

COUNCIL: 28 MARCH 2019

CHILDREN & FAMILIES STATEMENT

Welsh Government Grant Funding to Support Adoption Services

The Welsh Government Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services has announced that £2.3 million will be distributed through a grant in 2019/20 that requires local authorities to work together within their regional collaboratives as set out in The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 and/or nationally. Regional collaboratives are strongly encouraged to work with the National Adoption Service (NAS) central team, the Governance Board and the Advisory Group when developing their proposals.

Cardiff Council is part of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption service, which is one of the five regional collaboratives that form part of the NAS in Wales. It is comprised of Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil Councils.

The £2.3 million grant funding will be distributed based on the respective proportions of the Children and Young Persons Indicator Based Assessments (IBAs) for 2019-20. The grant amount for Vale, Valleys and Cardiff is £694,241 (28% of the total grant), of which Cardiff attracts £306,660. Once the contribution to the national work has been deducted, Vale, Valleys and Cardiff will receive a grant of £537,241.

Local authorities were expected to spend some or all of the grant on the following areas:

- Supporting the resilience of adoption and reducing the length of time children wait to be adopted (TESSA – Therapeutic, Education and Support Services in Adoption).
- Multi-agency teams to provide support to families from the pre-adoption stage through the first year of adoption (Adopting Together project).
- Additional resource to implement the strategic actions set out in the National Adoption Framework.
- Effective support to stop children entering the care system by avoiding the cycle of repeat pregnancies and care proceedings some women experience.
- Support for birth families in relation to their experience of loss and to assist with contact arrangements.

Vale Valleys and Cardiff submitted their regional plan on 15 March 2019, which was well received by the NAS and we await approval from the Welsh Government and receipt of the related grant award letters.

30 Hour Childcare Offer Update

The Childcare Offer for Wales provides funded Foundation Phase Nursery early years education and childcare for eligible working parents of 3 to 4 year olds. Totalling up to 30 hours per week of combined early education and childcare during term time and up to 30 hours of childcare during 9 weeks of the school holidays, the Childcare Offer aims to assist parents, particularly mothers, to return to work; to increase the disposable income of low income working families and to support child development and school readiness.

We initially opened for applications from parents in 10 wards in Cardiff in October 2018. I am pleased to have been able to work with Welsh Government Ministers in securing the additional funding for this offer to be made available to eligible parents across the whole of Cardiff, with children taking up their childcare places from the start of the January 2019 term.

To date, the Childcare Offer Team has received 1,515 applications, relating to 1,565 children. Of these, 1,512 applications have been assessed, with 1,382 applications approved. The team is currently working with 62 families to gather the further evidence required to approve their applications. There are currently 262 childcare settings signed up to provide the Childcare Offer.

Foster Carer Event

Following on from this year's budget consultation survey and recent communications, a significant number of enquiries were received from people who were interested in becoming a foster carer. I was therefore pleased to host a follow-up recruitment event at County Hall on 18th March 2019 for potential foster carers, where they were able to ask questions of staff, myself and experienced foster carers before considering taking the next steps. Fostering young children or teenagers can be both challenging and very rewarding, providing them a safe home and family life. As Corporate Parents, Councillors can also help publicise the relevant information that can be found at <https://fostercarecardiff.co.uk> or by contacting the Council on (029) 2087 3797. Fostering, whether short or long term, respite or supported lodgings, can make a huge difference to a young person's life journey.

Integrated Care Fund Transformation Bids

I am pleased to advise that a number of children-focused Integrated Care Fund (ICF) Transformation bids have been submitted to the Welsh Government to support our Early Intervention and Prevention strategies. These bids for additional funding have been supported by the Regional Partnership Board, which brings together the Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils, the Cardiff & Vale University Health Board and other public and third sector organisations.

Improving Our Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers

We are developing our workforce planning to improve our recruitment and retention of social workers within Children's Services. The service currently has 14 students and is developing a new approach to increase the number of final year students who come to work for Cardiff. In previous years, 60% of final year students chose to work in Cardiff – we are hoping to increase that rate this year by supporting students with the recruitment process (this may have been the first time they apply for jobs), appointing early in the year prior to them receiving their awards and employing them as support workers until they become registered social workers, as well as setting up interview specific days for the cohort of students much earlier in the year. The Director of Social Services and the Assistant Director (Children's Services) met with the student group recently to encourage them to apply to work in Cardiff and were impressed with the positive feedback about their experiences so far in relation to the amount of support and guidance they were receiving.

A second strand of the workforce plan is to fund 8 current staff to undertake a social work degree and commit to working in Cardiff when they complete their qualification. Expressions of interest are currently being sought and we expect a significant amount of interest in this opportunity.

We are also planning a recruitment event prior to Easter specifically to attract students from universities that haven't had a placement in Cardiff. We will be making more use of social media and merchandising to advertise this event and the benefits of working for Children's Services in Cardiff.

Councillor Graham Hinchey
Cabinet Member for Children & Families
22 March 2019