

CABINET: 11 JULY 2019

**STRATEGIC PLAN TO DELIVER EXCELLENT OUTCOMES FOR
ALL OUR CHILDREN**

**CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES (COUNCILLOR
GRAHAM HINCHEY)**

AGENDA ITEM: 3

Reason for this Report

1. A 3-year strategic plan to deliver excellent outcomes in Children's Services. It sets out how the Council and partners will develop prevention, improve practice, support and develop the workforce, improve the range of service offers and achieve improved performance.

Background

2. Cardiff is already a good place for many of its children and young people to grow up. In particular, young people identify the city's good health services, low crime rate, strong inclusive communities and the access to green spaces, sports, leisure and culture as some of the great things about living in the capital city.
3. Cardiff Council's Capital Ambition: Corporate Plan 2019 – 22 sets out how the Administration's priorities for Cardiff will be achieved, providing clarity on what will be delivered, and by when. One of the key well-being objectives is "Cardiff is a great place to grow up" and critical to the success of this is ensuring excellent outcomes for vulnerable children, and particularly for those who enter the care system. In addition, for the council to deliver on its other well-being objective "Safe, Confident and Empowered communities", this strategy enables the delivery of that in respect of safeguarding children and ensures that they are protected from harm or abuse, especially in relation to exploitation.
4. There are a range of legislation, regulations and social policy that has been taken into account when developing this strategy, including, but not limited to:
 - The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, along with the associated regulations and codes of practice,
 - A Healthier Wales: our Plan for Health and Social Care,
 - The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015,

- The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act,
- The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) Wales Direction 2015.

Issues

5. The age profile of the population of Cardiff is expected to increase significantly. The number of children between the ages of 0-19 years is forecast to increase from 88,280 in 2017 to 107,630 in 2035, which is a significant increase of 18%.
6. Cardiff is the commercial heart of the Welsh economy and contains many of the nation's most prosperous communities. Despite this, over a quarter of dependent children under the age of 20 in the city are living in poverty. Growing up in poverty can have a detrimental impact on a child's future prospects and well-being, and a child's experiences at an early age (prior to entering school) can lead to delayed development in language, emotional and social skills and poor general health.
7. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru set out in their August 2018 Position Statement on Children's Services, the four key areas where significant pressures are being experienced in relation to Children's Services in Wales:
 - External demands and complexities,
 - Placements,
 - Legislation and work with the Courts,
 - Workforce.
8. All of these pressures are evident in Cardiff. The number of children looked after has increased on average by 85 each year over the past 3 years (In March 2019 there were 900 children, an increase from 644 in March 2016).
9. The increasing numbers of children requiring placements has been putting more and more pressure on the limited number of foster carers and residential provision currently available.
10. The outcomes for children who have been looked after are worse than those of the general population. These children have often had multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). A national study in Wales found that children who had 4 or more ACEs were:
 - 3.7 times more likely to currently be receiving treatment for mental illness,
 - 9.5 times more likely to have ever felt suicidal or self-harmed,
 - 16 times more likely to have used crack cocaine or heroin,

- 20 times more likely to have been incarcerated in their life.
11. In line with these increasing demands, there is increasing budget pressures. Children's Services has a net budget of £58,454,000, with a further £2,000,000 held in contingency for possible growth in the number of looked after children. This budget has increased year-on-year substantially and whilst the increased spend demonstrates the Council's commitment to meet the rising demand for Children's Social Services, this is becoming unsustainable.
 12. The majority of this budget is currently being spent on placements, £32,957,000. The aim for the strategy will be to shift investment overtime from placements to more support services for children and their families.
 13. Welsh Government has been working with each local authority to set targets on reducing the need for children to enter care. The principle of this strategy is that every decision concerning the safety and well-being of children will be made in child's best interest. This means children will become looked after and remain looked after for as long as this is the case. This strategy sets out a host of enhancements across the whole of the child's journey that will have a positive impact on both the outcomes for children and potentially the overall number of children looked after. This includes the enhanced early help service and building on the success of our edge of care provision, to increasing the numbers of children being reunified with their families / achieving successful adoptions or onto special guardianship orders.

Addressing these challenges

14. The Cardiff Children's Services Strategy 2019 – 2022 attached in Appendix 1 brings together a range of service improvement projects under the creation of one 'delivering excellent outcomes in Children's Services' programme. It draws on other well-established plans including; the Corporate Parenting Plan, the Council's Capital Ambition Plan, the Child-Friendly City Plan and the pre-existing Improving Outcomes Programme.
15. The Strategy outlines the various improvement plans within the context of the child's journey and the guiding principles that we are aspiring to. It also describes the various practice and procedural changes that are required to achieve our ambition of excellent outcomes for children and young people.
16. This Strategy is a Cardiff Council document and has been created to inform officers, elected members, partners and communities of the direction of travel and our high ambitions for Children's Services in Cardiff. An associated practice manual is being developed to support social work staff and their managers to deliver a high quality service for the people of Cardiff.

Becoming a Child Friendly City

17. Cardiff is one of the five cities in the UK to be developing, in partnership with UNICEF UK, as a 'Child Friendly City'. This means we place the rights of children and young people at the heart of our policies and strategies; we involve young people in decision making and commit to addressing barriers which limit their lives.
18. Cardiff Children's Services place the child at the centre of everything we do. It is essential that children's voices are heard and their rights respected. Hearing the views of children and young people will be an integral part of driving forward our Delivering Excellence Agenda. As part of the development of this strategy a listening event was organised and the report is attached in Appendix 2.

Scrutiny Consideration

19. The Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee is due to consider this report on 9 July 2019. Any comments received will be circulated at the Cabinet meeting.

Reason for Recommendations

20. To enable Cardiff Council to meet the challenges it is facing and ensure that the right support is available at the right time for children and young people through the implementation of this Children's Services Strategy.

Financial Implications

21. In 2019/20 Children's Services has a net budget of £58,454,000, with a further £2,000,000 held in contingency for possible growth in the number of looked after children. Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this report, any initiatives proposed as part of the strategy will need to be subject to separate approval, with due consideration of a business case where it is possible that any additional expenditure may be incurred.
22. This report outlines the Children's Services Strategy which defines a set of measures and outcomes that are being targeted to be delivered. The delivery of the strategy will be found from within the existing budgetary allocation of the service and any other grant funding streams identified for this purpose. The report and the strategy acknowledge the financial performance of Children's Services over the last five years which has resulted in significant overspends due to increasing demand of high cost placements. This strategy aims to manage and reduce the risk of significant overspends in future years through achieving better outcomes through targeted spend which will reduce the average cost of individual packages. However, this change will result in a transitional period where the overall aim is to reduce spend.

Legal Implications

Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

23. The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ('the Act') places a 'well-being duty' on public bodies aimed at achieving 7 national well-being goals for Wales - a Wales that is prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal, has cohesive communities, a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, and is globally responsible.
24. In discharging its duties under the Act, the Council has set and published well-being objectives designed to maximise its contribution to achieving the national well-being goals. The well-being objectives are set out in Cardiff's Corporate Plan 2019-22
25. When exercising its functions, the Council is required to take all reasonable steps to meet its well-being objectives. This means that the decision makers should consider how the proposed decision will contribute towards meeting the well-being objectives and must be satisfied that all reasonable steps have been taken to meet those objectives.
26. The well-being duty also requires the Council to act in accordance with a 'sustainable development principle'. This principle requires the Council to act in a way which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Put simply, this means that Council decision makers must take account of the impact of their decisions on people living their lives in Wales in the future. In doing so, the Council must:
 - Look to the long term
 - Focus on prevention by understanding the root causes of problems
 - Deliver an integrated approach to achieving the 7 national well-being goals
 - Work in collaboration with others to find shared sustainable solutions
 - Involve people from all sections of the community in the decisions which affect them
27. The decision maker must be satisfied that the proposed decision accords with the principles above; and due regard must be given to the Statutory Guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers, which is accessible using the link below: <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/statutory-guidance/?lang=en>

HR Implications

28. Initial consultation on the Strategy has taken place with the Trade Unions and staff within Social Services. More detailed consultation will take place with these groups as areas of the strategy are developed and put forward for implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to approve the Cardiff Children's Services Strategy 2019 - 2022

SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	CLAIRE MARCHANT Director of Social Services
	5 July 2019

The following appendices are attached:

Appendix 1: Cardiff Children's Services Strategy 2019 – 2022

Appendix 2: Children's Services Strategy Development Listen Exercise