

COUNCIL: 18 JULY 2019

CHILDREN & FAMILIES STATEMENT

Childcare Offer for Wales

As the Childcare Offer for Wales has now been rolled out to all eligible families across the country, the Welsh Government is planning a major media and communications campaign, which will further enhance local promotion and engagement activities that will be led by the Council's Childcare Offer Engagement Officer. With this focus on raising the profile of the offer, it is hoped that more eligible families will access the offer and benefit from the funding available.

Since the initial roll-out of the Childcare Offer for Wales in October 2018 and the subsequent expansion to cover the whole of Cardiff in January 2019, applications for 1,910 children have been received by the Childcare Offer team. Of these, over 92% of applications have been approved and funded. Within the city, there are now 294 childcare providers that have signed up to provide the offer and 238 currently have funded children attending.

Expenditure on funding these childcare places, with additional staffing support for children with additional support needs, has now passed the £2.5m mark. This represents the 'real world' saving for families by offsetting their childcare costs.

If Members would like further information or breakdown of the roll-out within their individual wards, I would happy to assist.

Fostering Service

The Council's Fostering Service launched their new website and rebranded marketing campaign during Foster Care Fortnight in May 2019. The aim of the new approach was to re-affirm Cardiff Council as the authority and trusted voice on increasing and bettering outcomes for Cardiff's Looked After Children.

Since the new marketing campaign began, it has yielded some fantastic results with a 900% increase in visitors to the new website. Organic (not paid for) social media has also performed tremendously well in raising awareness of the campaign, which will continue throughout the summer and autumn.

Think Again! Tackling Exploitation Programme

In the second and concluding part of this year's 'Think Again! Tackling Exploitation' programme, young people from schools across Cardiff came together at County Hall at the end of June to showcase their presentations on

child exploitation. The event was split into two parts, with presentations in the morning and the launch of the 'Think Again!' report and accompanying video in the afternoon.

Funded by Cardiff Council and run by the YMCA, the project worked with young people who had experienced child exploitation and gathered their thoughts and feelings to evaluate the services they had accessed, including those provided by Cardiff Council and Cardiff & Vale University Health Board amongst others. From their feedback, service providers can learn about what worked, what made things worse and what measures need to be put into place to ensure that, in future, any young people who have experienced exploitation feel fully supported through their individual experiences.

This year's youth ambassadors excelled, going over and above to deliver powerful and insightful presentations. Schools have also taken the project's ethos on board, with pupils being asked to deliver their presentations to staff and staff implementing the student-generated content as part of next year's curriculum.

The programme culminated with a creative and impactful video that showcased the incredible work of the 'Think Again!' project. The video is available on the Council's YouTube channel.

Care Inspectorate Wales Annual Letter

In their annual performance review letter, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) noted the senior management changes in Social Services over the last 12 months, and commented that the directorate had used these changes as an opportunity to build on good practice and review areas for development across the whole service. CIW acknowledged that here is a good level of corporate support for Social Services in Cardiff and that the directorate has achieved a good understanding of its own strengths and areas of challenge within Children's Services.

In terms of strengths, CIW recognised the development of early help preventative measures, including the new delivery model that is being implemented and the involvement of people in the design and delivery of their care – using the involvement of young people in the development of the Children's Services Strategy as an example.

Areas of challenge include the over-reliance on agency social workers and Independent Fostering Agencies due to the difficulties in recruiting experienced social workers, and in-house carers respectively. CIW noted the actions being taken by the directorate to address these issues, including the Workforce Action Plan and Market Position Statement.

CIW also acknowledged the positive development of the multi-agency Resource Panel that supports joint decision making.

Children's Services Strategy 2019-22

The Cabinet approved the Cardiff Children's Services Strategy 2019-22 on 11 July 2019, which will bring together a range of service improvement projects under the creation of one programme, 'Delivering Excellent Outcomes in

Children's Services'. It supports the delivery of other Council commitments in Capital Ambition, the Corporate Parenting Plan and the Child Friendly Cardiff Strategy, which seeks to place the rights of children and young people at the heart of policies and decision making.

The strategy sets out Cardiff's key challenges and commits to the delivery of a programme of ambitious activity for 2019-22. These improvements will be delivered with partners over the next three years and include:

- Supporting and developing our workforce to address recruitment and retention of staff.
- Continuing the roll-out of an enhanced Early Help service and ensuring children and young people are aware of their rights as part of Cardiff's commitment to becoming a UNICEF Child Friendly City.
- Improving the way that families access advice, assistance and support.
- Following the child on their journey and ensuring that the child is always at the centre of all the changes we make.
- Continuing the development of our regional and local safeguarding arrangements, ensuring the workforce has access to appropriate training.
- Work with the Regional Adoption Collaborative to safely improve our adoption procedures.
- Ensure consistent successful transition into adulthood and independent living.

Letter to the First Minister and Minister for Social Services regarding Children's Services

I was pleased to further develop the ongoing dialogue with Welsh Government colleagues regarding Children's Services and to take the opportunity to share our work and plans for the service. I also shared some challenges around the way Looked After Children statistics are recorded as current methods do not always accurately reflect the hard work being done in Cardiff – for example, where a child remains living with parents or with family and friends (kinship care) under a care order.

Councillor Graham Hinchey
Cabinet Member for Children & Families
12 July 2019