



City and County of Swansea

Notice of Meeting

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

Scrutiny Performance Panel – Child & Family Services

At: Committee Room 5 - Guildhall, Swansea

On: Tuesday, 28 August 2018

Time: 4.00 pm

Convenor: Councillor Paxton Hood-Williams

Membership:

Councillors: C Anderson, M Durke, K M Griffiths, Y V Jardine, P K Jones, S M Jones, I E Mann and D W W Thomas

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www.swansea.gov.uk/disclosuresofinterests | |
| 3 | Notes of meeting on 25 June 2018
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Next Meeting: Monday, 29 October 2018 at 4.00 pm

Huw Evans

Huw Evans
Head of Democratic Services
Tuesday, 21 August 2018

Contact: Liz Jordan 01792 637314

Agenda Item 3



City and County of Swansea

Notes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel – Child & Family Services**

Committee Room 5 - Guildhall, Swansea

Monday, 25 June 2018 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor P R Hood-Williams (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

M Durke
D W W Thomas

Councillor(s)

Y V Jardine

Councillor(s)

P K Jones

Officer(s)

Owen Davies
Gavin Evans

Performance Manager, Social Services
Young People Services Manager, Poverty and
Prevention
Scrutiny Officer
Head of Poverty & Prevention
Head of Child & Family Services

Liz Jordan
Rachel Moxey
Julie Thomas

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): C Anderson, K M Griffiths, S M Jones and I E Mann

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

No disclosures of interest were made.

2 To confirm Convener of the Panel

Paxton Hood-Williams was confirmed as Convener of the Panel.

3 Notes of meeting on 30 April 2018

The Panel agreed the notes as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 Public Question Time

No members of the public were present at the meeting.

5 Impact of Prevention and Early Intervention on Child and Family Services (under 11 and over 11 services)

Rachel Moxey, Head of Poverty and Prevention and Gavin Evans from the Poverty and Prevention team, attended the meeting to present the Family Support

Continuum Performance Report for Quarter 4 2018, highlighting the context for this work and progress to date and answering questions.

It was emphasised that this is very much a work in progress. It is currently raw data and a group has been established and will begin to meet shortly to analyse and discuss trends and determine the way forward. The plan is that in the future the report will only include key indicators.

Discussion points:

- The Panel asked how families can be made aware that this help is available. They were informed that it is a very complex issue. Services are trying to pre-empt where there may be problems in families. All services need to work together to inform families that this help is available. Networking with colleagues and other public services is very important. Key to this is health staff. They need to be aware how important it is to identify problems in families early.
- Issues with children often show up in the school situation. It is hard to identify issues earlier when children are withdrawn from mainstream education.
- The Panel feels that this work is too high level and there is a need to talk to the people affected.
- The Panel emphasised that this work has to be about getting the best outcomes for children. That is the priority. Informed that the needs of individuals are the main driver but have to be aware of costs.
- Logic model pre-16 – the hope is that this work with families will stop them becoming involved with Child and Family Services. 80% of what comes to social services 'front door' should not be coming there. Social Services should be focussing on complex cases only. We can get better outcomes for children if we intervene early with specialist services so investment in early help services is vital.
- Panel concerned about the amount of staff time taken up in producing this data and whether they will be able to analyse and understand it in order to get the best outcomes for children. Panel was informed that this data is being collected anyway.

Actions:

- Report on progress to be brought to the Panel in 6 months' time. This should be a more fit for purpose highlight report, including the outcomes of the work by Vanguard and what is being done at social services 'front door'.

6 Review of the year 2017/18

Panel had insufficient time to undertake the review of the year.

7 Work Programme Timetable 2018/19

The Panel considered the work programme.

8 Letters

Letters received and considered by the Panel.

9 For Information Item

The Panel noted the Terms of Reference.

The meeting ended at 5.45 pm



Western Bay
ADOPTION SERVICE
GWASANAETH MABWYSIADU
Bae'r Gorllewin

**Care Inspectorate Wales Adoption Inspection
2017-18
Western Bay Regional Adoption Service
&
NAS Central / National Elements**

Western Bay Regional Adoption Service



- Children, adopters and people receiving adoption support receive a good service overall .
- Timeliness has improved for the period children wait to be placed for adoption, with every child placed being assessed for adoption support.
- Some best practice was noted with regards to direct work with children and their adoptive parents.
- In the past year there was a timely response to adoption enquiries with a slight increase in the numbers of adopters approved.
- Average time taken to assess adopters increased slightly but this was influenced by circumstances outside the control of the service.
- The quality of adopters' assessments was mainly good but the recording of challenge was underdeveloped

Western Bay Regional Adoption Service



- Feedback from adopters about the service was mainly positive with some people expressing a high level of satisfaction.
- Training for adopters was reported to be of good quality and a number of support services have been developed
- There are issues around being able to recruit sufficient adopters prepared to accept sibling groups and children with additional needs and numbers of children with a 'should be placed for adoption' decision and a placement order waiting to be placed increased in the past year. This is a national issue; managers were well informed of the profile of the service and have supported strategies to try to address the deficit

NAS Central / National Elements



- Benefits to children and families of enhanced profile, clear strategic intent and sector engagement are clear.
- Productive partnerships with third sector organisations have resulted in improved sharing of good practice plus creative and promising initiatives for the future.
- Improvements in some but not all key areas of performance e.g. timeliness / numbers waiting.
- Ability to collect and analyse data enable areas for improvement and regional differences to be identified.
- There is a common understanding of barriers to better outcomes and what resources are needed.
- Progress made in improving consistent standards e.g. initiatives such as a 'Best Practice Guide for Family Finding' and implementing a national framework for adoption support.

NAS Central / National Elements



- NAS governance is well understood but complex and may impede or slow down the implementation of national approaches across Wales.
- Service control and agility is challenging e.g. some things NAS needs to respond to / manage are unpredictable (court decisions) and / or not directly within the ambit of the service (things that rely on mainstream children's services e.g. matching, elements of life journey work).
- There is ongoing inconsistency in service delivery across Wales

Recommendations

- The regional management board should review the arrangements relating to the implementation of agreed actions and ensure there are vice charring arrangements in place.
- Consideration should be given to how improvements in adoption support can be more systematically developed across partner agencies.
- A quality assurance framework should be implemented across the service and consideration given to linking into the associated functions which are completed by children's services. i.e. CAR/B; life journey work and later life letters.
- All operational regional adoption service staff should complete relevant safeguarding training every two years.

Recommendations (Continued)



- The process for assessing and agreeing financial support for adopters should be reviewed to ensure the system is working appropriately.
- The timeliness and quality of supervision should be reviewed to ensure there is a consistent approach to case management and staff support and development.
- Consideration should be given to how staff can be provided with a more suitable working environment.
- Panel members should be provided with an appraisal and training opportunities.

Recommendations (Continued)



- Consideration needs to be given to provide the panel members with occasional business meetings and bring information and reports about placement breakdowns to panel. Panel member need to be provided with relevant policies and procedures.
- Monitoring arrangements need to be put in place to ensure review of support plans.



Report of the Cabinet Members for Children's Services

Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel - 28 August 2018

Western Bay Adoption Service Inspection

Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide a briefing requested by the Board regarding the regulatory inspection of the regional adoption service
Content	<p>This presentation and report includes a summary of the findings and subsequent regional action plan following the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Inspection of the Western Bay Regional Adoption Service in December 2017 and the inspection of the National Adoption Service central functions which took place January 2018.</p>
Councillors are being asked to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give their views on the inspection report and action plan
Lead Councillor(s)	<p>Cabinet Member for Children Services (Early Years) - Cllr Elliott King Cabinet Member for Children's Services (Young People) - Cllr Will Evans</p>
Lead Officer(s)	<p>Julie Thomas, Head of Child and Family Services</p>
Report Author	<p>Val Jones, Regional Adoption Manager v.jones1@westernbayadoption.org</p>



Inspection Report on Western Bay regional adoption service

**Mae'r adroddiad hwn hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg
This report is also available in Welsh**

Date of Publication

Tuesday, 8 May 2018

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Description of the service

Western Bay Adoption Service is one of the five regional adoption collaboratives which together with the Voluntary Adoption Service collaborative delivers adoption services across Wales. Western Bay regional adoption service comprises of a collaboration of three local authorities Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot (NPT) and Swansea and was developed in response to a change in guidance as outlined in the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) 2015 which followed new legislation.

The functions of the three local authorities' adoption agencies are mainly delegated to the Western Bay Adoption Services through the establishment of a regional interagency partnership agreement. There is a regional management board in place and a governance structure is established. The service is hosted by the City and County of Swansea with a lead head of service from that authority, but all workers are co-located in Neath Port Talbot. There are three distinct but related functions, twin tracking and family finding for children; recruitment and assessment of adopters and adoption support. The service is still relatively recently established and the staff remain employed by the authority where they previously worked. The staffing structure of the service includes a regional manager; three team managers and the equivalent of 21 full time social work posts. The service is supported by 6.5 business support staff and their manager.

Summary of our findings

Overall assessment

Children; adopters and people receiving adoption support receive a good service overall. The quality of adopters' assessments was mainly good and some best practice was noted with regards to direct work with children and their adoptive parents. In the past year there was a timely response to adoption enquiries with a slight increase in the numbers of adopters approved. Timeliness has improved for the period children wait to be placed for adoption, with every child placed being assessed for adoption support. Average time taken to assess adopters increased slightly, but this was influenced by circumstances outside the control of the service. The quality of adopter's assessments was mainly good but the recording of challenge was underdeveloped. There are issues around being able to recruit sufficient adopters prepared to accept sibling groups and children with additional needs and numbers of children with a 'should be placed for adoption' decision and a placement order waiting to be placed increased significantly in the past year. This is a national issue; managers were well informed of the profile of the service and have supported strategies to try to address the deficit.

Feedback from adopters about the service was mainly positive with some people expressing a high level of satisfaction. Training for adopters was reported to be of

good quality and a number of support services have been developed. Medical officer support through the adoption panel was particularly valued by adopters.

There is a central adoption panel which operates geographically to meet the needs of the three authorities and these are consistently operation to a good standard. Service users are well supported by an appropriately qualified, experienced and skilled workforce. The working environment and issues around the integration of staff from three separate services with differing terms and conditions had affected morale and sickness absence. Staff had not received refresher safeguarding training in the previous two years. Regional management arrangements are well established with effective performance management in place but quality assurance is inconsistent and still under development. Scrutiny arrangements are not consistent across the service as each authority reports differently to elected members.

Improvements

This is the first inspection of the service.

Requirements and recommendations

There were no areas of non compliance with the regulations.

Section four of this report sets out the recommendations to improve the service.

1. Well-being

Summary

Children receive a good service and placements are made to promote their well-being. The quality of adopters' assessments was predominantly good and supported clear and well reasoned matching decisions for children to be placed with adopters. Every child placed was assessed for adoption support. The service values diversity.

Our findings

Information about children referred to the service was comprehensive and allowed consideration of the key factors that would assist the finding of placements that would promote the child's well-being and maximise keeping them happy, healthy and safe.

We saw that the service responded promptly to referrals received and that consideration was given to identifying the family finding tasks for each child. Together with ensuring timely referral to the Welsh or National Adoption Register children had been placed safely, appropriately and without avoidable delay. Children had been visited in their adoptive placements in line with statutory requirements and reviews of placements had taken place.

The care, education and health needs of children and the potential impact of their earlier life experiences of attachment and trauma, were identified and shared with adopters, who were offered training and support to understand these. Children who were old enough had been helped to know and understand why they have been adopted. We learned that children had been supported to cope with difficult life events, transitions to new placements and experiences of loss. Foster carers had been involved in preparing children for moving to their adoptive placement, the intensive introductions and supporting the adopters to get to know the child. Adopters reported their appreciation of the role of foster carers in preparing children for the transition to their adoptive placement. Social workers working with both the child and adoptive family had worked as a team around the child to make introductions and placement a thoughtful, measured and positive experience. Although some life journey work had been undertaken with children and later life letters had been written in good time, not all had been shared with adoptive parents in a timely way. We saw examples where the information had not been available until after the adoption order had been granted.

The quality of adopters' assessments (PAR's) was predominantly good. The required statutory checks had been undertaken on prospective adopters and children were safeguarded by these and the comprehensive assessments of adopter applicants. The recording of challenge within the assessment is an area for improvement. Panel members reported that the quality of PAR's was generally good. Overall the depth of

information in the assessments supported the making of clear and well reasoned matching decisions for children to be placed with particular adopters. As a result children have been matched and placed with adoptive parents whose assessment evidenced that they were most likely to meet their needs.

The majority of adopters who responded to Care Inspectorate Wales questionnaires reported they had received good information about the service and what adoption entailed. They had found the assessment process to be timely, balanced and fair. They also felt that when matching and placement decisions were being considered the service had taken into account their family composition and circumstances.

We learned that people involved with the service were treated fairly, without prejudice and with respect. There was evidence of respect and inclusiveness in assessments and contacts with adopters. We saw that in some cases birth parents had been involved in giving their views about the kind of people who would adopt their child and that their views had been listened to. People with particular health or communication needs had been responded to sensitively and compassionately. In a number of cases there had been pre-assessment consideration of particular issues so that if an assessment was not likely to be viable applicants did not engage only to be disappointed at a later stage. We found that when adopters had given their views about the service they had been listened to although they may not always have been agreed with. We saw that lessons learned from feedback about the service had been considered with a view to improving future practice. An example of this was the issue of life journey work not always being made available to adopters in a timely way. Children experience enhanced well-being because the service ensures that they have good quality information about them and their needs, and strive to provide for their needs to be met. Children's support needs are considered as part of the matching considerations of a placement. Children have their individual identities and cultures recognised and valued and placements had been made to support these being met. The Welsh culture and language, or other heritage, is considered as part of adopter assessments and prospective placements and we saw that children from Welsh speaking homes had where possible been placed with adopters who spoke Welsh.

Children's individual and diverse needs are recognised and catered for, their rights are protected by the decision making processes and children who are old enough, have a voice and are encouraged to speak up. We read for example that children had been consulted by adopters about a possible change to their first name and that children had been listened to and their wishes respected.

We saw records that reflected that children experienced warmth, attachment and belonging in their adoptive homes. Children had made progress developmentally, emotionally, socially and in education since placement for adoption. Children had remained healthy because their needs were known and anticipated and they were able to have access to relevant specialist or medical support. Their health needs

were being monitored and addressed and many of the children were reported to be thriving.

A number of placements had been made of sibling groups. There was evidence of decision making regarding placement decisions for siblings and the considerations of retaining attachments with siblings where appropriate. If this was not possible or appropriate there was clear reasoning recorded and evidence of each child and their needs being considered individually as well as part of the sibling group. Financial support had been provided for some placements to support siblings to be placed together.

Children and young people are able to live with loving supportive adoptive parents who are committed to understanding and meeting their needs. Children are supported to have positive understanding of their journey to adoption and as agreed on an individual basis, arrangements had been put in place if contact was to be maintained with their birth family. The well-being of children is prioritised in this service which is child focused and attuned to children's needs. Children have been able to experience stability in their adoptive homes as within the period considered only one placement had been disrupted.

2. Care and Support

Summary

The panel arrangements mainly comply with legislative requirements, a designated professional advisor and decision maker are in place. However, some areas were identified as needing to be developed such as introducing business meetings and panel member appraisal and training.

Careful consideration is given to matching children and prospective adopters with appropriate processes in place to do so.

A range of appropriate support is in place to promote successful placements of children with adopters/prospective adopters. We identified some examples of good practice support and some areas where improvements could be made. Support plans were consistently put in place at the point of matching but robust arrangements for their review were not consistently in place.

The adoption service had effective mechanisms to provide good quality intermediary services that met people's needs and promote their wellbeing. However, the demand for the service could not always be met in a timely way although priority was given to do so for those adoptions pre November 1975.

Our findings

Good adoption panel arrangements had been developed. The adoption service had allocated both team managers to be Adoption Support Service Advisors (ASSA's) with each having designated roles within the service, for example one is panel advisor.

The panel membership and the way it operates had been developed since the restructure of the adoption service and the panel chair came in post in January 2015. The panel chairperson is the same for all three panels thus promoting consistency and rarely misses a panel meeting. There are usually three panels a month, which is geographically located in each of the local authorities. An adoption panel protocol was in place that sets out how the panel operates.

The service has established a central pool of panel members, a core of who attend regularly and some who only attend in their geographical area. The panel chair and ASSA told us that it was not difficult to ensure that panel meetings were quorate. Panel members were described as dedicated and committed which was evidenced by the care taken in their preparation for panels and their levels of attendance and participation at the meetings. This was observed at panel where members were seen to actively engage in the process and in the discussions held.

Whilst the panel members were seen to function well and show consideration to relevant issues, there was a lack of representation at a strategic level to influence policy and wider decision making. For example there was a retired teacher as a panel member and a LACE's coordinator was also a panel member, however, the LACE's coordinator told us they did not attend panel meetings and therefore did not have a sense of the operation of the panel or wider issues arising.

The medical advisors work well at sharing relevant information and to ensuring information is shared with prospective adopters. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Similarly each local authority has a legal advisor who provides information and guidance when needed.

Panel minutes are processed promptly and the chair told us there was good business support to administer the panel. The agency decision makers are effective at completing their roles in a timely manner. Records of panel meetings were suitably detailed.

The panel was described as working well with an open and honest culture. The panel chair promotes opportunities to explore issues and encourages questions and an open honest exchange of views from panel members. Acknowledgement of good quality reports and assessments by panel members was observed and also the identification of concerns about the quality of some reports and request that they be updated (usually the CAR B). Questionnaire responses indicated that the CAR B provided sufficient information about the child but often did not reflect the wishes of birth parents.

Panel members identified areas where improvement was needed. Panel members do not receive appraisal or training; this is identified in regulation 8(b) as the responsibility of the adoption advisor. The adoption advisor told us that when one team manager left there had not been time to undertake this work. Similarly, (Regulation 8(d)) panel have requested occasional business meetings and information regarding placement breakdowns to be brought to panel but this has not happened. The panel protocol indicates that business panel meetings will take place every six months but this has not taken place. This was confirmed in comments made in questionnaire received from panel members. Questionnaire responses also indicated that panel members had not received relevant policies and procedures. Steps need to be taken to address these issues.

Clear matching processes were in place to ensure that children and adopters needs are considered at the point of matching and placement. Consideration is given to the suitability of the match and any support needs the child or adopters may have. This process also monitors life story work and later life letters for children being placed. Whilst we saw some examples of good quality life story work, there was also examples of delays in this work and later life letters not being provided until very late

into placement and sometimes after the adoption order had been made. The ASSA told us that there were plans from April 2018 to drive forward a framework around life story work with independent reviewing officers (IRO's) taking on the responsibility for ensuring there is a named person responsible for this work and panel monitoring this with an expectation that it will be completed at the point of matching.

Arrangements were in place to ensure that information about children, their families and any health implications are shared with adopters. The medical advisors filled a positive role in this process.

Placements are supported through adoption support arrangements and plans. Support needs are considered at the point of matching and a support plan was consistently put in place at the point of matching/placement. However, the reviewing arrangements at the point of adoption order were not consistently taking place and there was a lack of monitoring process to identify these short falls. If the need for a support service is identified post placement, processes were in place to ensure these are subject to appropriate monitoring and review.

Efforts have been made to develop staff skills in order to provide good quality support to adopters and children. The support arrangements provided by the team include:

- Therapeutic social work;
- Theraplay techniques;
- Task centred/solution based;
- Attachment assessment;
- Therapeutic life story;
- Post approval training for adopters;
- Support groups;
 - Adopters – 2 groups, 1 in the east and 1 in the west. Includes a guest speaker and opportunity for adopters to meet and chat. A social worker from the team supports each of the groups.
 - Talk Adoption – 2 groups children a younger group and older group including children who have been adopted up to the age of 25. A social worker from the team attends. These were described as successful and provide an opportunity for children to talk about their experiences of adoption.
 - An adopter and child group – young children under 8 years of age. Three groups, one in each authority. A social worker attends each group and an adopter leads in one of the groups.

Where specialist therapeutic support has been identified for children and funding agreed, it can be difficult to locate/source. An example was seen of a worker who went to great lengths to find the right support for a child but this had the inevitable result of taking time to find.

Financial support: An adoption allowance policy has been developed for the three local authorities. Where arrangements are in place under the old arrangements, these will be honoured. An annual means test is undertaken for people in receipt of financial support. A means test is carried out initially and to ensure continued eligibility each year.

Letter box arrangements have been a challenge as there are very high numbers to manage. There is a dedicated business support officer to assist with the task and they ensure that everything is logged and scanned into the system. The work has now been shared across team members so everyone has some letterbox on their work load. The ASSA told us that efforts had been made to make dormant cases live and where necessary to investigate to ensure the legitimacy of the contact. It was described as being a lot of work but was seen as successful with greater clarity of the arrangements in place.

The team has a specialist worker to undertake intermediary work. However, efforts were being made to build up other team member's skill base in order to increase capacity in the team to meet the demand. This service had previously been regarded as low priority. Specialist training around this area of work was described as hard to find.

There had been a high number of unallocated cases for birth record counselling and intermediary services, inherited following the restructure of the adoption services. The cost of commissioning the service was prohibitive so there are plans for the one worker to take the lead for the next year with a view to developing staff skills and knowledge in this area of work. When work has been undertaken we saw examples of good work, one was a lengthy piece of work and the other a short focused piece of work. They showed that attention was given to follow correct procedures with sensitive and respectful consideration given to the specific communication needs of people.

Priority was given to provide a timely service to people adopted before November 1975 in line with regulation. An example of this was seen, but lack of capacity may impact on overall; timeliness of this service.

The service is planning to develop guidance for people to help to keep them safe if using social media and other processes to undertake their own searches.

We therefore found that the quality of work to help people with birth record counselling and intermediary work was very good although the overall demands of the service resulted in a lack of routine timeliness.

3. Leadership and Management

Summary

Leadership and governance arrangements comply with statutory guidance. All stakeholders were satisfied with the partnership agreement which was finalised in January 2017. The working arrangements are echoed in the statement of purpose for the regional service. There is good routine reporting on performance into the regional management board and members report positive partnership working. However, it would appear that the process can impact on the agility to implement decisions and quality assurance is relatively undeveloped.

Lines of accountability to elected members are not consistent or entirely clear across the three authorities. This is an area particularly influenced by a regional model. There is annual reporting on the performance of the regional service but there was little opportunity for members to scrutinise the outcomes of the children from their own authority for whom they have corporate parenting responsibility. Members acknowledged that this was an area for review.

There is good regional representation on the national advisory group and an elected member from the region had been chairing the national governance board promoting good communication. Western Bay had been identified as a progressive region with regard to innovative and creative practice. However, the two significant issues of recruitment of a sufficient number and range of adopters and the increase of children waiting to be placed for adoption remain a challenge.

The integration of the workforce from the three partner authorities had presented some difficulties. A number of issues had impacted on team morale and there was still progress to be made in developing a whole service ethos. The decision not to recruit into one of the team managers posts had an impact on capacity. This decision had been reversed but it was unclear how timely recruitment would be. There were some local management issues within the service which the regional management board acknowledged had been difficult to address.

Management were aware that the inter dependency which could impact on timeliness and quality of information between the local authority child care teams and the regional adoption service could impact negatively on practice. For example improvement life journey work had been made but the ensuring capacity to achieve consistent quality and timeliness, which was would be a challenge.

Our findings

There had been a great deal of effort made by the region to set up what essentially is a new service. The establishment of a national adoption service with the regional structure being crucial in delivering the aims and intended improvements; required a

high level of commitment from all involved. The national service aims and objectives are incorporated into the working agreement. The multi tiered arrangements are well understood and work effectively although the requirement to report on an increasing number of performance indicators was proving challenging. There was some evidence of a drift between decisions being agreed at board level and actions being implemented. The chairperson's role was vacant for a period which could have influenced timeliness.

Representation on the regional management board from other agencies has taken longer to achieve. There was little evidence that the involvement of partner agencies in the regional management board is currently making a difference to adoption support in the longer term. Although individuals were committed and there were examples of good working relationships and good quality support particularly from health. It is difficult to see what influence is being exerted across the health board and education directorates to embed improvements in adoption support. Third sector involvement is strong with good links into national structure. Board members were confident that progress in meeting national standards and improving quality is being made. There was a level of optimism about the potential benefits of national initiatives such as a scheme to support the adoption of children with additional needs 'Adoption Together' and national framework /training for life journey work. There was an acknowledgement that increasing the availability of sufficient adoption placements and improving long term support for adopted children remain problematic.

Heads of service from the three local authorities are very positive about the working arrangements of the regional management board. The lead head of service has additional responsibilities, supervises the regional manager and also represents the region nationally. Although the management board were able to scope service provision as data and trends were reported systematically the variability in the numbers of children with a plan for adoption being referred and little control over the number of potential adopters who could be recruited made planning a challenge. It was reported that there had been a surplus of adopters in recent years but a subsequent increase in children with a plan for adoption led to a deficit which it was not possible to make up in the short term. There was also a rise in the numbers of older children with a plan for adoption and those with additional needs which had contributed to an increase in the numbers of children waiting to be placed. i. e. from 86 in 2015/16 to 102 in 2016/17. There was a systematic process in place to ensure children were registered with the Welsh Adoption Register in a timely manner and additional initiatives such as 'exchange days' are attended in an effort to find suitable adopters.

There were some examples of good commissioning with training for prospective adopters and therapeutic services. The availability and range of post adoption support was less consistent. The board are aware that there is a need to develop a

more regional or even national approach to developing an appropriate range of services. There are plans for working in partnership with CAMHS to develop better psychological support to those affected by adoption across the region.

A quality assurance framework is being developed and while there was evidence that work was being reviewed this was not consistent across the service. Authorities have their own quality assurance processes in place but the regional service needs to establish systems to ensure continuous improvement of its work. There had only been one adoption disruption in the previous year for any children in the period between the adoption placement and the adoption order being made. However, there had been no review or quality assurance of the disruption nine months later; this was reported to be because of staff sickness. Plans were in hand to complete this piece of work and share the learning.

All heads of service expressed confidence in their knowledge of the effectiveness of the regional adoption service and their ability to track the progress of children from their own individual authorities. All were the designated 'agency decision makers' (ADM) for their own authority which gave them the opportunity to gain an overview of the quality of work being carried out. This work can demand a high level of capacity although it is variable. The arrangements are not consistent across authorities for example it was reported that there is local quality assurance of Children's Adoption Reports; however, documents recorded fairly routine criticism from the adoption panel. It would appear that that the link back to improvement in practice is not working effectively. Support for the ADM process was also variable which could impact on quality assurance although this did not appear to impact on outcomes. Practice opportunities to share learning could be improved.

There is a pooled budget for the running costs of the service which includes adoption support costs, each partner expressed satisfaction with the funding arrangements. The agreement for the provision of both one off and on-going adoption allowances had declined in the previous year. There did not appear to be any clear explanation for this change. This is an area which would benefit from review by the regional management board. Examples were seen of good therapeutic support packages being provided in preparation for adoption although these are funded by each local authority. Children could benefit further from consistency of provision of pre adoption support in an effort to ensure the best outcomes. Good efforts had been made to improve 'letter box' contact for example and the managers are proactive in driving forward improvements across the service.

There is a wide breadth of experience and skill mix in the workforce. All workers are suitably qualified, and registered with Social Care Wales. Turnover of staff is low, but there had been some long term sickness absence. There was a range of relevant training available but staff had not completed any refresher safeguarding training in the previous two years. There is a high level of commitment to supporting the best

outcomes for children and adopters. The arrangements for the running of the service were well organised but the team manager vacancy, the inherent challenges of bring three separate service together with differing terms and conditions for staff carrying out the same work and cramped working environment had impacted on staff morale. Work loads had been high due to sickness and vacant posts; some staff reported feeling unsupported at times. Staff supervision had not been routinely completed and there is mostly a case focussed approach. Better recording of supporting staff development and well being is needed. This was in the process of being resolved at the time of the inspection.

4. Improvements required and recommended following this inspection

4.1 Areas of non compliance from previous inspection

This was the first inspection of this service.

4.2 Recommendations for improvement

- The regional management board should review the arrangements relating to the implementation of agreed actions and ensure there are vice chairing arrangements in place.
- Consideration should be given to how improvements in adoption support can be more systematically developed across partner agencies.
- A quality assurance framework should be implemented across the service and consideration given to linking into the associated functions which are completed by children's services. i.e. CAR/B; life journey work and later life letters.
- All operational regional adoption service staff should complete relevant safeguarding training every two years.
- The process for assessing and agreeing financial support for adopters should be reviewed to ensure the system is working appropriately.
- The timeliness and quality of supervision should be reviewed to ensure there is a consistent approach to case management and staff support and development.
- Consideration should be given to how staff can be provided with a more suitable working environment.
- Panel members should be provided with an appraisal and training opportunities.
- Consideration needs to be given to provide the panel members with occasional business meetings and bring information and reports about placement breakdowns to panel. Panel member need to be provided with relevant policies and procedures.
- Monitoring arrangements need to be put in place to ensure review of support plans.

5. How we undertook this inspection

This was a full inspection and the first for this regional adoption service since its inception in 2015.

The inspection took place between 28 November and 19 December 2017 with an additional interview taking place on 8 January 2018.

Information for this report was gathered from:

- The service completed a self evaluation and data return.
- Inspectors reviewed a number of policies and procedures and workforce data.
- Read 21 case files including case tracking 8 files; interviewing social workers, team managers and adopters (where available)
- Interviews were held with:-
 - 3 Elected members (one from each partner local authority)
 - The head of children's services from each of the 3 partner local authorities.
 - The chairperson and members of the regional management board representing Voluntary Adoption Agencies and partner agencies.
 - Members of staff individually and as a team.
 - The regional team manager.
 - Two team managers and ASSA's.
 - One of the medical advisors.
 - The foster panel chair person.
 - A group of panel members.
 - The legal advisor for NPT, Principal Officer for Swansea and the LACE's coordinator for NPT as a group.
- Meetings with 4 adopters and adoption support group.
- Attendance of adoption panel.
- Questionnaires were completed by seven adopters and eight adoption panel members.

Further information about what we do can be found on our website
Careinspectorate.wales Arolygiaethgofal.cymru

Recommendation	Progress /Action	Completed	RAG Status
The regional management board should review the arrangements relating to the implementation of agreed actions and ensure there are vice chairing arrangements in place.	Arrangements for implementing actions reviewed and New Chair and Vice Chair appointed at Board meeting on 14.5.18.	14.5.18	
Consideration should be given to how improvements in adoption support can be more systematically developed across partner agencies.	Meetings with three LA intake teams planned. This will help with a common approach, signposting and sharing (both ways) what the available universal services are. Joint work with VAA's around support groups, training opportunities needs to be further developed. Access for adopters to a secure members page on the new website will aid access, improve consultation and feedback on what is needed and what is working.		
A quality assurance framework should be implemented across the service and consideration given to linking into the associated functions which are completed by children's services. i.e. CAR/B; life journey work and later life letters.	Draft QA report is in process of being developed with the Senior Manager Group representing each LA. QA checklists are to be developed to help managers undertake, in line with the QA framework, regular QA audits.		
All operational regional adoption service staff should complete relevant Safe guarding training every two years.	All staff have now completed refresher training in safeguarding and this is included in the TNA each year. Each member of staff will have an individual learning plan developed which will include safeguarding training. This will then be monitored in their personal supervision of staff on a monthly basis and explored in appraisals.	May 2018	
The process for assessing and agreeing financial support for adopters should be reviewed to ensure the system is	The process for assessing and reviewing allowances is now robust and all on Oracle. This also enables early notifications of reviews and enables detailed recording of		

WBAS- CIW Inspection Report 2017-18 Recommendations & Action Plan

working appropriately.	decision making and budget monitoring. There have and continue to be challenges due to manager capacity but this will be rectified with the appointment of a 3 rd manager		
The timeliness and quality of supervision should be reviewed to ensure there is a consistent approach to case management and staff support and development.	Supervision frequency and process has been reviewed and takes place monthly for all social work staff. Supervision templates have also been reviewed and updated. All staff have both personal and case supervision and have opportunity to comment on the supervision process.	??	
Consideration should be given to how staff can be provided with a more suitable working environment.	Raised and discussed at Management Board in May 2018. Also raised at the PTCC Accommodation group. Matter is being considered.		
Panel members should be provided with an appraisal and training opportunities.	<p>Panel training scheduled in for the year. Training undertaken on 25.4.18 & 18.6.18 covering quality assurance, panel's roles and responsibilities, evidenced based practice and considering two disruption reports and the lessons that can be learnt from these. Joint training is proposed for the autumn term and this will include panel members, family finding workers and recruitment workers. Aim of this will be to review the matching process and consider evidenced based practice, analysis and the impact of the LJF and Transition process.</p> <p>Appraisals will be rolled out in the Autumn</p>	April 2018	
Consideration needs to be given to provide the panel members with occasional business meetings and bring information and reports about placement breakdowns to panel. Panel member need to be provided with	Business meetings now scheduled in for the year. In both training events (April and June) a business meeting component was added to the training. Panel members have agreed that, given the way panels are convened across the region and with a fluid attendance, business meetings will be managed in two	May 2018	

<p>relevant policies and procedures.</p>	<p>ways. Updates on children’s cases and disruptions will be quarterly and shared in each of the three panels in a specific month (next one is September) and , where a panel has a number of cases pulled, the time will be used to hold business meetings.</p>		
<p>Monitoring arrangements need to be put in place to ensure review of support plans.</p>	<p>In adoption support, support plans are reviewed when an assessment of support needs has been completed, when interventions are completed or when there is long term work they are reviewed by social worker and manager on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>For family finding, it was agreed that every support plan should be reviewed by the FF manager on granting a placement order and as part of the case closure / transfer process.</p> <p>Transfer protocol to be updated to reflect this latter point</p>		



Report of the Cabinet Members for Children’s Services

Child & Family Services Scrutiny Panel - 28 August 2018

MONITORING THE PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS OF THE WESTERN BAY REGIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE

Purpose	The purpose of this report is to provide information to Elected Members of the Child and Family Services Scrutiny Panel about the performance and progress of the Western Bay Regional Adoption Service, including the Annual Report on Regional PI Performance 2017/2018 which is attached at Appendix A .
Content	This report updates the Committee on the progress and performance of the Regional Adoption Service during the last financial year.
Councillors are being asked to	Consider and note the performance and progress of the Regional Adoption Service.
Lead Councillor(s)	Cabinet Member for Children’s Services (Early Years), Councillor Elliott King. Cabinet Member for Children’s Services (Young People), Councillor Will Evans
Lead Officer(s)	Head of Child and Family Services and Regional Adoption Manager.
Report Author	Val Jones Tel: 01639 685396 v.jones1@westernbayadoption.org

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Adoption has and continues to receive high levels of attention from both the UK and the Welsh Government. Members will be aware that the creation of a National Adoption Service is one of the key policy strands of the Welsh Government, as enacted in the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014. This Act provides powers, under Section 9, for Ministers to direct local authorities to collaborate in relation to adoption services and to prevent any local authority from withdrawing from these collaborations in the future.

- 1.2 The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 came into force on 13th March 2015. The primary purpose of these Directions is to ensure effective joint arrangements are in place between local authorities in Wales for the delivery of adoption services
- 1.3 Schedule 1 of the Directions sets out which local authorities must collaborate with each other. For the Western Bay region the local authorities are Swansea, Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot. Swansea host and manage the regional service on behalf of the partner agencies, this having been approved by Cabinets in all three local authorities in April 2014.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Western Bay Adoption Service (WBAS) is integrated into the National Adoption Service (NAS) as one of the five identified regional collaboratives. The National Service is underpinned by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015.
- 2.2 The broad aims of the joint adoption arrangements across Wales as specified in the Directions include:
- Consistent and high quality service
 - Keeping delay to a minimum
 - Widest choice possible of placement
 - Eliminating waiting lists for training and assessments
 - Improving the matching process
 - Streamlining adoption services improved liaison between adoption social workers
 - Keeping breakdowns to a minimum by providing adequate adoption support
 - Collaborative working between local authorities, voluntary agencies, health and education services
- 2.3 The Management and oversight arrangements of the National Service consist of:

Governance Board

Includes representatives from each agency:

- Spokesperson and Deputy Spokesperson from WLGA for Health & Social Services
- Mayor or executive leader by the Lead Authority
- Independent Chairperson of the Advisory Group
- Representative on behalf of the voluntary agencies
- Elected member representation for each region

The functions of the Governance Board include: strategic direction, approval of annual work programme, ensuring the views of stake holders are represented and the monitoring & oversight of performance, complaints,

engagement with voluntary agencies, service user representatives, budget & financial, Welsh language and reporting to the Welsh Ministers.

The nominated elected member representative for Western Bay on the Governance Board is Councillor Alan Lockyer from Neath Port Talbot.

Advisory Group

Includes the following representatives from:

- each collaborative Head of Children's Service
- the Association of the Directors of Social Services Cymru
- the Association of Directors of Education in Wales
- the WLGA
- 3 from voluntary organisations
- Legal adviser from the lead local authority
- Health professional for Looked After Children
- Medical advisor to an adoption panel
- CAMHS
- Service User
- Social Research Centre

The functions of the Advisory Group include:

- Provision of professional advice and Support to the Governance Board
- Supporting the effective operation of the service
- Notifying the Welsh Minister of any issues

The City of Cardiff Council has been given the role of Lead Authority for the National Adoption Service and as host authority it works with key partners to run an all-Wales adoption website, developing a centre of excellence for adoption services and employing a Director of Operations for Wales.

Director of Operations and Central Team:

The functions of the Director of Operations and Central Team include:

- Production of an annual work programme to include priorities and targets
- Financial plans and budget responsibilities
- Monitoring and analysis of performance data
- Determine actions to address issues arising
- Improvements and developments of the service
- Submission of a 6 monthly and annual progress and financial report
- Analysis of reports from regional collaboratives
- Establish and maintain website
- Co-ordination of pre-approval training and adoption support services

In addition to the development of the National Service and the Central Team, a Wales Adoption Register has been developed which is hosted by the Central Team operating on the principle of keeping Welsh children in Wales.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 Western Bay Adoption Service (WBAS) became fully operational in April 2015. Prior to this adoption services were delivered locally via the three local authorities.
- 3.2 The regional adoption service provides a range of services and interventions across the five key domains to those affected by adoption. Those being:
- Assessing and supporting prospective adopters
 - Assessing non-agency (parent/carer, formerly step parent adoptions)
 - Birth Record Counselling and Intermediary Services (BRC &IS)
 - Adoption support (assessments and support services to anyone affected by adoption)
 - Twin tracking and Family Finding (TT&FF), which involves working with birth families of children in or following care proceedings and once a Placement Order has been granted by court in searching for an adoptive placement

4. Performance and Activity

- 4.1 The attached annual performance report outlines the performance within the regional adoption service for 2017/18.
- 4.2 Key achievements for the year include:
- The number of children placed during the year has shown a slight increase on last year's performance, 74 compared to 71 in 2016/17. Of the 74 children placed, 30 were in 'harder to place' category, this included, 8 sibling groups of 2, 2 sibling groups of 3 and 8 children who were either older children or children with complex needs. This demonstrates the successes and positive outcomes the service has achieved for this particular group of children. The number of children placed for Swansea was 28.
 - Of the children placed during the year we continued to place more children with Western Bay adopters than in Inter agency placements (IAs). By year end the service had placed 47 children within Western Bay and at the same time reduced the number placed in interagency placements from 32 to 27. Of the placements made 64% were placed with Western Bay adopters, despite there being challenges in placing those deemed as 'harder to place' children and a sustained position of adopters wishing to have the more straightforward and younger children. Six of these children were placed as a direct result of the profiling event in Western Bay. Sixteen children from Swansea were

placed with Western Bay adopters and 12 were placed in Inter agency placements

- There continues to be collaboration between the Family Finding and Adoption Support functions within the service to put together packages of support for more complex children or where placements need additional support. Of the 74 children placed for adoption during the year 18 had an ongoing service provision/package of support at the point of placement
- The region developed and organised a 'Profiling' event during the year which included some of our harder to place children who had been waiting longer than 6 months. Thirty four children were profiled and 17 approved adopter families were invited to consider those children as potential links/matches. This event proved very successful and resulted in 6 children being placed, a little under 10% of the total number of children placed by the region. The feedback from adopters and staff was extremely positive and following the outcome and success of the event it has been decided to continue holding the 'Profiling' events on a regular basis within the region, with the aim of holding 2 events a year
- The number of Adoption Orders granted (AOG) has increased significantly from the previous year from 69 to 90 in 2017-18. This is an excellent achievement despite many of our adoption applications being contested. Of the 90 Adoption Orders granted during the year 34 were Swansea children. Thirty four (38%) of the applications made in the region were contested in 2017-18, resulting in delay and having an impact on performance which is beyond the region's control
- Following a number of strategies implemented by both Western Bay Adoption Service and the local authorities there had been an increase during the year in the number of children presented to panel where there was evidence of Life Story Materials (LSM). There had also been some improvement in the number of children who had Life Story Materials provided to adopters by the time of the second review with 58% of children having these in place compared to 30% last year. During 2017-18 Swansea had 32 children who had a second adoption review, 17 of these children had Life Story Materials provided at this point
- Despite the reduction in the number of adopter enquiries to the service there is evidence to demonstrate that less initial enquires are being withdrawn and more being deemed suitable resulting in higher conversion rates through to assessments and approvals. This may have been impacted on through, improved responses to enquirers, improved literature and website information as well as the outcomes of targeted regional/national campaigns

- The average time taken to approve adopters from the inquiry stage to Agency Decision Making (ADM) decision has decreased compared to 2016-17 from 9.7 months to 8.2 months in 2017-18 which brings us closer to the national benchmark of 8 months
- The number of adoption support interventions has increased. Whilst there is some evidence this has reduced the use of higher cost commissioned services, of more note is the range of interventions. These have included more requests for engagement in resolving letterbox issues particularly between siblings
- We have invested in and further developed the Western Bay Adoption Service website to make it more interactive, user friendly and to include the active offer. This is now in the process of being translated and uploaded on to the site. In the coming year all of our information leaflets will be accessible via the website. We are also developing a member's only login page where adopters will be able to access key information, including our newsletter, playgroup dates and venues. There will be child friendly pages included in the website also to target and encourage our children to access the site. The improved website will be launched in September 2018
- Development and implementation of the Transition/Moving on model to assist in improving the preparation of children for adoption and in the provision of Life Story material has continued to be rolled out with training to staff across the region. Targeted training has been offered for all WB staff and for all three local authority social workers and foster carers where a child is subject to a plan of adoption
- An inspection took place in December 2017 which was positive and demonstrated the service was improving

4.3 The challenges/priorities that the service will need to focus on in the coming year include:

- There has been a significant decrease in Adopter enquiry rates with 117 enquiries within the year compared to the 174 received in 2016-17. The issue of adopter recruitment has been an issue nationally and data shows there is a re-emerging gap between placement need and adopter recruitment. The region is working hard on improving website access and interactivity as well as with the NAS central team to develop a revised All Wales Marketing and Recruitment Strategy for the coming year the aim of which is to;
 - Increase interest, enquiries and approvals from prospective adopters who can meet the needs of our children and
 - Increase the number of children placed;
 - Reduce the number of children waiting;

- Meet the need for sibling group placements and children with other complexities;
- Reach a level of adopter sufficiency that allows for choice but does not create significant levels of adopters waiting lengthy periods.

Whilst we have seen some success during the year the reality is that many adopters are still presenting themselves as wanting younger children which is in line with national research. We have identified a target for the coming year to achieve 63 adopter approvals. Staffing issues within Recruitment and Assessment appear to be resolving which will aid in achieving the targeted number of approvals for 2018-19

- Where possible to further reduce the time from LAC, SBPD and Placement Order (PO) to placement for adoption. We anticipate this continuing to be a challenge as we are mindful that the number of children that have been waiting longer than 6 months to be matched has increased. This is reflective of the National picture and we are currently participating in an All Wales National Recruitment Campaign to attempt to combat this. If we are successful in placing more of these children who have waited longer in the coming year we will anticipate our performance in this area to show a decline, however, overall this will be a successful outcome for those children
- There needs to be a robust and whole region approach to the improvement of Life Story Materials (LSM) in relation to quality and timeliness. The current NAS measure is by 2nd review however, WBAS with the support of the senior management in the LAs has agreed that this measure should be the longest time and the best practice aim is on placement. Our IT system will need to be developed in order to capture this data at various points of match and placement of adoption. Although this measure has improved during the year close monitoring and continued development will be needed to maintain and improve our performance in this area to achieve the revised national benchmark of 100%
- Performance in the number of Birth parents referred and offered a service has been sustained. Take up of this service within the same period remains particularly low with evidence suggesting that birth parents refer back into the service at a later date for support. WBAS has identified this as a key focus for the coming year to improve the work with birth families and take up of the service offered.

- Improving the early engagement of birth parents enabling greater information gathering of relevance to the child's adoption medical and identity issues.
- Consultation with adopters identified support for the additional training for family and friends, alongside the pre-approval training. As resources improve this will be implemented in the coming year
- Improving the matching paperwork for children being presented to adoption panel
- Further improvements are needed in Child Adoption Report – Annex B (CAR B) to improve quality of information. This will include rolling out additional training throughout the year
- Further development of the IT system throughout all functions in WBAS is needed for the coming year to collate further information to feed into our reporting and identify areas of need. This will include recording life journey materials at various points of the adoption journey and capturing more closely the amount of adoption support provided in certain areas, focusing for example on therapy packages being provided and enabling more robust monitoring
- The continuing development of policies and procedures is a key priority for the coming
- Continuing to address the significant backlog of non-agency assessments which is a hidden area of work as it not reported on nationally

4.4 The service plan reflects the key priorities for the coming year with the focus being on:

- Increasing the number of enquiries and adopter assessments/approvals
- Recruiting the right adopters for the right children
- Ensuring effective planning for children whose plan is one of adoption
- Ensuring effective support services are available
- To have a workforce which is experienced and able to provide a quality service
- To have an effective and high quality adoption panel
- To improve the processes for those affected by adoption

- To embed robust governance arrangements and to develop and implement an effective quality assurance framework
- Improving the number of children who have LSM provided at placement

5. Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no specific financial implications arising directly out of this report.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

7.1 This report is concerned with performance information rather than policy or decision making therefore an equality impact assessment is not applicable.

8.0 Conclusions

8.1 The current overall position of the regional adoption service remains generally positive but continued effort is required to ensure areas where the service has not performed as well as the previous year are improved upon. The key challenge facing the service is to increase the number of appropriate adopters to meet the growing need of those children who require adoptive placements, particularly those who are 'harder to place'. While at the same time to continue to maintain and improve on performance, achieve good outcomes for those affected by adoption and ensure that all performance indicators are on track.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that Scrutiny Panel notes the performance and review of the adoption service and its ability to meet the needs of those affected by adoption within the region.

Background Papers:

Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales)
Directions

The Adoptions Agencies (Wales) regulations 2007

Appendices

A. Annual Report on Regional PI Performance 2017-18

Contact Officer: Julie Thomas
Head of Child and Family Services

Legal Officer: Lucy Moore

Finance Officer: Chris Davies

June 2018



ANNUAL REPORT AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

For Period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018



Annual Report on PI data for Western Bay Adoption Service 2017/18

Introduction

This report reflects the region's third full year's performance as a collaborative service.

It is fair to say that there are areas of performance in which the service was doing well in 2016-17 where there has been a dip in performance in 2017-18 namely the number of children waiting longer than 6 months, Adopter enquiries and approvals. However, in other areas it is pleasing to note that the service has made some significant improvements, such as the number of Adoption Orders Granted, provision of life journey materials by 2nd adoption review, number of children waiting overall has decreased and the number of placements made within Western Bay has increased. The report highlights those areas where we need to focus attention and improve, along with those where we have demonstrated improvement and provides analysis to demonstrate the reasons and challenges.

There are continued developments being progressed within the service as a whole, these include ongoing improvements to the IT system and reporting mechanisms, ongoing development of adoption support services, the progression of the Life Journey Framework regional implementation plan and the implementation of our recruitment strategy to increase the number of adopters required to meet the needs of children whose plan is for adoption.

This report provides data for the Western Bay Adoption Service (WBAS) performance activity, against the national key PI measures. It provides data for the region as a whole along with comparative data across the three partner agencies, comparative data across the regions within Wales and against last year's regional performance.

Section 1 – Progress update

During 2017-18 the ongoing development of the Adoption Support service continued but has not been without its challenges. There has been a steady



increase in demand for adoption support, which has impacted on capacity. In addition to this there has been an increase in the complexities of referrals, with higher levels of need warranting longer, targeted and more specialised interventions. Of particular note is an increase in contact investigations which require an analysis of existing arrangements to enable contact to be restarted where appropriate.

Areas of development within Adoption Support include:

- Co-creation/engagement with adopters particularly around life story / journey work and enabling adopters to engage in or create life story books where these are missing or inadequate
- Building on the previous training implemented in order to meet service and NAS objectives and improve adoption support delivery
- Continual improvements in the IT system as service need demands
- Greater involvement with and engagement of birth parents early on the adoption journey
- Revisit, improve and act on the analysis of the impact of adoption on siblings, particularly when these are being separated and some children remain in foster care or other permanent placements. These impacts on their longer term support needs and letterbox arrangements.

We have continued to increase our performance and ability to place children within WBAS despite the challenges faced regionally and nationally in recruiting adopters for harder to place children. This increased has resulted from improved marketing, recruitment and engagement of adopters.

Areas of development within the region have included:

- Continued development of the WBAS transitional model in relation to preparing children to move on to adoption
- Development and implementation of the Life Journey Framework-Regional Plan which includes the roll out of training in relation to the framework and the transition model throughout 2018
- Redesign and development of the Western Bay website to support recruitment
- Development of the regional recruitment strategy and marketing plan
- Facilitating open events for approved and shortly to be approved adopters. This included an, adoption support information event which was highly regarded
- A very successful profiling event which will be repeated twice annually



Western Bay Adoption Service (WBAS) has also continued to play an active role in the national developments:

- Development of the national Life Journey Framework
- Partnership working with St David's and Barnardo's around the development of the new Adopting Together Project
- Engaging in the development of adoption support strategies, including joint work with AUK on promoting both Education developments and the first 1000 Day project.

The recruitment and assessment of Adopters was a key objective for 2017-18 and despite significant resource issues and lower numbers of enquiries and approvals, there were improvements in the number of children being placed within the region. We continue to focus on:

- Service user consultation and engagement
- Better align the take up of adopter assessments with the needs of children waiting for adoptive placements
- Increase the use of adoption support staff earlier in placements, specifically for more complex children
- Continue to reduce overall the time taken to approve adopters
- Increase the number of approved adopters for the more complex children through a process of an interactive website, open events and improved marketing.

The key achievements:-

- The number of children placed during the year has shown a slight increase on last year's performance, 74 compared to 71 in 2016-17. Of the 74 children placed, 30 were in the 'harder to place' category, this included, 8 sibling groups of 2, 2 sibling groups of 3 and 8 children who were either older children or children with complex needs. This demonstrates the successes and positive outcomes the service has achieved for this particular group of children
- Of the children placed during the year we continued to place more children with WBAS adopters than in interagency placements. By year end the service had placed 47 children with WB adopters and at the same time reduced the number placed in interagency placements from 32 to 27. Of the placements made 64% were placed within WB adopters, despite there being challenges in placing those deemed as 'harder to place' children and a sustained position of adopters wishing to have the more straightforward and younger children. Six of these



children were placed as a direct result of the profiling event in Western Bay

- There continues to be collaboration between the Family Finding and Adoption Support function(AS) to put together packages of support for more complex children or where placements need additional support. 18 children placed for adoption this year had an ongoing service provision/package of support at the point of placement
- The region developed and organised a 'Profiling' event during the year which included some of our harder to place children who have been waiting longer than 6 months. 34 children were profiled and 17 approved adopter families were invited to consider those children as potential links/matches. This event proved very successful and resulted in 6 children being placed, a little under 10% of the total number of children placed by the region. The feedback from adopters and staff was extremely positive and following the outcome and success of the event it has been decided to continue holding the 'Profiling' events on a regular basis within the region, with the aim of holding 2 events a year
- The number of Adoption Orders granted (AOG) has increased significantly from the previous year from 69 to 90 in 2017-18. This is an excellent achievement despite many of our adoption applications being contested. Thirty four (38%) of the applications made in the region were contested in 2017-18, resulting in delay and therefore, having an impact on the performance which is beyond the region's control
- Following a number of strategies implemented by both Western Bay Adoption Service and the Local authorities there had been an increase in the number of children within the region presented to panel where there is evidence of Life Story Materials (LSM). During 2016-17, 23% had evidence of Life Story Materials in place at time of panel, during 2017-18 this figure rose to 50% amounting to a 27% increase in performance. There has also been some improvement in the number of children who had Life Story Materials provided to adopters by the time of the second adoption review, with 58% of children in the region having these in place compared to 30% in 2016-17
- Despite the reduction in the number of adopter enquiries to the service there is evidence to demonstrate that less initial enquires are being withdrawn and more being deemed suitable resulting in higher conversion rates through to assessments and approvals. This may



have been impacted on through, improved responses to enquirers, literature and website information as well as the outcomes of targeted regional/national campaigns

- The average time taken to approve adopters from the inquiry stage to Agency Decision Making (ADM) decision has decreased compared to 2016-17 from 9.7 months to 8.2 months in 2017-18 which brings us closer to the national benchmark of 8 months
- The number of adoption support interventions has increased. Whilst there is some evidence this has reduced the use of higher cost commissioned services, of more note is the range of interventions. These have included more requests for engagement in resolving letterbox issues particularly between siblings
- We have developed the Western Bay Adoption Service website to make it more interactive, user friendly and to include the active offer. In the coming year all of our information leaflets will be accessible via the website. We are also developing a member's only login page where adopters will be able to access key information, including our newsletter, playgroup dates and venues. There are child friendly pages included in the website also to target and encourage our children to access the site. The improved website will be launched by the end of July 2018/19
- Development and implementation of the Transition/Moving on model to assist in improving the preparation of children for adoption and in the provision of life journey material has continued to be rolled out with training to staff across the region. Targeted training has been offered for all WB staff and for all three local authority social workers and foster carers where a child is subject to a plan of adoption and a Placement Order (PO) has been granted
- An inspection took place in December 2017 which was positive and demonstrated the service was improving

Challenges / Priorities

A number of challenges have been identified for the coming year and these include –

- The service has seen a significant decrease in Adopter enquiry rates with 118 enquiries received during 2017-18 compared to the 174



received in 2016-17. The issue of adopter recruitment has been an issue nationally and data shows there is a re-emerging gap between placement need and adopter recruitment. The region is working hard on improving website access and interactivity as well as with the NAS Central team to develop a revised All Wales Marketing and Recruitment Strategy for the coming year the aim of which is to;

- Increase interest, enquiries and approvals from prospective adopters who can meet the needs of our children and
 - Increase the number of children placed;
 - Reduce the number of children waiting;
 - Meet the need for sibling group placements and children with other complexities;
 - Reach a level of adopter sufficiency that allows for choice but does not create significant levels of adopters waiting lengthy periods

Whilst we have seen some success during the year the reality is that many adopters are still presenting themselves as wanting younger children which is in line with national research. We have identified a target for the coming year 2018-19 to achieve 63 adopter approvals. Staffing issues within Recruitment and Assessment appear to be resolving which will aid in achieving the targeted number of approvals in the coming year

- Where possible to further reduce the time from LAC, SBPD and Placement Order (PO) to placement for adoption. We anticipate this continuing to be a challenge as we are mindful that the number of children that have been waiting longer than 6 months to be matched has increased. This is reflective of the National picture and we are currently participating in an All Wales National Recruitment Campaign to attempt to combat this. If we are successful in placing more of these children who have waited longer in the coming year we will anticipate our performance in this area to show a decline, however this will be a successful outcome for those children
- There needs to be a robust and whole region approach to the improvement of Life Story Materials (LSM) in relation to quality and timeliness. The current NAS measure is by 2nd review however, WBAS with the support of the senior management in the LAs has agreed that this measure should be the longest time and the best practice aim is to have these in place at the point of placement. Our IT system will need to be developed in order to capture this data at various points, i.e. match and placement of adoption. Although this measure has improved during the year close monitoring and continued development



will be needed to maintain and improve our performance in this area to achieve the revised national benchmark of 100%

- Performance in the number of birth parents referred and offered a service has been sustained. Take up of this service within the same period remains particularly low with evidence suggesting that birth parents refer back into the service at a later date for support. WBAS has identified this as a key focus for the coming year to improve the work with birth families and the take up of the service offered
- Improving the early engagement of birth parents enabling greater information gathering of relevance to the child's adoption medical and identity issues
- Consultation with adopters, identified support for the additional training for family and friends, alongside the pre-approval training. As resources improve this will be implemented in the coming year
- Improving the matching paperwork for children being presented to adoption panel
- Further improvements are needed in Child Adoption Report – Annex B (CAR B) to improve quality of information. This will include rolling out additional training throughout the year
- Further development of the IT system throughout all functions in WBAS is needed for the coming year to collate further information to feed into our reporting and identify areas of need. This will include recording life journey materials at various points of the adoption journey and capturing more closely the amount of adoption support provided in certain areas, focusing for example on therapy packages being provided and enabling more robust monitoring
- The continuing development of policies and procedures is a key priority for the coming year
- Addressing the significant backlog of non-agency assessments through a number of strategies



Section 2 - Performance

The purpose of this section is to highlight some of the key performance areas for WBAS for the year 2017/18. The report is based on data that has been supplied to the NAS on a quarterly basis throughout the year and provides comparison data against last year's performance.

1. Children Referred 2017/18 - 187

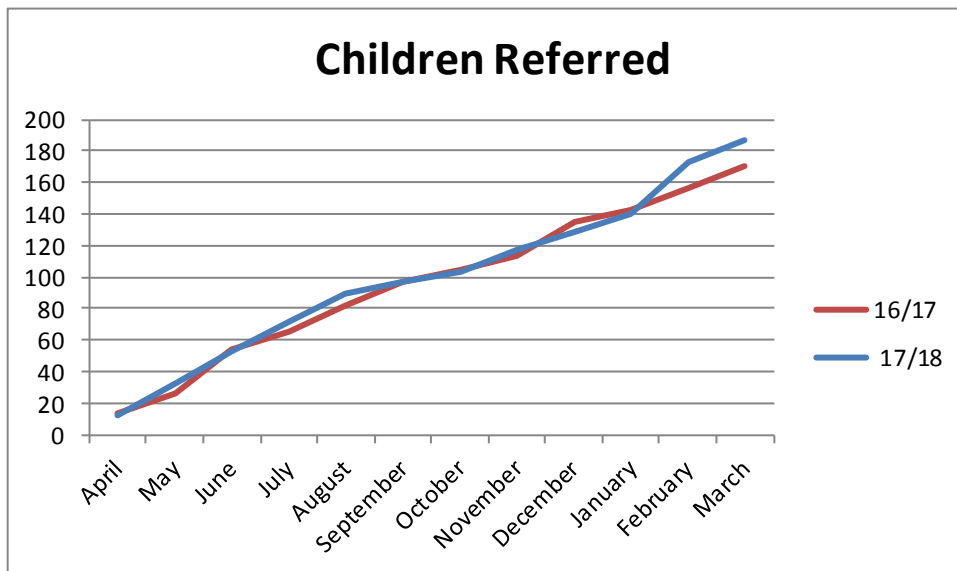
In the first three quarters of 2017-18 there was a downward trend in referrals, however a spike in quarter 4 resulted in the number of referrals at year end rising to 187. This shows a 10% increase on the 170 received last year.

Children Referred TOTAL	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	
2017/18	39	51	97	187
2016/17	72	43	55	170
2015/16	58	45	92	195
2014/15	68	56	79	203

Of the 170 referrals received in 2016-17, 90 were withdrawn, leaving just 80 active referrals. This could indicate why performance, in some measures this year has shown a decrease.

Whilst it is too soon to report on the whole of the year 2017-18, it is noted that at the end of Q3 129 referrals were made and 72 have been withdrawn to date (56%) leaving 57 active referrals at end of Q3. If this trend continues it will be likely to be reflected in lower figures for Placement Orders and children placed in the coming year.

At end of Q3 comparison of the local authority figures show that Swansea had 65 referrals, of which 42 were withdrawn leaving 23 active referrals (66% dropout). NPT had 43 referrals of which 25 were withdrawn, leaving 18 active referrals (58% dropout). BCBC had 21 referrals of which 5 were withdrawn leaving 16 active referrals (24% dropout).



Comparative data for other regions in Wales show that WB are the second highest in receiving the numbers of referrals. Figures for other regions are as follows Mid and West Wales Adoption Service (MWW) 65, North Wales Adoption Service (NWAS) 53, South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) 184, Valley, Vale and Cardiff (VVC) 245.

The overall figure across Wales is showing a slight decrease in the number of referrals for 2017-18.

2. Should Be Placed Decision (SBPD)

The number of children that progressed to have a 'should be placed decision' in Western Bay totalled 77 a decrease of 35 compared to 2016/17.

Compared to other regions across Wales, WBAS had the third highest number of SBPD with VVC having the highest at 120. MWW 46, NWAS 31, SEWAS 101.

3. Placement Orders Granted = 68

WBAS regional data

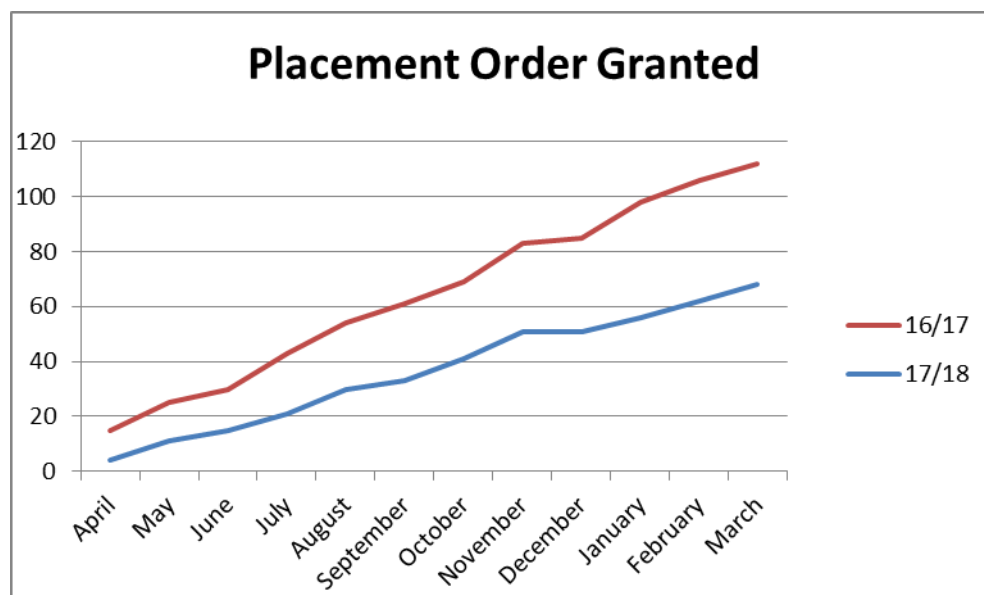
There has been a decrease in the number of POs granted during 2017-18 with 68 being granted compared to 112 in 2016-1, showing a 39% decrease. The data in the second table below shows a significant decrease in the



number of POs granted in two of the LAs with one LA decreasing by more than half.

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2017/18	15	18	18	17	68
2016/17	30	31	24	27	112

POG	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2017/18	22	26	20	68
2016/17	36	23	53	112
2015/16	31	26	26	83
2014/15	25	36	33	94



The figures for other individual regions across Wales show an upward trend for PO being granted compared to WBAS which shows a downward trend. MWW 43, N WAS 50, SEWAS 95, VVC 105.

Overall across Wales the number of PO reported as being granted by courts in 2017-18 shows a small reduction, 375 to 357 around 4%.

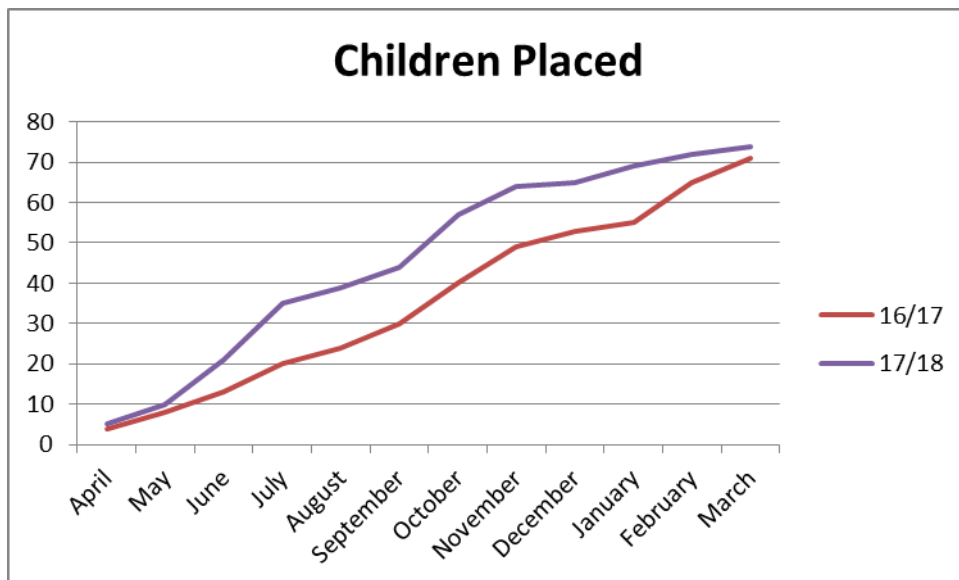


4. Children Placed = 74

Statistics evidence that during the year there had been a consistent number of children being placed for adoption by WBAS in the first three quarters of 2017/18. Quarter 4 however shows a decrease in the number placed. Those being placed are a combination of children that represent harder to place and more straight forward children. Overall there was a slight increase in the numbers placed by the region compared to 2016/17.

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2017/18	21	23	21	9	74
2016/17	13	17	23	18	71
2015/16	20	25	21	27	93

Children Placed	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2017/18	24	22	28	74
2016/17	24	17	30	71
2015/16	24	40	29	93
2014/15	28	28	37	93

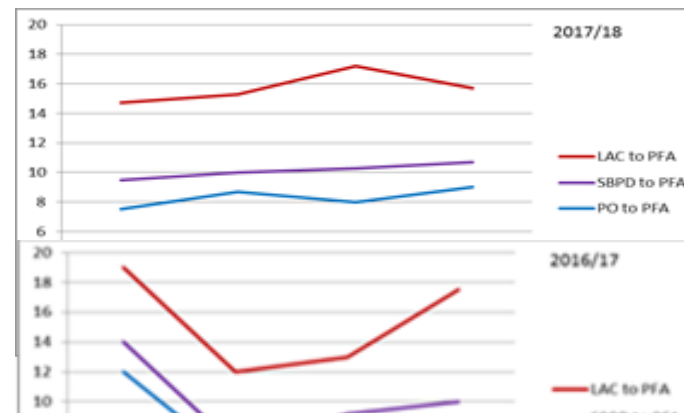
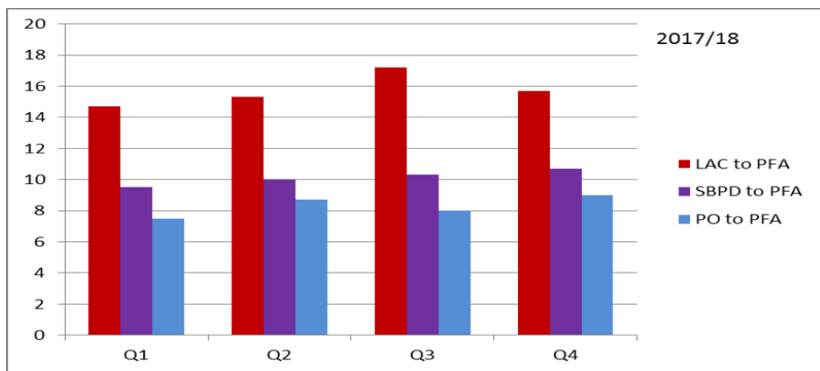


Performance in other regions across Wales is as follows, MWW 35, NWAS 41, SEWAS 71, VVC 86.

The National figures show the number of children placed overall was 307 in 2017-18 slightly more than the previous year.



5. Average Time (in months) Taken for Children to be Placed.



Average Time in Months (days) Taken for children to be placed

	16/17					17/8				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year Total
LAC to PFA	19.6 (590)	11.6 (347)	13.2 (396)	17.6 (527)	15.1 (453)	14 (421)	15.3 (460)	17.3 (518)	15.6 (469)	15.7 (470)
SBPD to PFA	14 (417)	7 (222)	9.2 (281)	10 (312)	10 (283)	9.1 (272)	10.1 (303)	10.3 (309)	10.7 (321)	10 (299)
PO to PFA	12.4 (373)	6 (17)	7.7 (235)	8 (240)	8.4 (255)	12.4 (373)	6 (17)	7.7 (235)	8 (240)	8.2 (246)

LAC to Placed for Adoption (PFA) – 15.7 months (Average)

The average length of time taken from 'becoming looked after' (LAC) to placement for adoption is 15.7. This has not met the national benchmark of 13 months and further work is needed within the Local Authorities (LAs) to address this.

Some of the delay in this area however, will remain out of the control of the service, for example, 3 children who all took over 900 days each were the result of a delay in care proceedings. One of these children took over 900 days from LAC to placement however proceeded from PO placement in only 104 days.

There were 19 children who were deemed 'harder to place' due to them being in a sibling group, having complex needs or were older children. Of these 1 child who took 917 days from LAC to placement had a high level of need and 1 child who took 1152 days was an older child – 7 years.

The National Average overall for the year was 14.5 months. This figure has reduced in 2017-18 demonstrating that regions are placing children more quickly from a child becoming looked after to being placed for adoption.

Of the number of children placed across all regions 56% were placed within the 13 month benchmark. Two regions (SEWAS & VVC) were within the 13 month benchmark.

SBPD to Placed for Adoption (PFA) – 10.2 months (Average)

The average time it takes for children from Should Be Placed Decision (SBPD) to placement for adoption (PFA) is 10.2 months. There have been considerable successes with a number of children placed in very short timescales. The shortest time being 102 days, (3.4 months). This is attributed to the close working between Recruitment and Assessment (R&A) and Family Finding (FF) teams to identify early the needs of children and adopters so that where suitable the link can be progressed without delay. This measure has been interrogated and it is clear that whilst there is a slight drop in performance, there are more complex children being placed which has necessitated increased social work activity and as explained above there were 3 children who took considerably longer to place who impact on these timescales.

Comparative data for this measure across other regions was not available at the time of completing this report.

Placement Order to PFA – 8.3 months (Average)

The average time it takes for children from PO to placement for adoption has increased marginally from 8.2 month to 8.3 months. This is not within the national benchmark of 6 months or under. 43% of children were placed within the 6 month benchmark with the shortest time being 85 days (2.8 months).

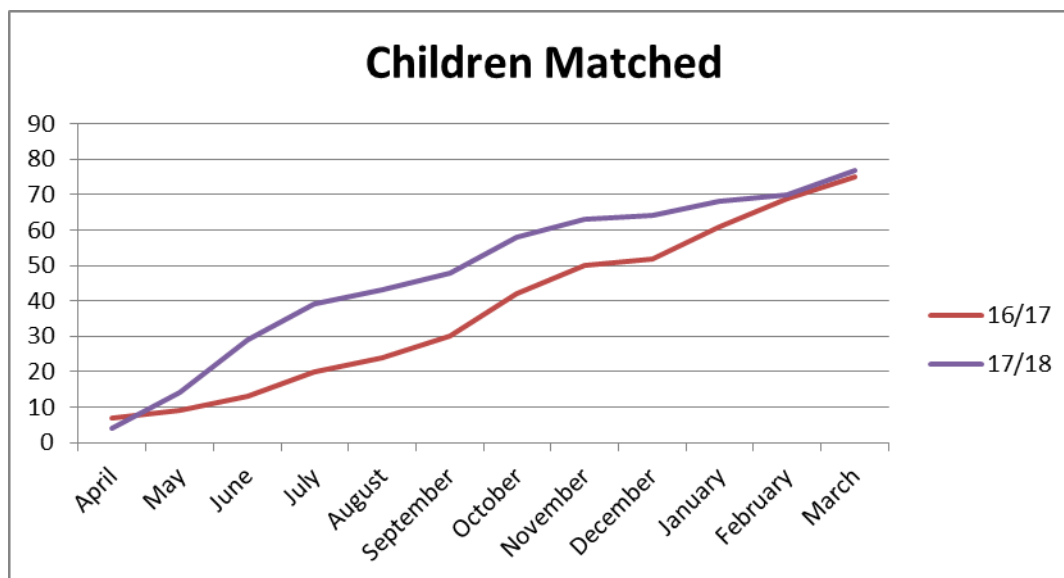
National performance in relation to Placement Order to Placement across the regions is encouraging with the average being 7.9 months. Reaching the benchmark of 6 months remains a challenge throughout the regions, although 49% of children placed in Q4 were placed within the 6 month benchmark.

Figures for other regions are, MWW 7.4 months, NWS 8.6 months, SEWAS 7.7 months & VVC 7.7 months.

6. **Children Matched = 77**

This is slightly higher than the performance achieved in 2016-17 which was 75 but remains fairly consistent over the two years.

Matched	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2017/18	26	23	28	77
2016/17	26	17	32	75
2015/16	25	39	30	94
2014/15	28	27	36	91



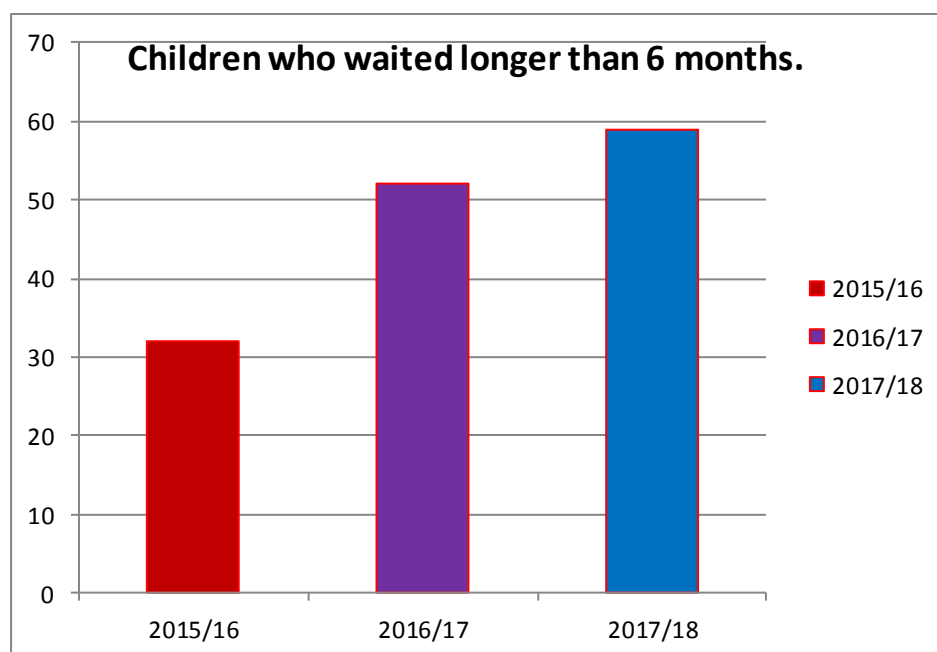
Performance in other regions is, MWW 38, NWAS 38, SEWAS 73, VVC 89.

7. Number of children matched who have waited longer than 6 months to progress from SBPD to agency decision to approved match = 59

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2017/18	24(83%)	15(79%)	12(75%)	8(61%)	59(77%)
2016/17	7 (54%)	12 (71%)	12 (55%)	21 (91%)	52 (67%)
2015/16	12 (50%)	8 (32%)	8 (31%)	4 (21%)	32 (34%)

The number of children who waited longer than 6 months was 59, this shows a slight increase in the number of children who have waited longer than 6 months from SBP compared to 2016-17 which was 52.

At 77% we remain above the benchmark of 40%. Other regions across Wales have also seen an increase in the number of children who wait longer than 6 months. Figures are, MWW 19 (50%), NWAS 24 (63%), SEWAS 48 (66%), VVC 60 (67%)



A number of factors have played a part in this drop in performance this includes:

- An increase in complex and harder to place children
- Adopters to meet the needs of those children are not readily available both within the region and wider afield resulting in delays

Whilst strategies in WBAS have been very successful, for example, identifying potential adopter's earlier and working with adoption support to explore what packages of support are needed to enable a placement to proceed, more systematic work is needed on harder to place children.

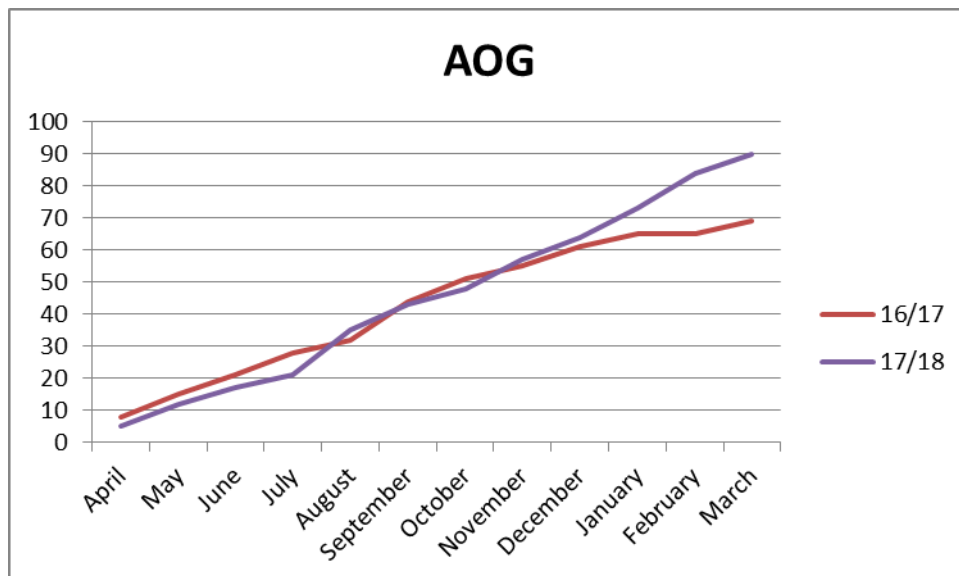
This is reflecting the national picture, whereby we know that the number of children waiting longer than 6 months nationally has increased. Due to these concerns we are currently participating in a national campaign to try and combat this problem, if this campaign is successful and we place some of these children we would anticipate this figure will continue to be high in the coming year.

In addition the region has agreed to participate in the pilot for the 'Adopting Together Project' and have identified 8 children who have waited longer than 12 months that can be considered for referral to the new scheme. This will hopefully assist in reducing the numbers who wait longer.

8. Adoption Orders Granted (AOG) = 90

This figure has demonstrated a significant increase with 21 more adoption orders being granted in 2017-18 compared to 69 in 2016-1. This increase has been achieved despite the increased number of contested adoption applications by birth families during the year.

AOG's	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2017/18	28	28	34	90
2016/17	12	27	28	69
2015/16	24	36	34	94
2014/15	21	34	40	95



There are currently 16 Adoption Order applications submitted to court and are at various stages of the process.

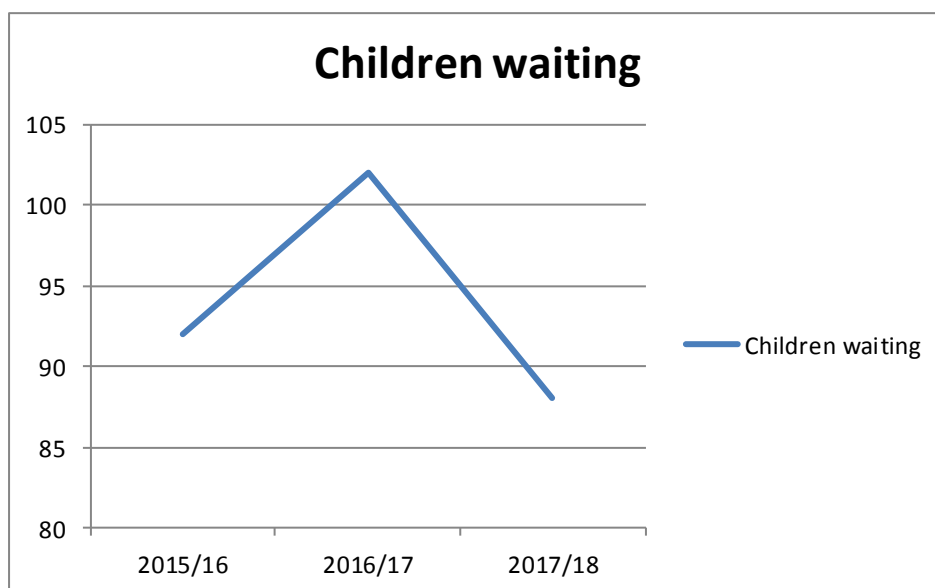
In comparison with other regions across Wales WBAS is the highest achieving with MWW 22, NWAS 34, SEWAS 73, VVC 71. Only WBAS and VVC showed an increase with other regions achieving less than the previous year.

9. Children Waiting = 88

The number of children waiting overall has decreased by 14 compared with the figure for the previous year 2016/17 - 112. Of the 88 children waiting at year end 2017/18, 74 (84%) of those had a SBPD decision and a PO but have not yet been matched, 6 (6.8%) children had SBPD and a PO and were matched.

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	End of year
2017/18	96	83	82	88	88
2016/17	97	100	100	102	102
2015/16	105	111	74	92	92
2014/15	101	94	100	92	92

Of the 74 children with SBPD and PO still waiting at year end we had 22 links identified, 22 matches identified and 12 children where a change of plan was being considered. Family finding/searching continued for the remaining 18 children.



The data for other regions is MWW 34, NWAS 46, SEWAS 76, VVC 117.

The National figures show that the level of children being placed is not keeping pace with the levels of new children being made subject to placement orders. All regions except Western Bay have seen an increase in the number of children waiting with some regions having a significant increase over the period of this data.

At the end of March 2018 two regions reported that some children had firm links or matches that were proceeding but had yet to be formally agreed, WBAS being one of these regions.

This amounted to 22% of all children waiting across Wales and exemplifies the fluid nature of the service. It is likely that some children in other regions would be at a similar stage. Nonetheless adopter recruitment is not keeping pace with the level of children waiting or those becoming subject to PO.

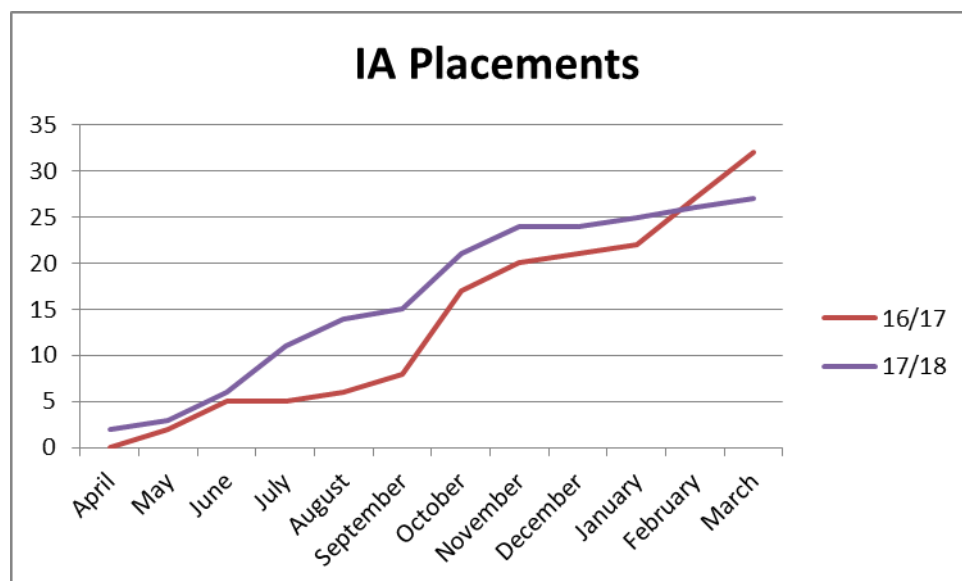
10. Number of Inter-Agency Placements = 27

Of the 74 children placed with approved adopters in the period, 27 (36%) were placed in IA placements, this is lower than in 2016-17 and is positive that we continue to place more children within the region.

The majority of our IA placements were in respect of sibling groups and children with complex needs. Of the 10 sibling groups placed (22 children) 8 were placed outside of WBAS in interagency placements (18 children), and of the 8 harder to place children that were placed in single placements 4 were placed in interagency placements. Of the 30 children who were identified as harder to place 73% were placed in IA placements.

The regional/local picture is outlined in the table and graph below.

IAs	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2017/18	5	10	12	27 (36%)
2016/17	11	6	15	32(45%)
2015/16	8	20	7	35(38%)
2014/15	24	20	15	59 (63%)



11. Number of WBAS Placements = 47

We continue to place more children within the region than externally, 47 children this year compared to 39 in 2016-17.

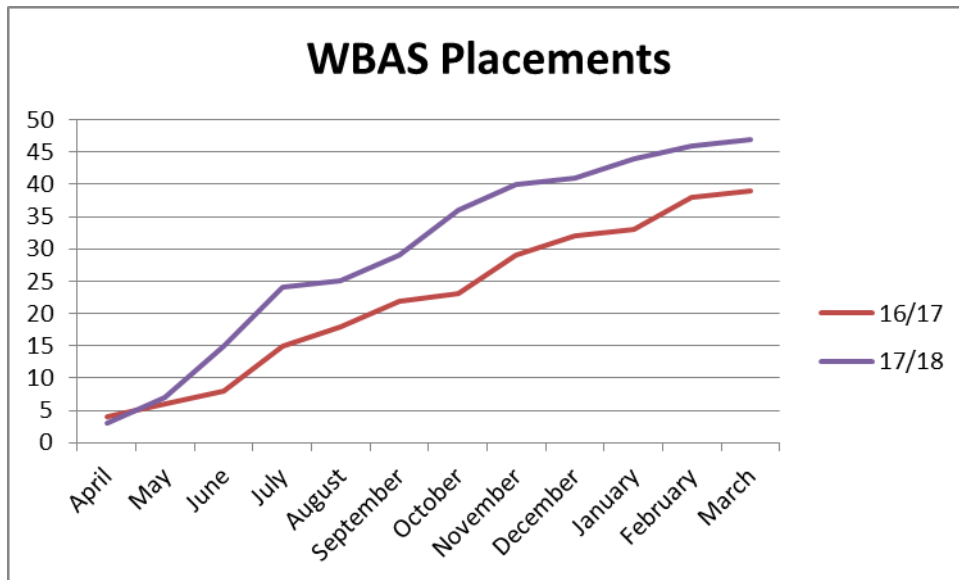
The arrangements/processes in place that contribute to achieving this are:

- Continued close liaison between FF and R&A through the monthly linking meetings remains a strong and effective activity in WBAS to identify children and adopters locally
- Links made locally have the potential to be achieved in a very timely manner given that early information is available and access to adoption support is within the service
- Adapting marketing and recruitment activity to prioritise adopter enquiries who can meet the needs of children waiting
- Development of robust assessment, marketing and information materials
- Training and use of adoption support has resulted in a number of adopters taking more complex children
- Use of the Welsh Register and Link Maker to assist adopters to see in detail a range of children, usually with complex needs who are waiting for placements
- The 'Profiling' event contributed to success in linking and matching adopters to children who had not previously been considered within the normal linking processes.

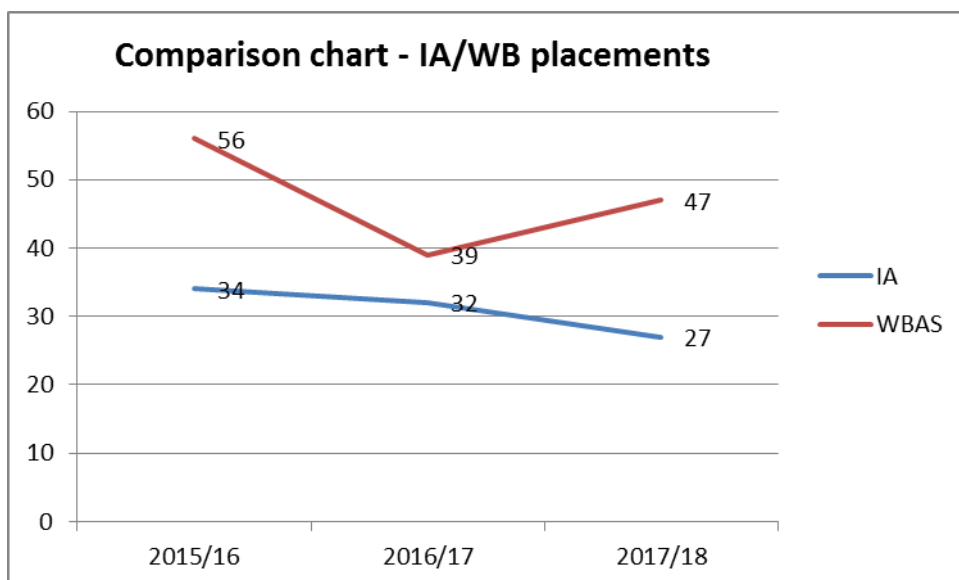
Due to the success of the regional profiling event in 2017-18 there is a plan to hold at least 2 events a year as part of the recruitment strategy, with an event taking place on 20th June 2018.

The regional/local performance of children placed within WBAS is outlined in the table and graph below.

WBAS	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2017/18	19	12	16	47 (64%)
2016/17	13	11	15	39 (55%)
2015/16	14	18	22	56 (62%)
2014/15	7	9	18	34 (36.5%)



The comparison chart below for the last 3 years demonstrates that the trend in the use of IA placements has continued to decrease. While at the same time placements found within WBAS has increased showing a positive widening in the gap.

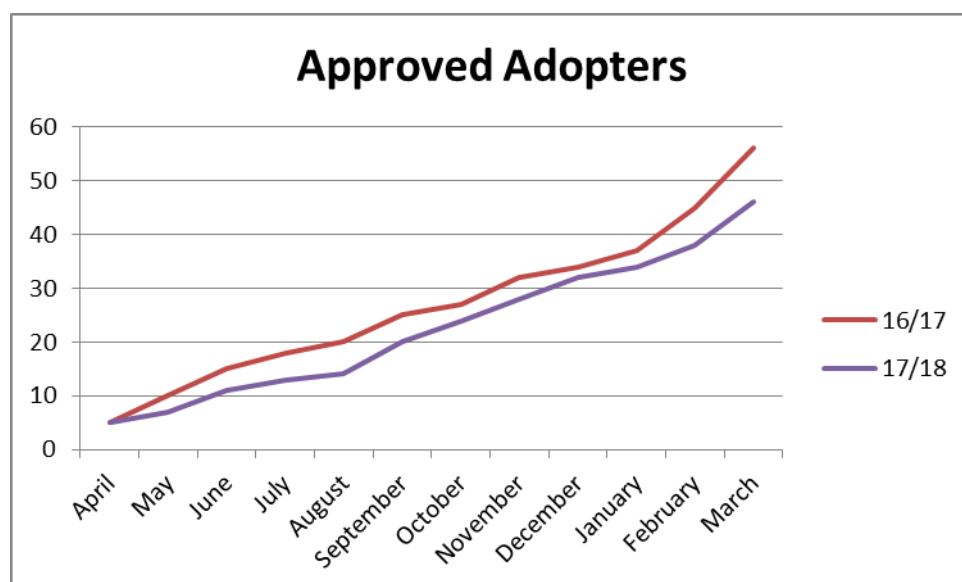


12. Number of Adopter Approvals = 46

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2017/18	11	9	12	14	46
2016/17	15	10	9	22	56
2015/16	18	16	15	4	53
2014/15	6	12	19	8	45

We have seen an 18% decrease in performance for 2017-18. This is in part due to an increase in adopters with complex issues, delay in assessments being completed due to the applicant's circumstances but mainly reflects a sustained period of staff absence in excess of 30% at times during the year.

In the 2016-17 56 adopters were approved generating 64 placements. Performance for 2017-18 was lower than anticipated with 46 adopters approved, generating 51 placements. (Projected figure for approvals for the year was 50).



Western Bay is working towards the aims of the revised national marketing and recruitment strategy to explore ways of not only increasing our adopter numbers but looking at how to recruit the right adopters for our children waiting. This has included a radio campaign launched by NAS that featured across Wales - Heart in South Wales and Capital in North Wales. We

have also been engaging with a Marketing company- Cowshed, commissioned by NAS with the aid of Welsh Government grant money to work with 3 of the regions WBAS, VVC and SEWAS, using their expertise to enhance and build on our local marketing/recruitment plan.

Performance in other agencies which includes regions and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VVAs) within Wales is as follows, MWW 29, NWAS 31, SEWAS 39, VVC 46, St Davids 16, Barnardos 5.

Overall 212 adopter approvals were achieved across Wales in 2017-18. The numbers seen in the last two years are lower than the first two years of regional services within NAS being operational, 236 in 2016-17 and 266 in 2015-16.

Current analysis by NAS of the current adopter gap indicates that at least 459 placements will be needed across Wales to place those children with PO'S, showing that there is a considerable gap to bridge through National and Regional recruitment activity.

13. Average Time to Approve Adopters = 7.9 Months

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	AVERAGE
2017/18	7.2 Months (217 days)	9.9 Months (296 days)	8.4 Months (251 days)	6.7 Months (200 days)	7.9 Months (236 days)
2016/17	9.7 Months (294 days)	10.7 Months (324 days)	9.5 Months (286 days)	9 Months (270 days)	9.7 Months (293 days)
2015/16	10.2 Months (294 days)	10.6 Months (320 days)	10.8 Months (326 days)	8.8 Months (264 Days)	10.1 Months (313 days)
2014/15	10.2 Months (232 days)	8.6 Months (305 days)	12.3 Months (255 days)	8.8 Months (310 days)	9.8 Months (275 days)

Despite pressures within the service, and a decrease in approvals we have seen an overall improvement in the average time taken to approve adopters

within the region which has fallen from 9.7 in 2016-17 to 7.9 months in 2017-18. The chart clearly demonstrates that this has been a continued area of improvement over the last 3 years showing success in our average performance and surpassing the national benchmark 8 month of 8 months.

The Service and NAS also collect performance in respect of the total length of time and average time it takes to approve adopters from the formal application to Agency Decision to Approve. Performance in respect of this is also good. Welsh Government guidance indicates that this stage should take 6 months. Western Bay were slightly over this at 6.6 months with the national average being 6.2 months.

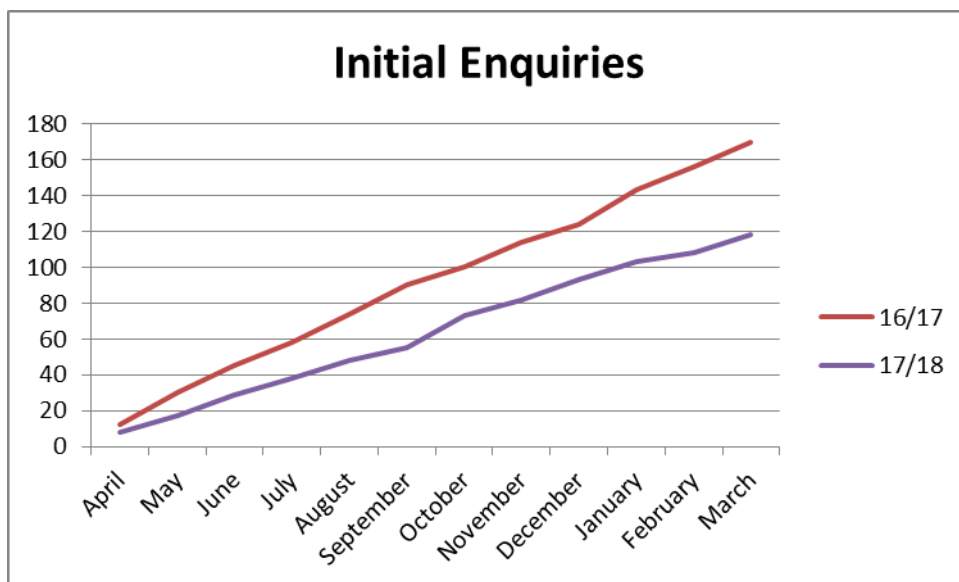
14. Numbers of Initial Adopter Enquires - 118

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2017/18	29	26	38	25	118
2016/17	45	46	37	47	175
2015/16	41	59	34	42	177
2014/15	44	35	26	33	138

There has been a significant decrease in the number of enquiries in 2017/18 falling from 175 to 118 despite NAS running an extensive campaign which WBAS were actively involved in. It is fair to say that despite this campaign, holding events locally and actively participating in national adoption week, the number of enquiries has continued to decline.

Even with these efforts we are aware that nationally as well as locally those wishing to adopt still wish to be considered for younger and less complex children. From our close working relationship within the service it is evident to see that there remains a need to approve adopters for young children alongside those deemed to be the harder to place.

We have this year invested in developing our website and this will be launched by the end of July 2018/19. Our new website will be more user friendly, easy to navigate, and will provide information for adopters to access and the option to request further information at the push of a button. We have also looked at how to get us to the top of any search engine when potential adopters are searching 'Adoption', and how to direct more traffic through our website. In the coming year with our new website we will also be able to access website analytics which will give us information to further scrutinise.



Overall enquires across Wales increased by 20% during 2017/18 indicating that improved marketing is starting to have an impact.

Response times to enquiries, within 5 working days, remains good with most agencies and regions achieving 100% over the year.

National data analysis shows that the conversion rate of enquiries into application has varied across the year by region/agency. The average conversation rate for enquiry to assessment in 2017-18 was 20% a similar level to the previous year. Conversion rates in regions are generally higher than in the voluntary sector which may indicate that targeted recruitment is beginning to have an impact for regional services. This is positive; we need to increase interest and approvals from more prospective adopters who can meet the needs of our children as well as understanding the changing pattern of enquiries and ensuring we have the capacity to assess and support more adopters.

The number of adopter assessments that had commenced in Western Bay during 2017-18 was 64, slightly lower than 2016-17 at 69.

Overall across Wales 277 assessments were commenced in 2017-18 compared to 246 in the whole of 2016-17 demonstrating a positive step in increasing on this measure. This increase will make a contribution to closing the gap but bigger increases are needed. The figures for other agencies /

regions were; MWW 29, NWAS 31, SEWAS 67, VVC 47, WBAS 64, St Davids 26, Barnardos 13.

15. Life Journey Material

Table 1.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. of children presented to panel for matching	28	16	13	11	68
No. of children where evidence of LJM materials undertaken.	5	10	11	8	34
Direct Work	7	3	6	2	18

Table 2.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. children who had a 2nd adoption review in the quarter.	13	20	32	21	86
No. children placed for adoption in the quarter where life journey material has been provided to adopters by the time of the 2nd adoption review.	3 (23%)	14 (70%)	20 (63%)	13 (62%)	50 (58%)

Performance has improved in this area with an average of 58% of materials provided at the second adoption review compared to 30% in 2016/17. The national benchmark for this performance measure in 2017/18 was for 75% of children to receive life journey material by the 2nd adoption review, therefore the region fell short of this. A variety of measures/actions have been undertaken across the region in partnership with the 3 local authorities to continue to influence improvements to performance related to life story work.

- Within two Authorities life story work project groups have been established
- Standards for life journey work are being developed and will be shared with WBAS and the three LAs
- Briefing events on the National Life Journey Framework have taken place for managers and staff involved in undertaking life journey work with children

- Training has been commissioned on the transition model and is being rolled out in the first half of 2018 for social workers and foster carers with children who have a Placement Order
- 'Champions' have been identified within each Local Authority to act as links with WBAS for life journey work and Fostering
- Measures are being put in place to capture the number and for the first time quality of materials at matching panel and aim as good practice for these to be provided by time of placement
- The need to ensure life journey materials and evidence of preparing children age appropriately for adoption is being fed back to the LAs to ensure where materials are not available this is being addressed
- Development of an audit tool which is being considered within the Principal Officer group for use across the region.
- Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) in each LA have been advised they are to cover this matter in adoption reviews and to ensure it is being undertaken and captured as part of the process

Comparative table.	MWW	NWAS	SEWAS	VVC	WBAS
No. children who had a 2nd adoption review in the year.	26	46	42	72	86
No. children placed for adoption in the in the year where life journey material has been provided to adopters by the time of the 2nd adoption review.	24 (92%)	21 (46%)	25 (60%)	49 (68%)	50 (58%)

Overall across the regions we have during 2017-18 begun to see improvements in the availability of life journey materials for children and their families which could be linked to the implementation of the Life Journey Framework development project and the focus on this across Wales. The national average across all regions for children placed during the year that had their life journey materials by the 2nd adoption review was 62%. Nationally we have continued to see improvement from the baseline year of

2014-15 which was 24%; with the following years showing 49% in 2015-16 and 45% in 2016-17.

For the coming year 2018-19 the benchmark for this measure has been increased to 100%, which will prove challenging for all regions.

Adoption Support

16. Number of Birth Parents referred and who were offered a service.

2017/18	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Referred.	102	81	62	118	363
Offered a service.	97	81	60	113	351

2016/17	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Referred.	63	80	68	63	274
Offered a service.	63	80	67	56	266

The numbers of birth parents referred to the adoption service has increased in 2017-18 which is in keeping with the child referrals. Good performance has been maintained in the offer of a service being made; with 97% of birth parents referred being offered a service. There were a number of birth parents whose whereabouts were not known at the time the service received the referral and this impacted on the figures shown above.

Our performance in relation to those birth parents who take up a service within the same period as being offered a service is particularly low at 2%. Take up within 2017-18 was also low nationally at 21% similar to previous years. We know however that many birth parents choose to take up offers of support at a later stage. WB has identified that this will be a focus within the region for the coming year to improve the work with birth families and the take up of the service offered.

The number of birth parents who took up a service during 2017-18 that were referred and offered in a different period was 54, and as above suggests that more birth parents make contact with the service at a later stage.



17. Number and Percentage of children placed for adoption that have had an assessment for adoption support and the plan has been discussed with adopters.

2016/17	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. who have had an assessment.	13	15	23	18	69
Plan has been discussed.	13 (100%)	15 (100%)	23 (100%)	18 (100%)	69 (100%)

2017/18	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. who have had an assessment.	21	23	21	9	74
Plan has been discussed.	21(100%)	23(100%)	21(100%)	9 (100%)	74 (100%)

For this measure, 100% of children placed have an adoption support plan in place at the time of matching panel, in preparation for the placement for adoption. In every case, the support plan is shared with adopters and they are consulted on the content

17. Adoption Support Referrals

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 17/18	Total 16/17
Number of other birth parents who took up a service in quarter	17	19	11	7	54	21
Number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from birth siblings in quarter	4	2	0	0	6	8
Number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from other adults (relatives/former guardians) affected by the adoption of a particular child in quarter	4	3	0	9	16	22



Comparative Chart	MWW	NWAS	SEWAS	VVC	WBAS
Number of other birth parents who took up a service in year	25	5	34	1	54
Number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from birth siblings in year	6	5	9	2	6
Number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from other adults (relatives/former guardians) affected by the adoption of a particular child in year	8	5	6	0	16

In the coming year the AS function will continue to work more closely with FF and neighbouring regional services to improve the amount of services and information for birth parents. This will include:

- WB to consider playing a role in completing the birth parent referral and medical forms to improve timeliness, information gathered and birth parent engagement at the start of the adoption process
- Consider an early referral meeting to identify the key tasks, adoption support needs and to improve quality
- Improving the information for birth parents to ensure the wording is more inviting on all communications
- Working with colleagues in two neighbouring regions to explore the feasibility and viability of birth parent support groups.
- Training and process redesign in matching children to ensure sibling attachments are given greater credence, considered on a case by case basis and there are mechanisms in place to preserve and promote sibling relationships.
- Of particular focus will be the development and improvement in work completed around sibling attachments.

There continues to be evidence of rising adoption support needs, with an increase in referrals across some aspects of adoption support particularly requests for assessment of need including direct work/therapeutic intervention and letterbox work. Letterbox is showing approximately a 14% increase in active letterbox cases within the last year. Interventions have taken longer with more complex needs being identified. In 2016/17 the numbers of new assessments for post adoption support were 23. For 2017/18 the numbers increased by more than half to 53, with the highest increase being in assessments completed for adoption allowances.

18. Birth Records and Intermediary Services Referrals

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 17/18	Total 16/17
Number of requests for access to birth records in quarter (BRC)	10	14	6	6	36	45
Number of requests for Intermediary Services (IS) in quarter	3	8	2	5	18	18

During 2017-18 there has been almost a 25% decrease in requests for Birth Record Counselling (BRC), requests for Intermediary Services (IS) has remained consistent with the previous year 2016-17. Alongside this the service has improved how BRC and IS cases are monitored and allocated, with priority being given to pre 1975 cases.

A comparison of adoption support requests with other regions is demonstrated in the table below

	MWW	NWAS	SEWAS	VVC	WBAS
Number of requests for access to birth records in year	36	40	32	49	36
Number of requests for Intermediary Services (IS) in year	32	37	9	51	18

In relation to access to birth records the national trend is showing a reduction in the number of requests for this service, however, the national trend for intermediary services shows that there has been an increase in requests in 3 of the regions and a decrease in 2 regions which includes WBAS.

Date of report update 14th June 2018
Val Jones

Agenda Item 6



Report of the Cabinet Members for Children's Services Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel – 28 August 2018

INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL ADVOCACY

Purpose	Further to the previous briefing to Scrutiny - on 18 th December 2017 - this report provides an update on the implementation of the National Approach to Statutory Advocacy.
Content	This report includes a brief background to independent advocacy services, some of the issues concerning the implementation of the National Approach and briefly highlights some of the issues in respect of the service going forward into 2019/20.
Councillors are being asked to	Give their views on the National Approach and advocacy more generally.
Lead Councillor(s)	Cabinet Member for Children Services (Early Years) - Cllr Elliott King Cabinet Member for Children's Services (Young People) - Cllr Will Evans
Lead Officer(s)	Julie Thomas, Head of Service for Child and Family Services
Report Author	Christopher Francis Christopher.francis@swansea.gov.uk 01792 637 630

1. Local authorities have had a statutory duty to provide independent professional advocacy since the investigation in 2000 into the abuse of looked after children in North Wales (the Waterhouse Report, 'Lost in Care') and subsequent amendments to the Children Act 1989. These duties have more recently been incorporated into the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014, and extend to all looked after children, care leavers and children in need of care and support.
2. Despite the longstanding presence of independent advocacy services, there continued to be concerns that the voices of vulnerable children were going unheard. Reports examining advocacy by the Children's Commissioner (and others) found that take-up was generally poor and that eligible groups of children were said to have limited knowledge of the service.
3. Over the last decade, the Welsh Government and other stakeholders have been actively exploring how to develop a new and improved service model. The culmination of this activity being the formation of a Ministerial Expert Group on Advocacy in 2014 for the development of a National Approach to Statutory Advocacy Services.
4. The National Approach devised by the Group essentially meant commissioning a regional (i.e. Western Bay) service which adheres to the following elements:-
 - a. A National Standards and Outcomes Framework.
 - b. A standardised national service specification, which includes the concept of an Active Offer to ensure children subject to child protection or looked after procedures are systematically informed of their rights, including their right to an advocate.
 - c. A common performance reporting tool.
 - d. A range and level tool that calculates; (i) the level of need for advocacy in each authority, and (ii) the associated levels of funding required.
5. The expectation of Welsh Government was that all local authorities would implement the National Approach by June 2017.
6. As explained to Scrutiny members in December 2017, elements a. - c. of the National Approach were welcomed locally without real issue. However, there were understood to be potential risks attached to element d. which were highlighted to Welsh Government at the design stage.
7. The range and level tool makes a series of assumptions to guesstimate the level of demand for advocacy and the associated funding each local authority is required to provide. The calculations anticipate significantly higher levels of take-up (regionally and nationally) and funding. For Swansea it meant annual funding for advocacy increasing from £62,000 per annum to £184,777.

8. A proportion of the additional money required has been provided via a discreet Welsh Government grant (Swansea was allocated £42,111 in 2017/18 and the same in 2018/19). The expectation being that local authorities will find the rest of the funding shortfall from their existing resources. For Swansea this means having to potentially find an additional £80,666 for advocacy.
9. If the calculations within the tool prove to be inaccurate and children do not take-up advocacy as anticipated then local authorities will pay too much for the service. To balance the need to adhere to the range and level tool with the principle of value for money, the three authorities in Western Bay have committed to fund up to the levels calculated by the tool but on the basis that:
 - 80% of the funding is provided via guaranteed core funding, and
 - the additional 20% is available on a spot purchase should take-up exceed certain pre-prescribed levels.
10. Other options were considered to ensure we secure value for money but these were all dismissed by those delegated responsibility by Welsh Government for the National Approach. The rationale for dismissing them being that they were deemed to be inconsistent with the range and level tool and, by extension, the National Approach. The local authorities in the mid-Wales Region sought an alternative option that would have delivered greater savings, but they were then required to undertake a second procurement exercise in order to be deemed compliant.
11. Swansea is the lead authority for advocacy in the Western Bay Region. We undertook a full procurement exercise in 2017 and the new contract commenced on 1st August 2017. The successful tenderer is Tros Gynnal Plant (also known as TGP Cymru).
12. Despite various activities - communications and training – being rolled out in order to promote awareness of the National Approach, it soon became apparent that the level of take-up was not going to immediately rise to those anticipated by the Range and Level tool. This has been the case for all the regions in Wales.
13. In response, the Welsh Government set up a Task and Finish Group earlier this year to oversee implementation. Swansea is an active member of the Group which has made some changes to the National Approach. Most importantly, the Group introduced changes in April 2018 to facilitate the take-up of the Active Offer.
14. The numbers of children and young people accessing advocacy have increased since the introduction of the National Approach and have risen markedly since the changes in April 2018: the numbers receiving a service in the last quarter (1st April to 30th June 2018) were more than double what they had been in the first quarter following the introduction of the National Approach.

15. The Council is fully committed to the National Approach at this time, however, it is important to note that the level of take-up remains below that predicted by the Range and Level tool. The contract is currently due to conclude on 31st March 2019. There is scope to issue an extension of the contract (up to 31st July 2020) but whether this option is ultimately chosen will depend on a number of factors, not least.

- First and foremost, does take-up continue to rise to the extent the range and level tool becomes an accurate predictor of demand? If not, it would seem appropriate to reduce the level of funding committed.
- Secondly, what are the future intentions of Welsh Government with regards to the National Approach beyond 2018/19 and will they continue to provide a funding contribution?
- Thirdly, what are the future intentions of our partner authorities, particularly Bridgend County Borough Council who are planning to merge with the councils for Rhondda Cynon Taff and Merthyr Tydfil.

Agenda Item 7




Report of the Cabinet Members for Children's Services

Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel – 28 August 2018

BRIGHTSPOTS SURVEY – YOUR LIFE, YOUR CARE

Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide an overview of the survey and responses• To update the panel on our next steps which include an integrated action plan with colleagues in Education and Poverty and Prevention
Content	<p>This presentation and report includes a summary of the information received as part of the Brightspots Survey that was undertaken with our Looked After Children. The Survey took place over a 4-week period in which children were invited to give their views on a range of different issues. Children were asked to complete the survey with a responsible adult, which included personal assistants, teachers and carers.</p>
Councillors are being asked to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give their views on the survey
Lead Councillor(s)	Cabinet member for Children Services (Early Years) - Cllr Elliott King Cabinet member for Children's Services (Young People) - Cllr Will Evans
Lead Officer(s)	Julie Thomas, Head of Child and Family Services Chris Francis, Principal Officer for Commissioning
Report Author	Gemma Whyley, Project Manager – gemma.whyley@swansea.gov.uk



Your Life, Your Care:

*a survey of the views of
looked after children and
young people aged 4-18yrs in
Swansea*

April 2018

*Professor Julie Selwyn and Jon Symonds
University of Bristol*

About this research

Bright Spots

This research is part of the Bright Spots programme: a partnership between the University of Bristol and Coram Voice.

The programme was originally developed in England with funding from the Hadley Trust.

Bright Spots in Wales is a pilot with six local authorities funded by the Children's Commissioner for Wales & Welsh Government through the work of the Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group to measure looked after children's subjective well-being – how they feel about their lives and their care.

- Through the programme we developed the *Bright Spots Well-Being Indicators*, which put children's experience and voices at the heart of how we measure subjective well-being.
- The indicators are measured by the '*Your Life, Your Care*' survey – a tool grounded in research and comparable to national data sets.
- The survey was developed from literature reviews, roundtable discussions with professionals and from focus groups and individual interviews with 140 looked after children and young people living in nine different English local authorities.
- The survey identifies the areas where children appear to be flourishing and where things could be improved, providing an evidence base of children's experience and well-being to inform service improvements.

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Section 1: Summary: Key Findings

Key findings:

122 looked after children and young people responded to the survey: a 32% response rate. Swansea achieved a reasonably representative sample, with boys and minority ethnic children being slightly over-represented.



80% of children and young people felt their lives were improving.



All children (4-11yrs) and **92%** of young people (11-18yrs) felt their carers were interested in their education.



All children (8-11yrs) and **89%** of young people (11-18yrs) had a trusted adult in their lives.



About **86%** of children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) felt included in social work decision-making 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.



100% of the youngest children (4-7yrs) and about 93% of children (8-11yrs) and **92%** of young people (11-18yrs) trusted their carers.



Most children and young people felt safe and settled in their placements.

Key findings:

Young people (11-18yrs)



49 young people reported worrying about their feelings or behaviour. **31%** of those who reported worrying did not feel they were getting support from an adult, compared with **25%** across other Welsh authorities.

7 (9%) young people could not connect to the Internet in their placement. This is a larger proportion than the **2%** of households with children in the Welsh population with no Internet connection.



A smaller proportion (**66%**) of young people (11-18yrs) reported liking school compared with both other young people living in Wales (**73%**) and other looked after young people in other Welsh authorities (**71%**).

More looked after young people (**13%**) were afraid of bullying in comparison with young people (**10%**) living in Wales. A **quarter** of these young people did not feel supported to deal with bullying.



Girls were statistically more likely than boys to dislike their appearance, whereas boys were more likely than girls to be scared of bullying.



Key findings:



A slightly larger proportion of children and young people in Swansea felt the amount of contact with parents as 'just right' compared to looked after children in 5 other Welsh authorities.

5 children (8-11yrs) and 8 young people (11-18yrs) had no face to face contact with *either* parent.



2 (**7%**) children (8-11yrs) and 9 (**12%**) young people (11-18yrs) reported not having a good friend. Having no friends puts young people at greater risk of anxiety and depression. In the general population, only **3%** are friendless.



78% of children (8-11yrs) and **65%** of young people (11-18yrs) had a pet where they were living; similar to the general population of children (**66%**) in Wales.



None of the children aged 4-11yrs had low well-being although four described themselves as sad the day before the survey.



16 (22%) of young people had low well-being. This was associated with:

- not liking how they looked;
- not having a good friend;
- not having a trusted adult in their lives;
- not liking school.



Section 2: Methodology

Methodology

- Three online surveys were used to capture looked after children and young people's views on their own well-being. The three versions were for:
 - a) younger children aged 4-7yrs (16 questions);
 - b) children aged 8-11yrs in primary school (31 questions); and
 - c) young people of secondary school age 11-18yrs (46 questions).
- There was a common set of 16 core questions.
- Surveys were available in English and Welsh
- Paper surveys were also available and used in cases where no Internet connection was available, or when the child preferred this method.
- In Swansea at the time of the survey 381 children and young people aged 4-18yrs were looked after and able to complete the survey.
- Children and young people completed the survey anonymously: individual identifiers such as name, school etc. were not collected in order to allow responses without fear of consequences.
- If children recorded names or any identifying information on the survey these were removed by the researchers.

Methodology

- The survey was distributed through education leads to head teachers and LAC designated teachers in schools. Given the number of looked after young people aged 16-18 in Swansea, the leaving care service was used to support responses from this age group. Social care staff, including foster carers and social workers, were asked to encourage children and young people to complete the survey. Regular reminders were sent to head teachers and social workers and some schools were followed up directly.
- Independent Reviewing Officers were encouraged to introduce the survey to young people at review meetings.
- In the final week, a core group of strategic leads followed up contacts in schools, IRO services and the leaving care service.
- Most children and young people were asked to complete the online survey in school over a five week period from February-March 2018 and, where appropriate, with a trusted adult present. The trusted adult was usually a teacher, learning mentor, SENCO or personal advisor.
- The survey was also promoted through other communication channels including the local authority's social media accounts, school's newsletter and staff intranet.

Methodology

Subjective well-being: Are children flourishing?

- Subjective well-being in this survey refers to children's own evaluations of how they feel about their lives.
- There are questions in the surveys about affect (e.g. how happy a child feels now), cognitive judgements (e.g. evaluations of relationships) and the inner world (e.g. life having meaning).
- All these elements help us understand whether children are flourishing.

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- Where possible, LA data are compared to data on children in the general population, and to the average responses from looked after young people (11-18yrs) in 6 Welsh local authorities.
- Data were weighted and tests run for significant difference between LAs.
- In addition to questions that measure overarching well-being indicators (happiness, life satisfaction etc.) the questions cover four domains that are important to children and young people: Relationships, Resilience, Rights and Recovery. The report covers each of these.



On some pages of this report you will see a '**Bright Spots**' icon (shown left). This indicates a 'good news' story – a positive aspect of practice in your local authority.

This is where children and young people are doing significantly better than children in care in other local authorities or report the same or higher well-being than their peers in the general population.



Section 3: Survey results



1. Demographics

- Sample sizes
- Age and gender
- Ethnicity
- Placements
- Length of time in care

Sample sizes

Although the sample size must be borne in mind when considering the representativeness of the data, the response rate was significantly better than in some similar surveys. *The State of the Nation: Children in Care, 2015* for example, had a response rate of 3%.

- 122 children and young people completed the surveys from an eligible looked after population of 381.
- The overall response rate was 32%.

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Age	Care population <i>n</i>	Responses <i>n</i>	Response rate %
4-7yrs	58	11	(19%)
8-11yrs	97	32	(33%)
11-18yrs	226	79	(35%)

Age and gender

- In Swansea, 55% of the looked after population were boys. Therefore, boys were slightly under-represented in the survey responses.

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Age group	Girls	Boys	Prefer not to say/no reply
	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>
4-7yrs	2 (18%)	9 (82%)	
8-11yrs	17 (53%)	15 (47%)	
11-18yrs	39 (49%)	37 (47%)	3 (4%)
TOTAL	58 (48%)	61 (50%)	3 (2%)

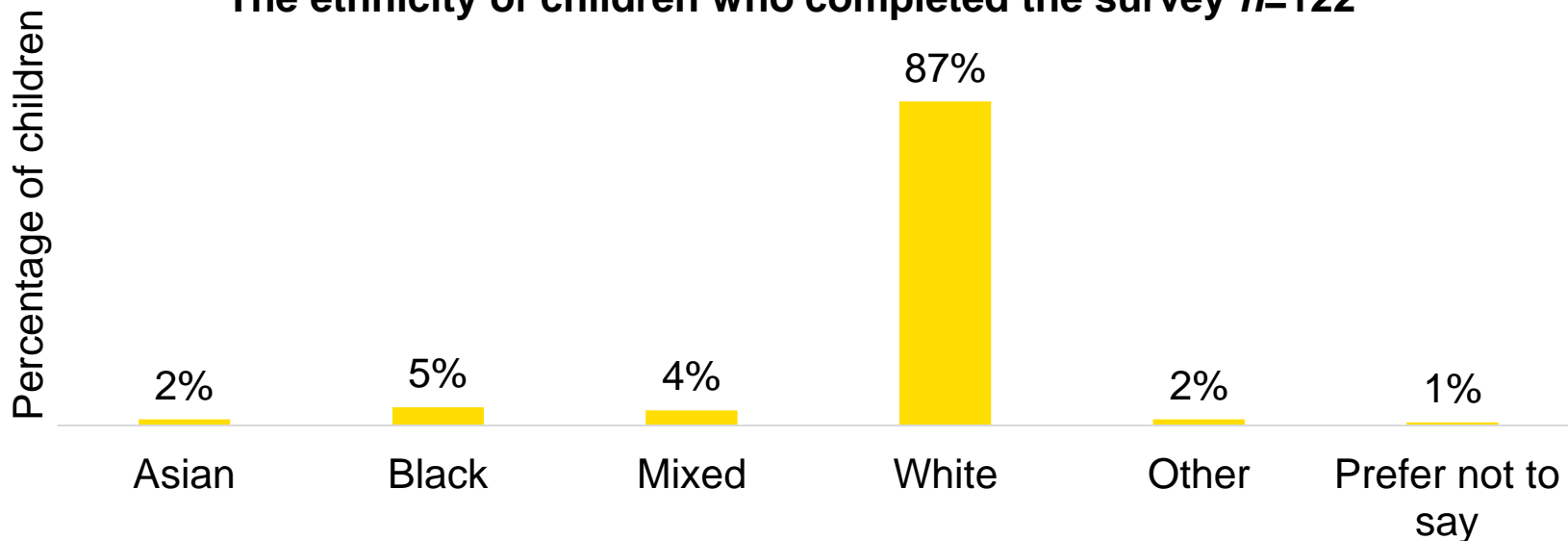
Ethnicity

Minority ethnic children were slightly over-represented in the survey, as they made up about 8% of the care population in Swansea's statistical return to the Welsh government (2017) compared to 13% in our sample.

- The majority (87%) of children and young people who completed the survey described themselves as being of white ethnicity.

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The ethnicity of children who completed the survey *n*=122



Placements

The responses probably under-represent those in foster care. Swansea's statistical return to government shows 79% in foster care. However, some of the kinship/ parent placements (34%) may have been formal foster carers, as only 7% are identified as kinship in the statistical return (STATWales, 2017).

- The majority (52%) of children and young people were living in foster care.

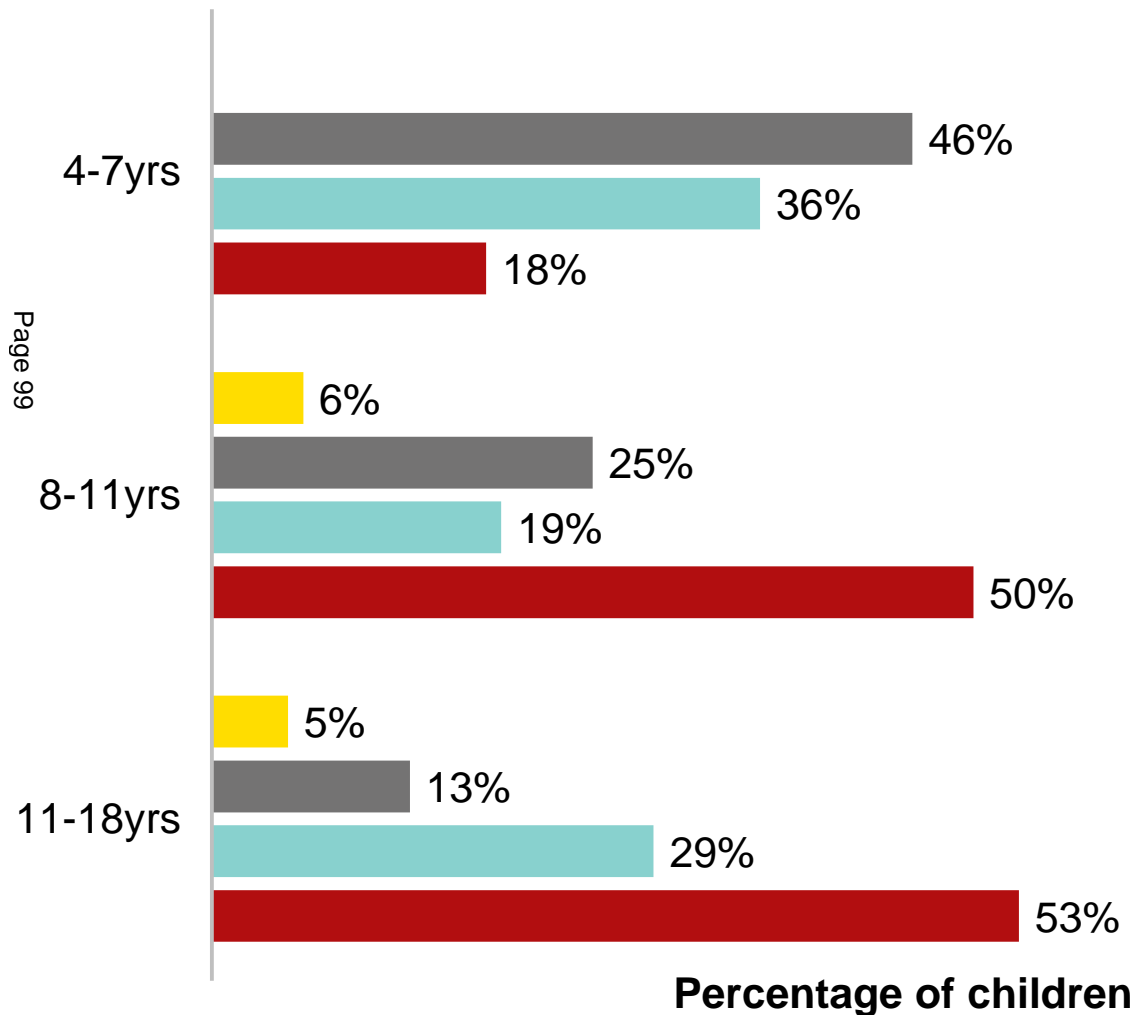
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Age group	Foster care <i>n</i> (%)	Family or friends care <i>n</i> (%)	Residential care <i>n</i> (%)	With parents <i>n</i> (%)	Somewhere else <i>n</i> (%)	Prefer not to say <i>n</i> (%)
4-7yrs	5 (45.5%)	5 (45.5%)	-	1 (9%)	-	-
8-11yrs	19 (60%)	10 (31%)	3 (9%)	-	-	-
11-18yrs	40 (51%)	19 (24%)	5 (6%)	6 (8%)	8 (10%)	1 (1%)
TOTAL	64 (52.4%)	34 (27.9%)	8 (6.6%)	7 (5.7%)	8 (6.6%)	1 (0.8%)

Length of time in care

How long have you been in care?

■ Don't know ■ Under a year ■ 1-3 years ■ 3 or more yrs





2. Relationships

- Family contact
- Good friends
- Pets
- Adults you live with:
Continuity and trust
- Social worker:
Continuity and trust

Family contact




The youngest children (4-7yrs) were not asked questions about family contact, as it was thought that they might become distressed or anxious.



Children and young people (8-18yrs) were asked whether they were *content with the frequency of contact that was taking place with their mother, father, and siblings.*

- 5 (18%) children (8-11yrs) and 8 (10%) young people (11-18yrs) had no face to face contact with *either* parent.
- Some of the children and young people's comments clarified that it was their choice not to see family members. Other children and young people wanted more contact or for the meeting not to be in "boring" contact centres.
- A slightly larger proportion of children and young people described contact with parents as 'just right' compared to looked after children in 5 other Welsh authorities.

Family contact

Family member	Age group	Too much	Just right	Too little	I am unable to see them	Don't have any siblings
	8-11yrs n= 30	2 (7%)	15 (50%)	7 (23%)	6 (20%)	-----
	11-18yrs n=76	5 (7%)	38 (50%)	19 (25%)	14 (18%)	-----
	8-11yrs n=28	1 (3%)	12 (43%)	3 (11%)	12 (43%)	-----
	11-18yrs n= 76	2 (3%)	17 (22%)	21 (28%)	36 (47%)	-----
	8-11yrs n=24	7 (29%)	8 (33%)	2 (8%)	4 (17%)	3 (13%)
	11-18yrs n=77	9 (12%)	31 (40%)	23 (30%)	10 (13%)	4 (5%)

Family contact: 8-11yrs

Children were also given the option of providing *comments about contact*.

- 20 children took the opportunity to write their thoughts and feelings about contact. Example quotes are shown below.

I am happy that I see them but I don't want to see them anymore.

I feel sad because I can't see my mum or dad.

I don't want to see my mum or my sister ever again.

I find contact with my mum at the contact centre boring. I would be happier if contact could be somewhere else.

Contact is better now that we are not meeting mum at the contact centre. We now do activities.

I don't want to see my mum. I have never seen my dad. He did have a choice to have us but he didn't want to.

Family contact: 11-18yrs

- 36 young people took the opportunity to write their thoughts and feelings about contact. Comments were a mix of asking for more contact, better quality contact or a statement that contact was not wanted. Example quotes are shown below.

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I do not really want to see my mum that much. I really would like to see my siblings.

I like the amount of contact I get with my birth family.

Unfair that I cannot see my biological brother and sister ... because they were adopted.

I don't bother with them and don't want to see them.

I don't know my family very well.

I haven't seen my mother since September, it's been a long time.

I have contact with my mum and sisters once a month and that is too little for me. I have a 4 year old sister and it is worse for her.

Good friends



A lack of friendships is associated with loneliness and anxiety. All children and young people were asked whether they *had a really good friend*.

General population: *The Millennium Cohort Study (2015)* of young people aged 14yrs found that 3% of young people did not have a good friend.

- Most of the children and young people had at least one good friend but 11 did not.
- The proportion (10%) of looked after young people without a good friend was higher than children in the general population where only 3% report being friendless.

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Age group	Yes I have a really good friend <i>n</i> (%)	No, I don't have a really good friend <i>n</i> (%)
4-7yrs	11 (100%)	
8-11yrs	28 (93%)	2 (7%)
11-18yrs	66 (88%)	9 (12%)
TOTAL	105 (90%)	11 (10%)

Pets



Pets were important to children in all the focus groups we ran.

Children and young people aged between 8-18yrs were asked if **they had a pet in the home they lived in.**

Focus group feedback

Children and young people said that pets are non-judgmental – they love you no matter what and are always pleased to see you. They can also give children an opportunity to take responsibility.

General population: In Wales, 66% of households with a child (under the age of 19yrs), have a pet.

- 78% of children (8-11yrs) lived in a household with a pet.
- In the older (11-18yrs) group, 65% of young people had a pet where they lived. 19% without a pet wrote that they would have liked one.

Adults you live with: Continuity and trust

Placement moves



Young people (11-18yrs) were asked, *how many placements have you had since coming into care?*

Trust



Children and young people were asked whether they *trusted the adults they lived with (i.e. carers, parents).*

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Number of placements	Percentage
1 placement	28%
2-4 placements	51%
5-7 placements	11%
8-10 placements	1%
11+placements	3%
Don't know	6%

Positive responses:

- 100% of children (4-7yrs);
- 93% of those aged 8-11yrs; and
- 92% of young people (11-18yrs) trusted their carers.

*My aunty and uncle are really kind and keep me safe.
4-7yrs*

Social worker: Continuity and trust

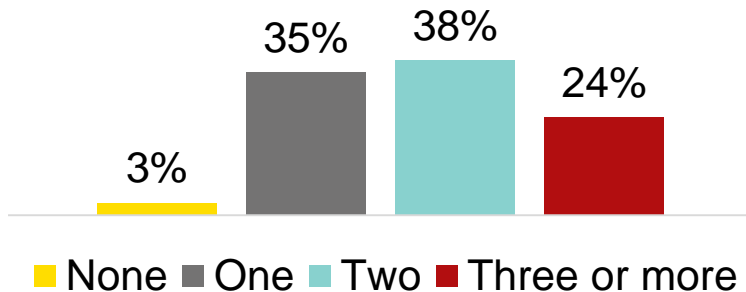
Changes in social workers



11-18 year olds were asked, *how many social workers have you had in the past 12 months?*

- 18 (24%) answered that they had had three or more social workers in the previous year.

How many social workers have you had in the last 12 months?



Trusting social worker



Children & young people (n=110) who knew who their social worker was, were asked whether they *trusted their social worker.*

The level of trust in social workers was high amongst the younger children but decreased in the older age groups.

- 90% of children (4-7yrs);
- 83% of children (8-11yrs); and
- 86% of young people (11-18yrs) trusted their social worker.

I would like to go to places with my social worker and talk about my life and how it is going to be better.
11-18yrs



3. Resilience

- Trusted adult
- Being trusted & helping out
- Liking school
- Adults you live with:
Support for learning
- Having fun & hobbies
- Access to nature
- Second chances
- Life skills
- Access to Internet at home

Trusted adult



Children and young people aged between 8-18yrs were asked, *do you have an adult who you trust, who helps you and sticks by you no matter what?*

A turning point

The availability of one key adult has been shown to be the turning point in many looked after young people's lives. (Gilligan, 2009)

Having a trusted adult has been shown to be the main factor in helping children recover from traumatic events.

- Most children and young people wrote that they had a trusted adult in their lives:
 - 100% of children (8-11yrs); and
 - 89% of the 11-18yrs young people.
- About one in ten young people did not have a trusted adult in their lives.

*I am more safe and happy and settled because I trust them very much.
8-11yrs*

Being trusted and helping out

Younger children (8-11yrs) were asked if they *got the chance to help the teacher*.

Focus group feedback

Children had said in the focus groups that they were never trusted to show visitors around school or deliver a message because they were looked after.

- 23% of children (8-11yrs) responded that 'all or most of the time' they were asked to help and 67% answered 'sometimes'.
- Three children (10%) wrote that they 'hardly ever' or 'never' were given trusted roles in school.



We asked young people, *how often do you get the chance to show you can be trusted?*

Focus group feedback

Having trusting relationships and being trusted were key issues raised by the children in the focus groups that underpinned the development of this survey.

- 44% of young people (11-18yrs) thought they were given opportunities 'all or most of the time' to show they could be trusted and 45% given them 'sometimes'.
- 11% felt they were 'hardly ever' or 'never' given the opportunity to be trusted.

Liking school



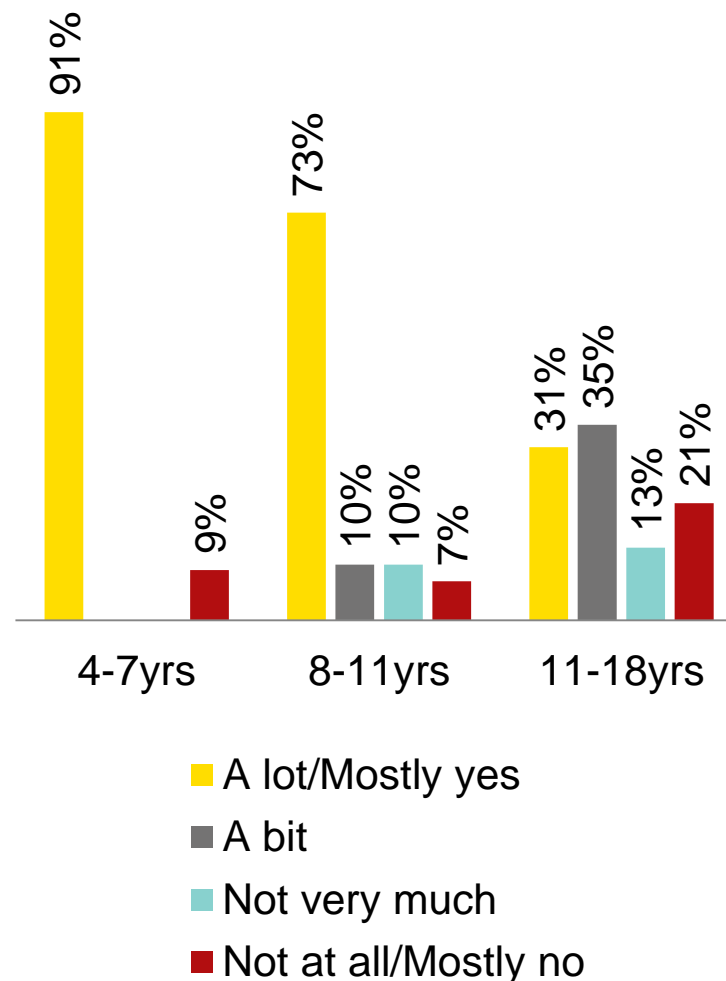
All the children and young people were asked how much they *liked school or college*.

General population: Liking school

The *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Survey* (Wales, 2015) of 5,335 young people (11-16yrs) reported that 73% liked school 'a lot' or 'a bit' and 27% 'not very much' or 'not at all'. Liking school decreased with the child's age and girls were more likely to say they enjoyed school 'a lot' in comparison with boys.

- 66% of the 11-18yrs group liked school or college 'a lot' or 'a bit'.
- Fewer looked after young people liked school compared to 73% of young people in the Welsh population and looked after young people (71%) in other Welsh authorities.

Do you like school?



Adults you live with: Support for learning



Children in the 8-11yrs and 11-18yrs surveys were asked whether the adults they lived with (e.g. carers, parents)

showed an interest in what they were doing in school or college.

- 100% of children (8-11yrs) and 92% young people (11-18yrs) recorded that the adults they lived with showed an interest in their education 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.

- Carers are doing a good job of supporting young people's learning. A slightly larger proportion (92%) of looked after young people felt their carers were interested in their education compared to 90% of young people in England*.

General population:

Support with learning

In comparison, the *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children survey* (11-15yrs) reported that 90% of young people in England* thought that their parents were interested in what happened at school.

* Comparative data given for England as comparative data for Wales not available.

Having fun & hobbies

Children aged 4-7yrs and 8-11yrs were asked if they had *fun at the weekend*.



The 11-18yrs survey asked young people if they were able to *spend time on their own hobbies or activities outside of school*.

- The majority (96%) of children and young people did have fun and took part in activities outside school.

What would make care better?

Go to different places like the zoo.

11-18yrs

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Age group	Yes, I have fun/take part in activities <i>n (%)</i>	Sometimes I have fun/take part in activities <i>n (%)</i>	No, I don't have fun or take part in activities <i>n (%)</i>
4-7yrs	11 (100%)		
8-11yrs	24 (83%)	5 (17%)	
11-18yrs	48 (64%)	23 (31%)	4 (5%)
TOTAL	83 (72%)	28 (24%)	4 (4%)

Access to nature



Contact with nature can reduce stress and improve mental health. (Play England, 2012)

We asked whether children and young people had opportunities to *explore the outdoors*, such as visiting parks, beaches, and forests.

Focus group feedback

Some of the children in our focus groups said safeguarding fears limited their opportunities.

General population:

About 11% of children (6-15yrs) had not visited the natural environment in the last year. (National Survey for Wales – outdoor recreation, 2015)

- 100% of children (8-11yrs) and 82% of young people (11-18yrs) answered that they got the chance to explore the outdoors 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
- 13 (18%) young people were 'hardly ever' or 'never' given these opportunities.

Second chances

All children make mistakes and need a second or many more chances. It is part of learning and growing up.



Young people aged 11-18yrs were asked if they felt they *got second chances if they did something wrong.*

Focus group feedback

Many children involved in the focus groups stated that looked after children were too readily refused a second chance.

- 52% responded 'all or most of the time';
- 36% answered 'sometimes'; and
- 12% thought they 'hardly ever' or 'never' got a second chance.

I'm thankful to my carers for the help ... I have a lot more help than I used to.
11-18yrs

Life skills



We asked the young people in the 11-18yrs group, *how often do you get to practice life skills like cooking healthy food, washing clothes or going to the bank?*

Focus group feedback

This question was asked as many young people in the focus groups thought that they had been insufficiently prepared for independence.

- 87% of young people answered that they got to practice independence skills 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
- 13% thought this was 'hardly ever' or 'never' true.

Access to the Internet at home



Young people 11-18yrs were *asked if they could connect to the Internet from home.*

General population: Access to the Internet

- In Wales, 98% of households with children and two adults have an Internet connection. 90% of single parents have an Internet connection. (National Survey for Wales, 2017)
- The *Millennium Cohort Study* of children aged 11yrs old found that children who never used the Internet outside school had a high probability of low well-being. (The Children's Society Report, 2014)

- The *majority* (91%) of young people reported that they did have access to the Internet in their placement.
- Seven (9%) young people could not connect to the Internet in their placement: a much larger proportion than the 2% of households with children in the Welsh population with no connection.



4. Rights

- Included in decision making
- Stigma of being in care
- Feeling safe in placement
- Bullying
- Knowing and contact with social workers

Included in decision-making

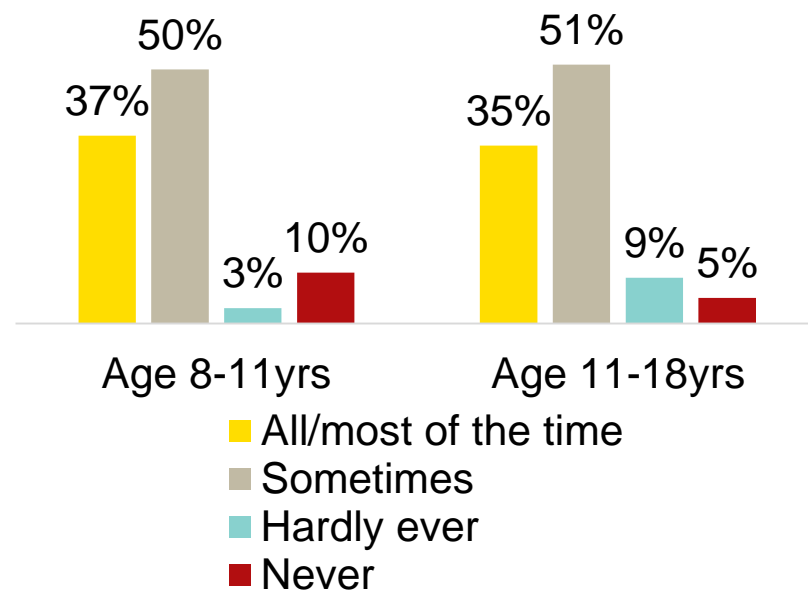


Children aged 8-18yrs were asked, *do you feel included in the decisions that social workers make about your life?*

- 87% of 8-11yrs 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' felt included.
- 86% of 11-18yrs 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' felt included.

I would like to be in more meetings and know what is going to happen.
11-18yrs

Do you feel included in the decisions that social workers make about your life?



Stigma of being in care



The 11-18yrs age group were asked a question in the survey about feeling different, *do adults do things that make you feel embarrassed about being in care?*

- 13% of young people recorded that adults did things that made them feel embarrassed about being in care.

Younger children were not asked these questions, as the focus groups suggested that being made to feel different was of much greater concern in adolescence.

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People sometimes say things that suggest I am different to others.
11-18yrs

Making a big deal about the fact that I'm in care.
11-18yrs

I don't like having visits. I live with my gran. I will be pleased when I don't have a social worker any more.
11-18yrs

Feeling safe in placement

bright spots

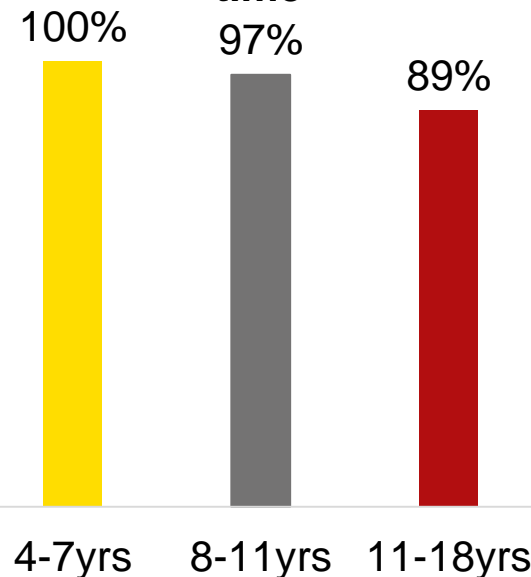


All children were asked whether they *felt safe in the home they lived in now*. It is difficult to know what children were thinking about when answering, but feeling secure is about how the world *feels*, not necessarily how it is.

- All of the children aged 4-7yrs felt safe.
- One child (8-11yrs) and 9 young people (11-18yrs) ticked the 'sometimes', 'hardly ever' or 'never' boxes.
- Overall, 92% of children and young people reported that they felt safe 'all or most of the time' in their placements – a larger proportion than children in the general population (75%) and other young people (86%) in care. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

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I feel safe in the home I live in all or most of the time



General population:

The Children's Worlds survey found that 75% of children (8-13yrs) in the general population felt 'totally safe' at home (Rees *et al.*, 2014). Not feeling safe is associated with raised cortisol levels and difficulty in learning and concentration. (Harvard University, 2012)

Bullying

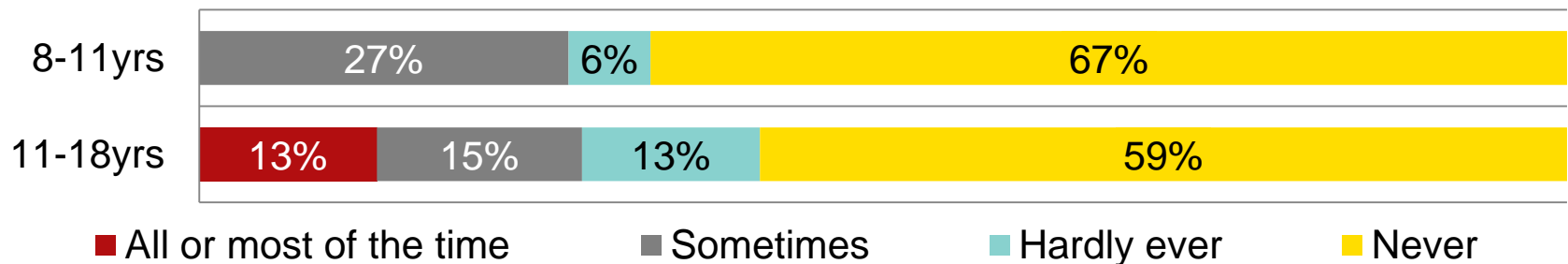
Our question asked whether *children felt afraid of going to school because of bullying* and if they were bullied were they *getting support from an adult*.

General population: Bullying

- The analysis of the *Children's Worlds surveys* in 22 countries has shown that being free from bullying is one of the most important factors in children's well-being. (Rees *et al.*, 2010)
- About 10% of children in Wales report that they are regularly bullied at school. (ONS, 2016b)

- 8 (2%) children (8-11yrs) reported being afraid to go to school 'sometimes' because of bullying. All of them felt they were getting support from an adult to stop the bullying.
- Nine young people (11-18yrs) were afraid 'all or most of the time' and a further 11 'sometimes'. A quarter of these young people felt they were not being supported by an adult.
- More looked after young people (13%) were afraid of bullying in comparison with young people (10%) living in Wales.

Do you ever feel afraid of going to school or college because of bullying?



Knowing identity of social workers



All the children and young people were asked if they *knew who their current social worker was*.

- Overall 6% of children and young people did not know their social worker.

Age group	Know social worker <i>n (%)</i>	Don't know social worker <i>n (%)</i>
4-7yrs	10 (91%)	1 (9%)
8-11yrs	29 (97%)	1 (3%)
11-18yrs	71 (93%)	5 (7%)
TOTAL	110 (94%)	7 (6%)

Contact with social workers

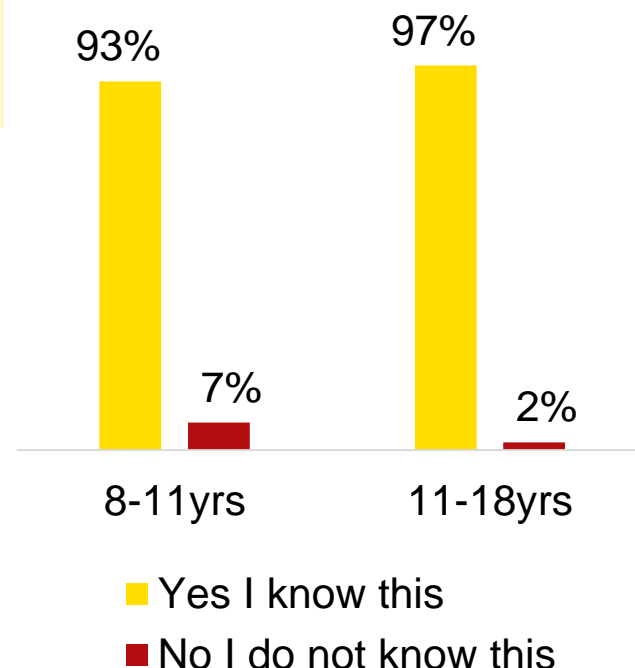


Young people (n=110) who knew their social worker were asked how *easy it was to contact them*.



Children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) were asked whether *they knew they could speak to their social worker on their own*.

Do you know you have the right to speak to a social worker on your own?



- 73% of young people (11-18yrs) reported that they could easily get in touch with their social worker 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
- 19 (27%) young people could 'hardly ever' or 'never' get in touch with their social worker.
- 93% of children (8-11yrs) and 98% of those aged 11-18yrs knew they could ask to speak to their social worker on their own.



5. Recovery

- Knowing reason for being in care
- Feeling settled in placement
- Liking bedrooms
- Adults you live with:
Sensitive parenting
- Adults you live with:
Sharing confidences
- Support with worries
- Parity with peers
- Happiness with appearance

Knowing reason for being in care



All the children and young people were asked if *someone had explained why they were in care.*

Important for recovery

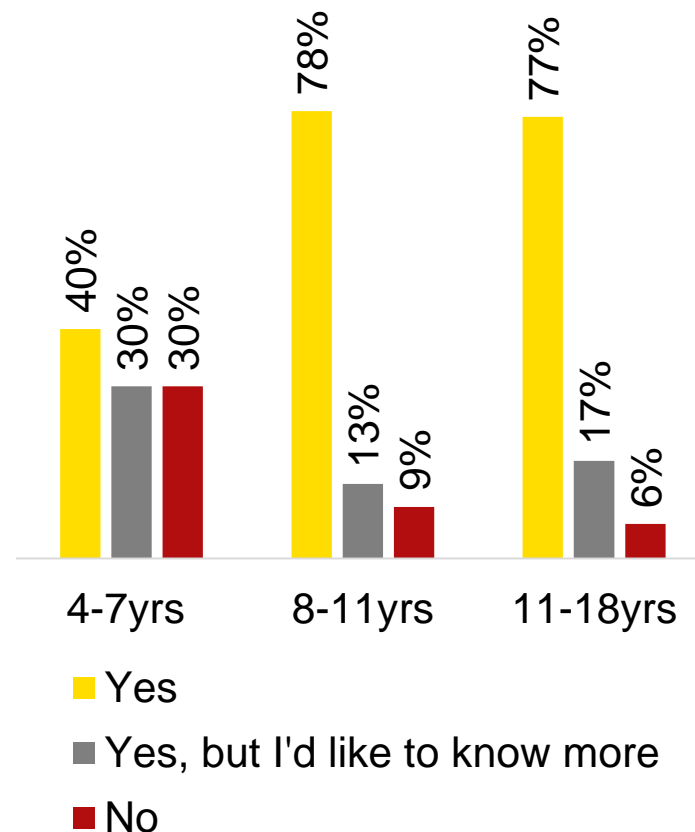
Having a coherent account of one's history and understanding the reasons that led to becoming looked after are important in the development of an integrated identity and in recovery from abuse and neglect.

(Adshead, 2012; Adler, 2012)

- Only 40% of the children (4-7yrs) felt they had understood enough about why they were in care. Children's understanding increased with age.

- In Swansea a larger proportion of young people aged 11-18yrs (77%) thought they had been given an explanation of why they were in care compared to young people (71%) in other Welsh authorities. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

Has someone explained to you why you are in care?



Feeling settled in placement

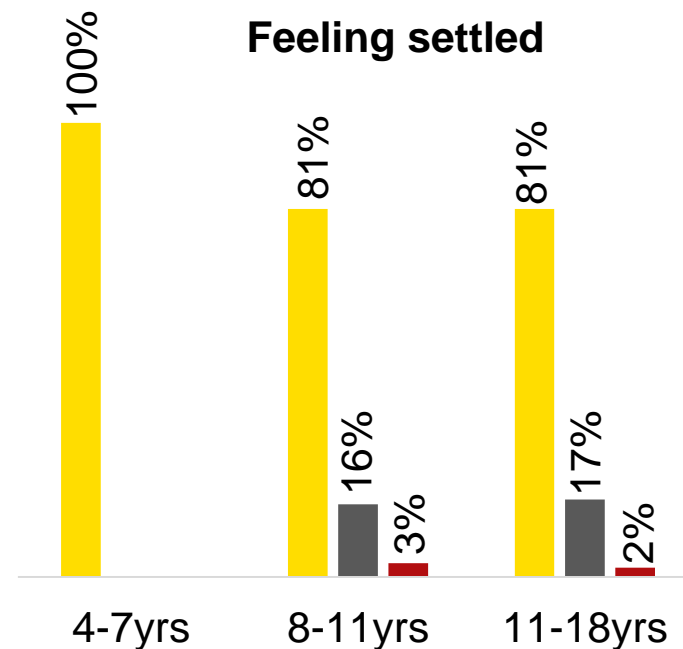


The surveys asked about children's sense of belonging: whether they felt at ease in their placements. Based on the advice from our focus groups, children and young people were asked:

*Do you feel settled in the home you live in now?
(Do you feel comfortable, accepted and at ease?)*

Children (4-7yrs) could answer 'mostly yes' or 'mostly no'. Children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) could answer: 'all or most of the time', 'sometimes', 'hardly ever', or 'never'.

- Compared to other looked after young people (73%) in Wales, more (81%) young people in Swansea (11-18yrs) felt settled in their placements. This is a Bright Spot of practice.



- All or most of the time/Mostly yes
- Sometimes
- Hardly ever/Never/Mostly no

Liking bedrooms



Children and young people were asked if **they liked their bedroom..**

Focus group feedback

Liking your bedroom was an important feature for the focus groups we ran. Young people reflected that their bedrooms were a place for being on your own in busy homes.

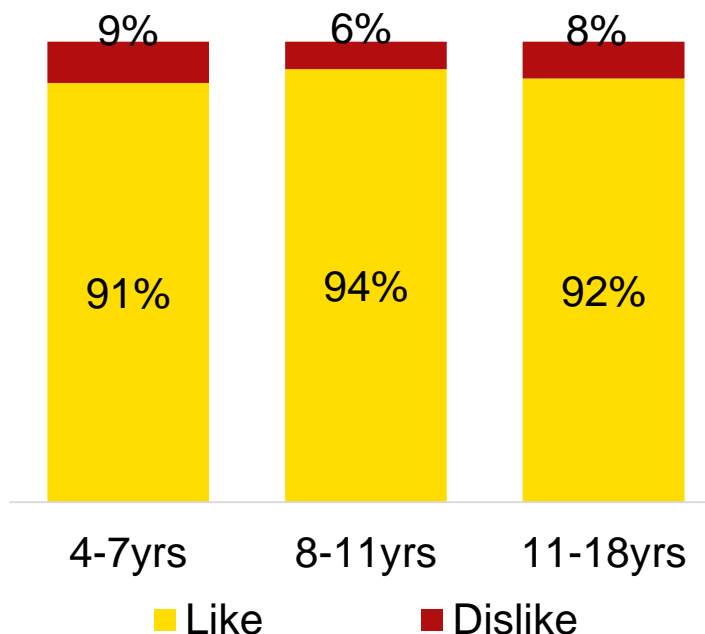
It was linked to safety, a sense of identity and feeling a sense of belonging.

- The vast majority of children and young people liked their bedrooms.

I like my room but I'd like to have a place to put my console.
4-7yrs

What would make care better?
Not sharing a bedroom with my brother.
8-11yrs

Do you like your bedroom?



Adults you live with: Sensitive parenting



All children were asked whether they felt the adults they lived with *noticed how they were feeling*.

- 100% of children (4-7yrs) and 100% of children (8-11yrs) thought their carers noticed how they were feeling 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'. This is a Bright Spot of practice.
- Slightly fewer but still positively 89% of young people (11-18yrs) felt their carers noticed how they were feeling.

*I like my carer
cooking for me.
My carer is kind.
4-7yrs*

*I am more safe and
happy and settled
because I trust them
(carers) very much.
8-11yrs*

Adults you live with: Sharing confidences



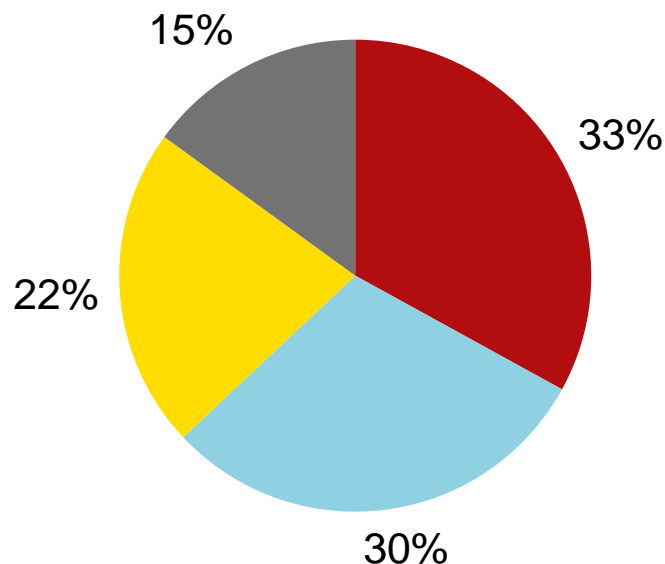
Young people were asked how frequently they *talked to the adults that they lived with about the things that mattered to them.*

General population

The UK *Understanding Society* survey (2017) found that 65% of children (10-15yrs) talked regularly to a parent.

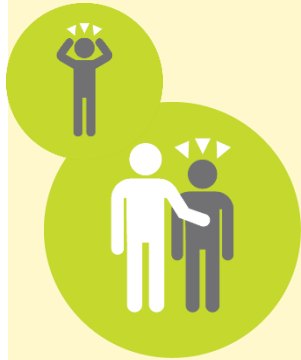
- 63% of young people talked regularly with their carers about things that mattered to them. That is a similar proportion to the 65% of young people in the general population who talk to their parents.

Speaking to adults about things that matter



- Most days
- More than once a week
- Less than once a week
- Hardly ever

Support with worries



Children and young people (8-11yrs and 11-18yrs) were asked if they *worried about their own feelings or behaviour* and, if they *did have concerns, were they receiving support*.

General population & other comparative data: Mental health

- Studies of looked after populations show that children's level of difficulties are much higher, ranging from about 45% of children in foster care to 75% of those in residential. (Ford *et al.*, 2007)
- In Wales about 17% of children have concerning SDQ scores that suggest they have a clinical level of mental health difficulties. (Statistical Bulletin, 2017)

- Three (10%) children (8-11yrs) worried 'all or most of the time' and 14 (47%) 'sometimes'. Just one child felt they were not getting help with their worries.
- 9 (12%) young people (11-18yrs) worried 'all or most of the time' and 40 (58%) 'sometimes'.
- 31% of young people (11-18yrs) thought they were *not* getting help with their worries. The majority of looked after young people report worrying in all local authorities but in those authorities fewer young people (25%) feel they are not being helped.

Parity with peers



Young people (11-18yrs) were asked if they *got the chance to do similar things to their friends.*

- 85% of young people reported that 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' they were able to do similar things to their friends.
- 11 (15%) young people reported that they could 'hardly ever' or 'never' do similar things to their friends.

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What would make care better?
Be able to do what normal teenagers do like going out.
11-18yrs

I think there are too many rules for foster children in the system, e.g. children not being allowed on holiday and stuff like that.
8-11yrs

Happiness with appearance



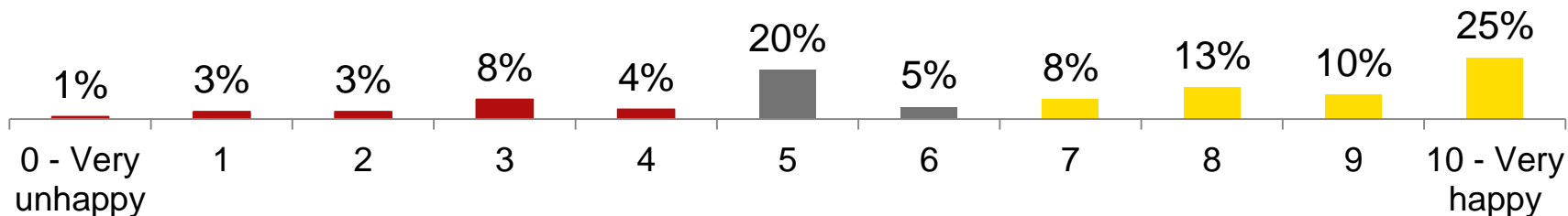
Studies have shown that poor body image is associated with low self-esteem, depression and self-harm. (Cash and Smolek, 2011)

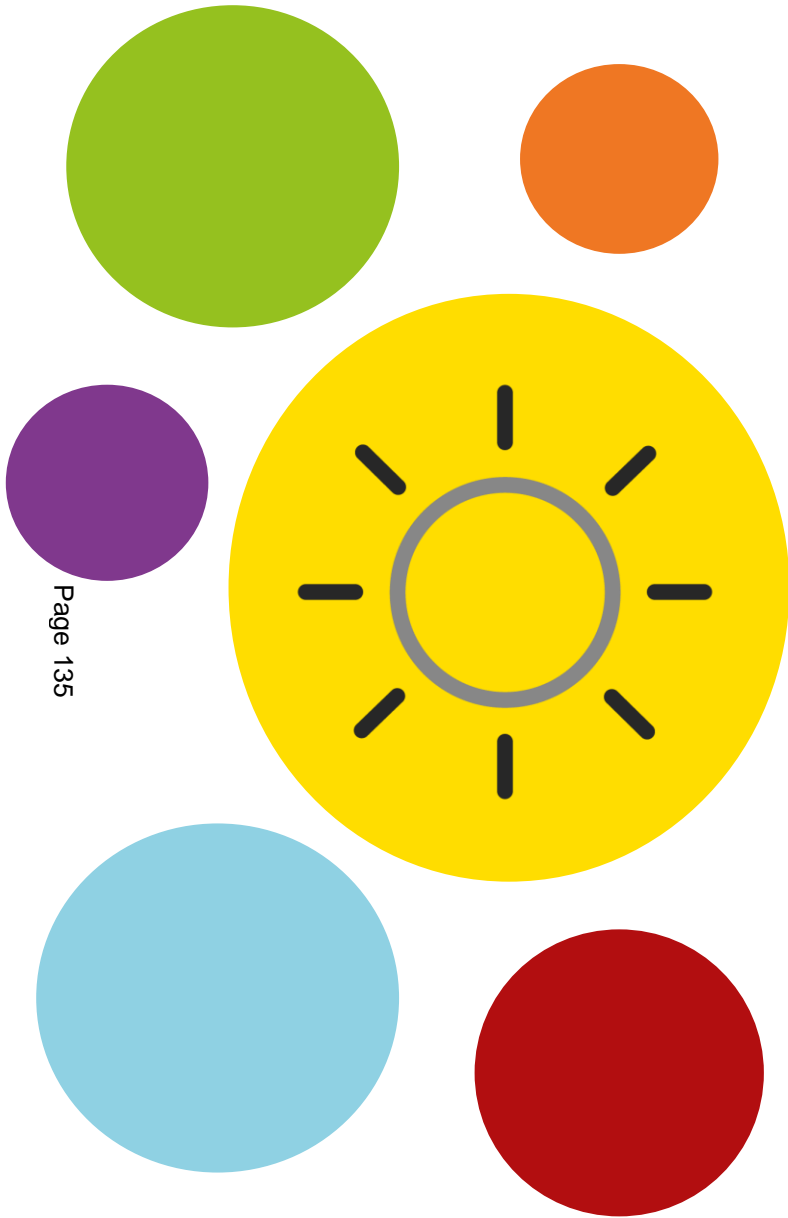
General population: Happiness with appearance

- 10% of 10-17 year olds in the general population are unhappy with their appearance. Girls are more likely to have a lower opinion of their appearance than boys. (The Children's Society, 2017)

- The majority of young people were happy with their appearance.
- On this scale scores of 0-4 show low happiness and this applied to 19% of the young people.

How happy are you with the way you look?





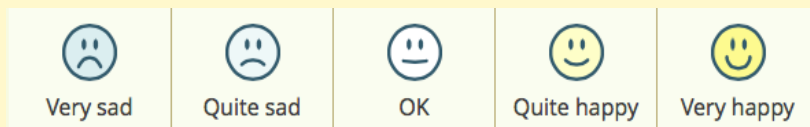
6. Well-being

- Happiness yesterday – affect
- Life satisfaction – overall evaluation
- Life is worthwhile – psychological/eudemonic well-being
- Life is improving
- Positivity about the future

Happiness

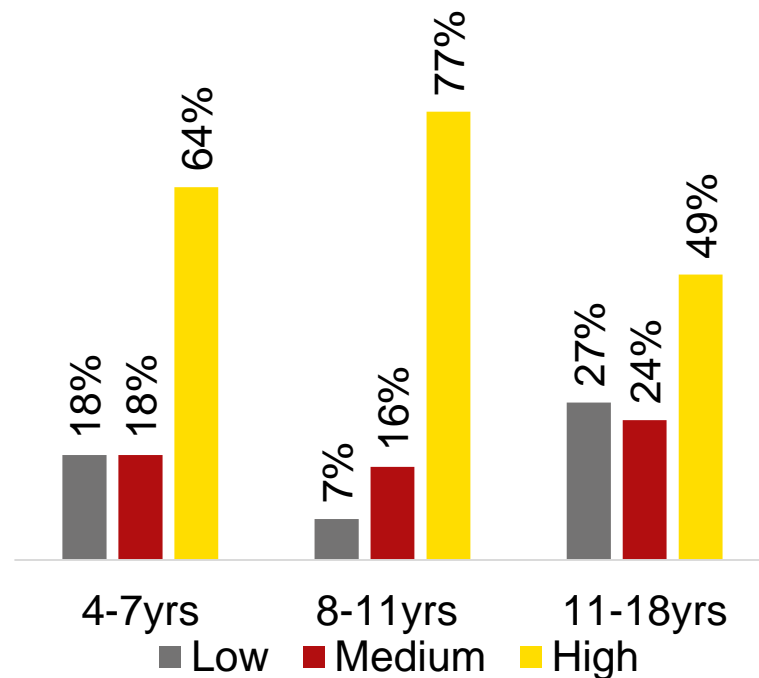
The decrease in happiness with age occurs in all surveys. Well-being decreases from school year 5 onwards with age 14-15yrs being the lowest point. It then starts to rise again. (Rees *et al.*, 2010)

- Children (4-7yrs & 8-11yrs) were asked to rate *how happy they were yesterday* on a five-point scale, from 'very sad' to 'very happy'.



- Young people (11-18yrs) selected a point on a 0-10 scale with 0 being 'very sad'.
- The majority of children and young people had been happy the previous day.
- 4 (18%) children and 20 (27%) young people reported that yesterday they had been 'quite sad' or 'very sad'.

Happiness yesterday



Life satisfaction



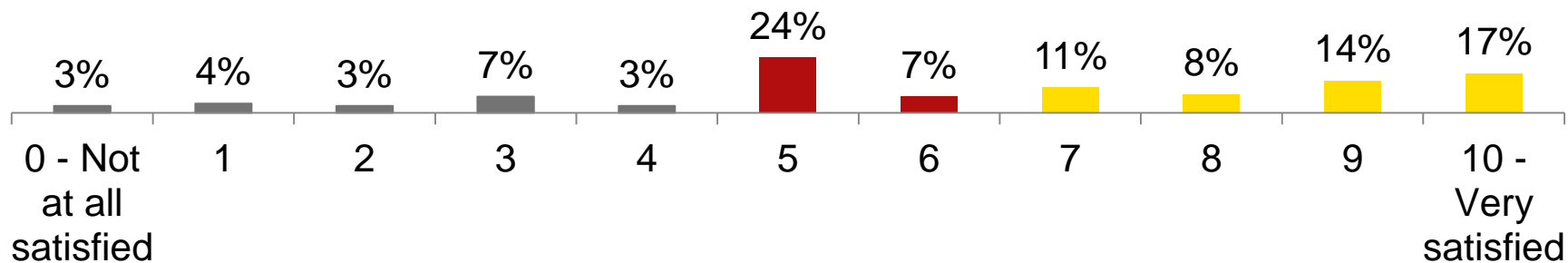
Young people (11-18yrs) were asked *how satisfied they were with their life* on a 0-10 scale.

This question exactly replicates The Children's Society survey question. A score of 7 or more is considered to be high life satisfaction. (The Cabinet Office, 2012)

- Just like the general child population in England there was a positive correlation between high life satisfaction scores and being happy at school.
- 20% of young people had low scores on the life satisfaction scale.

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How satisfied are you with your life?



NB: percentages add up to more than 100% because of rounding

Are the things you do worthwhile?

Young people (11-18yrs) were asked if the things they do are worthwhile.

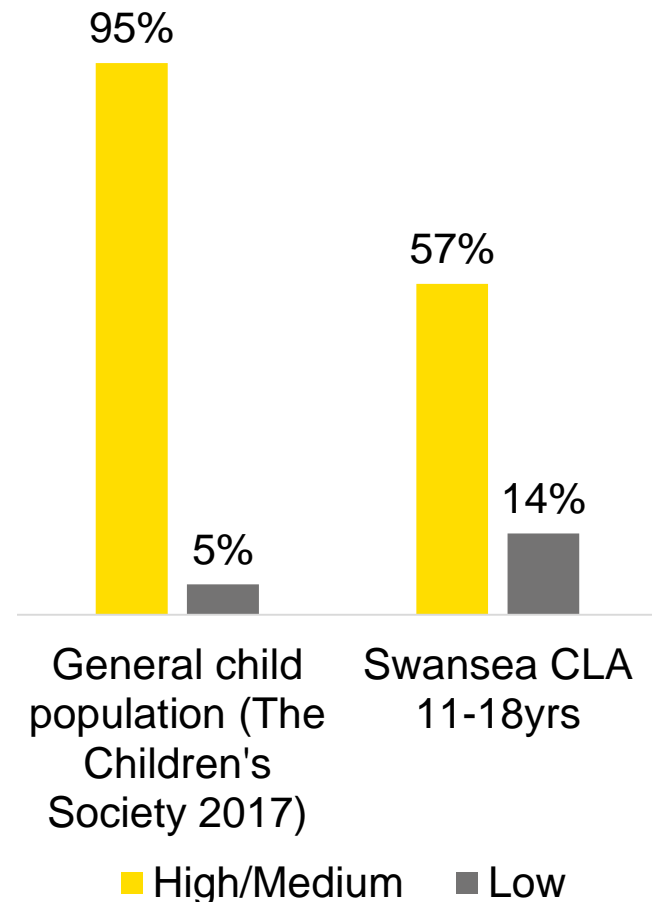
Importance of purpose

Having a meaning or a purpose to life is strongly associated with well-being. (ONS, 2014)

Young people (11-18yrs) completed the same 0-10 scale as used by The Children's Society (2017) in their household survey with 3,000 young people aged 10-17yrs.

- 57% of young people scored high or very high;
- 29% medium; and
- 14% low – feeling that the things they did were not worthwhile.

To what extent do you think the things you do in your life are worthwhile?



Positivity about the future



Young people were asked on a scale of 0-10 *how positive they were about the future?*

Links to happiness

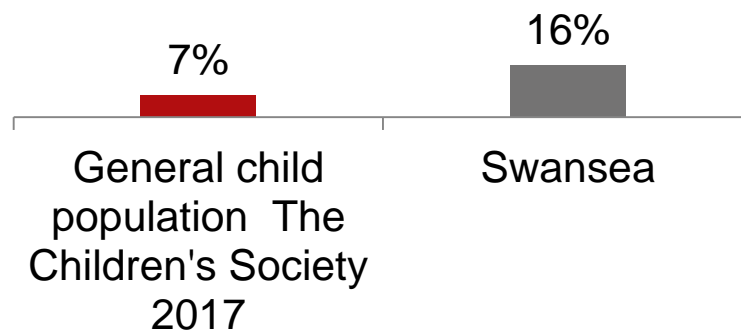
Optimism about the future is linked with happiness and resilience. (Conversano et al., 2010).

- 51 (68%) were positive about their future.
- 12 (16%) had moderate scores
- 12 (16%) had low scores and were pessimistic about their future.

I feel worried about turning 18. I don't feel my social worker has put enough plans in place for my move on and I am scared about what will happen to me.

11-18yrs

Young people who were pessimistic about their future: comparison of Swansea's (11-18yrs) looked after young people with the general child population



Comparisons

Levels of well-being – Swansea’s looked after young people (11-18yrs) compared to peers (10-17yrs) in the general population in Wales (ONS, 2016) and to the average scores of looked after young people in six Welsh LAs.

		Swansea	2018 average in 6 Welsh LAs	Peers in general population (10-17yrs)
		%	%	%
Life satisfaction	High scores	51%	55%	80%
	Low scores	19%	17%	8%
Happiness yesterday	High scores	49%	55%	74%
	Low scores	27%	23%	13%
Things done are worthwhile	High scores	57%	62%	75%
	Low scores	14%	12%	11%
Positive about future	High scores	68%	65%	-
	Low scores	16%	13%	-

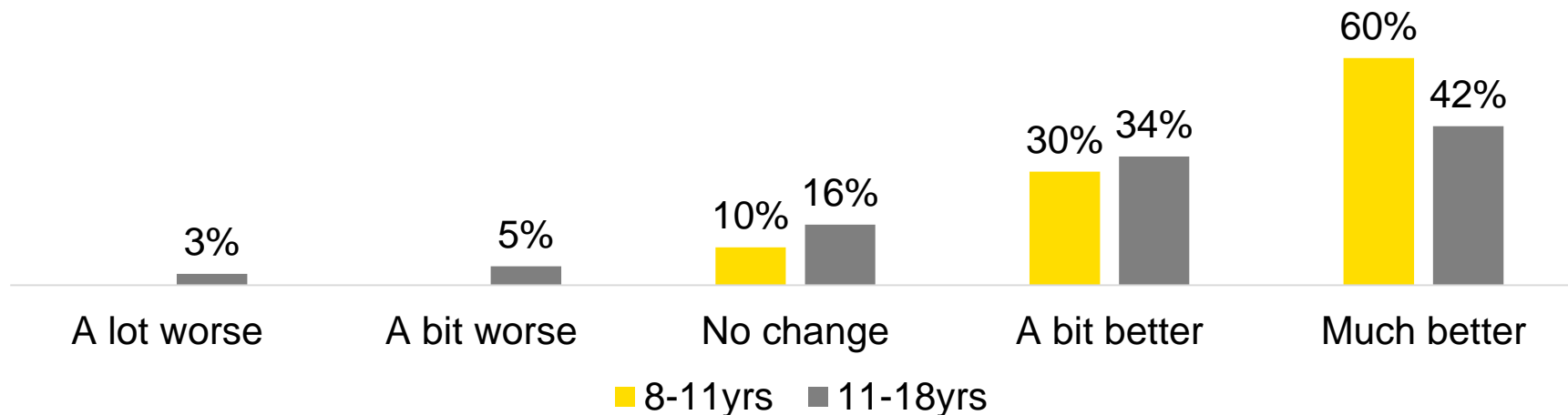
Life is improving

Children aged 8-18yrs were asked whether they thought their *life was getting better*, and could choose from a five point scale ranging from 'a lot worse' to 'much better'.

- 80% of children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) felt that their lives were improving.

Is life improving?

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Well-being: 4-7yrs



- Two (18%) of the children in the 4-7yrs group described themselves as 'very sad'.
- The two children did not give many negative responses in the survey but they
 - did not have a good understanding of why they were in care;
 - one did not trust the social worker; and
 - the other child wanted to return home.
- Neither of the two children's responses indicated that they had low well-being.

Well-being: 8-11 yrs



- Two (7%) of the children in the 8-11yrs group described themselves as 'very sad'.
- One child seemed to be very sad at not being able to have contact with all their siblings.
- The other child had a lot of worries and was unsure why they were in care.
- However, other responses such as 'always' feeling safe and trusting carers were very positive.
- Neither of the two children's responses indicated that they had low well-being.

*I know sometimes I
can get emotional. I
like to cry ... by myself
rather than with
friends. I speak to my
foster carer about it.
8-11yrs*

Well-being: 11-18yrs



- 16 (22%) young people had low well-being (i.e. scored 4 or less on two or more of the 0-10 well-being scales).
- Young people with low well-being gave many negative responses. The strongest statistical effect size associated with low well-being was young people who did not like their appearance followed by not having a good friend.
- Also associated with low well-being was young people:
 - without a trusted adult in their lives;
 - not liking school;
 - not being given opportunities to be trusted;
 - feeling the stigma of care;
 - not feeling settled in placement; and
 - not having the right frequency of contact with mothers.

Gender differences 11-18yrs



The Children's Society (2017) reported that in the general

population one in seven (14%) girls (10-15yrs) were unhappy with their lives as a whole as were one in ten boys.


Examining gender differences in our surveys in 2017, we found no gender difference in the surveys for 4-7yrs and 8-11yrs but girls aged 11-18yrs were more likely to report low well-being. Girls were four times more likely to be unhappy with their appearance and this contributed to gender differences in well-being.



- Girls were more likely than boys to not like their appearance and to feel that it was difficult to get in touch with their social workers.



- Boys were more likely than girls to report being afraid to go to school because of bullying.



Section 4: Children and young people's comments

Is there anything else you would like to tell us? What would make being in care better for you?

Comments: 4-7yrs

- Six of the youngest children gave text responses on, *what would make care better/ anything else you want to say?*
- The majority wrote that they were happy and liked living with their carers.

I want to go to my house not in (name of carer) house.

What would make care better?
For my sister to be good.

I don't like coming to school sometimes but I like it on the days we have nurture.

I like having pocket money. I like having new clothes and new things to bring to school. I like my carer cooking for me. My carer is kind.

What could make care better and other comments: 8-11yrs

- 18 (56%) children gave text responses on, *what would make care better/ anything else you want to say?*
- 10 children wrote that there was nothing they wanted to change
- Other children wrote about wanting changes to their contact arrangements

I am happy in care because I don't get beaten.

Nothing could make it better.

What would make care better?
Less seeing my half sister (name).

What would make care better?
Seeing my family more often.

What would make care better?
Included more.

What would make care better?
If I could have my brother back living with me permanently.

What could make care better: 11-18yrs

- 45 (57%) young people gave text responses on, *what would make care better/ anything else you want to say?*
- 13 young people recorded that there was nothing they wanted to change or that they were ok.
- Other young people wrote that they would like more contact with their family, and more involvement with their social worker.

Not having so many social workers would have made it easier.

I live on my own so this wasn't very relevant to me.

If they listened to me a bit better :)

Seeing my brothers and sisters more.

I feel my social worker is not making enough effort with my family.

See my mother more.

Other comments: 11-18yrs

It is the best experience I have had in a life time and I wish my carer had looked after me since I was born and that people like me are very lucky that they have someone to look after them and give them food and make sure you are clean and healthy.

I used to get bullied because I didn't live with my parents and no one helped me but then it got better so I think it would be good if young people like me could spread their story everywhere.

I love being in care.

My care experience has been shit. When I first when into care the amount of social workers I have had are unbelievable, the amount of houses I got moved to are stupid... Some places have been alright but most have been awful. You ... really need to change because you don't realise the kids that come in to care end up having a shit life because you don't offer most things at the end of the day

Section 5: Positive aspects of practice and areas for improvement



What's working well

- Placements in Swansea are safe places for most children and young people. All of the youngest children (4-7yrs) and nearly all aged 8-18yrs felt settled and safe where they lived. A larger proportion of young people (11-18yrs) felt safe and settled compared to looked after young people in other authorities in Wales, and compared to children in the general population.
- Relationships with carers are also very positive. Nearly all children and young people felt that their carers noticed how they were feeling. Similar proportions of young people (63%) talked regularly to their carers about things that mattered, as young people in the general population and a greater proportion (92%) felt their carers were interested in what they did at school or college.
- Adults are doing a good job of explaining the reasons for being in care to children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs). Compared with other local authorities in Wales, a greater proportion (77%) of young people answered that they had had an explanation.
- Most looked after children in Swansea felt their lives were getting better. This was reported by 90% of children (8-11yrs) and 76% of young people (11-18yrs).

What could be improved

- **Regularly review contact plans and listen to children's views about contact with immediate and extended family members, making clear the reasons for decisions about contact.**
- **Explore why 29% of children (8-11yrs) wanted less contact with their siblings.** For example, are these children in the same placement as their siblings? Do they need a targeted intervention to reduce sibling conflict? Consider the use of independent visitors for those with no parental contact.
- **Find out why some young people (11-18yrs), especially boys, had negative feelings about school.** The proportion (66%) of young people (11-18yrs) liking school in Swansea was smaller than looked after young people in other Welsh authorities (71%) and young people (73%) in the Welsh population.
- **Continue to work with schools to keep children and young people safe from bullying.** More than a quarter (28%) of looked after young people were afraid to go to school because of bullying, and a quarter of them did not feel supported.
- **Explore how young people (11-18yrs) can be supported with concerns about their feelings and behaviour.** 31% of young people did not feel they were getting support for worries that they had about their lives.
- **Understand the reasons why a quarter of young people (11-18yrs), especially girls, found it difficult to get in touch with their social worker.**
- **Ensure that all younger children (4-7yrs) understand why they are in care.** 60% of this age group wanted to know more, or felt that nobody had explained to them why they were in care.



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Understanding Society <https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/>

For enquiries about the Bright Spots project see:
<http://www.coramvoice.org.uk/professional-zone/bright-spots>

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Agenda Item 8

CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19

Meeting 1 Monday 25 June 2018 4pm	Impact of Prevention and Early Intervention on CFS (under 11 and over 11 services) Review of the year 2017/18 Work Programme 2018/19
Meeting 2 Tuesday 28 August 2018 4pm	Adoption update including report on Inspection of the Adoption Service Advocacy Update Bright Spots Survey
Meeting 3 Monday 29 October 2018 4pm	Report on 16 plus (BAYS) / Youth Offending Services Performance Monitoring
Meeting 4 Tuesday 18 December 2018 4pm	Corporate Parenting Board update (5 leads to be invited) Performance Monitoring
Additional meeting ? February 2019 (date tbc)	Draft budget proposals for Child and Family Services Cabinet Member presentation and Q and A session
Meeting 5 Monday 25 February 2019 4pm	CFS Complaints Annual Report 2017-18 Child Disability update Update on Impact of Prevention and Early Intervention on Child and Family Services (TBC) <i>Rachel Moxey, Head of Poverty and Prevention</i>
Meeting 6 Monday 29 April 2019 4pm	Performance Monitoring End of year review

Future work programme items:

- Presentation from Western Bay Justice Board – invite representative to attend once end of year figures are available (date tbc)

Councillor Paxton Hood-Williams
Convener
Child and Family Services Scrutiny Panel

Please ask for: Councillor Mark Child
Direct Line: 01792 63 7441
E-Mail: cllr.mark.child@swansea.gov.uk
Our Ref: MC/CM
Your Ref:
Date: 18 June 2018

BY EMAIL

Dear Councillor Hood-Williams

Child and Family Service Scrutiny Performance Panel April 30th 2018

Thank you for your letter of 24th May and I would respond as follows.

Child and Family Services Complaints Annual Report

Overall this was a very positive story and undoubtedly the management of complaints has become more professional, with the Performance Hub being a single point to collate learning opportunities and co-ordinate workshops to develop best practice. As you say it is particularly pleasing that the number of stage two complaints reduced through the year and there were no findings of maladministration by the Ombudsman. There is a system in place where staff receive feedback relating to compliments from the HOS.

Performance Monitoring

Work to improve performance around Life Journey work is included in WB Adoption Service action plan and there are early signs of improvement in this area. The final report of the inspection of the Adoption Service is now available and is a positive report with no surprises in terms of areas for improvement.

Whilst the redesign of SCP has been launched it will be important to allow time for the new system to embed and careful monitoring of performance will be necessary, particularly around the areas identified for improvement. Work on assessment triggers is taking place to enable a reduction in the duplication of assessment activity within the service. Work with the Judiciary and CAF/CASS runs alongside this work to ensure any changes are acceptable across the system.

I can confirm that the deployment order will shortly be signed with an 18 month lead in time for the move to WCCIS.

The front door of CFS and the link with early help services is a priority going forward. The work is led by the Family Support Continuum Steering Group, with a systems thinking review taking place in July which will support development in this area. Scrutiny might wish to consider a presentation, in the autumn, on the difference this is making to improve the lives of children and families in Swansea.

An audit is being undertaken within the Service Quality Unit of CP reregistration and this will be available in August, 2018. I can confirm that the additional information regarding the destination of children leaving care at 18yrs will be made available to the next Panel. The number of children looked after in Swansea remains a challenge, but one most CFS are facing. The safe LAC reduction strategy has been reviewed and additional measures have been put in place to ensure that children are in safe arrangements and achieve permanence at the earliest opportunity. If the Panel would find it useful a presentation on the changes and impact could be provided later in the year.

Thank you for the very positive feedback relating to the thematic review. I am confident this piece of work will have supported Scrutiny's understanding of this complex situation.

I hope this is helpful

Yours sincerley

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Child', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Mark Child
CABINET MEMBER FOR CARE, HEALTH & AGEING WELL



To:
Councillor Elliott King
Cabinet Member for Children's Services
(Early Years)

Please ask for: Scrutiny
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e-Bost:
Date 12 July 2018
Dyddiad:

Summary: This is a letter from the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services (Early Years) following the meeting of the Panel on 25 June 2018. It covers the Impact of Prevention and Early Intervention on Child and Family Services.

Dear Cllr King

The Panel met on 25 June and discussed the Impact of Prevention and Early Intervention on Child and Family Services (under 11 and over 11 services).

We would like to thank Rachel Moxey, Gavin Evans, Julie Thomas and Owen Davies for attending to go through the report and answer our questions. We appreciate their engagement and input.

We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion, share the views of the Panel, and, where necessary, raise any issues or recommendations for your consideration and response. The main issues discussed are summarised below:

Impact of Prevention and Early Intervention on Child and Family Services

We received a presentation on the Family Support Continuum Performance Report for Quarter 4 2018, giving the context for this work, progress to date and the barriers.

It was emphasised that this is very much a work in progress. It is currently raw data and a group has been established and will begin to meet shortly to analyse and discuss the trends and determine the way forward. The plan is that in the future the data will be narrowed down and the report will only include key indicators.

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The Panel asked how families can be made aware that this help is available and we were informed that it is a very complex issue and that services are trying to pre-empt where there may be problems in families. We heard that all services need to work together to inform families that this help is available. Networking with colleagues and other public services is very important and key to this is health staff, they need to be aware how important it is to identify problems in families early.

The Panel felt that issues with children often show up in the school situation and that the increase in home schooling would make it more difficult to identify these issues. The officers agreed that it is hard to identify issues earlier when children are withdrawn from mainstream education and this is an issue they would need to consider.

We felt that this work on the Family Support Continuum is too high level and that there is a need to talk to the people who are affected in order to work out the best way to try and solve issues.

We emphasised that this work has to be about getting the best outcomes for children, that is the priority. We were informed that the needs of individuals are the main driver but that the Council has to be aware of costs.

We heard about the Logic Model pre-16, and the hope that this work with families will stop them becoming involved with Child and Family Services as currently 80% of what comes to Social Services 'front door' should not be coming there and Social Services should be focussing on complex cases only. We also heard that we can get better outcomes for children, if we intervene early with specialist services, so investment in early help services is vital.

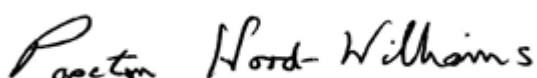
The Panel was concerned about the amount of staff time taken up in producing this data and whether they will be able to analyse and understand it in order to get the best outcomes for children. The Panel was informed that this data is being collected anyway as part of other reporting requirements.

The Panel will want to monitor progress on this work and have therefore requested that a report on progress be brought to the Panel in 6 months' time. This should be a more fit for purpose highlight report, including the outcomes of the work by Vanguard and what is being done at Social Services 'front door'.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your views and comments on any of the issues raised but please note that in this instance, a formal response is not required.

Yours sincerely



PAXTON HOOD-WILLIAMS

CONVENER, CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL
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