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THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

11th November 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee will be held as a Hybrid Meeting: Via MS Teams/Abraham Derby Room at the General Offices, Ebbw Vale - if you would like to attend please contact committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk on Thursday, 18th November, 2021 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

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

should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation will be provided if requested.

2. **APOLOGIES**

To receive.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATION**

To consider any declarations of interests and dispensations made.

4. **SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES** 5 - 12

To receive the Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 7th October, 2021.

(Please note the Minutes are submitted for points of accuracy only)

5. **ACTION SHEET - 7TH OCTOBER 2021** 13 - 24

To receive the Action Sheet.

6. **REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP UPDATE** 25 - 32

To consider the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.

7. **NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21** 33 - 48

To consider the report of the Head of Children's Services.

8. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 20TH JANUARY 2022** 49 - 52

To receive the report.

To: Councillor S. Thomas (Chair)
Councillor K. Rowson (Vice-Chair)
Councillor D. Bevan

Councillor G. Collier
Councillor G. A. Davies
Councillor G. L. Davies
Councillor P. Edwards
Councillor K. Hayden
Councillor W. Hodgins
Councillor J. Holt
Councillor M. Moore
Councillor G. Paulsen
Councillor T. Sharrem
Councillor B. Summers
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 – 7TH OCTOBER, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S.C. THOMAS (CHAIR)

Councillors: Councillor K. Rowson (Vice-Chair)

- D. Bevan
- G. Davies
- P. Edwards
- K. Hayden
- W. Hodgins
- J. Holt
- M. Moore
- G. Paulsen
- T. Sharrem
- B. Summers
- T. Smith

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
 Head of Adult Services
 Service Manager Children’s Services
 Communications & Policy Officer
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Councillor G. Collier.</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declaration of interest was raised:-</p> <p>Councillor G. Paulsen Item No. 6 – Children and Communities Grant</p> <p>Councillor Wayne Hodgins also raised a declaration of interest in the meeting as some of his clients may be service users of the Social Services Directorate.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 22nd July, 2021 were submitted; whereupon:-</p> <p>A Member referred to the suggestion raised by the Corporate Director that a report could be presented in relation to social work pay and incentives being offered by other Authorities for consideration. The Member noted that this was not on the Forward Work Programme for the November meeting and asked when the report could be expected.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Social Services advised that the report could be presented to the next meeting.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be presented to a future meeting.</p> <p>The Committee FURTHER AGREED, subject to the foregoing that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	

No. 5

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.

The Corporate Director Social Services referred to the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2020/2021 which was detailed in Appendix 1 and invited questions from Members.

A Member referred to the priority 'to develop alternative models of support that promotes independence and supports well-being outcomes' and in particular individuals 25 years and over. The Member advised that many of these young people are keen to get back to normality and asked what plans are in place going forward to get service users over 25 years old back into the community out of their homes where they have been since the start of the pandemic.

The Corporate Director Social Services referred to the presentation provided at a previous meeting in relation to the pressures in the social and health care system. It was informed that day care staff were supporting services in other areas as a result of staff shortages in frontline services due to the pandemic. Therefore, some services were not operating as they would have before the pandemic and a ration day service had been developed to fit an individual's needs. The Corporate Director added that there was a need to establish a model for day services facilities as the Department could not return to pre-pandemic ways as Social Services had an obligation to protect the most vulnerable in our communities and needed to comply with Welsh Government risk assessment to stop the spread of COVID-19 which would include social distancing restrictions. It was added that once this review had been undertaken it would be presented to Members for consideration, however the Corporate Director stated that the pandemic was continuing and there was a need for risk assessments to be undertaken to maintain some social distancing in our facilities.

It was noted that during the pandemic services have been offered virtually and on a 1-2-1 basis and service users had welcomed this contact and it was hoped that this interaction could be continued. There would be consultation undertaken with families and service users to identify their needs.

The Member welcomed the work undertaken by Social Services, however he further asked if projects were being sought with community clubs and organisations to get these individuals outdoors. The Member stated that these young people had been indoors for 18 months and families were keen to see the outdoor activities resume.

The Corporate Director confirmed that work was ongoing with other sectors where support could be offered within the community. The Head of Adult Services agreed to take the matter up with the respective Members direct.

A Member referred to the complaints and compliments section of the report and felt that there should be a number of compliments received which recognised the good work undertaken by Social Services to support families during the pandemic.

The Corporate Director Social Services advised that due to closures of facilities the Department was unable to gather compliments as the majority of correspondence was sent direct to buildings. The complaints are collated via one system and it was hoped that compliments could be received in the same way as the complaints to make them all more accessible.

A Member raised concerns in relation to vulnerable clients that would have had access to day centres and felt it was important that this service was reintroduced to support families. It was paramount that families had this support and as an Authority these services should now be fully operational. The Member acknowledged that the service was to be reviewed, however he could not support a reduction in the service and felt it was important that the Authority reverted back to the level of services provided prior to the pandemic.

	<p>The Corporate Director Social Services reiterated that due to social distancing restrictions these facilities could not be opened to same numbers as pre-pandemic. It was added that consultation would assist in identifying the needs of the service users and their families and this would be used to model out services going forward.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and considered the detail contained in the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2020/2021 and contributed to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate comments and or recommendations for amendment to the report before consideration at Executive Committee and approval at Council.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>CHILDREN AND COMMUNITIES GRANT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children’s Services.</p> <p>The Service Manager, Children’s Services provided a detailed overview of the progress of the Children and Communities Grant and outlined the key points as detailed in the report.</p> <p>In response to a question raised in relation to grant funding, it was advised that grant funding allocations were confirmed as part of the Welsh Government budget settlements received by the Local Authority. This information was provided in December and specific grants were separate to the budget settlement.</p> <p>Another Member asked if information could be presented on specific funding projects. The Service Manager advised that this information was available along with performance indicators and agreed to provide this information.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and the progress made to date on the Children and Communities grant be noted. The CCG Steering Group continued to oversee and implement the delivery programme and provides an annual report on progress to scrutiny, executive and the new local arrangements to replace the Public Service Board.</p>	

No. 7

**PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP A BLAENAU GWENT
MY SUPPORT TEAM (MYST)**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children's Services.

The Service Manager Children's Services spoke to the report which outlined the proposal and business case to develop a Blaenau Gwent My Support Team (MyST) instead of the current joint MyST with Monmouthshire. The Service Manager referred to the background of the establishment of the joint MyST and noted the evidence in the report on the work which had been achieved in past 2 years in relation to:-

1. Numbers of Blaenau Gwent children MyST have supported to move out of residential care.
2. The numbers of Blaenau Gwent children MyST have prevented going into residential care.
3. The number of Blaenau Gwent Psychological practice consultations undertaken by MyST
4. The actual cost savings made by MyST
5. The cost avoidance as a result of MyST

The Service Manager referred to the actual savings and cost avoidance the MyST had achieved during 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 and noted the anticipated costs for a Blaenau Gwent team based on a forecast provided by Monmouthshire. The Service Manager further spoke to the report and advised that the establishment of a Blaenau Gwent MyST would continue the positive work achieved and increase capacity within Blaenau Gwent to address the backlog of referrals.

The Committee welcomed the report and Members felt that the savings made as well as the impact on the number of children looked after were positive. The Committee fully supported the report and thanked the officer for an informative overview.

The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and the positive work MyST have undertaken be acknowledged and support the development of a Blaenau Gwent MyST to the Executive Committee (option 1).

No. 8

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME:
18TH NOVEMBER, 2021

Consideration was given to the report.

The Head of Adult Services advised that the Future Model of Assistive Technology/Telecare Provision report may not be presented to the next meeting as the responsible officer was dealing with the continued response to the pandemic. Therefore, the Chair agreed that the report be presented to a future meeting.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted (option 1) and

- a) any amendments to the topics scheduled for the meetings;
- b) suggest any additional invitees that the committee requires to fully consider the reports; and
- c) request any additional information to be included with regards to the topics to be discussed.

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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Action Sheet

Social Services Scrutiny Committee – Thursday 7th October 2021

Item	Action to be Taken	By Whom	Action Taken
4	<u>Minutes – 22nd July 2021</u> A report to be provided in relation to social work pay and incentives.	Damien McCann	Report to be included on the Forward Work Programme for the meeting in January 2022.
6	<u>Children and Communities Grant</u> Information to be provided on specifics of individual projects.	Ceri Bird	Information attached.

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CCG Performance Framework

National Well-being Goals

- a prosperous Wales.
- a resilient Wales.
- a healthier Wales.
- a more equal Wales.
- a Wales of cohesive communities.

Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board Well-being Objectives

- Blaenau Gwent wants everyone to have the best start in life for everyone
- Blaenau Gwent wants safe and friendly communities
- Blaenau Gwent wants to look after and protect the environment
- Blaenau Gwent wants to forge new pathways to prosperity
- Blaenau Gwent wants to encourage and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices in the places that they live, learn, work and play

Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives

Social Services:

- To improve accessibility, provision of information and advice to enable people to support their own wellbeing
- To work with people to make sure they have a say in achieving what matters to them
- 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
- To put effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm
- To develop a partnership approach to reducing and alleviating the impacts of Poverty

CCG Performance Framework

Purpose of the Children and Communities Grant

The purpose of the Children and Communities grant is to address the support needs of the most **vulnerable children and adults** in our communities through a range of **early intervention, prevention and support** mechanisms. It will seek to **mitigate or remove disadvantage** to vulnerable people to enable them to have the same life chances as others, and therefore contribute to a **more equal Wales**.

Blaenau Gwent Children and Communities Grant

Blaenau Gwent has been allocated, £4,094,579 for 2021/22 to implement the Children and Communities Grant. This has been allocated across seven programmes:

Programme	Lead	Original 2021/22 Allocation	% of Grant	Programme	Lead	Allocation	% of Grant
Flying Start	Social Services	£2,234,096	54.5%	Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People at Risk of Offending	YOS Youth Service DAS	£148,016	3.61%
Families First	Social Services	£1,143,183	27.9%	Childcare and Play	Social Services	£75,391	1.84%
Communities for Work	GAVO	£862,600	Financial allocation from a separate grant	St David's Day Fund	Social Services	£29,428	0.72%
Legacy Funding	Regeneration	£464,465	11.3%				

*Budgets have varied throughout financial year in line with flexible funding ethos and additional allocations from WG.

CCG Performance Framework

Population Indicators - The various programme indicators feed the population indicators which are collated at a national level and sit outside of the direct work of the Children and Communities Grant. No single agency or project is responsible for the population indicators outcome.

<u>Performance Indicator</u>	<u>Outturn</u>
Number of BG Children in low income households	2018/19 - 2487 (year on year decrease since 2014/15)
Blaenau Gwent Households Claiming Universal Credit	May 2019 – 2,551 May 2020 – 5,649
Proportion of working age adults not in employment in receipt of tax credits	7.2%
Working age population (16-64) with NVQ level 4 and above	24.9%
Economically Active	70.4%
Educational attainment – FSM v non FSM	Results not being published by WG at this time.
Total CIN	838
Rate of CIN	114
Care leavers in suitable accommodation	100%
Number leaving care at: 16; and 18.	Aged 16 – 1 Aged 18 - 16
Number of LAC***	208
Percentage of Low Birthweight Babies	2017 – 7.9% 2018 – 8.2%

CCG Performance Framework

Outcome indicators (consideration of the overall Outcomes Framework when available)

The following set of indicators demonstrate the difference each programme within the Children and Communities Grant is making to the lives of children, families and communities in Blaenau Gwent

Flying Start Performance Indicator	Baseline	Term 1 (Apr-Sept)	Term 2 (Oct-Dec)	Term 3 (Jan-March)
<p>Health</p> <p>Number of children under 4 allocated to Flying Start Health Visitor</p> <p>Percentage benefitting from enhanced programme.</p>	<p>951</p> <p>100%</p>	<p>955</p> <p>69%</p>		
<p>Speech Language and Communication</p> <p>Percentage of Flying Start children who were identified as having a degree of Speech Language & Communication delay in their initial screening who have made a reported improvement by parents/carers at 39 months.</p> <p>Descriptor</p> <p><i>Flying Start use a Speech and Language Toolkit for Screening and Intervention. The toolkit identifies children with potential language difficulties, The toolkit uses a traffic light system to identify an action pathway:</i></p> <p>RED - Consider referral to a specialist service for further advice/assessment</p> <p>AMBER - Extra support and intervention required</p> <p>GREEN -No intervention required</p> <p>Note:</p>	<p>61%</p>	<p>Face to Face Screening not implemented in term 1 owing to COVID restrictions</p>		

CCG Performance Framework

<p>Is it also worth noting that according to the National statistics, around 10% will have persistent difficulties and they will require specialist support.</p>				
<p>Parenting Number of parents completing formal or informal parenting programme</p> <p>Of which: Percentage of parents demonstrating improved parenting self-efficacy</p>		<p>92</p> <p>98%</p>		
<p>Childcare % of children exiting Flying Start at the expected level for their chronological age</p> <p>% of children exiting Flying Start working beyond the expected level for their chronological age</p> <p>Descriptor <i>the Foundation Phase Profile supports assessment of children’s learning and development throughout their time in the Foundation Phase. Its main purpose is to provide a nationally consistent baseline assessment which aligns with end of phase outcomes. Profiles are completed on all children accessing Flying Start childcare on entry and exit. N.B Most children within Flying Start enter childcare below the expected levels.</i></p>	<p>70% (2 terms of childcare only)</p> <p>28% (2 Terms of childcare only)</p>	<p>74%</p> <p>24%</p>		
<p>Number of children in receipt of Flying Start services that are on the Child Protection Register,</p> <p>Percentage of children on CP register in previous term which have:</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>9</p>		

CCG Performance Framework

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remained in care of their family • Became Children Looked After 	92% 8%	50% 20%		
Numbers of Flying Start families who are involved in Statutory Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection • Children Looked After • Care and Support Plan 	As at 31.03.21 10 11 42	31.08.2021 9 11 31		

Families First Performance Indicator	Baseline	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Total number of Families First referrals:	358	133	94			227
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referred into statutory services (escalated) 	38	13	14			27
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step down from statutory services 	24	7	10			17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-referred to statutory following step down (discussions) 	8	3	0			3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JAFFs completed 	275	97	79			176
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals signposted for single agency support 	5	0	0			0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Around the Family meetings (initial & review) 	440	193	139			332
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of interventions completed with a successful outcome i.e. JAFF/TAF and single agency support (<i>from outcome of referral</i>) 	121	38	46			84
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of re-referrals received 	52	10	14			24

Communities for Work + Performance Indicator	Baseline	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Number of people Engaged into the programme	341	94	78			172
Number of Participants Securing Employment (over 16 hours)	155	59	44			103

CCG Performance Framework

Number of people with disabilities securing employment (20% of overall)	19	Data known at 6mth report	5			5
Number of Participants volunteering	5	1	1			2
Number of participants undertaking a work experience placement	1	3	0			3
Number of participants undertaking accredited training	57	28	93			121
Number of Qualifications Gained	57	28	93			121
Number of participants undertaking work related training	47	7	7			14

Legacy Fund Performance Indicator	Baseline	Q1 & Q2	Q3 & Q4	Total
Number of projects funded through Legacy	17	11		11
Number of projects aligned to other CCG programmes:				
- Families First	3	3		3
- Flying Start	3	1		1
- CfW+	1	1		1
- St Davids	0	0		0
- Childcare and Play	3	1		1
- PPE	1	1		1
Number of citizens in Blaenau Gwent have benefited from Legacy services	2177	950		950
Number of groups in Blaenau Gwent have benefitted from Legacy services	386	212 (face to face sessions run)		212
Of those engaged how has the project empowered those individuals /groups to have their voices heard (case studies)	N/A	Case Studies		
As a result of the engagement with the citizens/groups has service delivery changed or been altered (case studies)	N/A	Case Studies		

CCG Performance Framework

PPE Performance Indicator	Baseline	Q1 & Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Of those children referred into the projects the number referred into the Youth Offending Service as a first time entrant (YOS)	37	10			10
Number of children re-offending after engaging with the projects following intervention (YOS)	3	1			1
children accessing the alternative programme on the cusp of being permanently excluded (Positive Futures)	N/A	14			14
Number/percentage of children engaged in the projects in the ASB 4 strike process who have further incidence following referral	3	1			1

Childcare and Play Performance Indicator	Baseline	Term1 (Apr-Sept)	Term 2 (Oct-Dec)	Term 3 (Jan-Mar)	Total
Number of children accessing support for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional Needs (1:1 support) - Assisted places 		64 46			64 46
% of children exiting Additional Needs with improved baseline score		Under development			N/A
Descriptor <i>the Foundation Phase Profile supports assessment of children's learning and development throughout their time in the Foundation Phase. Its main purpose is to provide a nationally consistent baseline</i>					

CCG Performance Framework

Individual Grant Performance

Each of the above named programmes undertake detailed performance monitoring on either a quarterly or six monthly basis.

Agenda Item 6

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: **18th November 2021**
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)
	Oct 2021	04.11.21			18.11.21	15.12.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 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 Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWB Act) since the last report presented to Social Services Scrutiny Committee on the 22nd April 2021.

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 has 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 3 occasions since the last report to Scrutiny Committee on the 22nd April 2021. There has been a number of areas which have occupied the Regional Partnership Board at these meetings. Firstly, the continued response to the Coronavirus outbreak across partner agencies and the effect on services. Secondly, the continuation of the Integrated Care Revenue and Capital Funds and the Transformational Offer beyond 2022, Finally, it has been considering the crisis in health and social care with the inability to recruit staff to certain part of the system.
- 2.7 At each of the Regional Partnership Board meetings we have received updates on the hospital and community position on the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, and more recently the progress on the vaccination programme being rolled out. This included feedback from the Citizen Panel on some of the issues that had been raised with them concerning access to healthcare. The Board have been reassured that although the pandemic has been worse third time round in terms of community transmission the hospital capacity and support in the community has been able to cope with the third wave locally and regionally which was very much due to the success of the vaccination roll out and collaborative working by all partners.
- 2.8 Although seeing higher community transmission rates across Gwent during the third wave the impact on hospital admissions has been much less, although there has been between 70 to 80 cases admitted a week with Coronavirus to Gwent hospitals. There has also been increasing outbreaks particularly with staff in Care Homes across Gwent although over 95% having received both vaccinations and 98% of all residents.
- 2.9 The Regional Partnership Board is the body who sign off and agree the Integrated Care Fund revenue and capital proposals. Members may recall that Welsh Government agreed to continue the Integrated Care Fund revenue and capital funding for 2021/22 at the same level as 2020/21, as a means of transition for any new administration to come in and determine how they wish to proceed with this funding following the Senydd elections in May 2021.
- 2.10 Therefore, this transition period for the Regional Partnership Board, will see the impending cessation of the current partnership funding model in March 2022, which is due to be replaced by a single coherent source of revenue funding to support transformation and integration. Gwent Regional Partnership Board have discussed and considered its priorities to support longer term planning during this transition period. These new priorities place significant emphasis on care closer to home for all priority groups for integration, and enabling an infrastructure within our partnership that supports delivery.
- 2.11 To facilitate this transition period, and to support continuous efforts to address the challenges within our system, Gwent Regional Partnership Board endorsed a programme transition plan for 2021-22 to support both

partnership and organisational financial planning, and ensure sufficient notice is provided to any initiatives that may need to conclude at 31 March 2022. This plan identifies all consideration activity of the existing portfolio to be complete by mid-November, by the Gwent Regional Partnership Board.

2.12 The £2million previously utilised for WCCIS implementation within the ICF revenue funding stream has been repurposed for a new priority area 'Safe accommodation for children with complex, high end emotional and behavioural needs'. This priority area has been introduced in direct response to the Children's Commissioner for Wales' report, No Wrong Door and in line with current Ministerial priorities. Welsh Government invited expressions of interest from Regions, Gwent submitted a proposal to Welsh Government to develop a children's residential home at Windmill Farm, Newport, setting out the opportunity of exploring joint commissioning methodologies for a wider cohort of children with complex needs. Welsh Government approved funding for this purpose and work has commenced using ICF capital together with the ICF revenue funding stream to deliver this proposed integrated model.

2.13 Members may recall from previous reports that the Regional Partnership Board had successfully submitted a 'Gwent transformational offer' to Welsh Government in response to 'A Healthier Wales' which set out a new £100 million transformational programme. The new transformation fund was 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'.

The offer in Gwent related to four areas, these include:

- The development of early intervention and prevention services (Integrated Wellbeing Networks);
- The development of primary and community care services (Compassionate Communities);
- The redesign of child and adolescent emotional and mental health services (Iceberg model);
- The development of an integrated 'Home First' discharge model;

2.14 The programme was awarded £8,313,131 for 2021/22. Sustainability being the primary focus in this final year, bringing together successful elements alongside successful ICF programmes, to create a framework of services within a model of 'Place Based Care'.

2.15 All four programmes, have embedded well and the evaluation reports demonstrate both financial efficiencies and improved wellbeing outcomes for citizens have been achieved.

2.16 Welsh Government have commenced the development of a new funding model in coproduction with the Regions. The principles within this emerging funding model propose to address the challenges that have been highlighted within the existing partnership funding arrangements, namely linked to project sustainability, local area needs and longer term strategic

planning. Ministerial commitment has been made to a 5 year partnership funding model that will provide a single revenue funding source for regions for the following purposes:

- Acceleration funding: up to 90% financial support for the testing and development of new ways of working. A maximum duration will be applied to acceleration initiatives, currently anticipated to be 2-3 years.
- Embedding funding: funding to support the scaling and sustainability of successful initiatives. This funding source will require a tapered match funding from alternative budgets.
- Resource funding: funding to provide regional capacity to support RPBs in their activities, programme development, area needs and planning. Regional match funding will be required and appropriate resource thresholds are currently being discussed with Welsh Government.

- 2.17 Since June 2021, Social Services have been increasingly reporting workforce issues to the Regional Partnership Board. What we have seen is restrictions being eased and more sectors re-opening, an exhausted workforce taking well deserved holidays, staff off sick and those self-isolating either because they have caught Covid19 or been 'pinged' as being in contact with someone who has tested positive.
- 2.18 We have seen a shortage of staff across health and social care sectors, but particularly within the domiciliary care and residential care sector, as we have seen many staff leave to obtain better paid jobs which they have described as easier and with less responsibility in the hospitality and retail sector, than what they had been doing in social care. We have also had great difficulty in recruiting to vacancies across the sector leaving the sector short of staff to deliver vital services.
- 2.19 This crisis is multi-faceted, with blockages in hospital because of no capacity in the domiciliary care market to meet new packages of care for those coming out of hospital. We believe that the difficulty on some people being able to obtain a GP appointment may have increased the demand at Accident and Emergency units. The shortages of beds and increased demand at Accident and Emergencies has resulted in ambulances waiting outside hospitals to discharge patients into hospital. The lack of ambulance to attend incidents has then been severely reduced, resulting in Police having to transfer patients from incidents to hospital resulting in officers having to spend time in Accident and Emergency to discharge patients into hospital or be seen by Accident and Emergency staff.
- 2.20 This resulted in the Blue Light Services (WAST and Gwent Police) in August asking the Gwent Strategic Co-ordination group(SCG) to convene as they felt this had become a public emergency situation. The SCG then set up a Tactical Co-ordination Group to look at a set of short term interventions to alleviate immediate pressures and longer term re-design how the system can work more effectively to reduce cyclical pressures.

- 2.21 The SCG and TCG will try and develop short and long term measures to alleviate the pressures. It will be the Regional Partnership Board responsibility to implement these measures to try and resolve the current crisis we find health and social care in.

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 Wellbeing 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 wellbeing;
- 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 Option 1 - The Regional Partnership Board have statutory responsibilities laid out within the Social Services and Wellbeing 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 are complying with the legislation and

Ministerial expectations.

Option 1 – Welsh Government have also determined that the use of the Integrated Care Capital and Revenue Fund, the new Transformational fund and any Integrated Winter Planning funding will have oversight by the Regional Partnership Board. All 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 are 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 and Revenue Fund, Transformational fund and Integrated Winter Planning fund could result in the withdrawal or ability to receive funding for the Blaenau Gwent and Gwent region respectively.

5.2 **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 which has been extended for a further 12 months during this transition year. The transformation fund is to develop new models of transformation at pace and has been agreed for a further 12 months during transition as well. These are all additional funding coming into the system.

The Integrated Care Capital and Revenue 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 proposed transition period will 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.

Welsh Government have indicated their intent to develop a new fund to replace both the Integrated Care Fund and Transformation fund and are currently developing this new funding stream and working with partners.

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.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

The report contents do not relate specifically to this agenda; indirectly local employment supports to ensure:

- People having the opportunity to work closer to home;
- The public can access services closer to home;
- Employment and service provision locally relates specifically to the decarbonisation agenda.

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

The report relates to a number of jobs which support employment locally, a loss to funding for these jobs would have a negative impact and may increase social and economic inequalities

6.9b. ***Equality Impact Assessment***

Not applicable

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

- N/A

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: **18th November 2021**
Report Subject: **National Adoption Service Annual Report 2020/21**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**
Report Submitted by: **Tanya Evans, Head of Children's Services**

Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
26/10/2021	28/10/2021	04.11.21			18/11/2021	15.12.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

To report on the performance of the South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) and the National Adoption Service (NAS) for 2020/21

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 national and regional performance report under **Appendix 1** and some performance graphs under **Appendix 2** have been produced by the National Adoption Service, both 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.

National Adoption Service

2.4 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.

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).

2.5

Blaenau Gwent host the South East Wales Adoption Service region.

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

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

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

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

SEWAS also supports the Blaenau Gwent Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy 2020 -2025.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 *Impact on Budget*

SEWAS is a collaborative arrangement funded by the 5 local authorities within this region

The Management Committee (required under regulation) is responsible for ensuring arrangements are in place to deliver the regional service and this includes financial arrangements.

There have been no concerns regarding the budget for this reporting year. The budget has been managed effectively resulting in no overspend at the end of the financial year 20/21

5.2 **Risk**

5.2.1 **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. Adding to the pressure for this year was the outbreak of the pandemic and although there was an increase in enquiries for our region they did not progress to applications. In addition, we also have adopters who were in the process of being assessed who withdrew due to Covid related issues, for example being furloughed, being made redundant and losing close family members.

5.2.2 **Mitigation**

To improve performance in this area SEWAS continued to invest in recruitment. The SEWAS Marketing and Recruitment Officer (MRO) used social media, google analytics and twitter to reach out to those interested in adoption. Although visits to the website increased we didn't see a huge increase in enquiries translating to application which is likely to be linked to the pandemic. However, recruitment activity is bearing fruit this year and we are on target to meet our end of year goal. The SEWAS core offer remains strong and is advertised on our website; this includes;

- Direct work pre and post approval which prepares children and adopters for placement, including Understanding the Child Days
- Additional post approval adoption training before placement using therapeutic models;
- Adoption support post order for adopters, children and birth parents
- Assessment being completed in a timely manner;
- Connected, which is a young person's support group
- TESSA (Therapeutic Education Support Service in Adoption)
- Family and Friends training and support
- Dad's group
- In house psychology provision for adopter and children
- Advertising our core offer including our psychology service input which is a 'big sell'.

Most of these services were provided remotely during the peak of the pandemic with some now moving to a blended way of working. The service also completed a number of webinars which supported the preparation for pre adoption approval and when children were placed

5.3 **Legal**

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**

Staffing issues were problematic at times linked with Covid illness, self-isolation and staff losing close family members. However, there are no significant staff vacancies in this service area.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.1.1 **National Adoption Service Annual Report 2021**

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

6.1.2 **ADOPTERS – TRENDS IN APPROVALS, ENQUIRIES AND NEW ASSESSMENTS (National)**

Nationally the number of initial enquiries and assessments commenced continued to increase but overall the number approvals reduced by 8% which wasn't a surprise given the challenge of number of changes required to work remotely and the delay in adoption medicals being completed because of the pandemic.

Despite the challenges experienced in this reporting year 65% of adopters were approved within the 6-month benchmark

The number of adopters waiting increased of these 72% we approved within the previous 6 months

6.1.3 **ADOPTERS – TRENDS IN APPROVALS, ENQUIRIES AND NEW ASSESSMENTS (SEWAS)**

The full report can be found under **Appendix 1 and graphs for SEWAS in 2**. The highlights will be captured here.

Enquiries increased for SEWAS this reporting year but there is was a slight decrease in assessments starting and a disappointing end of year approval figure (30). We know that we lost 10 potential adopters in the early days of the pandemic who cited Covid related issues for withdrawing and whilst there was an increase of visits to the website it is likely that applications were not pursued due to uncertainty with regards to the pandemic and the possible social and economic climate in the future.

70% of SEWAS approvals were completed in timescale (benchmark 6 months) with an average of 6.6% overall. This is pleasing given there were

inevitable delays switching to remote platforms and waiting for adoption medicals

SEWAS had 18 adopters waiting at the end of this period so 17% of the national number. Some of these are on hold for personal reasons but very few as a result of a limited matching criteria.

6.1.4

OVERALL IMPACT ON PLACING CHILDREN IN 20/21 (National)

Referrals to regions increased by 3% from 550 to 566.

Placement Orders granted have reduced by 6% from 275 in the previous year to 259.

The number of children matched decreased by 2% from 285 to 280. The reduction linked with one region (VVC).

The number of children placed for adoption nationally reduced from 309 in the previous year to 263 a reduction of 15%. With the 3 larger regions, the Vale Valleys and Cardiff (VVC) Western Bay(WB) and SEWAS seeing the biggest decrease.

Overall the number of children waiting for an adoption placement is falling from 270 in the previous year to 241. This doesn't include children with a strong link so for this reporting period another 60 children had a strong link.

The number of children placed within timescales from placement order to placement decreased by 34%.

6.1.5

OVERALL IMPACT ON PLACING CHILDREN IN 20/21 (SEWAS)

The number of placement orders reduced in the SEWAS region by 10% from 73 to 66.

SEWAS placed 50 Children in this reporting year.

The number of children matched was 62 equal to the previous year which is pleasing given the additional pressures on the service because of Covid related staffing issues.

The average time to place children from placement order to placement increased to 12.5%. We know that is attributed in some part to the pandemic but also to the number of birth parents making applications to the court to prevent placements once they have been notified that a match has been found. Legally parents are permitted to make these applications but it is resulting in delays for some children and seems to be on the increase.

6.1.6

Children – waiting

6.1.7 SEWAS children subject to a placement order but not yet matched stood at 30 as of 31.03.21. This figure does not include children with tentative links.

Life Journey Work (LJW)

Nationally there has been an improvement in the availability of life journey work with 82% of children having this in place at the point of matching meeting and 68% at the point of the second adoption review.

6.1.8 SEWAS improved the performance for LJW material being available at the point of matching meeting to 79% but unfortunately dipped to 53% by the second adoption review . There has been a rolling programme of training in place over the past year reaching a wider audience, including social workers, fostering teams, foster carers and independent reviewing officers, with a plan to include partner agencies this year, therefore , we are hopeful that we can build on performance in this area.

OVERVIEW OF ADOPTION SUPPORT PROVISION DURING 20/21 (National / SEWAS)

The number of adoption support assessments decreased slightly nationally from 314 to 312. SEWAS reported a 24% decrease although the work completed during the pandemic became gradually more complex for some adoptive families who began to feel the impact of the restrictions on their everyday lives.

Support services for adoption are improving with national initiatives like TESSA which is a programme aimed at supporting adoptive parents who are raising traumatised children and Connected which is an information and advice service for young people receiving very positive feedback. The SEWAS area have more than doubled the number parents and children accessing these service which support our core offer for adoption support and builds on an adoption community that supports each other.

Good practice guides and training have been rolled out to improve outcomes for children and families involved in adoption including;

- Transitions and early placement support;
- Contact arrangements for adopted children;
- Work with birth parents;
- An updated good practice framework and approach to adoption support assessment, planning and review.

6.1.9 These guides aim to ensure that the care planning for adopted children is more robust so that children have more support, adopters are better informed and contact with birth family is promoted where possible.

Summary

All the key elements of adoption services have been maintained during a very difficult period where changes to working practices were challenging at times but also highlighted some areas of our work that could be delivered more effectively using remote platforms.

We know the reasons behind poor recruitment for this reporting year but on a positive note we are on target to meet the goals for this year

There has been a reduction in the number of placement orders and I anticipate this trend continuing due to local authority investment in preventative services and special guardianship teams which means children are able to remain with their birth families.

We are beginning to see the benefits of investment in adoption support, although we are seeing the more complex cases, so those at possible risk of breakdown partly because of the pandemic but also because of historical lack of investment in life journey work, direct work preparing children and adopters and therapeutic support.

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. The region is also working to a NAS strategic long term plan.

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. 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 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 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

This is a national report and does not relate specifically to decarbonisation or reducing emissions.

6.9 ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

Local adopters are important to boost the local economy so the more we can support local adopters the more impact it has on both our community, children and local economy.

6.9b ***Equality Impact Assessment***

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 Papers

- Appendix 1 – National Adoption Service Performance Report – Quarter Four / Year End 2020/21
- Appendix 2 – Performance Graphs

APPENDIX 1

National Adoption Service Performance Report Quarter Four / Year End 2020/21

Reporting for the National Adoption Service (NAS) Performance Measurement System (PMS) was temporarily reduced to key indicators due to the Covid-19 situation.

This shortened report focuses on:

- Adopter recruitment;
- Children placed and waiting;
- Adoption Support

Overall adoption services across Wales did remarkably well to maintain key elements of service and performance by in adapting their working methods.

This enabled the service to maximise its ability to continue to recruit prospective adopters, place children and support adoptive families in a way that is compliant with Covid 'safe' practice and arrangements.

Inevitably however, Covid had an impact on the performance of adoption services. In looking at comparative data for this year, it should be noted that the pandemic impacted regions and services at different times and at differing levels.

Children

There was a small reduction in numbers of children matched and placed during the year. 280 children were matched, a reduction of 2% compared to last year, and 263 children placed, a reduction of 15% compared to last year. The reduction was in the three larger regions only, with MW and NW showing significant increases compared to 2019/20.

At 34%, fewer children were placed for adoption within 6 months of their placement order reflecting the additional time needed to place children through Covid secure

practices. At the end of the year there were 159 children for whom services were actively family finding (0.8 sufficiency reduces the number of families needed to 127).

Adopters

The number of initial enquiries and adopter assessments commenced continued to increase, by 23% and 20% respectively, compared to last year. The number of adopters approved reduced but only by 8%.

Adoption Support

Demand for new formal adoption support assessments reduced slightly although this masks significant change at regional level which may be linked to availability as well as the changing pattern of services being accessed without an assessment.

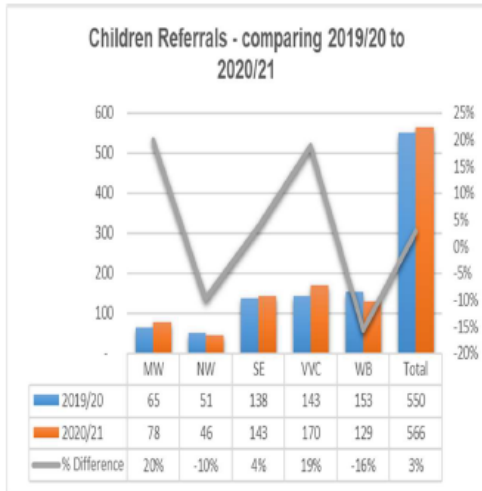
There was an overall improvement in life journey materials with 82% of children having this in place by matching panel and 68% by the 2nd adoption review. MW achieved 100% for materials available at 2nd adoption review.

Abbreviations

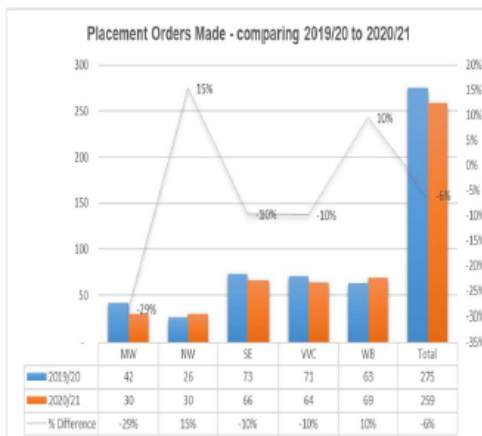
MW	Mid and West Wales Adoption Service
NW	North Wales Adoption Service
SE	South East Wales Adoption Service
VVC	Vale Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Service
WB	Western Bay Adoption Service
B	Barnardo's
St D	St David's Children Society

Children

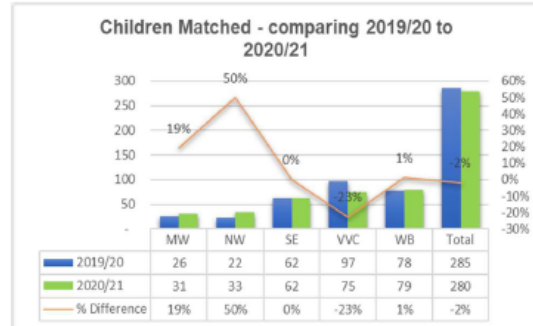
Referrals to regions increased by 3% to 566 compared to last year with some variation across the regions. All regions apart from NW and WB experienced an increase.



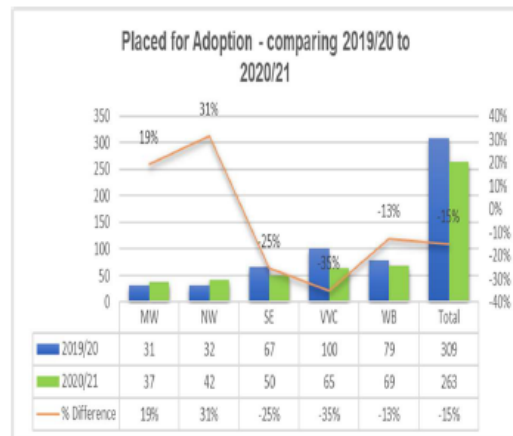
Placement orders granted reduced by 6% to 259 compared to last year. There had been a general downward trend, except for NW and WB, but this is likely to have been accelerated by the impact of Covid on court activity earlier in the year. All regions except NW and WB experienced a reduction.



Children matched reduced by 2% to 280. This reduction was in one region only, VVC. MW and NW increased by 19% and 50% respectively. SE and WB maintained a similar number to 2019/20.



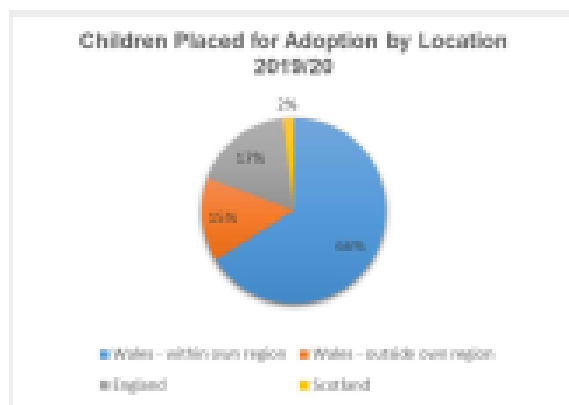
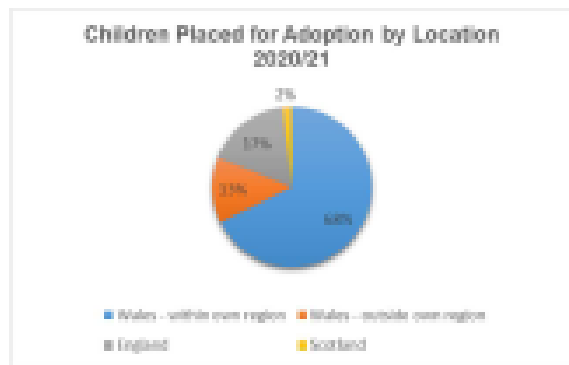
Children placed for adoption reduced by 15% to 263. The reduction was concentrated in the three larger regions with MW and NW seeing an increase.



34% of children were placed within 6 months of their placement order, 23 less children than in 2019/20.

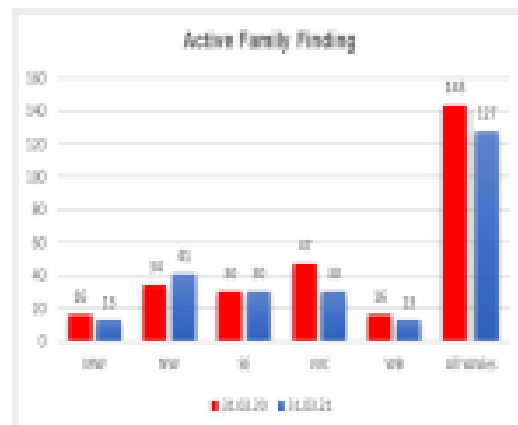
% of Children placed within 6 months of their PO					
MW	NW	SE	VVC	WB	Wales
27%	8%	20%	45%	52%	34%

The geographic distribution of placements remained similar to 2019/20.



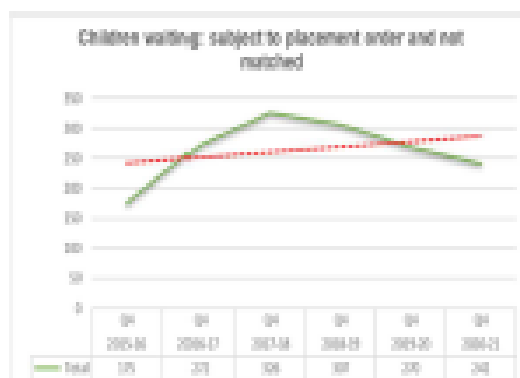
Of these children waiting a further 60 or 25% had a link in place that was waiting to be formally confirmed.

As at 31.03.21 the regions were actively family finding for 150 children, fewer than the previous year. Using the 0.8 sufficiency factor for siblings, reduces the number of families needed even further.



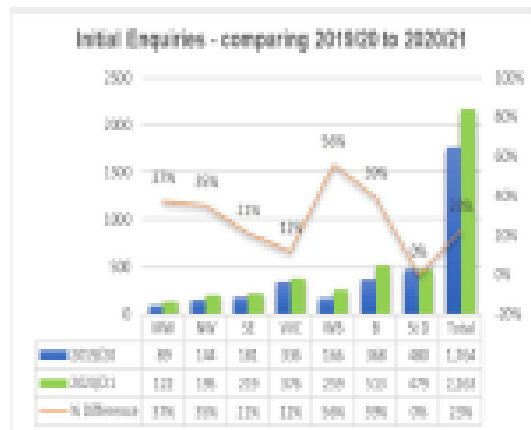
Single children made up the biggest proportion of children placed, 80%. A further 19% were sibling groups of 2, and 1% sibling groups of 3.

Overall the level of children waiting for an adoptive placement in Wales is falling.

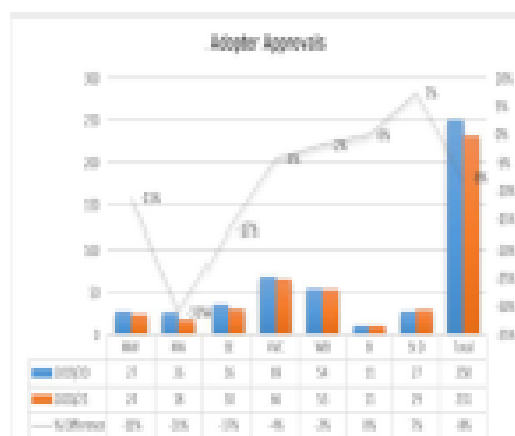


Adopters

Initial enquiries continued to rise with 2,163 received, a 23% increase compared to last year. All agencies experienced an increase in enquiries apart from St David's.



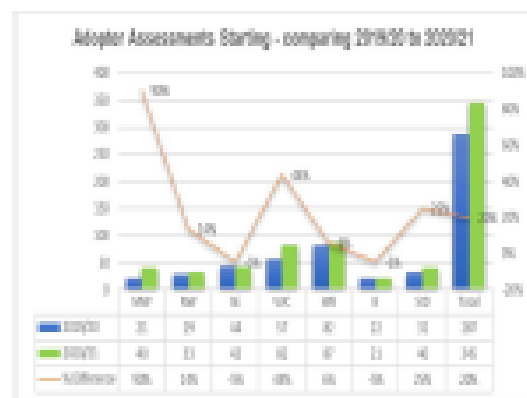
Each agency set goals for Adopter Approvals in 2020/21; the regional targets were ambitious in their aims to increase approvals which was felt achievable in the pre Covid context. In the event, Adopter approvals reduced by 8% compared to 2019/20 with 231 families approved. This is mainly reflective of the more challenging context in which assessments, particularly visits and medicals have been conducted.



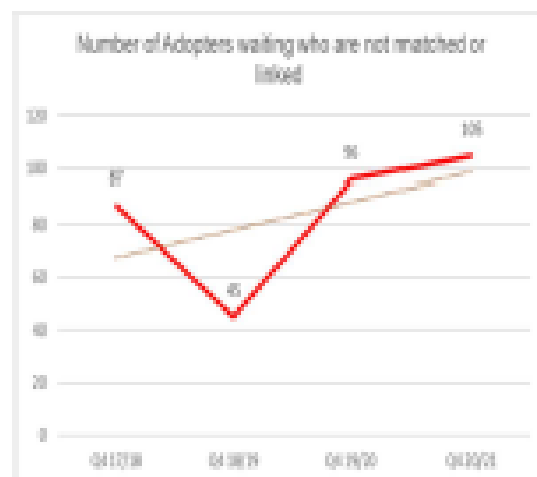
Despite the challenging conditions, 65% of adopters were approved within the 6 month benchmark.

MM	MN	SE	WVC	MB	B3	SD	Total
50%	50%	70%	70%	70%	6%	50%	65%

Adopter assessments starting continued to increase with 345 commenced an increase of 20%. All except two agencies are showing an increase.



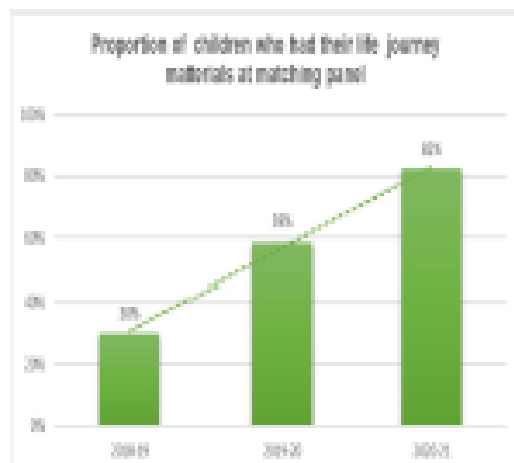
The number of adopters waiting also increased. Of these 72% were approved within the previous 12 months.



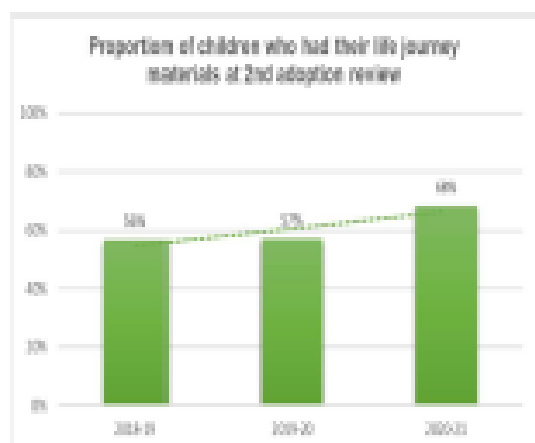
This is something that NAS will interrogate this year to identify any implications for recruitment as well as starting to collect qualitative data on this.

Adoption Support

Life Journey materials available at the matching panel continues to improve with this in place for 230, or 82% of the children matched. Two regions, NW and SE, improved their performance significantly.



Life Journey materials available by the time of the child's 2nd adoption review is also improving in all but one region with this in place for 151, or 68% of the children placed. The benchmark is 100% which has been achieved by MW.

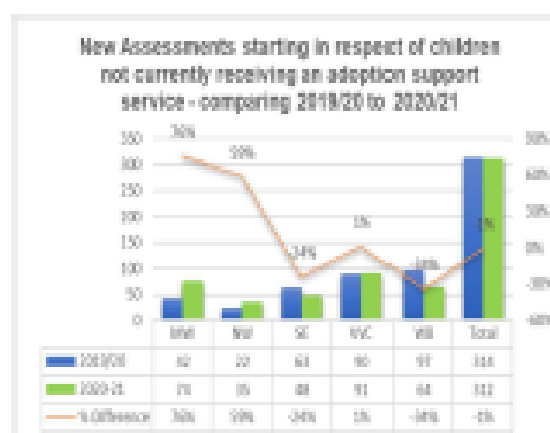


These two life journey measures differ so in order for improvements at matching to also be seen at 2nd review more activity is required.

This is an area where the investment in capacity to undertake this work appears

to be having the desired impact. There are now good indicators of overall improvement which regions can build upon including to interrogate further e.g. monitoring where materials are not in place at 2nd review.

New adoption support assessments starting stayed at a similar level overall. There is significant variance between regions, however, with MW showing a 76% increase to WB showing a 34% decrease.



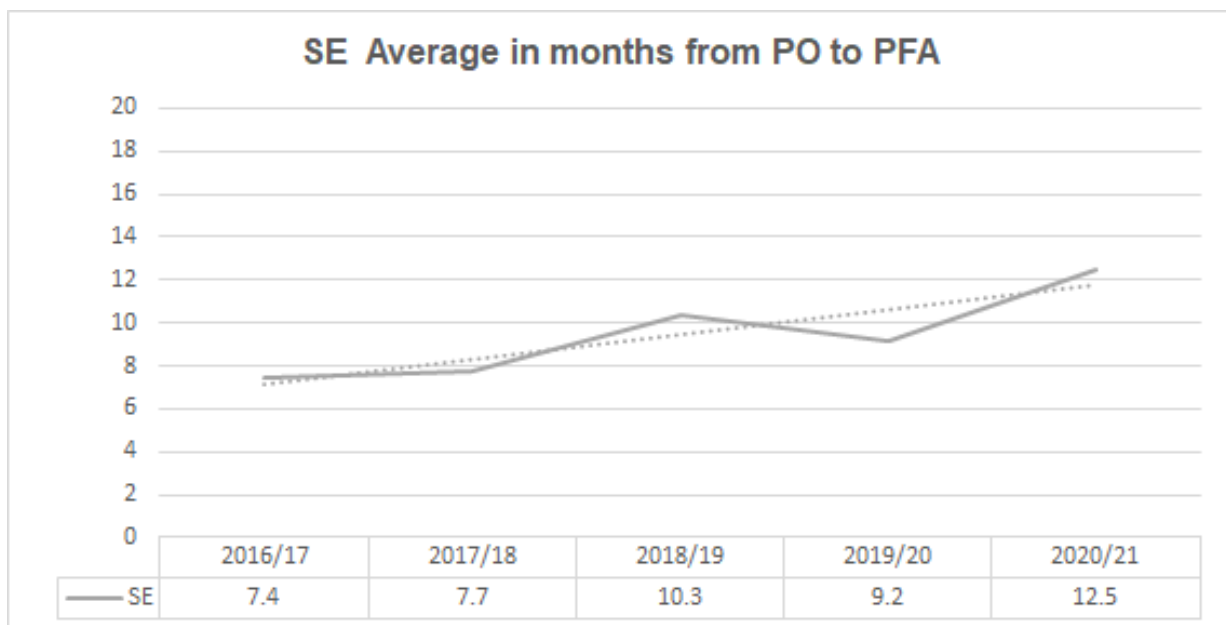
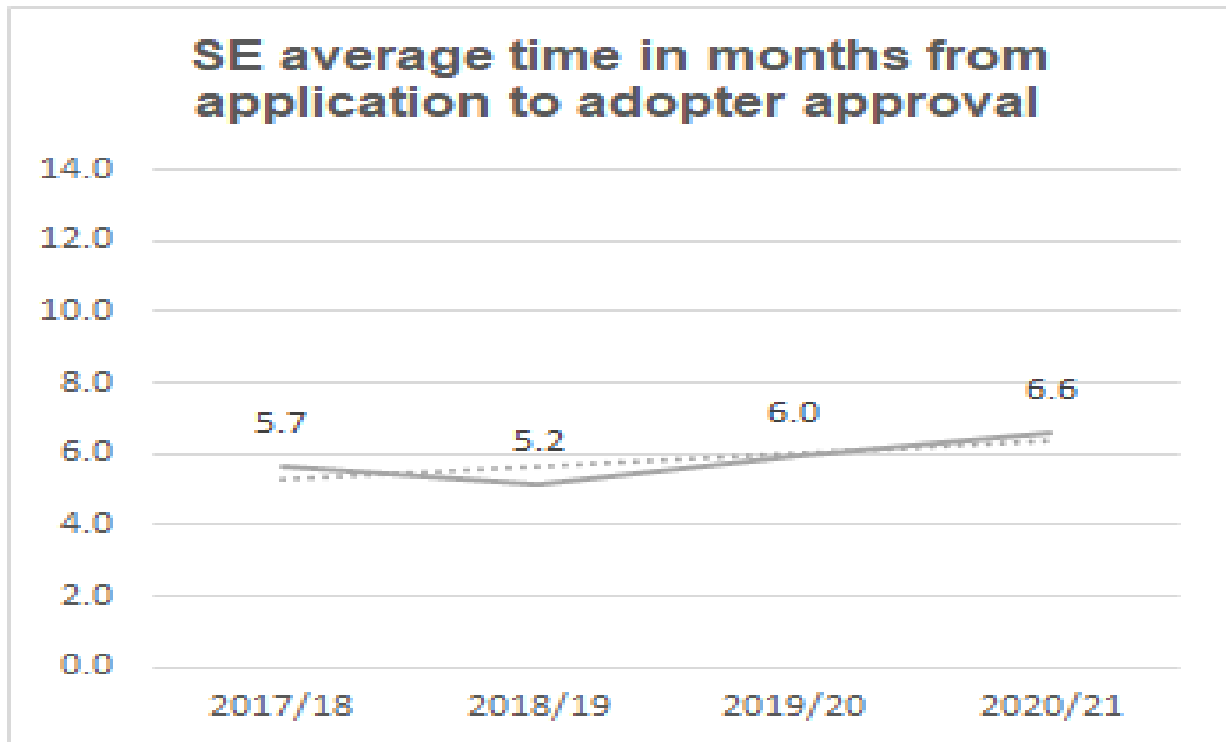
Many of the enquiries are for longer term support so the impact of this will be longer term. Services reported greater stress in families as the year progressed and further episodes of lockdown proved more difficult to cope with. Conversely, the pattern of services is changing with some of new services such as TESSA and Connected being available according to need and without a formal assessment as well as improved levels of support being generally available. This has led to improved satisfaction and ability to manage reported by some families.

NAS Central Team June 2021

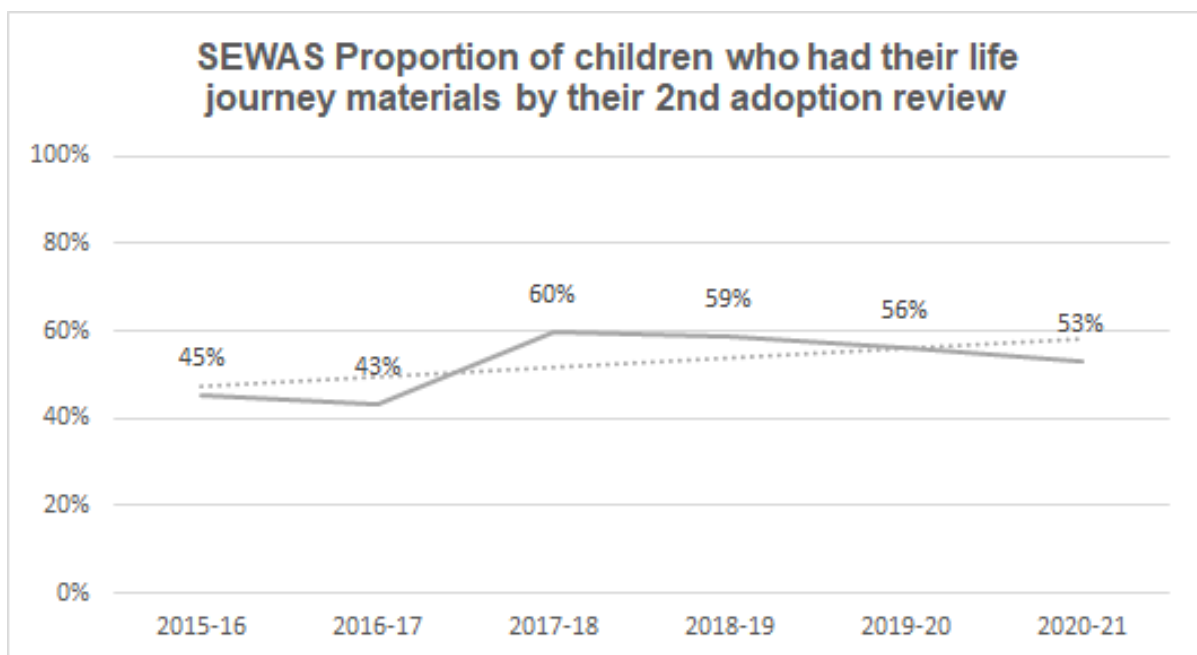
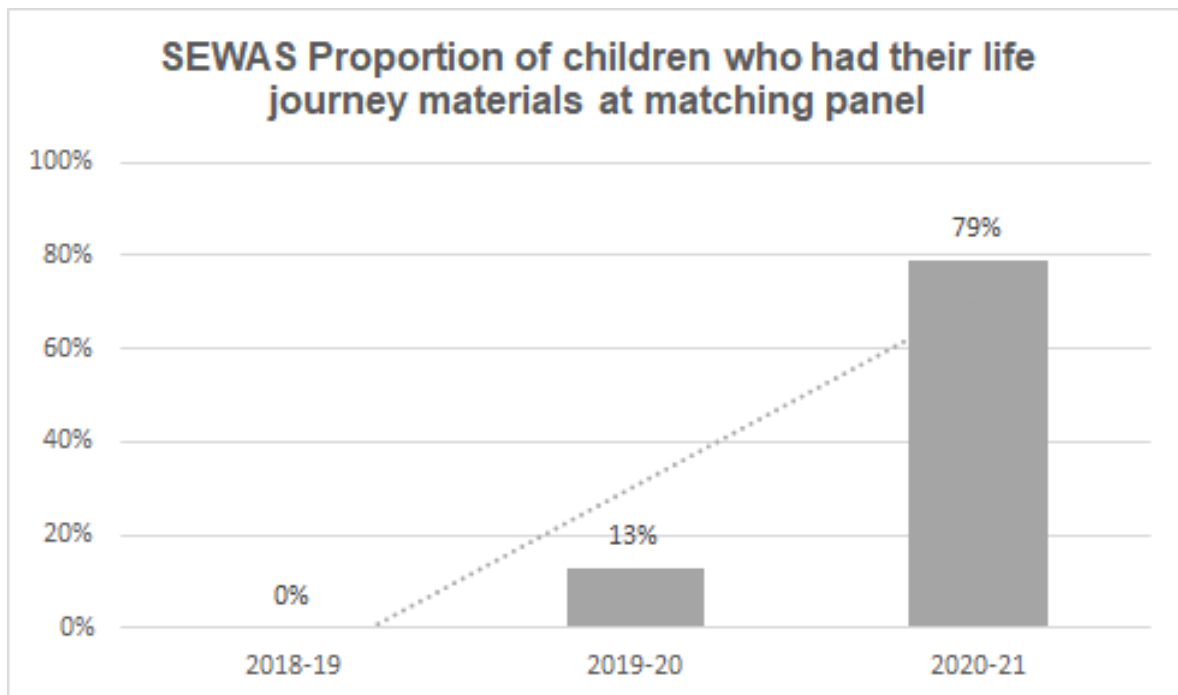
APPENDIX 2

Adopter Assessment Timeframes - 70% of approvals met the 6-month benchmark from application to approval during 2020/21, compared to 65% for all of Wales.

The average time for SEWAS was 6.6 months compared to 6.9 months for the whole of Wales.



Life Journey Work



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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: **18th November 2021**
Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme: 20th January 2022**
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	04.11.21			18.11.21			

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present to Members the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 20th January 2022 for discussion and agreement.
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 Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's revised Corporate Plan, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 Effective work programmes are essential to ensure that the work of scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services.
 - 2.4 The Committee's Forward Work Programme was agreed in June 2021, 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.
 - 2.5 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 20th January 2022, 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 20th January 2022, as presented.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme – Meeting on 20th January 2022

Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

Date	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Executive / Council Meeting
Thursday 20th January 2022 Deadline: Thursday 6th January 2022	Corporate Parenting Progress Report	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the progress made against the Corporate Parenting Action Plan	Tanya Evans	Executive Information - 02.03.21
	Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy Monitoring	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of progress in relation to the strategy 2020-25.	Tanya Evans	Executive – 02.03.21
	Integrated Care Fund (ICF) update	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the progress made in relation to ongoing sustainability of grant funded(ICF) services	Alyson Hoskins	Executive – 02.03.21
	Director of Social Services Quarter 1 and 2 update	Performance Monitoring Members to receive the quarterly update of the Director of Social Services Annual report.	Damien McCann	Executive – 02.03.21
	Future model of assistive technology / telecare provision	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of proposals to provide an enhanced telecare / assistive technology offer to promote independence and meet personal outcomes	Alyson Hoskins	Executive – 15.12.21
	Social Workers Pay and Incentives	Members to receive a report in relation to Social Workers Pay and Incentives.	Damien McCann	

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