

Cardiff Council

Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee

Annual Report 2018/19

Chair's Foreword

I am delighted to introduce the 2018/19 Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee. I have been proud to chair this important committee again this year. As Deputy Leader of the Council and Chair of the Committee I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their focus and hard work to ensure the wellbeing of our looked after children and care leavers.

I would also like to thank those managers and young people who have presented to or advised the committee during the year. They have taken time and effort to share and impart their knowledge and understanding of issues, solutions, good practice and achievement. We as committee members are grateful for those insights.

As you will see from the report the committee has completed a busy work programme during the last year. Highlights have included hearing detailed feedback from young people through the Bright Spots Your Life Your Care survey – we held dedicated extra meeting to hear from young people themselves.

Committee Members have also committed time to their role between meetings undertaking individual work streams and visiting services. Those activities have influenced the questions asked, the visits made and items requested on future agendas. Of particular interest this year were examples of good practice in schools and how that can be shared. A considerable amount of work went into clarifying the vision for the Committee, with the development of a revised terms of reference for the year ahead. This will be vitally important moving in to the next year when the current Corporate Parenting Strategy comes to an end and the Committee has an opportunity to redevelop that important document.

I look forward to chairing the committee again in 2019/20 and for us all continuing to work as corporate parents to nurture, respect and to be as ambitious for our looked after children and young people as we would for our own children.

Councillor Sarah Merry

Chair of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee

Director's Overview

This Annual Report continues to build upon a shared commitment by all members, officers and partners. Never before has it been so crucial to work in collaboration with all partners to achieve the best outcomes we can for the children and young people of Cardiff. So there is a strong focus on developing stakeholder relationships that help to enhance self-determination, support and service delivery across the child's journey throughout the report.

Our looked after children population continues to grow which poses a number of challenges. Whilst collectively we are seeking to manage this, we are doing this under the context of the Delivering Excellence in Childrens Services Programme which is the delivery

vehicle for the Children's Services Strategy. The strategy sets out our 3 year vision that reframes how children and young people receive care and support through creating enabling systems and practice that works for them and with them across their journey.

There have been a number of positive developments in 2018/2019 with Committee members driving forward the agenda in a dynamic way via various member work streams. This has resulted in the sharing of good practice between schools and has supported the early intervention / prevention agenda aimed at keeping children at home safely. A key priority throughout the work of the committee was focusing on listening to and including children and young people. Bright spots facilitated this by consulting with our looked after children. This highlighted the need for greater sufficiency of high quality placements, a reduction in out of area placements and a need to strengthen early intervention/prevention which is a cross-cutting priority.

We have continued to develop our services and support for teenagers including our edge of care service which has expanded and regionalised in recognition of its good practice and most importantly, positive outcomes in keeping young people within their family networks. The vision for the Corporate Parenting Committee this year will dovetail with the new Children's Services Strategy, building on the positive progress made so far and striving to deliver excellence for our looked after children and their families by working collaboratively with all key stakeholders including parents and communities.

Furthermore, the forthcoming children and young persons co-produced Corporate Parenting Strategy will ensure that meaningful participation is at the centre of its development. The strategy will be based on the voices of children and young people and what matters to them and will pay attention to their strengths as well as their needs. Most importantly it must make a real difference to the lives of the children and young people of Cardiff.

Claire Marchant
Director of Social Services

Introduction

Cardiff Council's Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee are collectively responsible for ensuring that all children who are looked after by the Council receive the best possible care and support. That they are appropriately safeguarded and achieve the best possible chances in life.

This report presents the Committee's main activities during 2018/19. It begins with background information that is helpful in understanding the Committee's function, purpose and the scale of its responsibilities. Following sections summarise activity. Those sections include:

- A record of meetings and attendance.
- Engagement activity.

- The Annual Programme and the Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- Inspection and Annual Reports received.
- Activity in Monitoring Performance.

The report is structured around the main elements of the terms of reference which are summarised in the diagram on the last page of this report.

Background

Corporate Parenting

The term “corporate parenting” indicates that the local authority has the same interest in the progress and attainment of looked-after children as a reasonable parent has for their own child.

The Welsh Local Government Association Corporate Parenting Workbook states:

“...good corporate parenting only happens when elected members and officers are working together to protect and promote the interests of looked-after children”.

The overarching objective of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee as stated in the terms of reference is:

“To seek to ensure that the life chances of looked after children, children in need and care leavers are maximised in terms of health, educational attainment, and access to training and employment , to aid the transition to a secure and productive adulthood”.

Children’s Rights

The rights of children and young people must be upheld in accordance with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, the Children Act 2004, Children Act 1989, the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child infers that:

- All departments and all levels should put children’s interests first (article 3).
- Special attention should be given to any children who are suffering discrimination (article 2).
- The active and informed participation of children as citizens and rights holders should be promoted (article 12.)

Extracts from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 3

1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
2. States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.
3. States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision.

Article 2

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

Article 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

These principles are central to Corporate Parenting.

Governance

A Corporate Parenting Panel was established in Cardiff during 2007 as a good practice mechanism to support the discharge of the Council's responsibilities. That Panel had no statutory role or formal decision making powers.

In 2014 the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee undertook a joint Inquiry to consider:

- Ways to raise the profile of corporate parenting.
- The role of the Panel.
- Lines of accountability.

As a result of the recommendations arising from the inquiry, a formal Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee was created to replace the Panel. The Committee met for the first time on the 8th of October 2014. 2017/18 marked the first significant change in membership. That change in membership was a result of the May 2017 Local Government

elections. The current Membership is now in its second year, with a small number of changes in individuals during the period.

Terms of Reference

As a Committee, the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee has a remit:

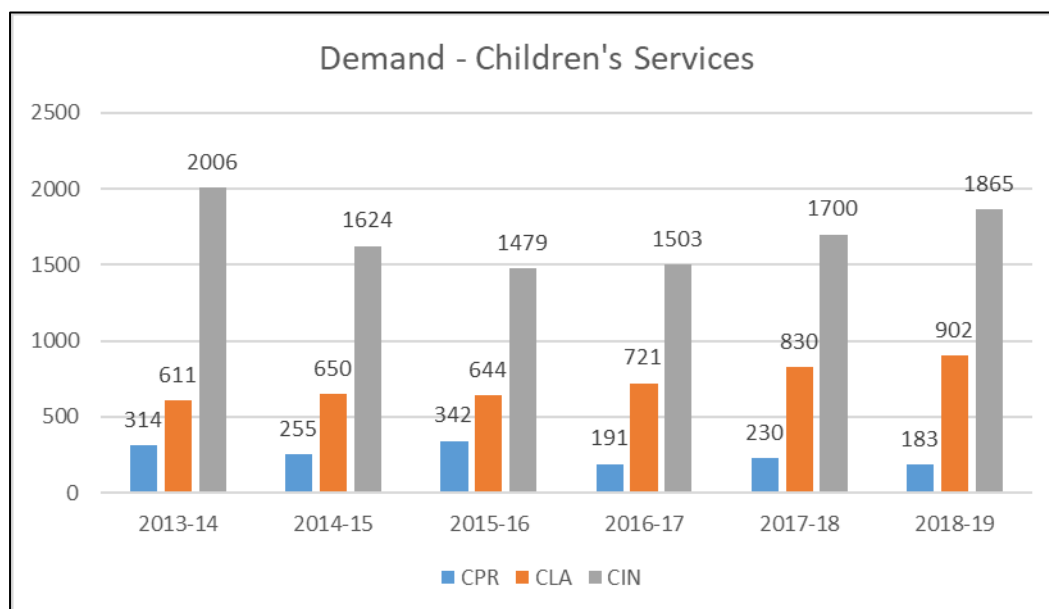
- To advise and make recommendations to the Cabinet or Council (pursuant to s.102 (4) of the Local Government Act 1972) with regard to the discharge of corporate parenting functions.
- To ensure that Corporate Parenting has a role and status within the Council.

During 2018/19 the Committee operated within the following terms of reference, first approved by full Council on the 24 July 2014:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>a) To actively promote real and sustained improvements in the life chances of Looked After Children, Children in Need, Care Leavers and children and young people in the criminal justice system and to work within an annual programme to that end;</p> | <p>g) To receive all relevant Children's Services inspection and annual reports, including: Children's Homes Quality of Care Report; Case Practice Reviews, Fostering Annual Quality of Care Report; Adoption Annual Quality of Care Report; 4C's Commissioning; Out of Area Annual Report; Annual Report of Brighter Futures (with education); Children's Complaints reports; and Advocacy Annual Report;</p> |
| <p>b) To develop, monitor and review a corporate parenting strategy, and ensure its effective implementation through work plans and corporate parenting training programmes;</p> | <p>h) To report to the Cabinet at least twice a year;</p> |
| <p>c) To seek to ensure that the life chances of Looked After Children, Children in Need and care leavers are maximised in terms of health, educational attainment, and access to training and employment, to aid the transition to a secure and productive adulthood;</p> | <p>i) To make recommendations to the Cabinet where responsibility for that function rests with the Cabinet;</p> |
| <p>d) To recommend ways in which more integrated services can be developed across all Council directorates, schools and other stakeholders to lead towards better outcomes for Looked After Children, Children in Need and care leavers;</p> | <p>j) To report to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee as necessary;</p> |
| <p>e) To ensure that mechanisms are in place to enable Looked After Children, Children in Need and care leavers, to play an integral role in service planning and design, and that their views are regularly sought and acted upon;</p> | <p>k) To recommend the appointment of co-opted Committee Members for approval by Council;</p> |
| <p>f) To ensure performance monitoring systems are in place, and regularly review performance data to ensure sustained performance improvements in outcomes for Looked After Children, Children in Need and care leavers;</p> | <p>l) To develop and undertake a programme of consultation, listening and engagement events with Looked After Children and care leavers, as well as visits to services providing support and advice to Looked After Children, Children in Need and care leavers;</p> |
| | <p>m) To submit an Annual Report on the work of the Committee to Full Council.</p> |

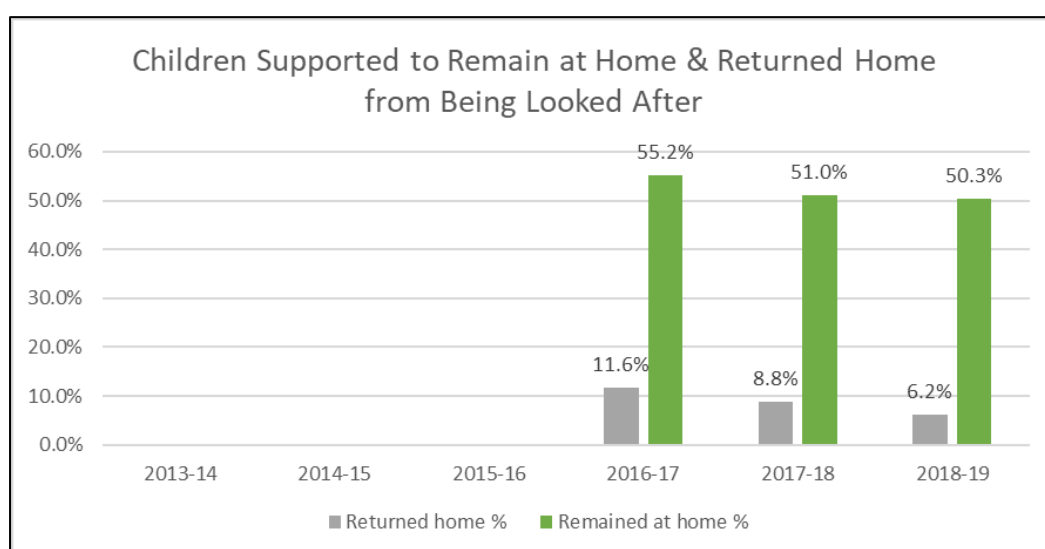
The Population

At 31st March 2019, there were **902 looked after children in Cardiff**.



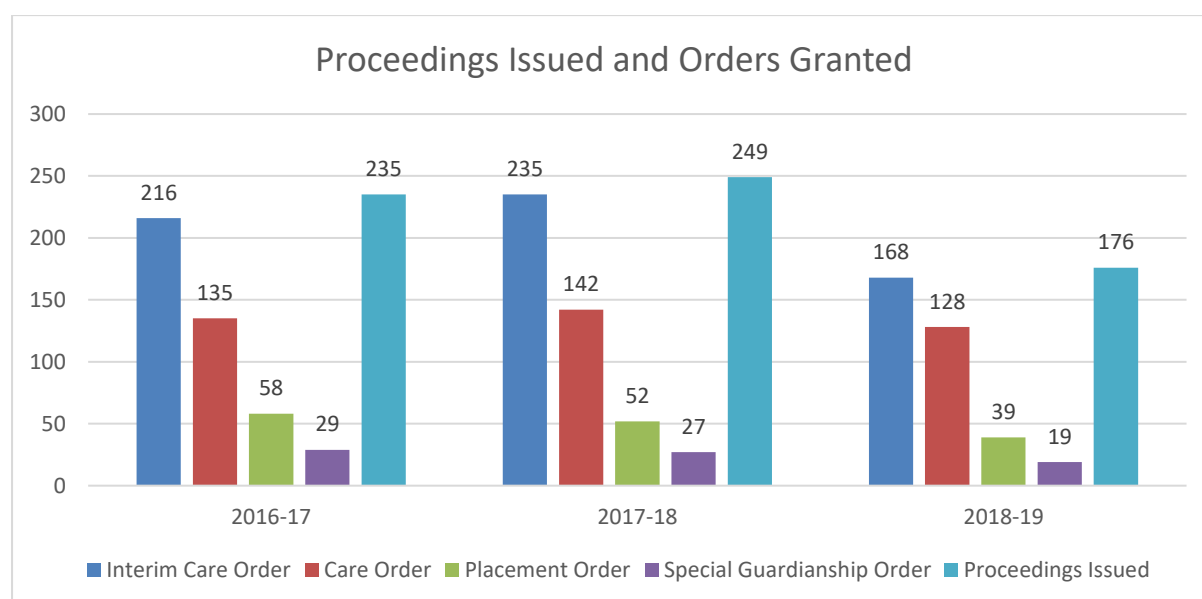
Of the 1,810 children with a Care and Support Plan at 31st March 2019, **911 were being supported to live at home** and were therefore not being looked after.

Of the total number of 1,093 children who were looked after during the 2018/19 year, **68 returned home**.

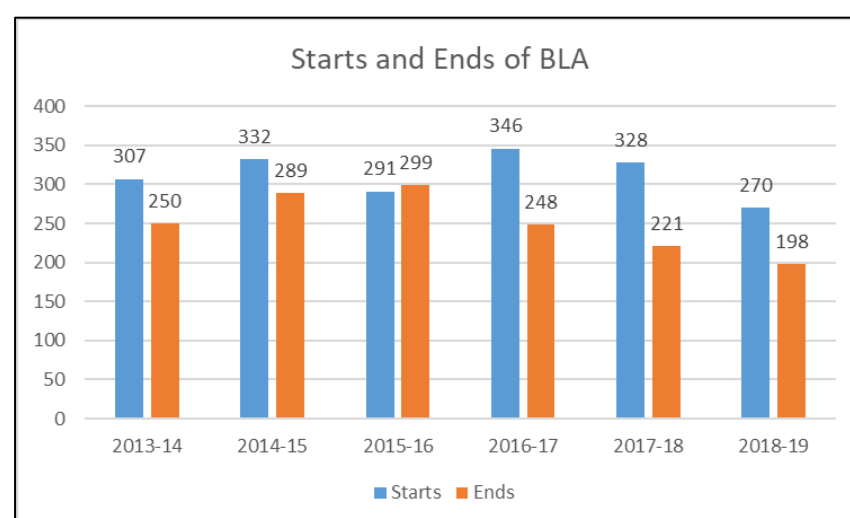


In addition to the 68 children who were returned home from care, **141 children were in the care of their parents**, but remain subject to a Care Order, and **102 children were placed with relative carers**.

These figures reflect the strong emphasis the judiciary currently have on placing children within the family under the auspices of a Care Order.



During 2018/19, **176 Care Proceedings** were issued. Some proceedings would have concluded from the previous year (2017/2018) in this timeframe and some will be ongoing (post April 2019) and therefore not reflected above.



56.7% (380/670) of looked after children in regulated placements **were placed in Cardiff** at 31st March 2019.

68.7% (460/670) of looked after children were in **external provider placements** at the 31st March 2019.

At the 31st March 2019, Children's Services had **86 in house foster carers** providing **158 approved places**.

There were **494 fostering placement requests in total during the year**. 95 children were placed in house. 96 were sibling group requests.

10 mainstream carers successfully **progressed through the assessment process** to be approved, arising from **150 enquiries** received during the year.

In addition to this Children's Services had 74 approved **kinship / connected person's carers**, 4 in house **When I Am Ready carers**, 20 **supported lodgings providers** and 8 **Private Fostering arrangements** commenced.

62 **Connected Persons** were presented to panel with 34 new approvals.

At the end of 2018/19 Children's Services had 70 residential placements in total.
64 children were in external residential placements,

Children's Services were solely responsible for funding 58 of those residential placements with the remaining 12 receiving contributions from Education, Health, or both. The average weekly cost per child was £3,966, although this ranged from £1,800 to £7,800. Contributions from Education ranged from 3% to 14% and Health ranged from 4% to 20% of the weekly cost - the percentage of the contribution was based upon factors such as how much the provider charges for education and therapy costs, the number of weeks in the school terms, the period of therapy, continuing health care needs and whether the child was statemented.

9.56% of children experienced **more than 3 placements**. The ceiling target is not to exceed 9% which we were in line with. Cardiff strive to ensure all children are in the right placement and that children are returned to Cardiff from out of area placements where appropriate for their needs. As a result, some children experienced moves but this was in line with their best interests and is not due to placement breakdown.

15.96% (91 / 570) of looked after children experienced **non-transitional school moves** in 2018/19.

Primary school attendance for looked after children was **96.9%** in 2018/19, compared with 96.6% in 2017/18 and remained just short of the 98% target.

Secondary school attendance for looked after children was **89.9%** in 2018/19, compared to 94.1% in 2018/19, and fell short of the 93% target.

8.2% (32/38) of looked after children achieved **Key Stage 2** core subject indicators (CSI) in 2018.

814.3% (7/49) of looked after children achieved Level 2+ threshold at **key stage 4** in 2018.

Of the total number of **care leavers**, **19.9%** (65 / 327) experienced **homelessness** during the year.

Of the children who were **care leavers** in 2016/17, **40%** (38/95) were engaged in **education, training or employment** one year after leaving care.

Attendance

Meetings

During the 2018/19 municipal year, five committee meetings were held. These included four scheduled meetings and one extra meeting dedicated entirely to a specific item - the findings of the Bright Spots survey of all Cardiff looked after children aged 4 - 18.

The scheduled meetings were held on the 17th of July 2018, 16th of October 2019, 29th of January 2019 and 2 April 2019. The extra meeting was held on the 18 September 2018.

*The April 2018 meeting is also reported here. This reflects a change in the reporting period from financial year (April to end of March) to Municipal year (May to end of April). Should the April 2018 not have been reported here it would not have been included in any annual report.

Membership

Membership of the Committee is decided at the beginning of each year by full Council. Seats are allocated on a politically proportionate basis. The Committee is chaired by the Deputy Leader of the Council and includes 3 Cabinet members. There were two changes of individual membership during the 2018/19 term. During 2018/19 members of the Committee were as follows:

COUNCILLOR REPRESENTATIVE		ATTENDANCE	
		Meetings: Possible	Meetings: Actual
Sarah Merry Chair	Labour (Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Education, Employment and Skills)	6	6
Cllr Sue Lent Deputy Chair	Labour	6	5
Cllr Timothy Davies* N.B	Conservative	3	1
Cllr Sean Driscoll **	Conservative	1	1
Cllr Fenella Bowden **	Independent	4	4
Cllr Graham Hinchey	Labour (Cabinet Member for Children & Families)	6	6
Cllr Shawn Jenkins	Conservative	6	6
Cllr Ashley Lister	Labour	6	6
Cllr Bablin Molik	Liberal Democrats	6	6
Cllr David Walker*	Conservative	1	1
Cllr Chris Weaver	Labour (Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance)	6	6

*Members who left the Committee during the year. **New Members of the Committee.

N.B Please note Cllr Timothy Davies attendance was impacted due to serious ill health and unfortunately Cllr Davies passed away.

Meetings were also attended by a core group of senior managers from Children's Services Education and Cardiff and Vale University Health Board along with a young person. They attended in the capacity of advisors to respond to questions. Invited guest speakers

presented to the Committee. Further information is provided on those discussions in the following section of this report.

Summary of 2018/19 Business

Engagement

The Committee's terms of reference require its members to hold events and undertake visits. To ensure mechanisms are in place to enable looked after children, children in need and care leavers to play an integral role in service planning and design and to act upon feedback. The Committee may recommend the appointment of co-opted Committee Members for approval by Council.

It should be noted that listening, consultation, and engagement permeates throughout the Committee's programme, as detailed in further sections of this report. Especially noteworthy are activities noted within the items titled Children's homes quality of care reports (Regulations 32 visits), the Annual quality assurance report for children's homes (Reg 33) and the Complaints & representations report. Through all of those items the voice of the child should be heard. Importantly, Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) have a statutory responsibility to act directly as corporate parents to every child who is looked after and take full account of each child's wishes and feelings. Their Manager is required by the Committee's terms of reference to report regularly to the Committee's meetings.

The following table lists the direct engagement mechanisms used by the Committee during 2016-17. Further details on each item are provided below.

Mechanism	Dates	Detail
1. Care leaver representative advisor	April 2018 July 2018 September 2018 January 2019	Attended meetings to advise the Committee.
2. Events	October 2018 May 2019	Bright Sparks award ceremony. Fostering Fortnight
3. Member visits	June 2018 November 2018 February 2019 August 2018	Crosslands Children's Home St Teilos Church in Wales School Hywel Dda Primary School Swan Centre
4. Presentation from National Youth Advisory Service (NYAS)	2 April 2019	Details below
5. Additional meeting - Bright Spots: Your Life Your Care Survey of Cardiff's Looked After Children.	18 September 2018	Findings and Next Steps

1. Attendance of advisors at meetings

It was agreed in the previous year that two young people should be invited to attend the meetings as regular advisors. This was recommendation from the 2016/17 annual report and fulfilled recommendations which arose from the 2016 care leavers listening event.

During 2018/19 one young person attended all but the last meeting in the year. The second young person indicated that they were no longer able to attend.

2. Events

Bright Sparks

The 2018 Bright Sparks awards ceremony was an outstanding success. Bright Sparks started in 2006 and has been an annual event since. Over 200 children, young people and their carers attended along with the Cabinet Member for Children & Families and the Director of Social Services. The event was organised by Looked After Young People and Care Leavers, many of whom took part in entertaining the audience with their individual skills which ranged from a cat walk show to singing and dancing. This year a new special award was introduced in memory of a young person who had passed away.

3. Fostering Fortnight

The Operational Manager for Specialist Services provided members with information about Fostering Fortnight (14-25 May 2018), which aimed to promote fostering in Cardiff. Members were advised that various events would be taking place including a display in County Hall reception, a radio advert and the launch of a focus group. Merchandise was available and Members were welcome to get involved.

Members suggested that it would be good to get support from Members of Parliament and Assembly Members and to use social media to promote the event. Officers advised that there will be lots of social media activity. Members suggested that there could be a stand at Council in May and that it would be good to have a roadshow at schools in the future.

Members were advised that there will be a re-launch of the Foster Carers' Charter during the fortnight, and Members were invited to be involved.

4. Member visits

Councillor Bowden advised Members that she and Councillor Merry had attended Hywel Dda School in February 2018. Members noted that the school serves as an exemplar of the work that needs to be done around Children who are looked after and those on the edge of care.

Members were advised that there are designated teachers who oversee children who are looked after. Those teachers meet on a regular basis and share good practice to maintain the same standards across all schools in the city. The resulting discussion enquired if children sometimes have to move school due to the location of foster carers, and about the uniformity of decisions to exclude children. In response to which Members were informed that there are 'patches' of foster carers in certain areas, and that the Welsh Government

has issued guidelines in relation to exclusion, but there is not a common threshold within Wales. Within Cardiff the Local Authority does challenge schools about their decisions.

Members were further interested in visiting or finding out more about St Teilo's Church in Wales School, Rumney Primary School, Crosslands children's home, the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Adolescent resource centre ARC, and were subsequently able to visit Crosslands Children's Home, St Teilo's Church in Wales School, Hywel Dda Primary School and the Swan Contact Centre during the year and received a presentation about the ARC.

5. Presentation from National Youth Advisory Service (NYAS)

During April 2019 NYAS presented to the Committee. The presentation informed members that NYAS provide the following services:

- The Professional independent advocacy service
- The Active offer
- The Independent visiting service
- An Appropriate adult service
- Participation
- and Additional NYAS Services

Extract from the report

'The child has the Right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child'. UNCRC Article 12.

Members were informed that NYAS received 350 referrals between April 2018 and March 2019. Themes included the following issues:

- Support and representation at meetings
- Placement
- Contact
- Leaving care
- Education
- Health

It was reported that the Bright Sparks Club of young people had facilitated participation in the following initiatives:

- The ARCF annual Director of Social Services event.
- Welsh Government IV Service development.
- The development of Children Looked after resources.
- The Council's UNICEF Child friendly City initiative.
- Cardiff and Vale health Board consultation.
- The Amnesty Children's Rights Leaflet.

Additional work and development by NYAS had included the following:

- NYAS Cymru
- IV Standards
- Mental Health and Well-Being Project
- Unity Project
- Peer Advocacy /Peer Mentoring
- Parent Advocacy

In response to questions, Members were advised that referrals were usually made by social workers, but also by education and a young person's solicitor. It was explained professionals act in a best interests capacity, but young people sometimes have very different views as to what is in their best interests and therefore require an independent advocate. They were also informed that there were 15 Peer Advocates across all Welsh local authorities funded by the Welsh Government. Members were advised that the normal referral route to the Mental Health and Well-being project operated by NYAS was through the National Healthline, however they were able to accept local referrals which would normally come through the office in Caerphilly.

6. The Bright Spots Programme and associated 'Your Life, Your Care survey' – Next Steps

During September 2018 the Committee held an extra meeting in their schedule dedicated entirely to receiving the findings of the Bright Spots Survey.

The Bright Spots programme was launched in 2013 as a joint partnership between Coram Voice and the Hadley Centre for Adoption and Foster Care Studies at the University of Bristol. Funded by the Hadley Trust, the programme had worked with local authorities across England and had now been extended to Wales with Cardiff Children's Services participating. The programme aimed to identify and improve the well-being and care experiences of looked after children and young people through a participative approach which sought to identify and promote 'bright spots'. They defined "Bright spots" as the policies and practices that have a positive influence on children and young people's well-being. The indicators were broken down into four domains: Resilience, Recovery, Relationships and Rights. The survey asked children age-appropriate questions about their carer, social worker, friends, where they live, how they feel and the things they get to do. The survey was completed by children aged 4-18 aided by trusted adults who could help them complete the survey honestly.

Key Findings



- **77%** of children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) felt their lives were improving
- **75%** of Young people (11-18yrs) liked school
- **0%** of boys felt that their carers didn't take an interest in their learning and only **12%** of girls did.



- **A Third** of young children (4-7yrs) felt that no-one had explained why they were in care. Children's understating increased with age but 29% of young people (11-18yrs) also wanted more information about why they were in care.



- **19%** of children (8-11yrs) and **24%** of young people (11-18yrs) had no face to face contact with either parent
- About **one in ten** young people (11-18yrs). Being friendless puts young people at greater risk of anxiety and depression
- None of the children aged 4-7 years had low well being but **2** children (8-11yrs) and **17** young people (11-18yrs) gave response that suggested low well-being

During the meeting, members discussed a number of aspects of the findings including, differences in perceptions of wellbeing between the genders and how that relates to young people more generally. Members expressed concerned in relation to the number of placements and social worker changes experienced by some young people. They were saddened by the information provided which expressed that some young people felt that they were not given second chances, that the reason they were in care had not been explained to some, and a particular reference to a child not having friends. Officers responded to each of the concerns highlighting the need for greater numbers of foster care placements, a better range of accommodation provision and more social workers to respond to the large increase in the number of children being looked after in the last three years. Officers explained that social workers have to have very difficult conversations with young people, and sometimes for a variety of reasons decisions are made not to explain straight away to young people about why they are in care. There is now a psychologist attached to the team who provides advice and guidance to Social Workers to ensure children's needs are understood, they have access to the right support for them and that decisions can be communicated in the right way

Extracts from the report

The Bright spots report made the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

Regularly review contact arrangements and ensure children and young people understand why decisions have been made. Some children/young people felt they were having too much contact, and others not enough.

Recommendation 2

Improve support to looked after young people who are experiencing bullying.

Recommendation 3

Connect with the youngest children to make sure they feel included in decisions and understand why they are in care and actively plan opportunities for children and young people to be trusted and feel involved in decision making.

Recommendation 4

Be aware of gender differences when care planning and provide opportunities to improve young people's feelings about their appearance and body image.

Recommendation 5

Encourage carers to see the benefits of spending time with children and young people outdoors (e.g. beaches, woods).

Recommendation 6

Talk to foster carers and young people to understand why 13% of young people were unable to access the Internet from their placements.

The presentation to the Committee outlined the response that Children's Services will be taking to each of these recommendations.

The Annual Programme and the Corporate Parenting Strategy

The Committee's terms of reference required it to develop and work within an annual programme to actively promote real and sustained improvements in the life chances of looked after children, children in need, care leavers and children and young people in the criminal justice system. The terms of reference also required the Committee to develop, monitor and review a corporate parenting strategy, and ensure its effective implementation through work plans.

A Corporate Parenting Strategy was drafted by managers in Children's Services in consultation with colleagues in Education and the University Health Board during 2015-16. The strategy was formally endorsed by the Council's Cabinet on the 19th of May 2016, and published as paper documents as well as a separate summary document. Both have been available in English and in Welsh since 2016-17. The term of the strategy will come to an end in 2019. At which time the current strategy will be superseded.

During 2017/18 the Committee agreed a structure for their work programme. This was structured around themes in the Strategy. Members stepped forward to lead and take responsibility for individual work-strands, and operational managers were assigned to support Members. The Member's Work Programme continued into 2018/19 and was structured as follows:

Theme	Member	Officer
Prevention 1. Effective early intervention and prevention.	Cllr Bablin Molik	OM Strategic Safeguarding and Partnerships

2. Safely reducing the number of looked after children.		Operational Manager Targeted Services /Operational Manager Youth Offending Service with interim responsibility for Preventative services /Operational Manager Safeguarding
The experience of looked after children and outcomes 3. Promoting permanency 4. Providing high quality placements. 5. Provide young people leaving care with appropriate preparation for adult life, taking account of all of their needs including their wellbeing.	Cllr Graham Hinchey	Operational Manager Specialist Services and Team Managers
Specialist services 6. Continue to improve services for children with disabilities, including short break care. 7. Improve and support the emotional health and mental wellbeing of looked after children.	Cllr Sue Lent	Operational Manager Targeted Services OM Strategic Safeguarding and Partnerships
Education 8. Improve the education attainment and achievement for all looked after children.	Cllr David Walker / Cllr Fenella Bowden	Education Achievement Leader
The role of the Corporate Parenting within the Council 9. Strengthening the role of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee within the Council.	Cllr Ashley Lister	Operational Manager Youth Offending Service with interim responsibility for Preventative services

In addition to their self-directed work and visits, the Committee received a number of presentations and reports to add to their knowledge of corporate parenting with an opportunity to ask questions. The following items were presented to the Committee during 2018-19, and are structured around the themes of the work programme:

Work-stream: Prevention

Member updates:

- The lead member for the work stream met with a range of operational managers to gain greater insight into the subject of prevention, the issues and associated work.

- The Cabinet Member for Children & Families informed the Committee that the 11th of October Cabinet approved a new delivery model for Family Help and Support in Cardiff. It allows a fundamental change in how the Council channels Children's Services enquiries through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- The work stream lead for the Prevention strand requested and received a Briefing Report explaining the rise in the number of looked after children, and a presentation about Adolescent Services.

Presentations / Reports	Dates presented	Guest speaker
1. Children's Services - Adolescent Services Presentation & Performance Report	29 January 2019	Team manager

I. Services - Adolescent Services Presentation & Performance Report

During January 2019 a report and presentation were provided to the Committee outlining the remit, current activity and performance of the three teams within Children's Services which focus specifically on working with adolescents. Those teams are the Adolescent Resource Centre (ARC), Think Safe! Team, and the 11+ Case Management Team.

Extract from the report

The report and presentation explained that the ARC provides intensive integrated therapeutic support and planned overnight short breaks to young people and their families who are at risk of being looked after. The service works in partnership with key organisations including the Health service, Education, the Youth Offending Service and Housing.

The Think Safe! Team provide specialist intervention for children who are most at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and was expanding to deliver preventative work and to address other forms of exploitation.

The 11+ Case Management Team offers relationship based social work with a specific adolescent approach.

The report outlined the core values, current performance, case studies, criteria, referral and transfer points, caseloads, interventions, strengths, areas for development and proposed next steps.

Extract from the report

Cardiff Children's Services recognises that working with adolescents requires a bespoke and different approach. Evidence shows:

- There is a cohort of young people in their teenage years for whom the risk of family breakdown is high.

- In the unlikely event that these young people become looked after, our experience suggests that they are more likely to require specialist fostering or residential placements in order to safely manage the entrenched challenging behaviour that many of these young people display.
- There is limited availability for such placements locally and consequently these young people are most likely to be placed at a distance from Cardiff.
- These placements face huge financial cost on the local authority, not to mention the emotional costs to these young people of being placed away from family and friends and their community.
- Adolescents need workers who are available, consistent and who are able to meet their changing needs. Young people and their families need a timely response in order to help them feel supported, to change behaviour and prevent escalation with the aim of reducing crisis and develop families' ability to manage.
- It is essential to work 'with adolescents to help keep them safe rather than doing it 'to' them.
- The Early Help Strategy and Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014) reiterate that intervention as early as possible would produce better outcomes for children, young people and their families

The presentation further explained that support is provided to young people and their families for as long as they need it. That the support takes the form of specialist interventions which are delivered intensively. The workforce is stable, able to build good rapport and committed to working with teenagers to create long term change. Areas for development were outlined along with next steps.

Members of the Committee discussed the importance of supporting care givers and acknowledging their importance in circumstances that can often be challenging for them. Multi-agency links and information sharing, including that with the Youth Offending Service and CAMHS were discussed.

A new strategy is currently being developed.

Work-stream: The Experience of looked after children and outcomes

Member updates:

The lead member for the work-stream provided Members of the Committee with updates. In relation to improving outcomes for Children they advised that there was a lot of work in progress across Children's Services at the present time. Around 20 Managers attended a meeting around promoting permanency. The number of Foster Carers still needs to be increased but positive feedback has been received regarding the Council Tax

Reduction Scheme. Plans are in place to potentially have 5 homes by the end of 2019. Overall they were of the view that things were progressing well.

Presentations / Reports	Dates presented	Guest speaker
1. Scrutiny Out of Country Inquiry Report	17 July 2018	Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
2. Bright Start Traineeship Scheme Presentation	*24 April 2018	Manager of the service
3. Safe Reduction of Looked After Children: A Verbal Update on the Ministerial Advisory Group	2 April 2019	Assistant Director of Social Services

1. Scrutiny Out of Country Inquiry Report

During 2017/18 Cardiff's Children and Young people Scrutiny Committee undertook a task and finish inquiry examining out of county placements. The Inquiry was chaired by Cllr Lee Bridgeman, Chairperson of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. On the 17th of July 2018 Cllr Bridgeman attended the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee to present the findings. The report had been presented to Cabinet on 5 July and comments from Cabinet were expected in October.

The Inquiry reviewed the evidence gathered from a number of sources and reported key findings under the following headings:

- Impact on Children being looked after
- Strategic operations
- Social Worker workforce
- Placements

19 recommendations were made to Cabinet.

The Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Members commended the report. During discussion Members expressed concern that inconsistency in education can be disruptive to those placed out of county and remembered information provided to them previously by a psychologist that evidence suggests a child or young person is more likely to suffer from mental health issues if there have been a number of different placements throughout their time in care. Members noted the increased funding allocated into the 2018-19 Social Services budget of to help with the increased demand for services to vulnerable people. The majority had been allocated specifically to Children Services to assist with the significant rise in the number of children being looked after.

2. Bright Start Traineeship Scheme

During April 2018 Members received a presentation on the Bright Start Traineeship Scheme. The presentation described what the scheme is, how it works, training and support provided and the benefits to young people.

Members were interested in opportunities to expand the reach of the service. In response to questions, Members were informed of the following. That there are currently around 25 traineeships. There are 20 young people on a waiting list for a traineeship at the moment and it is important to match opportunities with individuals. Members were informed that the length of placements can vary between 2 weeks and 8 months. Some feed into the Council's corporate apprenticeship role. Most placements are for 3 months, but all placements are reviewed on a monthly basis. At that time only 2% of traineeships lead to a permanent job, but often the placement was a stepping stone to paid employment elsewhere. The Council continued to receive funding from the Welsh Government (WG) and had chosen to spend the grant on this scheme. As well as this, a proportion of the St David's Day fund was spent on the traineeships. There was sufficient funding at that time to expand the team and thus expand support to young people up to the age of 25.

3. Safe reduction of looked after children: A verbal update on the Ministerial Advisory Group

At the April 2019 meeting, Members were provided with a verbal update on the work of the 'Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group'.

The Ministerial Action Group is a Welsh Government program of change that aims to improve services for children and families in need of help and support by taking a collaborative partnership approach in the following ways:

- It oversees the development of Welsh Government policy
- helping to identify potential gaps in policy
- generating ideas
- providing advice about what appears to work best in practice
- monitoring the impact of the Improving Outcomes for Children program
- ensuring approaches to improving outcomes for children are aligned and effective at a national, regional and local authority level.

The programme is split into three key areas for action:

- Safely reducing the number of children in need of care
- Making sure there are sufficient placement options of a high quality for children who are looked after or are leaving care
- Supporting children who are looked after to have the best possible journeys through care and into adulthood.

Members were advised that locally the Children's Services strategy was in the final stages of development and reflects all of those priorities. Members were advised that the first phase of the Welsh Government program had now concluded. That phase one dealt with the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer and the associated standards and good practice guidelines. Phase two was currently in progress and focused on securing sufficient high quality placement options for children who are looked after or leaving care. It was noted that representatives from the Welsh Government would be visiting all local authorities to explore this issue. Among the subjects to be discussed would be a desired reduction in the number of children looked after, out of area placements, placements outside of Wales and children and young people accommodated due to parental learning difficulties.

Discussion broadened beyond the number of children and young people becoming looked after to those remaining in care when alternative outcomes could be considered, the work being undertaken to increase the number of foster carers and use of Early Intervention Service to reduce the numbers of young people going into local authority care.

Work-stream: Specialist Services

Member updates:

The lead member for the work-stream provided Members of the Committee with updates about progress being made in relation to the Disability Index, Direct Payments, Continuing Health Care funding, transitions and the referral process between the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and the Child Health and Disability Teams.

Presentations / Reports	Dates presented	Guest speaker
1. Youth Offending Service Enhanced Case Management Model Presentation	29 January 2019	Operational Manager

1. Youth Offending Service Enhanced Case Management Model Presentation

During January 2019 the Committee were informed that the Cardiff Youth Offending Service had been participating in trial of the Enhanced Case Management Project (ECM). The trial had been in place since October 2017, during which Forensic Psychologists had used a trauma recovery model to recommend appropriate interventions as part of a multi-agency approach for 10 young people. ECM is supported by the Youth Justice Board, Welsh Assembly Government and NHS Wales Forensic Adolescent Consultation and Treatment Service (FACTS) and had previously been trialled by Youth Offending Teams in Flintshire, Carmarthen, Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly. Positive outcomes had been observed in the form of improved emotional resilience, improved self-confidence, reduced breach of conditions and reductions in offending rates for young people. Case Managers had been supportive of the approach and felt that it had identified the root cause of behaviour, tailor made interventions based on need, and that the early indications were that it had a positive impact.

Members sought clarification of the nature of the interventions, and were advised that it involved timeline work, looking at key events, dealing with personal issues and thereafter support to obtain employment. Members asked why the approach was not available to all young people and were advised that it is currently being trialed for those who meet a referral criteria of having complex needs and those who are serious repeat offending behaviour.

Work-stream: Education

Member updates:

The lead Members for the work stream provided Committee Members with regular updates which included informing them that a session had taken place around improving the education attainment and achievement of looked after children. The session had been well-attended and successful. They were of the view that sharing between schools should be systematic and that work in Scotland could provide examples of good practice.

They visited and met with representatives from the Youth Offending Service, Cardiff University, and the Education Collaborative. Those discussions led on to future items on the Committee's agenda and informed the selection of member visits.

Presentations / Reports	Dates presented	Guest speaker
1. Looked After Children Inclusion at St Teilo's Church in Wales High School (An example of good practice)	16 October 2018	Deputy Head Teacher
2. Children Looked After (CLA) Friendly Schools Training Update	29 January 2019	Looked After Children in Education Coordinator
3. *Cardiff Virtual Tracker is detailed below under the Monitoring Performance theme	17 July 2018	Achievement Leader
4. *Education performance reports (x2) are listed below under the Monitoring Performance theme	-	Achievement Leader

1. Looked After Children Inclusion at St Teilo's Church in Wales High School (An example of good practice)

The deputy head teacher of St Teilo's Church in Wales High School was invited to the October 2018 Committee meeting to share the school's experience as an example of excellent practice in supporting children who are looked after. The deputy head teacher explained that the success of the school is founded in its mission to ensure that all space at the school is a learning space, a healing space and a sacred space. This is deeply embed in all that the school does. The ethos and culture of school is restorative and non-punitive. Pupils and staff are encouraged to help and nurture each other and contribute to the mission. It was further explained that the school is in the fortunate position to be well resourced and is currently operating with a balanced budget. In these circumstances they are in a position to employ staff and prioritise funds. In turn very little needs to be spent on alternative provision.

Three poems written by young people, sharing the stories of how they came to spend time in care were read to the Committee. Committee members were moved by the stories.

The deputy head teacher advised Members that Local Authorities should look beyond results and encourage and praise those who provide meaningful care to young people. It is important to stress that we are all Corporate Parents and are here to serve our young people.

Members were impressed with the descriptions and ethos and wished to see the practice shared and transferred to other schools. Members highlighted that some schools are still reticent to accept children who are looked after and that they wished to see improvement. This presentation was impactful and went on to be raised in discussions throughout the year.

2. Children Looked After (CLA) Friendly Schools Training Update

During January 2019 the Committee received an update in relation to training Children Looked After Friendly Schools. Members were advised that the Level 1 training has been rolled out to teachers and they are to cascade the information and training within their own schools. Members were advised that about 67% of schools had taken up the training up to that date and that the training will be expanded to school governors in due course. Members sought clarification about the levels of training and were advised that there were two additional levels, level 2 is training for senior leaders and level 3 is a more in depth programme. The take up of level 2 has been good.

Work-stream: The Role of Corporate Parenting

Member updates:

- The lead Member for the work stream identified that guidance to Elected Members on their role as Corporate Parents was outdated. They wrote to the Welsh Government with the suggestion that an updated version of the guidance is produced. They were pleased to subsequently inform the Committee that the Welsh Government will be reviewing the guidance to Elected Members.
- The lead Member for the work stream discussed the Terms of Reference with the Chairperson and Senior Management within Children's Services to ensure that the work of the Committee is both realistic and undertaken. The group updated the Committee's Reference for implementation in the 2019/20 year.
- Members discussed the number of meetings and suggested that meetings should be increased to six a year. Members were content for an extra meeting to added in September 2018 for Officers to present the Bright Spots Survey and Action Plan.
- Members expressed concern that only a third of elected members had undergone the mandatory training. Committee Members asked that all Elected Members be reminded of the need to complete this training. The lead member for this work stream stressed the importance of all Committee Members encouraging colleagues to attend. Members indicated that they would raise awareness of training through Political Whips.

Presentations / Reports	Dates presented	Guest speaker
1. The 2017-18 Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee Annual Report	16 October 2018	-
2. Review of Terms of Reference and Meeting Frequency	16 October 2018	Committee & Member Services Manager
Review of Terms of Reference	2 April 2019	
3. Forward Plan	2 April 2019	-
4. Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, Part 6 - Looked After and Accommodated Children (Briefing Paper)	2 April 2019	Assistant Director of Social Services

1. The 2017-18 Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee Annual Report

During October 2018 Members discussed the draft Annual Report for 2017-18. It was agreed that the report would be provided to Cabinet. It was also decided that the report would be timetabled for October each year and that the timeframe being reported would change from reporting the meetings which occur during the Financial year (April to end of March) to those occurring during the Municipal year (May to end of April).

2. Review of the Terms of Reference and Meeting Frequency

During October 2018 Members of the Committee considered whether they wish to review the Terms of Reference adopted by the Committee in 2014. In addition the agenda item responded to the suggestion made at the 17 July 2018 meeting which suggested that the frequency of meetings should be increased. Members were advised that the Democratic Services Committee were undertaking a review of Elected Role Descriptions to include developing a Role Description for both the Chair and Members of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee.

Members discussed the frequency of meetings, the amount of business currently on the agenda and further work they wished to undertake. In conclusion, the Committee resolved that a subgroup would be established to review the Terms of Reference, and that the frequency of meetings would be increased to 6 per year. Members further discussed attendance at meetings and the need to ensure that all elected Members have received the required training.

At the April 2019 meeting Members discussed and approved the submission of the revised Terms of Reference to Full Council for ratification subject to further amendment.

3. The Forward Plan

A copy of the forward plan based on the terms of reference and suggestions from officers was circulated to Members, who also suggested topics of interest for inclusion. It was suggested that a review of the current work streams for members of the Committee should be undertaken in line with the development of the future Corporate Parenting Strategy when the current version comes to an end in September 2019.

4. Briefing Paper: Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, Part 6 – Looked After and Accommodated Children

At the April 2019 meeting Members were provided with a briefing paper outlining of Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

The paper informed Members that the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act came into force on 6 April 2016 and has reformed social services legislation. Part 6 of the Act provides for looked after and accommodated children in Wales, including children and young people who are leaving or who have left care. The paper outlined the principal duties of a local authority in looking after any child and the purpose of the legislation, including the following extract which has been embedded in its revised terms of reference.

Extract from the report

Local authorities, when exercising their social services functions, must act in accordance with the requirements contained in the associated code of practice. This provides guidance on the duties.

Any person exercising any functions in relation to a looked after or accommodated child or young person, or in relation to those leaving or who have left care must:

- ascertain and have regard to the child or young person's views, wishes and feelings, so far as is reasonably practicable.
- have regard to the importance of promoting and respecting the child or young person's dignity.
- have regard to the characteristics, culture and beliefs of the child or young person (including, for example, language).
- have regard to the importance of providing appropriate support to enable the child or young person to participate in decisions that affect them (to the extent to which this is appropriate in the circumstances, particularly where the child or young person's ability to communicate is limited for any reason)

Any person exercising functions under any part of the Act in relation to a child who has, or may have, care and support needs, or in respect of whom functions are exercisable under Part 6, must also:

- have regard to the importance of promoting the upbringing of the child by the child's family, in so far as doing so is consistent with promoting the child's well-being.
- where the child is under the age of 16, ascertain and have regard to the views, wishes and feelings of those with parental responsibility for the child, in so far as doing so is consistent with the well-being of the child, and reasonably practicable - Section 6(4)

The report further made reference that in exercising their functions relating to looked after and accommodated children, local authorities are required by section 7, to have regard to Part I of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Individuals must feel that they are an equal partner in their relationship with professionals. Local authorities must ensure that these children are advised of the availability of independent advocacy services and are supported to access those services. This section relates specifically to items in the terms of reference that are reported in the Engagement section of this annual report.

Inspection & Annual Reports

The Committee's terms of reference require all relevant Children's Services inspection reports and annual reports to be presented to the Committee. The reports are specified in the terms of reference. The following table lists the reports presented during 2017-18. Further details on each item are provided below.

Inspection Reports and Annual Reports	Meeting	Subject
1. Children's Services and Education Services inspection and annual reports	29 January 2019	Crosslands Inspection Report
2. Children's Homes Quality of Care Reports	*24 April 2018 17 July 2018 16 October 2018 29 January 2019 *24 April 2018 17 July 2018 16 October 2018 29 January 2019 2 April 2019	Crosslands Children's Home Regulation 32 visits Ty Storrie Short Break Service Regulation 32 visits
3. Annual Quality Assurance Report	None (reported September 2019)	Ty Storrie Short Breaks Crosslands Children's Home
4. Case Practice Reviews	16 October 2018 29 January 2019	
5. Fostering Annual Quality of Care Report (Reg 42)	None (May 2018)	- Fostering Fortnight reported above under Engagement.
6. Regional Adoption Service Annual Report (Briefing Paper)	29 January 2019	Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Regional Adoption Service annual report

7. 4C's Commissioning	None	-
8. Out of Area Annual Report	July 2018	Scrutiny Committee Report
9. Annual Report of Brighter Futures (with education)	None	Brighter Futures was disbanded prior to the 2015-16 year.

1. Children's Services inspection reports

All children's homes must be registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) who regulate and inspect adult care, childcare and social services for people in Wales.

CSSIW inspectors inspect registered services to check that they provide safe care, which respects peoples' rights, enhances their quality of life, and that there is compliance with Regulations and Minimum Standards.

The Inspection report of Crosslands Children's Home was presented to the Committee in January 2019. Crosslands Childrens' home was the only home directly delivered by Cardiff Council at that time. Crosslands is registered with CSSIW to accommodate up to 6 young people aged 11 to 17 years.

The reports was considered exempt from publication as it contained exempt information of that described in paragraph 12 of Part 4 and paragraph 25 of Part 5 of Schedule A of the Local Government Act 1972.

2. Children's homes quality of care reports (Regulations 32 visits)

Regulation 32 of the Children's home (Wales) Regulations 2002 requires monthly visits by an independent person and written reports on the conduct of the home. The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee received the Regulation 32 reports by virtue of its role in representing the responsibility of the authority as a corporate parent.

The regulation 32 reports for two services were presented to the Committee during 2018/19. They were for Crosslands children's home and the Cardiff Short Breaks Service at Ty Storrie.

The reports outlined visits which included interviews with residents, managers and staff, inspections of the premises, inspection of the daily log of events and inspection of the record of complaints.

The reports in respect of this item were considered exempt from publication as they contained exempt information of the description contained in Paragraph 12 of Part 4 and Paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972.

3. Annual quality assurance report for children's homes (Reg 33)

Regulation 33 reports provide a review of the quality of care offered by Children's Home from the perspective of the service provider, in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 33 of the Children's Homes (Wales) Regulations 2002. Registered Managers are required to operate and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the

quality of care as set out in the regulations. The aim of producing the report is to inform and drive improvements in the quality of care provided to the young people living in the home.

The 2018-19 Annual Quality Assurance Report (Regulation 33 report) for Crosslands Children's Home and Ty Storrie Cardiff Short Break Service was presented to the Committee in September 2019 and will therefore be reported in the Committee's next annual report.

4. Case practice reviews

During October 2018 and January 2019 the findings of an Extended Child Practice Review were presented to the Committee in accordance with the Committee's terms of reference. The discussions extended over two meetings, with greater detail being presented at the second meeting to fully reassure Members that they had full oversight.

The Committee were informed that a referral for a practice review can be made by any professional involved in a case, where they believe that lessons can be learned from the outcome. Members of the public can also make a referral. The review contained a number of recommendations and an associated action plan. A number of the actions had already been completed.

Members noted that this was a complex case where a number of other police force areas and local authorities were involved. In response to comments and questions from Members about the length of time it had taken to publish this report, officer advised that Safeguarding Board arrangements have now been strengthened and extended to improve the timeliness for reporting case practice reviews. Members sought clarification as to the number of Child Practice Reviews conducted, what is outstanding and discussed some specific recommendations contained within the Child Practice Review presented to them.

5. Fostering annual quality of care report

The fostering annual report was not presented to the Committee during this timeframe. Details of the annual Fostering Fortnight events are reported above under Engagement.

6. Regional adoption service annual report

The requirement to provide an annual review of the Adoption Service is set out in Regulation 22 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and section 15 (c) of the Adoption and children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015.

The National Adoption Service was launched in November 2014 to bring together local, regional and national organisations and activities as a key part of implementing the Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2014. The Adoption Service is probably most accurately described as a network of interdependent services operating at local, regional, and national levels through local government and the voluntary sector. Five local collaboratives are responsible for developing and improving adoption services across Wales. Cardiff Council is part of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff (VVC) Adoption Collaborative which

also includes the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

Members were provided with the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff (VVC) Regional Adoption Collaborative's Annual Report for 2017/18 along with the covering report which was presented to the Council's Scrutiny Committee during December 2011. This was the Collaborative's third annual report and covered the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018. The report set out the key information about the regional services together with monthly and quarterly performance information.

The report focused on the following areas of work:

- a. Service Development and Governance
- b. Service Functions
- c. Family Finding
- d. Recruitment & Assessment of Adopters
- e. Adoption support
- f. Adoption Panel
- g. Complaints and Compliments
- h. Conclusion and 2018-19 priorities

Extracts from the report

Conclusions and 2018/19 priorities

A Best Value Review provided a real opportunity to look at the strengths and weaknesses of the service and to look at potential remedies to address some of the presenting difficulties. The findings of the Review validated the earlier work undertaken by VVC detailing capacity and resourcing issues and options.

The service has been proactive in developing some new initiatives during the year to more effectively support adopters and prepare them for placement. There is also evidence that the increased permanent resource in Adoption Support is having a positive effect and reducing pressures on the service. The priorities set for the 2017-18 have been met in part but some are ongoing.

The increased 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. These improvements must however be considered against the increase in the number of children waiting for placements and the number waiting over six months to be placed. This set against the decrease in approvals of adopters and delays in timely recruitment of adopters makes recruitment an ongoing and clear priority for the service.

The priorities we have set for 2018-19 focus upon completing the actions arising from the Best Value Review. Particular emphasis for the remainder of the year will focus upon driving up the conversion rate of adopter enquiry to application with the intention of increasing the rate of adopter approvals.

The Committee resolved to note the content of the report.

7. 4C's commissioning

No reports were presented during 2018-19.

8. Out of area annual report

This item was presented in the form of the Scrutiny Out of Country Inquiry Report at the 17th of July 2018 meeting. Details are provided above on page 20 of this report.

9. Annual report of Brighter Futures

Having achieved its objective of improving the relationship between Children's Services and Education Services, The Brighter Futures group was disbanded before 2017-18.

Alternative arrangements have been in place since before the start of 2017-18. Those arrangements now include:

- Regular joint Education and Children's Services senior management meetings.
- Education representatives sit on the Out of Area Panel.
- Education representatives attend a Social Services Managers Meeting to review Out of Area placements.
- Monthly meetings between managers in the Looked After Children Service and the Looked After Children Education Team.
- Termly training sessions for Looked After Children Designated Teachers.

Monitoring Performance

The terms of reference for the Committee require the Committee to regularly review performance data and ensure performance monitoring systems are in place to achieve sustained improvements. The following table lists the reports presented during 2017-18. Further information on the reports is provided below.

Performance reports	Dates presented	Subject
1. Regular Education report	*24 April 2018 17 July 2019 16 October 2018	Education Performance of Cardiff Looked After Children 2016 -2017 Virtual Tracker Education Update - Provisional 2018 Results
2. Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Performance Report	29 January 2019	The role, function and activity of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service
3. Children's Services Performance report	24 April 2018 17 July 2018 16 October 2018 29 January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarter 3 • Quarter 4 • Quarter 1 • Quarter 2

	2 April 2019	
4. Children's Complaints and Compliments reports	24 April 2018 17 July 2018 16 October 2018 29 January 2019 2 April 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarter 3 • Quarter 4 • Quarter 1 • Quarter 2 • Quarter 3
5. Advocacy Report	2 April 2019	Reported above under the Engagement section.

1. Education Performance of Cardiff Looked After Children 2016 - 2017

During April 2018 Members were provided with an overview of the Performance of Cardiff Looked After Children in 2016-17. Education managers were of the view that whilst there had been some improvements, overall the results for looked after children remained too low when compared with their peers. In particular Key Stage 4 was a concern, with none of the cohort of looked after children who were educated outside of Cardiff achieving the L2+ threshold. However it was acknowledged that this year's cohort had particularly complex needs. 81% of the children had Special Educational Needs (SEN) and 25% had become looked after within the last two years. The challenging events they will have experienced before becoming looked after and the disruption of becoming looked after will have impacted on their ability to achieve their full potential.

Officers explained that the best place for looked after children are Cardiff Schools. There is a virtual tracker for looked after children, which contains a profile of the child, their history of placements and test results. Information is also gathered from Children's Services records to keep the information up-to-date. The names of looked after children are given to Challenge Advisors in schools on a termly basis and followed-up if a child is not progressing. Education professionals have improved communication with Children's Services, and have also provided training to School Governors. A Mentoring programme has been developed in partnership with local businesses in the commercial sector.

Members highlighted St Teilo's C.W. High School as being an example of good practice and a desire to find out more about how it achieves results. A representative from St Teilo's school attended the October 2018 meeting which is reported above under the Education work stream on page 22.

The Committee requested a presentation on the virtual tracker at a future meeting. This is detailed below.

2. Cardiff Virtual Tracker

At the July 2018 meeting members received information about the virtual tracker. Members were informed that the Virtual Tracker is a central system that tracks the educational progress of children who are looked after. This includes information about attendance, absence, exclusions and attainment.

Members welcomed the use of the tracker and made reference to the need for good information sharing and joint working.

3. Education Update - Provisional 2018 Results

Members were provided with the provisional educational attainment results for 2018 at their October 2018 meeting.

They were advised that outcomes across the city were still improving against previous results and especially those in the school that has the largest number of looked after children and which is considered an example of best practice. There is still room for improvement, and it is important that there are good lines of communication with young people to provide the necessary support and encouragement.

Members were keen to know what those pupils who were reported in Key Stage 4 are doing now and whether they are being supported. Members were advised that the data on progression was good, the data forms part of the Cardiff Commitment data. Members noted that whilst it is easy for a school to pride itself its good well-being policy, they do however still need to be challenged to ensure that they are doing what is best for their children. Officers advised that the virtual tracker help professionals understand where the issues are so that they can be challenged.

4. Independent Reviewing Officer Monitoring report

During January 2019 the Committee received the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Monitoring Report and presentation.

IROs have a responsibility to act directly as corporate parents. Local authorities are required by law to appoint an IRO to every child who is looked after. They monitor care plans, convene and chair reviews for children subject to care orders or accommodated voluntarily in placements with foster carers, residential homes, secure establishments, living with kinship carers or placed for adoption. Their role is to ensure that each care plan clearly sets out the help, care and support each child needs and takes full account of each child's wishes and feelings.

The report included an overview of the Independent Reviewing Service IRO role and purpose of the service, including an explanation of the service's duty to report to the Regional Safeguarding Board. The report also included looked after children performance information.

Extracts from the report

Recent Practice Standards produced by the Association for Fostering and Adoption (AFA) Cymru and the Welsh Government for reviewing Looked After Children summarises the role of the IRO:

- *The IRO's role is to monitor, that is keep an overview of the child's case, not just at formal review meetings, but between review meetings as well.*
- *During the reviewing process the IRO has a duty to look at how the child has been looked after and how the care plan is progressing*

- *As the IRO does not have the power to overrule the Local Authority decision making process, there has to be some way of showing that they are concerned about the progress of a child or young person's case or a decision made in relation to a care and support plan. The local authority should have a dispute resolution process by which IRO's can make senior managers in the local authority aware of their concerns, with a view to resolving them. If that internal process does not work, then the IRO may refer to CAFCASS Cymru.*

Independent Reviewing Officers have specific responsibility to escalate concerns about Looked After Children through a dispute resolution process. If the concern cannot be resolved within the line management structure, the process allows escalation to the Chief Executive and ultimately to the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS Cymru) to consider legal action if necessary.

The presentation highlighted the following key updates for 2018:

- The looked after children population as of the end of October 2018 was 882 (an increase from 796 in October 2017). This was a 10% increase.
- There had been an increase in younger children being looked after.
- The number of unaccompanied Asylum seeking children remained broadly the same as the previous year (16 children).
- The number of children who had had 3 or more moves had decreased slightly.
- Timeliness of looked after reviews had reduced slightly (at the time 89.5%) – linked to staffing and a rise in children.
- 130 children were placed at home with parents under a Care Order. A 34% rise.
- There had been an increase to 303 children in out of area placements. Rising from 222 in 2017.

Extracts from the report

“Within the recent Practice Standards and Good Practice Guide developed by the Association for Fostering and Adoption (AFA) Cymru and the Welsh Government for reviewing Looked After Children, it was remarked that “In Cardiff IROs always end the review with celebration of what has gone well and what has been achieved, writing these down so that the child or young person can take them away from the meeting with them”.”

“The IROs have liaised with other Local Authorities and gathered examples of good practice in this area to contribute to effective communication and engagement with Looked After Children. Some examples provided have used apps, phones and other devices with has proved very successful in improving engagement and communication. Early discussions have been held in respect of developing or appropriating an app to engage young people”.

“Next Steps:

- Initiate recruitment for a temporary IRO position.*
- Work with Human Resources to address the long term sickness issues.*
- Embed Signs of Safety across all areas of work.*
- Contribute to overall Safeguarding Action Plan and identify key areas for development.*
- Undertake training with IROs around Protocols.*
- Prioritise the participation and engagement of children & young people within their Looked After Reviews”.*

In response to questions, members of the Committee were advised that the service is fully stretched. The increased workload of IROs is associated with the significant increase in the number of looked after children over the past 2 years. This increase is reflected across the UK, and is due to a combination of factors including poverty, deprivation and neglect. The increased caseload has resulted in a fall in the number of reviews being conducted on time. All extensions to review timescales must be approved by the Operational Manager and this only happens in exceptional circumstances. A pressure bid has been submitted for more IROs to address this.

5. Children's Services performance report

During the April 2018, July 2018, October 2018, January 2019 and April 2019 meetings, reports were provided for Quarter 3, Quarter 4 of 2016/17, Quarter 1, Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 of 2017/18. The purpose of these reports was to help the Committee to understand the factors that impact on outcomes for children in need, looked after children and consider opportunities for improving outcomes. The format of the reports changed during this year to receiving the reports in the same form as they are presented to the Council's Scrutiny Committee.

Extracts from the reports

At Quarter 3 2017/18 Children's Services were projecting a £4.090 million overspend at month 9. This continued to be a challenge, particularly in view of the need to protect children and the associated costs of children being looked after. The anticipated savings shortfall of £867,000 largely related to the phasing of early help initiatives. Also, the savings proposals linked to preventative measures were only serving to restrict further growth (cost avoidance) rather than producing the actual cost reductions that would have been assumed in the budget.

By Quarter 4 performance was mixed, the Assistant Director advised that the Committee could be reassured by the current performance of the service, particularly when taking demand pressures into account. At 31st March 2018, there were 830 looked after children, 83 of whom started to be looked after during the quarter. The decisions to accommodate these children had been scrutinised and the Committee were reassured that the decisions were appropriate.

The Quarter 1 report highlighted that Children Services had received a significant rise in demand up 29% in 2 years. But Cardiff was not an outlier in terms of the proportion of Looked After Children in its population. Performance in respect of timely wellbeing assessments had declined from 71% (367 / 520) in quarter 4 to 66% (503 / 761), reflecting the 46.3% increase in the number of assessments completed (761 compared with 520 in Quarter 4). This was in the context of a 10% increase in the number of contacts requiring assessment (653 in Quarter 1 from 593 in Quarter 4 2017/18). The number of wellbeing assessments that were incomplete at the end of Quarter 1 was 330 from 401 in Quarter 4, of which 34 and 60 respectively were out of time. Close monitoring was continuing to be undertaken in Quarter 2 to attempt to limit the impact of the increase in demand on timeliness of completion. A number of initiatives were being developed.

At quarter 2 it was reported that the following were working well:

- Improving performance in timeliness of Well-being Assessments.*
- Good performance in managing sickness absence.*
- Positive Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection Report of Crosslands Children's Home.*

- The Commissioning Strategy was under development and advanced planning of new residential provision.
- Positive engagement with workforce and partners to understand priorities had occurred.
- A Workforce strategy had been developed
- Decision making panels had been implemented

But managers were worried about the following:

- Levels of agency workforce and variable caseloads.
- High numbers of looked after children and associated pressures on placement provision.
- Low numbers of child protection registrations.
- Numbers of children waiting for adoption 12 months after Order made.
- Fitness for purpose of current staffing structures.
- Low numbers of children looked after returned home from care during the year.

By quarter 3 it was reported that the following were working well:

- Good performance in managing sickness absence – Children's Services are the only service area across the Council exceeding sickness absence targets
- Positive engagement with workforce and partners to understand priorities.
- Workforce strategy developed.
- Care planning and decision making panels implemented.
- Signs of Safety refreshed and embedded – positive Signs of Safety Celebration Event highlighting progress across all Children's Services teams.
- Positive relationship and feedback received from Child and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) and Judiciary.
- Soft launch of the Prevention Service in Youth Offending Services has nearly doubled the prevention case referrals received.
- Recruitment of agency social workers to permanent positions.
- Developing a more coherent approach to Children Services and working as a team.

But managers were worried about the following:

- Management of demand and complexity of caseloads.
- Over reliance on agency workers.
- High numbers of looked after children and low numbers of children looked after returned home from care during the year.
- Lack of appropriate placement provision and over reliance on independent foster carers
- Low rate of child protection registrations.
- Numbers of children waiting for adoption 12 months after Placement Order made.
- Performance of Independent Reviewing Officer service.
- Fitness for purpose of current staffing structures.
- Oversight of actions from Child Practice Reviews (CPRs).
- Policies and procedures require updating.
- Threat of judicial review in relation to age assessments for unaccompanied asylum seekers.
- Finance system for fostering payments is at end of life and needs supporting.

Plans were in place to:

- Develop a 3 year strategy and implementation plan "Improving outcomes for all our children".
- Deliver a recruitment and retention strategy.
- Implement Early Help Gateway with an emphasis on prevention.
- Develop the Commissioning and Market Position Strategy.

- *Create a culture that is strength based, rights based and outcome focused with the child at the centre.*
- *Continue embedding Signs of Safety.*
- *Implement a quality performance framework.*
- *Develop a clear pathway for the “Childrens’ Journey”.*
- *Evidence that all activities make a positive difference to the lives of the children and young people.*
- *Improve oversight of Child Practice Reviews (CPRs) action plans.*
- *Undertake an independent review of Independent Reviewing Officer and Looked After Children’s Services.*
- *Update policies and procedures.*
- *Address age assessments.*
- *Implement the finance module of the current case management system.*
- *Develop local safeguarding arrangements to ensure effective multi-agency working.*

Members noted that the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee’s Terms of Reference require the Committee to ensure performance monitoring systems are in place, and regularly review performance data to ensure sustained performance improvements in outcomes for Looked After Children, Children in Need and care leavers. They were reassured that performance is monitored on a weekly basis and manager intervention occurs when necessary.

The Committee noted the content of the quarterly reports at each meeting. Among the resulting topics that they discussed was the overspend in the Children’s Services budget and the difficulties in predicting the number of children entering local authority care and therefore requiring spend over a period of time. They also discussed the reliance on agency staff and the national difficulties in recruiting social work staff to full time contracts, and number of referrals from the Police.

6. Complaints & representations report

During the April 2018, July 2018, October 2018, January 2019 and April 2019 meetings, reports were provided for Quarter 3, Quarter 4 of 2016/17, Quarter 1, Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 of 2017/18. The reports summarised complaints, compliments, subject access requests and representations activity, including details of independent investigations, ombudsman investigations, identified themes and learning.

Extracts from the reports

*As at the end of **quarter 3 2017/18** the service was working with 2606 children and young people and of those:*

- *In total, the service received 20 complaints (0.7%), of which, 2 related to Looked after Children (0.07%). None were directly from the young person.*
- *In total, there were received 7 compliments (0.2%).*

*By the end of **quarter 4 2017/18** the service was working with 2787 children and young people and of those:*

- *In total the service received 41 complaints (1.4%), of which, 13 related to Looked after Children (0.4%). 4 were directly from the young person.*
- *In total, the service received 22 compliments (0.7%).*

At the end of **quarter 1 2018/19** the service was working with 2,643 (2,787 in Q4) children and young people and of those:

- In total, the service received 52 complaints (2%), of which, 14 related to Looked after Children (0.5%). 4 were directly from the young person.
- In total the service received 46 compliments (1.7%).

As at the end of **quarter 2 2018/19** the service was working with 2,643 (2,787 in Q4) children and young people and of those:

- In total, we received 40 complaints, of which, 11 (27.5%) related to Looked after Children. 3 (7.5%) were directly from the young person.
- In total, we received 20 compliments.

As at the end of **quarter 3 2018/19**, the service were working with 2,717 children and young people and of these:

- In total, we received 40 complaints, of which, 4 related to Looked after Children (10%). One was directly from the young person.
- In total, we received 32 compliments.

The Committee noted the content of the reports.

Conclusion

2018-19 may be summarised as a year of renewed vigour, building on the process of establishment which begun in the previous post-election year.

During 2018/19 Committee Members engaged in a significant range of activity within and outside of meetings. Members' interest, their accumulation of knowledge and their considered evaluation, began a process of driving forward the Committee's agenda in a more dynamic way. In particular, individual Member activity during the undertaking of the work-streams directed wider sharing of knowledge across the Committee, drove the selection of Committee meeting agenda items, and the selection of destinations for Member visits.

Areas of particular interest to members during 2018/19 were:

- Encouraging the sharing of good practice between schools, to support the wellbeing of children who are or might become looked after.
- Understanding and promoting prevention.
- Reviewing the terms of reference.
- Engaging with and increasing the Corporate Parenting knowledge of Elected Members beyond the Committee.

Moving forward into 2019/20

At the end of the previous year it was expected that the year reported here (2018/19) would be part of the process of establishing a new direction for the Committee, and that by the end of the year the Committee would have a clear vision.

That vision has been articulated by the development of a new terms of reference for the Committee which will be implemented in 2019/20. This provides greater clarity and focus in some specific areas.

Key areas of development for the year ahead

Key areas of development to be taken forward during 2019/20 will be to realign activity to achieve the requirements of the new terms of reference. Specifically:

- Ensuring new **mechanisms are in place to promote the sustained improvements** listed (new terms of reference point b).
- Recommending ways in which more **integrated services** can be developed, with specific reference to the areas now specified (d)
- **Benchmarking and learning from best practice** (f)

Particular emphasis will need to be placed on achieving parts of the terms of reference where there was not sufficient time to address them during the last year. In particular:

- To develop and undertake a programme of **consultation, listening and engagement events** (new point c).
- To develop, monitor and review the **corporate parenting strategy** (new point h) – now that the 2016-19 is coming to an end.

At the end of 2017/18 it was also evident that there was a considerable amount of work that would need to be done both in terms of continuing to receive the volume of information required by the Committee's terms of reference and in progressing the development of the Committee's new work-streams.

Indeed it can be observed from this report that the Committee continued to receive a significant and large volume of information at its meetings.

Key area of development for the year ahead

The Committee decided during the year to request an increase in the number of meetings from four per annum to six to accommodate the volume of work required. This was granted and was implemented from the beginning of 2019/20 year.

Further to the work undertaken at meetings, at the outset of 2018/19 it was hoped the Member-led work-streams would further transform the Committee, from one that was meeting-centred to one where Members are intrinsically involved in service development.

Members, as an outcome of the knowledge they gained in undertaking their work programmes, were more involved than ever in shaping the forward plan for the 2019/20 year. The forward plan, rather than being a cyclic repeat of items annually, shows the continued expansion and development of areas examined by Members, and reflects by virtue of the number of items included, how difficult it is to cover such a wide ranging brief within the relatively short amount of time the Committee has together.

A diagram on the next page depicts the relationship between Committee activity and the terms of reference during 2018-19.

The relationship between Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee activity and the terms of reference during 2018-19

