

CHILDREN & FAMILIES STATEMENT

AGENDA ITEM:

Cardiff Family Advice and Support (CFAS)

The Family Gateway reached a key milestone on 11 May 2021 when it took its 20,000th call. During the two years since the service became operational, the Family Gateway has made more than 9,000 referrals to a range of services and supported more than 15,000 people.

Whilst there has been an increase in the number of contacts and referrals from Primary Health in the last two months, self-referrals from families remain consistently high with a total of 323 in March and April 2021. Schools are also primary referrers to the service, with a notable increase in referrals in the last two months with 176 received.

During March and April 2021, 53% of people supported were referred to a range of agencies for ongoing support. 25% gave new and additional information which was shared with services who were already providing support for the family and 22% were provided with signposting information and advice.

There has also been an increase in the number of Multi-Agency Referral Forms (MARFs) and Public Protection Notices (PPNs), which are being received on open cases. These are assessed at the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to ascertain whether Family Help continues to be the right team to support the families given the additional concerns raised. During March and April 2021, 56 MARFs were received, which resulted in 13 cases stepping up to Intake and Assessment and 41 PPNs were received, which resulted in four cases stepping up to Intake and Assessment.

Childcare and Play Grant

By the end of the 2020/21 financial year, £325,380 of the additional £606,183 grant made available by the Welsh Government had been paid out to childcare providers. Of this, £61,860 has supported 15 settings who were required to close due to a positive Covid case; £15,649 has been shared across 45 settings who have claimed funding for additional Covid related costs, and 36 settings have accessed the sustainability grant, with £247,870 paid out by year end. This funding was in addition to 51 direct grants to providers funded from the Childcare and Play funding, which benefitted 15 out of school providers, 11 full day-care settings, three sessional care settings and 22 childminders. These providers received a total of £78,102 to improve the quality of their settings or provide additional staffing to support the attendance of children who would not be able to attend safely without this assistance.

Childcare Offer Capital Grant

Childcare Offer providers also accessed a total of £189,865 of capital funding in the 2020/21 financial year. This consisted of £122,000.00 of additional 'in year' funding provided to support settings to ensure they were 'Covid safe', and £67,865 of the existing Capital Small Grants Scheme funding.

The Childcare Offer

By the end of May 2021, 1,869 children were benefitting for funding via the Childcare Offer, with a total of 389 childcare settings signed up to provide Offer places. This represents an occupancy rate of 94% of the previous maximum of 1,994 children funded in April 2020.

Children's Services – Covid-19 Operating Model

Children's Services continue to review the Covid-19 operating model on a regular basis. Face-to-face visits have been reinstated for all children – initial risk assessments are completed and updated to reflect any change of circumstance. Face-to-face contact for children looked after has also resumed on the basis of risk assessment. Going forward, contact will be a mixture of face-to-face and virtual in line with Covid-19 guidance and the child/young person's needs. Planning has started for staff to return to County Hall on a hybrid working basis, prioritising duty services and staff with emotional health and well-being needs.

Young People's Mental Health & Emotional Well-being

Children's Services continue to work closely with colleagues in Education and Health to address the emerging issue of some young people experiencing significant mental health and well-being issues, the most serious of which have required hospitalisation. A pathway is being developed and work is ongoing to identify suitable accommodation for young people who are ready to be discharged, but cannot be discharged home.

Corporate Parenting Strategy

I am very pleased to inform you that the Council has published its Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2021-24. This strategy outlines our commitment to work with our partners and the wider community to support children looked after and care leavers across our city – we all have a responsibility to support them to be happy, safe and thrive. The strategy was co-produced with children and young people – a total of 22 young persons aged 5-27 from a range of care settings, including children with disabilities, were engaged in the review. Kinship carers and foster carers were also engaged.

Foster Care Fortnight

Foster Care Fortnight was celebrated last month with local authorities across Wales uniting to encourage more foster carers to join us. Inspiring stories from the Council's own foster carers were shared, with the aim of reinforcing the message that all sorts of people can foster. Whether you are married, living with a partner, single, LGBT+ or have a disability, Cardiff Council needs foster carers that are as vibrant and diverse as the city we live in.

Mind of My Own

Staff training for the Mind of My Own app that will support children to communicate with staff and enable them to capture the views of children and young people in care planning is planned for early next month. Each member of staff will go live immediately following their training and it is hoped that most staff will be trained and using the app by 19 July 2021. The team are very excited about this development and look forward to seeing how it supports children to have a voice and be heard.

Assessment Centre / Oakway

The assessment centre (known as Falconwood) and emergency accommodation for young people (known as Oakway) are currently going through the registration process with Care Inspectorate Wales. It is anticipated that the registration process will be completed shortly and that both units will then be available to take referrals for placements.

Young Carers ID Card Launch

I am very pleased to inform you that the young carers identity card was launched on 10 June 2021. The Council, in collaboration with Vale of Glamorgan Council and Cardiff YMCA, have jointly developed this identity card with the intention of helping professionals including doctors, teachers and pharmacists to recognise young carers and support them appropriately. I was privileged to be able to attend the launch and it was a wonderful event – there were poems, songs and family stories about how young carers and their families feel, and how much they value the support provided by the young carers social worker and YMCA.

Ty Coryton

Members will be aware of the recent media coverage regarding allegations of the abuse of children with disabilities at Ty Coryton in Cardiff.

Ty Coryton is a privately-run residential unit for children with a variety of additional needs and is owned and managed by an independent provider. As the unit is located in Cardiff, the Council has launched a thorough investigation into the serious allegations that have been made and developed a robust plan to oversee the safeguarding processes in relation to all of the individual children. Families have been informed and are being kept fully up-to-date on the investigation, together with all local authorities that have children placed at Ty Coryton. The provider has agreed not to take any new referrals at present and all children placed there will be reviewed to ensure that their needs can continue to be met safely.

The well-being of the children placed in Ty Coryton is of the utmost importance and every effort will be made during the investigation process to support the provider to ensure that the investigation process itself does not impact on the well-being of the children placed there.

Councillor Graham Hinchey
Cabinet Member for Children & Families
17 June 2021