

Scrutiny Report



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Part 1

Date: 24th April 2024

Subject **Fostering Service Update**

Author Scrutiny Adviser

The following has been invited to attend for this item:

Invitee:	Designation
Sally Jenkins	Strategic Director – Social Services
Natalie Poyner	Head of Children Services
Rhian Brook	Service Manager – Childrens Teams
Louise Quatermass	Residential and Resources Service Manager
Councillor Stephen Marshall	Cabinet Member for Children Services

Section A – Committee Guidance and Recommendations

1. Recommendations to the Committee

The Committee is requested:

- a) To consider the Fostering Service Update Report
- b) To determine whether it wishes to make any comments.

2 Context

Background

- 2.1 The Committee approved its Forward Work Programme on 19 July 2023 to include an update report from Fostering Services in its April 2024 Committee Meeting. ***(A link to the Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships held on 19 July 2023 Report and Minute is included in the Background Papers in Section 7 of this report.)***
- 2.2 Newport's Children Looked After population stands at approximately 349 children, the majority of whom (83%) are placed with the local authority's own foster carers. The authority's priority is to support these vulnerable young people as close to home as possible, maintaining their essential family, friend and community connections through local placements. To this end, Newport has a strategic plan in place to reduce its reliance on external residential and independent fostering agency (IFA) provisions, aiming instead to meet children's needs through an enhanced in-house foster care capacity.

3 Information Submitted to the Committee

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

Appendix A - Fostering Service Update Report

4. Suggested Areas of Focus

4.1 Role of the Committee

The role of the Committee is to:

- **Consider the report upon Adoption Services**
- **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;
 - 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 report?
 - Does the Committee wish to make any comments upon the report?

4.2 Suggested Lines of Enquiry

In considering the report, the Committee may wish to explore some of the following areas of focus:

- To what extent have objectives been achieved?
- How effectively have Services worked together to achieve outcomes? What lessons have been learned as a result and how would they be fed back?
- What have been the resource implications of partnership working? Has it maximised the resources available?

- How is the fostering service monitoring and evaluating the impact and outcomes of the efforts to "eliminate private profit from the care of children looked after"? What metrics are being used to track progress?
- What specific recruitment and retention strategies are being employed to increase the pool of kinship foster carers and supported lodgings carers, beyond just general foster carers?
- How is the fostering service engaging with children and young people in care to understand their experiences and preferences when it comes to placement type and location? How are their voices being incorporated into service planning and development?
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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

- 6.1 The report links with the Wellbeing-being Objectives and Aims of the Council’s Corporate Plan 2022 – 2027;

Well-being Objective	1 – Economy, Education and Skills	2 – Newport’s Environment and Infrastructure	3 – Preventative and Equitable Community and Social Care	4 – An Inclusive, Fair and Sustainable Council
Aims:	Newport is a thriving and growing city that offers excellent education and aspires to provide opportunities for all.	A city that seeks to protect and enhance our environment whilst reducing our carbon footprint and preparing for a sustainable and digital future.	Newport is a supportive city where communities and care are at the heart of what we do.	Newport City Council is an inclusive organisation that places social value, fairness and sustainability at its core.

7 Background Papers

- [Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships 23 July 2023 Report \(Item 7\) and Minutes](#)
- [Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships 4 December 2019 Report and Minutes \(Fostering Update\)](#)
- [The Essentials - Wellbeing of Future Generation Act \(Wales\)](#)
- [Welsh Government Guidance for Local Authority Scrutiny Committees on the Scrutiny of Public Services Boards](#) (Issued August 2017)
- [Corporate Plan 2022-27](#)