & their carers.	.
<b>Positive messages gathered from visit</b>	There are 26 CLA at the school & only a few need academic intervention. The biggest need is support for emotional wellbeing & managing traumatised CLA. There are 330 pupils on the SEN register, 34% of the school. They have been successful in obtaining 25 statements in 4 years. The school has a strong team & staff are Trauma trained	

	<p>using Trauma Informed Practice. The staff are proactive with identifying the emotional &amp; educational needs of our yp. The ELPC for Yrs 7/8 works well in helping yp adjust to High School. The school uses its PDG to employ a permanent Counsellor as the CAHMs waiting lists are too long. Staff wellbeing is also supported.</p> <p>I had a tour of the school &amp; saw a number of intervention resource areas including the Hafan. I was pleased to hear that the School does not use pupil exclusion but find different ways to tackle problems.</p>	
<p><b>Concerning messages gathered from visit</b></p>	<p>The key messages were:</p> <p>Kinship carers – their need for support from CS together with funding for the carers to enable them to provide for the child;</p> <p>In many Kinship arrangements there is no one objectively organising contact with birth family &amp; siblings; &amp; there are no respite provisions;</p> <p>The lack of provision in Cardiff for an emotional trauma centre for yp who need it;</p> <p>The need for stronger advocacy. To support</p>	



	<p>the family &amp; the yp in care. Many (kinship) carers lack the capacity to access resources &amp; to cope with a 'battle' with CS; Schools are plugging the gaps that are being caused by lack of support from external services &amp; family circumstances</p>	
<p><b>Were there any safeguarding concerns and if so what were they?</b></p>	<p>There is a role FT Safeguarding Officer on the staff in view of the issues that the school faces with these yp. The issue of young people being placed in unsafe situations outside of the school environment, and the lack of appropriate response from CS, I believe should be seen as a safeguarding concern.</p>	
<p><b>Were there any concerns regarding the level of service being provided and if so what?</b></p>	<p>None</p>	
<p><b>Were there any other concerns?</b></p>	<p>None</p>	

Copy to team, establishment, manager, worker, etc

Date: 15.1.20

Visitors Position and Signature

Date Sent to Manager of Setting:

**Report of Director or Elected Member Visit to Front-line Service within Children's Services (VCI Recommendation 41)**



<b>Matters to be considered</b>	<b>Visit details and outcomes</b>	<b>Additional Comments including any follow up action required or taken</b>
<b>Individual(s) visiting setting</b>	Fenella Bowden	Visit with Cllr Sarah Merry
<b>Author of report</b>	Fenella Bowden	
<b>Date of Visit</b>	12.11.19	
<b>Date of Report</b>	15.1.20	
<b>Date reported to CPAC</b>		
<b>Setting Visited</b>	Rumney Primary School	
<b>General description of visit – e.g. number of staff (approx) involved in meeting visitor; number spoken to and engaged in discussion; whether the visit involved service users and/or carers</b>	I met with several members of staff at the school including the HT & Deputy HT. the HT. The purpose of our visit was to see for ourselves the work that the school is doing to support our looked after children & their carers.	
<b>Positive messages gathered from visit</b>	The school is an exemplar in terms of the skills & training of its staff in the handling of traumatised children. The school delivers training to other schools on Attachment & Trauma Informed Practice. The number of CLA is high at 25 & requires considerable staff resource. Several members of staff are responsible for being on call for the children & supporting them	

	while in school. I was impressed by the way in which all staff have been trained in trauma & handle the difficult situations that can arise. There is a specific resource room for children to use when they are distressed & we observed a group of young people working collaboratively on Lego construction.	
<b>Concerning messages gathered from visit</b>	The key messages were: inadequate funding; the Admissions process; & the absence of Social Workers.	
<b>Were there any safeguarding concerns and if so what were they?</b>	None that I could detect.	
<b>Were there any concerns regarding the level of service being provided and if so what?</b>	None	
<b>Were there any other concerns?</b>	None	

Copy to team, establishment, manager, worker, etc

Date: 15.1.20

Visitors Position and Signature

Date Sent to Manager of Setting:

	November 2019			January 2020	March 2020	TBC	May 2020	July 2020	September 2020	November 2020
<b>Reporting Required</b>	CPAC Progress report to Cabinet & Annual Report for Council									
<b>Presentations</b>	Life journey work Natasha Hilderley	Engagement Event* (require by terms of reference)	Bright Sparks Award Ceremony	Placements and Residential Provision Presentation – Kate Hustler and Angela Bourge	Wellbeing of Future Generations* - presenter to be identified. (Requested by Cllr Bowden)	Listening event* Event linked to <b>Bright Spots</b> . (Subject Requested by Cllr Lister. Event required by terms of reference) (Timing needs to be within school term)				
	Mind of mine own App digital engagement Matt Osbourne			4Cs Commissioning (required by terms of reference). Angela Bourge	Traineeship scheme -Nicola Wood.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Placement Board (re residential and fostering review) – Kate Hustler presenting. I’ve sent Kate a diary marker and deadline for submitting the presentation.</li> <li>Early Help Services - <i>Need to discuss with Natasha to specify this item and identify who will present it.</i></li> </ul>			
				Voices from Care Presentation – Chris Dunn	Youth Offending Service: to hear about the work they are doing with looked after children & how they are linking in with other parts of Children’s Services* - Finn Madell (Requested by Cllr Bowden)			Progress on the delivering excellence children strategy DD		
				Care Leavers – mental health, drugs, alcohol, number who have children removed, impact of benefit sanctions, links with Housing / Communities, criminality – Finn Madell						
				St David’s Day Fund intended use – tbc						

	Forward plan			Disabilities Futures Programme (Required in terms of reference) – Eve Williams		Corporate Parenting Strategy – signoff new version (December deadline in CS Delivery Plan)		Plans / work to develop new Children’s homes – Angela Bourge	Disabilities Futures Programme (Required in terms of reference) – Eve Williams
								Themes from CPRs – Alys Jones	
<b>Part 6 Compliance</b>	See item above.			Part 6 compliance				Part 6 compliance	Part 6 compliance
<b>Participation</b>	Feedback on award ceremony			Corporate parenting consultation update - Jade Harrison Marie Reid	Planning next listening event.			-	Planning next listening event.
<b>Annual Reports</b>	Out of area brighter future residential report			- VVC Adoption annual report (Scrutiny papers) (ToR)	Fostering Annual Report tbc. (required by ToR)		High risk panel	VVC Adoption annual report (Scrutiny papers) (ToR)	
<b>Inspection reports</b>	Tbc			tbc	tbc		tbc	tbc	tbc
<b>IRO Report</b>	Matt Osbourne			IRO 6 month report Matt Osbourne	IRO 6 month report. (required by ToR)		-	-	IRO 6 month report. (required by ToR)
<b>Education</b>	Education report- Gill James			Education report - <u>Integrated Services</u> (required by ToR)	Education report – 3 reports (Milestones required by “CP12CS” in Directorate Plan)		Education report – see above	Education report - <u>Integrated Services</u> (required by ToR)	Education report – 3 reports (Milestones required by “CP12CS” in Directorate Plan)
<b>Children’s home quality of care: RI/reg</b>	-			- Crosslands - Storrie - (required by	Plans / work to develop new Children’s homes – Angela Bourge			• Crosslands • Ty Storrie (required by ToR)	

<b>32 reports</b>				ToR						
<b>Performance</b>	Quarter 1			Quarter 1 and 2 (required by ToR)	-			Quarter 1 (ToR)	Quarter 2 (required by ToR)	-
<b>Complaints</b>				Quarter 1 and 2 (required by ToR)	Quarter 3 (required by ToR)			Quarter 1 & Annual outturn	Quarter 2 (required by ToR)	Quarter 3 (required by ToR)
<b>Member's Work Programme</b>	Cllr Ashely Lister			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Member Work Stream information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Championing examples</li> <li>Cllrs x2.</li> <li>Review membership.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Championing examples</li> <li>Cllrs x2.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Championing examples</li> <li>Cllrs x2.</li> </ul> tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Championing examples</li> <li>Cllrs x2.</li> <li>Review membership.</li> </ul>
<b>Member visits</b>	Cllr Bowden/Ashley Lister PARC Prison			Member visits (required by ToR)	Member visits (required by ToR)			Member visits (required by ToR)	Member visits (required by ToR)	Member visits (required by ToR)

**Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee 2019 to 2020 Forward Plan**

(Version draft 0.3 November2019)

**Key:** Items required by the Terms of Reference. Items requested by Members. Member led work-streams. Item required by the Directorate Delivery Plan. Items suggested by OM / AD.

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## **VALE, VALLEYS AND CARDIFF ADOPTION COLLABORATIVE (VVC)**

### **ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2018 TO 31 MARCH 2019**

#### **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1** Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) as part of the National Adoption Service in Wales (NAS), provides a regional adoption service to the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Cardiff Council and Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council.
- 1.2** This is VVC's fourth annual report and covers the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 although due to the reporting cycle some areas have been updated with current service information. This report seeks to combine the reporting requirements set out in regulation and the governance arrangements for the region in one report.

**Appendix 1** to the report sets out key performance data in respect of children by quarter and local authority.

**Appendix 2** provides information in respect of adopter enquiries.

**Appendix 3** provides information in respect of Adoption Support.

#### **2. SERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE**

- 2.1** The managerial structure of the service during the period has remained the same although the Family Finding Manager's post became vacant in November 2018 due the temporary manager leaving her employment and long term sickness on the part of the permanent post holder. This resulted in the Adoption Support Manager managing two teams until a permanent replacement was recruited in August of this year. The Business Support Manager also left in November 2018 but this post was successfully recruited from the agency cover put in place to cover the position.
- 2.2** During 2018, the service was enhanced with agreement to employ additional Social Work capacity, partly as a recommendation of the Best Value Review but also following acknowledgement by VVC Management Board of the need to increase capacity to recruit adopters. This has resulted in an additional five

Social Work posts; one in Adoption Support, four in Recruitment & Assessment and the appointment of a Marketing & Recruitment Co-ordinator on a fixed term contract. Two of the Social Workers appointed did not begin employment until this financial year. Successful appointments have been made to all posts and VVC continues to attract significant interest in terms of potential applicants.

- 2.3** The Business Support Team within the Collaborative has experienced some disruption both last year and into this year in terms of managerial cover, long term sickness and staff turnover. Temporary arrangements have been put in place which will enable a review of the business support functions to be undertaken.
- 2.4** At the latter part of the year, Welsh Government awarded a grant of £2.3M to improve the provision of adoption services in Wales. This grant has been allocated on a regional basis to support national and regional priorities. VVC Management Board agreed to utilise the grant to support the provision of life journey work, better planning for children being placed for adoption and improve services to birth parents with the result that a further 2.5 Specialist Social Worker posts are being recruited to within the region to support these areas. Two unqualified posts to support adoptive families and adopted children and young people are also being recruited to which will link directly to new initiatives being developed nationally by Adoption UK. In addition 10.5 Direct Work Practitioners to support life journey work for children being placed for adoption have been allocated from the grant monies across the four local authorities.
- 2.5** As outlined in the previous report, the service relocated permanently to the Dock Offices in Barry in September 2018. The move was achieved with minimal disruption to service delivery and staff have adapted well to the change. Agile working and remote working arrangements are in place to reduce the amount of travel time across the region.

- 2.6** The actions recommended by the Best Value Review of the service has resulted in some changes to the governance arrangements for the region. The Action Plan developed to take forward these actions has been met.
- 2.7** The Best Value Review of the service recommended a review of the Legal Agreement underpinning the Collaborative. This review was completed by the Regional Manager and the Vale of Glamorgan Legal Department and agreed by the Vale of Glamorgan Cabinet in April 2019. The revised Legal Agreement confirms the changes made to the governance structure and allows for a review of the Agreement every five years. These revisions have been agreed by the partner agencies.
- 2.8** The significant change in governance arrangements is that VVC Management Board has moved to meeting on a quarterly basis and a new tier of governance in the form of an Operational Group has been established. The composition of the Management Board has remained the same and chairing arrangements rotate on an annual basis. The Director for Cardiff Council is the current chair. The overall remit of the Management Board is unchanged and the Board continues to play a key role in monitoring the performance of the regional service highlighting areas for improvement.
- 2.9** The Operational Group comprises of senior managers in each of the four local authorities which meets on a quarterly basis with the regional managers within VVC. Terms of reference and a Business Plan for the Operational Group have been developed to further monitor performance against key priorities. Operational matters, policy and practice issues can also be remitted from the Management Board for consideration by this Group.
- 2.10** The overall governance of the region is via a Joint Committee. Meetings were held in June and December 2018 as per the requirements. The Joint Committee is comprised of one elected member from each of the authorities and is currently chaired by the member from the host authority. The Joint Committee approved the annual accounts, budget and annual plan for the Collaborative.

- 2.11** The budget for the Collaborative is managed by the Vale of Glamorgan and is monitored closely by the Management Board and Joint Committee. The end of year position reported a slight underspend in the budget for 2018-19 which was subsequently returned to partners. 2018-19 marked the fourth year of operation for the Collaborative and as there had been no change to the apportionment of the financial contributions made by each partner since its inception, the Best Value Review recommended that the original funding formula be reviewed and updated. Work was therefore undertaken during the year by the four partner authorities to look at the best option and it was agreed that a funding formula based on activity and usage of each partner would be a more realistic as a way of apportioning costs.
- 2.12** In order to avoid large swings in contributions it was considered appropriate for part of the apportionment to be based on a fixed charge of 20% for each partner with 80% of the costs being classed as variable and based on activity/demand being placed on the service. The factors agreed to be used in determining activity are the numbers of children looked after, referrals into the service, children placed for adoption and requests for adoption support. The calculation will be based on the average previous 3 years' activity in order to smooth out any peaks and troughs in demand. This new method of contribution was put in place from 1 April 2019.
- 2.13** The annual audit undertaken by Bridgend and Vale Internal Audit Shared Service in respect of the Collaborative again concluded that the effectiveness of the internal control environment within the service was sound and "Substantial Assurance" could be placed upon the management of risks.
- 2.14** The NAS provides a further tier of performance monitoring through the provision of quarterly and annual performance data which meet the requirements of the NAS Performance Framework. VVC has complied with all reporting requirements during the period and has developed a more comprehensive spreadsheet to capture the measures, which increase each

year. Due to the expiry of the existing contract, NAS has commissioned Data Cymru to develop a new Performance Framework which will enable data to be more easily uploaded by regions and will provide easier access to performance reports. This new system was trialled during the latter part of the year by the service. The Business Manager and Regional Adoption Manager have been part of a national Steering Group set up to oversee the development of the new Framework which will become fully operational during 2019-20.

- 2.15** The Director of Operations for NAS attended VVC Management Board in January 2019 to present the VVC's Mid-Year Report and met with the Head of Service for the Vale of Glamorgan and the Regional Adoption Manager in June 2019 to discuss VVC's End of Year Report. This Report was subsequently presented to VVC Management Board in July 2019. Reference is made to the overall findings in this report.

### **3. SERVICE FUNCTIONS**

- 3.1** VVC has continued to deliver services via three functional teams and staff specialise in one service area which focuses accountability and improves consistency. Performance against each of these functions is outlined under the following sections of the report alongside areas of development.

### **4. FAMILY FINDING**

- 4.1** Family Finding and its' associated activities remains a key area of activity for the region and the ability to place children effectively and promptly underpins all other activities. As the largest regional Collaborative the level of demand placed upon this area and our ability to meet the needs identified remains challenging.
- 4.2** The number of children referred for adoption totalled **218** which marks a decrease on the previous year. Significantly **43%** of those referrals were withdrawn during the period which represents an increase on 2017-18 and

may be indicative of the commitment to develop alternative permanency plans for children. This in many instances does not equate to a decrease in workload for the Family Finding Team as a lot of work has usually been undertaken to progress the adoption plan prior to it being discontinued. VVC placed **100** children for adoption during the year, a **16%** increase on the previous year and a very pleasing result for the region. **65%** of the placements were made within the region, **9%** elsewhere in Wales and **26%** outside of Wales. **25%** of the placements made were for children in sibling groups.

- 4.3** At the end of the year there were **101** children subject of a Placement Order awaiting an adoptive placement which is less than the previous year. An analysis of these children at the end of quarter 1 this year indicates that **35** of these children have additional factors i.e. aged 4 plus, BME, complex needs or a part of a sibling group which makes being able to secure appropriate matches more challenging.
- 4.4** The region has recorded **103** Placement Orders being made during the year which is an increase by one on the previous year. The number of Adoption Orders made is **83** which is a **17%** increase on the previous year.
- 4.5** The measure in relation to the timeliness of the process from becoming looked after to being placed for adoption has been highlighted as a concern by the NAS End of Year Report as this indicates that on average children were placed within **17.1** months. The report highlights that this demonstrates 'a fall in performance and a move away from the national benchmark of 13 months or less'. The NAS report also states that the VVC average of **10.8** months from Placement Order to placement from adoption is an increase from the previous year and again a move away from the benchmark of six months. Within the region **31%** of children were placed within this timeframe.
- 4.6** The level of placement breakdown continues to be low with two placement disruptions during the year, one of a six year old girl who was placed for 10 months and the adopters felt that they could not continue with the placement. The second breakdown was a four year old boy who was removed by the placing authority due to concerns regarding his care.

- 4.7** The number of birth parents referred to the service for counselling fell during the year to **212** in line with the reduction in children being referred to the service and of this number, **103** parents took up the service. This area continues to present a deficit in our current service and it is therefore hoped that the additional part time post to focus upon birth parents will bring about some improvement.
- 4.8** Performance in relation to the provision of Life Journey Material for children being placed for adoption has seen a downturn during the year and the improvements made during the previous reporting period do not appear to have been sustained. This information is currently collated by local authorities who reported that only **46%** of children were recorded as having life journey materials at the second adoption review. In April 2018, NAS introduced an additional performance measure to record the provision of Life Journey Materials at matching. VVC was able to collect data for one quarter from local authorities so internal mechanisms have been put in place to record this information. NAS has via some additional monies from Welsh Government provided a grant to the region to promote and develop Life Journey Work. This has enabled VVC to provide additional staff time for a part time member within the Family Finding Team to raise awareness of this work amongst the childcare teams and with adopters and deploy the NAS toolkit and direct work materials across the region. As part of the new monies this year, the region has recruited a full time Life Journey Work Co-ordinator who will take up post on 1 October 2019. It is anticipated that this post alongside the Practitioner posts within the local authorities will serve to drive up practice significantly in this area.
- 4.9** During 2018, Welsh Government undertook a tendering exercise to secure a new Adoption Register in Wales. Linkmaker was awarded this contract and the new Adoption Register Wales (ARW) became operational in March of this year. ARW provides a matching service for children and adopters so all children subject of a Placement Order and all approved adopters have to be entered onto the Register.

- 4.10** VVC'S Family Finding Manager states "Valleys and Cardiff have embraced the new Adoption Register Wales (ARW) and are working hard to ensure that information is uploaded and updated in a timely manner. A new monitoring process has been introduced to assist with this. We have found the interface is much more user-friendly and responsive and has been a successful avenue for external links. In addition the use of targeted profiling to adoption agencies across the UK continues to prove a valuable source of family finding".
- 4.11** VVC continues to utilise a range of methods to support family finding. In July 2018 38 children were profiled in a national Exchange Day event and from this identified a link for a single child and a sibling group were identified. The Welsh Adoption Activity Day in March 2019 also proved to be a very positive event as two matches for sibling groups (including those with complex needs) were identified.
- 4.12** St David's Adoption Agency and Barnardos, the two voluntary adoption agencies operating in Wales have developed a new family finding scheme, Adopting Together. Adopting Together is a new national initiative and an extension of their usual service in that it targets recruitment for specific children and provides support to those children for a year following placement. Adopting Together focuses on the recruitment of adopters for children with additional needs who have been waiting for adoptive placements over six months. This scheme has been embraced by the region and supported by VVC Management Board. Ten referrals were initially made to the scheme and six children have been placed on a spot purchase basis. The Vale of Glamorgan, as host authority is now in the process of entering into more formalised contractual arrangements with the scheme on behalf of the partner authorities ensuring that referral to the scheme is a key consideration in our family finding process.

## **5. Recruitment & Assessment of adopters**

- 5.1** The recruitment of a sufficient supply of adopters to meet the needs of children waiting is a significant and ongoing challenge both nationally and regionally. This has been highlighted in the NAS Annual Report for 2018-19



as during this period **212** adoptive placements were approved in Wales and yet there were **338** children waiting who had not been placed and almost a third of these were in VVC.

- 5.2.** The region received **259** enquiries from prospective adopters in total for the year 2018-19 which represents a **7%** increase on the previous year and which the NAS End of Year Report acknowledges is “encouraging and continues an upward trend”. The graphs contained in Appendix 2 highlight that this trend has continued into this financial year with **155** enquiries having been received to date. This is encouraging and hopefully indicative of the work which has been undertaken by the Marketing and Recruitment Co-ordinator in raising the profile of VVC and our needs.
- 5.3** The Marketing and Recruitment Co-ordinator was successfully recruited in August 2018. Since that time the Marketing Co-ordinator has focused upon a number of key areas of activity.
- 5.4** All enquiries from prospective adopters are responded to within two working days and well within the timescale of five days set by NAS. Enquirers are followed up within a week if no response has been received and at a month to ascertain if they wish to proceed further. Further follow up is conducted as agreed with the enquirer if they remain undecided. All initial visits are undertaken by the Marketing Co-ordinator and a Social Worker from the team providing a consistent, timely and professional response. Shortly after her appointment, the Marketing Co-ordinator undertook an analysis of all the enquiries received by VVC from April 2018 and developed a comprehensive spreadsheet which now captures a range of data in terms of our adopter demographic. VVC is now able to report on a range of indicators by geographical area and the reasons why prospective applicants delay or drop out of the process is being collated. This information is being utilised to inform and target our recruitment activity and is detailed under Appendix 2.
- 5.5** The work developed within VVC has been showcased at a national level as part of a national review of enquiries commissioned by NAS at the latter end

of 2018 and has been hailed as a model of good practice. The Marketing Co-ordinator has spent time professionalising VVC's website, our range of written information and developing our marketing materials. Close working links have been developed with COWSHED, the nationally commissioned marketing agency to develop a Marketing & Recruitment Plan for the region and VVC is actively involved in the national Marketing Subgroup. In conjunction with COWSHED, links have been established with Communications Departments in each of the partner authorities.

- 5.6** VVC has been represented at national campaign activities such as the National Eisteddfod and Pride. VVC has also engaged in more localised marketing activity at the Vale of Glamorgan Show, the Barry 10K run and Llantwit Major and Barry Pride. The Marketing Co-ordinator and Recruitment & Assessment Manager has presented the work of VVC to the Vineyard Church on two occasions and have provided a stand at IKEA and a Wedding Fair. Adverts have been placed in local free publications in each of the local authority areas, in cinemas and links have been made with fertility clinics within the region.
- 5.7** VVC's Marketing Co-ordinator is responsible for updating and managing VVC's website and has recently obtained agreement to develop VVC's usage of Facebook and Instagram as a means of raising our profile. This is likely to become live in October of this year
- 5.8** As part of the Welsh Government grant allocation to improve adoption, three of the other regions have decided to use part of the money to establish capacity for marketing within their services. North Wales already had a post within their service but this had been vacant for some time. VVC's Job Description and Person Specification has been circulated to those regions to assist in their recruitment process and provide consistency across Wales.
- 5.9** In terms of performance, the number of enquiries, response times and conversion rates is regularly reported upon to NAS as part of our performance monitoring. The Marketing Co-ordinator plays a key role in this and the

requirements to monitor this activity will increase with the implementation of the two stage model. It is too early to assess if the role has had a direct impact upon conversion rates although attendance at Information Evenings has increased this year with **86** people attending to date compared with **72** attendees for the whole of previous year.

- 5.10** The region approved **51** adopter households in the year compared with **46** in the previous year. A further five were recommended for approval but not ratified until April 2019 and five withdrew following concerns which had arisen as part of the assessment process. The approved adopters comprise of 36 first time adopters, 9 second time, 1 third time approval, 8 foster carers and 2 inter country. The increase in approvals has continued into this year with 35 being approved to date.
- 5.11** The increase in adopter approvals is acknowledged as a move in the right direction but falls short of the target of 100 approvals set by VVC Management Board and is a long way off the NAS projection of circa 160 placements which it forecasts will be needed to place children currently waiting.
- 5.12** In relation to VVC's overall performance in relation to the timeliness of assessments the picture has improved. The timescales from initial enquiry to approval has decreased from **13.5 months** to **11.3 months** and the timescale from application to approval has improved with an average of **5.8 months** overall, which is below the national benchmark.
- 5.13** During the early part of 2019, Welsh Government amended the Adoption Agencies (Wales) Regulations 2005 to introduce a two stage assessment process for prospective adopters. The implementation of these amendments have now been postponed until 1 January 2020. The Regional Adoption Manager has been part of a national Policy & Practice Group commissioned to develop a Good Practice Guide to accompany the Regulations and training has recently been provided for the whole team on the new requirements. The two stage process allows for a period of two months initially for training,

preparation and checks to be undertaken on prospective adopters and a further four months for the assessment to be completed. This model has operated in England for some time and it is likely to significantly impact on performance until the system is embedded in practice. A range of new performance measures have been developed to capture compliance with each part of the process.

- 5.14.** As indicated in the previous report, VVC receives a high numbers of non-agency adoption referrals, the majority of which are from step parents wishing to adopt their step child. These numbers are collated by NAS. Again this is an area which poses significant challenges for the service as the need to prioritise the recruitment of adopters for children waiting to be adopted has resulted in a backlog. Significant efforts have been made to reduce this waiting list with the result that only a relatively small number remain unallocated.
- 5.15.** The team remain very committed to developing the service and the fourth day of training for prospective adopters is now well established alongside the preparation course on a bi-monthly basis. The team provided training for second time adopters twice during the year and are also keen to develop training for family and friends of adoptive families. The need to provide training in a tighter timescale with the two stage model that is to be implemented in Wales may require the frequency of training courses to increase and so some preliminary discussions have taken place with our neighbouring regions to see if this could be facilitated jointly.
- 5.16.** Training has also been provided for the team on inter country adoption and adoption law in an effort to address the knowledge gap within the service particularly from those staff new to working in adoption. Representatives of the service also attended a national event with NAS and the Inter Country Adoption Centre (IAC) based in London and as a result a service level agreement for Wales with IAC has been agreed.

## 6. ADOPTION SUPPORT

- 6.1** Adoption referrals have remained at a consistent rate for the past couple of years. The proportion of referrals by local authorities have also remained consistent.
- 6.2** The total expenditure on Adoption Support Services for the reporting year was **£131,991.85**. The average spend per child is **£2,205.87** and is consistent across the local authorities. Cardiff's expenditure is considerably higher than previous years and includes a figure of approximately £15k on a high package of support for two children agreed over a two year period. Analysis of the figures over the past four years shows a correlation between the number of referrals in one year and the subsequent funding agreements received in the following year. On average **40%** of children referred from Cardiff and RCT go on to receive funding requests, meaning **60%** are managed with in-house support or sign-posting to other services. This figure is slightly higher for the Vale and much lower for Merthyr, although there is a very small data sample in Merthyr to draw from.
- 6.3** The largest costs are for attachment-based therapeutic work, complex emotional and behavioural therapeutic work and therapeutic life story work. These are our most frequently commissioned service and are in line with the types of need our children present with. We anticipate that although the need for therapeutic life story work remains high at present, over the coming years with the investment in Life Journey Work across Wales this demand will reduce as the quality of the support being provided at an earlier stage improves. The spend on Non-Violent Resistance support we anticipate reducing in coming years as we are able to offer this course in-house now, reducing the reliance on an external service. This year there has also been no spend on post-adoption parenting courses as we have been able to deliver the 'Nurturing Attachments' course in-house rather than commission another course for families.

- 6.4** 49 referrals for Access to Birth Records for adopted adults were received during the reporting period. This remains consistent with the rate of referrals from previous year.
- 6.5** 37 referrals for Intermediary Services. This is a decrease when compared to 2017-18 statistics. In 2017-18 the service saw a significant increase in the allocations of those waiting to access their birth records which subsequently led to an increase in follow-on intermediary requests from adopted adults.
- 6.6** Allocation times have significantly improved for both access to birth records and intermediary services. Historically waiting times for access to birth records cases could be up to a year and intermediary cases up to 2 years. With investment in a designated part-time post for this work in addition to the adoption support team maintaining full staffing these waiting times have been able to reduce and currently there is no-one waiting more than 2 months for either service. It remains a significant strength of our service that intermediary requests are being supported as not every region in Wales has been able to offer this service and where they do, there remains lengthy waiting times.
- 6.7** As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, the service has **905** open Letterbox cases. Of this, **700** are considered “active”. The number of “active” cases has continued to rise in recent years with increased success in engaging both birth parents and adoptive parents. This is greatly aided by the investment of a part time post designated for this work. However, additional support is provided through our Duty system and our Business Support team to ensure that the workload is managed.
- 6.8** The Adoption Support team has developed an improvement plan which focuses upon providing opportunities for upskilling staff to reduce reliance upon externally commissioned services, training for adopters and improved overall provision. This plan is kept under review and plans are in place to facilitate specialist training within the team utilising some of the slippage money arising from Welsh Government grant. In addition, the plan also focuses on maintaining our current universal services of; a monthly toddler group for adopted families and twice yearly fun-day. It is anticipated that when the

specialist posts embed in to the service then further improvements will be noted.

- 6.9** In the reporting period, NAS commissioned Adoption UK to engage in a further “Adopter Voice” consultation with adoptive families. The consultation focused upon key priorities for development at a national and regional level, namely; life journey work, contact, post adoption support, mental health and education. VVC adopters were invited to participate in a regional forum, 15 families attended and 17 responded to an online consultation. The findings of the consultation exercise were presented in a regional report and provided to VVC Management Board. It is of significance that the proportion of families had adopted with the last three years presented a more positive view of the service received and were clear about where they could go to access to support.

## **7. ADOPTION PANEL**

- 7.1** The Collaborative has continued to operate a joint regional Panel from two sittings held on a fortnightly Monday and Wednesday basis. Work has been undertaken to merge the Panel Members and the Panel activity to enable the Panel to operate on a more unified basis.
- 7.2.** Panel business has remained at a high level during the year with 47 Panel meetings being held and one scheduled meetings being cancelled due to quoracy.
- 7.3** Maintenance of the central list of Panel members continues to pose challenges in terms of maintaining a sufficient number of Social Work members. This issue has been raised by the VVC and some new Social Work representatives have been identified and are in the process of being vetted.
- 7.4** Panel training was not held during the year but is planned with the introduction of the new 2 stage model.

## **8. COMPLAINTS & COMPLIMENTS**

**8.1** VVC has received the following complaints during the period:

1. Complaint from an Assembly Member regarding delay in providing post adoption support package for an adoptive family.
2. Complaint from adopters of a sibling group regarding a delay in their assessment being undertaken for an older sibling.
3. Complaint from adopters regarding a delay in being informed of a data breach which had come to light during Court proceedings for a subsequent sibling and delays in the matching process for that sibling.
4. Complaint from an Assembly Member regarding removal of a child placed for adoption with one of his constituents. This was transferred to the placing authority for investigation.

All the complaints investigated by VVC have been resolved at stage 1 of the Vale of Glamorgan Complaint Process.

Two of the complaints highlight issues with the placement of siblings, but the concerns were significantly different and as such, it is not possible to draw any specific conclusions.

**8.2** Regional staff continue to receive positive feedback on the service provided in terms of assessment of adopters, participation in adoption support activities and for the general service provided. This however, tends to be very individualised and so the service has begun to develop a more formalised feedback process. Work has been undertaken with the Vale of Glamorgan Participation Officer to develop questionnaires to be used during the assessment process. A questionnaire has been developed which will be distributed following the adopter preparation training and these returns will be collated.



## **9. CONCLUSION AND 2019-20 PRIORITIES**

- 9.1** The priorities identified during the previous report in terms of completing the actions arising from the Best Value Review and managing the relocation of the Service to Barry have been met.
- 9.2** The other priorities in respect of VVC's performance relate to our core business and these will remain during the current year. As the largest regional Collaborative, VVC has the largest number of children awaiting adoptive placements and the biggest challenge in adopter recruitment. We envisage that these priorities in particular will be our main focus.
- 9.3** In terms of regional performance, the work undertaken by the regional Marketing Co-ordinator has had a positive benefit and we now have a rich set of data in respect of adopter enquiries and demographics in which to inform our recruitment strategy.
- 9.4** Positive performance has been noted in terms of increasing the number of placements made, the number of adopters approved and improved timeliness of the assessment process. VVC has seen a dip in the performance in the provision of Life Journey Work and the take up of services by birth parents, but it is hoped that the new posts identified as a result of the Welsh Government grant will go some way to improve this across the region.
- 9.5** The priorities for the service going forward are to ensure that the new service provisions are embedded into regional practice to improve consistency and service delivery. The other key priority is ensuring that the two stage model for the assessment of adopters is implemented fully and the impact upon regional performance is monitored closely.

**Angela Harris**

**Regional Adoption Manager**

**September 2019**

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