

Cardiff Council

Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee

Annual Report
2019/20

Chair's Foreword

I am delighted to introduce the 2019/20 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.

As you will see from the report the Committee has once again considered a very large volume of work during the year and we have been very busy. Highlights have included hearing detailed feedback from young people through a number of engagement sessions which will inform our work as a Committee and for the upcoming Corporate Parenting Strategy. It has been great to see the experiences of our looked after children first hand and their feedback will be vital in our forward work plan.

Our commitment to our looked after children and care leavers and the importance Committee members place on their role can be seen from the variety of work undertaken throughout the year. Of particular interest has been finding out more about our Child Friendly City Programme an exciting programme aimed at ensuring Children rights are adhered to and that young people across the city can have a voice and have an input in decisions that impact them.

Attendance at Committee meetings has remained high throughout the year showing the dedication our individual elected members have to the work undertaken by the Committee and the will to support our looked after children and care leavers across the city.

I look forward to chairing the Committee again in 2019/20 and for us all to 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.

I would also like to thank those managers and partners who 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.

Councillor Sarah Merry

Chair of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee

Assistant Director's Overview

The Annual report for 2019/2020 continues to showcase the wide range of work the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee have been involved in over the past year. Throughout the report there is a strong focus on the voice of our looked after children across the city. A great example of this is from a wide range of engagement sessions held with our Bright Sparks Forum and previous engagement through our Bright Spots Survey.

Based on what our young people have told us about their concerns, things that are working well and their dreams and aspirations for the future the annual report has been structured to highlight the work undertaken by the Committee based around a number of these themes. This information will also be used to shape our Corporate Parenting Strategy.

This exciting strategy will aim to strengthen the links between our looked after children and Corporate Parenting Committee and our shared Corporate Parenting action plan will bring together our key stakeholders to help improve the lives of our looked after children and care leavers.

The links between our looked after children across Cardiff and the Corporate Parenting Committee will be strengthened with our young people shaping our future work programme for the upcoming year.

This will build on a wide range of initiatives to support our young people across the city such as Cardiff 2030 vision, our Child Friendly City programme and Cardiff Commitment all aimed at improving the outcomes, educational attainment and aspirations for young people across the City.

Deborah Driffield
Assistant Director Children's 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 2019/20. 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.
- Young Person Participation.
- The Annual Programme
- Activity in Monitoring Performance.

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".

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

The Annual report covers the period of beginning of May 2019 to the end of April 2020

The Current Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee are set out below which covers the period reported. The current Terms of Reference are under review and subject to change.

An independent expert was appointed to under a review of the Member Safeguarding Protocol. In January 2020, Council considered and approved an ordinary resolution which welcomed the independent review of the Members' Safeguarding Protocol and put forward proposals in relation to the remit of the review which included; the development of a protocol on the corporate parenting role of Councillors to align with the Member Safeguarding Protocol; a review of the terms of reference and operation of the Corporate Parenting Committee; and, make recommendations on how the role of the committee can be strengthened. Due to restrictions as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic the review was not completed during this reporting 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.

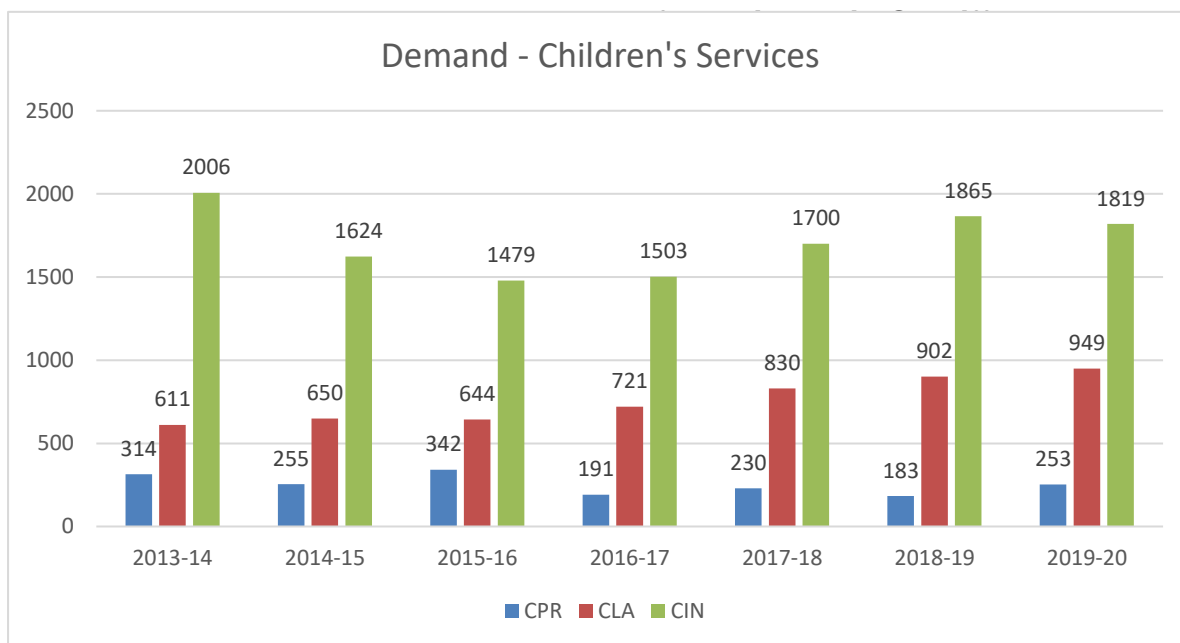
During 2019/20 the Committee operated within the following terms of reference:

- | | |
|-----|--|
| a) | To champion the life chances and rights of Children Looked After; Children in need; Care Leavers and children and young people in the criminal justice system across the Council, with Elected Members and partners. |
| (b) | To actively promote real and sustained improvements by ensuring that there are mechanisms in place to: |

ascertain and have regard to the child or young person's view, wishes and feelings, so far as reasonable 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; have regard to the importance of providing appropriate support to enable the child or young person to participate in decisions that affect them; 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; That there is a follow on provision for young people leaving care that meets the need of young adults.

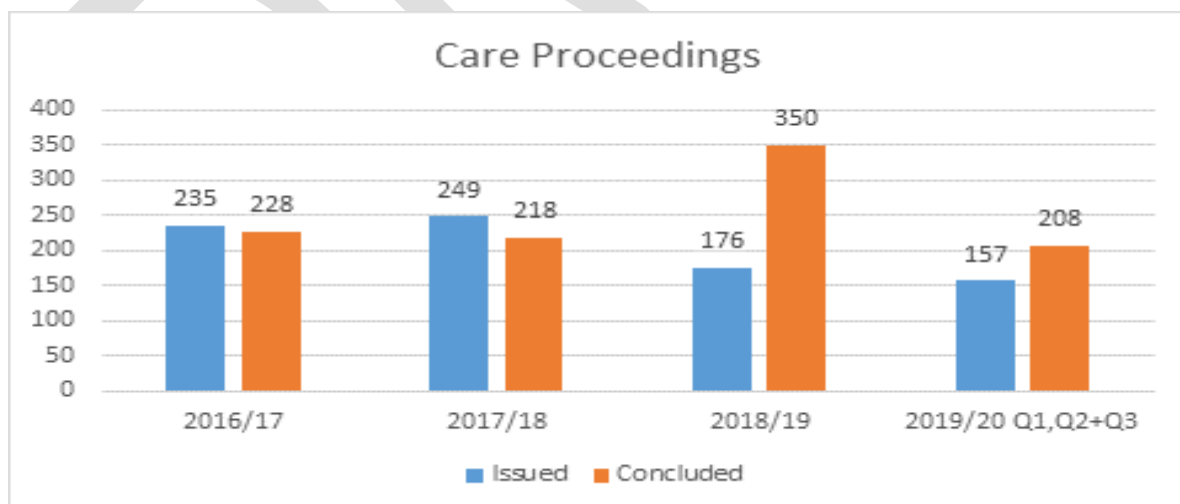
- (c) To develop and undertake a programme of consultation, listening and engagement events with Children Looked After, Children in Need and Care Leavers as well as visits to services providing support and advice to those children and young people.
- (d) To recommend ways in which more integrated services can be developed across all Council directorates, schools and other stakeholders to lead towards: - Improved education attainment and achievement for Children Looked After, Children in need and Care Leavers; Emotional and Mental Health and Well-being Support for Children Looked After, Children in Need, and Care Leavers; Improvements in services for children with disabilities; To encourage Looked After Children, Children in need and Care Leavers to become active citizens.
- (e) To ensure performance monitoring systems are in place, and regularly review performance data to ensure sustained performance improvements in outcomes;
- (f) To benchmark and learn from best practice of other Local Authorities;
- (g) To receive all relevant Children's Services inspection and annual reports, including: Children's Homes Quality of Care Report; Child Practice Review Themes, Fostering Annual Quality of Care Report; Adoption Fostering Annual Quality of Care Report; 4C's Commissioning; Out of Area Annual Report; Education Report; Children's Complaints reports; and Advocacy Annual Report;
- (h) To develop, monitor and review a corporate parenting strategy, and ensure its effective implementation through work plans and corporate parenting training programmes;
- (i) To submit an annual progress report to the Cabinet and make recommendations where responsibility for that function rests with the Cabinet;
- (j) To report to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee as necessary;
- (k) To recommend the appointment of co-opted members to the Committee for approval by Council;
- (l) To submit an Annual Report on the work of the Committee to full Council;
- (m) All Members of the Committee will be required to undertake relevant training to enable them to properly discharge their duties;

The Population

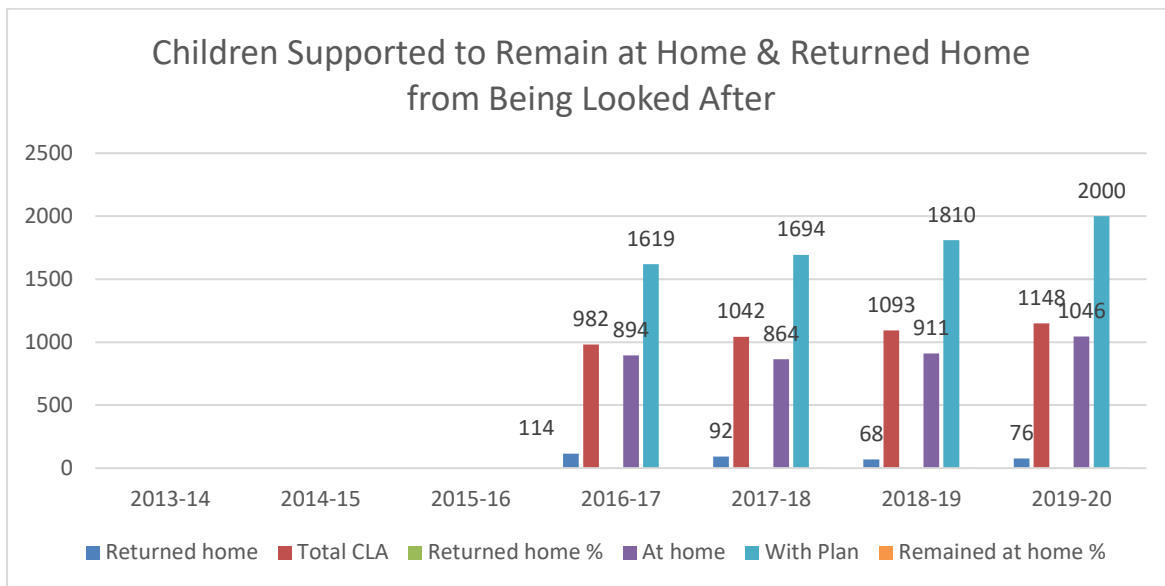


Of the 2000 children with a Care and Support Plan at 31st March 2020, 52.3% were supported **to live at home** and were therefore not being looked after.

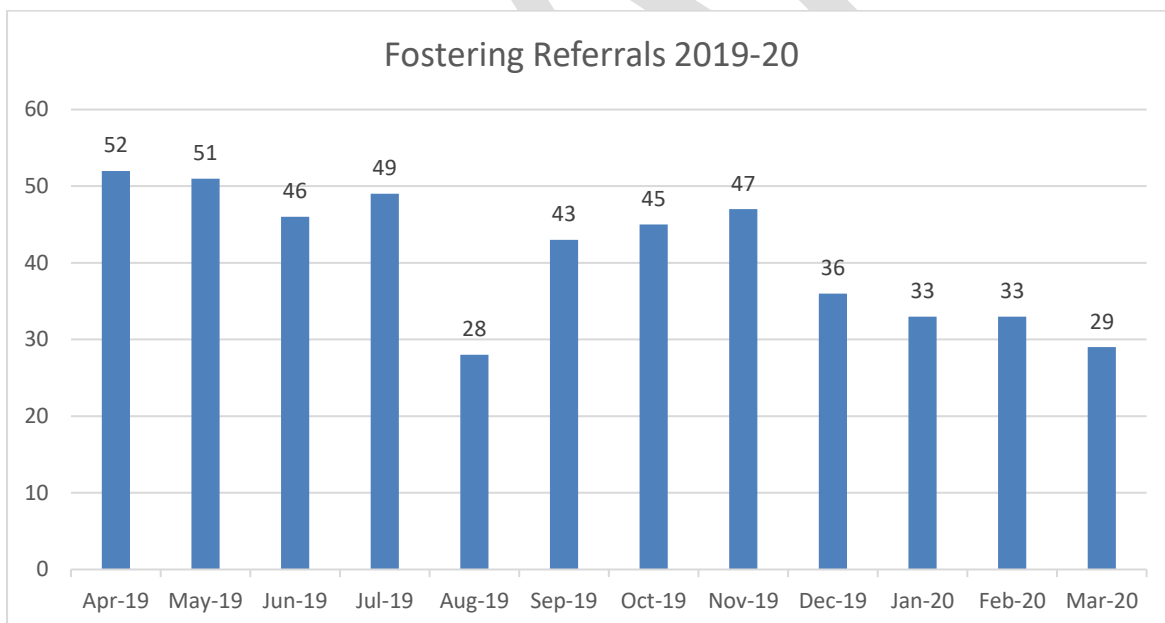
Care proceedings data outlined below cover up to quarter 3, quarter 4 data is currently unavailable at the time of report due to difficulty in collating manually during COVID 19 pandemic restrictions.



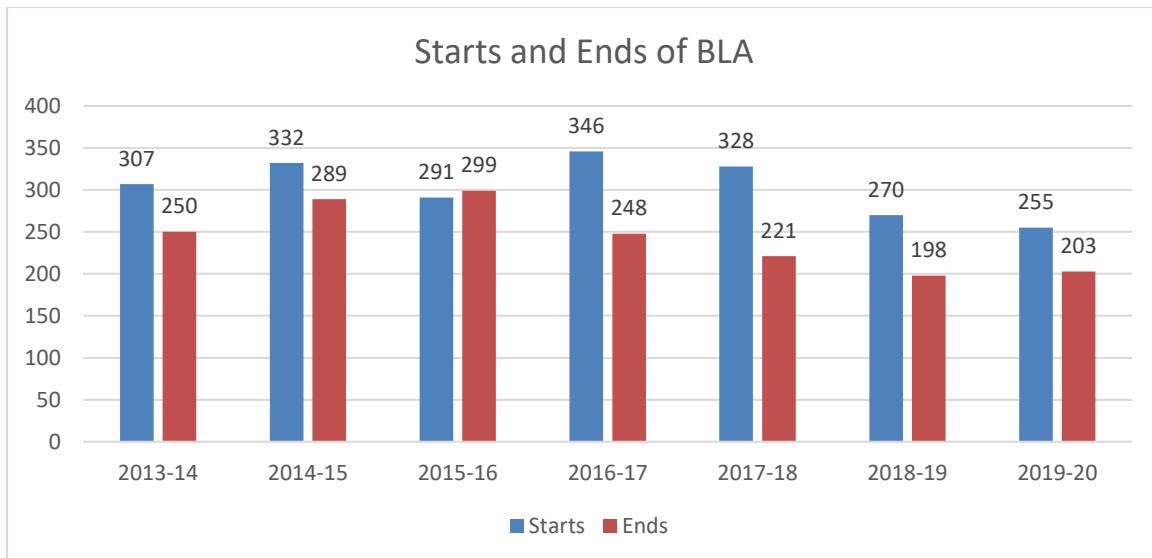
Of the total number of 1,148 children who were looked after during the 2019/20 year, **76 returned home**.



In addition to the 76 children who were returned home from care, **171 children were in the care of their parents**, but remain subject to a Care Order, and **148 children were placed with relative carers**.



Care proceedings issued and concluded data covering 2018-2019 is still being formulated at the time of the report.



56.6% (388/685) of looked after children in regulated placements were placed in Cardiff as of 31st March 2020

65.5% (449/685) of looked after children were in **external provider placements** as of the 31st March 2020.

Of the children who were **care leavers** in 2018/19, **54%** (40/74) were engaged in **education, training or employment** one year after leaving care.

Of the total number of **care leavers**, **21.39%** (77/360) experienced **homelessness** during the year.

As of 31st March 2020 **81 children were in external residential placements**

93.7% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation at the time of leaving care

8.07% (77/954) of children experienced **more than 3 placements**. The ceiling target is not to exceed 9% which we were in line with. Cardiff were and continue to strive to ensure all children are in the right placement for them and that children are returned to Cardiff from out of area placements where appropriate for their needs.

Attendance

Meetings

During the 2019/20 municipal year, four Committee meetings were held

The scheduled meetings were held on the 15th July 2019, 17th September 2019, 18th November 2019 and 28th January 2020.

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	
		<i>Meetings: Possible</i>	<i>Meetings: Actual</i>
Sarah Merry Chair	Labour (Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Education, Employment and Skills)	4	4
Cllr Sue Lent Deputy Chair	Labour	4	3
Cllr Fenella Bowden	Independent	4	4
Cllr Sean Driscoll *	Conservative	3	3
Cllr Fenella Bowden	Independent	4	4
Cllr Graham Hinchey	Labour (Cabinet Member for Children & Families)	4	4
Cllr Robert Hopkins**	Liberal Democrats	3	3
Cllr Shaun Jenkins	Conservative	4	3
Cllr Ashley Lister	Labour	4	4

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

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 2019/20 Business

Engagement / participation of young people

The Committee's current 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.

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 interest 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 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.

The Committee throughout the year were updated on how the voice of looked after children have been incorporated in a range of areas of work and were made aware of a range of initiatives and projects in development to further strengthen the voice of the child.

It should be noted that listening, consultation, and engagement permeates throughout the Committee's programme, as detailed in further sections of this report. Through a number of reports such as Complaints and representations reports and Independent Reviewing Officer service report the voice of looked after children are placed at the centre. There has also been a wide range of specific Participation initiatives, programmes and projects presented to the Committee aimed to strengthen the voice of a young person and ensure that our young people have meaningful engagement to have an active role in shaping services that affect them.

Theme

Participation

1. 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;

The experience of looked after children and outcomes

2. Promoting permanency
3. Providing high quality placements.
4. Provide young people leaving care with appropriate preparation for adult life, taking account of all of their needs including their wellbeing.

Specialist services

5. Continue to improve services for children with disabilities, including short break care.
6. Improve and support the emotional health and mental wellbeing of looked after children.

Education

7. Improve the education attainment and achievement for all looked after children.

The role of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee within the Council

8. Strengthening the role of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee within the Council.

Young Person Participation

Presentation on UNICEF UK Child Friendly City Strategy

During July 2019 a member of the Community Education team presented to the Committee. The presentation informed members on the Partnership between Cardiff and UNICEF UK in working towards Cardiff becoming a Child Friendly City. The programme is aimed to help make cities and communities places where all children including the most vulnerable feel safe, heard and nurtured.

The vision of the Child Friendly City was shared with the Committee

“A city with children and young people at its heart, where the voices, needs and rights of all children and young people are respected.

“A city where all children and young people, regardless of belief, ethnicity, background or wealth are safe, healthy, happy and able to share in the city’s success”

Details were given on how the vision could be reached through a set of 5 goals with 17 commitments to action showing how the goals would be reached

The 5 goals presented to the Committee were:

- Goal 1** Every child and young person is valued, respected and treated fairly
- Goal 2** Every child and young person has their voice, needs and priorities heard and taken into account
- Goal 3** All children and young people grow up in a safe and supportive home
- Goal 4** All children and young people access high quality education that promotes their rights and helps them develop their skills and talents to the full
- Goal 5** Children have good physical, mental and emotional health and know how to stay healthy

Members expressed concern at the number of elected members who have still not undertaken the UNICEF training and queried whether there is an expectation that all staff will undergo the training. Members were advised that the training provided by UNICEF concentrated on police officers, those officers from education and social services as opposed to across the board. However, there is a mandatory eLearning module which staff have to undertake.

Discussions were held for the need for a child in care to get their voice heard, the prioritisation of education for the child who is looked after and queried how is more funding and support being identified for these children and not necessarily through a classroom environment. Members were advised that it is a difficult challenge, and that engagement can only take place when they feel it is appropriate. It is important to have the processes and structure to be able to have meaningful conversations. There is still work to be done on this, the Child Friendly City is an umbrella but Children’s Services and Education have the responsibility of doing the work.

The Mind of my own app

In November 2019 the service manager for children services provided a presentation on a digital app to increase participation of looked after children. The Mind of my Own App would provide an opportunity for looked after children to provide real time feedback to services and support. Members were given case studies and key statistics outlining how the app has worked in other local authorities. Information was also given on how looked after children with additional needs would be able to access the app and get their voices heard.

Members expressed concern as to what would happen if communication was urgent, officers informed members that there is a process whereby reports are screened and contact will be made after. Such details will be clearly identified through an implementation plan. Discussions were held around the age of the young people using the app and how those with additional learning needs would be able to benefit. The Committee were informed that those children with additional learning needs who may struggle to share their views with the App will be able to share their views, wishes and feelings via Mind of my Own Express which is aimed at supporting communication in a primarily pictorial format.

CPAC were informed that a small group of young people in the Bright Sparks group tested the app, one person had literacy needs. The young people were actively engaged in the app and thought it was something that would benefit them and they would use.

Bright Sparks Awards

On the 15th November 2019 Committee members Councillor Hinchey and Councillor Lister attended the Bright Sparks Awards ceremony, in 2019 the theme chosen by young people was the theme of "Heroes" providing an opportunity for looked after children to reflect on what and who a hero is. The event was attended by approximately 150 people including a range of staff from Social Services and the Lord Mayor. As part of the awards, the young people chose to introduce a Lifetime Achievement Award and dedicated the award to a foster carer who has provided an amazing 25 years of service to caring for children and young people. Committee members noted that it was really encouraging to hear young people talk of their parents, teachers and caregivers as heroes and to see how they recognised the people who have made a positive impact on their lives.

Voices from Care Cymru

Voices from Care Cymru is an organisation that provides an independent voice for care experienced children and young people in Wales and delivers a range of services to support young people.

During January 2020 the Programmes Manager from Voices from Care Cymru provided the Committee with information about the project including the importance on supporting young people with their emotional and mental health, of sibling relationships; of being loved; and of stability and breaking the stigma that young people in care cannot do things that others can.

Members expressed concerns on how they could help support the Voices from Care organisation and were advised that responsibilities of corporate parents and raising an awareness of the voices from care; if there are activities and initiatives taking place young people would welcome the attendance of corporate parents; be champions for care experienced young people.

Presentations / Reports	Dates presented	Guest speaker
1. Child Friendly City strategy	July 2019	Community Education team
2. Mind of my own App	November 2019	Operational Manager
3. Voices from Care Cymru	January 2020	Programme Manager – Voices from Care Cymru

Experience of looked after children and outcomes

Good practice in leaving Care

Sections 105 to 115 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 place duties on a local authority to provide support for children and young persons who it has 'looked after' when they cease to be looked after (care leavers). The support provided is intended to be equivalent to that which a child who has not been looked after might reasonably expect from his or her parents.

During July 2019 Committee meeting, members were presented with what support was available to those Looked after children who have left care. The Committee were presented with information about categories of looked after children leaving care and what support is available.

The presentation outlined the key challenges facing care leavers that is faced UK wide:

- 43% are not in training, education or employment at the age of 19 years. (Wales figures)
- 43 per cent of care leavers felt the main professional supporting them had been unhelpful in helping them think about future housing needs. (UK figures)
- 40 per cent of care leavers say that not having enough savings for a deposit was a barrier to accessing accommodation. (UK figures)

Under section 108 of the 2014 Act, local authorities have duties towards young people in foster care who wish to continue living with their foster parents beyond the age of 18. The Committee were given information on the "When I'm ready" scheme.

During the meeting, members discussed a range of issues in relation to support for care leavers. Members referred to the Mind of My Own app and asked whether consideration is being given to those leaving care being allowed access. Officers noted that as the app is being purchased by the authority, the view is that access should remain with care leavers certainly until the age of 25. Members queried how we support our young people who are attending university. Officers advised that Personal Advisors were very good at providing advice, whether that be finance and budgeting issues, housing, the yellow box scheme which is an equipment exchange. It is largely about creating independence as opposed to dependency. As officers it is also necessary to sign off on financial assistance, for example for a gap in finance for accommodation. As parents we would provide that for our children, and the authority has to offer similar assistance.

Fostering update

The recruitment and retention of foster carers continues to be a priority area for the service to address the balance between placements with in-house foster carers and independent fostering agencies. In January 2019, a Fostering Project Team was established to review fees & allowances and recruitment & retention.

The Operational Manager for Substitute Family Care provided an update to the Committee in September 2019 on the Fostering arrangements and provisions across Cardiff. Information was given on the recruitment and retention of foster carers, the impact on recruitment and plans for the future.

Members were informed of next steps including a review of resources and an additional funding of 300k recurring this will help with service modernisation, providing 24 hours informal support and plans to introduce 'finder's fee' for existing foster carers.

The Operational Manager noted the impact including a significant increase in enquiries including enquiries from IFA foster carers wishing to transfer to the in house service.

However, the Operational Manager stated that there was no quick solution and that the timeframe for application of fostering arrangements to placement is approximately 9 months. During the meeting members discussed the compliance monitoring which has now been in place for the last few months which allows the team to look at blockages and drift.

Members were advised that currently foster carers receive in the region of £450 per week, the majority of the monies received is not taxable and foster carers are still entitled to other universal benefits.

NYAS residential review

The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) is a service that provides advocacy support to children and vulnerable adults.

In November 2019 Committee meeting, members were provided with a presentation from the service manager of (NYAS) on its participation programme. Members were informed of the meaning of participation and the Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification on the presentation.

The Committee discussed the involvement of young children and the feedback provided. It was noted that small focus groups were formed with young people to discuss the service provided by Social Workers, the quality of the support provided, the contact provided and the aftercare support for care leavers. It was also noted that young people have been taking part in the interview process with in the service. Members queried the nature of changes as a result of the participation and were pleased to note that there were tangible outcomes and that the listening events provided a good source of feedback.

Children Services Locality Review

In November 2019 members were provided with a detailed presentation outlining the new locality model for Children's Services. The Committee were informed that Cardiff will be split into three areas, with each area having an Operational Manager; Cardiff North, Cardiff East and Cardiff South.

The Committee were informed that the goal was to deliver excellence and to improve a child's journey by aligning services to the model. A number of key factors were analysed in establishing the areas:

Key factors were:

Deprivation,
Policing,
Education,
Health

It was noted that as the city grows the population density changes the proposed areas will need to be periodically reviewed. Officers also presented the current cases held in each area:

1. Cardiff North -718 cases,
2. Cardiff East- 877 cases
3. Cardiff South - 791 cases.

Members expressed their support and for the model and locality regions that have been created. Discussions were held around the need for joint working, particularly between Social Workers and Education. Members raised the need for funding for children who are looked after, it was noted that the PDG for looked after children is administered by the consortia. Members welcomed the opportunity of hearing from the Consortia as to how that funding is allocated.

Out of area placements update

Members were provided with an update on Children's out of area Placements at the January 2020 Committee meeting. Information was presented in regards to the types of placements, issues and a forward work plan. Officers presented information in regards to the reasons a child may be placed out of county:

- Exploitation/High risk behaviour
- Abuse and Neglect
- Drug & alcohol
- Terminally ill parents
- Domestic violence
- Sexual Abuse

Information was shared in regards to the issues facing out of area placements such as the insufficient numbers of in house foster carers, the reliance on independent fostering agencies and that placements are often led by what vacancies were available at the time.

The vision of local placements for local children was shared with the Committee and a forward plan to meet some of the challenges was outlined to members. This included actively recruiting in house foster carers and working with IFAs and local residential providers to develop relationships as well as introducing planning and forecasting.

The Operational Manager outlined to the Committee what work was underway to meet some of these challenges, such as a new in house residential provision. This would provide an in house assessment unit and would provide the opportunity to assess children and young people over a 12 week period, avoiding crisis driven moves.

Members queried how the authority kept in touch with those children who reside further afield and were informed that Social Workers undertake visits and reviews and that the Independent reviewing Officer would always have an oversight.

Presentations / Reports	Dates presented	Guest speaker
1. Good practice leaving care	July 2019	Operational Manager – Specialist Services
2. Fostering update	September 2019	Operational Manager
3. Locality Review	November 2019	Operational Manager
4. NYAS review	November 2019	Service Manager for NYAS
5. Out of area placements	January 2020	Operational Manager

Specialist Services

Care and Support Plans

The Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014 places a requirement to record information under the act there is a statutory requirement for every looked after Child to have a Part 6 Care and Support plan in place within 10 days of becoming looked after. These plans need to be updated regularly, including in preparation for a Looked after Child Review.

In July 2019 the Operational Manager for Specialist Services presented the importance of the voice of young people involved in their care and support plans as outlined in legislation. Details were given of when a care and support plan begins, how the plan is reviewed and what the plans aim to achieve in order to provide the best outcomes for looked after children.

Cardiff and the Vale UHB emotional and mental health development work

In September 2019 the Committee were provided with information from a clinical psychologist on the Developmental Trauma Service for children who are looked after. The Committee were provided information outlining the service model, team structure and the challenges facing the service.

Members were given an outline of the service including the issues that were faced by young people and their families and the nature of problems and barriers that arose during meetings. Discussions also took place around funding, work with schools and training.

Fostering Well-being Programme

In November 2019 Committee members were provided a presentation on a new Welsh Government funded Fostering Wellbeing programme. Members of the Fostering Network team presented a short video and outline of the programme.

Following a successful pilot in conjunction with Cwm Taf social services 2017 – 2019. The Fostering Network noted that they were rolling out the programme in phases by across Wales.

The programme aims to run a series of masterclasses to enable foster carers and supervising social workers to gain the skills, competence and confidence needed to help inspire and equip children and young people to fulfil their potential.

The programme focused on 5 basic needs that contributes to a looked after child's well being

- 1- Social – including being confident and forming appropriate relationships

- 2- Physical – including having a well-balanced diet, suitable accommodation, good health and recreation.
- 3- Emotional – including a positive self-image, managing of stress, the giving and receiving of love being free from abuse
- 4- Cultural – including having a sense of identity and belonging and understanding cultural norms and behaviours
- 5- Learning - access to formal and informal learning

Members confirmed their support of the programme but expressed concern about the financial pressures on schools who have a number of children who are looked after; The Committee were informed that there would be investment in the programme.

Members were keen to ensure that that knowledge in the masterclass will be widely shared. Foster Carers will be recruited as programme pioneers, as well as the skills and experience they have, they will receive training and support to help them cascade learning. This will aid sharing resources and understanding local issues. Concerns were raised by the Committee that Foster Carers are still not feeling valued and queried whether involvement in this programme could lead to some form of recognised qualification. Members were advised that Foster Carer Pioneers would receive some payment.

Presentations / Reports	Dates presented	Guest speaker
1. Care and Support plans	July 2019	Operational manager – Specialist Services
2. Cardiff and the Vale UHB emotional and mental health development work	September 2019	Clinical Psychologist
3. Fostering Well – being programme	November 2019	Fostering Well-being network- manager

Education

Pupil Development Grant

The Pupil Development Grant is a grant available to schools to support looked after and formerly looked after children. In September 2019 the regional lead for the Pupil Development Grant presented to the committee an outline on how the grant is allocated, the national model and the outcomes and objectives of the grant.

Members were informed that the Pupil Development Grant is allocated:

1. For The Salary for regional lead
2. To Support for Children placed outside of Wales
3. Strategically Delivered Support

Funding is allocated to clusters of schools and settings to build capacity and to provide bespoke interventions, both of which need to be based on evidence and impact. All activity in relation to the grant should consider sustainability beyond the lifetime of the grant.

The Committee were informed of the vision, values and objectives of the consortium and were given detail of the how the impact will be monitored. Information was given Projects must aim to enhance curriculum opportunities to support social and emotional development, which impacts on the following areas: Raising attainment/achievement, Improve attendance, Reduce exclusions.

Discussions were held amongst the Committee in regards to funding going to clusters of schools in order to provide bespoke interventions and build capacity. It was noted that funding will be based on evidence and impact. The clusters will have a CLA lead who will work across both primary and secondary schools. Members were advised that although a presentation had been provided outlining the new reporting arrangements as yet the figures cannot be reported.

Educational outcomes for Looked after Children 2018- 2019

In January 2020 members were provided with the annual Briefing report in respect of the Performance of Cardiff Looked After Children which provided analysis of the educational outcomes for the academic years of Children Looked After in years 2, 6 9 and 11. Members were advised that it was important to note, with particular reference to the Key Stage 4 information, the reporting mechanism has changed; the information provided is from a specific point in time, namely the end of March 2019 which shows that 79 young people were looked after in year 11, 27 of which were out of County.

The report provided an analysis of educational outcomes for the academic year 2018/19 for children in the care of Cardiff Local Authority and identified the main strengths and shortcomings in performance. It also sets out future key actions.

Educational outcomes for children and young people in Cardiff have improved over the past five years, reflecting the focus on education as a key priority for Cardiff at the heart of the Council's Capital Ambition:

“A good education provides the best start in life and remains the surest route out of poverty. We will continue to improve and invest in our schools and to make sure that every child has the best possible start in life.”

In October 2019, the council launched ‘Cardiff 2030: a ten year vision for a capital city of learning and opportunity’, building on progress made since the launch of ‘Cardiff 2020’ in 2016. Against this overall improving picture, ‘Cardiff 2030’ highlights the continuing importance of focused action in a number of areas, including the continuing need to improve educational outcomes for looked after children.

Officers noted that the attendance of looked after children educated in Cardiff schools in the primary phase is very good with an overall primary attendance figure of 94.76%. attendance of looked after children educated in the secondary phase is significantly below that of all pupils. The overall secondary attendance figure 93.8%. The drop in attendance through the key stages links directly to the drop in overall attainment. Officers will analyse in greater depth the reasons behind KS4 lack of achievement and identify changes that can be made and additional support that can be given. Additional staffing to support looked after children within the Education Directorate will be explored and the work on improving and monitoring the PEPs to identify underachievement will be central to improving performance

Members noted the report and queried the difference in performance of those in care and school locally as opposed to those out of county. Officers advised that emphasis is placed on bringing young people back to Cardiff as soon as possible and that the best chance for those young people is that they are attending school locally so that they have access to all the support services that can be provided. Concern was expressed amongst the Committee as to whether schools could do all that they could not to exclude children in care in secondary schools. Officers advised that schools are always challenged by the team about any proposed exclusion but if children are in school out of county it is far more difficult to challenge.

Extract from the report

We have focussed on increasing the transparency of data and a central robust tracking system. Our central Virtual tracker is being used effectively to track Looked After children. This was highlighted by Estyn as excellent practice.

- We have stronger working relationship between the local authority and the Challenge Advisors in the Consortium ensuring that schools receive the appropriate degree of challenge.

They are updated on a regular basis to the number and year group of looked after children in their schools. Any particular concerns are raised in termly meetings.

- Stronger, effective partnerships with Children’s Services have meant quicker responses to concerns and removal of barriers impeding pupil progress.
- Education teams have all committed pledges to support looked after children in their joint role as corporate parents.
- A new PEP format and a new system of responsibility for completing PEPs by designated teachers in schools was initiated in September 2019. This will be an ongoing development priority but already there are improvements to note.

Presentations / Reports	Dates presented	Guest speaker
6. Pupil Development Grant	September 2019	Operational Manager
7. Education performance report	January 2020	Achievement Leader

The role of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee within the Council

Cardiff Children’s Services Strategy 2019 – 2022

In July 2019 Assistant Director for Children’s Services provided the Committee with information of the need and development of a new Cardiff Children’s Services Strategy 2019 -2022.

The Committee were provided with an outline for the need for the strategy focusing on key areas of significant pressures:

1. External demands and complexities
2. Placements
3. Legislation and work with the Courts
4. Workforce

The presentation outlined key performance indicators and future improvements that would be made to meet the challenges and pressures. Key priorities were set out including how Children’s Services would develop a strength based approach and how outcomes and improvements would be measured. A staff structure was provided to the Committee which provided a new locality focus model.

A discussion was held noting that the development and implementation of the strategy was a huge piece of work, Members noted that the task would prove disruptive and wanted to be reassured that it was transformative and that the service would be better. Members were advised that a lot of consideration has gone into the strategy and officers accepted that it was indeed a huge piece of work but was necessary to ensure that a difference is made to the lives of our young people and their families.

Corporate Parenting Strategy

The terms of reference required the Committee to develop, monitor and review a corporate parenting strategy, and ensure its effective implementation through work plans.

In January 2020 the Committee were presented with an update from officers on the new Corporate Parenting Strategy. Officers informed the Committee of the vision of the strategy and legislation applicable to looked after children and children in care to provide context to the document. The Committee were informed how the strategy will be co-produced with young people. Details were given on the work undertaken so far to engage looked after children including a timeline and details of engagement with young people and future engagement with stakeholders were outlined to the committee.

Member visits

Councillor Bowden advised Members that she and Councillor Merry had attended a local High School in January. The purpose of the visit was to see the work undertaken to support looked after children and their carers. At the time of the visit there were 26 looked after children, it was noted to the Committee that only a few needed academic intervention. Although this is a positive it was noted that the biggest need for support was to support the emotional well-being and managing traumatised looked after children, there is a strong team at the school and staff are trained using Trauma Informed practice. The staff at the school are proactive in identifying the emotional and educational needs of young people and the well-being of staff was supported. There are 330 pupils on the SEN register, 34% of the school. They have been successful in obtaining 25 statements in 4 years

The Committee were advised that support is available to years 7 and years 8 via the ELPC to adjust to high school and that a permanent counsellor is employed via the Pupil Development Grant. Councillor Bowden and Councillor Merry were given a tour of the school and were able to meet a number of staff including the Deputy Head teacher and Safeguarding officer.

The key messages gained from the visit were:

- School does not use pupil exclusion but find different ways to tackle problems.

- Kinship carers – their need for support from CS together with funding for the carers to enable them to provide for the child; In many Kinship arrangements there is no one objectively organising contact with birth family & siblings; & there are no respite provisions;
- The lack of provision in Cardiff for an emotional trauma centre for young people who need it; the need for stronger advocacy. To support the family and the young person in care.

Presentations / Reports	Dates presented	Guest speaker
1. Children's Services strategy	July 2019	Assistant Director of Children's Social Services
2 Corporate Parenting Strategy	January 2020	Operational Manager

Themes	Dates	Detail
1. Young person Participation	July 2019	Presentation on UNICEF Child Friendly City Strategy
	November 2019	Mind of my own app presentation
	November 2019	Bright Sparks Awards
2. Experience of Looked After Children and Outcomes	July 2019	Good practice leaving care
	September 2019	Fostering update
	November 2019	Locality Review
	November 2019	NYAS residential review
3. Specialist Services	January 2020	Out of area placements
	July 2019	Care and support plans
	September 2019	Cardiff and Vale UHB emotional and mental health development work
4. Education	November 2019	Fostering Well- being programme
	September 2019	Pupil Development Grant
5. Role of Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee within the Council	January 2020	Education Performance Report
	July 2019	Children services strategy
	January 2020	Corporate Parenting Strategy

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 2019-20

Performance reports	Dates presented
1. Children's Homes Quality of Care report	September 2019
2. Children's Services report	November 2019
3. Complaints and representation report	January 2020
4. Independent Reviewing Officer Report	January 2020

1. Children's Services performance report

During November 2019, Quarter 1 of 2019/2020 were reported to the Committee. The purpose of the report 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.

Extracts from the report

At Quarter 1 2019/2020 Children's

934 children looked after.

71 starts of being looked after this quarter

39 ends of being looked after this quarter

385/ 676 (57.0%) children looked after in regulated placements are placed within Cardiff, increasing to 78.1% when taking neighbouring authorities into consideration.

97.7% of children looked after allocated to a social worker. Permanence secured for 7 children through adoption since 1 st April 2019.

In Quarter 1 it was reported that the following were working well:

Soft launch of Early Help Gateway in April - recruitment process for Family Support element of the Cardiff Family Advice Service completed and staff training and development is in progress. Staff morale is good and positive feedback has been received from families. Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) visited the Family Support Service in April 2019

- *Children's Services Strategy "Delivering Excellent Outcomes" developed with engagement with children and young people from the Bright Start Forum, 11 Plus Team and the Adolescent Resource Centre*
- *Fostering Fortnight was held during Quarter 1 to raise awareness of the in house fostering service and recruit new foster carers to Cardiff. At present, the number of children in in house fostering remains relatively stable, although the number of enquiries has increased - there were 15 full assessments ongoing at 30th June 2019.*

But managers were worried about:

The interface and relationship between MASH / Support4Families and Family Help / Gateway needs strengthening to ensure consistent and correct step up and step down mechanisms.

- *More work to do fully embed rights and participation in everything we do from practice to strategy and to communicate effectively.*
- *Supply of the right type of services for our most vulnerable children, including the lack of appropriate placement provision, scarcity of residential and foster care provision in a timely way to meet the needs of children and young people with more complex needs*
- *Social Worker vacancies in Children's Services - for Quarter 1 stand at 31.6% and result in an over reliance on agency social workers.*
- *Capacity within the Independent Reviewing Officer Service to complete timely children looked after review reports is challenging.*
- *Challenges in the Children Looked After Service as the service prepares to move into a locality model.*
- *Management of demand and complexity of caseloads.*
- *Numbers of children waiting for adoption 12 months after Placement Order made (51, 31 of whom are not yet placed).*

Plans in place:

Continue to work with the Institute of Public Care to explore best practice procedures and embed these into the service.

- Implement the Mind Of My Own app which will give young people an instant and convenient way to express their views, wishes and feelings, and social workers a smart way to record them.*
- Implement the priorities in the Commissioning Strategy, including development of emergency placement options.*
- A post to drive forward recruitment and retention was recruited to during Quarter 1 and a second post that will focus on workforce planning activities was also appointed to in the same recruitment process.*

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 subject if Care and Support plans and care leavers.

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.

2. Complaints & representations report

The Committee's terms of reference state that it will receive Children's Services Complaints reports. 2. The current Welsh Government guidance and regulations in relation to social services complaints and representations came into being on 1st August 2014.

Citizens making complaints have a right to be listened to properly and have their concerns resolved quickly and effectively. Children's Services emphasis is on listening to concerns and using this learning to improve services for everyone who uses them. Complaints should be handled in such a way that the complainant is the focus, not the process, and that the particular circumstances of the complainant are taken into account (including their age or disability).

Where the complaint relates to a looked after child, a child in need or a care leaver the local authority has a duty to provide an advocate as required. All children or young people who make complaints are offered a meeting and all children and families will receive a written response to the concerns they have raised.

In January 2020 the Committee were presented with a Complaints and representation report covering the period from 1 st July to 30th September 2019

Extracts from the reports

During this quarter, the number of complaints received by Children's Services was 37, a decrease of 2 from Q1. a. Of the 37 complaints received, 12 of the complaints received were in relation to the Social Worker or the service received, a decrease from 20 recorded in Q1. A further 12 were disputing decision-making, a slight increase from Q1 were 11 were recorded. 3 complaints were received alleging a delay in providing service and 2 alleging inaccurate information being recorded. b. 13 complaints were received regarding the Child in Need Service, a slight decrease from Q1 (14). 13 complaints were received regarding the Looked after Children Service compared with 15 in Q1. Complaints regarding the Intake & Assessment Service remained static as 7 complaints were recorded in both Q1 and Q2. There were 2 complaints recorded under the Council's Corporate Complaints procedure.

Summary for Quarter 2 19. As at the 30th September 2019, the service were working with 2,877 children and young people and of these, we received: a. 37 complaints, a slight decrease from Quarter 1. 5 were directly from the young person, the same as Quarter 1 b. 19 compliments. Responses to AM / MP / Councillor Enquiry Letters 20. 18 AM / MP / Councillor Enquiry letters were received by Children's Services during the quarter, a decrease of 3 from Q1. 21. Requests for Information from statutory agencies: a. 150 requests were received and responded to on time, this compares to 177 received in Q1. b. 0 were completed outside of the statutory time frame. c. 0 requests were withdrawn d. There are no new requests in process at the time of writing. 22. The turnover has to be rapid due to the nature of the enquiries. Of these: a. 67 requests were from the Probation Service asking if there are children living in a household with individuals who have been bailed or will be etc. and wanting background information b. There were 20 requests from other Local Authorities' Children's Services Departments c. 63 requests were received directly from other services such as HMRC, Education and Health Services.

The Committee noted the content of the reports.

Children's homes quality of care reports (Regulations 73 visits)

Under Regulation and Inspection of Social Care Act (2016), Regulation 73 requires that the Responsible Individual undertakes visits to the care home every 3 months Under Regulation 80, the Responsible Individual must undertake a quality of care review every 6 months

In September members received the Annual Quality Assurance Report for Ty Storr short break service and Crossland's Children's home covering the period April 2018 – April 2019. The aim of producing the report was to inform and drive improvements in the quality of care provided to the young people living in the home.

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 Operational Manager for resources in Social Services presented members to the Committee The presentation covered complaints and allegations, staffing, feedback from young people and parents and areas of development.

Ty Storrie short break centre is purpose built to accommodate a wide range of disabilities and needs of users and their families who require this specialist facility.

Extract from the report (Annual Quality Assurance Report)

Ty Storrie Report

6 new children were offered overnight respite during the period and 2 children received tea visits prior to overnight stays being introduced.

Contracted to deliver 863 bed spaces per year and 881 nights were delivered and 22 tea visits. Reference to a positive inspection report which was received in March 2019. The report stated that children were looked after by a committed and caring staff team, individual needs were understood and good relationships exist with parents and partner agencies. Overall it determined that children received a good standard of care and support during their stays with evidence of positive outcomes being achieved

Extract from the report (Annual Quality Assurance Report)

Crosslands report

An inspection took place in October 2018 – which found that young people were well cared for by consistent staff and management team. Staff were well trained using Signs of Safety as the underpinning model alongside RA, individual plans and risk assessments.

- Care is taken to involve young people in education, health social and leisure activities and to maintain positive family links in line with individual care plans. Young people were making progress.
- There were no areas of non-compliance.

Members noted the significant staffing challenges during the period with two changes of interim managers, and that, amongst other things, future focus is on ensuring a more consistent and settled period for staff which will in turn have a positive impact on the quality of care.

Independent Reviewing Officer Service Monitoring Report

Local authorities are required by law to appoint an Independent Reviewing Officer (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, in residential, 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 and to raise any issues with a care plan if they are identified.

In January 2020 the Committee were provided with a performance report from the Independent Reviewing Officer service.

The report outlined to the Committee the role, the function and activity of the Independent Reviewing Officer service.

Members discussed the increase in the Looked after Children population and noted the trends identified through case audits and population analysis in particular in reference to the Courts making greater use of a legal process to place children at home with a parent under Placement with Parent Regulations (PWP). Members noted that it can be difficult to evidence satisfactory progress to the Court that there has been sufficient change that would warrant changing the order. It was noted that a team has been reviewing all the PWP care orders. The Officer advised that whilst the rising number of children has placed additional pressure on staff workloads no local authority is meeting the 100% threshold. Reviews are very rarely more than a few days out of time and if that is the case IRO's make a concerted effort to ensure as much information is available to ensure the best for the child.

Extract from the report

The IROs role is to monitor, both at formal Looked After Review meetings and in between as well. The purpose of the review meeting is to consider the plan for the child, monitor progress and enable decisions to be made. Part 6 of the Social Services & Well-Being Act (Wales) 2014 relates to Looked After Children and the role of the IRO.

Under this part of the Act it is a statutory requirement for each Looked After Child to have an effective Care and Support plan that meets their day to day long term needs and which identifies the outcomes for the child, and also demonstrates the multiagency plans to meet the child's needs.

The plan achieves this by setting objectives for work with the child, birth family and caregivers in relation to the child's developmental needs. These needs include health, education, emotional wellbeing and behavioural development, identity, family and social relationships, social presentation and self-care skills.

The Safeguarding and Reviewing Service is responsible for coordinating and chairing Child Protection Conferences as well as independently chairing and reviewing children who are Looked After. The staffing establishment includes 15.5 members of staff employed as Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) with an additional IRO post that exclusively reviews families open to the Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS).

All IRO and Child Protection (CP) chairs in the service are able to undertake dual functions chairing Looked After Children reviews and/or Child Protection Conferences. The Independent Reviewing Officers are mostly all experienced social workers, however there have been some new additions to the team. A combination of experienced staff and new recruits has meant that the team has remained knowledgeable and innovative

Conclusion

During 2019/2020 Committee members were provided with a vast variety of information from a number of sources helping the Committee to get a broad range of issues for Looked after children and those leaving care. The Committee were able to evaluate from departments in the authority and external partners to help build on their knowledge and gain a greater understanding of the everyday challenges faced by looked after children across the city.

As well as gaining an understanding of the challenges faced, the Committee were able to work with teams and be informed of initiatives to help overcome these challenges and were provided with a series of projects and programmes aimed at helping to improve the life chances of those young people who are looked after and those who have left care. Of particular interest were those projects that strengthened the voice of young people and strengthened children's rights.

Areas of particular interest to members during 2019/20 were:

- Child Friendly City Programme
- Mind of my own app
- Educational performance for looked after children.

Moving forward into 2020/21

The Committee will continue to place looked after children at the centre of what they do and further strengthen the voice of the child in their work programme for the upcoming year.

A Corporate Parenting Strategy will be launched with an exciting action plan which will be able to deliver tangible outcomes for looked after children and care leavers across Cardiff.

The terms of reference will be reviewed in order to reflect the vision of the Committee which will provide greater focus to specific areas of work.

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** and to promote greater involvement in young people in the work of the Committee
- **Benchmarking and learning from best practice**
- To develop and undertake a programme of **consultation, listening and engagement events**
- To develop, monitor and review the **corporate parenting strategy 2020- 2023**.

The Committee continues to receive a significant and large volume of information at its meetings. Further work to be undertaken is to streamline information linked to the new Corporate Parenting Strategy, action plan and participation of young people.

The forward work programme will be shaped by members and young people feedback, the programme will be flexible based on current issues and challenges at the time, connections between internal and external partners will be strengthened which will contribute to the ongoing work of the Committee.