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R1 : All placements must be made in the interest of the Child, minimising the impact on them, their education and well being

- Children and young people's needs continue to be at the very centre of all care planning including when seeking a home for them.
- There are several 'Decision Making Panels' that oversee the Care Planning process in relation to finding suitable homes for children and young people to ensure that there is suitable oversight of the matching process.
- The supervision process is also a forum for discussing and agreeing what is in the best interests of children.
- The Independent Reviewing Officer process is enshrined in statute and ensures that all children that are looked after have their care plans reviewed by an independent officer.
- All children and young people who are looked after have access to an independent advocate and are offered this service (part of the active offer duty of the SSWBW Act).
- The senior management teams within Education and Children's Services now hold joint management meetings.
- The Assistant Directors for Children Services and Education meet monthly to discuss any issue arising for young person.

R2 : As Cardiff is the fast growing city and is promoting itself as a great place to grow up; placements should be made, wherever possible in Cardiff.

Delivering Excellent Outcomes for Children, Children's Services Strategy 2019-2022

- The Children's Services Strategy and the associated Delivering Excellent Outcomes Programme has a number of work-streams that have focused on ensuring children are placed close to home.
- We have a [Children's Commissioning Strategy](#) that sets out the key priorities for the service. Progress is already being made and an action plan for the delivery of the strategy is under development. Key commissioning priorities include:
 1. Complete the reshaping of **early help and support** to families to prevent the escalation of needs and reduce the need for alternative homes including Family Group Conferencing prior to any child becoming looked after.
 2. Where it is safe to do so, we will look to bring our children and young people back closer to Cardiff, using a Re-unification Framework to support children to return safely to their own families, as we know this achieves better outcomes for them.

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3. To respond to the **therapeutic and mental health and well-being needs** of Children Looked After, their parents and carers through the development of a range of therapeutic service with partners.
4. Reshape our respite provision to offer flexible short break opportunities including emergency provision for children with disabilities, and other children young people and families.
5. Redesign our Local Fostering service in order to increase our numbers of Cardiff Foster Carers homes for children.
6. Increase the availability of local placements through our collaborative market engagement with providers to shape provision to better meet the needs of our children and young people.
7. To commission and develop **additional internal residential provision** in Cardiff to enable flexibility especially for complex cases.
8. To further develop accommodation **sufficiency for vulnerable young people and those leaving care**
9. To further develop our **understanding of the needs** of this important group of children and young people by completing a detailed needs analysis.

- We have improved the offer to in-house foster carers including an increase in their financial remuneration this has resulted in a significant increase in Applications with over 34 people currently going through the assessment process.
- We are in the process of commissioning an Assessment Centre in Cardiff to ensure that YP are robustly assessed prior to being placed in residential provision.
- We have recommissioned the residential respite provision at Ty Storrie for YP with complex needs.
- We have significantly increased the number of kinship carers from 96 at 31st December 2018 to 126 at 31st December 2019.
- The percentage of children in regulated placements in Cardiff has increased slightly from 55.7% at 31st December 2018 to 57.4% at 31st December 2019.

R3 : Social Services Directorate should undertake a well-being assessment of all of its Children's Services social workers over the next 12 months

- We created and appointed to a Retention Officer post unfortunately the person withdrew and the post has been utilised to assist with the recruitment process.
- We have undertaken regular staff surveys.
- We have a mentoring service for newly qualified social workers.
- We have introduced a supervision practice manual.
- We have been under-taking regular supervision audits.

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Introduce Agency Peripatetic	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Procure alt' Temp Agency Team	White	Yellow	Yellow	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White
Increase Agency Cover	Red	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Increase Support Staff (agency ???)	White	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Increase Business Support (agency??)	White	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Review Skill Mix & Restructure	White	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Create Permanent Peripatetic Team	White	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Recruit Final Year Students	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Increase Secondment Scheme	Red	Red	Red	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White

R5 : As corporate parents, all staff and Councillors must work in collaboration with all partners to ensure the safeguarding of all children

- The current CPAC Terms of Reference are being refreshed in partnership with an independent advisor.
- There is a robust corporate safeguarding policy which is being reviewed by the same independent advisor in terms of the role of members.
- The Corporate parenting Strategy is being refreshed led by the views of children and young people and seeks to further strengthen working collaboratively with stakeholders.
- CPAC member training has been arranged.
- A local operational safeguarding Board has been established that is chaired by the LA CEO.
- The regional safeguarding board is chaired by the DSS in Cardiff and is now more effective.

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- A new Operational Manager with responsibility for all aspects of Safeguarding has been created and appointed to.
- The Exploitation strategy will develop wider links with all aspects of the corporate entity
- The community safety partnership board now receives reports from the YOS board and other safeguarding fora
- Council Directorates have completed a self-evaluation in relation to safeguarding and actions plans to address identified issues are under development.
- Corporate safeguarding e-learning module available and designated as mandatory.
- Action plan following internal audit of corporate safeguarding arrangements fully implemented.

R6 : The new management team for People and Communities, to work with the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee to, review the structure and operation of the service to ensure that it works with all parts of the Council in undertaking their corporate parenting duties, by 31 March 2019.

- The restructure of Children Services senior management tier is complete.
- The Children Services strategy has been published.
- The service has created 3 locality teams thus allowing greater focus on communities and partnerships.
- Children Services attend the wider Housing and Communities extended management forums.
- There is a review ongoing regarding Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee.
- Children Services now have joint management meetings with Education.
- The current Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee Terms of Reference are being refreshed in partnership with an independent advisor.
- There is a robust corporate safeguarding policy, which is being reviewed by the same independent advisor in terms of the role of members.
- The Corporate parenting Strategy is being refreshed led by the views of children and young people and seeks to further strengthen working collaboratively with stakeholders.
- Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee member training has been arranged.
- Review of Corporate Parenting Strategy is underway with the involvement of young people.
- Post being created to provide support to Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee.

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R7 : It must task officers to review the early help service and reorganise the management and control of all early intervention and prevention initiatives to enable them to be under the control of children's services within the next 12 months.

- Cabinet approved a new model of early help and family support in October 2018 which will be managed within the People and Communities Directorate. Professional oversight and accountability for the governance of the statutory part of the service sits with the Director of Social Services in accordance with statutory duties for early intervention and prevention.
- There is a governance board which oversees the work of the various aspects of the EH services and how they interface with Intake and Assessment and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.
- There are performance reports, which are scrutinised by the board, and any issue escalated for resolution.
- The formal launch of the EH service has happened relatively recently and its effectiveness at reducing demand on CS is yet to be established however initial reporting is as follows;
- The number of people supported through the Family Gateway = 2,187. The number of enquiries and well-being contacts. (1,754 in Q2) (5,622 year to date at 31st December 2019)
- The number of people supported by the Family Help Team = 467 (425 in Q2). (1,198 year to date at 31st December 2019), No of households = 219.
- The number of people supported by Support4Families = 459 (527 in Q2). (1,512 year to date at 31st December 2019).

R8 : A strategic approach to commission placements, to improve outcomes and safely reduce the number of children being looked after, must be developed and implemented as soon as possible.

- A placement sufficiency plan has been established and a commissioning strategy has been approved by cabinet.
- There are 9 key priorities which dovetail with the Children Services strategy and are monitored via the Delivering Excellence Board that is chaired by the Chief Executive.
- The commissioning priorities are closely linked to the shifting the balance of care work-streams which are what underpin Cardiff's approach to safely reducing the number of Children Looked After.
- We have moved the line management of the placement team to sit alongside the fostering team.
- We have placed a social worker into the placement finding team.
- We are developing a Reunification Framework, including commissioning Family Group Conferences.
- Also, see R2 above.

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<p>R9: It tasks officers in the Social Service Directorate to review the Placement Commissioning arrangements by 31 March 2019.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per previous response. • High cost placements are reviewed monthly by a panel that is chaired by the Substitute family Operational Manager. 	
<p>R10 : It continues to implement the Signs of Safety framework, within the next 12 months and provide evidence of its impact.</p>	<p>This recommendation is partially accepted</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence from Councils where Signs of Safety has been successfully implemented and embedded indicates a longer timescale is needed to really embed transformed practice. • Phase one of the project commenced in April 2016 and focused on the introduction of the model and setting the foundations across the service. During phase one, significant progress has been made in the delivery of learning and development of all staff, focused and structured training has been delivered as well as bespoke tailored support provided to teams and individuals • A refresh of the Signs of Safety Implementation Plan is underway to ensure it is focussed on the right systemic changes to support practice improvement. Independent quality assurance work is underway to ensure there is clear evidence to support the next phase of implementation. • Signs of Safety Awareness Briefings have been delivered to key partner agencies. • Tools to measure the effectiveness of Signs of Safety have been developed. • Regular briefings are held, and attended by colleagues from Health and Education. • Case reflection meetings are also held regularly are working well - champions are now holding these meetings within the teams. • Signs of Safety has been included in staff inductions (e.g. for the Personal Adviser Service and new Ty Storrie staff). • A celebration event was held in January. • Quality Assurance of CareFirst forms for use of Signs of Safety has commenced and a system will be developed to feedback to team managers to support them to instil confidence within their teams. • Signs of Safety Briefing attached in appendix a. 	
<p>R11 : It tasks officers to review, current demand, in to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub to ensure the consistent use of criteria by partners</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was an improvement plan put in place regarding the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub in Dec 2018 – since that time practice and processes have improved. • A permanent team manager has recently been appointed and plans to review the skill mix of the team are underway 	

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- There is an operational multi agency board that oversees the governance of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.
- A Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub coordinator post is currently being advertised and appointed to.
- A review of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub has been postponed due to the National Independent Safeguarding Board announcing their own national review of Multi Agency Safeguarding arrangements.
- A clear plan of work is being progressed by the board, which includes developing a more detailed performance framework.
- A threshold document has been developed.
- There are audits planned for MASH in order to make additional improvements for thresholds between partners and CS staff.
- Training plans will be considered following the above audits.
- In line with the new Children's Services structure, a new Operational Manager is in post and oversees Support4Families, MASH and the Intake and Assessment teams.
- Work to improve processes within MASH has commenced and will cover the end to end process including referral routes into Intake and Assessment. This work should be used as a basis for shaping the next steps of the improvement plan.

R12 : Officers must ensure that the placement of 0-5 year olds, out of county, is only undertaken when it is in the best interests of the Child.

This recommendation is partially accepted

- The placement of 0-5 year olds out of area will only take place in exceptional circumstances and will always be in the best interests of the child.
- There are a sibling group of 2 who are in separate residential provision who were under 6 at the time of their admission. They both have had a number of foster placement breakdowns and require a therapeutic type residential setting to meet their needs due to the trauma they have experienced earlier in their lives.

R13 : To develop and implement a Placement Strategy which should include, to recruit and retain Foster Carers, including, continuous advertisement programme, additional support, allowances, and retainers, to be in place within the next 12 months

- The 3 Year Children Services strategy and Commissioning Strategy have now replaced the Placement strategy – underpinning these strategies are various work-streams that report into the Delivering Excellent Outcomes board that is chaired by the CEO.
- The current number of foster carers working for the Council (not including kinship carers) is 88.
- There are currently 34 full assessments ongoing (Feb 2020).
- The recruitment target is a net increase of 8 foster carers over a 12 month period.

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- The aim is to increase the number of children placed with in-house foster carers to 110 in 2019/20 and 120 in 2020/21).
- The number of children currently with in house foster carers is 102 (Feb 2020).
- The number of children placed with Independent foster agencies is 380 (Feb 2020).
- There have been 46 applications received in the last 12 months.
- There have been 6 new foster carers approved in the last 12 months.
- The average length of time from initial application to actual recruitment in 2019/20 was 120.7 working days.

R14 : It ensures that a review of all vacant fostering placements, Agency, Council and Kinship options, is undertaken to verify that there is appropriate matching and stable placements for all children being Looked After.

Please see previous response

R15 : Officers are to develop and implement a building programme of homes for children in Cardiff, utilising every possible agency, as an Invest to Save project, within the next 12 months.

- A Corporate Wide Project Team has been established which is driving forward this recommendation; it reports into the Commissioning Board and the Delivering Excellent Outcomes Board.
- The Project is working to deliver on some of the key objectives of the commissioning strategy and in the first phase is progressing the creation of a residential assessment centre and an emergency assessment unit utilising the councils own housing stock for the latter

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work is being undertaken with external providers who have expressed an interest in opening children’s homes in Cardiff 	
<p>R16: It ensures that future annual placement budgets must reflect anticipated number of Looked After children at future year mid-point, to help ensure that Social Services do not over spend</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has provided significant levels of additional funding to Children’s Services in recent years with a net increase to the budget of £5.8 million (11.86%) in 2018/19 and a further increase in 20/21 of £4.85 million to realign the base, plus and additional of £2.2 million in the reserve. • The biggest pressures facing CS continue to be high cost placements and agency staff – the increase in the annual budget is predicated on their being the ability to spend to save. 	
<p>R17:Savings accrued from returning children back to Cardiff are reinvested into preventative and early help initiatives</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see previous response. 	
<p>R18: Officers investigate whether Greenhill School could admit Girls to minimise out of County Placements</p>	<p>This recommendation is accepted in principle</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is understood that the ‘Development of the Schools Estate ‘— will attend to the need for a higher level of suitable provision for children with additional learning needs <p>Check with Education</p>	
<p>R19 Action Plan: The Cabinet Member ensures that an action plan is developed to ensure the implementation of these recommendations within an agreed timescale as part of the response to this report.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Actions arising from the recommendations contained within the original Out of County Task and Finish have shaped the 3 year children’s strategy and commissioning strategy that are underpinned by various work-streams and projects that report to the Delivering Excellent Outcomes Board that is chaired by the CEO. 	