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## AGENDA

**Committee** CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date and Time of Meeting** THURSDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2021, 4.30 PM

**Venue** REMOTE VIA MS TEAMS

**Membership** Councillor Lee Bridgeman (Chair)  
Councillors Cunnah, Hopkins, Joyce, Melbourne, Molik, Phillips,  
Mia Rees and Singh

Patricia Arlotte (Roman Catholic representative), Carol Cobert (Church in Wales Representative) and Karen Dell'Armi (Parent Governor Representative)

*Time approx.*

- |          |  |         |
|----------|--|---------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Apologies for Absence</b>   | 4.30 pm |
|          | To receive apologies for absence.  |         |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Declarations of Interest</b>  |         |
|          | To be made at the start of the agenda item in question, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct. |         |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Minutes</b> ( <i>Pages 1 - 4</i> )  |         |
|          | To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting on 9 November 2021.                            |         |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Valleys, Vale &amp; Cardiff Adoption Collaborative Annual Report 2020-21</b> ( <i>Pages 5 - 80</i> )  | 4.35 pm |
|          | To receive the Annual Report 2020-21   |         |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Youth Justice Service Update</b> ( <i>Pages 81 - 102</i> )  | 5.05 pm |
|          | To receive an update on the Youth Justice Service, including Quarter 2 performance                       |         |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Children's Service - Quarter 2 Performance</b> ( <i>Pages 103 - 122</i> )                             | 5.35 pm |

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To receive an update

7 **Children's Services Review** (*Pages 123 - 174*) 6.05 pm

To receive a briefing

8 **Way Forward** 6.35 pm

To review the evidence and information gathered during consideration of each item and agree Members comments, observations and concerns to be passed on to the relevant Cabinet Member by the Chair

9 **Urgent Items (if any)**

10 **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee is on Tuesday 18 January 2021 at 4.30 pm via MS Teams

**Davina Fiore**

**Director Governance & Legal Services**

Date: Friday, 3 December 2021

Contact: Mandy Farnham,

02920 872618, Mandy.Farnham@cardiff.gov.uk

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

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 NOVEMBER 2021

Present: Councillor Bridgeman (Chairperson),  
Councillors Cunnah, Hopkins, Joyce, Melbourne, Molik, Phillips and  
Singh

Co-opted Members:

85 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mia Rees. Councillor Molik had indicated that she would be slightly late in attending the meeting.

86 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

87 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 20 September and 13 October 2021 were approved as a correct record of those meetings.

88 : INTERVENTIONS HUB

The Chair welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member for Children & Families), Sarah McGill (Corporate Director, People and Communities), Deborah Driffield (Director, Children's Services) and Suki Bahara-Garrens (Operational Manager, Wellbeing/Protection and Support) and Matt Osbourne to the meeting.

Councillor Hinchey was invited to make a statement in which he outlined the background to the proposals regarding the Interventions Hub and Reviewing Hub.

Members had been provided with a presentation outlining the proposal to realign 'intervention support' elements into one cohesive 'Interventions Hub' Team and a presentation outlining the proposal to enhance capability and resources to help ensure children and families are supported at the right time, in the right place and in the right way.

Members were asked to comment or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members sought clarification on what additional services would be provided by the Hubs. Members were advised that there was a difference in regard to the complexity and high risk in cases seen by statutory services in comparison to those families that came through Early Help Hub, particularly in relation to safeguarding.

- Members enquired as to the reasons behind the rise in the number of referrals to the Child Protection Register. Members were advised that the rise in Child Protection figures was reflected in Section 47 enquiries. There has been a continuing rise since the beginning of the pandemic. It is difficult to ascertain the reasons for the rise. The figures demonstrate that more risk is being held within the family home. The intention is to keep families together.
- Members enquired as to whether the early intervention programmes were delivering as much as they could. Members also sought clarification on how children would benefit from the Interventions Hub and what outcomes were expected. Members were advised that there are currently different referral pathways and a lack of consistency in defining work plans for families. The Hub would provide one referral pathway with managers screening referrals and assessment plans. Outcomes would then be examined with families.
- Members were further advised that the Early Help services are non-statutory and do not come under Children's Services. They were introduced to allow families and young people to refer themselves when they identify that they might need support. The intention behind the Interventions Hub is to bring together staff who are already employed in Children's Services and ensure there are more robust, forms of intervention that are time limited and evidence based. It is expected that families will work with interventions specialists on a programme that suits them, and there will be clear outcomes.
- Members were referred to the presentation which describes the intention behind the Interventions Hub. There is the potential for confusion for social workers and families in regard to the range of services available. Consequently it is intended to align access to services in a more coordinated way to ensure referees receive the right service at the right time.
- Members sought clarification on what need had been identified in the review process and how the success of the proposals would be measured. Members discussed the need for more clarity about the pathways available for young people, their means of access and the advantages compared to the current arrangements, and the need for a business plan. Members expressed concern that the presentations had not clarified the identified problems and service shortfalls in current arrangements. Members considered that there was a focus on the proposed solutions without a clear exposition of the need for them or the expected gains in regard to improved outcomes for children and young people.
- Members were advised that robust business cases had been developed previously. Officers were happy to re-present relevant details. The proposals tie in with the Children's Services' strategy of 'shifting the balance' and keeping children at home where it is safe do so and in the best interests of the children. The intention is to bring the various interventions under one line of governance to ensure that children and families receive the services they need in a timely way. It is also expected to facilitate the identification of need and appropriate response, and the measuring of outcomes.



- Members were advised that while there had been a spike in the number of child protection referrals during the pandemic numbers had been reduced recently.
- Members were advised that the intention behind the Reviewing Hub was to have a more robust oversight of the progress children were making and to ensure that the right support was available at the right time. All children allocated within Children's Services would be reviewed regularly with actions recorded and monitored.
- Members sought clarification on whether the proposals would lead to an increase in costs in the short to medium term, and the level of any longer term savings. Members were advised that details were in the original business case and would be shared on request. Members were further advised that it was anticipated that more timely and appropriate interventions would lead to long term savings. Early interventions would reduce the number of children needing to be looked after. More robust reviewing mechanisms would ensure that children were in the right place at the right time.
- Members discussed how it was intended to evaluate the outcomes of the proposed changes and what sort of quantitative data would be gathered. Members were advised that in regard to the Interventions Hub a Distance Travelled tool with a baseline indicator would be used. Results would be collated to provide overall data. In regard to the Reviewing Hub targets and milestones would be set in relation to the number of care plans reviewed.
- Members sought clarification on how pathways would differ under the proposals and what was lacking in the current arrangements. Members were referred to the information in the presentation and were given further details about the various pathways. Members were advised that data had not been collated regarding Distance Travelled and outcomes of the different pathways. There is a lack in capacity for reviewing interventions and inconsistency in supervision and oversight. The intention is to bring staff together into one place to improve management, oversight and the collation of data.
- Members sought clarification in regard to the timescale for recruitment for the new posts. Members were advised that the recruitment process was well underway and shortlisting had been carried out for some posts. The Service Manager posts had been readvertised and there had been considerable interest. Five applicants had been shortlisted for IRO/CP chair posts. It is anticipated the Grade 8 roles may be harder to fill without a market supplement.
- Members sought information on the reasons for the line management of IROs and child protection chairs being split between 2 service managers and the interrelationship between child protection chairs and IROs. Members were advised that IROs often act as child protection conference chairs. IROs have statutory responsibility and liability whereas child protection chairs do not. It had been decided that having people carry out both roles militated against effective reviewing capability, and so separate teams of IROs and child protection chairs had been set up and had been found to be more effective. It

continues to be useful to have staff members capable of carrying out both functions.

- Members were advised that children on the Child Protection Register were already being screened and their cases reviewed. There was evidence that this has already helped reduce the number of children on the register. The Reviewing Hub would consolidate and formalise these arrangements.

Members expressed their condolences to the friends, family and colleagues of Cyril Paine, a youth worker at St Mellons Youth Club who has sadly passed away.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the way forward.

Finally, Members expressed their condolences to the friends, family and colleagues of Cyril Paine, a youth worker at St Mellons Youth Club who has sadly passed away.

89 : REVIEWING HUB

90 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS REPORT

The Chair invited Alison Jones, Principal Scrutiny Officer to present the Committee Business Report which updates the Committee in relation to any correspondence received; Work Programme Updates and an update on the Scrutiny of the Replacement LDP.

The Committee RESOLVED to note the report.

91 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were tabled at the meeting.

92 : WAY FORWARD

Members discussed the information received and identified a number of issues which the Chairman agreed would be included in the letters that would be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to the relevant Cabinet Members and Officers.

93 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is on Thursday 9 December 2021 at 4.30 pm via MS Teams.

The meeting terminated at 6.00 pm

**CYNGOR CAERDYDD  
CARDIFF COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

9 December 2021

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**VALE, VALLEYS & CARDIFF REGIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE – ANNUAL  
REPORT 2020/21**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a copy of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff (VVC) Regional Adoption Collaborative Annual Report 2020/21. A copy is attached at **Appendix A**, with further Appendices as follows:
  - *Appendix 1* – Family Finding
  - *Appendix 2* – Recruitment and Assessment
  - *Appendix 3* – Adoption Support
  - *Appendix 4* – Adoption Panel
2. The report set out at **Appendix A** is the sixth VVC Annual Report and covers the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. The report seeks to combine the reporting requirements set out in regulation, and the governance arrangements for the region in one report.

**Background**

3. As a key part of the implementation of the Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2014, the National Adoption Service for Wales was created to bring together existing local government services into a three-tier system, with partnership arrangements for services provided in other sectors, to co-ordinate and deliver adoption services in a different way. These tiers are:

- local authority level – where all local authorities continue to identify and meet needs of children for whom adoption is the most appropriate plan;
  - regional level – where five local authority collaboratives have been created to deliver agreed adoption functions and develop operational links, as appropriate, with voluntary sector and other services to develop and improve service delivery; and
  - national level – a small team to co-ordinate and drive improvement and consistency, while maintaining strategic and planning links with Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) and the delivery of certain national functions.
4. The Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) brings together the adoption services of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Cardiff Council and Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council. It is one of the five regional Collaboratives which form part of the National Adoption Service in Wales (NAS). The Vale of Glamorgan Council host the Regional Collaborative.
5. The governance structure of the Collaborative involves a Joint Committee and a regional Management Board. The Joint Committee involves the lead Cabinet Member from each of the four Local Authorities and Heads of Service; it meets twice a year. The Management Board meets quarterly. It is comprised of the Heads of Service from the four Local Authorities which make up the Collaborative and representatives from Health, Education and the Voluntary Sector. The Management Board is chaired by a Director from one of the partner authorities. In October 2020, this transferred to the Director of Social Services for the Vale of Glamorgan. The Regional Adoption Manager reports to the Management Board and Joint Committee.

6. In addition, Regulation 39 of the Local Authority Adoption Services (Wales) Regulations 2019 require the Collaborative to create and maintain a system to monitor, review and improve the quality of its' service. Section 15 2 (c) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 also requires each regional Collaborative to provide an Annual Report to the Director of Operations for the National Adoption Service. It is envisaged that the Annual Report attached at **Appendix A** will meet all these requirements. The performance of the Collaborative continues to be regularly reviewed by the Management Board and the Joint Committee.

### **VVC Report 2020/21**

7. The report, attached at **Appendix A** focusses on the following areas of the region's work:
- Governance, staffing and service development
  - Performance in respect of children and family finding activity
  - Adopter marketing and recruitment
  - Adoption support services
  - Consultation, Engagement and Quality Assurance
  - Complaints and compliments
  - Adoption Panel
  - Future priorities and challenges
8. In terms of regional performance, the report outlines the ways the service adapted to the challenges imposed by COVID 19 and developed new ways of working to reduce delay and engage with service users.
9. The report provides information in respect of children against key performance indicators set by the National Adoption Service Performance Framework. It highlights a healthier end of year position in respect of children placed for adoption despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic and the overall decrease in Placement Orders. The report provides information in respect of the number of children waiting and the

reasons for this. It also highlights a continued increase in those children being placed within the region enabling the region to utilise its' existing pool of adopters effectively and providing easier access to support services for those families.

10. The report outlines the impact of VVC's Marketing Strategy and the use of social media platforms to raise VVC'S profile. A further increase in adopter enquiries was noted during year, and the number of households approved was comparable to the previous year despite the constraints on the service. There continues to be challenges in being able to recruit sufficient adopters to be able to meet the more complex range of needs of children referred.
11. The report provides information in respect of post adoption support services and the increase in workload in this area and the impact upon the capacity of the service to meet the increased demand.
12. The report outlines the posts created as a result of the investment from Welsh Government and the way these roles have enhanced service delivery within the region. There has been a significant improvement in the provision of life journey work for children with a plan for adoption during the period largely as a result of the investment. Other positive developments can be seen in improved transition planning for children moving into adoptive placements and birth parent support.
13. The posts linked directly to national programmes, TESSA and the Connected service have also become more established during the reporting period and activity levels associated with these roles have been significant.

14. The report outlines the ongoing requirement to report upon performance and the additional measures imposed as part of the investment to the National Adoption Service and Welsh Government.
15. The report highlights the key challenges going forward in terms core business specifically the placement of more complex children, adopter recruitment and meeting the ever-increasing demand for adoption support services. It also outlines some of the new challenges imposed with the implementation of the Good Practice Guides and the two-stage model of adopter assessment.

### **VVC Priorities for 2021/22**

16. As well as the results of performance for 2020/21, the report also sets a number of priorities for the current year (*Paragraphs 15.1 – 15.6 of the report*). These are:
  - The priorities going forward remain as in previous years. The VVC needs to continue to build upon our performance and ensure that we can meet the range of needs presented by children requiring adoptive placements within the region. The increased complexity and profile of the harder to place children will continue to challenge our ability to secure timely, appropriate matches for these children.
  - There is a need to evaluate which functions can continue to be delivered via virtual platforms and which parts of the service will require a combined approach. This will continue to inform the VVCs recovery planning.

- The investment received from Welsh Government has been a significant, positive development for the service as a whole and there is clear evidence of the benefits of the additional roles in enhancing performance. These improvements will however need to continue to be monitored and evaluated to meet the objectives and targets set by NAS. This is particularly important in respect of the provision of life journey work due to the large amount of the investment secured for completion of this work.
- One of the key priorities for the service highlighted during the period and continuing into the current year is how best to address the ever-increasing demand for post adoption support services.
- The full implementation of the Good Practice Guides will impact directly upon Family Finding practice and Adoption Support Service, although the need to promote ongoing and in some cases direct contact with birth families will need to be factored into the assessment process for prospective adopters.
- The easement to the Regulations in respect of the two-stage process for adopter assessments ceases on 30 September 2021 and the new process is to be fully implemented from 1 October 2021. VVC will need to collect data in respect of compliance with the new timescales for assessments and performance will need to be closely monitored.

### **Previous Scrutiny**

17. The Committee has scrutinised the Annual Report over a number of years, with 2019/20 VVC Annual Report being considered in December 2020. A copy of the Chair's letter is attached at **Appendix B**. The response to this letter is also attached at **Appendix C**.



## **Scope of the Scrutiny**

18. The report will provide the Members with the opportunity to review the progress made in the management and operation of the Regional Adoption Service. Members may wish to evaluate the following aspects of the reports:
- i. How well has the VVC Regional Service progressed against the targets and performance measures;
  - ii. The progress that the VVC Region has made in addressing the improvements and priorities;
  - iii. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the service and its resilience going forward; and
  - iv. What are the plans for the future for the VVC region?

## **Way Forward**

19. Angela Harris, Regional Adoption Manager, VVC, will introduce the report, which will be followed by a Q&A. Councillor Graham Hinchey, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities and Deborah Driffield, Director of Children's Services will also be available to answer any questions.

## **Legal Implications**

20. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the

body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

### **Financial Implications**

21. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. These financial implications will need to be considered before any changes are implemented. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Members review the information contained in **Appendices A, 1, 2, 3 and 4** together with any additional information provided at the meeting and submit any comments, concerns or recommendations about the services to the Cabinet Member for discussion with the Regional Manager.

**Davina Fiore**

**Director of Governance and legal Services**

**02 December 2021**

## Appendix A



# VALE, VALLEYS AND CARDIFF ADOPTION COLLABORATIVE REVIEW OF SERVICE AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

For Period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021

## NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE



**Achieving More Together /  
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd**

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Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Adoption Service  
Review of Service Report  
1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

## 1. Introduction

1.1 The requirement to provide six monthly reviews of the adoption service is set out in Regulation 39 of The Local Authority Adoption Services (Wales) Regulations 2019. The aim of this report is to bring into one document a presentation and analysis of the activity of each of the local authority adoption agencies, operating as a regional service.

1.2 The report will be used for:

- ❖ The Review of Service (Regulation 39 report).
- ❖ Annual reporting requirements to Cabinet/Scrutiny Committees as per the governance arrangements set out in Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Legal Agreement.

1.3 This is VVC's sixth annual report and covers the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information presented is an accurate record of the activity and quality of the adoption service.

The report has the following Appendices:

- ❖ **Appendix 1** sets out key performance data in respect of children by quarter and local authority.
- ❖ **Appendix 2** provides information in respect of adopter enquiries and recruitment of adopters.
- ❖ **Appendix 3** provides information in respect of Adoption Support.
- ❖ **Appendix 4 provides** information in respect of Adoption Panel activity.

## 2. Background

2.1 Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC), as part of the National Adoption Service in Wales (NAS) was established on 1 June 2015. It 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. The Vale of Glamorgan hosts the service.

- 2.2 The governance structure for the Collaborative is set out in a Legal Agreement agreed in 2015 and amended in 2019.
- 2.3 The organisational and managerial structure of the service has remained unchanged since its' original inception although the staffing establishment has grown. Service delivery continues to be structured around three functional teams with a separate Business Support Team.

### **3. Service Development and Governance**

- 3.1 The context for the delivery of our service during this reporting period has been the restrictions imposed due to COVID-19 and the impact this has had upon VVC's performance. In late March 2020, our office closed, and staff began remote working from home. This has largely remained the position since this time. As with other services, staff were required to adapt quickly and a new infrastructure to promote virtual working was developed. Due to the geographical spread of the region, staff within VVC had already been used to a pattern of agile working and so the new way of working did not pose too many challenges. Early on we identified those core tasks which required an element of office working and arrangements were made for one of the Business Support team to attend the office two days per week to deal with basic administrative functions. The office space was also risk assessed to allow a small number of staff to utilise the office space on a restricted basis to carry out specific functions and to improve overall work life balance.
- 3.2 The National Adoption Service facilitated regular Regional Manager/ VAA meetings to monitor the impact of the pandemic upon services and to develop consistent approaches to key areas of service. This provided an opportunity to raise key issues affecting the service and which required a standardised approach. In addition, the Regional Manager attended Vale of Glamorgan

Divisional Manager Meetings to address issues at a local level and monitor progress.

- 3.3 In line with Welsh Government advice several risk assessment processes were developed locally and nationally. NAS developed a Transitions Risk Assessment for authorisation by the respective Head of Service and Regional Manager to ensure a safe transition of children into adoptive placements.
- 3.4 NAS also in conjunction with Medical Advisers and regional services developed a protocol to reduce the delays in adopter medicals being undertaken.
- 3.5 On 1 April 2020, the two-stage process for the assessment of adopters came into force. Welsh Government allowed an easement to the Regulations to allow both stage 1 and 2 to run concurrently. VVC contributed to the development of a piece of national guidance to assist agencies in implementing the new process. The easement to the Regulations has continued but full implementation will take place from 1 October 2021.
- 3.6 The Recruitment & Assessment Manager within VVC developed a risk assessment process to enable part face to face and part virtual assessment sessions for prospective adopters to be undertaken which was adopted on a national level.
- 3.7 During the year, the National Adoption Service commissioned AFA Cymru to develop a Series of Good Practice Guides covering Adoption Support, Transitions, Contact and Working with Birth Parents. These guides were formally launched in the autumn of 2020 and regional training for managers and staff across the region was provided in the last quarter of the year. These guides will have a significant impact upon practice and will impact upon the resources needed to support their full implementation later this year.
- 3.8 In April 2019, as part of the Welsh Government award of £2.3M to improve adoption services in Wales, the region received a substantial investment of

new monies which enabled a number of new posts to be recruited across the service. The grant was allocated to national and regional services to support key priorities for improvement. As a result of these monies VVC was able to recruit two full time Social Workers to specialise in Transitions and Life Journey Work and a part time Social Worker to support birth parents.

- 3.9 The service was also able to recruit two new unqualified posts, a Children & Young People Co-ordinator to support adopted children and young people and a TESSA (Therapeutic Education Support Service in Adoption) Co-ordinator to support adoptive families. Both posts are linked to national programmes being delivered by Adoption UK; the Connected service which supports young adoptees and the TESSA programme which supports adoptive families.
- 3.10 In addition to the posts located within the Collaborative, 10.5 practitioner posts were created from the grant to support the provision of life journey work for children with a plan of adoption. These posts are distributed across the four partner authorities and link to the Life Journey Co-ordinator within VVC.
- 3.11 As part of the deployment of the grant a national Implementation Plan was developed requiring reports to be submitted monitoring the spend against the grant and detailing areas of improvement in performance in service provision. The National Adoption Service prepared the bid for the grant in 2020-1 and took over the monitoring function in conjunction with Welsh Government requiring regions to report upon progress to NAS. The Regional Adoption Manager completed the monitoring reports against the grant in October 2020 & March 2021 to enable the full allocation to be awarded to the region.
- 3.12 VVC's Management Board has continued to meet on a quarterly basis during the year although meetings are held virtually. The composition of the Board has remained the same although a representative from NAS now attends meetings to improve links between the national and local agenda. The Director of Social Services took over as chair of the Board in October 2020.



- 3.13 The overall remit and accountability of the Management Board is prescribed within regulation and the Legal Agreement underpinning the Collaborative. VVC's Management Board has continued to play a key role in monitoring the performance and business plan of the regional service highlighting areas for improvement.
- 3.14 The second tier of governance within the Collaborative is via the Operational Group which is comprised of senior managers from each of the four local authorities and regional managers from VVC. This group has also met on a quarterly basis during the year , although competing priorities within local authorities has impacted upon quoracy of some meetings which has required a mechanism to be put in place to agree matters discussed outside the formal meeting. The Operational Group provides a further mechanism for monitoring the performance of the region and is a vehicle for raising standards and improving practice consistency across the region.
- 3.15 The overall governance of the region remains via a Joint Committee which meets twice a year comprised of lead Members from each of the four authorities. It is chaired by the Cabinet Member for the Vale of Glamorgan. Meetings were held in May and December 2020 as per requirements to approve the annual accounts, the annual budget and annual plan for the Collaborative.
- 3.16 Following a review of NAS' governance structure by IPC, a National Partnership Agreement was developed by NAS for sign up by each of local authority in Wales. This Agreement lays out the national and local requirements in terms of governance. The recommended local governance structure for regional services outlined in the Agreement is modelled upon VVC's. The Partnership Agreement was signed off by the four partner authorities during November and December 2020.
- 3.17 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 small underspend in the budget for 2020 -21

created partly by revised working methods and some staff turnover. A proposal to retain the underspend within VVC has been agreed by Management Board and Joint Committee. These monies will be held over to provide the regional contribution to the TESSA programme.

- 3.18 VVC 's financial and governance arrangements are subject to an annual audit by Bridgend and Vale Internal Audit Shared Service. This audit was conducted remotely at the end of the reporting period and concluded that the “generally there was a sound system of governance, risk management and control in place but two areas of improvement were noted”. These areas related to revision of the WASPI Agreement and the audit trail of a couple of invoices which have now been addressed.
- 3.19 VVC is required to report to the National Adoption Service on a range of performance measures which are collected on a quarterly and annual basis under the NAS Performance Framework. Due to the pandemic a shortened list of indicators was agreed for submission and uploading to the Data Cymru database. VVC continued however to collate data against the full range of measures to enable fuller reporting upon performance at a regional level.

## 4. Staffing

- 4.1 The overall staff establishment has remained unchanged during the period..Two permanent vacancies arose during the year, a part time Social Worker in the Adoption Support Team and part time Birth Parent Adviser They were filled on a temporary basis until they were successfully recruited to in December 2020.
- 4.2 A temporary vacancy in the Recruitment & Assessment Team due to maternity leave has been covered by a part time member of staff taking on additional hours.
- 4.3 Temporary arrangements to cover a vacancy within our Business Support Team have continued whilst a review of the structure is being undertaken.
- 4.4 A staff repurposing exercise undertaken at the beginning of the pandemic resulted in two staff being redeployed on a short-term basis to Adult Services.

## 5. Children

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 The number of children referred for adoption totalled **171** in the year which marks a 20% increase on the previous year. This follows a previously sustained reduction in referral rates. It is unknown at this time to what extent the pandemic has impacted upon referrals to adoption; however, we note the rise in referrals in relation to the workload within the region, albeit not as high as observed pre-2019.
- 5.3 The rates of our referrals which were withdrawn remained steady at **43%** of those referred in 2020-21. This can be seen as a positive as alternative care

plans for these children meant a vast majority of these either returning to parents' care or being placed with Connected Persons following positive assessment. Withdrawn referrals, in many instances however do not equate to a decrease in workload for the service as a lot of work and staff capacity is invested in progressing the adoption plan prior to it being discontinued.

- 5.4 The number of 'Should be Adopted' decisions made in respect of children has remained steady at **81** (up from 80 the previous year). If the number of referrals continues to increase, we would anticipate the number of SBA decisions also to increase.
- 5.5 The region has recorded **62** Placement Orders being made within the year, a slight reduction from the 71 of the previous year and again but should be viewed in the context of reduction in referrals overall within the past couple of years. The reduction in Placement Orders is a trend seen in other parts of Wales although it is less noticeable within VVC.
- 5.6 VVC placed **65** children for adoption during the year which is a considerable drop from the previous year but is however significant given the constraints upon the service. Alongside COVID restrictions, the other inhibiting factors were the reduction in Placement Orders and therefore a reduction in the number of children within the region requiring placement for adoption. The number of children placed was as a result of the service having to adapt quickly and respond to the challenges of bringing together different households for the purposes of transitioning a child from one placement to another. VVC utilised the NAS Transitions Risk Assessment and developed a process for this within the region to prevent delay in moving children on to adoption because of the pandemic. Transitions have included in most cases the use of self-isolation for both households and supplemented by the use of lateral flow testing where complete isolation could not be maintained.
- 5.7 One of the positive developments brought about by the pandemic has been the increased use of virtual communications between adopters and children prior to face-to-face introductions commencing. Whilst we have not used this

to reduce the face-to-face time needed for children, it has enhanced the relationship building and familiarity between child, adopters and foster carers and the feedback from those involved has been overwhelmingly positive about the impact this has had on the overall introductions. This now forms part of all transitions plans for children moving into adoptive placements.

- 5.8 The average time from Placement Order to placement has remained at a similar rate at **10.6 months**. Some of the reasons for the delay includes some slightly delayed plans at the start of the pandemic until safe systems were in place to move children on and reflects some high outliers of children waiting a significantly higher period than others. It is positive however, that have seen an increasing number of placements for older, potentially harder to place children although the preparation and placement for adoption in such cases may take longer to ensure this is taken at the child's pace.
- 5.9 VVC has continued to place a high proportion of our children with VVC approved adopters (68%) maintaining a similar level to the previous couple of years.
- 5.10 At the end of the year there were **63** children on Placement Orders awaiting an adoptive match which is a reduction of **14%** from the previous year. A further 5 children had a very strong link proceeding but not yet matched as at the end of March 2021 and so the number waiting was **48**. It is positive to see a continued decrease in the number of children waiting for adoptive placements.
- 5.11 There were **83** Adoption Orders granted during the year which is a continued pattern from previous years. There were no placements which disrupted during 2020-21 which is hugely encouraging.
- 5.12 **172** birth parents of children referred during 2020-21 were offered birth parent counselling and **35%** took this up which is lower than in previous years. Opportunities to offer birth parent counselling virtually and via phone calls have been utilised during the pandemic , however lots of opportunities to

provide this in person, usually following a direct contact session for parents with their children have not been possible for much of 2020-21 due to contact moving to virtual arrangements during the strictest lockdown measures. Following the easing of restrictions we have offered parents a range of options: in-person, virtual or telephone according to their individual circumstances.

- 5.13 Performance in relation to the provision of Life Journey Material for children being placed for adoption has improved considerably and at the point of matching this was 100% by the end of Q4. Overall, for the year this was 83% but with a quarter-on-quarter increase. The provision of finalised materials at 2<sup>nd</sup> adoption review has increased from 60% in 2019-20 to 84% in 2020-21 however again we saw this increase to 100% in Q4.
- 5.14 The increase in performance can clearly be linked to the additional Welsh Government funding which has provided the region with a Life Journey Work Co-Ordinator and Life Journey Work Practitioners based within the local authorities.
- 5.15 The Life Journey Work Co-ordinator offers regular support, advice, and guidance to the Practitioners and in addition has offered workshops/briefings to local authority teams and was integral in the recruitment panels for the Practitioner posts. There are regular meetings established now between the Practitioners and the Co-ordinator supports the allocation process and monitoring of performance across the region.
- 5.16 Our Transitions Worker post has become integral to the service we offer and to our ability to provide an enhanced level of support to children moving on to adoption. Over 2020-21 the Transitions Worker has supported **46** children with direct transitions work. This includes ongoing post-placement support for children who were placed in 2019-20 and 26 new referrals for direct work in 2020-21. This means that 40% of our children being placed for adoption were in receipt of this service which is aimed at children over the age of 3 years. In context, 55% of our children placed were under the age of 2. The Transitions

Worker accepted referrals for some children aged 2+ where it was considered appropriate to work directly with them. Understanding the Child Meetings were held in respect of **20** children during 2020-21 along with the completion of Trauma/Nurture timelines for these children. There were an additional **2** families who were having a sibling placed with them where the Transitions Worker supported the children already within the family to manage the transition. The Transitions Worker has also led training for foster carers on moving children on to adoption and assisted in the delivery of training for 2<sup>nd</sup> time adopters.

- 5.17 VVC has continued to embrace the use of all available family finding methods over this year. The team liaises closely with the Adoption Register Wales (ARW)/LinkMaker team to ensure information is updated and monitored in a timely manner. The service delivered a virtual regional profiling event for 18 adopters and 17 children where 6 potential links were identified and are working with NAS to run a further event. VVC has not been able to access a Welsh Adoption Activity Day as these have not run in person due to the pandemic however some available spaces have been utilised at other events run in England on . A Welsh Activity Day is planned for later this year.

## **6. Disruptions and Breakdowns**

- 6.1 There were no placement disruptions during the year.

## **7. Advertising and Marketing**

- 7.1 VVC's Marketing and Recruitment Strategy has continued to focus on raising the profile of the service and helping the public see the Collaborative as very much their first choice when they are exploring adoption. The Recruitment and Marketing Officer's role is crucial in creating a flexible and relevant approach. Our Marketing Officer ensures our Strategy continues to be influenced by the National Adoption Service 's Strategy and she has

developed links with her counterparts in other regions to ensure there is cohesive approach.

- 7.2 The Marketing Officer has also continued to work closely with Cowshed, the marketing company commissioned by NAS to develop the national strategy and to support regional activity. VVC is recognised by the national team as being an active contributor when it comes to adopters who can share their lived experience of adoption during media events and campaigns. Four VVC adopters contributed to a podcast during National Adoption Week and a webinar. A single male adopter from VVC participated in a BBC feature on single male adopters.
- 7.3 Previously formed links with local Comms Departments across the region continue to be useful resources as they ensure adoption features as part of their local advertising particularly during such events as National Adoption Week.
- 7.4 In the previous year, the Collaborative had been proactive in having a physical presence at a variety of community events e.g., National Eisteddfod Cardiff Pride, the Vale of Glamorgan's Agricultural Show and we had engaged with different faith organisations, all activities to raise the profile of the region. COVID-19 meant however that these face-to-face events were cancelled and so the service had quickly to adapt to alternative mechanisms and to further develop our social media presence. VVC specifically uses pay-per-click (PPC) advertising on Facebook and Instagram. This approach has been cost effective as it allows us to target specific geographical locations and provides us with a rich pool of information about the profile of those engaging with our posts.
- 7.5 In addition to using our social media platforms, the service decided to trial including information about the Collaborative in council tax notifications within the areas of Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. Unfortunately, Cardiff Council were unable to provide the service. During the weeks after these inserts were delivered, the service experienced a sustained



increase in the number of visits to our website and in enquiries received. As a service we capture feedback from any enquirer to ascertain where they learn about us and positively many people referred to receiving information within the council tax letter.

- 7.6 Moving forward in 2021/22, it is our intention to repeat this approach with all four of our local authority areas, in addition to continuing our PPC advertising.

## **8. Adopters**

- 8.1 As outlined above, our continued marketing activity has had a specific goal to increase the number of enquiries the agency receives. 2020/21 saw a significant and sustained increase in the number of enquiries – **374** in total compared to **336** received during 2019/20. This is a pleasing outcome and our ability to provide a professional and structured approach to receiving, recording, and tracking enquiries has led to this important increase in performance. The national marketing work in conjunction with the well-established regional input is also having a positive impact in providing a consistent and coherent message to the wider public.

- 8.2 2020/21 saw the Collaborative hosting seven Information Evenings for prospective applicants. These events were delivered remotely but were well attended and feedback received has continued to be positive.

- 8.3 VVC's three day 'Preparation to Adopt' training course continued to be provided by an Independent Social Worker during the period but again this had to be quickly adapted to a virtual means of delivery. In preparation for the implementation of the two-stage process of adopter assessment and to avoid delay, the frequency of our training was increased in the latter part of the year. Since January 2021, our preparation training has been delivered jointly with Western Bay region which has allowed us to increase the number of training courses from six a year to 10 per year without any increase to overall costs as trainer's fees are shared equally with Western Bay.

- 8.4 With the recent retirement of our independent trainer, the service has used this as an opportunity to redevelop the training content and from October 2021 the frequency of the training will increase further to 11 preparation training courses a year. These will now be delivered by an experienced member of the VVC Recruitment & Assessment Team and an experienced member of the Western Bay Post Adoption Support Team.
- 8.5 Questionnaires have been developed by the Vale of Glamorgan's Participation Officer and are distributed at the end of training to gather views of the process from enquiry through to training. These questionnaires are collated and the feedback in respect of the training from received has been continued to be positive.
- 8.6 **71** households attended the courses. Out of those **71** households three did not go onto submit applications to progress onwards to an assessment. These potential applicants have been followed up. All three households feedback that they wished to take more time to consider their future plans.
- 8.7 During 2020/21 a total of **67** adopter approvals were presented to VVC's Adoption Panel and positive recommendations were made. **66** of these approvals were ratified within the reporting year. The approvals are broken down as follows: **Cardiff – 26, Merthyr Tydfil – 4, RCT – 17, and Vale of Glamorgan – 19 (included in the Vale of Glamorgan figures are approvals for four adopters outside of our area (2 - Newport, 1 - Caerphilly and Powys - 1)**. This represents a small decrease to the previous year but against the background of the challenging COVID-19 environment, this performance is a pleasing result.
- 8.8 Out of the **66** ratified approvals achieved in 2020/21, **9** were foster carers assessed to adopt a specific child, **6** were second time adopters and **51** were first time adopters.
- 8.9 The majority of the applicants approved during 2020/21 have gone onto be matched with children from within VVC. Four have had a child placed from

outside of our region: two from SEWAS region, one from Scotland and one from Devon. A further two are in the matching process of adopting non VVC children

## **9. Adoption Panel**

- 9.1 VVC continues to manage a central list of Adoption Panel members. In terms of practical delivery, VVC typically holds four Panel sittings a month. Again, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in Panel sittings being delivered remotely which in many respects has proved more efficient, especially in reducing travel time etc.
- 9.2 Panel membership has seen several changes during the year with the retirement of one of our independent Chairs just prior to the pandemic and then one of our Vice Chairs, leaving just one Chair & two Vice Chairs to maintain all Panel meetings. As the year progressed, our one remaining independent Chair also stepped down and one of the Vice Chairs with the result that an expression of interest was sent out to members in respect of the vacant positions. As a result of this process our one remaining Vice Chair was successful in being appointed as Chair alongside one of our independent members. Our new Chairs have demonstrated flexibility in being able to cover each other where required and in supporting the ever-increasing Panel workload. There is however a need to recruit a new Vice Chair.
- 9.3 Also, during the past year, VVC has been proactive in recruiting several new Panel members, with a particular focus upon increasing representation of adoptive parents and adopted people. There is an ongoing need to increase our Social Worker membership from our partner authorities whilst recognising that workload constraints often prohibit this.
- 9.4 During the past year the importance of understanding diversity and unconscious bias has been recognised as an important area of development for Panel members with the result that NAS provided training for all Panel

members across Wales on this topic. This training explored a range of equality and diversity issues and was attended by 23 members of VVC Panel.

- 9.5 Our Panel Chairs have also benefitted from participating in several information sessions and training events linked to the launch of the National Adoption Services Good Practice Guides.
- 9.6 During 2020/21 42 Adoption Panel meetings were held. The workload of the Panel is outlined in Appendix 4.

## **10. Adoption Support**

- 10.1 Referrals into the service for post adoption support services dipped in the first quarter of the year but then increased during the second quarter and have continued to rise. This increase is in line with the previous reporting year and reflects the focus from the NAS on improving awareness of support services for adoptive families. **92** referrals were received during the year which has created a backlog of unallocated work and a waiting list. When compared to previous years, the service has observed a 20% increase in the number of referrals received over the past three years.
- 10.2 The increased focus on adoption support services at a national and local level has in turn enabled adopters to request earlier services following the making of Adoption Order. It is anticipated that this will increase as with the implementation of the Good Practice Guides which emphasise earlier involvement of the Adoption Support Service in planning for the child and maintaining contact with the adoptive family post Adoption Order.
- 10.3 Referrals for Access to Birth Records for adopted adults have also seen a rise this year with a total of **68** referrals. There has also been a rise in request for information under the Post Commencement Regulations 2005 as a number of those enquirers have reached 18 years of age. **31** referrals for Intermediary Services have also been received. COVID restrictions have impacted to some

extent on our ability to access paper records as offices have been closed which has also contributed to our waiting list.

- 10.4 VVC does not manage a budget for the provision of adoption support services although undertakes assessments of support needs which may recommend an adoption support package to the respective authority where the adoptive family resides. The budgets to support such provision is held in the respective local authority. The total expenditure on adoption support services for the reporting year was **£167.550.50** which covers **64** children. The average spent per child has increased to **£2618** per child, although this only represents **24 %** of children who are being supported by the team. The emphasis of the service has been to continue to develop the skills of practitioners within the Adoption Support Team to be able to manage families by way of inhouse support without the need to rely on external input.
- 10.5 The Adoption Support Team embraced the constraints imposed by the pandemic and developed a range of virtual support mechanisms for families. The monthly Toddler Group was facilitated remotely until the easing of restrictions allowed some outside gatherings. A quiz for adoptive families was also developed. The team also facilitated a Nurturing and Attachment Course and two courses on Non-Violent Resistance (NVR) remotely. A support group established following the NVR training has also been run remotely. The mechanisms put in place have been well received and take up has increased as families have found ,in most instances, it easier to engage with virtual platforms of delivery.
- 10.6 ICF funds within Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan has been utilised to commission a Psychology Service, Enfys which includes support for adopted children. The Adoption Support Team can refer a small number of cases and the service provides consultation and peer supervision for staff within the team undertaking direct work with families.
- 10.7 The Birth Parent Adviser's role post has become more established within the service despite the change in the postholder . A referral process and

information leaflet for Social Work colleagues across the region and an information leaflet for birth parents has been disseminated with the aim of promoting the service and increasing support to birth parents. A birth parent group has been developed and is been delivered on a hybrid basis (part virtual and part face to face) to enable a wider reach and to meet differing needs. **35** referrals for individual birth parent support have been received and supported.

- 10.8 The TESSA Co-ordinator's role has also been further established within the region during this period. The Co-ordinator undertakes assessments of need and processes referrals of families who may be eligible for the service. **41** referrals have been made to TESSA by VVC during the year which is the highest in Wales. The TESSA Parenting group was unable to run due to COVID restrictions and so these families were redirected to one of the training courses being provided by VVC.
- 10.9 Since being established the Children and Young People Co-ordinator has been directly involved in running Connected groups on a Saturday each month with staff from the Connected service. During lockdown the frequency of these groups increased to fortnightly on a virtual basis which the Co-ordinator continued to service. The service caters for adopted children and young people 7 upwards, **59** children and young people from VVC are registered with the service. In addition, the postholder has provided direct support sessions to **17** children from the region and has also supported **8** direct contact sessions for adopted children, which can be as frequent as 3 times a year and can also include separate sibling contact.
- 10.10 There is a need to continue to collect data from the Evaluation forms that have been developed. The main objective is to ascertain the benefits of the service provided and the needs within families which may not have been addressed. It is however hoped going forward that the findings can be collated in a more systematic way to enable the feedback to be used constructively to improve service delivery.

## **11. Policies and Procedures**

11.1 The first six years of operation has seen great strides in delivering a service that meets objectives set both locally and nationally. Whilst there have been numerous examples of regionalising the paperwork, processes and systems, the development of general policies has been limited due to capacity.

11.2 The need to address gaps in our policy framework and to standardise processes has been acknowledged across regions. NAS have therefore commissioned Practice Solutions to develop a common set of policies and procedures and VVC has contributed to the initial audit undertaken to scope the work involved.

## **12. CIW**

12.1 The service has not been inspected by CIW.

## **13. Consultation, Engagement & Quality Assurance**

13.1 During 2020-21 VVC has developed a range of consultation and feedback tools at various points for all functions with the overall aim of improving our service user engagement and to develop our quality assurance system. Additionally, the evaluations undertaken have enabled us to ascertain the benefits of the service provided and identify needs which may not have been addressed. It is however hoped going forward that the findings can be collated in a more systematic way to enable the feedback to be used constructively to improve service delivery. In addition, VVC adopters contributed to Adoption UK Barometer Study and IPC's review of the Adoption Support Framework commissioned by NAS.

## **14 Complaints, Comments and Compliments**

14.1 There was one complaint received during the reporting period:

- 14.2 Complaint from a birth parent concerning the role undertaken by the Family Finding Social Worker and the delay in receiving her post adoption letter from the adoptive parents. This complaint was investigated by the Regional Manager under stage 1 of the Vale of Glamorgan Complaint Procedure.
- 14.3 Regional staff have continued to receive positive feedback on the range of services they provide from a variety of sources. These compliments are recorded, and staff are encouraged to collate this information to contribute to their own personal development plans. The new services established because of the investment, particularly the role of the Transitions Worker, have been particularly well received.

## **15. Conclusion, Future Priorities & Challenges**

- 15.1 In terms of key performance indicators the end of year position presented a much healthier position than was anticipated at the beginning of the reporting year. Despite the restrictions imposed upon service delivery, the region was successful in placing a significant number of children and in approving a comparable number of adopters to the previous year . The priorities going forward remain as in previous years. We need to continue to build upon our performance and ensure that we can meet the range of needs presented by children requiring adoptive placements within the region . The increased complexity and profile of the harder to place children will continue to challenge our ability to secure timely, appropriate matches for these children.
- 15.2 The report hopefully highlights the ways the service quickly adapted to the need to develop new ways of working to reduce the impact upon service delivery by the pandemic. The use of virtual platforms has been beneficial in many parts of our service and has enabled us to reach more families. Going forward there is a need to evaluate which functions can continue to be delivered in this way and which parts of the service will require a combined approach. This will continue to inform our recovery planning.



- 15.3 The investment received from Welsh Government has been a significant, positive development for the service as a whole and there is clear evidence of the benefits of the additional roles in enhancing performance . These improvements will however need to continue to be monitored and evaluated to meet the objectives and targets set by NAS. This is particularly important in respect of the provision of life journey work due to the large amount of the investment secured for completion of this work.
- 15.4 One of the key priorities for the service highlighted during the period and continuing into the current year is how best to address the ever-increasing demand for post adoption support services. The raised awareness of adoption support services at a national and local level can only be seen as positive for families in need of support but it has also highlighted the shortfalls within the service to meet these needs in a timely way. The investment monies have served to enhance the range of preventative services we can offer but they have not impacted significantly upon the services required for families in crisis. An urgent evaluation of the resources needed to support such families is required.
- 15.5 The full implementation of the Good Practice Guides will impact directly upon our Family Finding practice and our Adoption Support Service, although the need to promote ongoing and in some cases direct contact with birth families will need to be factored into our assessment process for prospective adopters. Again, an evaluation of the resourcing implications in respect of the new ways of working promoted by the Guides will need to be undertaken.
- 15.6 The easement to the Regulations in respect of the two-stage process for adopter assessments ceases on 30 September 2021 and the new process is to be fully implemented from 1 October 2021. VVC will need to collect data in respect of compliance with the new timescales for assessments and performance will need to be closely monitored.

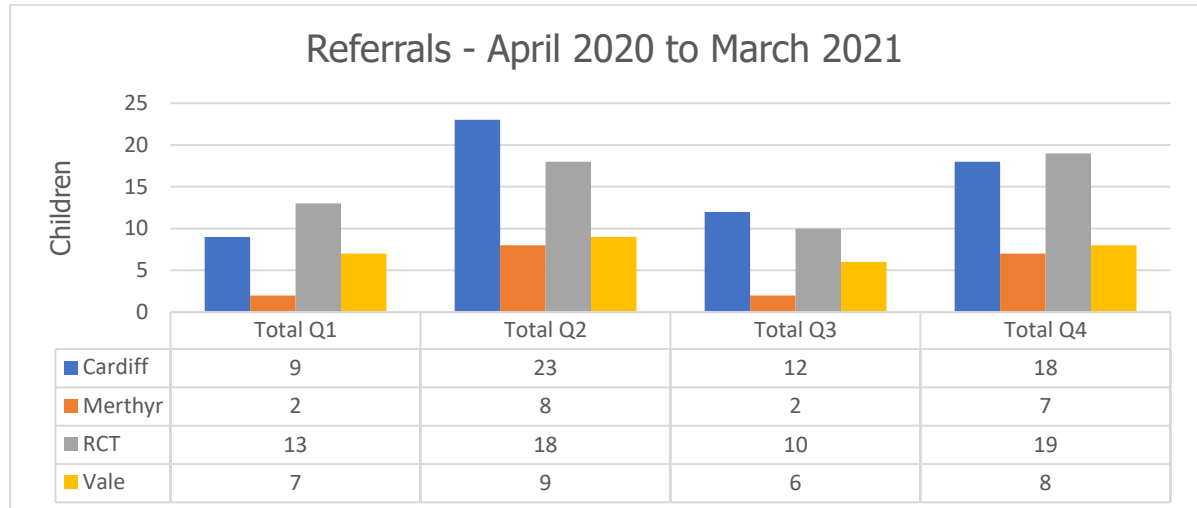
Angela Harris  
Regional Adoption Manager  
October 2021

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## Appendix 1 – Family Finding

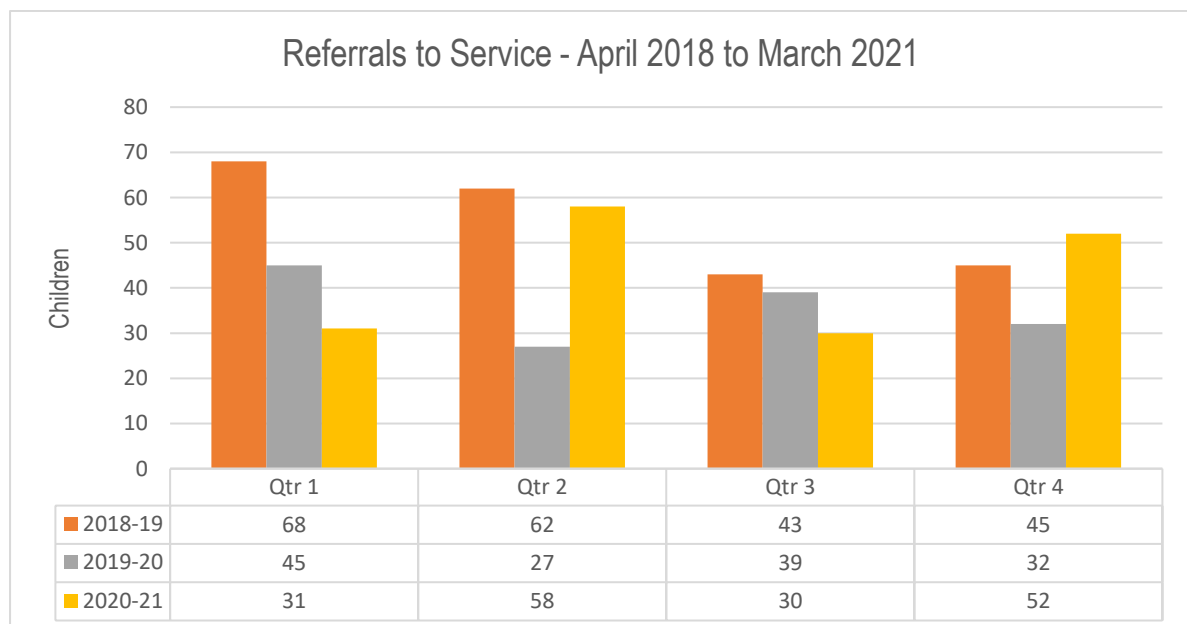
### Children Referrals

171 children were referred to the service during the period April 2020 to March 2021. On average 14 referrals were received monthly, with 36% and 35% of referrals received from Cardiff and RCT respectively. 18% of referrals were received from the Vale of Glamorgan and 11% from Merthyr Tydfil.



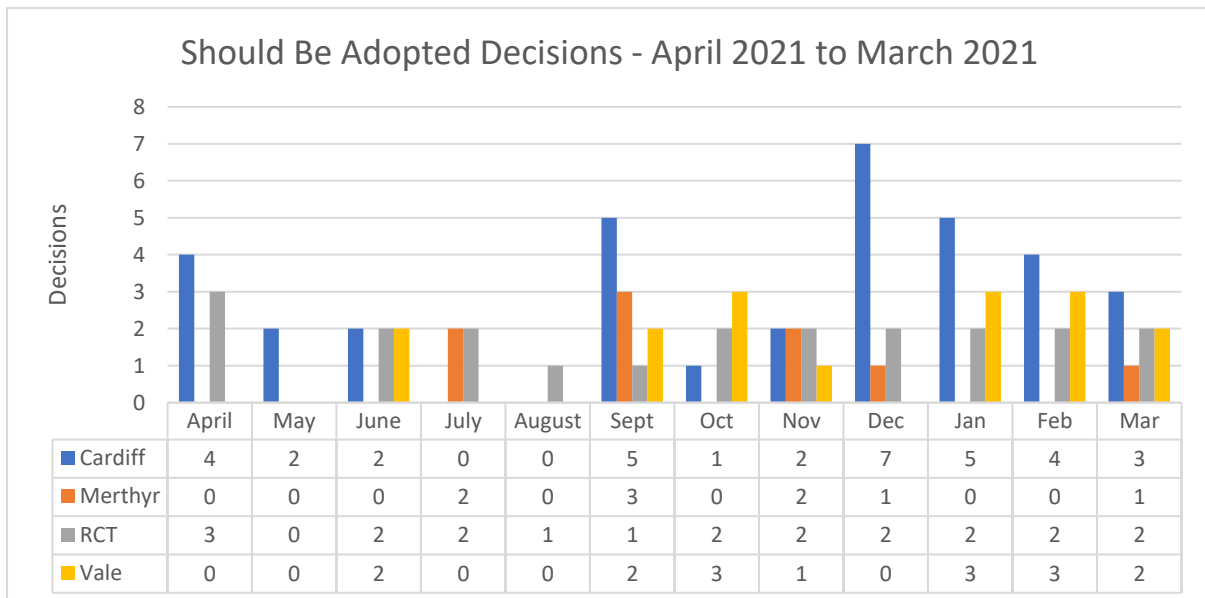
### Comparative Data

Comparative data for 2018-19 and 2019-20 noted a 34% decrease in the number of referrals made to the service and was in line with national trends. However, when 2020-21 data is compared with 2019-20, a 20% increase is noted.



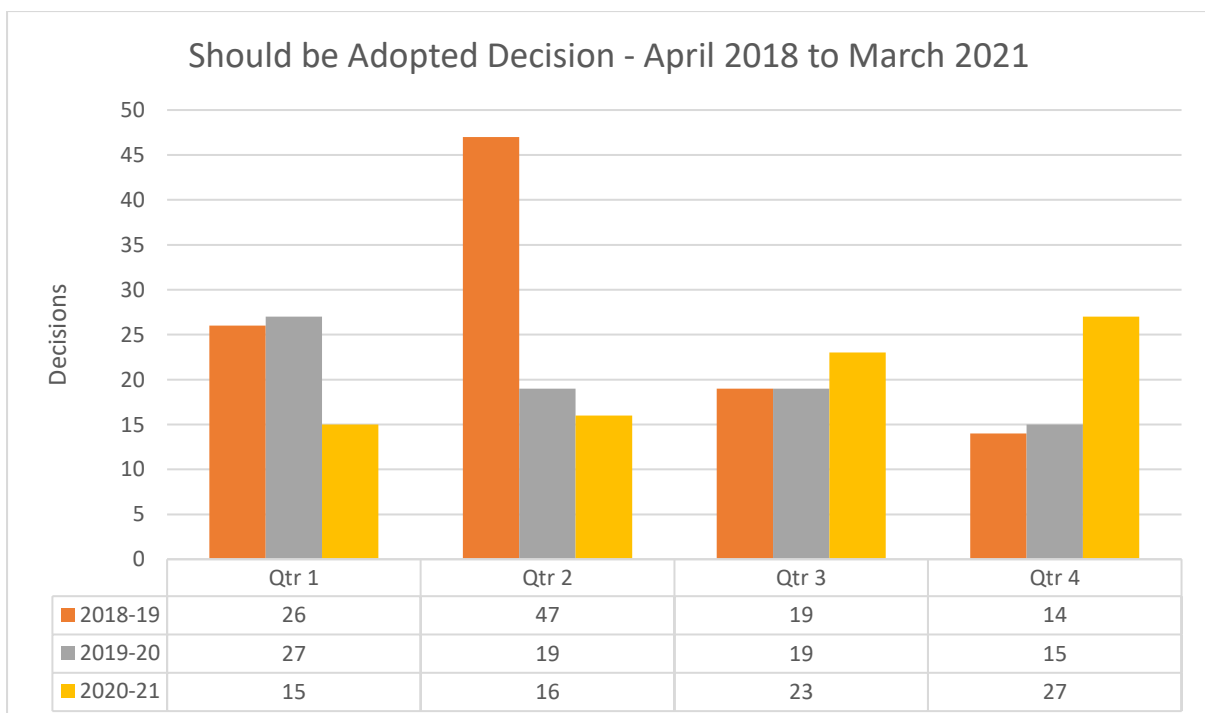
### ‘Should be Adopted’

81 SBA decisions were made during the period April 2021 to March 2021. This is consistent with previous years.



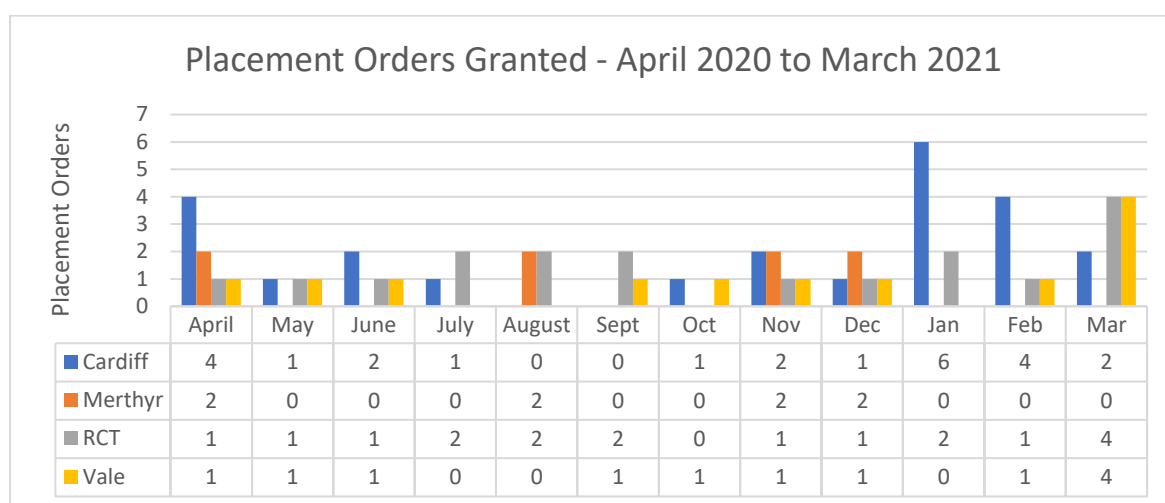
### Comparative Data

Comparative data demonstrates a 23.5% decrease of SBA decisions when compared to data held for 2018-19 and is consistent with national trends.



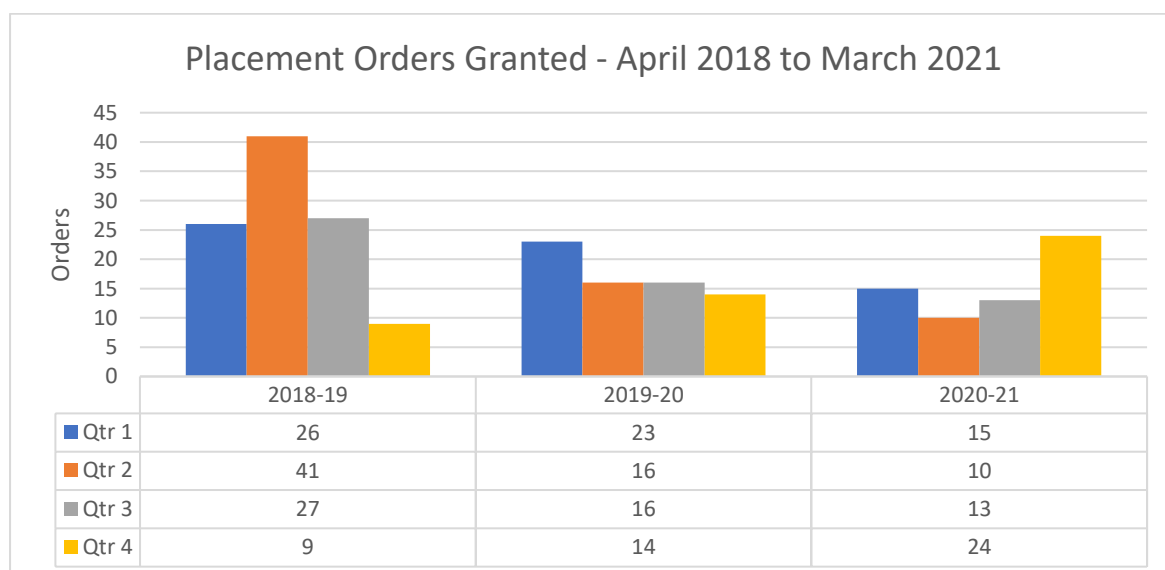
## Placement Orders

**62** Placement Orders were granted in the first half year, which is **13%** lower than the same period in previous year, however we are slowly seeing an increase in the number of Placement Orders being granted. The active family finding data monitored by Welsh Government shows 53 children with a Placement Order who are yet not linked, matched, or placed and whose care plan remains one of adoption. This number of children 'waiting' has significantly reduced through a combination of increased adopter recruitment, utilisation of specialist family finding measures and the reduction in Placement Orders over the past two years.



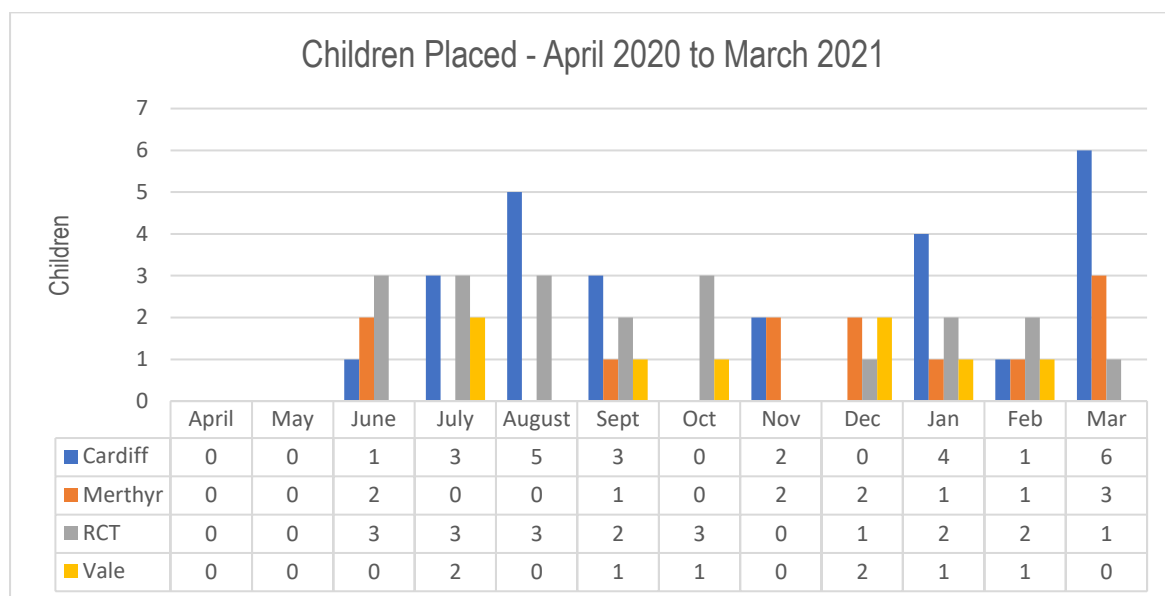
## Comparative Data

Comparative data indicates a marked decrease (33%) in Placement Orders granted during the period 2018-19 and 2019-20 which is indicative of national trends.



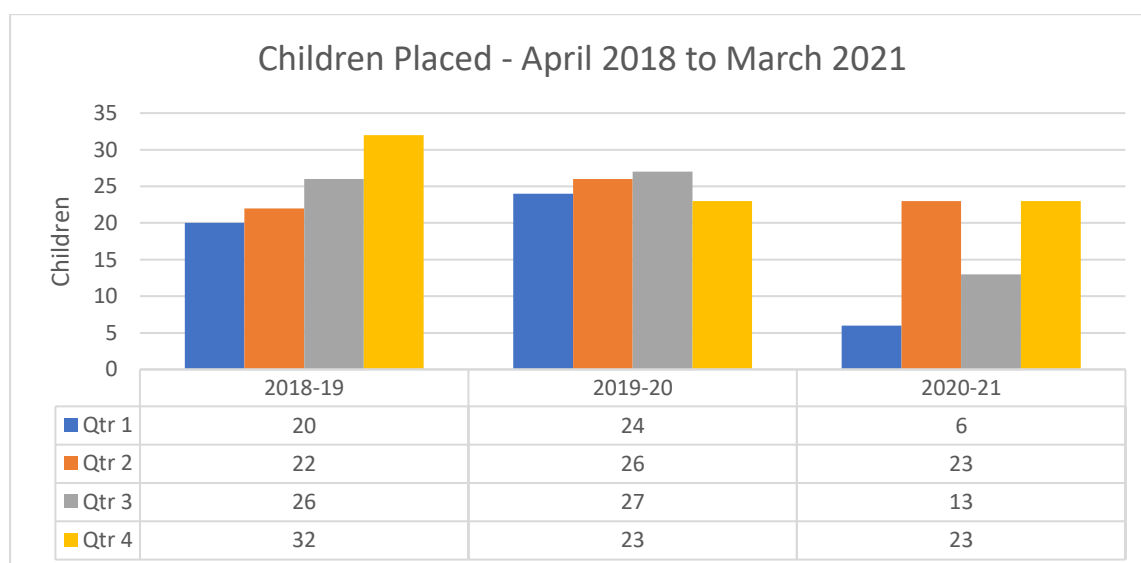
## Children Placed

65 children were placed between April 2020 and March 2021. Whilst there was an initial delay in being able to place children early on due to the coronavirus pandemic, there have been no ongoing delays because of this, and the transitions risk assessment process is enabling placements to continue.



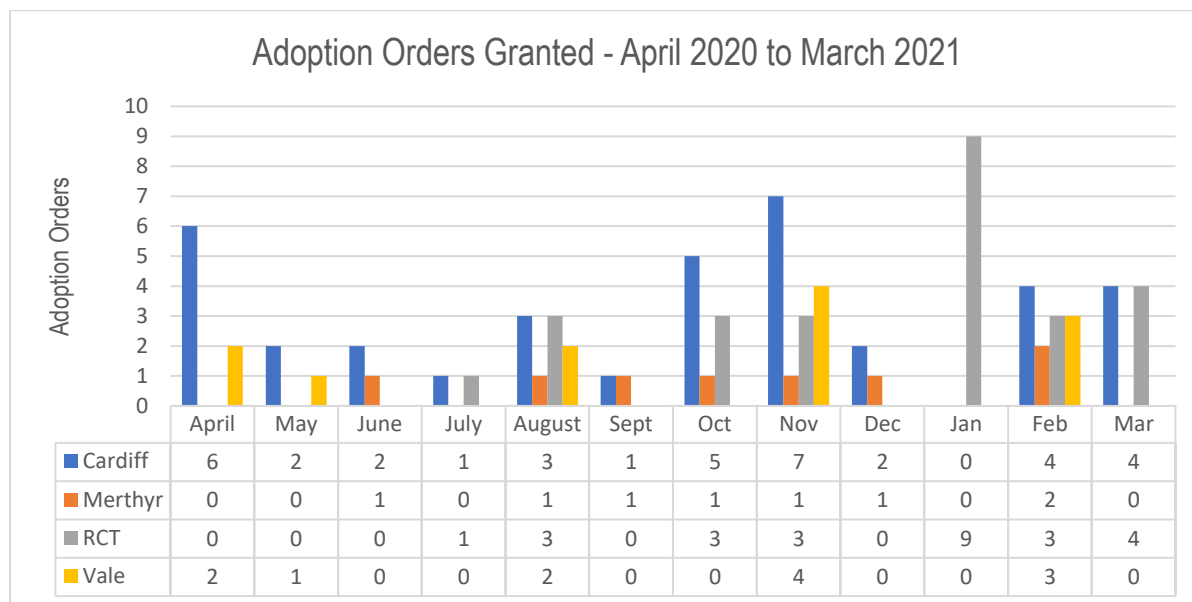
## Comparative Data

The number of children placed is lower than in previous years, in line with the overall reduction in the number of children requiring adoptive placements observed over the past two years.



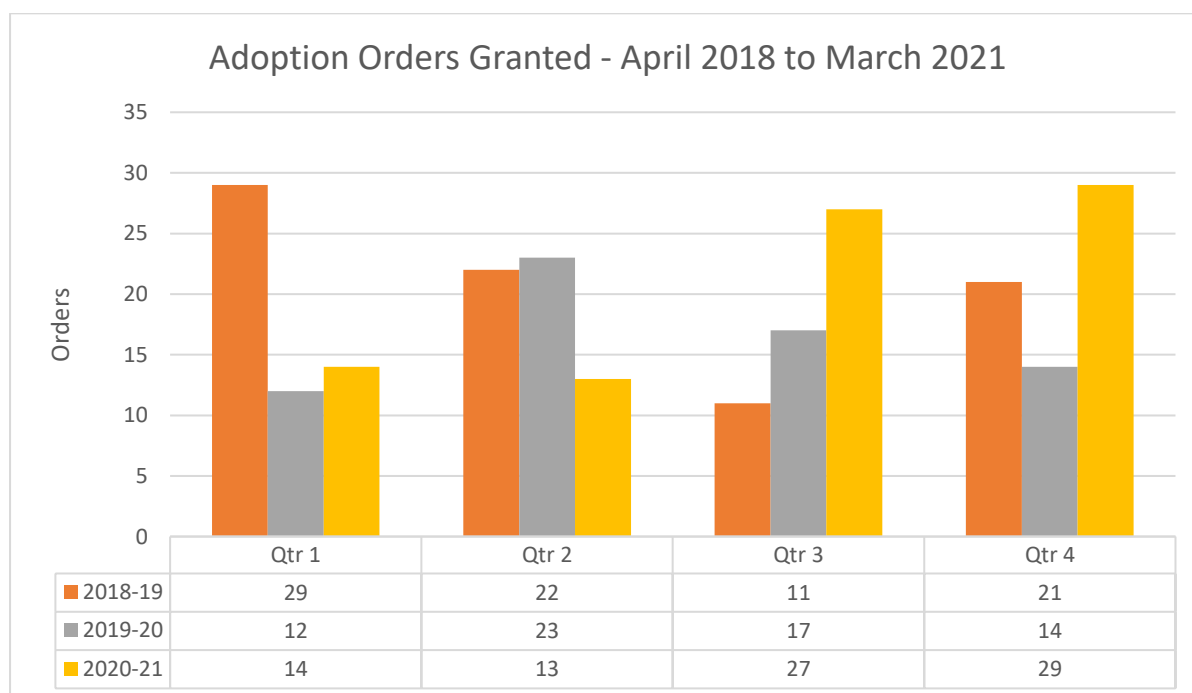
## Adoption Orders

**83** Adoption Orders were granted in the reporting period. There has been a significant increase from the first two quarters to the end of quarter 4 in line with an increasing number of final adoption order hearings which have been able to take place following the initial delays earlier in the pandemic.



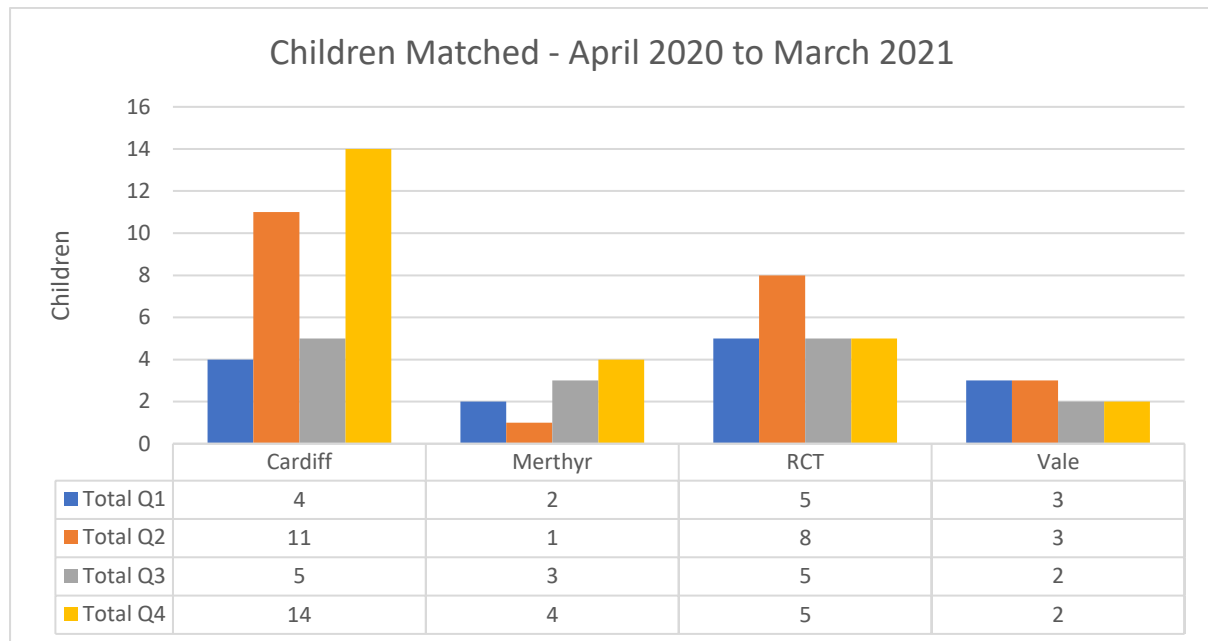
## Comparative Data

Adoption Orders granted during 2020-21 are comparable with data held for 2018-19. A slight decrease (16%) in Adoption Orders granted was noted in 2019-20.



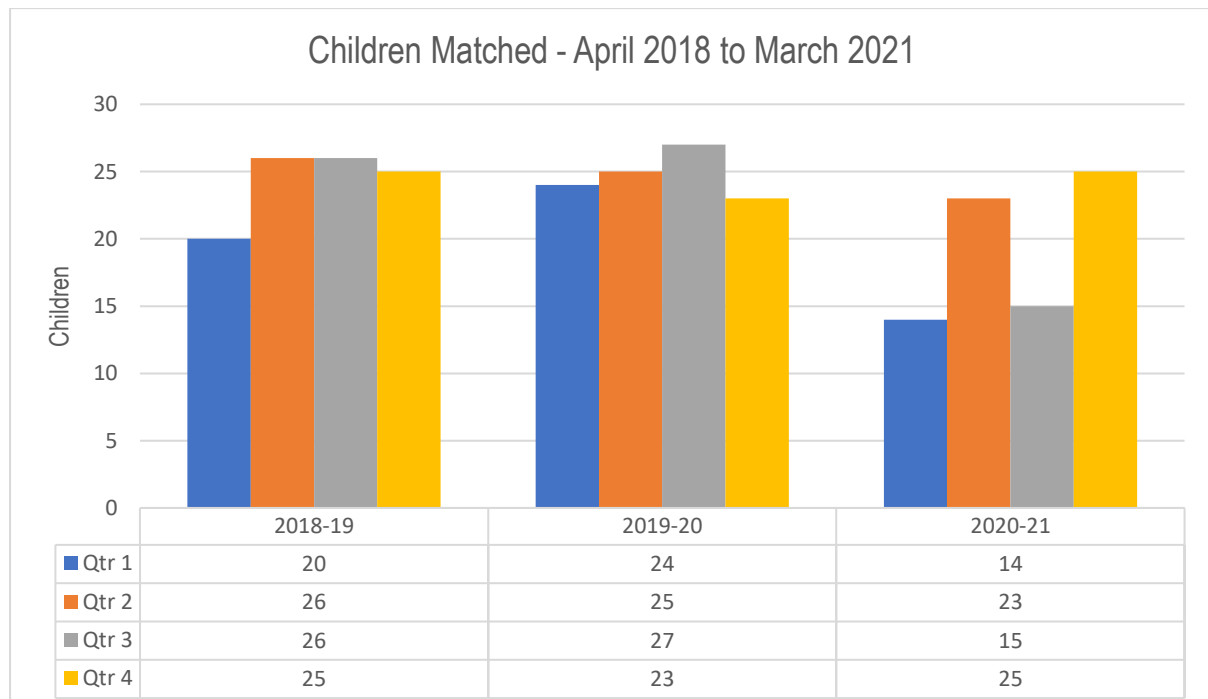
## Children Matched

77 children were matched to adopters during the reporting period. This figure is **22.22%** lower when compared to the same period in previous year.



## Comparative Data

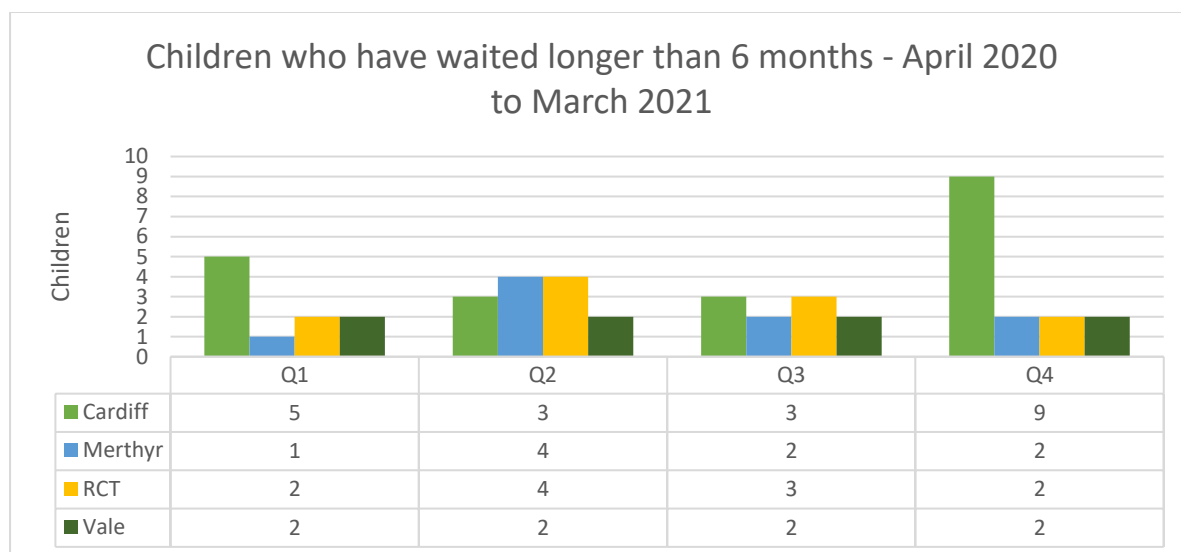
The service continues to consistently match children. It should be noted however, children placed in 2020-21 is 21% lower when compared to previous years.



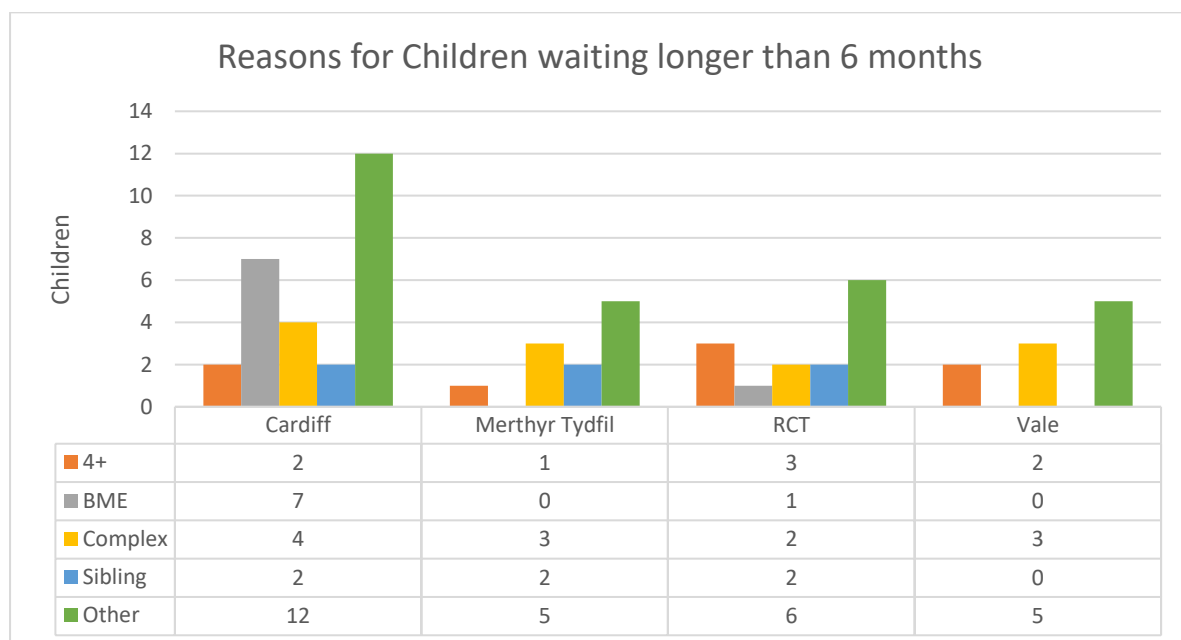


**Number of children Matched since April 2020 who have waited longer than 6 months (or 3 months for a relinquished child under 6 months of age) to progress from “Should be placed for Adoption” decision to approve to Match**

**48 (73.84%)** children matched in 2020-21 have waited longer than six months to progress from SBA to approve to match. This includes several children with additional/complex needs whose adoption searches have taken time but also whose matching with adopters has been drawn out over a longer period to ensure both that adopters have had sufficient time and information to proceed and that children have been able to be prepared.

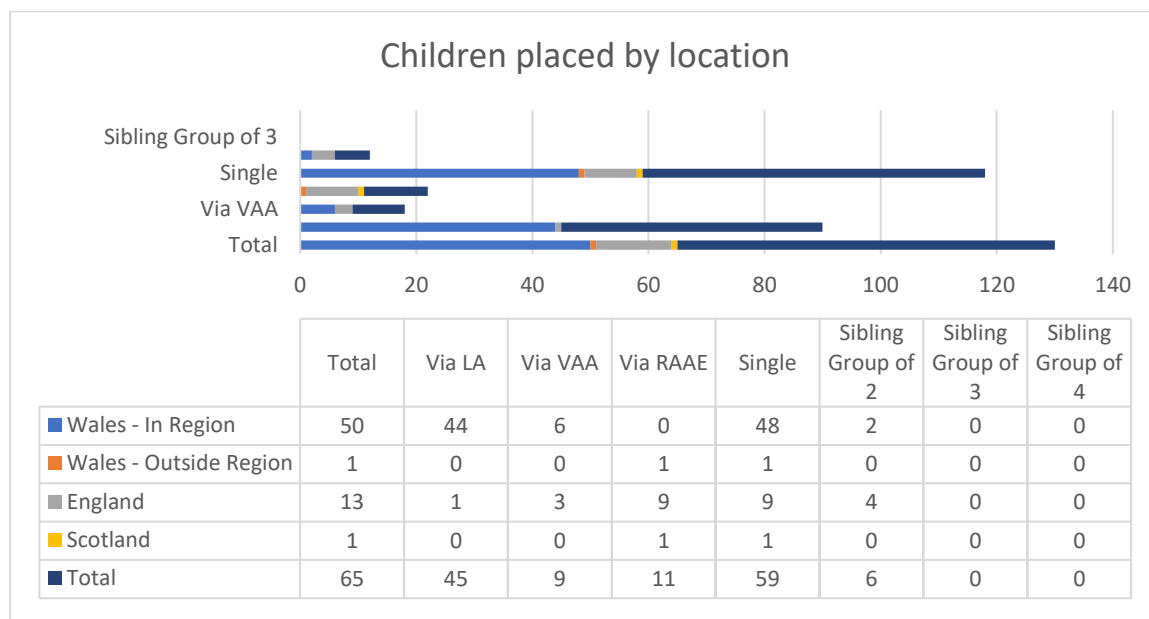


In many cases, children who have waited longer than six months come under more than one category.



## Type of Placement

68% of the children have been placed with VVC adopters



## Life Journey Work

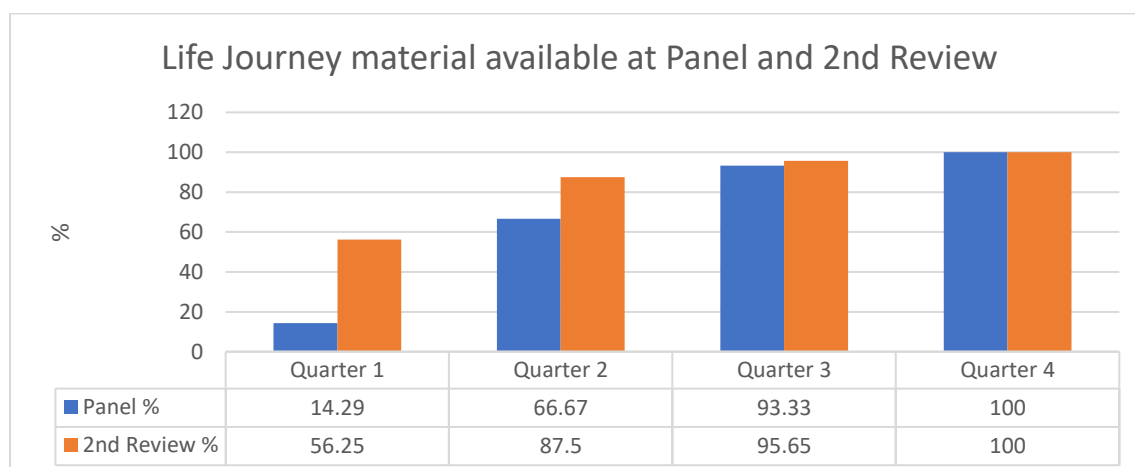
Amendments to the performance indicators for Life Journey work came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

M20A The number of children during the quarter where life journey material has been provided by the time of matching panel. ***Life Journey material at matching panel has been defined as: draft later life letter; and draft life storybook.***

M20 The number of children for whom life journey material has been provided to adopters by the time of the second adoption review.

M21 The number of children during the quarter who had their second adoption review.

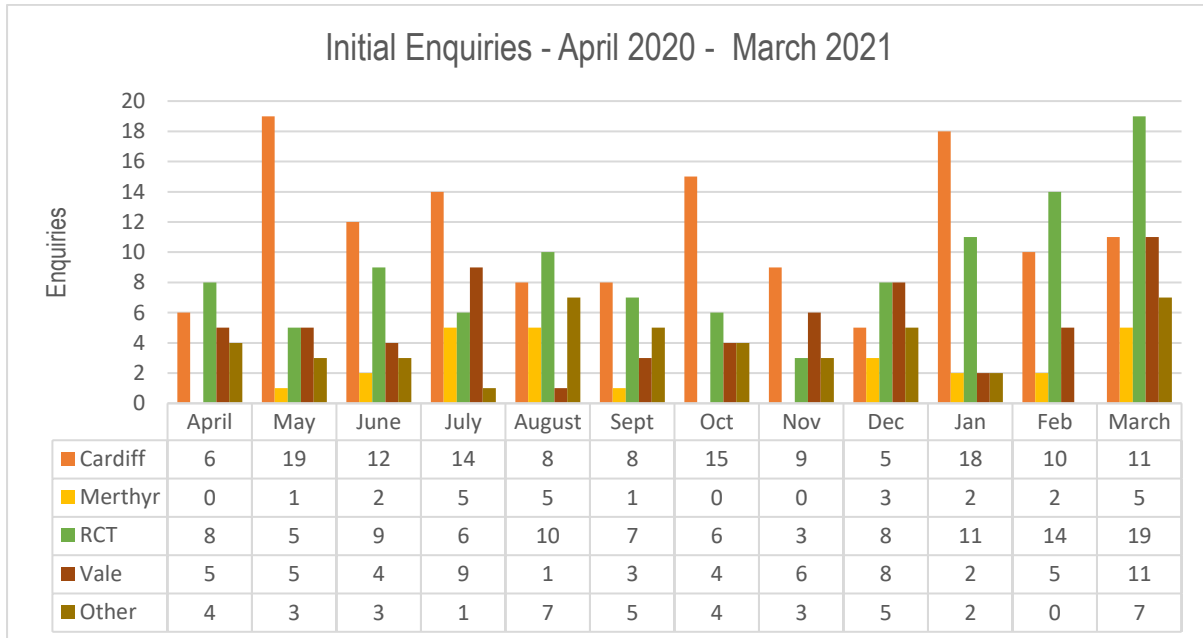
**Quarter on quarter we can see a steady increase in performance with most local authorities achieving 100% compliance. Given the relatively small numbers of children involved in both measures, just 1 child can show a significant impact on the overall %.**



## Appendix 2 – Recruitment and Assessment

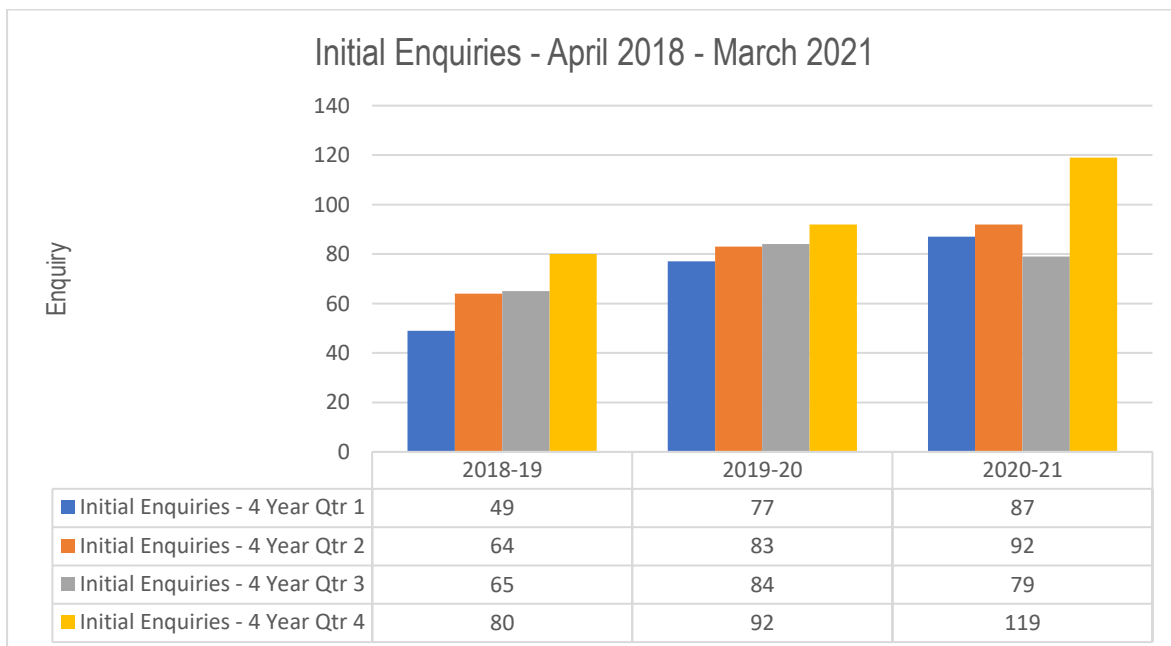
### Initial Enquiries

374 enquiries were received during the period April 2020 – March 2021. Of this, 36% and 28% of enquiries were received from Cardiff and RCT respectively, 17% and 7% of enquiries were received from the Vale of Glamorgan and Merthyr Tydfil respectively and 44 (12%) enquiries were received from outside our region.



### Comparative Data

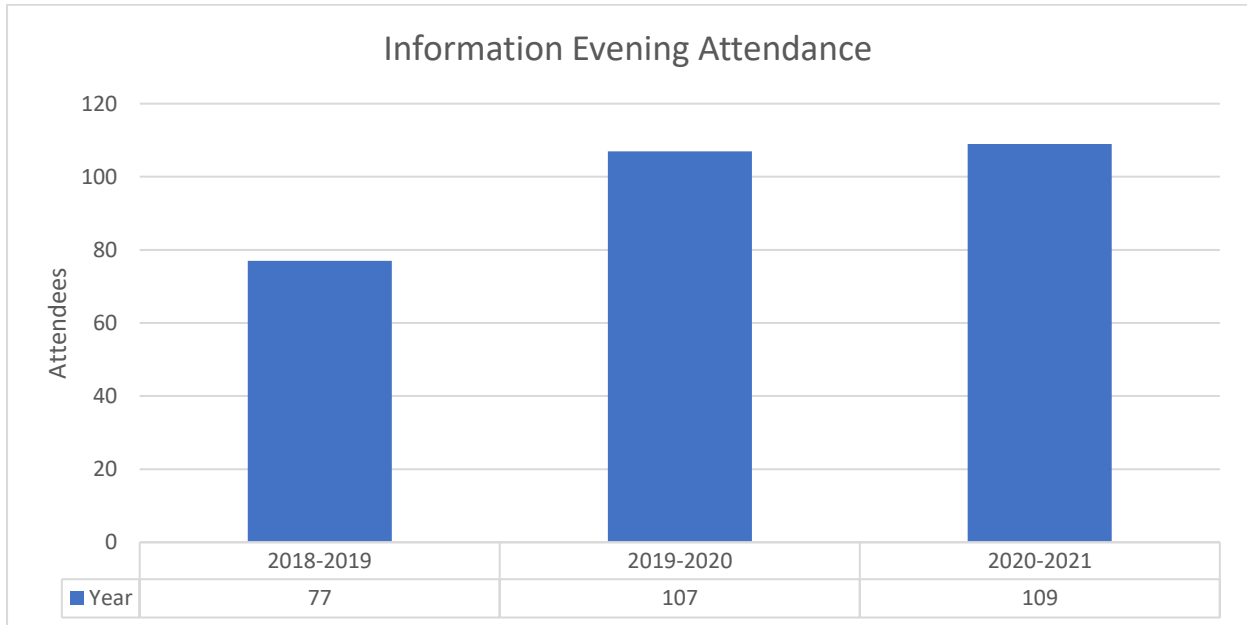
Over the past three years, the service has seen a 46% increase in the number of enquiries.



## Information Evenings

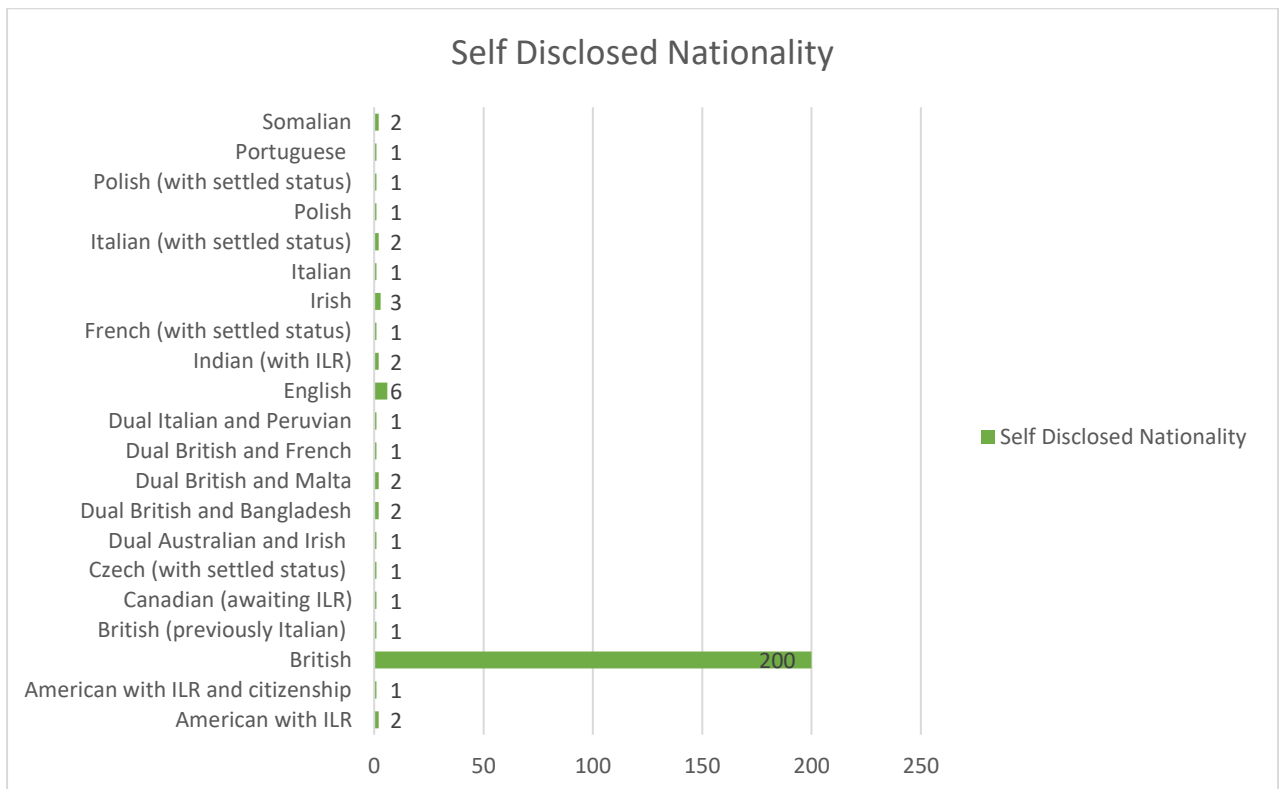
### Comparative Data

Year on year, the service continues to see an increase in attendance at Information Evenings.

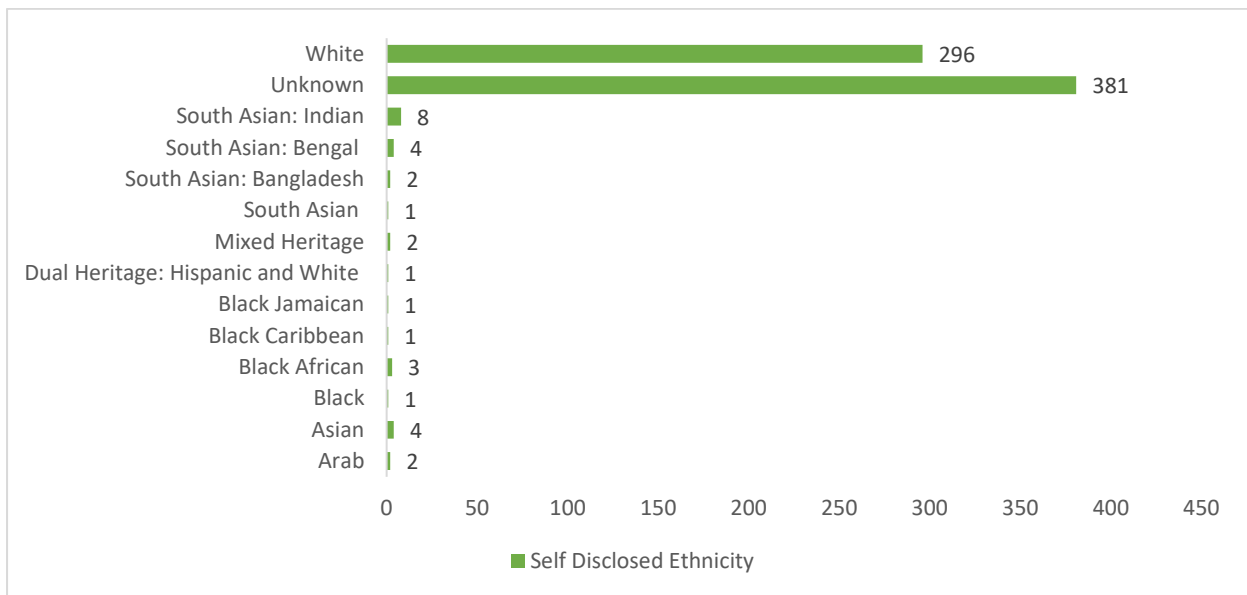


## Demographics of Initial Enquiries

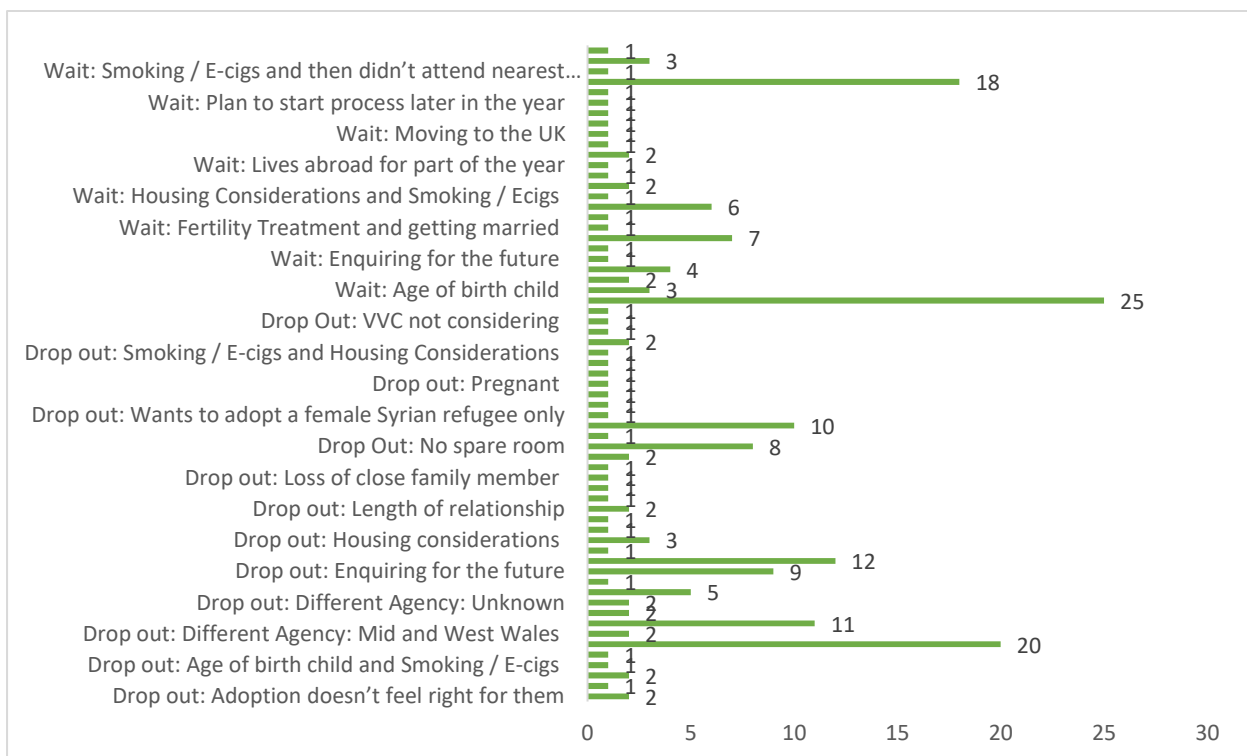
### Self-disclosed Nationality



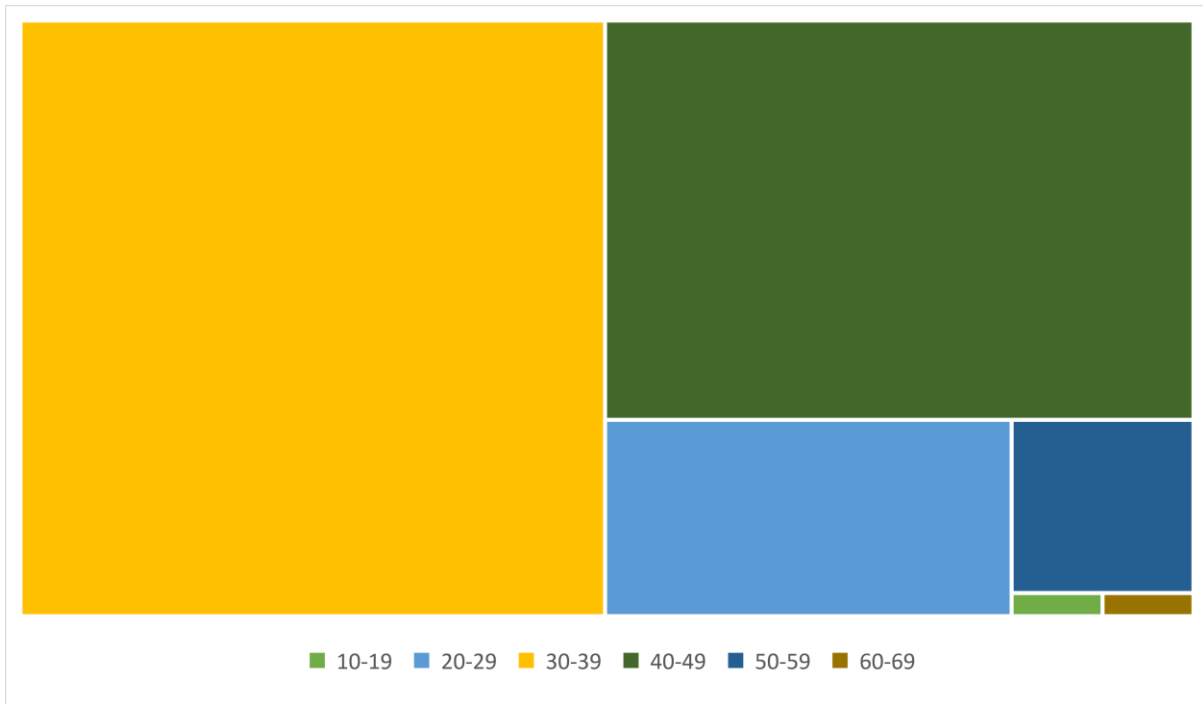
## Self-disclosed ethnicity



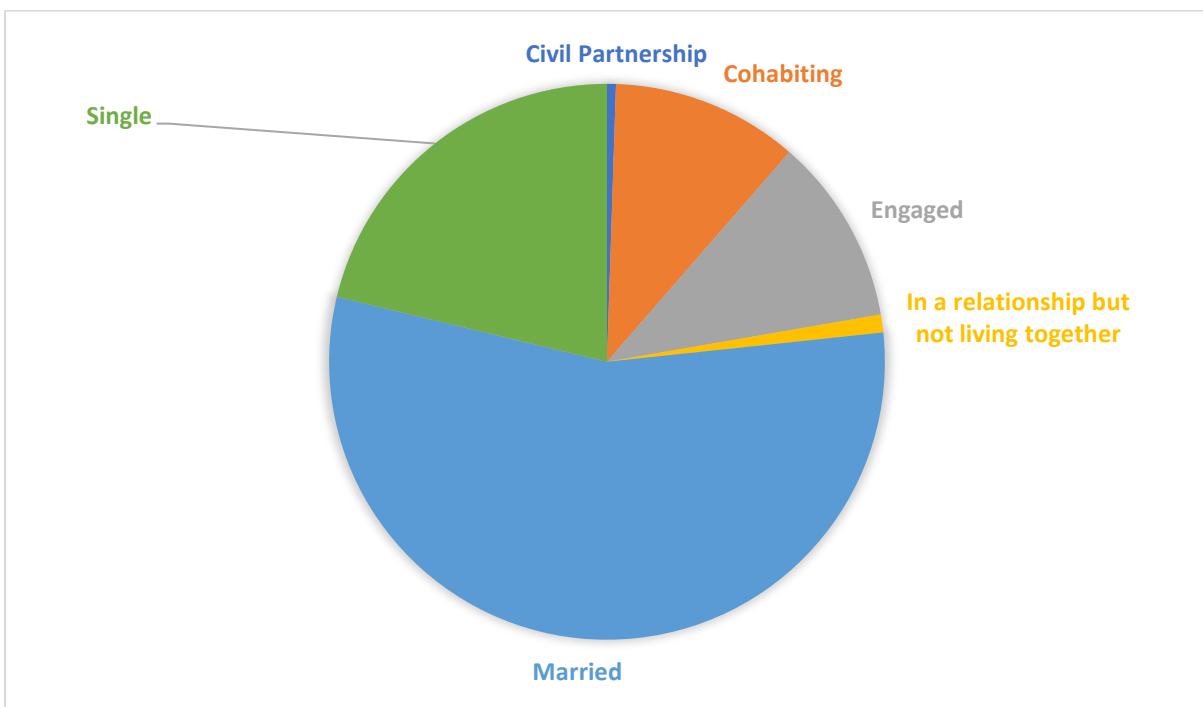
## Self-disclosed Follow up - reasons for delay or withdrawal from adoption process before Information Evening April 2020 – March 2021:



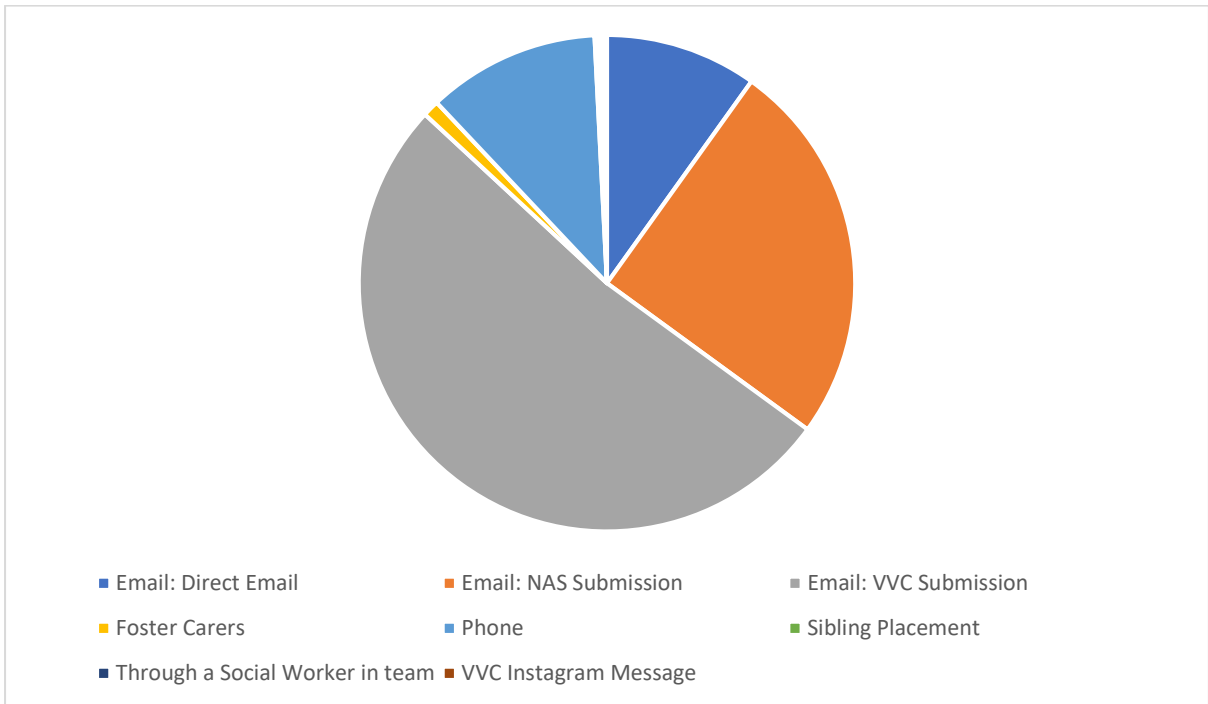
## Age of Applicants



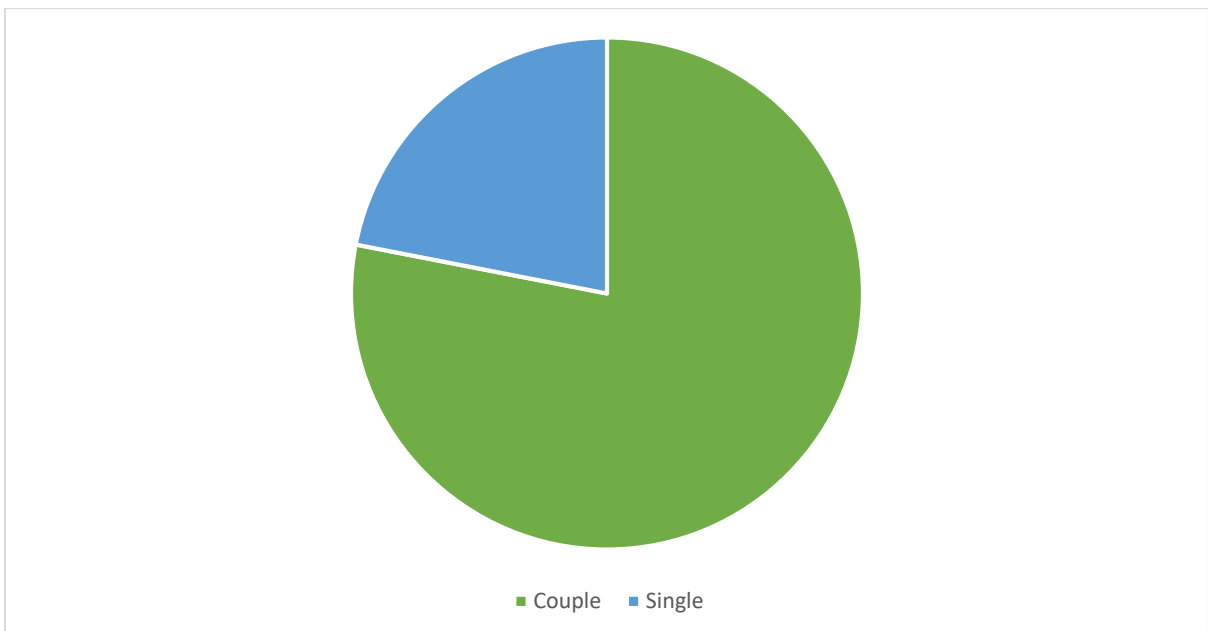
## Relationship Status



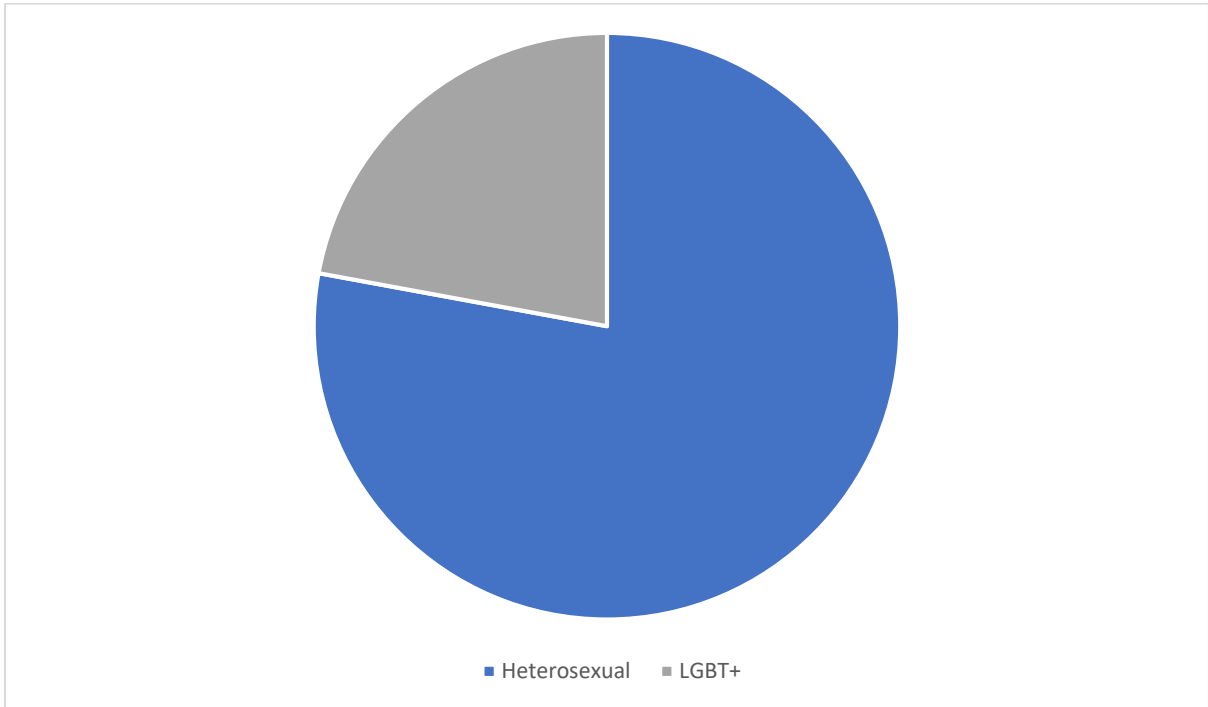
### How they contacted us



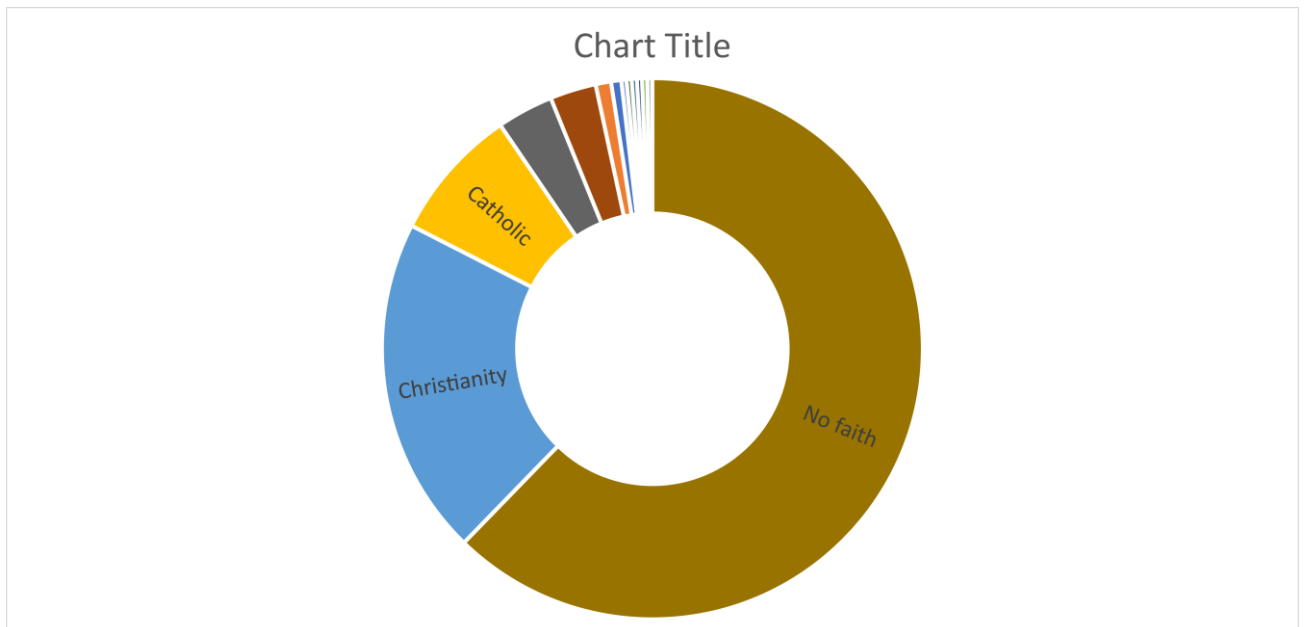
### Couples and Singles



### Couples – self-reported LGBT+ and Heterosexual

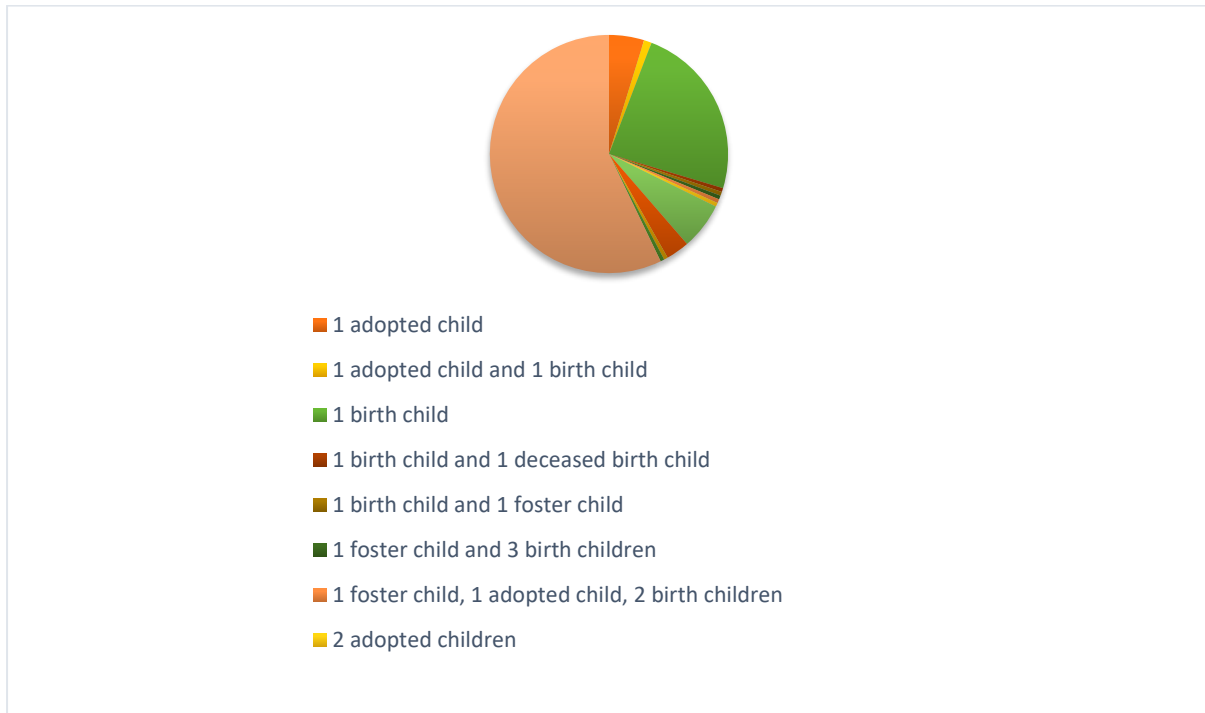


### Self-reported faith

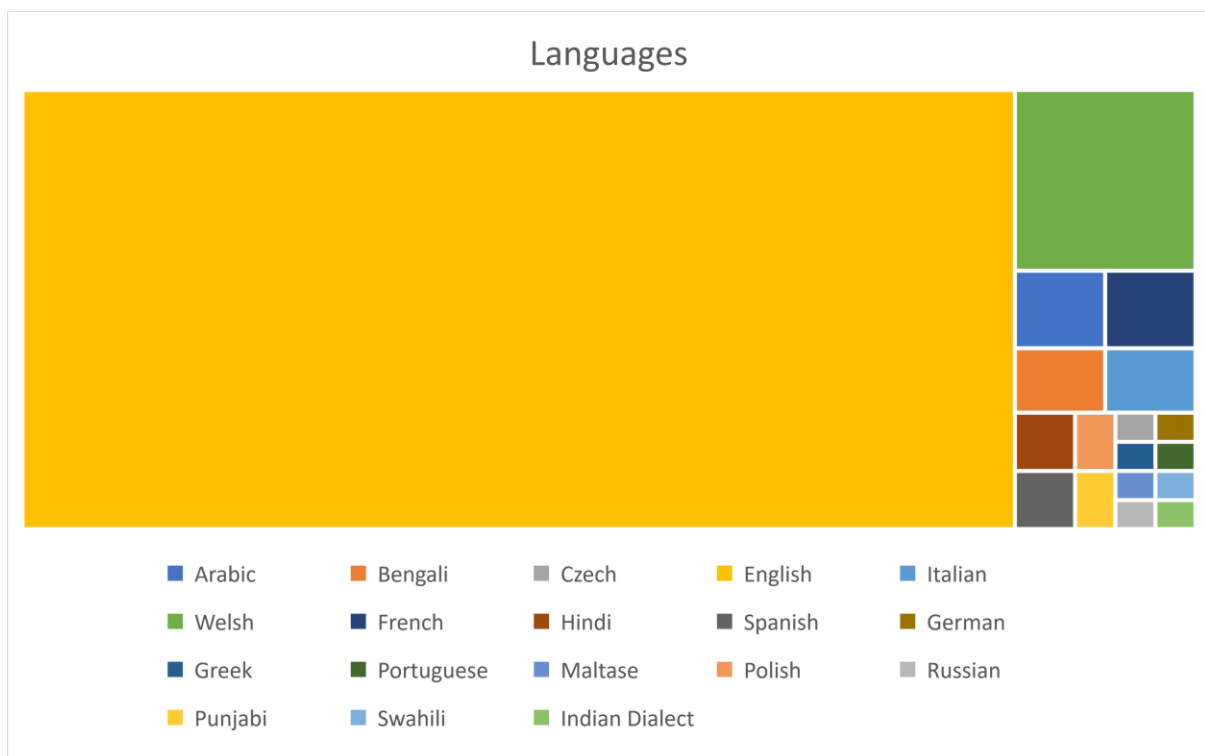




## Adopting with children already in the household

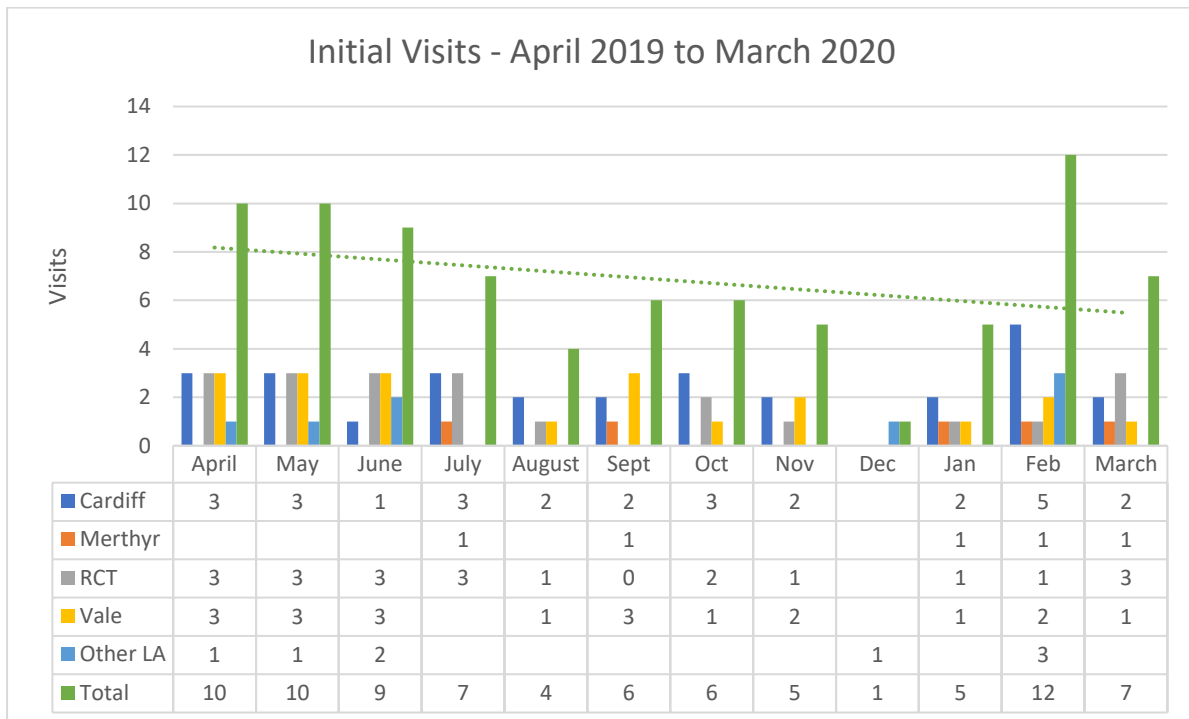


## Languages spoken in the household



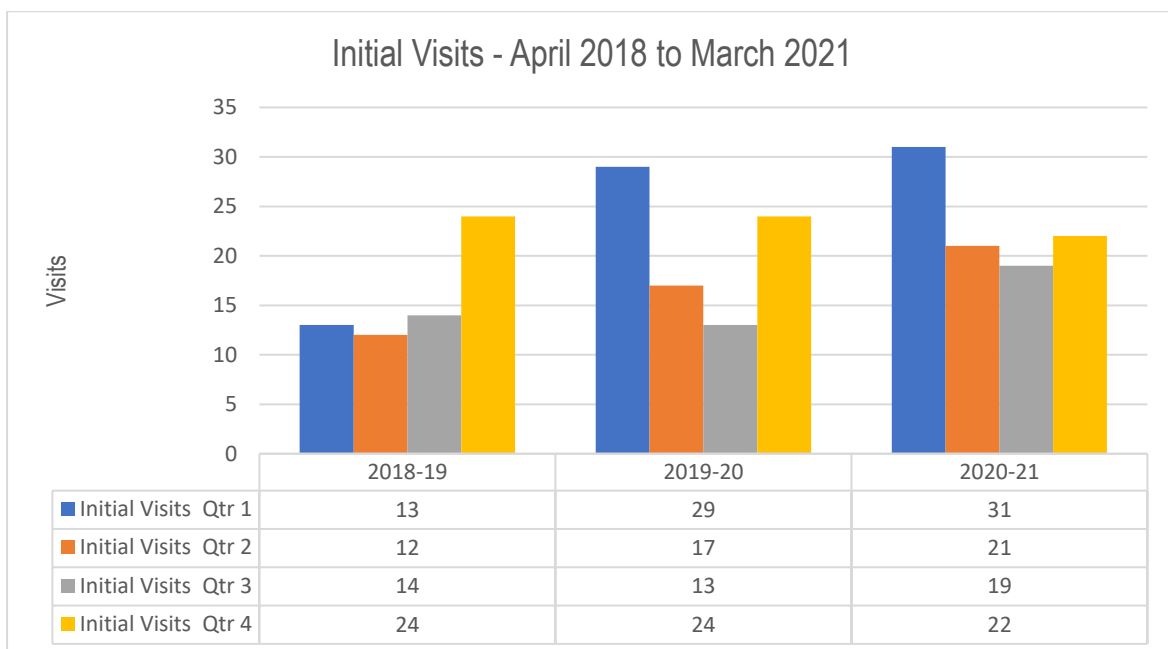
## Initial Visits

82 initial visits took place during the reporting period.



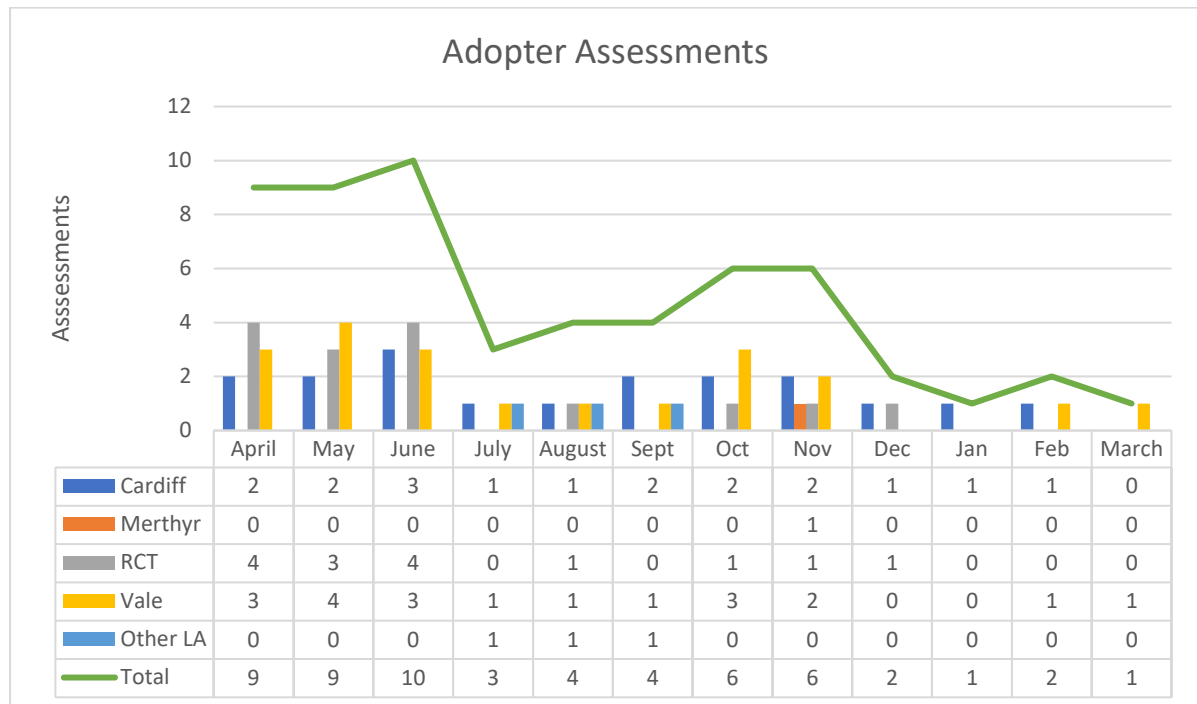
## Comparative Data

Over the past three years, the service has noted a 48% increase in the number of initial visits being carried out.



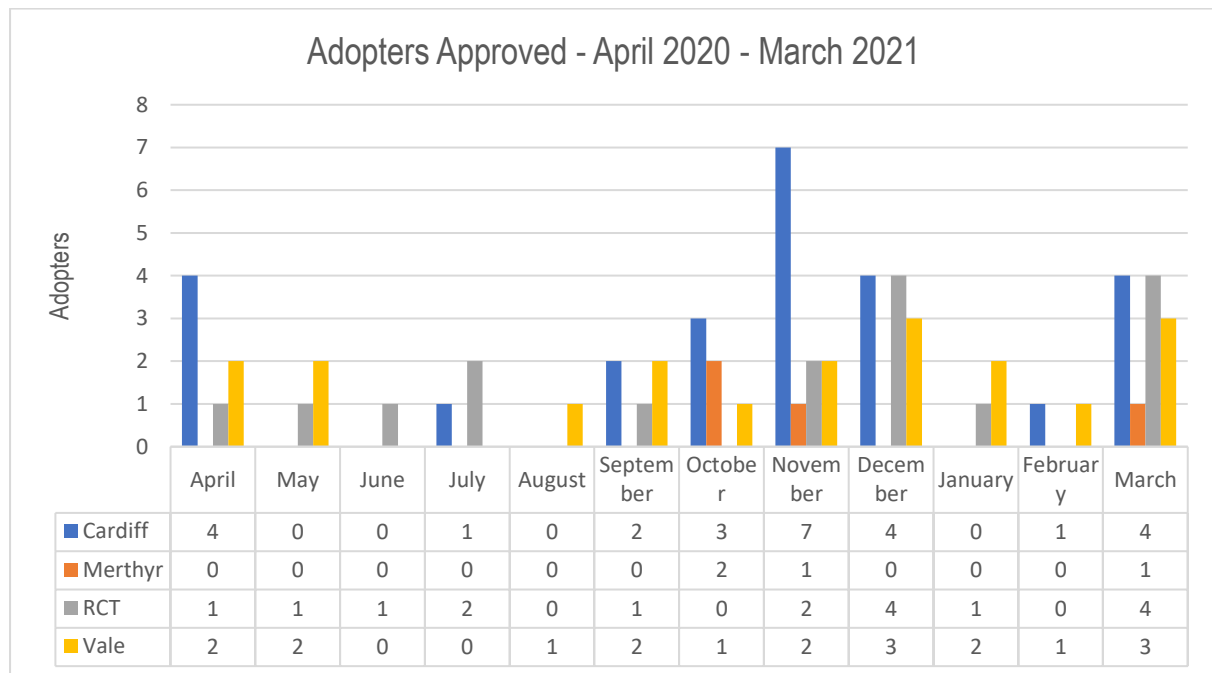
## Adopter Assessments

57 adopter assessments were carried out during the reporting period.



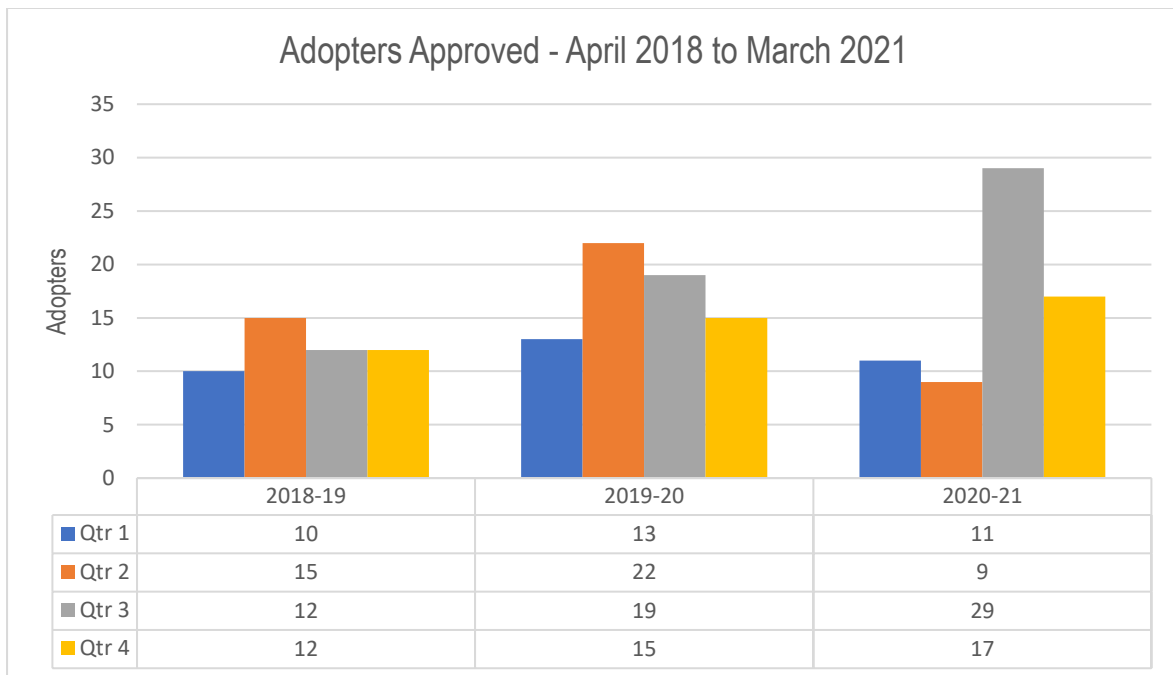
## Adopter Approvals

67 adopter approvals were presented to the adoption panel, of these 66 adopter approvals were ratified during the reporting period.



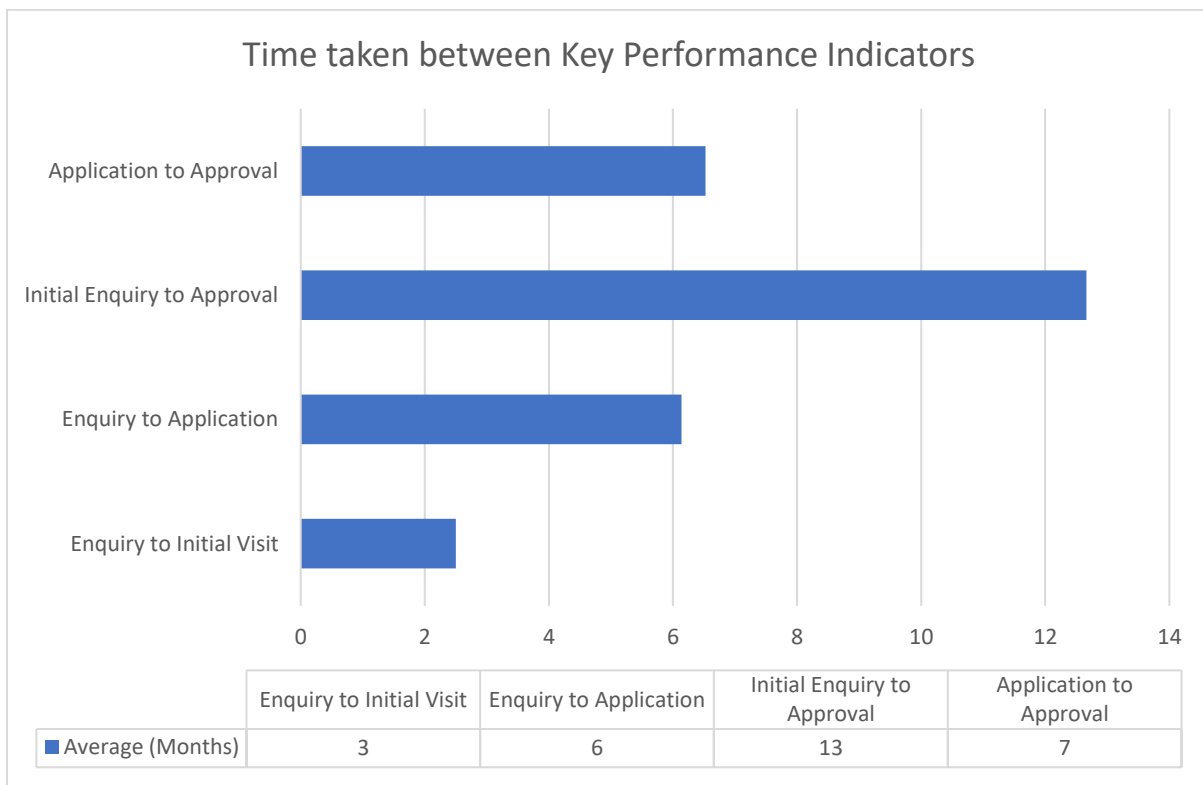
## Comparative Data

A 35% increase in the number of adopters approved has been observed during the three-year period.

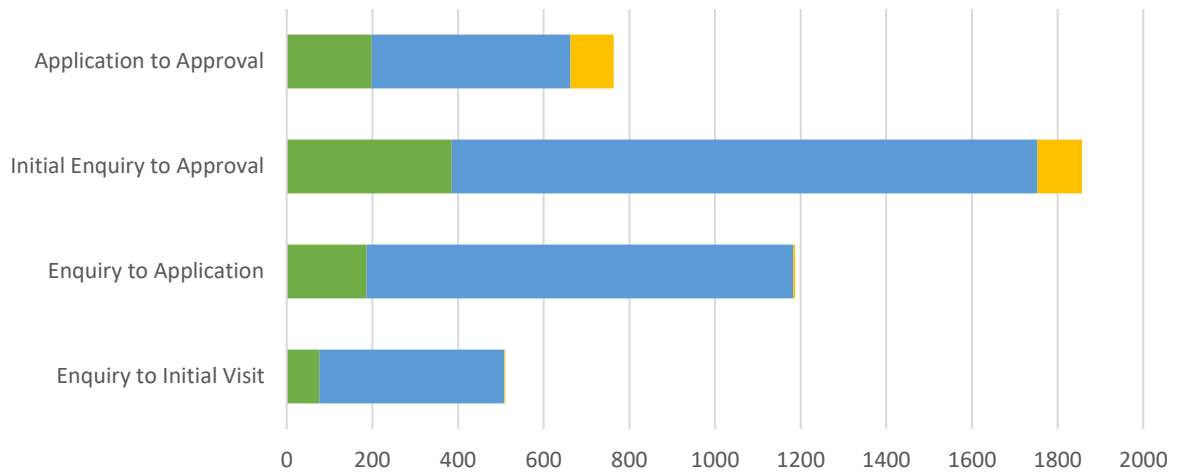


## Conversions

The Service continues to demonstrate its commitment to process applications within NAS guidelines. In respect of initial enquiry to approval (see graph below), the time scale was extended because 6 adopters' assessments were protracted due to a variety of reasons.



### Conversion Rates April 2020 - March 2021

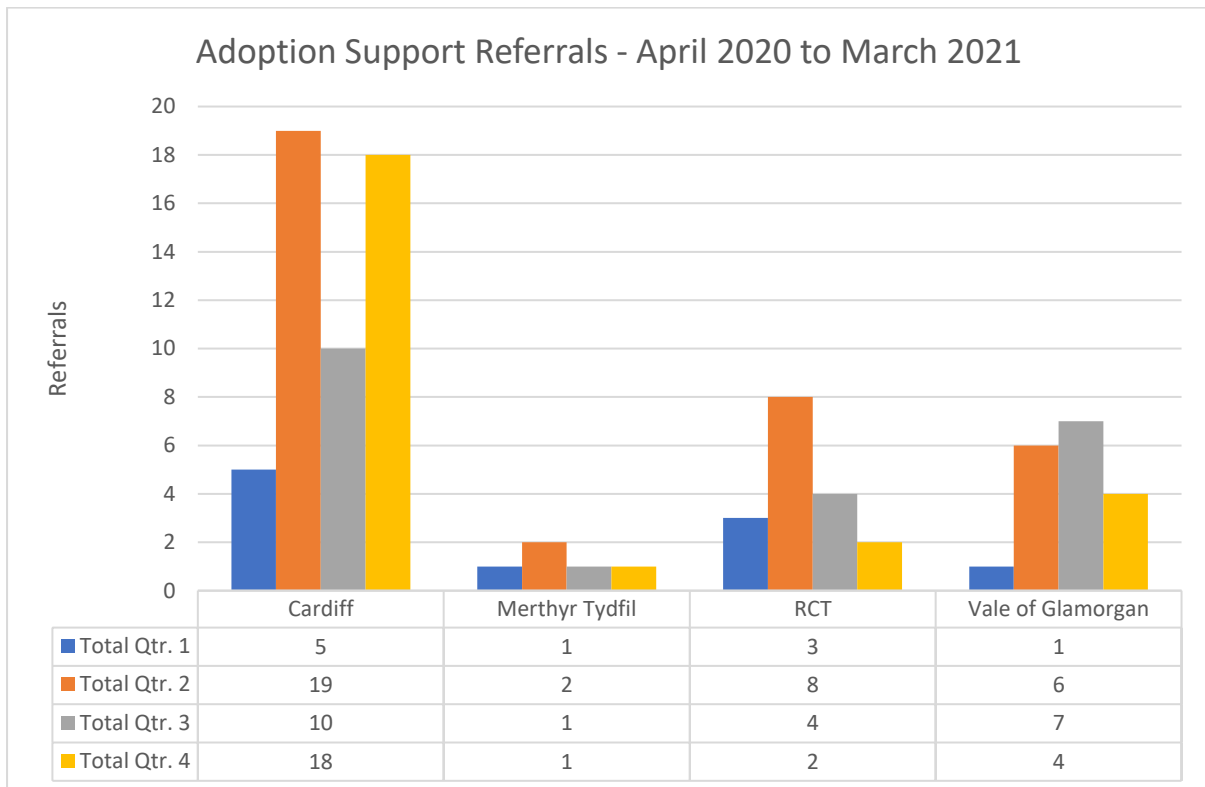


	Enquiry to Initial Visit	Enquiry to Application	Initial Enquiry to Approval	Application to Approval
■ Average	76.05	186.65	385.13	198.47
■ Longest	432	996	1368	464
■ Shortest	2	5	104	101



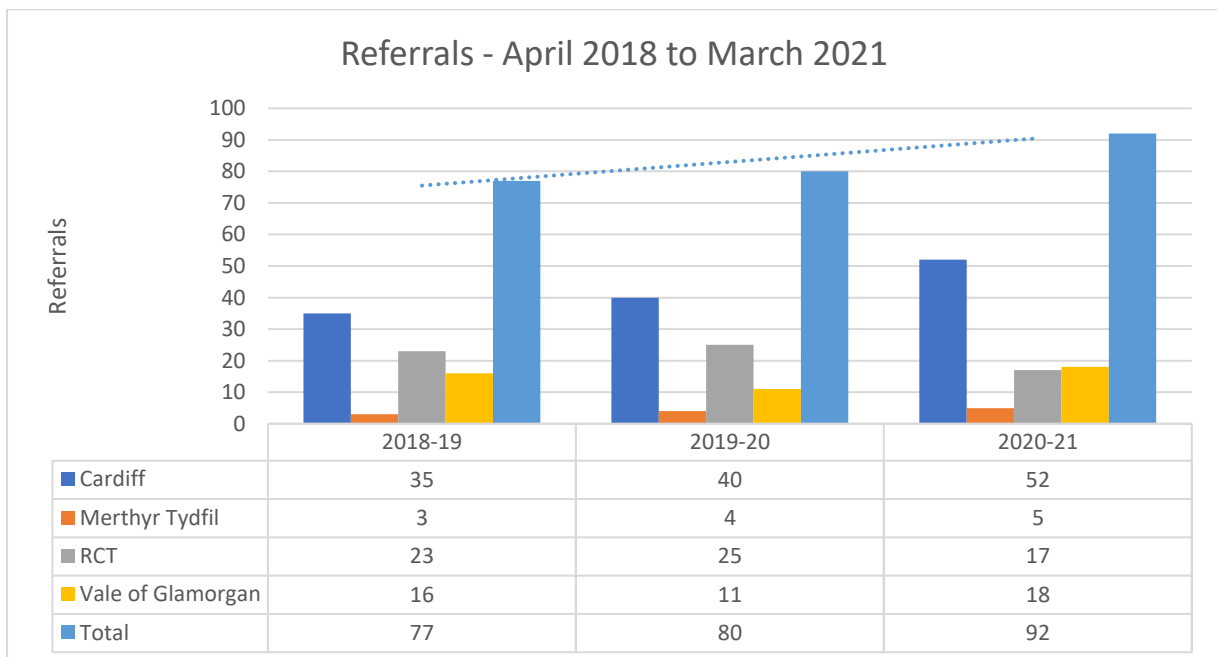
## Appendix 3 – Adoption Support

### Referrals



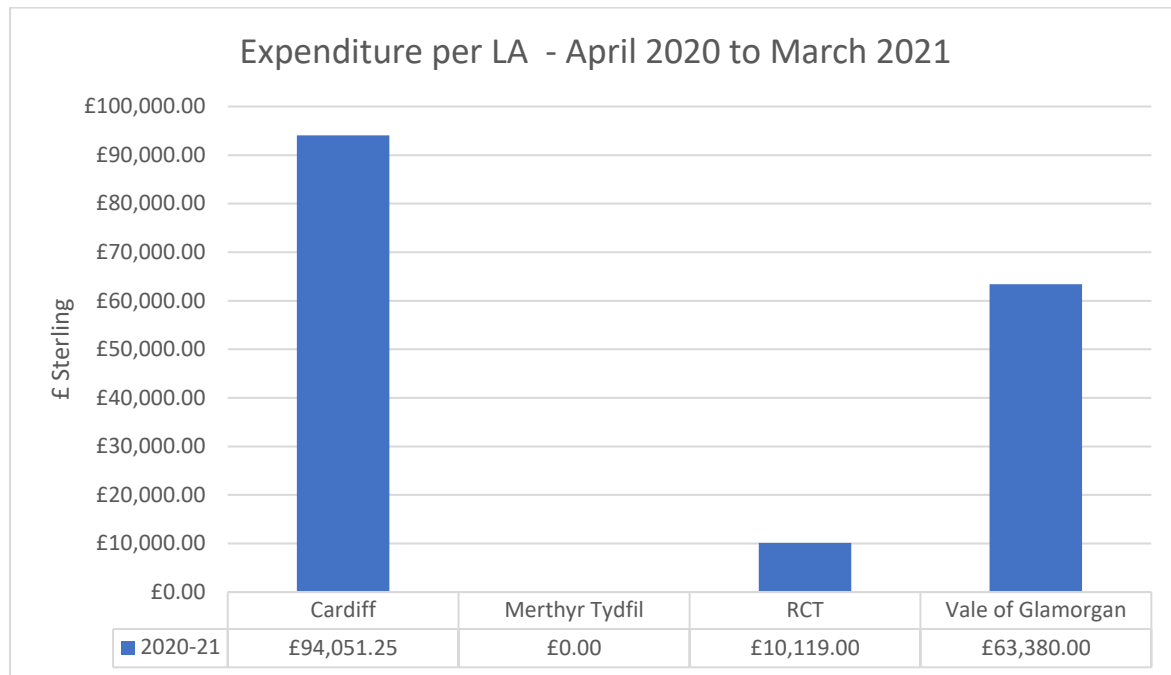
### Comparative Data

Over the past three years, referrals for post adoption support have increased by 19.4%

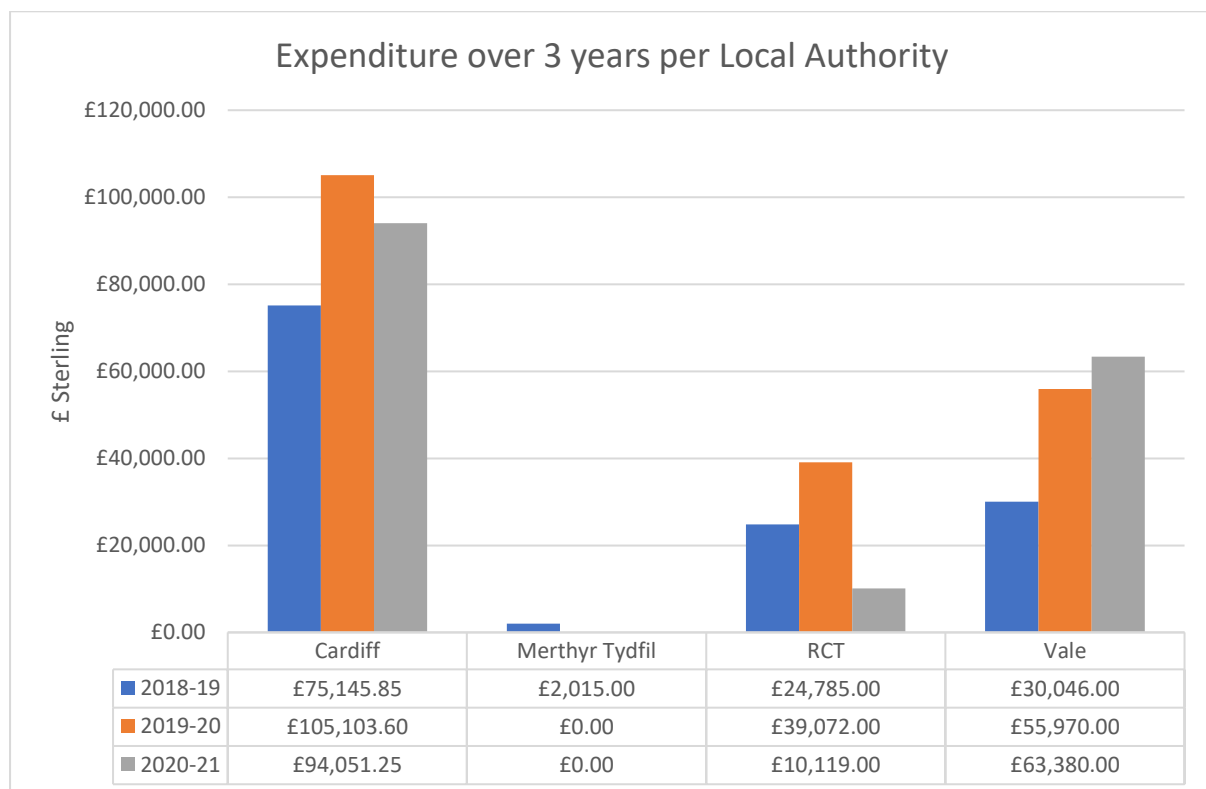


### Expenditure per Local Authority

64 children have received local authority funding during the year.



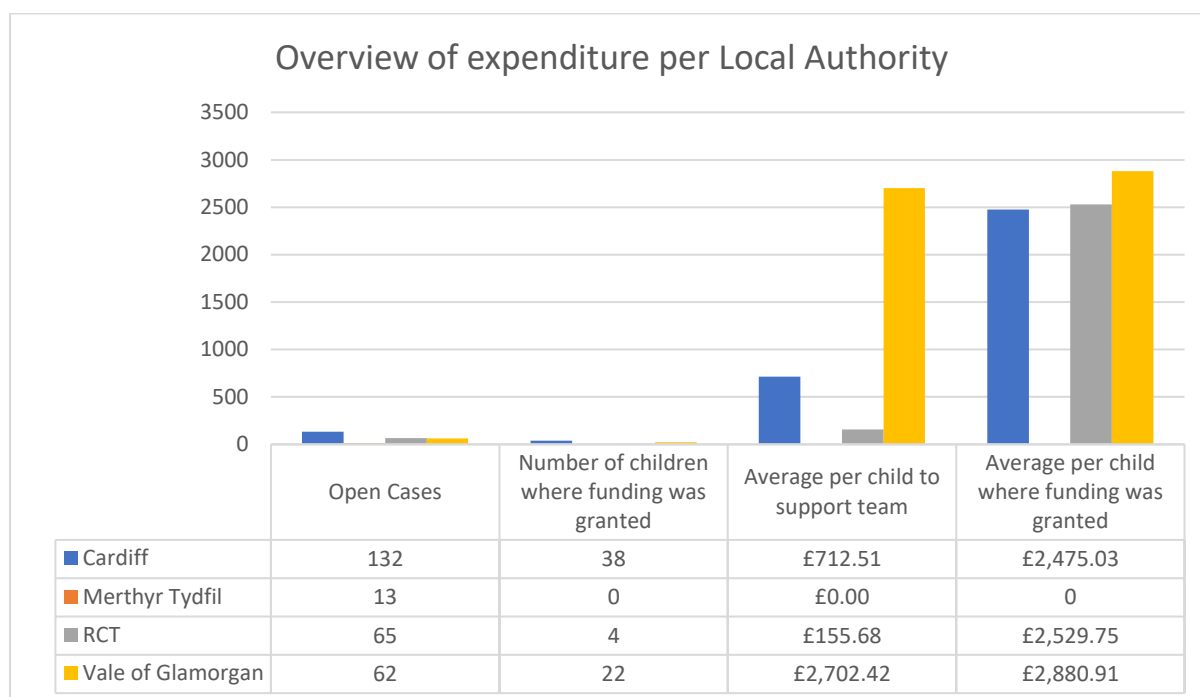
### 3-year comparative data - Expenditure per Local Authority





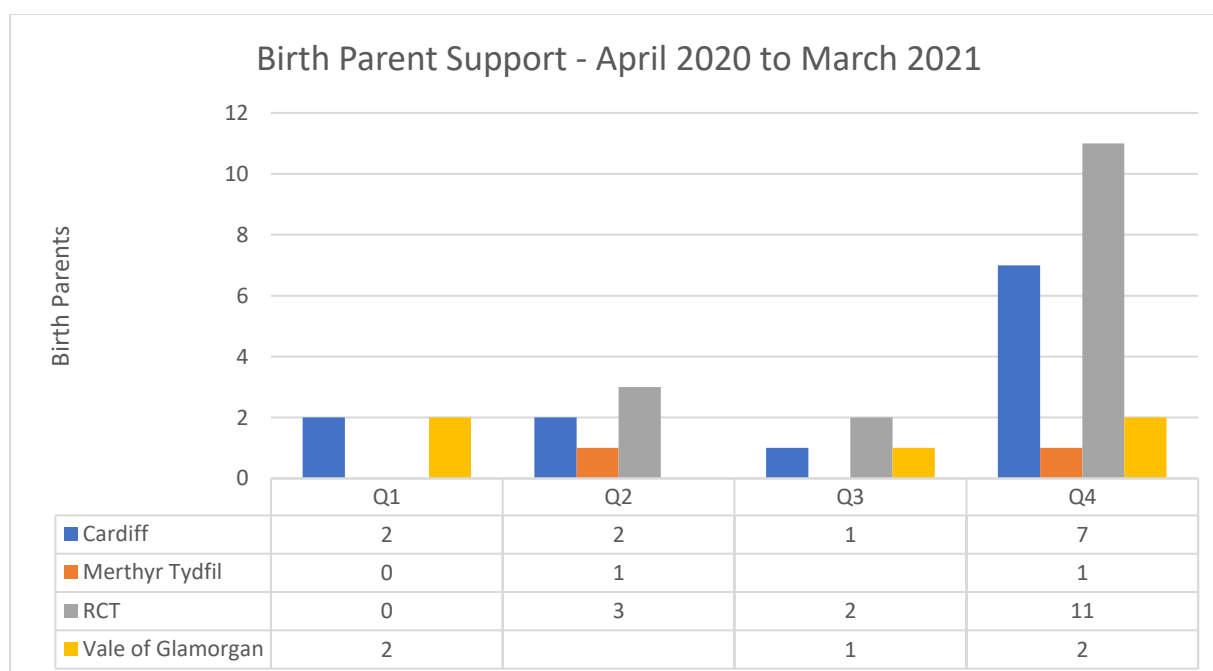
## Overview of average expenditure per Local Authority

The service has 272 open cases for adoption support. 49% are for Cardiff families, 24% and 23% are for RCT and Vale of Glamorgan families respectively. The remaining 4% of open cases for Merthyr Tydfil are supported by the Adoption Support team.

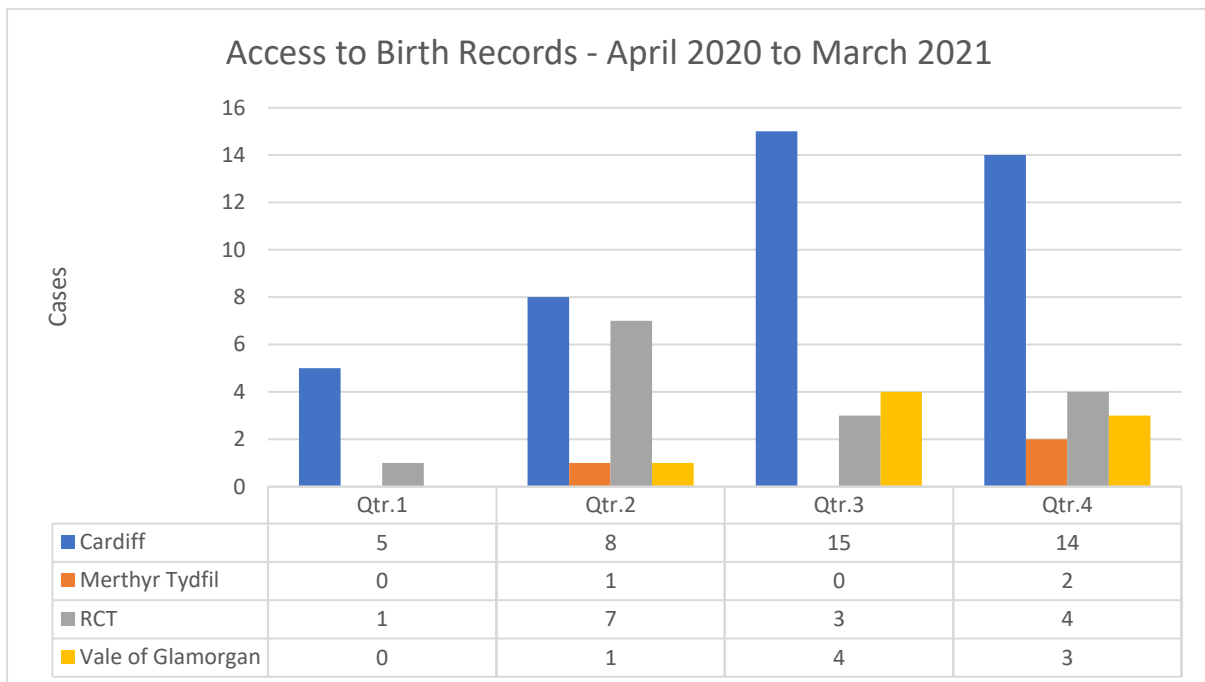


## Birth Parent Services

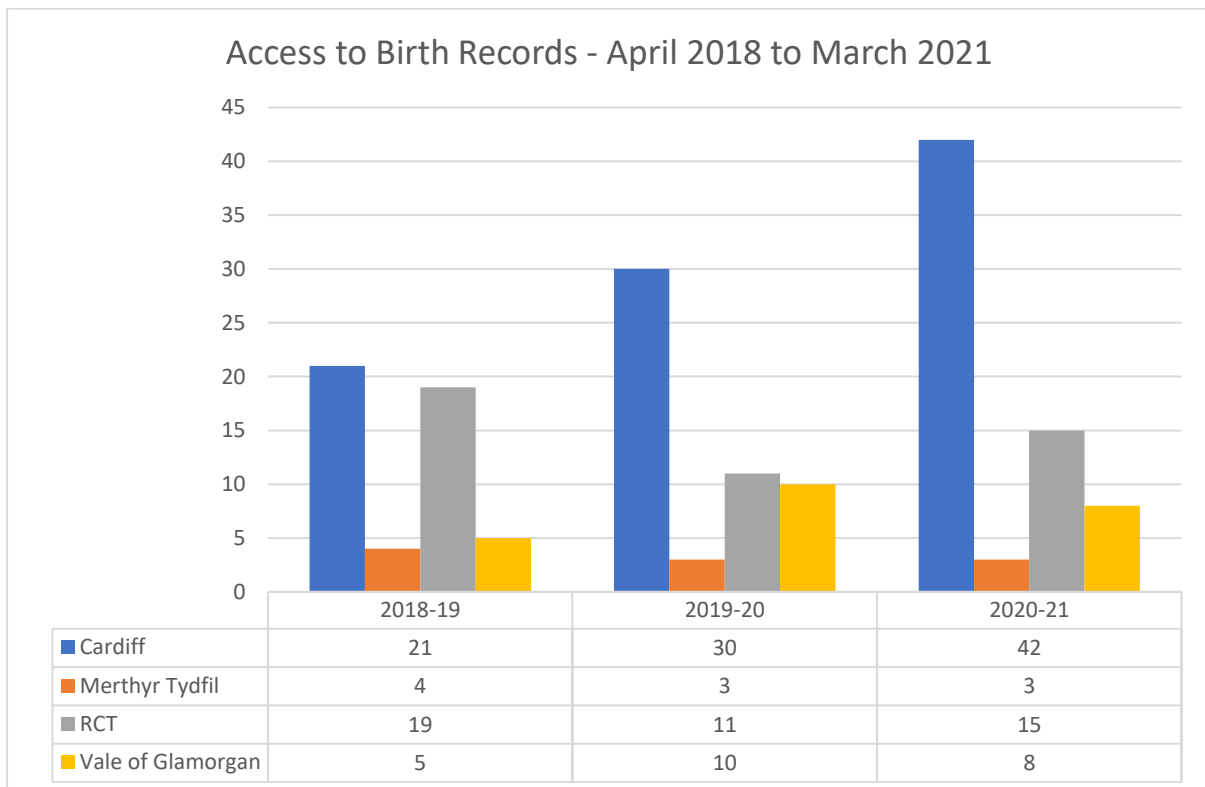
A significant increase (60%) in services offered to birth parents is observed in Quarter 4. This follows the recruitment of a permanent birth parent adviser and reduction in lockdown restrictions.



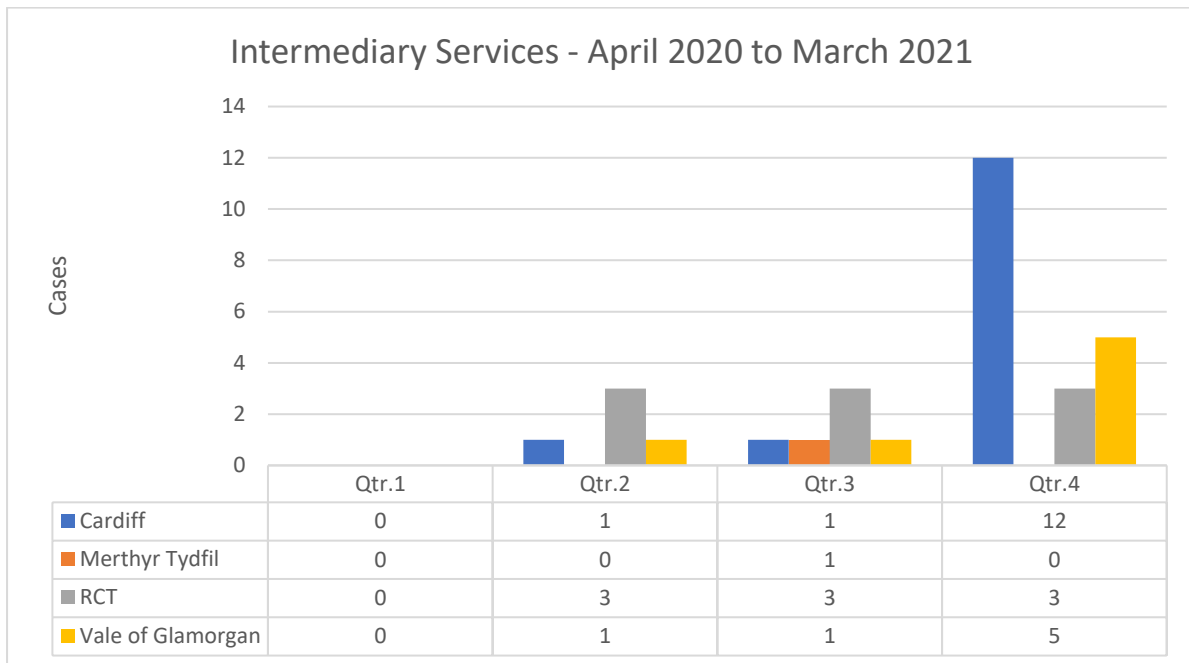
## Access to Birth Records



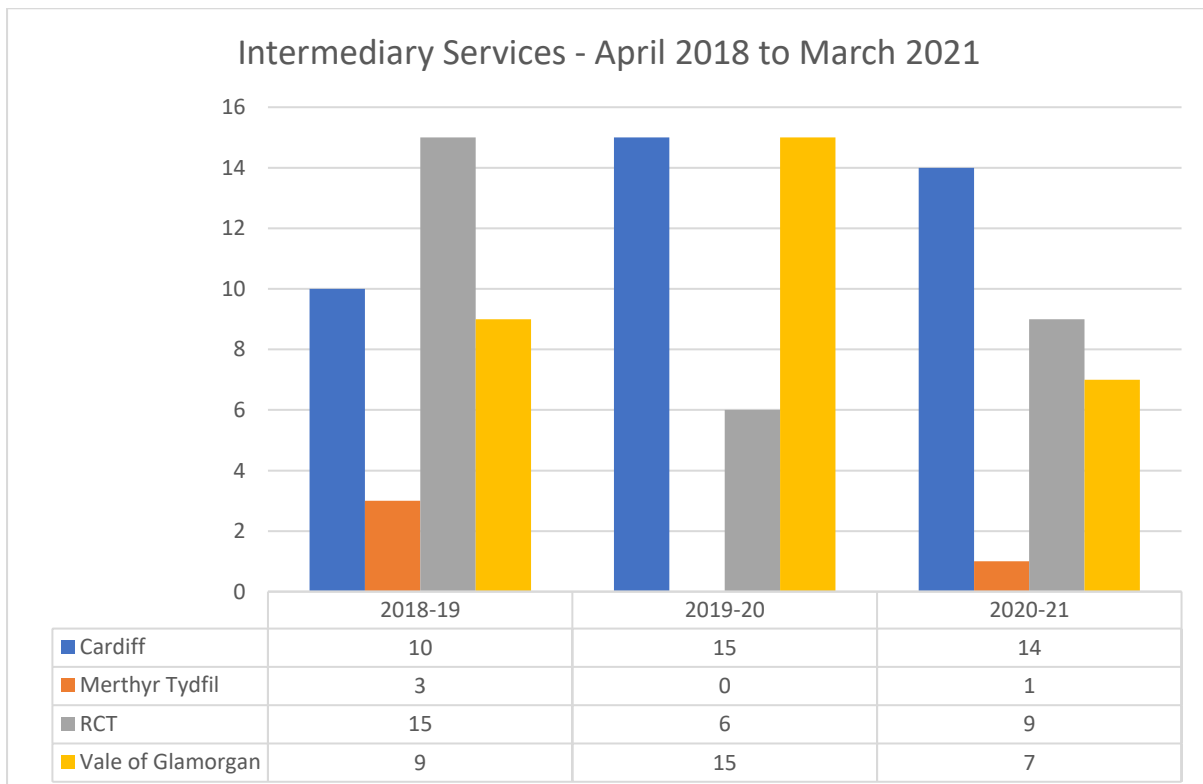
## 3-year comparative data – Access to Birth Records



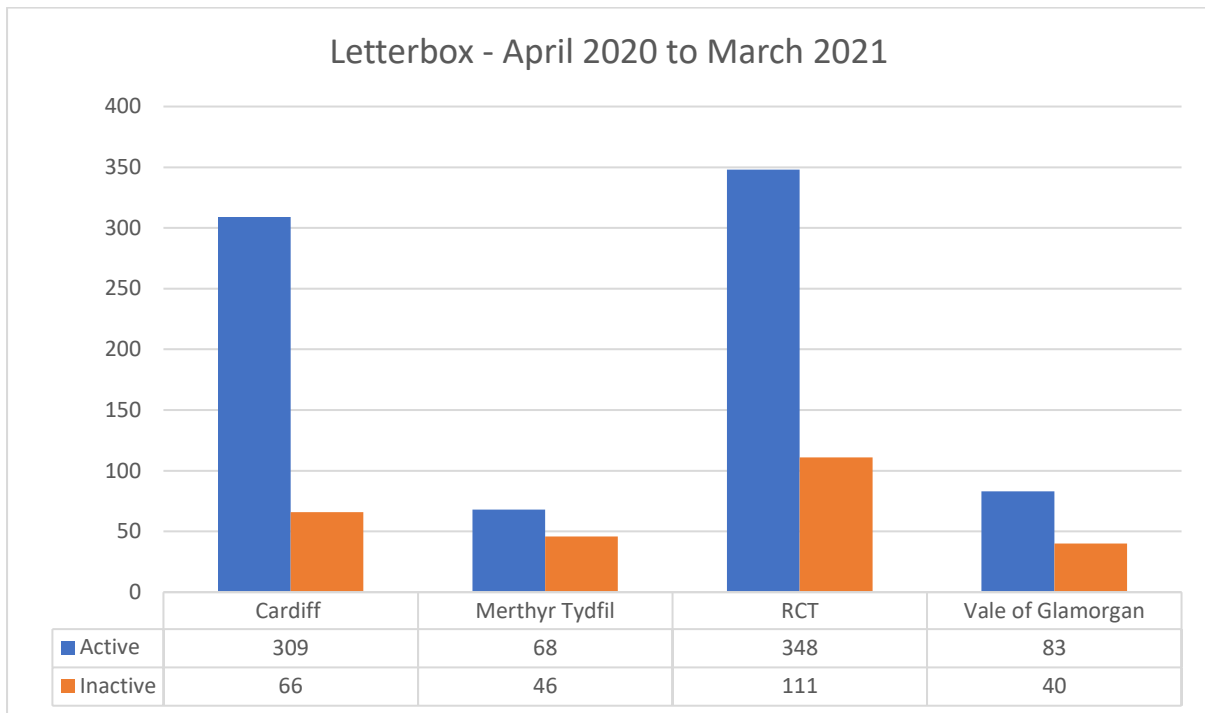
## Intermediary Services



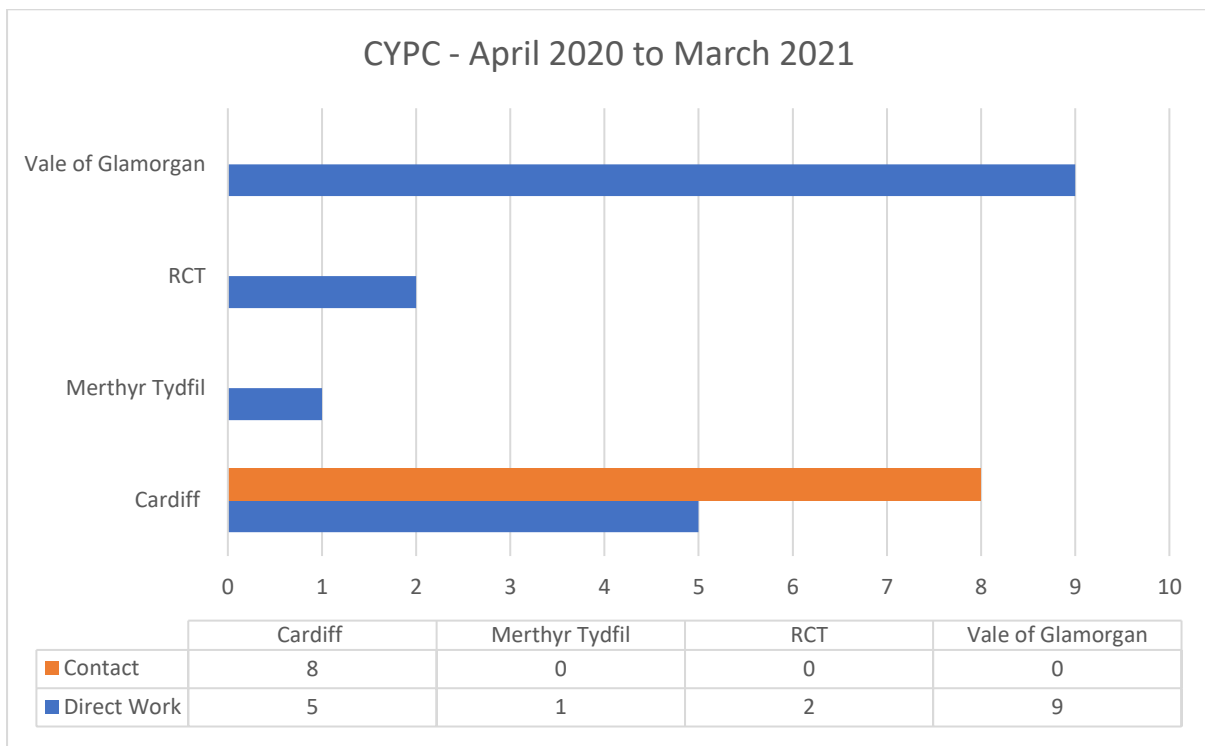
## 3-year comparative data – Intermediary Services



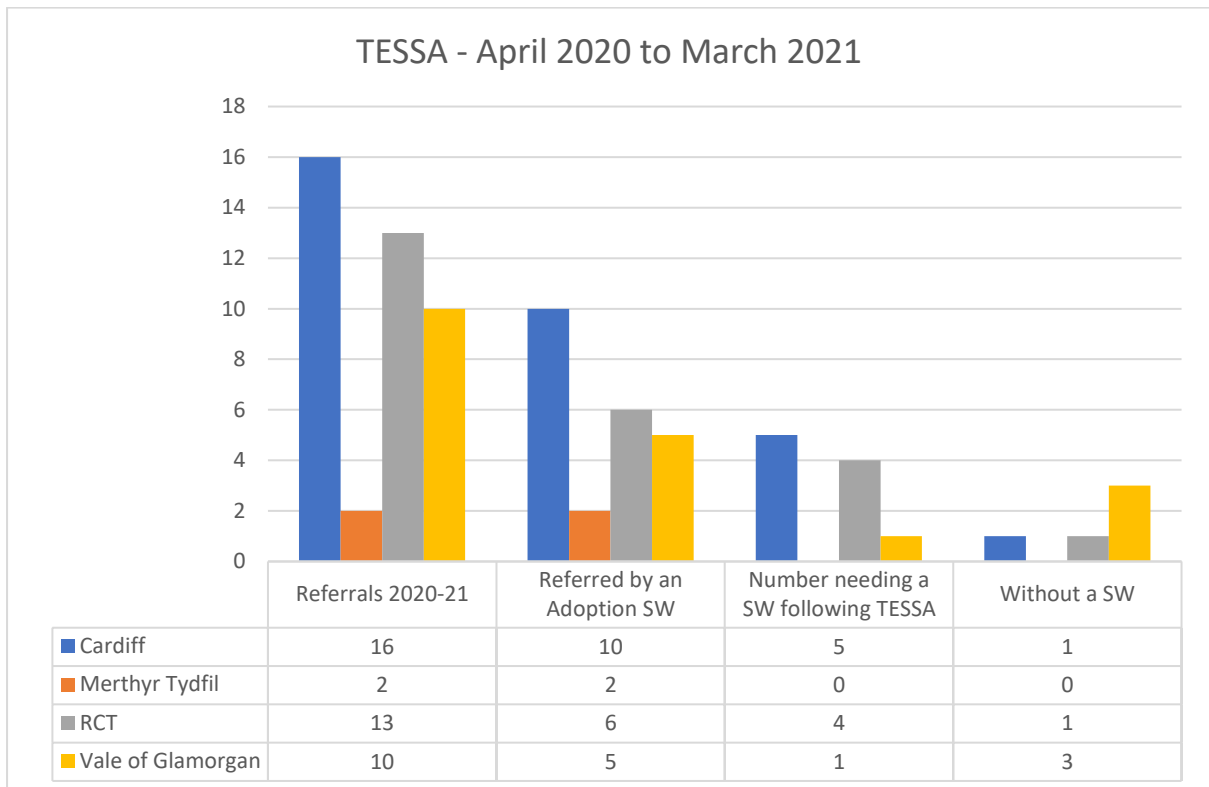
## Letterbox



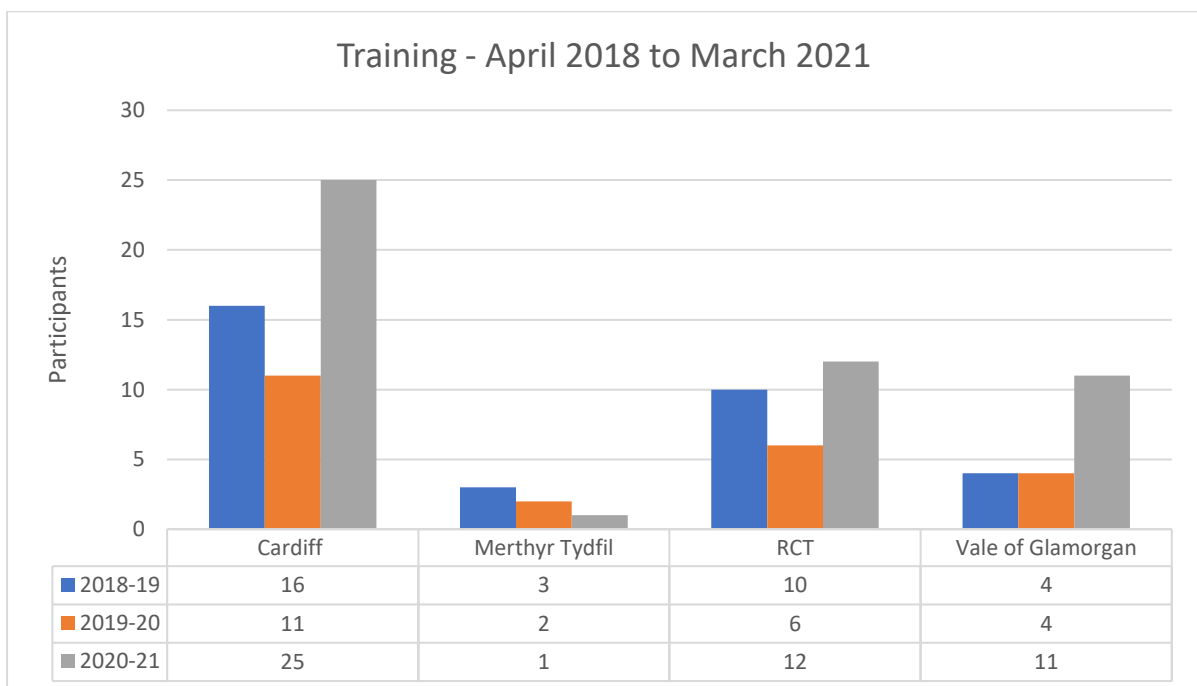
## Children and Young People's Service



## TESSA



## Training

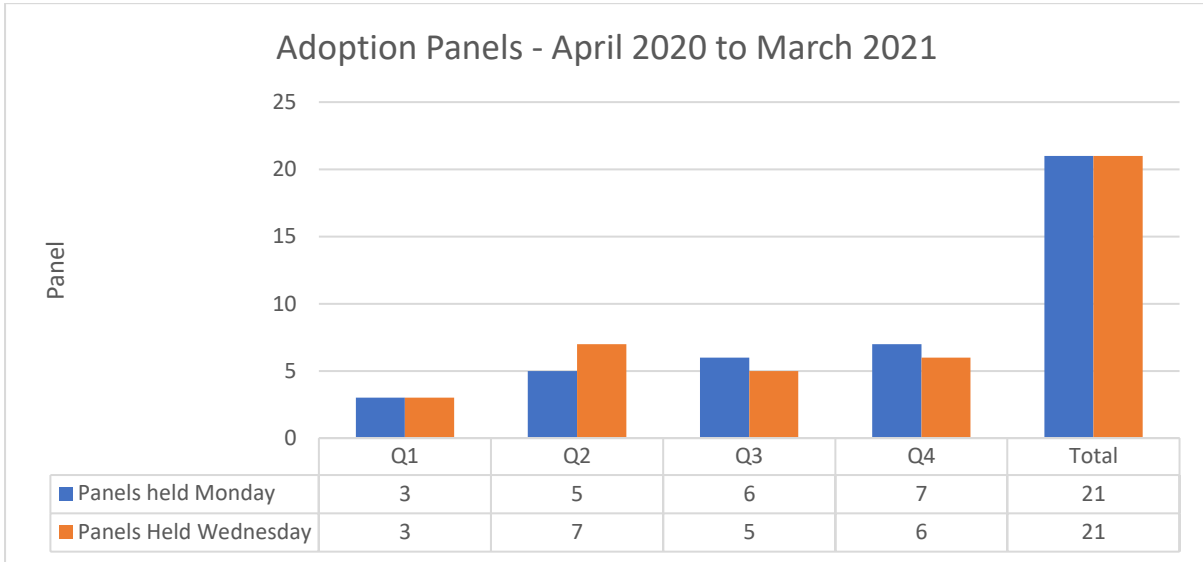


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## Appendix 4 – Adoption Panel

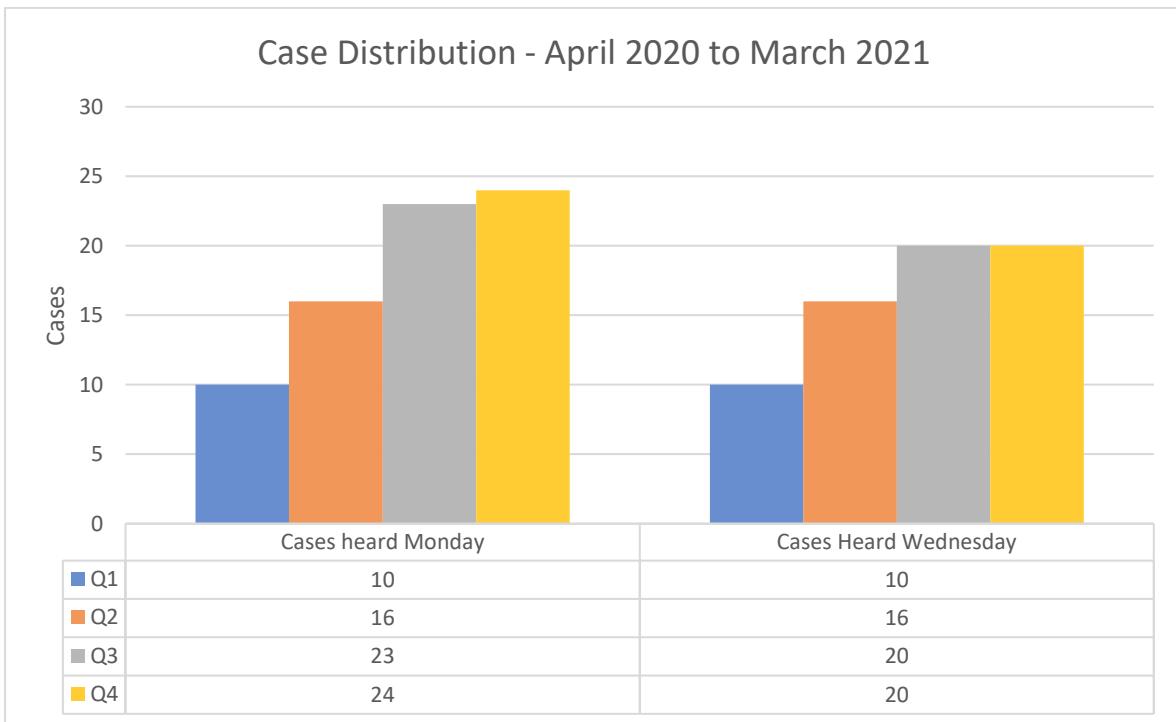
### Panels convened

**42** adoption panels were convened during the reporting period and is consistent with previous years. As a result of COVID-19 lockdown, adoption panels were moved from face-to-face meetings to virtual meetings held using video conferencing software.



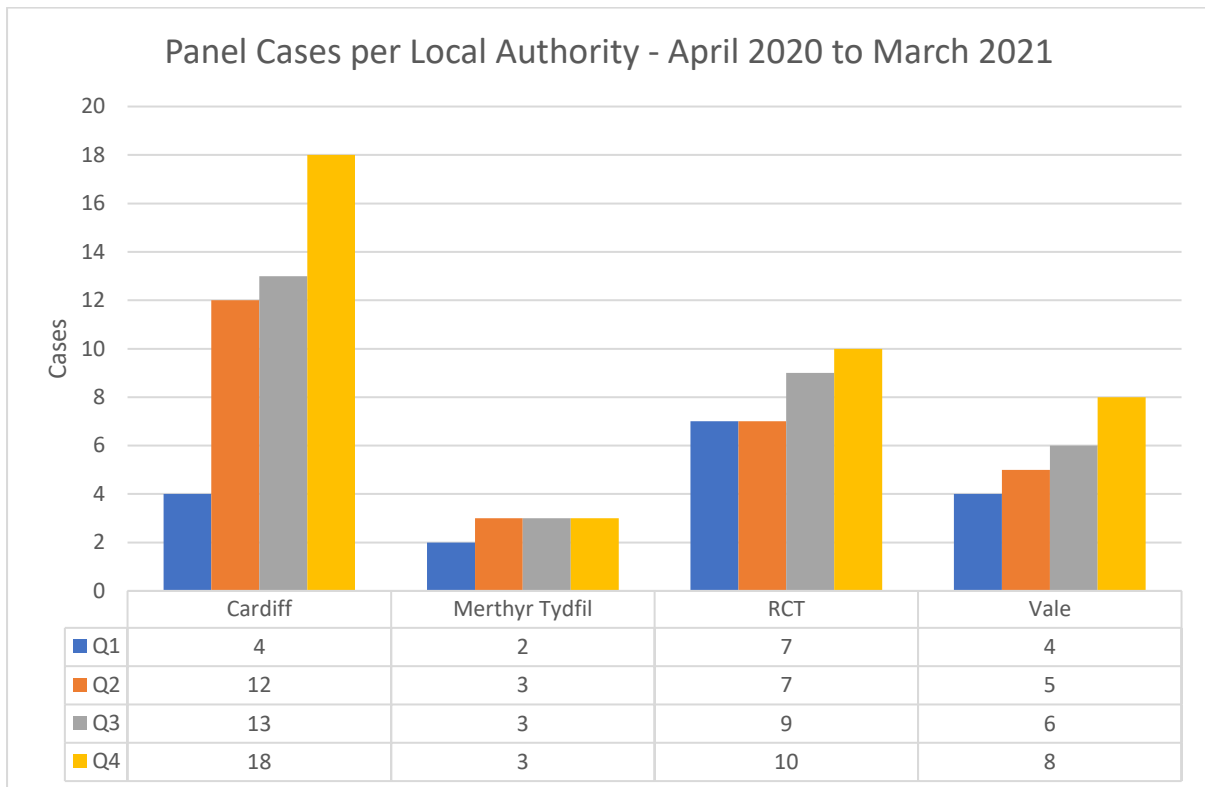
### Case Distribution

Cases are evenly distributed across the two panel days.



## Cases per Local Authority

Over the course of the year, panel activity increased.





Date: 21 December 2020

My Ref: SS/CYP/VVCAR19\_20



County Hall  
Cardiff,  
CF10 4UW  
Tel: (029) 2087 2087  
  
Neuadd y Sir  
Caerdydd,  
CF10 4UW  
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Councillor Graham Hinchey  
Cabinet Member for Children & Families  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
CARDIFF  
CF10 4UW

Dear Graham,

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15 DECEMBER 2020  
– VALLEYS, VALE & CARDIFF ADOPTION COLLABORATIVE ANNUAL  
REPORT 2019/20**

Please accept my thanks for attending the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to facilitate the consideration of the VVC Annual Report 2019/20. Please also pass on our thanks to Angela Harris and Deborah Driffield. The comments, observations and recommendations below were captured during the Committee's discussion at the Way Forward.

We welcomed the Annual Report for 2019/20 and would like to commend the range of improvements set out within the report, the work of the team and the response and adaptations made to address the Covid-19 pandemic.

Children Looked After

Members asked questions around the Annual Report stating that there had been a decrease in referrals into the adoption service despite a rising number children looked after. Whilst it was noted that other options such as kinship are now available, we would request that further information be provided on this, to provide clarity on how this explains the situation in Cardiff.

Linked to this, Members would also welcome further information on what strategies are being put forward to address increasing the diversity of adopters, including those from BAME and LGBTQ+ groups.

## Raising the Profile

Members appreciated the progress made in relation to attracting new adopters, through supporting national campaigns, events, information evenings and raising the profile of the adoption services generally. We were also pleased to hear that the increased use of social media was also having a positive impact in this area.

Members would request further information on what grassroots and community level events are being planned in the future to continue to this work.

## Data/Information

Members asked a range of questions regarding the data and information collected by the service, including those arising from the events outlined in the previous section of this letter. Angela assured us that a range of data was being collected in relation to issues such as how potential adopters had heard about the service; why they reached out to the service; and why people choose not to continue in the process. Angela also referred to the service now being able to monitor hits via social media and enquiries coming through that medium.

Therefore, we request that a briefing be provided to us, to include the following data/information:

- Overview profile of adopters and children looked after currently in the system, including ethnicity of current approved adopters;
- Q2 Performance for 2020/21 as suggested by yourself;
- Where prospective adopters are coming from – through what events/medium etc.
- How potential adopters had heard about the service;
- Why people reached out to the service;
- Why people choose not to continue in the process;
- How the service will increase numbers of BAME adopters;
- How the service will increase numbers of LGBTQ+ adopters;
- How the service will increase numbers of adopters in the 20-29 and 50-59 age groups; and
- Further information on how the service is capturing feedback from young people and outputs from any consultation with young people, outlining their views of the service and their experiences.

Any further information in addition to the above you have that may assist us would be very welcomed.

## Impact of Covid-19 on the Service, Workloads and Pressures

We asked questions around the impact of Covid-19 on the service and noted that the service was following the NAS Risk Assessment, the VVC risk assessment more locally and the continuation of the Adoption Panel in Cardiff. We appreciate that the service has adapted during 2020, and commend management and staff for continuing to work in challenging circumstances during this period. We also welcome the work of the Collaborative in ensuring that there has been a consistency in practice across the region.

We would request that you provide further information on the process for adopters, containing typical timescales and to include when they are likely to be allocated a social worker. Given the “spike” in referrals during Q2 this year, we are mindful of pressures and workloads placed on the service, as well as potential delays and uncertainty for adopters. We would therefore seek some clarity on what the process looks like.

To recap, the Committee **is requesting**:

- i. Further information and clarity on explaining the reduction of referrals into adoption against the rising numbers of children looked after in Cardiff;
- ii. Further information on what strategies are being put forward to address increasing the diversity of adopters, including those from BAME and LGBTQ+ groups;
- iii. Further information on what grassroots and community level events are being planned in the future in relation to recruiting new adopters;
- iv. A briefing be provided to us, to include a range of data and information as outlined earlier in this letter; and
- v. Provide further information on the process for adopters including typical timescales.

There are no formal recommendations arising from this letter.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. I look forward to a response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN**  
**Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

CC: CYPSC Members  
Angela Harris, Regional Adoption Manager, VVC  
Deborah Driffield, Assistant Director Children's Services  
Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services  
Alison Taylor, Cabinet Support Office  
Kim Thorpe, PA to the Director of Social Services

11 January 2021

Councillor G Hinchey  
Cabinet Office  
Rom 512  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW



Dear Councillor Hinchey

I refer to the letter from Councillor Bridgeman dated 21 December 2020 following the presentation of VVC's Annual Report 2019-20 to Scrutiny Committee on 15 December 2020. I will endeavour to address the points raised as follows:

### **Children Looked After**

It is difficult for VVC to fully comment upon the reasons why the numbers of children looked after have risen during the reporting period whilst referrals for children requiring adoption had decreased. VVC collates data on each child referred into the service. VVC processes each referral through the different stages of the twin tracking process i.e. where the local authority considers whether a permanency plan of adoption or an alternative permanency plan is in the best interests of the child. These stages are detailed in the chart under point 1 later in the letter. The decrease in referrals noted during the reporting period was not a feature confined to VVC but formed part of a national trend which highlighted a 30% decrease in Placement Orders. During the current reporting year an increase in the number of referrals into the service during quarter 2 is noted as outlined in the Quarter 2 Performance Report appended to the letter.

### **Diversity issues**

VVC's marketing materials either digital or in print clearly highlights that enquiries from all persons; regardless of age, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, gender or marital status are welcomed.

We use a range of imagery to capture the different make-ups of family life including; cultural and ethnic diversity, a mix of ages, sibling groups, older children, LGBT+ and single parenting.

VVC's website features a curated mix of resources such as podcasts, books and shows that encourage people from across the spectrum of humanity to consider adopting. This is an ever growing and expanding resource which is updated on a regular basis.

During 2020 we updated our initial information packs in terms of design and content to use more inclusive language and imagery.

The Marketing and Recruitment Officer analysed which languages our enquirers spoke aside from Welsh and English. This led to VVC also producing the packs in Arabic, Spanish and Italian. There is also provision via our translation service to translate information packs in other languages of choice. It is hoped that by providing information in someone's first language or language of preference that they will be able to gain a better understanding of adoption in a language that they feel most comfortable in.

During the start of the pandemic our Marketing Officer contacted a number of organisations across the region including businesses, places of worship and local organisations. We provided them with shareable content about adoption and our support services which we encouraged them to share with staff / attendees who may require such information. Within this information we also provided shareable content which they could use if they knew anyone who was considering adoption within their organisation or through their HR department. We had some positive engagement with organisations including Cardiff University who are in the process of making their parental leave policies more inclusive to include adoption.

### **Raising the profile**

During 2019 much work was undertaken to raise the profile of VVC. The Marketing and Recruitment Officer was established as a permanent role within the Collaborative. This position was critical in helping to identify suitable marketing opportunities and developing branded materials to advertise the service. As a region we worked closely with COWSHED, the marketing company commissioned by the National Adoption Service (NAS) to develop a national marketing campaign and to support regional marketing initiatives. We attended a number of local events throughout the year. These included Barry Pride, Pride Cymru, VOG Family Information Service Summer and Winter Fun Days, Barry 10K with Run4Wales, The Vale Agricultural Show, Vegan WinterFest and St Donat's Christmas Fayre. Vegan WinterFest proved to be the highest performing event as twenty-seven information packs were distributed resulting in over thirty conversations with interested parties.

During 2019 VVC staff were invited to speak about adoption at two churches; one in Cardiff and one in Barry. These led to three assessments of prospective adopters. VVC also attended the National Eisteddfod with NAS to support the national campaign. We also trialled stalls at a wedding fayre and IKEA to provide opportunities to reach a wider audience.

VVC's marketing strategy during 2020 was to build on this presence. The National Adoption Service had booked stands at the National Eisteddfod and Pride Cymru, but both of these events were cancelled due to the unfolding pandemic. Attendance at other local events was planned but these were also cancelled.

Since April 2020, VVC has therefore focused its' marketing strategy upon ways of reaching a potential audience through online events and the use of social media channels, Facebook and Instagram. The National Adoption Service linked up with

Pride Cymru during National Adoption Week to create a webinar for prospective adopters. The four adoptive parents who participated came from VVC. The National Adoption Service also created a podcast during 2020 and there were two webinars associated with these, one for the English podcast and one for the Welsh podcast. These were promoted online as events prior to National Adoption Week and three adopters from VVC took part in this.

During the past year and the move to virtual working, there has been a focus upon how adopters can best be supported remotely and kept up to date. Measures such as WhatsApp support groups for adopters, a secure email system to keep adopters up to date and a monthly quiz night have all been developed. All of these avenues provide further opportunities to encourage people to encourage their friends and acquaintances who are considering adoption to approach us. Word of mouth still remains one of the most highly effective recruitment strategies within adoption.

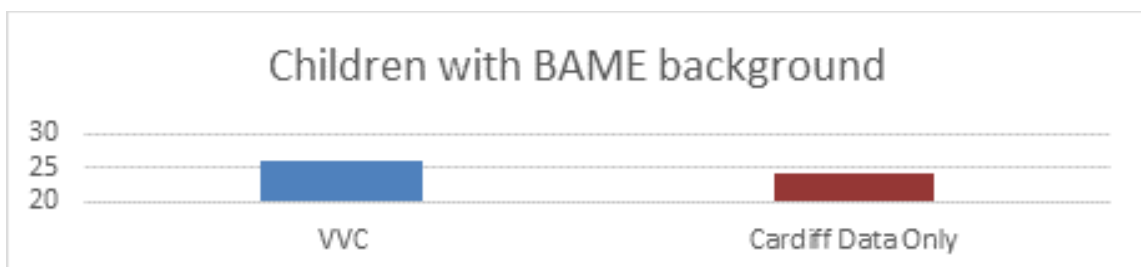
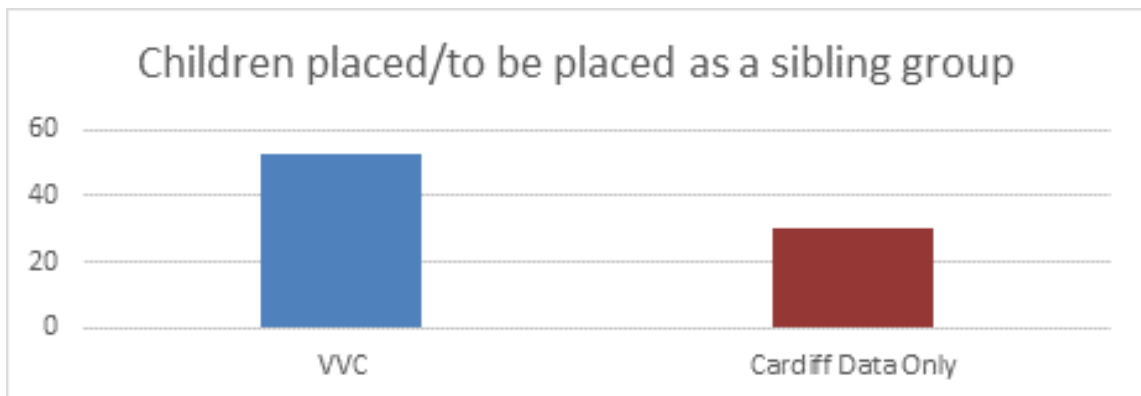
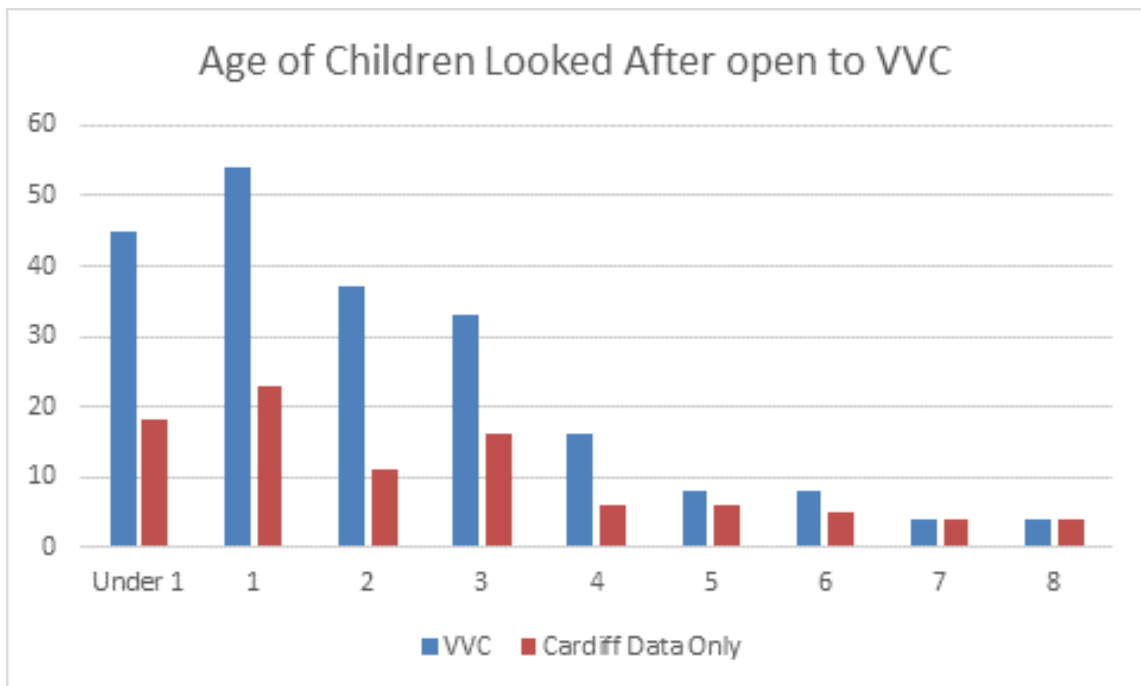
Moving into 2021 VVC will continue to monitor which face to face events are planned once lockdown restrictions are eased and the marketing opportunities these may provide. However, due to the increased opportunities provided via social media channels, it is likely that these aspects will be retained and form part of our strategy going forward.

## Data / Information

### 1. Overview profile of adopters and children looked after currently in the system, including ethnicity of current approved adopters.

These charts provide information in respect of the status of children VVC were working with as at 31 December 2020.

<b>STAGE IN ADOPTION PROCESS - CHILDREN</b>	<b>VVC Total</b>	<b>Cardiff Data Only</b>
Placed for Adoption	77	29
Matched/Linked with Adopters	27	14
Waiting (Not matched or linked with adopters)	38	17
Has a 'Should be Adopted' Decision but awaiting Placement Order	19	9
Referred to Adoption – Final Care Plan not decided	44	21
Care Plan changed or changing from adoption	4	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>93</b>





These charts below provide information in respect of the profile of VVC adopters as at 31 March 2020.

<b>ADOPTERS</b>	<b>VVC Total</b>	<b>Cardiff Data Only</b>
Ratified approvals 2019/20	69	29
BAME households 2019/20	6	5
LGBTQ+ households	10	6

#### **Distribution of BAME ethnicity**

British Pakistani 1  
 British Indian 1  
 British African 2  
 British Sri Lankan 1

The charts below provide information in respect of the profile of VVC adopters as at 31 December 2020.

<b>ADOPTERS</b>	<b>VVC Total</b>	<b>Cardiff Data Only</b>
Ratified approvals 2020/21 (Q1, 2 & 3)	49	21
BAME households 2020/21 (Q1, 2 & 3)	5	3
LGBTQ+ households	10	7

#### **Distribution of BAME ethnicity**

British Pakistani 3

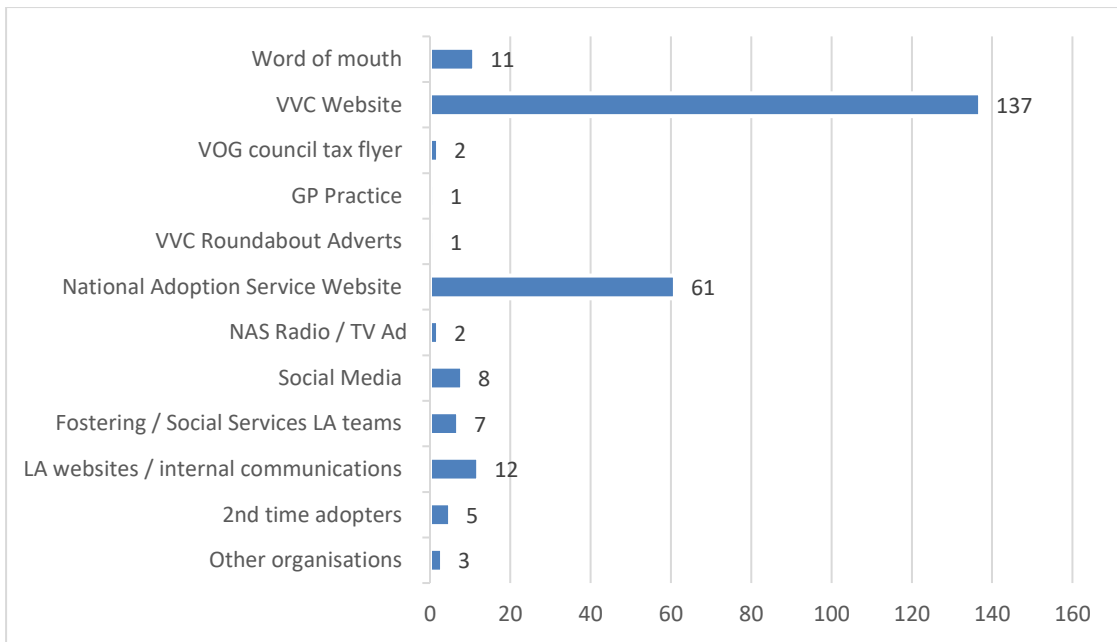
#### **2. Q2 Performance for 2020/21.**

Please see Quarter 2 report appended to the letter..

#### **3 & 4. Where prospective adopters are coming from – through what events/medium etc.**

**How potential adopters had heard about the service.**

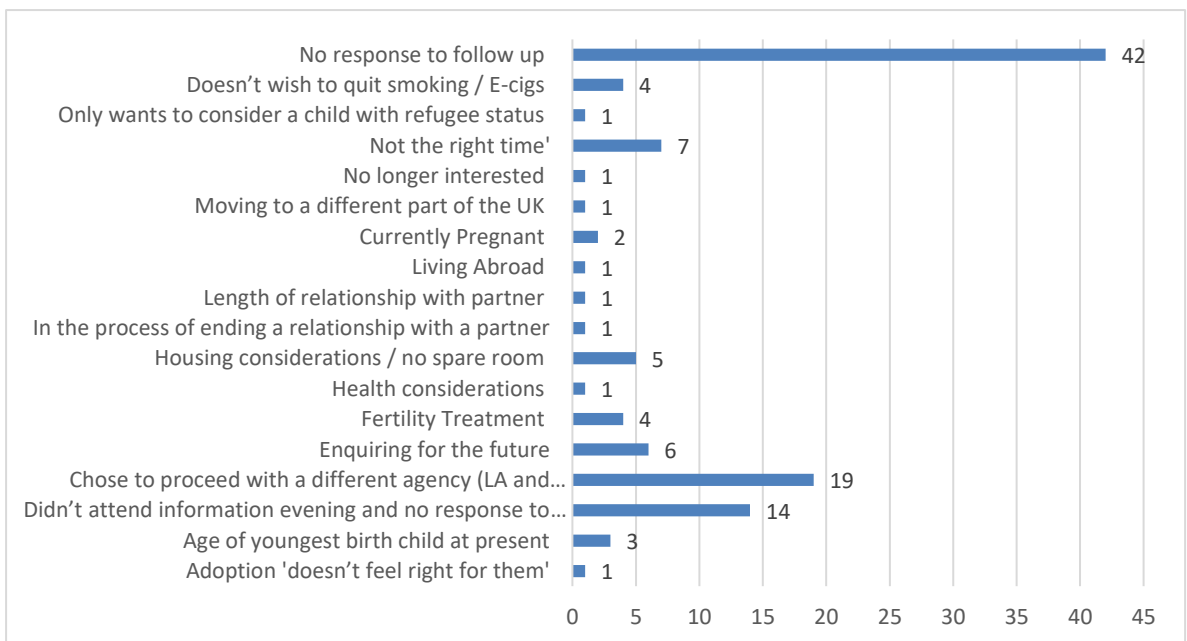
This chart covers the period up to 31 December 2020



## 5. Why people reached out to the service.

The vast majority of our enquiries come from within the region as prospective applicants are encouraged to approach their local area in the first instance. The exceptions to this are usually those applicants who specifically want to be considered by VVC (often as a result of a positive recommendation from a friend etc) or if they are in a work situation or other circumstances where it would not be appropriate for them to be considered by their local region.

## 6. Why people choose not to continue in the process.



**7 & 8. How the service will increase numbers of BAME adopters;  
How the service will increase numbers of LGBTQ+ adopters;**

As indicated previously, VVC encourages interest from all aspects of our community. In terms of promoting adoption within these groups our strategy would include contact with organisations which cater for people who identify as BAME and / or LGBTQ+ and engage with places of worship, community support and action groups and umbrella organisations such as Pride Cymru, Stonewall and the Muslim Council of Wales VVC is a long standing member of New Family Social, a UK charity led by LGBTQ+ adopters and foster carers.

The Marketing and Recruitment Officer has started to follow a number of such organisations on social media with the hope of engaging with them and hopefully them engaging with us through a follow or a message.

VVC's marketing materials have been adapted to highlight and celebrate all types of family and to ensure that we reflect all aspects of the community.

VVC has supported adopters in becoming champions for adoption via national campaigns and in providing opportunities for them to share their experience with others through our platforms.

VVC has also participated in discussions at a national level via the NAS Marketing Subgroup exploring the development of a recruitment campaign to support the Black Lives Matter movement.

The current profile of VVC adopters from a BAME background or identifying as LGBTQ+ is detailed under point 1.

**9. How the service will increase numbers of adopters in the 20-29 and 50-59 age groups.**

It is apparent from the data we are now able to produce that take up from these age groups is lower than in the 30 -50's age group. The reasons for this appear to vary and in the most part relate to the individual circumstances of each potential applicant. The marketing strategy we have developed aims to reach as wide an audience as possible but does not focus upon targeting certain age groups. We do not discriminate on the basis of age, although by law all applicants have to be aged 21 & over. There is no upper age limit in terms of being able to adopt, although the age of the prospective adopters can be a factor in matching a very young child.

**10. Further information on how the service is capturing feedback from young people and outputs from any consultation with young people, outlining their views of the service and their experiences.**

Part of developing VVC's marketing strategy during 2021 is to explore opportunities to connect more with people who are adopted and facilitate them sharing their experiences with prospective adopters and their peers.

VVC's Children and Young Persons Co-ordinator works closely with Adoption UK in delivering the Connected service for adopted children and young people aged 7 up. This service is well used by children and young people from VVC and provides an avenue for feedback on the service and opportunities for consultation. This also allows VVC the opportunity to identify young people who could become advocates for adoption at a local level.

**11. Provide further information on the process for adopters including typical timescales.**

Most initial enquiries are received via the VVC website or NAS website. Enquirers are sent a welcome letter and information pack and they are encouraged to contact re booking onto an information evening. If we do not hear back from them, enquirers are then followed up to ascertain if they wish to continue with their enquiry.

Monthly Information evenings have been held virtually since April 2020. Following attendance at the Information evening, enquirers are provided with further written information and encouraged to consider proceeding to an initial visit. Again initial visits are currently being undertaken remotely by the Marketing Officer and /or a member of the Recruitment Team. Following this prospective applicants are invited to attend a three day training programme; statutory checks are commenced, and a decision is made to move to the full assessment stage of the process.

In April 2020, the Adoption Agency Regulations were amended to introduce the two stage model of assessment which has been operational in England for some time. This allows two months for the initial part of the process and four months for the full assessment to be undertaken. Due however to the restrictions imposed by Covid-19, Welsh Government have allowed an easement to the Regulations to allow Stage 1 to run as part of the Stage 2 process until 31 March 2021 when the position will be reviewed.

The benchmark developed by NAS from application to approval is six months. During 2019-20 54% of the 69 approvals were achieved in this timeframe. Although comparable with the performance of other regions, this was seen as an area for regional improvement especially as the new Regulations prescribe a much tighter timeframe. The average timescale has not as yet been calculated for this year and it is more than likely that average timescales will have been impacted at year end by the pandemic. Completion of adopter medicals and the restrictions imposed in undertaking face to face assessment visits has made the assessment process more protracted. Progress in completing assessments is however kept under regular review and is reported to NAS on a quarterly basis. There was pleasing evidence at the end of Quarter 2 that completion of assessments was beginning to increase with 20 having been completed and a further 20 plus projected for completion by the end of Quarter 3.

I trust the information provided addresses the matters raised by Committee but please advise if any more information or clarification is required.

Yours Sincerely

*Angela Harris*

**Angela Harris**  
**Regional Adoption Manager**

cc Deborah Driffield, Assistant Director Children's Services, Cardiff Council

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**CYNGOR CAERDYDD  
CARDIFF COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**9 December 2021**

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**YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE – UPDATE**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. In October 2020, when agreeing the Work Programme for 2020/21, the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee agreed that it would prioritise the Youth Justice Service as a topic for scrutiny. This followed the publication of the HMIP Inspection report in 2020.
2. **Appendix A** attached to this report provides Members with an update on progress in relation to the Youth Justice Service. A range of performance results for the Youth Justice Service for Quarter 2 of 2021/22 are also attached at **Appendix B**.

**Background**

3. The Cardiff Youth Justice Service (YJS) is a statutory partnership set up under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to work with 10- to 18-year-olds and their families, to prevent anti-social behaviour, offending and re-offending. YJS workers provide intervention and support to young people sentenced to a community penalty or custody or those dealt with by an out-of-court disposal, as well as prevention and diversion work to try to steer young people away from entering the youth criminal justice system. They also offer support to victims of youth crime and anti-social behaviour.
4. The inspection, in January 2020 was led by HMI Probation and supported by inspectors from Care Inspectorate Wales, Estyn, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, and HMI Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

5. Overall, Cardiff Youth Offending Service was rated as 'Inadequate' across all areas of work: leadership and staffing; working with partners such as health, education and police; and providing services to children and young people who have offended and to their victims. The inspection found improvement was required across all areas. The report made 14 recommendations. A subsequent Strategy and Action Plan "All Our Futures" was agreed and implemented.

## **Issues**

6. Since the Inspection, this Scrutiny Committee has monitored progress and improvements to the YJS, via bi-monthly updates.
7. Attached at **Appendix A** is an update on the Youth Justice Service provided by the Service Area and Independent Chair. This covers:
  - Inspection update
  - Staff updates
  - Serious Cases immediate partnership learning
  - "All Our Futures" 2
  - Links with Estyn Inspection
  - Quality Assurance work
8. A range of performance results for the Youth Justice Service are also attached at **Appendix B**. These are set out under the following headings:
  - Organisational Health (August - November 2021)
  - Local Picture
  - Youth Justice Service and Children's Services Scorecard – November 2021
  - Caseloads
  - Weekly Briefings
  - YJB Published Comparison Data Quarter 1 - April 2021 – June 2021



## Previous Scrutiny

9. At its meeting on the 30 July 2020, CYPSC considered the YJS Inspection Report and the Council's response to it<sup>1</sup>. It was agreed that the Committee would monitor developments in relation to
- Youth Justice Board Governance and Progress
  - Performance Measures
  - Engagement and consultation with Young People and their Families/Carers
  - Improved/Joined working internally
  - Improved/Joined up working across the Partnership
10. As stated in Paragraph 1 of this report, CYPSC Members agreed that YJS be a priority topic for the Committee's work for the foreseeable future. Members have received updates across Children's Services (including YJS) at the following CYPSC meetings:
- 30 July 2020 – full briefing to Committee
  - 15 September 2020 – during the consideration of the Local Authority Social Services Annual report 2019/2020
  - 12 October 2020 – during the Children's Services Update
  - 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021 – full briefing to Committee
  - 11 May 2021 – full briefing to Committee; meeting with young people in the YJS
  - 13 July 2021 - full briefing to Committee
  - 13 October 2021 – full briefing to Committee
11. In addition to the issues highlighted in Paragraph 7, during these briefings, Members have made comments and requested evidence in relation to the following:
- Post 16 opportunities/NEETs/Young Homeless (September and October 2020)

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<sup>1</sup> [Agenda for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 30th July, 2020, 4.30 pm : City of Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

- Recruitment and retention of staff (September 2020; May 2021; October 2021)
- Demand on Services (October 2020; July 2021; October 2021)
- Staff Health & Wellbeing (October 2020; October 2021)
- Role of the Judiciary (October 2020)
- Quality Assurance (March 2021)
- HMIP Inspection (March 2021)
- Early Help (March 2021)
- Impact of Strategic Partners (March 2021)
- The Voice of young people (March 2021)
- Meeting young people (May 2021)
- Engagement and Evidence Gathering (May 2021; July 2021)
- Partnerships and Joined-Up Working (May 2021; July 2021)
- Funding and Resources (May 2021)
- Substance Misuse (July 2021)
- Young People Vulnerable to Criminal Exploitation (July 2021)
- Impact Evidence (October 2021)
- SAFE Model (October 2021)

## **Way Forward**

12. Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member for Children & Families), Deborah Driffield (Director of Children's Services), Sarah McGill (Corporate Director, People and Communities), Graham Robb (Independent Chair, Youth Justice Board) and Angharad Thomas (OM, YJS) will be available to answer any questions Members may have.
13. Members will be able to agree any comments, concerns or recommendations that they wish to pass on to the Cabinet Member for Children & Families, Corporate Director, People and Communities, Director of Children's Services and Independent Chair of the Youth Justice Board.

## **Legal Implications**

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

## **Financial Implications**

15. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Committee considers this report, its Appendices and information provided at the meeting and agrees any recommendations, comments or advice it wishes to offer to the Cabinet Member, Corporate Director, Director of Children's Services and Independent Chair of the Youth Justice Board.

**Davina Fiore**

**Director of Governance and Legal Services**

**02 December 2021**

## **Scrutiny Committee report 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

This report is an update on current progress within Cardiff Youth Justice Service, primarily around staffing and service re-structure as well as recent findings and next steps regarding Quality Assurance work and developing our next two year strategy

### **Inspection update**

Committee will be aware of the 'de-escalation' of concern of Cardiff Youth Justice Service from Stage 3 to Stage 1 by the Youth Justice Board; and whilst the service has not yet received notification of further Inspection, we continue to build on the good work so far in anticipation that HMIP will return before the end of the financial year. Relevant plans are in place.

Meanwhile we are learning from recent inspections on new additions to the Inspection framework. This includes Resettlement from secure estate and analysis of any overrepresentation of identified groups of children in the youth justice system by heritage or ethnicity.

### **Staff updates**

All will be aware that over the past 12 months there has been a focus on re-designing the management structure of the Youth Justice Service to provide a clear line of sight from management board to practice and ensuring clear management oversight of casework in relation to risk and safeguarding practices.

Over recent weeks, the Youth Justice Service has been primarily relying on two agency Team Managers to support the service as previous Youth Justice Service Managers have left the service and whilst this will remain the case over the Christmas period, appointment of the new management team is now nearly complete, and we expect all three successful candidates to be in position at the beginning of February.

The Youth Justice Service Practice Manager has been appointed and will start with the YJS on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> February – coming to the team with extensive experience in a number of other Youth Justice and Safeguarding teams as well as the Secure estate.

Interviews are being held on 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> December for the two Senior Officer posts – Planning and Intervention and Prevention and Partnerships. There were a strong field of applicants with a wide variety of experiences and backgrounds, so a robust shortlisting process had to be adhered to, therefore we anticipate a high standard during the interviews.

We have recently recruited into a Prevention case manager vacancy and a Court case manager vacancy with further Prevention vacancies to hopefully be filled before Christmas.

The previous Intensive Supervision & Surveillance Co-ordinator post has been re-written to incorporate intensive interventions across the service recognising the changing landscape and

breadth of Youth Justice Service work and is currently out to advert. Again, we are anticipating a lot of interest in this post.

### **Serious Cases immediate partnership learning**

As reported to last committee, Board held a partnership review of three cases – all on remand for serious offences. All statutory partners shared their understanding about the children and then proposed immediate or long-term actions. This also recognised that some of the very recent improvements in services may have had preventative impact.

The outcome will be signed off at Cardiff Youth Justice Board on 14 December.

### **“All Our Futures” 2**

In January - March 2022 we will start consultation on the successor two-year strategy to All Our Futures to ensure we sustain the progress since 2020 and reflect new strands. This will all be informed by the learning we have done on how youth justice services need to respond to “Child Friendly City” principles.

### **Estyn**

The YJS have been consulted as part of the current Estyn inspection. A workplan is already underway via the Youth Justice Service sub-committee to provide staff with more training around Additional Learning Needs and how recognition and understanding of Additional Learning Needs is integral to providing our children and young people with the right support and intervention.

Going forward Quarterly reports to Youth Justice Service Management Board will also include details around school attendance – not just hours offered to further understand the Youth Justice cohort

### **Quality Assurance work**

Since March, the Youth Justice Service Management team has undertaken a number of case audits – a summary of results is tabled below.

### **A target of 1-2 cases per team manager per month to be reviewed after case has closed**

All young people presenting with high risks have been reviewed at Risk Management Panel and shared with relevant agencies.

All necessary actions have been taken to safeguard young person where required.

Management oversight is being increasingly noted on cases

Panel and court reports were not consistently being shared with the young person and their family prior to attendance – the importance of this has been highlighted now during individual supervisions and at team meetings

Although there has been an increase in completing parent/carer self-assessments relatively low numbers of parents provided feedback at the end of an intervention – again there has been a push in team meetings to involve parents in feedback processes

#### **As a result of findings from case audits**

Case planning meetings and reviews are now implemented involving young person and parent/carer to ensure priorities are focussed and sequenced to build upon positive and protective factors procedure. This ensures plans are adjusted to account for changing circumstances and feedback.

Due to significant management pressures as detailed above; Quality Assurance processes have not been as robust over recent weeks as they were during the Spring/Summer period. However, Cardiff have been in discussions with the management team from Dudley Youth Offending Team – Service Manager, Advanced Social Work practitioner and Youth Justice practice lead who will be offering us a day of Quality Assurance work to ‘dip-sample’ approximately 10 cases and give some feedback around what’s going well and further areas for development. We anticipate the report will be available in January where feedback and next steps can then be shared.

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# EIN DYFODOL NI I GYD ALL OUR FUTURES

Appendix B



## Cardiff Youth Justice Service Performance Report Quarter 2: July – September 2021



Gwasanaeth Prawf  
Cenedlaethol  
National Probation  
Service



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES  
Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol  
Caerdydd a'r Fro  
Cardiff and Vale  
University Health Board



Cardiff  
Caerdydd



De Cymru  
Comisiynydd yr Heddlu a Throseddu  
Police and Crime Commissioner  
South Wales



CARDIFF  
CAERDYDD

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GWASANAETHAU  
CYFIAWNDER IEUENCTID  
CAERDYDD  
CARDIFF  
YOUTH JUSTICE  
SERVICES

## Organisational Health (August - November 2021)

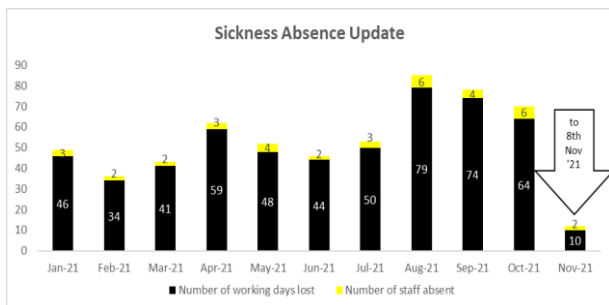
**Posts filled:** Grade 7 Case Management Post (September 2021)  
Grade 10 Team Manager appointed (starting January)

**Leavers:** Team Manager (August 2021)  
ISS Coordinator Manager (August 2021)  
2 x Prevention Workers (August 2021)  
1 x Prevention Worker (November 2021)  
Business Support Manager (December 2021)

**Vacancies:** Junior Attendance Centre Officer in Charge (interviews ongoing)  
Part-time Social Worker  
1 x Social Worker (advertise next week)  
2 x Team Managers (Grade 9) (out for advert)  
ISS Coordinator (advert due within next week)  
3 x Prevention Workers (advert out again)  
Business Support Manager  
Referral Order Case Manager (secondment ended, vacancy to be filled)

**Current issues:** The restructure of the management team has been agreed and will consist of 1 Grade 10 and 2 Grade 9 roles. The ISS Co-Ordinator post has been redefined and is ready to go out to advert as an Intensive Interventions Co-ordinator. One of the ISS workers has been redeployed and the other remains on sick leave.

**Staff sickness:** Between 01/08/2021 and 08/11/2021 - 7 members of staff have been on sickness leave losing 227 working days as per the breakdown below: -



- Prevention & Pre-Trial Team - 1 member of staff was absent totalling 69 working days
- Early Intervention Team - 1 member of staff was absent totalling 38 working days
- Court and Case Management Team - 4 members of staff were absent totalling 97 working days
- Business Support - 1 member of staff was absent totalling 23 working days

### Staff Supervision:

The target is 1 supervision per month (LA staff) and every other month for partnership staff (exc. Probation).

The Prevention and Pre-Trial Team Manager currently supervises 12 staff:

- August 21 – 7/10 staff received supervision, 3 staff are off long term (7/7 - 100%)
- September 21 – 7/10 staff received supervision, 3 staff are off long term (7/7 – 100%)
- October 21 – 6/12 staff received supervision, 2 staff members didn't receive supervision due to annual leave, 1 staff member was off sick and 3 staff are off long term (6/9 - 67%)

Discounting long term absence, 20 of 23 supervision sessions took place (87%)

The Early Intervention Team Manager left the service in August which impacted on the provision of supervision, supervises 8 LA staff and 4 partnership staff:

- August 21 – 1/8 staff member received supervision, 11 staff members didn't receive supervision due to Team Manager leaving the service and 1 staff member was off sick (1/12 - 8%)
- September 21 – 9/12 staff received supervision, 1 staff member didn't receive supervision due to sickness and 2 partner agency staff were unavailable (9/12 - 75%)
- October 21 – 9/12 staff received supervision, 1 staff member didn't receive supervision, 2 partnership staff have bi-monthly supervision (9/10 - 90%)

Discounting long term absence, 19 of 34 supervision sessions took place (56%)

The Court and Case Management Team Manager currently supervises 7 LA staff and 4 partnership staff:

- August 21 - 1 staff member received supervision, 5 staff members didn't receive supervision, 1 staff member was off sick, 2 staff are off long term, 1 staff member was on leave and 1 staff member receives bi-monthly supervision (1/8 - 13%)
- September 21 – 3 staff received supervision, 4 staff members didn't receive supervision due to unforeseen events, 1 staff are off long term and 2 partnership staff members receive bi-monthly supervision (3/7 - 43%)
- October 21 – 2 staff received supervision 1 provided by the Prevention Team Manager as a new starter, 7 staff members didn't receive supervision due to Team Manager sickness, 1 staff member is off long term and 1 partnership staff member receives bi-monthly supervision (1/8 – 29%)

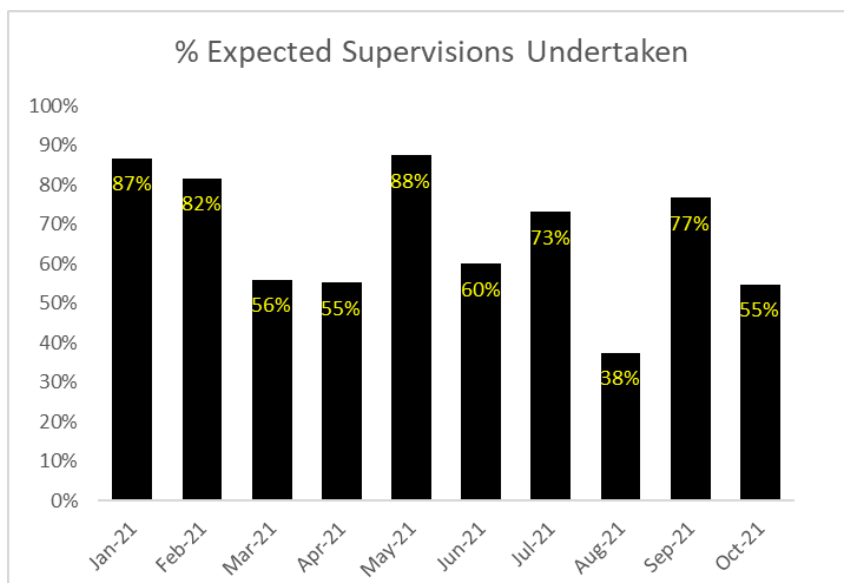
Discounting long term absence, 6 of 24 supervision sessions took place (25%)

Operational Manager currently supervises 4 team managers:

- August 21 - 3 staff received supervision and 1 staff member had their session postponed (3/4 - 75%)
- September 21 – 4 staff received supervision (4/4 - 100%)
- October 21 – 1 staff received supervision, 2 staff members were off sick and 1 staff member didn't receive supervision (1/4 - 25%)

Discounting long term absence, 8 of 12 supervision sessions took place (67%)

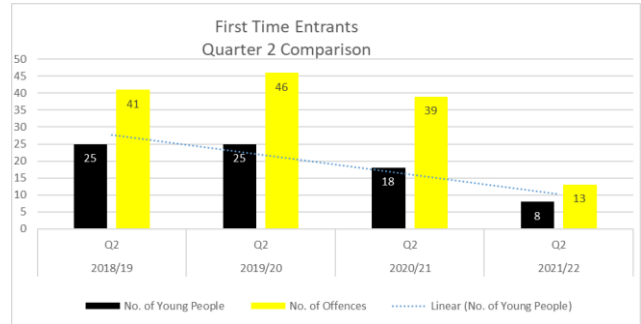
The chart below has been updated to show staff receiving supervision provided as a percentage of expected supervisions, this excludes staff on long term absence.



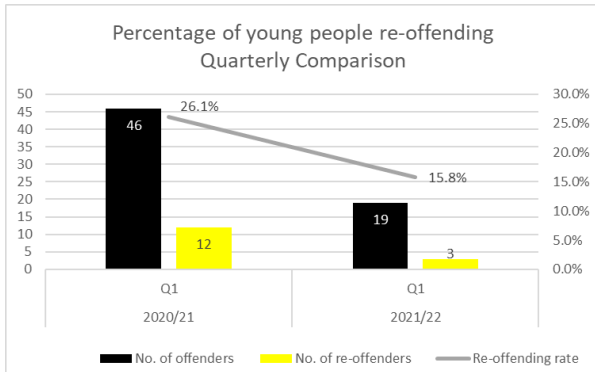
## Local Picture

### First Time Entrants

The ongoing downward trend since Q4 2019/20 ended in Q2 with an increase from 7 young people in Q1 to 8 in Q2. However, the chart opposite shows a reduction when compared to the same period in previous years. A number of initiatives have impacted upon FTE's maintaining very low levels. This includes the implementation of the Bureau Model which has diverted young people from the criminal justice service, with only 5% of young people referred for an Out of Court Disposal receiving a substantive outcome during the period. The courts in the South Wales Police area are implementing a referral back to YJS for low level car crimes for appropriate intervention in place of first tier penalties without intervention.



### Re-offending



The cohort of young people receiving a substantive outcome during October - December 2020 has been tracked for 6 months to June 2021. During Quarter 1 - 19 young people were included in the cohort, with only 3 young people re-offending committing a further 5 offences. A re-offending rate of 15.8% for this period with re-offenders committing an average 1.67 further offences. 1/3 young people committed a different crime type and all young people committed a more serious offence.

### Use of Custody

During Q2 1 young person received 2 custodial sentences, 1 short 4 month DTO for an offence committed in 2019 and a further 12 month DTO for violence against the person offences committed in July 2021 whilst subject to a Section 250 licence. 2 young people remain remanded in custody from the previous quarter and a further young person was remanded during Q2, all 3 young people have been charged with murder.

**Welsh Devolved Indicators – 9 young people concluded a statutory community intervention**

### Education Training & Employment

**School Age (Community) +11.1% (3).** The offer to all 3 young people changed during the course of their intervention. Increased hours for 2 young people, both of whom were EOTAS, 1 young person offered alternative full-time provision with ACT and an increase from 0 to 5 hours being offered to the other. 1 young person attending Greenhill had a significant reduction from 25 to 5 hours offered by the end of intervention, however beyond the end of their intervention was offered 25 hours EOTAS.

**Above School Age (Community) +88.8% (6).** 3 young people were NEET at the start of intervention, 2 secured employment and the other engaged with ITEC showing an overall increase of 71 hours.

### Accommodation

**% Change – Community Penalties 0% (9)**

1 young person aged 10-15 was in suitable accommodation at the beginning and the end of their intervention. Of the 8 young people who were 16+ 1 young person was in unsuitable accommodation at both the beginning and the end of the intervention, the young person was looked after but due to no appropriate placement being available they were placed at home.

**Substance Misuse**

**% Commencing a SM assessment within 5 days of referral date – 100% (3)**

All young people referred for an assessment were assessed within 5 days.

**% Receiving Tier 1, 2, 3 or 4 Service within 10 days of assessment – 100% (3)**

All young people assessed as requiring a service and agreed to engage received it within 10 days of the assessment being completed.

5 young people were identified via the screening process as requiring an assessment, 1 young person was already receiving a service and 1 young person refused to engage with the service after an assessment was completed. Of the 3 young people assessed and engaged on substance misuse interventions 1 young person was referred onto CAMHS for assessment as Tier 3 needs were identified and 2 young people engaged with Tier 2 interventions.

**Mental Health**

**% Commencing a MH assessment within 28 days of referral date – 100% (1)**

All young people referred for an assessment were assessed within 28 days.

**% receiving a Tier 2, 3 or 4 service within 28 days of MH assessment – 100% (1)**

All young people assessed as requiring a service and agreed to engage received it within 28 days of the assessment being completed.

5 of the 9 young people concluding a statutory intervention identified mental health concerns when assessed. 4 young people either had a diagnosis or had previously been referred to CAMHS. 2 referrals were made for a mental health assessment which were completed within 28 days from referral. 1 young person had Tier 2 needs identified and engaged in the service within 28 days whilst the other young person had no needs identified during the assessment.

**Youth Justice Service and Children’s Services Scorecard – November 2021**

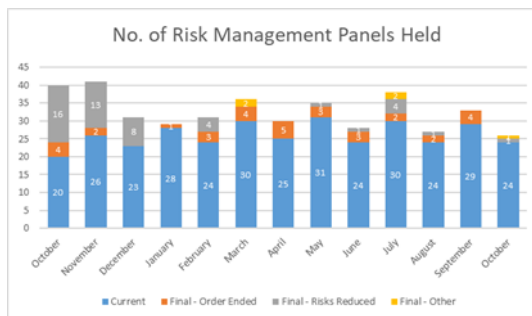
**Risk Management Panels (RMP)**

There have been 5 referrals to RMP during October. 26 Risk Management Panels took place during October. As at end October 28% (40/143) of all young people currently open to YJS were ongoing at the Risk Management Panels. The 2 cases concluding were under review for an average of 20.6 months.



**Number / percentage of cases referred to Risk Management Multi Agency Strategy Meeting with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) / Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) concerns**

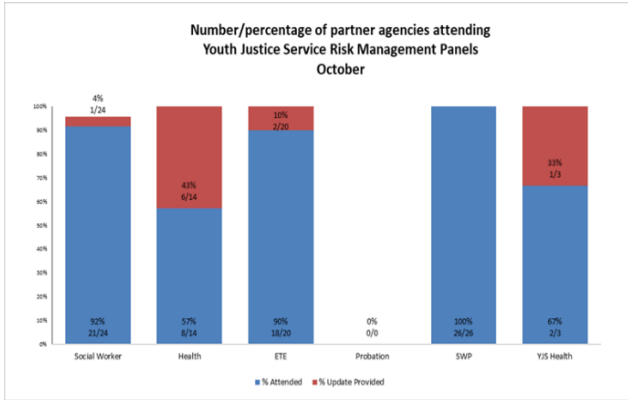
66% (23/35) of cases currently ongoing at RMP include CSE / CCE issues. 4/5 referrals made in October had CSE / CCE concerns.



**Number of cases referred to High Risk Panel**

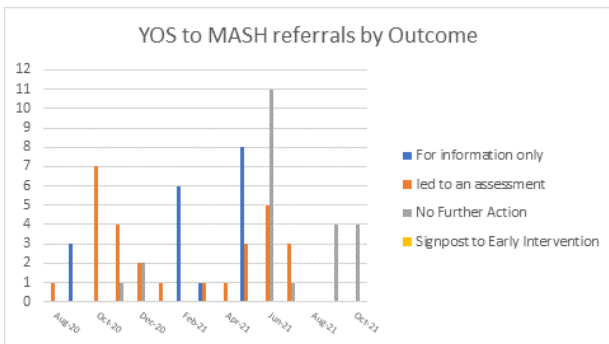
40 young people known to YJS have been referred to High Risk Panel (since April 2020). 10 cases known to YJS currently being reviewed at HRP 9 of which are currently active cases. 7 cases currently being reviewed have been re-referred. 0 cases open to YJS were referred during October





As shown in the majority of RMPs all relevant parties have either attended the meeting or provided an update.

**Number / percentage of cases referred to the MASH by YJS by outcome (assessment / no further action)**

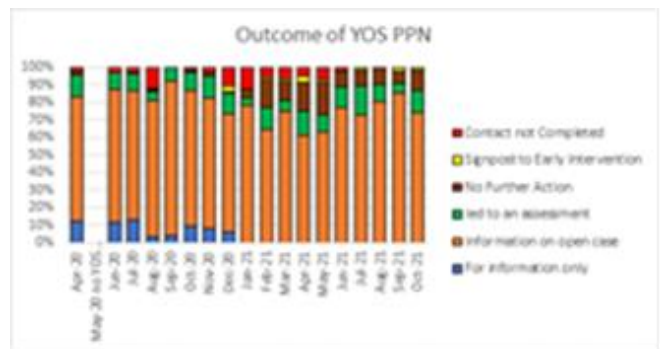
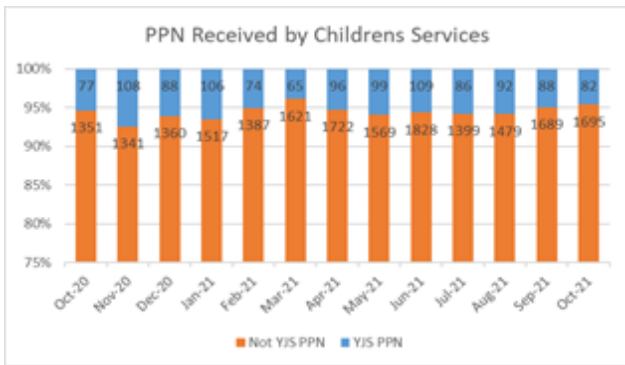


There have been very few referrals received during Q2 all of have resulted in no further action.

An average of 6% of PPNs relate to the YJS.

Since July there have been no 'Contact not completed' during the period.

**Number of Public Protection Notifications (PPN) relating to YJS by outcome**



**Number of closed cases audited - A target of 2 cases per team manager per month to be reviewed after case has closed**

**Overview of case audits completed to date**

- all young people presenting high risks have been reviewed at Risk Management Panel and shared with relevant agencies
- all necessary actions have been taken to safeguard young person where required
- panel and court reports were not consistently being shared with the young person and their family prior to attendance

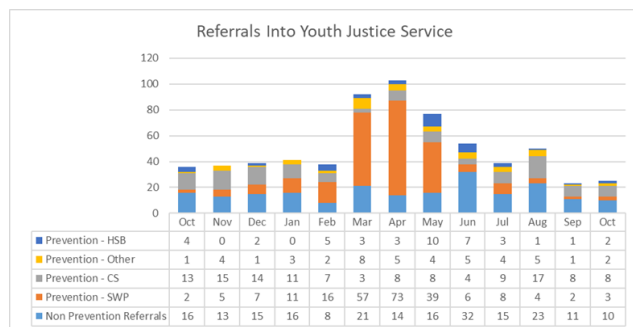
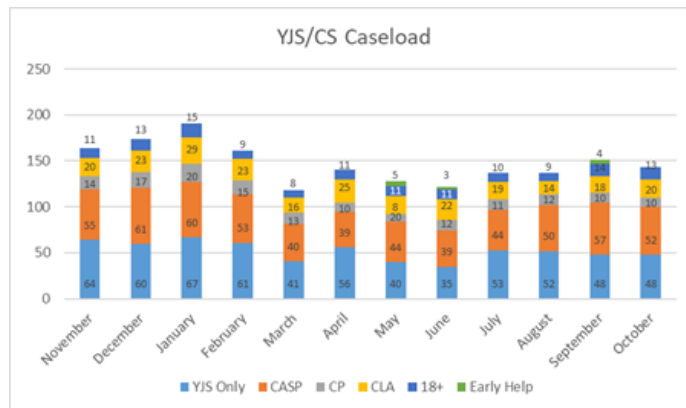
- although there has been an increase in completing parent/carer self-assessments relatively low numbers of parents provided feedback at the end of an intervention.

As a result of findings from case audits

- intervention planning meetings for professionals have been implemented to ensure priorities are focused and sequenced to build upon positive and protective factors
- procedure ensuring plans are adjusted to account for changing circumstances.

### YJS/CS Caseload and Referrals into YJS

Intervention Types	No.
Voluntary	7
Prevention	45
Out of Court Disposals - Non-statutory	49
Out of Court Disposals - Statutory	8
Remand - Community	3
Remand - Custody	2
Community Court Orders	26
Custodial	1
Licence	2
<b>Total (October)</b>	<b>143</b>



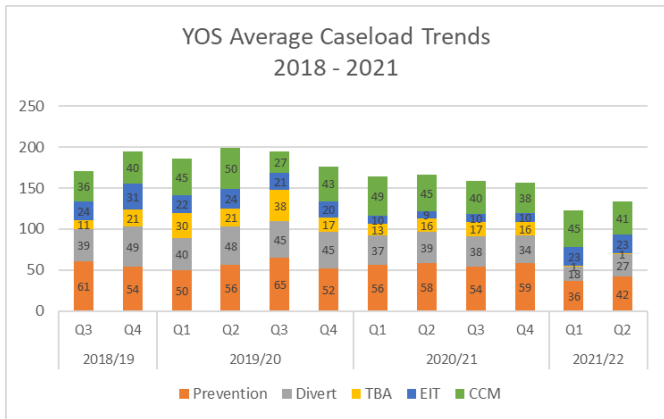
### Timeliness of ASSET+ Assessments - Standard 20 Working Days

As at 01/11/2021 54 assessments were in progress for an average of 47 working days with 29 in progress with the case manager and 36 awaiting countersigning.



Average number of working days to complete assessments													
Year	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total Avg.
2020/21	43	42	31	87	40	20	21						41
2021/22	22	20	25	13	22	36	29						24

## Caseloads



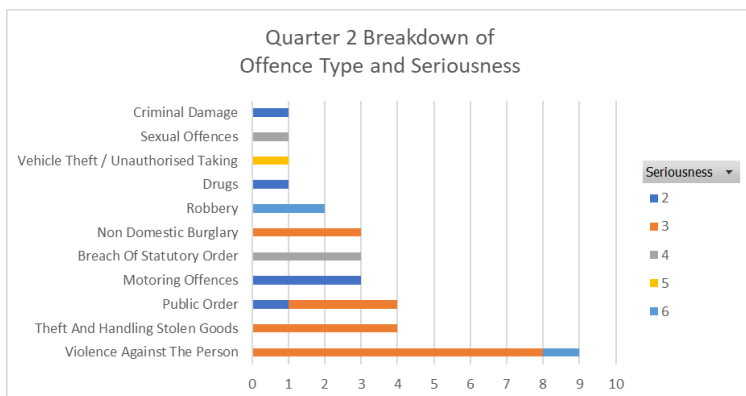
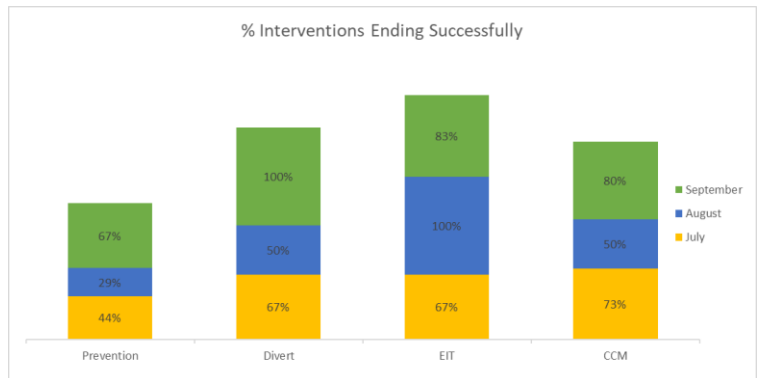
The review of the Prevention referral criteria has been ongoing which has impacted upon caseloads.

After the reduction in caseload numbers during Q1, Q2 shows an increase where changes in administrative processes were implemented in Q1 have embedded.

\*NOTE: from 2021/22 - Q1 OoCD's are no longer shown separately

86% of interventions supervised by the Early Intervention Team and Court and Case Management Team successfully completed interventions during the period.

Prevention and Divert interventions are voluntary, however, the success rate is still high at 61%.



The chart shows offences convicted or receiving a Youth Caution.

75% of all offences had a seriousness score of 2 or 3 (1 being the lowest and 6 the highest) and 13% of offences were +5.

There has been an increase in the number of young people convicted during Q2 compared to Q1.

Q1 - 14 young people committed 17 offences, average number of offences per young person = 1.88

Q2 - 18 young people committed 32 offences, average number of offences per young person = 1.21



## Weekly Briefings

Weekly briefings were introduced at the YJS at the beginning of 2021 to assist with the implementation of new policies and procedures and also to highlight and share good practice. Staff members volunteered to look at new policies and disseminate the salient messages at these meetings.

Sessions are kept to approximately 30 minutes and were initially weekly but have since reduced to fortnightly. All sessions are recorded for those members of the team not able to attend. There have been a number of themes covered to date as listed below:-

- Q4 ACORDS Case Recording Protocol
- Q4 Policy Briefings - Planning
- Q4 Saving Documents to ChildView
- Q4 Allocation Policy
- Q4 Induction Policy
- Q4 Management Oversight Policy
- Q4 ChildView Recording - Start of Intervention Checklists
- Q4 Victim Policy (including Awareness & Empathy)
- Q4 Resource Library
- Q4 QA Framework
- Q4 CE / NRM
- Q1 Welsh Language Offer
- Q1 Navigating SharePoint
- Q1 Agored Vocational Quals
- Q1 Planning Process
- Q1 ChildView - Version 5 Update
- Q1 Case Closure Summaries
- Q1 YJS Police Officers
- Q1 Knife Crime and Local Trends
- Q2 Intervention End Checklist
- Q2 Brief Assessment Tool
- Q2 Health Provision / Pathways
- Q3 Evidencing Information Gathering and Navigating AssetPlus Assessment
- Q3 NRM Pilot Briefing / Update
- Q3 ChildView Upgrade

## YJB Published Comparison Data Quarter 1 - April 2021 – June 2021

Green arrows = improvement

Red arrows = deterioration

Amber = static

Directional arrows = increase (up)/reduction (down) on previous period



National and Welsh Indicator Performance	Cardiff		Wales Comparison to Cardiff YJS		S. Wales Comparison to Cardiff YJS		YOS Family Comparison to Cardiff YJS		Core City Comparison to Cardiff YJS	
	Previous Year	Latest Period								
Number of FTE per 100,000 population of 10 to 17 year olds (January – December 20)	-2.0%	↓ -67.2%	↓	-30.2%	↓	-38.9%	↓	-3.8%	↓	-26%
Proportion of Offenders who Re-offend (July 19 – September 19)	42.4%	↓ 34.4%	↑	44.1%	↓	41.7%	↓	34.2%	↓	31.8%
Frequency of Reoffending – Number of Offences per Offender (July 19 – September 19)	1.64	↓ 0.84	↑	1.95	↓	1.94	↓	1.38	↓	1.25
Reoffences per reoffenders after 12 months (July 19 – September 19)	3.86	↓ 2.45	↑	4.43	↓	4.65	↓	4.04	↓	3.93
Rate of Custodial Disposals per 1000 population of 10 to 17 yrs (July 20 – June 21)	0.35	↓ 0.12	↓	0.08	↓	0.07	↓	0.15	↓	0.31
% Change in average No. of ETE hours for school age YP at end (April - June 21)	37.7%	↓ -60.0%	↓	-4.8%	↓	-34.8%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
% Change in average No. of ETE hours for 16 plus age YP at end (April - June 21)	28.3%	↓ 0.0%	↑	67.8%	↑	32.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
% Change in YP in suitable accommodation by end of YOT community (April - June 21)	-14.3%	↑ 0.0%	↑	-1.0%	↑	3.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
% Change in YP in suitable accommodation by end of YOT custodial (April - June 21)	N/A	↔ N/A	↔	0.0%	↔	0.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Proportion of children requiring substance misuse assessment starting in 5 days (April - June 21)	100%	↓ 0%	↑	81.0%	↑	79.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Proportion of children requiring substance misuse treatment starting in 10 days (April - June 21)	100%	↔ 100%	↓	97.0%	↔	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mental health assessment within 10 days of sentence (April - June 21)	N/A	100%	↓	92.0%	↔	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mental health service within 28 days of assessment (April - June 21)	N/A	100%	↓	89.0%	↓	75.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Resettlement Tracker																
		Quarter 3 - 2020/21			Quarter 4 - 2020/21			Quarter 1 - 2021/22			Quarter 2 - 2021/22			Quarter 3 - 2021/22		
		Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
	Custodial sentence															
	Remand in custody															
	Licence															
Child 1	Male	S91	Accomm. ✓ ETE ✗ Health ✓		Licence Recall (Tag)	Accomm. ✓ ETE ✓ Health ✓	Accomm. ✓ ETE ✗ Health ✓				Accomm. ✓ ETE ✓ Health ✓	Accomm. ✓ ETE ✓ Health ✓				
Child 2	Male	DTO					Transition to Probation in custody	Accomm. ✓ ETE ✓ Health ✓								
Child 3	Male				DTO						Accomm. ✓ ETE ✓ Health ✓	Accomm. ✓ ETE ✗ Health ✗				
Child 4	Male	RLAA		RLAA			DTO			Accomm. ✓ ETE ✓ Health ✓	Licence recall		Transition to Probation	Accomm. ✓ ETE ✗ Health ✓		
Child 5	Male						S91				Transition to Probation in custody	Accomm. ✓ ETE ✓ Health ✓				
Child 6	Male						Community Penalty	Accomm. ✗ ETE ✗ Health ✓								
Child 7	Male															
Child 8	Female															

S91 Section 91 - custodial sentence for young person 10-17 (where an offence is punishable in the case of an adult with imprisonment of 14 years or more)  
 DTO Detention and Training Order - custodial disposal for young people 10-17 (can be for 4 - 24 months)  
 RLAA Remanded to Local Authority Accommodation (can be used as an alternative to a custodial remand)

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**CYNGOR CAERDYDD  
CARDIFF COUNCIL****CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

9 December 2021

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**CHILDREN'S SERVICE QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE 2021/22**

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**Reasons for the Report**

1. The Director of Children's Services will introduce the Quarter 2 performance report for Children's Services. This report will enable the Committee to assess the progress being made in improving outcomes for children in need and looked after children.

**Issue – performance reporting**

2. The range of performance data relating to Children's Services is contained in **Appendix A** to this report. The following data is reported on:
  - The number of people supported through the family gateway (FAM KPI 01)
  - The number of people supported by the Family Help Team (FAM KPI 02)
  - The number of people supported by the Support4Families Team (FAM KPI 03)
  - Percentage of children in regulated placements who are placed in Cardiff (CS LAC 58)
  - Percentage of social worker vacancies in all teams (Staff 1)
  - Percentage of children re-offending within six months of their previous offence (YOS 2)
  - Demand – Family Gateway and MASH Phone Data
  - Contact/ Referrals to MASH and Family Gateway
  - Domestic Abuse at Referral and Assessment
  - Caseload Breakdown Over Time
  - Contacts Received by Children's Services that progressed/ did not progress to an assessment

- Percentage of Well-being Assessments completed within statutory timescales (CH/012)
- The Percentage of looked after children who have had three or more placements during the year (CH/043)
- Percentage of children looking after returned home from care during the year (CH/045 – was SSWB 26)
- Face to Face and Virtual Visits
- Number and percentage of re-registrations of children on Child Protection Register during the year and within 12 months from deregistration (CH/024 – was SSWB 27)
- Average length of time for all children who were deregistered from the Child Protection Register during the period (CH/035, was SSWB 28 and slight reword – “during the year”)
- Number of Children on the Child Protection Register, registrations and deregistrations
- Child Protection registration by Category of Abuse – September 2021
- % Child Protection Conferences on Time
- The percentage of Initial Core Groups meetings held on time (CH/028 – was previously only reported at year end)
- The percentage of visits to children on the CPR held on time (CH/030 - was previously only reported at year end)
- The number of children reported during Quarter 2 2021/22 where exploitation is a factor (CH/033 - was previously only reported at year end)
- Looked After Starts, Ends and Total Number of Children Looked After
- Timeliness of Children Looked After Reviews
- Agency Placements by Age
- Total children looked after by Placement type – as at 30.06.2016 (baseline number: 644)
- Total CLA by Placement type – as at 30.06.2021 (baseline number: 986)
- Unplanned Placement Move Requests by Age
- Percentage of Statutory visits held on time (CH/042)
- The number of young people leaving care who moved into a ‘When I’m Ready’ Placement (CH/055)
- Sickness – Children’s Services

- Net result of Social Workers starting and leaving Council

### **Scope of Scrutiny**

3. The scope of the scrutiny of this report is for the Committee Members to review the information provided to the Committee and to provide any comments, concerns or recommendations to the Cabinet Member, Corporate Director and Director of Children's Services.

### **Way Forward**

4. At the meeting Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member for Children and Families); Sarah McGill (Corporate Director, People and Communities); and Deborah Driffield (Director of Children's Services) will be in attendance to answer any questions Members may wish to ask.
5. Members may wish to review the information presented at the meeting and determine whether there are any comments, concerns or recommendations which they would like to pass on to the Cabinet Member, Corporate Director and Director of Children's Services.

### **Legal Implications**

6. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be

properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

### **Financial Implications**

7. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. These financial implications will need to be considered before any changes are implemented.

### **Recommendation**

The Committee is recommended to review the information provided in the report, appendix and at the meeting and provide any comments, concerns or recommendations to the Cabinet Member, Corporate Director and Director of Children's Services.

**DAVINA FIORE**  
**Director of Governance and Legal Services**

**02 December 2021**



# Children's Services Performance Report

Appendix A

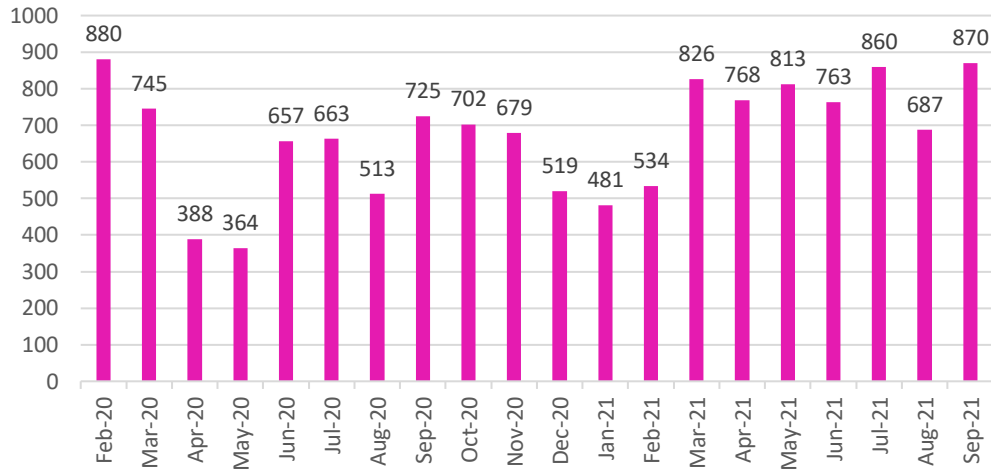
## Quarter 2 2021/22

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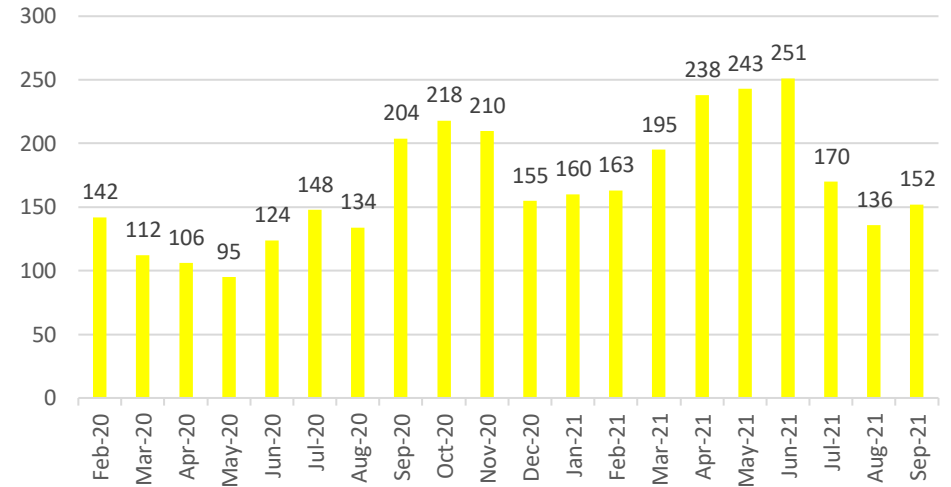


# Key Performance Indicators – Corporate Plan

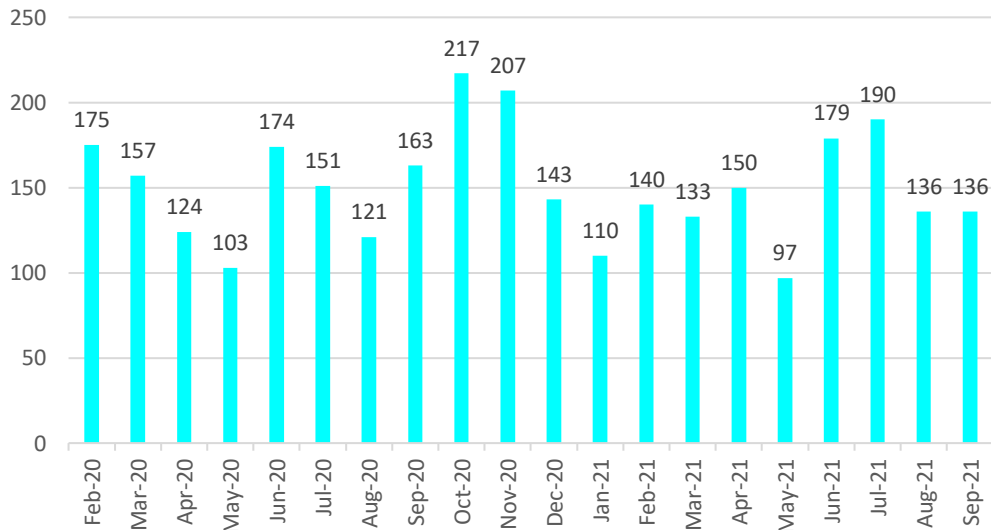
FAM KPI 01 Number of people supported through the Gateway



FAM KPI 02 Number of people supported by the Family Help Team



FAM KPI 03 Number of people supported by the Support4Families Team

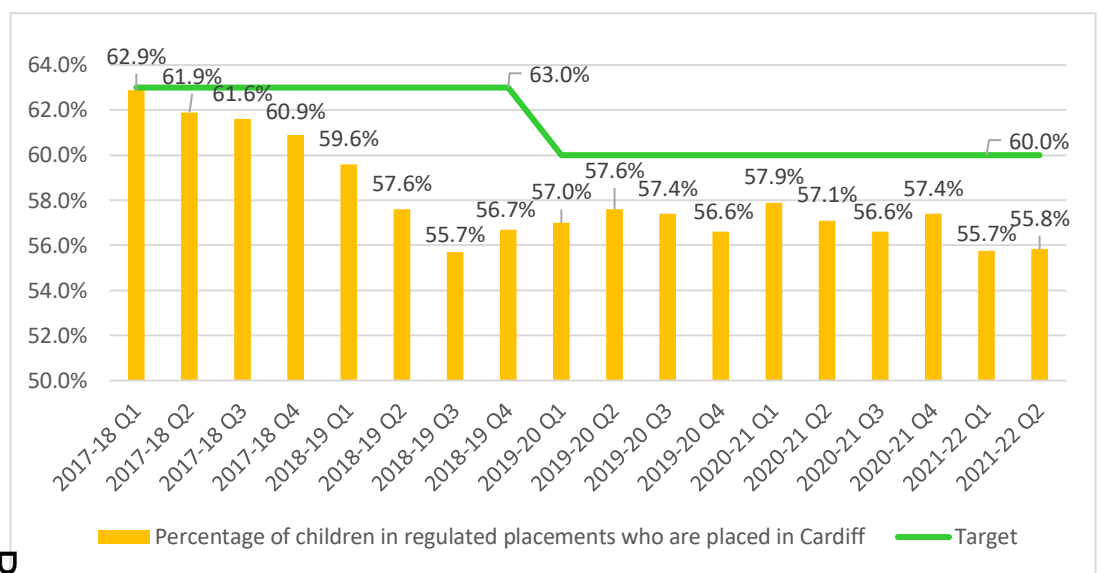


FAM KPI 01 The **number of people supported through the Family Gateway** = 2,417 during Q2 compared to 2,344 during Q1. Target per quarter is 1875. Target met. Annual Target for 2021/22 is 7500. This is a count of the number of enquiries and well-being contacts to the Family Gateway

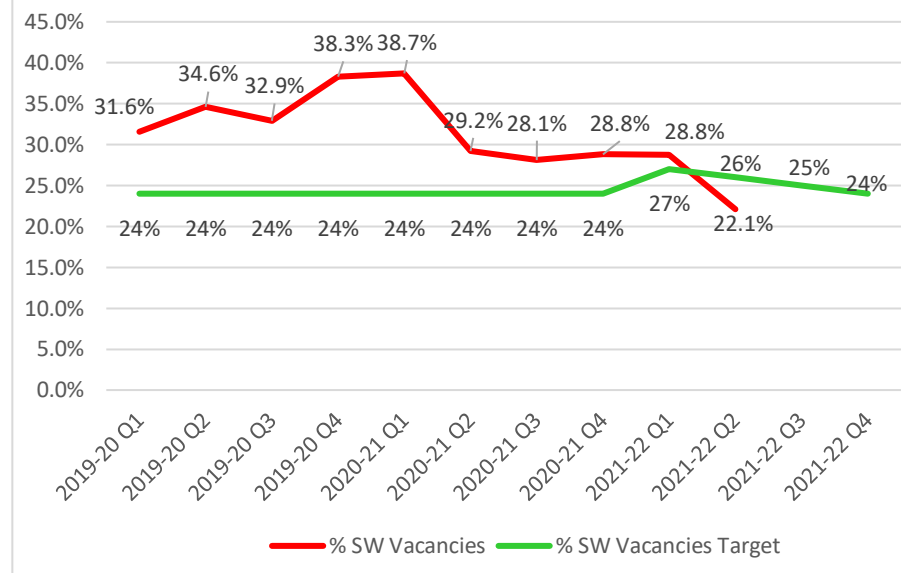
FAM KPI 02 The **number of people supported by the Family Help Team** = 458 during Q2 compared to 732 during Q1. Target per quarter is 375. Target met. Annual Target for 2021/22 is 1500.

FAM KPI 03 The **number of people supported by the Support4Families Team** = 462 during Q2 compared to 426 during Q1. Target per quarter = 500. Annual Target for 2021/22 is 2000.

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

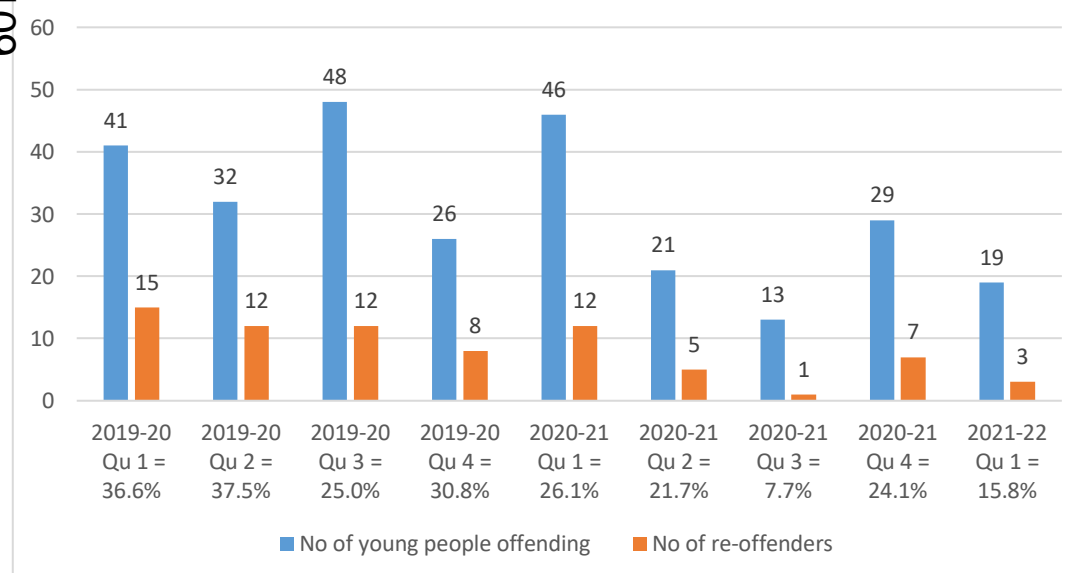


### Staff 1 Percentage of social worker vacancies in all teams



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### YOS 2 The percentage of children re-offending within six months of their previous offence



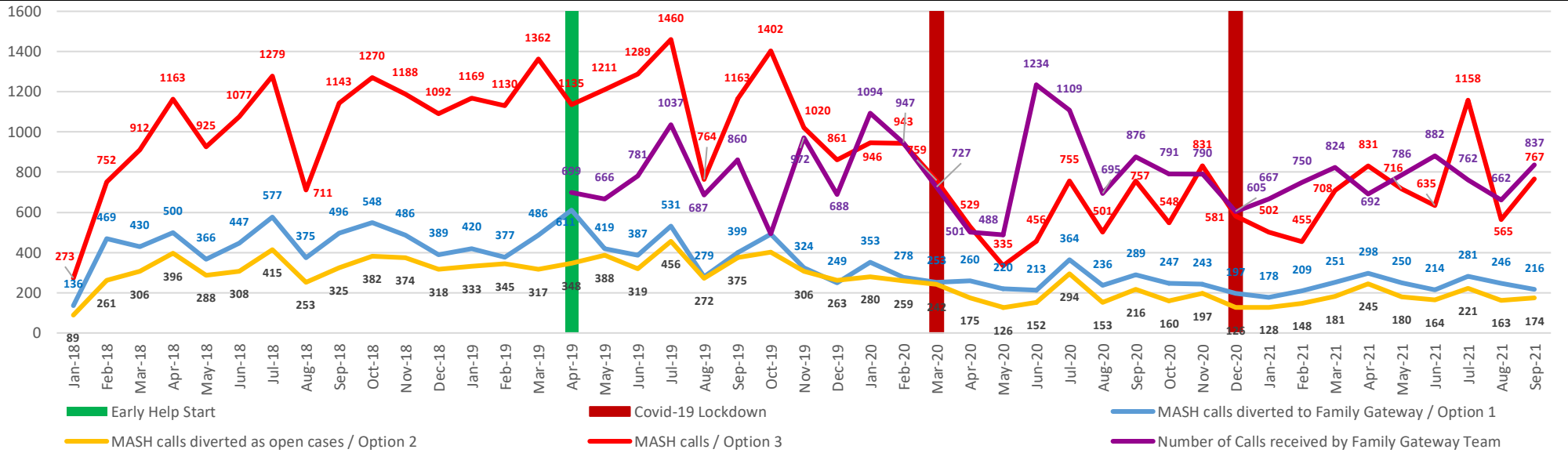
CS LAC 58 The **percentage of children in regulated placements who are placed in Cardiff** = 55.8% (397 / 711). The PI counts only children placed within the LA boundaries and excludes children placed in neighbouring authorities close to their home area and attending Cardiff schools. Please see page 12 for a breakdown of placements.

Staff 1 = 22.1% **vacancy rate** for Q2. Target met. 45.7 out of 206.8 posts were vacant and 161.1 posts were filled compared to 147 posts filled for Q1, an increase of 14 posts filled. Recruitment has continued as business as usual during the COVID-19 period. 13 social worker appointments are going through the recruitment process. This year we are using quarterly targets with the aim of reaching the annual target of 24% by the end of the year.

YOS 2 The **percentage of children re-offending within six months of their previous offence** = 15.8 (3 / 19). 3 out of 19 young people re-offended committing a further 5 offences. Target = 40%. Target met.  
 Annual outturn 2020/21 = 22.9% (25 / 109 young people re-offended). A reduction in the percentage of young people re-offending compared to last year.  
 Annual outturn 2019/20 = 32.0% (47 / 147 young people reoffended).  
 Please note results are always a quarter behind.

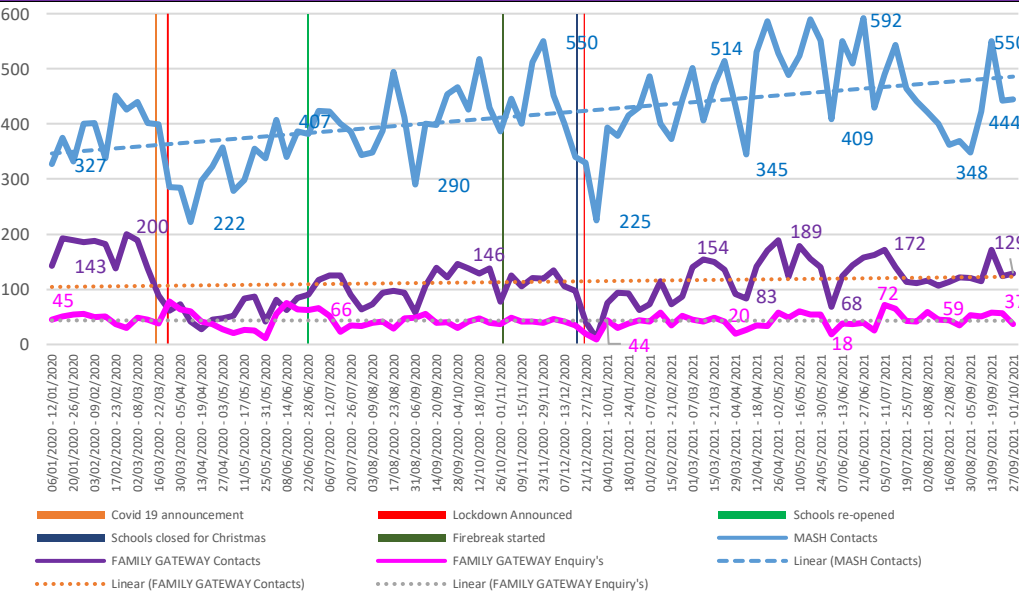
# Demand

## Family Gateway and MASH telephone data

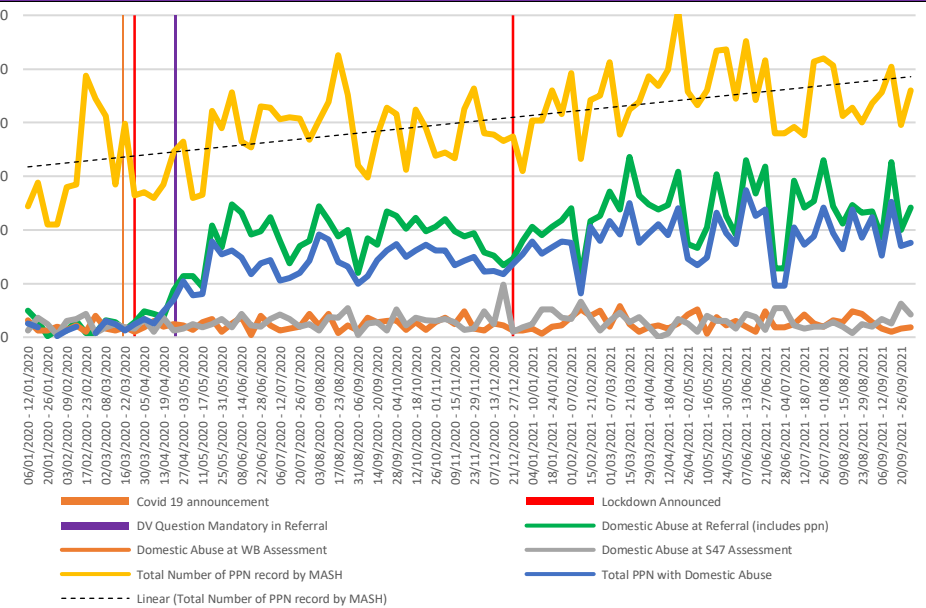


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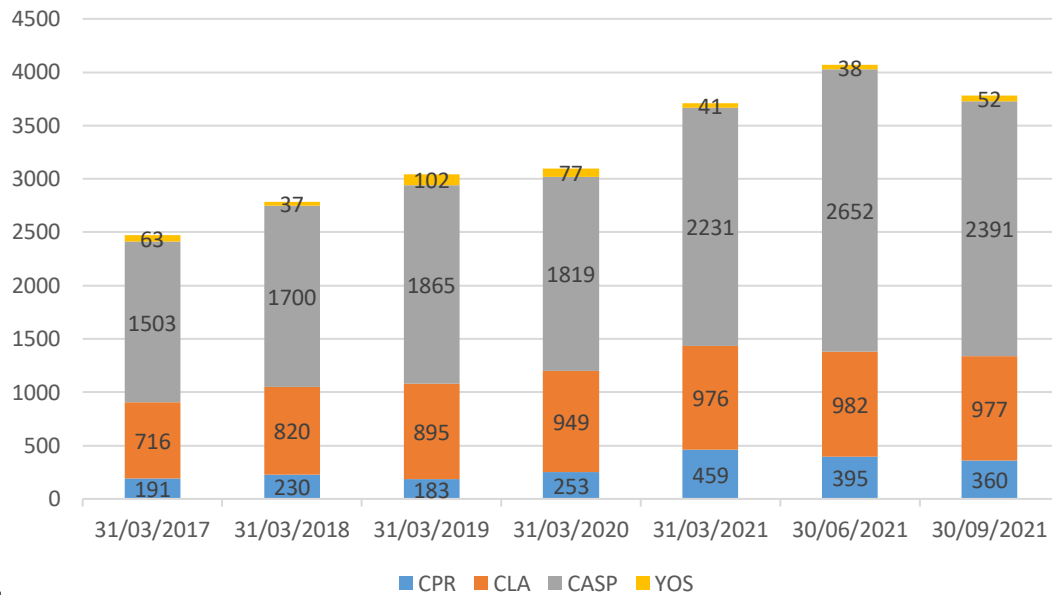
## Contact / referrals to MASH and Family Gateway



## Domestic abuse at referral and assessment



## Caseload breakdown over time



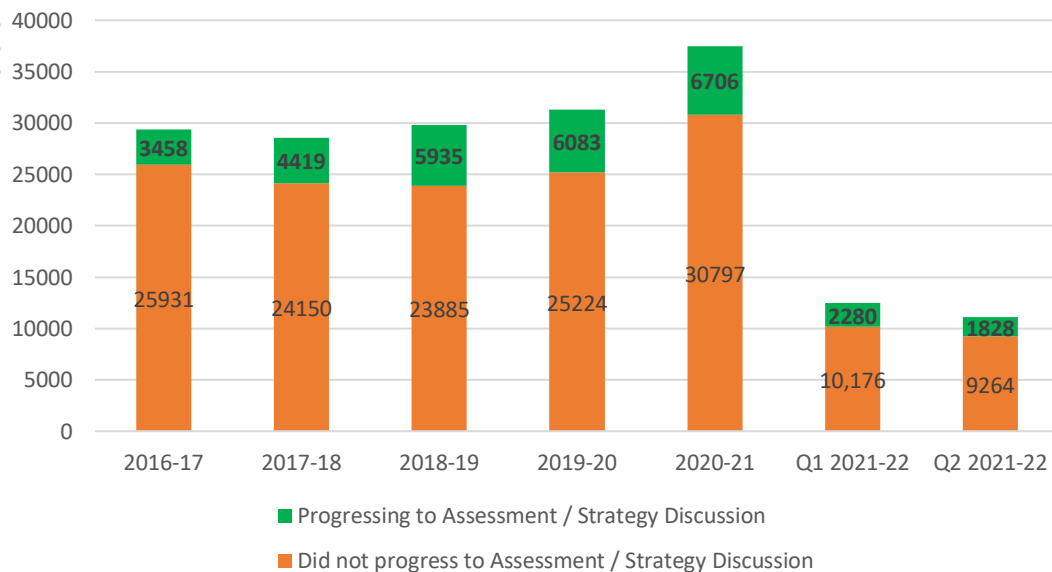
The caseload overview demonstrates the consistent rise in caseloads in all categories, over the years, until this quarter, which is showing the first decrease in caseloads.

Since 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017:

- The number of children on the Child Protection Register had increased by 140% from 191 to 459 at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. Over quarter 1, 2021/22 the number of children decreased to 395 and over quarter 2 the number decreased further to 360.
- The number of children looked after had increased by 37% from 716 to 982 at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021, this quarter however, the number has decreased to 977 (please note that an additional 9 children looked after were also on the Child Protection Register at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.)
- The number of other children in receipt of care and support had increased by 76% from 1,503 to 2,652 at 30<sup>th</sup> June, this has now decreased to 2,391.

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## Contacts received by Children's Services that progressed / did not progress to an assessment



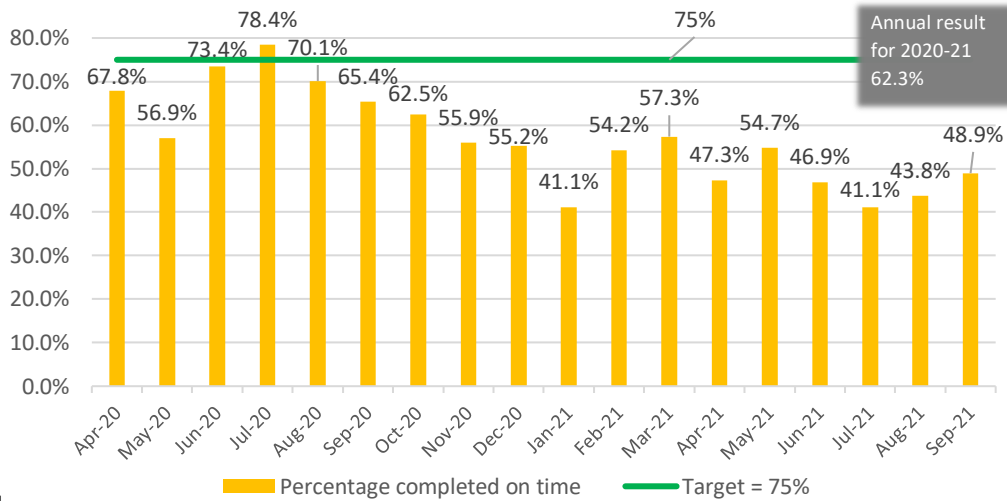
The graph to the left shows the steady increase in the number of contact / referrals received each year from 28,569 in 2017-18 to 37,503 in 2020/21. During Q1 we received 12,456 contacts, a 25% increase in contacts received, compared to the previous quarter of 9,936. Less contacts were received during Q2, 11,092, this is still a 13% increase on Q2 last year.

The proportion of contact / referrals that proceeded to assessment also increased from 15% in 2017/18 to 20% in 2018-19, falling to 18% in 2020/21. This remained at 18% for quarter 1, but has fallen to 16.5% during quarter 2, 2021/22.

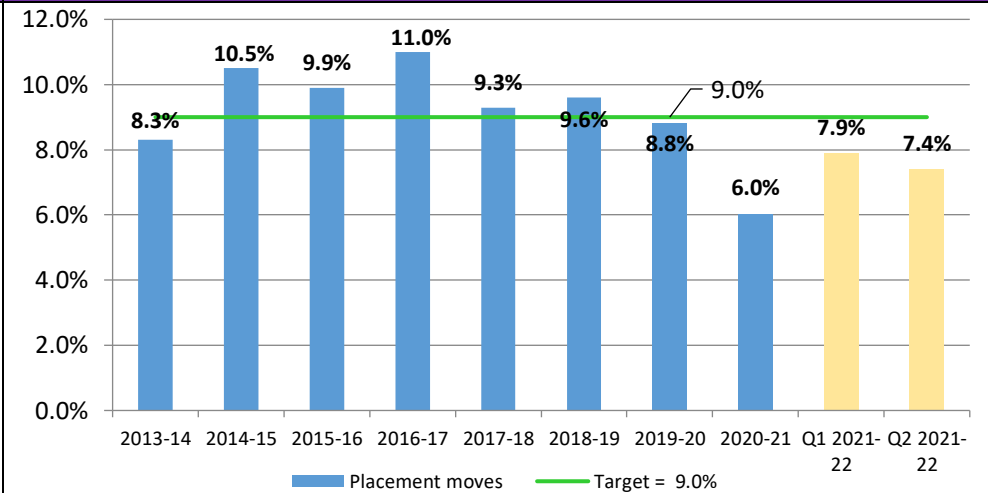
The contact / referrals graph at the bottom left of page 4 shows that referrals to MASH initially decreased but gradually increased to approximately the same level as before lockdown. Since schools reopened the number of contacts has steadily increased peaking at 592 received during one week at the end of June 2021.

In relation to domestic abuse, we have improved our recording mechanisms to ensure full capture of information; the graph at the bottom right on page 4 shows that overall the number of referrals with domestic abuse as a factor has increased since lockdown.

### CH/012 Percentage of well-being assessments completed within statutory timescales



### CH/043 The Percentage of looked after children who have had three or more placements during the year



### CH/045 The number of children looked after who returned home from care during the year

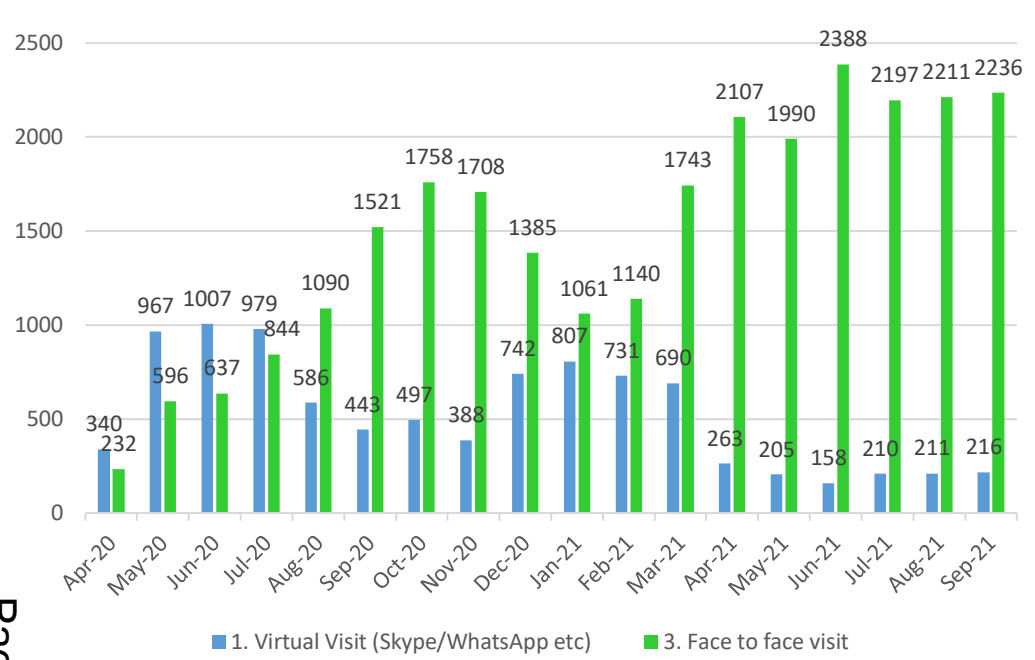


CH/012 44.5% (333 / 748) of new **Well-being Assessments** were completed within statutory timescales during quarter 2, compared to 49.0% (312 / 637) during quarter 1. 1,651 / 2,651 = 62.3% of new **Well-being assessments** were completed within statutory timescales during 2020/21.

CH / 043 **The percentage of looked after children who have had 3 or more placements during the year** = 7.4% (73 / 986.) This is a rolling result for quarter 2, based on the children who were looked after as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and the number of placements they had during the preceding year. 73 of our children looked after as at the 30<sup>th</sup> September had 3 or more placements during the year. This is in comparison to 6% (60 / 992) for the 2020/21 result as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

CH / 045 **The number of children looked after who left care who returned home during quarter 1 and 2** (cumulative result) = 43. 43 children returned home this year up to the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021. During 2020/21, 85 children returned home. Provisional result for 2021/22. Actual result will be populated from the Children Looked After Census. Clarification being sought from WG re the definition of the % measure.

## Face to face and virtual visits

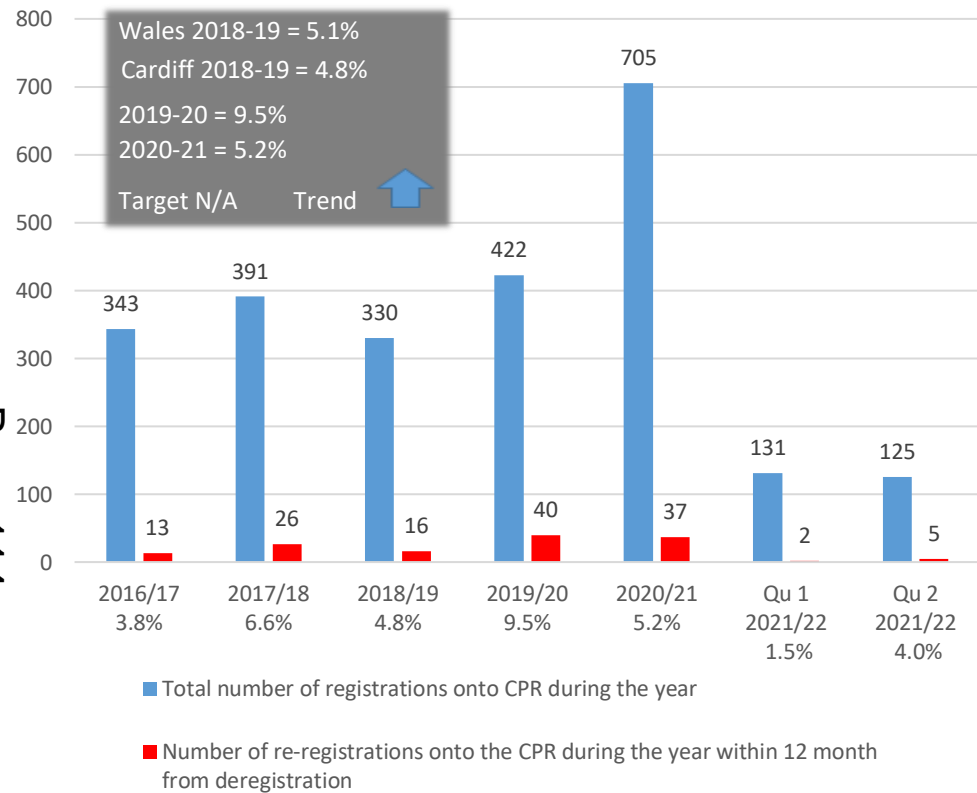


The proportion of virtual to face to face visits over time is displayed in the graph to the left. From 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020 until the start of the December lockdown, statutory visits to children on the Child Protection Register and children looked after were face to face as per business as usual requirements. During the lockdown that started in December, home visits to children on the CPR continued to be face to face, and children who were looked after and placed with their parents received face to face visits if required on the basis of risk assessment.

Face to face visits have now been reinstated for all children. Initial risk assessments need to be completed prior to face to face visits and updated to reflect any change of circumstance.

The number of virtual visits has decreased significantly over the last two quarters and the vast majority of visits are now being undertaken on a face to face basis.

### CH/024 Number and percentage of re-registrations of children on Child Protection Register during the period and within 12 months from deregistration

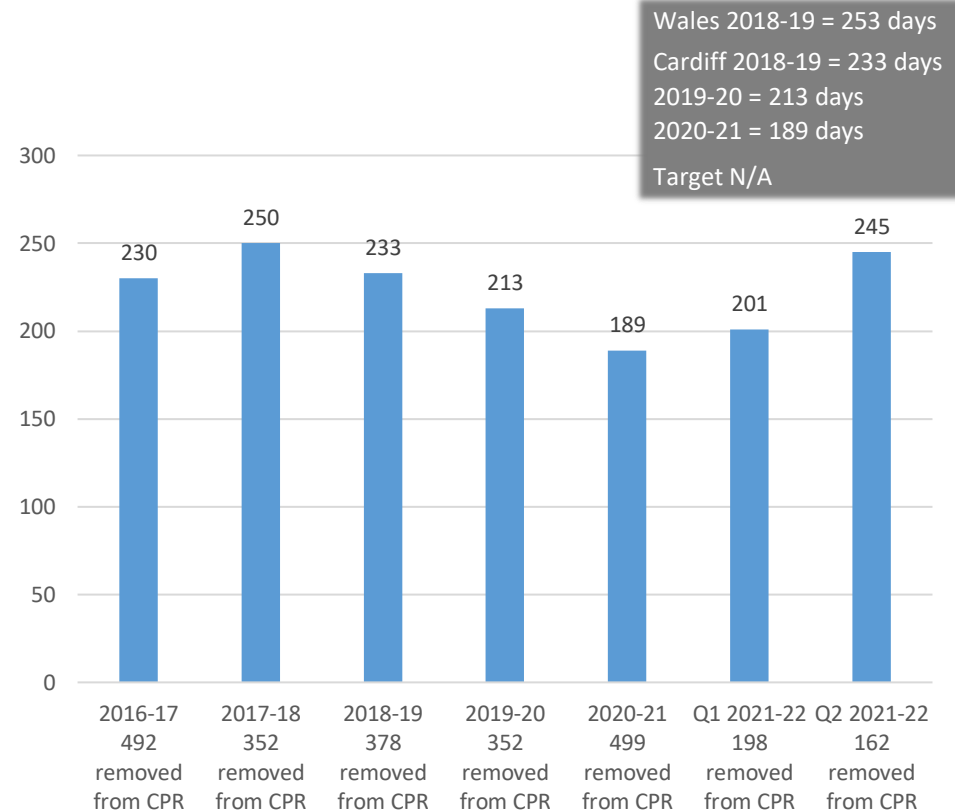


Quarter 2 = 4.0%. (5 / 125) 5 of the 125 children registered during quarter 2 had been on the CPR within the previous 12 months. This compares to 3.4% (6 / 178) during quarter 2 last year. The trend overall is an improvement on last year.

Annual outturn for 2020/21 = 5.2%. (37 / 705) 37 of the 705 children registered during the year had been on the CPR within the previous 12 months.

This compares to the annual outturn for 2019/20 = 9.5%. (40 / 422) 40 of the 422 children registered during the year had been on the CPR within the previous 12 months.

### CH/035 Average length of time for all children who were deregistered from the Child Protection Register during the period



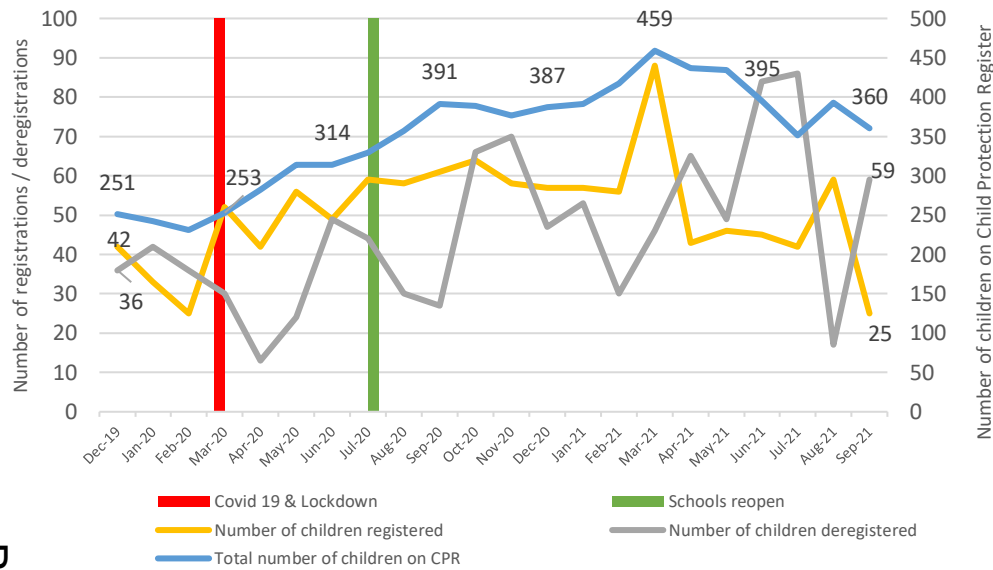
Quarter 2 = 245 days is the average length of time on the CPR for the 162 children who were deregistered during quarter 2 of 2021/22, in comparison to 199 days for the 101 children deregistered during quarter 2 of 2020/21.

Annual outturn for 2020/21 = 189 days. The average length of time on the CPR for the 499 children who were de-registered during 2020/21 was 189 days.

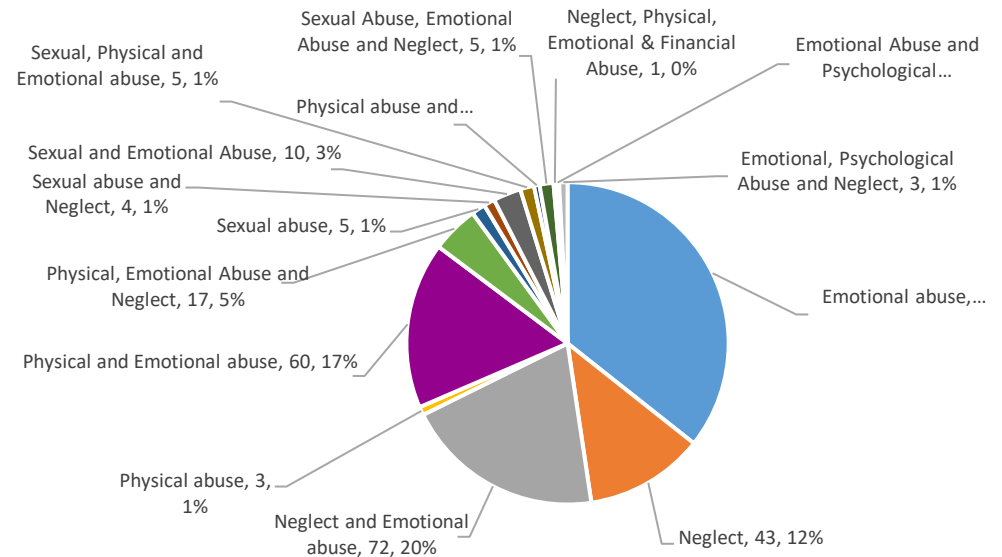
This compares to the annual outturn for 2019/20 = 213 days. The average length of time on the CPR for the 352 children who were de-registered during 2019/20 was 213 days.



## Number of children on the Child Protection Register, registrations and deregistrations

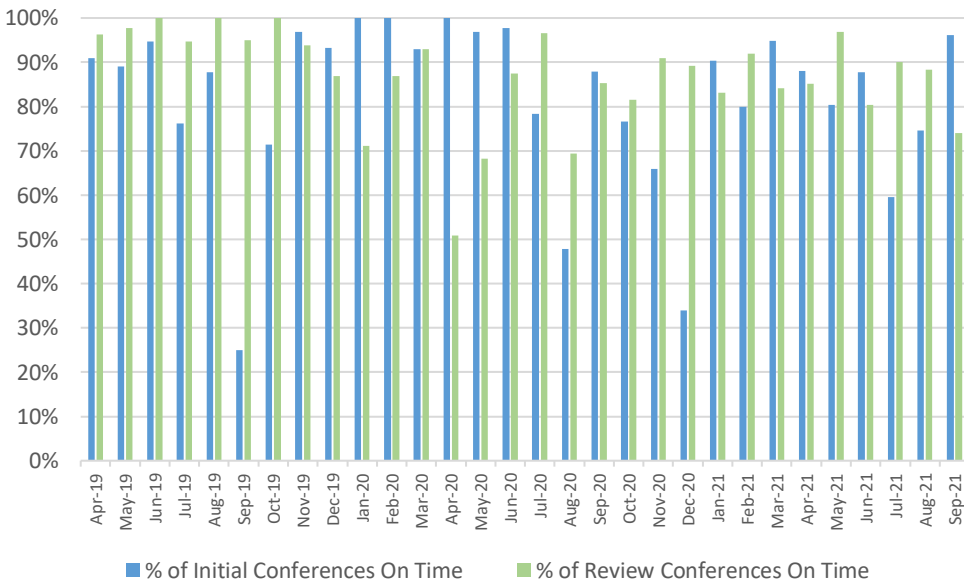


## CP Registration by category of abuse - September 2021



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## % Child Protection Conferences on Time

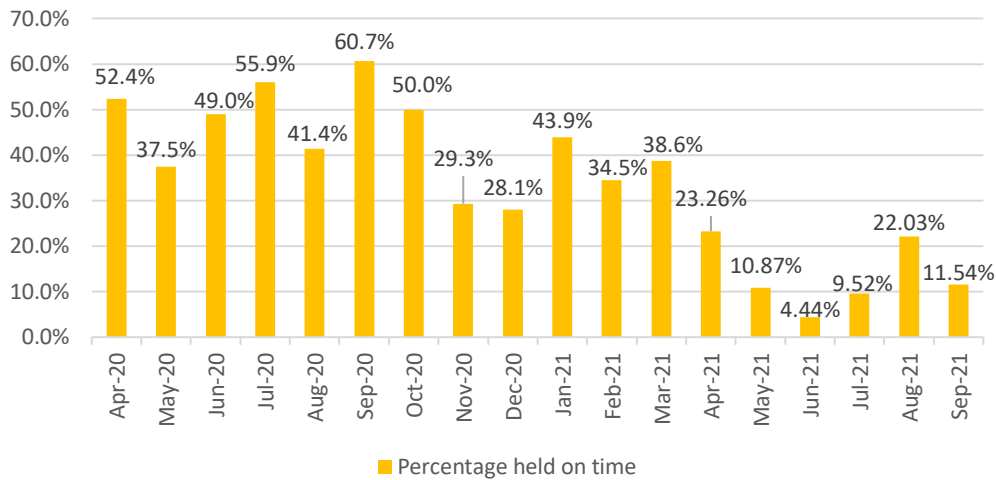


Following the steady increase over the last year of the number of children of the Child Protection Register, the number has decreased over the last two quarters from 459 at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 to 360 at the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021. Although the timeliness of initial conferences has fallen overall in quarter 2, 74.0% (94 / 127) compared to quarter 1, 85.3% (110 / 129), month by month sees an improving picture with 96.2% held on time in September 2021. The timeliness of child protection review conferences over the last quarter has dipped slightly to 83.2% (262 / 315) being on time, compared to 86.5% in quarter 1 (295 / 341).

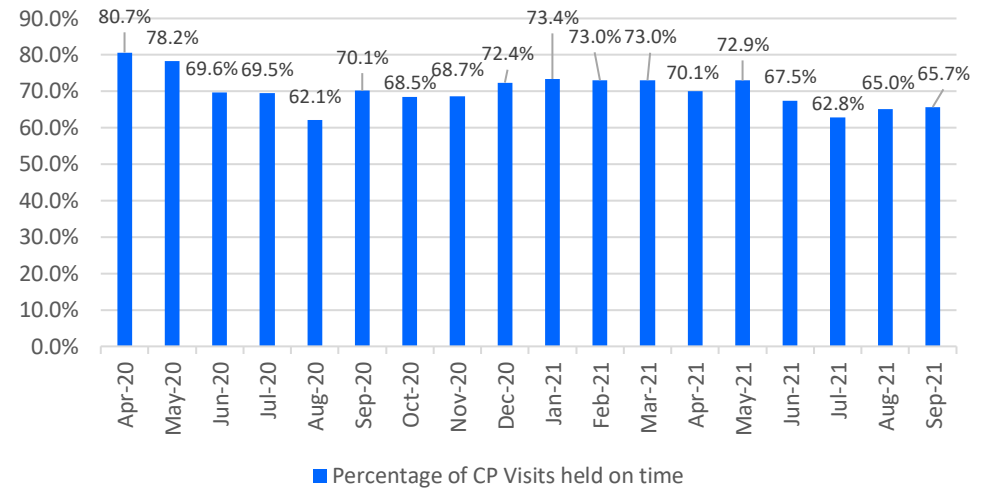
We have introduced a screening process to check appropriateness of CP conferences where there was information lacking. This has meant that some of the meetings and conferences were challenged, to ensure only the right children proceeded to conference. Requesting additional information has contributed to a slight delay. Initial conferences are currently limited to a maximum of 2 a day, however at times (July and September) there is a need for more (either side of school holiday). Police are currently unable to add additional capacity, but this has been escalated.

Review CP conferences have needed to be postponed on a number of occasions due to changes of worker, there is important information missing or because family have requested a different date for a valid reason. There have been several conferences rescheduled because of quoracy issues. This has been raised and escalated to health safeguarding for school based children, as school health nurses are currently not attending review conferences because of capacity.

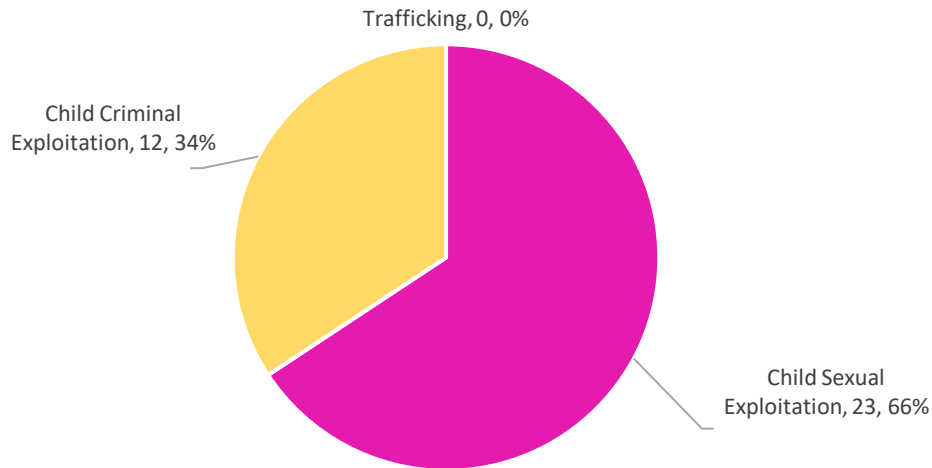
**CH/028 The percentage of Initial Core Groups meetings held on time**



**CH/030 The percentage of visits to children on the CPR held on time**



**CH/033 The number of children reported during Quarter 2 2021/22 where exploitation is a factor**



CH/028 **The percentage of Initial Core Group meetings held on time** = 15.7% (20/127) during quarter 2 compared to 12.7% (17 / 134) during quarter 1 and 43.2% (304 / 704) for 2020/21. A system has been put in place to support managers to monitor timeliness of initial core groups. In addition to this, we are in the process of utilising Welsh Government COVID Recovery Fund monies to temporarily engage Social Worker Resource Assistants to, among other duties, support the scheduling and minuting of core groups as a proof of concept.

CH/030 **The percentage of visits to children placed on the CPR, held on time** = 64.5% (1,494/ 2,317) during quarter 2 compared to 70.1% (1,899 / 2708) during quarter 1 and 71.7% (6,459 / 9,008 during 2020/21).

CH/ 033 **The number of children reported during Quarter 2 2021/22, where exploitation is a factor** = 35, breakdown shown in the pie chart opposite.

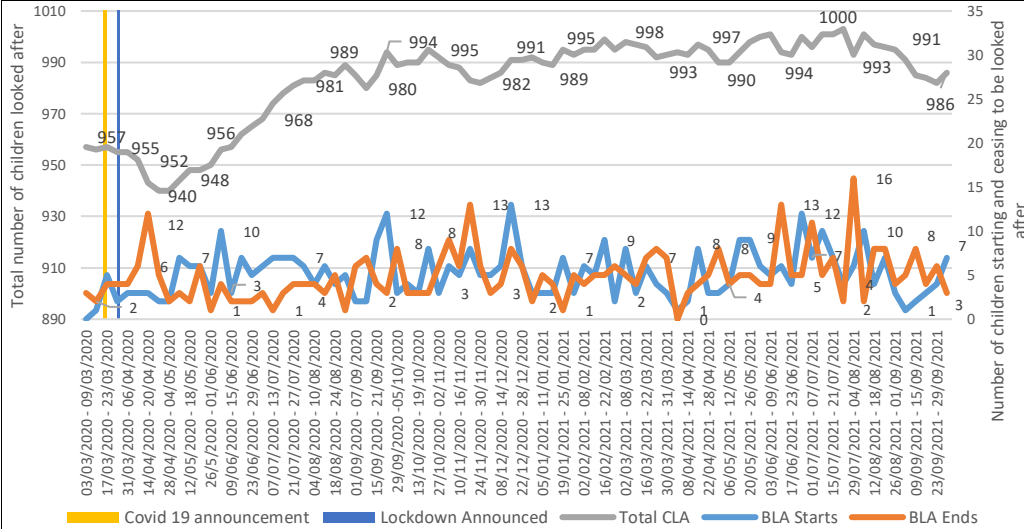
CH/016 **The number of children receiving Care & Support in receipt of Direct Payments** =

As at 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2021	178
As at 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	179
As at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2021	181
As at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2020	169
As at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2019	153

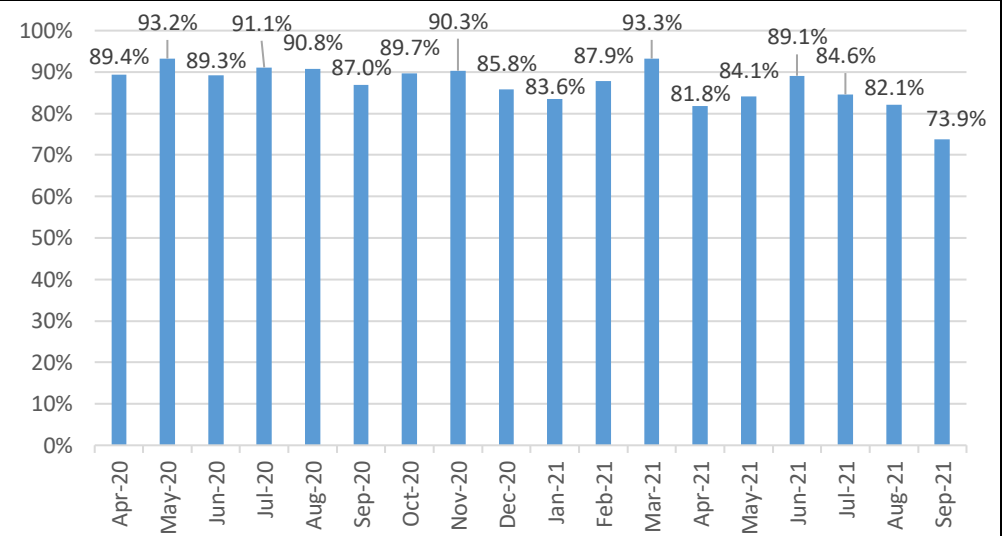
CA/011 **The number of contacts during the year to date (30/09/21) by or for young carers** is 126.

CA/014 **The number of assessments for young carers completed during the year to date (30/09/21)** = 28, 1 of which resulted in a care and support plan and 23 were signposted to YMCA.

## Looked after starts, ends and total number of children looked after (CLA)

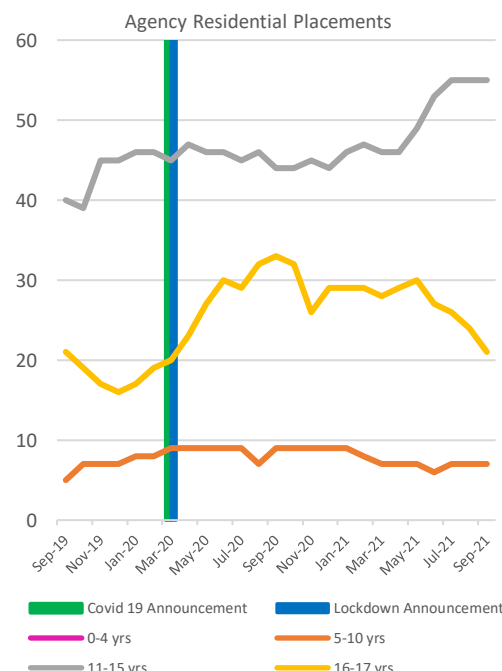
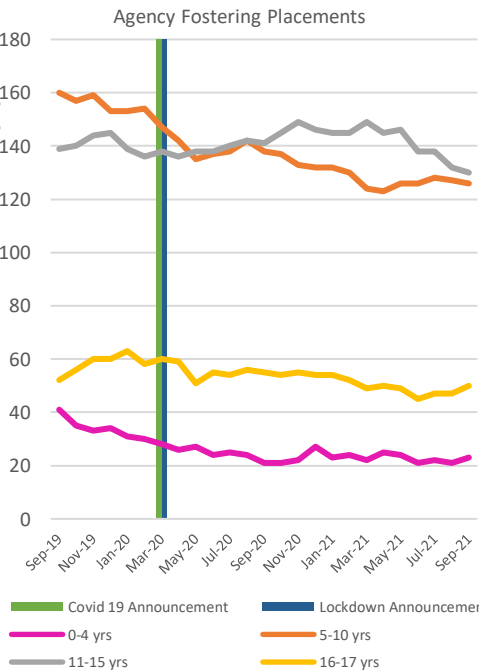


## Timeliness of children looked after reviews



## Agency placements by age

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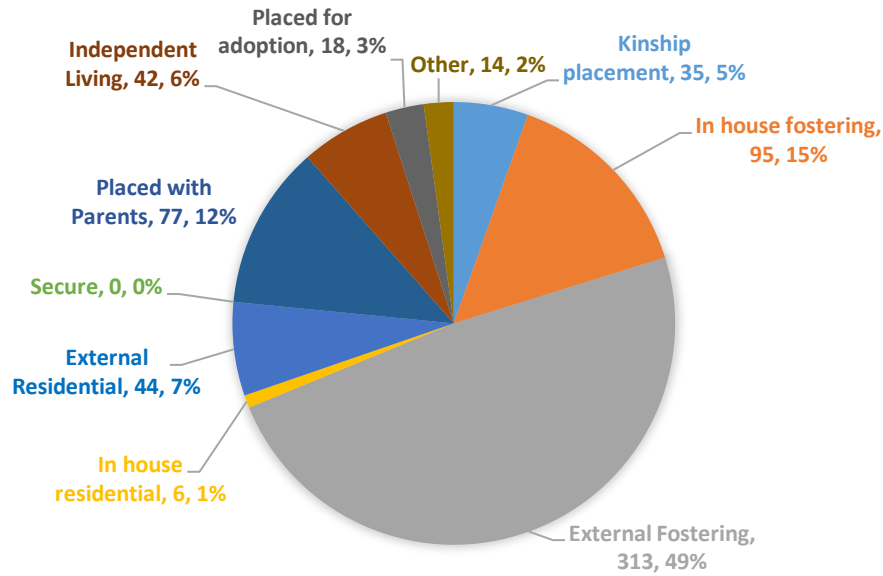


After a decrease in the number of children looked after in the early days of lockdown, a subsequent increase in new admissions led to a gradual increase from 939 at 27<sup>th</sup> April 2020 to 1,000 at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021. The number of children looked after has been relatively stable since October 2020, and is being closely monitored. 19 of the 73 children (26%) who started being looked after during Quarter 2 2021/22 were placed with parents on a Care Order, with family / friends or in parent and baby placements.

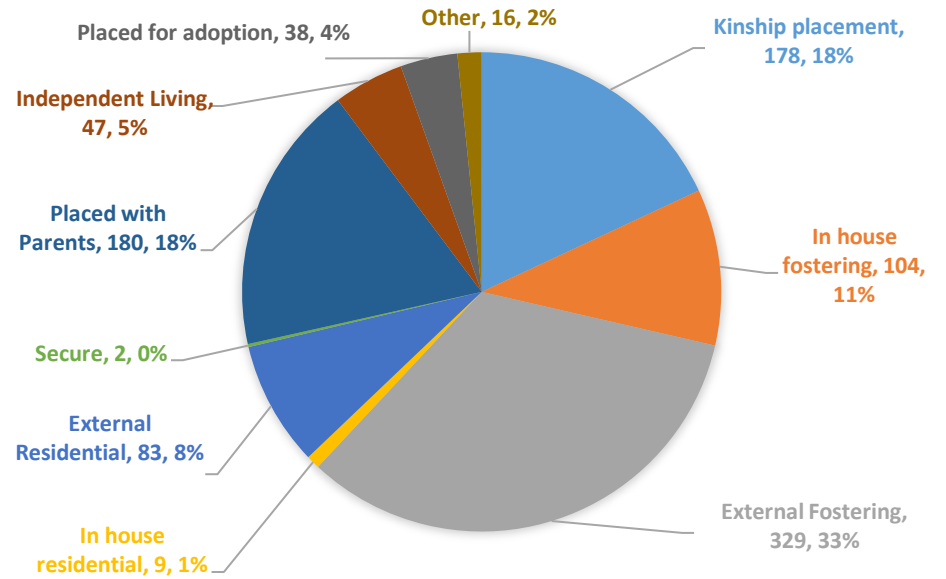
Provisional data shows, the percentage of looked after reviews held on time has fallen to 79.9% (521 / 652) this quarter from 84.8% (552 / 651) for quarter 1. There have been staffing issues in September related to a high level of sickness in the team in September and October. Some of this was covid related. A high proportion of reviews take place in September (following school holidays). The sickness has been managed through HR processes. Most staff have now returned to work, however they will need time to catch up. Additional agency support has been agreed and a plan is in place to bring reviews up to date, work through late reviews and support staff on return to work.

The number of children aged 11-15 in residential placements has increased recently due to difficulties in securing foster placements for these children as a result of market sufficiency issues. These young people will be closely monitored and prioritised for step down to foster placements as and when they become available. We are also reviewing our fostering marketing strategy with the intention of targeting foster carers for teenagers.

### Total CLA by placement type – as at 30.06.2016 (644)



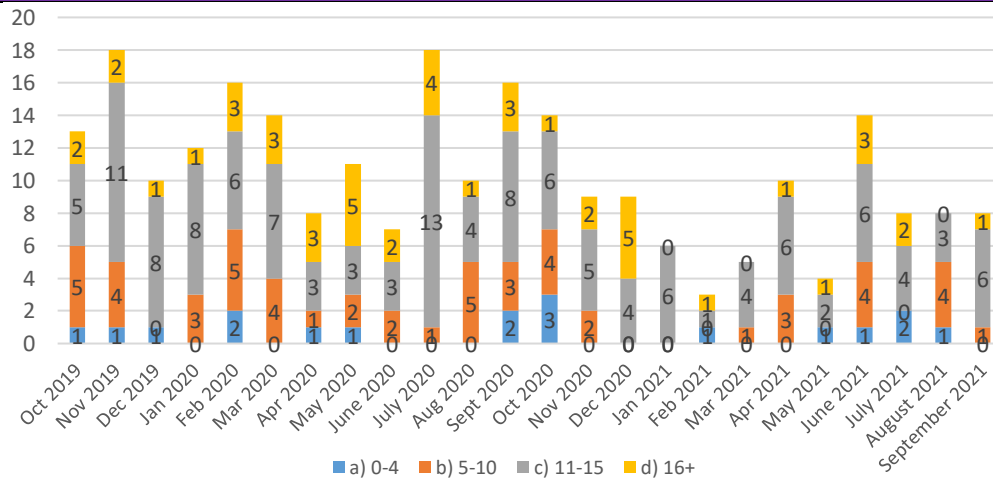
### Total CLA by Placement type – as at 30.09.2021 (986)



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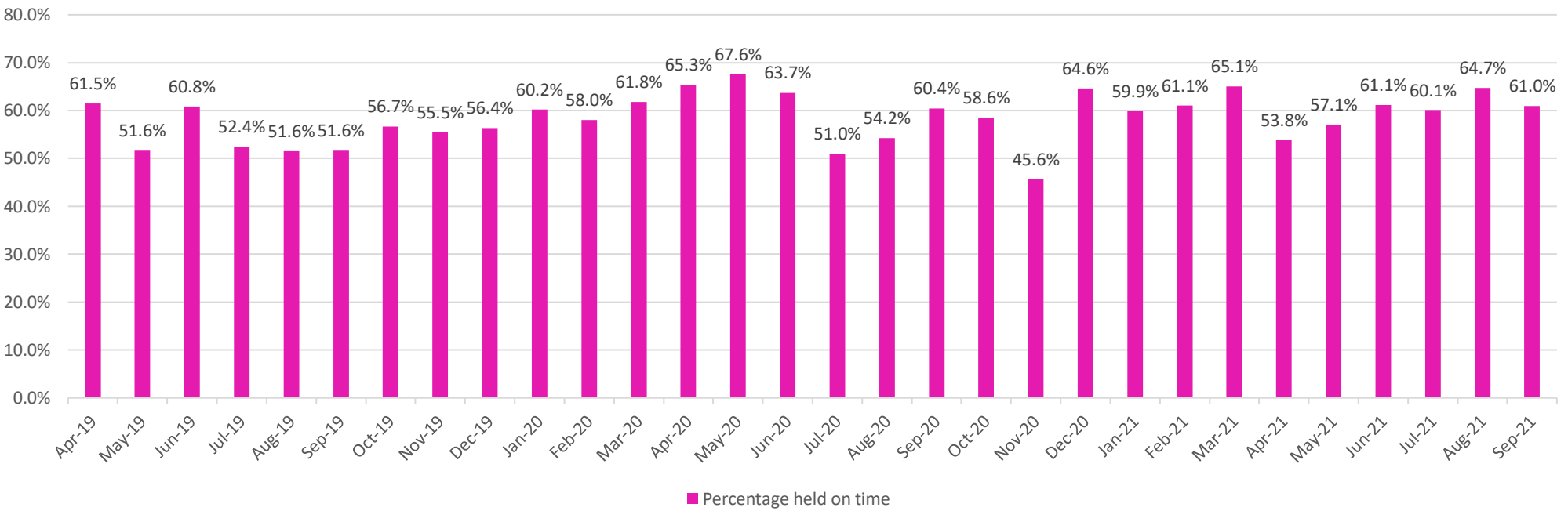
The pie charts above show the shift in the balance of care we have achieved in recent years. The percentage of children being looked after and placed with parents on a Care Order or in kinship arrangements with family members has increased from 17% (112 / 644) to 36.3% (358 / 986), while the percentage of children looked after in regulated placements minus kinship placements has reduced from 71% (458 / 644) to 54.1% (533 / 986.)

### Unplanned Placement Move Requests by Age



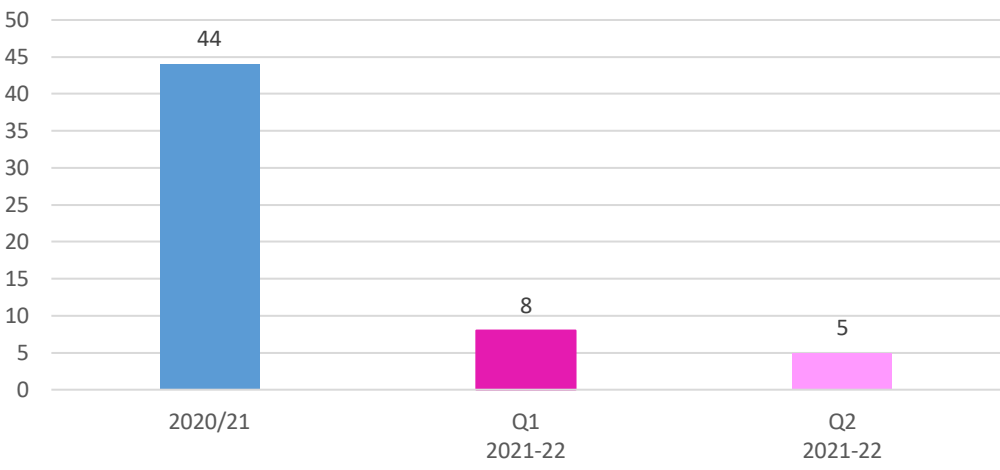
The number of unplanned placement move requests has shown a consistent pattern of reducing during lockdown and increasing when lockdown eased. Numbers have been relatively low in Quarter 2 and continue to be closely monitored. The majority of unplanned placement move requests are for children aged 11-15.

**CH/042 Percentage of Statutory visits held on time**



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**CH/055 The number of young people leaving care who moved into a 'When I'm Ready' Placement**



**CH/042 The percentage of statutory visits completed on time = 62.0% (600/968) for quarter 2 compared to 57.6% for Q1 and 60.5% for 2020/21 (2,171 / 3,589.)**

**CH/055 The number of young people leaving care who moved into a 'When I am Ready' placement during quarter 2 = 5 compared to 8 during quarter 1. During the year 2020/21 = 44.**

**Sickness – Children’s Services**

<b>FTE Target = 17</b>	<b>Q1 2021/22</b>	<b>Q2 2021/22</b>	<b>Q3 2021/22</b>	<b>Q4 2021/22</b>
Children’s Services Sickness FTE days lost per person (cumulative during year)	2.74	6.49		
Children’s Services Sickness FTE days lost per person full year forecast	11.79	14.28		

Source: Corporate HR Data

Result as at end of quarter 2, 2021/22 is 6.49 FTE days lost per person, this is on a similar trajectory as last year, where we had 6.29 FTE days lost per person as at the end of quarter 2 2020/21.

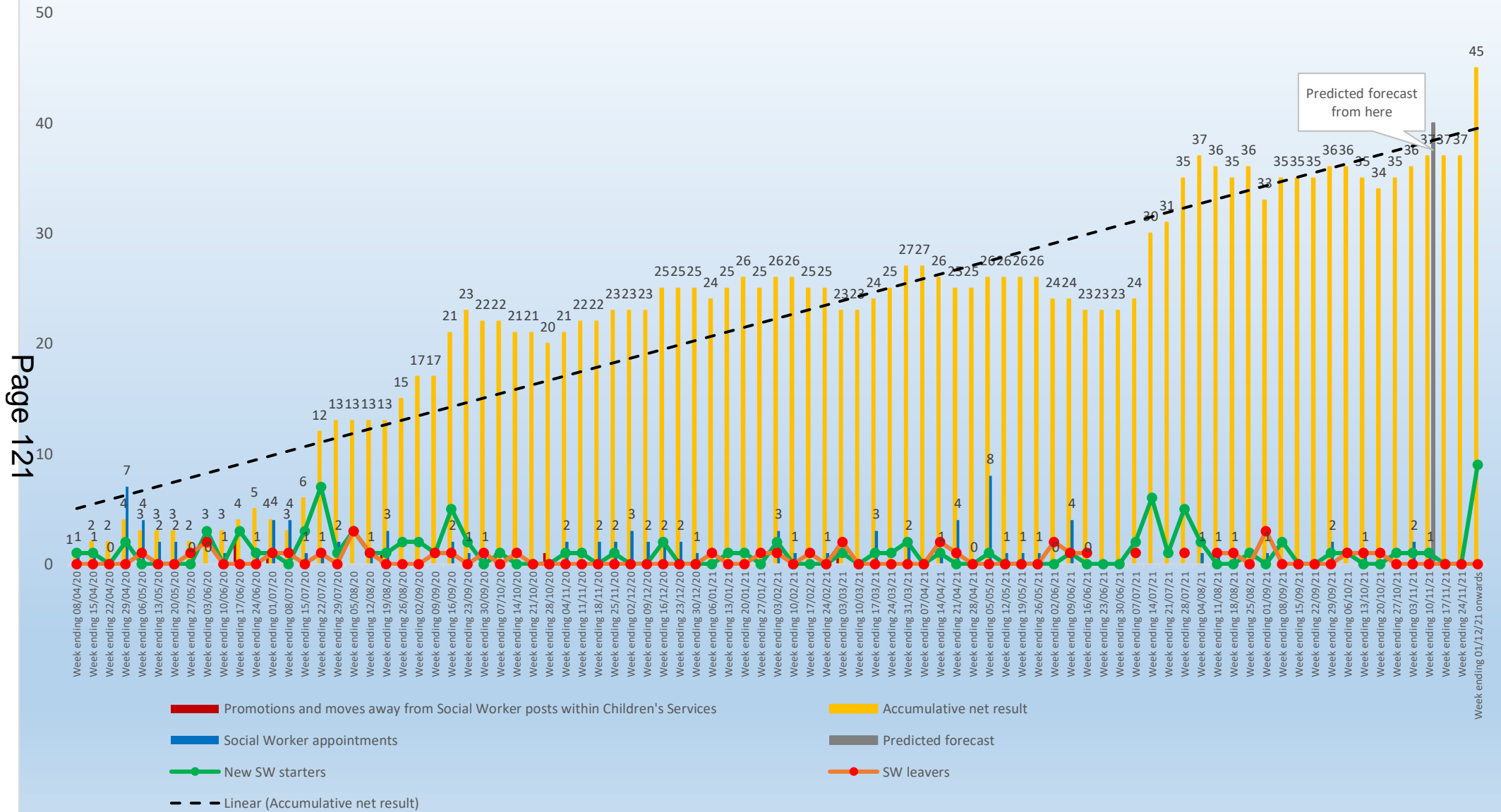
The forecast for this year based on this is 14.28 FTE days which is below the target of 17 FTE days for Children’s Services.

The annual result for 2020/21 = 12.88 FTE days lost per person.

This is an improvement from 18.23 FTE days lost per person for 2019/20. The target of 13 days was met.

Sickness is closely monitored by CMT to ensure that processes are followed. Options to support staff to return to work on a phased return are explored with input from all members of the management team.

# Net result of Social Workers starting and leaving Council



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**CYNGOR CAERDYDD  
CARDIFF COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**9 DECEMBER 2021**

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**CHILDREN'S SERVICES REVIEW**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. This report provides Members with an update and briefing on issues relating to Children's Services, including current pressures.
2. In addition, Members will receive a copy of the current Children's Services Strategy to enable them to consider options for its review; and an opportunity to be part of the development of the new Children's Services Strategy during 2022.

**Background**

3. When setting and agreeing its Work Programme for the current year, this Scrutiny Committee received a suggestion from the Cabinet Member and Service area to hear a briefing on "Workforce" in December 2021.
4. In addition, during the past year, Members have received updates and made comments, observations and recommendations in relation to issues such as:
  - Demand on Services and Capacity
  - Financial Resources
  - Service Redesign
  - Staff health and wellbeing
  - Staff - Vacancies; sickness levels etc

**Issues**

5. Members will receive a presentation at this meeting regarding current Children's Services pressures. A copy of the presentation is attached at **Appendix A.**

6. Childrens Services have been facing unprecedented demand as a result of the Covid pandemic. Contingency plans were put in place to manage the service during the acute phase of the pandemic; however, it has become clear that the longer-term implications of the pandemic are resulting in a significant increase in demand for children's social care at the same time as there being a severe shortage of resources, including experienced social workers and placements for children and young people that cannot live with family and friends.
7. Welsh Government have responded to the current crises affecting children's services by making available several short-term grants.
8. The presentation at **Appendix A** outlines Cardiff Children's Services plans in relation to how they are allocating the short-term funding, which are linked to existing work plans around building sufficiency within the system and shifting the balance across a variety of areas.
9. The Service's key areas of focus continue to be on moving from a temporary to permanent workforce, ensuring more children can be supported to live with family and friends, increasing the role the local authority plays in providing substitute care for children looked after.

### **Children's Services Strategy**

10. Attached at **Appendix B** is a copy of the current Children's Services Strategy 2019 – 2022. This 3-year strategy was developed within Childrens Services in 2019 and is due to be reviewed and a new strategy developed during 2022.
11. It is hoped that the development of the next Children's Services strategy will be a collaborative approach with inputs from children and young people and their families and all key stakeholders, including this Scrutiny Committee.

## Scope of Scrutiny

12. In relation to current Service pressures, Members may wish to consider the information attached at **Appendix A** and offer observations on issues highlighted.
13. Regarding the Children's Services Strategy (**Appendix B**), Members may wish to consider how they can provide a test and challenge approach to the development of the next strategy. This could include a collaborative Task & Finish exercise with the Cabinet Member and Service Area. Members are asked to note that there may be a delay to the commencement of the review due to the current pressures within Childrens Services and the requirement to prioritise key service priorities. It is anticipated that the review and development will commence from around mid-2022.

## Way Forward

14. At the meeting Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member for Children and Families); Sarah McGill (Corporate Director, People and Communities); and Deborah Driffield (Director of Children's Services) will be in attendance to take Members through the presentation attached at **Appendix A** and answer any questions Members may wish to ask.
15. Members may wish to review the information presented at the meeting and determine whether there are any comments, concerns or recommendations which they would like to pass on to the Cabinet Member, Corporate Director and Director of Children's Services.
16. Members may also wish to consider whether they would wish to undertake a Task & Finish exercise with the Cabinet Member and Service Area in the review and development of the Children's Services Strategy, when appropriate.

## Previous Scrutiny

17. As indicated in Paragraph 4 of this report, Members have made a number of comments, observations and recommendations in relation to these matters within the last 12 months, as follows:

- **Demand on Services and Capacity** – *Children’s Services Update – Oct 20; LASSAR<sup>1</sup> – July 21; and YJS – July 21*
- **Financial Resources** - *Budget – Feb 21; YJS – May 2021; LASSAR – July 21; Hubs – Nov. 21*
- **Service Redesign** - *YJS/Q3 performance– March 21*
- **Staff health and wellbeing** – *Children’s Services Update – Oct 20*
- **Staff Issues** – *Vacancies; sickness levels etc - LASSAR – Sept 20; YJS – May 21; YJS/Q1 performance – Oct 21*

## Legal Implications

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

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<sup>1</sup> LASSAR – Local Authority Social Services Annual Report

## **Financial Implications**

19. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is recommended to;

- i. review the information provided at the meeting and provide any comments, concerns or recommendations to the Cabinet Member, Corporate Director and Director of Children's Services; and
- ii. Consider establishing a collaborative Task & Finish Group relating to the review and development of the Children's Services Strategy.

**DAVINA FIORE**  
**Director of Governance and Legal Services**

**02 December 2021**

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# Social Services

## Current Pressures and Response Plan

November 2021

# Demand for Children's Services – Overview

	Contacts	Referrals	well-being assessment	Strategy discussions	Section 47	Initial child protection conferences	added to child protection register	Care and support caseload	started to be looked after
Percentage increase	↑ 49%	↑ 138%	↑ 79%	↑ 50%	↑ 41%	↑ 24%	↑ 28%	↑ 31%	↑ 14%
2021/2022 (predicted based on April to November data)	46,660	5,641	3,980	4,947	3,739	574	538	2,391	291
2019/2020	31,323	2,373	2,218	3,293	2,645	462	419	1,819	255

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# Recovery Funding

**Covid Hardship Fund - “ claims basis”** likely to be maintained until March 22

**Social Care Recovery Grant** - Allocation to Local Authorities be spent by end of March 22

- Address the adverse impact of Covid 19 has on unpaid carers
- Ensure the right support is available to maximise peoples ability to remain in or return to their own home as quickly, sustainably and safely as possible
- Work in partnership to develop local service structure to deliver care and support to meet local population needs.
- Increase the capacity and reach of domiciliary care.
- Prioritise the wellbeing of the social care workforce (improve terms and conditions and ensure there is continued focus on supporting wellbeing and mental health)

**Winter Pressures Funding** – Allocation to Health Boards but for “Whole System” activity

# Childrens Services

**PREVENTION** : Ensure the right support is available to maximise peoples ability to remain in or return to their own home as quickly, sustainably and safely as possible

- **Interventions Hub:** Bringing together and enhancing edge of care services
- **Additional reunification** : Supporting Children and Young People to return home
- **Kinship Care:** Additional family network support and supporting social workers
- **Kinship to SGO:** – Step down of kinship cases to special guardianship orders
- **PWP to Care & Support:** Removal of care orders for children currently place with their parents, where it is safe to do so
- **Adult Social Worker Pilot** – Adult social workers (Substance misuse, mental health & domestic violence specialists)

# Childrens Services

PEOPLE: Address the adverse impact of Covid 19 has on unpaid carers



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Detailed plans being worked for respite provision, especially for Child Health and Disability Cases where we know we have an emergency need support families who are reaching crisis point and have had to manage with reduced support over the last 18 months.

# Childrens Services

## Placement Stability for Looked After Children

- **Enhanced Placement Finding** : 2 x placement officers and 1 x G8 Placements Manager
- **In-house fostering & Supported Lodgings**: Support the additional in-house cases and increased level of assessments (additional fees)
- **Residential In-house provision** - Service Manager to oversee the newly created residential provision
- **Independent Fostering** : Foster Development Worker
- **Complex Case Funding Review** : – increase commissioning capacity to review all our high costs placements to ensure children and YP are in the right setting for their needs and the appropriate partner support
- **Step down from residential to in-house foster care** : – additional fees and wrap around support for foster carers to take children with higher needs that are currently being met by residential care

# Childrens Services

## WORKFORCE : Supporting and growing the Social Care Workforce

- **Temporary practice lead and recruitment** – practice lead in each of the areas to support newly qualified staff
- **Complex Case & Mentoring (Locality & I&A)** – experienced social works to take on the most complex court cases and co-work them with permanent members of staff to transfer of knowledge and upskill
- **Social Work Resource Assistant** – additional support for social worker to free up their time for direct contact and case work with children and their families
- **Additional business support** in line with increased demand (conference secretary/PLO support/High Risk Panel)

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# Cardiff Children's Services Strategy

2019 - 2022



Delivering Excellent Outcomes

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# Contents

- 
- 1. Introduction and comments by various children’s participation groups**
  - 2. Cabinet Member for Children and Families Councillor Graham Hinchey**
  - 3. Cardiff Council Vision**
  - 4. Children and young people in Cardiff**
  - 5. Why are we developing this Strategy now?**
    - Increasing demand and complexity
    - There are increasing pressures on budgets
    - a) Increasing range of legislation, regulations, social policy and guidance that we must have due regard to in our everyday work
    - b) We have set ourselves 25 key challenges
  - 6. How we will meet these challenges?**
  - 8. Delivering high quality social work supervision is an integral part of our Workforce Development Plan**
  - 9. Developing an overarching set of guiding principles**
  - 10. Reshaping and restructuring the service delivery model**
  - 11. Following the child on their journey**
  - 12. Developing our commissioning arrangements**
  - 13. Shifting the balance of care**
  - 14. Early Help**
  - 15. Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub**
  - 16. Intake & Assessment**
  - 17. Care and Support Plans**
  - 18. Child Protection and Safeguarding**
  - 19. Public Law Outline and Permanency Planning**
  - 20. Children Looked After**
  - 21. Adoption**
  - 22. Leaving Care and Pathway Planning**
  - 23. Supporting children who have a disability, additional learning needs or neurodevelopmental diagnosis**
  - 24. Youth Offending Service**
  - 25. Emerging areas of practice and development that will enable us to deliver on our key priorities**
    - 1. Family Network Meetings
    - 2. Resource Panels
    - 3. Reviewing our arrangements for Kinship Carers to support our aim of shifting the balance of care
    - 4. Multi-Agency Exploitation Strategy
    - 5. We will review and reshape our Fostering Service to support our aim of shifting the balance of care
    - 6. Adopting a Strength Based Approach to practice by implementing Signs of Safety
  - 26. Conclusion**



# 1. Introduction and comments by various children's participation groups

## Introduction:

This document sets out a single Strategy for Children's Services over the next three years. It brings together a range of service improvement projects under the creation of one 'Delivering Excellent Outcomes in Children's Services' programme. It draws on other well established plans including; the Corporate Parenting Plan, the Council's Capital Ambition Plan, The Child Friendly City Plan and the pre-existing Improving Outcomes Programme.

This Strategy sets out the context in which Children's Services are operating and the key challenges that we are facing. It highlights where we want to make a difference and how we are going to achieve those changes.

The Strategy outlines the various improvement plans within the context of the child's journey and the guiding principles that we are aspiring to. It also describes the various practice and procedural changes that are required to achieve our ambition of excellent outcomes for children and young people.

This Strategy is a Cardiff Council document and has been created to inform officers, elected members, partners and communities, of the direction of travel and our high ambitions for Children's Services in Cardiff. An associated practice manual is being developed to support social work staff and their managers to deliver a high quality service for the people of Cardiff.

Cardiff Children's Services place the child at the centre of everything we do. It is essential that children's voices are heard and their rights respected. Hearing the views of children and young people will be an integral part of driving forward our delivering excellence agenda. Some example comments from children, young people and their families are included below.

As part of the development of this strategy a listening exercise was undertaken young people from **Bright Start Forum, 11 Plus Team and Adolescence Resource Centre**. The full report available, however a selection of their comments are included throughout this strategy.

“ I want to thank my social worker for all the support she has given me, supporting me every step of the way and checking to see how I am. Last year I went through a very hard time, you helped me through my court case and gave me a lot of courage and confidence, I was lucky you were by my side. I was very rude to you at the start which I am truly sorry for, but even then you were calm and patient with me. You have done so much for me and my son, I respect you more than anyone, now it's time to say goodbye I will miss you a lot. ”

“ My social worker is amazing, so hard working and gives her all into anything she does. I'm so grateful to have someone like her as my social worker. I feel like I don't praise her enough for the things she does for me so I want her to know, I'm such a proud girl with her helping me achieve my goals. ”

“ Thanks for all your help and thanks for letting me live with my auntie and uncle and for all your support. ”

“ The social worker who arranged the adoption of my children had a really positive impact on my life. ”

“ The social worker's primary consideration was my children's best interests ”

## 2. Cabinet Member for Children and Families Councillor Graham Hinchey



Welcome to Cardiff Council's Children's Services Strategy.

Cardiff's children and young people are the future of our city. This strategy is designed to help meet their needs, working with them to fulfil their ambitions and achieve the best outcomes for them.

I would like to thank the conscientious and committed staff on the front line within children's services for all of their continued hard work and efforts.

We are proud of our achievements in recent years but recognise there remain a number of key challenges and areas for improvement. We have built strong and effective partnerships and laid down the foundations to secure improvements by working together. We remain committed to improving the outcomes for children and young people and want to help them to build a better life for themselves.

The challenges facing social services across the country have received increasing attention in recent years. The effect of austerity on people, communities and local government budgets is that the challenges of deprivation can cause an increasing need for Social Services involvement, and we have seen this particularly in Children's Services.

There have been really positive developments in Children's Services – the new approach to Early Help and Prevent; the impact of the Adolescent Resource Centre and Think Safe in supporting children and young people at the edge of becoming looked after and at risk of exploitation is very encouraging. It is also heartening to see the progress being made to implement signs of safety across all Children's Services teams.

It is pleasing to see the honest and transparent approach to strengths, areas for improvement and priority actions within this report. We are committed to addressing the challenges in respect of recruiting and maintaining our workforce in Children's Services. We are enhancing prevention and early intervention for children and young people, including the development of the Early Help Service.

We are concerned about the supply and quality of accommodation and support for our looked after children, and the number who live outside of Cardiff and neighbouring authorities. We are implementing new services closer to home to support more children to live in Cardiff when it is in their interest to do so.

This strategy is an exciting opportunity to respond to the many challenges faced by children and young people in Cardiff. We aim to make our city an even better place to live so that every child and young person can fulfil their potential and lead a safe, happy and healthy life.



**Cllr Graham Hinchey**  
Cabinet Member for Children & Families

### 3. Cardiff Council Vision

For many children and young people in our city, Cardiff is a great place in which to grow up. Education provision and the achievements of learners are both improving. The city offers a wealth of opportunities in sports, leisure and culture, and as the economy develops, there are a widening range of job opportunities within reach. However, currently not all of our young people are benefitting, and we know that we need to do more to address this inequality in achievement, participation and progression.

#### **Becoming a Child Friendly City**

Cardiff is one of the five cities in the UK to be developing, in partnership with UNICEF UK, as a 'Child Friendly City'. This means we place the rights of children and young people at the heart of our policies and strategies; we involve young people in decision making and commit to addressing barriers which limit their lives.

#### **Supporting Vulnerable Children and Families**

Parents have the most significant influence on children and on their future lives. Outcomes for children are best when they are supported to grow and achieve within their own families. In all cases, we will adopt a 'Think Family' approach which looks at the family as a whole and co-ordinates support across the public services, tailored to each family's needs and strengths. Public and third sector partners including teachers, health practitioners, social workers, youth workers, third sector practitioners, early years practitioners and play workers will work together to deliver a joined-up approach to enable the right conversations to take place at the right time, between the right people and for solutions to be found at the earliest possible stage, particularly for the most vulnerable children and families.

The identification and protection of vulnerable children needs to be everybody's business. Within our local communities we want individuals to feel empowered to identify where they feel a child is at risk – this may be a shop keeper asked to serve a child cigarettes for their parents, or refuse collectors who identify broken bottles and rubbish next to well used children's toys – raising concerns that may not be picked up through the provision of universal services for families. This will be supported by a Children's Services approach which places an emphasis on prevention and early intervention to give children the best possible outcomes and better manage the pressure on public services.



## 4. Children and young people in Cardiff

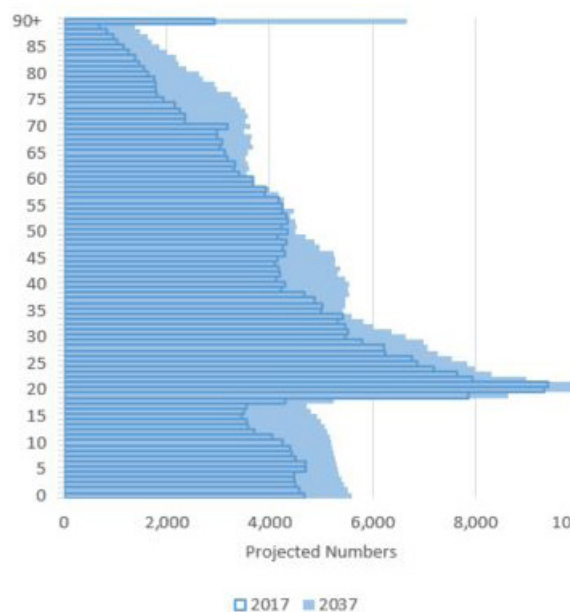
Cardiff is already a good place for many of its children and young people to grow up. In particular, young people identify the city's good health services, its low crime, strong inclusive communities and the access to green spaces, sports, leisure and culture as some of the great things about living in the capital city.

Although Cardiff is the commercial heart of the Welsh economy and contains many of the nation's most prosperous communities, over a quarter of dependent children under the age of 20 in the city are living in poverty. Growing up in poverty can have a detrimental impact on a child's future prospects and well-being and a child's experiences at an early age, prior to entering school, can lead to delayed development in language, emotional and social skills and poor general health.

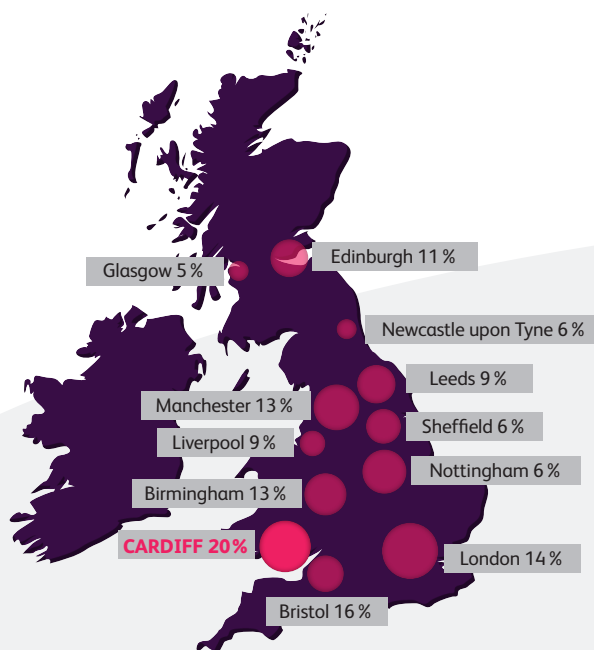
There are significant intra-city differences in the percentage of dependent children aged under 20 living in low-income families. In Ely, Splott and Adamsdown approximately 40% of children are living in low-income households.

Cardiff's rapid growth will not be evenly spread across age-groups. While there will be significantly more people of a working age there will also be more school children and more people over 65 years old – two groups who will need more support from public services. The number of young people (under 18s) in Cardiff is projected to increase by 25% over the next 20 years, compared to an all-Wales increase of 0.8%.

Projected Population Growth 2018-2038 by age group



Projected Population Growth within selected UK cities 2018-38





## 5. Why are we developing this Strategy now?

We have looked at information from a number of sources and listened to what a variety of people have told us about Children's Services to inform our three year strategy.

This has included reviewing data, case records, compliments and complaints, inspection reports, queries from elected members, performance information and feedback from children and young people, parents and carers, our workforce and our partner agencies.

### WE WILL:

**Develop a whole system approach to improving and monitoring performance that will use report cards that are accurate, up to date, clear and concise and meaningful.**

We know we need to get better about listening to children and young people and ensuring their voices are heard and that they are more involved in decisions that affect them and the wider service.

### WE WILL:

**Use the Child Friendly Cardiff Framework to ensure this happens.**

We also know we need to improve our partnership working with parents to ensure that they are supported to care for their children wherever possible and that they are able to better influence decisions that affect them directly and the wider service.

### WE WILL:

**Develop a parent's participation charter and ensure that it is co-produced by parents for parents.**

We want to find more effective ways of engaging with our workforce; we already have workforce champions that are the key links between senior managers and the workforce, monthly extended meetings between the Assistant Director and the whole management team and regular open events where main grade staff have the opportunity to ask questions of the Director.

### WE WILL:

**Ask workers via a survey for ideas on how they can better participate in shaping the service and we have already planned a series of rolling roadshows as part of improving engagement.**



# Increasing demand and complexity

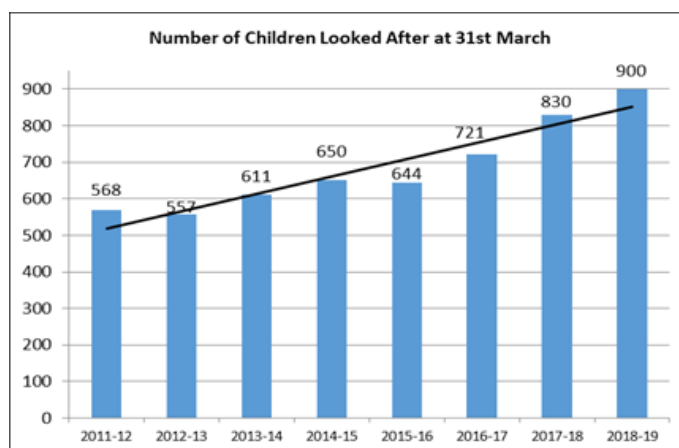
The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru set out in their August 2018 Position Statement on Children’s Services. The four key areas where significant pressures are being experienced in relation to Children’s Services in Wales:

- External demands and complexities
- Placements
- Legislation and work with the Court
- Workforce

These pressures have been acknowledged in Cardiff. The numbers of children looked after in Cardiff has been increasing year on year with rates of increase far exceeding increasing young people’s population. The placement types that have seen the biggest increase are in residential, and those placed with parents.

The WLGA and ADSS Position Statement set out three key messages:

- Recent years have seen an increase in expenditure on Children’s Services at a time when Councils’ overall budgets have been cut.
- Over the last decade the number of children in the care system in Wales has increased significantly.
- Services for the care and protection of vulnerable children are now, in many areas, being pushed to breaking point.



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

# There are increasing pressures on budgets

## The Council wide context

Cardiff Council's 2019/20 budget totals £624m of which the Social Services budget is £169m and includes £58m for Children's Services (with an additional £2m held in contingency).

Schools and Social Services account for 66 % of the current budget in 2019/20. When the requirements of capital financing and non-controllable budgets are taken into account just 14 % of the Council's budget remains.

## Children's Services budgets and spend

It can be observed that the greatest area of spend is to outside bodies and for placements. Over the last four years the Children's Services budget has been overspent by the following amounts:

- 2015/16      £2,013,000
- 2016/17      £4,277,000
- 2017/18      £3,996,000
- 2018/19      £4,240,000

Whilst the increased spend demonstrates the Council's commitment to meet the rising demand for Children's Social Services, this is becoming unsustainable. The WLGA and ADSS Position Statement concludes:

It is known that the amount spent in excess of budget has most significantly been driven by the increase in the number of children looked after and the subsequent increase in external placements.

“ The limited money councils have available is increasingly being taken up with the provision of urgent help for children and families already at crisis point, leaving very little to invest in early intervention. This leads to a spiral of uninterrupted and increasing need for services is driving a mounting complexity of challenges for the most vulnerable children. (WLGA and ADSS Position Paper 2018) ”

The Bright Start Forum, 11 Plus Team and Adolescence Resource Centre.

Shape of Cardiff Council's 2019/20 Budget - £624 million



## a) Increasing range of legislation, regulations, social policy and guidance that we must have due regard to in our everyday work

				
<p><b>A Healthier Wales: our Plan for Health and Social Care</b></p> <p>An ambitious plan for a whole system revolution. The Plan emphasises the need to deliver population focused seamless services, making better use of technology and placing a much greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention.</p>	<p><b>The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015</b></p> <p>Is about improving the well-being of Wales. It will make the public bodies think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.</p>	<p><b>The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014</b></p> <p>The Act imposes duties on local authorities, health boards and Welsh Ministers that require them to work to promote the well-being of those who need care and support, or carers who need support.</p>	<p><b>The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act</b></p> <p>Will transform the separate systems for special educational needs in schools and learning difficulties and/or disabilities in further education, to create a unified system for supporting learners aged from 0 to 25 years.</p>	<p><b>The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) Wales Direction 2015</b></p> <p>Sets out the legal framework for the National Adoption Service for Wales.</p>

In addition to the Acts outlined above, the following regulations are in place:

- Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) (Wales) Regulations 2012
- Special Guardianship (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018
- Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016
- Care Leavers (Wales) Regulations 2015
- Visits to Children in Detention (Wales) Regulations 2015
- Care and Support (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2015 and The Care and Support (Care Planning) (Wales) Regulations 2015
- Care and Support (Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2015
- Social Services Complaints Procedures (Wales) Regulations 2014
- Representation Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014
- Integrated Family Support Teams (Review of Cases) (Wales) Regulations 2012
- Visits to Children in Long-Term Residential Care Regulations 2011
- Independent Review of Determinations (Adoption and Fostering) Regulations Wales 2010
- Review of Children's Cases (Wales) Regulations 2007
- Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) (Wales) Regulations 2006
- Adoption Support Services (Local Authority) (Wales) Regulations 2005
- National Outcomes Framework for People who Need Care and Support and Carers who Need Support
- The new all Wales Induction Framework for Health and Social Care



## b) We have set ourselves 25 key challenges

1. The child and young person's voice is heard
2. Partnership with parents is always evident
3. Partners are clear about thresholds and the duties placed on Children's Services
4. We can work with partners to reduce the impact of exploitation on children and young people
5. We take account of the increasing impact of poverty on families
6. We can manage and reduce the increasing demand for services
7. We can manage effectively the increasing complexity of cases and caseloads
8. We meet the required standards & timescales within the Public Law Outline
9. We can safely reduce the rising number of children and young people looked after
10. We meet all of our statutory duties and responsibilities
11. We can increase the numbers of kinship Carers
12. We can increase the number of local authority foster carers
13. We can increase the range of placements to meet complex needs
14. We can reduce our reliance on independent fostering agency placements
15. We can reduce our reliance on out of county placements
16. Recruitment and retention of social workers can meet current and future demand
17. Our workforce have the appropriate knowledge values and skills
18. We have clear practice models that are accredited and evidence based
19. Our case recordings are of a good standard and meet good practice guidelines
20. Our decision making is clear, consistent, evidence based and well recorded
21. We have the relevant and up to date policies and procedures in place
22. We have a fully developed Quality Assurance Framework in place
23. We have a fully developed outcomes framework
24. All partners including the regulators have confidence in Children's Services
25. Communities have confidence in Children's Services

# 6. How we will meet these challenges?

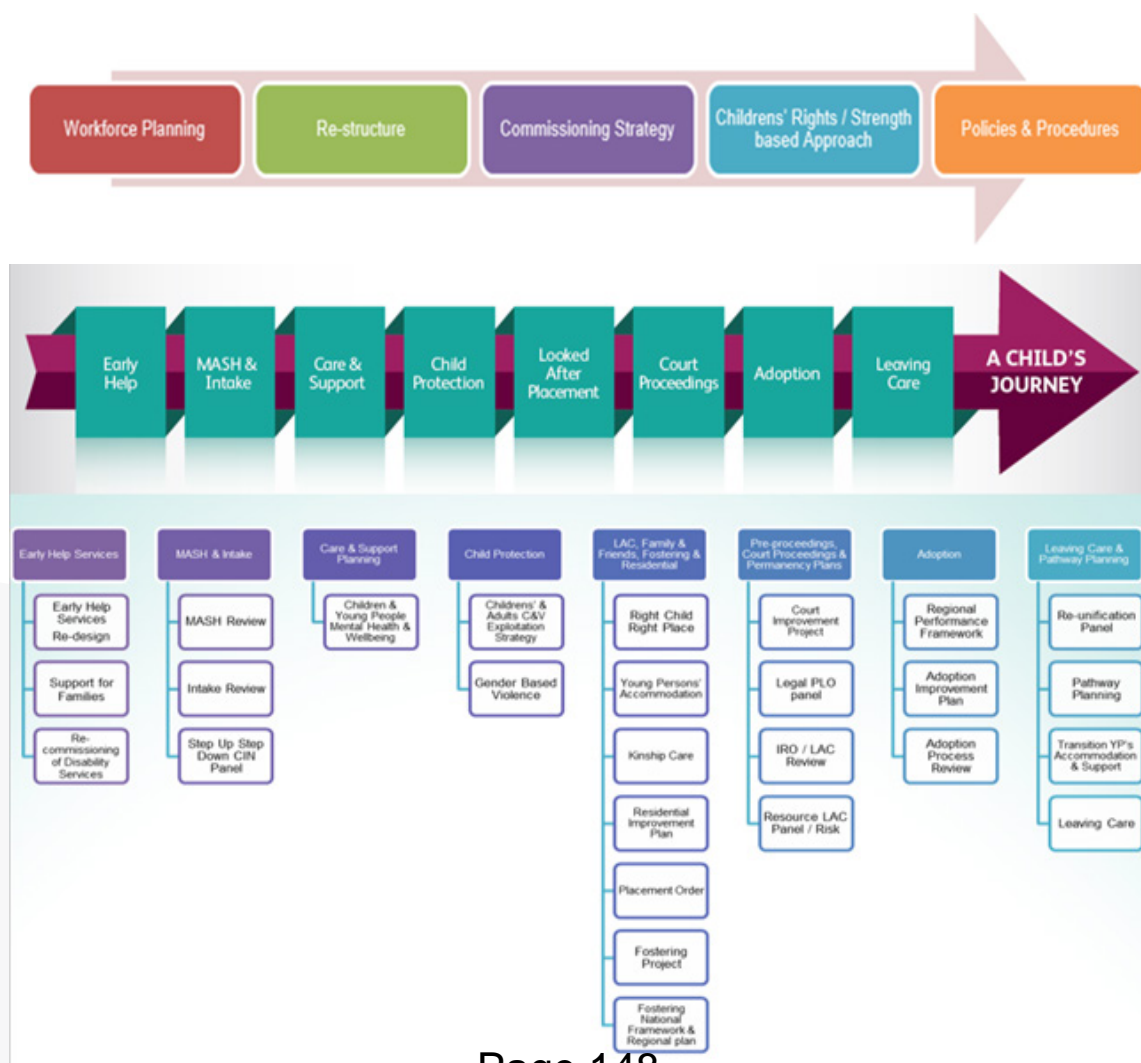
## WE WILL:

Create a 'Delivering Excellence in Children's Services' Board chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by members of the senior management team to oversee the delivery of this Strategy and monitor the impact that it has.

the whole system; workforce planning, reshaping and restructuring the service delivery model, the development of a commissioning strategy and adopting a rights based, strength based and evidence based approach to practice.

The work-streams will address all of the challenges we face through a number of projects that all align to the child's journey. All of these work-streams will be underpinned by the over-arching projects that will impact across

The Delivering Excellent Outcomes programme will have a clear set of key milestones and key outcomes to achieve.



## 7. All of this is underpinned by the Workforce Development Plan

The Workforce Development Plan was created to address a number of issues being faced by Children's Services which were:

- Struggling to recruit experienced qualified social workers to front line teams
- Traditionally relying on agency staff to cover vacancies but this is also now problematic
- A piece meal approach to recruitment and retention
- The need for a workforce plan for the whole service
- Lack of a high visibility recruitment campaign across all media
- Lack of information regarding team establishment and where vacancies exist
- Competition from other local authorities in relation to wages and incentives
- Local recruitment opportunities e.g. Universities and Job Fairs not fully exploited
- Not systematically adopting a 'prudent' approach to workforce e.g. social workers only do what only social workers can do, so tasks that don't require a social worker can be undertaken by another worker, such as a support worker
- Ensuring we have a variety of roles and an appropriate skill mix to meet the needs of the families we work with

Restructure and reshaped Roles & Responsibilities

Training & Staff Development

Recruitment & Retention

New Commercial style recruitment post

Developing 'grow your own' schemes In-house

### WE WILL:

- Develop a 'grow your own' Social Worker Strategy
- Ensure that social worker pay in Cardiff reflects the level of responsibility that the role carries and is competitive with other Local Authorities
- Introducing a coaching and mentoring scheme for social workers and managers
- Develop a clear plan to reduce reliance on agency workers, whilst ensuring that current arrangements meet our needs
- Conduct exit interviews to understand reasons for leaving
- Ensure that appropriate marketing campaigns are in place
- Undertake regular staff satisfaction surveys
- Undertake regular staff briefings
- Refresh the Signs of Safety implementation plan
- Proactively manage staff migrating from high pressure teams into less pressured teams

## 8. Delivering high quality social work supervision is an integral part of our Workforce Development Plan

Good quality and regular social work supervision is the backbone for delivering excellent outcomes for children and a pre-requisite for assuring good practice and evidence based decision making. It is also an integral part of a robust workforce development plan.

The All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008 state that staff working in child protection should have supervision which:

***“Help to ensure that practice is soundly based and consistent with the All Wales Child Protection Procedures. Supervision should also ensure that key decisions made, and guidance given, in supervision, is clearly recorded in case files”***

Children’s Services are developing ‘A Good Practice Guide to Supervision’ (and an associated performance report card) which emphasises that supervision discussions should be clearly recorded on individual client records on the CareFirst client record system. This will evidence why decisions are made and the agreed actions of the worker. It will also require that supervision sessions are consistent across the teams in the way they are recorded onto CareFirst so that decision making is clear and easy to find.

Cardiff Children’s Services have adopted a strengths based approach to working with children and families utilising the Signs of Safety model, therefore a supervision exemplar has been designed within CareFirst to guide discussions. Supervision records should evidence the three columns assessment which should flow throughout a family’s involvement with the service (‘what is working well’, ‘what are we worried about’ and ‘what needs to happen next’). A danger statement that helps to give a clear description of the risk and the impact it has on the child should also be discussed and recorded for every family during supervision.

### WE WILL:

- Update the Supervision Policy to provide guidance on frequency, quality and recording
- Provide refresher training to managers around the important of supervision and how to conduct supervision using the Signs of Safety model
- Update and implement the Supervision Audit Protocol and report card
- Audit Youth Offending cases (currently not on CareFirst, the current Social Services client record system)
- Expand auditing to include Family Support Workers and the Adolescent Resource Centre
- Ensure that cases where supervision has not been recorded for 3 months are identified by the Performance Team and urgent remedial action taken by managers

## 9. Developing an overarching set of guiding principles

Our over-riding principle that guides everything we do is that every child and young person should be an active participant in all decision making that affects them. They should have the opportunity to be brought up by their parents or family and friends unless it is not in their best interests, and every child and young person should be able to live a life that is free from abuse, harm, and exploitation.

“  
If I don't know my rights my parents definitely wouldn't, half the time they are the problem”

“  
'It's a massive issue, it's not that they don't listen, they don't even ask'”

The Bright Start Forum, 11 Plus Team and Adolescence Resource Centre.

### WE WILL:

Develop a set of supporting principles to be adopted across Early Help and Childrens Services:

- A strengthening families approach that focuses on families' strengths and supports parents to bring up their child at home to achieve their best outcomes where realistic and possible; families should be empowered to identify their own problems, needs and solutions
- A Think Family approach will be used to understand the needs of the whole family, not just the child, by working in partnership with families and other professionals
- An outcomes based approach with clear and measureable outcomes for children and families; new initiatives and re-targeting of resources will be based on evaluated evidence of 'what works'
- Providing the right support at the right time by implementing a clear plan, outcomes and tailored support with the family
- A connected partnership approach that will utilise wider cross partnership initiatives to maximise impact and re-target partner resources to reduce demands or de-escalate interventions to the lowest appropriate levels
- A shared understanding and language will be developed across the city and a “no wrong door” approach with all partners involved in supporting families
- Understanding the impact of poverty and routinely using advice and into work services to maximise income and resolve family income and housing issues
- Effective and meaningful engagement with families will allow these groups to actively participate in the model implementation and feedback their views and suggestions for on-going review and evaluation of outcomes
- Effective and continuous workforce development will be required to provide workers with the necessary confidence and experience to work directly with families, especially when providing outreach or intensive interventions

## 10. Reshaping and restructuring the service delivery model

The development of the Early Help Service will improve the way that families access advice, assistance and support by joining up a number of services that are currently in separate directorates or service areas.

The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) (see page 21 for further information) will be closely linked to the Early Help Service and will provide an access point for statutory social care where it is required. The current review of MASH has identified a number of opportunities to streamline referral routes and undertake more joined up working.

There are increasing threats around exploitation for young people within Cardiff and although we have a number of services to support them they are disparate and work within separate service areas.

Children and young people should be able to remain with family and friends wherever possible. We currently have a low, albeit growing, number of kinship carers and the teams that support them are not closely aligned to the Fostering Service where the expertise to support substitute carers sits.

The current management structure within Children's Services does not meet the needs of the service or reflect the child's journey. Staff are based in a variety of locations that don't necessarily meet the needs of the service or the families we support.

### WE WILL:

- Redesign our services to follow the child's journey wherever possible with the least amount of transfers of worker or team
- Create locality teams to enable workers to link closely with communities and local services
- Develop an Adolescent Service
- Restructure the management of Children's Services to ensure we are able to meet the current and future challenges on our service area
- Develop an 'All Age' disability service to ensure a smooth transition into adulthood
- Develop proposals to create a Family Placement Team that would include special guardians, private fosterers, kinship carers, foster carers, When I Am Ready and supported lodgings
- Develop an Accommodation Strategy to ensure our staff have easy to access bases from which they can reach the families they work with





# 11. Following the child on their journey

Once a child or young person starts to receive any advice, support or care, they will be allocated a specific worker. Sometimes they will have several changes of worker as their case progresses through the system. It is important to us that children and young people have as few changes of worker as possible and that any transfers of worker and team are completed effectively.



## WE WILL:

- Develop a Case Transfer Procedure that covers internal transfers within Children's Services, transfers between different local authorities and partner agencies and a protocol for stepping cases up and down between Children's Services and Early Help Services. The Case Transfer Procedure should ensure a 'seamless service' with the needs of people using our service having priority.
- We will implement a set of performance targets to monitor how we are doing however these will be subject to change once we have completed the reshaping of staffing structures.

Monthly report card to be developed to include:

% of children with a disability who have a transition worker 4 weeks after their 15th birthday

% of referrals into Intake & Assessment with a named worker within 24 hours

% of cases transferred to the CLA team by the 2nd CLA review (Data development)

Data development

Data development

## 12. Developing our commissioning arrangements

Children's Services is developing a Children's Commissioning Strategy aimed at supporting the process of finding appropriate care settings for children looked after. We know that to achieve this we will need to provide more placements in and around Cardiff to allow children to live near their home. The Strategy will set out the proposed approach to the strategic commissioning of placements by Children's Services.

The Strategy entitled, "**Right Home, Right Support**" - A Commissioning Strategy for Accommodation and Support for Children who are Looked After by Cardiff Council, will pull together the identified strands of placement commissioning, ensuring there is a clear vision which underpins the approach and making sure that the vision aligns to Cardiff Council's Capital Ambition Corporate Plan. It is expected that the Strategy will assist Children's Services in identifying the range of new residential and fostering provision it needs to develop in Cardiff in order to meet current and future needs. Going forward it will inform:

- The shaping of Children's Services internal placement services.
- Children's Services partnership working approach to placement commissioning with stakeholders, and a range of public and private sector partners.
- The development of a Market Position Statement (MPS) which will be published. The MPS will summarise placement supply and demand in Cardiff, and will signal business opportunities within the children's care market in the area. It is intended to give providers a range of information relevant to their business and how it might develop to meet local needs.

The Strategy will align with the developments in the Disability Futures Programme and will form an integral part of this new Children's Services Strategy.

### WE WILL:

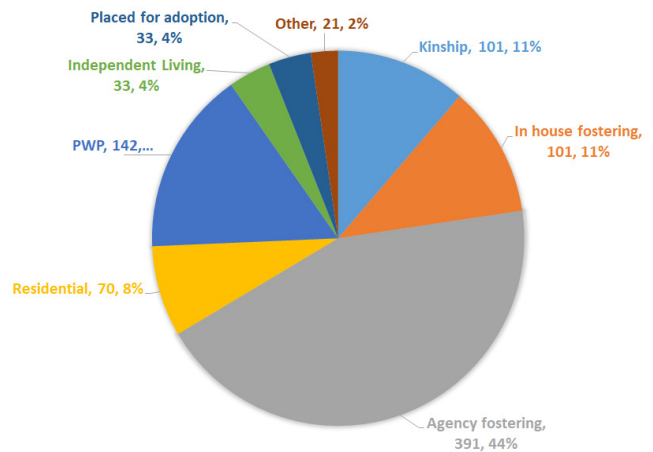
- Have a Commissioning Strategy for Accommodation and Support for Children who are Looked After
- Complete a Market Position Statement and undertake comprehensive local market engagement with providers to increase the range and level of external placement provision in and around the Cardiff area by March 2020
- Develop an implementation plan for the Strategy that is supported by a range of business cases that set out our commissioning intentions; these will include but are not limited to:
  - Development of a new regulated provision for 16 – 20 year olds by March 2020
  - Transfer of Ty Storrie (short breaks provision) to the local authority by June 2019
  - Conclude a scoping exercise regarding Edge of Secure Provision (Regional) by July 2019
  - Emergency residential provision
  - An assessment (step up / step down) residential provision



## 13. Shifting the balance of care

We are developing our practice and procedures to ensure the right young people are in the right placements for the right period of time by setting up a series of decision making panels, introducing more Signs of Safety reflection meetings, Family Network meetings and by introducing a Family Re-Unification Framework.

Safe Children Looked After Reduction Strategy  
(31st March 2019)



### WE WILL:

- Reduce the number and length of time that children and young people are placed in residential settings
- Support more family members to become kinship carers
- Support more family members to become Special Guardians
- Review all children and young people placed on a Care Order with parents and consider whether any can step down to Supervision Orders; this will mean revising the approach to Supervision Order management by reviewing at 3, 6 and 9 month intervals with time limited targets set for each period
- Recruit more local authority foster carers
- Support more children and young people at home on Care and Protection Plans instead of under Placement with Parent regulations which can be stigmatising
- Support more children and young people at home on Care and Support Plans
- Support more children and young people in the Early Help Service





# 14. Early Help

Each stage of the child’s journey will have its own Improvement Plan which will form the new Children’s Services Strategy.

The development of the Early Help Service involves partners from across a wide spectrum of services. The service will ensure that we are fully compliant with the duty within the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to provide an Information, Advice & Assistance Service.



The ambition in Cardiff is to provide a more coherent approach to early intervention and prevention services. This will enable us to provide information, advice and assistance to all families whilst providing the right support, at the right level, at the right time for those who need it the most.

Bringing together existing services to create 3 new services:

<p><b>Family Gateway</b> Primary route in for all referrals and requests for help</p>	<p><b>Family Help Service</b> Rapid response to families needing short term intervention</p>	<p><b>Family Support Service</b> To work with families facing more complex or severe issues</p>
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Better integration and knowledge sharing across other services to provide the right support, at the right time, to families, children and young people.

### Outcomes

- Reduce the number of children who are impacted by adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- Support more children and young people to live with their families
- Raise educational attainment and aspirations of families
- Improve access to better employment opportunities
- Minimise safeguarding and care expenditures by building resilience in families
- Reduce over reliance on foster and residential placements

Monthly report card to be developed to include:

<p>Number of people contacting the Family Gateway</p>	<p>Number of people accessing the Family Help Team</p>	<p>Number of people receiving support from the Family Help Team</p>	<p>Data development on outcomes</p>	<p>Data development on outcomes</p>
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# 15. Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is the single point of contact for all safeguarding concerns regarding children and young people in Cardiff and the front door access for Early Help referrals. It is therefore a critical part of our safeguarding arrangements.

Having a MASH model does not guarantee a good safeguarding response. The label of a MASH will not deliver any benefits unless each agency effectively discharges its own safeguarding duties. In this way a MASH is not a solution for poor inter agency working, but will instead enhance good inter agency working if effective cultures and processes are developed.

Better working with the Intake & Assessment teams will contribute to better allocation of resources at the right place and the right time. Furthermore the target of making a decision within 24 hours of a referral being received will be significantly improved.

The current plan in relation to the referral routes into Early Help will ensure that the MASH is not used as a 'one stop shop' but that referrals are screened out by social workers within Early Help with only safeguarding referrals being processed by MASH.

The rotation of staff between all 3 tiers of Early Help, MASH / Intake & Assessment and the Domestic Abuse Hub is an integral part of the Early Help Plan and the detail of this will form part of the implementation plan.

Through the development of MASH and Early Help the right service will be identified for the right child at the right time. Consistent evidence based preventative casework interventions to children and families will be delivered at the earliest stage of identified concern(s).

## WE WILL:

- Establish a strategic steering group to oversee the development and integration of the Early Years, MASH and Intake & Assessment services
- Reconvene the Operational Management Group with revised membership and Terms of Reference
- Develop a performance report card to ensure improvements are maintained
- Develop an action plan for all outstanding areas of concern
- Implement a Quality Assurance Framework that covers audit activity with performance data and feedback from citizens
- Ensure these proposals inform the wider Accommodation Strategy
- Review IT systems and identify solutions
- Ensure there is an interface with the Early Help implementation plan
- Develop Information Sharing Protocols

Monthly report card to be developed to include:

Number of contact / referrals received

Numbers of children subject to multiple contacts during the month

Breakdown of contact / referrals by source

Breakdown of contact / referrals by outcome

Proportion of contact/ referrals leading to/ not leading to an assessment

## 16. Intake & Assessment

The Intake & Assessment Service currently receive all of the referrals from MASH that require further action in relation to urgent safeguarding issues or families that may be in need of care and support.

Performance reports demonstrate a significant increase in referrals over recent months which appears to be directly attributable to the changes made within the MASH around thresholds and decision making.

The future role of the Intake & Assessment Service will be considered as part of the development of the Early Help Service and the wider restructure.

There is an action plan in place to address the increasing demand.



### WE WILL:

- Close the back log of cases awaiting closure
- Transfer staff into the team wherever possible
- Develop robust step down arrangements into Support4Families
- Review arrangements for agency workers
- Review pathways into the 11 years + team
- Review pathways into the Youth Offending Service for exploitation cases
- Review arrangements re: age assessments for unaccompanied asylum seekers
- Review the process for private law cases
- Undertake an analysis of the business processes to ensure work flow improves and adequate capacity is available to meet demand

Monthly report card to be developed to include:

Breakdown of well-being assessments by outcome

Breakdown of s.47 enquiries by outcome

Timeliness of well-being assessments

Timeliness of s.47 enquiries

Intake & Assessment social worker caseloads



# 17. Care and Support Plans

This section refers to Cardiff children with care and support needs under Part 4 of the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 but are not on the Child Protection Register.

Cardiff Children's Services work with children with care and support needs and their families on the basis of consent. Parents' agreement to any social work intervention or to services for their child is necessary.

The Care and Support Plan is clear on the unmet need, what the end outcome looks like and how this will be achieved. The Care and Support Plan is measurable and scaling questions are used in order to review and assess the levels of changes made by the family.

The tasks in the Care and Support Plan have timescales attached and it is clear who is responsible for each activity. Once a Care and Support Plan has been formulated and agreed by families it will be signed by all professionals, family members and the child (depending on age and level of understanding). Any changes to the Care and Support Plan are agreed by all concerned and in conjunction with the child and family.

Where a child has been subject to a Child Protection Plan and improvements have been made so that the plan ends, and where a child who has been looked after returns home to their family, a Care and Support Plan is put in place with the child to support continued development. This plan should be in place for at least 3 months and should be reviewed before it is closed to make sure that all concerns have been address to avoid re-referrals.

Care and Support is also put in place where section 47 enquiries have not proceeded to Child Protection, but the child and family's need for support has been identified.

Cardiff have introduced a Step-Up and Step-Down Panel to ensure there is the support at the right level to identify cases which may need to be escalated. This Panel will follow a strengths based approach using the Signs of Safety mapping assessment (what is working well, what we are worried about and actions). The Panel will contribute to effective planning, support social workers and positive outcomes for families.

## WE WILL:

- Identify cases of a child receiving care and support which need to be closed
- Identify families who have unmet needs but do not require statutory services; these cases should be referred to early help or other identified universal services
- Re-review cases which may need to be referred for a well-being assessment from early help
- Review cases which may need to progress to Strategy Discussion

Monthly report card to be developed to include:

Number of children with care and support needs

Percentage of children with a Care and Support Plan who are supported to remain at home

Timeliness of reviews of children with care and support needs

Number of child-led changes to a care plan following a review (Data development)

Social worker caseloads

## 18. Child Protection and Safeguarding

The All Wales Child Protection Procedures are currently being reviewed and amended.

Cardiff are part of Cardiff and the Vale Regional Safeguarding Board and are members of the various sub groups.

A need was identified to set up a Local Operational Safeguarding Board (LSOB) to oversee local safeguarding issues. The LOSB has been in existence for four months and is chaired by the Chief Executive of Cardiff Council.

The Institute of Public Care identified following a recent audit that there were less than the expected number of children on the Child Protection Register compared to the number of children looked after.

Comparator data also shows that children tend to remain on the Child Protection Register for less time than in other local authorities.

It is crucial that children are supported via a Care and Protection Plan prior to them becoming a looked after child unless an emergency situation prevents that.



### WE WILL:

- Improve the timeliness of Child Protection Conferences and Reviews
- Improve how we enable parents and young people to participate
- Evaluate the effectiveness of child protection plans
- Ensure our workforce have access to appropriate training
- Continue to develop regional and local safeguarding arrangements

Monthly report card to be developed to include:

Profile of children on the Child Protection Register

Breakdown of length of time children have been on the Child Protection Register

Timeliness of Initial Conferences and Child Protection Reviews

Numbers of registrations, de-registrations and re-registrations

Timeliness of visits to children on the Child Protection Register

# 19. Public Law Outline and Permanency Planning

The Public Law Outline (PLO) is the framework for working with families to do everything to prevent going into Court proceedings. If this cannot be achieved, all assessments are completed and care planning of the case is in place before issuing proceedings.

There are strict standards including timescales within the PLO that place increasing pressures on Children's Services. This was an area that previously caused concern in relation to not meeting timescales or practice standards but this has improved following a robust improvement plan.

A protocol has been developed as part of the improvement plan:

- Having a consistent approach to care planning, pre-proceedings and Public Law Outline
- How and when care proceedings are issued
- The standard of statements, assessments, reports and care plans placed before the Court

- A PLO manager that monitors all dates reports are to be completed and meetings to be held

And applies to:

- Children subject to Child Protection Register where sufficient change has not been made despite significant support
- All children subject to pre-proceedings
- All children subject to Public Law care proceedings with the aim of identifying those children for whom twin-tracking is appropriate
- Local Authority Statement of Evidence submitted to Court

The emphasis (except in emergencies i.e. Emergency Protection Order applications) is on pre-proceedings. This is in order to ensure that more appropriate alternatives have been explored prior to public care proceedings being initiated.

## WE WILL:

- Complete chronologies and genograms and present them to panel
- Hold Case Reflection meetings before panel, as appropriate
- Develop a constructive relationship with Judiciary
- Promote confident assertive practice within PLO
- Develop mechanisms for regular dialogue with the Child and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) and clarity of expectations of the dialogue and collaborative working with children's guardians
- Review and monitor use of s.76 (including retrospective review)
- Develop system to capture issues raised by social workers attending Court and ensure support systems in place

Monthly report card to be developed to include:

Number of cases not completed within 26 weeks (Data development)	Percentage of case within PLO completed as part of pre proceedings (Data development)	Number of statements requested by judiciary raising concerns (Data development)	% of overall cases issued as emergencies (Data development)	Breakdown of recommendations & disposals (Data development)
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## 20. Children Looked After

The Code of Practice on the exercise of Social Services functions in relation to Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, contains provisions relating to children looked after and accommodated, including children and young people who are leaving or who have left care.

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

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

The strategy reflects a genuine partnership in which no one agency has primacy but in which all are committed to:

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

As part of the reshaping of Children’s Services the current arrangements for children looked after will move from being a discreet service to becoming part of the newly formed locality based teams. This will ensure that returning home following a period of being looked after is a more streamlined process and that social workers work with families within their communities, including other local professional networks (including schools, health and police).

### WE WILL:

- Review all of our children looked after to ensure their care plans continue to meet their needs
- Keep children and young people with their family and friends wherever it is possible, appropriate and safe to do so
- Introduce an App to allow children and young people to influence their care plans and reviews
- Develop a Permanency Protocol
- Ensure we increase the availability of placement choices
- Ensure we have systems in place to monitor the quality of all placements
- Review our Independent Reviewing Officer service against the new practice guidance
- Ensure our Children Looked After service is compliant with relevant legislation
- Develop a new 3 year Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Develop our approach to participation with children and young people including the reshaping of the service

Monthly report card to be developed to include:

Allocation of children looked after to social workers

Children and young people’s engagement in their looked after reviews

Children and young people actively influencing their care plan (Data development)

Timeliness of looked after reviews and statutory visits to children looked after

Children and young people who were offered / received an advocacy service (Data development)



# 21. Adoption

Adoption transfers all legal parental rights and responsibilities to the adoptive parents. The birth parents of the child lose all legal access to their child once an adoption order is approved by the courts. Adoptive children may keep in contact with some of their birth relatives if agreed during the adoption process – but the child's safety and well-being is our first priority.

The child becomes a new member of the adoptive family and receives the same rights as if he or she were born into that family.

Cardiff is part of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) which is the largest of the five regional collaboratives, which form part of the National Adoption Service in Wales (NAS).

It 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. The service is hosted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

In respect of regional performance, the increase in the number of children being placed for adoption during the period, the number being adopted and the reduced time taken to place a child for adoption from Placement Order are positive improvements.

Some improvement has also been noted in the provision of Life Journey materials for children placed and in respect of the take up of birth parent counselling.

There has been increase in the number of children waiting for placements and the number waiting over six months to be placed.

There has been a decrease in approvals of adopters and delays in timely recruitment of adopters makes recruitment an ongoing and clear priority for the service.



## WE WILL work with the Regional Adoption Collaborative to:

- Decrease the number of children waiting to be adopted
- Decrease the time children wait to be adopted
- Increase the diversity of adopters
- Increase the number of adopters

## Monthly report card to be developed to include:

Placement Orders granted

Number and profile of children placed for adoption

Length of time between Placement Order and child placed for adoption

Number of children adopted

Information about adopters (Data development)

## 22. Leaving Care and Pathway Planning

It is a statutory duty for all young people leaving care to be provided with the support they need to make a successful transition to adulthood and move towards more independent living.

Care leavers should expect the same level of care and support that others would expect from a reasonable parent. The local authority responsible for their care and support should make sure that they are provided with the opportunities they need to come to terms with taking on the responsibilities of adulthood. It is not just Social Services that impact upon these young people. Once a child is looked after all elected members and officers of the local authority, as corporate parents, need to be concerned about that child and must take the following principles into account when engaging with them and making any decision concerning them:

- Is this good enough for my own child?
- Does this provide a second chance if things don't go as expected?

- Is this tailored to the child's individual needs, particularly if they are more vulnerable than other children?

Plans for transition to adulthood for children looked after must be in place for all young people aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks after they reached the age of 14. Preparation for a time when they will no longer be looked after should be integral to the care and support planning process throughout their time in care. As well as practical concerns, this should also encompass emotional preparation for leaving care. The transitional period when care leavers approach independence and the time immediately after they leave care can present significant challenges to their emotional well-being. Preparation work for young people leaving care should include helping care leavers to develop and maintain relationships with people who will be able to continue supporting them after they leave care.

### WE WILL:

- Develop an online website for use by care leavers in conjunction with their Personal Adviser
- Develop a new and up to date 'young person friendly' guide for care leavers which sets out our pledge to them. This will include financial entitlements.
- Encompass young people's involvement in service design and development and build in the Trauma informed model and approach
- Further develop mediation services and build on Young Persons Gateway to accommodation and support (following Positive Pathway model)
- Develop a Health Passport for young people at the age of 16 which would assist care leavers in knowing and understanding their health history; this is particularly important in view of the moves that young people have made
- Review Age Assessments
- Develop integrated pathways with the Adolescent provision (Youth Service/YOS/ Prevention Services)

Monthly report card to be developed to include:

Completion of Pathway Plans

Destination for young people when leaving care

Suitability of accommodation for young people leaving care

Allocation of Personal Advisers to care leavers

Care leavers in Education, Training or Employment

## 23. Supporting children who have a disability, additional learning needs or neurodevelopmental diagnosis

Cardiff believes that all children are a child first. As a result, opportunities and services for all children should be inclusive to the needs of individuals with additional needs and disabilities.

Within the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 [2], 'a disabled child is presumed to need care and support in addition to, or instead of, the care and support provided by the child's family'.

Within the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Act 2018 - the term 'Additional Learning Needs' refers to a child or young person who has a disability or learning difficulty which calls for 'Additional Learning Provision' that is additional to, or different from, that made generally for others of the same age.

Children and young people with additional learning needs and disabilities are currently supported through a range of services across Education, Social Services, Health and the voluntary sector.

Families are offered support at first point of contact within specialist services. This could be via a clinic appointment, at birth from a hospital consultant or through education where additional needs emerge over time.

Information and Advice services within St David's Hospital are delivered as part of the Cardiff Disability Team Around the Family. This service offers families a key worker and supports families to navigate services and Health offer a special needs health visitor and Education provide early support to transition into education settings with necessary levels of support.

Children and young people with additional needs may be more vulnerable and their health and development is likely to be impaired or further impaired without the provision of early help, intensive intervention or remedial intervention.

The Early Help Service will work with all families and children, but will ensure that where specialist services are needed an early conversation will take place to ensure that the needs of the family are assessed and met by the most appropriate and relevant services.

This collaborative approach supports families at the earliest point in time to provide information, build resilience and connectivity to services to reduce the impact of caring for a disabled child.

### WE WILL:

- Create an All Age disability team
- Develop our approaches to supporting children with additional needs and disabilities
- Provide easier access to a key worker for co-ordination
- Work collaboratively with Health, Education and third sector partners to enable families to receive a seamless approach to their care at the right time
- Formalise the working arrangements across all agencies to ensure equity and reduce duplication in service delivery
- Develop a single approach to planning using person centred and strengths based approaches

Monthly report card to be developed to include:

Number and source of referrals to Child Health & Disability

Number of children being supported by Child Health & Disability

Allocation to Transition Workers

Data development

Data development

## 24. Youth Offending Service

The Crime and Disorder Act 1988 places a responsibility on each local authority to establish and maintain a Youth Offending Service.

The Youth Offending Service (YOS) is a multi-agency organisation with statutory responsibility for providing intervention, challenge and support for young people and their families with the primary aim of preventing anti-social behaviour, offending and reoffending. YOS offers support to victims of youth crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and a range of restorative interventions are offered.

There has already been improvement in the service with work being undertaken to improve the visibility of the services that are offered. To this end we have:

- Improved performance reporting and performance management
- Engaged with Neighbourhood Policing Teams to promote Prevention Services
- Engaged with Education
- Closer collaborative work with Children's Services, especially Think Safe! and Adolescent Resource Centre (ARC) teams

- Widened the membership on the YOS Management Board so that more agencies will be involved in the governance arrangements for the work of the YOS
- Used funding to create additional and new posts in order to respond to emerging trends
- Taken part in the Enhanced Case Management project and determined appropriate interventions within a trauma recovery model

Emerging trends have identified a rise in low level harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) across the City and a HSB Prevention Officer has been recruited in order to work with this client group.

It should be acknowledged that the trend toward increased complexity of cases continues with this being seen across all service delivery areas, including the non-statutory prevention service. Prevention referrals have increased and it is anticipated that further increases will be experienced when the service is launched amongst council colleagues.

### WE WILL:

- Promote the Youth Offending Service and the programmes offered
- Develop a Protocol around the joint chairing of exploitation meetings
- Deliver a range of presentation briefings to our partners, individuals and the community
- Formalise arrangements with Education to deliver preventative themed topics as part of the curriculum or to respond to emerging trends
- Review and relaunch the YOS management board ensuring appropriate membership
- Develop new terms of reference for the Management Board
- Ensure that the YOS has an effective governance structure

Monthly report card to be developed to include:

First time entrants to YOS and reoffenders

Engagement in education, training and employment for children in the youth justice system

Access to suitable accommodation for children in the youth justice system

Access to substance misuse services for children in the youth justice system

Access to mental health services for children in the youth justice system

## 25. Emerging areas of practice and development that will enable us to deliver on our key priorities

To ensure we have the right support at the right time for children and young people we are in the process of developing a Practice Manual that will include our approach to:

### 25.1. Family Network Meetings

Family Network Meetings have a significant role in promoting rights based outcomes for children as they:

- Provide families with an opportunity to promote continuity in their child's upbringing in line with their ethnic, cultural and linguistic background (Article 20 UNCRC)
- Enable families to understand their role and responsibilities in promoting their child's best interests by identifying and using their individual strengths to protect the child and take the lead in caring for their children (Article 18 UNCRC)
- Ensure the child is supported in maintaining their family ties, including personal relations and direct contact with their birth parents, subject to any restrictions imposed by the Courts (Articles 8 and 9 UNCRC)

Family Network Meetings are a way of working which aims to provide children and their families the best opportunity to create safety and well-being for their children, with community and professional support. They allow workers to be rigorous in assessing risk and planning for safety of children; and for workers to be transparent in their practice.

The meeting provides a forum for children, young people and their families to have their voices heard, and give parents and prospective kinship carers the opportunity to demonstrate how they can provide a safe and secure home in a way that not only works for them, but also addresses the concerns of the local authority. The benefit of this is fundamental to the success of the placement of the children and young people, helping to build supportive and enduring relationships within the family network, achieve best outcomes and reduce the risk of placement breakdown.

#### WE WILL:

- Safety planning within the Child Protection process
- Support network plans, including within Public Law Outline (PLO) pre-proceedings and Placement with Parent placement planning
- Prevention of placement breakdown
- Reunification planning
- Assessment of Special Guardianship Order support need
- Respite arrangements
- Parenting / family dynamic assessments within the PLO and Court process



## 25.2. Resource Panels

The Resource Panel is underpinned by the belief that there are unique advantages for children and young people growing up within their own families and communities, with a network of support to help manage their own problems and stay safe and well.

The panel models and supports the strengths based Signs of Safety (SoS) framework and processes for working, which incorporates principles, disciplines, tools for assessment and safety planning and engaging with children and families.

The panel will contribute to effective planning, support social workers and positive outcomes for families.



### WE WILL:

- Safely reduce the existing children looked after
- Promote placement stability
- Reduce the number of children who become looked after
- Promote the upbringing of children within their families including Placement with Parents and kinship care
- Identify comprehensive packages of support to enable children and young people to remain in their own families where possible with an emphasis on early intervention
- Ensure that effective support systems are put in place so that children who are already looked after can return to live safely with family members, in line with their child care plan
- Ensure that effective support systems are put in place to prevent placement breakdown and promote placement stability for children looked after
- Approve therapeutic support packages which may be required

### 25.3. Reviewing our arrangements for Kinship Carers to support our aim of shifting the balance of care

The assessment of family members or close friends as a kinship carer for a child or sibling group who cannot remain with either of their parents, is one of the most complex assessments a social worker can undertake.

An assessor will generally have a maximum of twelve weeks to complete a full assessment, although sometimes as little as five weeks is ordered by the Court. Early identification of family members and Family Network Meetings held early on will enable the local authority to comply with this timescale.



#### WE WILL:

- Create a new 'substitute family' team that incorporates all Kinship Care arrangements alongside mainstream foster carers
- Support family members from the earliest possible stage to help keep those children safe within their family rather than being placed with unrelated foster carers or adopters
- Ensure all kinship carers and Special Guardianship carers have an allocated support worker
- Use the Signs of Safety approach in this way to reduce the level of emotional harm that children are likely to suffer as a result of removal from their family, alongside promoting the best permanence route, and ultimately the best outcome for each child
- Incorporate the Signs of Safety model and Family Network Meetings to adopt a restorative approach in a way that promotes respect, trust and a sense of belonging; promoting a key strategic objective as outlined in our Corporate Parenting Strategy

Monthly report card to be developed to include:

Number and % of children becoming looked after placed with kinship carers

Profile of children in kinship placements by age

% of children becoming looked after where a Viability Assessment was completed (Data development)

% of Viability Assessments that progressed to full Connected Persons Assessments (Data development)

Outcome of full Connected Persons Assessments (Data development)

## 25.4. Multi-Agency Exploitation Strategy

Like many other UK cities, Cardiff is facing an increasing challenge in trying to safeguard children and young people against the threat of various forms of exploitation including:

Child Criminal Exploitation is an area of increasing concern. We know more now about this area and are working with partners to form a robust response. This can occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. Criminal exploitation of children is broader than just county lines, and includes for instance children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is the coercion or manipulation of children and young people into taking part in sexual activities. It is a form of sexual abuse involving an exchange of some form of payment which can include money, mobile phones and other items, drugs, alcohol, a place to stay, 'protection' or affection. The vulnerability of the young person and grooming process employed by perpetrators renders them powerless to recognise

the exploitative nature of relationships and unable to give informed consent.

Modern Day Slavery - Child related crimes such as child sexual exploitation, forced begging, illegal drug cultivation, organised theft, moving a child / young person from one area to another for this purpose constitutes Modern Day Slavery. Children and young people cannot give consent to being exploited therefore the element of coercion or deception does not need to be present to prove an offence. It can often be unclear on the surface what is offending behaviour and what is exploitation. Children / young people will often not share information due to the threat of reprisals.

All forms of exploitation involve high level risks to children, families, the public and staff which is beyond the family unit and doesn't fit into traditional social care. Safeguarding children and young people from the risks can be challenging therefore a multi-agency partnership joint approach is required to the newly perceived threats and risks that exploitation brings.

Children and young people at risk of exploitation doesn't stop at 18. The transition from 'child' to 'adult' is a process not an event. Transitional safeguarding responses need to be developed to ensure that our vulnerable adults are also protected from all forms of exploitation.

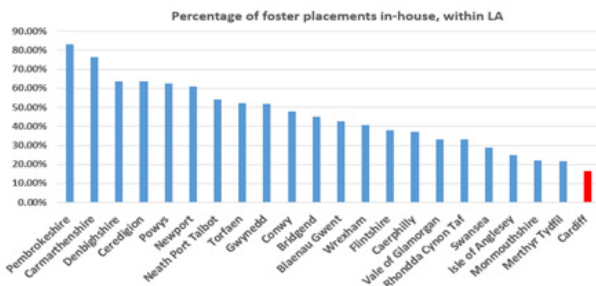
### WE WILL:

- Ensure exploitation is a priority of the Regional and Local Safeguarding Board
- Broaden the scope of the current CSE strategy to include all forms of exploitation
- Consider the Youth Offending Service undertaking the lead role if there are no other safeguarding concerns
- Develop escalation processes from general prevention / targeted, high end prevention / protection and feed into local profiling through police intelligence
- Link in and learn from the new National County Lines Coordination Centre
- Explore the use of Risk Management Panels for all exploitation / adolescent risk that could replace the Multi Agency Strategy Meeting process
- Explore the use of Risk Management Panels for all exploitation / adolescent risk that could replace the Multi Agency Strategy Meeting process
- Convene a local learning event based on recent cases



**25.5. We will review and reshape our Fostering Service to support our aim of shifting the balance of care**

When looking at the percentage of foster placements that are provided by our in-house provision, the graph below demonstrates that Cardiff has the lowest in Wales with only 16 % of placements. Cardiff has significantly higher rates of children placed with independent foster carers than any other local authority.



ensure that, so far as is reasonably practical, they are able to provide children looked after and other accommodated children with accommodation that is within the local authority's area and that meets the children's needs. The local authority must also ensure that, so far as is reasonably practical, the placement:

- Allows the child to live near home
- Meets the needs of the child as set out in the Part 6 Care and Support Plan, and the outcomes set out in the Pathway Plan
- Does not disrupt the child's education or training
- Enables the child to live together with any siblings who are also being looked after
- Provides accommodation which is suitable to the child's needs if the child is disabled

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on the local authority to take steps to

We need to adopt a whole system review of Fostering in Cardiff to improve the offer and increase transitions into in house fostering placements. This is the best outcome for children and young people.

**WE WILL:**

- Increase the number of in house foster carers
- Reduce the number of placements with Independent Fostering Agencies
- Increase the number of complex cases placed with foster families (opposed to residential)
- Increase the number of sibling groups remaining together
- Increase placement stability
- Fully support our foster carers, enabling and empowering them to support the children
- Modernise the Fostering Service to meet the needs of children and young people
- Provide real time data on performance, provision and cost
- Set targets and time frames for task completions
- Review resources to ensure sufficient staffing levels

Monthly report card to be developed to include:

Number of in house foster carers

Number of placements

Number of vacancies

Conversion rates from initial enquiry to approval

Number of marketing events

## 25.6. Adopting a Strength Based Approach to practice by implementing Signs of Safety

### What's working well?

- Political and Corporate Support
- Partners willingness to engage
- Training Programme
- Forms being updated for Signs of Safety (SoS)
- Evidence of SoS in case recordings
- SoS approach used in Supervision by some team managers
- Pockets of good practice
- Reflection Meetings
- Celebration Event
- Children Looked After Reviews

### What are we worried about?

- Inconsistencies in practice
- Not adopted wholesale
- Not used systematically to inform decision making across the care planning process
- Not embedded as business as usual
- Confidence of some workers is low
- Performance monitoring and reporting
- Expected outcomes not achieved
- Not used for Supervision consistently

### What do we need to do next?

- Practice What We Preach daily
- Reshape steering group / practice leads
- Ask families and staff about their experience
- Embed SoS across all decision making
- Learn from UK Evaluation of SoS pilots
- Develop performance framework
- Celebrate success and share good practice
- Develop report card

Signs of Safety has been adopted by Cardiff Children's Services as the overarching practice framework for all of its work with children and families. Signs of Safety is a strengths based, safety-organised approach to child safeguarding work which expands the investigation of risk to encompass strengths and signs of safety to make an overall judgement of safety using a safety scale. The tools used in Signs of Safety have a wider application to other settings where workers need to communicate with children about their feelings and engage families in making changes.

Signs of Safety is about building on the strengths and safety already present with families to build reliance and encourage families to find their own solutions to what's happening in their lives. Safety and well-being is not created in services but within a family's home. Practitioners work with the child or young person, their family and their support network to build safety for the child or young person.

The framework within Signs of Safety allows practitioners to critically think through and analyse the information gathered about a child and their family mapping out their thinking about what is happening and what they need to see the family doing in order to know the child / young person is safe or that their needs are being met. This process provides a clear understanding of the current situation for that child and family.

Our overall ambition for children in Cardiff is that each and every one of them is happy, healthy, safe and confident in their future.

Our absolute priority for all of those children who need our help, care and protection is that they are 'seen, safe and heard'.

## Conclusion



As the Council's Director of Social Services, having taken up my position in July 2018, it is both a privilege and a considerable responsibility to lead on the implementation of this Strategy. Since taking up this role I have been impressed by many of the strengths here in Cardiff's Children's Services and the openness of the Council, workforce, partners and children, young people and families to work together to address areas where we need to improve.

The challenges that Children's Services face have a high corporate and political profile, which translates itself into very good working relationships across the Council, especially across housing and education colleagues and with partners in the NHS, Police and the Third Sector. This agenda has a high profile at the Public Service Board and Regional Partnership Board. To improve outcomes for our most vulnerable children, we Children's Social Services need to be effective partners to deliver a whole city response. Our most important partnership is with children, young people and families. Our commitment to rights and participation has driven both the development of this strategy and will drive the implementation plans.

This is an important strategic plan for Cardiff Council. I hope it clearly sets out how Children's Services operates in Cardiff and that we are clear and transparent in our aims going forward. We are driven by information about how well we are doing, from performance information, complaints, compliments and quality assurance information. This approach to understanding our quality and performance means we can be fully held to account if we are not making the improvements that we have set ourselves.

In everything we do, and I believe it strongly comes across in this strategy, the child's voice is at the centre. I want the most important question asked to

be "What is important to the child?", and this to be fully understood in all aspects of our preventative, practice and commissioning and service development work. The strategy also promotes a 'think family' approach and we are seeking to involve families, taking a strength based approach, and wrapping support around them, to enable children to live with their own families wherever possible.

We can't deliver this strategy if we don't invest in and continue to support our fantastic and committed workforce. We are committed to continuing to develop our workforce to work in a strength based way, build on strengths and signs of safety and to be supported in their practice. We have changed our operating model to support locality working to enable children's services to work positively with partners in schools, early help services, primary care and housing and communities.

Cardiff is in a strong position to attract, retain and develop its workforce. The city has a lot to offer and has good universities and further education providers; we need to promote the benefits of what Cardiff has to offer to encourage students who study here to stay working here in Cardiff. The diverse nature of the work in our city, opportunities for support and development, strong political, corporate, partnership and professional support make Cardiff the best possible place to make a positive difference to the lives of children and families.

Finally, and with good reason, I am optimistic that the ambitious commitments (the 'We Will's) will be delivered. I am excited at the commitment of the Council to delivery this 3 year strategy and deliver excellent outcomes for our children and to celebrate the impact of when we get things right. To this end below is a poem from one of our Cardiff young people. I hope it inspires everyone involved in delivery of this strategy to go above and beyond to make that difference.

**Claire Marchant,**  
Director of Social Services

# Case Study – Feedback from a Young Person at the End of Leaving Care Services

Thank you so much for the following :

- T** - the times that could have been my darkest of days both physically and mentally and not giving up on me while i was going through crisis
- H** - having faith in me that i could be the best i could be when even i could not see my potential
- A** - anything i needed you would be there. in crisis many of your staff have dropped what work they had and come and support me and i could nkt be more thankful of them
- N** - now that my time with your incredible survice is coming to an end i feel like you have toirght me all the relivdnt skills i need to live a more stable and managable life
- K** - k is going to be a hard for me to think of something to say but think of my time with leaving care as a car journey and chow far we have come if you eete to tell me at the start i would be budgeting my utility bills finding things to do with my time ie going to college looking for hosing i would say never in a billion years but together we have travelled nany 1000s of kilometres mentaly and we have achieved so many things i dont think i would have done on my own

- Y** - years have past but every time they do your incredible support just gets better and in years to come I will remember every single time you've helped me in supported me and I just wish that people would not have the bad connotations to go with social services because they are a fantastic organisation and I cannot be more proud of with the staff they have there and to be honest with you I'm such a lucky person to have gone through the service and I met so many fantastic people
- O** - o is for onwards and upwards for me because of your fantastic support no more will I be getting myself into trouble and I just want to say thank you for supporting me to get to where I am right now because I feel like I can now move on with my life and forget the past put that behind me but not forgetting how extraordinary has been to me
- U** - unbelievably so thankful that you have supported me the way you have and I just feel like I've got to somehow thank you because I've just feel so lucky to have met so much extraordinary people and thank you so much for your hard work in me because I now believe that the skills you have taught me will lead me on to greater things My Life