

HEAD OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES



ANNUAL REPORT 2014 - 2015

The Children and Young People Services Division provides help and support to children and young people who are in need, who are looked after by the Council, who have left care, who have additional needs and/or disabilities or who need to be protected

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01446 700111

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Overview

1. In the Vale of Glamorgan Council Corporate Plan (2013-17), the intended outcome for children and young people is that they are engaged and supported and take full advantage of life opportunities available in their local community and beyond. The principal goal of Children and Young People Services is to ensure that effective help and support reach those vulnerable children, young people and families assessed as being 'in need'.
2. We achieve our goal by offering a range of services. Many of them are designed to support a child or young person to remain living within their own family or in their local community. Where this is not possible or it is not safe to do so, we aim to find placements for them that meet their needs. Most often, this means that they live in foster care within the Vale of Glamorgan so that they can maintain their links with family, friends and school.
3. The National Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families provides a way of looking at, understanding and recording what is happening to children and families. It ensures involvement by other agencies such as health, education and the voluntary sector where this is appropriate. The Framework provides statutory timescales for work to be undertaken with families. The Vale of Glamorgan is fully engaged in national work being done to simplify assessment, planning and reviewing processes for individual cases. It will help to reduce levels of bureaucracy and the disproportionate time spent by staff entering information on to case management systems.
4. Partnership working in the Vale of Glamorgan is strong and effective. At an operational level, there is evidence for this on a daily basis in the management of individual cases across the whole range of need. Strategically, partnership working is demonstrated in the work of groups such as the Children and Young People's Board, the Families First and Flying Start Management Board, the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Local Safeguarding Children Board, the Safer Vale Partnership, the Local Service Board, the South-East Wales Improvement Collaborative (with nine other local authorities) and the Integrating Health and Social Care Programme (with Cardiff Council, the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and third sector umbrella organisations).
5. There is a high and growing level of demand for children and family services. To ensure that this demand can be met and that we can continue to improve the quality of the services available, the Children and Young People Services Commissioning Strategy 2013-18 was introduced. It contains four key strategic objectives:
 - **To support families to stay together** and reduce the need for children to be looked after, by ensuring a focus on early intervention and preventative action across all service provision for children.

- **To manage risk confidently and provide support at the ‘edge of care’** by making sure that need is accurately assessed, resulting in the right children being accommodated at the right time. This includes supporting families to avoid children becoming accommodated unnecessarily and by making private arrangements within their wider family networks.
 - **To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality placements** that meets the diverse range of children’s needs.
 - **To give children clearly planned journeys through care** which remain focused on achieving care plans, prevent drift, enable them to be reunited with family and friends where possible, have stable placements and exit the care system positively.
6. As a consequence of actions to implement this Strategy, numbers of looked after children have been subject to monthly fluctuation but have remained stable over the year; from 184 at the end of March 2014 to 189 at the end of March 2015. Although increasing in the first half of the year to 105 in December 2014, the number of children and young people whose names are included on the Child Protection Register has decreased to 90 in March 2015.
7. We have continued with our strategy to achieve permanence planning for children who are looked after by revoking in appropriate cases Care Orders on children placed at home with parents and supporting Residence Orders and Special Guardianship Orders for children in long term settled placements. While such placements continue to generate financial costs for the Council, the burdens on social worker and independent reviewing officer time and resources lessen as a result and enable other priority areas to be targeted. We have also progressed plans to place children for adoption where this is in their best interests and all alternative options have been exhausted.

During 2014/15, we made three successful applications to Court in respect of five children to revoke Care Orders in favour of Special Guardianship Orders. These children are no longer Looked After and no longer have Social Services intervention in their lives at an inappropriate level.

At the end of year 2014, there were 52 children in total who were formerly looked after and are now subject to Special Guardianship Orders, an increase of 21 children over a two-year period.

During 2014/15, eleven children were adopted and a further eight placed for adoption. This compares to five children who were adopted in 2013/14 and ten children who were placed for adoption in the same year.

8. We have also continued to focus our efforts on returning children placed out of area to placements within Wales and, where possible, within the

Vale of Glamorgan. In March 2015, of the 167 children placed in foster or residential care, only six were placed outside Wales. Each of these is in very specific circumstances where the level of need warrants a specialist placement that is not available in Wales.

9. We have started a review of our Commissioning Strategy to ensure it remains relevant and up to date. Completion of this work will be a priority for the Division as we move into 2015/16.
10. The Division has achieved budget savings over the last year. However, placements for children and young people looked after continue to be a source of pressure. Through the Directorate's Budget Programme, we are endeavoring to make the necessary changes to services that will bring about improvement but also ensure that we continue to meet the savings targets set and deliver a balanced budget. This has included the development of an invest-to-save project to provide funding for the recruitment of additional in-house foster carers. The project has enabled us to employ a social worker on a fixed term contract to act as a recruitment officer. There is also provision built in for marketing costs and the funding of assessments by independent social workers. This strategy has continued to deliver against the targets set for this year. By increasing our ability to place with in-house foster carers, we will reduce our reliance on independent foster placements.
11. We have been able to maintain staffing levels at the front-line, with a good level of stability amongst the workforce. We have experienced difficulties in recruiting to posts within the Intake and Family Support Team but remain committed to resolving this issue, which affects all local authorities to some degree.
12. Significant changes in the past year include:
 - further expansion of Flying Start with three new projects, including our second partnership in childcare as part of a school site;
 - continued implementation of the Children and Young People Services Commissioning Strategy 2013-18;
 - opening of our first commissioned residential provision in the Vale of Glamorgan;
 - returning children to Wales from out of area placements;
 - meeting the annual target set for increasing the number of in-house foster carers.
13. As we move towards implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act in April 2016, Children and Young People Services alongside its statutory and third sector partners will face challenges in ensuring that new requirements can be met. The Act is intended to transform the way social services are delivered through an approach that is focused on achieving the outcomes necessary to promote a person's well-being; as an individual, as part of a family and as part of their community.

14. To achieve this aim, the Act requires us to ensure that people have access to clear information, advice and assistance and that their voice is at the centre of decisions about their care and support. It also emphasises the importance of prevention and early intervention to help people live independently.
15. The regulations and guidance that will provide the detail of the implications are yet to be finalised by Welsh Government. Children and Young People Services are aware of potential implications in areas such as advocacy and leaving care options. We will be using the time available in 2015/16 to prepare fully for these changes.
16. The ability to meet the need of our most vulnerable children and families at a time when resources are reducing will require the development of alternative service delivery models and re-shaping services through more integrated arrangements.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

17. Social Services have a statutory responsibility to investigate situations where a child or young person may be suffering abuse or neglect or is at risk of suffering abuse or neglect. Whenever it is necessary, we must protect children and young people from harm. While we always endeavour to do this in partnership with families, we sometimes have to take action against the wishes of the parents or wider family.
18. Referrals are received from a number of sources including families themselves, the police, schools, health visitors, GPs, hospitals and members of the public. All referrals are screened to establish priority and need for assessment and the provision of support. The Service has maintained a high level of performance for decisions made within one working day, achieving a rate of 99% for the year. When there are concerns that a child or young person may be at risk of being harmed or neglected, the assessment starts immediately.
19. As stated earlier, the number of children and young people whose names are included on the Child Protection Register has been decreasing since December 2014. From inspection, audit and quality assurance processes, we know that multi-agency assessments, decision-making and planning are helping to ensure that the most vulnerable children and young people are identified and supported appropriately. The Council continues to demonstrate strong performance in areas such as the timeliness of child protection conferences and initial core group meetings. All children involved in the child protection process are offered an advocate.

These were our improvement priorities for 2013/14 and progress made.

- **We have maintained effective partnership working with all agencies through the Safeguarding Children Board across Cardiff and the**

Vale of Glamorgan to ensure individual children are protected from harm.

- **We have reviewed our responses to forms of abuse where there is national or regional evidence of increasing prevalence such as child sexual exploitation, trafficking and internet grooming. Focussed work has been completed on a regional basis to promote consistency across the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff.**

These are our improvement priorities for 2014/15.

- **We will respond to the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act as they relate to children's safeguarding and ensure our responsibilities to children in the Vale of Glamorgan are met.**
- **We will improve our awareness of child exploitation rates by developing baseline data to inform a strategy for early intervention. In doing so, we will promote the wellbeing of children and young people who experience, or are at risk of, sexual exploitation.**

Children in Need

20. Our aim is to support children and young people so that they continue to live within their own family networks and within their community wherever this is possible. We intervene when it has been assessed that there are risks to children and young people, to prevent those risks escalating and to safeguard those children who have suffered or are likely to suffer significant harm. In order to achieve our aims, we work in close partnership with other agencies and service providers to offer a range of family supports to meet assessed needs. We ensure priority is given to those children, young people and families in greatest need to ensure the services are used most effectively and efficiently.
21. The focus on prevention and earlier intervention is a key part of the efforts of the Council and its partners to change the way in which services meet need. This model will be reinforced further through the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act which will be implemented from 6th April, 2016. The Council has assessed its readiness for the Act and is currently developing an implementation plan. We are also reviewing our Commissioning Strategy which contains an analysis of the need for services to ensure we are focusing the provision of resources in the right way.
22. The Families First Management Board takes responsibility for allocation of the Families First grant funding, to ensure that the services commissioned are targeted at those children and families who may be harder to reach and so more vulnerable. The Board have begun to actively consider the implications of the Social Services and Wellbeing

(Wales) Act and changes that may be required to the allocation of Families First grant funding.

23. A fundamental part of this spectrum of services is the Families Achieving Change Together (FACT) Team. It plays a critical role in supporting children and young people to remain living within their family networks and in minimising the need for more intrusive and costly intervention. 314 referrals were received across the Vale of Glamorgan in 2014/15, leading to 93 assessments. The remaining 221 families were signposted to alternative services. The project successfully ended involvement with 68 families.
24. The following case study provides an example of the work undertaken by the FACT team:

Case example – FACT:

Young person aged 13 years at point of referral. The referral was made by the Education Welfare Officer who had been involved with the family for a number of years due to several older siblings also having long term attendance problems.

Key issues identified:

- Non-attendance (attendance was 0% for year 9)*
- Brother not in education, employment or training*
- Mother's health problems impacting on family life*
- Young person had not left the home several months, causing social isolation*
- Health concerns for young person*

It took several attempts to engage with the family as well as several appointments to complete the initial assessment, because of mother's health problems. Once this was completed, it was agreed that the support would carry on with the young person even if the mother was ill, as this was becoming a barrier to their engagement. Several discussions were held with the young person's mother about trying to access a social worker for her due to ongoing ill health; however, mother declined as she felt that she had enough support. The majority of work therefore focused on the young person's needs.

Support put in place:

- 1-2-1 support for young person, encouraging him back into the community.*
- Referral to attend "Emojis" (a 10 week youth group focusing on confidence building and emotional literacy).*
- 1-2-1 work completed around identifying and addressing the barriers to the young person's attendance at school, and to prepare him to return in*

September. Support was provided to ensure that the young person had appropriate uniform for his return, as he was concerned about appearing different. Work was also planned for the first day, looking at re-connecting with peers, and planning to walk to school with them to reduce his anxiety.

The young person returned on the first day of term and at the time of closure his attendance was 97%. In school his engagement has been good, and his presentation continues to be good. It was reported that he overslept one day, but still came in as soon as he woke up. The young person now reports that he has a good group of friends and spends most evenings out with them.

The case was closed due to significant improvements in attendance, the young person's routines and socialisation. The young person no longer felt that he needed any support and was happy with how things were going both in and out of school.

25. The Policy and Quality Assurance Officer for Social Services carried out a service user consultation in September 2014 and concluded as follows:

Service user consultation – FACT – September 2014

Overall, parents appear to be very satisfied with the support they have received from the service, particularly the individual approach that they offer.

This approach was also reflected in comments from professionals. Increase in the service users and families' confidence and the changes made in their circumstances were all acknowledged.

26. Demand for the FACT service has increased, together with a rise in the complexity of referrals being made. This is a common experience across other Team Around the Family service models in Wales. Welsh Government is aware of these challenges and it is currently reviewing the guidance. Locally, the Vale of Glamorgan has undertaken a review of the Vale of Glamorgan's Resource Panel, which receives referrals at Tier 2 of the Integrated Service Model and cases that are on the edge of more intensive interventions from statutory services, in order to consider how we can most effectively respond to levels of need. We have also audited the flow of cases between the Intake and Family Support Team and FACT in order to inform the development of a referral protocol in 2015/16.

27. Under the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, local authorities and the NHS have a joint statutory responsibility for ensuring delivery of an Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) in their area. The Vale and Glamorgan and Cardiff IFSS has been operational since the end of February 2012 and has five principal functions:
- Undertaking intensive direct work with families through the application of time-limited, family focused interventions.
 - Providing advice and consultancy to practitioners and agencies on engaging complex families with parental substance misuse.
 - Working jointly with the case managers and others to ensure that the family can gain access to the services they need.
 - Spot-purchasing services not otherwise available.
 - Providing training on evidence-based interventions for the wider workforce.
28. The IFSS has worked with 36 families during 2014/15, 10 of which resided in the Vale of Glamorgan. The Annual Report 2014/15 demonstrates the robust system of data collection and analysis in place to demonstrate how families are referred and prioritised for support, and the impact upon key areas of wellbeing such as education, parenting, relationships, alcohol or drug cessation. This data is complemented by qualitative evaluation through service user and referrer feedback. The results demonstrate that the IFSS is taking a lead role in strengthening services to support some of the most disadvantaged children who are in need or at risk because of parental alcohol or drug dependence.
29. The results include analysis of goal attainment. The IFST works with families to create clear, measurable and attainable goals in line with the referring social worker's expectation for outcomes of the intervention to ensure the children's safety. Families will generally work towards an average of two goals of which at least one will focus on reducing/stopping problematic substance misuse. The aim is to achieve a success rate of 75%. Results indicate that 67% of all goals were attained during 2014/15 and 85% of those goals relating to substance misuse.
30. The Annual Report also makes reference to the additional services now aligned to the IFSS which will be funded for three years by the Substance Misuse Area Planning Board. These services enhance the support offered by the IFSS and provide early intervention opportunities for families.
31. The main priorities for IFSS for the year ahead are to consolidate its position given recent changes to the funding basis for the service, to train the wider workforce in the IFSS model of intervention using motivational interviewing, solution focused and other cognitive behavior techniques, and to work with third sector organisations to increase confidence and competence in working with families in an early intervention and prevention model.

32. The Flying Start programme, funded by Welsh Government, now offers a service to 1,200 children and their families in 17 Lower Super Output Areas across a total of six wards (Gibbonsdown, Court, Cadoc, Castleland, Buttrills and Illtyd) in the Barry area. A map is attached at Appendix A. Hosted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council, the programme offers four core entitlements: intensive health support, free childcare, the promotion of early speech, language and communication development and positive parenting.
33. The outcome measures for the programme are that Flying Start children are:
- healthy and thriving;
 - capable and coping;
 - reaching their potential.
34. The programme aims to bring about sustained positive changes and improved outcomes in language, cognitive, social and emotional development and the physical health of children and their families through the early identification of needs and provision of early intervention. Flying Start support families to identify their needs and to access existing services. In addition, within the programme for eligible families, there are:
- 280 childcare places provided annually for children aged 2-3 years;
 - A health visitor caseload ratio of 1:110.
 - Over 15 regular opportunities for families to access groups, clinics and play sessions.
 - One-to-one support for parents from a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary team to address issues that negatively impact on the health and well-being of the family.
 - 336 packages* of enhanced Parenting Support (1:1 in the home) offered to Flying Start Families in 2014-15.
 - 231 packages* of enhanced Early Language/Play Support (1:1 in the home) offered to Flying Start Families in 2014-15.

A *package of care refers to a minimum of 4 dedicated sessions, needs based intervention.

35. Feedback from families, detailed below, highlights how children are benefitting from the services offered.

Feedback from families regarding Early Years input:

How do you feel your child has benefited from the sessions?

- *'She plays better and is more confident playing with others'.*
- *'He has learned new skills and improved in his speaking of English [ESL]'*
- *'I know I have to give him new textures/toys to explore'.*

How do you feel you have benefited from these sessions?

- *'Different ways to play, different activities that don't cost lots'.*
- *'Confidence to play with (my baby) knowing I'm helping them to learn'.*
- *'Shown me that it's important for my baby to try new things, new experiences'.*
- *'Thank you for your support, we have really enjoyed your visits and will definitely continue to do stuff together, especially messy play!'*

36. Flying Start are actively working in partnership with Families First, Communities First, Third Sector organisations and statutory services to identify and address needs within the wider community, with a particular focus on the 'tackling poverty' agenda.
37. The following case study provides an example of the work undertaken by Flying Start and its impact.

Case example – Flying Start:

X was a teenage mother with a very poor history of being parented. During her adolescence X's mother involved her in selling/dealing illicit substances resulting in X's first child being born whilst serving a prison sentence. The child was placed on the child protection register and on release from prison, X continued her relationship with the baby's father who was also known to misuse substances and became pregnant again very quickly.

X then moved into the Flying Start area, where following assessment, services were put into place to support her. Both the Early Years and the Parent Support teams have worked with X on/off for the last two years along with the continued support of the health visitor and social services. The situation reached a low point last year where pre-proceedings meetings took place in relation to both children with a view to consideration of adoption.

The continued Flying Start support, including childcare enabled X to address her drug use and her past, and she has turned her life around. At their recent developmental assessments, both children are reaching all their expected milestones, are fully immunised and have a close and loving relationship with their mother. X is now looking forward to the future. She has recently moved into a new area and is making friends who are not involved with substance misuse or her past. She is gradually decreasing her methadone and planning on returning to full time education to enable her to provide for her children.

38. During 2014/15, Families First funding and Carers Services funding were combined to procure a new Young Carers Project. A tender for the new project was awarded to the YMCA Cardiff from November 2014. The enhanced service offers additional one-to-one support, including support for young carers to improve their educational attendance and attainment.
39. Performance has been maintained in 2014/15 with 100% of young carers known to the Council being assessed. Our performance for those who were assessed receiving a service has improved from 92% in 2013/14 to 100% in 2014/15.
40. The case study below illustrates how the Vale's project for young carers provides support:

Case example – Young Carers Project:

T started with the Vale Young Carers Project a number of years ago when he was aged 10. Now aged 16 years old, T has two younger sisters; the middle one has down's syndrome and T does a lot of the caring for both siblings. Mum is very supportive of all the children and they have a loving family unit. Mum recently informed the project worker that, since attending Young Carers, T's confidence and self-esteem has grown. T is now in the St. John's as a sergeant. Mum said T would never have had the confidence to do this before. Mum also said there was a time when T had negative feelings about being a young carer but, by attending the project, this has made T realise that being a young carer gives a positive image and has provided opportunities to learn new skills. Mum couldn't praise the project enough and now the youngest sibling is joining the project.

41. The timely completion of both Initial and Core Assessments is critical to ensuring appropriate support and services are provided to children and families 'in need'. Initial Assessments should be completed within seven working days and our performance has increased to 89% for 2014/15. Completion of Core Assessments within the recommended 35 working days has further improved from 91% in 2013/14 to 94 in 2014/15, compared with a Welsh average of 81%. The proportion of re-referrals has decreased from 24% in 2013/14 to 16% in 2014/15.

These were our improvement priorities for 2013/14 and progress made.

- **With an agreed extension from Welsh Government following unforeseen issues with building works, we will have completed the 2015 expansion phase for Flying Start by the end of June 2015.**
- **We have started a review of current service models to ensure individuals are able to access appropriate services in a timely manner. This includes examining the capacity of current services and ensuring appropriate allocation of resources.**

These are our improvement priorities for 2015/16.

- **We will complete the review of current service models in the context of the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act. This will include giving consideration to the review of the Resource Panel and its recommendations, with the intention of identifying a more effective mechanism for responding to need and effectively signposting families to the right services at the right time.**
- **We will complete the 2015 expansion phase for Flying Start delivering targeted services to eligible families in their communities.**
- **We will complete the review of the Commissioning Strategy, in the context of the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act, to ensure it continues to provide an appropriate focus on the needs of children and their families and makes best use of our resources in meeting those needs.**
- **We will review the use of Families First funding, in the context of the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act, to ensure our priorities our appropriately targeted and services are delivered effectively to families.**

Looked after Children

42. The most common reasons for children and young people becoming looked after continue to be abuse and neglect but, as a result of case law decisions, there are also a growing number of homeless 16/17 year old young people who are being accommodated by the Council.
43. Our consultation with children and young people looked after tells us that:
- they appreciate having one social worker who remains consistent;
 - need age appropriate information to enable them to understand why they are looked after; and
 - value opportunities to be involved in decisions that affect them.

44. The cross-party Corporate Parenting Panel, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools, actively considers issues affecting looked after children. It emphasises the collective responsibility of the whole Council, in conjunction with all statutory and non-statutory bodies, to contribute to raising standards. Examples of topics explored by the Panel during 2014/15 include the responsibility of the local authority to respond to allegations of abuse against professionals, the educational attainment of looked after children, and placement trends.
45. The 2014/15 national CSSIW inspection of safeguarding and care planning arrangements for looked after children recognised that our Corporate Parenting arrangements are well established and have directly influenced outcomes for looked after children and that the authority has effective mechanisms in place to share information with our partner agencies to support the joint planning of looked after children.
46. The same report also highlighted that child protection processes were being used appropriately to manage risk for children looked after and good quality assurance processes were in place. It recognised the improvements that have been made in relation to residential placements through commissioning new facilities which have enabled young people to return or remain in their communities.
47. All requests for placements are scrutinised by Divisional Managers at the weekly, multi-agency Placement Panel. This ensures that, in all cases, local authority accommodation is being used appropriately to safeguard children and young people. It also helps staff to identify the kind of responsive and effective services that might be introduced earlier in order to support children and young people to remain within their family networks. The Children and Young People Services Commissioning Strategy provides the framework to ensure targeted support is provided to the right children and young people at the right time. This Strategy is being reviewed to ensure that it remains relevant and up to date.
48. Whilst the number of children and young people being looked after by the Council can fluctuate on a daily basis, the number over the year has remained stable from 184 at the end of March 2014 to 189 at the end of March 2015. This has been achieved, despite increases in the complexity of children's needs, through a number of actions set out in the Commissioning Strategy, including:
 - The revocation of Care Orders for children and young people who have been placed at home with their parents where it is assessed as being safe to do so.
 - Supporting long-term foster carers and kinship carers to seek Residence Orders or Special Guardianship Orders for children and young people who have been in stable placements.
 - Establishing a formal Permanency Panel where all care planning for looked after children can be considered before the second statutory review, i.e. within four months of becoming looked after.

49. Although these planned changes of placement can have an impact on the percentage of children experiencing three or more placements in a year (an important performance indicator for the service), this figure had stabilised in 2013/14 at less than 11%, and further improved in 2014/15 to less than 7%.
50. There is considerable evidence that looked after children and young people in the Vale of Glamorgan are receiving timely support and quality services. Every looked after child has an allocated Social Worker and every care placement starts with a Care Plan in place. 94% of statutory visits to children in their placements are achieved on time and reasons for the remaining 6% are agreed by a Manager and recorded. Almost 96% of all Care Plans are reviewed within timescale and again reasons for the remaining 4% are agreed with managers and recorded.
51. Considerable work was undertaken during 2013/14 to further enhance the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process, which captures the attainment of a looked after child and identifies the need for any additional support. The benefits of this work have been realised during 2014/15. The new guidance and the format for PEPs were drafted in collaboration with children, schools and Social Services and. The process is more robust and carefully tracks the attainment of the child. It is now an accumulative document, incorporating the education history of the pupil as well as other information which is useful to schools and other educational settings. With the implementation of the new arrangements since January 2014, performance in 2014/15 has improved considerably to 97% of PEPs being completed within the required 20 days.
52. Children and young people benefit from the additional support offered by the Children First Team which comprises a Specialist Teacher, part-time Educational Psychologist and LAC Clinical Nurse Specialist. Although we continue to work closely with the Cardiff and the Vale University Health Board to promote the percentage of looked after children receiving a health assessment, performance this year has decreased from 66% in 2013/14 to 63% in 2014/15. This is below the Welsh average of 81% and we will maintain a commitment to further improvement.
53. There are concerns about the extent to which the Child and Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS) across Wales is able to meet the need for help. Problems in delivering an effective CAMHS service model are long-standing and there are serious adverse consequences for children and families in the Vale, including those for whom the Council has a direct responsibility. The Cwm Taff University Health Board has experienced significant problems in maintaining agreed staffing levels in the CAMHS service it provides for other health boards.
54. For this reason, the Social Services Directorate has been closely engaged in helping the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board to plan and implement remedial action. Action plans are in place for a number of work streams and the Council will be using our lead role in multi-agency planning for children's services to exercise oversight of this

programme managed by the University Health Board and to monitor the effects of implementation on areas such as assessment rates and children's safety. The Council's Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee were sufficiently concerned to request a presentation from Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and CAMHS; it will maintain a strong interest in the progress being made. A further report will be presented to Scrutiny Committee later in 2015.

55. We aim to place all children within their local communities so that links are maintained with family, school and friends. We need to recruit more foster carers who are able to provide placements for older children and teenagers and children with health and disability needs. To increase the availability and range of local placements, the Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy was introduced in 2013/14. The target to recruit eight foster carers during 2014/15 has been met. We have also actively involved our foster carers in providing community support to families that supports rehabilitation or enables families to remain together. This is an example of where we seek to use our resources creatively, in this case to benefit from the wealth of experience amongst our foster carers, several of whom have received long service awards this year.
56. During our annual fostering inspection undertaken by CSSIW this year, foster carers reported positively on the responsiveness of the service and senior managers within the department to any issues raised by them. They told the inspector that management "do listen and respond" and "we feel respected by them". The inspection also highlighted where the fostering service had promoted the educational attainment of looked after children, stating 'we saw examples where some children had achieved excellent educational and career outcomes during their placements and foster carers told us about some children gaining excellent grades in GCSE exams. We also saw, from case tracking, an example where two younger children had progressed considerably in their reading age in the short time they were in placement'. The report went on to illustrate how the service promotes the wider needs of looked after children, stating 'children have warm, nurturing and secure attachments to their carers. Through case file reading we could see that children had developed close and meaningful relationships with their foster carers. We saw, from a reading a foster carer review where two children in placement had made significant achievements and the positive impact living with their foster carers was having upon their lives. In one case, improvements in a child's health condition had been attributed by a doctor to the change for the child to living in a calm and stable home where routines and boundaries were consistent and the child was receiving full support in all aspects of their life'.
57. As part of the South East Wales Improvement Collaborative (SEWIC) and its Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (the 4Cs), we are engaged in regional commissioning of externally managed children's placements. By collectively negotiating fees with independent sector providers through this unit, all the local authorities have been able to achieve cost savings and improve service quality. In addition, a regional approach to recruiting in-house foster carers has been developed.

Discussions are continuing to explore ways of developing a regional approach to foster care recruitment where it can bring benefits.

58. The number of young people requiring mainstream residential care placements has reduced during the year from 24 to 23, with a further three young people whose plans are to move on to more independent settings in 2015. Although demand has not increased, we continue to experience difficulty in securing specialist residential placements for a small number of young people with complex and challenging behaviours and disabled children.
59. The Council carried out an exercise to tender residential care provision from the independent sector. The service specification included provision of smaller units of accommodation to offer a wider range of placement options. The first of the three residential units opened in December 2014, with the second expected to be operational during quarter one of 2015/16. Similarly, we recognise the need to provide additional support to foster carers dealing with increasingly challenging children and young people and we have begun to scope development of an 'intensive placement support team'.
60. In response to the Welsh Government's Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act and as part of the local government commitment to establishing a National Adoption Service, the Council has been leading the work to prepare for creating a regional adoption collaborative. Our region includes the local authorities within the two Health Board areas of Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan and Cwm Taf. Regional working has been in place for some time and staff will transfer to a single location on 1st June 2015 as employees of the Vale of Glamorgan. Collaborating across our region will enable us to work to increase the number and range of adopters, support timely planning for children where a plan for adoption has been agreed and promote improvement in the availability and consistency of adoption support. There are also opportunities to work more closely with the voluntary adoption agencies and to further enhance relationships with Education and Health in the interests of adopted children.
61. All young people leaving care have an allocated case worker and access to a Young Person's Advisor, although a small number of young people choose not to use the support available. Pathway Plans continue to be in place in all cases. The Council has a good record of supporting young people into Further and Higher Education.

Educational achievement of some of our young people leaving care:

One young person will be qualifying as a solicitor during 2015. Another young person has finished her degree and qualified as a Social Worker. Four young people are at university undertaking degree courses and a number are undertaking A levels. One young person has secured a place at university to study Pharmacy.

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62. The needs of all homeless young people aged 16–18 years are assessed by Social Services in partnership with the Housing Department and Llamau, a third sector provider. We work actively to provide appropriate support.
 63. As a Council, we are aware of the increasing demand for accommodation by young people presenting as homeless and also how this adversely affects the options available for young people leaving care and preparing for independence.
 64. During 2013/14, we cooperated with a private landlord to put in place a scheme which provides accommodation for four young people who possess sufficient independent living skills to care for their own room and prepare food, but who are not yet able to manage adequately the demands of their own tenancy. This initiative has enabled us to increase our range of accommodation options for young people and to release higher-level supported accommodation for our more vulnerable 16-18 year olds.
 65. During 2014/15, we have increased our numbers of supported accommodation beds for young people 16 – 25 years of age by six beds following the opening of Ty Newydd in August 2014.

These were our improvement priorities for 2013/14 and the progress made.

- **We have increased the rate of care leavers who are in employment, education or training from 44% in 2013/14 to 57% in 2014/15.**
- **We have increased sustainability and stability of looked after children and young people’s placements.**
- **We have achieved the target set within our Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy.**
- **We have reduced the number of placements with Independent Fostering Agencies, with targeted efforts to further improve this position in 2015/16.**
- **We have fully used the placements at our newly commissioned residential provision.**

- **We have supported Cardiff and Vale University Health Board in planning and implementing remedial action to address deficits in the provision of CAMHS, and monitored the effects of implementation.**

These are our improvement priorities for 2015/16.

- **We will review our Commissioning Strategy 2013-18 to ensure it remains relevant and up to date.**
- **We will consider fully the implications of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act as they relate to looked after children and improve our ability to respond to these changes.**
- **We will finalise the scoping exercise regarding the development of a therapeutic fostering service and undertake a thorough cost/benefit analysis.**
- **We will continue to explore fully all opportunities to reduce our LAC population, including changes to the range and provision of family support services.**
- **We will co-locate staff transferring to the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative.**

Child Health and Disabilities

66. The Child Health and Disability Team work to provide appropriate support to families, helping disabled children and young people to achieve their potential. This includes supporting social inclusion and enabling them to gain skills that will enhance their independence.
67. Services include a range of short breaks, leisure provision and sessional support, overnight and holiday breaks with approved foster carers or at our purpose-built residential provision (Ty Robin Goch). These services are provided in partnership with Action for Children and Barnardos. In addition, families may receive Direct Payments, where they are given financial support which they use to fund choices about how best to meet their children's needs. Holiday play schemes support disabled children and young people; in addition, Social Services provide specialist support.
68. Children and families are regularly given information and advice on how to access the range of benefits and services available to them. The high quality Disability Index newsletter is distributed on a quarterly basis to all families and aims to ensure each publication is packed full of articles about events, play schemes and new opportunities. Interested in hearing feedback from readers, the Disability Index Coordinator contacted everyone for their views during 2014/15 and is using this information to further improve the newsletter. A publicly accessible web-

site contains news on all the latest developments in services and support.

69. Short breaks provide invaluable support for disabled children and young people and their families. They offer opportunities for children to become more independent, widen their experiences and form real friendships outside their family. At the same time, their families get a break from the caring role. Resource pressures mean that all care packages are regularly reviewed across all service areas to ensure equity of provision to disabled children and their families.
70. There is evidence of increasing demand for support for older disabled children and young people. Families often manage to cope when children are younger but some of them find it increasingly tiring and stressful as the children grow and may become more challenging. A small number of disabled young people require 24 hour care and support, needs which can be met only in a residential school setting, usually until they reach the age of 19. This represents a significant long-term pressure on social care, health and education resources in coming years as the cost of such provision is extremely high. At the end of 2014/15, there were five children in such settings, plus three currently under the age of ten years old who are likely to require this provision in the future due to the complexity of their needs.
71. Strategic social care and health partners in the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff commissioned an independent review of services provided to disabled children and young people and their families. This was to help them to consider opportunities to integrate health, social care and special educational needs provision where there are potential benefits for children. To help take forward this work, the statutory agencies have pooled resources to create a programme manager post. We also need to improve families' experiences and expectations when young people make the transition from child to adult services, maximise the potential to improve cost effectiveness over the longer term, and meet the overall step changes required by the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act. A report of the review was received in late 2015 and its recommendations are currently under consideration.

These were our improvement priorities for 2014/15 and the progress made.

- **We have continued to work with Cardiff Children's Services and the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board on the Joint Equipment Service, a Joint Strategy for Children with Disability, and assessment and decision-making around Continuing Health Care criteria for children. All work streams are ongoing.**
- **We have contributed to the strategic review/business case for remodelling services for disabled children and their families and are considering the recommendations arising from that work with**

our strategic partners across the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff, to achieve improved outcomes for children.

- We have engaged with the Learning and Skills Directorate to support the development and opening of the new integrated provision for children with additional learning needs at Ysgol-y-Deri. This includes ongoing work on the model for the provision of residential and respite care at the school which can best meet the assessed needs of children and families for such support.
- We have been working closely with partner agencies and adult services on transition planning and support, and are concluding the revision of the Transition Protocol and underlying policy guidance.

These are our improvement priorities for 2015/16.

- We will continue working with Cardiff Children's Services and Cardiff and Vale UHB on the joint areas of priority identified i.e. the equipment store, CHC criteria, and development of a commissioning strategy.
- We will fully consider the final recommendations of the strategic review of services for disabled children and their families, and develop a joint plan of implementation with our strategic partners.
- We will continue to work with Learning and Skills, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and Cardiff Children's Services on scoping and delivering the model for residential and respite provision at Ysgol-y-Deri.
- We will continue to develop processes that ensure a full exchange of information between the Child Health and the Disability Team and partner agencies so that children with disabilities achieve a smooth transition to adulthood and their needs are met in the most cost-effective manner.
- We will consider in detail the changes required by the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) 2014, to ensure the assessment of children's needs is more outcome focused and that there is wider exploration of how the needs of carers for respite can be met without making use of residential options.

Youth Offending Service

72. As part of its prevention service, The Youth Offending Service (YOS) works with children and young people from the age of 8 to 17 years at risk of involvement in offending. These young people have not committed offences and the aim of the service is to address risks and identified needs to prevent them from entering the Youth Justice System. The YOS delivers these interventions in partnership with Media

Academy Cardiff, Cardiff YOS and South Wales Police to children and young people who have offended for the first time and admit the offence, to divert them from continued offending through Triage and diversion interventions. Prevention and diversion now make up approximately 50% of the overall YOS caseload.

73. The YOS pre and post Court functions are to assess, supervise, plan and deliver interventions to children and young people both in the community (i.e. subject to Out of Court Disposals, Court Orders) and in custody. The aim of the service is to:
- prevent offending and reoffending;
 - reduce the use of custody;
 - promote and safeguard the wellbeing of children and young people; and
 - manage risk and protect the public from harm.
74. In order to achieve these aims and to divert young people from criminality and anti-social behaviour, the YOS provides restorative justice for victims, reparation to individuals and the community, parenting groups and support, careers and education support, accommodation assistance, access to health interventions and substance misuse education and treatment. By working closely with partner agencies, the YOS aims to ensure that children and young people with identified needs can access mainstream services.
75. Consultation carried out by the Social Services Consultation and Quality Assurance Officer in August 2014 concludes as follows:

Service user consultation – YOS – August 2014

Young people seemed to be very aware of issues that they may have had prior to being involved with the service, and were satisfied with the explanations provided at the start of the service. Experience of panel was very positive with young people's viewpoints being taken into account and clear explanations about the service and expectations.

Victim awareness was effective for most cases, with recognition of the consequences of the crime and its implications for others. This was reflected in comments from both parents and young people about the outcome of writing letters of apology and acknowledging what the service has helped them to achieve. When comparing issues experienced before and after the involvement with the Youth Offending Service, it was clear to see that many concerns had lessened for both parents and the young people.

It was also clear to see that a large proportion of young people and their parents felt the chances of them re-offending are lower. This was reiterated in the views of the focus group that took place.

There were very few improvements suggested by the service users and the parents, and the influence on future behaviour was evident in the understanding achieved through work with the team.

These were our improvement priorities for 2014/15 and the progress made.

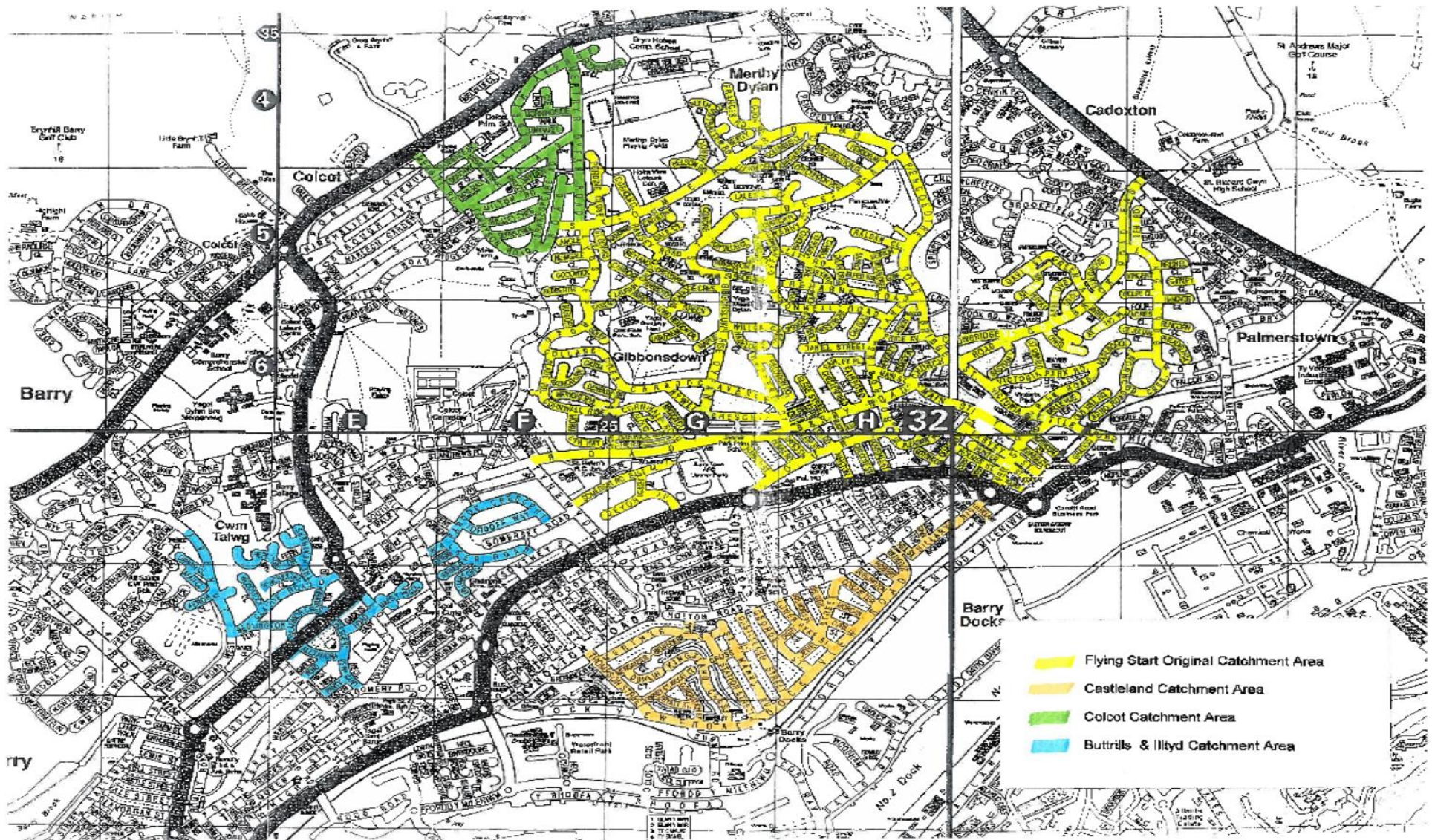
- **An analysis of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System is in progress.** *Following the initial data collection and analysis of this information, further work is being undertaken to compare the assessment scores of young people subject to Prevention, Triage and Out of Court Disposals regarding dynamic factors.*
- **Partners have contributed to the analysis of first time entrants as part of work to refresh the Youth Offending Prevention Strategy.** *Discussions are currently ongoing to inform the strategy. We anticipate launching the strategy following approval by the YOS Management Board in June 2015.*
- **Reducing re-offending was identified during 2014/15 as a priority of the Youth Justice Board (YJB), Welsh Government and the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner due to an increase in the national trend.** *Although no specific numeric targets have been set in relation to reducing re-offending, it is the aim of the YOS to reduce re-offending year and year. In 2011/12, the binary rate for re-offending across South Wales was 42.6%. This has increased to 44.6% for the period March 2012 to April 2013, with the Vale of Glamorgan being above the South Wales average at 49.4%. As a result, the YOS has worked with the YJB to analyse the cohort of young people who offended during 2011/2012 and were tracked for 12 months up to March 2013. A number of recommendations were made and an action plan has been developed which will be implemented during 2015/16 following approval by the YOS Management Board during the March 2015 meeting.*
- **As a result of high custody levels in 2013/14, the YOS has undertaken an internal evaluation and analysed its custody cases, worked with Cardiff and Vale Magistrates Court regarding sentencing decisions and Cardiff YOS to examine their custodial disposals.** *This analysis has revealed that young people in the Vale of Glamorgan are being sentenced for either the most serious offences or because they are not complying with court orders. Further work is currently being undertaken to ensure where possible that the YOS is removing barriers to engagement and promoting compliance. A custody action plan has been developed and will feed into the priorities for next 12 months.*

These are our improvement priorities for 2015/16:

- **We will reduce re-offending.** **The YOS will utilise the YJB Live Re-offending Tracker Tool with effect from 1st January 2015. The YOS**

will implement the actions outlined in the Reducing Re-offending Action Plan, which includes working with partners to ensure that specific groups such as looked after children are not over-represented.

- **We will reduce the use of custody. As outlined in the Custody Action Plan, the YOS will implement systems and practice changes to assist young people to understand the expectations placed on them by a Court Order, promote engagement and compliance to reduce the number of breaches and the risk of the Court imposing a custodial sentence for non-compliance with community supervision.**
- **In preparation for the introduction of the new Assetplus assessment framework, the YOS will deliver training and pilot Early Practice Change tools. This will improve the quality of assessments and increase practitioners' awareness of the impact of a number of issues on young people's behaviour (such as speech, language and communication, health and emotional wellbeing) to enable them to deliver interventions tailored to meet individual needs.**



Flying Start LSOA List of areas covered - June 2015

Area	LSOA Number	LSOA Name	Coverage	Original / Expansion 2012, 2014, 2015
Buttrills	W01001064	Buttrills2	Part	New Expansion Area 2015
	W01001065	Buttrills3	Part	Original
Cadoc	W01001067	Cadoc1	Full	Original
	W01001068	Cadoc2	Part	Original
	W01001069	Cadoc3	Full	Original
	W01001070	Cadoc4	Part	Original
Castleland	W01001073	Castleland1	Part	New Expansion Area 2012
	W01001910	Castleland2G	Part	New Expansion Area 2012
	W01001911	Castleland2H	Part	New Expansion Area 2012
Court	W01001079	Court1	Part	Original
	W01001080	Court2	Full	Original
	W01001081	Court3	Full	Original
Gibbonsdown	W01001094	Gibbonsdown1	Full	Original
	W01001095	Gibbonsdown2	Full	Original
	W01001096	Gibbonsdown3	Full	Original
	W01001097	Gibbonsdown4	Part	New Expansion Area 2014
Illtyd	W01001099	Illtyd2	Part	New Expansion Area 2015