



# **CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Annual Report  
2021/22**

## **CHAIR'S FORWARD**

I am pleased to introduce the 2021/2022 Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee. The introduction of the reinvigorated Corporate Parenting Strategy in 2021 has set out an exciting and ambitious plan to help improve the lives of our Care experienced young people in Cardiff and formed the yearly work programme for the Committee.

As you can see from the report the Committee have received a variety of updates from a wide range of organisations, services and teams that have all played a role in supporting our children and young people. It has been inspiring to see all the exciting work and developments.

The introduction of a key performance dashboard has helped Committee Members gain a wider understanding of services that support our children and young people. New Terms of Reference reaffirm our commitment to hear the voices of care experienced young people in Cardiff.

A particular highlight for me was taking part in an engagement session with some members of the Bright Sparks group. It was great to directly hear their views, aspirations, and experiences in order to help the Committee to gain an understanding of the issues impacting them. These views will help to guide the agenda for the Committee and help to plan and develop projects and support for the future.

I would like to thank those managers and partners who have taken the time and effort to share their knowledge and understanding of issues, solutions, good practice, and achievements. We as Committee members are grateful for those insights.

**Councillor Sarah Merry**

**Chair, Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee**

## **DIRECTOR'S OVERVIEW**

The Annual report for 2020/2021 highlights a number of key pieces of work that the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee has been involved in over the past year. The report focuses on the exciting refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy and sets out Cardiff Councils and partners vision for care experienced young people in Cardiff and includes the systems that have been put in place to ensure that everyone has a part to play in supporting our children and young people.

It is important and positive to note that although the Covid 19 pandemic has raised significant challenges over the last 2 years, the Committee has continued in its work.

It is particularly encouraging to see the link between the Committee and our young people strengthen with the participation of our young people being a standing item agenda on the Committee and an engagement session being held to hear first-hand the experiences and thoughts members of the Bright Sparks group. As well as helping the Committee gain an understanding the issues impacting young people, feedback from our young people will help to develop and improve services for the future.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of the Committee for their contributions and active involvement throughout the year.

**Deborah Driffield**

**Director, Children's Services**

## **Introduction**

It is the collective responsibility of members, partners, and the council to ensure that children who are looked after are provided the best possible care and safeguarding. Every member and employee have the statutory responsibility to act for those children in the same way that a good parent would act for their own child. Cardiff Council's Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee are collectively responsible for achieving this and ensuring children and young people receive the best possible care and support, that they are appropriately safeguarded and achieve the best possible chances in life. The Committee actively works to promote the life chances of looked after children in the care of Cardiff Council and those young people who are care leavers. The voice of those children and young people in care help to drive and shape the Committee agenda and priorities, this also includes monitoring services that are delivered across all statutory and voluntary sector organisations.

This report presents the Committee's main activities during 2020/21. It begins with background information that is helpful in understanding the Committee's function, purpose, and the scale of its responsibilities. This includes:

- A record of meetings and attendance
- Terms of reference and Corporate Parenting protocol
- Young Person Participation
- Activity of the Committee
- The Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Monitoring Performance

### **What does it mean to be a Corporate Parent?**

"When a child or young person enters the care of the Council, the role of being a parent is taken on by the local authority. This is known as Corporate Parenting. The term describes how Cardiff Council collectively fulfil their parenting responsibilities, by seeking positive outcomes for children looked after and young adults who are care leavers in the same way we do for our own children. From early years into

adulthood all our children, young people and young adults should be kept safe, are happy and have every opportunity to thrive. Leadership & influence Effective Corporate Parenting requires not only strong collective ownership and leadership but influence at the most senior level” (**Cardiff Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024**)

### **Who are the Committee?**

The Cardiff Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee brings together strategic partners to work with elected Councillors to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people and care leavers. The Committee’s values highlight the right results can only be achieved by all professionals working together and listening to children and young people to understand what matters to them.

### **Record of meetings and attendance**

During the 2020/21 municipal year 6 Committee meetings were held. An additional meeting with the Chair of CPAC and Bright Sparks group was held on the October 29th

The scheduled meetings were held on:

- 17th November 2020
- 9th March 2021
- 18th May 2021
- 20th July 2021
- 19th October 2021
- 18th January 2022

### **Membership**

Membership of the Committee is approved by Council at its Annual Meeting each year. Seats are allocated on a politically proportionate basis. The Committee is chaired by

the Deputy Leader of the Council. There were three changes of individual membership during the 2021/22 term. During 2021/22 members of the Committee were as follows:

<b>COUNCILLOR REPRESENTATIVE</b>		<b>ATTENDANCE</b>	
		<b>Meetings: Possible</b>	<b>Meetings: Actual</b>
Sarah Merry (Chair)	Labour (Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Education, Employment and Skills)	6	6
Cllr Sue Lent	Labour	6	6
Cllr Thomas Parkhill	Conservative	6	2
Cllr Shaun Jenkins	Conservative	6	4
Cllr Mike Jones – Pritchard (from 25.11.21)	Conservative	1	1
Cllr Lisa Ford (from 25.11.21)	Propel	1	0
Cllr Fenella Bowden (until 29.09.21)	Independent	4	2
Cllr Graham Hinchey	Labour (Cabinet Member for Children & Families)	6	5
Cllr Dan Naughton	Liberal Democrats	6	6
Cllr Ashley Lister	Labour	6	1

Meetings were also attended by a core group of senior managers from Children's Services, Education , Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and NYAS Cymru. They attended in the capacity of advisors to respond to questions. Invited guest speakers also presented to the Committee. Further information is provided on those discussions in the following section of this report.

Due to a change in operating model to focus on the challenges raised by the global pandemic 2 Committee meetings were cancelled in the municipal period in 2020. The further 2 Committee meetings that took place in November 2020 and March 2021 are included in the report.

## **Young People Participation**

The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) are commissioned by Cardiff Children's Services to deliver a participation service called the Bright Sparks group to children and young people aged 11-25 needing care and support. The principal objective is to ensure children and young people are afforded a voice, becoming active participants in shaping policy and service provision within the council and within a wider external context.

In addition, Bright Sparks is a peer support forum for care experienced children and young people, providing them with opportunities to take part in social activities, other participation opportunities and avenues of support.

At each Committee meeting the Participation Officer from NYAS Cymru attends to inform the Committee of work undertaken by members of the Bright Sparks group in line with the Priorities in the Corporate Parenting Strategy. The updates also provide feedback from young people in order to strengthen the voice of young people and inform the Committee of the challenges, achievements and views of care experienced young people in Cardiff.

## **Engagement Session with Bright Sparks Group**

The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee met with members of the Bright Sparks group via an engagement session at a local venue. The purpose of the session was for members of the Bright Sparks group to find out more about the role of the Committee and role of the Chair. The session also helped the Chair of the Committee understand the issues directly impacting young people.

A series of ice breaker activities were held which included a question-and-answer session and an exhibition of a photography project that members of the Bright Sparks group took part in. The session also provided an opportunity for young people and the chair to have an open discussion about their experiences and provide feedback on the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Feedback from young people who took part in the engagement session:

***“I’m glad that I came today – I got my point across and got to explain what it is like for us. I would like to do that again; it is important that they listen”***

***“It was very interesting and good to speak directly instead of through a Social Worker or Advocate”***

The themes identified in the engagement session were presented to the January 2022 Committee meeting. This included:

- Access to mental health services
- Stigma
- Cost of living

This feedback will inform projects developed with partners, young people and the Corporate Parenting Operational group.



## **Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee new Terms of Reference**

In May 2021 the revised Terms of Reference of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee and Corporate Parenting Protocol were agreed by the Committee, and approved by Council at its Annual Meeting in May 2021

### **Terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee:**

The terms of reference for the Committee can be found [here](#)

## **Corporate Parenting Protocol**

An independent expert facilitated a series of discussions with Cabinet Members, Group Leaders, Scrutiny Committee Chairs and offered workshops for all Elected Members to enable them to have their views considered as part of the development of a Corporate Parenting Protocol.

In May 2021 the Head of Democratic Services presented the Corporate Parenting Protocol to obtain feedback and views from the Committee.

The link to the Corporate Parenting Protocol can be found [here](#)

The Protocol was agreed by the Committee and approved by Council at its Annual meeting in May 2021.

## **Corporate Parenting Strategy**

The Corporate Parenting Strategy is a three-year multi agency strategy that sets out what Cardiff Council and other organisations need to do as corporate parents to enable Children Looked After and Care Leavers to thrive. The Corporate Parenting

strategy outlines five key priorities based on the views and experiences of Looked After Children in Cardiff.

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**

The Cardiff Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021- 2024 can be found [here](#):

Committee members were involved from the outset in the development of strategy, providing useful and valuable insight and feedback.

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee considered the draft Strategy at its meeting on 9th March 2021 and recommended the draft Strategy should be submitted to Cabinet for approval. The Corporate Parenting Strategy was agreed by Cabinet in March 2021.

## **November 2020**

In November 2020 the Committee approved the previous Committee Annual report and approved the work programme of activity for the year. Members of the Committee also received the following updates:

### **Member Protocol on Safeguarding Vulnerable Children and Adults**

In November 2020 members of the Committee considered a revised draft of a Member Protocol which provided guidance and advice to Elected Members on their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding vulnerable children and adults.

The Director of Governance and Legal Services and an independent consultant informed the Committee of the work that had been undertaken to develop the protocol. This included incorporating flowcharts to clarify the process for members to make a safeguarding referral or to raise other safeguarding concerns and extensive discussion with members to ensure it remained fit for purpose.

The Committee were advised that the document had been considered by the Standards and Ethics Committee and also the Children and Young people Scrutiny Committee. Members of the Committee were informed that the protocol would go to Cabinet and then the Council for adoption, considering any views received.

A discussion was held with Committee members about the content of the protocol with particular reference to wording. Members of the Committee were encouraged by the work that had taken place and were felt that Cardiff was setting a bar that others will follow. Committee members considered it was helpful to have clarity on their role as advocates; bringing issues to Officers who are professionals, to deal with them.

### **Young Person Participation**

In November 2020 the Committee were updated about the mechanisms used to seek the views, concerns and issues facing looked after children throughout Cardiff. Committee members were also informed of the development and progression of projects across the service area to help enhance the voice of young people which included a new digital app and building on the Bright Sparks Participation forum.

A discussion took place about how young people were able to engage with the Committee in the future. The Committee were intrigued about the mutual participation between young people, their forum and CPAC, but sought advice on the format in which the young people would like this to take place. Members of the Committee suggested that when meeting face to face they could meet somewhere familiar to the young people.

Committee members wished to stress to young people that that they were keen to hear from them and it would be an opportunity for them to raise any issues and would

be positive all around. They were keen that this experience was not intimidating for the young people.

## **March 2021**

### **Family Thrive project**

In March 2021 the Project Manager for the Family Thrive Team presented to Committee courses for parents and carers being piloted by the Looked After Children in Education (LACE) Team. The purpose of the course was to support parents and carers to meet the wellbeing and social emotional development needs of their children. Topics included brain development, activities to develop our stress-regulation system, the importance of creativity and play, understanding behaviour as communication and ideas on how to calm ourselves and our children. Members of the Committee were also informed of the schools who displayed an interest in running the course and feedback obtained once the course was completed.

### **Personal Adviser Service Update**

In March 2021 the Team Manager for the Personal Adviser Service updated the Committee on the work that had been undertaken to support young people leaving care, including during the Covid 19 pandemic.

The Committee were informed of the key functions of the Personal Adviser service which included:

- Providing advice and guidance for young people aged 16- 25 leaving care.
- Participate in the assessment, preparation, implementation, and review of Pathway Plans as well as to coordinate the provision of services to young people and take reasonable steps to ensure young people make use of services that could meet their needs.

- Act as an advocate for young people and support their engagement with other advocacy services to ensure their voices are heard and responded to accordingly

The Committee were advised of the issues that had impacted the service during the Covid 19 pandemic and how it had adapted in line with government restrictions at the time. This included maintaining contact with all young people open to the Personal Adviser service and providing advice via telephone, skype and text. Members of the Committee heard how staff were working flexibly to ensure the needs of young people were prioritised to support them at times when they may feel more vulnerable and isolated.

A discussion was held on the emotional drain the pandemic and restrictions had on young people and officers were questioned if they felt they provided the supportive role that parents would. The Committee were advised that young people often have many different support workers throughout their lives and building relationships was vital. The nature of working relationships varied also with some young people having aspirations and ideas for their future, some young people coming from the Youth Justice Service, others in crisis. Each young person needs different levels and types of support at different times. Members of the Committee commended the work by Officers.

### **Bright Sparks Participation Update**

The Participation Officer for National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) attended the Committee to provide an update of the annual Bright Sparks event which celebrates the achievements of care experienced young people in Cardiff.

The Committee were informed that the event celebrates the numerous achievements of care experienced children and young people in Cardiff, whilst also acknowledging the commitment and dedication of others such as social workers, foster carers and supported lodgings providers. The event is the annual highlight of the Bright Sparks group, with young people playing a fundamental role in its planning and organising.

The event has been an excellent example of good practice in participation. Due to the Covid 19 restrictions the event last year was held online.

A discussion was held in regard to planning for future Bright Sparks event including suggestions from Committee members about a change in categories, the best time in the year for the event to take place and where would be best to hold the event. Members of the Committee were advised that the suggestions would be fed back to the young people for consideration.

### **Forward Work Plan**

Following agreement from members of the Committee the Forward Work programme and meetings held from May 2021 to January 2022 were based around the priorities outlined in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

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

In May 2021 the Committee received a number of updates from organisations and services that help to support and improve the emotional well-being and physical health of care experienced young people in Cardiff in line with priority 1.

### **Resilience project**

The Resilience Project Practitioner presented an update to the Committee on the work that had been undertaken by the Resilience project over an 18-month period. The Committee were advised that the aims of the project focused on building greater capacity, expertise and mental health resilience for children and young people in educational settings across Cardiff and the Vale.

Members of the Committee were advised of the close partnership work of the project with partners such as CAMHS, third sector services and youth services. Committee members noted the importance of smooth and timely transition between different interventions. Members of the Committee were informed that direct intervention work

is led by Developmental Psychotherapists with the involvement of teachers, with a focus on supporting parents with practices including therapeutic parenting, particularly if there has been a trauma in the child's early life that might impact on their development.

The Committee were informed of different models and strategies that are used to support young people such as:

- PACE- Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy
- Regulation strategies
- Anxiety management
- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
- Dialectical Behaviour Therapy
- 

The Committee were advised that the project is expanding into 3-4 schools every half term and that staff have been identified for training. The project facilitates the 1st round, and it is then expected that the staff will continue with further rounds to build resilience in that school.

### **Regional Health and Social Care Partnership**

In May members of the Committee were provided with a detailed presentation from the Director of Health and Social Care Integration on the newly established Starting Well Partnership and the revised governance arrangements of the Regional Partnership Board.

The Committee were informed how the partnership brings together two major programmes, together with previous work and projects. Members of the Committee were informed of the goal to improve the impact of the Regional Partnership Board and joining up of services to wrap around the needs of both children and their families. Committee members discussed the work of the Regional Partnership Board and noted that the work was considered was very complex and discussed the need for it to be finessed.

## **Bright Sparks Participation update**

The Participation Officer from NYAS Cymru updated the Committee of the work that had been undertaken by members of the Bright Sparks group addressing priority 1 of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

The Committee were informed of how the Bright Sparks group developed resources that explored the lives of care experienced young people, what wellbeing means to them and how their dreams and aspirations have been shaped through their experiences over time. These resources were used as part of the Fostering Network well-being classes delivered to foster carers and professionals . Other work updates provided to the Committee included:

- Development of resources for care experienced young people working with Cardiff University.
- Participation in consultation on young peoples' views and thoughts on statutory school and community counselling services.
- Bright Sparks group attendance to mental health and wellbeing workshops on Resilience.

Children and young people reported that they were being overly consulted due to a duplication in surveys from different partners. The Committee considered how this could be addressed by increased partnership between organisations. Young people also need to feel the information they supply is important and the benefit and impact of surveys explained.

## **Assessment and Therapy Pilot**

The Commissioning Manager for Children Services provided members with an overview of progress on an Assessment and Therapy Pilot. The Committee were informed that the pilot focused on conducting gap analysis, quality assurance and market engagement to identify commissioning needs and possibilities.



Members of the Committee were provided with a Therapy Pathway which was developed to reduce duplication for Social Work teams and provide an efficient process where therapy is identified as a requirement for a child or young person. The Pathway had been enhanced to align with the ENFYS service to ensure that the provision of therapy was consistently considered and consulted on in conjunction with Health Board colleagues and expertise.

Committee members were advised in relation to outcomes of the pilot that within 6 months the pilot would have a handle on the data and the process would be fully embedded and aligned with the Health Board and that within 18 months it would be possible to report back on the themes coming through from the data.

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

In July 2021, in line with Priority 2 of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, the Committee received a number of updates about services and developments that are aimed to improve the working relationships between young people and professionals, as well as an update on the impact Covid 19 pandemic has had on services. Updates provided in July also focused on the work that had been undertaken by services as part of a - COVID recovery plan.

### **Enfys Service**

Enfys is an NHS-based service for children and young people looked after, adopted or on the edge of care in Cardiff and the Vale. In July Consultant practitioners from Enfys provided the Committee with an update on their work. Members of the Committee were informed that the number of children becoming looked after has increased during the pandemic. In addition, many of the children and families supported by Enfys are in crisis. Increasingly the service is seeing a need to support children still residing with their birth families.

A discussion was held about the behaviours presented to the team which included aggression, withdrawing, self-harming, depression, and anxiety. The Committee were

informed how Enfys works closely with CAMHS to provide wraparound support in order to upskill adults to better understand young people's behaviour. The Committee were advised how the service was funded and a discussion took place around funding contributions and the including sustainability of the service.

### **Voices from Care Cymru – Welsh Government review of Corporate Parenting**

Voices from Care Cymru is a third sector organisation which aims to improve the lives of care experienced children and young people in Wales by being an independent voice for the care community. In July the Programme Manager provided an update to the Committee on the organisation's involvement in the Welsh Government's Review of Corporate Parenting.

Committee members were advised that the Welsh Government would be embarking on an extensive programme of work and engagement activity to take forward a new 'refreshed' approach to corporate parenting. The Programme Manager informed the Committee that the new approach would look at doing things differently whilst other elements would focus on strengthening what is already in place by raising awareness and increasing knowledge about organisations' roles and responsibilities.

The Committee were reminded of the forthcoming operational group looking at Corporate Parenting Strategy and investigations were underway to see how the efforts of different bodies could be linked to avoid duplication. Members of the Committee were advised of how Voices from Care Cymru will produce a Corporate Parenting Charter to enable stakeholders to sign up to a common statement of improved support and action when working with care experienced children.

Committee members enquired as to the responses from local authorities across Wales to the Corporate Parenting Charter and were informed that responses were similar and there was a widespread recognition that an extension of duties were needed.

## **Mind of my Own Project**

The Mind of My Own digital app help children and young people express themselves freely and communicate with their social worker and other professionals. The app has been designed and co-produced with young people for young people and unlike traditional surveys, the apps allow staff to receive organic and authentic feedback from the children and young people using services.

The Account Manager from Mind of My Own and the Corporate Parenting Officer attended the Committee to share information to Committee members of how the Mind of My Own app had been implemented across Children's Services in Cardiff. The Committee were informed of the two features of the app; the 'One App' which allows young people to create their own account on any device and communicate in ways which suit them, and the 'Express App' for young children and those with communication needs, this can only be accessed through a workers account.

The Committee were informed that when a child or young person has used either of the apps to share their views a clear statement is created which is automatically sent via a service portal. This is monitored and sent to the social worker.

The Committee were informed that training to staff had been adapted to be delivered online rather than face to face due to Covid restrictions. Members of the Committee were advised that around 100 languages are available on the app and that the data collated was only visible to the local authority client and not the company.

## **Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative Performance Report 2020- 21**

An Operational Manager for Children's Services attended the Committee in July 2021 to inform Committee members of the progress made under the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff (VVC) Regional Adoption Collaboration. The Committee were informed that adoption services had performed well given the adaptations that had been necessary during the Covid-19 pandemic and were provided figures for the number of children referred to services, orders made, children successfully placed, children adopted, and children matched who had significant complex needs. Members of the Committee were informed that 45% were able to secure orders within 6 months of a court order

and that there had been a year on-year increase in the number of adopter enquiries and adoption approvals. Adoption support services had significantly increased along with complex care packages.

### **Bright Sparks Participation Update**

The Participation Officer from NYAS Cymru attended to inform the Committee of activities of the Bright Sparks Club in relation to priority 2 of the Corporate Parenting Strategy. The 'What's Your Story' project was shared, it aims to challenge media stereotypes and stigmatisation of children and young people in care and will be on the NYAS website later in the year.

Committee members were informed that of a number of other projects and work members of the Bright Sparks group have been involved in which included:

- A review into the recruitment of volunteers to the Independent Visitor Project
- Involvement in new developments regarding Advocacy work in Cardiff and ensuring that NYAS complies with RISCA (The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016)
- Providing feedback on the draft Cardiff Anti-Bullying Guidance has been provided to the Child Friendly Cardiff Team

Members of the Committee stated that they were pleased to hear that young people were becoming more interested and involved in politics and noted that there is a forthcoming public event during Democracy Week in October which will examine the role and responsibilities of Councillors.

Members of the Committee noted that Julie Morgan MS was being invited to talk to young people about their experience of elections and asked if, in the interest of political balance, members of opposition parties could be invited too. Participation Officer advised Committee members that members of opposition parties were intended to be invited also.

## **Delivering a Child Friendly Recovery**

The Operational Manager for Partnerships and Performance along with the Achievement leader attended the Committee in July 2021 to provide an update on a recent Cabinet report entitled 'Recovery & Renewal: Delivering a Child Friendly Recovery' of 20th May 2021.

Discussions were held about attempts to engage with Children Looked After regarding summer activities. Children who were looked after and other vulnerable children were given priority access to these events and there was extensive engagement through the Youth Service website and social media. The Summer of Smiles festival, the Youth Service summer programme through Youth Centres, Roadshow events and a pop-up youth provision were provided. Youth mentors supported Year 11s at risk of disengagement. The Committee were advised that capacity was added into the pre-16 Children Looked After education team to ensure additional mentoring capacity. Teams were being joined up across Education, Children's Services and People and Communities to engage in a life coaching programme entitled Compass for Life.

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

In October 2021 members of the Committee received a number of updates from a wide variety of services that helped to achieve Priority 3 of the Corporate Parenting Strategy: helping to provide a comfortable, safe, and stable home for young people in care and after.

### **Young Person Gateway**

The Housing Accommodation Manager attended the Committee to provide information of the Young Person Gateway (YPG); an Accommodation provision for young people aged 16-21. This included information in regard to the current structure of the service, data on outcomes and information around the expansion plans for the Gateway.

The Committee were informed what happens when a young person presents as homeless and the support that is provided in supported accommodation for example developing independent living skills. Members of the Committee were also advised that when a young person has been identified as being ready to live independently, they will be required to attend a training session which covers all the necessary information around managing a tenancy, such as; connecting utilities, how to pay rent, applying for any benefits, how to register with a GP and managing relationships with neighbour. Information was provided on the development of the service and plans in place to strengthen support for young people.

### **Foster Wales Launch**

In October 2021 the Regional Marketing Officer from Foster Wales presented to the Committee on the launch of a national partnership of local authority fostering services. Members of the Committee were informed of the challenge in recruiting foster carers across Wales via a presentation which also included the national campaign to promote the work of Foster Wales and support recruitment.

Discussions were held amongst the Committee and members of the Committee sought clarification on whether there had been any specific targeting in the social media campaign and if there were plans to produce publicity material in other community languages besides English and Welsh. The Committee were informed that the campaign had been generic, on a national level and marketing had been aimed at raising awareness on a broad level. Committee members were advised that as the campaign progresses more work will be undertaken on identifying specific opportunities for targeting. The Committee sought information on the percentage of foster carers from BAME backgrounds. Members of the Committee were advised that the precise figures were not available, but the percentage was understood to be low.

### **Bright Sparks Participation Update**

The Participation Worker from NYAS Cymru updated the Committee on the Bright Sparks Club and the activities the group had undertaken in relation to the third of the 5 Priorities.

The All-Wales National Steering Group were undertaking work on a children's rights approach to policing and the Bright Sparks members provided initial thoughts on this. Members of the group had provided feedback to the use of language used regarding "Return interview or Debriefs" and had informed the steering group that the language used was too formal and not young person friendly.

The Committee were also informed that NYAS had been successful in their application to be a partner organisation at Welsh Youth Parliament. Members of the group were consulted on how they feel the NYAS representative in the parliament should be elected and that children and young people will be supported to apply for the role.

A discussion was held on whether Children and Young People were provided with information on local elections. The Committee were advised that there had been sessions on the Senedd earlier in the year and young people were supported in registering to vote. Information has also been shared about the Youth Parliament.

Members of the Committee enquired on links with higher and further education. They were informed discussions were planned about opportunities for care experienced young people to attend university. Links were being made with First Campus; a collaboration between Cardiff Met, Cardiff University and University of South Wales. A First Campus outreach manager has recently been appointed and is looking at developing pathways for care experienced young people to enter university.

### **National Transfer Scheme**

In October 2021 the Operational Manager and Project Manager presented a report informing the Committee of the National Transfer Scheme along with an update on the developments of its implementation. Committee members were informed of the long-term objective of the voluntary transfer scheme which was to ensure that children can access the services they need by achieving a fairer distribution of unaccompanied children across all local authorities and parts of the UK, through a scheme which is equitable and transparent.

The Committee were informed that each region or nation involved in the scheme takes its turn on the rota in sequence with the expectation being for that region or nation to fulfil the allocated number of placements at which point responsibility will move on to the next region. A discussion was held on the frequency and duration of periods on the rota and the Committee were informed that the pressures on the service meant that the rota cycle had gone round more quickly than initially anticipated. It had been said that there would be a pause for reflection when the regional commitment of 20 young people in Cardiff and 30 across the region had been reached.

Committee members queried whether the National Youth Advocacy Service ( NYAS) could support. Officers advised that there had been contact with National Youth Advocacy Service and that Advocacy can be involved in 2 ways; supporting young people on arrival including those needing an age assessment, and those entitled to the active offer. Members of the Committee noted the update of the scheme

### **Independent Reviewing Officer Monitoring Report**

In October 2021 the Service Manager for Children Services IRO team provided an update to the Committee on key updates and trends on Children Looked After during the last period. Members of the Committee were informed of the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer and legal requirements. Service information was provided including how Looked After Children reviews have been adapted in line with Covid 19 restrictions. Key information was provided on the demographics of Children Looked After in Cardiff as well education arrangements.

A discussion was held as to whether there was evidence of more children coming into care due to the lockdown and the consequent pressure on families. Committee members were advised that there had been a large increase in the number of children on the Child Protection Register during the lockdown and that there were a number of reasons for the rise. Committee members were informed that work was being undertaken to ensure children were receiving the right services and there was the right level of scrutiny, it was noted that reviewing will be extended to children on the Care and Support plan.



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

In January 2022 members of the Committee received a number of updates from a wide variety of services that helped to achieve Priority 4 of the Corporate Parenting Strategy: Educational achievement, employment, and training.

### **Into work Advice Service**

The Bright Futures Project provides support for Care Experienced young people (16-24) who are identified as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and needing intensive help to access training and the workplace. A team of five Youth Mentors liaise with partners in Children's Services and Youth Services to ensure that all Care Experienced young people are given the opportunity to reach their potential and be supported into education and work. The Assistant Into Work Coordinator for Youth and Bright Start Youth Employment Mentor presented an update to the Committee on the Bright Futures Project and Bright Start Traineeship Scheme.

A discussion took place in regard to placements offered by external agencies. The Committee were informed that due to concerns around covid 19, external placements were put on hold and that placements have been taking place internally within Council departments. Members of the Committee expressed disappointment that it had only been possible to make internal placements and noted the importance of widening placement opportunities when Covid restrictions allow. Committee members discussed the benefits of face-to-face meetings with young people on placements and commended the work of officers in supporting young people.

### **Bright Sparks Participation Update**

In January 2022 the Committee were informed of the activities that the Bright Sparks group had undertaken in relation to the fourth of the five Priorities in the Corporate Parenting Strategy, as well as details of an engagement session held with members of the Bright Sparks group and Chair of the Committee.

The Committee were informed of the themes following the discussions that took place with young people and the next steps services and partners would take to deliver change as a result of what members of the group had said. This included an example of tackling stigma faced by care experienced young people. Officers advised that the care experienced young people that they worked with were proud of their experience as Children Looked After and working with others who fall into that category is important to them.

Members of the Committee expressed the importance of peer support for young people to achieve their aspirations.

### **Support for Care Leavers**

The Personal Adviser service manager and well-being coordinator updated Committee members of the work undertaken to support young people leaving care, as well as future plans for the service. A presentation highlighted activities that had taken place as part of Care Leavers week including a residential trip and DIY sessions with a local construction company.

A discussion took place about further activities that could take place to support the well-being of Care Leavers. The view was expressed that it was the activities that young people wished to do that mattered. Life skills such as cooking, DIY and financial awareness are important to enable young people to live independently. Sessions given by the team are intended to give young people more independence and confidence that will enable them to join outside groups such as Scouts building on their social skills and other opportunities.

### **Youth Justice Service update**

In January 2022 the Operational manager from the Youth Justice Service presented to the Committee on data and information on Children Looked After who are supported by the service. Information was provided on the background to the service which included legislation, structure of the service and the support provided to young people.

A breakdown of data was provided in reference to the number of young people known to the service who Children Looked After.

Members of the Committee enquired as to the nature of preventative work undertaken with children aged 8-9. Officers advised that while some areas did conduct prevention work among 8–9-year-olds HMIP had advised that this was not appropriate for Youth Justice Service. There might be scope for targeted work within primary schools which the service could contribute to.

Committee members were informed of substance misuse workshops; the Committee were informed that the workshops were targeted according to the needs of the different residential establishments and that substance misuse workers provide information and support to children in reducing harmful behaviours and making positive choices.

Members of the Committee enquired whether substance misuse workshops would take place. The Committee were informed that the workshops would commence following recruitment.

### **Children Looked After in Education Annual Review Briefing**

The Achievement Leader for Key Groups and Project manager from the Looked After Children Education Team attended the Committee and provided an overview of the results of tracking and monitoring the performance of Looked After Children in Education. Members of the Committee were informed of the positive feedback provided by Estyn following the work that taken place to support Looked After Children during the pandemic. The Committee were informed about the key performance of young people in education in Cardiff, what was working well within the team and the further actions needed for improvements to be made.

Committee members discussed whether it would be appropriate to incorporate targets for exclusion rates, transition to GCSE, and progression to employment, education, or training. Officers advised that the aspiration was for no children to be excluded and all children to progress to employment, education, or training and that it is important to consider what success means for an individual.

Further discussion took place in regard to the distances travelled by Looked After Children educated in out of county settings. Officers advised that even where the settings were just over the border, they still presented difficulties.

## **Additional learning Needs and Education Tribunal Wales Act 2018 Update Briefing**

Officers from the Looked After Children Education team provided a presentation on the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and the new responsibilities outlined in the act. The Committee were informed of the main principles as well as information that all Children Looked After with Additional Learning Needs would have a Local Authority maintained Individual Development Plans and information about what the Individual Development plan would contain.

Members of the Committee sought clarification on where responsibility for a child's IDP would lie. Officers advised that the Local Authority would be responsible for the IDP, and it would rest upon colleagues in Children's Services and Education to ensure a joined-up approach. The sole focus of the inclusion teacher is the IDPs. Committee members welcomed the inclusion of Looked After Children in the development of their IDPs and discussed how the experience of Children Looked After by the Local Authority and those who were not differed.

## **Monitoring Performance**

The terms of reference for the Committee require the Committee to regularly review performance data and ensure performance monitoring systems are in place to achieve sustained improvements. A number of developments have been made to help capture data and inform the Committee of key services that help to achieve deliverable outcomes to improve the lives of Children Looked After and Care leavers.

## **Key Performance Indicator dashboard**

A Key Performance Indicator Dashboard was agreed by the Committee to help monitor and understand the services that support Children Looked After and Care Leavers. Previously the Committee had received a number of Key Performance Indicators from predominately Children Services and the Education Directorate, however Children Looked After and Care Leavers have support and involvement from a range of services and agencies and therefore the dashboard was developed to help capture data more widely.

The Key Performance Indicator Dashboard is now a standing performance management item on the Committees agenda and shows a range of key data from internal departments and outside agencies that have an impact on the lives of Children Looked After and Care Leavers in Cardiff.

Partners who contribute and provide key performance indicators include:

- Cardiff and Vale Health Board
- Children Services
- Bright Futures
- Housing Directorate
- Education Directorate
- Criminal Justice System
- Adolescent/ leaving care services

The dashboard continues to be developed to help include relevant data will help members of the Committee in their role. Performance information training will be added to the Member Development programme to help Committee members to learn and to develop their ability to analyse performance information.

## Corporate Parenting Strategy Progress Report

The Corporate Parenting Officer for Children Services presented an update to members of the Committee on the implementation of the new Corporate Parenting Strategy. Committee Members were informed of the progress made and outcomes and developments in the first 6 months of the strategy being implemented.

The report provided a number of projects from a range of partners that had taken place to improve the lives of care experienced young people over the first 6 months in line with each of the 5 priorities of the strategy and the plans for the future

Progress that had been reported to the Committee included:

- **Private Sector Opportunities** – DIY sessions to support those leaving Care were held to help young people learn skills such as decorating and basic home repair helping to prepare with independent living.
- **Summer of Smiles Festival** – Care experienced young people were provided with exclusive access to book onto activities as part of the 6-week summer programme
- **Independence planning workshops** – pilot of Children's Services and housing 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.

Information was shared on the development of the strategy and the systems put in place to galvanise internal and external agencies to have a role to play in extending Corporate Parenting duties. This included the establishment of an operational group and development of a shared multi agency action plan.

Committee members noted the report and advised that there had been significant progress in the work over recent months.

## **Corporate Parenting Strategy Action Plan**

The Corporate Parenting Strategy action plan outlines key deliverable outcomes that aim to improve the lives of care experienced young people in Cardiff.

The Committee were informed of the development of the action plan and the establishment of a multi-agency Operational group and membership of the group which included representation from:

- Children Services
- Housing
- DWP
- Child Friendly City Team
- Education
- Youth Service
- Police
- Cardiff Commitment
- HR
- Tourism & Leisure
- Voices from Care Cymru
- NYAS Cymru

Members of the Committee were informed that the action plan for the Operational group outlined a set of key clear deliverable outcomes that help to improve the lives of care experienced young people in Cardiff. Members of the group provide updates to the progress made against the actions.

## **Complaints and Compliments – Performance Report**

The Committee's terms of reference state that it will receive Children's Services Complaints reports and Compliments performance report. A report is produced and provided to the Committee at each reporting quarter period.

It is a statutory requirement for Local Authorities to have in place a Representations and Complaints Procedure for Social Services. Statutory complaints relate to the provision of social care and are handled in line with the national regulations. Citizens making complaints have a right to be listened to properly and have their concerns resolved quickly and effectively. Children's Services emphasis is on listening to concerns and using this learning to improve services for everyone who uses them. Complaints should be handled in such a way that the complainant is the focus, not the process, and that the particular circumstances of the complainant are considered (including their age or disability). Where the complaint relates to a looked after child, a child in need or a care leaver the local authority has a duty to provide an advocate as required.

At each quarterly report update the Committee were informed of the methods of how citizens can make a complaint, the themes of the complaints with analysis, as well as compliments received about Children Services, thus helping the Committee to gain an understanding of common issues facing citizens.

### **Quality of Care Review**

The Regulated Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2017, (amended 2019) provides the requirement of a Quality-of-Care Review. In October the Committee received the Annual Quality Assurance Report for Ty Storrie Short Break Service and Crossland's Childrens home covering the period Oct 2020 – March 2021. The aim of producing the reports was to inform and drive improvements in the quality of care provided to the young at the home and short break service.

The reports outlined the results and feedback from a number of surveys conducted which included young people's feedback, staff, social workers, and parents. The Operational Manager for Performance, Strategy and Resource presented to the Committee key findings and a summary of both Quality-of-Care reviews which included examples of good practice, outstanding actions from previous reviews and how young people are supported to have their voice heard.



## **CONCLUSION**

During 2020/2021 Committee members received a wide range of updates and information from a variety of organisations and teams helping the Committee gain an understanding of the issues impacting Care experienced young people and the organisations, projects and initiatives that support them.

These updates helped to notify the Committee of how services and organisations adapted to the Covid 19 pandemic and the future plans and developments for services Areas of particular interest from Committee members for 2020/2021 were:

- Participation of Children and young people updates
- Voices from Care presentation
- Launch of Foster Wales

Key systems were put in place to support Committee members in their role including a refreshed Terms of Reference, Corporate Parenting Protocol and the development of a Key Performance Indicator dashboard.

The forward work programme for the Committee had been shaped to link with the new Corporate Parenting Strategy and connections between young people, external and internal partners were strengthened.