

Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee

Annual Report
2023/24

CHAIR'S FORWARD

In 2023-2024, the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee continued its commitment to providing robust care and support for our children and young people who are care experienced or looked after. This annual report focuses on the progress made in addressing our corporate priorities and highlights several key pieces of work that the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee has been involved in over the past year.

Throughout 2023/2024 members have been able to learn about the variety of invaluable services provided by the authority and its partners to support the children and young people in our care. The Committee have also been given opportunities to engage with care experienced children and young people in Cardiff. This has allowed the children and young people to share their views, experiences, and challenges with the committee members directly.

A particular highlight for me has been attending the annual Bright Sparks awards. This ceremony has been running for 17 years and recognises the achievements of Children Looked After, families, carers and staff. It was fantastic to see so many children and young people enjoying the celebrations and to witness their accomplishments, resilience and determination.

I was privileged to be able to give out an award on the evening to the members of the Bright Sparks group. Bright Sparks is a participation group of care experienced children and young people who come together to discuss topical issues and participate in fun activities. The group provides children and young people with a safe space to have their voices heard, enabling them to lead changes and make a difference to the services that affect them.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of the Committee for their contributions and active involvement throughout the year. In the next municipal year, the Committee will focus on continuing with our support for The Accommodation Strategy and promoting Cardiff homes for Cardiff children across the authority. We will strengthen the implementation of NYAS' My Things Matter Campaign throughout the service, following the pledge made in June 2023 and look to expand our participation

services, which will be facilitated by the publication of the new Participation Strategy in 2024.

Councillor Sarah Merry
Chair, Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee

DIRECTOR'S OVERVIEW

The 2023/2024 Annual Report highlights the range of initiatives undertaken by the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee in the past year. The report explores the various updates received by the Committee; the growth of the Virtual School and Virtual Headteacher, expansion of the emotional wellbeing and mental health services and the rapid development of the Accommodation Strategy. The aim of the Committee is to ensure there is a consistent and sustained focus on each of the corporate priorities throughout the authority and its partners.

It is encouraging to see the enthusiasm from the Committee to engage in the member visit programme as this provides meaningful opportunities for members to hear directly from our young people. I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of the Committee for their contributions and active involvement throughout the year. With the event of the new national Corporate Parenting Charter, we are in an exciting time where we are looking to review the role of the committee. It will also see us strengthening our partnership working with our Corporate Parenting Statutory partners, as part of the implementation of this charter. I look forward to seeing how we can continue to support the committee in achieving the best possible outcomes for our children and young people.

Finally, it was wonderful to see so many young people taking part in the Bright Sparks Awards in December. The Bright Sparks is a participation group that is run by young people for young people. It creates a space for them to come together with other people who understand exactly who they are and what it means to be care experienced. The achievements of our young people are incredible, and it was a privilege to hear about all of their successes and accomplishments.

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 staff member and employee has a 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's 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 2023/24. 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
- Committee Training
- Young People Engagement
- Activity of the Committee
- 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 & 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 Children Looked After 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 2023/24 municipal year, 4 Committee meetings were held. The scheduled meetings were held on:

- 26th June 2023
- 6th November 2023
- 22nd January 2024
- 11th March 2024

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. In 2023/2024 the Members were as follows:

COUNCILLOR REPRESENTATIVE		ATTENDANCE	
		Meetings: Possible	Meetings: Actual
Sarah Merry (Chair)	Labour (Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Education, Employment and Skills)	4	4
Cllr Ash Lister	Labour	4	4
Cllr Mike Ash Edwards	Labour	4	3
Cllr Chris Lay	Labour	4	4
Cllr Margaret Lewis	Labour	4	3
Cllr Maliika Kaaba	Labour	4	3
Cllr Peter Littlechild	Conservative	4	4
Cllr Daniel Naughton	Liberal Democrats	4	3
Cllr Rhys Taylor	Liberal Democrats	4	4

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.

26th June 2023

Priority 1: Improving Emotional Wellbeing and Physical Health

Children and Young People Emotional Wellbeing Mental Health Service Update

Members of the Corporate Parenting Committee were provided with an overview of the Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service, part of the Children and Young People & Family Health Service (CYPF).

Previously, Services were delivered under a South Wales CAMHS Network hosted by Cwm Taf University Health Board. However, in 2016, Primary Mental Health was repatriated to Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and then later, in 2019, SCAMHS followed.

The committee heard how the aim of the new service is to provide an integrated Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service, with a single point of access and no wrong door approach.

A number of improvements were made to the service following its repatriation into Cardiff and Vale University Health board. These included significant growth in workforce, a single point of access with a consultation line for professionals, clear pathways of care and communication platforms that were co-produced with children and young people.

The Committee also heard how the service has introduced several other provisions, including:

- Intensive Home Treatment Service
- Specialist Eating Disorder Service
- Schools In Reach Team and Specialist Emotional Wellbeing School Nurses
- Embedded Mental Health Practitioner in the Early Help Service
- Community Connections: Social Prescribing Project

The committee were then told about future plans for the service and where it's focus would be. A primary target is to improve waiting times, an issue that is shared across

several areas within the service. CYPF also explained how in the coming year they would be looking to increase their visibility in communities, launch an EmPower Programme and continue with their exploration of alternatives to admissions.

Childrens Services Emotional Wellbeing Project

Childrens Services Operational Manager, Suki Bahara Garrens attended to deliver an update to the Committee on the Emotional Wellbeing Project undertaken by the Safeguarding Team. Members of the were told about the significant increase in the number of Cardiff children and young people presenting to emergency units following self harm or suicide attempts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members heard that whilst the majority of young people were able to be discharged back to their homes once they were medically fit, there was a growing number of young people who did not meet the criteria for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) or tier 4 in-patient support. This was due to the fact their needs were not described as related to a 'mental illness', however, the young person did require ongoing support to enable them to safely return to living within the community.

Children's Services collaborated with Health and other partners to work on a multiagency project to improve outcomes for children and young people in emotional crisis. The progress of the project created close partnership working with Health to create joint hospital discharge procedures and safety plans for our children and young people in emotional crisis.

The committee were told of the successful implementation of weekly multi-agency meetings between Local Authorities and Health colleagues to discuss any issues or concerns. A dedicated CAMHS Social Worker was recruited to deliver much needed work across several agencies. The dedicated CAMHS Social Worker was also available to offer consultancy support to social work staff, in order to provide them with a space to discuss young people where there are concerns about emotional crisis or mental illness.

Members were pleased to note that staff from across agencies have undertaken specialist training to further their knowledge and understanding so that they are able to offer the best level of support to this group of young people.

Enfys A Psychology Led Service For Children That Are Looked After Update

Members were provided with an overview of Enfys, a psychology led service for Children Looked After from the Lead Psychologist Libby Erin. Enfys was previously known as the Developmental Trauma Service, was established in August 2016 and was originally just a part-time Clinical Psychologist who then became full time in August 2017.

Enfys has grown since the last presentation to the Committee and now consists of a team of 15, comprising Psychologists, Graduate Mental Health Workers and Occupational Therapists. Members were informed that Enfys used a pyramid model to deliver their services and explained how support was offered.

To meet the demand of having over 1300 children who are looked after in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, the service provided a predominantly consultation-based model of service delivery. Once a family or child had support at one level, they could move up to the next level of the pyramid if it was considered there was a need for more intensive support. Members were informed that the number of families Enfys worked with at each level decreased as the pyramid was ascended. The service supported foster carers, social workers, teachers, or anybody else involved in a child's care, to complete the nurturing attachment group.

Members were provided with information on the ongoing support to families provided by Enfys as follows:

- Assessment and formulation of therapeutic need
- Based on child, young person or family individual needs (needs led)
- Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy –based support
- Members of the team are skilled in a variety of therapeutic models, as well as integrative working (e.g. play based work, EMDR Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing), Dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) and others).

Members were also informed of the work with Enfys undertook alongside other agencies which included:

- 6-weekly supervision with CLA nurses
- 6-weekly supervision to post-adoption service
- Co-location with East, North, South teams in Cardiff Children's Services every month
- Co-location with post-adoption service every 2 weeks
- ARC – dedicated psychologist embedded in the edge of care service

Members were advised that so far, this year, 5 Enfys groups had been run for individuals from both Cardiff and Vale and within Cardiff and that Enfys has provided 246 Advice and Support Sessions since January 2023.

Members were appreciative of the fact that Enfys had supported many of Cardiff's children and young people and passed on their thanks for the positive difference that they had made.

Statutory Health Information For Looked After Children Update

Becci Ingram, General manager at the Children, Young People and Family Health Services, and advisor to this Committee, provided a presentation to Members on Statutory Health and Information for Children Looked After.

Members were informed that the Children Looked After team in health were an important part of the Children, Young People and Family Health Directorate and delivered an area of work where there were statutory health requirements. Children in care have traditionally had more adverse health outcomes, so the assessments were aimed at improving health outcomes and reducing health inequalities, as well as ensuring identified health needs are actioned and monitored. The service was provided by a small staffing team of Consultant Paediatricians and Specialist Nurses.

Members were provided with a summary and overview of the statutory responsibilities for monitoring the health of Children Looked After and the role of the key people in

assessing and monitoring the health needs of Children Looked After, including the Looked After Health Nurses.

The Committee were advised that there had been a growth in the number of children looked after with a direct impact on the number of Health Assessments the team were required to deliver. Until recently the team had not grown in line with the growth in demand. Recognising these pressures, Becci Ingram explained that the Health Board had taken the above actions to mitigate this, which were outlined to Members.

NYAS My Things Matter Campaign

Members were given an overview of the My Things Matter Campaign from Candice Lloyd, Service Manager for NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service).

The aim of the campaign was to raise awareness of how important it is to treat the belongings of children and young people with respect, should they have to move between placements. The Committee heard how there was a collaboration with Madlug, who for every bag they sell, donate a compact travel bag to a child or young person who is looked after. This was to ensure that no child would have their belongings put into a bin liner and feel as though their personal items were worthless.

Members were informed that to date, a total of 32 Authorities had already signed the pledge and were encouraged to become signatories to the NYAS My Things Matter Campaign. All CPAC Members signed the pledge and as a result, Cardiff City Council updated its guidance and policies and publicised the campaign.

6th November 2023

Priority 4: Educational Achievement, Employment & Training

Virtual Headteacher and School Overview and Update: Looked after Children in Education Annual Report

Deborah Williams, Virtual Headteacher, Libby Jones Child Looked After Virtual School Cardiff Project Manager and Davina Miller, Inclusion Teacher, Child Looked After Virtual School Cardiff were invited to the meeting to provide an update to Members on the Children Looked After in Education Annual Report 2022-23 and the Virtual School and Virtual Headteacher Update. Members were informed how the Virtual School and Virtual Headteacher was working to further priority 4 of the Corporate Parenting Strategy: Educational Achievement and Training.

Members were informed that since the last Educational Report to the CPAC, there had been changes to the LACE (Looked After Children in Education) Team. Following a successful application for Welsh Government pilot funding, the Virtual School and the role of the Virtual Headteacher began in July 2022, Welsh Government agreed to extend the funding for a second year.

The Virtual School Headteacher advised members that a written review of the work of the Virtual School was being undertaken and reported to Welsh Government.

Members were informed that the National Development Group for Child Looked After met in July 2023 for the first time since the pandemic and that there were plans in place for the Virtual School Headteachers to meet and work collaboratively.

The following performance information was provided to Members:

- 63% of Cardiff Children Looked After were educated in a Cardiff School or setting
- 32% of Cardiff Children Looked After were educated in an out of county setting
- 5% of Cardiff Children Looked After were in Education other than at School (EOTAS)

Work being undertaken to support Children Looked after in Education included:

- Collaborative and integrated working with Education and Children's Services
- Working with schools and other education settings in and out of county
- Leadership and managing the change from the Looked After Children Education to the Virtual School Team
- Developing partnerships and relationships with other professionals and agencies

Members were also provided with a summary, and able to clarify, the priorities and future plans in Education to improve outcomes for Children and Young People Looked After including vision, funding, impact and timescales.

Cardiff Commitment Update

Members were given an update from Carly Davies, Project Manager of Cardiff Commitment.

Members were informed that Cardiff Commitment had been developed as a programme to support the Capital Ambition, which was that all learners progressed into education, employment or training post-16. Members were advised that supporting the progression of young people was a key priority for the Education Directorate and Cardiff Commitment was building strong relationships between Cardiff schools, employers, and higher and further education partners to support young people to access jobs and careers.

Carly Davies informed members that to do date, over 300 employers in Cardiff are working with Cardiff Commitment to offer young people employment and training opportunities, work experience and curriculum enrichment activities.

Members were given an overview of what success looked like, which included the goal of ensuring no young people became 'NEET' (Not in Education, Employment or Training), particularly from vulnerable groups such as Children Looked After and low income families.

In terms of targeted support for Children Looked After, members were informed that a Child Looked After Working Group was being developed to support pupils across Cardiff schools with meaningful career and work-related experiences. The Group would help to promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for those children and young people.

Members were told the group would be chaired by the Child Looked After Virtual Headteacher and Headteacher at Cardiff West Community High School. It would look at how meaningful opportunities could be developed within the Cardiff Commitment network to support Cardiff's Children Looked After to develop their aspirations and support them to realise their ambitions for the future. The views of Children Looked After would be central to this work and they would be consulted for their views in relation to the support needed to raise their aspirations and realise their ambitions. The intention was that Cardiff Commitment would listen to their ideas and needs and respond with a Call to Action across their partner network.

Into work Advice Service- Bright Futures Update

Members were provided with a presentation from Kate Elias, Into Work Service Co-ordinator, who gave an update on the Bright Futures Project.

Members were informed that the Bright Futures Project sat within the Into Work Advice Service as part of a wide team of employability and training projects. The Service provides employment, training, volunteering and digital support to Cardiff citizens who were actively seeking work or looking to upskill. The Bright Futures Project provides support for Care Experienced young people (16-24) who were identified as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or at risk of becoming so and needing intensive help to access training and the workplace. A team of Youth Mentors liaises with partners in Children's Services and Youth Services to ensure that all Care Experienced young people were given the opportunity to reach their potential and be supported into education and work.

Members were informed that the support consisted of:

- Intensive youth mentor support for care experienced young people in Cardiff to help them remove the barriers into employment, education or training;

- Financial support was available to help young people get into employment; access to a flexible barrier fund to help them with clothing, transport, training, childcare etc;
- Support to prepare for 6 month Bright Start Work Placements;
- Access to wellbeing and confidence building, including summer wellbeing sessions and access to ICare boxed in partnership with the Youth Service

Members were provided with a snapshot of engagement since April 2023 with 52 young people having signed up for mentor support, 16 young people were helped into employment, 24 young people completed training, 22 young people completed Bright Start placements and 244 were supported into Employment or Education since the launch of Bright Futures in 2020.

Katy Elias shared some quotes from young people with the members. One young person said, *“This chance you helped me with could change my life now, thank you so much.”*, *“Thank you so much ... for going above and beyond. I feel so much better after talking to you”* and *“Without the support from you I would have been on a very dark path. Thank you for being constant and not giving up on me.”*

To conclude the presentation, Katy Elias informed Members of the Bright Start Trainee Scheme. Members were told of the existence of the Bright Start Trainee Scheme, whereby young people were supported to undertake up to 6 months of paid work experience placements. Partners who offer the young people these placement opportunities include- The Dogs Trust, Clayton Hotels and Cardiff Motorcross. Members were given the opportunity to incorporate a meeting with some of the young people participating in the trainee scheme into their member visit programme.

Participation Strategy Update

The members were given an update on the Participation Strategy by Matt Osborne, Operational Manager of Childrens Services. Members were advised that a consultation had been undertaken in collaboration with Children’s Services, NYAS and Cardiff Youth Service to develop a participation strategy.

Members were informed that the consultation had been co-produced by members of the Bright Sparks groups, as well as children and young people who attended services provided by Cardiff Youth Service and the Personal Advisor Service. It was explained that the aim of the Participation Strategy was to develop a strategy that would set out how the Authority engaged with Cardiff's children, young people and families and how services could be shaped in the future to better meet their needs. The strategy would be co-produced with children and young people, ensuring their voices were at the heart of the strategy development.

Members were told that a steering group was set up with members from Children's Services, Cardiff Youth Service and NYAS to map out a structure to engage with children and young people. Matt Osborne explained that in September 2023, all children and young people open to children's services between the ages of 8-18 years were invited to take part in the co-produced online questionnaire. A target of 100 responses was set and 122 responses were received.

Members were updated on direct work that was undertaken by way of visits to young people in residential homes and schools, and were advised that the strategy was at the point where all the information gathered from young people was being analysed.

Members were given valuable insight of some of the responses that had been received as part of the consultation. It was notable how many young people mentioned their families were important to them as well as the importance of sport and activities. An early draft would be presented to Members in order for them to communicate their views.

Support for Care Leavers Report

Hayley Beynon, Personal Advisor Service Team Manager and Jess Lloyd, Senior Personal Advisor updated Members on the Support for Care Leavers Report. Details were shared about the current work being undertaken to support young people leaving care, as well as work planned for future development. It was explained to members that the Personal Advisor Service is a fundamental service providing support, advice and guidance for young people aged between 16-25 years of age.

It was highlighted that since the last presentation to the CPAC Committee, the service had moved into Adults, Housing and Communities Service Area. Members were told how the alignment of the service helped to provide a holistic and cohesive approach to address the needs of young people with more of a 'wrap around' of services.

Members were also given an update on the recent Basic Income Pilot (a £1600 monthly payment for care experienced young people turning 18) which was being undertaken with 98 young people across the service. The entry to the pilot has now ended but it will continue to progress until 2025.

Hayley Beynon explained to members that the main concern for the PA Service was that in receiving the basic income payment, the young people would no longer be entitled to universal credit and rent support. Therefore, it was necessary for them to engage in meetings to undergo financial health and benefits checks.

The future aims for the service were outlined to the Committee, which included working with young people at an earlier age (15 and a half), a leaving care pilot/website in conjunction with a virtual youth hub, parenting support groups and entitlement support groups.

Passport To The City Report

In November 2023, the Committee heard from the Passport To The City Achievement Officer about a their programme, which ensures children and young people from all backgrounds are able to enjoy the amenities Cardiff had to offer.

Members were informed that the programme, which had been running for a year, provided fun, engaging, and aspirational experiences across the city for children and young people, in particular Cardiff's most vulnerable, to help improve their self-esteem, confidence, and well-being.

Examples of these opportunities included tickets to watch professional cricket matches at Sophia Gardens, Wales Millennium Centre tickets and BBC studios tours. More than 200 tickets were also obtained for Children and young people who are looked after to attend Bute Park Christmas Lights.

22nd January 2024

Priority 2: Better Connections and Improved Relationships

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) Update

A detailed presentation was delivered to Committee Members by Candice Lloyd, Service Manager and Scott Giles, Project Co-ordinator, of the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) Cardiff.

Members were provided with an overview of the service as a whole and advised that NYAS Cymru are a leading rights-based charity who provide independent advocacy services for children and young people aged between 5-25 in Cardiff. NYAS ensure that the rights of children and young people are upheld and that their views, wishes and feelings are respected and their voices are heard.

Members were told of the two different types of service offered by NYAS; the Active Offer and the Issue Based Advocacy. The Active Offer relates to children and young people who are new to the looked after or child protection system. Issue based advocacy is available to children and young people who are looked after, receiving care and support or are on the child protection register. Issue based advocacy is also available to care leavers.

Candice Lloyd informed members that between April and September 2023, NYAS have received 408 referrals comprising 230 Active Offers and 178 issue based advocacy services for children and young people in Cardiff. As part of this service, NYAS has supported 24 children and young people with disabilities, 10 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children and 17 young people placed out of county.

Members were provided with a case study which included firsthand information from a young person and highlighted the difference advocacy made to their life.

Voices From Care Cymru Update

To link with the theme of the January 2024 Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee meeting, Voices from Care provided members with an update on their current projects.

Helen Mary Jones, Head of Policy and Communications provided information about the independent Welsh voluntary organization which has been supporting care-experienced children and young people for thirty-five years.

Support is provided by way of various well-being services; allowing young people the opportunity to develop resilience and independent living skills, as well as facilitating peer support in both formal and informal settings. Members heard how Voices from Care Cymru offers enjoyable activities to allow care-experienced individuals to relax and bond with others who share similar experiences, whilst empowering them to collaborate and influence decisions affecting their lives.

In terms of well-being, Voices from Care Cymru offer tailored support to address barriers to successful independent living. Members heard how this included practical skill workshops which focused on topics such as budgeting, fostering healthy relationships, and addressing past traumas. The organization has recently expanded its services to include professional counselling. They also offer peer support cafes and a project called the Sky's the Limit which cater to specific age groups.

Members were informed how Voices from Care Cymru places a strong emphasis on influencing policies and decisions to improve the lives of care-experienced individuals. It actively engages young people in developing manifestos and collaborates with the Welsh Government to implement policy commitments. Voices From Care Cymru assisted with the development of the Basic Income Pilot and also played a key role in the creation of the Corporate Parenting Charter. Committee members were given an in depth update on the Summit Meeting between Welsh Ministers and care-experienced young people, which was held to discuss a reform of services.

Residential Homes Update

Members were provided with an update on the Accommodation Strategy from Nick Blake, Operational Manager Children's Services. The Strategy is part of the new Children's Services Strategy, which was been developed to set out the vision and direction for service provision in Cardiff over the next 3 years. It outlines how Cardiff will seek to work with partners to meet the needs of children, young people and their families, using the least interventionist approach. There will be a focus on three key areas: Place, People and Practice.

The Accommodation Strategy sets out the accommodation provision required to implement 'The Right Place Model' in Cardiff and gives an overview of the ambitious plans to increase residential care provision for children and young people.

Members were told that one of the reasons behind the need for more residential provision, is the consistent reduction in foster carer recruitment. The proposal is to use current assets within the authority, as well as the acquire and develop a number of other properties.

The Committee heard how Childrens Services currently have 5 new operational properties (3 General, 1 Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing and 1 for Children with Disabilities) with a further 4 due to be completed in the first half 2024. The service is also exploring the potential to purchase 4 smaller homes which would be used for solo, respite and shared care placements for children and young people who require additional health and disability support.

The Committee were encouraged to hear that the Right Place Model is also supported by the commitment from Welsh Government to end private profit from the care of children who are looked after.

The overriding aim for the next phase of The Accommodation Strategy is to provide homes for Cardiff children and young people where they feel safe, nurtured and protected.

Youth Service Report

Cardiff Youth Service Manager, Craig Bartlett attended the January 2024 Committee meeting to provide members with an update on the service and its offer to children and young people in Cardiff. Operating under the Education Department of Cardiff Council, The Youth Service supports children and young people aged 11-25 years to enhance their personal, social, and educational development. This is done by offering engagement through community activities, participatory experiences, and comprehensive information, support, and guidance to help young individuals achieve their full potential.

The Committee were advised that the service operates across a variety of settings, offering both universal and targeted support to young people which is all based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

With 13 youth work teams, Cardiff Youth Service engages young people in youth centres, clubs, schools, streets, and communities. All youth workers are nationally qualified and registered, ensuring high standards of professionalism.

Specialist Looked After Youth Mentors provide tailored support, including one-to-one sessions focusing on improving well-being, attendance, and academic performance. Delivery is flexible, accommodating school, community, or home settings, even for children placed out of county.

There is a Children Looked After Wellbeing Group that offers care-experienced young people a supportive environment for socialising, sharing experiences, and participating in themed workshops. The workshops are aimed at promoting emotional health and wellbeing including cooking, games/activities, iCare Programme, and accredited activities such Youth Achievers Award and Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Guaranteed Interview

The members of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee heard from Corporate Policy Officer, Lucy Thomas about the proposal for a guaranteed interview scheme for care leavers.

Members were told of the plan to introduce a guaranteed interview scheme for young people who have left the care system when they apply for vacancies within Cardiff Council.

The proposed scheme would be applicable only to job vacancies within Cardiff Council where the Council has the authority to employ individuals, so excluded from the scheme are school-based jobs or partnership posts.

Under the proposed scheme, care leavers would be guaranteed an interview if they identify as such on their application and meet the essential criteria outlined in the person specification.

Members were advised that the implementation of the scheme is targeted to be completed by the end of the first quarter of the 24/25 financial year, with efforts to expedite the process if system changes can be accommodated sooner.

Prior to implementation, several changes are necessary. This includes collaboration with Human Resources to update all recruitment systems, application documentation and recruitment and selection policy. It is also necessary to undergo a consultation with Trade Unions to address any concerns or considerations.

Mentoring Scheme Report

Members were updated about the Children's Services Mentoring Scheme being developed to support children and young people who are looked after in Cardiff.

The Mentoring Scheme is designed to support and empower children and young people by offering them practical experiences and opportunities within the authority. The purpose of the Mentoring Scheme is to provide a structured programme focused on offering guidance, support, and assistance to children and young people in various aspects of their lives.

Members heard how the scheme will pair young people with adult mentors to offer them supervision, positive role modelling, and opportunities for personal and academic

growth. This will be facilitated by way of practical work experience and volunteering opportunities within the authority.

The aim of the scheme is to increase social, academic and life skill development in children and young people by giving them positive, consistent role models to learn from. It is hoped that this will create a sense of community and belonging for those young people taking part in the scheme.

Members were pleased to note that this is an authority wide initiative and were told how each Directorate had been contacted for their suggestions as to how they can support the mentoring scheme. These suggestions will then be included in the Corporate Parenting Operational Plan for 2024-2025.

Member Visit Programme

Committee Members Cllr Rhys Taylor and Cllr Peter Littlechild visited Ty Storrie Children's Home in Cardiff. The Members were extremely grateful for the warm welcome they received and were inspired by the care and support staff provide to the children and families reliant on Ty Storrie.

Ty Storrie is a Home for children and young people aged between 6-17 with disabilities and complex needs. It has 8 en suite bedrooms, 2 lounge areas along with a playroom and sensory room. There are currently 33 children having regular overnight respite care, however it is hoped that with the right support, this can grow to 45.

The Members wished to highlight the complexities of settling a child, prior to them enjoying their first stay at Ty Storrie. It is a gradual, phased process and can sometimes take up to 4 months before a child stays overnight.

Cllr Mike Ash Edwards visited the Youth Justice Service and met with Angharad Thomas, Operational Manager as well as a number of support officers.

Cardiff YJS is a multi disciplinary partnership between the Youth Justice Board, Welsh Government and The Police & Crime Commissioner to provide intervention and support for young people and their families. Cllr Ash Edwards learned how the aim of

the partnership is to prevent anti-social behaviour, offending and re-offending by young people aged 10-17. It also offers support to victims of youth crime and anti-social behaviour.

Cllr Dan Naughton visited St Teilos Comprehensive School and met with the Headteacher, Mr Ian Loynd. Cllr Naughton also had the opportunity to speak to pupils and youth service mentors working within the school. Mr Loynd gave an in-depth overview of the ethos of the school and their adoption of trauma informed processes for all of their pupils.

Cllr Mike Ash Edwards attended a fostering catch up coffee morning where he discussed various aspects of the fostering process with carers in attendance. Cllr Ash Edwards shared with members how one carer had looked after over 80 children during her time as a foster carer and expressed how privileged she felt to be in this position. Cllr Ash Edwards heard how there is still a national shortage of foster carers but with the support of the Welsh Government and Foster Wales' recruitment campaign, it is hoped that the situation will improve.

Committee members Cllr Ash Lister and Cllr Sarah Merry attended the annual Bright Sparks Awards in December 2023. The event was held at County Hall and welcomed over 200 people. Members were impressed at the effort may by staff to make the committee rooms look spectacular so that the children and families felt special.

There was a red carpet and photobooth area, complete with a balloon arch and aesthetic lighting. There was also a quiet area for any children who needed to withdraw, and a good selection of food was provided. There were 14 different award categories and every young person that was nominated received a certificate, goody bag and some Christmas chocolates. The Bright Sparks group hosted the entire evening and had complete autonomy in how the event was run.

Forward work programme

The Forward Work Programme for the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee sets out the Committee business that will be considered during the period identified in the programme.

The programme has been developed to enable the Committee to monitor the progress being made to support the children looked after by the authority. Following a recent engagement session with children and young people looked after, several themes have been identified which are mirrored in the Forward Work Programme to effectively plan the work of the Committee for the forthcoming municipal year. This will ensure that the agenda and issues considered at the Committee will reflect the needs of our young people.

Monitoring Performance

The terms of reference for the Committee requires the regular review of performance data and to ensure performance monitoring systems are in place to achieve sustained improvements.

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.

The Key Performance Indicator Dashboard is a standing performance management item on the Committees agenda and is reported bi-annually to the Committee. The dashboard 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
- The Youth Justice Service
- Adolescent/ leaving care services

The dashboard continues to be developed to help include relevant data will help members of the Committee in their role.

The Corporate Parenting Operational Plan

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

The Children and Young People's Board is a multi-agency operational group that oversees the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Operational Plan. The Children and Young People's Board includes representation from:

- Children Services
- Housing
- Child Friendly City Team
- Education
- Youth Service
- Cardiff Commitment
- HR

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.

The Cardiff Council Operational Plan is in the process of being updated, and will be presented to the Children and Young Person's Board in April 2024. A draft will be

presented to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee in June 2024, for review and members contribution. This will celebrate the hard work and effort of all Cardiff Council departments as Corporate Parents for our Children Looked After. We will also be inviting our Corporate Parenting Statutory Partners and the Independent Sector to review our Operational Plan and contribute.

Conclusion

During 2023/2024 Committee members received a wide range of updates and information from a variety of organisations which helped the Committee gain an understanding of the issues impacting care experienced young people and the services, projects and initiatives that support them.

Areas of particular interest from Committee Members for 2023/2024 were:

- The Accommodation Strategy
- The Virtual School Annual Report
- The Participation Strategy for Children and young people
- Bright Sparks Awards

Looking ahead the focus will be building on the information we have gained from the participation consultation and look to use this to expand ways of listening to children and young people to ensure they are at the heart of our decision making.

The themes and discussions from listening to our young people have been reflected in the members Forward Work Programme. This year, there will be a focus on building connections between young people, working closely with schools in the authority and supporting young people to take part in vocational and educational activities.

The new Corporate Parenting Charter presents a new opportunity for the Committee to review how Cardiff Council can work together with our statutory partners and the independent sector. The charter provides us with the prospect of improving engagement and joined up work, as well as strengthening our combined Corporate Parenting responsibilities.