

**Committee:** Executive Committee  
**Date of meeting:** 17<sup>th</sup> July 2019  
**Report Subject:** Progress on the Implementation of the Safe Reduction of Looked After Children Strategy  
**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services  
**Report Submitted by:** Tanya Evans, Head of Children's Services

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
30.5.19	4.6.19				20.5.19	17.7.19		

**1. Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to update the Executive on the progress made in relation to the implementation of the Safe Reduction of Looked After Children Strategy 2017-2020

**2. Scope and Background**

- 2.1 Prior to the end of 2015 the numbers of looked after children within Blaenau Gwent had remained stable since 2008 at a rate of between 135-145 within any 12 month period.
- 2.2 The end of 2015 saw a significant increase in the numbers of looked after children received into foster care. Since that time the numbers have continued to increase at a steady rate peaking at a high of 237 in July 2018.
- 2.3 The First Minister has highlighted the increasing numbers of looked after children as a priority area for action in Wales. As a result a Looked After Children Technical Group has been established to inform Welsh Governments approach and engagement with local authorities on this issue.
- 2.4 The technical group is in the process of visiting all 22 Welsh Authorities to focus on the following 4 areas which the First Minister has set out as priority areas for reduction:
- The number of children in care
  - The number of children placed out of county
  - The number of children placed out of Wales
  - The number of children removed from parents with a learning disability.
- 2.4 Blaenau Gwent was visited by the technical group on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2019. As the Authority already had a well-established Safe Reduction of Looked After Children Strategy it was well placed to evidence the work it was doing to address the 4 priority areas identified for the First Minister.

2.5 The presentation given to Welsh Government provided data to set the scene an, overview on what has been achieved so far under the strategy and what we still needed to do.

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 This report will be considered by the Social Services Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019 and any feedback will be provided verbally to the Executive Committee.

#### 3.2 Option 1

- Consider the information contained within the report and presentation, and provide comment on areas requiring further clarity.

#### Option 2

- Consider the information contained within the report and provide comment on areas requiring further clarity.
- Provide comment on any amendment, for inclusion in future reports.

### 4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

The implementation of the safe LAC reduction strategy supports the following priorities for social services under the corporate plan

- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater;
- To work with our partners including Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and neighbouring authorities to deliver integrated responsive care and support;
- To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering health and social care involving key partners and our communities.

#### 5.3 **Legal**

No issues relating to this report at this time.

#### 5.4 **Human Resources**

No issues relating to this report at this time

### 6. **Supporting Evidence**

#### 6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

See presentation

#### 6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

The successful implementation of the safe LAC reduction strategy will lead to more positive outcomes for children on a number of levels. It will prevent children coming into care in the first place due to the work under the strategy. For those children who do come into care they will have more local placement choices enabling them to maintain attendance at their local school and contact with family and friends.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

There is extensive involvement with the children and families we work with. Their views are gathered through a number of avenues including:

- The National Youth Advocacy Service;
- Formally seeking their views following interventions from the supporting change team;
- Formally seeking their views at each review of their plan.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The Lac reduction strategy is 2 years into its 3 year lifetime. An independent evaluation is underway which will shape an amended strategy by June 2020

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

A large part of the safe LAC reduction strategy has a preventative focus

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

A number of the actions under the safe LAC reduction strategy rely on partnership working. Senior managers and staff have good working relationships with our partners which will support us in achieving the actions.

6.7 ***Integration(across service areas)***

As above

6. ***EqIA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The actions under the strategy are incorporated under the children's services business plans. Progress on action are report quarterly and contribute to the Directors Annual report

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- Appendix 1 – Welsh Government Presentation