



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/2020**

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**9<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2019**

**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

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**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the progress made in advancing the portfolio responsibilities of the Cabinet Member.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that Members scrutinise the content of the report.

**3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 To challenge any arising matters or issues with the relevant Cabinet Member and to ensure that the appropriate mechanisms are in place to effectively scrutinise the Executive.

**4.0 BACKGROUND**

4.1 On the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018, the [Overview & Scrutiny Committee](#) considered a report regarding the engagement of the Executive at future Scrutiny Committees going forward.

4.2 At the meeting Members agreed to receive Cabinet Members at future Scrutiny meetings on a quarterly basis to present relevant information relating to their portfolio areas, alongside the relevant Director.

4.3 Such an approach will provide Scrutiny Members with the opportunity to further challenge the Executive, as the Cabinet Members can provide details (both verbal and written) relating to the potential challenges facing the services, as

well as the opportunities and policy changes currently being considered. This approach would allow each Cabinet Member the opportunity to update Scrutiny Members on the delivery of their respective areas of the Corporate Plan, reference Key Performance Indicators and important details of policies being considered for future decisions which are referenced for future business, or those which have been developed since the last publicised Work Programme.

## **5.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There is no negative or adverse equality or diversity implications associated with this report

## **6.0 CONSULTATION**

6.1 There are no consultation implications aligned to this report

## **7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

8.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report

## **9.0 LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/ OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

To contribute to the well-being goals under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.



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## **1. Introduction**

Scrutiny Members will be aware that Children Services provide a wide range of services and support throughout the County Borough. The services protect and support vulnerable children, young people, families and carers.

- 1.1 What we do and how we do it is framed by several things. This includes laws such as the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, both of which focus on wellbeing, prevention, partnership, collaboration and integration, and involving people. Together with our regional partner we have also assessed the needs of the population.
- 1.2 We work to meet the care and support needs of all those who need our help, and the wider community. We have an emphasis on helping:
  - Carers including young carers
  - Families and individual members of families
  - Children with complex needs including disability and illness
  - People who have experienced adverse childhood experiences
- 1.3 Our assessments have told us that the following are important to people:
  - Getting information, advice and assistance
  - Stopping problems before they start
  - Stopping problems before they get worse
  - Connecting people to their community
  - Seamless services i.e. different organisations working together as one
  - Making it personal and working with people who need help
- 1.4 Our longer-term aims, which have featured in previous reports, continue to guide our work and what we deliver. These include:
  - Ensuring more young people with complex disabilities will stay in Rhondda Cynon Taf where they grew up, and live in their own homes,

with opportunities to engage in education, training, culture and the arts, thus helping them to grow in independence.

- Delivering more support in the community to people with mental health issues to help them stay well, re-engage in learning, find and keep a job and remain active. Our support is focused on helping people with their whole life, not simply a diagnosis.
- Helping the area's residents to be some of the most active and healthy in South Wales, benefitting from our leisure facilities, theatres, libraries and heritage sites, parks and open spaces.

## 2. Summary of performance

- 2.1 I am pleased to report that our teams across Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council have again delivered a high quality of service to people needing care and support. We have continued to demonstrate strong commitment to joint working, innovation and creativity in further developing our strategic partnerships and new models of care. We continue to work with others in the public, private and third sectors to provide the best services and support we can to help people to improve their wellbeing and to live safely and as independently as possible.
- 2.2 The year has seen many developments including the development of our Community Hubs and, our Resilient Families Service. These developments, which will bring further benefits to people's wellbeing, are over and above the wide range of actions we undertake every day to meet our obligations to provide good levels of care and support to those with needs.
- 2.3 We are conscious that the quicker we can provide help to families in need, the more likely a positive outcome. Our Resilient Families Service is all about quicker response times, sharper diagnosis and assessment of need, the removal of barriers to increase resilience, and improved delivery of family support services. The service is helping families with physical and mental health problems, parental separation, childhood trauma, abuse or offending and drug or alcohol misuse. Most families have been successfully managed by way of a lower level of intervention and possibly at an earlier stage. While it is still too early to fully assess the impact of this initiative, the initial indications are encouraging with reductions in referrals to planned care and support services, and enhanced communication and consistency in service delivery. I am pleased this has been also recognised by Care Inspectorate Wales.
- 2.4 An important part of our role in improving people's wellbeing is encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society. Our Community Hubs development aims to join up public services, making them more cost effective and accessible. They provide a single point of contact within communities to access good quality information, advice and assistance. They also provide a platform for learning, volunteering, to developing community capacity, and flexible community space for people to meet and socialise, thus helping to tackle loneliness and social isolation. Community Hubs play an important part in preventing ill health and improving health and wellbeing.

## 3. How are people shaping our services?










- 3.1 We have continued to reach out to people who use our services and to the public more widely. We use a variety of approaches, including information and awareness raising, social media, surveys, meetings with people who use services and feedback questionnaires. We encourage feedback whether positive or negative and, in some cases, make special arrangements to help individuals to take part. This year we have placed a greater focus on the use of social media and our online platform, which makes it easier to see what residents are being asked.
- 3.2 During the year, we engaged with people in many ways: For example:





- We facilitated a session with children looked after to review and develop the content of a website. This resulted in the launch of the “2 Sides” website as part of the existing “Wicid” website. The latter is a youth information and media website produced by young people themselves. The site, which has more than 2,400 registered users, already runs features and information relevant to children looked after. Linking them was a logical step.
- We liaised with a group of young people, the “Blue Print Forum”, which is facilitated by Voices from Care. They meet regularly to capture the views of young people. We use their feedback to inform the evaluation of our services and further developments. They are members of the Corporate Parenting Board and have also worked with our staff to develop a Leaving Care Support Framework and a housing strategy.
- Children Services are also heavily involved with the Youth Engagement and Participation Service via our young person’s forum. This has been set up across the County Borough to improve the way we engage with young people. It consists of young people representing their schools. They in turn, report back to their School Councils to enable young people to be involved in important issues which affect them. The Youth Engagement and Participation Service is making good use of social media. Its Facebook page receives approximately 30-40,000 hits per month while its Twitter page has 28-30,000.

### What do people think of our services?

3.3 We use surveys to measure the quality of our services and to determine what outcomes we achieve by working with people to meet their care and support needs:

#### Key service quality measures, Children’s Services, 2016-17 to 2018-19

|   | Statement   | 2016-2017 | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019 | Change this year/last (%)   |
|---|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|---|
| 1 | I live in a home where I am happy                           | 94        | 99        | 98        |  |
| 2 | I am happy with the people I live with                      | 96        | 99        | 99        |  |
| 3 | I can do the things I like to do                            | 97        | 100       | 96        |  |
| 4 | I feel I belong in the area where I live                    | 92        | 92        | 92        |  |
| 5 | I am happy with my family, friends and neighbours           | 97        | 97        | 98        |  |
| 6 | I feel safe   | 97        | 99        | 96        |  |
| 7 | I know who to speak to about my care and support            | 97        | 94        | 94        |  |
| 8 | I have had the right information or advice when I needed it | 94        | 92        | 89        |  |
| 9 | My views about my care and support have been listened to    | 96        | 98        | 93        |  |

|    |   |    |    |    |   |
|----|---|----|----|----|---|
| 10 | I have been able to use my everyday language  | 98 | 99 | 98 |  |
| 11 | I was treated with dignity and respect  | 98 | 98 | 98 |  |
| 12 | It am happy with the care and support I have had  | 96 | 97 | 96 |  |
| 13 | I have had advice, help and support that will prepare me for adulthood (16 and 17-year olds only) | -- | 86 | 90 |  |

3.4 Overall, the above tables show that children looked after report exceptionally high levels of satisfaction with the Council’s services and support. For all but one measure, far more than 90% of children are satisfied. While the red coloured flags denote the direction of change and apparent reduction in satisfaction compared to last year’s very high levels of satisfaction, the difference is marginal in some cases (e.g. 1 percentage point). The rounding of results to the nearest whole number may also have affected some figures.

3.5 A testimonial from one young person illustrates the difference it can make to people’s lives.

*“I am a 16-year-old male who has been in a substance misuse service for over 6 months. During this time I have worked with my caseworker to look at my substance use and how to control it, I have done work around harm reduction and triggers to help me cut down to give up, they have helped me to control my substance use to a level I was happy with. From my substance use I disengaged with many things that I enjoyed; with help I have started to engage back with that I enjoy. With support, I was able to attend the Recovery Walk up Pen y Fan and it was a great day as I had never been up there before, and I was able to meet new people. At the moment I am attended the new young people’s service group and enjoying it has I get to meet new young people and look at what we can do to help others, I have successfully gained employment and am also working shifts at the local rugby club. I would like to say thank you as I am substance free for over 10 weeks and this was from help and support from services. My relationship with my family has got a lot better and I am able to speak openly with them if I have a problem, this was never the case before as I always used substance to help me. Thank you”*

3.6 All survey results and any supporting comments from people who receive our services are used to plan developments to further improve the services we deliver. Self-assessment is also being used to identify possible improvements.

### Complaints and compliments

3.7 We welcome and appreciate the complaints and compliments we receive. While we are disappointed to hear of occasions when a service hasn’t met people’s expectations, we also appreciate people who take the time to tell us. The table below summarises the number of complaints and compliments received in the last four years.

**Table 3: Number of complaints and compliments received, Children’s Services, 2015-16 to 2018-19**

|                     |                             | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Children's Services | No. of complaints received  | 89      | 106     | 114     | 32      |
|                     | No. of compliments received | 86      | 62      | 41      | 39      |

3.8 The last year is encouraging in that there were more compliments than complaints.

## Welsh language

3.9 Nearly 28,000 people in Rhondda Cynon Taf speak Welsh (2011 Census) which is slightly more than 1 in 10 of the population (12.3%). The Welsh Language Standards apply to all local authorities. This means everyone in Wales can expect the same approach to the Welsh Language in services, ensuring it is treated the same as the English language with all Councils offering people the opportunity to receive services from us, as well as from those funded by us, in Welsh.

3.10 In 2018-19, we have enhanced our approach for service users who wish to communicate in Welsh. Our approach is shaped not only by the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards and the Welsh Government's "Follow-on Strategic Framework for Welsh Language Services in Health and Social Services" but also by our commitment to delivering services which meet people's needs. We work closely with our colleagues in the Council's Welsh Language Service and use the Cwm Taf "More than Words" quarterly forum to ensure we are complying with statutory requirements.

3.11 We reviewed our progress against the Welsh Language Standards. As a result, all our correspondence and written material available to the public for Children's Services, including online information and our content on DEWIS Cymru (the national website for people who are looking for information or advice about well-being), is available bilingually. If someone corresponds with us in Welsh, we will respond in Welsh. All our staff are aware of the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards and what it means for how they work. We also monitor all our external service providers to ensure they comply with the Standards.

3.12 Our front-line staff make an active offer of communication in Welsh if it is someone's preference. Arrangements are then made for a Welsh speaking member of our staff to have the conversation and to work with them. We record people's language preference on our system, which informs subsequent communication, and we check preferences on language when core data is checked. No complaints were received during the year about services from Children's Services being available in Welsh. However, we are not complacent, and we will continue to work in a way which meets people's needs.

## What are our priorities?

- Ensure compliance on Welsh language preference at review when the core data is checked and ensure the Welsh Community Care Information System is updated



- Work with external providers via the contract terms and conditions to ensure Welsh language requirements are met

## **4. Promoting and improving the wellbeing of people we help**

- 4.1 One of the Council's priorities is promoting independence and positive lives for everyone in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Social Services play an important part. Helping to improve the wellbeing of people who need care and carers who need support is at the very heart of our work. We aim to make a real difference to their lives. We cannot do this alone.
- 4.2 We work closely with many other organisations to help vulnerable children, young people, adults and families. We are committed to delivering high quality services and improvements and changes to provide people with the support they need when they need it.
- 4.3 In delivering our services, we continue to face big challenges - financial, population changes, and others. Only by working together with others can we respond to the challenges. One of the ways we do this is through a regional partnership. With our partners, we looked at the needs of our population and identified the action we need to take over a five-year period. The Cwm Taf Regional Plan 2018-23<sup>1</sup> describes what will be done and is the basis for our work.
- 4.4 This part of the report describes what we have done over the last year. It includes the priorities we set for 2019-20 after reviews undertaken the previous year. Reviews undertaken by other organisations have also informed what we will do in 2019-20. The priorities are developments we feel will help us to further improve the services and support we offer and, most importantly, the lives of those who receive them.

### **(a) Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve**

#### **What did we plan to do last year?**


- 4.5 As part of our self-evaluation, we decided on a range of priority actions to support children and adults, to be delivered during the 2018-19 year and we included these priorities in last year's Annual Report. We said we would:
- Prioritise the integration of services for: people with learning disabilities; Carers, including young carers; Integrated Family Support Services; and Children with complex needs due to disability or illness.
  - Implement the Resilient Families Service and secure the engagement of internal and external partners to deliver the Resilient Families Programme
  - Promote engagement with Children Looked After and partner agencies to ensure coproduction and that the voice of the children and young people are heard.
  - Implement the National Adoption Support Framework in the area to ensure the children that are placed for adoption reach their full potential and have opportunities to achieve.
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- Ensure the offer of a direct payment to all people with eligible care needs

## How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?

- 4.6 Our Children's Services provided information, advice or assistance to 5,670 children and families. This is a marked increase (14%) over the numbers helped the previous year. There was a similar increase (11%) in the number of assessments completed during 2018-19. A total of 7,170 assessments were undertaken this year, up from 6,488 in 2017/18.
- 4.7 The increase in the level of assistance provided and assessments undertaken is due to improvements we have made for people to access the services of our Resilient Families Service through our Information, Advice and Assistance Service.

**Table 5: Key national performance indicator - Information, Advice and Assistance Service, RCT and Wales, 2018-19**

|  | <b>Our target</b> | <b>Our performance</b> | <b>Actual vs Target</b>   |
|--|-------------------|------------------------|---|
| Percentage of assessments completed for children within statutory timescales | 98%%              | 97.14%                 |  |

Source: Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)

- 4.8 Our performance on completing assessments for children within the statutory timescales was marginally below (0.86%) our target of 98%. However, it is a notable improvement on the previous year's figure of 93.3%

### **Case Study - Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve.**

Mr A contacted the Information, Advice and Assistance Team requesting support for himself and his two young children. Following a "What Matters" conversation, Mr A was able to identify that as a single parent he was isolated and felt unable to access community projects and this was impacting on the care he was providing to his children.

Mr A was referred to the Resilient Families Service. An assessment identified that the family required short term intervention to enable him to build confidence in his parenting and sustainable changes that benefitted the children. This resulted in the family engaging in community activities and no longer requiring intervention from Children's Services.

## Integrating services

- 4.9 We continue to work with many organisations to deliver more integrated services. Looking at alternative ways of doing things is a key part of the way we work. We do this by drawing on the results of service reviews and evaluations, our performance monitoring systems, and feedback from service users. We also take advantage of opportunities e.g. if a vacancy occurs in a team, we consider whether services improvements or economies can be made by deploying the resource in a different way. This stems not only from a need to ensure our services remain sustainable in increasingly challenging times and to make the best possible use of our limited and decreasing resources but also our desire to give people better services and support.

4.10 Our joint working with the housing sector in Rhondda Cynon Taf was featured in a report commissioned by the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru. The study is part of work to implement “A Healthier Wales” and was supported by the Welsh Government. Our two training flats with Trivallis housing association which help individuals in care to make the transition to living independently on their own were highlighted.

### **Resilient Families Service**

4.11 We have implemented our Resilient Families Programme and made good progress with its development and operation. The service, which builds on our original “Team around the Family” arrangements, is geared to quicker response times, sharper diagnosis and assessment of need, the removal of barriers to increase resilience, and improved delivery of family support services.

4.12 Partnership with other organisations is inherent in our approach. Barnardo’s was commissioned to deliver the Families Team element of the service. The other core elements – The Assessment, Brokerage and Review Team, the Families Plus team and the Children with Additional Needs Service – are delivered by us. Working closely with other organisations, we have incorporated additional support services, including a Young Persons Homelessness Support Worker (with Llamau), Specialist Health Visitors and Community Nursery Nurses, and our new Universal Parenting and Young Persons Support frameworks.

4.13 We estimated approximately 1,200 families would be referred to our Resilient Families Services its first full year of operation. The service started in January 2018. By August 2018, the service had already engaged with over 1,000 families. Analysis of the referrals indicates that the numbers were consistent and showed no signs of slowing down. At that point it suggested a potential 60% increase over the estimated figure to around 2,000. In the event, the volume of referrals did slow down before the end of the financial year. However, the full year total number of referrals received was 1,608 which is still a significantly higher figure (34%) than anticipated. The service is helping families with physical and mental health problems, parental separation, childhood trauma, abuse or offending and drug or alcohol misuse. Importantly, only around 1 in 20 (6%) of the overall number of referrals had to be escalated to Children’s Services, which means the vast majority were successfully managed by way of a lower level of intervention and possibly at an earlier stage.

4.14 Given the voluntary nature of the service, there is always the prospect of families refusing to engage with the support on offer. The intervention completion rate of 72% suggests that most families opt to actively engage. This represents a 22% improvement on the 2016-2017 engagement rates with the previous service. This is encouraging. However, we are committed to improving the take-up of the service where possible. Our evaluation indicates more than 9 out of 10 of the families that completed a package of support (95%) benefited from the help and support provided.

### **Case Study – Resilient Families Service**

A referral from Health Visitor made as a result of concerns about a child who lived with his mother, stepfather and siblings. All the children had health concerns, which the mother was trying to manage with the help of the maternal grandmother. The mother was also being investigated for health problems. The stepfather was an alcoholic who has tried on numerous occasions to stop drinking. He had to give up work due to his alcohol addiction as it involved driving. He was spending a great deal of time in bed, so the mother was carrying out all the family routines. The mother also had concerns regarding another child's behaviour; the school reported he was disruptive and did not listen.

The Resilient Families Service helped the father to attend his first "Walk in clinic" to address his struggles with alcohol. Referral was followed up by an assessment and ongoing support, including appointments with his GP to address low mood. Medication was prescribed. As a result, the father was reported to be feeling the 'fittest' he has in years. The Service made enquires for training sessions to build his confidence and to give him something to focus on with the aim of employment, and he attended Communities4Work training sessions. The school reported improvements in the child's behaviour and the parents and school are in contact to ensure the positive behaviour continues. The relationship between the parents improved and they have been reported to be participating in activities as a family.

### **More engagement with Children Looked After**

- 4.15 In line with our priority action, we have promoted better engagement with children looked after. We have done this in several ways and have continued our efforts to provide them with the information they need. Children looked after and young people are now provided with consultation documents for each review, depending on age, as are their parents and foster carers. The comments provided in these documents are used to inform the review process and the planning for individuals. A group of young people, the "Blue Print Forum", meets regularly to capture young people's views to inform service developments, evaluation and delivery. They are members of the Corporate Parenting Board. The group also works with staff from 16+ to develop a leaving care support framework and housing strategy. As mentioned in Part 3 of this report, we also worked with children looked after to develop the "2 Sides" website
- 4.16 Since the introduction of the National Advocacy Framework, all children and young people have access to advocacy and have an 'active offer'. This ensures all children and young people who become looked after or whose names are on the Child Protection Register are visited by an independent advocate. During the year, the advocacy service received 303 new referrals, undertook 171 active offers and provided 132 young people with issues-based advocacy. Children and young people were supported and represented at 84 formal meetings, including 39 Child Protection meetings and 39 Children Looked After meetings.
- 4.17 The above action responds to a recommendation in the "Your Life Your Care" report, which was based on a survey of 4 to 18-year olds in the area in early 2018. The

report<sup>2</sup>, published in April 2018, emphasised the importance of working with children and young people to ensure they are informed of when and why decisions are made about their care.

- 4.18 Children’s voices must be heard in making decisions which affect them, and we are committed to doing this well. We use the Quality Assurance Framework to ensure it happens by making the necessary checks against the standard. In response to the report, we are developing Life Story work. We have set up a system to ensure it continues throughout a child’s care journey and we are implementing it. The Children Looked After Quality Assurance Framework for Schools sets standards to be met when children are looked after. We have also introduced Foster Care Pioneers whose role is to help other foster carers to liaise with schools on education issues which children in their care may be experiencing.
- 4.19 Our plan to implement the National Adoption Support Framework has been delayed. The National Adoption Support Framework is due to be issued. While we have been unable to take specific action on the Framework, we have undertaken an audit of our current system and a provisional local framework has been put in place.

### **Ensuring an offer of Direct Payments**

- 4.20 We have worked with people receiving a direct payment to explore opportunities to improve the support available to them. We did this by the recommissioning of a support contract, which was completed in March 2019.
- 4.21 The table below shows the progress we have made in supporting the uptake of Direct Payments over the past 3 years:

**Table 6: Take-up of Direct Payments, RCT, 2016-17 to 2018-19**

|         |     |
|---------|-----|
| 2016-17 | 127 |
| 2017-18 | 134 |
| 2018-19 | 154 |

### **What are our priorities for next year and why?**

- Strengthen the participation of children and young people in service delivery by continuing to promote engagement specifically with children looked after and partner agencies to ensure coproduction and the voice of the children and young people are heard.
- Improve local access to information advice and assistance provision for children, young people and families to promote their participation and engagement.

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<sup>2</sup> Your Life Your Care (April 2018) A survey of the views of looked after children and young people aged 4-18yrs in Rhondda Cynon Taf

- Strengthen systems for recognising and supporting the needs of carers. Increase the number of carers assessments completed and offers accepted of support when needed.
- Remodel the delivery of Early Years as a result of the Regional Early Years Co-construction Project.
- Continue to work to reduce the need for statutory services by ensuring that children and families have coordinated integrated family support.
- Manage the Children and Communities Grant to commission effective integrated early intervention and prevention services.
- Further develop integrated service delivery to improve early intervention and prevention support informed by Vulnerability Profiling data.
- Develop and fully implement, across all service areas, a systematic and collaborative process for capturing the views of service users and their families about the impact of our support and services.
- Continue to embed strengths-based and outcome-focused assessment, support planning and review across Adult Services

## **(b) Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being**

### **What did we plan to do last year?**

4.22 We said in 2018-19 we would:

- Continue the work between Adult's and Children's Services to improve the way we support young people transitioning into adulthood.

### **How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?**

#### **Transition to adulthood**

4.23 We have made progress on developing new models of care and pathways to achieve better outcomes for young people transitioning into adulthood. Working with partners, regional transition principles have been prepared. Workshops were held in March to produce the new models and a development plan for implementation. A multi-agency project team is now in place to take forward the developments.

## **What are our priorities for next year and why?**

- Continue to develop new models of care to achieve better outcomes for young people transitioning into adulthood by focusing on preparing them for living as independently as possible.
- We will be developing and delivering individualised support that is strength based and focuses on what young people and their families want. We will also be ensuring that children and young people who have been cared for are returned home to their families at the earliest opportunity and that the supports offered are evidence based and are part of a reunification framework

## **(c) Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm**

### **What did we plan to do last year?**

4.24 During 2018/19, we said we would:

- Strengthen our Quality Assurance Framework and further reduce the number of repeat episodes where children and young people are placed on the child protection register.
- Deliver the actions in the Children Looked After Quality Assurance Panel's Work Plan 2018/19 to ensure children looked-after and care leavers receive good quality placements that support them to live safe, healthy and fulfilled lives and to achieve their potential.
- Deliver the training opportunities identified in the multi-agency safeguarding training plan focusing on suicide and self-harm.


### **How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?**

#### **Child protection**

4.25 At 31 March 2019, 498 children in the area were on the Child Protection Register. This compares to 502 a year earlier, a small reduction (1%) but nonetheless positive. Children who were on the Register for reasons of neglect rose very slightly from 148 at March 2018 to 150 in March 2019. Those on the Register because of emotional abuse increased from 243 to 263 over the same period.

**Table 11: Key national performance indicator –  
Children Looked After, RCT and Wales, 2018-19**






|   | <b>Our target</b> | <b>Our performance</b> | <b>Actual vs Target</b>   |
|---|-------------------|------------------------|---|
| Percentage of re-registrations of children on a Local Authority Child Protection register | 8.0%              | 6.72%                  |  |

- 4.26 The percentage of re-registration of children on our Child Protection Register was 6.72%. The figure, the lower the better, was ahead of our target of 8% and our previous year's performance of 8.1%.
- 4.27 During the year, 4 children become looked after on more than one occasion. Repeat admissions for children who became looked after on more than one occasion equates to 2.4% of all admissions.
- 4.28 Our Miskin Service helps young people who may be vulnerable, looked after, or at risk of becoming looked after. It has a preventative role e.g. preventing the inappropriate admission of young people into care and for those in care and whose placements e.g. in foster care, children's homes, are at risk of breaking down. It also helps young people who are accommodated in an emergency to return home. On average, during 2018-19, the service received 50 referrals per month & accepted over 60% of these for intervention.
- 4.29 Over and above helping young people who find themselves in difficult circumstances, our Miskin project encourages learning and development. The team works with our Cultural Services to provide arts and music projects and with the Tai Education Centre providing outdoor activities. The aim is to get young people re-engaged with education through these activities and achieve recognised qualifications.

### **Supporting Children Looked After**

- 4.30 Over the course of the year, 164 children became looked after, an increase of 5% on the previous year. A total of 837 children and young people were looked after during the year, a small reduction from 845 in 2017-18 and a continued downward trend from 884 in 2016-17.
- 4.31 Of the 837 looked after during the year, the total number being looked after at 31 March 2019 was 674, a marginal reduction from the 676 at the same point a year earlier. While the numbers in the area are still relatively high in comparison with similar authorities within Wales, we have not seen the increases experienced by some authorities. Children under 4 years of age are most of children becoming looked after (53%) followed by children less than 1 year old (32%). This is almost identical to the position for the previous year.
- 4.32 The commissioning mix of placements which favours placing children with carers in the County Borough continues to be positive. This has remained similar to last year with 70% of children looked after being placed with in-house foster carers and 30% with independent sector foster carers. Both figures are slightly ahead of our target figures. The rise in the percentage of children looked after being placed with relatives has continued with 30% as at 31 March this year compared to 27% in March 2018. This is positive for the children concerned who are afforded the security and stability they need without being legally separated from their family.

**Table 12: Key national performance indicators – Children Looked After, RCT and Wales, 2018-19**

|   | <b>Our target</b> | <b>Our performance</b> | <b>Actual vs Target</b>   |
|---|-------------------|------------------------|---|
| Percentage of children looked after who were seen by a registered dentist within 3 months of becoming looked after  | 60%               | 79.2%                  |  |
| Percentage of children looked after registered with a GP within 10 days of start of their placement   | 98%               | 89.3%                  |  |
| Percentage of looked after children who have experienced 1 or more changes in school during a period or periods of being looked after which were not due to transitional arrangements | 12.8%             | 12.8%                  |  |

Source: Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)

- 4.33 We comfortably exceeded our target for children who were seen by a dentist within 3 months of becoming looked after. Our performance of 79.2% - basically 4 out of 5 children – was considerably higher than our 2017-18 performance of 53.8%. Although a good performance, we will strive for further improvement in 2019-20 on this and on the percentage of children looked after who are registered with a GP. As the above table shows, we fell slightly short of our target this year.
- 4.34 We met our target of 12.8% for the percentage of looked after children experiencing changes in school which were not due to transitional arrangements. This was an improvement on our 2017-18 performance of 14.4%
- 4.35 During the year, 45 children were adopted, which is a marked, and very encouraging, increase from the 31 adoptions in 2017-18. Three of the children were adopted by their previous foster carers. Three were adopted by single carers, 10 by same sex carers and 32 by different sex carers. We continued our work on quality assurance with the Children Looked After Quality Assurance Panel initiative, which was introduced after an independent review. Our progress was recognised by Care Inspectorate Wales in its recent review of the Council's statutory social services functions.
- 4.36 In partnership with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and with the support of the Welsh Government, we piloted a Fostering Well Being programme to improve wellbeing outcomes for fostered children. Foster carers, children and young people were recruited as pioneers, with foster carers running a helpline within Fostering Services for carers. In October 2018, we also launched the good practice guide the “Children Looked After School Quality Mark”.
- 4.37 In 2018-19, 13,137 contacts were received by the Cwm Taf Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub for Children’s Services of which 1,889, (14%) had child protection concerns. In all, 1,451 of the 1,889 child protection contacts received (77%) proceeded to investigation. This compares with 16,470 contacts from April 17

to March 18, 12% (1938) of which related to child protection concerns & 85% of these resulting in an investigation.

- 4.38 An extensive programme of learning and development was delivered as a result of the multi-agency safeguarding training plan. More than 2,800 people from more than thirteen different organisations and council departments attended training events. The programme covered a diverse range of important subjects. It included safeguarding practice for children and adults, child protection, working with complex families, working with children involved in sexual exploitation and human trafficking. More than 300 people also received “Ask and Ask” training as part of implementing the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

#### **Case Study - Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect or harm**

The Information, Advice and assistance team received a referral from a local school following a disclosure by Child B alleging that he had been hit with a belt by his mother. The case was identified as a child protection concern and referred to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub where a strategy meeting was held. Child B was spoken to at the school and it became evident that the child had been subject to inappropriate behaviour management styles within the home. Mother was arrested and as there were no family members the child was placed with foster carers until further enquiries could be undertaken. Following assessment, it was identified that the family originated from a country that used this form of punishment and had not initially understood professional concerns. The outcome was for work to be undertaken with the family which parents fully engaged with and Child B safely returned home with no further intervention from Children’s Services.

- 4.39 A series of safeguarding audits were undertaken during the year:

- Audit of use of the ‘Professional Concerns Protocol’
- Quality of strategy discussions & Investigation decisions
- De-registration of 16/17 year olds from the Child Protection Register
- Sexually Harmful Behaviour Audit
- Sexual Abuse Referral Centre referrals in Cwm Taf
- Six individual Children Safeguarding case audits

#### **What are our priorities for next year and why?**

- Implement the Quality Assurance Framework.
- Strengthen the participation of children and young people in services delivery by continuing to promote engagement with Children Looked After and partner agencies to ensure coproduction and that the voice of the children and young people are heard.

- Develop the pioneer Foster Carer Programme to mentor foster carers who have children with challenging behaviour placed with them.

## **(d) Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships**

### **What did we plan to do last year?**

4.40 We said we would:

- Continue to work with Children's Services to develop a practice-led approach that improves the way we work with young people and their families throughout their life and at the critical time of transition to adulthood.
- Develop a plan to implement a Regional Fostering Service in line with the recommendations of the National Fostering Framework.

### **How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?**

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

4.41 We have continued to work with Children's Services in regards to Transition arrangements. During 2018/19 we implemented Principles of Transition which were developed on behalf of the Cwm Taf Safeguarding board and have also developed a Strategic Transition and Operational transition Group which will involve not only Children's Services but other Multi Agency Partners to ensure that we are planning effectively for young people approaching adult hood.

These groups will drive ongoing practice development to improve the transition arrangements for young people and we continue to embed a culture of learning and development by arranging Practitioner forums to develop a consistent approach to transition and support provided to individuals and their families.

#### **Regional Fostering Service**

4.42 We aim to give children a great start in life by improving our fostering services and by recruiting more foster carers. In December 2018, our Cabinet approved a proposal to collaborate with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council to create a single Cwm Taf regional 'Front Door'. This reflects the priority in last year's report to develop a regional service with locally driven recruitment and marketing activity in line with the National Fostering Framework. It also brings the assessment of potential foster carers back into Council services. The new arrangements were implemented in April 2019. The Council's Contact Centre is now handling all fostering recruitment enquiries, processing applications, coordinating the marketing

function and supporting potential foster carers through the process of becoming a Foster Carer for the Cwm Taf region. Whilst it is too early to establish the full impact of the change, early signs are positive with calls being responded to more efficiently and initial visits carried out promptly.

## **What are our priorities for next year and why?**

- Continue to work to reduce the need for Statutory Services by ensuring that children, young people and families have coordinated integrated family support earlier.

## **(e) Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs**

### **What did we say we would do?**

4.43 We said in 2018/19 we would:

- Implement the recommendations of the independent report: Review and Refocus of Accommodation and Placement Provision for Children Looked After and Care Leavers'
- Realign the Children Looked After Project to take account lessons learnt and ensure that children who cannot live with their own parents live in suitable accommodation within the area.
- Identify a range of placements that support Children Looked After and care leavers to achieve positive outcomes and draft a new model of service provision within our residential establishments.

### **How far did we succeed and what difference did we make?**

#### **Accommodation and placements for Children Looked After**

- 4.44 All our Children Homes received positive reports from the independent visitor. Our three residential establishments have been at full capacity for most of the year with voids being scrutinized monthly. We recognise we need to plan for future accommodation needs and are in the process of reviewing our model of residential care and the housing needs of our children looked after aged 16 and over.
- 4.45 Working with Trivallis Housing Association, we continue to provide two one-bedroom flats for young people leaving care to use on a trial basis for living independently on their own. The flats are for young people aged 17+ in residential or foster placements and staying there helps them to get to grips with everyday life such as paying bills, prioritising expenditure and ultimately facing the reality of living alone.

4.46 For our commitment to draft a new model of service provision within our residential establishments, we held back until the Review of models of Residential Care for Children and Young People commissioned by the Welsh Government's Ministerial Advisory Group had been published. It was published in December 2018 and we have considered its recommendations.

### **What are our priorities for next year and why?**

- We will review our model of residential care and the housing needs of our children looked after aged 16 and over.
- Deliver new accommodation models to improve outcomes for those individuals who need support to live independently (This will include actions in relation to extra care/supported living)

## 5. How we do what we do

### (a) Our workforce and how we support their professional roles

5.1 The delivery of high-quality services depends on us having an adequate workforce of well-trained staff with the right mix of skills, experience and approach e.g. to enhance partnership working across organisational boundaries. We have continued to press ahead with organisational and cultural change following the introduction of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act.

5.2 To ensure we have the workforce we need to achieve the best for our residents, we play our part in implementing the Council's five-year Workforce Plan<sup>3</sup>. The Plan has five aims:

- Developing a flexible and agile workforce that shares organisational knowledge
- Recruiting and retaining the best talent to create a diverse workforce
- Leadership and management development
- Enabling a high performing, engaged and committed workforce
- Supporting the health and well-being of our workforce to maximise attendance

5.3 We have also taken, and are continuing to take, action specific to our social care workforce internally and through the Cwm Taf Social Care Workforce Development Partnership Annual Workplan 2018/19. This is a rolling action plan to:

- Support the training, development and qualification of social care managers: including Step Up to Management; Middle Manager Development Programme; Team Manager development programme; and those requiring registration as managers
- Support for both Social Work qualifying training and post-qualifying training in Wales
- Support front line social care workers to develop their skills overall in relation to social care, and to support introduction of the revised induction framework
- Enable the workforce to meet regulatory requirements for qualification and/or registration

5.4 A training needs analysis undertaken across the region took account of the national priorities identified by Social Care Wales. The regional priorities identified are a combination of cyclical core training (i.e. required annually) and development events that will raise awareness and develop practice. The local priorities reflect the policy and service delivery of each local authority in the region.

5.5 During the year, we delivered planned training for senior practitioners including coaching and mentoring and strength-based practice and supervision. We also

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delivered training for all Care and Support staff. Subjects included motivational interviewing and collaborative communication, critical reflection and analysis, and positive risk-taking and decision-making.

5.6 In 2018-19, we took several steps to strengthen our workforce planning, our performance management and to train and develop our workforce. They include:

- Action to make effective use of the new Welsh Community Care Information System, which gives us better information to manage people's care and saves time by avoiding the need to repeat information to different agencies.
- A new Supervision Policy, which was co-produced with staff and which is aligned to the principles of strength-based practice.
- Regular engagement with staff by managers to improve communications and to allow concerns, developments, suggestions and ideas to be discussed. This happens in different ways in different service areas.
- Where possible, more temporary and permanent posts created to increase capacity as a response to specific pressures.

5.7 In our Youth Engagement and Participation Service, we introduced "Restorative Approaches". All members of staff who manage others have been trained in the approach, which is now embedded across the whole service. The approach has been helpful in establishing the collective needs of staff, informing the redevelopment of supervision forms and sessions, and delivering day-to-day activities. Plans are in hand to introduce the approach to the Early Years and Family Support Service and Resilient Families Service.

5.8 Staff in Children's Services have been involved in several task groups to develop a more streamlined approach to service delivery. Some are also part of national working groups and the training which stems from this is included in our Annual Training Programme. The annual programme is developed with the involvement of staff.

5.9 Our safeguarding staff also continue to contribute to the well-received programme of Multi Agency Practitioner Events. The many events which were held during the year aid professional development practice by sharing learning from audits and reviews.