

COUNCIL: 21 JUNE 2018

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES STATEMENT

Fostering Service

Across Wales we are seeing an unprecedented demand for fostering placements, difficulties in commissioning placements in the independent sector and an increase in the number of exemptions being sought in order to expand in-house fostering provision. There are some early indications of an increase in the use of placements in residential care because of pressures within fostering services.

In view of the lack of suitable placements, the service is embarking upon a wholesale review of the fostering service. This project will develop an effective business model that will enable the in-house Fostering Service to grow and take the lead position in the provision of fostering services in Cardiff. This will focus on three key aspects of the service:

- Marketing of the service.
- Timely assessment and recruitment of foster carers.
- Support provided to foster carers once they have been approved.

The intended outcomes of this review are to:

- Increase the number of in-house foster carers.
- Improve outcomes for looked after children.
- Reduce the number of children being placed in residential care where fostering is more appropriate to their needs.
- Improved compliance with Part 6 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, Looked After and Accommodated Children.

Adolescent Resource Centre (ARC)

I have visited the recently launched Adolescent Resource Centre which provides intensive support to young people who are at risk of being accommodated by the local authority and their families. Utilising the Signs of Safety model, the whole family are encouraged to identify their strengths and support needs, and to set their own family goals. Families can access a wide range of support to achieve their goals including a named officer who will support them; one-to-one and group work around a variety of topics including emotional management, adolescent to parent violence, self-esteem, problem solving and consequential thinking, parenting support, targeted therapeutic interventions and planned respite provision.

Families can take part in the support either in their homes or in the purpose-made space at the ARC. Young people have also been involved in the planning of how the space is furnished and decorated to ensure it is a welcoming and safe place for all.

In 2017/18, 53 families engaged with the support on offer. Of the 53 families, 84% were supported to stay together, preventing those children from being placed in local authority care.

Bright Spots Survey

Cardiff Children's Services recently participated in a survey as part of the Bright Spots programme; a partnership between the University of Bristol and Coram Voice, a not-for-profit organisation which enables and equips children and young people to hold to account the services that are responsible for their care. Bright Spots in Wales is a pilot with five other local authorities funded by the Children's Commissioner for Wales and Welsh Government through the work of the Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group to measure looked after children's subjective well-being – how they feel about their lives and their care.

In Cardiff, 255 children completed the online survey; an impressive overall response rate of 44%. The results have recently been received and managers will be considering what improvements could be made using this feedback. Some key findings for Cardiff include:

- The vast majority of the children reported that they now feel safer in care.
- The overwhelming majority of the 4-7 year olds and of the 8-11 year olds (both 98%) had a really good friend; however 11% of young people (11-18 years) wrote that they did not have a really good friend, compared with 3% of the general population.
- 98% of children aged 8-11 years; and 90% of the 11-18 year olds had a trusted adult. Not having a trusted adult was associated with low well-being.
- 94% of children (8-11 years) and young people (11-18 years) felt that their carers showed an interest in their education 'most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
- 84% of 11-18 year olds felt safe where they lived compared with 75% of the general population.
- Most children and young people trusted their social workers (97% of children aged 4-7 years, 94% of children aged 8-11 years, 83% of young people aged 11-18 years).

I am very pleased with the overall positive response from our children, but recognise that there are further improvements we can make. An action plan is being drawn up in consultation with young people in response to the findings.

Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board

The Welsh Government Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies AM, recently attended a meeting of the Cardiff & Vale Regional Partnership Board (RPB), which is chaired by my Cabinet colleague, Cllr Susan Elsmore. The Minister answered questions and commented on the rising pressures on children's services in Wales and across the UK. He noted the array of challenges

and the need for a dynamic style of partnership working. He also voiced a sense of optimism about what can be done by partners working together collaboratively to make a real difference for people. He encouraged the RPB to keep challenging current ways of working to ensure that they best fit the needs of citizens. He concluded by extending the help and support of Welsh Government to enable partnership working and the work of the RPB on an ongoing basis.

Councillor Graham Hinchey
Cabinet Member for Children & Families
15th June 2018