

# **Cardiff Council Corporate Parenting Strategy Progress Report**

**April 2021- September 2021**



## Introduction

In May 2021 Cardiff launched a refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2021- 2024 outlining commitments to our Children Looked After and Care Leaver across the city. Co-produced by children, young people and a range of professionals the Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out what we all need to do as corporate parents to support our Children Looked After and Care Leavers to enable them to thrive.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021- 2024 was produced following feedback from Children Looked After in Cardiff who shared their experiences, worries and aspirations for the future. These views have formed 5 priority areas of work required to deliver on our vision.

The five priorities identified by our young people were:

**Priority 1:** Improving emotional well-being and physical health

**Priority 2:** Better connections, improved relationships

**Priority 3:** A comfortable safe stable home whilst in care and after

**Priority 4:** Educational achievement, employment and training

**Priority 5:** Celebrating our children and young people

This report sets out the work that has been undertaken and the contributions made by partners, showing the progress that has been made against each of the priorities over the period April 2021 to September 2021

## The Local Context – Our Children

**50** Children on Residence orders supported by the Local Authority

**283** Children on Special Guardianship Orders

**3%** of Children were adopted

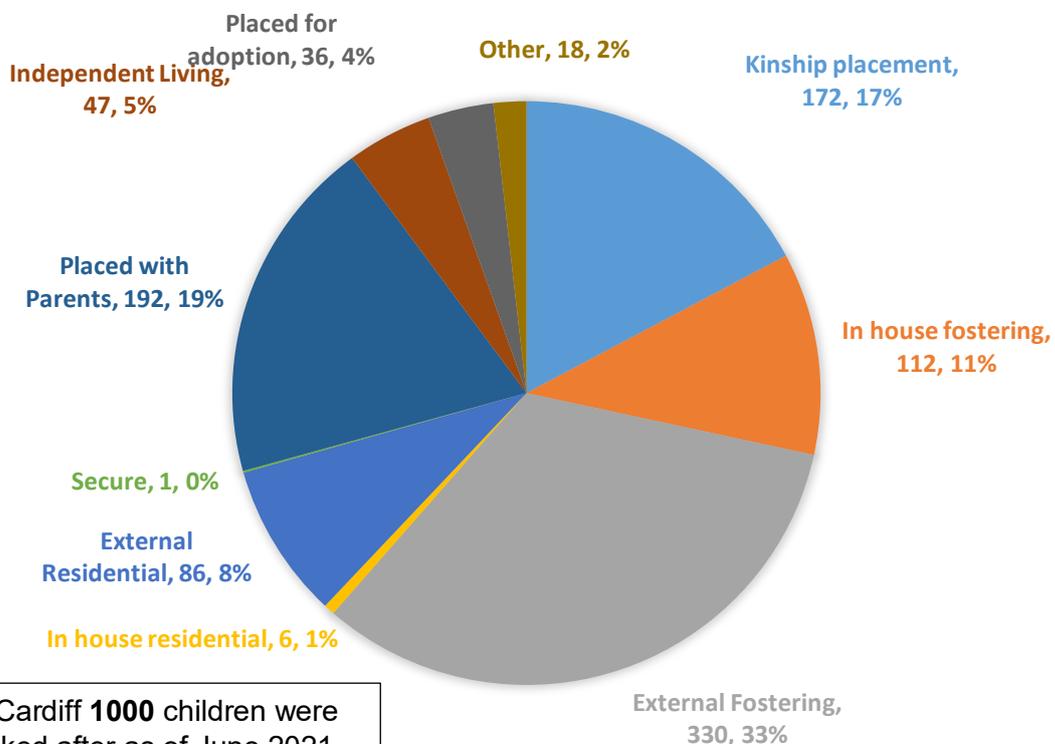
**94%** of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation

**89%** of those who left care had a personal adviser 2020/2021

**7%** of those who left care experienced homelessness

**90%** Care Leavers had a pathway plan

### TOTAL CLA BY PLACEMENT TYPE AS AT 30.06.21



In Cardiff **1000** children were looked after as of June 2021

Male **54%**

Female **46%**

**19%** aged 0-4 years

**33%** aged 5-10 years

**31%** aged 11-15 years

**18%** aged 16-17 years

69% white British

31% other ethnicity

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## Priority 1: Improving emotional wellbeing and physical health

**Our children and young people have the same core health needs as all children, but their backgrounds and experiences mean they may be particularly vulnerable to poorer health outcomes. This is because children who enter our care may have unaddressed or current health issues which have arisen through poverty, neglect or abuse.**

### Well-being

Over the summer the Cardiff Child Friendly City team held a series of events to promote well-being for Children and young people across Cardiff during the school summer holidays. The Summer of Smiles was a programme of free engaging experiences across the city aimed at children, young people, and their families.

A range of exclusive opportunities have been provided for Children Looked After through the Summer of Smiles programme.

These included:

- Exclusive early bird access to book onto a range of activities a week prior such as : arts and crafts, sport , science and technology
- Access to the main Summer of Smiles festival main site with additional information and activities
- A Pirate adventure experience trip to Flatholm Island

Feedback from the Summer of Smiles programme was very positive amongst young people and families.

**“The pirates made me laugh. It was so fun to be on an island in the middle of the sea! Going fast on the boat was the best!” quote from CYP Pirate Island adventure**

## Enfys

The Enfys service has continued to support the mental health and well-being of those young people on the edge of care or who are looked after.

Enfys work comprises of consultation, training, and therapeutic support to the whole system around a child.

From May 2021 – September 2021 the Enfys service has ran 4 Nurturing attachment groups, 1 DBT skills group and 20 workshops which have been delivered to schools, and health and social care staff. These workshops have had a specific focus on well-being and difficulties with eating regulation.

60 pieces of work have been completed with families, with the Enfys team also completing 142 consultations in this period. An online coffee morning has also been established to support carers.

## Corporate Parenting Scorecard

To help understand the health and well-being needs of our young people a key performance indicator dashboard has been developed. This dashboard provides key information from a cross section of agencies including housing, health, and education. The dashboard has been agreed by members of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee and will help to identify gaps in services and help to improve outcomes. The dashboard will continue to be developed to help capture more data.

## Participation and Collaboration

Working with Cardiff University students, Child Friendly Cities, Active Involvement Team and our Bright Sparks Participation group, an accessible guide for Children Looked After and Care Leavers has been developed. This prototype outlines information in an easy and accessible

way to help our young people understand what services are available to them, supporting them to navigate through their care journey.

Work is underway to build on this to include a series of creative digital stories to help enhance the guide, with our young people taking a lead role in its development. A Kickstart Participation Officer will support this area of work working with our youth services to host the guide on an online information platform.

## Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health

A PHD researcher from the University of Bath is undertaking a piece of academic research to help gain an understanding of the barriers faced by our Care Leavers in accessing mental health services. A cohort of Care Leavers are currently being identified to take part in the research and share their experiences, feedback from this research will help develop services for the future.

In July a new National Well-being and Counselling service was launched to offer specific support to care experienced young people. The service is provided by Voices from Care Cymru and provides information, advice, counselling, and group work to help improve the well-being of Children Looked After and Care Leavers. The service uptake has been high and will continue to be promoted in Children Services and wider networks with regular meetings taking place between Voices from Care Cymru.

## Health Assessments

The lead consultant for Children Looked After has scoped referrals for medicals, consent, timing, and delays in achieving health assessments.

As a result, the process between Children's Services and Cardiff and Vale University Health Board around timeliness of health assessments is being strengthened and links between performance management and the

consultant have been made to help develop more effective information sharing.

Further work has been identified to develop a mechanism for a paediatrician to be notified of all Children Looked After who present to the emergency department at Cardiff University Hospital. Progress of this work will be monitored through the Corporate Parenting Operational group.

## **Priority 2: Better connections, improved relationships**

**We know a trusted adult has been shown to be the main factor in helping children recover from traumatic events. We also know our children and young people want better connections and improved relationships in their lives.**

### Mind of My Own

In July 2021 a Mind of My Own app was launched across Children's Services to help enhance the voice of our children and help improve relationships between workers and young people.

Mind of My Own is a set of accessible apps that provide a unique digital solution to advancing children's rights. The Mind of My Own digital apps help children and young people express themselves freely and communicate with Social Workers and other professionals who regularly work with them.

A series of virtual training sessions have been delivered to a wide range of Children's Services staff and partners to help them to use the app with our young people.

Mind of My Own will continue to be promoted across social work teams, NYAS, health and education colleagues by way of champions, train the trainer sessions and will be a standing agenda item at team meetings. This will build confidence amongst staff helping them to use the features of the apps which will strengthen the voice of our young people, helping to capture evidence the views, wishes and feelings of the young people in our care.

## Case study

*“During a statutory visit Jessica and foster carer were shown how to use the Mind Of My Own app. Jessica signed up prior to the Children Looked After (CLA) review and used the app to state that she would like to chair CLA reviews in the future. Jessica will be having lessons on how to chair the review by herself with a plan that the young person will chair future reviews in the future”*

The Mind of my Own apps build on other current mechanisms that help to establish trust amongst Children and Young people and workers.

## Advocacy

Advocacy enables our young people to speak up, making sure that their rights are respected, and their views are heard. An advocate can help children and young people with issues such as where they live, seeing family and leaving care arrangements. Advocates can also provide support to children and young people in meetings by representing them or accompanying them.

Our Advocacy service provided by NYAS Cymru continues to provide regional advocacy services to children and young people in receipt of support from Children’s Services.

During the period May – July a total of 291 referrals for advocacy have been made to NYAS Cymru to support young people via advocacy helping

to ensure children have their voices, wishes and feelings heard within decisions being made about them. These issues included placement, contact and Education

Feedback from young people, parent/ carers and officers on the service has remained positive.

**"You do help a lot cos you're like a voice recorder but also a friend as well and I can ask you to do different things and you listen to what I have to say"**

***Young person feedback on NYAS Advocacy service***

The service will continue to develop and build on the work that has been achieved continuing to create connections and build meaningful relationships. Advocacy will remain a priority for the service area and will continue to be promoted across Children's Services teams.

## Reunification Framework

A Reunification Framework is currently being operated as a pilot in the East social work team with a small team of staff undertaking the reunification assessment.

A Reunification Framework supports practitioners and managers to apply structured professional judgement to decisions about whether and how a child should return home from care.

Support staff have been recruited to assist with the reunification project and suitable cases for reunification been identified through a screening process.

There has been reduction in the pilot locality area of twenty-one children being subject to Placement With Parents (PWP). Twelve children have been taken through the fast-track PWP discharge pilot. It is anticipated that there will be a further cohort of discharges of PWP placement by end of Quarter 3 with continued progress planned for Quarter 4.

## Kinship Service

Since April we have enhanced our Kinship service. These have included an additional 3 Social Workers Assistants, 3 Social Workers and a Principal Social Worker. Improvement plans are underway to strengthen Connected Person and SGO assessments further, considering the Review of Public Law Outline by the Judiciary.

A monthly SGO carer group has also been developed to provide an opportunity for SGO carers to share ideas, discuss difficulties and provide feedback. The group has been meeting virtually and will be strengthened to include training and guest speakers based upon the needs of the group. Members of the group will be supported to take ownership and will have an increased role in facilitating as the sessions continue.

This has helped to provide greater support for family placements, increased support for children making the transition to family carer placement.

## **Priority 3: A comfortable, safe, and stable home whilst in care and after**

**All our children and young people need and deserve a safe, comfortable, stable home. Home can be with parents, with a kinship carer, special guardian, foster carer, at a children's home, residential school, in supported accommodation or independently with floating support. But sometimes also includes secure accommodation or remand. This includes stable accommodation as an adult, including opportunities for home ownership.**

## Homes for Children in Cardiff

As set out in the Right Homes, Right Support 2019-22 Children's Commissioning Strategy, Cardiff Children's Services have undertaken to review and develop our internal residential provision, with the result that one provision is complete, and another is nearing completion.

Falconwood House is a 3-bed home, which has been developed as our new short-term assessment provision. Children's Services have designed a multi-disciplinary assessment process to take place over the course of a young person's 10-week residence at the home, with input from Children's Services, Health, Education, and other agencies as required, to ensure that young people's next move, whether back home to family or on to a new placement, is as suitable as possible for their needs and well-being.

With key partners including Cardiff and Vale UHB's Enfys service and the Council's Adolescent Resource Centre, Falconwood will employ a trauma-informed approach, and will also work closely with potential new placements where the assessment identifies that one is required, to help ensure the success of that placement and the best possible outcome for the young person.

Over the past year an emergency pop up residential provision has also been developed. Oakway residential will support young people requiring emergency care. Staff have been successfully recruited and building work is being finalised. Care Inspectorate Wales inspection visit is being undertaken shortly.

As well as providing new residential provisions, current services have been enhanced to help progress with this priority.

## Fostering

Our Fostering team continues to promote fostering opportunities amongst under-represented groups including the LGBTQ+ community. The team have worked with senior management at Pride Cymru to help share recruitment advertisement which has included dispelling myths advertisement.

## Fostering Panel - Participation

Since June a care leaver has sat weekly as an independent member on the fostering panel providing valued lived-in experience and a different perspective to panel decisions.

## Looked After Protocol for Residential Homes

A protocol is currently being devised between Youth Justice Service (YJS) and the Police as a response to incidents within residential homes that could result in criminal proceedings yet can be dealt with via a restorative intervention with YJS and Police oversight, where supportive and reparative intervention is deemed to be the best outcome for all.

Whilst the protocol is awaiting ratification with senior leadership, the practicalities of introducing the YJS police officers to residential staff and young people is underway.

## Independence planning

In July a pilot between Children's Services and housing commenced to improve independence planning. The workshop took place to inform staff and stakeholders about how to plan for independence for young people leaving care. Care leavers shared their experiences and informed staff of the challenges they faced moving to live independently.

This feedback has been used in the pilot which has helped support staff to understand options and how they can further work with leaving care services. Due to the successful pilot these workshops will now be delivered across other social work localities.

## Young Person Gateway

Our Young Person Gateway service continues to support our young people to resolve their immediate uncertain housing situation and to prevent homelessness or the risk of homelessness through advice, support, and mediation.

If appropriate and assessed as needing accommodation a range of accommodation options are explored such as hostel placement or self-contained units in the community.

When deemed ready to live independently young people are given tenancy training, helping them to acquire skills to live independently and maintain their tenancy. During the COVID 19 pandemic training sessions were delivered online ensuring young people could move on to independent living throughout the crisis.

As of September 2021 394, young people have received tenancy training and 319 young people have been housed since 2016. Tenancy sustainment rate has remained high with 99% of young people able to maintain their tenancy with 100% of young people reporting that they are happy with the support they have received.

## Priority 4: Educational Achievement, Employment and Training

**We want our children and care leavers to achieve the best possible educational and employment outcomes so that they can lead fulfilled and successful lives. Our children and young people told us this is their aspiration. Having a good job with a good income was seen as a means to obtaining their own home, income, fulfilment and to have the things they never had.**

### Leaving Care

In July a new Well-being Coordinator was recruited to make links between young people and the Department of Work and Pensions. This role supports Care Leavers to identify appropriate activities helping to build confidence, overcome barriers to employment and reach their aspirations.

A number of activities have already taken place which has included surfing, local trips, and training, this has helped to enhance well-being, build confidence, and develop employability skills for our Care Leavers. Young people have attended a 3-night residential trip and have taken part in a range of activities during the trip which has included hill walking, shelter building and fire making. The young people were also supported to cook for themselves and clean their rooms helping to develop skills and encourage independence.

From the work that has been undertaken 5 Care Leavers have now been supported to gain full time employment in a range of different sectors including the leisure and hospitality industry. The feedback from our young people has been very positive:

**Quote from young person “It’s been really good, it has given me structure and helped me out financially as well. It was a really good environment to work in as everyone was friendly and they’re keen to help you progress by putting you on more training”**

The Well-being Coordinator role will continue to identify employment opportunities as well as further activities that will help to build confidence and improve the well-being for our young people. The role will work to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment, or training through working in partnership with providers to develop work, volunteer, traineeship, and education placements.

## Compass for Life Training

Children Services staff have taken part in a bespoke coaching and training programme lead by Education as part of the Child Friendly recovery approach post pandemic. The training provides a consistent coaching and mentoring framework helping professionals to support children and young people to achieve their aspirations. The programme upskills staff to become advanced coaches and mentors' helping to empower our young people to reach their potential. Initial feedback from the training has been very positive.

**“The training is so far the most informative, well planned and executed training I have been on in many years. The knowledge and experience from the trainer and the guest speakers have really opened my eyes and that of others on the training”**

The Compass for Life training will continue to be implemented across the Children's Service and Education to help raise the aspirations of our young people. This includes implementing within Cardiff Children's Homes, our Looked After Children's Teams and the Personal Advisor Service.

## Private Sector Opportunities

Relationships between private construction businesses and Children's Services have been strengthened to increase the profile of Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

A programme of training is being developed to help our Care Leavers learn DIY and house maintenance skills which will help and support them to live independently. Initial planning sessions have taken place to help deliver the programme in November.

Discussions have also taken place to increase placement opportunities for our Care Leavers in the construction industry. Work is ongoing to help our young people undertake basic construction training and be part of a work placement scheme helping our Care Leavers to be and site ready and help them to find employment opportunities in this industry.

Work will continue with the private sector to increase and develop opportunities for our young people in a variety of settings.

## Education

Within our Education Directorate 4 Looked After Children Youth Mentors have been recruited to improve attendance and attainment supporting young people in their transition to post-16 education, employment, or training.

All schools and social workers of Y11 pupils have now been contacted to confirm destinations, conditions of offers to college / sixth form and to report any concerns.

Those where there are concerns around engagement or attendance, those with no planned destination and those young people who are at high risk of becoming NEET are then supported to ensure appropriate advice is in place, make applications to employment or training or signposted to relevant support services.

The role of the youth mentors will continue to be developed to include tracking and monitoring all Key Stage 4 Looked After Children in Education to ensure early identification and help provide tailored support. Many young people in the at risk of NEET category would already have

an identified person to support them for example Personal Advisors or other mentors through youth service. The LACE mentor enhances this support and helps to gather more accurate and detailed data.

## Bright Start Traineeship

Our Bright Start Traineeship scheme for care experienced young people aged 16-24 continues to help young people find traineeships within the council to gain practical work experience. The placement helps boost knowledge, confidence and soft skills, hopefully leading to employment. Working with their mentors, young people identify possible work areas that would interest them. The Into Work Advice Service Employment Liaison team then sources the best opportunities.

The first round of placements began on 19 July 2021 for up to six months with positions in Parks, Cardiff International White Water, Waste Management and the Into Work Advice Service. Future placements have been agreed with the new Onsite Construction Academy, Cardiff Dogs Home, Storey Arms Centre and Connect 2 Cardiff among others. Young people are supported throughout their placements by the Bright Start Support Worker and receive a Bright Start training allowance that doesn't affect their benefits.

8 care experienced young people will be attending a 12-week programme helping to create an outdoor healthcare and rehabilitation facility in 14 acres of woodland and meadow next to a local hospital. The young people will attend one day a week and be supported by the Bright Start Support Worker. They will also receive a Bright Start training allowance.

**“Bright Start has helped me get my confidence back. The mentors are so kind and dedicated to helping us better our future. This scheme has helped me so much. (Trainee)”**

**“From our point of view, his confidence and self-esteem have grown a lot and this placement seems to suit him.” (Foster Carer)**

## **Priority 5: Celebrating our children and young people**

**Many of our young people have had a difficult start in life and are likely to have faced barriers. It is vital our children and young people feel valued and their achievements are celebrated.**

**The views of the young people, carers and families we support is essential in order to provide the services that help them to keep them safe and to achieve their full potential.**

### Young Person Festival

During the Covid 19 pandemic many of our young people have felt isolated, scared, and worried about the future. In order to promote the health and well-being of our young people and to celebrate their resilience a young person festival is scheduled to take place in Spring 2022.

This will bring together key partners to provide information, advice in a fun and engaging way with range of fun activities based on the views and interests of our young people. A planning group has met with representation from a variety of agencies to share ideas, resources and help to run and facilitate the day.

### Participation champions

There are now several Participation Champions across many Children's Services departments to ensure that Participation remains a priority for the Directorate. The role of the champion is to disseminate information of participation work at a national and local level to their team and actively promote and contribute to participation development plans across the service.

The Participation Champions have met and discussed initiatives that can help support Children, young people and families to have a greater say on the services that impact them. One of the first key pieces of work the champions have been involved in, is the development of a Participation Framework.

The Participation Framework sets out the current ways we can engage with families we support and what opportunities there are to increase participation of Children and families in service planning and development. The Participation Framework will further be developed and be available on Children's Services website in November.

The Bright Sparks Forum continues to be the main participation platform for Children looked After and Care Leavers to have a say on the issues that are important to them. Work to strengthen and increase membership to the group continues with planning underway for an engagement session between the bright sparks group and members of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee to help build and strengthen relationships.

The Participation of our Children and are young people is now a standing item at the Cardiff Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee with participation worker from NYAS providing regular updates on the work of the Bright Sparks group to the Committee.

A Participation and Communications officer has been recruited as part of the Kick-start Apprentice Scheme. This role will help support the development of a Young Persons Festival as well as supporting the drive for participation of Children, young people, and families.

Work will be undertaken to help strengthen and build upon this priority based on the views and priorities of our young people, feedback will be gained from our young people and any changes made to this priority in February 2022.

**“Our voices make a difference”**

**“We are a care family working together to make changes”**

***Quote from Bright Sparks group***

## Governance

A Corporate Parenting Operational group has been established to support the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee and the City of Cardiff to ensure that Council and its partners are ambitious for children and young people in care and Care Leavers.

The operational group will work collaboratively to drive the work of the Corporate Parenting Strategy in order to improve the life outcomes for Children Looked After and Care Leavers in Cardiff including reviewing how each service area is contributing to the ethos and aspirations of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and championing each of the five priority areas within the strategy.

Members of the group have also contributed to the Corporate Parenting Strategy action plan setting out how each service area or organisation can contribute to delivering improved outcomes for Children Looked After and Care Leavers. Actions set out in the action plan are measured by a red , amber or green status helping to improve accountability and to help status or projects are kept on track.

## Membership

We know that our young people use and meet a range of services and therefore there is representation from a wide range of stakeholders who sit on the Corporate Parenting Operational Group.

Directorate / agency	Role
Children's Services	Director of Children's Services (Chair) Operational Manager ( Vice Chair) Corporate Parenting Officer
Housing & Communities	Operational Manager Strategy and Housing Need
Voices from Care Cymru	Participation Manager
South Wales Police	Detective Chief Inspector

Education	Achievement Leader Key groups
Child Friendly City team	Child Friendly coordinator
Into Work Services	Into work Manager
NYAS Cymru	Service Manager
Cardiff and the Vale Health Board	Lead consultant for Children Young People and Family Health Services
Venues, Tourism and events	Head of Culture
HR	Chief HR Officer
Cardiff Commitment	Cardiff Commitment Programme Manager
Youth Service	Achievement Leader
DWP	Partnership Manager

## Half Yearly Progress Reflection

Good Corporate Parenting involves a cross section of partners and agencies working together to improve the outcomes for our children and young people.

Over the last 6 months, the profile of Corporate Parenting has been raised across Cardiff with relationships strengthened between the private sector, third sector and Council Directorates.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy went live April 2021, in the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic recovery and positive progress has been made against the Action Plan.

The response from partners has been very positive and will continue to be built upon throughout the strategy's timescales demonstrated in this progress report. The Corporate Parenting Operational Group will drive the workstreams forward.

We would like to thank partners for their positive contributions to the report and the ongoing commitment shown to help ensure that our care experienced children and young people are supported to thrive and reach their potential.