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THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

10th October 2019

Dear Sir/Madam

SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee will be held in Council Chamber, Civic Centre on Thursday, 17th October, 2019 at 10.00 am.

Please note that a pre and post meeting will be held 30 minutes prior to the start and following the conclusion of the meeting for members of the committee.

Yours faithfully

Michelle Morris
Managing Director

AGENDA

Pages

1. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation will be provided if requested.

We welcome correspondence in the medium of Welsh or English. / Croesawn ohebiaith trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.

2. **APOLOGIES**
- To receive.
3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATION**
- To consider any declarations of interests and dispensations made.
4. **SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** 5 - 12
- To receive the Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd September, 2019.
- (Please note the Minutes are submitted for points of accuracy only)
5. **ACTION SHEET - 2ND SEPTEMBER 2019** 13 - 14
- To receive the Action Sheet from the meeting held on 2nd September, 2019.
6. **EXECUTIVE DECISIONS FOR SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** 15 - 16
- To receive the Executive Decision Sheet.
7. **WELSH GOVERNMENT CHILDCARE OFFER - BLAENAU GWENT AND TORFAEN** 17 - 28
- To consider the report of the Head of Children's Services.
8. **REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP UPDATE** 29 - 44
- To consider the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.
9. **INTEGRATED CARE FUND UPDATE 2019** 45 - 52
- To consider the report of the Head of Adult Services.
10. **NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19** 53 - 96
- To consider the report of the Head of Children's Services.

11. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - 28TH
NOVEMBER 2019**

97 - 100

To consider the attached report.

To: Councillor S. Thomas (Chair)
Councillor K. Rowson (Vice-Chair)
Councillor D. Bevan
Councillor G. A. Davies
Councillor M. Day
Councillor P. Edwards
Councillor L. Elias
Councillor K. Hayden
Councillor J. Holt
Councillor J. Millard
Councillor M. Moore
Councillor J. P. Morgan
Councillor G. Paulsen
Councillor T. Sharrem
Councillor T. Smith

All other Members (for information)
Manager Director
Chief Officers

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: **THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

SUBJECT: **SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2ND SEPTEMBER, 2019**

REPORT OF: **DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S.C. THOMAS (CHAIR)

Councillors: D. Bevan
G.A. Davies
L. Elias
J. Holt
J. Millard
M. Moore
T. Sharrem

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Head of Children's Services
Head of Adult Services
Service Manager for Provider Services
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

WITH: David Wilson, Wales Audit Office

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u> Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: K. Rowson, P. Edwards, K. Hayden G. Paulsen and T. Smith.	

No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 3rd July, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>EXECUTIVE DECISIONS FOR SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Executive Decision Sheet.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Executive Decision Sheet be accepted.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>WALES AUDIT OFFICE: WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS – ENSURING PREVENTATIVE SERVICES TARGET THE MOST VULNERABLE FAMILIES IN BLAENAU GWENT WHO DO NOT MEET THE CRITERIA FOR A CARE AND SUPPORT PLAN</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Children’s Services which presented Members with the Wales Audit Office: Well-Being of Future Generations – ensuring preventative services target the most vulnerable families in Blaenau Gwent who do not meet the criteria for a care and support plan.</p> <p>The representative from the Wales Audit Office spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein and concluded that the Council had acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle in setting the step ‘Flying Start, Families First, Early Years Childcare and Play ensuring preventative services target the most vulnerable families in Blaenau Gwent who do not meet the criteria for a care and support plan’ but there were opportunities to further embed the five ways of working.</p>	

	<p>The Head of Children's Services was pleased with the outcome of the report and informed Members that Appendix 2 outlined the areas for improvement.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1, namely that the WAO review and actions to implement the proposals for improvement be accepted.</p>	
No. 7	<p><u>ANNUAL CIW INSPECTIONS WITH PROVIDER SERVICES 2018/19</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Social Services which was presented to summarise the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspections undertaken across Provider Services during the period April 18 – March 19 and update Members on the actions taken following the inspections.</p> <p>The Head of Adult Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>The Service Manager Provider Services commented that three of Blaenau Gwent's four regulated services had been inspected by CIW and the Supported Living inspection was due shortly;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Augusta House • Home Care Services • Cwrt Mytton <p><u>Augusta House</u></p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding collaboration, the Service Manager said that collaboration was on-going with the Health Board, Augusta House was purpose built for people with complex needs and three bedrooms were fully equipped with overhead ceiling track hoists. The Service Manager explained that the Authority had recently secured Welsh Government funding which had enabled further improvements to be made to the disabled facilities at the service.</p> <p><u>Home Care</u></p>	

A Member enquired regarding the home care service, the Service Manager said that there had been a reduction in the in-house Home Care service following a decision made by Council to reduce in-house home care. This had reduced the number of people the service supported in the community and these had been picked up by the private sector.

In response to a Member's question, the Head of Adult Services said that the new bungalows built at Llys Glyncoed Extra Care Facility were operated by Link Housing Association, separate from the Council.

Cwrt Mytton

A Member enquired regarding social activities at Cwrt Mytton, the Service Manager said that there was no dedicated staff member to co-ordinate social activities and as the home supported adults who had a diagnosis of dementia social activities had to be carried out 'in the moment'. A staff member had been seconded who had previously worked as a Community Connector and a pilot project was underway to develop a social activities programme at Cwrt Mytton.

A Member raised concerns regarding the non-compliance notice. The Service Manager said that this issue had been rectified and the follow up inspection in May 2019 had reported that the non-compliance from the previous inspection had been met.

In relation to training the Service Manager said that although staff may not have been compliant with refresher training they were regularly competency assessed regarding manual handling, food hygiene and health & safety etc., however, it was challenging for Managers to schedule refresher training given the number of staff and the numerous refresher training courses required within the timescales.

A Member commented that he hoped to see that Cwrt Mytton would be maintained and decorated to a high standard. The Service Manager said that an improvement plan had been carried out with Technical Services and this was progressing well, he invited Members to visit the

	<p>facility to meet the team and residents.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding agency staff, the Service Manager confirmed that all agency staff were in receipt of mandatory training.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1, namely that the inspection reports by CIW and actions taken by the Department to mitigate any non-compliance of regulations be accepted.</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>REVIEW OF ACTION PLAN FROM THE INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES REPORT BY THE CARE INSPECTORATE WALES 2018</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children's Services which was presented to provide Members with an update on progress on the action plan developed as a result of the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspection report on Children's Social Services in Blaenau Gwent which took place in 2018.</p> <p>The Head of Children's Services spoke to the report and highlighted the positive practice within the service area and the recommendations to improve service delivery.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely to continue to endorse the action plan and progress which had been made.</p>	
No. 9	<p><u>CARE INSPECTORATE WALES LOCAL AUTHORITY PERFORMANCE REVIEW</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Social Services which was presented to provide Members with the published Local Authority Performance Review annual letter from the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) which was published on the 28th June 2019.</p> <p>The Director of Social Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p>	

	<p>In response to a Member's question regarding mental health partners involvement, the Director of Social Services said that the Mental Health Triage Project was a pilot project working across Gwent, whereby an Approved Mental Health Social Worker was placed within the police control room to give immediate advice and support to assist people presenting with mental health needs at the earliest opportunity. The focus was on early identification and intervention to prevent needs escalating to arrest or taken to a place of safety. A Member asked about the Directorates experience with CAMHS. The Director explained about the Iceberg Project and how this was trying to support all those children with mental health needs who are not eligible for specialist mental health services such as CAMHS. Transformation funding had been used to develop these early intervention and preventative services.</p> <p>The Head of Children's Services commented that the InReach Project was working with schools to upskill school staff to identify and deal with mental health issues at a lower level.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely to accept the report and CIW letter as provided.</p>	
No. 10	<p><u>SUPPORTING CHANGE TEAM INTERNAL AND INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL EVALUATION</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children's Services which was presented to outline the case to establish the Supporting Change Team on a permanent basis following two positive evaluations of the work undertaken by this team.</p> <p>The Head of Children's Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein. The independent external evaluation had been commissioned to provide Scrutiny with additional assurances of the effectiveness of establishing the Supporting Change Team on a permanent basis. One of the recommendations was that funding be made permanent or long-term to ensure</p>	

	<p>the continuation of the programme. The internal evaluation evidenced that the work of the Supporting Change Team was preventing children coming into care and was achieving actual savings and cost avoidance for the department.</p> <p>Members commented that the programme provided a better avenue of care for children and had a positive impact on the budget and congratulated everyone involved in the programme.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the information and recommendations contained within the report and external evaluation report on the Supporting Change Team be accepted.</p> <p>Councillor Gareth L. Davies left the meeting at this juncture.</p>	
No. 11	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 17TH OCTOBER 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee which presented the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 17th October 2019.</p> <p>Members requested an additional item be added to the FWP regarding the new Welsh Government legislation being introduced where parents are banned from physically punishing children and the implications on the service and its budget. The Director of Social Services said there would be implications for teachers, social services and children around safeguarding. He informed Members that an item could be scheduled into the Work Programme at a later date as this proposed legislation was currently out to consultation.</p> <p>The Head of Children's Services commented that there could be cost implications for the Council in relation to this issue as policies and procedures would need to be in place.</p>	

	<p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 17th October, 2019 be approved.</p>	
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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Action Sheet

Social Services Scrutiny Committee – Monday 2nd September 2019

Item	Action to be Taken	By Whom	Action Taken
7	<u>Annual Care Inspectorate Wales Inspections with Provider Services 2018/19</u> Officers offered an invitation to Members to undertake site visits to the provider services.	Officers / Members	Members to inform Democratic Team if interested in a site visit.
11	<u>Forward Work Programme – 17th October 2019</u> Members requested an additional item be added to the FWP regarding the new Welsh Government legislation being introduced where parents are banned from physically punishing children and the implications on services and budgets.	Scrutiny and Democratic Officer / Relevant Officer	Report to be presented to Committee at an appropriate time following legislation being formally introduced.

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Report to: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee – Thursday 17th October 2019**

Subject: **Executive Decision Sheet**

Item	Scrutiny Committee Recommendation	Executive Decision	Recommendation			Executive Member invited to attend if recommendation accepted in part or rejected
			Approved	Accepted in Part	Rejected	
Executive Meeting – 26 th September 2019 Supporting Change Team Internal and Independent External Evaluation	The Committee recommended Option 1, that the information and recommendations contained within the report and external evaluation reporting on the Supporting Change Team be accepted.	RESOLVED, that the report be accepted and the information and recommendations contained within the external evaluation report on Supporting Change Team be noted.	Scrutiny recommendation accepted.			No further action

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Agenda Item 7

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **17th October 2019**

Report Subject: **Welsh Government Childcare Offer – Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Tanya Evans, Head 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)
	13.08.19	07.10.19			17.10.19	Info Item 06.11.19		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update Scrutiny Committee on the continued roll out of the Welsh Government's Childcare Offer in Blaenau Gwent and the first year of roll out in Torfaen County Borough Council.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 This report details the progress made by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in delivering the Welsh Government's Childcare Offer programme from September 2017 in Blaenau Gwent and from September 2018 in Torfaen, under a hosting arrangement previously reported and approved.
- 2.2 In 2015 the Public Policy Institute for Wales (PPIW) was asked by the First Minister to support the Welsh Government in developing options for extending support for childcare in Wales. Its report 'Childcare Policy Options for Wales', December 2015, looked at the potential impacts of an additional 20 hours free childcare for 3 to 4 year-old pre-school children in Wales.
- 2.3 In August 2016 the Welsh Government publicly recognised that childcare is one of the biggest challenges facing working families in Wales which is why developing an enhanced childcare offer was a top priority. Supporting families with high quality, flexible and affordable childcare supports economic regeneration, can reduce pressures on family income and help parents to participate in work reducing a family's risk of poverty. It also supports the well-being of children through positive and rich childhood experiences.
- 2.4 The Welsh Government's Programme for Government of September 2016, Taking Wales Forward, included a key commitment to deliver 'free childcare for working parents of 3 to 4 year olds for 48 weeks per year'.

- 2.5 In September 2016 Welsh Government wrote to all Local Authorities in Wales asking for their support in implementing the offer, and requested Authorities express their interest in becoming one of a small number of local authorities to become advisory partners and early adopters. 16 Local Authorities including Blaenau Gwent chose to apply to become an early adopter.
- 2.6 On Tuesday 8th November 2016 Communities and Children Secretary Carl Sargeant announced that Blaenau Gwent's bid to become an early adopter had been successful and that Blaenau Gwent was among six local authorities chosen to work with the Welsh Government to pilot the new childcare offer. The projects, offering 30 hours of free early education and childcare per week to 3 to 4 year olds, would be piloted from September 2017 in specified locations within Gwynedd, Anglesey, Flintshire, Swansea, Blaenau Gwent and Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 2.7 After ten months of intense work with Welsh Government to develop the Childcare Offer for Wales, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council went live with the offer in September 2017.
- 2.8 In September 2018 Blaenau Gwent became host Authority for the administration of the Offer for Torfaen CBC. To date the team has successfully rolled out the programme to Torfaen residents and developed good working relationships with Torfaen colleagues and:
- developed a Legal Agreement and Information Sharing Protocol;
 - engaged providers in and around Torfaen providing a service to Torfaen parents;
 - provided information to networks and stakeholders in respect of the programme and the roll out;
 - agreed processes for dealing with children with Additional Needs;
 - developed systems and paperwork;
 - brought teams together to discuss developments and share good practice.
- 2.9 It must be recognised that the childcare market in Torfaen is significantly bigger than Blaenau Gwent.
- 2.10 To date 560 children have benefited from the Offer in Blaenau Gwent, £1,463,396 has been drawn down from Welsh Government to reimburse childcare costs, with additional costs of £37,672 being drawn down to provide extra support for children with additional needs. 71 childcare providers have signed up to deliver the Offer for Blaenau Gwent parents, and 51 are currently benefitting from being funded to deliver the offer.
- 2.11 In Torfaen 670 children have benefitted from the Offer, £1,547,945 has been drawn down to reimburse childcare costs and £3,957 for additional needs support. 91 providers are registered to provide the Offer to Torfaen parents with 68 currently actively delivering the Offer.

2.12 **Programme monitoring and evaluation**

The Blaenau Gwent CBC Childcare Offer team is required to collate and report information to Welsh Government on a weekly, monthly and termly basis. These data returns provide information on:

- number of children accessing the Offer;
- number of providers signed up and delivering the Offer;
- number of hours children have attended childcare;
- number of children receiving Offer either through the medium of Welsh or bilingually;
- number of applications this month for children with SEN requirements and the referrals as a result;
- number of children accessing Foundation Phase Nursery Provision;
- number of children who attended Flying Start;
- child and parent ethnicity;
- dates of birth for the child and parent(s);
- parent(s) salary bracket and weekly hours worked;
- the amount of paid childcare used per week at application;
- whether unpaid/informal childcare was used per week at application;
- parents view on affordability of childcare at application;
- monthly spend on childcare pre Childcare Offer.

2.13 The team is not required to report on parents who are re-entering the job market as a result of the Childcare Offer, or who have increased their working hours so it not possible to provide data on this at a local level.

2.14 Welsh Government has appointed Arad Research in conjunction with NatCen Social Research to undertake an evaluation of the programme of the first year pilot and their report was published in November of last year (<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-06/181122-evaluation-early-implementation-childcare-offer-en.pdf>). Amongst other things, ARAD has looked how the programme has impacted on employability and their key findings are set out below.

2.15 The key findings for the pilot came from all seven Early Implementer Local Authorities (EILA's) are split across three themes and include:

Implementing the Offer

- All EILA's reported time and resources needed to deliver was greater than expected;
- 92% of parents reported the application process was straightforward;
- 94% of childcare providers actively promoted the Offer to parents;
- Submitting evidence of earnings was a challenge particularly for parents self-employed, on zero hour contracts, or working irregular flexible hours.

The Offers Influence on Providers

- 40% reported an increase in the number of children since the previous year;

- 88% agreed the £4.50 rate is commercially viable;
- 72% reported improved profitability;
- 76% reported improved sustainability;
- 15% introduced additional charges for food;
- 25% accessed business support following the introduction of the Offer.

The Offers Influence on Parents

- 90% of parents used the same childcare provider they had used before;
- 37% of parents accessed Welsh Medium childcare;
- 59% of parents accessed school holiday childcare;
- 88% of parents reported having more disposable income;
- 67% of parents now have the opportunity to increase earnings;
- 40% access more childcare hours.

- 2.16 The evaluation report also highlights that 60% of parents were earning the equivalent of, or below, the Welsh median salary and the median earnings of those accessing the Offer appears to be comparable to the median earnings of the general Welsh population.
- 2.17 In respect of impact on employment prospects the report says *‘the Childcare Offer in Wales has led to some positive, but not significant, impact on the employment prospects of parents supported by it. The majority (86%) of parents reported that they currently work the same hours as before the Offer. However, 10 per cent noted that they work more hours; 67 per cent reported having more flexibility in the types of job they do and the hours they work and 60 per cent reported having more opportunities for training. Those who did report improved employability as a result of accessing the Offer were mostly women and parents from lower earnings group’.*
- 2.18 **The ARAD/Natcen report made a number of recommendations, including:**
- Further consideration given to the application process to ensure they are as straightforward as possible for all parents;
 - A centralised approach to promotion and awareness raising when the programme gets to national rollout stage;
 - More and clearer information may be needed to help parents work out childcare costs and other benefits available such as child tax credit;
 - Further alignment between delivery of childcare and Foundation Phase Nursery, which could include co-location, joint provision and transport between settings;
 - Further guidance to be issued to ensure consistency of the application of charges for additional hours;
 - Further promotion of business support;
 - Further guidance on the use of the SEN (ALN) budget;
 - Further research required over a longer period of time to provide conclusive evidence on impact;
 - Consideration of how monitoring data is presented by Local Authorities.

- 2.19 Welsh Government has already acted upon a number of the recommendations including the provision of a national promotional campaign that should provide good information to parents, a review of the guidance is underway and alignment of the programme with Foundation Phase Nursery is being strengthened through the Capital programme.
- 2.20 As has been previously reported, Blaenau Gwent were successful in a bid to the Childcare Offer Capital Programme and was awarded £4.1 million across 5 schemes:
- Full day care setting in South Ebbw Fach;
 - Full day care setting in central Ebbw Fawr, to link with the 21st Century schools redevelopment;
 - Extension to the Swffryd Flying Start centre (adjacent to Swffryd Primary);
 - Extension to Blaina ICC childcare provision;
 - Small capital grants scheme that all Blaenau Gwent providers can bid for.

Work is currently ongoing on each of these schemes; the schemes will be completed by end of financial year 2020/21.

2.21 **Moving Forward**

The Welsh Government is currently looking at options for the future administration of the Programme and is mapping processes and systems to inform planning for future delivery. Options may include:

- Moving the application process to HMRC;
- Moving to a national payments system;
- Having a national approach to applications and payments administered by Local Authorities.

The Childcare Offer team is feeding in information to support this process and decision making around this.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 *To include Recommendation(s) / Endorsement by other groups, e.g. CMT/Committees/Other groups)*

Option 1

That Members scrutinise and accept the progress made in delivering the Childcare Offer to both Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen residents.

Option 2

That Members scrutinise and make recommendations or suggestions to Executive to improve the delivery of the Childcare Offer to both Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen residents.

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

Links to Council Priorities within the Corporate Plan -

Social Services – The Childcare Offer will help reduce and alleviate the impacts of poverty in Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen by removing barriers to employment for many parents. Providing 30 hours of combined Foundation Phase Nursery and free childcare a week, for working parents of 3 and 4 year-olds, 48 weeks of the year, will hopefully encourage more parents to return to work. For those already in work the provision of extra funding for childcare will mean they have more disposable income for their family.

Economic Development and Regeneration - The Childcare Offer will help the growth and expansion of existing local private, voluntary, third sector and local authority childcare and the set-up of new. This means extra jobs will be created in the Blaenau Gwent Childcare Sector. Blaenau Gwent Childcare Team are also working alongside Coleg Gwent to ensure sufficient courses are provided to enable as many local residents as possible to take up and study Early Years and Childcare courses to be able to fill these new roles.

Links to priorities within the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan :-

The Best Start In Life For Everyone: - The Childcare Offer will enable parents to choose high quality early year's childcare. Quality childcare benefits children, families and the economy. The EPPSE (Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education) research (2014) shows a child has more chance of getting better exam results leading to higher earnings, more chance of holding down a job and commit fewer crimes than those who did not attend high quality early years childcare.

To Forge New Pathways To Prosperity By Creating Extra Job Opportunities :- As more children take up the Offer, small childcare business will grow, more jobs will be created within small communities within Blaenau Gwent and thus aid our community regeneration. Affordable childcare acts as a spur to economic growth. With the Childcare Offer both parents must be in work, or the sole single parent. A third worker in the child-care field may be added, and all three pay taxes.

Blaenau Gwent will benefit as more disposable income will be available to hopefully spend in our community.

To Encourage People To Make Healthy Lifestyle Choices In The Places That They Live, Learn, Work and Play: - All Early Years and Childcare settings in Blaenau Gwent sign up to Healthy and Sustainable Preschool Scheme which encourages our little ones to make healthy choices from a very young age promoting, protecting and embedding the physical, mental and social health and well-being as they grow up. In Blaenau Gwent we have Full Day Care Nurseries, Sessional Childcare, Playgroups and all Flying Start Child Care

Settings signed up to the award. The award covers seven health topics: Nutrition and Oral Health, Physical Activity/Active Play, Mental and Emotional Health, Well-being and Relationships, Environment, Safety, Hygiene and Workplace Health and Well-being

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 *Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)*

The Administration Grant for 2019/20 is £197,119 and this is to cover administration costs up to the end of June 2020. The Local Authority team work closely with Welsh Government to ensure the budget is adequate to meet the demands of delivering the Programme and will continue to do this as the future administration of the Programme is decided.

The Local Authority is also offered a grant to cover childcare and SEN costs and the money we pay out to childcare providers on a monthly basis is claimed back from Welsh Government on a monthly basis.

5.2 *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

Risk implications include:-

There are risk implications depending on the decisions taken with regards to the future administration of the scheme.

5.3 *Legal*

A legal agreement setting out the formal relationship between Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen in respect of the project has been developed.

5.4 *Human Resources*

There are no human resource implications from this report.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 *Performance Information and Data*

Please see attached Appendix 1 on Childcare Offer in Blaenau Gwent to date.

6.2 *Expected outcome for the public*

Eligible parents are able to access up to 20 hours of funded childcare if they are working the equivalent of 16 hours a week at National Minimum Wage rates and have children aged between 3 and 4 years of age (eligibility criteria should be met). As outlined above the evaluation of the pilot showed some significant benefits for parents accessing the Offer. Childcare providers also noted significant benefits, particularly around profitability and sustainability, which can lead to increases in working hours and pay for practitioners working in childcare settings.

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

Childcare Offer is regularly promoted at community events attended and via social media.

ARAD/Natcen also engages with parents to acquire their views about the Programme as part of their evaluation work.

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

As noted above there are currently three options up for consideration for the future administration of the Programme and the Childcare Offer team will be part of the discussions at a national level to inform future delivery.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Wales Centre for Health has documented that Blaenau Gwent has one of the worst overall health profiles in Wales compared to the average. Many of the reasons are historic and underlying. Supporting families with high quality, flexible and affordable childcare supports economic regeneration, can reduce pressures on family income and help parents to participate in work reducing a family's risk of poverty. It also supports the well-being of children through positive and rich childhood experiences.

Employment can provide important social, mental and physical health benefits, resulting in improved quality of life and enhanced well-being. Psychologists (Eisenberg and Lazarsfield 1938) and sociologists (Jahoda et al. 1933) have argued as far back as the Great Depression that unemployment damages emotional health and undermines the social fabric of society. Blaenau Gwent also has a high level of poor mental health in its communities. Psychologists draw a conceptual connection between involuntary joblessness and mental health in numerous ways such as: incomplete psychosocial development (Erikson 1959), feelings of helplessness brought on by a perceived lack of control (Seligman 1975) and failure to obtain the non-monetary benefits of work (Warr 1987). By becoming an early implementer for Childcare Offer we hoped to attract parents back to work that previously may have thought childcare was unaffordable or allow parents to work additional hours to boost family income. Thus contributing to improved social, mental and physical health in the longer term and thus aiding the economic and social regeneration of Blaenau Gwent. The above facts are also relevant to Torfaen.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The "hosting" arrangements that have been developed along with Torfaen County Borough Council show true collaborative working between two neighbouring Authorities. Blaenau Gwent Early Years Childcare and Play Team have also assisted Newport, Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff in the setup of their Childcare Offer Projects. The original bid for the Blaenau Gwent Childcare Pilot was developed in consultation with the Education and Regeneration Departments. The Childcare Offer has meant and will continue to mean more business for local childcare business both voluntary and private and thus allowing them to fill vacancies, employ more staff or increase staff

hours and expand their business opening hours. The Blaenau Gwent Early Years, Childcare and Play team will continue to work closely with this large sector of Blaenau Gwent and offer solutions to any other Authorities requiring our help and expertise.

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

6.8 ***EqlA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

The EQIA screening was completed and the programme was assessed as having low negative impact but high positive impact.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 *State how the work will be monitored e.g. through scrutiny or directorate performance management arrangements*

The offer is monitored on a weekly, monthly and termly by Welsh Government.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 – Childcare Offer Take-Up Blaenau Gwent*

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Appendix 1 – Childcare Offer Take-Up Blaenau Gwent

Term	No of Children Accessing the Offer	No of childcare hours attended
Autumn Term 2017	167	27,600
Spring Tern 2018	255	35,282
Summer Term 2018	342	77914
Autumn Term 2018	203	40996
Spring Term 2019	244	44749
Summer Term 2019	333	79115 *

*Incomplete (does not include August hours)

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Agenda Item 8

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **17th October 2019**

Report Subject: **Regional Partnership Update**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Damien McCann, Corporate Director of Social 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)
		07.10.19			17.10.19	06.11.19		

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the Report is to update Members on the work and decisions taken over the last 6 months by the Regional Partnership Board, developed under statutory guidance Part 9 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWB Act).

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The SSWB Act came into force in April 2016, Part 9 of the Act sets out statutory requirement for a Regional Partnership Board (RPB), along with the required minimum membership and a regional Citizen Panel, regional Provider Forum and regional Leadership Group (senior officer group) which have all been established.
- 2.2 The Regional Partnership Boards have been established on current local health board footprints – so the Gwent Regional Partnership Board includes Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) and Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen local authorities.
- 2.3 The regulations also set out required membership of Regional Partnership Boards. The Executive member in each local authority, with responsibility for health and social care, sits on the Regional Partnership Board. In a similar vein, non-executive members of the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board also sit on the Regional Partnership Board.
- 2.4 The Regional Partnership Board is an advisory body, that does not take away the existing responsibilities of the individual statutory bodies, but it is expected to take oversight of and provide direction to, any areas of integrated working across health and social care.
- 2.5 Social Services Scrutiny Committee on the 13th March 2017 agreed for the Executive Member of Social Services and Director of Social Services to report

back to Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis. This approach was endorsed by Executive Committee on the 15th March 2017.

- 2.6 The Regional Partnership Board has met on a number of occasions since the last report to Scrutiny Committee on the 24th January 2019. There are a number of areas which have occupied the Regional Partnership Board over this period. Firstly, the Transformational Offer which sets out the proposals of the Gwent Regional Partnership Board, to support the continued development of a ‘*seamless system*’ of care, support and well-being in Gwent, in response to the Welsh Government’s new long term plan for health and social care ‘A Healthier Wales’. Secondly, the Integrated Care Revenue and Capital Fund which has required bids and has been awaiting approval by Welsh Government. Thirdly, a visit by Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething to the Regional Partnership Board on the 13th June 2019 and the fact that Welsh Government has appointed KPMG to commission a short review of the extent of progress with establishing pooled fund arrangement in each of the Regional Partnership Boards. Fourthly, a visit was received from the Children’s Commissioner in Wales, Sally Holland to hear what integrated services we have in place for children with complex needs and for children and young people with mental health problems. Finally, the Regional Partnership Board has commissioned the Bevan Commission and Social Care Wales to help us look at future models of services across the Boards area.
- 2.7 Members may recall in the previous report dated the 20th September 2018 and 24th January 2019 that the Regional Partnership Board had successfully developed and submitted a ‘Gwent transformational offer’ to Welsh Government which was approved and granted the Gwent RPB £13.4 million of new limited funding over a two year period. Members may also recall that this was in response to ‘A Healthier Wales’ which set out a new £100 million transformational programme. It has the expectation that transformational change delivers a ‘seamless system of health and social care’. The new plan emphasises the role of the Regional Partnership Boards in setting the strategic change agenda and providing the collaborative leadership required to deliver system change through the ‘Area Plan’. The new transformation fund is intended to provide additional funding to catalyse ‘whole system change’, driven through the Regional Partnership Boards with an expectation that each region develops a ‘transformational offer’.
- 2.8 The offer in Gwent related to four areas, derived from the priority areas within the Area Plan and the considered directions of the Regional Partnership Board. These include:
- The development of early intervention and prevention services;
 - The development of primary and community care services;
 - The redesign of child and adolescent emotional and mental health services;
 - The development of an integrated ‘Home First’ discharge model;
 - The development of workforce planning and organisational development to underpin transformational activity.

- 2.9 A summary of the different projects was previously provided at the 24th January 2019 Scrutiny Committee but is attached again at Appendix 1 to remind Members of the projects.
- 2.10 There has been progress in relation to all Transformational projects, delivery is underway of enhanced early intervention and prevention services in tandem with the new transformational model of primary care. Transformation funding will deliver integrated well-being networks across Gwent with a model of compassionate communities. Individual local authorities are implementing plans that best fits the unique needs of their community.
- 2.11 Homefirst has been successfully implemented using a 'Trusted Assessors' model allowing patient to return home as soon as possible with support before they are assessed in their own home.
- 2.12 The Iceberg model has successfully implemented a 'Single Point of Access' (SPA) for GP's and Families and feedback is that it is making a considerable difference in improving access, making families feel more supported and able to access the system more easily. We are starting to activate additional capacity in schools to deliver the 'whole schools' approach as the next part of the system and enabling access through the SPA.
- 2.13 One of the difficulties with the Transformation funding is recruitment to specialist posts, with staff reluctant to leave existing posts for a short term funded post. This has been fed back to Welsh Government and hopefully will be taken on board for future funding streams.
- 2.14 The Regional Partnership Board is the body who sign off and agree the Integrated Care Fund revenue and capital proposals. We do not intend to go into detail of the funding obtained and the bids made and agreed for Blaenau Gwent within this report as this is subject to a separate report which will be presented at this Scrutiny Committee meeting. There has been some frustration with Welsh Government particularly over the capital funding which required bids in by early summer (May 2019) and were only confirmed at the end of September giving a 6 month period to implement some large schemes.
- 2.15 Vaughan Gething, Minister for Health and Social Services met with Chair of Gwent Regional Partnership Board; with the Local Health Board Chair and Chief Executive; Local Authority Leaders, and Cabinet Members with responsibility for social care together with Directors of Social Services on the 13 June, 2019 for an hour and half. The discussion was around an update from Minister on the implementation of A Healthier Wales: our plan for health and social care at a national level, and an outline of priorities for the year ahead. The RPB's presented its key achievements over the last 12 months; progress on Transformation Fund supported projects in the region. Finally a discussion of the steps being taken within the region to improve the effectiveness of transfers of care. The meeting was very fruitful and the Minister was particularly interested in the Iceberg model around children with complex mental health problems and was seeking early evidence of its

success or otherwise, although it was too early to provide clear evidence of its impact.

- 2.16 At the end of July 2019, Welsh Government wrote to the Chair of Regional Partnership Board explaining its plans to commission a short review of the extent of progress with establishing pooled fund arrangements. It is intended to confirm the extent that the arrangements in place are consistent with the regulations associated with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. Welsh Government has appointed accountancy firm KPMG to undertake this work. This will be undertaken over the coming months.
- 2.17 The Children's Commissioner for Wales Sally Holland also visited the Regional Partnership Board in September 2019, to discuss our approach to integrated services for children with complex needs due to disability or illness and for children and young people with mental health problems. Again the Commissioner was impressed with some of the models that we have been implementing across Gwent and similar to the Minister for Health and Social Care was keen to see the evidence emanating from these projects.
- 2.18 To enable the RPB to oversee service transformation and the successful delivery of 'A healthier Wales' development sessions are held on a regular basis to support members to build trust, enable critical challenge and scrutiny. To help the Board to continue this they have mandated a programme of organisational development to be facilitated by the Bevan Commission and Social Care Wales to co-create with the RPB an options paper to set out potential options for future service delivery models, which will be effective and sustainable in the Gwent context.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 The options for consideration are:

Option 1 – to scrutinise the report and to support the decisions of the Regional Partnership Board:

Option 2 – to scrutinise the report and propose an alternative approach to Executive Committee in relation to the options taken by Regional Partnership Board.

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

The report is fulfilling our statutory functions under the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 and accompanying regulations.

The report is also fulfilling a number of the Social Services aims within the Corporate Plan:

- To improve accessibility, provision of information and advice to enable people to support their own well-being;
- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater;

- To work with our partners including Aneurin Bevan 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.

A number of the areas being progressed by the Regional Partnership Board will support us to achieve two of the Wellbeing Plan objectives:

- The best start in life for everyone;
- To encourage and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices in the place that they live, learn, work and play.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 *Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)*

There are no immediate impacts on the budget, the Integrated Care Capital Fund is provided on an annual basis to fund innovative projects within Health and Social Care until the term of the current Welsh Government. The transformation fund is to develop new models of transformation at pace and has been agreed for a two year period. These are all additional funding coming into the system.

The Integrated Care Capital Fund provides significant investment to develop a number of projects across Blaenau Gwent and Gwent as a whole and should this funding be removed at the end of the Government's time in the Assembly then this may have significant consequences going forward. In addition the transformation fund is a time limited fund intended to replace or reconfigure existing services not adding an extra layer; therefore there is an expectation that these models will be funded from core budgets going forward.

5.2 *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

Option 1 - The Regional Partnership Board has statutory responsibilities laid out within the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 and Ministers expect to see the Regional Partnership Boards, maturing into a vehicle for more integrated commissioning, transformation and improvement across health and social care, with an emphasis on providing more care closer to home, maintaining independence and reducing unnecessary hospital admissions. Therefore by implementing the Gwent transformation offer the Regional Partnership Board is complying with the legislation and Ministerial expectations.

Option 1 – Welsh Government has also determined that the use of the Integrated Care Capital Fund and the new Transformational fund will have oversight by the Regional Partnership Board. Both these funding sources are to assist with the integration of health and social care across the Gwent Regional footprint. It is essential that the Regional Partnership Board has

oversight of funding proposals and subsequent use of these funding streams, and have approved the proposals before they were submitted and agreed by Welsh Government.

Option 2 – The Regional Partnership Board is made up of a number of organisations who collectively make decision for the good of the region. If Scrutiny were to recommend alternative approaches then it would need the support of neighbouring authorities and the health board to obtain consensus. Failure to do this would mean being in breach of legislation and could result in Welsh Government intervention. Whilst failure to comply with the requirements of the Integrated Care Capital Fund grant and Transformational fund could result in the withdrawal or ability to receive funding for the Blaenau Gwent and Gwent region respectively.

5.3 Legal

The Legal department becomes involved in considering and advising on any legal agreements before signing such as the Section 33 Agreement.

5.4 Human Resources

The Gwent Transformational Team support senior officers and elected members to deliver and implement the priorities of the Regional Partnership Board. In addition they administer the Regional Partnership Board and Leadership Group. The Gwent Transformation Team is hosted by Torfaen County Borough Council.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 Performance Information and Data

Not applicable.

6.2 Expected outcome for the public

The role of the Regional Partnership Board is to ensure more seamless provision of health and social care services across Gwent.

6.3 Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)

The Regional Partnership Board has involvement from the third sector and representation from the Citizens Panel to ensure engagement and involvement in its direction.

6.4 Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)

The Regional Partnership Board provides the opportunity to work collectively and have a long term vision to progress integration and partnership across the Gwent region.

6.5 Preventative focus

The Regional Partnership Board within its strategic intent statement will be considering how Health and Social Services can work together in a more preventative way.

6.6 Collaboration / partnership working

The role the Regional Partnership Board is to work collaboratively across boundaries to benefit citizens requiring health and social care services across Gwent.

6.7 Integration(across service areas)

The purpose of the Regional Partnership Board is to foster integration between Health and Social Services.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 The monitoring arrangements for the Regional Partnership Board are through the Social Services Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Committee on a quarterly basis.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 – Transformation Offer Report Summary*

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Transformation Offer Report Summary

This offer sets out the proposals of the Gwent Regional Partnership Board, to support the continued development of a *'seamless system'* of care, support and wellbeing in Gwent, in response to the Welsh Government's new long term plan for health and social care 'A Healthier Wales'.

The offer has been developed through the Regional Partnership Board mechanism, with a dedicated transformation leadership group, established to act as the brokers of change, and determine the content of the offer.

The offer demonstrates the shared drive in Gwent to *'Step up to change'*, rather than continuing to *'observe the system struggle'*, to deliver a system, predicated on pace, traction and agility, within the context of austerity and rising demand.

The proposal is constructed in two parts- the first *'Delivering an early intervention, prevention and improved population Wellbeing system'* focused on the development of new integrated services, specifically Integrated Wellbeing Networks, and Primary Care Transformation. The second, *'Creating integrated models of health and social care'* focuses on the service redesign of existing service models, in CAMHS and Hospital Discharge. Taken together these two elements of what will be the substantive 'transformation' programme, will provide the foundations for a seamless system of care, and address the need to remodel at pace specific services to address sustainability and demand concerns.

The transformation fund will provide the capacity, capability and resource to develop a truly integrated commissioning approach, through design, planning, delivery and management of services able to make the most impact on improving wellbeing across health and social care, and as a result, the achievement of a more 'seamless system'.

Specifically, this offer seeks to deliver transformational change in the following areas:

- The development of a new model of prevention and wellbeing services.
- The development of primary and community care.
- The development of new pan Gwent 'Home First' discharge services.
- The development of a pan Gwent integrated system of emotional and mental wellbeing for children and young people.
- The development of a programme to create a Gwent 'Wellbeing workforce'.

The new models proposed are in areas of shared significant challenge, in terms of demand, capacity, access and financial sustainability, and where the additional capacity, and leadership that will be achieved through the transformation fund, will make a significant difference to the *'whole system'* over time. It is in these identified areas, where the biggest difference can be made at pace, in creating a seamless patient pathway across health and social care.

At the heart of integrated service delivery is the continued development of the Neighbourhood Care Networks (NCN) Model, which is unique to Gwent and where we are able to direct resources around community need, support improved healthy behaviours and create new integrated pathways into primary and community care.

The NCNs are the footprint for the development of a sustainable, social model of primary care to support people to better manage their own health and wellbeing, be independent and resilient for longer in their own homes and localities.

Through the new transformation fund, there is an opportunity to build the pace of delivery of the required whole systems change, by funding dedicated work to develop, and implement a place based integrated service model. We have undertaken work to assess the delivery of services at the right level i.e. regional, borough and neighbourhood to ensure we are able to provide access to services in the right place, at the right time.

The development of a new model of prevention and wellbeing services

The Integrated Well-being Network (IWN) concept provides the framework for establishing integrated, place-based well-being systems across GP clusters in Gwent. Bringing together a holistic range of assets that contribute to positive health and well-being on a place-basis will enable people to find the support they need to stay well within the community, reducing the need to access the care system.

This will support the evolution of a more socially centred model of Primary Care through the Compassionate Communities model, focussed on a more proactive and preventative approach, empowering patients and carers to find non-medical information and support in the community. Signposting and active linking of patients to community well-being assets will be an important part of the multi-disciplinary team activity in primary care, and the development of a rich and diverse well-being network will be the foundation upon which this activity can operate.

The NCNs have been identified as they are aligned to developments that can provide a focal point for the IWN concept to progress, as well as implementation of the Compassionate Communities approach:

- Caerphilly North (aligned with Bryntirion primary care transformation developments).
- Newport East (aligned with Ringland Health and Well-being Centre development).
- Blaenau Gwent East (aligned with Brynmawr Resource Centre development).
- Monmouthshire South (aligned with the South Monmouthshire Health, Well-being and Social Care Project).
- Torfaen North (aligned with Blaenavon place-based pilot).
- Blaenau Gwent West (aligned with Tredegar Health and Well-being Centre development).
- Caerphilly South (aligned with Lansbury Park Deep Place Plan).

IWN has the following objectives:

Establish place-based co-ordination and development of well-being resources

- Engage organisations in a co-ordinated place-based 'well-being community' which aims to improve co-ordination, alignment and visibility of existing well-being resources in order to enable timely and seamless support for people.
- Facilitate an Assets Based Community Development (ABCD) network which will engage organisations with community development functions in order to develop the ABCD approach and create links with well-being networks.
- Develop a range of methods for communicating with the community about available well-being resources, to develop a shared sense of ownership and responsibility.

Establish systems for linking Primary Care with well-being resources

- Ensure professionals are able to effectively triage/signpost patients to information, advice and assistance using electronic technologies.
- Develop and evaluate a range of ways to link patients with the 'well-being community' attached to the NCN (including reception navigation or community connector roles).

Develop the well-being workforce

- Identify, develop and deliver a range of interventions which support an intentional whole system transition towards the shared values and practice underpinning our whole system approach. Staff across the whole system will be encouraged to 'live and breathe well-being', changing the conversation towards what matters to people and what they can do to improve their own health and well-being. In addition, staff working across the system will have the knowledge and skills to improve well-being (e.g. supportive signposting, behaviour change, mental well-being).

Communication and engagement to support whole system change

- Organisational development and leadership programme which creates an enabling environment for the workforce to focus on outcomes and what matters to people.
- Engage local communities in changing the way they receive support.

Identify ways that hubs can be centres for well-being resources in the community

- Maximising the well-being potential of Health & Well-being Centres.
- Joining up hubs to make best use of the range of well-being resources in local communities.

The development of primary and community care

A strong Public Health approach, provides the foundation and context for the delivery of '*A Healthier Wales*', improving population wellbeing, so that more people are supported to stay healthy and well and more effectively manage their health, is the biggest challenge the system currently faces, it is also the biggest opportunity.

It is estimated that 20% of patients present to their GP with underlying social problems such as debt, housing or social isolation, and this is often the case with patients who attend frequently.

The second part of this programme, will work in tandem with the development of an Integrated Wellbeing Network approach, to construct a new place based approach to the delivery of primary and community services in Bargoed (Bryntirion Surgery), before scaling up and expanding wider across Caerphilly North.

It is our intention to use this transformation approach to stimulate widespread adoption of the new model across five NCN areas which present the greatest sustainability challenges, areas which include:

- Blaenau Gwent (West and East NCNs)
- North Caerphilly
- East Newport
- North Torfaen

The areas prioritised described above are a combination of Health Board managed practices and independent practices that are experiencing sustainability challenges. The transformation funding will allow us to proactively support areas that most need this new model of care.

People are accessing their primary care settings for support with numerous situations and not just for healthcare. For most people, their principal contact with the NHS is via their GP Practice. In order to provide a sustainable solution for the future, the service needs to adapt to provide services outside historic opening times and deliver services and information via different modalities (e.g. telephone, internet) to meet the growing needs of the population through a prudent approach.

The increasing demands on primary care services in addition to the on-going fragility of workforce, requires General Practice to evolve from single-handed uni-professional care to a system based on teams of professionals working collaboratively in primary care teams.

Gwent intends to adopt the 'compassionate communities' model in the five identified NCNs with greatest sustainability challenges. Compassionate Communities builds teams around general practice, operating a "hub" for about 10,000 population. The approach requires a systematic approach to well-being in care and treatment plan enable through a web-based directory of well-being support and services (i.e. DEWIS), health connectors, community connectors and a local community development service.

In Gwent there is now widespread acknowledgement and commitment that we need to integrate social care provision, community health services and third sector wellbeing support through a single point of access and place based working, as evidenced by this offer. This requires a more streamlined, responsive and relationship-based approach where families receive the right support first time reducing unnecessary hand offs.

The development of new pan Gwent 'Home First' discharge services

We propose to develop a 'Gwent wide intensive domiciliary support service 'Home First''. The additional capacity provided through the transformation fund will allow, dedicated work at pace to implement solutions that will mitigate pressures in advance of winter 2018/19.

The evidence from across Gwent suggests that it is both the frailty and acuity of patients that makes discharging them complex, when community and social care is also under pressure to maintain a growing number of older people safely at home. Therefore, Regional partnership board, through a working group of Health Board and local authority heads of service, as part of the Gwent Adult Strategic Partnership, has developed a "Home First" solution to implement a Gwent wide, integrated model of discharge to recover and assess. The proposed model can be scaled up to a regional or national level, and combines the dedicated capacity, resource and expertise needed across health and social care, to safely discharge people from hospital. The service model supports an integrated approach to service provision providing an opportunity for local authorities to work across organisational boundaries for the first time providing accelerated assessment and short term care packages for citizens receiving care in the Royal Gwent and Nevill Hospital (in the first instance) irrespective of their normal place of residence.

The service model supports an integrated approach to service provision providing an opportunity for local authorities to work across organisational boundaries for the first time providing accelerated assessment and short term care packages for citizens receiving care in the Royal Gwent and Nevill Hospital (in the first instance) irrespective of their normal place of residence. The service is developed to complement existing step up/down facilities with clear pathways. The scheme will also provide a bridging service to enable people to be discharged earlier than planned from the wards, for example where a care provider has been identified but cannot start for several days the services will be accessible to main hospital discharge teams/area staff to facilitate discharge and provide the care until the identified long term care provider is in place. This aims to reduce length of stay and provide better outcomes for people and their carers.

The development of a pan Gwent integrated system of emotional and mental wellbeing for children and young people

This proposal focuses on the implementation of a new service model for emotional and mental resilience for children and young people, redrawing the current landscape, to provide a more sustainable model of care, by working in a different, expansive and more integrated model.

The proposed new iceberg model has been developed as a shared public service response. It is driven by striving to provide the right services at the right time, thus preventing long waits for specialist clinical services, and a context where too many children and young people access assessment without meaningful follow-up support.

Fundamentally, this approach will ensure that only the children and young people who need the specialist intervention provided by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and related services are able to access that service promptly and will do so by re-designing the current tiered approach, to:

- Develop frontline capacity to understand children, and young people's distress within a normative, contextual, developmental and relational framework and to implement intervention plans on the basis of this understanding.
- To increase access to the right evidence-based psychological interventions within the children and young people's communities and homes, with interventions provided at the lowest level of intensity that is consistent with achieving positive outcomes ('do what is needed').
- To co-produce and develop intervention services that are based on a whole family approach, drawing on a systemic and relational understanding of how the problems have evolved, and a whole family and community approach to designing the interventions that fall out of this formulation.
- To increase frontline staff's access to highly qualified and experienced mental health professionals who are embedded in community services able to support frontline staff and join with partner agencies in the design and delivery of services.
- To provide effective mental health 'in reach' to school/college staff and leadership teams at pre-school, primary and secondary school level, with access to specialist consultation, training and support to enable them to support the well-being of pupils at both an individual pupil and a whole-school level.

It builds on the very strong collaborative working relationships between Health, Local Authorities, Education and the Third Sector. Furthermore, the proposal supports and strengthens three planned developments in Gwent. Firstly, through mental health-ring fenced transformation funds, ABUHB has invested in co-ordination capacity to enable Locality-based, multi-agency single points of access for all children and young people with mental health and wellbeing. This is an essential element of the wider 'iceberg' model described in the current proposal. Secondly, through ICF resource (with longer-term sustainability to be achieved through a reduction in out-of-area placements), partners working under the Gwent Strategic Partnership for Children and Young People are finalising the model for a multi-agency resource 'hub' that aims to provide care close to home for our most vulnerable and complex children and young people, who are currently often sent out-of-area to specialist placements that deliver poor outcomes at considerable cost. Thirdly, new mental health monies that are being invested in CAMHS provision are being directed to the Primary Care Mental Health Service and Specialist CAMHS, with both service areas using this resource to provide support and access to consultation to communities and/or to support local place-based working. All three of these developments will support and strengthen, and will in turn be supported and strengthened by, the transformational changes described in the current proposal.

In Gwent, we are committed to intervening much earlier, addressing the seeds of distress before they take root, and to do this will require radical, and transformational change, developing the new iceberg model, in the context of a new framework for children and young people's services, based on prevention, early intervention and timely targeted support. The new approach will adopt an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) informed approach, and be delivered in conjunction with the Gwent ACE's programme.

This new integrated model will ensure there is more proactive support to children and young people, providing them with opportunities to build their own resilience, recognise their need earlier, encouraging them to support one another and feel comfortable talking about their issues. If they need to access services they can do so when, where and how they choose to.

The development of a programme to create a Gwent 'Wellbeing workforce'

The creation of an integrated wellbeing workforce is perhaps the most challenging area of this transformation offer, if a step change in the pace of workforce planning and development cannot be achieved and a more multi-disciplinary approach adopted as standard, then transformation will stall.

Critical to the success of this '*systems alignment*', is the development of the 'wellbeing workforce' in tandem with service realignment and remodelling. Training opportunities must be created, in order to ensure the workforce of the future is available to deliver this model. This will require a 'grow your own' model and, as such, it will be necessary to develop an academy-type approach alongside work already underway to establish an Academy for Health & Social Care.

Effective transformation work also needs to address career pathways spanning health and social care, with clear opportunities for progression. Good links with higher and further education bodies to ensure the right core skills training have been made and additional capacity will enable development of a career approach that can benefit employers, individuals and the training providers.

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Agenda Item 9

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **27th September 2019**
Report Subject: **Integrated Care Fund Update 2019**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**
Report Submitted by: **Alyson Hoskins – Head of Adult Services (Social 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)
27/09/19		07.10.19			17.10.19	Info Item 06.11.19		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report provides an overview for Members on the current allocation of funding for projects monitored by Adult Services and funded via the Welsh Government Integrated Care Fund (ICF) as at September 2019.
- 1.2 It also highlights the new bids that have been submitted from Adult Services for allocation from the current slippage on the ICF budget and how the service is actively accessing the funding to test different preventative approaches to service delivery.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Previous annual reports have identified the history of the Integrated Care Fund – formerly known as the Intermediate Care Fund (ICF)
- 2.2 ICF funding has been available to health and social care organisations since 2014/2015. Blaenau Gwent has been accessing this fund since its inception and since 2014 it has supported some of our most successful services including:
 1. Step up / step down intermediate care beds (CARIAD beds)
 2. 3 x Community Connector posts
- 2.3 Members are aware that the funding has been a critical component in the testing of new initiatives to support the development of our prevention services and have been important in the delivery of continued development of the 'Living Independently in Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century' Strategy and our cultural changes required following the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.
- 2.4 The Integrated Care Fund is currently governed via the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) structures and the grant funding is administered through the ICF performance monitoring unit within Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB). The fund can be accessed by sectors that support the priorities of the

Regional Partnership Board (RPB) and the overarching population needs assessment for Gwent. The grant supports the delivery of the key priorities in the areas of:

- Older people with complex needs and long term conditions including dementia
- People with Learning Disabilities
- Children with Complex Needs due to disability or illness
- Carers, including young carers

- 2.5 The allocation and bidding process can be complex as there are **both revenue and capital funding streams** within the investment plan of ICF and allocations within these funding streams can be for differing time periods.
- 2.6 The total **capital** ICF grant allocation for Gwent is almost £20 million across a spending plan of 3 years until 2021/22 – the length of the plan is due to the nature of the building development process.
- 2.7 The ICF **capital** allocation is split into a further 2 funding streams for schemes that are being developed at a cost of less than £100k (25% of total allocation) and those whose costs are over £100k (75% of total allocation). The Gwent spending profile for the 3 years of the capital fund is:

Table 1

	Total allocation	75%major schemes	25% discretionary schemes
2018/19	£5,558,000	£4,168,500	£1,389,500
2019/20	£6,484,000	£4,863,000	£1,621,000
2020/21	£7,410,000	£5,557,500	£1,852,500
Total	£19,452,000	£14,589,000	£4,863,000

- 2.8 In addition to the main **ICF revenue funding** pot administered by ABUHB, there are also 3 additional revenue ICF streams which are held centrally by Welsh Government:
- **ICF dementia funding** – this funding supports the priorities of the All Wales Dementia Actions Plan. Funding for 2018/19 Wales wide was £984k with a further £3.2 million available over 2019-2021.
 - **ICF WCCIS funding** – this funding supports the implementation of the new all Wales health and social care IT system - the Gwent allocation for this for 18/19 was £292k.
 - **ICF Autism Funding** - this funding supports the priorities of the All Wales Autism Actions Plan – the Gwent allocation for this for 18/19 was £458k.
- 2.9 In relation to **revenue funding** there has been no commitment from Welsh Government to continue the funding after April 2021 and therefore, exit strategies are being developed to identify the potential to sustain the services from core or alternative budgets. In some instances this will mean that some services may be withdrawn and during 2020/21 assessments will need to be developed to ascertain the impact for our citizens.

3. Options for Recommendation

- 3.1 Members are asked to scrutinise the report, and how in future they would wish to receive through a reporting mechanism, progress of this strategy.
- 3.2 **Option 1**- Endorse the report and the evidence provided to support the way in which available ICF grant funding is being accessed to support the strategic priorities of the Council, and the service to continue to provide progress updates to the Scrutiny Committee in 2020/21 as outlined in this report.
- 3.3 **Option 2** – Members to recommend any additional information and/or an alternative methodology for reporting progress, challenges and opportunities during 2020/21.

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

- 4.1 **Corporate Plan – 2018 to 2022.** The Living Independently in the 21st Century Strategy links to the key themes of the Corporate plan and in is promotion of resilient communities. Both the Corporate Plan and Living Independently in the 21st Century promote the ethos of preventative approaches to support vulnerable people. ICF grant funding is used to further promote these strategies here in Blaenau Gwent.
- 4.2 **Blaenau Gwent Well-being plan – *Priority area - enabling older people to feel valued and empowered to maximise their independence and lead healthy and engaged lives*** - this strategy is key in delivering this Well-being outcome including:
- **Thinking in the Long Term** - The development of schemes accessing ICF promotes effective cooperation and partnership working between all agencies and organisations, including health, and is a key element of meeting the needs of citizens in Blaenau Gwent.
 - **Taking an integrated approach** – The funding streams promote an integrated approach across Health, Social Care and the Third Sector.
 - **Taking a preventative approach** – The way in which we accessed and utilised the ICF funding has promoted preventative services including reablement and assistive technology as a model that promotes personal independence and management of a person's own well-being. The ICF funding has enabled the service to deliver a preventative and early intervention approach to minimise the escalation of need and dependency on statutory services.
 - **Collaborating** - The use of ICF has been across all agencies and sectors including Health and Housing.
 - **Involvement** - A key aspect of the ICF grants funding has been ensuring

people have a voice and control over their care and support to achieve the outcomes that are important to them i.e. through the development of transition and advocacy projects.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

Option 1 – this will result in a report for 2019/20 being developed using a similar approach and methodology to that used for 2018/19. Updates will continue to be provided using information contained in the tier 1 and 2 business plans, team briefings, progress reports and data from our Corporate Performance Team and feedback from any relevant regulatory reviews.

Option 2 – the format and reporting mechanism for future reports will be amended to reflect additional information as requested by members.

- 5.1 **Impact on budget** – in the short term, the use of the fund has been advantageous in enabling external funding to be accessed to develop both capital and revenue schemes in Blaenau Gwent. However longer term – as stated in 2.9 above for revenue funding there has been no commitment from Welsh Government to continue the funding after April 2021 and therefore exit strategies are being developed to identify the potential to sustain the services from core or alternative budgets. In some instances this will mean that some services may be withdrawn and during 2020/21 assessments will need to be developed to ascertain the impact for our citizens.
- 5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions** – the development of exit strategies for the potential reduction in funding resulting in the closure of preventative services is scheduled to commence in early 2020 and the outcome will be reported to Scrutiny. The time frame is however dependent on further Welsh Government decisions around the future of the ICF funding streams and other grants within the Healthier Wales health and social care portfolio.
- 5.3 **Legal** – there are no legal implications associated with this report. This strategy supports the delivery of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Healthier Wales transformation programme.
- 5.4 **Human Resources** – there are no OD implications associated with this report at this point in time. However it is important to note that a number of the posts funded via Integrated Care Fund contained in tables 2 and 3 below are fixed term posts until 2020 and work is currently underway to scope the implications both in terms of finances and service delivery should Welsh Government confirm that funding will not be available after March 2021.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

During 2018/19 the following services were supported in Blaenau Gwent utilising the Integrated Care Fund (ICF):

Table 2

Revenue Schemes 2018/19	Allocation	Description of service
BG Mynydd Practitioner	32,640.00	1 Post to support Home Care and CRT integration
CARIAD intermediate care beds	347,536.00	8 intermediate care beds
Community Co-ordinators - Blaenau Gwent	72,270.00	2 Posts of Community Connectors
Blaenau Gwent Emergency Care at Home	45,000.00	Home Care support
Blaenau Gwent Care & Repair additional funding	10,000.00	Aids and adaptations
2 Additional CARIAD beds	12,290.00	One off funding to support winter pressures
Additional capacity to clear DFG backlog	7,500.00	One off funding to support winter pressures
Additional in-house dom care/emergency care at home	7,500.00	One off funding to support winter pressures
Carers Co-ordinators - Blaenau Gwent	49,321.00	1 Post of Community Connector
Carers support - Blaenau Gwent	52,853.00	2 posts - Carers Trust GP scheme
Transition - development of integrated working across adult and childrens services in Gwent	70,500.00	2 Social workers - Learning Disability Team
Community Co-ordinator - Learning Disability Team	26,520.00	1 Post of Community Connector
Total	£733,441.00	
Capital Schemes 2018/19		
Initial refurbishment of internal rooms at Augusta Respite Centre	62,048	Improvement of internal environment including new assistive technologies and equipment
Digital and Mobile Assistive Technology Solutions	66,624	Equipment for our SMART houses in Extra Care
Integrated Telephony / IT systems	7,491	New IT for the IAA team
Mobile apps for Home Care / Community Resource Team	19,000	New technology for call monitoring in Home Care
Total	£155,163.00	

During 2019/20 the following services have been supported in Blaenau Gwent utilising the Integrated Care Fund (ICF):

Table 3

Revenue Schemes 2019/20	Allocation	Description of service
BG Mynydd Practitioner	32,640.00	1 Post to support Home Care and CRT integration
CARIAD intermediate care beds	347,536.00	8 intermediate care beds
Community Co-ordinators - Blaenau Gwent	72,270.00	2 Posts of Community Connectors
Social Value Project - Catering & Community Meals Enterprise	£44,600	New post – not yet able to recruit as advertised and failed to appoint
Health & Social Care Changing Culture - Social Media Project	£46,800	New post – not yet able to recruit as awaiting outcome of job evaluation
Advocacy Access	£115,000	Gwent wide scheme

Resilient In House Provision (Adults) for Day opportunities	£115,000	Gwent wide scheme
Carers Co-ordinators - Blaenau Gwent	49,321.00	1 Post of Community Connector
Carers support - Blaenau Gwent	52,853.00	2 posts - Carers Trust GP scheme
Transition - development of integrated working across adult and children's services in Gwent	70,500.00	2 Social workers - Learning Disability Team
Community Co-ordinator - Learning Disability Team	26,520.00	1 Post of Community Connector
Total	£919,187	
<u>Dementia ICF (19/20)</u>		
Dementia Reablement Service – 2 year service	£81,675	Currently scoping staffing complement across health and social care. 2020-21 136,317.00)
Increased befriending support (Alzheimer Society)	£25,598	Increased support to prevent social isolation and support carers/ citizens following diagnosis of dementia
Total	£107,273	
<u>Slippage Bids (19/20)</u>		Awaiting response – only submitted September 19
Dementia Cats and Dogs	£9,700	Joint bid with Caerphilly
Carers Events	£1,500	Visit to theatre in Cardiff
Additional purchases of dementia pets	£9,700	Joint bid with Caerphilly
Additional blood screening units	£1,320	Equipment in the Community Resource Team
Total	£12,520	
<u>Capital Schemes 19/20</u>		
Reablement facility to be developed for Augusta House (2 year development)	£391,853	Development of additional units at current location
Further investment in assistive technologies	£63,420	Increased working with Worcester Telecare
Support for aids and adaptation to promote independence	£97,500	Bid submitted by Care and Repair Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent
Total	£552,773	(19/20 only)

6.1 The following paragraphs provide examples of where the ICF funded schemes are currently being utilised to meet the key strategic priorities of the Blaenau Gwent Living Independently strategy:

Priority 1: Long term care: ICF intermediate care beds (CARIAD) are used to support assessments of suitability of citizens for placement into long term care. They have been critical in Blaenau Gwent maintaining low numbers of people remaining in hospital when they are fit for discharge (known as DTOC) and have also supported in a reduction of numbers of days Blaenau Gwent residents in our community hospitals.

Priority 2: Reablement/Enabling services: The development of a new Dementia Reablement service (19/20) will support people living with Dementia to remain as independent as possible in their homes.

Priority 3: Day Opportunities/Community Options: Our Community Connector Service supports the development of alternative ways of being supported during the day and reduces instances of social isolation, whilst promoting community based solutions.

Priority 4: Assistive Technology: ICF funding has been used to expand the assistive technology support to citizens by procuring new and innovative care and support technology solutions to promote independence and reduce reliance on family carers and commissioned support. The introduction of our dementia friendly 'cats / dogs and babies' has proved to be a huge success in our care homes and are being expanded as 'company' to citizens living in their own homes.

Priority 7: Carers: We have extended the support we provide to unpaid carers through a number of initiatives including the Carers GP engagement service – in partnership with Carers Trust South East Wales. This service has recently been shortlisted for an Argus Health and Care Award.

6.2 Expected Outcomes for the public

This use of the Integrated Care Grant funding (ICF) focusses on the development of services that promote Well-being and independence in their own homes which may or may not include a Care Home. It utilised the key principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 including:

- a. **Voice and control** – putting the individual and their needs, at the centre of their care, and giving them a voice in, and control over reaching the outcomes that help them achieve well-being.
- b. **Prevention and early intervention** – increasing preventative services within the community to minimise the escalation of critical need. The fund has been used to trial new interventions and opportunities to support new ways of working across the Adult health and social care sector.
- c. **Well-being** – supporting people to achieve their own well-being and measuring the success of care and support.
- d. **Co-production** – encouraging individuals to become more involved in the design and delivery of services.

- 6.3 **Equalities Impact Assessment** – the development of the new services using the ICF funding has included the development of individual impact assessments. The critical impact assessment will be required following any decision to withdraw funding from these projects as it is anticipated that some services will cease and there will be an impact for citizens within the protected characteristics.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

- 7.1 All Integrated Care Fund (ICF) funded schemes are subject to high level of scrutiny and ongoing monitoring from ABUHB and Welsh Government. Officers are required to complete both quarterly financial and data monitoring outcomes returns for each of the projects. During 2018/19 were also asked to deliver briefing sessions on progress of the projects, to the respective regional partnership board planning groups.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Agenda Item 10

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**

Report Subject: **National Adoption Service Annual Report 2018/19**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Damien McCann, Corporate Director Social Services**
Sue Radford, Service Manager, SEWAS

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
Virtual	24.9.19	07.10.19			17.10.19	Info Item 06.11.19		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To report on the performance of the South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) and the National Adoption Service (NAS) for 2018/19.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 This report is required in line with the Regulations as set out in The Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2005.

- 2.2 The regional performance report under **Appendix 1** and the National performance report under **Appendix 2** have been produced by the National Adoption Service. Both reports focus on key areas which include:

- Children placed and waiting for adoption;
- Demand for adoptive placements and adopter recruitment;
- Life journey materials; and
- Adoption Support.

- 2.3 The National Adoption Service (NAS) was launched in November 2014 with a remit of expectations to:

- Eradicate drift for children in care;
- Eliminate waiting lists for training and assessment of adopters;
- Improve the matching process for children;
- Allay adoption breakdowns by improving adoption support;
- Streamline the process to ensure better linking for children;
- Provide a wide choice of placements;
- Ensuring consistent delivery of adoption services across Wales.

2.4 National Adoption Service

There is a small central team headed by the Director of Operations. The national team provides national direction, development and coordination to all the regions.

2.5 The regions include:

- South East Wales Adoption Team **(SEWAS)** (Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Torfaen, Newport, Monmouthshire)
- Western Bay **(WB)** (Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot, Swansea.
- Vale, Valley's Cardiff **(VVC)** (Cardiff, Vale, Merthyr Tydfil, RCT, Vale of Glamorgan.
- North Wales **(NW)** (Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd
- Mid and West Wales **(MWW)** (Carmarthen, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Powys.

2.6 Every region is responsible for:

- Placing children for adoption (Local Authority);
- Recruitment and assessment of adopters;
- Offering counselling to birth parents;
- Offering advice to adopted adults;
- Providing post adoption support;
- Matching children with adopters;
- Creating links with voluntary adoption agencies, health and education.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 Option 1 - Provide comment or any amendment to, or inclusion of, information on the content of the report to assist Executive in its function.

3.2 Option 2 - Accept the information as reported.

4. **Evidence of How Does This Topic Supports the Achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 The work of the South East Wales Adoption Service 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

4.2 SEWAS also supports the Safe Reduction of Looked After Children Strategy 2017-2020.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 Impact on Budget (Short and Long Term Impact)

- 5.1.1 SEWAS is a collaborative arrangement funded by the 5 local authorities within this region.
- 5.1.2 The Management Committee (required under regulation) is responsible for ensuring arrangements are in place to deliver the regional service and this includes financial arrangements.
- 5.1.3 Budget pressures are managed effectively resulting in no overspend at the end of the financial year 2018/19.

5.2. Risk Including Mitigating Actions

5.2.1 1. Shortage of adopters

The risk implication for this reporting period mirrors that of previous years in respect of the shortage of adopters available to meet the needs of the children referred to the service, although, there was an increase in the number of adopters approved by SEWAS (**47** 2018/19 compared to **39** 2017/18) there is still a gap in adopters who can meet the needs of our more complex children, resulting in the number of children waiting still being high.

- 5.2.2 Recruitment pressures are not unique to the SEWAS region. The other regions in Wales show a year on year decrease and similar in respect of more complex children be referred for adoption.

5.2.3 Mitigation

To improve performance in this area SEWAS will continue to invest in recruitment. It is known that a large majority of adopters come to SEWAS because of 'word of mouth' with this mind we are building on our core offer of support to adopters to ensure they have a positive experience of the service. This core offer includes:-

- Direct work pre and post approval which prepares children and adopters for placement;
- Additional post approval adoption training before placement using therapeutic models;
- Work with panel;
- Assessment being completed in a timely manner;
- Advertising our core offer including our psychology service input which is a big sell'.

- 5.2.4 Welsh Government recently allocated additional funding to improve adoption support. As a result new posts have been developed in 19/20 which should help increase the recruitment of adopters.

5.3 Legal

- 5.3.1 This report is required in line with the Regulations as set out in The Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2005.

5.4 Human Resources

- 5.4.1 No issues

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 *Performance Information and Data*

National Adoption Service Annual Report 18/19

The full report can be found under **Appendix 1**. The Highlights will be captured here.

The National Adoption Service has 2 priorities which are:-

1. Placing Children Effectively.
2. Continuing to improve adoption support by implementing the NAS Adoption Support Framework.

The National Adoption Service (NAS) has been working for five years to support better outcomes for children for whom adoption is the best plan.

6.1.1 **Some of the achievements from the last five years have been**

- Successfully raised the profile of adoption with the public, funders and policy makers.
- Accessed additional funding; a £90k development grant from the Welsh Government each year, £125k targeted investment in 2017/18 and a £2.3m investment for adoption support to commence in 2019/20.
- Improved performance in the key areas of approving adopters and placing children more quickly, alongside embedding a performance culture supported through regular evaluation and reporting.
- Increased the availability of life journey materials through a new best practice approach.
- Developed how we listen to adopters and their children and ensured their messages and input make a difference to the service.
- Created five regional adoption collaboratives as the focus for local government adoption expertise and access point for services.
- Developed and maintained a strong partnership with the Welsh Voluntary Adoption Agencies. This added value, different expertise, additional services and more choice, resulting in exciting new services such as Adopting Together Service, TESSA and a new Children and Young People's service.

- Commissioned and developed the all Wales website, which now provides a comprehensive source of information for parents and agencies.
- Brought the Wales Adoption Register into the service, giving greater breadth and depth of choice for prospective parents and children.
- Produced strategic plans, which not only outline what improvements are needed but help influence and improve legislation and policy, as well as achieve investment in times of constraint.

6.1.2 **However a number of challenges remain which are**

- Maintaining performance improvements and making them more consistent within services and across Wales.
- Improving service agility and access to resources to respond to emerging issues and changing service demands.
- Using our data and information to better effect.
- Making a complex governance and operational structure for collaboration, work effectively within local government and with partners.

One of the key messages from the National report is ensuring that there are sufficient adopters available to meet the number and needs of children who have a plan for adoption is critical to achieve.

6.1.3 **South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) End-year Performance Report 2018/19**

The full report can be found under **Appendix 2**. The Highlights will be captured here.

- 70 children were placed in their new adoptive home, a similar number to 2017/18. Numerically this compares to 85, 80, 85 and 71 over the last four years.
- The number of children waiting for an adoptive family was 70. This compares to 41, 47 and 76 at the end of the last be matched or placed with their new family at the end of the year.
- The children placed for adoption in SEWAS were on average placed within 16.8 months from becoming looked after, moving away from the benchmark of 13 months or less. We are aware the figures have been influenced by the courts ordering reviews of old placement orders which subsequently needed to be discharged, for example; change of plans for long term fostering, this coupled with some delay placing children with complex needs resulted in the average timescales increasing.
- At an average of 10.3 months, the time from placement order to placement, is an increase from last year and also higher than the

benchmark of 6 months or less. This figure will have also been affected by the discharge of placement orders and the delay in placing children with complex needs. On a positive note within SEWAS 64% of children were placed within the benchmark of 6 months.

- 34% of the placements made were for children in sibling groups.
- 77% of placements made with local authority approved adopters.
- In SEWAS 59% of children placed this year had their life journey materials by the 2nd review, maintaining similar performance to last year. This is disappointing given the target is 100 %. The service is using Welsh Government investment money to improve performance going forward.

6.1.4 Key messages in relation to Adopters in the SEWAS region

- Enquiries to SEWAS from adopters decreased by 6%.
- Fewer assessments of adopters were commenced 45 compared to 67 last year.
- The number of adopters being approved in SEWAS increased to 47 in 2018/19
- On a positive note SEWAS are the best performing regions in Wales in respect of the timescales for adoption approvals. The performance measure from initial enquiry to approval is 8 months – SEWAS have been completing these assessments in 7. 5 months. In respect of formal application to approval the benchmark is 6 months – SEWAS are within the benchmark at 5.2 months.

6.1.5 Key Messages for Adoption Support

- SEWAS saw a similar level of post adoption support being sought and completed a similar number of assessments in the year. 58 new requests for post adoption support were received during 2018/19. The majority of these assessments completed resulted in practical or therapeutic support being provided.
- Birth parents - The numbers of Birth Parents referred to adoption services nationally reduced by 13% during 2018/19. In SEWAS the number stayed at a similar level 222. All of these birth parents were offered a service by SEWAS. In many regions data availability, particularly on take up has been affected by system changes within the local authorities for a number of regions or the loss of 3rd sector provider. SEWAS has been unaffected by this. Take up within a year tends to be low nationally but SEWAS performance was similar to previous years at 14% (n32). A service was also offered to another 43 parents who requested it.

The number of adopters available to the children waiting ratio continues to be a concern but despite the pressures the staff team have done well to maintain performance and remain committed to improving the service.

6.2 *Expected outcome for the public*

6.3 Involvement (Consultation, Engagement, Participation)

SEWAS consults with all adopters following their attendance at training, adoption panel for approval and when they are matched with children.

The Adoption Support Team in SEWAS facilitates a number of support groups including; birth parent support, adopter support, therapeutic parenting support, and grandparent/ family and friend of adopters.

A quarterly newsletter is distributed to all adopters which advises them on where they can access support and training.

6.4 Thinking for the Long Term (Forward Planning)

SEWAS uses the performance information to plan for the longer term and changing the way in which services are delivered.

6.5 Preventative Focus

The focus is on avoiding drift for children in care by providing adoption placements that meet the needs of children who are referred to the service. The performance measures highlight that children are now being placed for adoption in a timelier manner which supports local authority looked after children reduction plans. A good standard of adoption support is also essential to avoid adoption breakdown and prevent children coming back into care.

6.6 Collaboration / Partnership Working

The regions continue to work collaboratively by sharing information and good practice. There are a number of work streams in process to improve collaboration with partner agencies including improving CAMHS services to adopted children and working with education so they have a better understanding of the issues for adopted children.

6.7 Integration (Across Service Areas)

SEWAS continues to form relationships with other department in the councils in the region to improve outcomes for children who are placed for adoption. An example of this is working with communication teams to promote adoption within the region to attract adopters. We also provide training for local authority social workers on a quarterly basis.

6.8 EqlA (Screening and Identifying if Full Impact Assessment is Needed)

The work of the SEWAS is a key part of the Blaenau Gwent safe children looked after reduction strategy. The strategy aims to reduce the inequalities children would face if they remained in the looked after system.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

- 7.1 The performance of the National Adoption Service/ Regions is monitored by a National Governance Board and regional Management Committee.

SEWAS have a business plan which is reported on Quarterly to the Children's management team

Background Documents / Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – National Annual Report 2018-19

Appendix 2 – SEWAS End Year Performance 2018/19

REF: ICSRBCIW.2432



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service

**Achieving More Together /
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd**

ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19





FOREWORD

Since being established in 2014 The National Adoption Service has focused on clear priorities to deliver an improved adoption service in Wales. This Annual Report (2018/19) reflects on achievements whilst identifying future priorities to deliver ongoing improvement of the service to children and adopters.

Actively listening to adopters and children has influenced how the National Adoption Service has evolved and developed to deliver change and good services. There is evidence that the benefits of improvement are being felt by many adopters and their children although we acknowledge there is more to do.

Continued improvement remains a priority for the service delivered through the Central Team, Regional Local Government Adoption Services and Voluntary Sector Agencies. This collaborative approach has brought a shared vision, priorities, strategies and delivery of services that is making a positive difference.

We are very pleased to take this opportunity to thank adopters, staff in all agencies within the National Adoption Service Collaborative for their hard work and dedication.

We are also delighted that the Welsh Government has made available a £2.3m investment package from 2019/20 which will enable us to move forward on agreed improvement priorities for the immediate future.

Much progress has been made since the Service's inception, but the needs of children in Wales continue to demand a faster and smarter response to the scale and complexity of the challenge. NAS is ambitious for the role we can play in responding to that challenge.



Philip T. Hodgson

Phil Hodgson

Independent Chair of the Advisory Group



Geraint Hopkins

Cllr Geraint Hopkins

Chair of Governance Board



Suzanne Griffiths

Suzanne Griffiths

Director

INTRODUCTION

The National Adoption Service for Wales is a collaboration for the provision of adoption services across Wales.

Since November 2014, it has brought together all local authority adoption services into five regional collaboratives, with co-ordination and leadership provided by a small central team and Director. Voluntary adoption agencies operating in Wales are key partners in the collaborative, as are other agencies such as health and education.

CENTRAL TEAM



National Adoption Service – Central Team

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NORTH WALES

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MID & WEST WALES

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WESTERN BAY

Swansea, Neath Port Talbot,
Bridgend



Western Bay Adoption Service

Port Talbot Civic Centre,
Port Talbot CF131PJ
0300 365 2222
enquires@westernbayadoption.org
www.westernbayadoption.org

VALE, VALLEYS & CARDIFF

Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf,
Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan



Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Adoption

Level 7, Ty Pennant, Catherine Street,
Pontypridd, CF37 2TB
0800 0234 064
adoption@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
www.adopt4vvc.org

SOUTH EAST WALES

Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent,
Torfaen, Caerphilly, Newport



South East Wales Adoption Service

North Wing, 2nd Floor Block B,
Mamhilad House, Mamhilad Parke Estate,
Pontypool, Torfaen, NP40HZ
01495 355766
adoption@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/3122.asp

ALL WALES VOLUNTARY ADOPTION AGENCIES SERVICES

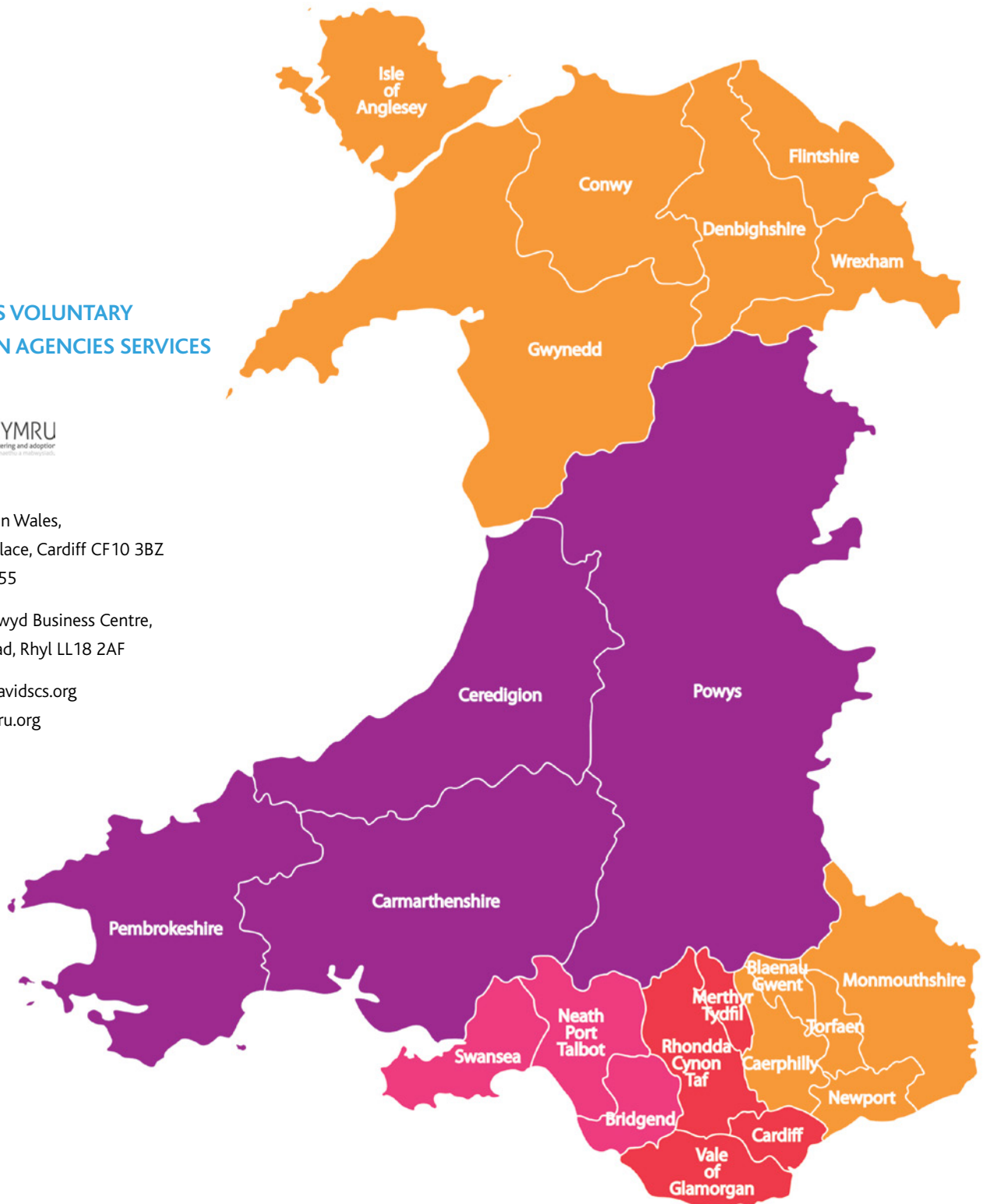


AFA Cymru

c/o Children in Wales,
25 Windsor Place, Cardiff CF10 3BZ
029 2076 1155

W2 Morfa Clwyd Business Centre,
84 Marsh Road, Rhyl LL18 2AF

Info-afa@stdavidscs.org
www.afacymru.org



Adoption UK

Penhaved Studios, Penhaved Street,
Grangetown, Cardiff, CF117LU
029 2023 0319
www.adoptionuk.org



Barnardo's Cymru

Trident Court, East Moors Road,
Cardiff, CF245TD
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cymruadoptionandfostering@
barnardos.org.uk
www.barnardos.org.uk/adoption



St David's Children Society

28 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3BA
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www.adoptionwales.org

FIVE YEARS ON

Celebrating our achievements and embracing the challenges



The National Adoption Service (NAS) has been working for five years to support better outcomes for children for whom adoption is the best plan.

It was established in 2014 in response to a National Assembly Enquiry through a subsequent Ministerial Advisory Group. Its role is to work in a unique collaborative way, improving and coordinating the delivery of adoption services across Wales and in particular:

- Raising the profile of adoption;
- Improving timescales for children and adopters;
- Improving adoption support including changing the 'postcode lottery' for services; and
- Providing leadership to promote more consistent services and standards.

The role adoption plays in society continues to change; legislation continues to change to reflect this. What has not changed is that children who cannot remain with their birth family need permanent substitute families, to belong, to be nurtured and be loved. Adoption services provide these children with families as well as services and support to adoptive parents, birth parents and others affected by adoption.

This year marks the fifth year of the National Adoption Service and the thirtieth anniversary of the UK's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The National Adoption Service seeks to secure positive changes for children where adoption is in their best interests so that they might realise their rights under the convention.

SOME OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE LAST FIVE YEARS

- Successfully raised the profile of adoption with the public, funders and policy makers.
- Accessed additional funding; a £90k development grant from the Welsh Government each year, £125k targeted investment in 2017/18 and a £2.3m investment for adoption support to commence in 2019/20.
- Improved performance in the key areas of approving adopters and placing children more quickly, alongside embedding a performance culture supported through regular evaluation and reporting.
- Increased the availability of life journey materials through a new best practice approach.
- Developed how we listen to adopters and their children and ensured their messages and input make a difference to the service.
- Created five regional adoption collaboratives as the focus for local government adoption expertise and access point for services.
- Developed and maintained a strong partnership with the Welsh Voluntary Adoption Agencies. This added value, different expertise, additional services and more choice, resulting in exciting new services such as Adopting Together Service, TESSA and a new Children and Young People's service.
- Commissioned and developed the all Wales website, which now provides a comprehensive source of information for parents and agencies.
- Brought the Wales Adoption Register into the service, giving greater breadth and depth of choice for prospective parents and children.
- Produced strategic plans, which not only outline what improvements are needed but help influence and improve legislation and policy, as well as achieve investment in times of constraint.

THE CHALLENGES WE ARE NOW ADDRESSING ARE:

- Maintaining performance improvements and making them more consistent within services and across Wales.
- Improving service agility and access to resources to respond to emerging issues and changing service demands.
- Using our data and information to better effect.
- Making a complex governance and operational structure for collaboration, work effectively within local government and with partners.

THESE SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES INFORM OUR CURRENT VISION WHICH IS TO:

- > Increase the number and range of adoptive homes available so that all children with an adoption plan are placed in a timely way.
- > Ensure prospective and approved adopters receive good quality, timely assessment and support.
- > Implement the National Adoption Service Framework for Adoption Support to provide improved access to advice, information and services for those that need and want support.
- > Achieve overall improvements in the performance of adoption services across Wales.
- > Create a modern, responsive and forward-thinking adoption service for Wales.

Alongside these undoubted strides forward and improvements to services new challenges have become evident; not least of all in ensuring that there are sufficient adopters available to meet the number and needs of children for whom we are family finding.

THE SERVICE IN 2018/19



During the business year:

- more than 310 children were placed in their new adoptive home;
- approximately 280 children had their adoption orders granted¹;
- a further 338 children, with the legal authority to be placed, were waiting to be matched or placed with their new family at the end of the year;
- 212 new adoptive families were approved.

The service worked with circa 14% of the children who were looked after in Wales last year.

Welsh Government data indicates that for 2017/18 (latest available) 18% of all the children who ceased to be Looked After were adopted.

The adoption agencies that make up the National Adoption Service for Wales provide a range of services to support these children and their families, as well as for others affected by adoption.

In addition to working with the children above, adoption services across Wales also:

- provided adoption support to more than 100 of the children placed in the year
- facilitated more than 3,281 active letterbox contact arrangements
- provided a service to 268 birth parents
- received 38 requests for support from birth siblings' other relatives
- received 226 requests for access to birth records and
- received 124 requests for intermediary/tracing support.



¹ Awaiting confirmation in Welsh Government data in October 2019

OUR 2018/19 PRIORITIES

PRIORITY 1

Placing children effectively

- Keeping recruitment focused on the needs of children likely to be adopted
- Implementing the new Wales Adoption Register and adopter database

WHY WAS THIS IMPORTANT?

- We wanted to increase the range of adoptive homes available to meet the needs of all children with an adoptive plan.
- Research tells us outcomes in adoption are affected by the length of time children spend in care and their age at the time of placement. Being able to make a timely match for a child depends on having a sufficiency of adopters who are prepared to care for children who have varied and sometimes complex needs.
- Making the best possible match between children and adopters increases the likelihood of a successful outcome and improves timeliness.
- We aim to use the best information about service performance, research and best practice to develop more effective processes, and timeframes to underpin best practice.

HOW DID WE DO?

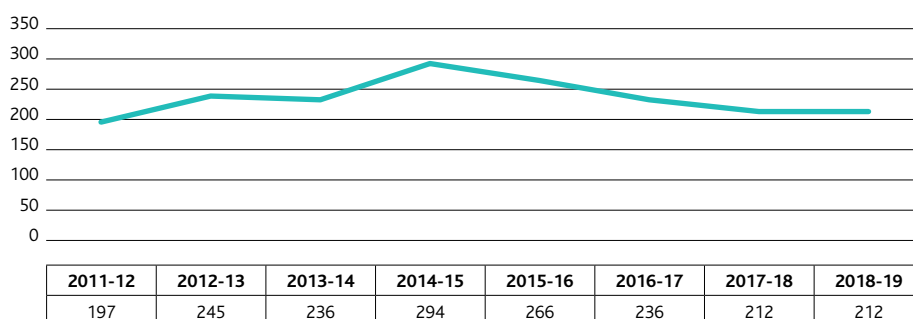
At 311, slightly more children were placed with their new families this year and approximately 280 children were already in placement and had their Adoption Orders granted.

However, recruiting sufficient adopters in Wales has become an ongoing challenge.

At the time of NAS's creation, we faced a different range of challenges, namely reducing waiting time to approve adopters and ensuring we were recruiting adopters who could be matched with children who had complex needs and were waiting longer.

Our strategies are now informed by our data, giving us a much better understanding of the need for placements, which is greater than the number of adopters we are approving. However, having an impact on recruitment takes time; recruitment in 2018/19 remained at a similar level to last year. Adopter recruitment in Wales has been falling and is now back to pre NAS levels; it is difficult to identify precisely why adopter approvals have fallen – this trend is, however, also evident in England and Scotland.

Adopters Approved



The story behind the data

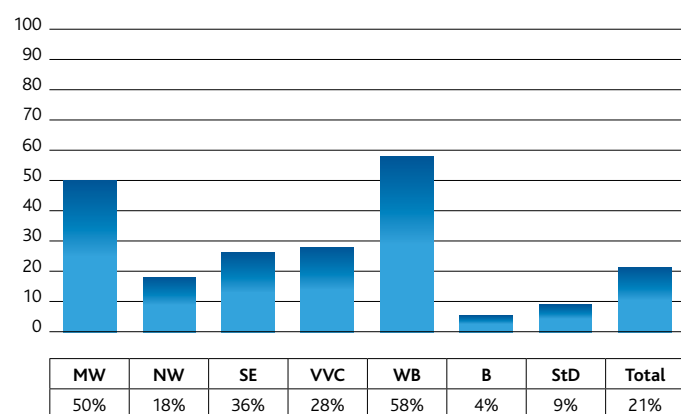
ADOPTER ENQUIRIES AND ASSESSMENTS

There has been an overall increase in enquiries from prospective adopters since NAS was formed.

However, the picture beneath this is more complex. At a regional level there is an overall upward trend in two of the bigger regions and maintenance in another, while the two voluntary adoption agencies have higher levels of enquiries.

In both the regional and voluntary adoption agencies, conversion of enquiries into assessments varies, with the regional services tending to see more applications resulting from enquiries received.

Percentage conversion from initial enquiry to assessment starting



Q4 2018-19, based on average of 3 months from Initial Enquiry to Assessment Starting

We can build on the early indications of success, in increasing the number of potential adopters coming forward at enquiry stage. Adopters have reported that:

- there is good information available through the national website and directly from the regional services;
- response times to enquiries are timely and many first contacts are considered helpful and supportive.

In order to understand this better, NAS commissioned customer feedback research to consider the reasons behind so many enquirers not proceeding beyond this stage. The overall findings are informing our work. Whilst identifying that the majority of enquirers cited personal reasons for not proceeding, key recommendations from the report also include:

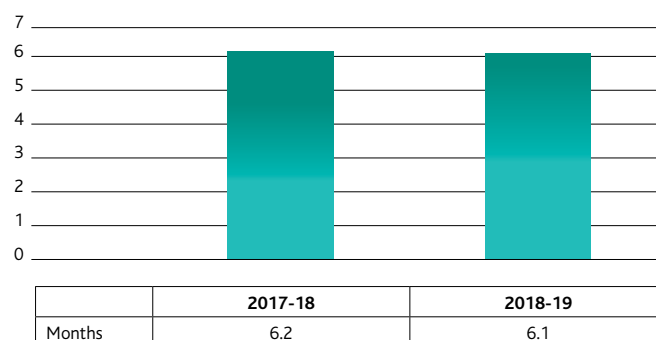
- A need for a more consistent message across agencies
- More flexibility around timeframes, where potential adopters want to delay their applications
- A more welcoming approach and clearer follow up processes for those who do want to defer applications.

This work has led to a number of changes which will be implemented in 2019/20:

- We are producing a good practice guide to support staff in dealing with enquiries and the early stage of the assessment process. This will move away from agencies trying to 'test' people at the very start of their enquiry and respond to adoption managers views that the messages that are given regarding issues such as smoking, income and medical criteria are up to date, accurate and consistent.
- We have commissioned Cowshed PR to support NAS at both national and regional levels. This will lead to better integrated marketing and recruitment activity.
- We are providing more focused efforts to increase enquiries and approvals within a revised NAS Recruitment Strategy. Using recognised marketing techniques, we aim to keep people engaged and ensure barriers families face, to progress their interest into further action, are removed.
- To meet planned changes to regulations, we are implementing a two-stage process for the assessment and approval of prospective adopters whilst reducing the timescales for making use of the Adoption Register for Wales. NAS has been working since 2015 to influence a change in the Adoption Agency (Wales) Regulations 2003 to simplify and streamline the recruitment and assessment of prospective adopters. This has borne fruit with revised regulations due to be implemented in 2019/20.

The above will enable us to further improve the timeframes for adopter approvals. The average timeframe from enquiry to approval improved to just 9.1 months this year, with administrative delays around essential checks behind many that took longer. The time between the formal application by adopters and their approval is good, an average of 6.2 months, which is within the government guideline. 56% of applicants were approved with the 6-month benchmark.

Average timeframe (months) from formal application to adopters approval



Benchmark: 6 months or less

DEMAND FOR PLACEMENTS

The numbers of placement orders being granted by Welsh courts is now showing year on year fluctuations after a peak of 467 in 2012/13; regions report that circa 340 placement orders were made in 2018/19. This is alongside a further increase in the number of children being identified by local authorities as, likely to be in need of an adoptive placement, which indicates that similar, or more placement orders are likely as we go through the coming year.

We are using these trends to project forward so that regions and agencies have a clear understanding of likely demand, allowing them to plan activity in advance in order to meet more ambitious recruitment goals.



IMPACT ON PLACEMENT ACTIVITY

The number of children waiting for a placement reduced slightly at the end of this year.

NAS had previously been successful in reducing average timeframes for children being placed, but this has changed this year.

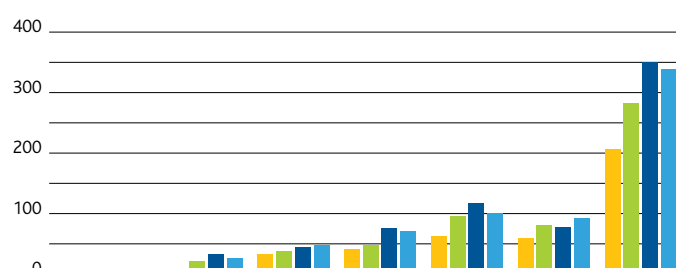
Although almost half of the children were placed within the benchmark of 6 months or less, during 2018/19, the projected annual average time has increased in 2018/19 to 9.9 months.

There are a number of factors that have impacted on this indicator:

- Some adoptive homes have been more challenging to find due to a small number of children with very complex needs;
- Late decisions or delayed applications where it is agreed that foster carers can adopt the children they are caring for;
- Prolonged court proceedings including appeals by birth parents.

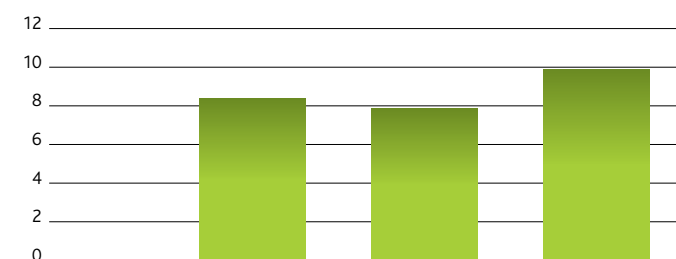
The more positive aspect of this is that regions have been increasingly successful in placing children with more complex needs, however as identified this leads to placement preparations taking longer.

Measure 7: Number of children with 'should be placed decision' and placement order who have not yet been placed



	MWW	NW	SE	VVC	WB	Total
2015/16	9	34	41	62	60	206
2016/17	22	39	47	95	80	283
2017/18	34	46	76	117	77	350
2018/19	27	48	70	101	92	338

Average timeframe (months) between placement order and placed for adoption



	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Months	8.4	7.9	9.9

Benchmark: 6 months or less

What else is helping us recruit adopters and place children?



ADOPTING TOGETHER SERVICE

The voluntary adoption agencies in Wales play a key role in delivering adoption services across the country, and recent innovative projects like the 'Adopting Together Service' demonstrates their commitment and capacity to work creatively and support the sector as a whole.

Adopting Together Service was launched this year in 2018/19 – a collaborative project between St David's and Barnardo's with Adoption UK in Wales and supported by the statutory sector through the National Adoption Service. It emerged, following a request from statutory services, for a creative response to a shared desire and need, to secure permanence for children who wait longest for a family.

Contracts have now been agreed in four out of the five regional services.

Although the number of children placed is unlikely to be high, it is of utmost importance that children with additional needs have the opportunity to experience living in stable and loving homes. Twelve children have been placed to date in the first year of operation, with a target of placing 25 children in 2019/20.

The scheme provides a new best practice for placing children and providing early support and is being evaluated by Cardiff University School of Psychology. An indication of its innovation and value is that it received The Institute of Collaboration ICW Innovation Award and a Highly Commended 1 Award in the GO Wales Social and Community benefit category.



Cofrestr Fabwysiadu **Cymru**
Wales Adoption Register

WALES ADOPTION REGISTER / ADOPTION REGISTER FOR WALES

We have worked hard in the past year to ensure that the new bilingual Wales Adopter Register, now called the Adoption Register for Wales (ARW) is ready to be launched. In order to do this the Central Team has:

- Commissioned a new partner, 'Link Maker', to provide a modern bi-lingual and on-line linking service;
- Linked with adoption services and agencies to support implementation of the new Adoption Register for Wales, raising awareness for staff use and ensuring transfer of information about children and adopters;
- Supported the development of a set of national guidelines, which outline expectations for use of the Register;
- Briefed partners, and stakeholders including Heads of Children's Services and Family Justice Network for Wales through the publication of regular bulletins.

The new Adoption Register for Wales came into operation in March 2019 and was formally launched in June 2019. The aim of the ARW is to improve how we match children to prospective adopters. It will be more user friendly and efficient and provides managed access for approved adopters. It will also allow the development of a 'keeping in touch' system for adopters as part of the improved adoption support arrangements.

Significantly, all children and adopters will be listed on the Register more quickly. It will facilitate matching, managed at a regional, Welsh and UK level when needed.

During its last year of operation the previous Wales Adoption Register:

- Matched 36 children through the register data base, Adoption Exchange Days and an Adoption Activity Day;
- Saw an increase in child referrals to the register during the year although the end of year figure as of March 2019 was 293, 57 less than the previous year;
- Saw changes in the profile of children waiting; over 60% being below the age of 3, fewer sibling groups and the percentage of those with additional or complex needs continued to rise;
- Saw the number of adopters referred to the register continuing to drop, with just 32 active for family finding at the end of the year. This reflects proactive family finding with many adopters being pre-linked by the time they are approved.

PRIORITY 2

Continuing to improve adoption support by implementing the NAS Adoption Support Framework

- Agreeing the next priorities and identifying funding
- Continuing things that are already helping e.g. improving Life Journey Work, improving 'adoption awareness' in schools and health services, changing the law for adoption support, improving training and development for adopters, consistent approaches across Wales.

WHY?

The Wales Adoption Cohort Study by Cardiff University shows that 47% of children who are placed for adoption had experienced at least 4 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) before they were placed. This puts them in the highest risk group for later life difficulties, in line with just 14% of the general population. It is therefore critical that good support is available from the start as well as being accessible throughout childhood.

Adopted children have additional needs that emerge at different points in their lives and can continue into adulthood. These can include; understanding their identity as an adopted child, why they were adopted, managing contact and feelings of loss or grief. Many of these are issues are unique to adoptive families and require adoption informed support. Children, young people and adopters consistently report high levels of dissatisfaction with the process of getting help and sometimes with the quality of the help itself.

Research also tells us that adoption and the long-term legacy for children who have suffered significant harm are generally poorly understood. There is a particular need to improve awareness in schools, where adopted children are being excluded at a younger age and in greater numbers than their peers. Children who have been in care often have additional learning needs and a more complex mixture of difficulties.

It is a NAS priority to deliver high quality adoption services in Wales.

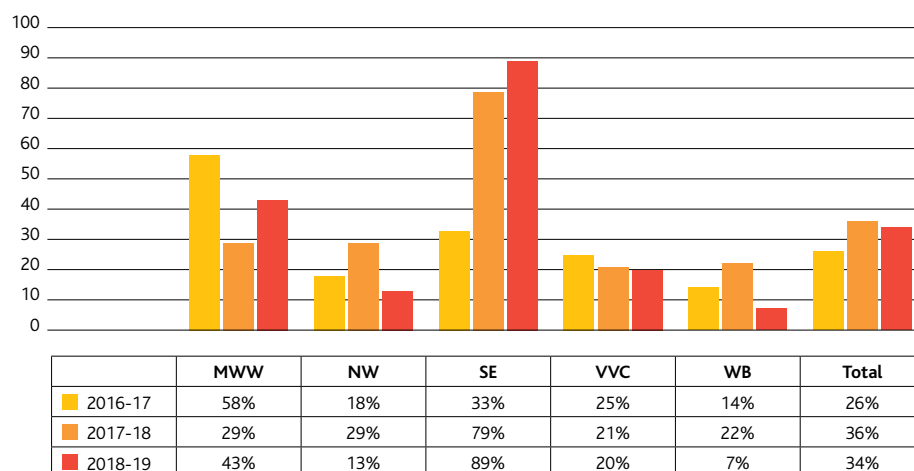
ADOPTION SUPPORT CARRIED OUT IN 2018/19

- More than 3,281 active letterbox contact arrangements were in place (a reduction from 2017/18)
- 819 birth parents were referred to adoption services in 2018/19 (a reduction from 2017/18) of these 98% were offered a service
- A service was provided to 268² birth parents
- 38 requests for support were received from birth sibling and other relatives (a reduction from 2017/18)
- 226 requests for access to birth records were received, an increase on the 205 for 2017/18
- 124 requests for intermediary / tracing support were received, a reduction on the 156 for 2017/18.

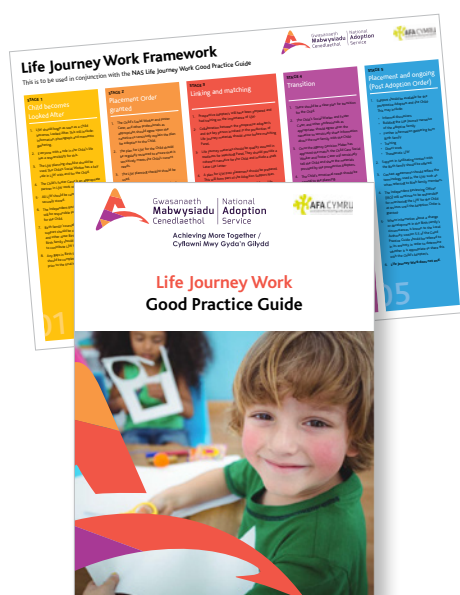
There was a slight reduction in the number of children who had an ongoing service established at point of placement, down from 112 (36%) in 2017/18 to 107 (34%). This masks significant regional variations as well as year on year changes within regions, linked to the fact that support packages are individualised.

² A number of regions were unable to provide data as required from their LA's. An additional region was unable to provide data due to the contractor going into administration.

Percentage of children placed for adoption whose plan for adoption support involved ongoing service provision at the point of placement



There were fewer new requests for post adoption support received, with decreases in 2 regions. There were 160 assessments for post adoption support completed, similar to previous figures. The majority of these completed assessments resulted in practical or therapeutic support being provided to families.



LIFE JOURNEY WORK

We have continued to implement and develop the new NAS Framework for 'Life Journey' work.

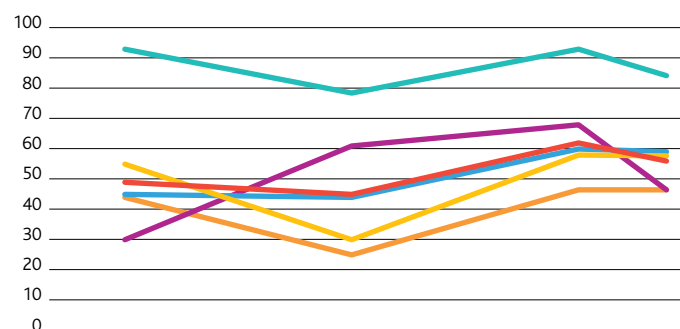
All children who cannot be cared for by their birth families, need to have an understanding of their family history and their unique journey. Life Journey Work is designed to help a child make sense of their past and understand their current situation in order to help them move into the future. Life journey work should support a child's identity, promote self-esteem, and help give the child a sense of belonging, wellbeing and support good mental health. The NAS website hosts guidance and existing tool kits around life journey work and we are currently working on making toolkits for children and young people, foster carers and birth parents available.

In November 2018 NAS was invited to present the 'Framework' developments within Wales to the Adoption UK national conference.

In January 2019 a conference was held in Wales to formally launch the Framework. Opened by the new Deputy Minister for health and Social Services, Julie Morgan, this highly successful event was oversubscribed with more than 110 delegates from across Wales attending, taking back the learning into their agencies.

Due to varying performance levels across Wales (from 83% to 46%) overall improvement has marginally declined. This will continue to be a priority area for NAS with all regions committing to making further improvements.

Percentage of children at second adoption review
with Life Journey materials in place



	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Mid & West Wales	92%	79%	92%	83%
North Wales	44%	25%	46%	46%
South East Wales	45%	43%	60%	59%
Vale, Valleys & Cardiff	30%	61%	68%	46%
Western Bay	55%	30%	58%	57%
WALES	49%	45%	62%	56%

Consultation with adopters was commissioned through our 'Adopter Voice' service with Adoption UK Cymru. We wanted to identify whether adopters were beginning to see improvements in the life journey materials being provided.

There was evidence of some improved satisfaction amongst adopters who had adopted more recently (within the last 3 years) suggesting that, whilst there is still some work to be done in terms of delivering the Life Journey framework, improvements are being made. Significantly, adopters suggested that:

- More training workshops are needed pre matching to prepare adopters.
- The most confident parents were the ones who had met with birth parents.
- Overall adopters preferred having accurate information and then making the life journey book themselves.

These comments will feed into the ongoing improvement project.



How did we do on our improvement priorities?

We have focussed this year on continuing to implement the NAS Adoption Support Framework which is key to successful outcomes. We were delighted when the Welsh Government announced that they were making available a £2.3m investment package from 2019/20; this will enable us to move forward with our focus on the agreed improvement priorities for the immediate future.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR ADOPTERS

We have finalised the post-approval training package for adopters. This now includes twelve different modules, providing advanced information on areas that adopters asked for, such as; 'Attachment and Trauma', 'Parenting teenagers', 'Understanding and dealing with challenging behaviours' and 'Life Journey work'.

- This work was led by AFA Cymru and Adoption UK Cymru. The modules have been tested thoroughly including within regional services and will be launched during 2019/20.

We have improved our preparation training, with Adoption UK Cymru and AFA Cymru also leading on this working, utilising existing trainers to refresh and extend the preparation offer.

- This will also be launched during 2019/20 and will include a guide for prospective adopters outlining what to expect along with an individualised planner.



IMPROVING ADOPTION AWARENESS IN EDUCATION

NAS supports and works alongside the lead organisation Adoption UK in this area of work, with support provided by the Education Minister, as well as resources from the Welsh Government's 'Supporting Vulnerable Learners' section.

Adoption UK has continued to deliver its 'Adoption Support Wales – Getting it Right for Every Child' programme which extended its previous success; producing a school's guide and a parent's guide for working with adopted children

- Delivering a series of master classes supported by staff from the regional services to education professionals and adopters. This ensured they understood adoption, what it means for children and families and how they can shape and improve services to meet adopted children's needs.
- Delivering INSET training to 479 education staff in schools across Wales on the needs of adopted children
- Delivering education 'master classes' with 500 people participating and giving extremely positive feedback. The learning from this work has been made digitally available for use by school staff when supporting other adopted children.

NAS supported the launch of Adoption UK's 'Equal Chance' campaign, in Wales during June 2018. This UK wide campaign aims to ensure that adopted children have the same chances to education as other children by raising awareness of their particular needs for additional support.

The work was further supported when the Welsh Education Minister wrote to all schools encouraging them to co-operate in supporting adopted children within education services.

IMPROVING ADOPTION AWARENESS IN HEALTH SERVICES

NAS benefits from input by the Designated Doctor for the NHS National Safeguarding Team and a lead Medical Advisor from North Wales into its Advisory Group; they work with us on health-related matters as does the Welsh Government CAMHS lead.

- We worked with these key health advisors and industry experts Practice Solutions to develop a publication for health service staff; 'Care about Adoption – A Guide for Healthcare Professionals'. This will come into use during 2019/20.

The guide will enable health staff to positively contribute to the well-being of adopted children young people and their families.



NEW INITIATIVE IN ADOPTION SUPPORT

TESSA

NAS worked alongside Adoption UK, to develop the Wales element, of a successful UK wide bid for funding from the National Lottery Community fund for the TESSA service.

TESSA – a therapeutic education support service for adoptive families began to be established in Wales in February 2019. It is the intention that NAS adds to the resources available for TESSA through match funding from the investment in 2019/20. The service sets out to deliver:

- > A focus on early intervention and support as soon as post-settling in concerns are raised
- > Professional psychological assessments for children, with information shared with parents and other support staff
- > 6-session therapeutic parenting support, delivered by teams consisting of a clinical psychologist and experienced adoptive parents (parent partners)
- > Ongoing parent partner support.



CHANGING TO KEEP PACE WITH THE 21ST CENTURY LIVING – CONTACT

NAS is continually seeking to improve adoption services informed by research and the life experiences of those affected by adoption, within a society that is continuously changing. This means that adoption policy and practice needs to develop, whilst keeping children's need for security and a sense of belonging firmly at its heart. Contact is one of the areas where this is most challenging.

In order for adopted children to be confident about their identity, they need information about their past. This requires us to change the 'clean break' approach to adoption of letterbox contact and annual exchanges of letters. We want to modernise contact to maintain children's rights to permanence and security, while enabling them to know and understand their history.

- We have been working with partners to respond to a recommendation from the Children's Commissioner for Wales, that NAS works with the Welsh Government *'to ensure that siblings' rights to contact are fully considered during adoption care planning'*.
- NAS attended and provided an issues paper for a scoping event with Welsh Government and other stakeholders.
- In order to get a better understanding of what would work better in sibling contact, we commissioned Adoption UK Cymru and the former After Adoption, to undertake consultation with adopters and adopted children and young people.
 - From an adopters' perspective this identified that contact arrangements, agreed at placement, often become unworkable and that there would be widespread benefit from increasing support to adopters and birth families. Practical areas for development were suggested including production of guidance, standardised templates and in-depth research to better understand what is best for children in terms of contact.
 - From a young person's perspective it was concluded that contact is positive and should be allowed and encouraged where possible, with young people stating that they felt the care they receive and connections they make, pre adoption, are an integral part of their early attachment and should be continued where they can³.

- We've continued to work with other partners and are collaborating with:
 - Voices from Care Cymru, to be part of an 'Event' to create change in how we support ongoing sibling relationships.
 - Swansea Law Centre, to produce an advice leaflet for adopted and looked after children.

WHAT ELSE HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

We continued to request that Welsh Government brings entitlement to adoption support, into line with the Social Service and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014; Welsh Government has committed to doing this when the opportunity arises.

We continued to engage with adopters and children and young people to hear and understand their experiences through Adoption Voices and the former Talk Adoption services. We also focused on co-producing development where we could.

- Adopter Voice reports have been provided to all five regions and the third sector providers, for consideration by their management boards or equivalent.
- NAS worked with Adoption UK to develop the Wales section of their new Adoption Barometer which will be an annual survey gauging views from adopters. The first wave of this was distributed at the year, with an initial report expected in the Spring.

Most significantly, NAS has been involved this year in ensuring that a direct service for children and young people could continue, following the former After Adoption announcement that they would be withdrawing from providing services in Wales after March 2019.

We successfully worked with Adoption UK Cymru to support it to become the provider for this service, so that it could continue to support the circa 100 children and young people registered. We look forward to continuing to work with Adoption UK Cymru to expand and develop this valuable service.

³ The report was based on structured discussions with a very small number of children supplemented by informal information gathered through group sessions.

Regional & Voluntary Adoption Agencies Priorities and Achievements



AFA CYMRU

- Life Journey Work (LJW) – the annual conference was attended by over 100 people
- The LJW pack has been expanded to include materials for birth parents, young people and foster carers.
- Taking a collaborative approach to the development of post approval training courses – working alongside adopters and social workers to develop materials

BARNARDO'S

- The push within Barnardo's and NAS from an Equalities Diversity and Inclusion perspective has seen an increase in applications from people with more diverse backgrounds and cultures.
- Work to achieve an improvement in the timescales from Enquiry to Approval and ultimately placement of children

ADOPTION UK CYMRU

Many of our services are provided by volunteers who are also adoptive parents – between them they provided 984 hours of support to other adoptive parents.

- Established a buddy scheme for new adopters within the Adopting Together scheme.
- Worked with AFA Cymru to develop twelve training modules for use by adopters' post-adoption order, as well as new guidance and information for prospective adopters to be used during the preparation training.
- Delivered training to nearly 500 adoptive parents and delivered INSET training to 479 education staff in schools across Wales and responded to 1,376 contacts 25% higher than last year.
- As part of a UK wide project, Adoption UK Cymru were successful in an application to the Big Lottery Community Fund. This will provide therapeutic and educational input to adoptive families early in their adoption journey, in order to prevent difficulties building up over the coming years.

MID & WEST WALES

- Improved preparation arrangements in order to reduce delay for adopter assessments.
- Used social media to successfully increase attendance at Information Events.
- Produced an innovative short film with birth parent and adopters, which highlighted positive contact arrangements.

NORTH WALES

- Appointment of a Contact Coordinator Officer, offering a consistent response and support to adopters and birth parents, with in-direct and direct contact.
- Worked with expert Richard Rose, to implement the Life Story Framework.
- Expanded the Buddy scheme for adopters.
- Invested in upskilling Training Officer – completed Dyadic developmental psychotherapy level 2 and is currently undertaking a diploma in therapeutic parenting.

SOUTH EAST WALES

- Significant investment in workforce development including accessing innovative 'Circle of Security' training.
- Improved the information pack for adopters.
- Enhanced adopter's preparation training with greater focus on Therapeutic Models of parenting

ST DAVID'S CHILDREN SOCIETY

- External launch of Adopting Together Service and first placement made.
- Invested in upskilling social workers in Theraplay and DDP.
- Received two awards for Adopting Together – Winner of The Institute of Collaboration ICW Innovation Award and Highly Commended 1 in the GO Social and Community Benefit in Procurement Award.

VALE, VALLEYS & CARDIFF

- Appointment of a Marketing Officer offering a timely, consistent response to adopter enquiries and building knowledge of adopter demographic within the region.
- The development of the Life Journey Work 'champion' role resulting in positive progress in this area.
- Highest number of children placed for adoption since region was established.

WESTERN BAY

- Strengthened the work of our adoption panel on matching, by introducing a checklist to ensure that all the relevant information such as life journey materials, transition plans etc. are in place.
- Improved co-production; adopters have been involved in a quarterly form for adoption support and a successful inaugural profiling event to help approved adopters consider a wider range of children needing adoptive placements.
- Providing additional early support, where children with additional needs are placed with WBAS adopters.



PRIORITY 3

Forward thinking

- Thinking about the sort of adoption service we want for the future
- Continuing co-production and engagement with those who use adoption services
- Working to improve the legal, policy & evidence framework that affects adoption
- Encouraging the development of improved professional understanding and skills



WHY?

The National Adoption Service was created to improve services for all those affected by adoption in Wales. However, the needs and challenges faced by children presenting for adoption are changing rapidly and there is an on-going need to respond more consistently and effectively particularly in the areas of recruitment of adopters and ongoing support.

We also want to modernise the service to make adoption experience better for children, young people, and their adopters as well as others affected by adoption.

HOW DID WE DO?

We believe that adoption continues to provide good outcomes for children. The role of NAS is to ensure Welsh adoption services keep pace with the changing global environment of engagement and the way people live their lives.

We can and will contribute to the continued discussion about the role adoption plays in permanency planning across the country. Alongside this we will seek to continue to improve services through effective planning, informed by research and evidence from people who use our services.

The sections above gives an outline of the many things we have done to both deliver and improve services. We have also continued to engage in strategic and infrastructure work;

- We have considered the outcomes of the NAS Review of Arrangements which has been carried out for us, independently, by the Institute of Public Care. We have acted to implement the recommendations which will contribute to the streamline national level governance over the next year alongside looking at how we further improve accountability.



- Successfully secured marketing and recruitment support to increase adopter recruitment.
- Improved the integration of NAS policy work across local government and third sector organisations by working jointly with AFA Cymru so we can better influence more consistent and innovative practice.
- Provided advice to the Welsh Government for their proposed changes to adoption regulations as well as in relation to relevant education and safeguarding matters.
- Undertook work with the Adoption Leadership Board in England and Welsh services to ensure that Wales would stay in line with increases to the interagency adoption fee. These are paid when an adoptive placement is secured and purchased from another adoption agency. This led to the Welsh VAA's agreeing a short delay to allow Welsh local authorities time to plan in the adjustment.
- Put in place alternative arrangements for the NAS Performance Monitoring System when the current contract runs out in June 2019. Expert advice has been commissioned, working with Data Unit Wales to develop a service specification, which will deliver a flexible, easy to use system to improve accuracy and support. This will provide us with flexibility to join up with the Wales Community Care Information System in the future.
- Supported practice development
 - Inter-country adoption training was commissioned and delivered
 - Post commencement training was commissioned and delivered
 - Continued to share research and good practice across the regional collaboratives and to use the evaluation emerging from initiatives such as the 'Adopting Together' service.
 - Shared learning from significant cases, specifically, this year, the child practice review by the Regional Safeguarding Children Board in Wales, into the death of an adopted child. The central team worked with the adoption region and will be holding an all Wales practice seminar to share the learning.
- Worked to advocate and develop a business case which has resulted in Welsh Government investing £2.3 million ongoing funding to improve adoption services.

PLANS FOR 2019/20 ONWARDS

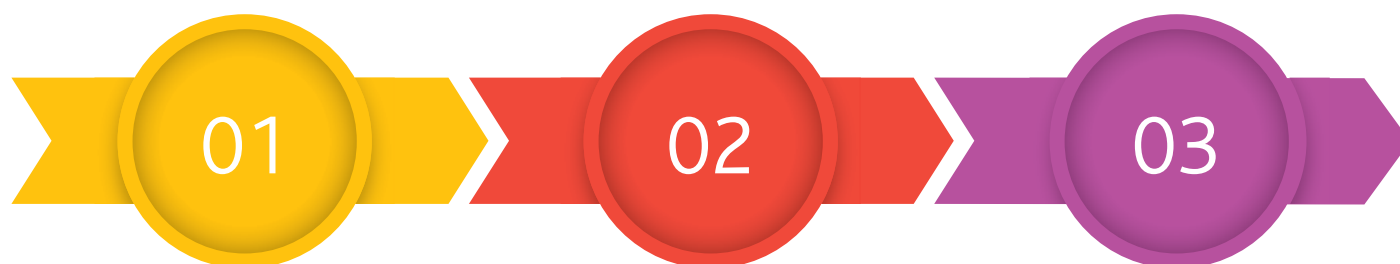
This plan will build on the improvements made over the first five years of NAS; with the significant benefit of the availability of new investment funding.

This is in the form of £2.3m from Welsh Government for service improvement; around £250,000 via Adoption UK Cymru for TESSA from the Big Lottery and Communities Fund, in addition to grant aid of around £300,000 to the Voluntary Adoption Agencies from Welsh Government Third Sector grant scheme currently agreed up to 2020.

The National Adoption Service will continue to work to deliver services to high numbers of children, young people and families and others affected by adoption; mainly through NAS regional services and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies. The core business of the service will continue to be, recruiting adopters so that children who cannot be cared for by their own families can live in stable, loving homes as the best alternative.

The work of NAS is closely linked with the Welsh Government Ministerial Advisory Group for Children (MAG). Adoption features across the numerous work streams of this important national initiative.

Improvement priorities for 2019/20



Placing more children

Increase recruitment of adopters to meet the number and needs of children waiting including use of 'Adopting Together' for children who wait longest

Embed the new Adoption Register for Wales to speed up matching of children through quicker notification of children and adopters in line with revised regulations

Continuing to improve adoption support

Implementing the Adoption Support Framework and investment plans

Continuing to raise awareness amongst professionals and the public

Thinking ahead

Continuing to co-produce and use information from engagement

Using data from the revised performance measurement system

Working to improve the legal, policy and evidence framework that affects adoption

Encouraging the development of workforce understanding and skills to meet NAS priorities

The National Adoption Service was created to improve services for all those affected by adoption in Wales.

The National Adoption Service (NAS) for Wales, launched in November 2014, is an innovative collaborative for the provision of adoption services. It brought together Welsh local authority adoption services into a three-tier structure which includes partnerships at all levels with Voluntary Adoption Agencies based in Wales, Health and Education Services, as well as others.

At local authority level, all 22 Welsh councils continue to provide services to all looked after children whilst identifying and working with those children for whom a plan for adoption is appropriate.

Regionally, local authorities work together within five regional collaboratives to provide a range of adoption services. Each regional collaborative has links with the voluntary adoption agencies, health and education. The services provided differ in each collaborative but all provide the adoption agency functions for children, recruit and assess adopters, offer counselling to birth parents and advice to adopted adults. Some currently directly provide adoption support services, whereas in others this remains with their local authorities.

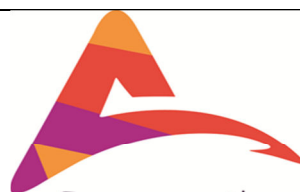


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National Adoption Service for Wales

South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) End-year Performance Report 2018/19



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol




National
Adoption
Service

Achieving More Together /
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd

This report outlines the position at 31.03.19, the end of the 2018/19 business year. It focuses on key elements of the data set namely:

- Children placed and waiting for adoption;
- Demand for adoptive placements and adopter recruitment;
- Life journey materials and
- Adoption Support.

Regional Overview

-  70 children were placed in their new adoptive home, a similar number to 2017/18. Numerically this compares to 85, 80, 85 and 71 over the last four years.
-  58 children had their adoption orders granted¹;
-  70 children, with the legal authority to be placed for adoption, were waiting to be matched or placed with their new family at the end of the year.

Although relatively static at the end of this year and last, the trend shows that SEWAS is placing fewer children and has more waiting. This year on average it took longer for children to be placed although at least two thirds of children are placed within the guideline timeframes. More children had their plans for adoption change to alternative permanence options.

In order to meet its own need for placements the region needs to more than double the number of adopters it approves to circa 100. SEWAS' response to prospective adopter enquiries is currently good and applicant assessments are completed within the guideline timeframes. If the region could scale this up including increasing enquiries and improving conversion rates it would be in a better position.

At 59% SEWAS has maintained its previously improved performance in respect of life journey work in place by the 2nd adoption review but not moved closer to the 100% target.

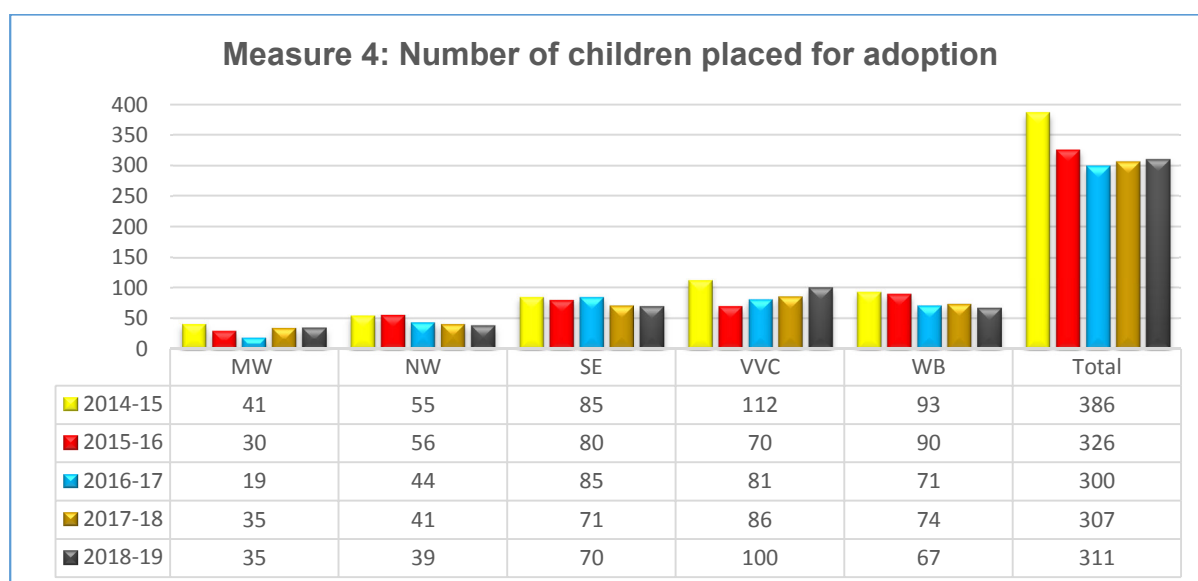
¹ NAS data from regions to be verified against WG statistics later in the year

Key points

- The children placed for adoption in SEWAS were on average placed within 16.8 months from becoming looked after, longer than months in 2017/18 and moving away from the benchmark of 13 months or less.
- At an average of 10.3 months, the time from placement order to placement, is an increase from last year and also higher than the benchmark of 6 months or less. Within SEWAS 64% of children were placed within this benchmark for 'placement order to placement' (6 months).
- 34% of the placements made were for children in sibling groups.
- 77% of placements made with local authority approved adopters.
- The level of SEWAS matches that do not proceed increased this year to 4 but disruptions remained at a similar level 3%.
- The number of children waiting for an adoptive family was 70. This compares to 41, 47 and 76 at the end of the last three years.
- Enquiries to SEWAS from adopters decreased by 6%.
- Fewer assessments of adopters were commenced 45 compared to 67 last year.
- The average time from enquiry to approval for a SEWAS adopter decreased to 7.5 months while the time frame from formal application to approval is 5.2 months. Both are better than the national averages and meet or are close to the Welsh Government guidelines.
- The number of adopters being approved in SEWAS increased to 47 in 2018/19.
- Projections indicate that circa 100 placements will be needed to place the children currently waiting and those for whom a placement order is likely to be granted during the coming year.
- In SEWAS 59% of children placed this year had their life journey materials by the 2nd review, maintaining similar performance to last year.
- More SEWAS children had had an ongoing adoption support service in place at the point of placement, 62 (89%).
- SEWAS saw a similar level of post adoption support being sought. 58 new requests for post adoption support were received during 2018/19. The majority of the assessments completed resulted in practical or therapeutic support being provided.
- SEWAS provided a service to 75 birth parents.

Children placed for adoption.

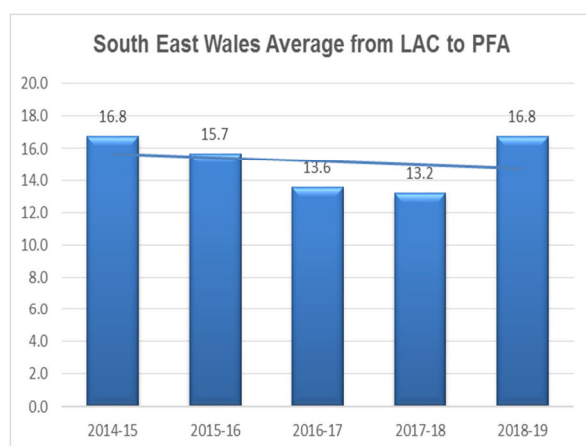
The **number of children placed for adoption** by SEWAS in 2018/19 was 70, a similar number to last year but lower than the first three years of data collection.



After a period where children were being placed more quickly, this has now reversed across Wales as outlined below:

- The Wales average for a child between becoming 'looked after' and being placed was 16.4 compared to 14.5 months in 2017/18. This aim is to reduce this to 13 months; in 2018/19 50% of children were placed within 13 months.
- The Wales average between the Placement Order being granted and placement was 9.9 months. Our aim is to reduce that to 6 months; in 2018/19 47% of children were placed within 6 months of their Placement Order.

SEWAS had made improvements in the timeframe between children becoming looked after and being placed for adoption but this has reversed this year and the timeframe between placement order and placement is also increasing.



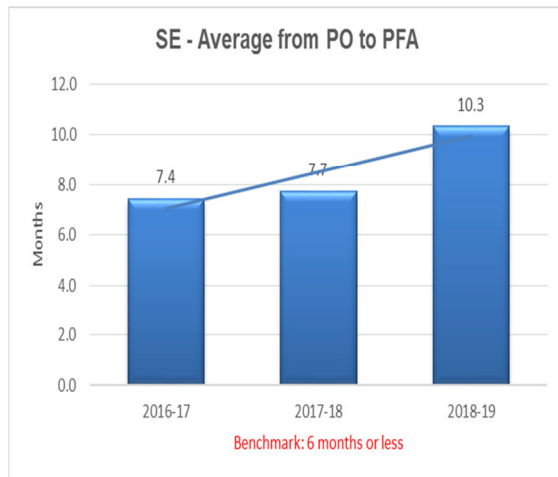
The average for a SEWAS child between becoming 'looked after' and being placed was increased to 16.8 months compared to 13.2 months in 2017/18.

73% of SEWAS children are placed within 13 months of becoming looked after.

The average between a SEWAS child having their placement order granted and placement is 10.3 months higher than last year.

64% of SEWAS children are placed with 6 months of their placement order being granted.

The region indicated that over this year it has placed a number of children who had been waiting for some time; some with their longstanding foster carer.



The children who take longer to be placed inevitably influence the average timeframe to placement. It is however positive that regions are being successful in placing more complex children. The following characterise those situations where placements took longer across Wales:

- Complex children
- Late or delayed assessment of foster carers as adopters
- Placement breakdown with family members
- Care proceedings extended.

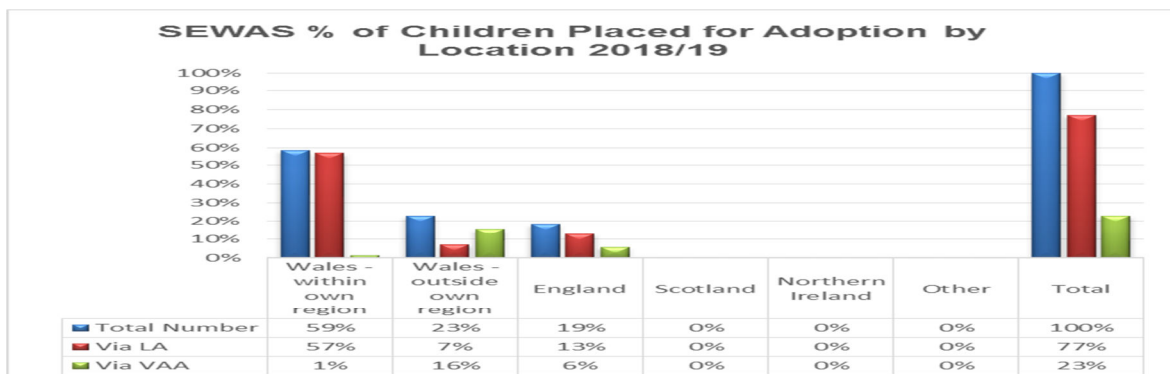
It is likely that similar reasons apply to SEWAS children placed. Over the year regions, reported on specific delays relating to up to 63% of all children placed.

The region placed 12 sets of sibling groups this year, at 40% of children placed a higher proportion than last year (34%).

Where are placements being made?

The analysis of placement activity nationally shows that 77% of placements were made within Wales, a similar proportion to last year with the majority in local authority placements. However, there was an increase in children placed in England particularly in VAA placements.

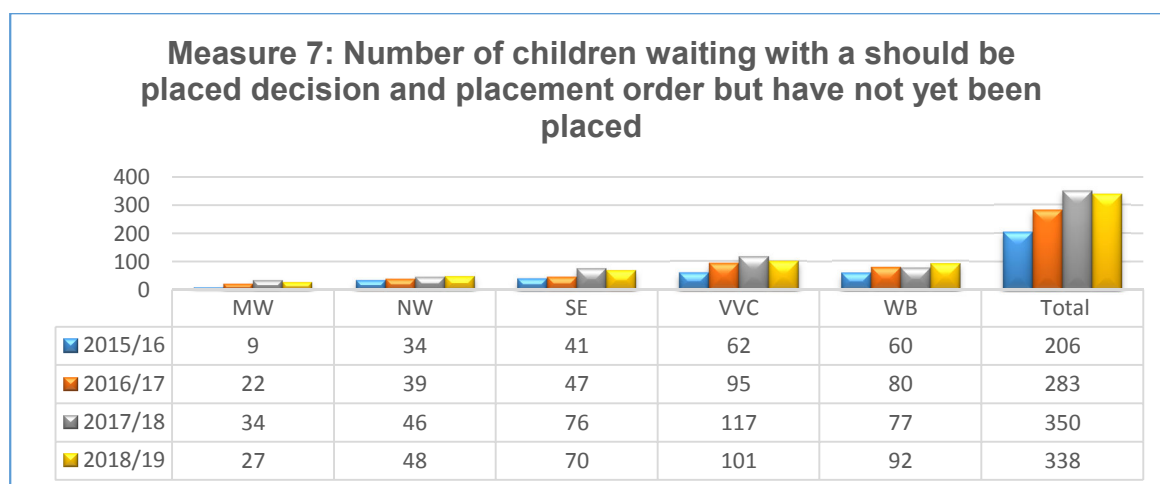
SEWAS placed 59% of their children within the region, a further 23% elsewhere in Wales and 19% outside of Wales. This compares to 65%, 20% and 15% last year.



Children waiting

The level of children being placed is not keeping pace with the levels of new children being made subject to placement orders regionally or nationally. All regions except Western Bay have however seen a slight decrease in the number of children waiting this year.

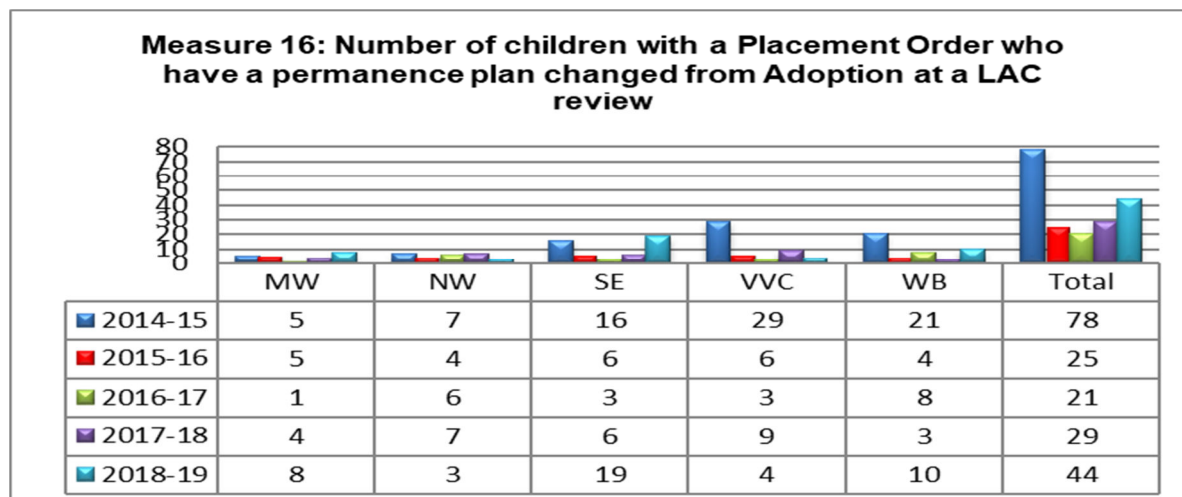
At March 31st SEWAS had 70 children subject to a placement order, for whom no match had yet been identified and were therefore waiting for a placement. This is fewer than last year but significantly more than previous years.



Information from the **Wales Adoption Register (WAR)** at year end indicates that of the children for whom the Register was family finding 22, or 14%, were SEWAS children.

SEWAS had 4 matches that did not proceed to placement this year more than in previous years but only 2 post placement disruptions a similar level to previous years.

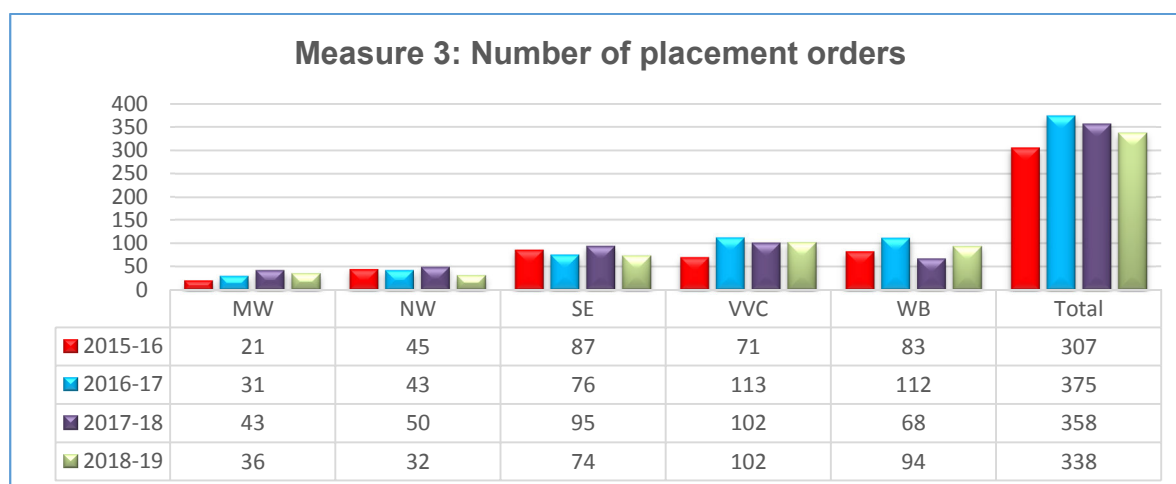
At 19 a higher number of SEWAS children had their adoption plan changed at their care and support plan review this year. This is a similar level to the first year of data collection.



Demand for adoptive placements and adopter recruitment

Adopter recruitment across Wales is not keeping pace with the level of children waiting nor those becoming subject to new placement orders; in this respect SEWAS mirrors the other regions. Nationally and regionally recruitment needs to double.

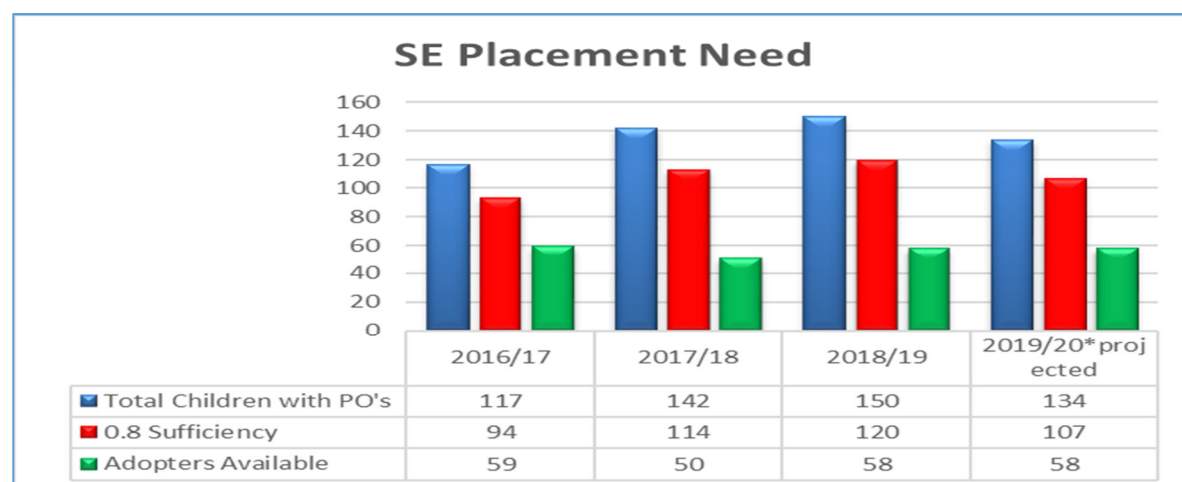
The overall number of **Placement Orders** reported as granted by courts across Wales in 2018/19 was **338**, a small reduction of about 6%, this is reported data and we await verification through official Welsh Government statistics.



Fewer placement orders were granted in the SEWAS region during 2018/19 (n74), a similar decrease to two other regions while VVC stayed the same and Western Bay increased. This is the second year of a small overall reduction across Wales albeit that numbers are still higher than in the years immediately post Re:B and Re:BS.

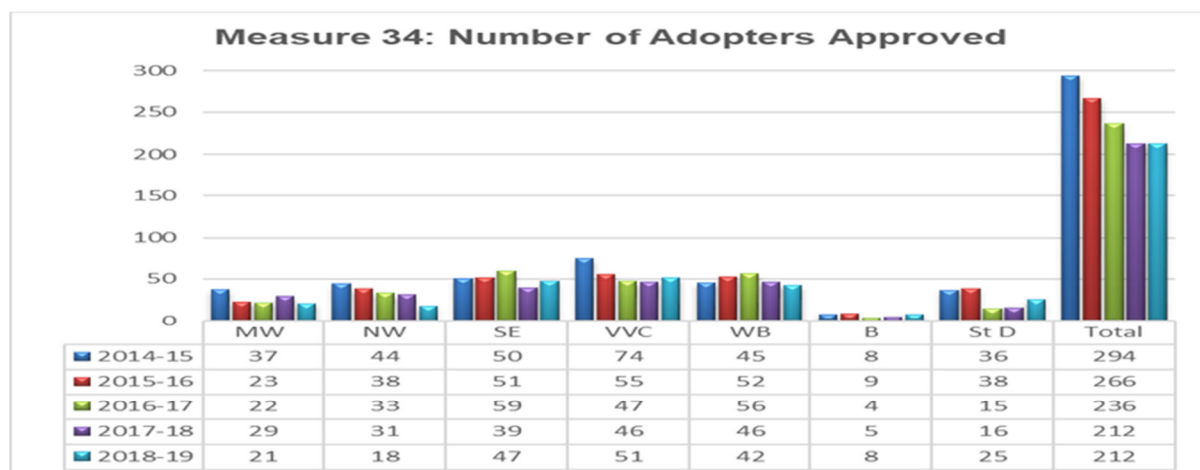
A further 84 'should be placed for adoption' decisions were made during the year in SEWAS. This was fewer than in 2017/18; when there were 101.

The analysis of the adopter gap the region has been facing since 2016/17 is below with projections for 2019/20.

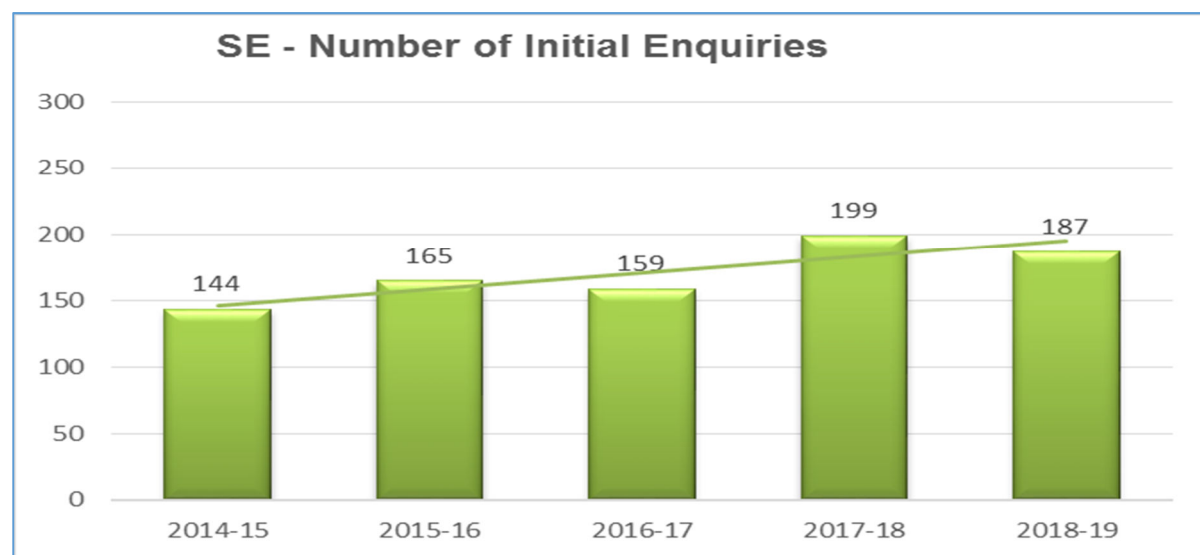


SEWAS made **47 adopters approvals** during 2018/19, higher than the previous year but lower than the goal of 65 set by the region. As above the projected sufficiency goal for adoptive placements is circa 100; the region should seek to recruit or have access to this level of adoptive placements.

The region is currently agreeing its recruitment plans and goals for 2019/20 and beyond.



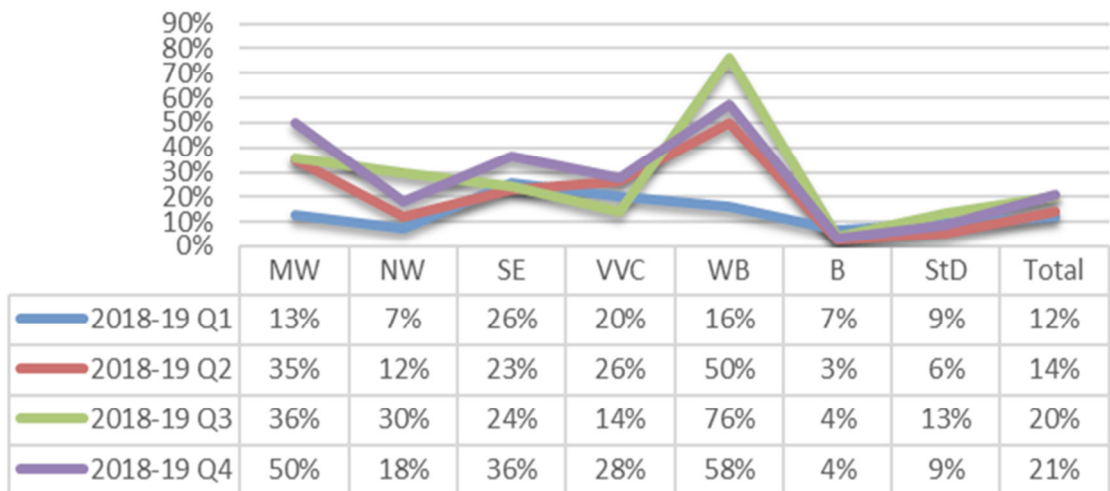
It is arguably too early to have seen a significant impact from the national focus on recruitment during 2018/19 but **SEWAS saw a 6% drop in enquiries**, which is against the trend in other regions. Circa 500 enquiries would be needed in order to reach the level of recruitment the region requires.



Response times to enquiries, within 5 working days, remains good; 100% of enquiries in SEWAS are responded to within 5 working days.

The average conversion rate from enquiry to assessment was 27% for 2018/19 a similar level to last year. Conversion rates for SEWAS varied in a similar way to other regions.

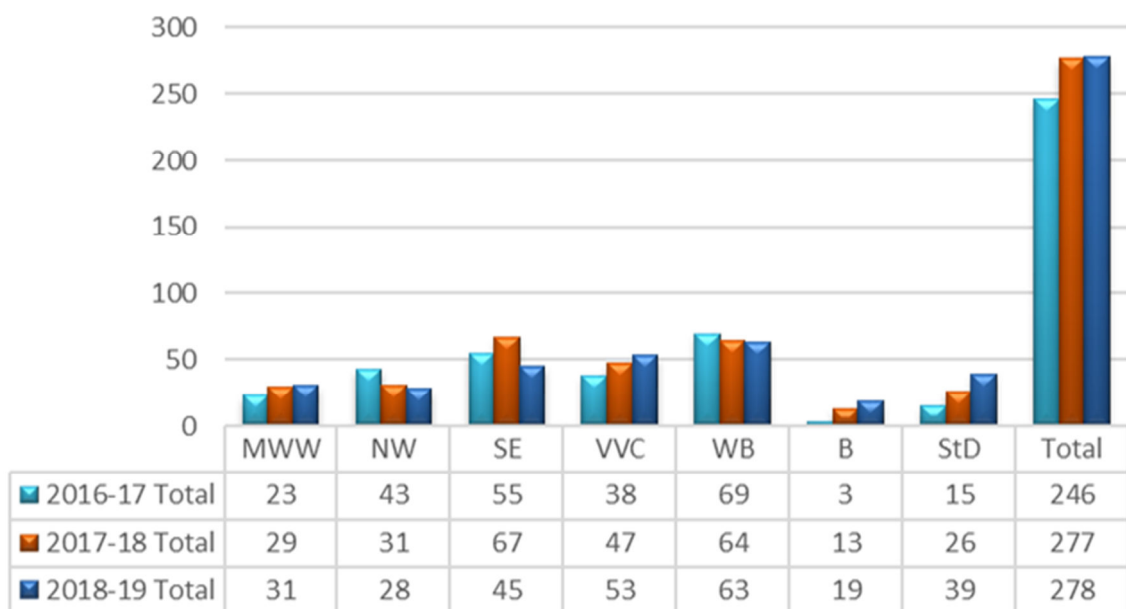
% of Initial Enquiries progressing to Application



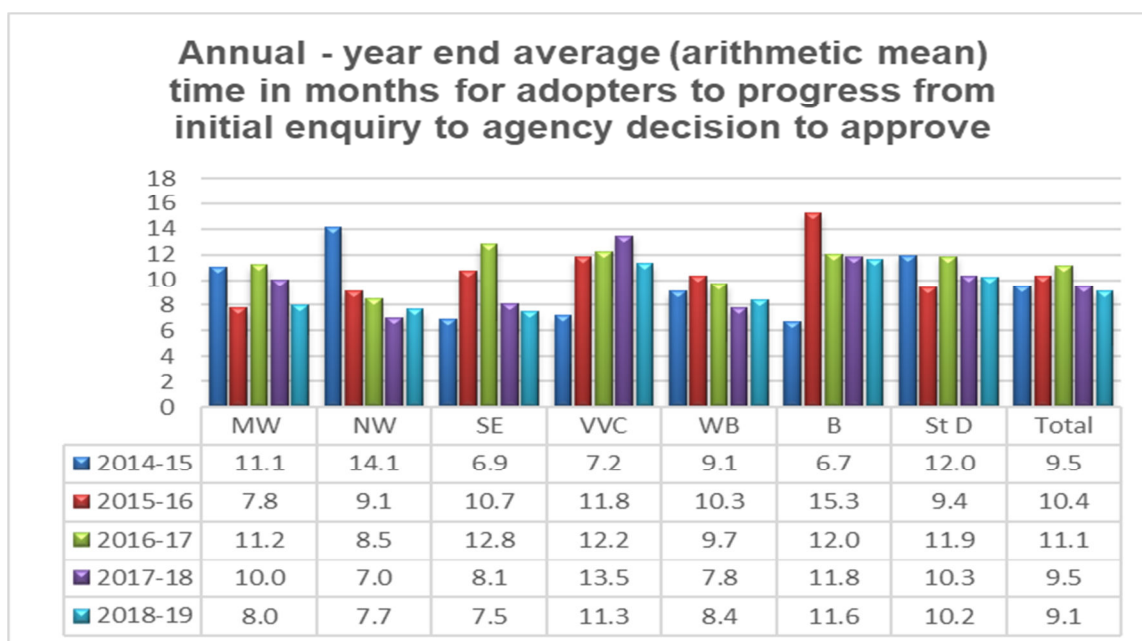
% is based on assessments commenced in a quarter compared to enquiries received 2 quarters before, to take account of the average delay in an application being made

SEWAS commenced 45 assessments during 2018/19, fewer than in previous years, a level which needs to increase to meet its need for placements.

Measure 36: Number of Assessments Started



The **average timeframe** for **adopter approvals** nationally was **9.1 months**, a further improvement on the year-end figure for 2017/18 which was 9.5 months.

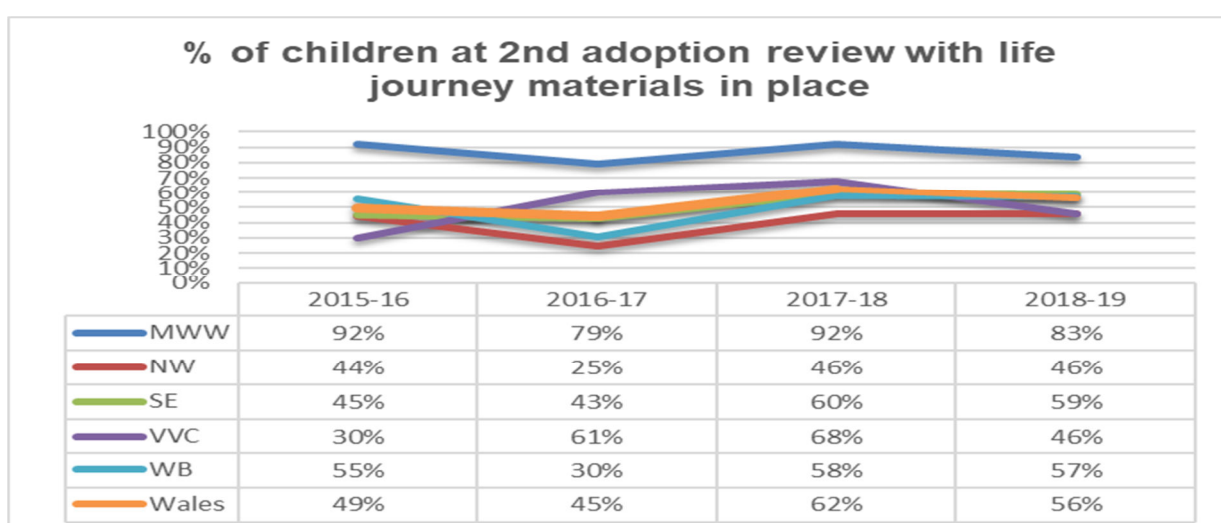


SEWAS' performance on this measure **improved this year to 7.5 months**. Which is within the benchmark and Welsh Government guidelines.

SEWAS' performance in respect of **formal application to approval is 5.2 months** over the year, meeting the Welsh Government guidance that this stage should take 6 months on which the NAS benchmark is based. SEWAS was within this benchmark for all of 2018/19.

Life Journey Materials

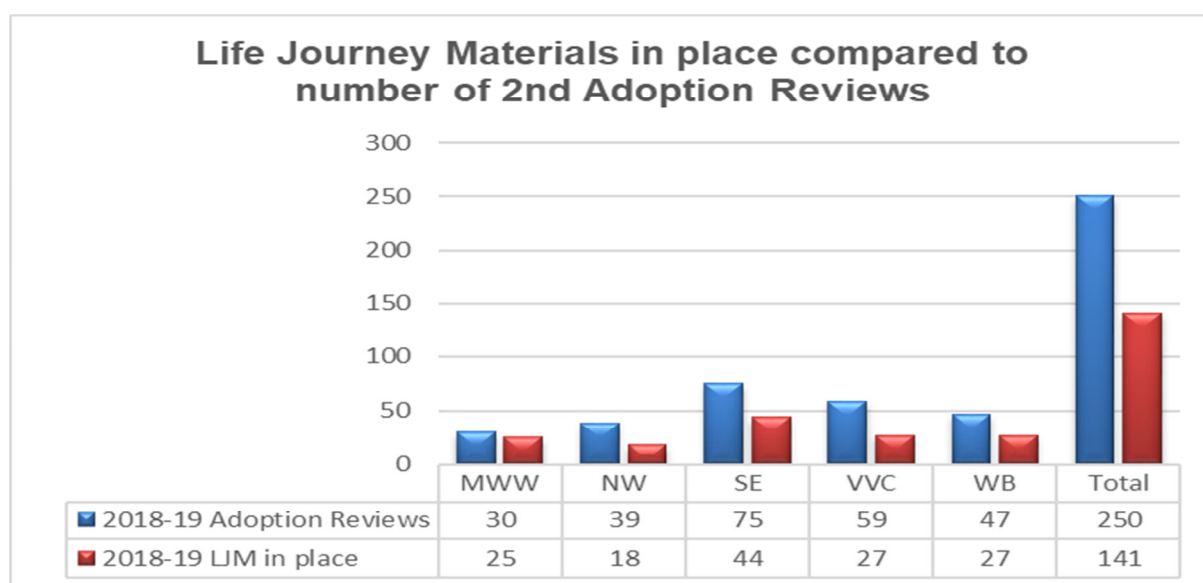
The improvement made in 2017/18 has not been maintained during 2018/19 in the availability of life journey materials for children and their families. The whole year averages shows that 56% of children placed this year had their life journey materials by the 2nd review; compared to 62% in 2017/18.



SEWAS maintained its performance at 59% against ongoing quarterly and regional variation. The plans to improve this were hampered by unanticipated staff changes.

The aim is for this performance to improve further within the context of investment since 2017/18 and the Life Journey Work Framework development project. The benchmark increased to 100% for 2018/19.

There were 31 SEWAS children placed where these materials were not available by the second adoption review as shown below.



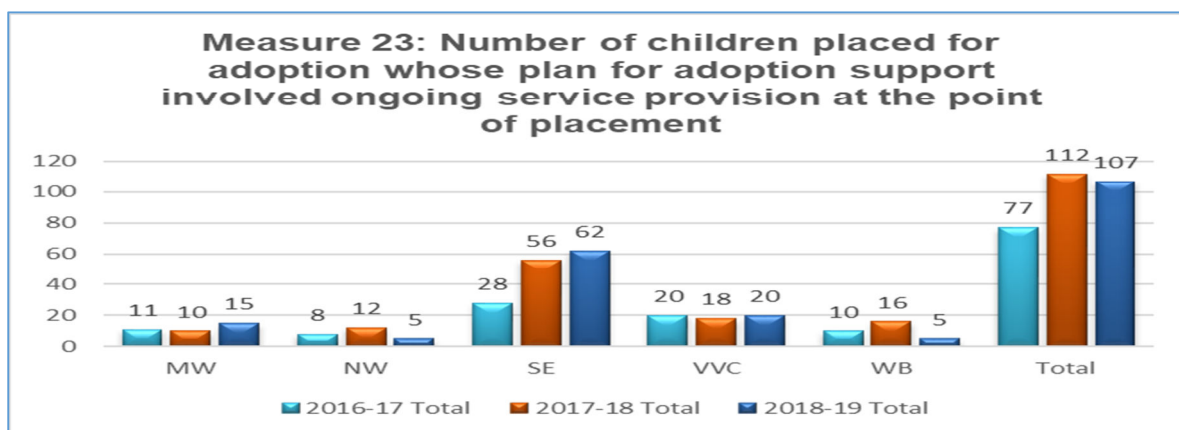
SEWAS was not able to collect data for the availability of materials at matching for 2018/19.

Adoption support

During 2018/19 SEWAS:

- facilitated more than 477 active letterbox contact arrangements 10% more than reported in 2017/18
- provided a service to 75 birth parents
- received 8 birth sibling requests for support and 2 from other relatives (both less than last year)
- received 53 requests for access to birth records compared to 49 last year and
- received a similar level of requests for intermediary / tracing support, 8 compared to 9 last year.

All the children placed by SEWAS had had their need for adoption support services assessed while more children placed had an ongoing service in place at the point of placement, 89% (n62) compared to 79% (n56) last year.



SEWAS saw a similar level of post adoption support being sought and completed a similar number of assessments in the year. 58 new requests for post adoption support were received during 2018/19. The majority of these assessments completed resulted in practical or therapeutic support being provided

Birth parents

The numbers of Birth Parents referred to adoption services nationally reduced by 13% during 2018/19. In SEWAS the number stayed at a similar level 222. All of these birth parents were offered a service by SEWAS.

In many regions data availability, particularly on take up has been affected by system changes within the local authorities for a number of regions or the loss of 3rd sector provider. SEWAS has been unaffected by this

Take up within a year tends to be low nationally but SEWAS performance was similar to previous years at 14% (n32). A service was also offered to another 43 parents who requested it.

Suzanne Griffiths. Director, May 2019

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Agenda Item 11

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **17th October 2019**

Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme – 28th November 2019**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Cllr Steve Thomas, Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
x	x	07.10.19			17.10.19			

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present to Members the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 28th November 2019 for discussion and to update the Committee on any changes.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Scrutiny Work Programmes are key aspects of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and support the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the Forward Work Programmes link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's Corporate Plan, corporate documents and supporting business plans. Effective work programmes are essential to ensure that the work of scrutiny make a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services.
 - 2.3 The Committee's Forward Work Programme was agreed in July 2019, recognising the fluidity of the document to enable the Committee to respond to urgent and emerging issues, and included timescales when reports will be considered by the Committee. The work programme is managed and implemented by the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer under the direction of the Chair and Committee.
 - 2.4 The forward work programme for the forthcoming meeting will be presented to Committee on a 6 weekly cycle in order that Members can consider the programme of work; request information is included within the reports, as appropriate and / or make amendments to the work programme.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 **Option 1:** The Scrutiny Committee consider the Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 28th November 2019, and :
 - Make any amendments to the topics scheduled for the meetings;
 - Suggest any additional invitees that the committee requires to fully

- consider the reports; and
- Request any additional information to be included with regards to the topics to be discussed.

3.2 **Option 2:** The Scrutiny Committee agree the Forward Programme for the meeting on 28th November 2019, as presented.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme - Meeting on 28th November 2019

Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Forward Work Programme

Scrutiny Meeting Date: Thursday 28th November 2019

Scrutiny Deadline to receive reports: Wednesday 13th November 2019

Report Title	Lead Officer	Purpose of Report	Method/ Expert Witness/Exec Member	Latest CLT Sign Off Date	Executive Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
Assisted Transport – Charging Policy	Alyson Hoskins	Policy Development To provide Members with the numbers affected by the implementation of the policy and to make recommendations regarding the future charging for transport.	Agenda Item	12.11.19	18.12.19	N/A
Looked After Children Update	Tanya Evans	Monitoring To update Members on the current situation in relation to the numbers of children who are looked after and the progress made in relation to the implementation of the Safe Reduction of Looked After Children Strategy.	Agenda Item	12.11.19	18.12.19	N/A
Six Monthly Report of the Director of Social Services – Quarters 1 and 2	Damien McCann	Monitoring To update Members on the effectiveness of the services delivered by Social Services through a six monthly monitoring report. The report has been developed in line with the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.	Agenda Item	12.11.19	Info Item - 28.11.19	N/A
INFORMATION ITEMS						
Review of Supporting People and Community care Contracts and Commissioning Update	Andrew Day	Information To provide Members with performance information on commissioned services in Blaenau Gwent for the year 2018/19.	Information Item	12.11.19	Info Item – 18.12.19	N/A

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