



Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

Children's Services

Evaluation

**Report In Relation To Work Undertaken By
Supporting Change Team**

December 2017 - December 2018

**SOCIAL
SERVICES**

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1. Introduction

This report provides information in respect of the work undertaken by the Supporting Change Team since its launch in December 2017 and is a one year evaluation of the project.

The report will provide information in respect of the performance management data collated by the team with an evaluation of the impact of their work, both from the point of view of the citizen but also in relation to Children's Services strategy to safely reduce numbers of looked after children and to prevent children entering the care system. This will also include an assessment of actual savings generated by the team's work as well as projected savings generated via cost avoidance.

2. Background

In 2017, in response to rising numbers of looked after children, work was undertaken to develop a 3 year strategy to safely reduce the numbers of looked after children.

As part of that strategy, agreement was given to scope the potential for developing a team to work with children at the edge of care. The team's remit would be to work intensively with families with the aim of preventing children entering the care system or, to work intensively with families to support rehabilitation and discharge of Care Orders for those children placed at home under Placement with Parents Regulations.

Upon completion of the scoping exercise and identification of funding sources, political approval was given to proceed with developing the team.

The team commenced in December 2017 and became operational in January 2018. Since this time the team's criterion has been expanded to include the facilitation of family group meetings, for the prompt identification of potential kinship carers within a family in the event that children require removal from parental care.

3. Methodology

In order to evaluate the team's work the following information will be provided:

- The numbers of referrals accepted by the team;
- Legal status of the child at point of referral;
- The identified issues that require intervention;
- Summary of interventions delivered;
- Legal status at end of intervention;

- Feedback from children and families who receive a service from the team;
- 6 case studies providing qualitative information in respect of the team's work.

In addition information will be provided in respect of:

- Numbers of children whose names are included on the child protection register (with detail of those who are working with or who have worked with the Supporting Change Team);
- Numbers of children entering the Public Law Outline process since January 2018 (with detail of those who are working with or who have worked with the Supporting Change Team).

This information is deemed relevant because these children are, by the very nature of the intervention, potentially at risk of becoming looked after.

4. Number of families accepted by the team

Referrals by Team (01.01.2018 – 31.12.2018)

Team	Number of Referrals Accepted by the Supporting Change Team
CS - 14+ Team	12
CS - Abertillery	20
CS - Brynmawr	10
CS - Children with Disabilities	3
CS - Ebbw Vale	20
CS - Tredegar	39
TOTAL	104

There were 104 referrals made to the Supporting Change Team in the first 12 months of the team becoming operational. During this time the team worked with 140 children and their parents.

There were a further 20 children re-referred into the service. Of these children 16 were re-referred due to ongoing concerns or where parents had withdrawn prior to the work having been completed at the first opportunity. 4 children were re-referred for a further period of intervention following a successful first intervention where rehabilitation home from foster care was being progressed.

The information contained in the above table demonstrates that the majority of referrals to the Supporting Change Team have been made by the Tredegar Locality Team. This is a change from the first six month period where the number of referrals from Tredegar and Ebbw Vale Localities were roughly on par. While it is not possible

to draw definitive conclusions from these figures, one explanation could be that the area of Tredegar has a higher proportion of children meeting the criteria for Supporting Change Team Intervention in comparison to other areas in Blaenau Gwent.

Children with Disabilities Team only made three referrals to the Supporting Change Team during the first year of the team being operational. Again, while there is no definitive explanation for this vast discrepancy between the Children with Disabilities Team and the other teams, possible explanation for this could be; lower numbers of children at the edge of care; lower numbers of children on child protection plans; lack of awareness of the Supporting Change Team criteria and/or lack of direct daily contact with the Supporting Change Team and that the Children with Disabilities Team have developed their own intervention service through Barnardo's which may negate the need for Supporting Change involvement. Attendance at complex needs panel could help to identify cases eligible for the Supporting Change Team within the Children with Disabilities Team.

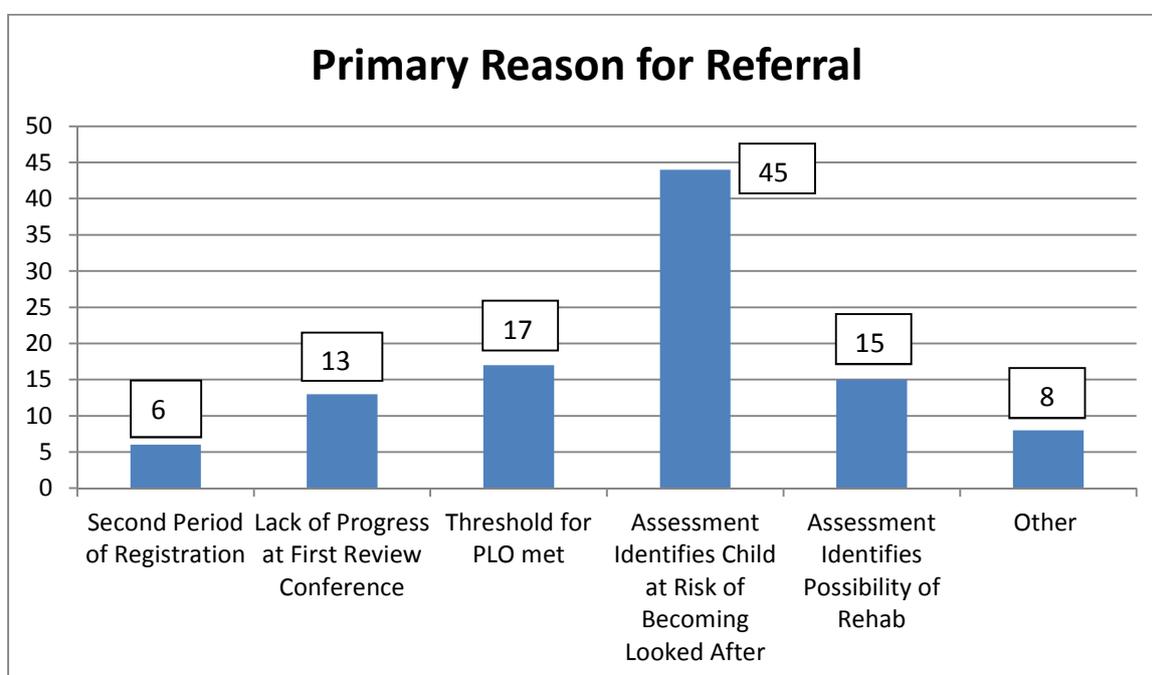
Referral numbers by Month (01.01.2018 – 31.12.2018)

Month (2018)	Number of referrals accepted.
January	14
February	6
March	6
April	6
May	6
June	13
July	9
August	10
September	6
October	13
November	9
December	6
TOTAL	104

In January 2018, the number of referrals into the team was initially high due a waiting list being in place ready for when the team became operational. Spikes in referral numbers were also seen in June, August and October 2018.

5. Legal status of the child at the point of referral
(inclusive of repeat referrals)

Month	Looked After Child	Child Protection Registration	Care and Support Plan
January	3	19	1
February	3	3	5
March	0	8	3
April	2	5	2
May	3	3	2
June	9	8	5
July	5	1	5
August	7	5	1
September	2	7	4
October	3	14	1
November	4	1	5
December	6	1	1
TOTAL	47	75	35



Since January 2018 there has been a shift in the primary reason for referrals. In the first six months the majority of referrals into the team were received at the point of

threshold as a final attempt to prevent cases escalating to the Court arena. In the following six months there was a significant increase in the number of referrals received under the criteria where assessment identifies a child at risk of becoming looked after. This suggests that referrals to the Supporting Change Team are being received much earlier than they previously were. This has proved beneficial as the team have been able to offer interventions prior to cases reaching absolute crisis point.

In the second half of the year, the team have taken six referrals at the point of a case being at the second period of registration. This was in contrast to the first six months of the year where no referrals were received under this criterion. As anticipated in the 6 month report, the more the service has become fully embedded; there has been an increase in the number of referrals received with this being the primary need. Although the pre-threshold meeting process has not yet been established, the number of referrals received at threshold has decreased in line with an increase in the number of referrals during the child protection process.

In addition to attending threshold meetings, attendance at Complex Needs Panel would aid in identification of eligible cases particularly from within the Children with Disabilities Team.

6. Status of the child from point of referral to review 6 months after case closure

6 month Review Date	De-escalation of concerns	Ongoing CP registration - No escalation	Ongoing C&S Plan - No escalation	Ongoing LAC status including PWP	Escalation of concerns to CP/PLO or LAC
December-18	14	7	3	2	7

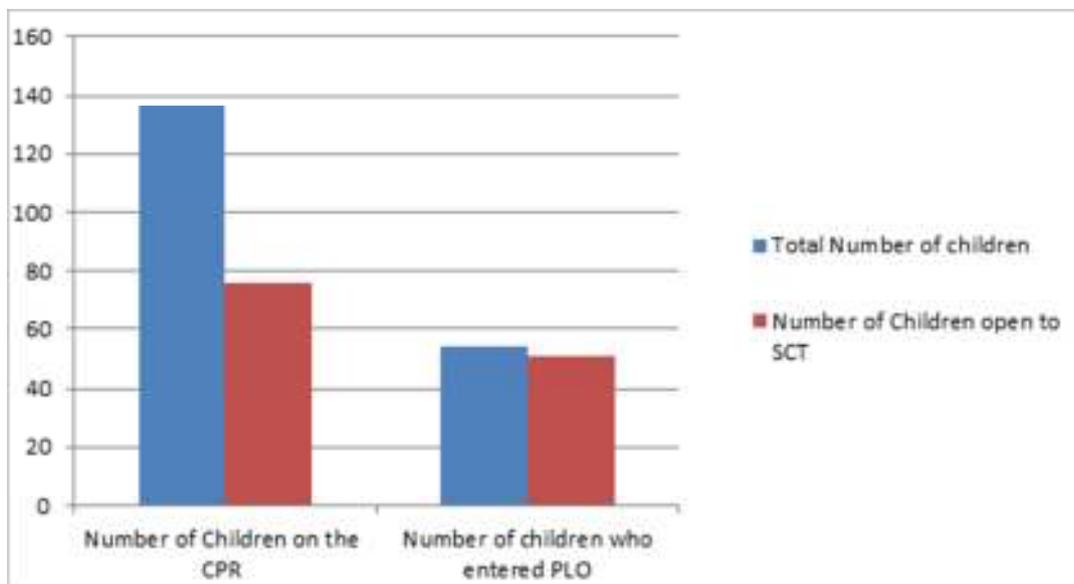
33 children were reviewed six months after the cases closed to the Supporting Change Team (December 2018). Of these children, the plans for 14 children were de-escalated; 7 children remained on the child protection register with no progression to the Court arena and 3 children remained on a Care and Support Plan with no escalation. In total, of the 33 children reviewed 6 months after case closure, 24 children were prevented from entering care.

Of the remaining 9 children, 2 children remained on Care Orders (Placement with Parents) and 7 children were escalated through to Child Protection; PLO and/or LAC.

Of the 33 children reviewed at the 6 month point beyond case closure, 31 children were at the same status at the point of case closure. The other 2 children were escalated from a Care and Support Plan back to Child Protection. A second referral was made in respect of these children and a further brief intervention was delivered.

7. Number of children on the Child Protection Register and entering PLO

Numbers of children registered on the Child Protection Register since January 2018 and the numbers of children entering the Public Law Outline process since January 2018



8. The identified issues that require Intervention and summary of interventions delivered

Programmes of work provided by the Supporting Change Team

Programmes ranged from 2 weeks to 29 weeks in length. Programmes of work this year have addressed a range of issues that include the following:

Anger Management;
Boundaries;
Appropriate Relationships;
Family Relationship Work;
Risk Taking Behaviour;
Understanding Risk;

Consequences of Behaviour;
Building Self-Esteem and Confidence;
Keep Safe Work.

The team refer on to other agencies (where appropriate) to offer ongoing support to the young person and family when the Supporting Change Team have ceased their involvement.

9. Groups

Circle of Security

In September 2018, the Supporting Change Team facilitated the first Circle of Security group programme. The Circle of Security Parenting Programme is based on decades of research about how secure parent-child relationships can be supported and strengthened. The programme was open only to families already known to the Supporting Change Team. Five parents attended group with positive feedback obtained from all attendees.

“I learned about how to respond to my child; over the last few weeks when he has been whingy or playing up, I was shouting and getting bogged down with it all. Now I reassure him and show him affection, and he is responding well to this. ‘I now know what my child needs from me’. I really liked the group!

Following the success of the first programme three further Circle of Security Programmes have been scheduled for 2019 and these will run in January, May and September. In addition to families already open to the Supporting Change Team, 6 additional places have been offered, one place to each of the Locality Teams, the 14+ Team and the Children with Disabilities Team.

Supporting Change Parenting Programme

In November 2018 the Supporting Change Team facilitated the first Supporting Change Parenting Programme. This model takes different strategies taken from the Non Violent Resistance Programme (NVR), Solihull Approach and Circle of Security Parenting Programme. The model focusses on providing parents and care givers strategies to use when managing their child’s challenging behaviours at home.

The programme was open only to families already known to the Supporting Change Team. Nine families attended the first parenting programme with positive feedback received from all attendees.

“Amazing group; helpful techniques;
amazing teachers.”

"I learnt that many of the experiences talked about by the other parents attending the group were similar to what we have experienced."

"I loved coming and getting good advice off people. Thank you for your help."

"I am now able to de-escalate; I am a lot more confident; this group has been really helpful"

"I am able to stay calmer in situations and feel better about my decisions."

Following the success of the first programme three further Supporting Change Parenting Programmes have been scheduled for 2019 and these will run in January, May and September. In addition to families already open to the Supporting Change Team, 6 additional places have been offered, one place to each of the Locality Teams, the 14+ Team and the Children with Disabilities Team.

10. Family Meetings

The aim of family meetings is to support families to identify the most suitable person/s who can offer permanent long term care of a child/ren if they cannot be looked after by their birth parents. The family meeting also aims to establish what other family members can do to support alternative permanent arrangements.

In August 2018 the Supporting Change Team held its first family meeting under the PLO protocol. Since this time there has been a further 8 family meetings scheduled. At this point family meetings were being held for every child entering the PLO process regardless of the number of family members being put forward. This resulted in a number of cancelled family meetings where there were not enough family members in attendance.

A review of the family meeting process was held on the 9th November 2018. The review concluded with a revised process for family meetings. It was agreed that family meetings will now only be scheduled where there are 3 or more family members being put forward. The revised process has resulted in family meetings being held only where family meetings are required and this has reduced the number of referrals into the Supporting Change Team.

11. Feedback from children and families who receive a service from the team.

Parent Feedback

My situation has improved because I am more confident in being a parent

I'm more enlightened; I have more information and I am clear about the steps I have to take.

I feel more in control, I feel like I am the mother again. I feel very confident going forward. My support worker was very supportive.

I have been able to make the changes needed in order to safely parent my children and could not have done so without my support workers intervention

We have tried working with domestic abuse services but they were not useful. However the work with the support worker has really encouraged us to think and talk about our experiences and the impact on the children.

Thank you very much with help with our family. Hopefully with your ideas and tips we can move forward and be happy.

Professionals Feedback

The support worker was a great support and I feel the contact with the family gave them confidence and the regular reassurance allowed them to find solutions themselves. It was evident that the support worker had formed a good relationship with the young person in a very short period of time. (Social Worker)

I have been involved in your team's work and intervention in two cases. Both your workers in these matters have affected positive change within the issues that led to care proceedings and have contributed to the two matters concluding in positive outcomes for the children in so far as rehabilitation/remaining in the care of their respective mother's. The family were more than complementary of the input, the approach of the worker, the support, advice and challenge which enabled mother to understand the concerns of the LA and the Court which lead to a Care Order being made with the child remaining at home. I look forward to working with your team in the future, sounds an exciting prospect for children and their families in BGCBC (Children's Guardian.)

The Supporting Change Team has undertaken extensive training in the first year of becoming operational. In addition to the experience and skills staff brought with them to the team from previous employment, the team have undertaken the following training programmes:

Brief Solution Focused Therapy	Cygnnet Training
What Matters To Children and Young People Conversations	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
Child Development and Attachment	Non Violent Resistant Training
Dealing with Substance Misuse	Applied Suicide Intervention Skills
Coping with Change	Solihull Programme
Bruce Thornton Risk Assessment	Circle of Security
Data Protection Training	AIMS Training
Domestic Violence	Secure Base Training
Safeguarding	Mental Health First Aid
Family Links – Nurture Programme	Behind the Mask
	RIPA Training

The above training has been used by staff to create bespoke packages of support for individual families. This training has led to a highly skilled workforce who is able to make use of a variety of parenting programmes at any given time to meet the needs of children and families.

13. Team Capacity

The Supporting Change Team is currently fully staffed with a Team Manager, Senior Practitioner and six Support Workers. The Senior Practitioner has the additional responsibility of managing the Contact Service which consists of one senior contact worker and five contact workers. This service is overseen by the Team Manager of the Supporting Change Team.

One member of the team has been successful in securing a secondment to the Social Work Course. This member of staff is due to undertake a social work placement from February 2019 to July 2019. During this period a social work student will be in placement in the Supporting Change Team.

The team are working at capacity at this time. While caseload number are low with support workers working between 4-7 cases each, the intensity of the visits are high with staff currently undertaking between 10-13 visits per week. Should there be a further influx of referrals the team will need to hold a waiting list with priority cases allocated first.

14. Impact of the Service

Since the Supporting Change Team became operational in December 2017 the number of children presented to threshold has reduced; the number of children

entering care has stabilised and the number of children accessing the contact service has reduced.

15. Open Closed Doors Project

Barnardo's were successful in securing funding through the 'Children Effected by Domestic Abuse' grant and from this funding, the Supporting Change Team will benefit from the provision of two new support worker posts specifically targeting families where domestic abuse is a concern. The service aims to provide support to children and young people who are exposed to domestic abuse and/or violence. The Opening Closed Doors project will deliver evidence based interventions to children and young people; and adopting a key worker approach, facilitate support for the wider family unit to embed sustainable change. Working alongside Social Services and the Police, they will build on their experience and expertise to work collaboratively to achieve long term outcomes; supporting children and young people to recover from their traumatic experiences and mitigate future Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The Opening Closed Doors project will deliver a spectrum of services across Gwent based on local need, that will enable children and young people to recover from their experiences of domestic abuse/violence, build resilience, strengthen parenting capacity and support system change to improve outcomes for children and their families.

16. Barriers to engagement

The Supporting Change Team work with some of the most vulnerable children and families in Blaenau Gwent. Many of these families have experienced neglectful parenting spanning generations; resulting in poor mental health and poor coping mechanisms. Over the past year the Supporting Change Team has worked with a number of parents suffering with low mood and depression. Engagement with these families has been very difficult and motivation to change has been poor. As the Supporting Change Team work intensively with families for a time limited period of a maximum of 12 weeks, it is crucial that parents are able to engage with the service from the start. However access to mental health services is limited and parents are often faced with long waiting times to receive services.

In addition, access to child mental health services is limited and while the Supporting Change Team have supported children to access appointments through CAMHS these appointments are often difficult to obtain. The team work with a number of children with attachment issues; children that have received neglectful parenting or have been within the care system. These children often have complex mental health needs and the lack of psychology input within the team makes it difficult for staff to work with these vulnerable young people.

17. Team Development

Team Criteria

Several parents have provided feedback to the Supporting Change Team suggesting that had the support been in place earlier the concerns may not have escalated. In addition social workers have approached the team for support within weeks of the initial case conference where concerns have been raised and no other support services identified. Under the current referral criterion, cases are only eligible for the Supporting Change Team at the point of first review conference if no significant progress has been made. For some families there is a gap in receiving a service between the initial case conference and the first review conference. In some cases it is predictable at the initial case conference that the case will be referred into the team at the review conference and social workers are left monitoring while awaiting for cases to become eligible. While consideration could be given to children accessing the service at the initial case conference, if the remit of the team were to increase, the workload of the Supporting Change Team would also increase and current demands on capacity would result in a waiting list.

18. Cost Avoidance Calculations

Approx. Potential Saving Per (Calendar)Year

With many Supporting Change Team (SCT) interventions it is not possible to fully quantify as to whether a young person would have entered the care of the local authority should there not have been SCT intervention. Therefore savings have been identified as potential savings. However it is to be noted that prior to SCT intervention being delivered, cases are scrutinised to ensure that within a family or care arrangement, there has either been a significant concerning event, a serious request for a young person to enter care, a concerning sequence of events or repeated requests for a young person to enter care. In addition to this SCT interventions are also delivered on the basis that the Public Law Outline has begun and legal proceedings are seriously being explored. Therefore the costs are approximate and are explained in each in category below.

These costs / savings only take into account the accommodation/ placement costs. No consideration is given to legal costs, care planning costs, reviewing functions, leaving care services or the potential for the need to fund independent living opportunities.

Costs of In House Foster Care Provision

Based on information provided by Blaenau Gwent's Placement Team, there is a supposition that the majority of care entries for young people 12 and under will result in an "in house foster placement". Should a young person be placed with an "in house foster carer" a rate will be payable based on their age range. An additional uplift according to the carer's status is also applied at an average cost of £75 per placement. Based on these figures the following applies:

- A young person who is 0-4 years of age entering care would cost on average £170 + £75 = £245 per week. Therefore (£245 x 52 =) £12,740 per year

- A young person who is 5-10 years of age entering care would cost on average £155 + £75 = £230 per week. Therefore (£230 x 52 =) £11,960 per year

- A young person who is 11-15 years of age entering care would cost on average £177.38 + £75 + £50 teenage scheme = £302.38 per week. Therefore (£302.38 x 52 =) £15,723.76 per year

- A young person who is 16+ years of age entering care would cost on average £215.74 + £75 + £50 teenage scheme = £340.74 per week. Therefore (£340.74 x 52 =) £17,718.48 per year.

Costs of Independent Foster Care Provision

Based on information provided by Blaenau Gwent's Placement Team, there is a supposition that the majority of young people over 12 (i.e.13+ who display challenging behaviours) would enter an independent foster care placement. There are varying costs between Independent Providers however an average cost of £781 per week has been given. £781 x 52 = an average cost of £40,622 over a calendar year.

Potential Cost avoidance based on the Referrals received in January 2018

When calculating the potential cost avoidance of the referrals received in 2018 the potential cost savings are as follows

If we assume 100% of the children referred would have ended up in care the cost avoidance would be £1,711,000

If we assume 75% of the children referred would have ended up in care the cost avoidance would be £1,283,250

If we assume 50% of the children referred would have ended up in care the cost avoidance would be £855,500

If we assume 25% of the children referred would have ended up in care the cost avoidance would be £427,750

Assuming these children remain out of the care system, these savings will continue to rise year on year. While the team acknowledge that not all children can be prevented from entering care, these savings are expected to rise in line with the number of referrals received.

Actual Cost Savings

The Supporting Change Team has worked with a number of children placed in local authority care where the care plan has identified the possibility of rehabilitation back to their parents care. In these cases it has been possible to calculate actual cost savings based on the actual cost of the foster placement. The Supporting Change Team has worked with 21 children who fall within this category. Of these children 13 children have been rehabilitated home; 3 are in the process of being rehabilitated home; 3 are awaiting a court date for an adoption order to be made and 2 children's final care plans are yet to be determined. Of the 13 children that have successfully been rehabilitated home the total cost saving to the department, is in the region of £6,632 per week; saving the Local Authority over £344,864 per year. If all 21 children are rehabilitated home, the actual cost saving to the authority will be in the region of £10,095 per week equating to £524,940 per year.

This clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of the supporting change team on a number of levels. Not only have they improved the outcomes for these children by enabling them to be safely reunited with their families, they have achieved actual savings to the department's budget and demonstrated significant cost avoidance for the department.

19. Case Studies



Case Study A.docx



Case Study B.docx



Case Study C.docx



Case Study D.docx



Case Study E.docx



Case Study F.docx