

CHILDREN & FAMILIES STATEMENT

Falconwood Assessment Centre

Members may recall that I reported on the progress at Falconwood Assessment Centre in my last statement in July 2021. I am pleased to confirm that the home was registered by Care Inspectorate Wales during August and our residential team has already welcomed the first three young people to the home. The delivery of this new centre is the first in our ambitious development plan to increase in-house residential provision, with the aim of reducing out-of-county placements and to better meet the need of those on the edge of care or care-experienced children and young people in our city.

National Transfer Scheme

Officers from Cardiff Council, together with colleagues from Newport City Council, are working with key partners, including the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership (WSMP) and Welsh Government to scope and develop a National Transfer Scheme (NTS) delivery model for Wales. The NTS is a UK Government scheme that forms the basis of a voluntary agreement made between local authorities in the UK to ensure a more equitable distribution of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) across local authority areas. It is intended to ensure that local authorities do not face a disproportionate responsibility in accommodating and looking after unaccompanied children, simply by virtue of being the point of arrival or entry. In recent months, UASC arrivals have increased significantly and Kent County Council Children's Services have been unable to accept any unaccompanied minors into their care as they are unable to meet their statutory duties to safeguard these young people. Therefore, children arriving in the UK via cross-channel routes into Kent are currently being supported by the Home Office. Cardiff Council has successfully placed six UASCs since June 2021, including one child who was placed with family members in the area.

Cardiff Family Advice and Support (CFAS)

Referrals to the Family Help and Family Help Disability Teams remain consistently high. Between July and August 2021, 147 cases were stepped down from the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Team (MASH) compared to 94 cases during the same period in the previous financial year. Referrals to the Family Help Teams by the Family Gateway also increased in July and August 2021 compared to the same period in the previous financial year. There are currently a total of 539 open cases for Family Help and the Family Help Disability Team compared to 344 open cases during the same period in the previous financial year.

Families supported by the Family Help Disability Team are receiving an average of 13 weeks of intervention, which has more than doubled since May 2021 when the average intervention period was five weeks. This is reflective of the complexity of recent referrals and the fact that more direct work in being undertaken with multiple family members, often on a range of issues.

Cardiff Parenting

169 new referrals were received across Parenting Services last month, compared with just 60 in August 2020 and 149 in August 2019. Teams completed 1,574 contacts in total with parents and carers last month, which is comparable to the same time last year, but lower than 2019 when we were able to provide summer trips and large-scale summer events (3,132 contacts in total in August 2019). 437 contacts were made for formal parenting programmes and interventions, compared to 521 in August 2020 and 172 in August 2019.

Our one-to-one psychology-led teams have seen an increase in complexity of cases from referrals for teenagers and young people, Children's Services Pre-Birth Team and very young infants referred by Health Visitors and Children's Services. For example, there has been an increase in neurodiversity and sensory needs; hospitalisation for a pattern of eating non-food items; children with anxiety/ fear of unusual things (e.g. colours), which affects day-to-day function and quality of life; cases where parents are having difficulty putting in place boundaries/ placing expectations on children following suicide attempts (aged 14-17), and current and historic sexual abuse.

The length of parenting interventions is now up to 20 weeks due to the need to work through complex needs and change processes. In 2019/20, the average length of intervention was 12-13 weeks, rising to 14-15 weeks by November 2020 and it has increased steadily since then. The number of contacts by these teams has also increased over the last three years from 147 in August 2019 and 180 in August 2020 to 228 in August 2021. The Child Development Fund has enabled us to employ more staff to deliver this service.

Summer of Smiles Festival – Pirate Island Adventure

Last month, care-experienced children and young people, and young carers took part in four days of Pirate Island Adventures at Flat Holm Island as part of the Summer of Smiles Festival. This activity was organised in partnership between Child Friendly Cardiff, Children's Services and the Harbour Authority. Each group was hosted by pirates played by actors from LaLaLa Productions. After being welcomed into the motley crew, participants travelled by boat to Flat Holm Island where they took part in a treasure hunt involving games and tasks, before returning to the mainland where they received a certificate and treasure.

Councillor Graham Hinchey
Cabinet Member for Children & Families
23 September 2021