

Cardiff Children's Services Strategy

2019 - 2022



Delivering Excellent Outcomes



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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

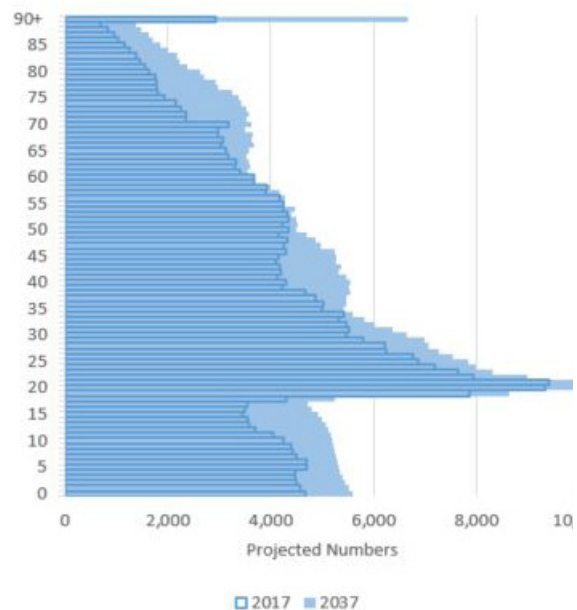
Cardiff is already a good place for many of its children and young people to grow up. In particular, young people identify the city's good health services, its low crime, strong inclusive communities and the access to green spaces, sports, leisure and culture as some of the great things about living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

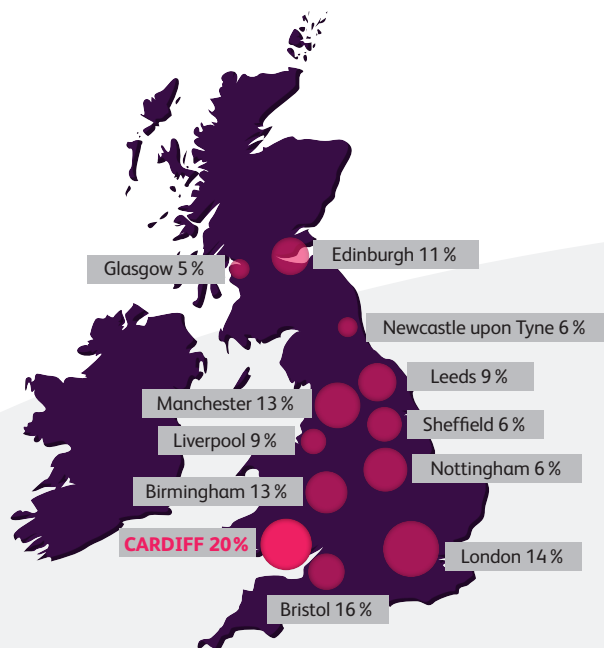
There are significant intra-city differences in the percentage of dependent children aged under 20 living in low-income families. In Ely, Splott and Adamsdown approximately 40% of children are living in low-income households.

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

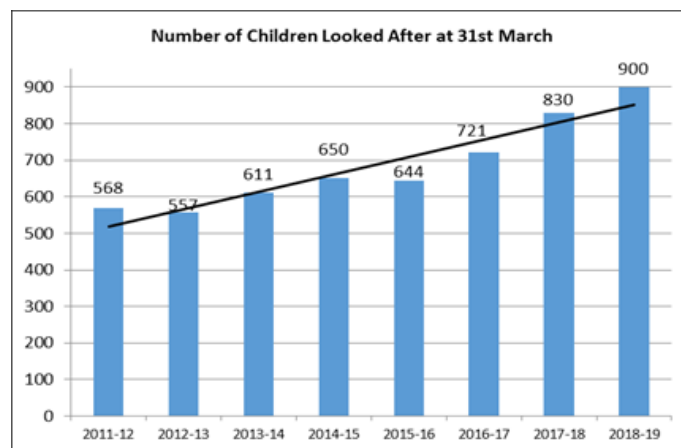
The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru set out in their August 2018 Position Statement on Children’s Services. The four key areas where significant pressures are being experienced in relation to Children’s Services in Wales:

- 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 st March 2019	31 st March 2018	31 st 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
Total	900	830	721

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

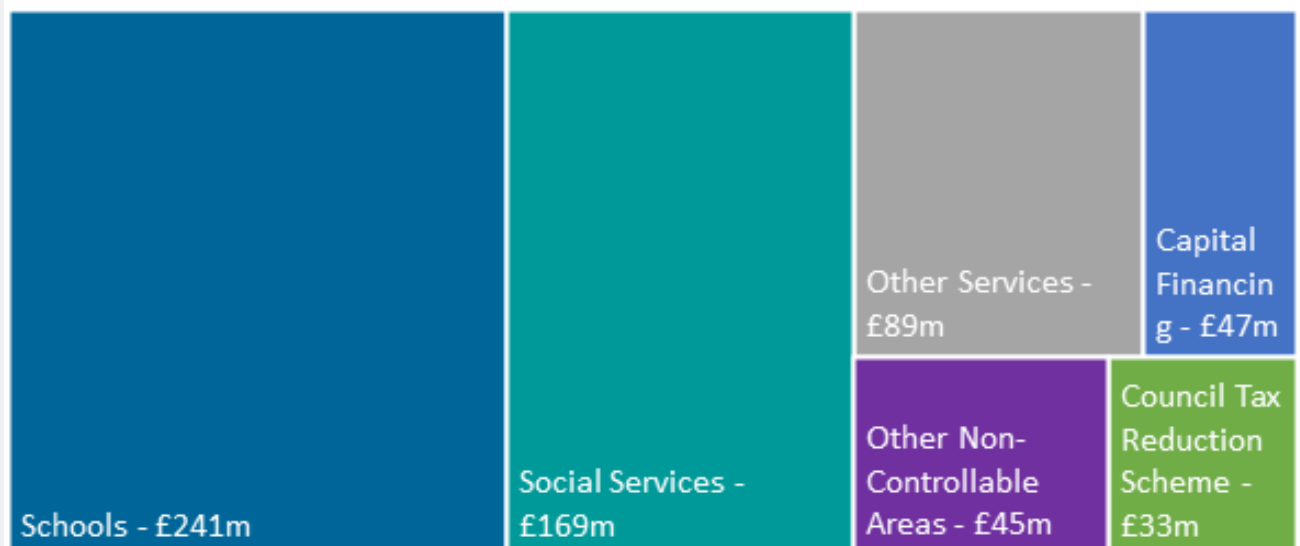
Whilst the increased spend demonstrates the Council's commitment to meet the rising demand for Children's Social Services, this is becoming unsustainable. The WLGA and ADSS Position Statement concludes:

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>A Healthier Wales: our Plan for Health and Social Care</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>The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015</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>The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014</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>The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act</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>The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) Wales Direction 2015</p> <p>Sets out the legal framework for the National Adoption Service for Wales.</p>
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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?

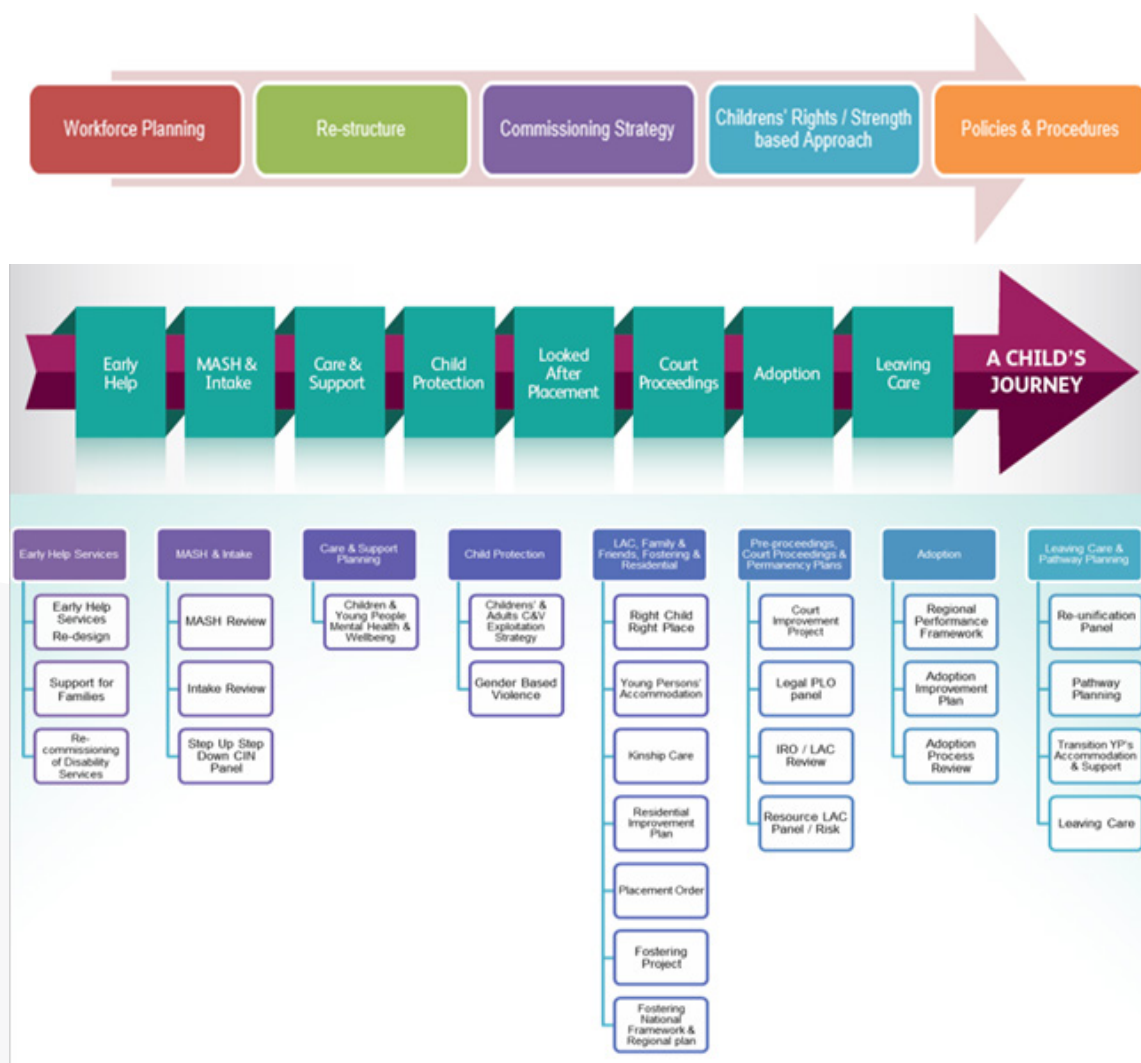
WE WILL:

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 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 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 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.

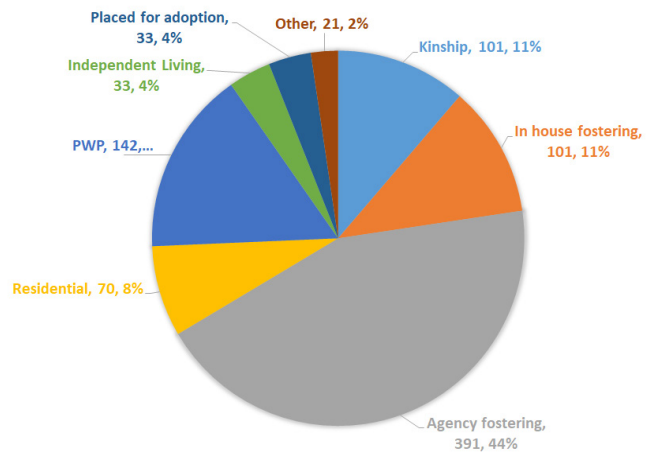
WE WILL:

- 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

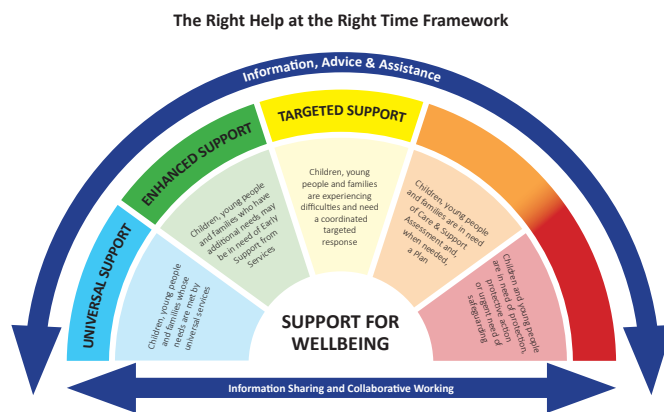




14. Early Help

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>Family Gateway Primary route in for all referrals and requests for help</p>	<p>Family Help Service Rapid response to families needing short term intervention</p>	<p>Family Support Service 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 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.

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.

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.

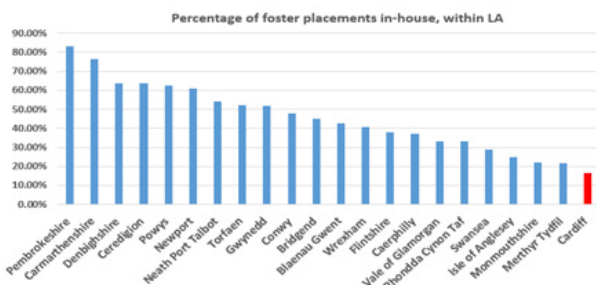
Children and young people at risk of exploitation doesn't stop at 18. The transition from 'child' to 'adult' is a process not an event. Transitional safeguarding responses need to be developed to ensure that our vulnerable adults are also protected from all forms of exploitation.

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.



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

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

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