

Meeting of:	Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Wednesday, 07 February 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	Proposed Corporate Strategy for Children Who Need Care and Support 2024-28
Purpose of Report:	To provide Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the proposed Corporate Strategy for Children who need Care and Support 2024-28.
Report Owner:	Director of Social Services
Responsible Officer:	Head of Children and Young People Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Corporate Parenting Panel Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee Corporate Strategy Management Group All relevant stakeholders as part of the completed consultation
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision
<p>Executive Summary: This proposed Strategy attached at Appendix 1 is the third Vale of Glamorgan Corporate Strategy for Children who need Care and Support.</p> <p>First endorsed by Cabinet in October 2016, the initial three year Strategy marked a significant change in recognising the responsibilities of the whole Council in enabling children in need of care and support to receive the right help at the right time to improve their well-being and protect them from harm, and in aligning the roles of multiple directorates in delivering the associated actions.</p> <p>The second Strategy built on these foundations and positively reflected the cross-sector relationships within its Action Plan. The third Strategy continues this legacy having been developed in partnership with our external partners in Health, the Third Sector and through engagement with children and young people and their families and carers.</p> <p>The proposed Strategy identifies how, utilising an integrated model of services, the needs of children, young people and their families will be met, within the resources available to the Council and its partners, during the period 2024 to 2028.</p>	

Recommendations

That Scrutiny Committee:

1. Notes the progress made in developing a new four year Corporate Strategy and Action Plan for Children who need Care and Support.
2. Considers the proposed Strategy and the associated Action Plan and provides feedback and comments to inform the development of a final draft of the Strategy for approval by Cabinet.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To provide Members with opportunities to exercise oversight of a key strategic development for the Council.
2. To ensure that the Strategy is given close consideration and is informed by members prior to any subsequent approval.

1. Background

- 1.1 Children and young people who need care and support, including those looked after by the local authority, and not by their parents or within their wider families, have often been subject to multiple adverse childhood experiences and are amongst the most vulnerable in society.
- 1.2 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 focuses on the importance of identifying and assessing children who need care and support as early as possible, helping them to use the strengths within their families and resources in their communities to provide help and support, and intervening at a stage which prevents their needs becoming critical. In addition, as corporate parents of children who become looked after, it is our responsibility to keep them safe, to make sure their experiences in care are positive, and to improve the access they have to opportunities for them to succeed in life.
- 1.3 The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 places an emphasis on meeting the needs of learners from 0-25 years. It also places emphasis on increasing the participation of children and young people, transition and workforce development. There are some specific arrangements in relation to children who are looked after which ensure their educational needs are coordinated effectively. This includes a requirement to appoint a Looked After Children (LAC) Coordinator and to integrate Personal Education Plans and Individual Development Plans in order to provide a holistic approach to addressing any additional learning needs.
- 1.4 A Healthier Wales published in June 2018 sets out the vision of a whole system approach to health and social care which is focused on health and well-being, and on preventing physical and mental illness. The Cardiff and Vale University Health Board Strategy is “Shaping our Future Well-Being” and is based on the premise of care closer to home which supports the principles of A Healthier Wales.

- 1.5** This proposed Corporate Strategy for Children who need Care and Support 2024-28 sets out how the whole Council is going to work collaboratively with its partners to improve the general well-being of children and young people who, for whatever reason, need care and support. It aligns to numerous local and national plans including the Council's Corporate Plan and the Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The Strategy describes the central importance of working in partnership with families as early as possible to co-produce effective plans that seek to prevent the escalation of needs. It recognises that opportunities for prevention take place at a number of key milestones within a child's journey, and that our focus should always be on enabling families to care for their children where it is safe to do so. This requires the provision of support and services, resourced sufficiently to respond to need.
- 2.2** The Strategy also considers the level of care and placements we want to provide and commission for our children who are looked after. It focuses on all stages of the care journey, articulating how we will support children in need of care and support and their families to stay together whenever it is safe to do so and, as a result, both minimise the need for children to become looked after and increase the opportunities for reunification. Where children need to be looked after, achieving permanency is the primary goal.
- 2.3** It is recognised by all those contributing to the Strategy and its associated Action Plan that it will remain an evolving document. For that reason, very positively, the Action Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis, as per the previous Strategy, by bringing partners together and reviewing progress updates against all actions within the Action Plan. This will enable additional actions to be added and maintain the commitment to, and momentum, of the Strategy. The ability to be responsive and adaptive in this way has never been more necessary following the pandemic and the challenges associated with the cost of living.
- 2.4** All Council and partner agencies are experiencing reductions in resources and face considerable challenges in being able to protect frontline services. In the context of increasing demand and diminishing resources, we need to:
- better manage resources and reduce costs where possible;
 - reshape services to divert demand;
 - integrate and regionalise services where it makes sense to do so.
- 2.5** The Council and its partners have recognised the need to reshape to change the pattern of services and the way in which we deliver them. This is involving working together with families to reduce dependence wherever possible and focus services on prevention, using the strengths within families, communities, universal services and the Third Sector.
- 2.6** We are working together to align the resources available across the local authority and with our external partners to meet our collective statutory

obligations and provide sustainable, flexible and innovative services. Doing this together, we are:

- developing a competent and confident workforce which is skilled, responsive and professional; and well supported by organisational frameworks;
- working collaboratively across the whole Council and with statutory and Third Sector partners to deliver better integrated services;
- securing better value in the use of scarce resources through efficient and effective delivery of services, promoting independence and reducing demand for intensive support services by focusing on prevention

2.7 To ensure the Strategy reflects the needs and lived experiences of children and young people, their families and carers, engagement has been undertaken with stakeholders throughout the summer 2023. Partners and professionals were also given the opportunity to provide additional feedback on the draft Strategy and accompanying action plan during November/December 2023.

2.8 The Strategy is underpinned by four Objectives representing a focus on working together with children and young people, their families and carers to provide support as early as possible. The Objectives for 2024 - 2028 are:

- Objective 1: To support families to stay together and reduce the need for children and young people to be looked after, by ensuring a focus on early intervention and prevention across all service provision for children and young people.
- Objective 2: 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 and young people being accommodated at the right time. This includes supporting families to avoid children and young people becoming accommodated unnecessarily and by making private arrangements within their wider family networks.
- Objective 3: To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality services that meet the diverse range of children and young people's needs.
- Objective 4: To give children and young people 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 care positively.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

3.1 Throughout the Strategy, partners recognise the importance of working within the Five Ways of Working. The Action Plan reflects the importance of balancing

short term and **long term** needs. Our Objectives are **integrated** with many other local and national plans and strategies to ensure maximum outcomes. Partners are committed to ensuring service users are **involved**, helping shape service delivery going forward and in shaping their own journeys through care. This **collaboration** between partners and stakeholders is shown through the engagement with stakeholder over the summer and the importance placed on hearing the voice of the child throughout care plans and care journeys. Working together to **prevent** problems occurring or getting worse as easily as possible is central to the Strategy and Action Plan.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** There are no Climate Change and Nature Implications as a direct result of this report.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** The new draft Corporate Strategy focuses on:

- Preventing the need for statutory interventions and provision of care and accommodation;
- Managing the increasing expectations and demand for help and support;
- Managing the ongoing reductions in budgets and the need to prioritise service delivery to those most in need.

- 5.2** Demand for children and young people to be looked after and for appropriate placements to be found creates pressure in this Council's budgets, most significantly in Children and Young People Services and Learning and Skills. Recognising the financial benefit to the Council as a whole and the opportunities to improve the outcomes for children, the proposed Strategy aligns the responsibilities across Directorates and our external partners and offers a shared commitment to achieving the agreed objectives.

Employment

- 5.3** There are no employment implications associated with this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.4** As set out in the Social Services and Well-being Act and other related legislation and guidance, safeguarding vulnerable children and young people in need of care and support is a key statutory responsibility of the Council.
- 5.5** The draft Strategy operates on the principle that all children in need of care and support should be given the opportunity to achieve their potential, to be the best that they can be. This shared commitment across all Council directorates enhances the Council's ability to meet its statutory responsibilities and the expectations which arise from our role as corporate parents.

- 5.6** Children and young people have been directly consulted on the proposed Strategy and its associated Action Plan and received it well. The 'Strategy on a Page' attached at Appendix 2 is a direct consequence of this consultation and is a positive means of communicating the intentions of the proposed Strategy to children and young people.

6. Background Papers

Proposed Corporate Strategy for Children who need Care and Support 2024-- 28 –
Appendix 1

Corporate Strategy on a Page – Appendix 2

DRAFT VALE OF
GLAMORGAN CORPORATE
STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO
NEED CARE AND SUPPORT



2024 - 2028



S T I S T E N T I E N C E C O N C E P T

01.

Introduction

02.

Context

03.

Needs Analysis

04.

Key Objectives and Goals

05.

Next Steps

06.

Appendix - Action Plan

This is the Vale of Glamorgan’s third Corporate **Strategy for Children and Young People who need Care and Support** covering the period 2024 – 2028, following on from the first in 2016 - 2018 and the second in 2019 - 2023.

The Strategy has been developed in partnership between the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and Third Sector partners including Llamau and Action for Children. It has been shaped by direct stakeholder engagement, building on the strengths and lessons learnt from the past strategies, recognising the responsibilities across partners in enabling children, young people and their families in need of care and support to receive the right help at the right time.

Throughout Wales and the Vale of Glamorgan there are a series of Acts, Plans and Strategies which have helped shape this new Strategy. The graphic overleaf provides an overview of the different elements that have been reflected.

Children and Young People Who Need Care and Support

2024-2028

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

WELSH GOVERNMENT

The Act provides the legal framework for improving the well-being of people who need care and support, carers who need support, and for transforming Social Services in Wales.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

FUTURE GENERATIONS COMMISSIONER FOR WALES

The Act requires public bodies to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. Together working to improve social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being.

Joint Area Plan 2023 - 2028

CARDIFF AND VALE OF GLAMORGAN'S REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP BOARD

The Starting Well Priority outlines how the partnership will work to help every child in the region to have the opportunity to thrive, focusing on children in vulnerable situations and the services that support them.

Corporate Plan 2020 - 2025

VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

The Plan sets out what the Council will focus on over the 5 year period. Objective 3 'Support People at Home and in Their Community' includes actions to provide care and support to children and families in need which reflects their individual strengths and circumstances.

A Healthier Wales: Our Plan for Health and Social Care 2018

WELSH GOVERNMENT

The Plan sets out the vision of a whole system approach to health and social care which is focused on health and well-being, and on preventing physical and mental illness. The Cardiff and Vale University Health Board Strategy called Shaping our Future Well-Being and is based on the premise of care closer to home which supports the principles of A Healthier Wales.

Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018

WELSH GOVERNMENT

The Act places an emphasis on meeting the needs of learners from 0-25 years and on increasing the participation of children and young people, transition and workforce development. It also includes more specific arrangements for children who are looked after.

Corporate Parenting Charter

WELSH GOVERNMENT

The Charter sets out commitments to be followed when engaging with care-experienced children and young people. It also outlines shared principles that all bodies and their leaders should follow when providing services to care-experienced children and young people.

Children and young people who need care and support, including those looked after by the Local Authority and not by their parents, or within their wider families, have often been subject to multiple adverse childhood experiences and are amongst the most vulnerable in our society.

This Strategy sets out how the whole Council is going to work collaboratively with its partners to improve the general well-being of children and young people and their families who, for whatever reason, need care and support. It aligns to numerous local and national plans including the Council's Corporate Plan and the Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

The Strategy describes the central importance of working in partnership with families as early as possible to co-produce effective plans that seek to recognise that opportunities for prevention to take place at a number of key milestones within a child or young people's journey, and that our focus should always be on enabling families to care for their children and young people where it is safe to do so. This requires the provision of support and services, resourced sufficiently to respond to need. We recognise the challenges related to limited resources during the coming years and will endeavour to explore new opportunities to remodel and provide services ensuring they continue to meet high quality standards and support people with varying levels of need.

The Strategy also considers the level of care and placements we will need to provide and commission for our children and young people. It focuses on all stages of the care journey, articulating how we will support children and young people in need of care and support and their families to stay together whenever it is safe to do so. This both minimises the need for children and young people to become looked after and increases the opportunities for reunification. Where children and young people need to be looked after, achieving permanency is the primary goal.

It is recognised by all those contributing to this Strategy and its associated Action Plan that it will remain an evolving document. For that reason, whilst progress will be regularly monitored by the Corporate Strategy Management Group, the Action Plan will be reviewed in depth on an annual basis, as per the previous Strategy, by bringing partners together and reviewing progress updates against all actions within the Action Plan. This will enable additional actions to be added and maintain the commitment to, and momentum, of the Strategy. The ability to be responsive and adaptive in this way has never been more necessary following the pandemic and the challenges associated with the cost of living.



CONTEXT

All Council and partner agencies are experiencing reductions in resources and face considerable challenges in being able to protect frontline services. In the context of increasing demand and diminishing resources, we need to:

- better manage resources and reduce costs where possible;
- reshape services to divert demand;
- integrate and regionalise services where it makes sense to do so.

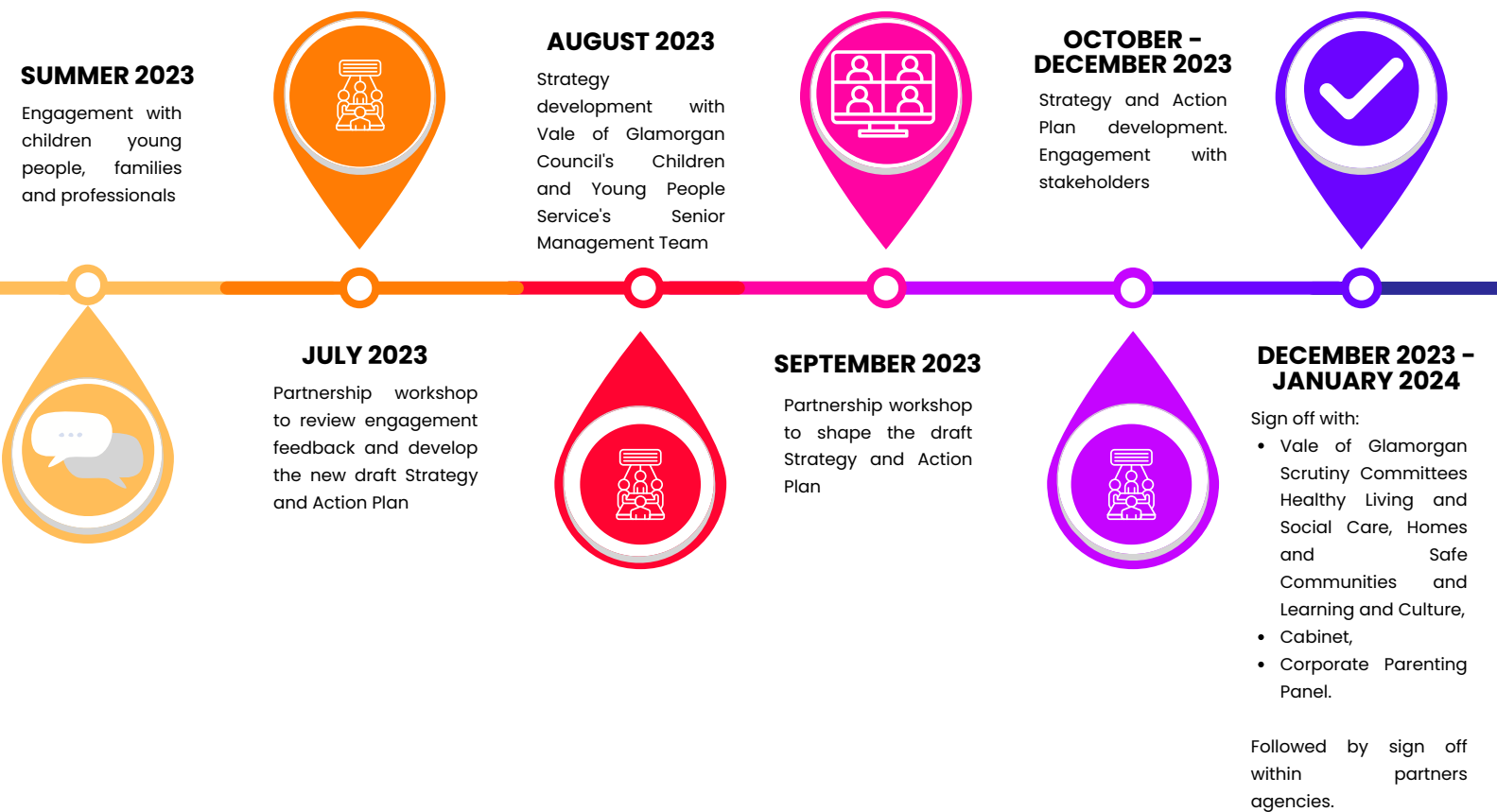
The Council and its partners have recognised the need to reshape to change the pattern of services and the way in which we deliver them. This involves working together with families to reduce dependence wherever possible and focus services on early prevention, using the strengths within families, communities, universal services and the Third Sector.

We are striving to make best use of the fact that the Council is an integral part of local government, and maximising the services delivered against key priorities. We are working together to align the resources available within the wider local authority and within our external partners to meet statutory obligations and provide sustainable, flexible and innovative services. Doing this together, we need to continue to:

- develop a competent and confident workforce which is skilled, responsive and professional; and well supported by organisational frameworks;
- work collaboratively across the whole Council and with statutory and Third Sector partners to deliver better integrated services;

- secure better value in the use of scarce resources through efficient and effective delivery of services, promoting independence and reducing demand for intensive support services by focusing on prevention.

To ensure the Strategy reflects the needs and lived experiences of children and young people, their families and carers, engagement has been undertaken with stakeholders throughout the summer 2023. The key stages of development have been reflected in the timetable below:



Throughout this Strategy, partners recognise the importance of working within the Five Ways of Working.



- The Action Plan reflects the importance of balancing short term and **long term** needs.
- Our Objectives are **integrated** with many other local and national plans and strategies to ensure maximum outcomes.
- Partners are committed to ensuring service users are **involved**, helping shape service delivery going forward and in shaping their own journeys through care. This **collaboration** between partners and stakeholders is shown through the engagement with stakeholder over the summer and the importance placed on hearing the voice of the child throughout care plans and care journeys.
- Working together to **prevent** problems occurring or getting worse as easily as possible is central to the Strategy and Action Plan.

Reflecting the local and national landscape, strategies, policies, stakeholder feedback and partner priorities and resources, the four Objectives below have been developed to underpin the latest Strategy and Action Plan.

01

Objective 1:

To support families to stay together and reduce the need for children to be looked after.

02

Objective 2:

To manage risk confidently and provide support at the 'edge of care'. *

03

Objective 3:

To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality services.

04

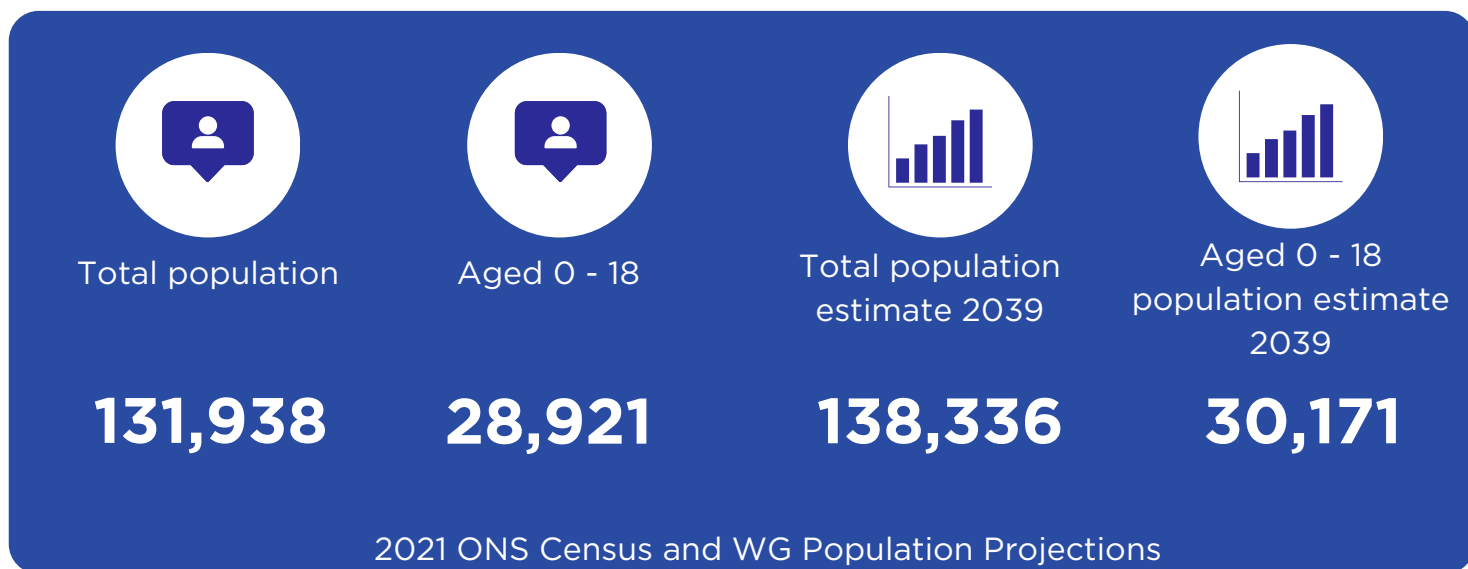
Objective 4:

To give children clearly planned journeys through care.

*edge of care is defined as children or young people who are at risk of becoming looked after by the local authority.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

The following section provides an overview into some of the key statistics that are monitored to build our picture around children, young people and their families who need care and support and the services available.



In understanding the level of need, it is important to understand this across key areas of involvement with children and young people, their families and carers. The data provided below is not mutually exclusive and there will be areas of duplication where a child is for example subject of a child protection plan and pre proceedings, or subject of care proceedings and looked after. What the data does illustrate is an increase in demand, the complexity that exists when working with children, young people, their families and carers, and the importance of a system that is able to respond across a range of support interventions.

INFORMATION, ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

In line with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, the Vale of Glamorgan provides an Information, Advice and Assistance Service. The Service is made up of three elements: the Family Information Service, the Families First Advice Line and the Duty function of the Intake Team.

The **Family Information Service** provides information on childcare, activities and services for children, young people and their families in the Vale of Glamorgan.



Family Information Service (FIS)

There has been an **increase** in the number of enquires in 2022-23 on the previous year.



Number of enquires:

2,015	2,430	1,566	1,619
2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23

Since 2017 the number of enquires has increased (from 801 enquiries) and has remained high. **Enquires in 2022-23 were more than double those received 5 years ago.** Peaks in 2019-20 and 2020-21 are a result of the pandemic and introduction of the 30 hour childcare offer in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The most common subject of an enquiry each year between 2019 -2023 was childcare.



INFORMATION, ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

The **Families First Advice Line** is the central point of contact for parents, carers and professionals in the Vale of Glamorgan seeking information, advice and guidance in improving families' well-being, relationships and resilience. In addition to providing advice and signposting, the Advice Line acts as a single point of access to a number of Families First projects.

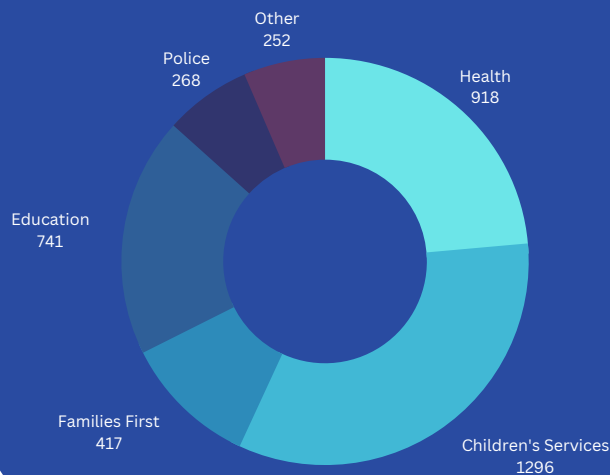
Family First Advice Line (FFAL)

2,751

Calls in 2022-23

There has been an **increase** in the number of calls received each year since 2017-18.

The majority of calls received each year are made by professionals. Referrals are received from service like Children Services, Health, Education and the Police.



Children's Services have made the most referrals between 2020 - 2023.

The **Duty function of the Intake Team** receive referrals into Children and Young People Services. Not all referrals will require social work involvement; some will require no further action, signposting or advice, and others will go on to require a wellbeing assessment.

Intake and Family Support Team

Since 2016 referrals have drastically risen and have remained high, peaking in 2020-21. **Latest figures are almost 6 times higher than that in 2016-17** (1,230).

7,801

Referrals in
2020-21

7,165

Referrals in
2021-22

7,083

Referrals in
2022-23

It is clear that complexity has also increased and referrals are almost always multi-faceted.

CARE AND SUPPORT

769

Total number of children and young people supported assessed as needing care and support at 31/03/2023.

This is an **increase** on 699 at 31/03/2022.

The total number of children and young people supported that are assessed as needing care and support includes children and young people in various circumstances. This includes those supported via child protection plans, children looked after and those in pre-proceedings where the Council has identified significant concerns and has not been able to make progress under a child protection or care and support plan. It also includes where work is being undertaken with the family to prevent the initiation of care proceedings, and care proceedings where this level of intervention has been initiated and planning for the child is taking place under the oversight of the Court.

107

Average number of children and young people on the child protection register 2022-23.

68

Number of children and young people entering pre-proceedings 2022-23.



The number of children and young people subject to care proceedings has **increased**, with 2022-23 being the **highest figure for the past 8 years**.

110

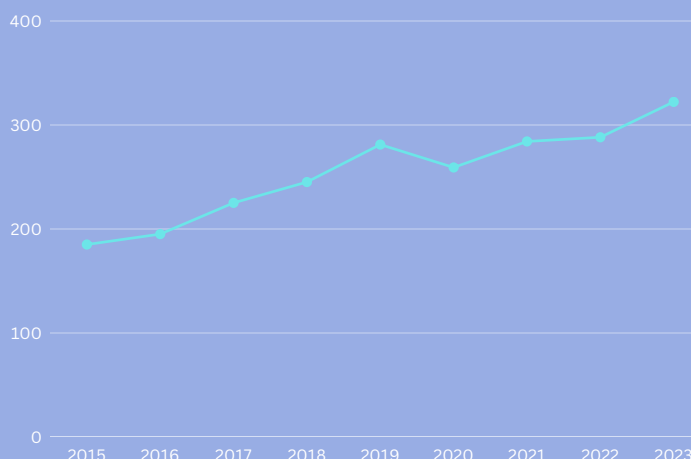
Number of children and young people subject to care proceedings 2022-23.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LOOKED AFTER

There has been a **steady increase** in the number of children and young people looked after over the past years. Following the decrease in 2020 subsequent increases are associated with the pandemic and cost of living crisis.

322

Number of children and young people looked after in 2022-23.



A breakdown of these figures shows an increase in the number of children and young people placed within their own families; either with their own parents or wider family (kinship). These children and young people are subject to Care Orders granted by the Court where the care plan for the child has endorsed arrangements within their own families but where the Council shares parental responsibility.

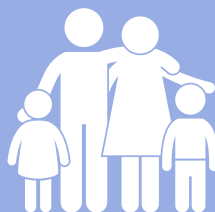
The highest number of our children and young people looked after are placed in kinship care. A smaller number are placed with independent foster agencies (74), in house foster care (58), placed with parents (48), in residential care (15), placed for adoption (12), independence (5), in residential schools (2), parent and child placements (2) and none in secure accommodation.

48

Number of placements with parents 2022-23.

106

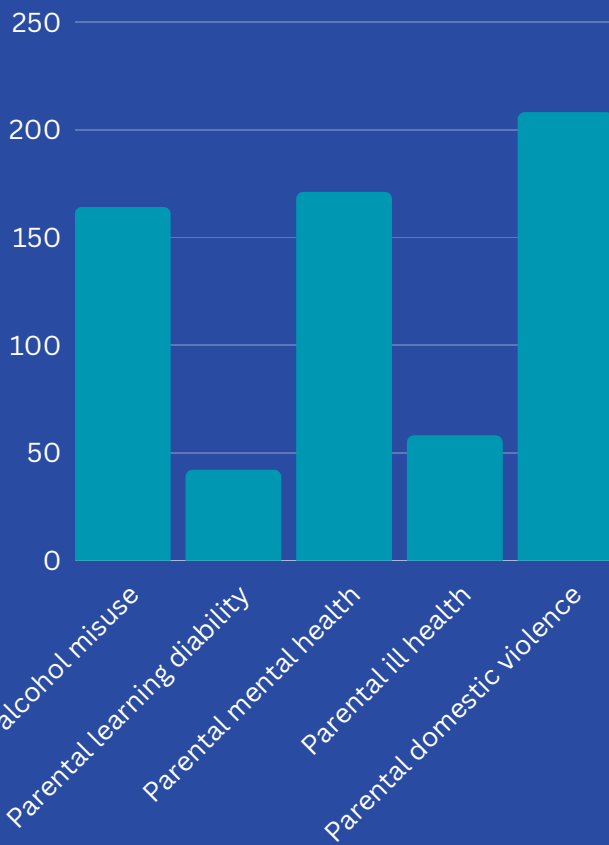
Number of placements with kinship carers 2022-23.



Over the past three years **kinship placements continue to increase** from 72 in 2020-21, whilst placement with parents have slightly decreased from 57 in the same period.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

There are a number of reasons why children and young people become looked after, and it is rarely a single reason that requires this level of intervention. This graph illustrates the primary reasons for children and young people becoming looked after in the Vale of Glamorgan as parental domestic violence, parental substance and alcohol misuse, and parental mental health.



16 years old

The most common age of children and young people looked after is 16 but there are children and young people looked after at all ages from 0 - 17.

In 2022-23 18 children currently looked after will turn 18.

CARE LEAVERS

The Council also has a responsibility to support those over 18 years of age who have left care. As of April 2018, the Welsh Government extended the age care leavers are entitled to receive support from their Local Authorities from 21 years to 25 years of age. Therefore, over the last few years the number of care leavers supported was expected to increase.

In 2022-23 there are 95 children and young people looked after aged between 14 -17 years who will become care leavers over the next three years.



The number of children and young people who left care spiked in 2018 (with 84 children leaving care) but has **remained relatively stable**. 2022 saw an increase in the number of children and young people 18 or over leaving care compared to the previous year.

Number of children and young people who left care:

76

2019-20

68

2020-21

73

2021-22



KEY OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

This Strategy is underpinned by four Objectives representing our focus on working together with children, young people, their families and carers to provide support as early as possible. We aim to support families to remain together where possible and ensure where a child does become looked after they are actively involved in developing their care and support plans. Our Objectives for 2024 - 2028 are:

Objective 1: To support families to stay together and reduce the need for children and young people to be looked after, by ensuring a focus on early intervention and prevention across all service provision for children.

Objective 2: 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 and young people being accommodated at the right time. This includes supporting families to avoid children and young people becoming accommodated unnecessarily and by making private arrangements within their wider family networks.

Objective 3: To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality services that meet the diverse range of children and young people's needs.

Objective 4: To give children and young people 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 care positively.

Our four Objectives are supported by a number of principles that all partners are committed to achieving. These are:

The responsibility for meeting the needs of children and young people looked after or at risk of becoming looked after rests across all services for children, including statutory and Third Sector partners, and is always exercised in partnership with children and young people and their families.

The majority of children and young people are most likely to thrive and achieve good outcomes if they are cared for within their own families.

Preventative services and early intervention to support children and young people in need and their families should be provided to empower families to stay together.

Where children and young people cannot be supported within their immediate family, families will be supported to achieve sustainable family arrangements within their wider family and friendship networks and, where necessary, to make these arrangements permanent through the use of Child Arrangement Orders.

Formal kinship fostering arrangements will be explored in partnership with children and young people and their families as the preferred alternative arrangement where it is necessary for the local authority to share parental responsibility or intervene in managing risk and protecting children and young people, but with clear step down plans to alternative Orders.

Where a child's or young person's needs cannot be adequately met through the arrangements described, consideration will be given to the needs of the child or young person and how they can be met in a substitute family, preferably with in-house foster carers and, if not, with independent fostering agency carers, wherever possible living within the Vale of Glamorgan.

Residential care placements will be made only where the complexity and challenge of a child or young person's needs mean they are unable to live within a family setting, or where a young person is subject to a Court ordered secure remand. Efforts will always be focused on stepping down from residential care wherever possible.

Placements should be local to enable children and young people to remain in their communities, maintain their networks and minimise disruption in their lives.

Placement requests should be defined in terms of the child and young person's needs. It is the role of the multi-agency Placement Panel to agree that a child should become looked after and consider the most appropriate type of placement to meet these needs, with due consideration given to the views of the child and young people and the available resources.

All children and young people looked after of statutory school age should receive appropriate education provision regardless of their placement and ability to access school. Providing appropriate support to enable engagement in education is just as important as finding suitable care arrangements for children and young people looked after.

Placements should support a positive transition to independence, adulthood, education, employment, and training and, where applicable, resettlement back into the community from custodial settings.

OBJECTIVE 1: TO SUPPORT FAMILIES TO STAY TOGETHER

Objective 1: To support families to stay together and reduce the need for children and young people to be looked after, by ensuring a focus on early intervention and prevention across all service provision for children and young people.

Mission Statement: We'll support families to access support services as early as possible and empower families to stay together.

"More could be done to raise the awareness of preventative services."

"As parents / carers we don't always know what support is available."

Outcome	Actions	Lead Directorate/ Organisation	Timescale
Professionals and public are able to access appropriate information more easily, 24/7.	Develop a digital one stop shop approach to the provision of information to the public and professionals about what support is available, and advertise this widely.	Social Services (Early Help) and Cardiff and Vale UHB	July 2025
The need for early intervention and prevention services is identified as early as possible.	Ensure Llamau's Advice and Family Mediation Services are utilised to their full potential.	Llamau	December 2025
	Strengthen connections between Early Help and Housing to identify those in need of early intervention or support.	Social Services (Early Help) and Environment and Housing	December 2025

OBJECTIVE 1: TO SUPPORT FAMILIES TO STAY TOGETHER

Actions continued.

Outcome	Actions	Lead Directorate/ Organisation	Timescale
Opportunities to reach the wider community are maximised.	Develop a calendar of events to engage directly with the community.	All agencies	December 2024
	Improve the connections with, and awareness of, community support projects e.g. Big Bocs Bwyds and community hubs.	All agencies	March 2025
	Progress work with school clusters to develop community hubs increasing access to support services following the successful community hub pilot.	Social Services and Learning and Skills	March 2025

OBJECTIVE 2: TO MANAGE RISK CONFIDENTLY AND PROVIDE SUPPORT AT THE 'EDGE OF CARE'

Objective 2: 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 and young people being accommodated at the right time. This includes supporting families to avoid children and young people becoming accommodated unnecessarily and by making private arrangements within their wider family networks.

Mission Statement: We'll take a trauma informed approach to working with families at the edge of care to understand their strengths, prevent escalation and ensure a consistent approach to risk assessments.

"We don't have a consistent approach to the assessment of risk and this impacts us having a shared narrative."

Outcome	Actions	Lead Directorate/ Organisation	Timescale
Families feel well informed, safe and able to seek support at the edge of care.	Encourage the promotion of support services available through schools to empower families who may be at the edge of care to come forward and approach agencies for help to prevent escalation.	Learning and Skills	March 2025
Better understanding of the support network for the child.	Work with the family group and others e.g. schools to identify a trusted adult as early as possible.	All agencies	September 2024

OBJECTIVE 2: TO MANAGE RISK CONFIDENTLY AND PROVIDE SUPPORT AT THE 'EDGE OF CARE'

Actions continued.

Outcome	Actions	Lead Directorate/ Organisation	Timescale
Better understanding of the support network for the child.	All interventions with families to include a robust understand of the existing support network around the child and family.	Social Services	September 2024
Partners have a shared understanding of risk.	Develop a common risk assessment.	Social Services	March 2025
Staff working with families are trauma informed and have a shared understanding of what this means.	Partners provide staff with consistent trauma informed training as a mandatory part of their induction and as part of their continual professional development.	All agencies	December 2025

OBJECTIVE 3: TO PROVIDE AND COMMISSION A FLEXIBLE AND AFFORDABLE MIX OF HIGH QUALITY SERVICES

Objective 3: To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality services that meet the diverse range of children and young people’s needs.

Mission Statement: We’ll listen to the voice of children and young people and their families when developing, monitoring and reviewing services to ensure they meet their needs and are of high quality.

"We want support to be provided, not just talked about."

Outcome	Actions	Lead Directorate/ Organisation	Timescale
Increased service quality and consistency of approach across agencies.	Involve children and young people in service development, procurement and quality monitoring.	All agencies	December 2025
	Complete an annual external placement audit to ensure quality and value for money with placements.	Social Services	September 2025

OBJECTIVE 3: TO PROVIDE AND COMMISSION A FLEXIBLE AND AFFORDABLE MIX OF HIGH QUALITY SERVICES

Actions continued.

Outcome	Actions	Lead Directorate/ Organisation	Timescale
Increased access to support services.	Enfys Team to promote the newly remodelled Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service in Cardiff and Vale University Health Board.	Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	September 2024
	Explore funding opportunities to expand therapeutic services for children and young people and their families.	Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	March 2026
	Develop a new process to ensure that data and information to plan for current and future needs are shared annually by all partners.	Social Services	March 2026
Increase the number and diversity of local foster placements.	Explore the need for targeted parent and children and young people support services / accommodation.	Environment and Housing and Social Services	June 2025
Improved quality and timeliness of Health Assessments.	Develop a referral process, to improve communication and the quality of information sharing at the time of the child becoming looked after.	Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	July 2024

OBJECTIVE 3: TO PROVIDE AND COMMISSION A FLEXIBLE AND AFFORDABLE MIX OF HIGH QUALITY SERVICES

Actions continued.

Outcome	Actions	Lead Directorate/ Organisation	Timescale
Increase the number and diversity of local foster placements.	Develop a respite arm to our fostering service.	Social Services	March 2025
	Develop an emergency arm to our fostering service, including access to emergency accommodation.	Social Services	December 2024
Children and young people are placed with extended families or connected persons where possible.	Develop the training and support offer for kinship carers.	Social Services	July 2025
	Increase the number of mainstream foster carers within the Vale.	Social Services	December 2025
	Review the offer to foster carers e.g. finance and support to ensure it aides recruitment and retention.	Social Services	March 2025
Increased housing options and housing support for children and young people.	Develop a second children and young people's residential home with Llamau.	Llamau and Social Services	March 2025

OBJECTIVE 4: TO GIVE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE CLEARLY PLANNED JOURNEYS THROUGH CARE

Objective 4: To give children and young people 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 care positively.

Mission Statement: We'll involve and support children and young people, their families and carers in their care plans and through transition processes, ensuring they have suitable living arrangements and making sure they know about supports available.

"Sometimes it can feel that support 'falls away' as children get older."

Outcome	Actions	Lead Directorate/ Organisation	Timescale
More tailored support to assist children and young people through transitions.	Agree a set of principles for transition across different agencies ensuring due regard to entering and exiting services.	Social Services	March 2026
	Ensure all children and young people looked after have a current passport when they turn 18.	Social Services	December 2024
	Embed Individual Development Plans (IDP) and Personal Education Plan (PEP) IDPs to ensure adequate provision to meet needs.	Learning and Skills	September 2024

OBJECTIVE 4: TO GIVE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE CLEARLY PLANNED JOURNEYS THROUGH CARE

Actions continued.

Outcome	Actions	Lead Directorate/ Organisation	Timescale
<p>Better housing options and housing support for children and young people.</p>	<p>Adopt a 'my first home' model.</p>	<p>Environment and Housing</p>	<p>December 2024</p>
	<p>Work in partnership to identify opportunities for joint funding and improved support to better meet increasingly diverse needs e.g. young homeless and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.</p>	<p>Environment and Housing</p>	<p>December 2025</p>
	<p>Develop a pipeline of accommodation projects reflecting local needs.</p>	<p>Environment and Housing</p>	<p>December 2024</p>
<p>Services traditionally offered later in the system are re-focussed to enable earlier intervention that prevents the escalation of need.</p>	<p>Review the success of the Emphasis Project in working with schools to identify and prevent youth homelessness.</p>	<p>Environment and Housing and Llamau</p>	<p>June 2024</p>

OBJECTIVE 4: TO GIVE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE CLEARLY PLANNED JOURNEYS THROUGH CARE

Actions continued.

Outcome	Actions	Lead Directorate/ Organisation	Timescale
<p>Children and young people are involved in and clearly understand their journey.</p>	<p>Review all care plans to ensure they are easy to understand by children and young people.</p>	<p>Social Services</p>	<p>March 2025</p>
	<p>Develop a 'nothing about me without me' approach to assessments and care planning across services.</p>	<p>All agencies</p>	<p>March 2025</p>

NEXT STEPS

The Action Plan outlines how we will achieve our shared goals over the next four years. The Action Plan should be regarded as a live document. Whilst progress will be regularly monitored by the Strategy Management Group, an in depth review of the actions within this Strategy will be undertaken on an annual basis by the Strategy Management Group to ensure progress is captured, monitored and reported. This annual review process will allow partners the opportunity to agree additional actions within the life of the Strategy that both maintain momentum and support our ambitions for continuous service improvement and delivery.



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Objective 1: To support families to stay together and reduce the need for children to be looked after			
Outcome	Actions	Lead Directorate/Organisation	Timescale
Professionals and members of the public are able to access appropriate information more easily, 24/7.	1. Develop a digital one stop shop approach to the provision of information to the public and professionals about what support is available and advertise this widely.	Social Services (Early Help) and Cardiff and Vale UHB	July 2025
The need for early intervention and prevention services is identified as early as possible.	2. Ensure Llamau's Advice and Family Mediation Services are utilised to their full potential.	Llamau	December 2025
	3. Strengthen connections between Early Help and Housing to identify those in need of early intervention or support.	Social Services (Early Help) and Environment and Housing	December 2025
Opportunities to reach the wider community are maximised.	4. Develop a calendar of events to engage directly with the community.	All agencies	December 2024
	5. Improve the connections with, and awareness of, community support projects e.g. Big Bocs Bwyds and community hubs.	All agencies	March 2025
	6. Progress work with school clusters to develop community hubs, increasing access to support services following the successful community hub pilot.	Social Services and Learning and Skills	March 2025

Objective 2: To manage risk confidently and provide support at the 'edge of care'			
Outcome	Actions	Lead Directorate/Organisation	Timescale
Families feel well informed, safe and able to seek support at the edge of care.	7. Encourage the promotion of support services available through schools to empower families who may be at the edge of care to come forward and approach agencies for help to prevent escalation.	Learning and Skills	March 2025
Better understanding of the support network for the child.	8. All assessments to include a robust understanding of the support network around the child and family.	Social Services	September 2024
Partners have a shared understanding of risk.	9. Develop a common risk assessment.	Social Services	March 2025
Staff working with families are trauma informed and have a shared understanding of what this means.	10. Partners provide staff with consistent trauma informed training as a mandatory part of their induction and as part of their continual professional development.	All agencies	December 2025

Objective 3 – To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality services			
Outcome	Actions	Lead Directorate/Organisation	Timescale
Increased service quality and consistency of approach across agencies.	11. Involve children and young people in service development, procurement and quality monitoring.	All agencies	December 2025
	12. Complete an annual external placement audit to ensure quality and value for money.	Social Services	September 2025
Increased access to support services.	13. Enfys Team to promote the newly remodelled Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service in Cardiff and Vale University Health Board.	Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	September 2024
	14. Explore funding opportunities to expand therapeutic services for children and young people and families.	Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	March 2026
	15. Develop a new process to ensure that data and information to plan for current and future needs are shared annually by all partners.	Social Services	March 2026
Improved quality and timeliness of Health Assessments	16. Develop a referral process, to improve communication and the quality of information sharing at the time of the child becoming looked after.	Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	July 2024
Increase the number and diversity of local foster placements.	17. Explore the need for targeted parent and children and young people support services / accommodation.	Environment and Housing and Social Services	June 2025

Objective 3 – To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality services			
Outcome	Actions	Lead Directorate/Organisation	Timescale
	18. Develop a respite arm to our fostering service.	Social Services	March 2025
	19. Develop an emergency arm to our fostering service, including access to emergency accommodation.	Social Services	December 2024
	20. Increase the number of mainstream foster carers within the Vale.	Social Services	December 2025
	21. Review the offer to foster carers e.g. finance and support to ensure it aides recruitment and retention.	Social Services	March 2025
Children are placed with extended families or connected persons wherever possible.	22. Develop the training and support offer for kinship carers.	Social Services	July 2025
Increased accommodation options for children and young people looked after.	23. Develop a second children’s residential home with Llamau increasing our local residential provision for older young people to four beds.	Llamau and Social Services	March 2025

Objective 4 - To give children and young people clearly planned journeys through care.			
Outcome	Actions	Lead Directorate/Organisation	Timescale
More tailored support to assist children and young people through transitions.	24. Agree a set of principles for transition across different agencies ensuring due regard to entering and exiting services.	Social Services	March 2026
	25. Ensure all children looked after have a current passport when they turn 18.	Social Services	December 2024
	26. Embed Individual Development Plans (IDP) and Personal Education Plan (PEP) IDPs to ensure adequate provision to meet needs.	Learning and Skills	September 2024
Improved housing options and housing support for children and young people.	27. Adopt a 'my first home' model.	Environment and Housing	December 2024
	28. Work in partnership to identify opportunities for joint funding and improved support to better meet increasingly diverse needs e.g. young homeless and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.	Environment and Housing	December 2025
	29. Develop a pipeline of accommodation projects reflecting local needs.	Environment and Housing	December 2024
Services traditionally offered later in the system are re-focused to enable earlier	30. Review the success of the Emphasis Project in working with schools to identify and prevent youth homelessness.	Environment and Housing and Llamau	June 2024

Objective 4 - To give children and young people clearly planned journeys through care.			
Outcome	Actions	Lead Directorate/Organisation	Timescale
intervention that prevents the escalation of need.			
Children and young people are involved in and clearly understand their journey.	31. Review all care plans to ensure they are easy to understand by children and young people.	Social Services	March 2025
	32. Develop a 'nothing about me without me' approach to assessments and care planning across services.	All agencies	March 2025

DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN CORPORATE STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO NEED CARE AND SUPPORT 2024-2028 - STRATEGY ON A PAGE



WHAT IS THE STRATEGY?

The Strategy is a document that shows how the Council is going to work together with partners to improve the general well-being of children and young people and their families who, for whatever reason, need care and support, within the resources available.

This is the third edition of this Strategy and will show what we'll be doing over the years 2024 - 2028.

HOW DID WE DEVELOP IT?

The Strategy has been built by the Corporate Strategy Management Group which includes the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, Llamau and Action for Children.

Together we used information from local and national Acts, Plans and Strategies, local data analysis, and listened to what children and young people, families, carers and people who work with them told us in the summer of 2023 about their need and experiences to create the Strategy.



WHAT WILL WE DO?

Over the next 4 years we will work together with children, young people, their families and carers to provide support as early as possible. We aim to support families to remain together where possible and ensure where a child does become looked after they are actively involved in developing their care and support plans.

This is shown through our 4 Objectives:

Objective 1) To support families to stay together and reduce the need for children to be looked after.

Objective 2) To manage risk confidently and provide support at the 'edge of care'.

Objective 3) To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality services.

Objective 4) To give children clearly planned journeys through care.

Each of these 4 Objectives have actions linked to them that we'll be working to complete over the next 4 years. All together we have 33 actions, you can see them in the full Strategy document along with who will be leading on the work and when it is expected to be completed by.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?

We will regularly monitor progress through the Corporate Strategy Management Group as well as reporting progress to Scrutiny Committees. On top of this, every year we will come together to see how we are doing against all the actions in the Action Plan. To make sure the Action Plan is focusing on the right things, when we check our progress we can also add in more actions if there are new areas of work we need to include going forward.

For more information please see the full Strategy document.



Imagine a World Without Homelessness



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