

# Director of Social Services Report 2012-13

## Part Two - Head of Safeguarding and Family Support

### Context / Overview

1. This is the fourth report on the Safeguarding and Family Support Services (SFS) in Bridgend written by the Head of Service within the Annual Council Reporting Framework. Based primarily on self-assessment, it has also been informed by feedback and consultations with a range of colleagues within the service, partner agencies and service users themselves. Consideration has been given to the range, quality and effectiveness of our services with particular attention given to how services are impacting on outcomes for the children and families that we serve.
2. Safeguarding children is everybody's business and in Bridgend we recognise that this is an area which we have to get right in order to allow every child and young person in Bridgend to remain safe from harm and to achieve their full potential.
3. The role that public services play in safeguarding children continues to attract significant media and public attention. There is no doubt that high profile, child abuse cases, publically reported in England and Wales, continue to influence a steady increase in the number of children placed on the child protection register and those who become looked after. In Bridgend, this is also influenced by high numbers of reported incidence of domestic violence where children have been present, parental substance misuse and the associated neglect of children. Comparatively higher rates of teenage pregnancies in Bridgend have also resulting in an increase of babies becoming looked which continues to be an issue of concern. Responding, the Council has invested in an array of new preventative and early intervention services and services providing intensive family support to families with children on the edge of care.
4. In 2012-13, the service received 3,142 contacts from professionals and members of the public and, of these, 1,007 were assessed as referrals where a form of safeguarding intervention was required and where initial assessments were initiated. In addition to these initial assessments, a further 398 initial assessments were completed arising out of new concerns raised on existing open cases. In total, 1,405 initial assessments were completed throughout the year. Initial assessments establish whether a child is in need and additionally whether the child is in need of protection. These assessments must be completed within 7 working days of the referral being received. Once an initial assessment has established that a child is in need, a decision should be made about whether to complete a core assessment. The

core assessment builds on the initial assessment and is an in-depth assessment which examines the developmental needs of the child, the capacity of the parents or care givers to respond to their needs within the family and community context. The core assessment can provide a sound evidence base for professional judgements on whether services would be helpful to a child and family, and, if so, the types of service most likely to bring about good outcomes for the child. During 2012-13, 502 core assessments were completed.

5. In Bridgend, the number of Looked After Children (LAC) rose by 12.2% from 345 on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 to 387 on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2013. The number of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR) also rose from 131 on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012, to 161 on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2013, a 23% increase.
6. During 2011-12, whilst it was acknowledged that the service had shown continuous improvements in both, performance indicators and quality of provision, it was acknowledged that there were still some areas where service improvements could be made. It is in these areas, coupled with areas noted for improvement in the CSSIW 2012-13 Annual Performance Assessment Report, which we have continued to focus our efforts for improvement throughout the past year.

7. **Service Achievements in 2012–2013 include:**

**Improved timeliness of responses**

- 98% of all contacts made were reviewed within 24 hours.
- 88% of initial assessments completed within statutory timescales.
- 98% of reviews of LAC, children on the CPR and Children in Need were carried out within the statutory timescale compared to 87% the previous year.

**Improvements in planning for LAC**

- 96% of first placements during the year began with a care plan in place compared to 89% in 2011-12.
- 96.5% of LAC had a plan for permanence in place at the second review due date compared to 93.8% previously.

**Maintaining a stable workforce**

- Workforce remained stable with all teams being permanently staffed; staff retention rates significantly improved and team managers have benefitted from improved supervision.

**Improvements in PIs across a wide range of activities, including:**

- 100% of eligible children had a pathway plan in place as required throughout the year compared to 96.2% the previous year.
- 88% of young people formerly looked after at the age of 19 were engaged in education, training or employment compared with 29.4% the previous year. This is a significant improvement.

- Adoption Service exceeded its target of 14 children to be placed for adoption with 21 children actually being placed.

#### **Service developments:**

- Just @sk Plus Service launched in 2011-12 became fully operational and delivering holistic, effective services to young people 15 - 25 years old.
- Regional IFFS service launched in February 2013.

### **8. Safeguarding and Family Support – Priorities for Improvement 2012-13**

#### **Access to Services**

- Improve information available to looked after children and their families about their rights and the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities.
- Improve the number and range of foster placements available.

#### **Assessment/Care Management**

- Continue to improve workload management and increase the proportion of children looked after or in need allocated to a qualified social worker.
- Increase the number of good quality, looked after children's personal education plans completed within 20 school days of a child entering or joining a new school.
- Improve performance in relation to statutory visits made to looked after children.
- Achieve placement stability and then effective transition into adulthood for looked after children and young people.
- Continue to improve the quality and consistency of initial and core assessments through team based training and updating guidance.
- Improved support for looked after children; in particular minimising school moves and the provision of annual health assessments.

#### **Range of Services**

- Extend the reach of integrated family support services to support both earlier intervention and families with acute and complex needs.

#### **Quality of service and quality assurance**

- Maintain a focus on the quality of decision-making, and ensure the reasons for decisions are consistently recorded, including better capture of service users' views.
- Improve how we share the learning that comes out of quality assurance activities with front line social work practitioners, managers and other staff.
- Launch audit tool for use by senior managers to examine the quality of supervision.

- Ensure that Elected Members have support to undertake their corporate parenting responsibilities and that the scrutiny arrangements maintain their robust approach.

### **Service User/Carer Engagement and Feedback**

- Further engagement of service users in both the shaping of services and decisions that affect them personally.
- Ensure that carer's views are used in the review of the quality of foster care.

### **Performance management and improvement**

- Planning for the upgrading of our information systems so that we can take account of our integrated service model and the need for greater consistency in information systems across Wales.
- Continue to implement the improvement activities identified as part of the *Workwise* project and keep a running total of what efficiencies and performance improvements are being achieved.
- Consider better analysis of data to influence planning and allocation of financial resources.

### **Leadership & Culture**

- Implement a revised permanent senior management restructure.
- Improve communication with staff and their opportunities to influence service developments.

## **GETTING HELP**

### **Access to Services**

9. Our Safeguarding and Family Support Services (SFS) aim to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people who are in need. Services are either provided directly or commissioned to ensure they are accessible to all children, young people and their families who need them in order to support the children and young people achieve their full potential. We have good arrangements in place for children, young people and their families to access help, advice and support around the clock. Our Emergency Duty Team (EDT) responds to concerns about the safety and protection of children raised by professionals and members of the public outside of office hours.
10. Our county-wide Assessment Team, open during normal office hours, receives contacts and referrals from members of the public and professionals in respect of safeguarding and child welfare matters. During 2012-13 the Assessment Team received slightly fewer contacts than in the previous year, 3,142 compared to 3,201. This decrease is likely to be partly influenced by the Councils improved multi-agency prevention, early intervention and family support provision.
11. Nearly all contacts received by the service were reviewed, and a decision made about the necessary course of action, within 24 hours of

the initial contact (98.2% compared to 92.8% last year). Where people are eligible for a service, we endeavour to provide good and timely responses to their needs. To ensure this, there are robust screening processes in place which promptly assess people's needs to identify children who are at the highest risk of harm in order to ensure that appropriate interventions ensue. In 2012-13 the percentage of referrals that were re-referrals within 12 months was 12.3 compared to 9.1% in 2011-12.

12. In 2010, we established a joint project with the police to jointly assess, on a daily bases, all reports of domestic abuse which may impact on the welfare of children.
13. The joint screening (which was a CAIU project not a CAIT project as referred to in the ACRF for the last two years), was incorporated into core business following the cessation of the formal project, so is no longer a project as such.
14. Since the Police have moved to the 'hub' in Cowbridge, they have been very clear in saying that they can no longer continue to maintain the database which captures those cases that are screened out, due to volume of work now that their responsibilities cover two local authorities. On that basis, there has been some discussion with Health and Education in terms of other mechanisms to ensure that our decision making at the joint screening stage is robust and to seek agreement for changes in the current processes. Consequently, our processes are likely to change in July 2013 after a review meeting with the Police. However, this will make future data capture more challenging with regards to those PPD 1s screened out.
15. More positively, the working arrangement has continued to strengthen professional relationships between the Assessment Team and the Police and over the last year we have been sharing knowledge/ experiences/practices with other local authorities.

	PPD1 Num	PDD1 %
PPD1 Screened out at the CAIU	1142	41.0%
PDD1 Contacts that have come into BCBC	1646	59.0%
Total PPD1 Contacts	2788	100.0%

16. Of the 1,405 initial assessments completed throughout the year 88.3% were completed within statutory timescales, compared to the previous year's figure of 92.1%. Whilst this is somewhat disappointing to us, this slight drop in performance comes within the context of significantly increased work pressures placed on social workers as a result of rising LAC and CP numbers during the year. For the contacts made to the Assessment Team that did not proceed to initial assessment,

appropriate advice/information was provided or referrals were made to other means of advice and family support.

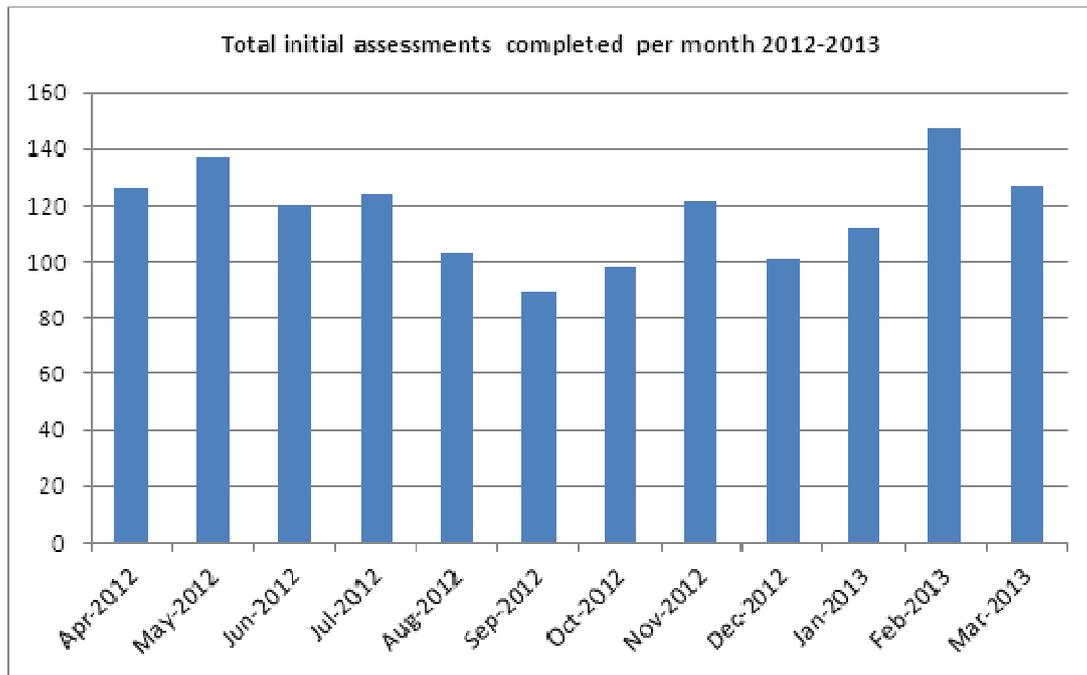
17. We provide a comprehensive range of information to children, young people and families about the services available, how these can be accessed and what they can expect to receive. During 2012-13 we refreshed the information available to children who may become looked after, those who are looked after and those who have been looked after. We have also refreshed the information available to children and families in respect of our child protection procedures and in particular information about what families can expect when attending case conferences, including information on how to complain.
18. In Bridgend, we actively promote feedback from service users about the full range of services we deliver. This is used to help shape and refine the way we do things in order to achieve improvements. Feedback is gathered through questionnaires, face to face consultations and participation events with children and young people. When cases are closed, SNAP questionnaires are sent to parents/carers and the children themselves seeking feedback on how they perceived the service they received. A quarterly report is produced that collates and analyses the returned SNAP questionnaires which is shared with managers so they can understand how service users feel about the service they have received.
19. During 2012-13, the service received 63 complements from service and professionals engaged with our services compared with 46 in 2011-12. The table attached (Appendix II) provides some examples of complements received throughout the year.
20. During 2012-13, we received 67 unregistered complaints which were quickly dealt with by Team Managers. We received 15 formal complaints which were dealt with at stage 1 of the complaints procedure, meaning they were resolved informally by front line managers, avoiding further investigation. All complaints are taken seriously, investigated and aim to seek prompt resolution. Examples of these are detailed in the table attached (Appendix III).
21. Service users who are in receipt of either short or long services are encouraged to participate in all stages of the care planning and review processes. A partnership approach is taken with service users and other agencies, such as health, education and the police in order to achieve more positive outcomes for children and young people.
22. Mechanisms are in place for case file audit, within a quality assurance framework, which include consideration of how well the child and family are being consulted and engaged in relation to care plans. Case notes are also reviewed by managers as a further means of evidence of engagement and consultation with the child or young person in respect to care planning. To ensure that our care planning processes for

children evidence effective engagement with children and young people and to ensure that their wishes and feelings are recorded, during 2012-13, many of the councils our ICS exemplars have been redesigned, including initial and core assessments, to include mandatory data fields to record whether the child has been seen during the assessment process and to record his/her wishes and feelings. In addition, ICS exemplars for LAC, CP and CIN cases now all have mandatory data fields for recording the child's wishes and feelings. Efforts are made to ensure that parents and carers provide their views by contributing to written assessments, attending review meetings and providing feedback on the range of services they are in receipt of.

23. We encourage the attendance of children, young people and their parents are encouraged to attend LAC, CP and CIN reviews and their contributions are clearly recorded. Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) routinely meet with children, young people and their parents prior to review meetings, or outside of such meeting if they are unable to attend.
24. When initial assessments are undertaken, we monitor the percentage of assessments where children are seen alone by the social worker, which in 2012-13, was 54% compared to 49% the year before. To ensure that practitioners are being proactive in engaging and consulting with children and their families, our quality assurance framework implicitly considers engagement and consultation with the child, particularly in respect of care planning. In the autumn 2012, a senior officer was appointed to be responsible for service improvement with a particular focus on improving the quality of care planning.

### **Assessment/Case Management Services**

25. 2012-13 proved to be another exceptionally busy year for our assessment/case management teams. The table below illustrates the number of initial assessments completed throughout each month of the year.



Apr 2012	May 2012	Jun 2012	Jul 2012	Aug 2012	Sep 2012	Oct 2012	Nov 2012	Dec 2012	Jan 2013	Feb 2013	Mar 2013	Total
126	137	120	124	103	89	98	121	101	112	147	127	1405

26. Last year, it was reported that significant improvements had been made in performance in relation to the completion of core assessments within prescribed timescales with 79% of core groups being held within timescales. We acknowledged however, that more effort was required to improve the consistency of the quality of assessment. This year 73.3% of all core assessments were completed within statutory timescales, which is a fall in performance. However we are confident that the quality of assessments has improved with greater detail recorded of service users' wishes and feelings. This has been influenced by enhanced team based training, individual mentoring, supervision and audit activity.
27. For many years, like other local authorities, we have been consistently challenged due to the high number of social work practitioner vacancies within our assessment/case management teams, which led to an over reliance on agency social workers. However, throughout 2012-13, our workforce remained generally stable resulting in all staff in post being predominantly permanently employed. At the end of the year, there were very few vacancies. Retention rates across the whole service improved except for the final quarter of the year when the service did experience a number of social workers leaving to take up promotional opportunities internally or to work in local authorities nearer to their home. During the year, 13 social workers left and 30 new appointments were made, including 9 newly qualified social workers. During 2012-13, 11 social workers successfully completed their first year in practice.

## Case Management

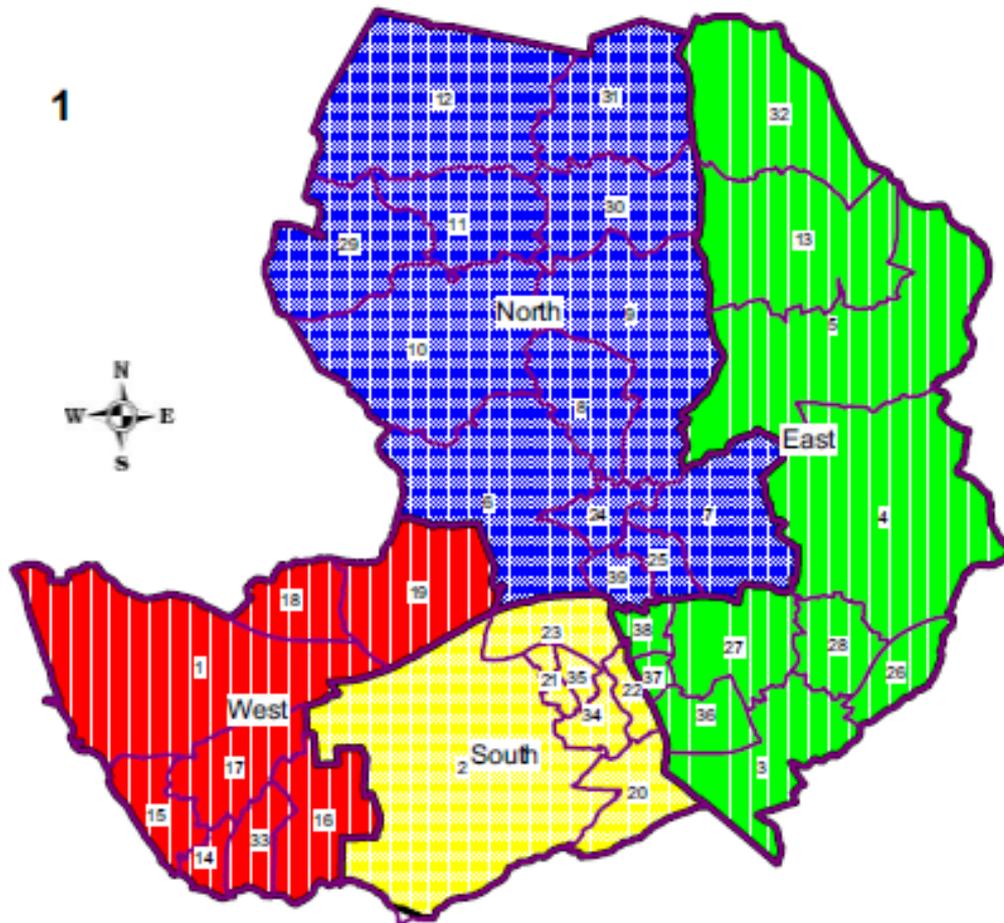
28. Throughout 2012-13, the number of children and young people who had open and active allocated cases within our Safeguarding and Family Support teams increased to 1,441 on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 from 1,374 on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012. This is a 4.9% increase on the previous year. The chart below shows the breakdown of open cases to each of the service teams on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013.

### *Safeguarding and Family Support Service Teams*

Team	Children in Need	Child Protection	Looked After Children	Grand Total
Adoption Team	2		8	10
After Care Team	96		33	129
Assessment Team	157	1	10	168
Bridgend Foster Care Team	4			4
Disabled Children's Team	192	3	17	212
Safeguarding Team East	121	23	64	208
Safeguarding Team North	150	61	59	270
Safeguarding Team South	90	34	89	213
Safeguarding Team West	105	39	81	225
Youth Offending Team	1		1	2
Grand Total	918	161	362	1441

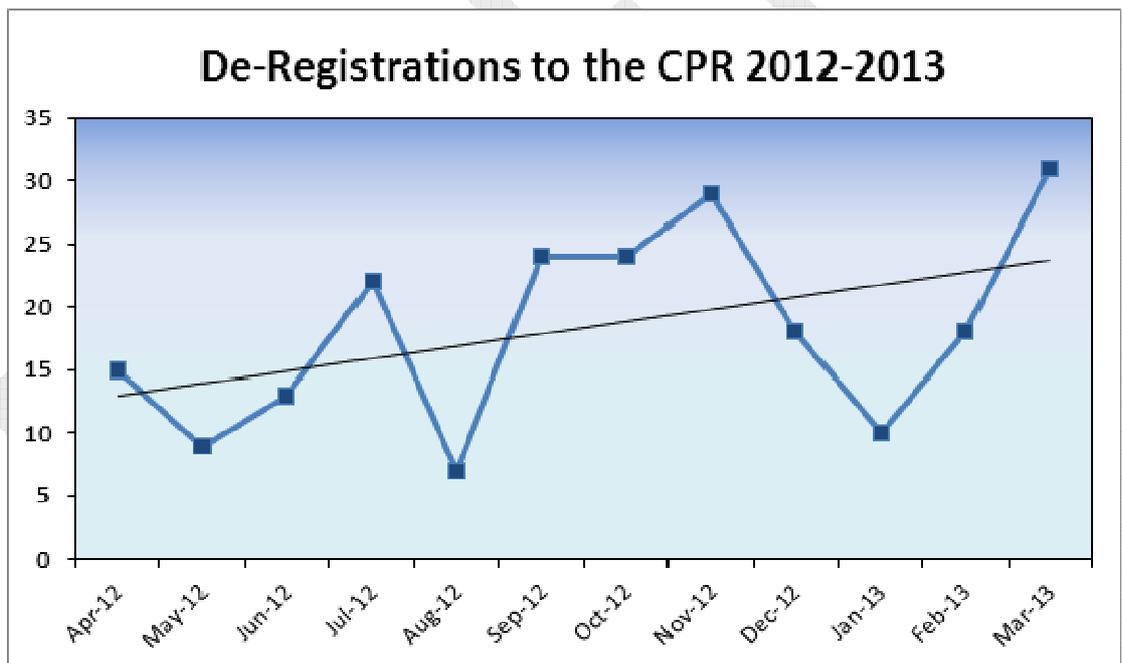
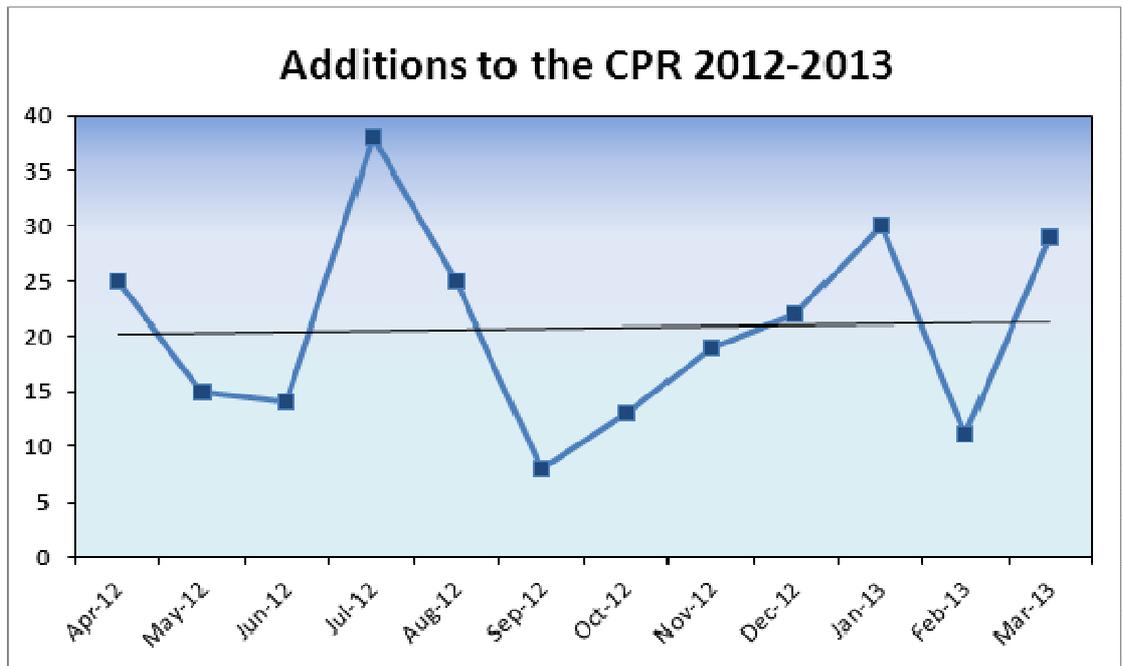
29. Inevitably, the increase in open cases across safeguarding teams has resulted in higher caseloads for many social workers. In response, the Council will be investing in the creation of an additional safeguarding team manager and a number of new social work posts. This will result in team managers having fewer social workers to supervise and social workers having smaller caseloads. Our four safeguarding teams have continued to provide services to children and families on a locality patch basis. The diagram below illustrates the localities within Bridgend which each of the four safeguarding teams team serves, along with the Wards. The Just @sk Plus Team, Assessment Team, Disabled Children's Team Youth Offending Team, IFSS, Family Support Team, Adoption, Fostering and our Connecting Families Team all provide county wide services.

## Safeguarding Teams Geographical Boundaries Within the Borough with Electoral Divisions



### **Child Protection Activity**

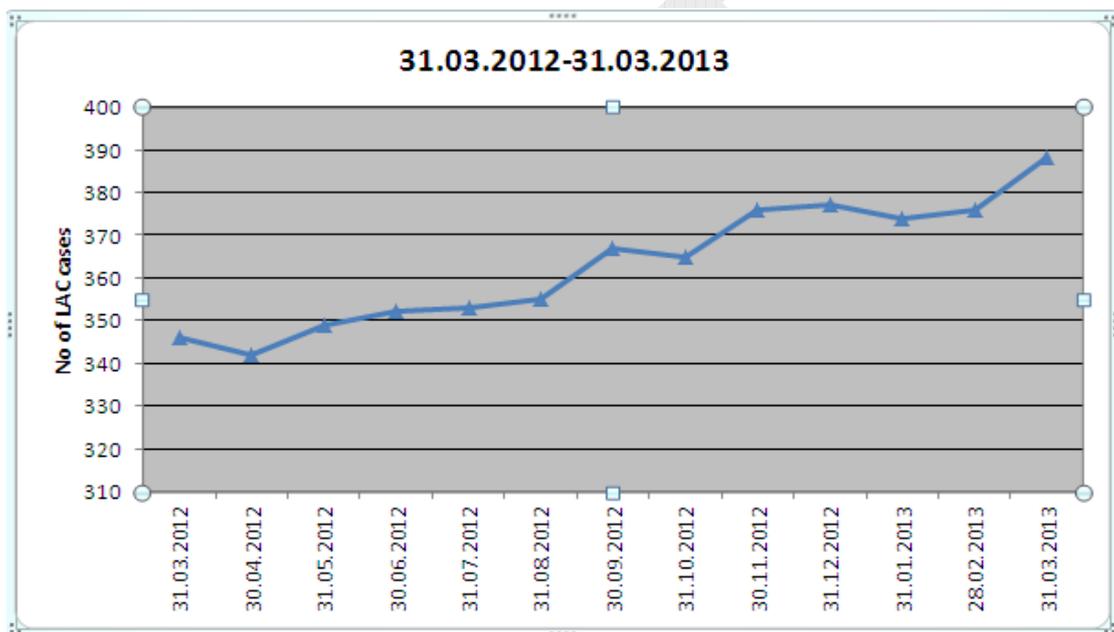
30. Throughout 2012-13, all child protection cases were allocated to qualified social workers. The names of 249 children were added to the Child Protection register (CPR) compared to 166 in 2011-12. 220 children's names were removed from the CPR, compared to 197 in 2011-12. This demonstrates significant child protection activity throughout the year. The tables below show the pattern of CP registrations and de-registrations during the year.



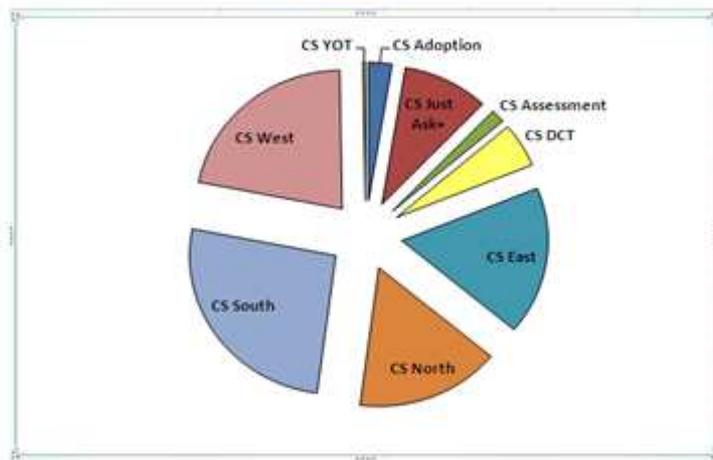
31. During 2012-13, 91.7% of initial child protection case conferences were held within 15 working days of the strategy discussion and 87.6% of initial core groups were held within 10 working days of the initial child protection case conference in line with agency and Welsh Government expectations. For CP reviews 98.7% were conducted within statutory timescales throughout 2012-13. This is a significant achievement in the context of increasing workloads and the associated pressures and demands placed on the service.

## Looked After Children

32. Despite the 12.2% rise in the number LAC in Bridgend, at no point did a LAC case remain unallocated. We acknowledge, however, that there were occasions when LAC cases have not always been allocated to a qualified social worker. On these rare occasions, LAC stable cases are allocated to social work assistants who have held these cases for several years and are closely supervised by qualified senior social workers. Notwithstanding this, we have increased the percentage of our LAC cases allocated to qualified workers from 91% in March 2012 to 93% on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013. The table below shows the pattern of the increase in LAC numbers throughout the year;

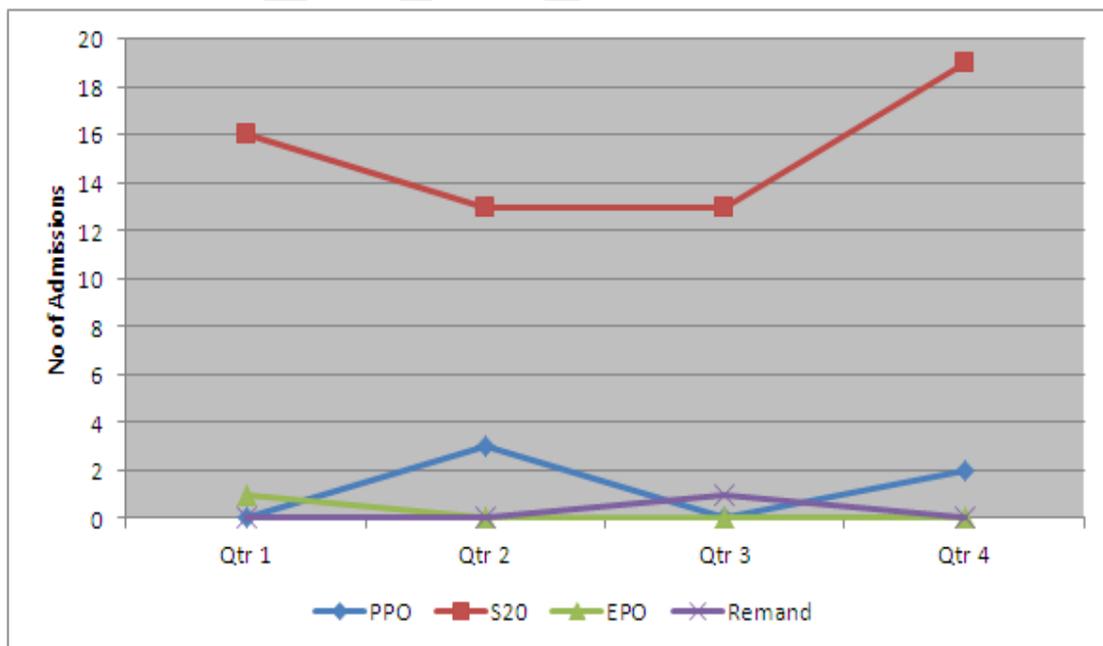


## LAC Population per Team at 31.03.2013



Inevitably throughout the year, children become LAC as a result of emergency situations through a number of legal routes. The table below shows the legal status of children who became LAC as a result of emergency situations.

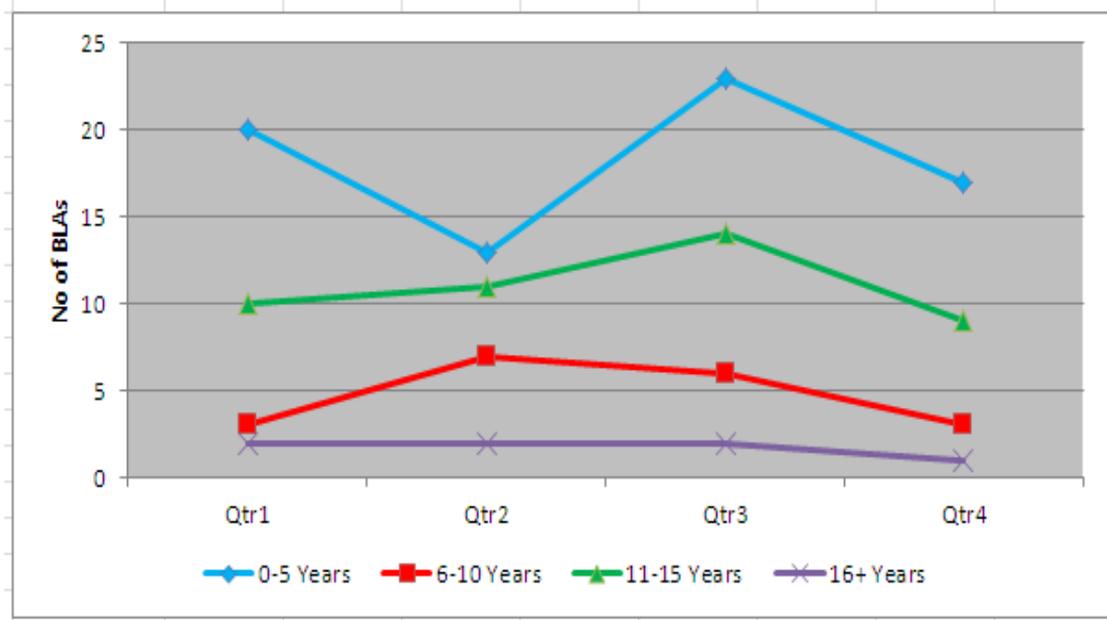
Legal Status of Emergency Admissions  
01.04.2012 – 31.03.2013



**Key:** PPO – Police Protection Orders. EPO – Emergency protection Orders  
S.20 - Accommodated by agreement with the parents. Remand. Remanded into the care of the LA.

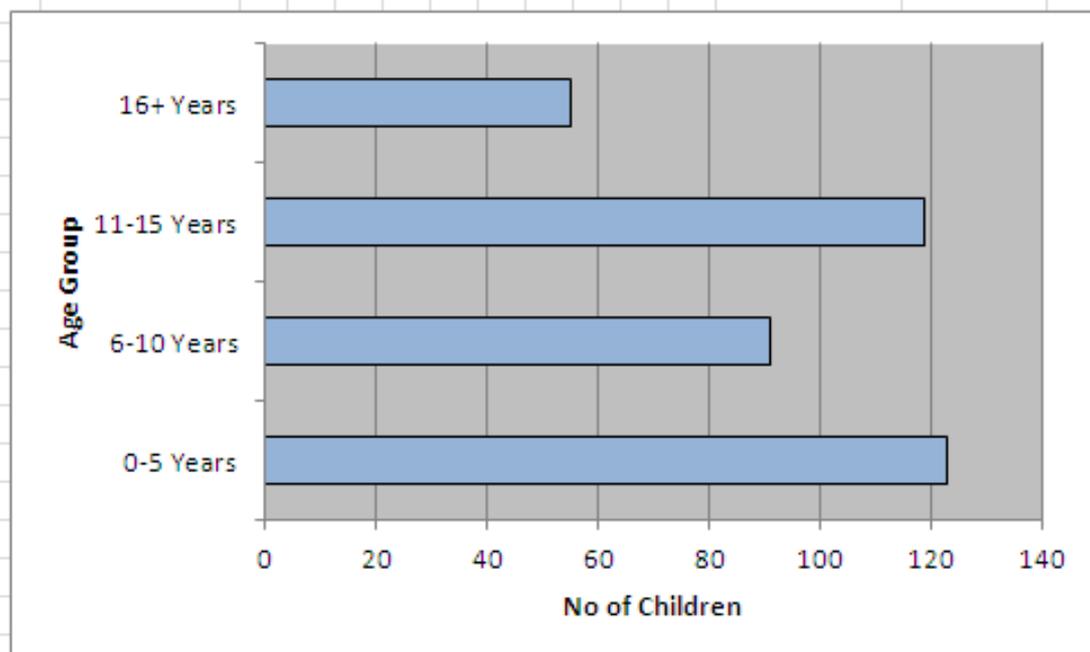
The table below shows the age profile of children who became LAC throughout 2012/13

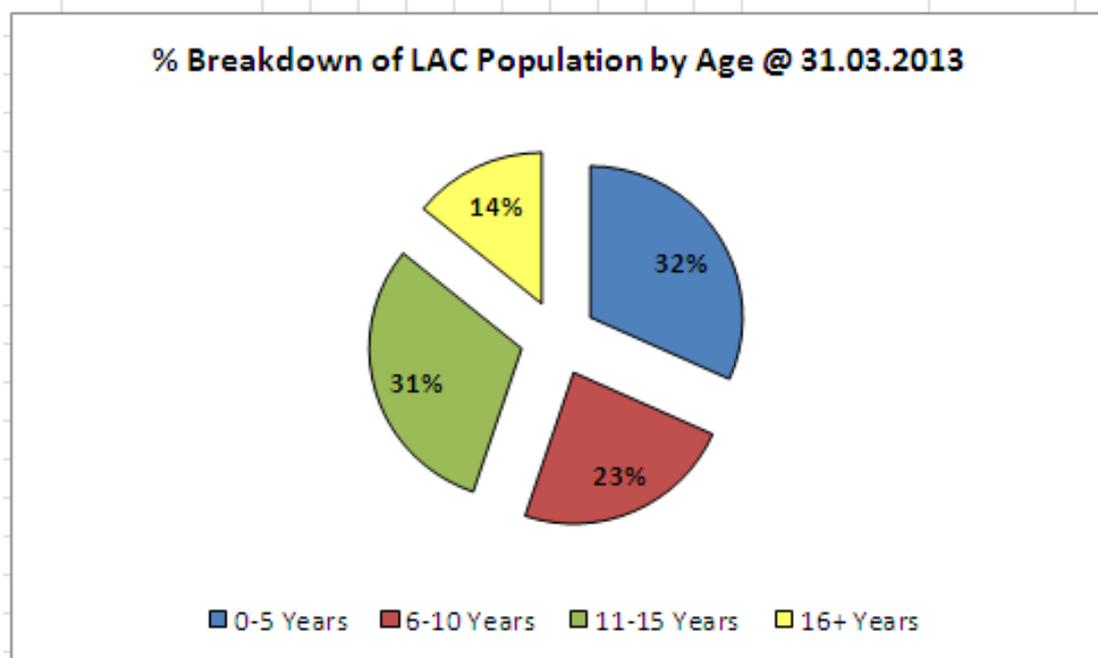
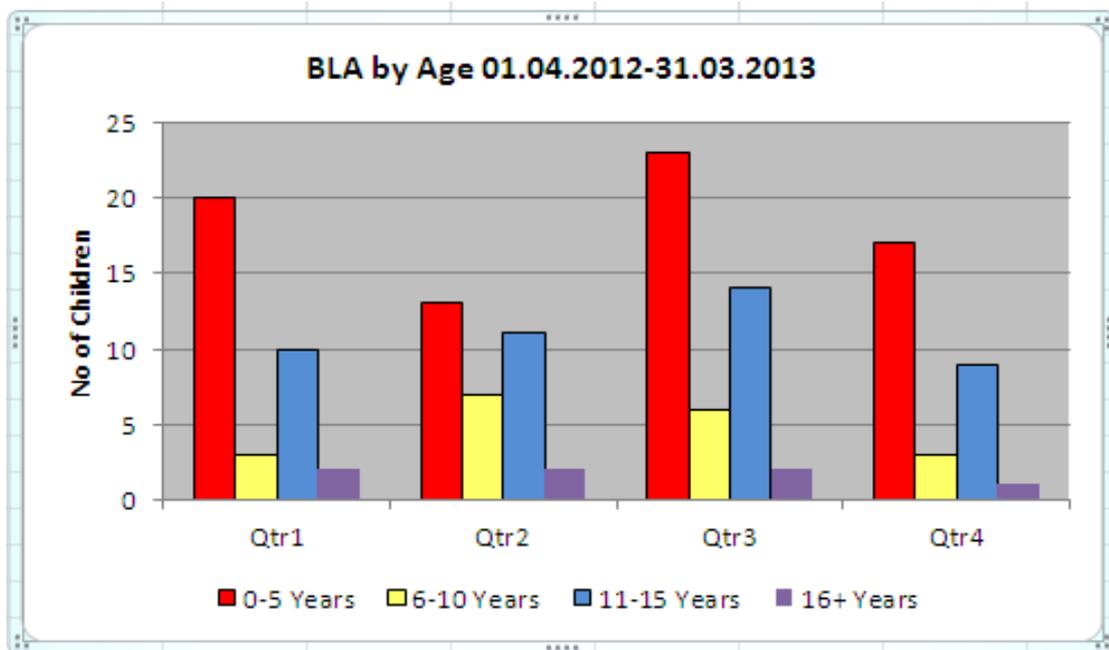
Become Looked After by Age  
01.04.2012 – 31.03.2013



The tables below shows the breakdown of Bridgend's LAC population at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013. This clearly illustrates that a higher proportion of LAC are within the 0-5 and 11-15 year old cohort.

BCBC LAC Population by Age at  
31.03.2013



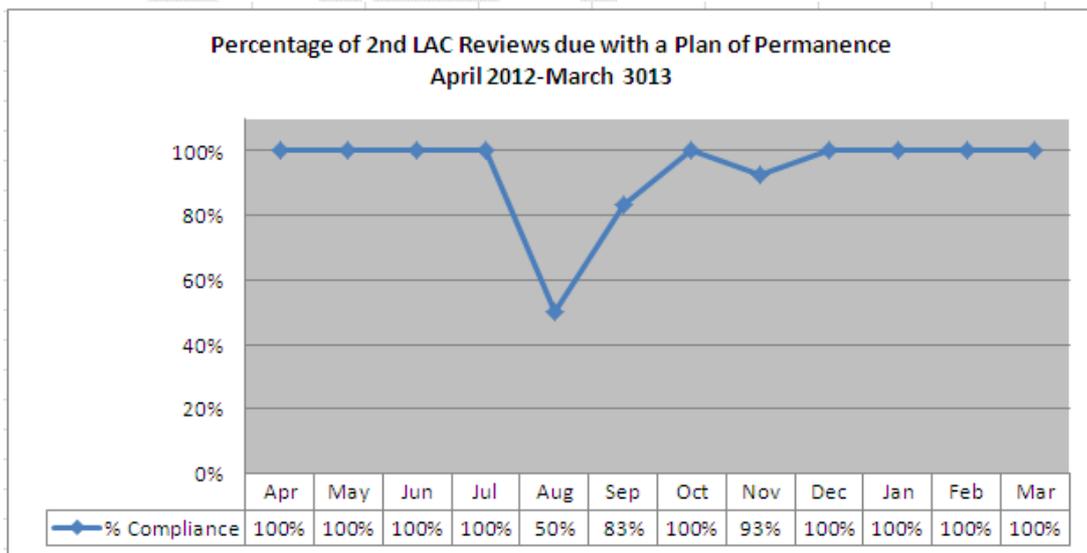


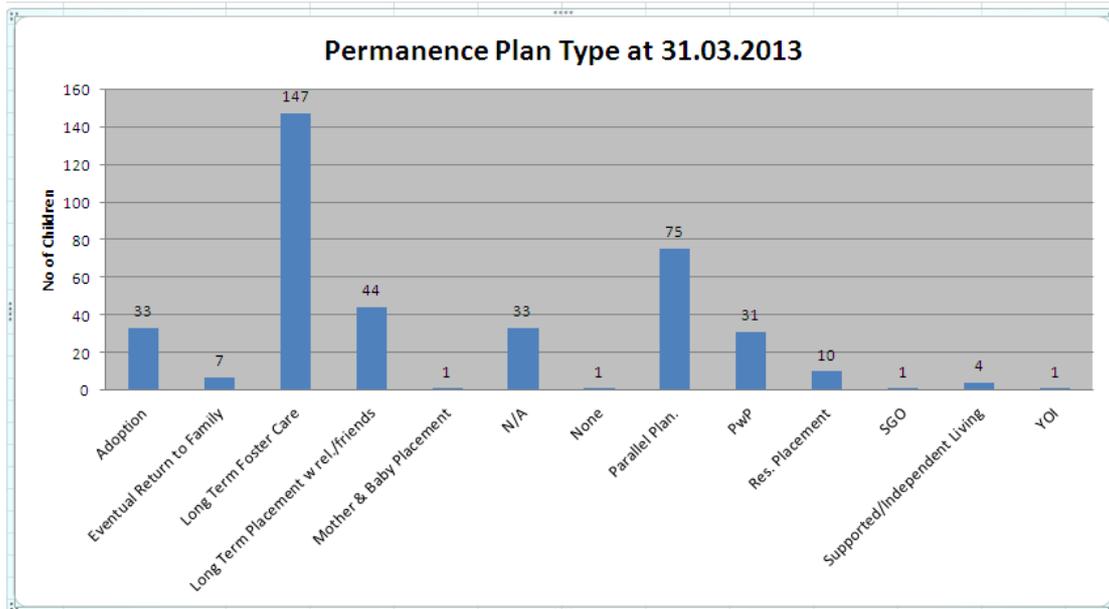
33. Throughout the last year, children and young people have continued to benefit from having a dedicated LAC Health Visitor based within the safeguarding and family support service working closely with social workers to ensure that the specific health needs of all LAC, irrespective of their age, are constantly promoted and considered paramount. Social workers have also benefitted from our established working relationship with CAMHS through monthly triage clinics.
34. The increase in both the number of children added to the child protection register and the increased numbers of looked after children during the year has required us to increase the number of legal surgeries held. These meetings are now held weekly to consider our

duty to apply legal safeguards as appropriate in line with the Public Law Outline (PLO). Legal surgeries are attended by a senior lawyer, principal officer and key professionals involved in the cases being considered. Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013, 32 full Care Orders and 73 Interim Care Orders were granted by the courts and during the same period, 4 Interim Residence Orders, 3 Residence Orders and 14 Special Guardianship Orders were also granted by the courts. 13 Care Orders were discharged.

**Permanency Planning for LAC**

- 35. We continue to implement a specific project aimed at ensuring that all LAC have a permanent plan for their long term future. The purpose of permanency planning is to give each LAC a greater sense of security, and, if possible, a stable family life. We have recruited an additional social worker specifically to progress plans for children and young people where it has been identified they would more appropriately be looked after under the auspices of either a residence or special guardianship order.
- 36. During 2012-13, 95.7% of LAC placements began with a care plan in place at first placement compared to 88.7% the previous year. There has been sustained improvement throughout 2012-13 in the number of Looked After Children who had a permanence plan in place at their second LAC review, resulting in 96.5% of looked after children having a permanency plan in place throughout the year. It is acknowledged that all LAC children require a plan for permanence to ensure stability and to avoid them drifting in care.





37. Performance in relation to personal education plans (PEPs) being in place for LAC within 20 days of a child starting school has also improved as a result of embedding a more robust reporting system that better captures compliance and completion of PEPs. At the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013, 56% of all Looked After Child had a PEP in pace within 20 school days of entering care or joining a new school.
38. Last year, whilst significant improvement had been made in relation to our performance around statutory visits made to LAC within timescale, it was acknowledged that further improvement was required. Whilst we have been able to reassure ourselves that the vast majority of visits have been undertaken regularly and children are being seen, there remains an issue in terms of visits being promptly written up. To address this, we have streamlined the process required and senior managers have facilitated team based training for all social work practitioners. Nevertheless, we were only able to evidence that 71.5% of statutory visits required to LAC were completed in accordance with regulations. In the coming year, we intend to further revise our practice guidance and procedures to streamline and simplify the statutory visiting processes to realise continuous improvement.
39. Within Bridgend, we have a comprehensive permanence policy which underpins our proactive approach to supporting a range of options for permanence. All staff are clear about the significance of permanence planning in achieving best outcomes for children and the importance of LAC reviews being well planned and on time. In 2012-13, 97% of LAC review meetings were conducted within statutory timescales which is a significant achievement.
40. During 2012-13, we have continued to embed our relatively new team structures within our case management services. The rationale for this change has been clearly communicated both internally and externally

in that it sought to provide greater support to front line team managers, reduce the number of case transfers and provide social workers with opportunities to further develop their compendium of social work skills. This has improved both consistency in practice and the relationships between children and families with their social worker.

41. Last year, I reported that we needed to do more to streamline our assessment/case management processes to avoid duplication and where possible lessen existing bureaucratic systems and processes. In response, during the past year, the assessment and safeguarding team were involved in a comprehensive 'workwise' review.
42. 'Workwise' is the term used by Bridgend Council to describe the application of transformational change techniques to help bring about service improvement and generate efficiencies. During early 2011, the Safeguarding and Family Support Service area was prioritised for participation in the Workwise programme. A project officer was assigned in May 2011 to assist the service to understand the change programme.
43. To deliver on the incremental based changes identified through the workwise project, four workstreams were established in January 2012. The work streams were aligned to the four central processes within the service:
  - front door assessment ;
  - child in need (CIN) processes;
  - child protection (CP) processes;
  - looked after children (LAC) processes.
44. Alongside these work streams, the service has identified several cross cutting issues and independent projects which are required to deliver improved services. These include the:
  - rationalisation and removal of unnecessary duplication of work from the current Integrated Children's System suite of forms;
  - development of new in house training modules to combine both practice and process based training. This approach will provide a joined up approach to service staff development;
  - exploration of cutting edge ICT facilities such as tablet based working and voice recognition software;
  - adoption of Electronic Document Records Management (EDRM) software to replace the current paper based child file;
  - review of existing out of hours service provision with the aim of improving the quality of social work provision available on a 24/7 basis.
45. During 2012/13 the workwise project has successfully delivered two process changes to the visit management and case transfer processes achieving 1,140 hours of productivity improvements per year. The IRO team has successfully piloted voice recognition software which will

allow them to transcribe minutes from LAC reviews more efficiently. The Safeguarding West Team has completed the transition to electronic case files reducing the cost of print and consumables within the service as well as reducing further any risks around the protection of sensitive case file information. Roll out to the other teams within the service will continue throughout the rest of 2013 and 2014.

## THE RANGE OF SERVICES PROVIDED

### The Services Provided

46. The overall aim of the safeguarding and family support service is to respond to and assess concerns about children who may not maintain a reasonable standard of health and development without the provision of services; or who without intervention, could be at risk of suffering significant harm; or, who are disabled.
47. As a result of the work of the service, children are supported, within their families, wherever possible and their welfare monitored so that they are protected from abuse and neglect. This will help them in developing into confident and caring adults.
48. Our **assessment and case management services** currently comprise a county-wide assessment team, four generic safeguarding teams covering geographical locations within the borough and a county-wide disabled children's team. However, as previously mentioned, a fifth safeguarding team will shortly be created and in doing so teams will be assigned to one of the following geographical areas: Maesteg, Ogmore, Pencoed, Bridgend and Porthcawl. This will result in managers having fewer direct reports and social workers having considerably reduced caseloads allowing more time to work directly with children and families. It will also improve management oversight and the support and mentoring afforded to practitioners.
49. Our **family support team** work alongside the assessment and case management service to provide interventions focussed on intensive support to prevent family breakdown, parenting programmes and behaviour management. It also manages a volunteer driver scheme linked to a supervised contact service where children have been separated from their parents. The service supports families by:
  - helping to repair relationships between parents and their teenagers;
  - building confidence in parents and carers of younger children so that the children can thrive and achieve emotional well-being;
  - enabling separated children to maintain relationships with their families, while permanent plans are made for their future security.

Appendix \*\*\* shows the structure of our Family Support Intervention Services

50. Our **services for disabled children and young people** operate a 'wrap around' disability service model which brings the responsibility for all disability service under one senior officer who now assumes the strategic lead in both the management and strategic development of services for disabled children and young people, including transition to adulthood. Our disabled children's multi-agency strategy group has continued to meet bi-monthly and continues to be well attended. Specialist services for disabled children and young people are provided by virtue of their status as 'children in need' as defined in S17 (11) of The Children Act, 1989 or as looked after children.
51. Our specialist disability services which have been developed and are provided to disabled children and their families, aim to
- ensure they have the support they need to live 'ordinary lives' as a matter of course;
  - recognise that all children and young people are unique and may require different levels of support and different types of services such as short breaks depending on their needs and circumstances;
  - acknowledge that needs may change and services need to be reviewed to reflect this.
52. The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children (Wales) Regulations came into force on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2012 which state that a Local Authority must prepare a 'short break services statement' setting out details of:
- a) the range of services the local council provides,
  - b) any eligibility criteria for assessment for services,
  - c) how the services will meet the needs of carers in the area.
53. Bridgend's short breaks statement was ratified by the councils Corporate Parenting Committee and was subsequently published on the BCBC website on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2012. This will be reviewed annually and updated accordingly. A task group has been developed which involves all key stakeholders in order to further develop the 2012 Statement, with an aim to improve the participation of parents/carers and disabled children and young people.
54. Services referred to within the Short Breaks Statement include:

#### **The Disabled Children's team**

This is an assessment case management team which has specialist knowledge and experience in working with disabled children. The team is based in Glanogwr offices in Bridgend has a county wide remit. The Disabled Children's Team comprises 1 x Team Manager; 1 x Senior Practitioner; 2 x Transition Social Workers; 4 x generic Social Workers and 1 unqualified specialist worker for under 5's. To access the specialist support services, the child/young person's needs must meet the eligibility criteria for an assessment to be undertaken by the team.

### **Bakers Way Residential Short Breaks Service**

Bakers Way is a 5 bedded residential short breaks home based in the Bryncethin area of Bridgend. The home is regulated and inspected annually by CSSIW. The home has been specially adapted to provide short break stays (including overnight) for children aged 0-18 years, who have a range of disabilities, including those with more complex medical needs.

### **Family Link Short Break Service**

Family Link is a short break fostering service which is based with the Disabled Children's Team. Family Link is a regulated service which is annually inspected by CSSIW as part of the annual fostering inspection. The Family Link scheme recruits, assesses and supervises short break foster carers who provide regular, planned short break stays (within their own homes), to disabled children and young people on the open caseload of the Disabled Children's Team.

### **The Complex Needs Playscheme**

The Complex Needs Playscheme is a specialist therapeutic playscheme which operates from Heronsbridge school. The playscheme provides a specialist play and short break service to children with the most complex health needs and disabilities who would be unable to access any other play provision within the County Borough of Bridgend, due to the complexity of their needs. The playscheme operates for three days per week for two weeks in the Easter school holidays and four weeks of the summer holidays.

### **Trinity Care and Support**

Trinity Care and Support is a registered charity commissioned by Bridgend County Borough Council to provide a sitting service to the parents of disabled children and young people. The service also provides personal assistants to accompany disabled young people to engage in community based social activities.

### **Direct Payments**

Direct payments are monetary payments made by local authorities directly to individuals who have been assessed as having community care needs that are eligible for certain services (including to people who care for others). Direct payments enable individuals to purchase the assistance or services that the local authority would otherwise provide. They therefore give individuals control over their own life by providing an alternative to social care services provided by a local authority. This helps to increase opportunities for independence, social inclusion and enhanced self-esteem. Since the original legislation was passed in 1996, Direct Payments have gradually been extended to include carers, parents of disabled children, and disabled 16 and 17 year olds. Parents of disabled children and young people on the active caseload of The Disabled Children's Team are provided with packages of Direct Payment support following the outcome of an assessment. These Direct Payments are often used to employ personal assistants

who can provide care to the disabled child within their own home, or to assist disabled children and young people to engage in social activities.

The table below illustrates the number of children during the period December 2011 to December 2012:

Name of service	Numbers of children	Average frequency of visits/hours per month
Bakers Way	48	Overnight stays range from 1-4 per month. Average stays per month = 2. 10 transition aged young people receive a fortnightly Outreach service.
Family Link	17	Average of fortnightly visits/overnight stays.
Trinity Care and Support	32	A range of hours and flexible packages of support matched to identified need. Average hours per month range from 3 to 62.
Direct Payments	44 (in addition 10 cases transferred to Adult Services during period Dec 2011 – Dec 2012)	A range of hours and packages of support matched to identified need. The lowest number of hours is 3 per week for social activities (£2,387 p.a.); the highest package provides a more complicated care plan with additional hours during school holiday periods (£15,288 p.a.)
Complex Needs Playscheme	Up to 15 children (12 attended Easter 2012 and 15 Summer 2012)	Offers a service for three days per week during at Easter School holidays, and three days per week for four weeks in the Summer .

**Y Bont day care centre**, a commissioned service, provides specialist day care, after school and playscheme activities for children with

additional needs and disabilities aged 0-18 years. In 2011, this service was successful in its tender to become the lead provider for the disability element of the discrete disability funding within the Families First programme. This programme will ensure the continuation of the delivery of the specialist Earlybird and Earlybird plus parenting programmes.

Our **transition planning arrangements** to ensure that disabled children including Looked After Children are supported to have a smooth transition from Children's services to Adult Services through a transition pathway. During 2012-13 our multi-agency Transition Strategy group has continued to meet in order to progress the review of the Transition protocol. This has included representatives from ABMU health board, education and the third sector. Whilst progress has been achieved in establishing a social care pathway between Children's and Adults Services, there have been challenges in engaging partner agencies in order to establish corresponding pathways. There is however, now a plan in place to further progress this work on a Western Bay basis. This has been the priority focus of the Transition Strategy Group, and thus, the development of a Strategic plan has been re-prioritised for 2013-2014.

Decision making for the funding of college and specialist placements for young people up to the age of 18 years is agreed at the Children's Out of Authority panel. The Group Manager for Disability (Adults) now participates in this monthly forum. The Transition panel continues to provide an effective forum for joint decision making between Children's and Adults services.

Our Transition Keyworker based within the Disabled Children's Team has further progressed the roll out of "Person Centred Approaches" and keyworking within the Disabled Children's Team. The ESFWG funding for this post concluded on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012. However funding for a further 12 months has been secured and the post has expanded to encompass all disabilities and all age groups, without losing the focus on Transition planning. In July 2012, an evaluation event was held which included all key stakeholders. This event was facilitated by Care Coordination Network Cymru, and a report produced from the event, evidenced the positive difference the intervention of the Keyworker had made to young people and their families.

55. New Guidance for Continuing Care for Children has been published in November, 2012 and we have subsequently have commenced with ABMU to establish a local arrangement for the implementation of the guidance. This will be monitored during 2013-14 via the Disabled Children and Young People's Strategy Group and the Transition Strategy Group.
56. The Just @sk Plus Team continue to participate in the bi-monthly Transition Panel and within our Adult Services, a more Person Centred

Planning approach has been integrated into the Care Planning process ensuring that all young people who are approaching the time when they leave care are supported through their transition to independent living.

57. The Outreach Service within Bakers Way was evaluated during 2012 and is now a core service provision to disabled young people aged 14-18 who experience age appropriate activities which promote their independence and life skills.
58. Our **family group mediation service, advocacy services** and **our young carers services** are commissioned through the third sector and have enabled us to develop an appropriate range of support services for individual children and their families.
59. Our **accommodation and regulated services** provide a range of support and resources to children who cannot remain with their families, in the short or longer term. These services provide placements either with foster carers or in residential care, where possible, helping children to mainstream within their families and enhancing the quality of life for them, their siblings and their carers. Where long term plans require a new permanent family for a child, our adoption service recruit and place children with adoptive parents. Other solutions that provide permanence for children include residence orders and special guardianship orders, particularly in relation to care provided by relatives and friends. The service will undertake an assessment of need and will provide financial support where legislation and guidance provide for this and families meet the requirements.
60. The **Adoption Service** provides a range of services and interventions across five key areas affected by adoption. The areas are:
  - assessing and supporting prospective adopters;
  - assessing non-agency adoption (also known as step parent adoptions);
  - birth record counseling and intermediary services (BRC and IS);
  - adoption support (assessments and support to anyone affected by adoption);
  - twin tracking and family finding, which involves working with birth families of children in or following care proceedings and once a Placement Order has been granted by court, searching for an adoptive placement.
61. The Adoption Service was created as a distinct service, separate from Fostering, in 2006 and has since that time strengthened not only its identity but also performance.
62. In April 2012, a set of local performance indicators (PIs) were agreed, in the absence of any national PIs. The targets reflected the number of LAC at the time and the trend in Wales to place approximately 4%-4.5% of LAC in adoptive placements. The targets also reflected the

national shortage of adopters and provided an aspirational target for approval of adopters. The targets we set for the 2012-13 year were exceeded as in previous years. The targets are not overly simple or artificially low but are realistic yet challenging. Achieving the targets has involved prioritizing the placement of children for adoption and approving adopters over other aspects of the service. This has created some backlogs and waiting lists, particularly in terms of BRC and IS.

63. The 2012/13 targets, achievements and performance of the Adoption Service are set out in the table below;

	Target Set	Number Achieved
Number of Children Placed for adoption	14	21
Number of Adoption Orders granted	14	17
Number of adopters approved	16	22

Table 1: Summary of targets and achievements in 2012/13

64. The increase in the number of looked after children each year continues to be the position nationally. This has placed increased pressure on the Adoption Service as more children require adoptive placements year on year. Approximately 20% more children were referred to the adoption service in 2012-13.
65. **Bridgend Foster Care service (BFC)** provides general, relative and Regulation 38 (emergency family and friends) foster carers for children accommodated by the local authority. We have increased the number of general foster carers to 83 with general foster carers providing around 168 placements, 41 relative carers providing 64 placements and 22 Regulation 38 carers providing 23 placements. Bridgend Foster Care's, general foster carers are members of the public who apply to become foster carers for the local authority. Relative foster carers are relatives who have been approved specifically to care for named children who are looked after by the local authority. Regulation 38 carers are people who have children placed with them in an emergency situation by the local authority for a period of up to six weeks or whilst further assessments are undertaken, again normally people who are family members and occasionally family friends.
66. The support care scheme which seeks to prevent children who are considered to be at high risk of entering the looked after system now has 2 sets of approved carers who can support parents in their own homes in an attempt to avoid their children becoming looked after. Publicity about the Support Care scheme and a handbook has been published.
67. The team has now produced a Regulation 38. Handbook which is currently in a consultation period before being formally launched. The team continue to review and update as appropriate, the general foster carer handbook and a relative carer handbook which will be ready for consultation in September this year. The Childrens guide to placement

is going to be reviewed by a group of children who are looked after and this should be available for consultation later this year.

68. Last year a number of "Liaison Carer" posts were established. These are proving to be very successful. The liaison carers are experienced carers who undertake a mentoring role for carers undertaking their Qualification Accreditation Framework award and a supportive role for newly approved foster carers. There is a specific relative liaison carer who is a relative themselves so is able to relate to issues specific to relative carers. All liaison carers are supervised by a senior social work practitioner on a monthly basis. A review of the scheme will take place in August 2013.
69. The Delegated Authority policy will be ready for consultation within the Safeguarding Directorate by the end of June 2013. Following this the policy will be formally launched, and mandatory training provided to all safeguarding staff. Foster carers have already taken part in a very positive consultation exercise in this area.
70. In 2012-13, Bridgend Foster Care (BFC) was again commended by CSSIW inspectors within a very positive inspection report which noted the good performance of the team overall. Recruitment of new foster carers has been strong and unlike previous years BFC has attracted a number of foster carers who have transferred from Independent Fostering Agencies.
71. Bridgend Foster Care continue to be actively involved with the Childrens Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4C's), through which a framework has been developed that utilises secure web based technology to support placement matching along with collaborative framework management and contract monitoring. These frameworks represent an opportunity for Welsh authorities to benefit from greater value for money and to work with framework providers to achieve better outcomes for looked after children and develop a more partnership based approach to market development and choice, this had led to significant savings for the local authorities.
72. South Wales Improvement Collaboration (SWIC) have produced a best practice guide for recruitment and marketing for all Local Authority Fostering Services within its membership. Bridgend CBC were forerunners in a number of the recruitment processes and good practice examples being used and agreed in the final guide. All members of BCBC Fostering Services staff have been on training run by SWIC and an action plan has been devised for our Local Authority, all LAs will then be providing prospective applicants with a standard approach and timescale in a bid to provide uniformity in delivering foster services and reduce competition from Independent Fostering Agencies. The SWIC group has also agreed to establish a regional marketing centre for all fostering enquiries across Wales and the BCBC Marketing officer is involved in this project.

73. During 2012-13, Bridgend Foster Care has been able to successfully return 1 young person in collaboration with Sunnybank complex needs unit to transition carers in house. Transition foster carers have been trained to work with young people in residential care in preparation for their move into foster care. This scheme was successful in securing the successful return of one young person from an out of county residential placement to a set of in-house approved transition foster carers.
74. Last year's included information on the proposed development of the **Just @sk Plus service**. This service, based within the town centre of Bridgend now brings together 'leaving care' services and various aspects of the Council's youth service provision. It provides a universal drop in service for young people aged 16-25 years, offering a range of services from sexual health advice, careers guidance and counselling. In addition to the "universal entitlement", there are additional targeted services including the council's leaving care service, a homelessness service for 16 and 17 year olds and case management services for young people 16 and over who are LAC. The service works alongside case managers to ensure that plans are in place to enable a looked after young person to achieve a successful transition into adulthood. Young people are supported to seek training, employment and suitable housing. The corporate parenting role of the local authority and its partners ensures support for care leavers up to the age of 21 and 24 if they are in education. Young people leaving care are able to access services that will help them to become confident and caring individuals throughout their lives through receiving emotional and practical support from this service. A recent evaluation of this service can be found at Appendix IV of this report
75. Our **independent reviewing service** ensures that appropriate, outcome focused care plans are in place for all looked after children and young people and children who are deemed to be at risk of significant harm such that their names are on the CPR. As a result of the work of this service, the quality of planning for children and young people is monitored and enhanced where necessary. The independent reviewing officers help raise standards and contribute to achieving permanence in a timely way for looked after children, enabling them to make the best of their talents and helping to keep children safe from harm.
76. Our **LACE Service (looked after children in education)** ensures that the many educational needs of a looked after child are addressed and to safeguard and promote their education. This involves a multi-agency approach and close liaison with designated teachers, additional education needs services, social workers and carers. The team provide time-limited and focused educational support and mentoring to LAC who require additional educational support.
77. Our **child protection service (education and youth service)** provides support and advice to schools regarding individual cases, training for

school staff, governors, educational psychologists, EWOs, access and inclusion service, schools counsellors, school transport and the youth service. It ensures that schools are clear about safeguarding policies, procedures and protocols and it advises and supports schools and services when dealing with professional abuse allegations.

78. **Bridgend's The Youth Offending Service (YOS)** is a multi-agency service that works in partnership across Bridgend to deliver a range of interventions to reduce anti-social behaviour, offending and re-offending amongst children and young people between the ages of eight and eighteen years of age. The YOS is involved in early intervention and prevention work through to the management of young people who pose a high risk of harm to others. It provides 'appropriate adult', bail and remand services within the cell area and in the court setting providing written information pre and post sentence as required.
79. To work effectively, the YOS engages with the local community, parents, carers and family members and the victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. The YOS supervises children and young people within the community and those within the secure estate providing a service that is available every day to ensure that high risk (or vulnerable) young people are appropriately managed within the community.
80. There has been **further** success in the past year, in the reduction of the number of children and young people entering the youth justice system as a result of the "Bureau" approach, launched in February 2011. During 2012-13 practices became further embedded resulting in a 90% success rate in young people not involving themselves in further offending. The Bureau model originated in South Wales in Swansea and the approach has since been adopted across South Wales, albeit with differences in each of the YOS areas in which it is being delivered. The basic principle of the model is that it is a means by which the police and the YOS operate on a partnership basis to identify an appropriate response to young people who are either first time offenders or who have committed low level offences. The bureau gives the opportunity to divert children and young people away from the youth justice system through non-criminal disposals. There were only 60 individual young people receiving substantive outcomes from court during the financial year compared to 131 in 2011-12. Only 9 of the 60 had experience of the bureau since its launch. Key features of Bridgend's bureau are the involvement of a community volunteers in the process and the victim mediation worker who ensures the victims views are represented and feedback given engaging the young person and the victim in restorative approaches. The challenge for the coming year will be the management of the changes resulting from the implementation of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) introducing the new out of court disposals framework including the Youth Conditional Caution. Prior to the implementation of LASPO a young person convicted in Court could not be referred to the Bureau,

this is no longer the case and there is more emphasis on the level of seriousness of the offences. There is the need to ensure consistent and defensible decision making across the Police Force area. The rate of reduction in the numbers entering the system will inevitably slow down as the court cohort reduces year on year.

81. Reducing re-offending amongst children and young people who enter the youth justice system has remained a focus for the YOS, especially as those coming through the youth justice system are accepted as being the more difficult to achieve change with now that the diversion from the system is proving to be successful. Bridgend Youth Offending Service is a well performing service. Analysis of the most recently published YJB data shows that the overall picture is of positive performance figures particularly in relation to reductions in first time entrants and the rate of custodial sentences which compare exceptionally well with South Wales and Wales averages. However, whilst the number of offences per offender has reduced, the rate of re-offending has increased. This is in line with South Wales and Wales averages and reflects the higher percentage of higher risk young people in the reduced offending cohort. Every young person receiving a YOS intervention has an asset assessment (a holistic assessment of need identifying key risk indicators in relation to the likelihood of reoffending) and a common indicator along with substance misuse is that of the need for access to education training and employment. The YOS "skill build project" has targeted those young people assessed as NEET (not in Education, Training or Employment) with specific attention to those at high risk of offending to give them confidence and a sense of worth. This has resulted in young people meeting Welsh Government Ministers and YJB representatives to show case the high quality work they have completed as part of the project. The project has developed to such a quality service that the young people are being commissioned by local schools to build, for example, outdoor class rooms. The challenge for next year will, if accepted, be a pilot project targeting 18-20 year olds through providing effective transition arrangements from youth to adult services and swift response to any relapse in negative behaviour once young people have left the YOS. This project supported by the Police and Crime Commissioner should impact positively on reoffending data as the YOS is measured on the effectiveness of interventions through the re-offending rates of young people up to two years after they leave YOS.
82. YOS has successfully reduced the use of custody further from 10 custodial sentences imposed on young people in 2011/12 to 1 custodial sentences in 2012-13. The challenge for us now is to sustain such progress. The implications of Legal Aid Sentencing Punishment of Offenders Act are relevant to this area of work as well as relevant to the out of court disposals for young people committing offences as it introduces the status of remanded to "Youth Detention Accommodation" as opposed to the terminology of remand to "Custody". The secure estate remains the same for these young

people (be it shrinking in size) i.e. Secure Childrens Home Secure Training Centre or Young Offenders Institution. However there is now the requirement that any young person meeting the criteria to be remanded to such accommodation will have Looked After Children status. This is a major change. Detailed practise guidance has yet to be received in relation to this area of work.

83. Responding to change is something the YOS is used to and 12-13 brought the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 into effect. This had implications for the youth justice system both in terms of out of court disposals and young people who enter Youth Detention Accommodation having Looked After status. The Youth Justice Board transferred the costs of remands to the secure estate to the local authority. Bridgend YOS and the Courts have worked in partnership to keep not only custody figures low but also the use of secure remand. It has been accepted that such action must be a last resort and for the most serious offenders. With numbers low, the YOS were victims of their own success as this resulted in a low financial figure being transferred to cover any future remand costs as the allocation was based on previous use of custodial remand beds only. This is of particular relevance as we move into 2013-14 as there is the risk that this very small allocation of funding could be overspent if there is one serious offence committed by a young person resulting in a remand to youth detention accommodation.
84. Approaches to working with children and young people, families and victims in contact with the YOS aim to be inclusive and innovative. The YOS is aware that there are areas for improvement and this has been kept on the agenda through, for example, good practice workshops held internally by the Operational Manager. In order to evaluate the work of the YOS, towards the end of 2012-13 the YOS commissioned two pieces of critical analysis from outside consultants. Both of these were financed through the YJB Effective Practice Grant. The first was to look at the prevention work of the YOS concentrating on the bureau and Youth Inclusion Support Programme. First time entrants continue to reduce which is a positive outcome, but there was a need to look at sustaining and developing the early intervention work including the implementation of the LASPO changes to out of court disposals and developing the approach taken to anti-social behaviour. The critical friend approach was taken to the study which was completed by Susan Thomas who previously worked for NACRO Cymru who has a vast knowledge of youth justice and now works directly for the Youth Justice Board. The report has not yet been received but verbal feedback so far has been positive with some interesting and challenging suggestions for future developments, one being the introduction of a risk based screening tool. The second evaluation (also not yet received) was checking on the statutory element of the YOS workload and specifically focussing on outcome based assessment, planning and recording. Bill Stewart Associates completed the work a company that has worked extensively across South Wales with Youth Offending Services. The

process included speaking to every member of YOS staff in the first instance to gain background knowledge. The final report that will highlight not only good practise but any barriers to development concluding with improvements that can be made. The YOS felt it was important to include an independent view of service delivery and be open to suggestions for improvement, this is characteristic of the team's openness and motivation to change for the better. It was hoped that the reports would be ready by the beginning of May this year, but there has been a delay in both cases. They are expected imminently and will inform developmental work which will be key to the delivery and on-going development of effective practise in youth justice services. be publically available. The one report that has been received is that of the independent researcher who examined seven Local Management Reports on young people who had taken overdoses with little or no regard to the risks they were taking with their lives. This was commissioned as the team wanted to be pro-active in relation to their response to this problem and understand the behaviours better.

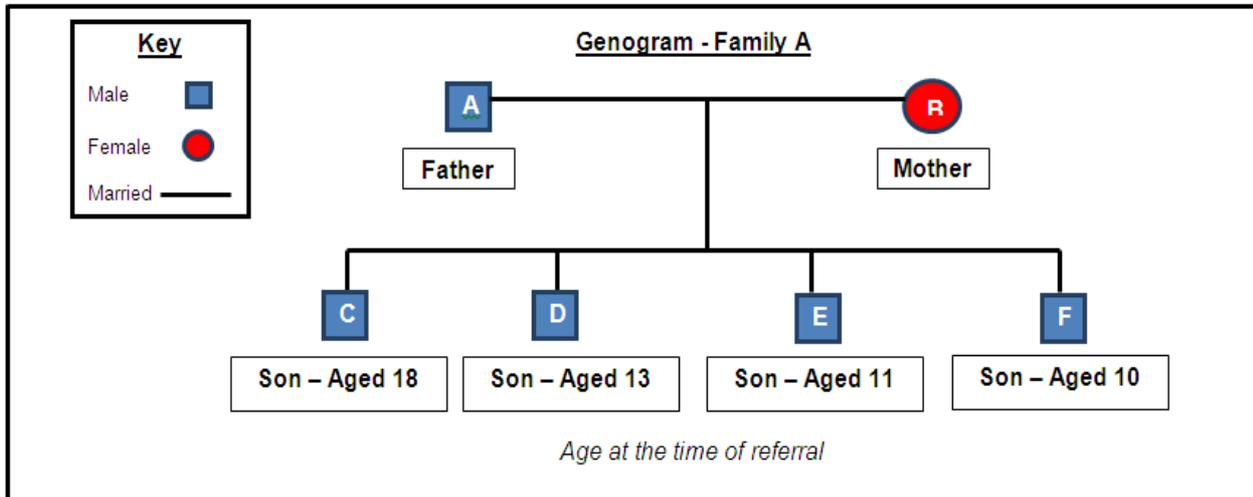
85. The YOS is well placed to continue developing practice over the next year but will always have to be mindful of the ever changing landscape in which they provide services.
86. Our **Connecting Families service** is a Local Service Board led initiative that has further refined different ways to work more effectively with families that have the most chronic and complex difficulties and who draw on a wide range of multi-agency services. It provides intensive multi-agency, evidenced-based interventions similar to the IFSS model. The service was designed locally using the evidence of good practice from other areas including IFSS pioneering authorities in Wales and the Westminster recovery programme. The main features of the service are that it;
- is a multi-agency team;
  - uses evidence based interventions;
  - is extremely intense in the early phase;
  - works with every individual within the family unit.
87. Connecting Families is a multi-agency, co-located team and consists of personnel from the following agencies: Safeguarding, Wellbeing, Education, SMAT (substance misuse), Mental health, Health visiting, Police, Probation, Job Centre Plus, Voluntary sector (domestic abuse charity).
88. I reported last year that Connecting Families became operational on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2011. There continues to be a number of principals which underpin the delivery of the service.
- The service is delivered in the family's home and/or community.
  - The service is intensive, this can mean daily visits.

- The service uses evidence based interventions which are motivational and use the family's own perception of the issues and their motivation to create a preferred future.
89. Connecting Families is designed to work with the most complex families within the borough, those who receive input from a number of agencies. Families who become involved with the service are profiled in 3 dimensions.
- 1) Statistically: profiling the nature of the family pre and post intervention. Data collected includes the areas where the families reside, the number of agencies involved with the families and the issues or concerns presented by the family members.
  - 2) Outcomes: using a variety of scales families are measured pre and post intervention to measure the outcomes they achieve and 'distance travelled' after the intervention
  - 3) Cost Avoidance: using the above data a cost is attached to the family's use of agencies in order to attribute a cost of the family to a range of agencies pre and post intervention.
90. We have recently engaged a researcher for a fixed term (6-9 months) who will use this data to produce a formal evaluation report of the service. As part of this evaluation more qualitative evidence will be collated including the development of a DVD with families describing their experience of the service.
91. Connecting Families is co-located with IFSS and our Family Support Team in order to ensure that families receive the appropriate service regardless of where they are referred. This also enables families to be moved from one service to another to another as appropriate without having to be referred again and waiting to receive a new service. We are currently developing a single point of entry, including a single referral form for all these services.
92. From a recent SSIA conference it is clear that agenda for improving social work practice, informed by research, is that we need to transform the practice of Children's service social workers by using strengths based and outcome focussed methodologies, these are both already employed and well embedded within connecting families and will be enhanced by the same methodology being employed within IFSS. This means that Bridgend is extremely well placed to disseminate these ways of working within our core social work teams in order to help drive up practice more widely. The following is a case study arising out of work undertaken by Connecting Families;

# Connecting Families Case Study

## Summary

Family 1 was referred to Connecting Families in July 2011 and the basic family unit is displayed in the below genogram:



## Summary of the issues, interventions and positive outcomes

Area	Details
Needs / issues at the time of the referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Anti-social behaviour</b> – The eldest son (<i>family member C</i>) was involved in anti-social behaviour (received 1 ASB warning letter from the Police) and had been arrested 5 times between 2010 and 2011</li> <li>• <b>Challenging behaviour</b> - The children's / young people's behaviour (<i>family members D, E &amp; F</i>) was unmanageable (shop lifting in the community, fighting in school, staying out late, ignoring rules at home, disrespecting parents and so on)</li> <li>• <b>Child Protection Register</b> - Three children / young people (<i>family members D, E &amp; F</i>) were on the Child Protection Register for emotional abuse</li> <li>• <b>Domestic abuse</b> - There was domestic abuse between the parents resulting in the Police being called out on a number of occasions. The husband appeared at the Magistrates Court accused of assault</li> <li>• <b>Economically inactive</b> - Both parents were economically inactive</li> <li>• <b>Educational issues</b> - Two children (<i>family members D &amp; E</i>) were experiencing difficulties in school (poor concentration, truancy and aggression) and one child faced exclusion for fighting</li> <li>• <b>Hoax calls</b> – The eldest son (<i>family member C</i>) had a habit of making hoax calls to the emergency services whilst drunk</li> <li>• <b>Housing issues</b> - Home conditions were described as poor and dirty (all the chores were left to the mother to complete)</li> <li>• <b>Mental health issues</b> – The father had unaddressed mental health issues (feeling depressed and suicidal) possibly due to bereavement</li> <li>• <b>Substance misuse</b> - Both parents were drinking cider excessively</li> </ul>
Support provided by Connecting Families	<p><b>Whole family approach - Work was completed with both parents and the three youngest children (the eldest son refused to engage with services)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Anger management support</b> - One child / young person (D) was referred to the PREVENT project and received support around anger management issues</li> <li>• <b>Behaviour support</b> - The Intensive Outreach Worker liaised with Education and one child (D) received behaviour support whilst in school</li> <li>• <b>Benefit support</b> - The Benefits Advisor produced 'better off' calculations for the parents and encouraged the father to enrol on training courses</li> <li>• <b>Bereavement counselling</b> – One to one support was provided to the father around bereavement, anger management and assertiveness (encouraged to seek support from his GP)</li> <li>• <b>Domestic abuse support</b> - The Intensive Outreach Worker completed work around the effects of domestic abuse on children and families (3 children / young people displaying aggression towards others)</li> <li>• <b>Housing support</b> - The Intensive Outreach Worker provided practical advice on de cluttering and cleaning the home on a budget</li> <li>• <b>Parenting support</b> - Parents received support around instilling rules and boundaries</li> </ul>

<p><b>Positive outcomes for the family</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Alcohol consumption</b> - Both parents reduced their alcohol consumption and are now almost abstinent</li> <li>• <b>Anti-social behaviour</b> - The eldest son (<i>family member C</i>) no longer commits anti-social behaviour or calls the emergency services (last time was June 2012)</li> <li>• <b>Behaviour</b> - The children / young people (<i>family members D, E &amp; F</i>) are now more compliant to the rules and boundaries set by their parents (no longer stay out late)</li> <li>• <b>Child protection Register</b> - Three children (<i>family members D, E &amp; F</i>) were deregistered from the Child Protection Register and as of 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013 the children / young people are completely closed to Children's Services having previously been involved for approximately 8 years (reduced dependency on services)</li> <li>• <b>Domestic abuse</b> - The domestic abuse ceased between the parents which resulted in a reduction in Police call outs and domestic abuse incidents</li> <li>• <b>Emotional wellbeing</b> - The children's / young people's emotional well-being has improved and they no longer fight or display aggression towards others</li> <li>• <b>Employment</b> – Both parents created curriculum vitae's (CV's) and the father enrolled on the Futures Project, which is a 'welfare' to work programme'. Both parents are actively seeking employment and have been completing application forms weekly</li> <li>• <b>Home conditions</b> - Home conditions have improved and the family received support with renewing the carpets. All family members now take an active role in completing chores</li> <li>• <b>School attendance</b> - The children / young people (<i>family members D &amp; E</i>) improved their school attendance and their behaviour became more manageable within the school environment (no longer need behaviour support within school)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cost avoidance to the public sectors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Health</b> avoided spending £1,000.00 in substance misuse support and the NHS potentially saved £787.20 in alcohol abstinence (<b>total = £1,787.20</b>)</li> <li>• <b>Police</b> avoided spending £944.00 in Police Callouts and £2,248.00 in domestic abuse incidents (<b>total = £3,192.00</b>)</li> <li>• <b>Children's Services</b> avoided spending £1,620.00 per year per child in child protection (3 children were deregistered) – total = £4,860.00</li> <li>• <b>Total cost avoidance = £9,839.20</b></li> </ul>

### Needs

Both parents had issues with alcohol and whilst intoxicated they often had verbal arguments coupled with violence (witnessed by the children). Both parents minimised the impact of this and failed to recognise the effect it was having on their children.

Children's Services received 9 referrals between 2005 and 2011 in relation to domestic abuse and the children's names were placed on the Child Protection Register under the category of emotional abuse.

Police were called to the property on a number of occasions and the family were taken to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) where the risk was perceived as high.

Father was arrested for assault and he was granted bail. During this time the couple's relationship broke down, but the mother later withdrew her statement and resumed the relationship with her husband (he moved back into the family home whilst his bail conditions were still in place).

Both parents previously received support from services, for example; the mother attended two out of four sessions of the Freedom Programme facilitated by Women's Aid and the father attended a two year cognitive behaviour course specific to domestic abuse with the probation service.

Alcohol was a trigger factor of the domestic abuse, which inevitably impacted on every aspect of the family's life including the welfare of the children

Education reported that the children were hostile and often aggressive to others whilst at school (one received an exclusion).

Children displayed challenging behaviour at home (ignoring rules and boundaries),

Children found it difficult to concentrate at school (had no bed time routine)

Children also misbehaved in the community and truanted regularly.

The Police recorded that the eldest child (*family member C*) was often drunk in public and engaged in anti-social behaviour (causing problems with neighbours, fighting and making hoax calls to the emergency services), which resulted in him being arrested 5 times and receiving a warning letter for anti-social behaviour.

Father struggling to come to terms with the death of his brother and reported to staff at Children's Services that he felt depressed and suicidal. Mother felt unsupported, isolated, anxious and in a state of despair (very low self-esteem).

Home conditions were neglected with clutter, broken furniture resulting from aggressive outbursts and threadbare carpets.

### Intervention

The Intensive Outreach Worker provided 16 weeks of intensive support with the family, visiting at least 3 times a week. The majority of the work was completed with the parents, around substance misuse, domestic abuse, healthy eating, managing on a budget, the importance of de-cluttering a home, unaddressed mental health issues, instilling rules and boundaries, and managing difficult relationships. For example; the mother completed work around improving self-esteem and the father received counselling in relation to anger management, bereavement and assertiveness. The family also received interventions from a number of partners attached to the Connecting families team as listed below:

- The substance misuse officer supported the parents with attending appointments with West Glamorgan Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (WGCADA) and offered advice around reducing their alcohol intake, identifying the risk factors that contribute to increased alcohol consumption and safety planning ensuring that the children were safe whilst they were intoxicated. The parents were encouraged to keep an alcohol diary so that they could manage and record exactly how much they were drinking on a daily basis.
- The Benefits Advisor produced a better off calculation, which is fundamentally an assessment that compares potential employment income against monies received through state benefits. The parents were also supported with completing curriculum vitae (CV's) and were encouraged to use advanced job searching techniques whilst looking for employment. In addition to this the father engaged with Remploy and was enrolled onto the Futures Project, which is a 'welfare to work programme' that provides interview coaching and support with enhanced job searching techniques. Ultimately the aim of the programme is to prepare an individual for the labour market (job ready) through enhancing self-esteem, confidence and skills, hence eliminating barriers and improving long term employability prospects
- The Education Authority agreed to fund additional behaviour support for the children (*family members D & E*) whilst they were at school and one child (*family member D*) was referred to the PREVENT project to help him come to terms with his anger management issues

### Outcomes achieved for the family

Following interventions from Connecting Families, the parents reduced their alcohol consumption significantly which had a domino effect on various other aspects of the family's life as shown below diagram:

When the parents reduced their alcohol consumption, this had a dramatic effect on all aspects of the family's lives, including the domestic abuse. For the first time, the parents acknowledged the impact that domestic abuse was having on the emotional wellbeing of their children and they feared that Children's Services would remove them if the situation did not improve. The parents began to communicate (talked about their feelings in a mature way) and no longer felt the need to resolve issues through verbal aggression or violence (reduced Police callouts). This led to the parents being able to assess their current situation and with the support of Connecting Families they were able to develop and implement strategies to bring about positive change. For example; the parents put in place rules and boundaries within the home and the children were no longer allowed to cause havoc in the community and when meeting friends they were given curfews ensuring that they returned home at an agreed time. This had several advantages including a) improving the supervision of the children, b) ensuring the children's safety and c) introducing the children to routine and structure. The behaviour of the children within the home improved drastically and they attended school regularly. With the additional support from school, the children stopped fighting, improved their concentration levels and no longer truanted from lessons. This resulted in the behaviour support being withdrawn.

In addition to introducing rules and boundaries, the family worked together to improve home conditions with each family member being responsible for their own chores (previously all the chores were left to the mother). This resulted in the home being de-cluttered and maintained to an acceptable standard (mother developed increased self-esteem and confidence). The parents also supported their eldest son with his own alcohol consumption and discouraged him from committing anti-social behaviour within the community. They reiterated the importance of whole family working together to bring about change, to ensure that the younger children remained within the family unit. The parents have engaged with all services and have implemented positive change, which resulted in the children being de-registered from the Child Protection Register.

Currently (March 2013) the children are completely closed to children's services, the Police callouts have stopped and the parents are making every effort to find employment (actively seeking work and attending all training courses available) within a difficult climate.

See Appendix 5

### **Integrated Family Support Service**

See Appendix 6

93. During 2012-13, we established an Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS) which is a health/social care collaboration developed by BCBC on behalf of the Western Bay Region (Bridgend, Neath and Port Talbot and Swansea, ABMU)
94. IFSS is based on a highly skilled staff cohort and all practitioners are either qualified social workers or nurses. The Western Bay IFSS consists of:

- 8 consultant social workers
  - 2 senior practitioner social workers
  - 2 health visitors
  - 2 substance misuse nurses
  - 2 Lead trainers
  - 3 business support
95. IFSS is a statutory service and will be Wales wide from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. Western Bay IFSS became operational 1<sup>st</sup> February 2013. There is a statutory model of intervention and requirements for all staff to be trained in the model and for a number of staff to achieve 'train the trainer' status in the model. The Welsh Government has recently made additional funds available to Western Bay to employ 1.5 lead trainers to ensure the training of personnel Wales wide continues. (These 2 posts were appointed on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013.)
96. IFSS is a model of working in a very intensive way with families where there is substance misuse. The prescribed model is very well evidenced although the actual model as a whole is still subject to early evaluation. Although there is no requirement set by the Welsh Government for the Western bay IFSS to be evaluated we have decided on a range of outcome measures and these are detailed in the Performance Framework for the service.
97. Referrals for IFSS have to come via Children's Services and therefore there is a process of consultation sessions whereby IFSS practitioners hold 'surgeries' to discuss potential referrals. Since February 2013, the service has already worked with 33 families.) The annual target set by Welsh Government is 100 families. The main reason for consultations not proceeding to referrals so far is that the prerequisite substance misuse issue is not present in the family and therefore this message needs to re-enforce within referring teams across the whole Western Bay area. Because data is collected based on referrals received from each individual child care team across the area, it is easy to target information where referrals are not being received or where inappropriate referrals are coming from.
98. One of the statutory functions of IFSS is to use this highly skilled workforce as an agent for change within the wider workforce. Using the methods already established within Connecting families we therefore intend to ensure that outcome and strengths based models of intervention are widely disseminated and that professionals in core teams are up skilled to work more effectively with families. So far we have undertaken:
99. Training – A whole scale programme of training has been planned (in conjunction with existing training arrangements within agencies), some training has already been delivered by IFSS staff. All IFSS staff will become accredited trainers in the IFSS model giving us a much

increased resource for the training and up skilling of the wider work force ( including the tiers 1 and 2 providers of services.)

100. Mentoring – each consultant social worker has already mentored social workers. We have so far employed mentoring to support newly qualified or struggling practitioners but envisage a more holistic approach to support in the future. Consultant social workers have also undertaken some quality assurance work within safeguarding teams and offered reflective supervision. Weekly consultation surgeries are taking place in each LA area (which are not just limited to potential IFSS cases but can be used by social workers and other professionals to discuss challenging safeguarding issues or complex cases).
101. As Western Bay IFSS has only been operational since 1<sup>st</sup> February 2013, there are no complete cases to present as case studies.

### **Quality of Services**

102. We constantly strive to maintain and improve the quality and range of the services that we provide. In 2012-13, we continued to develop the functionality of the Integrated Childrens System which continues to deliver a comprehensive set of information that allows managers and practitioners to monitor performance effectively. Management information is produced regularly for managers at all levels and is analysed and used to inform decisions and priorities for service change and improvement.
103. The quality assurance framework has supported the effective delivery of services. In particular, regular case file audit activity assists in raising standards, improving practice and lends for identifying and sharing good practice.
104. Within the quality assurance framework, we have now embedded the new supervision policy which allows for the frequency of supervision to be more accurately recorded and reported.
105. As with all local authorities, annual inspections are carried out by CSSIW in relation to fostering and residential services and three yearly inspections are undertaken in relation to the adoption service. Our three residential childcare units, Bakers Way, Sunnybank, Newbridge House and our Fostering Service (encompassing Resolutions Fostering and the Family Link Scheme) all received positive CSSIW inspections during 2012-13.

## **THE EFFECT ON PEOPLE'S LIVES**

### **Safeguarding Vulnerable Children and Young People**

106. The Children Act 2004 makes it clear that it is everybody's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. In Bridgend, we have established a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), its purpose being to:
- co-ordinate the safeguarding work done by various agencies;
  - ensure that the work that agencies do is effective.
107. During 2012-13 Bridgend's LSCB was made up of representatives from agencies who work with children and their families in Bridgend and it meets every three months. These agencies include the local Council, the Police, the Health Board, voluntary organisations and other relevant bodies.
108. During 2012-13 Bridgend LSCB continued to improve its communication with partners, stakeholders and the wider community through, for example, through the expansion of the BLSCB website [www.bridgendlscb.org.uk](http://www.bridgendlscb.org.uk) which was refreshed last year. This is often the first point of contact for those individuals and groups wanting to know more about the framework, activities and plans for the future. There will continue to be an emphasis on relationships and communications with other partnerships, in particular, the new People's Partnership Board where Safeguarding is now a standing agenda item.
109. Our LSCB has well established regional and local training sub groups that co-ordinate safeguarding training on a multi-agency basis. Similarly our joint policy and procedure sub group continued to deliver joint training sessions throughout the year.
110. Our safeguarding manager and case managing teams actively contribute to local Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) to ensure potential vulnerabilities are recognised and children and young people safeguarded appropriately. People will be able to find out where and how to get hold of the help they need when someone may be at risk. Children and adults are supported by staff from all agencies that understand and carry out their safeguarding responsibilities effectively. In Bridgend we aim to ensure that staff across the whole council are aware of safeguarding issues and respond appropriately to specific requests for services for/from children and young people.
111. During 2012-13 we carried out a training needs analysis which has informed the Social Care Workforce Development Programme. Throughout the past year our regional LSCB training sub group continued to co-ordinate multi-agency training. In addition, our Child Protection Co-ordinator for Education and the Youth Service delivered child protection awareness training to all school and youth service staff as part of a three year rolling programme. Bespoke training sessions can also be arranged if a need is identified. Business support for

training is provided by SCWDP and this involves liaison with schools and others to set up dates, sending training packs and certificates and collating evaluations.

112. Training for governors is arranged twice yearly via governor support as well as the availability of sessions organised for school governing bodies at the schools. Safeguarding was also the focus of the Bridgend Governors Association conference in March 2013
113. The Child Protection Team for Education and Youth Service are also part of the training local delivery group and co-facilitate multi-agency training on safeguarding children – recognition and referral and child protection conferences and core group working. Revision of the content of this training has been carried out and includes some headline information from SCR's and audits. We recognise that it is important to ensure that training delivery leads to improved practice through reinforcing the links between induction, appraisal, supervision and training.
114. To ensure that children and adults are protected from harm and abuse wherever possible, we ensure that there are clear multi-agency procedures and processes for both assessment and decision-making which are consistently implemented across agencies. Such practice continues to comply with Welsh Assembly Government 2006 guidance document: Safeguarding Children: Working Together Under the Children Act 2004 and the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008.
115. All multi-agency procedures and protocols are added to the LSCB website and our Interactive Practice Guide which offers 'one stop shop' access to these materials for practitioners. In procedures there are a range of opportunities for professionals to meet with families to assess and manage risk, create and review care plans with the benefit of multi-agency input. These include strategy meetings, children in need planning meetings and reviews, child protection conferences and core group meetings. During 2012-13 the former LSCB regional policy and procedures sub-group continued to develop new procedures when required and review existing ones.
116. In 2012-13 the LSCB Audit and Evaluation sub-group has continued to audit the effectiveness of multi-agency working. The work plan included samples of cases that were identified by Serious Case Reviews. Risk assessment guidance for practitioners has been revised to facilitate the use of safeguarding alerts to identify and monitor adults who may pose a risk to children and young people.
117. Improvements in performance have been sustained in terms of the timeliness of child protection conferences. A factor in this has been efforts made by all agencies to improve attendance.

118. In 2011, the Welsh Government announced that it would be seeking to reduce and streamline the number of LSCBs across Wales. It proposed that the new regional LSCBs would mirror the health board areas across Wales. Therefore, during 2012-13 we completed the process of establishing a regional Safeguarding Board which became operational on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2013.

### **Promoting Independence and Social Inclusion**

119. BCBC's Safeguarding and Family Support Service continues to provide excellent support and services for young people leaving care and entering a life of independence through the Just@sk Plus service and its transition planning arrangements. In order to ensure that young people leaving care are able to achieve secure living arrangements, good training, employment and education opportunities we have created new initiatives to enable those leaving care to be afforded apprenticeships, traineeships and work placement opportunities within BCBC.
120. We have continued to monitor performance in respect of young people formally looked after with whom the authority is in contact at the age of 19 and known to be engaged in education, training or employment.

### **Support to Carers**

121. In order to support carers, we aim to provide services that can be easily understood and accessed by service users at a time and place which suits their needs. Our Family Support Team (FST) structure has been revised and social workers' awareness of the services available for service users has been heightened.
- 22 We have continued to offer weekend services when other services may not be available. Weekend referral forms and a cover system have enabled the safe operation of weekend visits. Social workers are able to access services in a timely manner on behalf of their service users who can now receive a more rapid response when in urgent need.

## **DELIVERING SOCIAL SERVICES**

### **Workforce Management and Development**

123. Throughout 2012-13, we have continued to promote training and development opportunities to equip our social care staff, social workers, managers and foster carers with the necessary skills and knowledge which are essential to ensure the effective safeguarding of children and young people. We have continued to ensure that staff and foster carers across the service have had access to significant training, at an appropriate level to their needs, based on a robust training needs analysis. Staff are required to access core training programmes and any training that is put on in response to the learning from serious case

reviews and local and national changes in policy, procedures and legislation. Core areas of training events are delivered on a rolling programme. Seven mandatory training events for foster carers are delivered every three years and new areas are being considered. Staff are also supported to access other specialised training that aims to enhance their knowledge and skills within their role and function.

124. In addition four specialist training events have been delivered for parents of children/young people on the autistic spectrum disorder. Three sessions of the three day training on Restorative Practices has been provided to staff across sectors so ensuring joined up approaches and good partnership work. Bridgend is piloting the Care Council for Wales CPD Framework for Residential Child Care workers in Wales.
125. A number of our safeguarding and family support teams have participated in team development days and considered a variety of topics including theories in assessment and analysis and reflective models to interpret information gathered. A number of events have been held which have had on lessons learnt from the outcomes of serious case reviews.
126. We have increased the opportunities for staff to access training opportunities across the Western Bay collaborative region. The Western Bay Safeguarding Children Board training sub-group sets the strategic direction and priority areas for safeguarding training across the region.
127. Specific training on “direct work with children” has been delivered to a number of locality teams on a workshop basis.
128. Evaluation forms are issued for all training events and attendees are encouraged to provide feedback. These evaluations are closely considered by the workforce development team and inform training practice, commissioning and development. In addition staff and foster carers are enabled to identify their learning needs through the supervision and appraisal processes and this in turn informs each team’s individual training needs analysis. Workforce development officers liaise with individual teams to ensure that the team’s training needs analysis thoroughly reflects the whole team’s areas of learning and development. Staff and foster carers are encouraged to discuss any issues regarding training within team meetings, supervision and foster carer’s group meetings. Views of children and young people resident in local authority registered Childrens Homes are consulted on their care experience during Regulation 32 visits as are children placed in foster homes during statutory visits by their social worker and these responses inform the identified training need across the service.
129. Staff and foster carers are also supported to access other varied, comprehensive and specialised training that aims to enhance their knowledge and skills as appropriate to their role and function.

130. Between April 2012 and March 2013, there were 3,322 attendances at Children's Services training events compared to 2,413 the previous increase. This included 506 attendances by Foster Carers/Adopters at learning and development events. 8 foster carers achieved NVQ Level 3, Qualification Credit Framework Health and Social Care awards.
131. In March 2013, we had 13 family support staff and social workers undertaking post qualifying social work training programmes. 3 staff achieved NVQ level 3 QCF Diploma in Health and Social care during 2012/13 and by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013, 100% of our residential staff had an NVQ level 3.
132. During 2012-13, our Safeguarding and Family Support Service had 30 staff join the service 13 leavers. Many of the new staff have become employed in new service development initiatives such as IFSS and Connecting Families. However, a number of staff have also been recruited to new post funding by budget growth awarded in response to increasing pressures of our safeguarding teams. At the time of writing this report, 11 social workers had just celebrated their achievement of successfully completing their first year in practice and within Bridgend. Whilst this is a great achievement for the individual staff and the service, we recognise the need to monitor the effectiveness of our support to newly qualified social workers during their first year in practice. A number of practitioners who have recently completed their first year in practice have been honest in their feedback about their induction and the on-going support offered to them by their managers, peers and mentors. Examples of accounts provided by social workers following their first year in practice include the following;

**Example 1**

I completed my social work training in June 2012 and was appointed as a social worker at Bridgend County Borough Council in August 2012. In comparison to other social work students I was fortunate to have a statutory practice learning opportunity within a Child Assessment Team. I feel that this placement gave me a lot of learning experiences and by the time I had completed my training I was excited to practice in the Bridgend area.

During my first month in practice I shadowed experienced social workers and had the opportunity to familiarise myself with the teams and local services within the Children's Services sector. This has been invaluable as these connections have really assisted me during practice.

I was told that I would be supported through my first year in practice and provided with an appropriate case load to address my learning and developmental needs. I thought this was brilliant not only for me as a newly qualified but for the children and families I worked with. In reality

I do not feel that this can be totally achieved within a safeguarding team due to the complexities of the team and the nature of the work we do. I do feel I have been supported and have felt comfortable during practice however I am also getting used to feeling overwhelmed, nervous and the never ending work load. In all honesty I do not feel that the programme in Bridgend for newly qualified is what I expected it to be. I would have liked to have had greater support around understanding procedures and making sense of the very repetitive documents along with new referral forms, as NQSW generally do not know.

Within social worker practice I have had many different experiences, some more challenging than others and some clearer cut. The support and advice from my team has helped me to understand and manage each situation I have faced. I feel proud to work in the safeguarding team which I'm in which has a good team morale and individuals who are passionate about working with children and their families.

Now that I am fast approaching the completion of my first year in practice I feel more confident in my own professional judgement as a result of being supported by my team manager, senior practitioner and staff within the team; and like they say 'it comes with experience'

### **Example 2**

In July 2011 I started full time employment with Bridgend Council, on completion of a Masters in Social Work. Prior to starting this post I had benefited from partaking in practice learning opportunities within the county borough and, in many respects, this eased the transition to being newly qualified.

During the first year there were many rigours and challenges were both stimulating and, at times, somewhat overwhelming. In principle, Bridgend offers much support via their First Year in Practice Programme, and the well documented guidelines for practitioners in their first year. The overarching emphasis of this package was to enable continual reflection and learning. This included emphasis being placed on training, mentoring schemes, and the availability of a restricted case load.

In reality, it was extremely difficult to access any of these supports in a meaningful or expedient fashion, due to the daily pressures of frontline service provision. Taking my own case load as a niche example, high and complex case loads needed to take priority. Indeed, within one month of entering Safeguarding Team's I had cases within the court arena, and by month 8 I had 23 cases (8 of which were in court and 7 separate child protection cases). In essence, this rendered mentoring sessions and attendance at training as burden, and not the requisite

support. This being a source of further frustration, as research and training are a specific retention need for me, as I wish to complete a PHD in the medium term and would like to continue my professional development in this area.

On the other hand, whilst the documented framework of support was ineffectual, the informal and practical support of colleagues and management was invaluable. In this light, I note that management made every effort to consult with myself and to offer advice and assistance wherever possible. Moreover, I have found Bridgend to demonstrate a culture of team performance and inclusivity, whereby professionals 'pull together' to offer emotional and practical assistance wherever possible. This is largely facilitated by the accessibility and approachability of management, which sets the bench mark team work for front line staff within teams.

In spite of those difficulties outlined above, I have learnt a great deal during the past two years and the experiences are greatly appreciated. In further service development I would hope that Bridgend can implement great theoretical and reflective practice for practitioners in their first year. This would set the foundation for practitioners to place continual professional development and research based practice at the forefront of their career pathways and the implementation of best practice. More specifically, by increasing the professionalism of social work, I would hope that staff retention would improve in line with feelings of self-efficacy.

### ***Example 3***

I was not fresh out of university when I began working within the safeguarding and family team, I worked within a residential care setting for nearly a year. I was really surprised to how quickly I adapted to the position of a social worker in Bridgend County Borough Council, I was given a great and very organised induction and the team were very welcoming. I think I can honestly say the effort put together by the team has been amazing, and everyone is always willing to help when it is needed. I was not allocated a mentor, but still felt supported. I was working with CP cases quite soon into my first year, which at first was quite daunting but I managed to cope with the work load, and discuss the cases thoroughly during supervision sessions. I was lucky to have a team manager that I could get on with, and who I could be completely honest with about how I felt about work. I actually enjoyed working on duty as I felt you were thrown in the deep end and it helped further my knowledge and experience.

After around 10 months of my first year of practice the stress levels were very high and I was finding it really difficult to manage the work load, continually working till early hours of the morning and staying in the office till 7 every evening. This was not a positive experience for

me, and I did not feel I was managing my cases to the best of my ability due to all the 'paperwork', court work and the amount of contacts I was supervising, as well as fitting in all my visits which was becoming a struggle. We were given a protected week to complete typing up our unfinished stat visits and core groups. I found this quite helpful and felt myself getting on track again. Court work can be very stressful, and it can feel like the paperwork will never end, but after finishing a court case I have found I am able to keep on top of most of my work, as well as fitting in my visits on time.

It is so important to say when you are stressed or unhappy so you can receive some help and support. We are also lucky within our team to have very supportive social work assistants to help you with your caseload. I do not regret joining the children and family team as it has improved my working practice, I am more confident with making decisions, working with others and it has improved my knowledge and I have found the experience invaluable. University should prepare students more around their practice rather than just their knowledge to help prepare for future employment.

The interim senior management structure that was implemented in October 2010 following the internal appointment of an interim Head of Service has subsequently become a permanent structure with minor amendments made. The senior management structure can be found at Appendix I. Although still relatively new, the senior management structure is proving to be very successful in addressing some of the capacity issues identified within the former management team arrangements. This has meant that there is more capacity for managers to spend time on key service performance management issues as well as the management and deployment of employees.

## **Systems and Information**

133. Our current social care ICT system 'DRAIG' continues to be developed by the Wales System Consortium (WSC) in liaison with the software supplier 'Careworks'. There is currently a national project to replace this system and this has been presented to local authorities in Wales in order to reshape the current configuration of Social Care systems used in Wales. Bridgend CBC is leading this collaborative project and involvement includes 8 local authority members as well as NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS).
134. The WSC is now proceeding with NWIS to procure a single supplier National Community Health and Social Care system, and the option for other participants to join at any stage during the first term of contract has been included.
135. Bridgend's Head of Service for ICT continues to act as SOCCITM advisor to the WSC. The Business Support managers for the

Wellbeing and Children's Directorates sit on the Project Board as LA representatives for BCBC. The role of chair has passed from Bridgend to Ceredigion Council. BCBC is acting as lead authority for the procurement of the new system.

136. During 2012-13, DRAIG continued to be developed, although much of the required functionality required by services has already been achieved. However the increased integrated working agenda has meant that Draig has needed to cater for NHS and social care staff using the system. The following developments and changes were facilitated during 2012-13:

- The local development of DRAIG to meet a variety of needs continues to grow with the intention that this functionality is carried over into any replacement system. Most importantly, DRAIG now provides our solution to managing referrals through the Joint Assessment Family Framework (JAFF) and Team Around the Family (TAF) approaches. There is significant benefit to this approach, especially in joining up the data that supports the early intervention and prevention agenda with social care data in our core DRAIG database. This helps paint a more comprehensive picture of our service users to the benefit of all agencies involved, including health and the police.
- Further progress is being made with the use of DRAIG to support the work of the Inclusion service, the Educational Psychology Service and the Formal Assessments and Critical Cases (FACCT) teams in respect of managing the data around pupil with Special Educational Needs (SEN). With the further integration of data that supports SEN with data for early intervention and prevention as well as social care data, the 'picture' of our service users is becoming ever more detailed.

### **Performance Management**

137. Performance management arrangements are increasingly more embedded into our case management teams. However, there is a need to continue to assist staff to further understand the agenda of change that is driven by efficiency and performance. It is essential that management information is 'owned' across the service and that it is effective in evidencing why we are making changes and what is being achieved. We will endeavour to continue to ensure that we have effective performance monitoring arrangements in place that will help drive forward business improvement and that ensure staff and services meet the standards that have been set. In addition, our Quality Assurance Framework has been designed to inform service and organisational learning.

138. Whilst performance management arrangements are becoming more embedded with Safeguarding and Family Support, there is a need to assist staff to further understand the agenda of change that is driven by efficiency and performance and the essential role that management information plays in evidencing what is being achieved. There will need to be a greater focus on outcomes in future and we will need to develop appropriate mechanisms for collecting more outcome focused data in line with both statutory national and local reporting requirements.
139. The full range of our statutory performance indicators are reported to the Council and as part of the Continual Performance Assessment (CPA) process on a quarterly basis. In addition, our performance is regularly presented to the councils Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Parenting Committee.

### **Quality Assurance**

140. Within the safeguarding and family support service, the quality assurance project team continued to develop and implement a work plan relating to the delivery of the division's quality assurance framework. The QA project team consists of managers across the directorate (business support and safeguarding and family support); there is also close liaison with colleagues in organisational development. During 2012-13 Bridgend's LSCB audit and evaluation sub group continued to audit the effectiveness of multi-agency working. Its work plan has included samples of cases that were identified by Serious Case Reviews which included referrals from police, anonymous sources and family members; neglect cases; children who moved areas. The group has also developed tools that are consistent with those used by the division and are working towards inputting multi-agency audits on DRAIG. These forms have now been adopted by the new regional safeguarding board.
141. Case file audits have routinely been carried out during 2012-13 out by business support staff, team managers, senior managers and independent reviewing officers (IRO). IROs also complete feedback forms to social workers and team managers following LAC reviews and case conferences. On completion of individual audits, two action plans are developed. The first relates to case management issues and outlines the action that is needed to improve services provided to the user. The second relates to the case manager and highlights any personal development needs and how these will be responded to through supervision, training etc. Case file audits have highlighted issues about practice in relation to individual cases for which remedial action has been taken. Multi-agency audits have also highlighted cases where lessons can be learned and used to improve future service delivery. We have acknowledged the need to improve systems and processes for disseminating the learning out of audit activity to

managers and front line staff which will be a priority for us to address in the coming year.

142. The service's supervision policy is now embedded into 'business as usual' with the frequency of supervision being recorded on an electronic database.
143. Staff receives supervision on a regular basis and, should this not be taking place, the system draws this to the attention of the relevant senior manager. An audit tool has been finalised to examine the quality of supervision and will be launched for use by senior managers across the service.

## **SHAPING SERVICES**

### **Planning and Partnerships**

144. We have continued to progress the development of a strategic framework for integrated working which builds upon and complements the 4-5-6 Model and Family Support Strategy. The framework will support the identification of potential hub locations in order to develop services in localities and achieve 'teams around the child / family.' The first hub was intended to become operational in October 2012 but this has been delayed until June 2013.
145. The purpose of the framework is to provide a strong steer on how multi-agency working is to become fully effective in Bridgend County so that services are seen to be working as one. In doing so, they will:
  - recognise and understand the needs of the children and young people of Bridgend County;
  - seek to prevent problems arising;
  - be quick to respond when the need arises;
  - give a single point of access to services;
  - provide help and support closer to the point of need;
  - break down barriers between agencies;
  - be integrated, inclusive and of high quality;
  - support parents.
146. The development of the framework linked closely to other projects in the Supporting Vulnerable Children 2 Programme (SVC2) which includes the Connecting Families project, a project in each of the three areas (community locality networks) in Bridgend County to establish multi-agency teams and community hubs, an ICT project to facilitate information sharing and integrated working, a project to improve the lives of Looked After Children and the implementation of the redesign of residential child care provision.
147. The Bridgend Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14 set out the main shared priorities for a range of services and indicated the

outcomes we wish to see in terms of improvements in the lives of children and young people. These are expressed in terms of the 6 outcomes for children and young people which will change their lives for the better. They embrace the Welsh Government's 7 core aims. They inform and underpin the rationale for developing principles of integrated working and setting up multi-agency teams.

148. The framework has been designed to ensure that each child in need has a team to support him or her. The forms of working set out in the framework are geared to supporting children and young people with additional needs at Tier 2 so reducing the number of children and young people who require that more intensive level of support provided by a team around the child. They are designed to bring about continuing improvement for all and to bring an appropriate focus on the children and young people that need support and improvement most i.e. the most vulnerable. Whatever the level of need, therefore, integrated working practices will ensure that:

- support is designed around the needs, progress and development of individual children;
- there is a strong emphasis on prevention and early intervention, turning this from an ambition into actual practice; and
- practitioners reconfigure their services to reflect the particular backgrounds of different groups of children and communities and offer children and young people a seamless service.

## **PROVIDING DIRECTION**

### **Leadership and Culture**

149. BCBC's Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee, established in 2007, has continued to provide a vehicle for elected members to consider what needs to be done in relation to the well-being and progress of looked after children and young people. It seeks information specifically relating to looked after children and the Authority's corporate parenting role. The committee has continued to meet bi-monthly to consider a range of projects and developments associated with looked after children and young people who have left care or are about to leave care. Throughout the past year, the committee has received reports including information and updates on the looked after children population, the development of a new Just @sk Plus service, the authorities redesign of its residential care, the apprenticeship, traineeship and work experience schemes for looked after children and various policies, procedures and performance in relation to looked after children and young people.

150. Members of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee have continued to benefit from training on their corporate parenting responsibilities to ensure they are better informed on the range and scope of the services in place for looked after children and young

people. There has been an active interest from Members to learn about the issues facing young people leaving care and a continued commitment as corporate parents to have the same aspirations for Bridgend's looked after children as parents would for their own children.

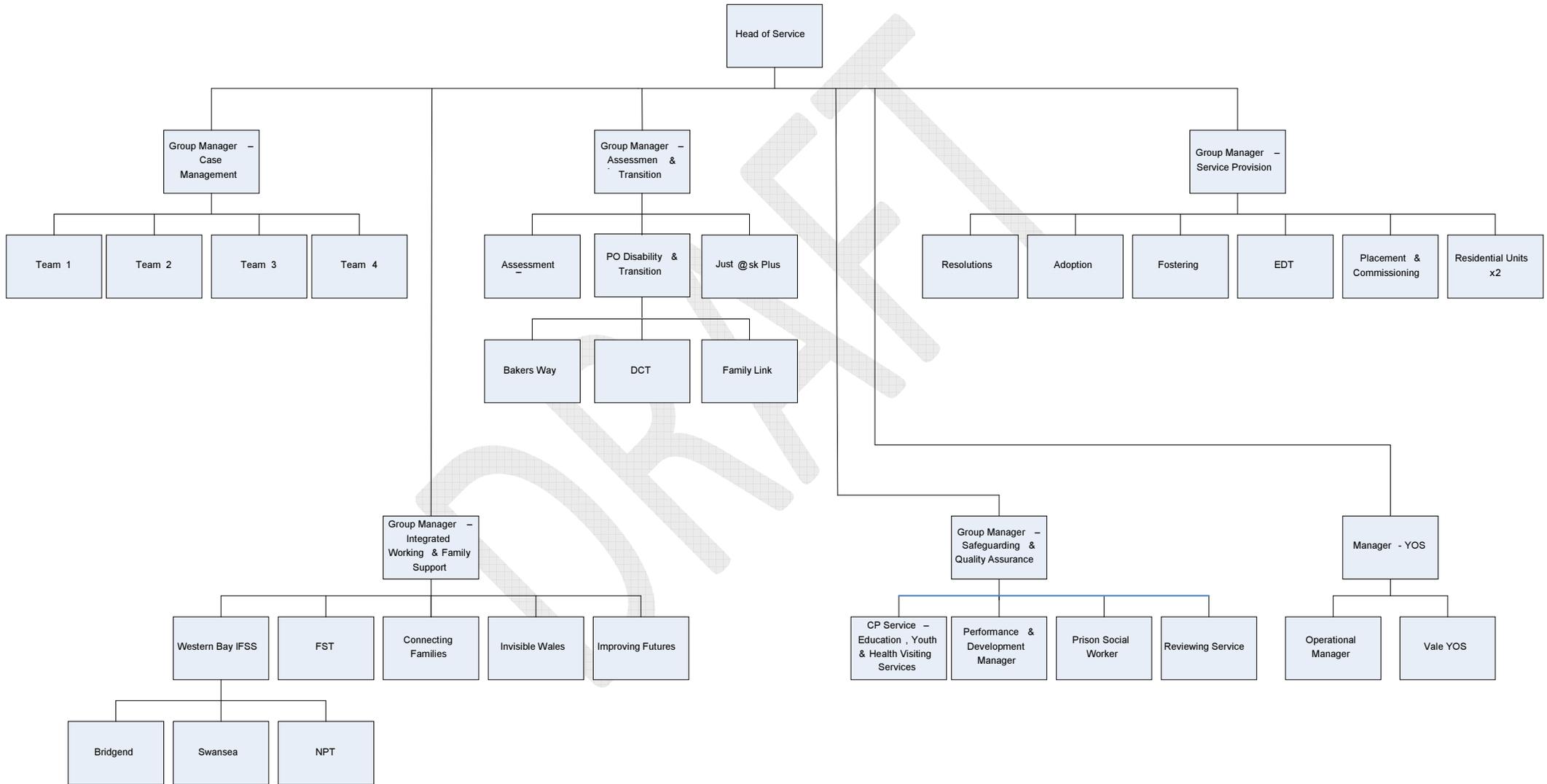
151. We have also taken steps to ensure that the whole Council, including Members and a broad range of agencies, are aware of the importance of safeguarding children. During 2012-13, reports on SCRs and safeguarding issues/developments were presented to the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **Summary – Forward View of 2013-14**

152. This report highlights the full range of safeguarding and family support activities that have taken place in Bridgend during the past year. Whilst it notes a number of areas where improvements have been made and evidenced, we will not become complacent as we continue to face the reality of restraints on resources, within the context of increasing work demands. This will require us to continue to work more smartly and efficiently to ensure our resources are targeted at those most in need, where we can evidence value for money and improved outcomes for children. Our biggest resource will continue to be our staff and whilst we have welcomed many new recruits to the service and have eliminated our over reliance on agency staff, we recognise the need to continue to support our staff as we grow a skilful and mature workforce. The main challenge we face in the coming year will be to continue our efforts to build upon progress we have made in the past and address the areas noted for improvement in this report.

Colin Turner  
Head of Safeguarding and Family Support

# Appendix I



## Appendix II

### Safeguarding & Family Support:

**Compliments Received : 01/04/12 – 31/03/13 : Total: 63**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Team</b>		<b>Compliment</b>
18.04.12	Case Management / Safeguarding South Team		Compliment received from Barnardos member in respect of standard of lifestory book completed by SW. Has commented that "she wanted to pass on how brilliant it was and that it was actually the best book she had ever seen".
12.06.12	Case Management / Safeguarding West & Adoption Teams		Compliment received from adopted parents of X in respect of the SW's handling this case - "thank you for all your time, energy and friendship throughout this. You made this so pleasant and have given us the most stunning wonder boy we could have asked for. Also, thank you for not giving up on him".
13.06.12	Case Management / Disabled Children's Team		Compliment received from Barrister regarding social workers in respect of the way in which a very difficult case was managed, "paperwork was excellent as was the very proactive and sensitive nature in which the application was progressed. It was a pleasure to pick up a case that was in such good order". Noted that the Judge had also made very positive comments in his concluding speech.
09.07.12	Case Management / Safeguarding West Team		Compliment received via BCBC solicitor – "I just wanted to mention that the Magistrates were very impressed with the 'wonderful' evidence given by X on this case and also spoke about the quality of the written evidence she has filed".
03.09.12	Case management / Family Support Team		Compliment received with regard to support provided by SW to YP and his family - "there has been a huge improvement in their parenting and the SW has offered some excellent advice which they appear to have taken on board - the parenting has improved to such an extent that we are no longer considering removing the YP".
10.10.12	Child Protection / Service Development		Compliment received from AM for Education & Skills - "your Authority is to be congratulated on the arrangements you have put in place for Safeguarding in Education. I read with interest the summary of the work your Child Protection Team do in relation to child protection in schools which is very

				<i>comprehensive". The compliment was passed on by Cllr D who also stated - "the Minister does not give praise lightly or often so well done to you and your Team".</i>
15.10.12	Accommodation / Adoption			<i>Compliment received by Cllr D to pass on - "gratitude and thanks for the personal advice and support you provided to him and his family recently - you were excellent".</i>
08.11.12	Case management / Safeguarding South Team			<i>Compliment received from Her Honour Judge P in respect of the quality of the Core Assessment - "with good quality social work assessments like this, on cases of this nature no further assessments should be required".</i>
04.01.13	Case Management / Safeguarding West Team			<i>Compliment received from Solicitor in respect of parenting assessment report prepared by SW for Court – "this is checked and very much approved. This is one of if not THE most intelligent, articulate, well balanced and analysed pieces of social work I have ever had the pleasure to read. Well done X you should be very proud of yourself".</i>
15.01.13	Case Management / Safeguarding South Team			<i>Compliment received in respect of SW working with two out of county YP placements - "would you please pass on my sincere thanks to X for the very high level of commitment and support he has given to both myself and the young people he has supported in two of the out of county placements. I have been working with X for the past year and found him to be extremely professional and a dedicated social worker. I have been very impressed with the quality of his work and his timely responses - it has been my pleasure to work with him and I hope I have the opportunity to do so again".</i>
05.02.13	Case Management / Safeguarding North Team			<i>Compliment received from father of YP who wanted to express his gratitude at Review Conference to the SW for her support "she is the best social worker he's ever had".</i>
27.03.13	Case Management / Looked After Children			<i>Compliment received from BBC Reporter / presenter in respect of LAC Awards. "Thank you so much for inviting me. It was amazing to meet those YP, they are such an inspiration".</i>
28.03.13	Case Management / Looked After Children			<i>Compliment received from Children's Commissioner in respect of LAC Awards. "Congratulations to all at the LAC Awards - fantastic ceremony for some wonderful children / YP / parents and BCBC staff".</i>

### Appendix III

#### Safeguarding & Family Support:

Complaints Received : 01/04/12 – 31/03/13

Total Received : 15 Formal Complaints – Stage I

Total Received : Unregistered Complaints : 67

<i>Formal Complaint Examples</i>							
<b>Date</b>	<b>Team</b>			<b>Complaint</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
22.05.12	Case Management / Safeguarding South Team			Complainant does not feel that the current SW is working in the best interests of her children / allegations regarding the actions of one child towards his siblings are not being investigated / requesting a change of SW.	Not Upheld	24	Letter of response sent by Tm Mgr under the following headings. Wishing to have a change of SW - it was explained that as discussed on 18.05.12, the children's cases were due to be transferred to the Safeguarding West Team at the point of the initial CP Case Conference on 9.05.12. Due to the complexities of this case and the issues being raised it was felt that it was inappropriate for the case to transfer. SW not working in the best interest of X - it was noted that there is no evidence to substantiate this. All appropriate assessments have been undertaken and legal advice has been sought when required. Allegation made by Women's

							Aid resident in relation to X which has not been addressed - it was explained that this allegation was investigated thoroughly and discussions were held with CPU as part of this enquiry. However there was no direct evidence to substantiate the allegations made. Appropriate referrals have since been made to TAITH to support X.
31.07.12	Case Management / Safeguarding East Team			Complainant contacted Dept to advise that he now wishes to pursue his complaint in respect of the proposed plans to move him from his current out of county placement. (Prev. withdrawn - Ref: 4008).	Partially Upheld	8	Response partially upheld - delay in finding appropriate alternative placement that would meet his needs has resulted in X remaining in emergency placement since May 2012. A suitable placement has now been identified and plans to move X will be progressed.
01.10.12	Case Management / Safeguarding North Team			Father of YP has raised concerns in respect of attitude of SW and Snr Prac and contact arrangements.	Not Upheld	16	A meeting was held with the Tm Mgr and a letter of response was sent summarising the issues discussed. It was advised that the cancellation of contact was done so with justified reasons but this could not be discussed further with X due to confidentiality. Contact times were discussed and it was

							agreed that this will be looked into. Payment for transport to contact sessions was discussed and rates of pay were provided and details of how X could make a claim were given.
04.10.12	Case Management / Duty and Referral			Complaint in respect of SW and her handling of case and understanding of current situation.	Not Upheld	14	Complaint not upheld: Appropriate information shared / action undertaken to ensure identified risks shared with family.
05.11.12	Case Management / Duty and Referral & Family Support			Issues raised relating to lack of information / follow up by SW in respect of parenting course / allegation that SW pressurised comp into signing care documentation / lack of meetings.	Not Upheld	37	Complaint not upheld - actions taken were in accordance with the All Wales CP Regs & appropriate follow up action undertaken.
28.11.12	Case Management / Safeguarding South Team			Complaint received from Advocate of YPs in respect of delay in arranging passport applications.	Partially Upheld	13	Complaint partially upheld as delays occurred in progressing work to complete passport application forms when SW was on A/L. However, delays also occurred due to YP having a different surname on her birth certificate to that on Care Orders.

28.01.13	Case Management / Safeguarding East Team			Issues raised relating to access to records and conduct of SW.	Partially Upheld	11	Complaint partially upheld - instances where communication from SW regarding cancelled / late visits could have been improved. However, problems with non- engagement of parent in process also noted.
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## Appendix IV

### Evaluation of the Just@sk Plus Service

1. An evaluation of the service (April 2012 – April 2013) has recently been completed. Year 1 milestones include;
  - Initial assessment and referral systems have been modified to avoid unnecessary duplication and to ensure all essential data is captured.
  - A single QES electronic database is being further developed to capture client data and to monitor distance travelled for all presenting clients of all services. This is being complimented by work being undertaken to link the three main data capture systems, QES, DRAIG and The Housing Database.
  - Revised recording and monitoring systems to monitor project and project outcomes for the Youth Service Families First funded team.
  - Improved partnership working which has resulted in the significant increase in referrals being made from outside agencies.
  - Secured additional funding via the Youth Service for a part time employment and training worker to work with young people with tier 3 and 4 needs to address barriers to learning and engagement. This was taken forward in response to an identified gap in service provision for referrals that fell outside of the threshold for intervention as part of Families First
2. In terms of service delivery, this includes;
  - Programmes have and are being developed to ensure they are relevant to client needs; providing the right employability skills. Interventions are adapted to the needs of clients/young people. Client feedback sought to improve support services provided.

- Provision is being developed so that it is 'needs' led, offering a range of social and education and personal support in non-threatening environments.
- Programmes are being targeted and the aim is to work directly with young people who have disengaged from mainstream education or are on the cusp of being NEET or who are not able to progress into current training or education opportunities due to their circumstances.
- Multi-agency meetings are taking place, ensuring all support needs are being met in the most effective way. These meetings also provide staff with the opportunity to identify any gaps in support and to identify and avoid any unnecessary duplication in provision.
- TALK Housing Worker and Just @sk Plus Information, Advice, Guidance and Advocacy Workers are working together to manage intensive support work to avoid duplication and enhance specialist information that can be provided.
- The Youth Service element has worked intensively with young people developing learning plans. Strong partnership links have been developed between Changing Tracks, the Just @sk Plus Team, KPC, Careers Wales and Job Centre Plus in the provision of community based Job Clubs offering preparation for employment skills; job search; support with applications; signposting and on-going mentoring.
- Work is continuing also with a host of partners that provide information, training and potential work placements for young people, particularly for those deemed NEET. Training can be on a one-to-one and individually tailored basis and include e.g. Key, Basic and Life skills.
- Provision of support continues to be offered through Yellow Wales via the TALK Housing Worker to young people and families with a range of housing and tenancy related issues. This worker working closely with staff from the Youth Service team to further develop links with housing support providers.
- Counselling provision is extremely well attended with more appointment requested for Just @sk Plus as a venue compared to all other community based locations.
- Consultation with young people has been an on-going priority during 2012-13 with a consultation group established and three meetings taking place to date and a designated 'Have Your Say Day' took place in March 2013, with the view to

exploring young people's views on service delivery, developments and plans and to obtain their views on the benefits of the integrated service model.

3. In addition in terms of fulfilling the local authority's statutory responsibilities in relation to looked after children and care leavers (Children Act 1989 & Leaving Care Act 2000) the following activity has taken place throughout 2012-13.
  - Advice & Guidance - during 2012–2013, Just @sk Plus has supported in excess of 806 individual young people with 2866 contacts. Job search and assistance with application forms was the most common topic that young people requested help with. A significant number of young people visited Just @sk Plus to see their Social Worker/Personal Advisor.
  - 110 young people have engaged with the Families First funded Youth Service information, advice and guidance team. The majority have engaged with goal planning and expressed a satisfaction with the service.
  - Out of 148 referrals that were made to Just @sk Plus for Information, advice and guidance (including tenancy support), almost 50% of these were self-referrals from young people.
  - Referrals that are made to other agencies by Just @sk Plus for specialist services follow an initial assessment process and on-going engagement with the young person concerned. Referrals for specialist services have included housing providers thus reducing the need for involvement from the Safeguarding & Family Support Service and/or Housing and Community Regeneration. There was a 30% reduction of referrals in relation to 16/17 year olds presenting (or being referred) as homeless to the Safeguarding & Family Support Service during 2012-13 compared to the previous year. This decrease is likely to be linked to the preventative work undertaken by the Families First element of the service.

#### **Feedback from Young People access Just @sk Plus**

4. As stated above, there have been three consultation meetings with young people during the past year. In addition to this, the 'Have your Say' day was held in March 2013. In relation to Just @sk Plus, feedback from young people was as follows (based on the current accommodation and the longer term plan of a move to more suitable premises):
5. Young people are in favour of the services that are already available through Just @sk Plus but are also in favour of new services to be introduced such as Music and Media workshops. Almost all young people were in favour of a Housing Officer

and Family Mediation worker to be present at Just @sk Plus. There was also a call for welfare reform workshops to be held. When asked as to where young people thought the venue of the Just @sk Plus building should be it was unanimously agreed that it should be based in Bridgend Town Centre with there being several comments around how the centre should be presented:

- “Visible”
- “Shop front”
- “Important for it to be in view and not hidden away”
- “Easy to find”
- “In the town centre it’s local to everyone”
- “Close to public transport links”

6. There was also a suggestion that there should be several Just @sk Plus centres throughout the county borough to be situated in each of the largest towns in the borough, as well as a suggestion that the venue should also incorporate a hostel for young people.
7. When asked what young people liked about the current Just @sk Plus venue there was a unanimous agreement that its central location is “the best thing” about the location although there were several calls for the service to be visible and have a shop front. One of the other things that young people liked about the current location is the fact that it’s private and quiet, young people also felt that the size of the drop-in area is good and adequate.
8. Even though it was felt that the amount of services provided by Just @sk Plus were sufficient (“tries to cover everything”) there was still a call for better facilities at the centre to be improved with young people calling for items such as a photocopier, better toilets and healthy snacks to be available. There was also the call from young people for more activities to be held at Just @sk Plus such as trips and fund raising events.

### **Links to Housing**

9. In terms of links with Housing, there has been some delay in a Housing Officer being based within Just @sk Plus due to the restructure within the Housing Options Team. Following the completion of the restructure and the appropriate training, this is now likely to take place in the summer of 2013. Not with standing this, work has been completed in terms of agreeing a joint assessment process and work is in progress for an IT/database solution that will link the three existing

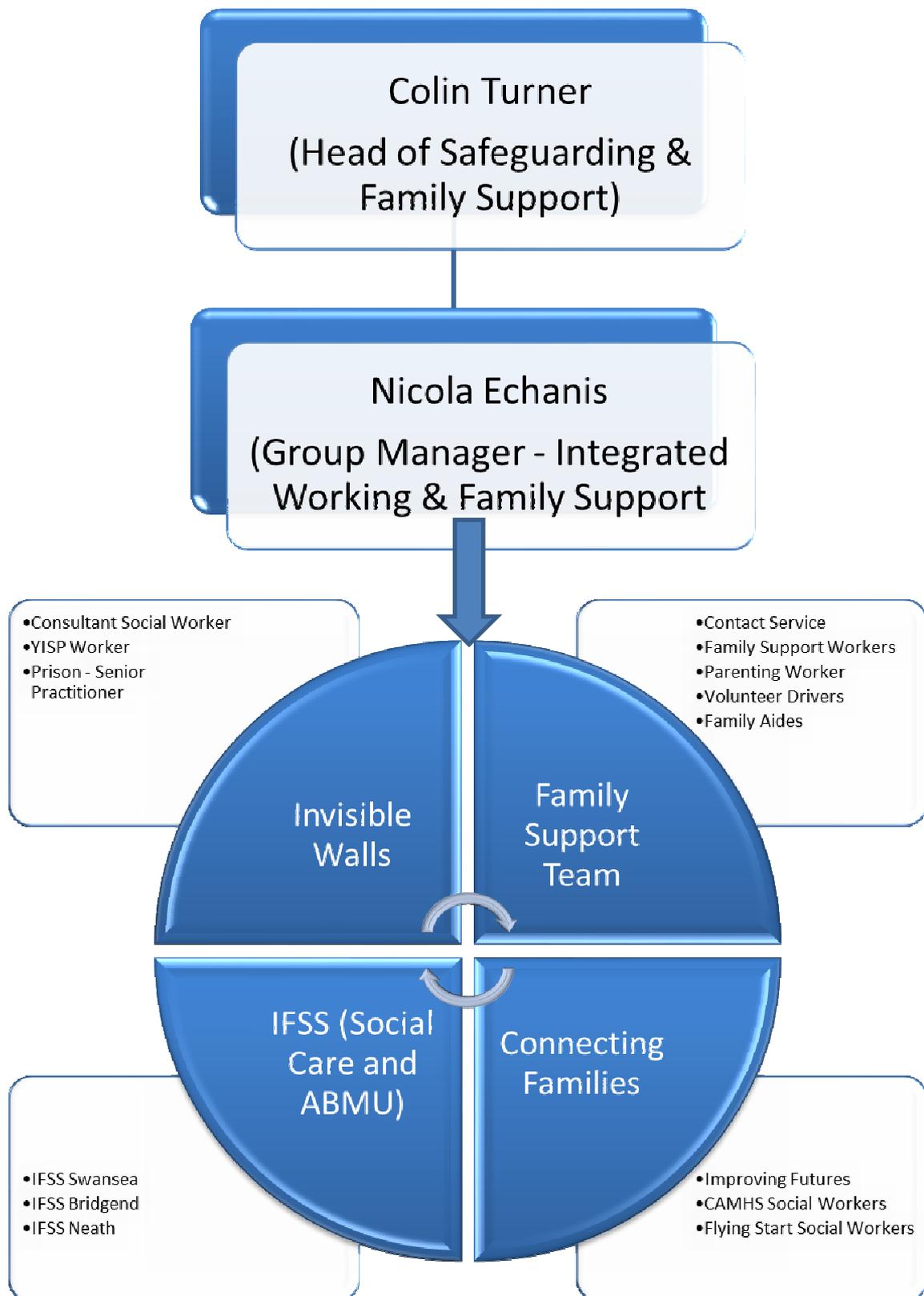
databases that are currently used across the services. This will be significant in terms of attempting to reduce duplication whilst fulfilling all statutory requirements. Safeguarding & Family Support Service and Housing have developed and agreed a protocol in relation to assessing homeless 16/17 year olds (based on the Southwark Guidance). This is already being applied in practice and has created a 'joined up' approach to assessments; this approach will continue to be used.

10. Regular forums have taken place during 2012-13 involving managers responsible for Just @sk Plus (S&FS part of the service) and Housing. The aim of these meetings has been to resolve any operational issues but also discuss and ensure that young people are included and represented within the council's overall homelessness strategy. Further links have been made with the officer responsible for the Housing Strategy which is due to be completed and published in 2014 (a five year strategy). The Head of Safeguarding & Family Support is also a member of the Supporting People Board.
11. The service structure and specification have been agreed in principle, though there may be a need for further amendment as development of the new service progresses. The authority's after care service and youth service 'Just @sk' provision merged to create the new 'Just @sk Plus' integrated service for 16-25 year olds. The new service became operational on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2012, and is based at the former Just @sk offices in the town centre.
12. The main aims of the new service model are:
  - to provide a service that can respond promptly, flexibly and effectively to the needs of vulnerable young people;
  - to fulfil the local authority's statutory duties as corporate parent to young people leaving care, including accommodation, support, advice and befriending;
  - to provide advice, practical assistance, information and personal support to young people in a range of areas, including education, employment, training, housing, welfare rights, health, leisure and personal development;
  - to ensure the service listens to young people, treats them with respect and involves them in decision making.
13. The existing services provided by the former 'Just @sk' youth service continue to be provided within the new service which include a 'drop in' advice and information service, counselling, sexual health, and various workshops/courses such as confidence building, media skills, Learn Direct-basic skills, animal care, budgeting and money management, careers and job club, peer training and volunteering.

14. Funding was agreed through the Medium Term Financial Strategy for an additional social work post to enable the new service to take on case management responsibility for all looked after children who are 16+. The new post holder took up post on 11 June 2012.
15. All 16 plus LAC cases are now routinely transferred to the Just @sk Plus service using the transfer protocol. This has led to a significant increase in workloads within the team and it is predicted that this increase will continue. There are also increased demand on the service and the increased statutory duties in relation to the recent legislation and policy document 'Reconnecting to Care' and the 'When I am Ready' consultation document. In addition to this, the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) was implemented in December 2012, which will mean that all young people under the age of 18 years in youth detention accommodation will have 'looked after' status. This will potentially have a further impact on increasing workloads.
16. The Bridgend Substance Misuse Action Team (SMAT) was successful in securing funding to employ an additional full time substance misuse practitioner. The post holder commenced on 15 October 2012. The Substance Misuse Worker is employed by West Glamorgan Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (WGCADA) and will provide a service to young people referred through Just @sk Plus.
17. Monthly consultation surgeries for Just @sk Plus staff with the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to discuss young people that are considered particularly vulnerable are now in place. In addition to this, a meeting took place in October 2012, with the Consultant Psychiatrist at CAMHS and their colleagues, which was extremely positive in relation to young people receiving services from the Just @sk Plus base. However, further work is required to consider the appropriate referral pathways and access to services.
18. A team information day was held for staff in the new service in December 2012, to raise awareness of services across the county borough for young people. A team development day is planned for early 2013 to further consider and develop roles and responsibilities within the integrated team.
19. The Young Persons Consultation Forum continues to meet quarterly as a minimum. Young people from the consultation group have recently met and been consulted on the design and content of a proposed Just @sk Plus information leaflet. There is on-going consultation with regards to the development of the service.

20. A young person's focus group has been established to ensure young people's views are being taken on board and listened to as the new Just @sk Plus service develops. The second consultation event was held in October 2011 which included young people taking part in an organised outdoor activity-canoeing as well as discussion groups to consider what services would benefit young people most within the new service. This proved to be an excellent piece of work and DVDs have been produced to demonstrate this. A further event took place on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2012 with the focus aimed at advocacy and entitlements for young people.
21. Throughout the past year, a number of young people leaving care have been supported by the Just @sk Plus service to access traineeships, apprenticeships and work experience placements through identifying opportunities in other council departments and directorates. Specifically, one young person has secured a traineeship within the Youth Offending Service. Here, she is part of a multi-agency team contributing to the work of the "Restorative Justice in Schools Project". She is not only accessing training in mediation skills but also has the opportunity to develop skills within the wider remit of youth justice service delivery and hopes to develop a career in this area.
22. Another care leaver is being supported to complete a three year university degree in International Business Management. A young parent will also shortly be completing her CACHE Level 2 in Child Care and has been accepted for Level 3 whilst also holding down a part-time child care post in a local nursery. Another young person is due to complete her NVQ Level 3 in Hairdressing and is now seeking full-time employment. One young person has been accepted for the TA and is now engaged in training other youngsters as part of the military preparation college. Finally, another young person who participated on a work experience placement with the parks department in Bridgend was subsequently offered full time employment on a seasonal contract.

# Family Intervention Services



**FAMILY SUPPORT TEAM**

