

Agenda



Pwyllgor Craffu ar Berfformiad – Partneriaethau

Dyddiad: Dydd Mercher, 4 Rhagfyr 2019

Amser: 5.00 pm

Lleoliad: Ystafell Bwyllgora 1 - Canolfan Ddinesig

At: Cynghorwyr: J Hughes, C Jenkins, S Marshall, R Mogford, M Spencer, T Suller and K Whitehead

Eitem	Wardiau Dan Sylw
1	<u>Enwebu Cadeirydd ar gyfer y Cyfarfod</u>
2	<u>Ymddiheuriadau</u>
3	<u>Datganiadau o ddiddordeb</u>
4	<u>Gwasanaethau Mabwysiadu Cenedlaethol a Rhanbarthol</u> (<i>Tudalennau 3 - 50</i>)
5	<u>Gwasanaethau Maethu</u> (<i>Tudalennau 51 - 80</i>)
6	<u>Casgliad Adroddiadau Pwyllgorau</u> Ar ôl cwblhau adroddiadau'r Pwyllgor, gofynnir i'r Pwyllgor ffurfioli ei gasgliadau, ei argymhellion a'i sylwadau ar eitemau blaenorol i'w gweithredu.
7	<u>Adroddiad Cynghorydd Craffu</u> (<i>Tudalennau 81 - 94</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Diweddariad y Rhaglen Gwaith Ymlaen (Atodiad 1)b) Llythyrau Craffu / Cofnodion y Bwrdd Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus (Atodiad 2)

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn



Scrutiny Report

Performance Scrutiny Committee- Partnerships

Part 1

Date: 4 December 2019

Subject National and Regional Adoption Services

Author Scrutiny Adviser

The following has been invited to attend for this item:

Invitee:	Designation
Sally Jenkins	Head of Children and Young People Services

Section A – Committee Guidance and Recommendations

1. Recommendations to the Committee

The Committee is requested:

- a) To consider the Adoption Service Report and the following:
 - National Adoption Service Annual Performance Report 2018-19;
 - South East Wales Adoption Service Region End of Year Performance Report 2018-19.
- b) To determine whether it wishes to make any comments.
- c) To determine the timescale for future monitoring.

2 Context

Background

- 2.1 The Committee approved its Forward Work Programme on 26 June 2019 to include a report requested upon National and Regional Adoption Service in its November Committee Meeting. ***(A link to the Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships held on 26 June 2019 Report and Minute is included in the Background Papers in Section 7 of this report.)***
- 2.2 This report is provided in accordance with the Regulations set out in the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2005. It provides information about the Regional and National arrangements for adoption. The appendices provide further detail for Members again both regionally and nationally.

3 Information Submitted to the Committee

- 3.1 The following information is attached to the report for the Committee's consideration:

Appendix A - The Adoption Service Report (Submission of Evidence to Scrutiny)

Appendix 1 - National Adoption Service Annual Performance Report 18-19;

Appendix 2 - South East Wales Adoption Service Region End-Year Performance Report 2018-19.

4. Suggested Areas of Focus

4.1 Role of the Committee

The role of the Committee is to:

- **Consider the report upon Adoption Services and the following:**
 - National Adoption Service Annual Performance Report 2018-19;
 - South East Wales Adoption Service Region End of Year Performance Report 2018-19.

- **Assess and make comment on:**
 - The progress being made by the Regional and National Service in partnership working;
 - How effectively the Services worked together to date;
 - What mitigating actions have been put in place to address risks;
 - What barriers are there to achieving outcomes.

- **In drawing its conclusions, the Committee should assess:**
 - What was the overall conclusion on the information contained within the report?
 - Is the Committee satisfied that it has had all of the relevant information to base a conclusion on the National and Regional Plans?
 - Does the Committee wish to make any comments upon the Plans?
 - When should future scrutiny activity be undertaken.

4.2 Suggested Lines of Enquiry

In considering the report, the Committee may wish to explore some of the following areas of focus, which have been adapted from the Welsh Government Guidance on Scrutiny of the Public Services Board:

1. To what extent have objectives been achieved?
2. How effectively have Services worked together to achieve outcomes? What lessons have been learned as a result and how would they be fed back?
3. What have been the resource implications of partnership working? Has it maximised the resources available?
4. How has working together impacted on outcomes in line with the five ways of working from the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act?
5. Have there been any unintended consequences of joint working and if so what impact has this had?
6. How is service user experience being used to influence developments? What methods are being used to evaluate effectiveness and impact?

4.3 Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act

The Committee's consideration of the report should consider how working in partnership is maximising its contribution to the five ways of working. The following are examples of the types of questions to consider:

5 Ways of Working	Types of Questions to consider:
Long-term The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.	What long-term trends will impact upon service outcomes?
	How will changes in long term needs impact upon outcomes in the future?
Prevention Prevent problems occurring or getting worse.	What issues are facing service users at the moment?
	How are Services addressing these issues to prevent a future problem?
Integration Considering how public bodies' wellbeing objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.	Are there any other organisations providing similar / complementary services?
	How do the Services' performance in the Plans impact upon the services of other public bodies and their objectives?
Collaboration Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the organisation itself).	Who has the Service been working with to deliver outcomes?
	How are the Services using knowledge / information / good practice of others to inform / influence outcomes?
Involvement The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area, which the body serves.	How have Services sought the views of those who are impacted by service delivery?
	How have Services taken into account diverse communities in decision-making?

Section B – Supporting Information

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Characteristics of Effective Partnership Scrutiny set out in the Guidance for Local Authority Scrutiny Committees on the scrutiny of Public Services Boards issued by Welsh Government in August 2017 can equally be applied to the scrutiny of other Partnerships and states that:

“Research into the practice of collaborative or joint scrutiny in England and Wales identifies that arrangements are effective when they demonstrate the following characteristics:

Characteristics of effective partnership scrutiny:

- Scrutiny regards itself as a form of ‘critical friendship with positive intent’ in which scrutiny practitioners act as advocates for the success of joint working.
- Collaborative performance is evaluated from the citizen’s perspective.
- Strong efforts are made to understand the complexity of partnership arrangements and to facilitate learning about the culture and assumptions of different organizations.
- Scrutiny creates positive expectations by focussing on issues regarded as useful to the partnership or where there is consensus that ‘things need to change’.
- Scrutiny demonstrates intellectual independence and investigative rigour in all of its activities.
- Scrutiny demonstrates a positive impact by developing clear, timely, evidence-based recommendations aimed at enhancing collaborative performance.
- Scrutiny critically evaluates its own performance utilising partnership perspectives.

(A link to the full Welsh Government Guidance is included in Section 7 of this report in the Background Papers for Members’ information.)

6 Links to Council Policies and Priorities

- Newport City Council’s Corporate Plan and Wellbeing Objectives:

Well-being Objectives	Promote economic growth and regeneration whilst protecting the environment	Improve skills, educational outcomes & employment opportunities	Enable people to be healthy, independent & resilient	Build cohesive & sustainable communities
Corporate Plan Commitments	Thriving City	Aspirational People		Resilient Communities
Supporting Function	Modernised Council			

7 Background Papers

- Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships [26 June 2019 Report \(Item 6\) and Minutes](#)
- [The Essentials – Well-being of Future Generation \(Wales\) Act](#)
- [Welsh Government Guidance for Local Authority Scrutiny Committees on the Scrutiny of Public Services Boards](#) (Issued August 2017)
- [Corporate Plan 2017-22](#)

Report Completed: 22 November 2019

Submission of Evidence to Scrutiny – National and Regional Adoption Services

Author Head of Children and Young People Services, Newport City Council

Date 4 December 2019

Purpose To ensure Members are fully sighted on the on the work of the South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) and the links to the National Adoption Service (NAS).

Summary This report is provided in line with the Regulations as set out in the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2005. It provides information about the Regional and National arrangements for adoption. The appendices provide further detail for Members again both regionally and nationally.

Proposal **To inform Scrutiny Members of the work of the SEWAS and provide the information required for oversight.**

1. Background

The National Adoption Service (NAS) was launched in November 2014 with a remit of expectations to:

- Eradicate drift for children in care
- Eliminate waiting lists for training and assessment of adopters
- Improve the matching process for children
- Allay adoption breakdowns by improving adoption support
- Streamline the process to ensure better linking for children
- Provide a wide choice of placements
- Ensuring consistent delivery of adoption services across Wales.

The National Adoption Service is made up of the National team and five regions. The South East Wales Adoption Service is the region for NCC.

2. National Adoption Service and Regional arrangements

There is a small central team headed by the Director of Operations. The National team provides National direction, development and coordination to all the regions.

The Regions include:

- South East Wales Adoption Team (**SEWAS**) (Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Torfaen, Newport, Monmouthshire)
- Western Bay (**WB**) (Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot, Swansea)
- Vale, Valley's Cardiff (**VVC**) (Cardiff, Vale, Merthyr Tydfil, RCT, Vale of Glamorgan)
- North Wales (**NW**) (Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd)
- Mid and West Wales (**MWW**) (Carmarthen, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Powys)

Every region is responsible for:

Submission of Evidence to Scrutiny – National and Regional Adoption Services

Author Head of Children and Young People Services, Newport City Council

Date 4 December 2019

- Matching and placing children for adoption
- Recruitment and assessment of adopters
- Offering counselling to birth parents
- Offering advice to adopted adults
- Providing post adoption support
- Creating links with voluntary adoption agencies, health and education.

The National Annual Performance report (**Appendix 1**) and the Regional Annual Performance Report (**Appendix 2**) have been attached at the end of this report. Both reports focus on key areas, which include:

- Children placed and waiting for adoption
- Demand for adoptive placements and adopter recruitment
- Life journey materials
- Adoption Support.

3. Monitoring Arrangements

The performance of the National Adoption Service is monitored by a National Governance Board.

SEWAS has a regional Management Committee with Head of Service representation from each LA, health, education and third sector members.

4. National Adoption Service Annual Report 18/19

The full report can be found under **Appendix 1**. Below are the key elements of the report

The National Adoption Service (NAS) has been working for five years to support better outcomes for children for whom adoption is the best plan. The National Adoption Service has 2 priorities, which are

- I. Placing Children Effectively
- II. Continuing to improve adoption support by implementing the NAS Adoption Support Framework

Some of the achievements from the last five years have been:

- Successfully raised the profile of adoption with the public, funders and policy makers.
- Accessed additional funding; a £90k development grant from the Welsh Government each year, £125k targeted investment in 2017/18 and a £2.3m investment for adoption support to commence in 2019/20.
- Improved performance in the key areas of approving adopters and placing children more quickly, alongside embedding a performance culture supported through regular evaluation and reporting.
- Increased the availability of life journey materials through a new best practice approach.

Submission of Evidence to Scrutiny – National and Regional Adoption Services

Author Head of Children and Young People Services, Newport City Council

Date 4 December 2019

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- Developed how we listen to adopters and their children and ensured their messages and input make a difference to the service.
 - Created five regional adoption collaboratives as the focus for local government adoption expertise and access point for services.
 - Developed and maintained a strong partnership with the Welsh Voluntary Adoption Agencies. This added value, different expertise, additional services and more choice, resulting in exciting new services such as Adopting Together Service, TESSA and a new Children and Young People's service.
 - Commissioned and developed the all Wales website, which now provides a comprehensive source of information for parents and agencies.
 - Brought the Wales Adoption Register into the service, giving greater breadth and depth of choice for prospective parents and children.
 - Produced strategic plans, which not only outline what improvements are needed but help influence and improve legislation and policy, as well as achieve investment in times of constraint.

However, a number of challenges remain which are:

- Maintaining performance improvements and making them more consistent within services and across Wales.
- Improving service agility and access to resources to respond to emerging issues and changing service demands.
- Using our data and information to better effect.
- Making a complex governance and operational structure for collaboration, work effectively within local government and with partners.

The key message from the National report is the need to ensure that there are sufficient adopters available to meet the number and needs of children who have a plan for adoption. It is critical to achieve a strong pool of adopters for the children waiting. Along with adopters, the need for support for children and their parents post adoption is vital in order to ensure stable and secure lifelong families.

5. South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) End-year Performance Report 2018/19

The full report can be found under **Appendix 2**. The highlights are captured here.

- 70 children were placed in their new adoptive home, a similar number to 2017/18. Numerically this compares to 80, 85 and 71 over the last three years.
- The number of children waiting for an adoptive family was 70. This compares to 41, 47 and 76 over the last three years
- The children placed for adoption in SEWAS were on average placed within 16.8 months from becoming looked after, moving away from the benchmark of 13 months or less. We are aware the figures have been influenced by the courts ordering reviews of old placement orders which subsequently needed to be discharged, for example; change of plans for long term fostering, this coupled with some delay placing children with complex needs resulted in the average timescales increasing.
- At an average of 10.3 months, the time from placement order to placement, is an increase from last year and also higher than the benchmark of 6 months or less. This figure will have also been affected by the discharge of placement orders and the delay in placing

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children with complex needs. On a positive note within SEWAS 64% of children were placed within the benchmark of 6 months.

- 34% of the placements made were for children in sibling groups.
- 77% of placements made with local authority approved adopters.
- In SEWAS 59% of children placed this year had their life journey materials by the 2nd review, maintaining similar performance to last year. This is disappointing given the target is 100%. The service is using Welsh Government investment money to improve performance going forward.

Key messages in relation to Adopters in the SEWAS Region

- Enquiries to SEWAS from adopters decreased by 6%.
- Fewer assessments of adopters were commenced 45 compared to 67 last year.
- The number of adopters being approved in SEWAS increased to 47 in 2018/19
- On a positive note, SEWAS are the best performing region in Wales in respect of the timescales for adoption approvals. The performance measure from initial enquiry to approval is 8 months – SEWAS have been completing these assessments in 7.5 months. In respect of formal application to approval the benchmark is 6 months – SEWAS are within the benchmark at 5.2 months

Key Messages for Adoption Support

- SEWAS saw a similar level of post adoption support being sought and completed a similar number of assessments in the year. 58 new requests for post adoption support were received during 2018/19. The majority of these assessments completed resulted in practical or therapeutic support being provided
- Birth parents - the numbers of Birth Parents referred to adoption services nationally reduced by 13% during 2018/19. In SEWAS the number stayed at a similar level 222. All of these birth parents were offered a service by SEWAS. In many regions data availability, particularly on take up has been affected by system changes within the local authorities for a number of regions or the loss of 3rd sector provider. SEWAS has been unaffected by this. Take up within a year tends to be low nationally but SEWAS performance was similar to previous years at 14% (n32). A service was also offered to another 43 parents who requested it.

The number of adopters available to the children waiting ratio continues to be a concern but despite the pressures, the staff team have done well to maintain performance and remain committed to improving the service.

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6. Key data for Newport City Council 2018/19

Placement Orders	51	A Placement Order is granted by the court when adoption is the plan for a child.
Placed for adoption during year	22	The number of children placed in the year
Placements with Independent providers	9	These are placements outside of SEWAS when it has not been possible to source carers in SEWAS. Each placement in 2018/19 cost £27,000
Placements with SEWAS	13	
Adoption Orders	28	Adoption Order is the final hearing. Of these Orders 25 were unopposed while in 3 consent was dispensed with. Some of these children would have been placed in 2017/18

7. Financial Summary

SEWAS is a collaborative arrangement funded by the 5 local authorities. The Management Committee (required under regulation) is responsible for ensuring arrangements are in place to deliver the regional service and this includes financial arrangements. Budget pressures are managed effectively resulting in no overspend at the end of the financial year 18/19.

In 2018/19 the NCC contribution to SEWAS was £385,629

8. Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
Shortage of adopters	H	M	To improve performance in this area SEWAS will continue to invest in recruitment. We know that a large majority of adopters come to SEWAS because of 'word of mouth' with this mind we are building on our core offer of support to adopters to ensure they have a positive experience of the service. This core offer includes:- Direct work pre and post approval which prepares children and adopters for placement	Head of Children's Services, Strategic Director of People

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Date 4 December 2019

			Additional post approval adoption training before placement using therapeutic models Work with panel Assessment being completed in a timely manner; Advertising our core offer including our psychology service input which is a 'big sell'.	
Lack of support for children and adopters	H	M	Welsh Government recently allocated additional to improve adoption support. As a result new posts have been developed in 19/20 which should help increase the recruitment of adopters.	

9. Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The work of SEWAS is part of the wider work of Children's Services, which has been developed to support the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and is focused on:

Resilient Communities;
Aspirational People.

SEWAS also supports the Safe Reduction of Looked After Children Strategy 2017 -2020.

The Corporate Plan sets out the meeting of the Well Being Objectives. "Supporting children to remain safely with their families" is within Well Being Objective 3 – To enable people to be healthy, independent and resilient.

10. Cabinet Member

The Cabinet Member has approved the report for consideration by Scrutiny

11. Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010

There is no decision linked to this report hence there is no requirement for a FEIA.

12. Children and Families (Wales) Measure

SEWAS consults with all adopters following their attendance at: training; adoption panel for approval, and; when they are matched with children.

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The Adoption Support Team in SEWAS facilitates a number of support groups including; birth parent support, adopter support, therapeutic parenting support, and grandparent/ family and friend of adopters.

A quarterly newsletter is distributed to all adopters, which advises them on where they can access support and training.

13. Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Throughout this report the core principles of the WFG are referenced and interwoven. This is clearly a long term proposal which seeks to embed preventative working as a way to ensure good outcomes for citizens. Integration with other elements of the Council and public bodies is key to the success of the adoption service. Working in collaboration with families and partner agencies is vital and drives this plan. Throughout Children's Services we are looking for new ways to fully involve and engage children, young people, parents and carers this plan is key to that work.

Thinking for the Long Term (Forward Planning)

SEWAS uses the performance information to plan for the longer term and changing the way in which services are delivered.

Preventative Focus

The focus is on avoiding drift for children in care by providing adoption placements that meet the needs of children who are referred to the service. The performance measures highlight that children are now being placed for adoption in a timelier manner which supports local authority looked after children reduction plans. A good standard of adoption support is also essential to avoid adoption breakdown and prevent children coming back into care.

Collaboration / Partnership Working

The regions continue to work collaboratively by sharing information and good practice. There are a number of work streams in process to improve collaboration with partner agencies including improving CAMHS services to adopted children and working with education so they have a better understanding of the issues for adopted children.

Integration (Across Service Areas)

SEWAS continues to form relationships with other department in the councils in the region to improve outcomes for children who are placed for adoption. An example of this is working with communication teams to promote adoption within the region to attract adopters. We also provide training for local authority social workers on a quarterly basis.

14. Background Papers

Appendix 1 - National Adoption Service Annual Report 2018-19

Appendix 2 - SEWAS Regional 2018-19 End Year Performance Report

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu | National
Cenedlaethol | **Adoption**
Service

**Achieving More Together /
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd**

ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19





FOREWORD

Since being established in 2014 The National Adoption Service has focused on clear priorities to deliver an improved adoption service in Wales. This Annual Report (2018/19) reflects on achievements whilst identifying future priorities to deliver ongoing improvement of the service to children and adopters.

Actively listening to adopters and children has influenced how the National Adoption Service has evolved and developed to deliver change and good services. There is evidence that the benefits of improvement are being felt by many adopters and their children although we acknowledge there is more to do.

Continued improvement remains a priority for the service delivered through the Central Team, Regional Local Government Adoption Services and Voluntary Sector Agencies. This collaborative approach has brought a shared vision, priorities, strategies and delivery of services that is making a positive difference.

We are very pleased to take this opportunity to thank adopters, staff in all agencies within the National Adoption Service Collaborative for their hard work and dedication.

We are also delighted that the Welsh Government has made available a £2.3m investment package from 2019/20 which will enable us to move forward on agreed improvement priorities for the immediate future.

Much progress has been made since the Service's inception, but the needs of children in Wales continue to demand a faster and smarter response to the scale and complexity of the challenge. NAS is ambitious for the role we can play in responding to that challenge.



Philip T. Hodgson

Phil Hodgson
Independent Chair of the Advisory Group



Geraint Hopkins

Cllr Geraint Hopkins
Chair of Governance Board



Suzanne Griffiths

Suzanne Griffiths
Director

INTRODUCTION

The National Adoption Service for Wales is a collaboration for the provision of adoption services across Wales.

Since November 2014, it has brought together all local authority adoption services into five regional collaboratives, with co-ordination and leadership provided by a small central team and Director. Voluntary adoption agencies operating in Wales are key partners in the collaborative, as are other agencies such as health and education.

CENTRAL TEAM



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol | National
Adoption
Service

National Adoption Service – Central Team

c/o City of Cardiff Council,
Room 409 County Hall, Atlantic Wharf,
Cardiff, CF10 4UW
029 2087 3927
contact@adoptcymru.com
www.adoptcymru.com

NORTH WALES

Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy,
Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham



North Wales Adoption Service

3rd Floor, Lambpit Street,
Wrexham, LL11 1AR
01978 295311
adoption@wrexham.gov.uk
www.northwalesadoption.gov.uk

MID & WEST WALES

Ceredigion, Powys, Carmarthenshire,
Pembrokeshire



Mabwysiadu
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru
Adoption
Mid & West Wales

Mid & West Wales Adoption

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Carmarthenshire, SA31 3HB
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WESTERN BAY

Swansea, Neath Port Talbot,
Bridgend



Western Bay
ADOPTION SERVICE
GWASANAETH MABWYSIADU
Bae'r Gorllewin

Western Bay Adoption Service

Port Talbot Civic Centre,
Port Talbot CF131PJ
0300 365 2222
enquires@westernbayadoption.org
www.westernbayadoption.org

VALE, VALLEYS & CARDIFF

Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf,
Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan



Vale, Valleys
and Cardiff
Adoption | **Mabwysiadu**
yn y Ffro, y Cymoedd
a Cheerdydd

Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Adoption

Level 7, Ty Pennant, Catherine Street,
Pontypridd, CF37 2TB
0800 0234 064
adoption@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
www.adopt4vvc.org

SOUTH EAST WALES

Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent,
Torfaen, Caerphilly, Newport



South East Wales Adoption Service
Achieving More Together
Gwasanaeth Mabwysiadu Deddfwyrain Cymru
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd!

South East Wales Adoption Service

North Wing, 2nd Floor Block B,
Mamhilad House, Mamhilad Parke Estate,
Pontypool, Torfaen, NP40HZ
01495 355766
adoption@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/3122.asp

**ALL WALES VOLUNTARY
ADOPTION AGENCIES SERVICES**

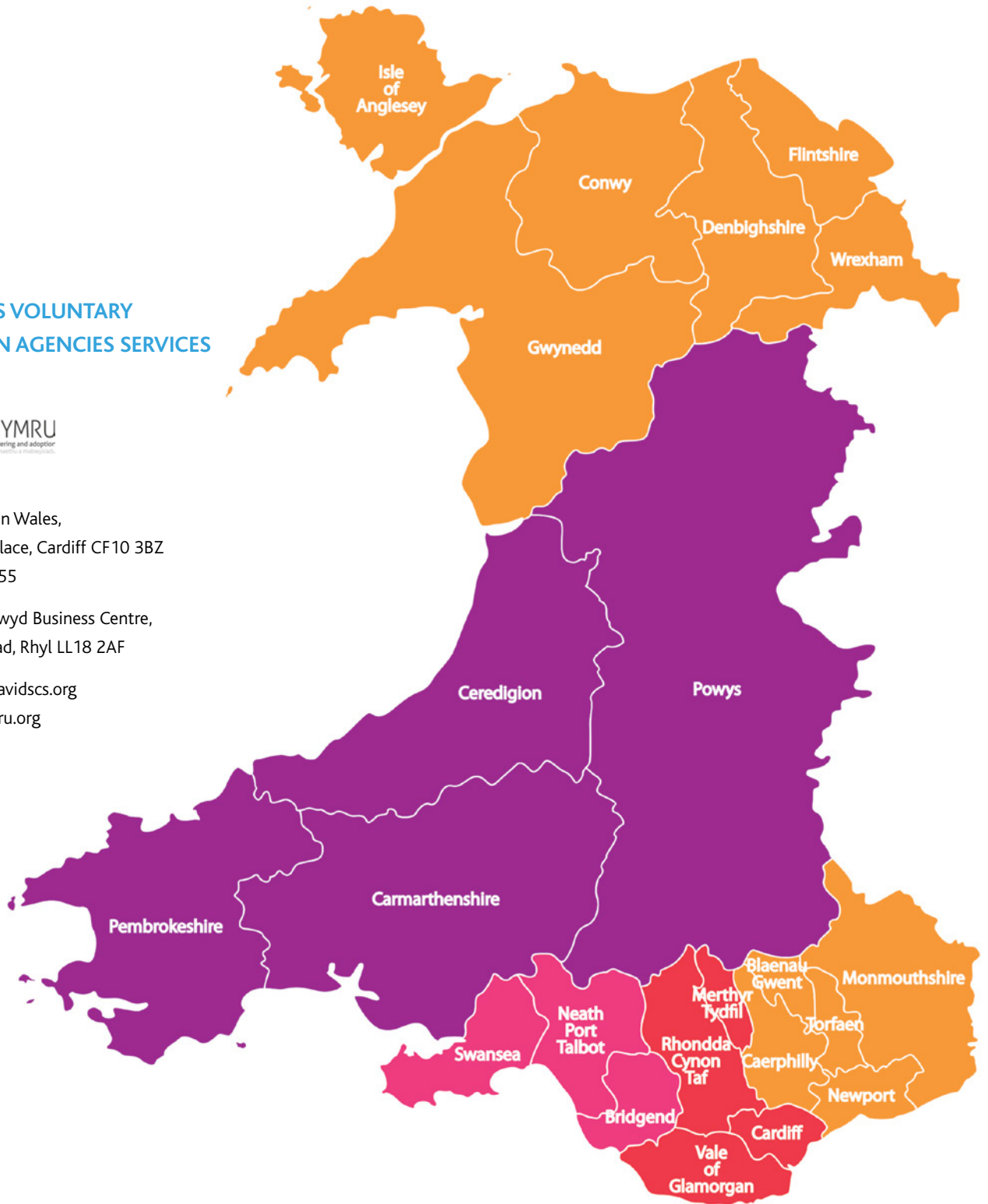


AFA Cymru

c/o Children in Wales,
25 Windsor Place, Cardiff CF10 3BZ
029 2076 1155

W2 Morfa Clwyd Business Centre,
84 Marsh Road, Rhyl LL18 2AF

Info-afa@stdavidscs.org
www.afacymru.org



Adoption UK

Penhaved Studios, Penhaved Street,
Grangetown, Cardiff, CF117LU
029 2023 0319
www.adoptionuk.org



Barnardo's Cymru

Trident Court, East Moors Road,
Cardiff, CF245TD
0800 0546 788
cymruadoptionandfostering@
barnardos.org.uk
www.barnardos.org.uk/adoption



St David's Children Society

28 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3BA
029 2066 7007
info@stdavidscs.org
www.adoptionwales.org

Tudalen 19

FIVE YEARS ON

Celebrating our achievements and embracing the challenges



The National Adoption Service (NAS) has been working for five years to support better outcomes for children for whom adoption is the best plan.

It was established in 2014 in response to a National Assembly Enquiry through a subsequent Ministerial Advisory Group. Its role is to work in a unique collaborative way, improving and coordinating the delivery of adoption services across Wales and in particular:

- Raising the profile of adoption;
- Improving timescales for children and adopters;
- Improving adoption support including changing the 'postcode lottery' for services; and
- Providing leadership to promote more consistent services and standards.

The role adoption plays in society continues to change; legislation continues to change to reflect this. What has not changed is that children who cannot remain with their birth family need permanent substitute families, to belong, to be nurtured and be loved. Adoption services provide these children with families as well as services and support to adoptive parents, birth parents and others affected by adoption.

This year marks the fifth year of the National Adoption Service and the thirtieth anniversary of the UK's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The National Adoption Service seeks to secure positive changes for children where adoption is in their best interests so that they might realise their rights under the convention.

SOME OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE LAST FIVE YEARS

- Successfully raised the profile of adoption with the public, funders and policy makers.
- Accessed additional funding; a £90k development grant from the Welsh Government each year, £125k targeted investment in 2017/18 and a £2.3m investment for adoption support to commence in 2019/20.
- Improved performance in the key areas of approving adopters and placing children more quickly, alongside embedding a performance culture supported through regular evaluation and reporting.
- Increased the availability of life journey materials through a new best practice approach.
- Developed how we listen to adopters and their children and ensured their messages and input make a difference to the service.
- Created five regional adoption collaboratives as the focus for local government adoption expertise and access point for services.
- Developed and maintained a strong partnership with the Welsh Voluntary Adoption Agencies. This added value, different expertise, additional services and more choice, resulting in exciting new services such as Adopting Together Service, TESSA and a new Children and Young People's service.
- Commissioned and developed the all Wales website, which now provides a comprehensive source of information for parents and agencies.
- Brought the Wales Adoption Register into the service, giving greater breadth and depth of choice for prospective parents and children.
- Produced strategic plans, which not only outline what improvements are needed but help influence and improve legislation and policy, as well as achieve investment in times of constraint.

THE CHALLENGES WE ARE NOW ADDRESSING ARE:

- Maintaining performance improvements and making them more consistent within services and across Wales.
- Improving service agility and access to resources to respond to emerging issues and changing service demands.
- Using our data and information to better effect.
- Making a complex governance and operational structure for collaboration, work effectively within local government and with partners.

THESE SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES INFORM OUR CURRENT VISION WHICH IS TO:

- > Increase the number and range of adoptive homes available so that all children with an adoption plan are placed in a timely way.
- > Ensure prospective and approved adopters receive good quality, timely assessment and support.
- > Implement the National Adoption Service Framework for Adoption Support to provide improved access to advice, information and services for those that need and want support.
- > Achieve overall improvements in the performance of adoption services across Wales.
- > Create a modern, responsive and forward-thinking adoption service for Wales.

Alongside these undoubted strides forward and improvements to services new challenges have become evident; not least of all in ensuring that there are sufficient adopters available to meet the number and needs of children for whom we are family finding.

THE SERVICE IN 2018/19



During the business year:

- more than 310 children were placed in their new adoptive home;
- approximately 280 children had their adoption orders granted¹;
- a further 338 children, with the legal authority to be placed, were waiting to be matched or placed with their new family at the end of the year;
- 212 new adoptive families were approved.

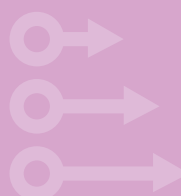
The service worked with circa 14% of the children who were looked after in Wales last year.

Welsh Government data indicates that for 2017/18 (latest available) 18% of all the children who ceased to be Looked After were adopted.

The adoption agencies that make up the National Adoption Service for Wales provide a range of services to support these children and their families, as well as for others affected by adoption.

In addition to working with the children above, adoption services across Wales also:

- provided adoption support to more than 100 of the children placed in the year
- facilitated more than 3,281 active letterbox contact arrangements
- provided a service to 268 birth parents
- received 38 requests for support from birth siblings' other relatives
- received 226 requests for access to birth records and
- received 124 requests for intermediary/tracing support.



OUR 2018/19 PRIORITIES

PRIORITY 1

Placing children effectively

- Keeping recruitment focused on the needs of children likely to be adopted
- Implementing the new Wales Adoption Register and adopter database

WHY WAS THIS IMPORTANT?

- We wanted to increase the range of adoptive homes available to meet the needs of all children with an adoptive plan.
- Research tells us outcomes in adoption are affected by the length of time children spend in care and their age at the time of placement. Being able to make a timely match for a child depends on having a sufficiency of adopters who are prepared to care for children who have varied and sometimes complex needs.
- Making the best possible match between children and adopters increases the likelihood of a successful outcome and improves timeliness.
- We aim to use the best information about service performance, research and best practice to develop more effective processes, and timeframes to underpin best practice.

HOW DID WE DO?

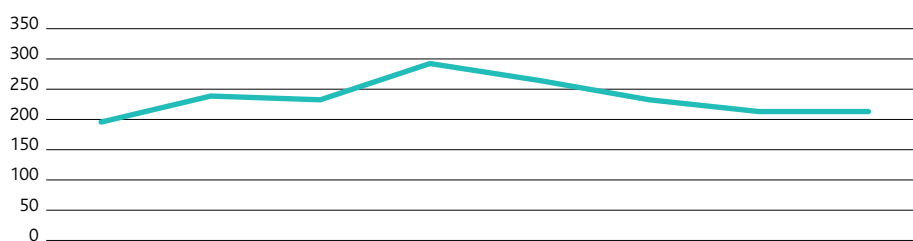
At 311, slightly more children were placed with their new families this year and approximately 280 children were already in placement and had their Adoption Orders granted.

However, recruiting sufficient adopters in Wales has become an ongoing challenge.

At the time of NAS's creation, we faced a different range of challenges, namely reducing waiting time to approve adopters and ensuring we were recruiting adopters who could be matched with children who had complex needs and were waiting longer.

Our strategies are now informed by our data, giving us a much better understanding of the need for placements, which is greater than the number of adopters we are approving. However, having an impact on recruitment takes time; recruitment in 2018/19 remained at a similar level to last year. Adopter recruitment in Wales has been falling and is now back to pre NAS levels; it is difficult to identify precisely why adopter approvals have fallen – this trend is, however, also evident in England and Scotland.

Adopters Approved



2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
197	245	236	294	266	236	212	212

The story behind the data

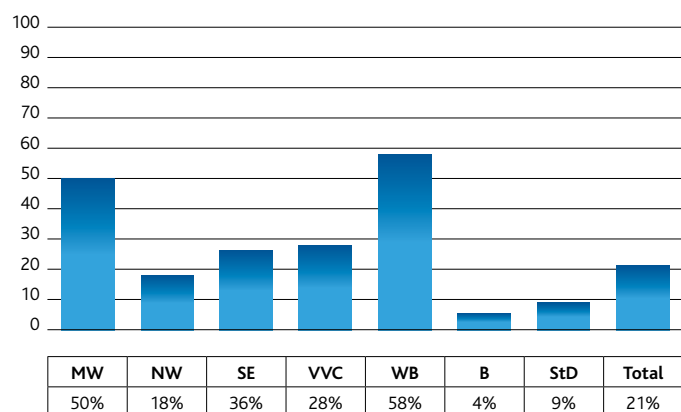
ADOPTER ENQUIRIES AND ASSESSMENTS

There has been an overall increase in enquiries from prospective adopters since NAS was formed.

However, the picture beneath this is more complex. At a regional level there is an overall upward trend in two of the bigger regions and maintenance in another, while the two voluntary adoption agencies have higher levels of enquiries.

In both the regional and voluntary adoption agencies, conversion of enquiries into assessments varies, with the regional services tending to see more applications resulting from enquiries received.

Percentage conversion from initial enquiry to assessment starting



Q4 2018-19, based on average of 3 months from Initial Enquiry to Assessment Starting

We can build on the early indications of success, in increasing the number of potential adopters coming forward at enquiry stage. Adopters have reported that:

- there is good information available through the national website and directly from the regional services;
- response times to enquiries are timely and many first contacts are considered helpful and supportive.

In order to understand this better, NAS commissioned customer feedback research to consider the reasons behind so many enquirers not proceeding beyond this stage. The overall findings are informing our work. Whilst identifying that the majority of enquirers cited personal reasons for not proceeding, key recommendations from the report also include:

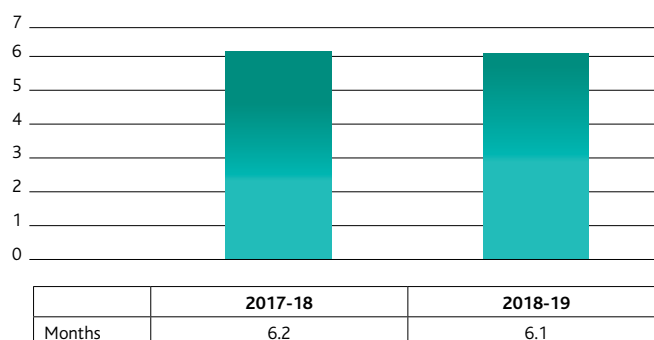
- A need for a more consistent message across agencies
- More flexibility around timeframes, where potential adopters want to delay their applications
- A more welcoming approach and clearer follow up processes for those who do want to defer applications.

This work has led to a number of changes which will be implemented in 2019/20:

- We are producing a good practice guide to support staff in dealing with enquiries and the early stage of the assessment process. This will move away from agencies trying to 'test' people at the very start of their enquiry and respond to adoption managers views that the messages that are given regarding issues such as smoking, income and medical criteria are up to date, accurate and consistent.
- We have commissioned Cowshed PR to support NAS at both national and regional levels. This will lead to better integrated marketing and recruitment activity.
- We are providing more focused efforts to increase enquiries and approvals within a revised NAS Recruitment Strategy. Using recognised marketing techniques, we aim to keep people engaged and ensure barriers families face, to progress their interest into further action, are removed.
- To meet planned changes to regulations, we are implementing a two-stage process for the assessment and approval of prospective adopters whilst reducing the timescales for making use of the Adoption Register for Wales. NAS has been working since 2015 to influence a change in the Adoption Agency (Wales) Regulations 2003 to simplify and streamline the recruitment and assessment of prospective adopters. This has borne fruit with revised regulations due to be implemented in 2019/20.

The above will enable us to further improve the timeframes for adopter approvals. The average timeframe from enquiry to approval improved to just 9.1 months this year, with administrative delays around essential checks behind many that took longer. The time between the formal application by adopters and their approval is good, an average of 6.2 months, which is within the government guideline. 56% of applicants were approved with the 6-month benchmark.

Average timeframe (months) from formal application to adopters approval



Benchmark: 6 months or less

DEMAND FOR PLACEMENTS

The numbers of placement orders being granted by Welsh courts is now showing year on year fluctuations after a peak of 467 in 2012/13; regions report that circa 340 placement orders were made in 2018/19. This is alongside a further increase in the number of children being identified by local authorities as, likely to be in need of an adoptive placement, which indicates that similar, or more placement orders are likely as we go through the coming year.

We are using these trends to project forward so that regions and agencies have a clear understanding of likely demand, allowing them to plan activity in advance in order to meet more ambitious recruitment goals.



IMPACT ON PLACEMENT ACTIVITY

The number of children waiting for a placement reduced slightly at the end of this year.

NAS had previously been successful in reducing average timeframes for children being placed, but this has changed this year.

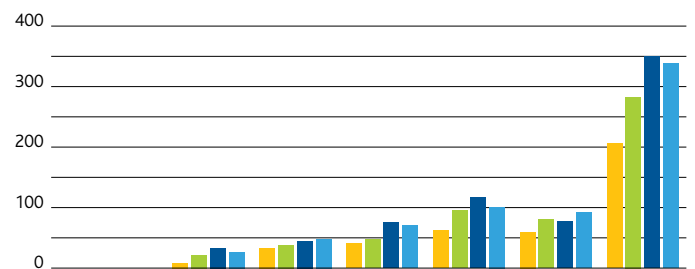
Although almost half of the children were placed within the benchmark of 6 months or less, during 2018/19, the projected annual average time has increased in 2018/19 to 9.9 months.

There are a number of factors that have impacted on this indicator:

- Some adoptive homes have been more challenging to find due to a small number of children with very complex needs;
- Late decisions or delayed applications where it is agreed that foster carers can adopt the children they are caring for;
- Prolonged court proceedings including appeals by birth parents.

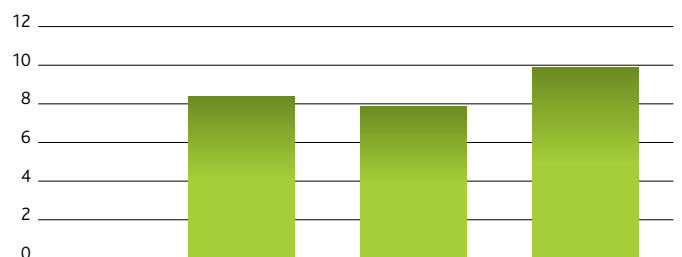
The more positive aspect of this is that regions have been increasingly successful in placing children with more complex needs, however as identified this leads to placement preparations taking longer.

Measure 7: Number of children with 'should be placed decision' and placement order who have not yet been placed



	MWW	NW	SE	VVC	WB	Total
2015/16	9	34	41	62	60	206
2016/17	22	39	47	95	80	283
2017/18	34	46	76	117	77	350
2018/19	27	48	70	101	92	338

Average timeframe (months) between placement order and placed for adoption



	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Months	8.4	7.9	9.9

Benchmark: 6 months or less

What else is helping us recruit adopters and place children?



ADOPTING TOGETHER SERVICE

The voluntary adoption agencies in Wales play a key role in delivering adoption services across the country, and recent innovative projects like the 'Adopting Together Service' demonstrates their commitment and capacity to work creatively and support the sector as a whole.

Adopting Together Service was launched this year in 2018/19 – a collaborative project between St David's and Barnardo's with Adoption UK in Wales and supported by the statutory sector through the National Adoption Service. It emerged, following a request from statutory services, for a creative response to a shared desire and need, to secure permanence for children who wait longest for a family.

Contracts have now been agreed in four out of the five regional services.

Although the number of children placed is unlikely to be high, it is of utmost importance that children with additional needs have the opportunity to experience living in stable and loving homes. Twelve children have been placed to date in the first year of operation, with a target of placing 25 children in 2019/20.

The scheme provides a new best practice for placing children and providing early support and is being evaluated by Cardiff University School of Psychology. An indication of its innovation and value is that it received The Institute of Collaboration ICW Innovation Award and a Highly Commended 1 Award in the GO Wales Social and Community benefit category.



WALES ADOPTION REGISTER / ADOPTION REGISTER FOR WALES

We have worked hard in the past year to ensure that the new bilingual Wales Adopter Register, now called the Adoption Register for Wales (ARW) is ready to be launched. In order to do this the Central Team has:

- Commissioned a new partner, 'Link Maker', to provide a modern bi-lingual and on-line linking service;
- Linked with adoption services and agencies to support implementation of the new Adoption Register for Wales, raising awareness for staff use and ensuring transfer of information about children and adopters;
- Supported the development of a set of national guidelines, which outline expectations for use of the Register;
- Briefed partners, and stakeholders including Heads of Children's Services and Family Justice Network for Wales through the publication of regular bulletins.

The new Adoption Register for Wales came into operation in March 2019 and was formally launched in June 2019. The aim of the ARW is to improve how we match children to prospective adopters. It will be more user friendly and efficient and provides managed access for approved adopters. It will also allow the development of a 'keeping in touch' system for adopters as part of the improved adoption support arrangements.

Significantly, all children and adopters will be listed on the Register more quickly. It will facilitate matching, managed at a regional, Welsh and UK level when needed.

During its last year of operation the previous Wales Adoption Register:

- Matched 36 children through the register data base, Adoption Exchange Days and an Adoption Activity Day;
- Saw an increase in child referrals to the register during the year although the end of year figure as of March 2019 was 293, 57 less than the previous year;
- Saw changes in the profile of children waiting; over 60% being below the age of 3, fewer sibling groups and the percentage of those with additional or complex needs continued to rise;
- Saw the number of adopters referred to the register continuing to drop, with just 32 active for family finding at the end of the year. This reflects proactive family finding with many adopters being pre-linked by the time they are approved.

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PRIORITY 2

Continuing to improve adoption support by implementing the NAS Adoption Support Framework

- Agreeing the next priorities and identifying funding
- Continuing things that are already helping e.g. improving Life Journey Work, improving 'adoption awareness' in schools and health services, changing the law for adoption support, improving training and development for adopters, consistent approaches across Wales.

WHY?

The Wales Adoption Cohort Study by Cardiff University shows that 47% of children who are placed for adoption had experienced at least 4 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) before they were placed. This puts them in the highest risk group for later life difficulties, in line with just 14% of the general population. It is therefore critical that good support is available from the start as well as being accessible throughout childhood.

Adopted children have additional needs that emerge at different points in their lives and can continue into adulthood. These can include; understanding their identity as an adopted child, why they were adopted, managing contact and feelings of loss or grief. Many of these are issues are unique to adoptive families and require adoption informed support. Children, young people and adopters consistently report high levels of dissatisfaction with the process of getting help and sometimes with the quality of the help itself.

Research also tells us that adoption and the long-term legacy for children who have suffered significant harm are generally poorly understood. There is a particular need to improve awareness in schools, where adopted children are being excluded at a younger age and in greater numbers than their peers. Children who have been in care often have additional learning needs and a more complex mixture of difficulties.

It is a NAS priority to deliver high quality adoption services in Wales.

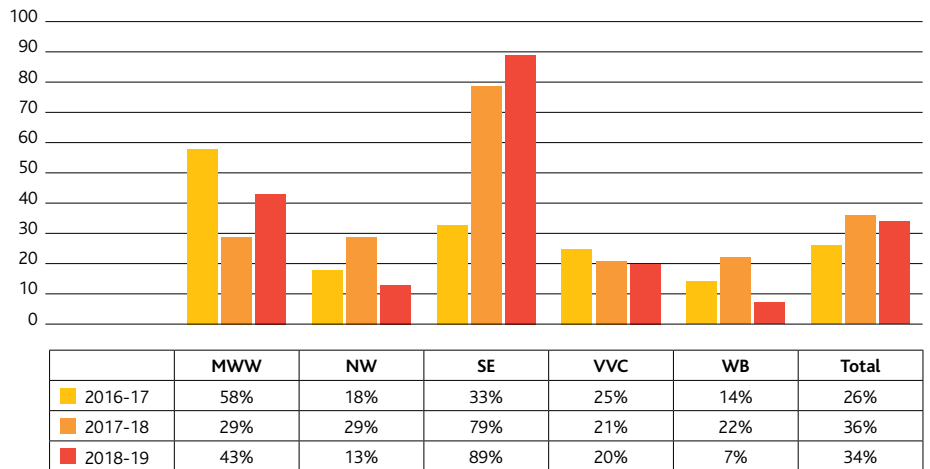
ADOPTION SUPPORT CARRIED OUT IN 2018/19

- More than 3,281 active letterbox contact arrangements were in place (a reduction from 2017/18)
- 819 birth parents were referred to adoption services in 2018/19 (a reduction from 2017/18) of these 98% were offered a service
- A service was provided to 268² birth parents
- 38 requests for support were received from birth sibling and other relatives (a reduction from 2017/18)
- 226 requests for access to birth records were received, an increase on the 205 for 2017/18
- 124 requests for intermediary / tracing support were received, a reduction on the 156 for 2017/18.

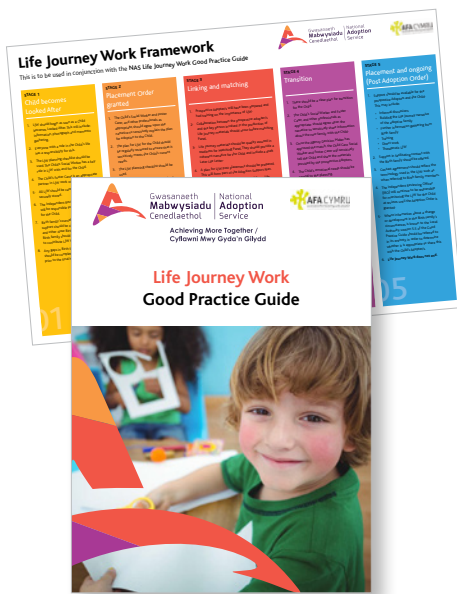
There was a slight reduction in the number of children who had an ongoing service established at point of placement, down from 112 (36%) in 2017/18 to 107 (34%). This masks significant regional variations as well as year on year changes within regions, linked to the fact that support packages are individualised.

² A number of regions were unable to provide data as required from their LA's. An additional region was unable to provide data due to the contractor going into administration.

Percentage of children placed for adoption whose plan for adoption support involved ongoing service provision at the point of placement



There were fewer new requests for post adoption support received, with decreases in 2 regions. There were 160 assessments for post adoption support completed, similar to previous figures. The majority of these completed assessments resulted in practical or therapeutic support being provided to families.



LIFE JOURNEY WORK

We have continued to implement and develop the new NAS Framework for 'Life Journey' work.

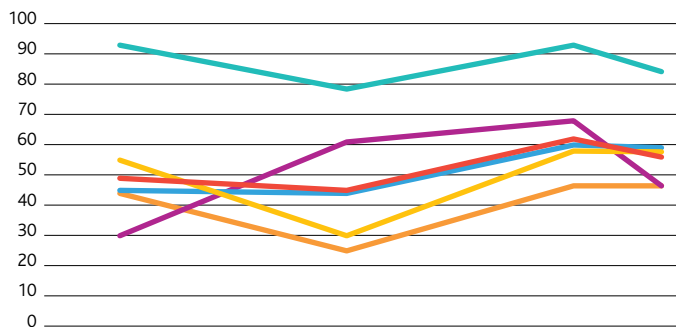
All children who cannot be cared for by their birth families, need to have an understanding of their family history and their unique journey. Life Journey Work is designed to help a child make sense of their past and understand their current situation in order to help them move into the future. Life journey work should support a child's identity, promote self-esteem, and help give the child a sense of belonging, wellbeing and support good mental health. The NAS website hosts guidance and existing tool kits around life journey work and we are currently working on making toolkits for children and young people, foster carers and birth parents available.

In November 2018 NAS was invited to present the 'Framework' developments within Wales to the Adoption UK national conference.

In January 2019 a conference was held in Wales to formally launch the Framework. Opened by the new Deputy Minister for health and Social Services, Julie Morgan, this highly successful event was oversubscribed with more than 110 delegates from across Wales attending, taking back the learning into their agencies.

Due to varying performance levels across Wales (from 83% to 46%) overall improvement has marginally declined. This will continue to be a priority area for NAS with all regions committing to making further improvements.

Percentage of children at second adoption review with Life Journey materials in place



	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Mid & West Wales	92%	79%	92%	83%
North Wales	44%	25%	46%	46%
South East Wales	45%	43%	60%	59%
Vale, Valleys & Cardiff	30%	61%	68%	46%
Western Bay	55%	30%	58%	57%
WALES	49%	45%	62%	56%

Consultation with adopters was commissioned through our 'Adopter Voice' service with Adoption UK Cymru. We wanted to identify whether adopters were beginning to see improvements in the life journey materials being provided.

There was evidence of some improved satisfaction amongst adopters who had adopted more recently (within the last 3 years) suggesting that, whilst there is still some work to be done in terms of delivering the Life Journey framework, improvements are being made. Significantly, adopters suggested that:

- More training workshops are needed pre matching to prepare adopters.
- The most confident parents were the ones who had met with birth parents.
- Overall adopters preferred having accurate information and then making the life journey book themselves.

These comments will feed into the ongoing improvement project.



How did we do on our improvement priorities?

We have focussed this year on continuing to implement the NAS Adoption Support Framework which is key to successful outcomes. We were delighted when the Welsh Government announced that they were making available a £2.3m investment package from 2019/20; this will enable us to move forward with our focus on the agreed improvement priorities for the immediate future.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR ADOPTERS

We have finalised the post-approval training package for adopters. This now includes twelve different modules, providing advanced information on areas that adopters asked for, such as; 'Attachment and Trauma', 'Parenting teenagers', 'Understanding and dealing with challenging behaviours' and 'Life Journey work'.

- This work was led by AFA Cymru and Adoption UK Cymru. The modules have been tested thoroughly including within regional services and will be launched during 2019/20.

We have improved our preparation training, with Adoption UK Cymru and AFA Cymru also leading on this working, utilising existing trainers to refresh and extend the preparation offer.

- This will also be launched during 2019/20 and will include a guide for prospective adopters outlining what to expect along with an individualised planner.



IMPROVING ADOPTION AWARENESS IN EDUCATION

NAS supports and works alongside the lead organisation Adoption UK in this area of work, with support provided by the Education Minister, as well as resources from the Welsh Government's 'Supporting Vulnerable Learners' section.

Adoption UK has continued to deliver its 'Adoption Support Wales – Getting it Right for Every Child' programme which extended its previous success; producing a school's guide and a parent's guide for working with adopted children

- Delivering a series of master classes supported by staff from the regional services to education professionals and adopters. This ensured they understood adoption, what it means for children and families and how they can shape and improve services to meet adopted children's needs.
- Delivering INSET training to 479 education staff in schools across Wales on the needs of adopted children
- Delivering education 'master classes' with 500 people participating and giving extremely positive feedback. The learning from this work has been made digitally available for use by school staff when supporting other adopted children.

NAS supported the launch of Adoption UK's 'Equal Chance' campaign, in Wales during June 2018. This UK wide campaign aims to ensure that adopted children have the same chances to education as other children by raising awareness of their particular needs for additional support.

The work was further supported when the Welsh Education Minister wrote to all schools encouraging them to co-operate in supporting adopted children within education services.

IMPROVING ADOPTION AWARENESS IN HEALTH SERVICES

NAS benefits from input by the Designated Doctor for the NHS National Safeguarding Team and a lead Medical Advisor from North Wales into its Advisory Group; they work with us on health-related matters as does the Welsh Government CAMHS lead.

- We worked with these key health advisors and industry experts Practice Solutions to develop a publication for health service staff; 'Care about Adoption – A Guide for Healthcare Professionals'. This will come into use during 2019/20.

The guide will enable health staff to positively contribute to the well-being of adopted children young people and their families.



NEW INITIATIVE IN ADOPTION SUPPORT

TESSA

NAS worked alongside Adoption UK, to develop the Wales element, of a successful UK wide bid for funding from the National Lottery Community fund for the TESSA service.

TESSA – a therapeutic education support service for adoptive families began to be established in Wales in February 2019. It is the intention that NAS adds to the resources available for TESSA through match funding from the investment in 2019/20. The service sets out to deliver:

- > A focus on early intervention and support as soon as post-settling in concerns are raised
- > Professional psychological assessments for children, with information shared with parents and other support staff
- > 6-session therapeutic parenting support, delivered by teams consisting of a clinical psychologist and experienced adoptive parents (parent partners)
- > Ongoing parent partner support.



CHANGING TO KEEP PACE WITH THE 21ST CENTURY LIVING – CONTACT

NAS is continually seeking to improve adoption services informed by research and the life experiences of those affected by adoption, within a society that is continuously changing. This means that adoption policy and practice needs to develop, whilst keeping children's need for security and a sense of belonging firmly at its heart. Contact is one of the areas where this is most challenging.

In order for adopted children to be confident about their identity, they need information about their past. This requires us to change the 'clean break' approach to adoption of letterbox contact and annual exchanges of letters. We want to modernise contact to maintain children's rights to permanence and security, while enabling them to know and understand their history.

- We have been working with partners to respond to a recommendation from the Children's Commissioner for Wales, that NAS works with the Welsh Government *'to ensure that siblings' rights to contact are fully considered during adoption care planning'*.
- NAS attended and provided an issues paper for a scoping event with Welsh Government and other stakeholders.
- In order to get a better understanding of what would work better in sibling contact, we commissioned Adoption UK Cymru and the former After Adoption, to undertake consultation with adopters and adopted children and young people.
 - From an adopters' perspective this identified that contact arrangements, agreed at placement, often become unworkable and that there would be widespread benefit from increasing support to adopters and birth families. Practical areas for development were suggested including production of guidance, standardised templates and in-depth research to better understand what is best for children in terms of contact.
 - From a young person's perspective it was concluded that contact is positive and should be allowed and encouraged where possible, with young people stating that they felt the care they receive and connections they make, pre adoption, are an integral part of their early attachment and should be continued where they can³.

- We've continued to work with other partners and are collaborating with:
 - Voices from Care Cymru, to be part of an 'Event' to create change in how we support ongoing sibling relationships.
 - Swansea Law Centre, to produce an advice leaflet for adopted and looked after children.

WHAT ELSE HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

We continued to request that Welsh Government brings entitlement to adoption support, into line with the Social Service and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014; Welsh Government has committed to doing this when the opportunity arises.

We continued to engage with adopters and children and young people to hear and understand their experiences through Adoption Voices and the former Talk Adoption services. We also focused on co-producing development where we could.

- Adopter Voice reports have been provided to all five regions and the third sector providers, for consideration by their management boards or equivalent.
- NAS worked with Adoption UK to develop the Wales section of their new Adoption Barometer which will be an annual survey gauging views from adopters. The first wave of this was distributed at the year, with an initial report expected in the Spring.

Most significantly, NAS has been involved this year in ensuring that a direct service for children and young people could continue, following the former After Adoption announcement that they would be withdrawing from providing services in Wales after March 2019.

We successfully worked with Adoption UK Cymru to support it to become the provider for this service, so that it could continue to support the circa 100 children and young people registered. We look forward to continuing to work with Adoption UK Cymru to expand and develop this valuable service.

³ The report was based on structured discussions with a very small number of children supplemented by informal information gathered through group sessions.

Regional & Voluntary Adoption Agencies Priorities and Achievements



AFA CYMRU

- Life Journey Work (LJW) – the annual conference was attended by over 100 people
- The LJW pack has been expanded to include materials for birth parents, young people and foster carers.
- Taking a collaborative approach to the development of post approval training courses – working alongside adopters and social workers to develop materials

BARNARDO'S

- The push within Barnardo's and NAS from an Equalities Diversity and Inclusion perspective has seen an increase in applications from people with more diverse backgrounds and cultures.
- Work to achieve an improvement in the timescales from Enquiry to Approval and ultimately placement of children

ADOPTION UK CYMRU

Many of our services are provided by volunteers who are also adoptive parents – between them they provided 984 hours of support to other adoptive parents.

- Established a buddy scheme for new adopters within the Adopting Together scheme.
- Worked with AFA Cymru to develop twelve training modules for use by adopters' post-adoption order, as well as new guidance and information for prospective adopters to be used during the preparation training.
- Delivered training to nearly 500 adoptive parents and delivered INSET training to 479 education staff in schools across Wales and responded to 1,376 contacts 25% higher than last year.
- As part of a UK wide project, Adoption UK Cymru were successful in an application to the Big Lottery Community Fund. This will provide therapeutic and educational input to adoptive families early in their adoption journey, in order to prevent difficulties building up over the coming years.

MID & WEST WALES

- Improved preparation arrangements in order to reduce delay for adopter assessments.
- Used social media to successfully increase attendance at Information Events.
- Produced an innovative short film with birth parent and adopters, which highlighted positive contact arrangements.

NORTH WALES

- Appointment of a Contact Coordinator Officer, offering a consistent response and support to adopters and birth parents, with in-direct and direct contact.
- Worked with expert Richard Rose, to implement the Life Story Framework.
- Expanded the Buddy scheme for adopters.
- Invested in upskilling Training Officer – completed Dyadic developmental psychotherapy level 2 and is currently undertaking a diploma in therapeutic parenting.

SOUTH EAST WALES

- Significant investment in workforce development including accessing innovative 'Circle of Security' training.
- Improved the information pack for adopters.
- Enhanced adopter's preparation training with greater focus on Therapeutic Models of parenting

ST DAVID'S CHILDREN SOCIETY

- External launch of Adopting Together Service and first placement made.
- Invested in upskilling social workers in Theraplay and DDP.
- Received two awards for Adopting Together – Winner of The Institute of Collaboration ICW Innovation Award and Highly Commended 1 in the GO Social and Community Benefit in Procurement Award.

VALE, VALLEYS & CARDIFF

- Appointment of a Marketing Officer offering a timely, consistent response to adopter enquiries and building knowledge of adopter demographic within the region.
- The development of the Life Journey Work 'champion' role resulting in positive progress in this area.
- Highest number of children placed for adoption since region was established.

WESTERN BAY

- Strengthened the work of our adoption panel on matching, by introducing a checklist to ensure that all the relevant information such as life journey materials, transition plans etc. are in place.
- Improved co-production; adopters have been involved in a quarterly form for adoption support and a successful inaugural profiling event to help approved adopters consider a wider range of children needing adoptive placements.
- Providing additional early support, where children with additional needs are placed with WBAS adopters.



PRIORITY 3

Forward thinking

- Thinking about the sort of adoption service we want for the future
- Continuing co-production and engagement with those who use adoption services
- Working to improve the legal, policy & evidence framework that affects adoption
- Encouraging the development of improved professional understanding and skills



WHY?

The National Adoption Service was created to improve services for all those affected by adoption in Wales. However, the needs and challenges faced by children presenting for adoption are changing rapidly and there is an on-going need to respond more consistently and effectively particularly in the areas of recruitment of adopters and ongoing support.

We also want to modernise the service to make adoption experience better for children, young people, and their adopters as well as others affected by adoption.

HOW DID WE DO?

We believe that adoption continues to provide good outcomes for children. The role of NAS is to ensure Welsh adoption services keep pace with the changing global environment of engagement and the way people live their lives.

We can and will contribute to the continued discussion about the role adoption plays in permanency planning across the country. Alongside this we will seek to continue to improve services through effective planning, informed by research and evidence from people who use our services.

The sections above gives an outline of the many things we have done to both deliver and improve services. We have also continued to engage in strategic and infrastructure work;

- We have considered the outcomes of the NAS Review of Arrangements which has been carried out for us, independently, by the Institute of Public Care. We have acted to implement the recommendations which will contribute to the streamline national level governance over the next year alongside looking at how we further improve accountability.



- Successfully secured marketing and recruitment support to increase adopter recruitment.
- Improved the integration of NAS policy work across local government and third sector organisations by working jointly with AFA Cymru so we can better influence more consistent and innovative practice.
- Provided advice to the Welsh Government for their proposed changes to adoption regulations as well as in relation to relevant education and safeguarding matters.
- Undertook work with the Adoption Leadership Board in England and Welsh services to ensure that Wales would stay in line with increases to the interagency adoption fee. These are paid when an adoptive placement is secured and purchased from another adoption agency. This led to the Welsh VAA's agreeing a short delay to allow Welsh local authorities time to plan in the adjustment.
- Put in place alternative arrangements for the NAS Performance Monitoring System when the current contract runs out in June 2019. Expert advice has been commissioned, working with Data Unit Wales to develop a service specification, which will deliver a flexible, easy to use system to improve accuracy and support. This will provide us with flexibility to join up with the Wales Community Care Information System in the future.
- Supported practice development
 - Inter-country adoption training was commissioned and delivered
 - Post commencement training was commissioned and delivered
 - Continued to share research and good practice across the regional collaboratives and to use the evaluation emerging from initiatives such as the 'Adopting Together' service.
 - Shared learning from significant cases, specifically, this year, the child practice review by the Regional Safeguarding Children Board in Wales, into the death of an adopted child. The central team worked with the adoption region and will be holding an all Wales practice seminar to share the learning.
- Worked to advocate and develop a business case which has resulted in Welsh Government investing £2.3 million ongoing funding to improve adoption services.

PLANS FOR 2019/20 ONWARDS

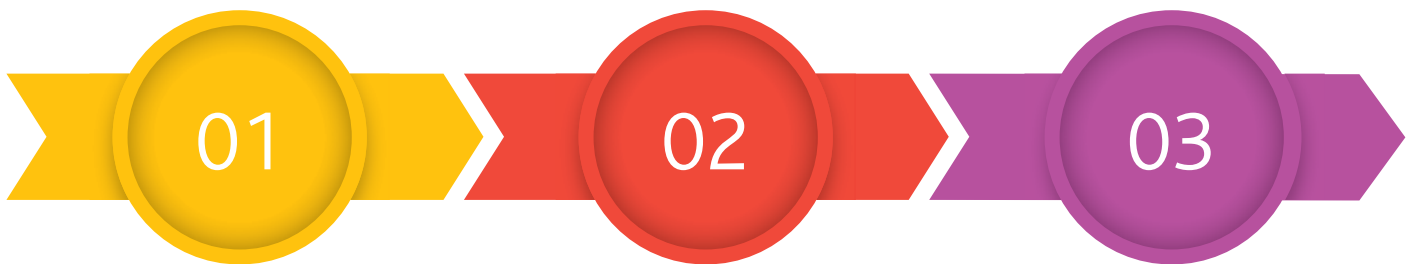
This plan will build on the improvements made over the first five years of NAS; with the significant benefit of the availability of new investment funding.

This is in the form of £2.3m from Welsh Government for service improvement; around £250,000 via Adoption UK Cymru for TESSA from the Big Lottery and Communities Fund, in addition to grant aid of around £300,000 to the Voluntary Adoption Agencies from Welsh Government Third Sector grant scheme currently agreed up to 2020.

The National Adoption Service will continue to work to deliver services to high numbers of children, young people and families and others affected by adoption; mainly through NAS regional services and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies. The core business of the service will continue to be, recruiting adopters so that children who cannot be cared for by their own families can live in stable, loving homes as the best alternative.

The work of NAS is closely linked with the Welsh Government Ministerial Advisory Group for Children (MAG). Adoption features across the numerous work streams of this important national initiative.

Improvement priorities for 2019/20



Placing more children

Increase recruitment of adopters to meet the number and needs of children waiting including use of 'Adopting Together' for children who wait longest

Embed the new Adoption Register for Wales to speed up matching of children through quicker notification of children and adopters in line with revised regulations

Continuing to improve adoption support

Implementing the Adoption Support Framework and investment plans

Continuing to raise awareness amongst professionals and the public

Thinking ahead

Continuing to co-produce and use information from engagement

Using data from the revised performance measurement system

Working to improve the legal, policy and evidence framework that affects adoption

Encouraging the development of workforce understanding and skills to meet NAS priorities

The National Adoption Service was created to improve services for all those affected by adoption in Wales.

The National Adoption Service (NAS) for Wales, launched in November 2014, is an innovative collaborative for the provision of adoption services. It brought together Welsh local authority adoption services into a three-tier structure which includes partnerships at all levels with Voluntary Adoption Agencies based in Wales, Health and Education Services, as well as others.

At local authority level, all 22 Welsh councils continue to provide services to all looked after children whilst identifying and working with those children for whom a plan for adoption is appropriate.

Regionally, local authorities work together within five regional collaboratives to provide a range of adoption services. Each regional collaborative has links with the voluntary adoption agencies, health and education. The services provided differ in each collaborative but all provide the adoption agency functions for children, recruit and assess adopters, offer counselling to birth parents and advice to adopted adults. Some currently directly provide adoption support services, whereas in others this remains with their local authorities.



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu | National
Cenedlaethol | **Adoption**
Service

National Adoption Service Central Team
c/o City of Cardiff Council
Room 409 County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
Cardiff CF10 4UW

T: 029 2087 3927
E: contact@adoptcymru.com
www.adoptcymru.com

National Adoption Service for Wales

South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) End-year Performance Report 2018/19






Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
 Cenedlaethol | National
Adoption
 Service
Achieving More Together /
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd

This report outlines the position at 31.03.19, the end of the 2018/19 business year. It focuses on key elements of the data set namely:

- Children placed and waiting for adoption;
- Demand for adoptive placements and adopter recruitment;
- Life journey materials and
- Adoption Support.

Regional Overview

-  70 children were placed in their new adoptive home, a similar number to 2017/18. Numerically this compares to 85, 80, 85 and 71 over the last four years.
-  58 children had their adoption orders granted¹;
-  70 children, with the legal authority to be placed for adoption, were waiting to be matched or placed with their new family at the end of the year.

Although relatively static at the end of this year and last, the trend shows that SEWAS is placing fewer children and has more waiting. This year on average it took longer for children to be placed although at least two thirds of children are placed within the guideline timeframes. More children had their plans for adoption change to alternative permanence options.

In order to meet its own need for placements the region needs to more than double the number of adopters it approves to circa 100. SEWAS' response to prospective adopter enquiries is currently good and applicant assessments are completed within the guideline timeframes. If the region could scale this up including increasing enquiries and improving conversion rates it would be in a better position.

At 59% SEWAS has maintained its previously improved performance in respect of life journey work in place by the 2nd adoption review but not moved closer to the 100% target.

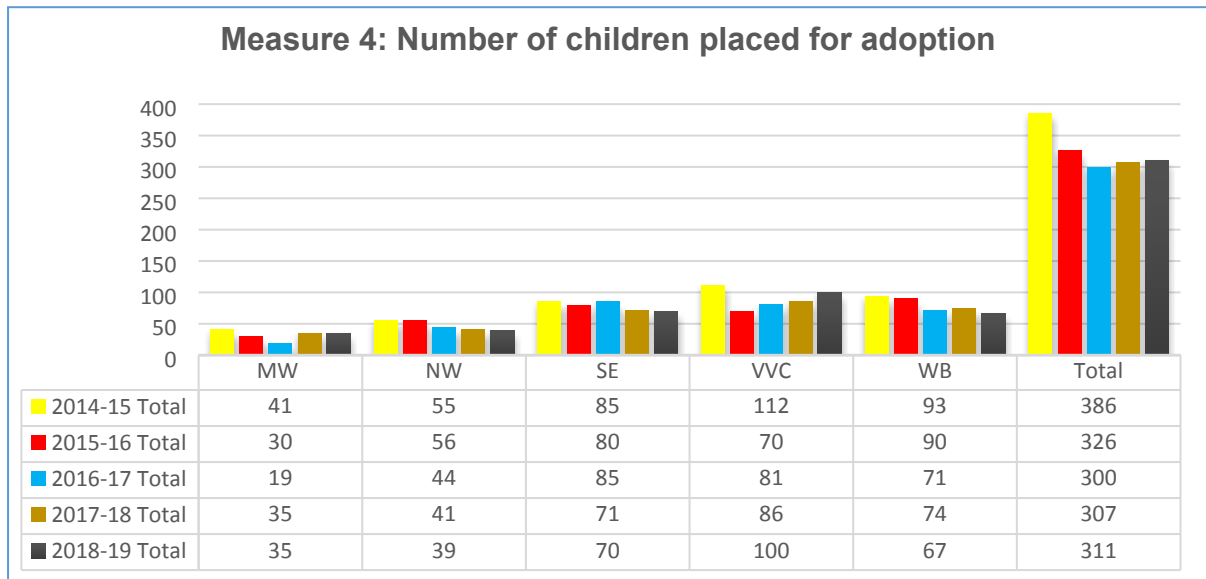
¹ NAS data from regions to be verified against WG statistics later in the year

Key points

- The children placed for adoption in SEWAS were on average placed within 16.8 months from becoming looked after, longer than months in 2017/18 and moving away from the benchmark of 13 months or less.
- At an average of 10.3 months, the time from placement order to placement, is an increase from last year and also higher than the benchmark of 6 months or less. Within SEWAS 64% of children were placed within this benchmark for 'placement order to placement' (6 months).
- 34% of the placements made were for children in sibling groups.
- 77% of placements made with local authority approved adopters.
- The level of SEWAS matches that do not proceed increased this year to 4 but disruptions remained at a similar level 3%.
- The number of children waiting for an adoptive family was 70. This compares to 41, 47 and 76 at the end of the last three years.
- Enquiries to SEWAS from adopters decreased by 6%.
- Fewer assessments of adopters were commenced 45 compared to 67 last year.
- The average time from enquiry to approval for a SEWAS adopter decreased to 7.5 months while the time frame from formal application to approval is 5.2 months. Both are better than the national averages and meet or are close to the Welsh Government guidelines.
- The number of adopters being approved in SEWAS increased to 47 in 2018/19.
- Projections indicate that circa 100 placements will be needed to place the children currently waiting and those for whom a placement order is likely to be granted during the coming year.
- In SEWAS 59% of children placed this year had their life journey materials by the 2nd review, maintaining similar performance to last year.
- More SEWAS children had had an ongoing adoption support service in place at the point of placement, 62 (89%).
- SEWAS saw a similar level of post adoption support being sought. 58 new requests for post adoption support were received during 2018/19. The majority of the assessments completed resulted in practical or therapeutic support being provided.
- SEWAS provided a service to 75 birth parents.

Children placed for adoption.

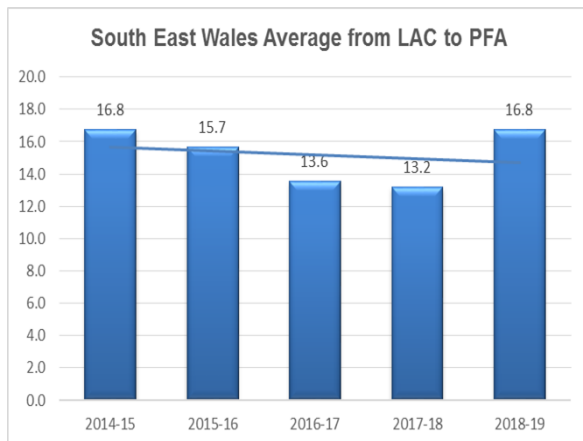
The **number of children placed for adoption** by SEWAS in 2018/19 was 70, a similar number to last year but lower than the first three years of data collection.



After a period where children were being placed more quickly, this has now reversed across Wales as outlined below:

- The Wales average for a child between becoming ‘looked after’ and being placed was 16.4 compared to 14.5 months in 2017/18. This aim is to reduce this to 13 months; in 2018/19 50% of children were placed within 13 months.
- The Wales average between the Placement Order being granted and placement was 9.9 months. Our aim is to reduce that to 6 months; in 2018/19 47% of children were placed within 6 months of their Placement Order.

SEWAS had made improvements in the timeframe between children becoming looked after and being placed for adoption but this has reversed this year and the timeframe between placement order and placement is also increasing.



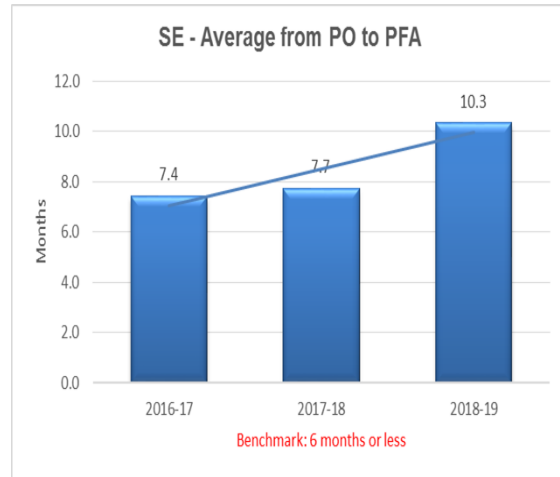
The average for a SEWAS child between becoming ‘looked after’ and being placed was increased to 16.8 months compared to 13.2 months in 2017/18.

73% of SEWAS children are placed within 13 months of becoming looked after.

The average between a SEWAS child having their placement order granted and placement is 10.3 months higher than last year.

64% of SEWAS children are placed with 6 months of their placement order being granted.

The region indicated that over this year it has placed a number of children who had been waiting for some time; some with their longstanding foster carer.



The children who take longer to be placed inevitably influence the average timeframe to placement. It is however positive that regions are being successful in placing more complex children. The following characterise those situations where placements took longer across Wales:

- Complex children
- Late or delayed assessment of foster carers as adopters
- Placement breakdown with family members
- Care proceedings extended.

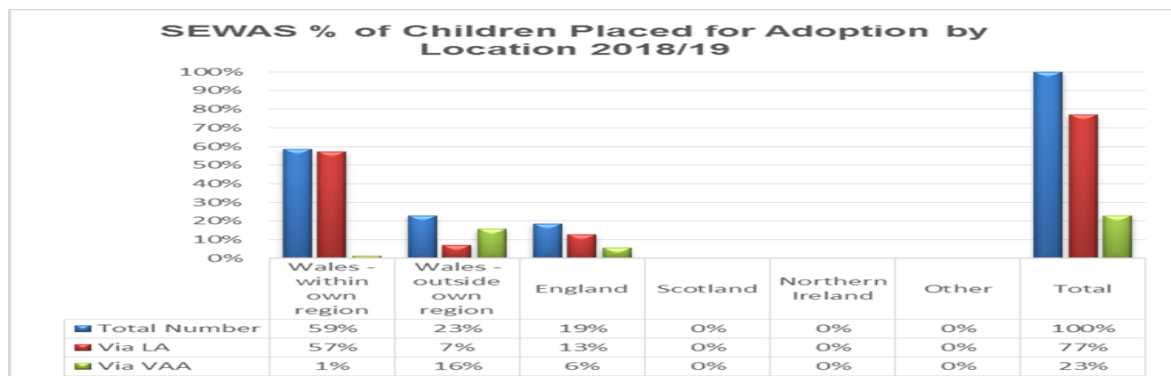
It is likely that similar reasons apply to SEWAS children placed. Over the year regions, reported on specific delays relating to up to 63% of all children placed.

The region placed 12 sets of sibling groups this year, at 40% of children placed a higher proportion than last year (34%).

Where are placements being made?

The analysis of placement activity nationally shows that 77% of placements were made within Wales, a similar proportion to last year with the majority in local authority placements. However, there was an increase in children placed in England particularly in VAA placements.

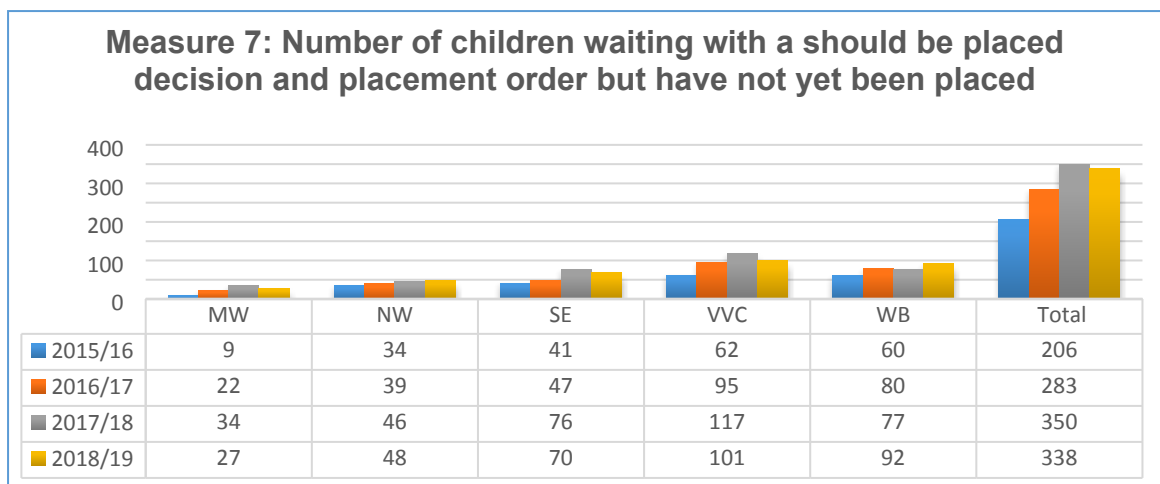
SEWAS placed 59% of their children within the region, a further 23% elsewhere in Wales and 19% outside of wales. This compares to 65%, 20% and 15% last year.



Children waiting

The level of children being placed is not keeping pace with the levels of new children being made subject to placement orders regionally or nationally. All regions except Western Bay have however seen a slight decrease in the number of children waiting this year.

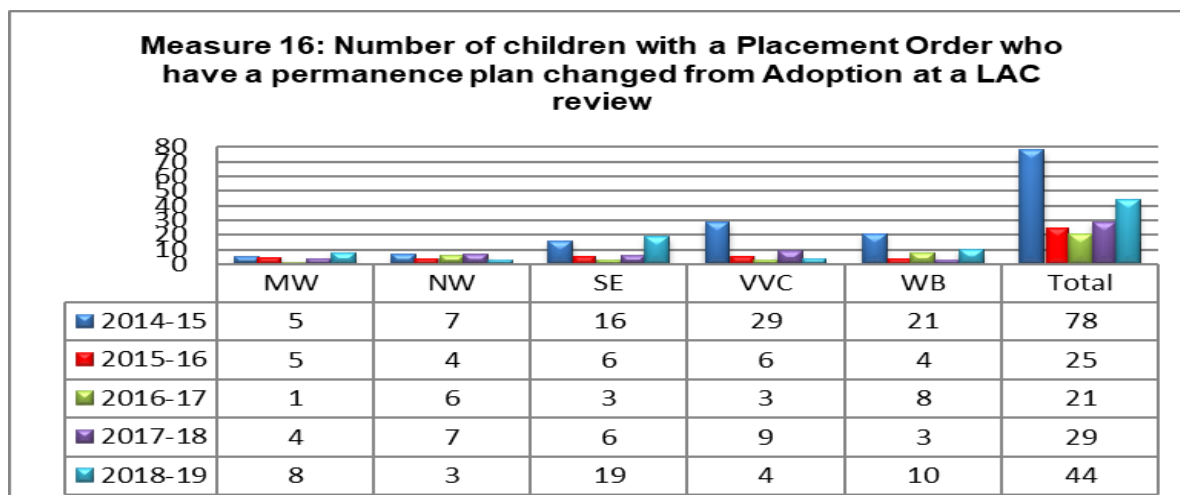
At March 31st SEWAS had 70 children subject to a placement order, for whom no match had yet been identified and were therefore waiting for a placement. This is fewer than last year but significantly more than previous years.



Information from the **Wales Adoption Register (WAR)** at year end indicates that of the children for whom the Register was family finding 22, or 14%, were SEWAS children.

SEWAS had 4 matches that did not proceed to placement this year more than in previous years but only 2 post placement disruptions a similar level to previous years.

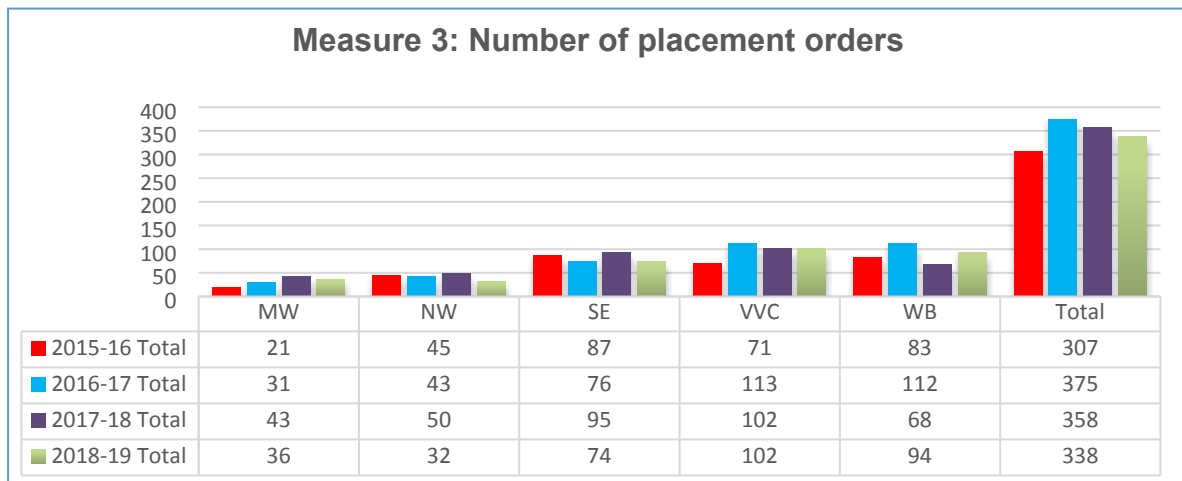
At 19 a higher number of SEWAS children had their adoption plan changed at their care and support plan review this year. This is a similar level to the first year of data collection.



Demand for adoptive placements and adopter recruitment

Adopter recruitment across Wales is not keeping pace with the level of children waiting nor those becoming subject to new placement orders; in this respect SEWAS mirrors the other regions. Nationally and regionally recruitment needs to double.

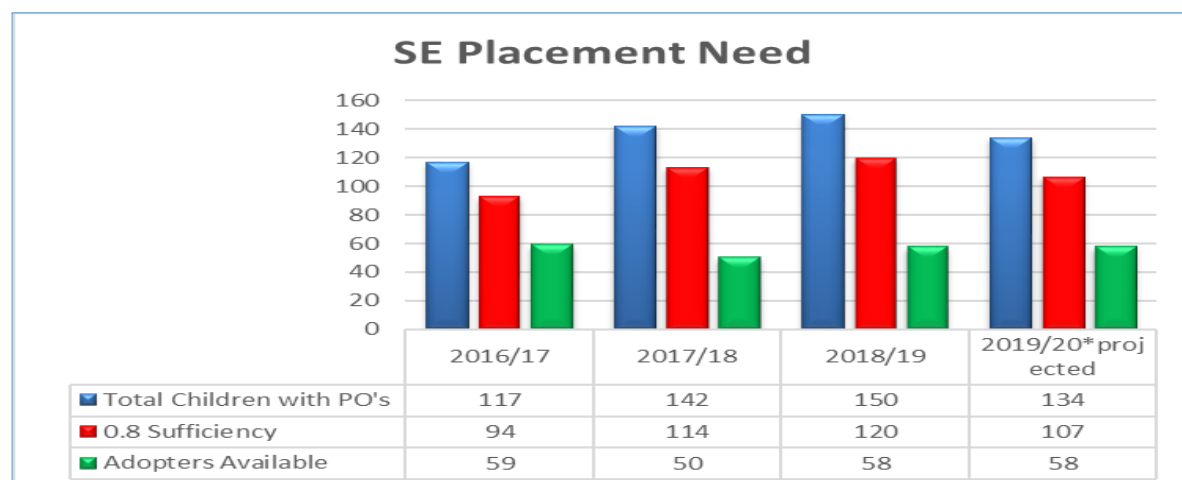
The overall number of **Placement Orders** reported as granted by courts across Wales in 2018/19 was **338**, a small reduction of about 6%, this is reported data and we await verification through official Welsh Government statistics.



Fewer placement orders were granted in the SEWAS region during 2018/19 (n74), a similar decrease to two other regions while VVC stayed the same and Western Bay increased. This is the second year of a small overall reduction across Wales albeit that numbers are still higher than in the years immediately post Re:B and Re:BS.

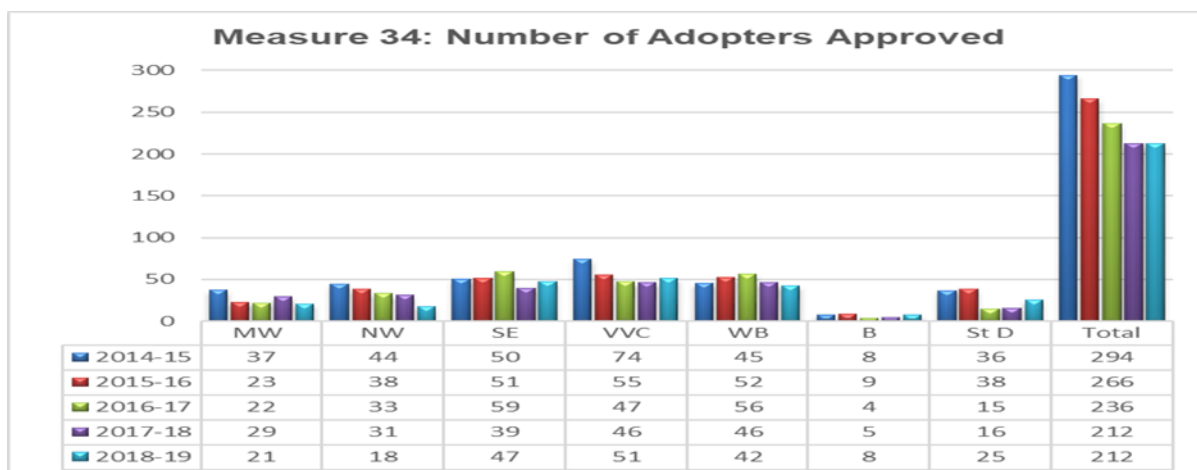
A further 84 'should be placed for adoption' decisions were made during the year in SEWAS. This was fewer than in 2017/18; when there were 101.

The analysis of the adopter gap the region has been facing since 2016/17 is below with projections for 2019/20.

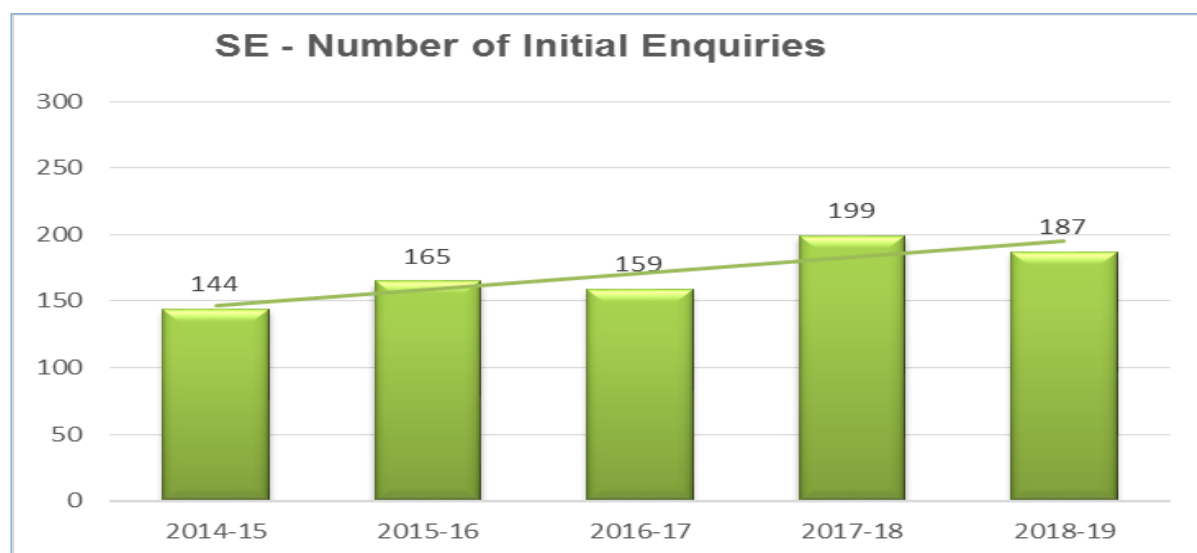


SEWAS made **47 adopters approvals** during 2018/19, higher than the previous year but lower than the goal of 65 set by the region. As above the projected sufficiency goal for adoptive placements is circa 100; the region should seek to recruit or have access to this level of adoptive placements.

The region is currently agreeing its recruitment plans and goals for 2019/20 and beyond.

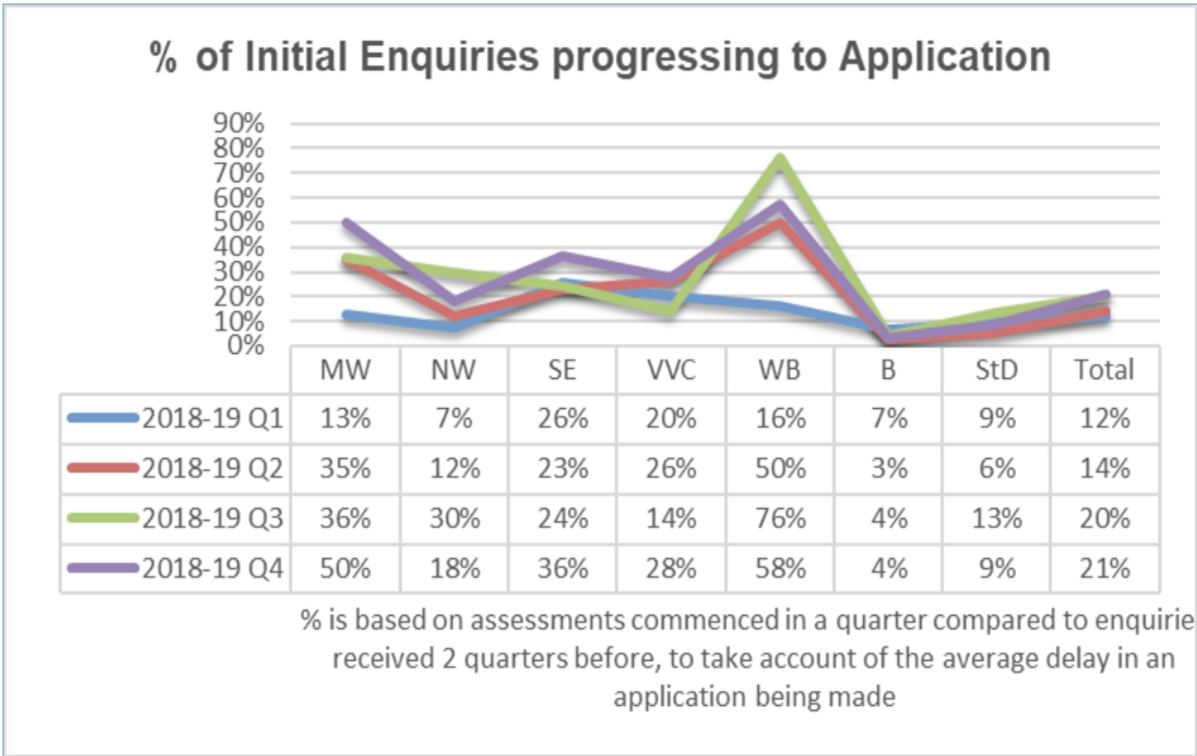


It is arguably too early to have seen a significant impact from the national focus on recruitment during 2018/19 but **SEWAS saw a 6% drop in enquiries**, which is against the trend in other regions. Circa 500 enquiries would be needed in order to reach the level of recruitment the region requires.

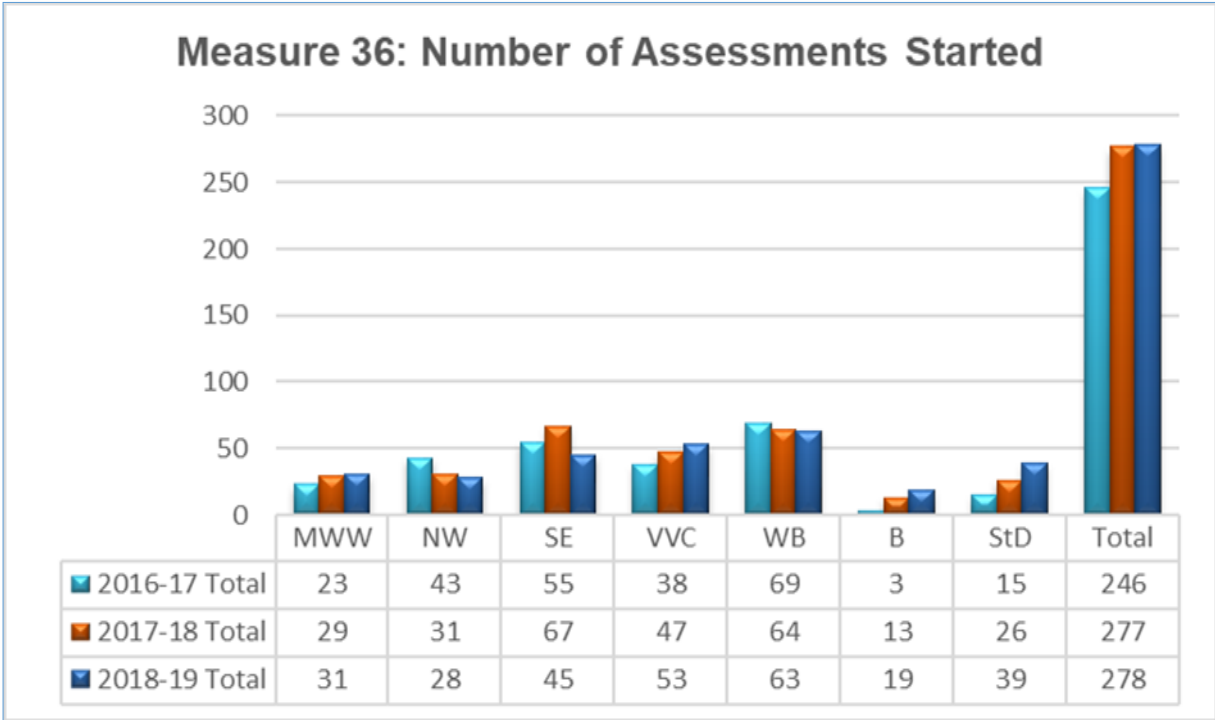


Response times to enquiries, within 5 working days, remains good; 100% of enquiries in SEWAS are responded to within 5 working days.

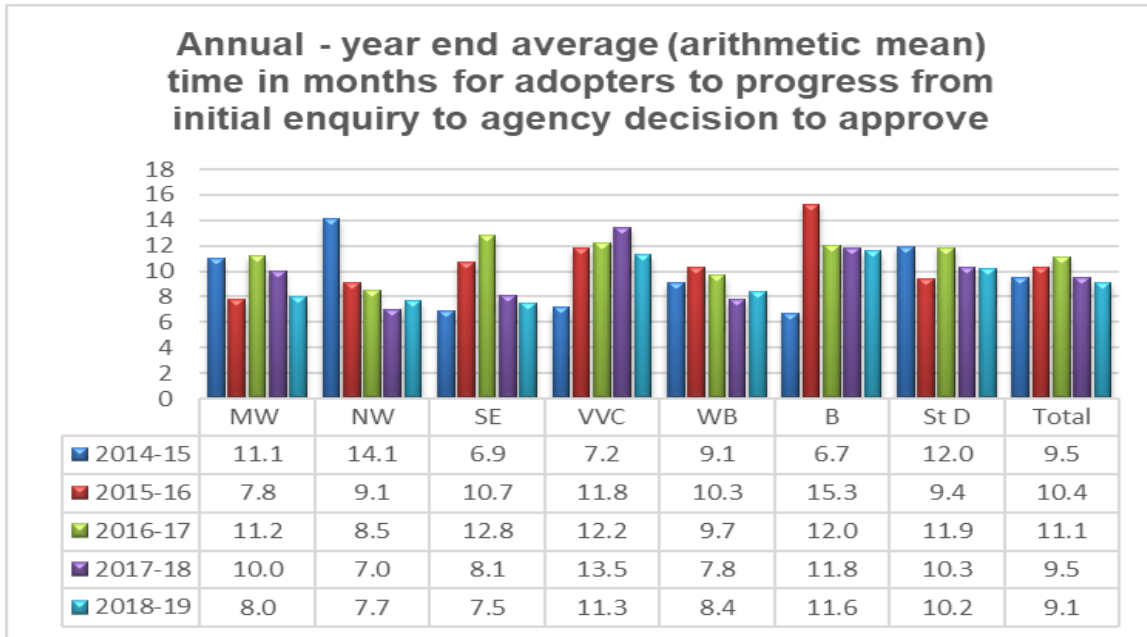
The average conversion rate from enquiry to assessment was 27% for 2018/19 a similar level to last year. Conversion rates for SEWAS varied in a similar way to other regions.



SEWAS commenced 45 assessments during 2018/19, fewer than in previous years, a level which needs to increase to meet its need for placements.



The **average timeframe** for **adopter approvals** nationally was **9.1 months**, a further improvement on the year-end figure for 2017/18 which was 9.5 months.

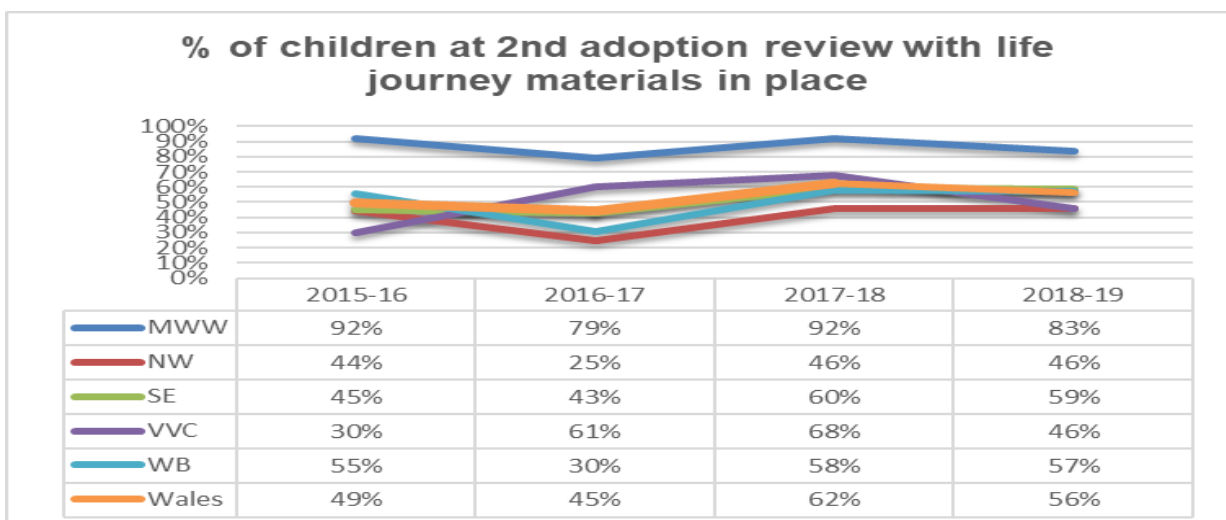


SEWAS’ performance on this measure **improved this year to 7.5 months**. Which is within the benchmark and Welsh Government guidelines.

SEWAS’ performance in respect of **formal application to approval is 5.2 months** over the year, meeting the Welsh Government guidance that this stage should take 6 months on which the NAS benchmark is based. SEWAS was within this benchmark for all of 2018/19.

Life Journey Materials

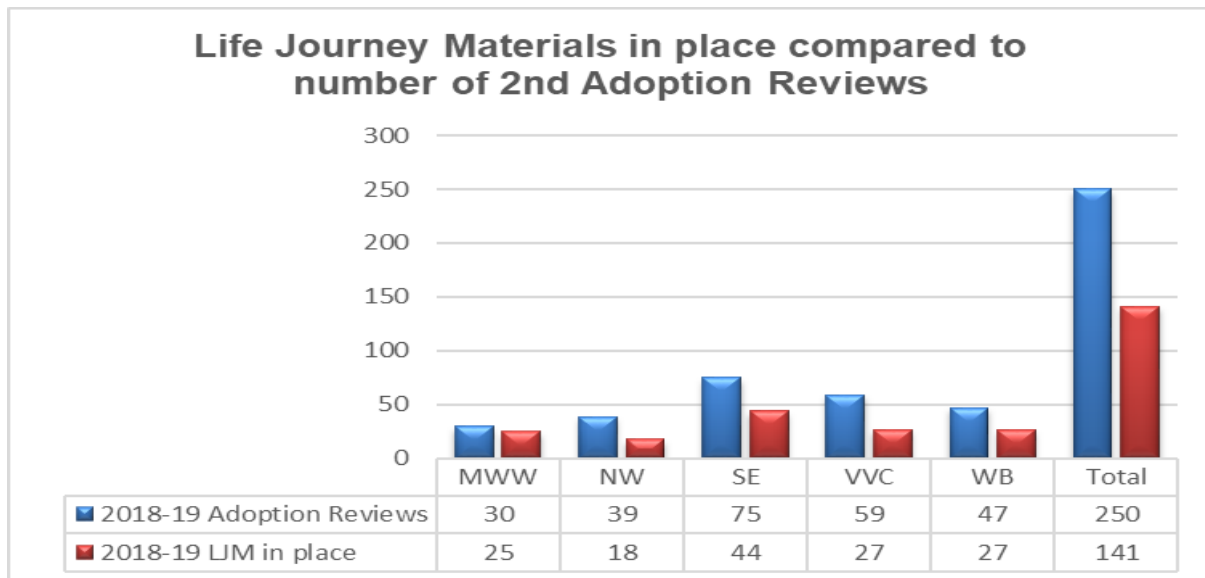
The improvement made in 2017/18 has not been maintained during 2018/19 in the availability of life journey materials for children and their families. The whole year averages shows that 56% of children placed this year had their life journey materials by the 2nd review; compared to 62% in 2017/18.



SEWAS maintained its performance at 59% against ongoing quarterly and regional variation. The plans to improve this were hampered by unanticipated staff changes.

The aim is for this performance to improve further within the context of investment since 2017/18 and the Life Journey Work Framework development project. The benchmark increased to 100% for 2018/19.

There were 31 SEWAS children placed where these materials were not available by the second adoption review as shown below.



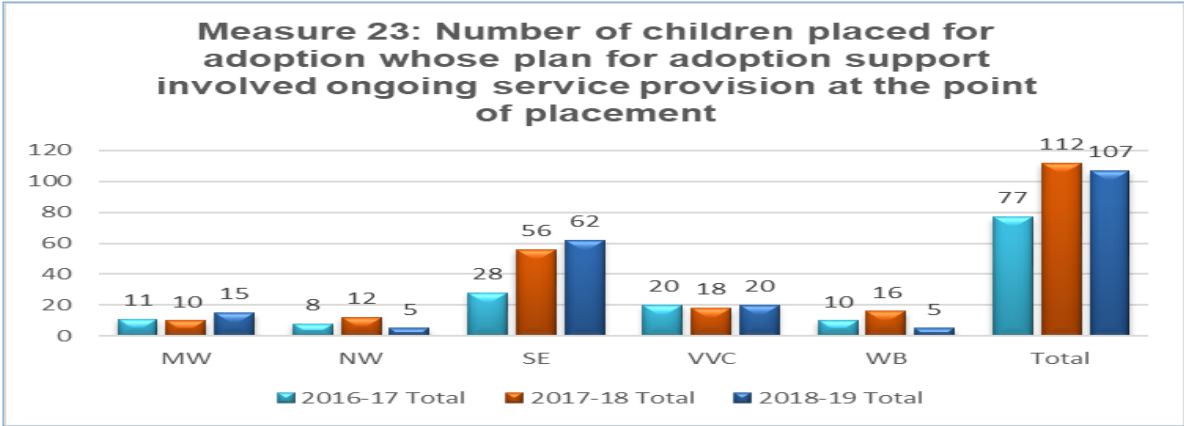
SEWAS was not able to collect data for the availability of materials at matching for 2018/19.

Adoption support

During 2018/19 SEWAS:

- facilitated more than 477 active letterbox contact arrangements 10% more than reported in 2017/18
- provided a service to 75 birth parents
- received 8 birth sibling requests for support and 2 from other relatives (both less than last year)
- received 53 requests for access to birth records compared to 49 last year and
- received a similar level of requests for intermediary / tracing support, 8 compared to 9 last year.

All the children placed by SEWAS had had their need for adoption support services assessed while more children placed had an ongoing service in place at the point of placement, 89% (n62) compared to 79% (n56) last year.



SEWAS saw a similar level of post adoption support being sought and completed a similar number of assessments in the year. 58 new requests for post adoption support were received during 2018/19. The majority of these assessments completed resulted in practical or therapeutic support being provided

Birth parents

The numbers of Birth Parents referred to adoption services nationally reduced by 13% during 2018/19. In SEWAS the number stayed at a similar level 222. All of these birth parents were offered a service by SEWAS.

In many regions data availability, particularly on take up has been affected by system changes within the local authorities for a number of regions or the loss of 3rd sector provider. SEWAS has been unaffected by this

Take up within a year tends to be low nationally but SEWAS performance was similar to previous years at 14% (n32). A service was also offered to another 43 parents who requested it.

Suzanne Griffiths. Director, May 2019

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn

Scrutiny Report

Performance Scrutiny Committee- Partnerships

Part 1

Date: 4 December 2019

Subject **Fostering Services**

Author Scrutiny Adviser

The following have been invited to attend for this item:

Invitee:	Designation
Sally Jenkins	Head of Children and Young People Services
Joanne Llewellyn	Service Manager Resources, Children and Young People Services

Section A – Committee Guidance and Recommendations

1. Recommendations to the Committee

The Committee is requested:

- a) To consider the Fostering Services Update and the following:
 - Foster Care Recruitment Strategy;
 - Foster Newport Communications Plan.
- b) To determine whether it wishes to make any comments.
- c) To determine the timescale for future monitoring.

2 Context

Background

- 2.1 The Committee approved its Forward Work Programme on 26 June 2019 to include a report requested upon Fostering Services Update in its November Committee Meeting. ***(A link to the Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships held on 26 June 2019 Report and Minute is included in the Background Papers in Section 7 of this report.)***

Previous Consideration of this item

- 2.2 At its meeting on 8 November 2017, following consideration of a report upon a Proposal to Develop Fostering Services on a Regional Basis, the Committee made the following conclusions:
1. That the National Fostering Framework Phase 2 document linked to this report, which shows greater context and rationale behind the regional proposal, should be shared with Cabinet when considering the proposal.
 2. It is important that consultation continues with Foster Carers to feed their views into the ongoing development of this proposal and the need for harmonisation of policies for paying fees and allowances to local authority foster carers, to address the payment of foster care allowances and fees identified by foster carers and staff as a key issue during the consultation programme, was recognised. (Recommendation 9 of the National Fostering Framework Phase 1 Report refers.)
 3. The Budget modelling and forecasting for foster care provision is key and balancing the spending on fostering with the care needs, both of which are rapidly increasing.
 4. The Scottish Model, where legislation removed profit-making private sector foster care provision, could be explored and considered in Wales and nationally look at how to increase the number of carers and ways to maximise the use of the available funding, while reducing the spend on profit-making private sector foster care agencies.

(A link to the Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships held on 8 November 2017 Report and Minute is included in the Background Papers in Section 7 of this report.)

3 Information Submitted to the Committee

- 3.1 The following information is attached to the report for the Committee's consideration:

Appendix A - Update on Fostering Services (Submission of Evidence to Scrutiny)

Appendix 1 - Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy;

Appendix 2 - Foster Newport Communications Plan.

4. Suggested Areas of Focus

4.1 Role of the Committee

The role of the Committee is to:

- **Consider the report upon Fostering Services and the following:**
 - Foster Care Recruitment Strategy;
 - Foster Newport Communications Plan.
- Assess and make comment on:
 - The progress being made by the Fostering Service in Wales and developments at both a regional and local basis;
 - How effectively the Services worked together upon developments to date;
 - How the Foster Care Recruitment Strategy and Communications Plan will be implemented. Is there an Action Plan with clear actions and measurable timescales identifying who is responsible for each action;
 - Will the Recruitment Strategy be reviewed before 2022;
 - How is recruitment for placements where there are issues of ethnicity and /or religion being met;
 - What mitigating actions have been put in place to address risks;
 - What barriers are there to achieving necessary outcomes.
- In drawing its conclusions, the Committee should assess:
 - What was the overall conclusion on the information contained within the report?
 - Is the Committee satisfied that it has had all of the relevant information to base a conclusion on developments at a Regional and National basis?
 - Does the Committee wish to make any comments upon developments?
 - When should future scrutiny activity be undertaken.

4.2 Suggested Lines of Enquiry

In considering the report, the Committee may wish to explore some of the following areas of focus, which have been adapted from the Welsh Government Guidance on Scrutiny of the Public Services Board:

1. To what extent will objectives be achieved?
2. How effectively have Services worked together to achieve outcomes? What lessons have been learned as a result and how would they be fed back?
3. What have been the resource implications of joint working? Has it maximised the resources available?
4. How has working together impacted on the outcomes in line with the five ways of working from the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act?
5. Have there been any unintended consequences of regional or national developments and if so what impact has this had?
6. How is service user experience being used to influence developments? What methods are being used to evaluate effectiveness and impact?

4.3 Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act

The Committee's consideration of the report should consider how working in partnership is maximising its contribution to the five ways of working. The following are examples of the types of questions to consider:

5 Ways of Working	Types of Questions to consider:
<p>Long-term The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.</p>	<p>What long-term trends will impact upon Regional and National service developments? How will changes in long term needs impact upon developments in the future?</p>
<p>Prevention Prevent problems occurring or getting worse.</p>	<p>What issues are facing service users at the moment? How is regional and national developments addressing these issues to prevent a future problem?</p>
<p>Integration Considering how public bodies' wellbeing objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.</p>	<p>Are there any other organisations providing similar / complementary services? How do the regional and national developments impact upon the services of other public bodies and their objectives?</p>
<p>Collaboration Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the organisation itself).</p>	<p>Who has the Fostering Service been working with to deliver outcomes? How are Fostering Services using knowledge / information / good practice of others to inform / influence outcomes?</p>
<p>Involvement The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area, which the body serves.</p>	<p>How have Services sought the views of those who are impacted by service delivery? How have Services taken into account diverse communities in decision-making?</p>

Section B – Supporting Information

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Characteristics of Effective Partnership Scrutiny set out in the Guidance for Local Authority Scrutiny Committees on the scrutiny of Public Services Boards issued by Welsh Government in August 2017 can equally be applied to the scrutiny of other joint working and states that:

“Research into the practice of collaborative or joint scrutiny in England and Wales identifies that arrangements are effective when they demonstrate the following characteristics:

Characteristics of effective partnership scrutiny:

- Scrutiny regards itself as a form of ‘critical friendship with positive intent’ in which scrutiny practitioners act as advocates for the success of joint working.
- Collaborative performance is evaluated from the citizen’s perspective.
- Strong efforts are made to understand the complexity of partnership arrangements and to facilitate learning about the culture and assumptions of different organizations.
- Scrutiny creates positive expectations by focussing on issues regarded as useful to the partnership or where there is consensus that ‘things need to change’.
- Scrutiny demonstrates intellectual independence and investigative rigour in all of its activities.
- Scrutiny demonstrates a positive impact by developing clear, timely, evidence-based recommendations aimed at enhancing collaborative performance.
- Scrutiny critically evaluates its own performance utilising partnership perspectives.

(A link to the full Welsh Government Guidance is included in Section 7 of this report in the Background Papers for Members’ information.)

6 Links to Council Policies and Priorities

- Newport City Council’s Corporate Plan and Wellbeing Objectives:

Well-being Objectives	Promote economic growth and regeneration whilst protecting the environment	Improve skills, educational outcomes & employment opportunities	Enable people to be healthy, independent & resilient	Build cohesive & sustainable communities
Corporate Plan Commitments	Thriving City	Aspirational People		Resilient Communities
Supporting Function	Modernised Council			

7 Background Papers

- Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships [26 June 2019 Report \(Item 6\) & Minutes](#)
- Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships [8 Nov 2017 Report \(Item 5 refers\) & Minutes](#)
- [The Essentials – Well-being of Future Generation \(Wales\) Act](#)
- [Welsh Government Guidance for Local Authority Scrutiny Committees on Scrutiny of PSBs](#)
- [Corporate Plan 2017-22](#)

Report Completed: 27 November 2019

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn

Submission of Evidence to Scrutiny – Update on Fostering Services**Author** Head of Children and Young People Services, Newport City Council**Date** 4 December 2019

Purpose To ensure Members are fully sighted on the progress and plans of the fostering service.**Summary** This report identifies the progress being made by the Fostering service in Wales and developments at both a Regional and National basis.**Proposal** To update Scrutiny Members of development on a national, regional and local basis.**Background**

Within Newport we currently have a Children Looked After population of around 392 children. Children are cared for by Local Authority foster carers, supported lodgings carers, Independent Fostering Agency carers and residential homes; 22 NCC foster carers are family members caring for their relatives. These are children subject to Care Orders due to the level of risks posed to the carers/children by the parental circumstances but where alternative family members have the capacity to provide safe, positive and nurturing care.

The priority is always to support children as close to home as possible and in settings that most fully meet their needs for the short, medium and long term. There is a long-term strategic plan to return our Out of County children to Newport from both Residential and Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements. If we do not work towards a long-term aim to increase foster carer numbers then costs of IFA placements will continue to increase.

Newport Developments

To support the long-term strategic plan a Fostering Recruitment Policy has been devised that aims to implement strategies to increase numbers of foster carers for NCC. This includes the implementation of a new website landing page, increasing advertising for foster carers both internally and externally and linking with different information days to increase the opportunities to recruit new carers. The payments to foster carers vary from one LA to another and are different again from the Independents. To assist in a robust package of support to foster carers it is important that the Local Authority also implement a competitive payment structure. This will all work to promote NCC as a supportive and responsibility authority to work for. The recruitment strategy is attached to this report in order for Members to have the opportunity to be aware of the proposed direction of travel. There are potentially financial implications within this strategy as there is currently no separate budget specifically for recruitment and this does potentially present challenges across the Council.

Work has been undertaken to increase and streamline our recruitment process to speed up the assessment process and retain more potential carers. An action plan to improve our recruitment strategy has been devised. A senior practitioner within the fostering service now leads on recruitment and this has resulted in a more focused approach to recruitment. Work is currently underway with SRS on developing the new landing page for the website to help with the image of Newport Fostering Service.

Figures for this financial year:

April - June (inclusively) 8 enquiries

July - September 20 enquiries (This includes August where we traditionally have very low enquiry rates) This clearly shows a huge increase of 150%.

October - We had 6 enquiries, 2 positive Initial home visits (IHV), 2 further IHV booked in

November - 1 week in and we have had 3 enquiries with one IHV completed.

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There is also a Newport Fostering communication plan that has been devised to plan the communication shared through social media and linked to boost the potential recruitment.

The Matching and Placement team are now incorporated into the fostering team as a fostering service. The support workers have transferred to Barnardo's where support is now provided to include Special Guardianship Carers. There is a larger pool of support within Barnardo's and access to a large pool of experience to support our foster carers.

Increased focus on training including an online training package which has seen a significant take up during the first week of being implemented. This should increase the knowledge of our carers and enable them to provide a higher quality level of care.

A number of carers have left for Independent fostering agencies and this has had both a financial impact and has lead carers to recruit other carers from Newport due to Independents policy to pay carers who recruit other current foster carers.

To assist in a robust package of support to foster carers it is important that the Local Authority also implement a competitive fee structure. The new marketing strategy will refer to the proposed increase in fees that should assist in the recruitment of foster carers. Foster carers receive financial support to care for the children; the support is linked to the ages and needs of the children. Foster carers provide care for twenty four hours, seven days a week and as such the financial support is not a salary but is a fee to provide directly for the children. NCC provides equipment for example cots, car seat and pushchairs.

The current placement costs in Newport for children in care vary from £11,400 per annum for a child under the age of 4 with no additional needs to £306,800 per annum for a child aged over 11 in residential care. The IFA fees are not banded in the same way as our in-house fees in age groups. They cover a wide range of weekly costs, ranging between £572 and £1,449 per week.

Regional developments

Across Gwent as at the 31st March 2019 the total children looked after population across the region was 1622. This is an increase of 165 children (10.2%) from 31st March 2018. Whilst the total Children looked After) CLA population across the region continues to increase, there is a small decline in the growth rate (4.3%) compared to 2017-18 figures when there was a growth increase of 14.5%.

In Gwent 1137 children were looked after in foster placements across the region as at 31st March 2019, an increase of 90 children (8%) from 31st March 2018. However, the increase of children in foster placements as at 31st March 2018 was 100 children (9.6%); therefore the comparison is a small decrease of 10 children (1.6%) looked after in foster placements compared to last year.

Across the region in 2018-2019 there were **66** new approvals made with general foster carers, an increase of **24** approvals from the previous year. All LA's increased their approval rates from the previous year. The overall number of placements made available through new approvals was 105, a significant increase of 43 placements since 2017-2018, where those figures showed a decrease of 1 placement since 2016-2017. There was an increase of 40 unplanned endings during 2018/19 compared to the previous year. The highest number of unplanned endings (per percentage of CLA by placement type) occurred within the Independent sector. This is an interesting figure and indicates that in-house foster placements provide increased stability and better value for money than our independent equivalents.

There is a potential joined up regional New Year campaign regarding recruitment of foster carers. The idea is that we have one, integrated campaign to go live at midnight on New Year's Day, i.e. pre

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scheduled social media posts with a 'Happy New Year' message linked to the 20 reasons to foster in 2020. This will be backed up with social media posts, leaflets, posters and a strong PR push.

Costs options will be divided by the number of local authorities who say yes, so the more support we have the better for everyone:

- **Concept development** - £8,500 divided by authorities that are up for this so e.g. £386.36 per local authority if all 22 local authorities in Wales go for this as a media takeover or £1,700 each if divided between the 5 Gwent authorities
- **Personalisation by Local Authority** - Plus £725 per authority for personalising creative with individual call to actions and logos etc. **(so anything from £1,111 to £2,425 in total per Local Authority)**

It has been agreed that we will be part of this campaign to continue to increase our pool of potential foster carers. The 2018-2019 fostering performance report indicated that NCC needs to generate more initial enquiries. Although their conversion rate has improved, we have had fewer enquiries to process and assess. Historically we have had no active recruitment strategy in the past year and less recruitment activity hasn't been generating the same number of enquiries. Although this has meant that NCC have been better able to respond to enquiries which has assisted with increased conversion rates.

National Development

There is work on a national basis with the National Fostering Framework to implement a national fostering recruitment campaign and the fostering service will continue being part of this campaign when this is developed. The campaign is working to develop a Foster Wales Brand to recruit foster carers for each region utilising a common theme and branding to recruit.

There is continued work on regional profiling, the regional core offer and the regional and national performance information.

There has been the development of a framework to assist with the learning and development of foster carers across Wales. A learning event for carers and fostering workers was undertaken to share the framework. The framework is being considered at Children's Management Meeting on 27th November to agree to implement this within Newport.

Post Approval Learning and Development Framework is to provide:

- Consistency and quality of post approval learning and development opportunities for foster carers across Wales
- A wide range of learning experiences offered in a variety of learning methods
- A clear pathway for foster carers to map their own professional development

Work remains on-going with the National Fostering Frameworks harmonisation of fees and allowances group.

There are no decisions arising from this report. Children's Services will be continuing to work with all partners and take shared appropriate steps to address how to increase the number and quality of foster carers within the City who work from NCC.

Financial Summary

The proposals are funded from within the core Children's Services budget.

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Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
Continued rise in numbers of children looked after means increased requirement and pressure on foster placements	H	M	The proposals in the Welsh Government template lay out mitigation. First discussions have taken place to widen the scope for involvement in responsibility for reducing the numbers of looked after children	Head of Children's Services, Strategic Director of People
No increase in new foster carers recruited	H	M	New recruitment strategy and increased links with corporate comms team. Work is being undertaken to increase package of support including Barnardo's providing placement support. Proposal to increase fostering fees to compare with Caerphilly County Councils rates to help with recruitment and retention.	Head of Children's Services, Strategic Director of People
Carers leave NCC to work for other LA's or independents	H	H	Increase in foster carers fees is going to SLT. Support such as training increased. Promotion of the benefits of foster care has increased on social media. Recruitment strategy.	Head of Children's Services, Strategic Director of People
Continue with recruitment strategy and focussed member of staff to promote recruitment	L	L	Recruitment strategy written. Staff member in post who supports recruitment.	Head of Children's Services, Strategic Director of People

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Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The work outlined is part of the wider work of Children's Services which has been developed to support the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and is focused on

Resilient Communities
Aspirational People

The Corporate Plan sets out the meeting of the Well Being Objectives. "Supporting children to remain safely with their families" is within Well Being Objective 3 – To enable people to be healthy, independent and resilient.

Comments of Cabinet Member

The report author is to confirm that the Cabinet Member has approved the report for consideration by cabinet.

Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 contains a Public Sector Equality Duty which came into force on 06 April 2011. The Act identifies a number of 'protected characteristics', namely age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership. The new single duty aims to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the regular business of public authorities. Compliance with the duty is a legal obligation and is intended to result in better informed decision-making and policy development and services that are more effective for users. In exercising its functions, the Council must have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The Act is not overly prescriptive about the approach a public authority should take to ensure due regard, although it does set out that due regard to advancing equality involves: removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics; taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these differ from the need of other people; and encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

There is no decision linked to this report hence a FEIA will be completed as and when necessary.

Children and Families (Wales) Measure

Although no targeted consultation takes place specifically aimed at children and young people, consultation on planning applications and appeals is open to all of our citizens regardless of their age. Depending on the scale of the proposed development, applications are publicised via letters to neighbouring occupiers, site notices, press notices and/or social media. People replying to consultations are not required to provide their age or any other personal data, and therefore this data is not held or recorded in any way, and responses are not separated out by age.

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Report writes need to indicate how they have considered the five things public bodies need to think about to show they have applied the sustainable development principle put into place by the Act. You will need to demonstrate you have considered the following:

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- Long term. This report considers how to increase the number of children placed within in-house foster placements. This is positive both financially for the local authority and also is in the best interests of the children to remain in their local area and assists with plans to rehabilitate home.
- Prevention: This reports indicates the plans to try to prevent a reduction in the number of foster carers which would have a detrimental impact on the LA financially and also upon Newport's CLA who would have to be placed away from their home authority. The corporate plan states that there will be a reduction in the number of children placed OOC and this report indicates some of the ways this is being implemented.
- Integration: This links to a Wales of cohesive communities, a more equal Wales and a resilient Wales. This is working in collaboration with Welsh Government objective to return children home from OOC placements and optimise economic benefits for Newport.
- Collaboration: successful achievement of these objectives will require collaboration with education to ensure placements for our CLA in Newport and our Well-being objectives.
- Involvement: Links have been made with corporate comms team and Foster carers via Foster carer forum.

Throughout this report the core principles of the WFG are referenced and interwoven. This is clearly a long term proposal which seeks to embed preventative working as a way to ensure good outcomes for citizens. Integration with other elements of the Council and public bodies is key to the success of the proposal. Working in collaboration with families and partner agencies is vital and drives this plan. Throughout Children's Services we are looking for new ways to fully involve and engage children, young people, parents and carers this plan is key to that work.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Section 17(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 imposes a duty on the Local Authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 – Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy 2019

Appendix 2 – Fostering Communication Plan

Newport City Council

Children's Services

Fostering Service

Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy

2019

Review in 2022

Foster carer recruitment strategy

2019 - 2022

Introduction

Responsibility for the recruitment of foster carers with Newport City area belongs to the Fostering Team.

The Fostering Team will attempt to recruit as many foster carers as possible, representing as wide a range of social class and ethnic grouping as possible, to meet the needs of children and young people within Newport City area. The effect will be to expand the number and choice of placements available, including post 18 years' arrangements, which support our young people into adulthood.

The strategy sets out the approach taken to recruit foster carers over the next three years: 2019-2022.

It is part of a range of strategies to improve placement choice for children and young people in need of placements.

Aims and objectives:

To provide an effective, high quality and best value fostering service to meet the needs and numbers of the children looked after population.

To improve placement stability and choice for children and young people

Increasing the number of in house foster carers for UASC, older teenagers, disabled children, sibling groups and respite support.

To recruit parent and baby foster carer placement(s).

Targeted recruitment campaigns for difficult to place children with specialist training and support packages.

To reduce the number of children and young people placed with independent fostering agencies to reduce the cost of out of county provision.

To respond promptly to potential carers and ensure clear information is shared and the assessment process is prompt.

In order to provide, effectively, more equitable placement choices, and to guarantee that net gains in our carer cohort are, on average, more than net losses, we need to recruit a variety of carers who can meet the placement demands presented by the following:

- age
- a range of diverse needs
- large sibling groups
- short term and long-term fostering,
- respite care
- short break for children with disabilities,
- supported- lodgings,
- placements where there are issues of ethnicity and/or religion.

Sources of enquiries will be monitored closely and each recruitment event and occasional P.R. activities reviewed and evaluated in an attempt to achieve optimum results, and most prudent use of scarce resources.

The recruitment process – advertising, initial contact, initial visits, training and assessment - will be monitored closely in an attempt to identify positive areas as well as common ‘drop-out’ points pre assessment and a system of feedback introduced to receive and record the views both of enquirers who progress to approval, and those who drop out of the process earlier. Such monitoring will be the responsibility of the Foster Team Manager and will link with the quarterly report required under the Fostering Regulations 2019.

Prompt and smart response to initial enquiries will continue to be imbedded in the Recruitment Strategy, with our target being to arrange an initial visit within **seven** working days after sending out the information pack to the prospective foster carer.

Reduction of the authority’s dependence on Independent Fostering Agencies for out-of-county placements will be an ongoing objective of the Recruitment Strategy.

The Fostering Team will aim for wider dissemination of information regarding Private Fostering.

The overall strategy will be reviewed in January 2022 so that plans/events can be amended or approved for the coming years.

Scope

The recruitment strategy covers the development of Newport's fostering service in the provision of mainstream, disability, respite and potential mother and baby carers.

Target

A recruitment target of **60** new fostering households/families over the next 3 years offering short term, respite and long term placement; this means a minimum of 20 new fostering households/families a year.

Summary

The council aims to ensure that all children living in Newport have the opportunity to grow up in permanent, safe and loving homes where this cannot be provided by the birth family or adoption. The key objective is to recruit a pool of carers who meet the assessed needs of the children needing placements.

*Today, over 65,000 children are living with almost 55,000 foster families. The Fostering Network estimates that a further 8,100 foster families are needed across the UK in the next 12 months alone, in order to ensure all fostered children can live with the right family for them. **Fostering Network 2019.***

Statistics

The number of foster families recruited to Newport in the last three years has been 16.

Date	Number of new fostering families approved	Number of foster families leaving the service	Net number of gain/loss
2016 - 2017	1	General: 13 Kinship: 10	-22
2017 - 2018	3	General: 15 Kinship: 4	-16

2018 - 2019	12	General: 13 Kinship: 5	-6
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The need for additional foster carers is because a number of carers leave the authority each year, for genuine reasons. The reason for loss of kinship foster carers is very different to the loss of general carers. Many Kinship carers are lost as they become Special Guardianship Carers and this is a positive reason for the loss of carers. As at 1st June 2018 we had 150 fostering households consisting of single carers and couples. We had a total of 222 foster carers:

Age – our youngest approved foster carer was **26-year-old** and the oldest approved foster carer **74-year-old**. Breakdown of ages for our 222 foster carers is:

Age range	Number of foster carers
20 - 29	11
30 – 39	23
40 – 49	39
50 – 59	93
60 – 69	48
70 - 74	8

Our foster carer population has 149 foster carers who are age 50 year+, which is 67% of our foster carers. We have 40 fostering households where one or more of the foster carers is age 60 year +. In the next 5 – 10 years we risk the majority of these households retiring.

With the increasing number of children looked after it is important that we work to recruit more foster carers in order to place our children within Newport, if this is in their best interests. In 2018-2019 the below shows the low numbers of carers approved in Newport:

Enquiries 65

Initial Home Visits 21

Allocated 13

Approved 5

Placements numbers 10

Plans:

To increase recruitment numbers.

Create media interest with press releases including stories from carers.

To update our online presence to have a fit for purpose website which diverts potential carers through the online process. Social media strategy with regular updates sent through to corporate services to add to Facebook/Twitter.

To have a dedicated budget for recruitment which will allow time and resources to be allocated for recruiting foster carers

To work towards recruitment of a dedicated recruitment officer

Look at long term recruitment planning

Have a marketing plan consider adverts in newspapers, via twitter, Facebook and so forth

Video campaign via cinema's

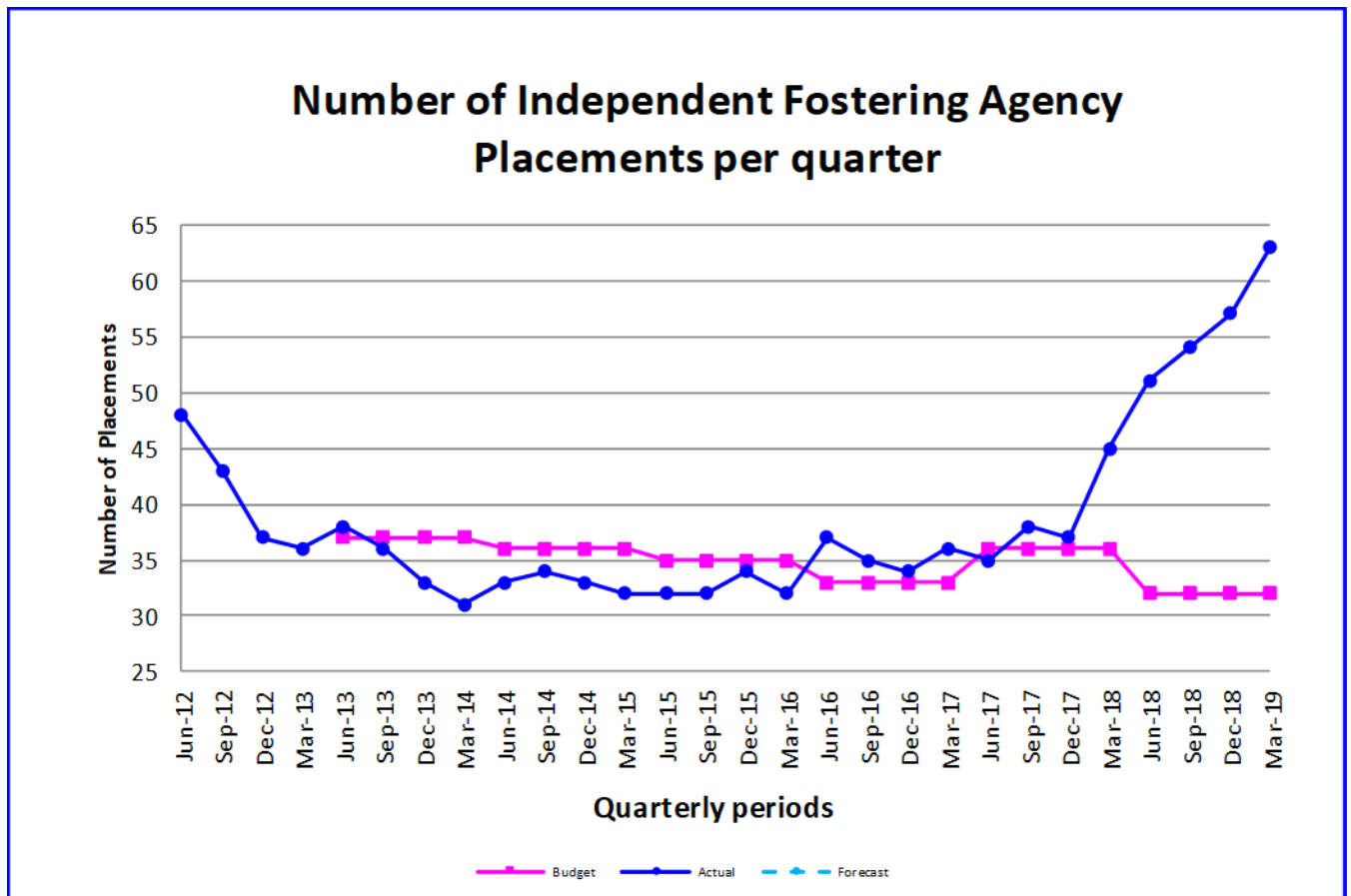
Poster campaign/leaflet campaign/banners where agreed

Outreach events targeting key areas in the city. Gain permission to use stalls in supermarket foyers, leisure centre or stalls in shows.

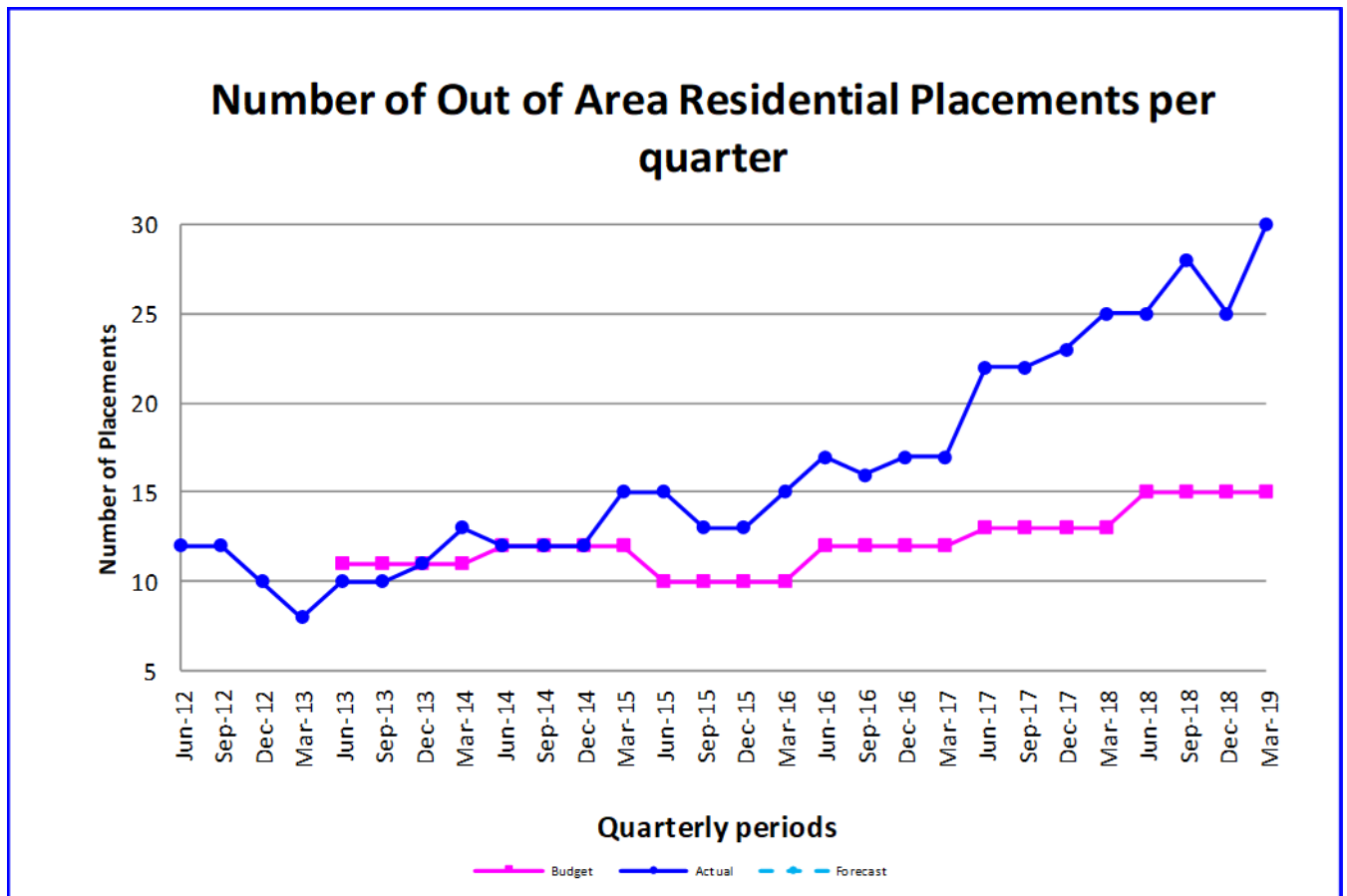
Increase support groups for carers.

Coffee mornings and welcome events to be marketed and held.

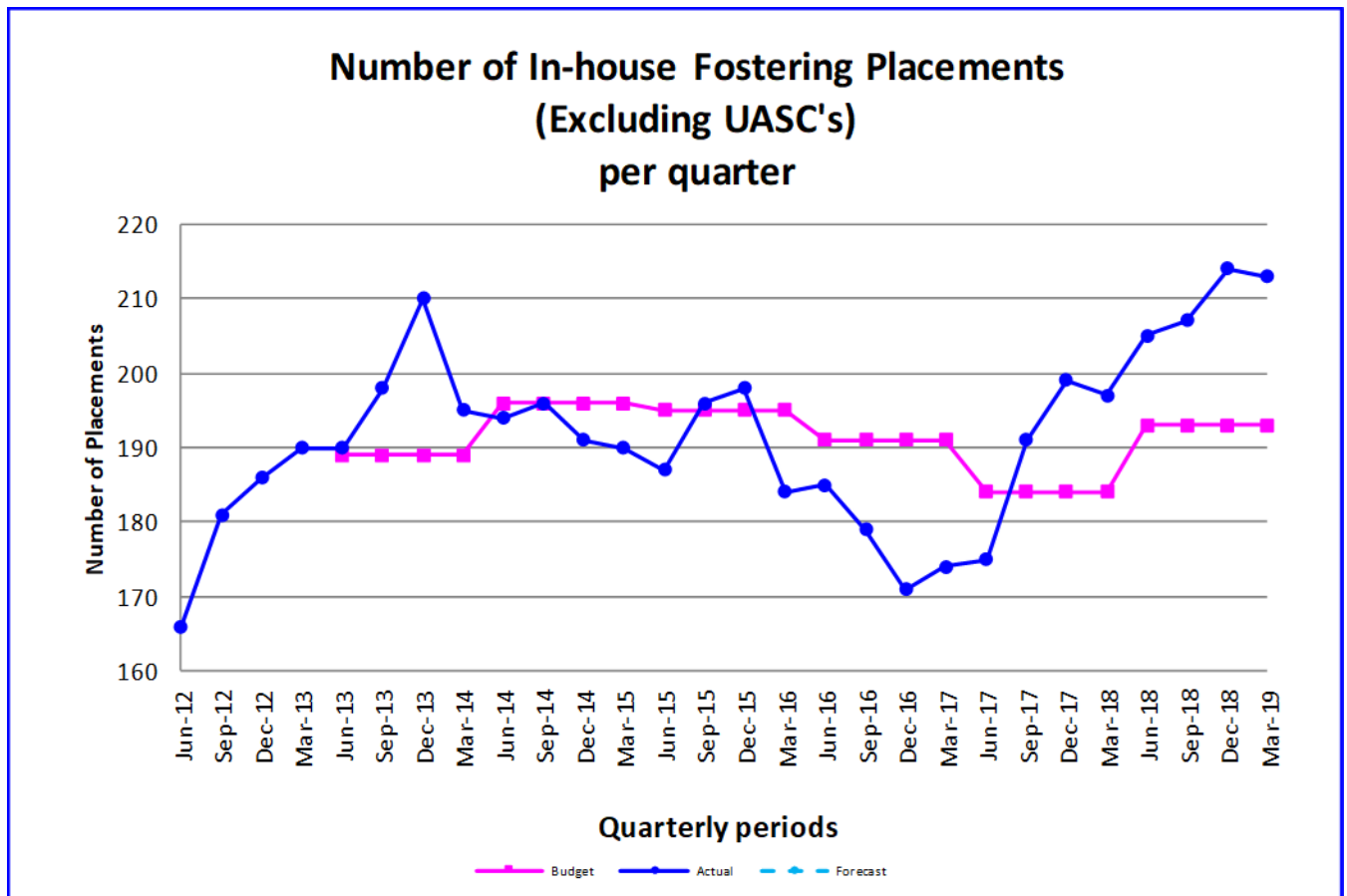
To improve partnership working both with other authorities to share good practice and local businesses who can encourage their employee's to foster and can also become a fostering friendly employer.



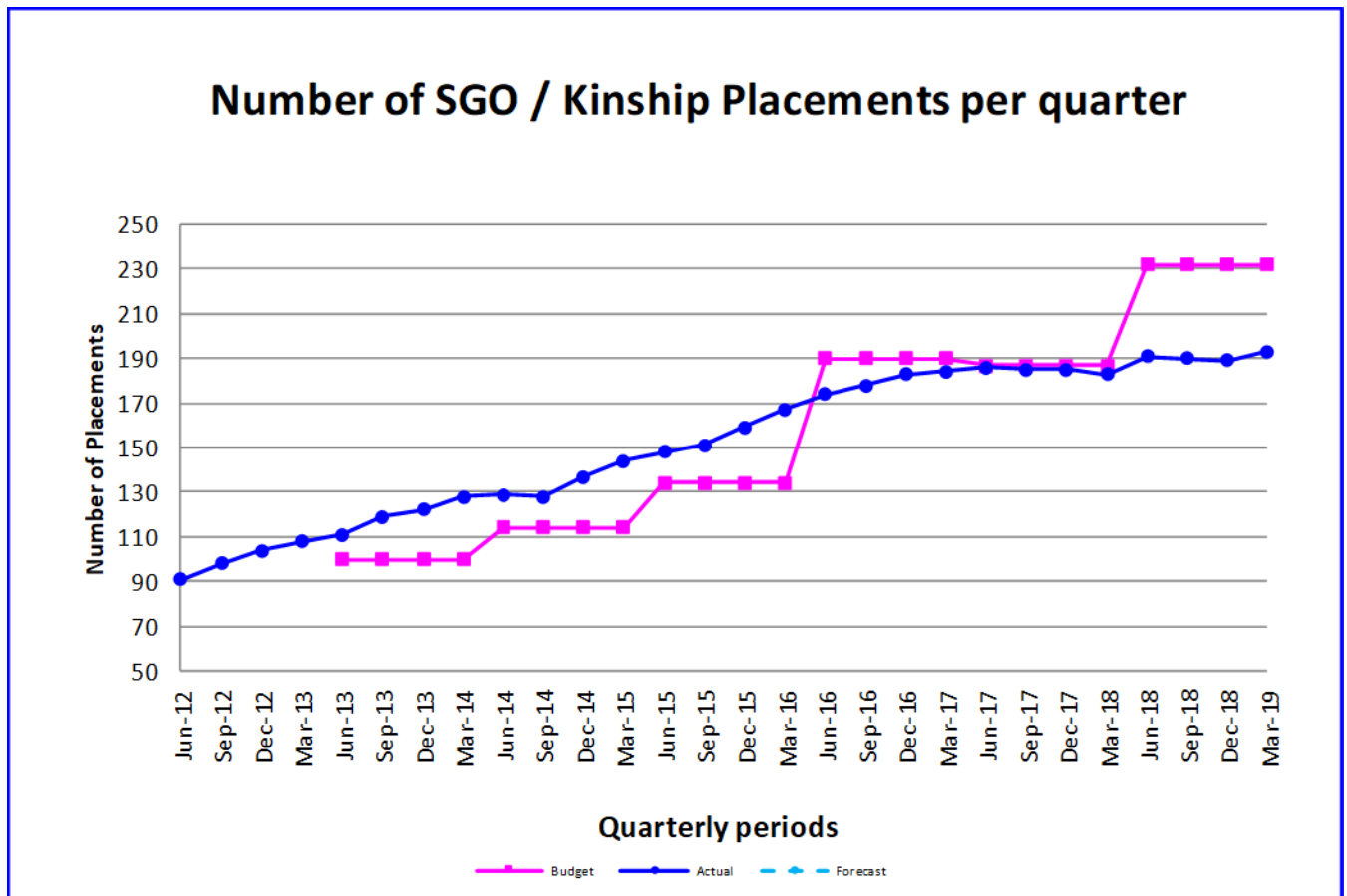
From December 2017 the number of Independent placements has increased significantly; through increasing numbers of Newport Carers there will be a reduction in out of county placements.



The number of out of county Residential placements has increased and a workstream regarding opening new residential properties in Newport is working to reduce this number. Increasing the number of Newport Foster carers should also reduce the number of out of county residential placements. The reduction in December was the opening of a new residential home in Newport whereby young people returned to Newport.



The number of in house placements has started to fall and this is linked to a reduction in carer numbers and low recruitment numbers of carers. Through increasing carer numbers there will be an increased number of placements available to place children in house.



There has been a significant increase in SGO/Kinship placements within the preceding 12 months and this has led to the creation of a new Family and Friends team to provide additional support to these carers. Increasing the number of suitable Family and Friends placements continues to be a priority as this reduces pressures upon the in house general foster carers.

Process for recruitment

Enquiry Stage

Newport Fostering Service receive enquiries from prospective foster carers through the link on the Fostering page on the corporate website and telephone referrals made directly to our Duty Fostering system. Notifications of online enquiries are received through a dedicated mailbox, which is monitored by our social work assistant and in her absence the duty officer. Our social work assistant and duty officer are the first point of contact and the ‘face’ of Newport fostering, their roles are pivotal to the recruitment process and promoting a positive image of fostering for Newport. Each applicant making an on line enquiry is contacted within 2 working

days to provide more information about the process, gather more information from the applicant and answer any questions. An electronic information pack is sent out to applicants within 24 hours of us making contact.

Our social work assistant continues to follow each applicant through the process at each stage maintaining a strong link with the customer. In addition to this the role is pivotal in tracking and maintaining information on each applicant from enquiry to approval.

Recruitment Process

We provide a seamless process for recruiting foster carers. The process has a target date of 26 weeks from initial enquiry to panel date. Initial Home Visits are booked in at first phone call when appropriate or within 3 working days of the information being provided to the applicant. During the home visit there is opportunity to answer any further questions, provide the applicant with more information about fostering for Newport and collate information for a brief report. If the applicant wishes to proceed and the fostering service are satisfied with the information to date the applicants will be invited on the next Skills to Foster training, which is a two day pre-approval course facilitated by staff from the fostering team and foster carers approved with Newport Fostering Service.

Newport fostering also hold evening meet and greet events for applicants who may have just missed the opportunity to attend the Skills to Foster course. Our Care2Foster for Newport meet and greet session give applicants the opportunity to meet a number of staff who have different roles in the Fostering Service, colleagues from other services such as education and foster carers approved with Newport. We use a 'speed dating' format for applicants to move from table to table talking to staff and foster carers.

We provide information in a timely way ensuring that applicants feel valued throughout the process and that the process continues to be responsive to the customer's needs.

Allocation of assessments

Prospective foster carers can be allocated an assessing social worker any time after the initial home visit. Assessing social workers will visit the applicants in their home

on a regular basis to complete the assessment. Children and any other adults living in the household are also interviewed as part of the assessment process. Fostering is very much a family commitment and the views and experiences of everyone in the household need to be considered when completing the assessment report. Checks and references are completed as part of the process and information included in the final assessment report.

Tracking, Reporting

It is necessary to record all data on all applicants who contact us. Applicants are tracked throughout the process and data collated for analysis.

Feedback/Evaluation

Enquirers/Applicants are asked for feedback during different stages of the recruitment process. Approved foster carers are also asked for feedback. Exit interviews are given to all foster carers who are deregistered to provide feedback. This feedback is evaluated to help inform future planning.

Competition

An increasingly competitive market means potential foster carers are offered a wider choice and we need to ensure that we are foremost in offering the preferred local option. Encouragingly Newport continues to attract carers transferring from IFAs and other authorities although unfortunately has lost carers to private agencies. Private agencies advertise both nationally and locally.

Publicity and marketing activity will not exclude anyone due to Gender, Sexual Orientation, Ethnicity, Cultural needs, disability, sexual orientation, or relative social or economic status. Recruitment practices comply with Newport City Council's policies and procedures including Equality and Diversity Policy. The use of translation service for publications or face to face will be offered when required.

CONCLUSION

The Fostering team is committed to maintaining a high profile for recruitment, and will continue to seek imaginative and productive ways of presenting fostering needs and opportunities in locations where they may be communicated to as large a section of the community as possible.

The budgetary implications of such a strategy are clearly understood; however, funding will be committed as appropriate, subject to the limitations of scarce resources. The Newport Fostering scheme are looking at using low cost methods of awareness raising such as Facebook and twitter, however effective recruitment comes at a cost and in order to sustain a presence in the market we need to be have an ongoing commitment to recruitment activity.

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn

Foster Newport Communication Plan

Overview/objective

To boost the numbers of in-house foster carers and point out the advantages of being a foster carer for the council rather than an independent agency

Strategy

Consistent and regular messages based around the “Newport offer” mainly through social media but also in Newport Matters and, where appropriate, in press releases/special events.

Key messages

- **Council can offer a range of benefits including financial support; learning and development; supervision and support; respite care; out-of-office advice and support; Care First; an education coordinator; paid membership of the Fostering Network; opportunities to meet other foster carers, officers and senior councillor at twice-yearly forum; Newport support groups**
- **Newport City Council is “working together hand in hand” with foster carers**
- **Foster carers do receive a payment but becoming a foster parent is so much more than a job – and the rewards of giving a child a safe, secure and happy environment at a time when they most need it is immeasurable**
- **The advantage of fostering for the council, rather than a private agency, is that it has an excellent reputation and offers professionalism, training and support to both foster carers and children**
- **Newport is unique in that it offers additional support via a specialist team**
- **Not-for-profit**

Key Communication Channels

- South Wales Argus
- Western Mail/Wales Online
- BBC Wales
- Council website
- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube

Key dates and actions

Tudalen 78

Date	Activity	Core message	Actions/considerations
Continuing 2019/20	Social media messaging	Advantages of being a council foster carer	Weekly social media messages with appropriate imagery.
19 October	Stall at 50+ information day	Find out more about becoming a council foster carer	Marketing give-aways
Autumn tbc	Animated film completed		Put on council's YouTube channel/social media using clips and directing people to film
Autumn tbc	Cabinet member report recommending increase in foster care payment	Payments being brought in line with neighbouring councils	Press release/social media making clear this is just part of the Newport offer
Autumn tbc	Decision on increasing pay	As above	As above with quote from CM
January 2020	Month long recruitment campaign across Gwent	20 good reasons to foster	Press release launching campaign followed by regular social media messages culminating in drop-in sessions for would-be foster carers
Towards ends of Jan	Reminder about drop-in sessions		Press release/social media

February 2020	LGTB history month	Awareness raising for LGTB	Specific social media messages aimed at this community and how they can be great foster parents
Summer 2020	Pride Cymru	As above	Council's equalities team takes part in event – potential opportunity?
August 2020	National Play Day	Newport Foster team presence on day	Excellent opportunity to get message to parents
October 2020	Food festival	Opportunity to have a stall/hand out leaflets	Need to speak to food festival team early to arrange

General media messages for use throughout the year:

Our foster carers work for a not-for-profit organisation that offers 24-hour support as they provide a loving and caring home for our children. Find out more here

Could you provide a loving and stable home for a child? In return, we can offer you fantastic support – both financial and practical. Lots more info here

We value our foster carers and make sure we care for them. Our unique Newport offer includes respite; access to Care First; out-of-hours advice and support; social activities and much more...

Our foster carers, their own children and their foster children can enjoy leisure and sporting activities thanks to their special council leisure card. One of the many advantages for being a council carer...

Have your children flown the nest? Do you have room in your home and your heart for a child who needs someone to care for them? Find out more about how you can help us – and we can help you

We need special people to foster our children and to say thank you we offer more than just financial support

...

Foster carers tell us how much better it is to work for us. Find out what we can offer our carers over and above the support given by agencies including regular treats for the whole family and continuing training.

Become a Newport council foster carer and discover that we're not just there to sign you up – we're there for as long as you need us...

We're proud that our fantastic foster carers look after our children. Become part of our great network and make a difference to a child's life

From small beginnings...help give a child a home when they most need one by become one of our foster carers.

**PLUS: personal messages from foster carers about why they foster for the council (with pix/videos)
Clips from animated film**

Time specific

October:

Interested in becoming one of the special people who look after our children? Pop along to the 50+ information day in Newport Centre on 19 October and chat to our fostering team

Our fostering team will be at the 50+ info day tomorrow and can explain the advantages of becoming a council foster carer. Look out for their stall in Newport Centre between 10am and 3pm.

Christmas:

Oh yes they are! Our foster families are off to enjoy the pantomime at The Riverfront this month. It's one of the treats we arrange for these very special people during the year

Before summer holidays:

The sun has got its hat on and we're getting ready for our summer fun day for foster carers, the children they look after and their own children. Find out more about the benefits of being one of our foster carers

Scrutiny Report

Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships

Part 1

Date: 4 December 2019

Subject Scrutiny Adviser Report

Author Scrutiny Adviser

The following people have been invited to attend for this item:

Invitee:	Role
Meryl Lawrence (Scrutiny Adviser)	Present the Committee with the Scrutiny Adviser Report for discussion and update the Committee on any changes.

Section A – Committee Guidance and Recommendations

Recommendations to the Committee

The Committee is asked to:

1. Committee's Work Programme:

Consider the Committee's Forward Work Programme Update (**Appendix 1**):

- *Are there any amendments to the topics scheduled to be considered at the next Committee meeting?*
- *Are there any additional invitees that the Committee requires to fully consider the topics?*
- *Is there any additional information that the Committee would like to request?*

2. Scrutiny Letters/ Public Services Board Minutes

Note the Minutes of the Public Services Board held on 3 October 2019, when the Scrutiny Letter containing the Committee's comments upon the Well-being Plan Annual report 2018-19 from the 26 June 2019 Meeting were submitted to the Public Services Board.

(Appendix 2).

2 Context

Background

- 2.1 The purpose of a forward work programme is to help ensure Councillors achieve organisation and focus in the undertaking of enquiries through the Overview and Scrutiny function. Effective work programming is essential to ensure that the work of Overview and Scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services.
- 2.2 Further information about the work programming process, including the procedures for referring new business to the programme, can be found in our Scrutiny Handbook on the Council's Scrutiny webpages (www.newport.gov.uk/scrutiny).
- 2.3 The Centre for Public Scrutiny's Good Scrutiny Guide recognises the importance of the forward work programme. In order to 'lead and own the process', it states that Councillors should have ownership of their Committee's work programme, and be involved in developing, monitoring and evaluating it. The Good Scrutiny Guide also states that, in order to make an impact, the scrutiny workload should be co-ordinated and integrated into corporate processes, to ensure that it contributes to the delivery of corporate objectives, and that work can be undertaken in a timely and well-planned manner.

Forward Work Programme Update

- 2.4 The Committee's work programme was set in June 2018, including estimated timescales for when the reports will be considered by the Committee. This programme is then managed and implemented by the designated Scrutiny Adviser for this Committee under the direction of the Committee Chairperson.
- 2.5 Attached as **Appendix 1** is the Committee's Forward Work Programme Update. The Committee is asked to consider:
- *Any amendments to the topics scheduled to be considered at the next Committee meeting?*
 - *Are there any additional invitees that the Committee requires to fully consider the topics?*
 - *Is there any additional information that the Committee would like to request?*

The Committee agreed to keep a degree of flexibility within its work programme to enable the Committee to respond to urgent / emerging issues. This item is an opportunity for the Committee members to raise any suggested amendments to the Work Programme.

Scrutiny Letters / Public Services Board Minutes

- 2.6 A Scrutiny Letter was sent to the Public Services Board Meeting with the Committee's comments upon the Well-being Plan Annual report 2018-19 from the 26 June Meeting. The Minutes of the Public Services Board held on 3 October 2019 are attached as **Appendix 2**.

3 Information Submitted to the Committee

- 3.1 The following information is attached:

Appendix 1: The Committee's Forward Work Programme Update;

Appendix 2: Minutes of the Public Services Board held on 3 October 2019.

4. Suggested Areas of Focus

Role of the Committee

The role of the Committee in considering the report is to:

- **Forward Work Programme Update - Appendix 1**

Consider:

- Are there any amendments to the topics scheduled to be considered at the next Committee meeting?
- Are there any additional invitees that the Committee requires to fully consider the topics?
- Is there any additional information that the Committee would like to request?

- **Scrutiny Letters / Public Services Board Minutes – Appendix 2**

Note the Minutes of the Public Services Board on 3 October 2019, when the Scrutiny Letter containing the Committee's comments upon the Well-being Plan Annual report 2018-19 from the 26 June 2019 Meeting were submitted to the Public Services Board.

Section B – Supporting Information

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Corporate Assessment, and the subsequent [follow up assessment](#) provide background information on the importance of good work programming. Specific reference is made to the need to align the Cabinet and Scrutiny work programmes to ensure the value of the Scrutiny Function is maximised.
- 5.2 The latest Cabinet work programme was approved by the Cabinet on a monthly basis for the next 12 months and includes the list of reports scheduled for consideration. Effective forward planning by both Cabinet and Scrutiny needs to be coordinated and integrated in relation to certain reports to ensure proper consultation takes place before a decision is taken. A link to the Cabinet work programme is provided [here](#) to the Committee as part of this report, to enable the Committee to ensure that the work programmes continue to reflect key decisions being made by the Cabinet.

6. Links to Council Policies and Priorities

- 6.1 Having proper work programming procedures in place ensures that the work of Overview and Scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services, contributes to the delivery of corporate objectives, and ensures that work can be undertaken in a timely and well-planned manner.
- 6.2 This report relates to the Committee's Work Programme, Actions from Committee's and Information Reports that support the achievement of the Scrutiny Committee, in accordance with the Law and Regulation Service Plan, Objectives, Actions and Measures and the Wellbeing objectives:

Well-being Objectives	Promote economic growth and regeneration whilst protecting the environment	Improve skills, educational outcomes & employment opportunities	Enable people to be healthy, independent & resilient	Build cohesive & sustainable communities
Corporate Plan Commitments	Thriving City	Aspirational People		Resilient Communities
Supporting Function	Modernised Council			

7 Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act

7.1 The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 which came into force in April 2016 sets the context for the move towards long term planning of services.

7.2 General questions

- How is this area / policy affected by the new legislation?
- How will this decision / policy / proposal impact upon future generations? What is the long term impact?
- What evidence is provided to demonstrate WFGA has been / is being considered?
- Evidence from Community Profiles / other data?
- Evidence of links to Wellbeing Assessment / Objectives / Plan?

7.3 Wellbeing Goals

- How are the Wellbeing goals reflected in the policy / proposal / action?
 - *A prosperous Wales*
 - *A resilient Wales*
 - *A healthier Wales*
 - *A more equal Wales*
 - *A Wales of cohesive communities*
 - *A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language*
 - *A globally responsible Wales*

7.4 Sustainable Development Principles

- Does the report / proposal demonstrate how as an authority we are working in accordance with the sustainable development principles from the act when planning services?
 - **Long Term**
The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs
 - **Prevention**
How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives
 - **Integration**
Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies
 - **Collaboration**
Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives
 - **Involvement**
The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

8 Background Papers

- [The Essentials - Wellbeing of Future Generation Act \(Wales\)](#)
- [Corporate Plan 2017 - 2022](#)
- The Corporate Assessment and [follow up assessment](#).
- [Reports and Minutes of One Newport Public Services Board Meetings](#)

Report Completed: 25 November 2019

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Appendix 1

**Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships
– Forward Work Programme Update**

Wednesday, 5 February 2019 at 5pm		
Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
Education Achievement Service (EAS) – Business Plan	To consider the draft EAS Business Plan that sets out the priorities, programmes and outcomes to be achieved as part of the consultation prior to its approval and submission to Welsh Government.	Strategic Director – People Chief Education Officer Deputy Chief Education Officer Representatives from the EAS
Well-being Plan Mid-Year Update	To monitor performance of the delivery of the Well-being Plan by the PSB and its progress towards the five Interventions within the Plan.	Chief Executive Head of People and Business Change PSB Intervention Leads

Wednesday, 18 March 2019 at 5pm		
Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
Regional Safeguarding	Consider a report upon Regional Safeguarding to include an update upon the implementation of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) reported previously, due to the statutory role of the Local Authority for this Strategy.determine if it wishes to make any comments.	Strategic Director – People Head of Adult and Community Services Head of Children and Young People Services Regional Partnership Representatives

Scrutiny Committee Briefings		
Topic:		Timescale:
Newport LIVE	Overview of the partnership arrangements.	To be arranged (following postponement from 27 Sep 2018 due to the number of apologies received)
NORSE	Overview of the partnership arrangements.	
Wastesavers	Overview of the partnership arrangements.	To be arranged (following postponement from 20 Nov 19 Due to the number of apologies received)

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn



Minutes Newport Public Services Board

Date: 3 October 2019

Time: 10.00 am Newport City Homes

Present:

Statutory Partners:

Newport City Council: Councillor Debbie Wilcox (Chair); B Owen. S Davies attended the meeting as an observer.

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB): K Dew

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service: E Bellew

Natural Resources Wales: C Davies

Invited Partners:

Welsh Government: A John

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner: D Garwood-Pask

Heddlu Gwent Police: CS I Roberts

Probation Service: L Plechowicz

Coleg Gwent: G Lacey

Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations: M Featherstone

RSLs: C Doyle

Newport Live: S Ward

Public Health Wales: W Beer

Officers:

N Dance (PSB Co-ordinator NCC); Tracey Brooks (NCC); M Sharpe (NCC) Tracy McKim (NCC); Louise Postill (NCC).

G Calder (Chair of the Fairness Commission) attended for item 9

Apologies: C Lane (Newport Third Sector Partnership), N Prygodzicz (ABUHB), S Aitken (Public Health Wales), CFO H Jakeway (SWF&RS), M Cadwallader (USW)

No	Item	Action
1	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Guy Lacey, Coleg Gwent, to his first PSB meeting.</p>	
2	<p>Minutes of the meeting held 11 June 2019</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2019 were confirmed as a true record.</p> <p>Matters arising</p> <p><u>Minute 2 Matters Arising</u> – On the basis that he wished all Scrutiny members to have the same access to information and knowledge of PSB work, the Scrutiny Chair did not consider that there should be a direct link between a Scrutiny member and a Well-being Plan Intervention. The Scrutiny Chair had also noted that the Committee should not be involved with PSB interventions on a decision making level.</p> <p>The Strategy and Performance Board will consider Scrutiny reporting at its next meeting.</p> <p><u>Minute 9- Partnership Evaluation-</u> The Chair reminded members to complete the partnership evaluation survey.</p>	ALL
3	<p>G10 Update</p> <p>The Chair reported on discussions at G10's September meeting, which is a meeting of the Leaders and lead officers of statutory partners across Gwent. The Chair advised that Beverly Owen is now a member of the M4 Commission.</p> <p>AGREED – As part of the regional work, the Sustainable Travel intervention leads take forward the possible Travel Charter for Gwent and the fleet review, which is in partnership with the Energy Saving Trust.</p>	C Doyle; C Lane
4	<p>Western Powerhouse</p> <p>B Owen gave an update on progress regarding the Western Powerhouse.</p> <p>The main priorities of the Western Powerhouse are an industrial strategy; Great Western Crossrail; trade and investment; productivity; and inclusive growth.</p> <p>Members commented that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • divergent skills agendas should not be a barrier to progress; • policies and practices need to be flexible to avoid operational barriers e.g. in the allocation of grant funding for housing initiatives; • noting connections between Newport and Bristol on crime, it would be beneficial to build policing partnerships in the Severnside area alongside consideration of the economy. <p>A John would work within Welsh Government to facilitate the joining up of these agendas. S Davies would work within the Western Powerhouse partnership to avoid duplication and conflict in these areas.</p>	A John; S Davies

<p>5</p>	<p>National Development Framework (NDF)</p> <p>T Brooks presented the National Development Framework consultation and Newport City Council's response, with the aim of the PSB considering a collective response.</p> <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable Housing – The NDF does not draw out a policy against mono tenure. A range of tenure types in all new developments would give flexibility. • Climate change – In terms of the hierarchy of the challenges facing us, climate change seems low down in the list although WG has declared a climate emergency. The PSB would like to see more commentary around public transport and active travel to support this. • The links between climate change, air quality, biodiversity and sustainable management of the land could be better made within the Framework. • Newport is part of regional consortia (Cardiff Capital Region and Western Powerhouse). Differences in policies and practices, particularly between Wales and England, should not be a barrier to growth across regions. <p>It was considered that a health impact assessment of the NDF on Newport would provide useful context for a PSB response.</p> <p>AGREED – To submit a PSB response based on the comments above and any further comments submitted by individual PSB members by 18th October.</p>	<p>W Beer</p> <p>ALL</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Scrutiny Letter on the Well-Being Plan Annual Report</p> <p>The PSB considered a letter from Cllr Rahman, Chair of the Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships.</p> <p>The letter noted that the work undertaken by the PSB in the first 9 months had been positively received and the Scrutiny Committee commended those involved for their hard work.</p> <p>The Committee had commented on individual interventions and responses to these would be prepared by intervention leads supported by the Partnerships Team.</p> <p>Scrutiny had also commented more generally on the report as a whole.</p> <p>Intervention leads commented that the Scrutiny Committee meeting had felt more positive than the Chair's letter implied. Leads would take the Scrutiny comments on board when reporting this year. Plans to report in alternative formats such as video should help make the 2019/20 Report more accessible and agendas for intervention board meetings should include Communications as a standing item so that project-based news stories and successes could be identified and promoted.</p>	

	<p>An error in the Scrutiny Committee minutes was noted: the Participation Panel had been granted £15,000 to spend on their local area and not £150,000 as recorded in the minutes.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the intervention leads for attending the Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>AGREED -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Intervention boards to include Communications on their agendas ii. Intervention leads, supported by the Partnerships Team, take forward the Scrutiny comments when reporting this year. 	<p>Scrutiny</p> <p>Intervention leads and Partnerships Team</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>Local Wellbeing Plan Q1 Performance Reports</p> <p>Intervention Board leads updated on the progress made in delivering the Local Well-being Plan in Quarter 1. Performance dashboards were presented.</p> <p>Regarding the Newport Offer, B Owen noted that PSB members would be requested to complete a questionnaire regarding their use of low carbon energy.</p> <p>Members commented that the positive perception targets under the Newport Offer were quite low. It was noted that the targets were based on the outcomes of perception surveys carried out in recent years; the National Survey for Wales might offer comparisons regarding citizens being happy with where they live.</p> <p>AGREED -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. PSB Members to complete a low carbon energy survey to be circulated ii. The PSB's December agenda to include a report on lessons learnt from neighbourhood hubs iii. The new Newport Destination website be presented at a future meeting 	<p>ALL</p> <p>IR / NP</p> <p>B Owen</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>Minutes of Strategy and Performance Board</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 21st August were noted.</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>Fairness Commission Training</p> <p>Gideon Calder, Chair of the Fairness Commission outlined the Commission's offer to train employees of PSB partners.</p> <p>AGREED - PSB members to consider Fairness Commission training for their staff.</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Building a Healthier Gwent</p> <p>The Board considered a report summarising the themes and content of the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2019 'Building a Healthier</p>	

	<p>Gwent' and outlining the programme for involving the public, professionals, senior managers and system leaders.</p> <p>AGREED -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. To note the contents of the report ii. To provide leadership in building a healthier Gwent iii. To actively participate in the involvement plan and promote it 	ALL
11	Community Wellbeing Profiles – Report noted	
12	Minutes of the Regional Partnership Board Minutes of the July meeting noted.	
13	<p>Forward Work Programme – Programme noted</p> <p>AGREED – All members to propose agenda items.</p>	ALL
14	<p>Meeting Dates 10 am Tuesday, 10 December 2019. The Friars, Royal Gwent Hospital</p> <p><u>Meeting dates in 2020</u> 10 am Tuesday, 10 March 2020 10 am Tuesday, 9 June 2020 10 am Tuesday, 8 September 2020 10 am Tuesday, 8 December 2020</p>	ALL

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