

COUNCIL: 26 NOVEMBER 2020

CHILDREN & FAMILIES STATEMENT

AGENDA ITEM:

National Safeguarding Week

This year's National Safeguarding Week was held between 16th and 20th November 2020. The aim of the week is to raise awareness about safeguarding issues and to reinforce the message that 'safeguarding is everyone's responsibility'. The events took place virtually on digital platforms with a focus around the theme of social isolation. The programme offered a mix of training, talks and workshops for a wide audience including professionals, practitioners and stakeholders.

Safeguarding Recognition Awards Ceremony 2020

I am looking forward to attending the virtual Safeguarding Recognition Awards Ceremony 2020 on Friday 20th November alongside Councillor Susan Elsmore, Councillor Ben Gray from the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Superintendent Tim Morgan from South Wales Police. A total of 29 nominations have been received for this year's awards from across all partner agencies including the third sector. A winner will be chosen from each of the following categories:

- Outstanding Engagement and Investigation to Safeguarding Children
- Exceptional Commitment to the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults
- Innovation and Improving Practice in Safeguarding
- Excellent Contribution to Safeguarding Practice
- Significant Wider Community Safeguarding

The ceremony is an excellent opportunity to celebrate an array of outstanding contributions to safeguarding in a multi-agency context and to recognise all the hard work of staff who have made a real impact on people's lives, which is so valued by the Regional Safeguarding Board.

Bright Sparks Awards 2020

This year's Bright Sparks Awards will be held on 10th December 2020 via a pre-recorded event. A panel with representation from partners and young people will consider the nominations. The theme this year will be Christmas. The Bright Sparks forum also wanted to recognise the work that the NHS has undertaken over the past few months and so we will be looking to correspond with children's homes, fostering agencies, education and Bright Sparks to do some short messages thanking the NHS.

The messages will form a digital picture mosaic which will be shown at the beginning of the event. Messages from senior officers thanking our young people will be shown throughout the event and it will finish with a song sung by a young person.

Cardiff Parenting

During October 2020, 550 activity packs were delivered to families to provide them with books, craft activities, messy/sensory play, cooking ideas and more. This supports parents to enjoy time with their children particularly over the firebreak lockdown. Cardiff Parenting and Flying start Facebook pages continue to reach thousands with ideas and tips for families.

Feedback from parents for the online groups is very positive. Groups include GroBrain, Parent Nurturing Programme and Talking Teens, as well as informal Flying Start digital groups, Little Cooks @ Home, Rhyme Time & Story Time.

GroBrain Toddler will be rolled out during November and December to target the tricky toddler years and help improve parents' understanding of their child's development during this time. It also teaches parents how to connect with their child and guide behaviour more positively. Over 1,513 contacts were made with parents and carers, via telephone and video calls. 96% of parents completing a parenting programme demonstrated positive evidence of distance travelled.

Cardiff Family Advice & Support (CFAS) service

CFAS celebrated its first full year of operation this week and more than 12,000 parents, children and young people have already benefitted from the support the service has offered. This service has developed and now includes specialist support from PCSOs, Primary Mental Health Specialists and Family Help Disability Advisors. During the pandemic the service adapted quickly to digital ways of working, processed more than 1,000 Coronavirus-Childcare Assistance Scheme applications, supporting Key Worker parents to access childcare provision. Families struggling financially were also supported to access Emergency Response Grants from Save the Children, allowing them to urgently purchase essential items.

Children's Services Workforce

In spite of the Covid-19 pandemic, the recruitment team has worked tirelessly to ensure that the recruitment process continues, so that the city's most vulnerable families receive the support they require. This has involved developing effective processes for interviewing and shortlisting social care staff virtually. Over the past six months, 36 qualified social workers have been successfully appointed, compared to 13 during the same period in 2019. This includes staff from neighbouring local authorities, external organisations, an overseas candidate and agency staff choosing to become permanent members of the Council's workforce. As a result, the vacancy rate has been reduced from 38% to 29%, with an additional 10 social workers joining the workforce in Quarter 3.

Retention of staff has also improved, with a reduction in the number of social workers leaving the service. This is in part due to increased opportunities for reflective practice, shared learning and career progression.

Since the implementation of the market supplement in April 2020, 15 agency workers have been appointed as permanent employees. The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) started this year with 3 permanent members of staff and now has a fully-established, permanent team of 11.

In the summer, 16 newly-qualified social work students decided to start their careers in Cardiff. Eight of these staff joined us initially as student support workers, recruited during the Covid-19 pandemic to support the Intake & Assessment and Locality teams with lower risk cases, freeing up social workers to do work that only they can do. All 16 have been allocated experienced members of staff as mentors to provide guidance and support.

The Childcare Offer

Applications for the Childcare Offer from parents with children eligible to access it in the autumn term opened on 1st September 2020. By the end of October 2020, 1,141 Cardiff children were benefitting from the Offer and two new childcare settings have signed up to provide it, bringing the total to 364. Since April 2020, over £2.6m has been spent providing funded childcare for eligible working parents in Cardiff. Between October 2018 and October 2020 the total value of cost saving to families in Cardiff is over £9m.

Welsh Government Childcare Provider Grant

14 childcare providers have benefitted from the Welsh Government Childcare Provider Grant, totalling £39,468. The grant was set up to support childcare settings which had lost income in 2020/21 compared to the same period last year and which had not been able to access other grant funding.

Welsh Government Child Development Fund

The Council has been given £442,996 from the Welsh Government to provide additional developmental support to those children and families who are in greatest need and disadvantage, and who have been impacted most by Covid-19. This short-term grant will allow Local Authorities and partners to address the developmental delay of children aged 0-5.

Councillor Graham Hinchey
Cabinet Member for Children & Families
19 November 2020