

Children & Young People Services purpose is *“To promote and safeguard the wellbeing of children and young people within their families and where this is not possible, to provide good quality alternative care”*.

Key to all our work is firstly to support children to remain safely with their families. Our emphasis on preventative services alongside support for families to explore their strengths and meet the needs of their children is crucial in meeting this primary outcome. Secondly when children are in our care and leave our care we must do everything to support them to ensure positive lives in the present and strong opportunities for the future. Children and families deserve services that are truly holistic and recognise the multifaceted nature of family’s lives. In order to ensure we can work to meet this need partnership underpins our service. We work with families and a broad range of agencies to meet our stated outcomes and to offer the best possible services.

Over the coming four years we will look to develop and enhance all elements of Children’s Services to safely reduce the numbers of children being looked after while ensuring that those who are looked after have effective and nurturing placements which promote aspiration into adulthood.

Children & Young People Services in Newport provides a range of services to children and families requiring care and support:

**Operations** – These teams undertake first point of contact work for referrals from the public and other agencies. They undertake assessments, multi-agency plans strategy meetings and conferences, initiate care proceedings, court processes and other activities. The core teams in this area include: Newport Safeguarding Information Hub; Child Protection and Children requiring Care and Support teams; Mentoring Assessment and Consultancy; Disabled Children’s Team; Pathway Teams; and Youth Justice Team.

**Placement resources for our Looked after Children** – The teams provide the direct care for children who live in residential homes, in-house fostering services, out of county placements, promoting educational achievement, training and therapeutic support for emotional and mental wellbeing. The core teams in this area include: Residential Services; Fostering Team; Family and Friends Team.

**Integrated Family Support Services** - The teams provide a range of evidence based, outcome focussed interventions designed to reduce risk in families, improve resilience and avoid the need for more acute services. They work with the frontline social work teams to prevent children coming into the care system unless it is absolutely necessary. They support families when children are being rehabilitated to the care of their birth families and provide court ordered supervised contact as well as certain key programmes requested by the courts. The teams involved are: Family Assessment and Support Team; Family Support team; Family Contact Service and Prevention Services.

**Safeguarding** – The Safeguarding team is responsible for ensuring that all vulnerable children are protected and that where there is evidence that a child is at risk or harm that effective processes are in place to make an assessment, investigate and take action if necessary. The Safeguarding team

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collaborates with other social care providers, health board, police, education, probation and other organisations both internal and external) through the South East Wales Safeguarding Children's Board.

Children & Young People Services has set 4 Objectives in our Service Plan

Objective 1 – Deliver effective services to support children to safely remain with their families

Objective 2 – Improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers including a focus on safe reunification

Objective 3 – Ensure a range of placements are available for looked after children

Objective 4 – Prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people.

The Objectives and the whole Service Plan are reviewed within Children's Services and then through the Scrutiny processes of the whole Council at mid-year and again at the end of the year.

**Defined service users:** Children on the edge of care, Looked after children, their families and carers

**Headline performance measures:**

- reduction in the number of children in care
- reduction in the number of children placed out of county
- reduction in the number of children placed out of Wales
- reduction in the number of children removed from parents with a learning disability

In the section below the current position is outlined. Using the data of the past five years and the current trajectory of the figures we recognise that halting the increase and then turning to a reduction is testing. The National research all points to a very wider range of factors and influences and casting the net to facilitate enduring change will require work across agencies and the courts. On the current trajectory our numbers of looked after children would increase during this year by a further 55 taking us to 435. We have already put in place a number of measures to attempt to slow this trajectory but realistically rebuilding a culture where a higher degree of risk is accepted takes time and the ownership across all areas of public bodies as well as

**Proposed Reduction Expectations**

**Year One (2019/20):**

410

**Year Two (2020/21):**

Reduction of 10% to 15% on the total number at the end of March 2020

**Year Three (2021/22):**

Reduction of 5% on the total number at the end of March 2021

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| <p>an understanding and emphasis throughout the universal and preventative services. This year we therefore plan to slow the upward trajectory and then look to reduce the overall figures in the following two years. The work to move towards these reductions has already commenced but is also predicated on the support of the revenue streams from ICF and work with Cafcass Cymru and the courts.</p> <p>We have set the overall expectations for the reduction expectations. For the detail in the three other bullet points for the reasons outlined in the section “How are we doing?” below we have not set reduction expectations.</p> <p>Predicting the UASC numbers continues to be immensely challenging and while predicting looked after children numbers is always fraught the complexity in this area poses particular difficulties and potentially compromises any setting of targets.</p> |  |
| <p><b>What other measures have you agreed to support the headline performance measures?</b></p> <p>Number of Care Orders with children subject to Placement with Parent regulations revoked</p> <p>Number of kinship carers becoming SGO carers</p> <p>Number of adoptions</p> <p>Number of children with a care plan for long term fostering</p>  |  |
| <p>Number of families referred for Family Group Meetings within period</p>   | <p>No and % of families experiencing the following outcomes as a result of the Family Group Meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referral to ‘step-down’/early support service</li> <li>• Diverted from Child Protection Case Conference</li> <li>• Diverted from Section 76 Accommodation</li> <li>• Diverted/stepped down from PLO</li> </ul> |

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| <p>Numbers of children/young people accessing edge of care services during period</p>                            | <p>The number and % of children and young people receiving edge of care support who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Supported to remain living within their family network</li> <li>ii. Supported to return to live within their family network from care</li> <li>iii. Supported to return to or engage in education</li> <li>iv. Supported to engage in community activities</li> <li>v. Removed from the CPR as a result of the intervention</li> </ul> <p>Numbers and % of those children/young people accessing edge of care services who have experienced school exclusion during period</p> |
| <p>The number of children/young people subject to an SGO expressed as proportion per LA</p>                      | <p>Number of SGO carers subject to an SGO support plan (other than financial support only)</p> <p>The number of children/young people subject to SGO who have experienced school exclusion during period</p> <p>The numbers and % of SGO carers accessing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. peer support (during period)</li> <li>ii. training (during period)</li> <li>iii. psychological support (during period)</li> </ul>  |
| <p>The number of young people aged 14 – 17 years (broken down by age) referred for Mediation within a period</p> | <p>Of those accessing the Mediation service how many were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Supported to remain living within their family</li> <li>ii. Supported to return to their family pending a planned move to alternative accommodation</li> <li>iii. Supported to become Looked After</li> <li>iv. Supported into independent living (ie non-LAC)</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Number of families referred for Baby and Me support</p>   | <p>Of those accessing the Baby and Me service how many babies were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Supported to remain living within their parent(s)</li> <li>ii. Supported to live with a family member</li> <li>iii. Became Looked After</li> </ul>  |

**How are we doing?**

| Number of looked after children at 31 March 2018 |       |       |       |       |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|  | 2015  | 2016  | 2017  | 2018  |
| Newport  | 285   | 295   | 280   | 325   |
| Wales  | 5,615 | 5,665 | 5,945 | 6,405 |
| Rate per 10,000 population at 31 March           |       |       |       |       |
|  | 2015  | 2016  | 2017  | 2018  |
| Newport  | 85.5  | 87.5  | 83.1  | 94.3  |
| Wales  | 89.2  | 90.2  | 94.6  | 102.0 |

**As of 31.3.2019**

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| Number of children in care                                     | 375 |
| Number of Children Placed within Newport                       | 234 |
| Number of children placed out of county                        | 121 |
| Number of children placed out of Wales                         | 20  |
| Number of looked after children removed from parents with a LD | 0   |
| Number of UASC   | 25  |

The number of public law referrals for 2018/19 was 122 compared to 139 in 2017/18. However, the rate of children exiting care also fell hence the overall rise. The increasing numbers of UASC pose a particular challenge as there are no exit options for this group of children and the LA cannot reduce this number nor control the numbers arriving. Newport had seen steady looked after children figures until 2017/18 when there was a significant spike. The increasing numbers continued into 2018/19. We have explored the reasons behind the increase and while there is no single factor there are a range of themes which emerge some identified by IPC from dip sampling and some by the LA using available data and dip sampling.

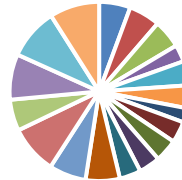
- There was a jump in the number of UASC
- A higher identified rate of domestic abuse than in similar LAs
- An increase in large families – 3 children or more – including families who had been known to the LA for many years and a single precipitating factor triggered care proceedings
- A slowly increasing rate of placement with parents
- A slowly increasing rate of kinship care arrangements
- Private law cases referred with no previous knowledge within the LA

We have reviewed the children currently placed out of county and with our increased residential capacity already targeted those furthest afield to return to Newport. On examination none of the children placed out of county are placed inappropriately with the majority being placed in South East Wales and only 23 placed away from Gwent or Cardiff. For example there are 7 children placed in specialist provision for disabled children who will remain out of county while there are 11 children placed for adoption further afield. There are a further group placed with family members.

We have reviewed all our children currently placed out of Wales and all are placed either for adoption and have been placed out of Wales because of their identified needs or are placed with family members. The practice in this area is therefore already meeting the best interests of this group of children. We will continue to work on an individual case basis to ensure that only when it is in a child's best interests are they placed outside of Wales.

In 2018/19 there were no children removed from parents who were receiving services from adult learning disability services. There were 7 parents who after capacity assessments required the services of the Official Solicitor. Capacity assessments are commissioned for a number of parents. The assessments are used to assist with the type of parenting support offered. All PAMS assessments are carried out internally and we also use elements of PAMS methodology when appropriate. Family support services have worked on specific packages for parents who require extra support and for example materials in different formats. We await the work commissioned from IPC under the auspices of the MAG to consider further steps we could take when parents require support identified in capacity assessments while recognising that the number of parents who access adult services is extremely low.

Age of Looked after Children 31.05.2019



0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

31.05.2019

- 199 of the looked after children in Newport are aged over 11
- 67 of this group have been looked after for more than 10 years
- 27 are UASC

Reducing our long term looked after children population requires as far as possible avoiding long term care within the Local Authority. From the data we have we recognise if children are over 11 when they become looked after the more likely it is they will then remain with us until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and they are more likely to require external placements. While children becoming looked after post 11 is usually as a result of a range of factors the most common are the risks of criminal and sexual exploitation. There is already significant partnership work in Newport focussed on the local risks of criminal exploitation. Actions to tackle child criminal exploitation need to be proactive, focus on prevention, early identification and intervention, as well as disrupting activity and prosecuting perpetrators. Nationally the research has already established a link with school exclusions as a marker a risk of exploitation. As part of the city-wide work drawing on multi agency resources to understand and address contextual safeguarding we will look to understand the local risk factors of school exclusion and exploitation.

**Story behind the headline measures (progress since the last reporting period):**

N/A for this submission

**Key partners who are supporting us**

As part of the discussions in preparing this template dates have been set first to present this information to Cabinet and then to agenda for the Public Services Board. All the key partners sit at the PSB and so will be part of the discussions and actions over the coming three years. The Regional Partnership Board has allocated ICF and Transformation funding directly and indirectly to the support for and reduction of looked after children numbers

There are existing mechanisms in place to work effectively with colleagues in the Local Authority legal

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|  | <p>teams.</p> <p>There are established relationships with education colleagues in the Local Authority, Gwent Police and different section of the health Board.</p> <p>NCC has a long-established Strategic Partnership with Barnardo’s who deliver our family support as well as working with us to develop evidence based new provision.</p> <p>We will continue to have regular contact with local Cafcass Cymru staff to work within the court arena.</p>  |
|  | <p><b>What further activity will you be taking place to support your reduction expectation plans?</b></p> <p>In line with the recommendations of the Care Crisis Review NCC has introduced Family Group Conferencing. The service commenced in February 2019 The provision is managed within the Barnardo’s Partnership and follows the rollout of training across all services including Preventions and YOS. The service was initially funded from a reconfiguration within the existing family support service but if the regional children’s revenue ICF bid is successful the service will be supplemented with an increased number of coordinators. Initial take up has been very promising and the provision is being built into processes as a default option. FGCs are being offered across Children’s Services with a view to preventing families from moving through the systems of risk and creating strengths based family solutions. They will also be used with a view to reunification for children who have been in care for many years but where home circumstances have changed and with support they can return home.</p> <p>On 1.7.2019 we will launch a service specifically focussing on working at a much earlier stage with vulnerable women who are likely to require Children’s Services involvement. Again the service is part of a refocussing of resource in the Barnardo’s Partnership but will be enhanced with the ICF funding. The support is intensive with social work, health visitor and family support worker input from 12 weeks of pregnancy and into the early months after the baby is born.</p> <p>Developing a separate Family and Friends team specifically to support family carers with a focus on support for Special Guardianship arrangements has commenced with again a reconfiguration of existing</p> |



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|  | <p>staff and resources. The team will undertake all elements of Connected Person’s Assessments and then support family carers be they Special Guardians or kinship carers. The team will also work with all children subject to placement with parent to ensure revocation is expedited as quickly as possible. Part of the work of this team is to build assurances for when in the court arena that the support wrapped around Special Guardianship is on par if not greater than that offered to foster carers. As a Local Authority we have a comparably low rate of kinship carers but are under increasing pressure from the court to approve family members as foster carers rather than explore the option of SGO.</p> <p>We have reviewed the timing of legal meetings and are using the work being completed within the Public Law Working Group to improve our pre-proceedings work. This includes a recognition of the drivers within the court which encourage risk averse practice. There are local challenges in this area with a demanding court arena and an exceptionally high rate of referral of cases to the Official Solicitor for HRA resulting from alleged delays in removal.</p> <p>We have used local authority and ICF capital funding to develop our in-house children’s residential care. A new children’s home opened in January 2019 with a further home planned for later in the year. The children placed in the home returned to Newport from out of authority residential care. This will also be the case in the second home. We are currently driving our recruitment of foster carers locally. While we have a reasonable pool of carers our use of IFAs and hence out of the immediate locality is too high. The recruitment of new carers is an ongoing attempt to address this issue.</p> |
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