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## CHILDREN'S SERVICES REVIEW

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### Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides Members with an update and briefing on issues relating to Children's Services, including current pressures.
2. In addition, Members will receive a copy of the current Children's Services Strategy to enable them to consider options for its review; and an opportunity to be part of the development of the new Children's Services Strategy during 2022.

### Background

3. When setting and agreeing its Work Programme for the current year, this Scrutiny Committee received a suggestion from the Cabinet Member and Service area to hear a briefing on "Workforce" in December 2021.
4. In addition, during the past year, Members have received updates and made comments, observations and recommendations in relation to issues such as:
  - Demand on Services and Capacity
  - Financial Resources
  - Service Redesign
  - Staff health and wellbeing
  - Staff - Vacancies; sickness levels etc

### Issues

5. Members will receive a presentation at this meeting regarding current Children's Services pressures. A copy of the presentation is attached at **Appendix A.**

6. Childrens Services have been facing unprecedented demand as a result of the Covid pandemic. Contingency plans were put in place to manage the service during the acute phase of the pandemic; however, it has become clear that the longer-term implications of the pandemic are resulting in a significant increase in demand for children's social care at the same time as there being a severe shortage of resources, including experienced social workers and placements for children and young people that cannot live with family and friends.
7. Welsh Government have responded to the current crises affecting children's services by making available several short-term grants.
8. The presentation at **Appendix A** outlines Cardiff Children's Services plans in relation to how they are allocating the short-term funding, which are linked to existing work plans around building sufficiency within the system and shifting the balance across a variety of areas.
9. The Service's key areas of focus continue to be on moving from a temporary to permanent workforce, ensuring more children can be supported to live with family and friends, increasing the role the local authority plays in providing substitute care for children looked after.

### **Children's Services Strategy**

10. Attached at **Appendix B** is a copy of the current Children's Services Strategy 2019 – 2022. This 3-year strategy was developed within Childrens Services in 2019 and is due to be reviewed and a new strategy developed during 2022.
11. It is hoped that the development of the next Children's Services strategy will be a collaborative approach with inputs from children and young people and their families and all key stakeholders, including this Scrutiny Committee.

## Scope of Scrutiny

12. In relation to current Service pressures, Members may wish to consider the information attached at **Appendix A** and offer observations on issues highlighted.
13. Regarding the Children's Services Strategy (**Appendix B**), Members may wish to consider how they can provide a test and challenge approach to the development of the next strategy. This could include a collaborative Task & Finish exercise with the Cabinet Member and Service Area. Members are asked to note that there may be a delay to the commencement of the review due to the current pressures within Childrens Services and the requirement to prioritise key service priorities. It is anticipated that the review and development will commence from around mid-2022.

## Way Forward

14. At the meeting Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member for Children and Families); Sarah McGill (Corporate Director, People and Communities); and Deborah Driffield (Director of Children's Services) will be in attendance to take Members through the presentation attached at **Appendix A** and answer any questions Members may wish to ask.
15. Members may wish to review the information presented at the meeting and determine whether there are any comments, concerns or recommendations which they would like to pass on to the Cabinet Member, Corporate Director and Director of Children's Services.
16. Members may also wish to consider whether they would wish to undertake a Task & Finish exercise with the Cabinet Member and Service Area in the review and development of the Children's Services Strategy, when appropriate.

## Previous Scrutiny

17. As indicated in Paragraph 4 of this report, Members have made a number of comments, observations and recommendations in relation to these matters within the last 12 months, as follows:

- **Demand on Services and Capacity** – *Children’s Services Update – Oct 20; LASSAR<sup>1</sup> – July 21; and YJS – July 21*
- **Financial Resources** - *Budget – Feb 21; YJS – May 2021; LASSAR – July 21; Hubs – Nov. 21*
- **Service Redesign** - *YJS/Q3 performance– March 21*
- **Staff health and wellbeing** – *Children’s Services Update – Oct 20*
- **Staff Issues** – *Vacancies; sickness levels etc - LASSAR – Sept 20; YJS – May 21; YJS/Q1 performance – Oct 21*

## Legal Implications

18. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

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<sup>1</sup> LASSAR – Local Authority Social Services Annual Report

## **Financial Implications**

19. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is recommended to;

- i. review the information provided at the meeting and provide any comments, concerns or recommendations to the Cabinet Member, Corporate Director and Director of Children's Services; and
- ii. Consider establishing a collaborative Task & Finish Group relating to the review and development of the Children's Services Strategy.

**DAVINA FIORE**  
**Director of Governance and Legal Services**

**02 December 2021**