

## **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES STATEMENT**

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### **Families First**

I recently had the privilege of attending a Families First event that recognised the achievements of a group of 20 young commissioners aged 10-19 years old and 12 parent/carer commissioners who were trained and supported to participate in the re-commissioning of the new Families First programme. The youngest commissioner was 10 years old. Certificates and t-shirts were presented to all those who participated to thank them for their contribution. The coming together of parents, carers, children and young people provided an excellent opportunity for Families First to ensure that new services appropriately reflect the needs of the citizens they are meant to serve and are delivered in a way that make them most accessible with maximum impact. I understand from Families First officers that many of the young commissioners and parent/carer commissioners went on to participate in tender exercises for services providing healthy relationships support for young people; a youth information service; an early years volunteer based family support service, and a family well-being service. Their participation was highly commended by the professionals who were also part of the evaluation panels. In addition, their insightful contribution and straight talking appropriately challenged providers who were being interviewed and I understand that the professionals involved found them to be truly inspirational and an absolutely pleasure to work with.

### **Swan Family Centres**

I recently attended the formal opening of the Swan Family Centres in the east and west of the city. The centres, managed by Swanstaff, provide supervised contact for our Looked After Children who can only meet with their parents under supervised conditions due to safeguarding concerns. After much scrutiny and deliberations, the Council awarded Swanstaff the contract to deliver this invaluable service for our Looked After Children. The 4-year contract commenced in May 2016 with provision to extend for a further year.

The purpose of the service is to offer a safe and secure child-friendly environment where Looked After Children can meet their parents, siblings and other family members or significant people within the terms of specified contact arrangements, with a view to supporting the relationships between child and parent/family in circumstances where it is not safe for the child to live within the family. The service provides a range of different types of contact, including centre-based; activity-based; community-based and home-based contacts.

Swanstaff work in partnership with Social Workers to ensure that a safe service is provided, whilst maximising the most natural contact with significant people in the

child's life. The service aspires to minimise the level of observation, particularly detailed written observation as far as realistically possible. It also aims to build on parental strengths at all times and will endeavour to work with the child or young person, as well as the family member or connected person, to ensure that the contact session is enjoyable and positive for the child or young person. Safeguarding of the child or young person is fundamental for the service. In the last reporting quarter, the service was working with 405 children and delivered 3683 contact hours.

As the Cabinet Member for Children & Families, I remain wholeheartedly committed to ensuring that our Looked After Children are the Council's top priority and, as such, provision such as this should be nothing less than outstanding. Indeed, the family centres reflect a gold standard with well-resourced facilities that provide a homely environment with well-furnished and child-centred decorated family rooms and kitchen facilities for parents to enjoy time with their children in comfortable and safe surroundings. They are supported by staff who are confident and competent in their roles to safeguard children and promote positive family relationships.

### **Hafan Gobaith**

On 13<sup>th</sup> March 2018, I attended Hafan Gobaith to join the staff based there to officially open the building. The staff of the Looked After Children service and the Personal Advisor service all moved into the building in February 2017. Staff moved from the Ely Family Centre and from Suffolk House and are now enjoying better, safer working conditions. There were also plans originally to move the Fostering Team into Hafan Gobaith in order to complete the specialist services based there, but unfortunately there was not enough space to make this viable or comfortable for staff.

### **Bright Start Traineeship Scheme**

Whilst at Hafan Gobaith earlier this month, I also had the opportunity to launch the rebranded Bright Start Traineeship Scheme, which was formerly known as the "Looked After Children (LAC) Traineeship Scheme". Having listened to young people, it was apparent that they did not like the previous name of the scheme and so they suggested "Bright Starts – where ability meets opportunity". In the three years since it was first launched, the scheme has worked with almost 100 young people, giving them the opportunity to have work experience within the Council. I would like to extend my gratitude to the many service areas and managers who have embraced the scheme and given so many young people in Cardiff such positive experiences and assistance with their future employment. If Members have links with companies or organisations who would be willing to support Bright Start, please let me know.

**Councillor Graham Hinchey**  
**Cabinet Member for Children & Families**  
**21 March 2018**