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Bridgend County Borough Council



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Gwasanaethau Gweithredol a Phartneriaethol / Operational and Partnership Services

Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: (01656) 643148
Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Mr Mark Anthony Galvin

Ein cyf / Our ref:
Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad/Date: Thursday, 12 October 2017

Dear Councillor,

CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

A meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting will be held in Committee Rooms 2/3, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB on **Wednesday, 18 October 2017 at 2.00pm.**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
To receive apologies for absence from Members.
2. Declarations of Interest
To receive declarations of personal and prejudicial interest (if any) from Members/Officers in accordance with the provisions of the Members' Code of Conduct adopted by Council from 1 September 2008.
3. Approval of Minutes 3 - 6
To receive for approval the minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting dated 19 April 2017.
4. Children with Disabilities Transformation Programme 7 - 32
5. Monitoring the Performance and Progress of the Western Bay Regional Adoption Service 33 - 72
6. Urgent Items
To consider any other item(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in accordance with Part 4 (paragraph 4) of the Council Procedure Rules and which the person presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should be reason of special circumstances be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.
7. Exclusion of the Public
The Report relating to the following item is not for publication as it contains exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 and 13 of Part 4, and Paragraph 21 of Part 5, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007.

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If following the application of the public interest test Cabinet resolves pursuant to the Act to consider this item in private, the public will be excluded from the meeting during such consideration.

8. Child Practice Reviews

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Yours faithfully

P A Jolley

Corporate Director - Operational and Partnership Services

Councillors:

HJ David

D Patel

Councillors

CE Smith

PJ White

Councillors

HM Williams

RE Young

Invitees:

Cllr N Clarke

Cllr DK Edwards

Cllr J Gebbie

Cllr RM James

Cllr J Radcliffe

Cllr C Webster

Cllr DBF White

Agenda Item 3

CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING - WEDNESDAY, 19 APRIL 2017

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 19 APRIL 2017 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

CL Reeves

CE Smith

PJ White

HM Williams

Apologies for Absence

HJ Townsend

Officers:

Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Julie Ellams	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Kate Giltrap	Team Manager Just Ask Plus
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Alison McDonald	Group Manager
Mark Shephard	Corporate Director - Communities

149. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

150. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting dated 18 January 2017 be approved as a true and accurate record.

151. HIDDEN AMBITIONS - A CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER FOR WALES REPORT AND BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S POSITION

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing presented a report on Hidden Ambitions – A Children’s Commissioner for Wales report and updated the Committee on the position of Bridgend County Borough Council in relation to the recommendations within the report.

The Children’s Commissioner had been working with the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to explore ways that they could help care leavers achieve their ‘Hidden Ambitions’. Her report concluded with a series of recommendations which if realised, would ensure Wales became a country that truly enabled “every young person to be the best that they could be”. In Bridgend there was a Sixteen plus team which played a pivotal role in delivering the BCBC response to the recommendations.

In 2016 the Commissioner consulted care leavers, and surveyed every Local Authority across Wales to establish what opportunities they currently provided.

To deliver the suggested improvements the Children’s Commissioner stated that she would:-

- Visit every Local Authority's executive leadership team across Wales in 2017 to discuss what they currently offered to support care leavers to achieve their 'hidden ambitions' and what they planned to put in place;
- Monitor the progress Local Authorities made;
- Monitor the progress of the Welsh Government in supporting care leavers;
- Continue to listen to care leavers about their experiences and whether they were getting the help they needed.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing reported each of the nine recommendations listed in the report and the Council's position or planned action. Progress had been made under each recommendation, more in some areas than others.

A member stressed the importance of clear guidance and advice when it came to finance and gave as an example the problems that adults serving in the forces experienced when they left because they were inexperienced when it came to organising their own finances. The Team Manager, Sixteen Plus, explained that it was particularly difficult for foster carers to allow children to take responsibility for their finances and a huge problem for 18 year olds. The "When I'm Ready" scheme had been available in the last year and addressed the gap where 18 year olds were not ready to be independent. It was geared towards those in education rather than NEETS and it allowed the foster carer to continue to provide care and bridge the gap until supported accommodation was available.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help stressed that all recommendations were important and these might not be enough to solve the issues. Housing was imperative when it came to the transitional period and helping find employment. Apprenticeships and traineeships were also imperative going forward. Carers were also appreciative of transitional support and younger carers in particular were not getting support in terms of education as they left school at the end of the day to start work at home.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing reported that targets for supporting young carers into apprenticeships were in the business plan but there was a lot of work still to be done. Some children needed pre support and there would be a report on this to a future meeting. They were aware of each recommendation in the report and each one was being tackled at some level.

The Leader commented that the right accommodation options were not available and the authority was failing vulnerable young people. A few 18 year olds could be left to set up home but the vast majority needed support. Consideration had to be given to how adequate accommodation could be provided and if more support was required. As a signatory to the document, issues had been raised with Welsh Government. This was not just the responsibility of local authorities but across the board. The state had a responsibility extending beyond Councils. He recommended that a report be submitted in six months on housing options and how we tackle this issue. It was important to be able to demonstrate that progress was being made.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help stated that in order to address the housing element, representatives from the Communities Directorate and the Housing Solutions team had to be involved. The authority had to be innovative with empty houses in the borough.

A member asked why more than 2000 house were unoccupied in the borough. He was advised that a number of these were privately owned and had been unoccupied for a long period of time. Efforts had been made to encourage the owners to rent out the

property, including the offer of grants and loans but it was difficult trying to persuade landlords to make their properties available.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration explained that there was anecdotal evidence that this was a private sector issue and legislation was required to stop these properties going to rack and ruin. Enforcement powers were limited and related to health and safety hazards.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing reported details of a project looking at in-house residential care and pathways and included providing better responses to children's needs and options for when they left care. The project was currently consulting with stakeholders to enable an options paper to be produced and a report would be submitted to Cabinet in the autumn.

The Programmes Manager, from Voices from Care, agreed that the housing stock was not being utilised and recognised that vulnerable adults were sent into society with no idea on how to function. There was a stigma attached to people who had been in care and this had to be addressed.

Members then received a presentation from Chris Dunn and Deborah Jones, Voices from Care.

The presenters gave a background to Voices from Care including the groups of people they worked with and the opportunity they provided for young people to influence the looked after system in Wales. They also represented the views, rights and experiences of those looked after in Wales. Examples of services they provided included participation, influencing, advice and support, training and collaboration.

"Proud To Be Me" was a Voices from Care initiative which brought young people and professionals together, developing a conversation on what it meant to be looked after and how to promote positive aspirations and messages. Other initiatives included "Question Time", the "National Fostering Framework" and "Care Day" which was a 5 nation partnership where young people developed messages which were showcased at Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and lit up Cardiff City Hall in celebration.

Future activities included the Hay Festival on May 26th 2017, Cascade Voices on April 25th, Royal College of Music & Drama between 8th and 10th August and VFC Regional Groups on 22 August.

Members raised a number of issues including media interest in the Big Build and DIY SOS, the benefits of sharing practical ideas and what was happening in other areas, collaboration and the Role of the Commissioner, raising the profile of safeguarding and the value of the Credit Union to help with advice regarding finance and cheap loans.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the contents of the report be noted and support be given to the Sixteen Plus team and other partner department and services in fulfilling the recommendations of the Hidden Ambition report for the children and young people of Bridgend.
- 2) That a further report on progress and achievements against each recommendation and specifically on housing options to meet care leavers needs, be submitted in six months.

152. URGENT ITEMS

None.

The meeting closed at 3.25 pm

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

18 OCTOBER 2017

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING
CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide the Committee with an update of the work undertaken since Cabinet granted approval to implement a new model for specialist 52-week provision for children and young people with complex needs, and to note the Statement of Purpose that has been developed for the new provision (provided in **Appendix A**), which was originally approved by Cabinet in July 2017.

2.0 Connection to Corporate Plan

2.1 This report links to the following improvement priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- Helping people to be more self-reliant;
- Smarter use of resources.

Plus the following background document:

- Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

3.0 Background

3.1 At present, there is no specialist 52-week provision available in-county for children and young people with complex needs. Therefore, when the needs, complexities and challenges of a young person escalate, and a 52-week accommodation service is required, the only option currently available is an Out-Of-County placement. Placing young children outside the county is not ideal for the child or their family, as they have to move from their local area, and these placements are expensive.

3.2 There is clearly a demand for specialist 52-week provision for children with disabilities locally, averaging circa 3 placements per year over the last 10 years, and it has been identified that they could have been placed and educated in-county, if there was specialist 52-week provision available in Bridgend.

3.3 Mapping and profiling recently undertaken also shows that there are a number of children and young people currently receiving other forms of care, whose needs and complexities are increasing to such a degree that 52-week specialist provision may be needed in the near future.

3.4 In July 2015, a report was presented to Cabinet, to inform them of the work being undertaken as part of the Children with Disabilities Transformation programme. Cabinet noted the progress that had been made to date, and approved a

consultation exercise with staff and stakeholders, to inform the options for delivery of in-county accommodation in the future.

- 3.5 Officers have spoken with families of children with disabilities about developing a 52 week provision within the County Borough of Bridgend and they have been very positive about this. Families have spoken about their upset and difficulties when their child has had to go outside of the Borough to have the necessary support.
- 3.6 A number of workshops and discussions have also taken place with local providers, in respect of scoping options and opportunities to work together to facilitate providing specialist 52-week provision, in-county. Findings from these multi-partner events helped inform the development of potential models for specialist 52-week provision in moving forward.
- 3.7 In November 2015, a report was presented to Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to update the Committee on the work being undertaken as part of the Children with Disabilities Transformation programme. The Committee requested that they receive a report on the developed options, so that Members can provide views on the options being considered and proposed new model.
- 3.8 In light of the costs associated with proceeding with the proposed new model at Heronsbridge School, a business case (which included an appraisal of those options identified above) was developed to help inform the financial viability of proceeding with this option, which was consulted-upon with:
 - School Modernisation Board
 - Heronsbridge School Board of Governors
 - Stronger Communities Connecting Services Board
- 3.9 Following endorsement of the proposal for specialist 52-week provision from the above boards, a capital bid of £286k was submitted to ensure funding is available to undertake the required works at identified Heronsbridge School properties, which was approved by Council in March 2016.
- 3.10 A report was presented to Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2016, asking the Committee to provide views on the proposed new model for specialist 52-week provision for children and young people with complex needs.
- 3.11 In response to acquiring this funding in 2016/17, a project board and project team were established, and project plans had been developed, which were in place to be implemented from October 2016, if officers were given approval by Cabinet to commence with the new model.
- 3.12 In November 2016, a report was presented to Cabinet who approved the implementation of the proposed new models for specialist 52-week provision for children and young people with complex needs, which is to refurbish and utilise the Caretaker's Lodge at Heronsbridge School, in order to provide specialist 52-week provision in-county – with BCBC delivering and staffing the service.

4.0 Current Situation

- 4.1 Following approval to develop the new specialist 52-week provision at Heronsbridge School, the project team initiated the project plans in order to take this piece of work forward. Members of the project team include representatives from: Built Environment, Children's Services, Education, Property Services, Finance, Human Resources and Project Management, who provide regular progress and monitoring updates at Children with Disabilities Programme Board.
- 4.2 Children and young people attending Heronsbridge School were asked to provide suggestions for the name of the home, who proposed the name 'Harwood House', which is the surname of the current caretaker at the school – and is in-keeping with how the other buildings at the school are named.
- 4.3 A number of separate workstreams have also been established, with the key areas of focus being:
- Procurement and Construction
 - Placements/transition planning
 - Registration (including staffing structure and rota)
- 4.4 **Procurement and Construction** – working alongside colleagues in Procurement and Built Environment, officers undertook a tender exercise in order to carry out the required refurbishment and building works at the Caretaker's Lodge in Heronsbridge School – with the successful bidder commencing work on 22nd May 2017, and the works being successfully completed in September 2017.
- 4.5 **Placements/transition planning** – working alongside colleagues in the Disabled Children's Team, profiling has been undertaken in order to identify those most appropriate for placement within the new provision, and plans are being put into place in order to make the required transitional arrangements from existing provision in readiness for September 2017.
- 4.6 **Registration** – in consultation with members of the project team, and also members of the Children and Disabilities Programme Board, officers are undertaking an application process to register the new provision with CSSIW, a fundamental part of which is the Statement of Purpose (attached as **Appendix A**), which was presented for approval from Cabinet in July 2017.
- 4.7 A summary of the key points contained within the Statement of Purpose is shown below:
- Harwood House will provide a high quality residential Looked After Children service for up to three children/young people with complex needs, which includes children with a learning disability, aged from eight to eighteen years; and who are also enrolled in Heronsbridge School.
 - The service will enable children with complex needs who are unable to reside with their families to continue to attend their specialist school and remain resident local to their school and family.
 - Harwood House is a detached 2 floor listed building in the grounds of Heronsbridge school. The building is being extensively refurbished with a fit for

purpose extension, scheduled to open in Autumn 2017. It offers safety and security within a comfortable and pleasant home-like environment.

- Harwood House is managed by the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate of Bridgend County Borough Council.

4.8 The registration process with CSSIW commenced in June 2017, and it is scheduled that the registration process will be completed by September/October 2017, when it is planned for the first cohort of individuals to be placed within the provision.

4.9 As part of the Children with Disabilities Programme, the project to develop the new specialist 52-week provision at Heronsbridge School has been undertaken alongside the remodelling work carried out at Bakers Way, the overnight short break provision for children with disabilities. This has allowed officers to share management and administrative duties and roles between both provisions, and also allow those affected by the changes at Bakers Way to apply for the roles within the new provision – which has resulted in reduced costs and lessened the adverse impact on staff.

4.10 Due to the time constraints around CSSIW registration, and there not being a meeting of Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting within the required timescales, in July 2017 Cabinet approved the Statement of Purpose for the new 52-week provision for children and young people with complex needs, who noted that an information report will be presented to Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting in October 2017, detailing the information contained in the report to Cabinet, and the decision made by Cabinet in respect of approving the Statement of Purpose for the new 52-week provision for children and young people with complex needs.

4.11 In-line with BCBC's Constitution, it is the role of Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting to approve individual Statements of Purpose for the service areas of Fostering, Adoption and Children's Homes. As such, additional approval of the Statement of Purpose that has been developed for the new provision (**Appendix A**) is being requested, which was originally approved by Cabinet in July 2017.

5.0 Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

5.1 There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.

6.0 Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 An EIA screening has been completed in consultation with the Equalities Officer, the conclusion being that a Full EIA will need to be undertaken within 3 years of this initial EIA Screening. This will give officers an opportunity to implement and embed the new model of care, before a full assessment is completed; identifying how effective it has been, who has been affected, and if there are any EIA implications as a result of implementing the new models of care.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 It has been forecast that the savings from the planned reduction in existing high-cost out-of-county placements will be over and above the cost of running the new service, and the new service should enable a reduction in the dependence on high-

cost placements in future years. However, it should be noted that there remains a significant pressure on out of county budgets at this moment in time.

7.2 In the longer-term, an option that could also be considered is the potential for income generation from neighbouring local authorities, as there is limited specialist 52-week provision for children and young people with complex needs across the South Wales region.

8.0 Recommendation

8.1 Cabinet Committee – Corporate Parenting is requested to:

- Note the information contained in this report, which had also been presented to Cabinet in July; and
- Note that Cabinet approved the Statement of Purpose for the new 52-week provision for children and young people with complex needs in July 2017 – as provided in **Appendix A**.

Susan Cooper

Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing
12 October 2017

9.0 Contact Officers

Laura Kinsey – Head of Children’s Social Care
(01656) 642314
Laura.kinsey@bridgend.gov.uk

10.0 Background documents

None

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

HARWOOD HOUSE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Ewenny Road
Bridgend
CF31 3HS

Tel. 01656 653766

Gail Summerhayes
Residential Manager

THIS STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR

**HARWOOD HOUSE
HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE**

**RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL
LAURA KINSEY**

SIGNED:

DATE:

INTRODUCTION

This Statement of Purpose provides detailed information about Harwood House. It is intended for any parent or any person with parental responsibility, social workers and staff working in the Home. It provides a basis for parents and social workers to decide whether the service is appropriate to meet the needs of particular children and to measure the suitability and standard of the service that is provided.

Parents will be made aware of the Statement of Purpose at the time of admission of their child and will be provided with a copy on request. Alternatively they may wish to refer to it at the Home. Paper and electronic copies will be available in an English and Welsh version for social workers at their office base. Staff will have access to it at the Home. Where appropriate, staff will use the Children's Guide to help children understand the service provided at Harwood House

Harwood House intends to provide a service that meets the needs of the children placed and satisfies the reasonable expectations of their parents and the child's social worker. The Manager and staff at the Home welcome comments from parents, social workers and children/young people. At the beginning of the service, parents/carers, together with the child/young person where appropriate, will be invited to view the facilities available and comment on their suitability. At intervals, parents will be asked for their opinions on the service and facilities. When the service ends Harwood House, the service will ask the child/young person, parents/carers and social workers to give their views on the child/young person's period of placement. Views are also welcome at reviews, which are held regularly. Where improvements can be made immediately, the Manager and staff will action immediately.

The Statement of Purpose is updated on an annual basis, reflecting changes that are being made to improve the service. CSSIW will be notified of any changes at least 28 days before they take effect. Consultation with parents and children/young people is a very important part of the process, which will take place in advance of the revised Statement of Purpose being put in place from April 1st each year. As part of a wider consultation, parents and children/young people will contribute during this period to identify any improvements needed to support the service. Other comments made throughout the year will also be considered in this exercise. Parents/carers and children/young people will then be informed of proposed changes and the revised copy of the Statement of Purpose will be available.

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5. The numbers, relevant qualifications and experience of staff working at Harwood House
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7. Organisational structure
8. Children for which the service is provided
9. Admission Policy
10. Intended Outcomes when more than six children are accommodated
11. Ethos of the House
12. Arrangements made to protect and promote the health of the children who use our service
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1. Aims and Objectives

Aim

At Harwood House we are committed to providing a high quality residential Looked After Children service for up to three children/young people with complex needs including a learning disability aged from eight to eighteen years; and are enrolled in Heronsbridge School. The service is located within the grounds of Heronsbridge School enabling ease of access for the children to the school, and promoting contact with parents/carers and multi-agency professionals involved with the children. This includes close monitoring of the children's care and support by their respective social workers. During school term time the children will attend the school for their education during the day time and at school holiday periods the children will reside in the home within the school setting. The service will enable children with complex needs who are unable to reside with their families to continue to attend their specialist school and remain resident local to their school and family.

Risk assessment and appropriate matching of the needs of children and young people are fully considered prior to a child being offered a placement at the home.

We adopt a person centred approach and work to support the child/young person to achieve their personal outcomes. We encourage and support each child/young person to reach their full potential and to make their own choices in order to live fulfilled lives. We offer a stimulating, safe, caring environment that promotes a holistic approach to all aspects of the child/young person's life. Staff are appropriately skilled and experienced to meet the complex needs of the children/young people who reside in the home.

The service will work with the children/young people to help devise and contribute to their Care and Support Plan. We establish strong working relationships with other multi-disciplinary professionals involved in supporting the child/young person.

We ensure children/young people are provided with accurate and accessible information which promotes the rights, responsibilities and the choices of children and young people. Such information is provided in the child/young person's preferred format and language.

We work with young people to develop independent living skills and promote their access to community services and facilities to support their transition to adulthood.

Objectives

- To assess each child/young person's needs before the service commences, to develop an individualised package of care and support that focuses on their needs which will be subject to regular reviews.
- To introduce children/young people to Harwood House at their pace, through a series of tea-time visits, prior to longer stays.
- To offer children and young people interventions to assist them in achieving wellbeing. To meet each child/young person's emotional, social, behavioural, health and developmental needs during their placement, in a way this ensures their dignity and promotes self-reliance.
- To provide a homely relaxed environment within which children/young people are encouraged to achieve their personal goals and individual potential.

- To support all children/young people to make good use of all community based resources, thereby promoting social and economic inclusion.
- To provide a comprehensive package of Educational support to promote the best possible outcome for the children.
- To assess the child/young person's living skills and to develop these skills through an individual living skills assessment programme. Provide support through transition plans into Adult services.
- To consult with children/young people, parents, carers, social workers and other professionals so that the service continually adapts and develops.
- To resolve issues for children/young people and parents promptly, and to address concerns wherever possible, with the residential manager and social worker. If a complaint can't be resolved matters will be responded to through Bridgend County Borough Council complaints procedure.

2a Facilities and Services within the Home

Harwood House offers a comprehensive range of services and facilities to meet the needs of each child.

Harwood House is a detached 2 floor listed building in the grounds of Heronsbridge school. The building is being extensively refurbished with extension fit for purpose to open Summer 2017. It offers safety and security within a comfortable and pleasant home-like environment.

The ground floor comprises of:

- **Shower room:** Is equipped with a toilet, sink and walk in shower with alert alarm pull cord for use of children/young people and visitors.
- **Lounge:** this is a communal room where children and young people have opportunities to engage with each other and form friendships, watch television/dvds, sensory bubble tube together and can be used when visitors call.
- **COSHH** (Control of Substances Hazards for Health, a body of regulations introduced in Britain to govern the storage and use of substance) will be stored under the stairs in a locked cupboard.
- **Office:** This room is well equipped to assist in the delivery of the service. Due to confidentiality procedures, children/young people can only access the office in the company of staff. The office also contains the locked medical cabinet for safe/storage of medication. A telephone is available for private use
- **Dining/Sun room;** this room is equipped with a table and 8 chairs, sofa, TV and music player and is where children/young people and staff will have their meals together. It can also be used as a second living room/quiet area, where arts/crafts and boards games can be used. Double patio doors with accessible access to patio/lawn garden area.
- **Kitchen:** this room is well equipped with fridge/freezer and cooking facilities, dish washer, washing/tumble dryer machine. Children/young people are encouraged to assist with cooking meals dependent on age and ability which will be assessed by house manager using their individual living skills assessment.
- **Staff Bedroom:** this room is for staff undertaking sleeping in duties and has an en suite for staff use, which has, toilet, sink and shower facilities.
- The home has installed not only an intruder alarm but an internal bedroom alert alarm, which will notify the waking night worker when a child has exited their room.

- The external doors to the property does not have thumb locks fitted as per usual regulatory requirements due to the needs of the vulnerable residents/children and DOLS being in place. All staff will have the exit door keys on them at all times and this is recorded within the fire risk assessment.

The first floor comprises of:

- **3 children/young people's bedrooms:** The bedrooms are well equipped with toughened furniture offering plenty of storage and a work space area where school/homework can be completed. Individually decorated suited to specific individual needs and allowing some choice
- **Bathroom:** is equipped with a shower, bath, sink and toilet with an alert alarm pull cord for the use of children and young people.

Outdoor space comprises of:

- **Garden Area:** The garden perimeter is enclosed with a 6 foot fence, which has a double gate opening, which will be locked via padlock, next to this there is a single gate, which has a latch lock, which will not be padlocked due to fire regulations. The garden is mainly grass lawn with a paved patio area to the front of home, paved patio lawn is also at the rear of the property and has access by patio doors from the sun lounge/diner room. There is also a shed, outdoor electric sockets and a water tap.
- **Parking:** There is a designated parking area for the minibus and car parking spaces for Harwood House.

Fun and play

We provide:-

- A large secure garden area with recreational equipment such as; trampoline, Bbq area.
- Toys, games and books suitable for all ages and both genders.
- Televisions, DVD's, music centre, game consoles, tablet and CD player.
- Sensory bubble tube and toys.
- PECS on children's doors to show their daily routines.
- A mini-bus for trips for social and recreational purposes.

The services provided are:

- Educational support
- Physical, emotional and behavioural development to meet need
- Independence living skills assessment and development programme
- Working in partnership with children/young people, parents/carers and relevant professionals to assist in meeting needs
- Key / link working
- Advocacy
- Transport to visit families
- Quality physical and personal care
- Rehabilitation work through restorative practice approach
- Recreational activities, as approved by Bridgend County Borough Council Social Services Guidelines
- Transition process to support a successful move on to adulthood.

The Team:-

- A suitably qualified, experienced and skilled staff team dedicated to providing an excellent experience for children during their stays
- A high ratio of staff to children/young people so that individual attention can be given to each child/young person during their stay
- A purposeful care programme which is well-designed and executed, and based on individual assessed needs
- A partnership approach to working with parents/carers
- A Key Working system providing a member of staff with specific responsibilities for each child
- All care team registered with Code of Professional practice for Social care.

Other agencies' services provided:-

- An advocacy service provided by Tros Gynnal
- Advice from community nursing, paediatric Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy and physiotherapy services, so that the team can provide a specialised service for special health or caring needs
- Children are referred to Harwood House by their Social Worker who will visit regularly and oversee the arrangements for the child/young person to ensure they are working well.

2b Facilities and services within the Community:-

Harwood House is situated in the grounds of Heronsbridge School in Bridgend, close to the town centre and Bridgend College. It is within easy reach of many attractions for children and the minibus is used to take children on outings to a wide-range of recreational settings.

There are many facilities on offer in the town of Bridgend and surrounding area including: -

- Recreation Centres and Swimming Pools
- Coastal and Beach Areas
- Country Park
- Cinema
- Soft play area and trampoline park
- 3 recreation/fitness centre
- Ten pin bowling
- Gymnastics club
- Youth clubs
- Library
- Sea/Army/Air Cadets
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Clinic
- Doctors and Dental Surgeries
- Bus and train services

3. Registered Persons:-

Registered Provider: Bridgend County Borough Council

Responsible Individual:

Laura Kinsey
Head of Childrens Social Care
Bridgend County Borough County Council
Civic Offices
Bridgend
CF31 4WB
Telephone Number (01656) 642314

Registered Manager:

Gail Summerhayes
Harwood House
Ewenny Road
Bridgend
CF31 3H

Qualifications and Experience of Registered Persons

4. Registered Manager – Gail Summerhayes (37 hours)

Qualifications:

BA Hons Public Services
NVQ 4 Leadership and Management Care Services
NVQ 3 Health social care Children and young people
NVQ 2 in Children Care and early education
A Level's: English, maths, Psychology
10 GCSEs
Brief solution focus therapy
Introduction to Dialectic behaviour therapy
Therapeutic play/life story work
Various in house training

Experience:-

Employed by Bridgend County Borough Council as the Registered Manager of Bakers Way Short Breaks service in September 2015. The manager has previously worked in private therapeutic residential/education home for 10 years including 6 years as the Registered Manager. A home for looked after children with social, educational and behavioural difficulties. Prior to that worked voluntary in a primary school as classroom support and for a mentoring service reintegrating disabled people into the community and work place.

Working in Harwood House on a Monday, Tuesday and Half day Wednesday morning, on Wednesday afternoon, Thursday and Friday at Bakers Way Short Breaks Service which is within 10 minute drive to Harwood house, in the Registered Managers absence there will be Senior Residential Workers completing office hours and deputising in the managers absence but both the Residential Manager and the Group Manager for Regulated Services will be available by phone for support and will go to Harwood House if needed.

5. Within Harwood House the following staffing will be in place;

- Registered Manager as stated above.
 - Three Senior Residential Workers (32 hours) - minimum qualification NVQ 3/QCF Level 3 Health Social Care Children Young People. Working towards (or qualified) QCF Level 5 Leadership and Management Children and Young People Residential Manager
 - Three Residential Care workers (28 hours) –Qualified or working towards NVQ/QCF Level 3 Health Social Care Children Young People
 - Three Residential Care workers (24 hours) –Qualified or working towards NVQ/QCF Level 3 Health Social Care Children Young People
 - Three Night Care workers (21 hours) –Qualified or working towards NVQ/QCF Level 3 Health Social Care Children Young People
 - Casual Residential Care workers – Qualified or working towards NVQ/QCF Level 3 Health Social Care Children Young People
 - Administrative assistant to work two days a week in Harwood House to support Registered Manager.

RATIOS OF STAFF: THE CHILDREN WILL BE SUPPORT BY AT A MINIMUM OF 1 TO 1 CARE, THE RATIO WILL BE INCREASED AS SPECIFIED IN INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN'S CARE AND SUPPORT PLANS. AT NIGHT TIME THERE WILL BE TWO STAFF IN RESIDENCE, ONE UNDERTAKING SLEEP IN DUTIES AND ONE WAKING NIGHT.

6. **Arrangements for Supervision, training and development of employees**

Supervision is provided on a monthly basis to all team members by the manager or senior staff and group supervision is undertaken with casual staff. This assists in identifying individual development needs and enables staff to acquire the skills and knowledge to work within the service area including working closely with the Directorate's Social Care workforce Development Programme and ABMU Children community nursing team to identify relevant training needs.

Annual appraisals identify ongoing training needs, monitor performance of a staff member within their working role and identify areas of further support required. The appraisals of all team members will be used to inform the content of the Directorate's training programme. In addition to accessing the Directorate training programme, team members will be provided with in-house team training through the involvement of specialists who provide services for the service users.

Monthly team meetings are held which further extend and develop the skills, knowledge and understanding of team members.

7. **Organisational Structure**

Harwood House is managed by the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate of Bridgend County Borough Council.

Social Services and Well Being Director – Susan Cooper

Head of Children Social Care –Laura Kinsey

Group Manager, Regulated Services –Natalie Silcox

Residential Manager – Gail Summerhayes

Harwood House is one of four children's residential units managed by the Social Services and Well Being Directorate of Bridgend County Borough Council, and is the only one to offer long term care for disabled children and young people.

Regulation 32 visits are undertaken by the three registered managers who alternate between the homes, reporting to the Head of Childrens Social Care. Other visits are undertaken by shared regulatory services e.g. inspection of food hygiene and CSSIW inspections.

Rota Visits are undertaken by Elected Members over a period of 12 months.

Staffing can be supplemented by casual staff and staff contracted to work across a number of Children's Homes

8. **Children for whom the service is provided**

Harwood House provides a long term residential service for a maximum of 3 children/young people with complex learning disabilities. Placements will be considered according to compatibility. The service provides support to young people from ages between 8-18 years, however referrals will be considered for young people aged up to 19 years who continue in educational placements.

There is a thorough referral and admission policy to assist in establishing whether this setting is appropriate to meet the needs of the children/young people and their family. Families are encouraged to visit the home as part of an active policy to encourage the facilitation of placement choice, as well as the child/young person's ongoing placement plan.

During a child's/young person's stay at the home, they are encouraged to lead a normal and independent life and to participate in local community facilities. The home creates an atmosphere in which young people are encouraged to make decisions of their own choice in a safe environment. There is considerable emphasis to enable children and young people to have a voice, choice and control whilst respecting their personal dignity and emotional wellbeing.

9. **Admission policy**

The referral pathway will require the Social Workers to present a case to the Accommodation and Permanence Panel requesting accommodation for a child/young person to take up placement within the service; children and young people must already be in attendance at Heronsbridge School. It will be the responsibility of the panel to determine the suitability of this placement before any arrangements are made. Once the panel has given approval the referral will be sent to the registered manager of the service to consider placement.

An impact assessment will be completed by the Registered Manager to determine suitability of the referral in relation to the children already placed and their compatibility. Decisions to place are based on assessed needs of the child/young person ensuring the service is able to accommodate the placement safely whilst meeting regulatory requirements.

The social worker will have discussed the proposed placement with the child/young person and his/her parents/carers. Pre admission visits and discussions will have taken place prior to the child/young person being placed, the documentation for 'Looked After Children (WCCIS)' will have been completed by the SW. The service will complete a placement agreement with the child/young person's family/carer, which sets out clearly, what support the service will offer ensuring the service identifies 'what matters' to the child/young person's whilst meeting the assessed needs according to their care and support plan. The referral and

admission policy will seek to engage the child/young person and his/her parents/carers positively and collaboratively in a partnership approach.

During the placement, staff will assist and support the child/young person whilst working closely with their families/carers to contribute and achieve better outcomes for the young person. Staff will support and assist the transition process of the child/young person prior to discharge into adult services provision or return to their own home. This is managed via the transition panel.

10. **Outcomes when more than six children are accommodated**

The above does not apply to Harwood House. Criteria of the service will be up to 3 child/young person to be accommodated at any given time.

11. **Ethos of the House**

The care provided to disabled children and young people at (52 week home) is based on the principles contained in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, Children Act 1989 and 2004 especially that:

Disabled children are children first, and their disability is a secondary, albeit a significant issue.

The approach is to adopt the following principles:

- a) Children/young people at Harwood House are treated as individuals and will be provided with staff support according to their individual assessed needs.
- b) The service provided by Harwood House is in response to the identified needs and planned outcomes as detailed in the individual care plan of the child/young person.
- c) Young people have support in preparing for adulthood through an individualised independence living skills and development programme.
- d) Children/young people are encouraged as far as possible to: -
 - Discuss and agree activities
 - Choose toys and learning materials
 - Shop, cook and develop daily life skills
 - Show consideration to other service-users, their property, rights and choices
 - Share any concerns they may be feeling during their stay.
 - Take up opportunities to access community based activities.
- e) Children/young people will be treated in such a way that ensures their racial, gender, religious and cultural needs are taken into account.
- f) The home is committed to providing an environment which promotes the child/young person's growth, maturation, self-respect and personal dignity.

12. **Arrangements made to protect and promote the health of the children/Young people in Harwood House Placement**

Many children have specific health needs. Efforts are made pre-placement to understand and address these needs in discussion with the Social Worker/care manager, parents/carers

and multidisciplinary professionals. This ensures each child /young person's individual health needs are appropriately met.

Some children's health needs may require specialist health interventions during their placement. Careful consideration will be given to whether staff are sufficiently skilled and trained to meet children/young people's needs safely. Staff will be upskilled through specialist or bespoke training to support children and young people within the accommodation as and when required.

Staff at Harwood House undertakes in-house training provided by health colleagues on specific health needs, which includes the administration of medication. Such training is regularly monitored and reviewed by the manager and health colleagues. This ensures competency and compliance.

We will aim to meet the needs of the children/young people placed as assessed by the Looked After Children's Nurse/Health Visitor and Community Paediatrician. Throughout the child/young person's placement the Looked After Children Nurse/Health Visitor continues to remain involved and consults with staff in the carrying out of individual health plans. This assistance is specialised and provides a useful resource for promoting:

- Immunisation and screening
- Communication (PECS and Sign-along)
- Nutrition and diet
- Exercise and rest
- Personal hygiene
- Sexual health
- The harmful effects of alcohol, smoking and substance misuse
- The impact of HIV/AIDS and other blood borne viruses

Staff will liaise with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Occupational therapists and Speech and Language Therapists team supporting children/young people in clinical consultations.

Staff will endeavour to assist each child/young person upon admission to register with one of the local doctors, dentist and opticians, unless they chose to remain with their own registered GP practice. All children and young people are expected to have an annual statutory health assessment. They are provided with a well-balanced diet, which takes into account their personal choices.

13. Arrangements for the promotion of the education of children

Each child attends Heronsbridge School. Staff will take and meet the child/young person from the school to walk back to their accommodation. Opportunities are provided for a verbal handover to take place between accommodation staff and class teacher/assistant regarding the day's events of the child/young person attendance or any other matters which need's addressing. This enable's an integrated approach. Staff will also share information concerning the child/young person during the accommodation placement with education colleagues.

Staff will support and assist a child/young person to complete any homework they receive from school. Children have the use of I pads (educational apps have been downloaded on them). Advice is sought from school, so that children's learning can be supported informally as well as providing stimulating and rewarding activities.

The Looked After Children Education team provide individual support to the child/young person. Each child/young person placed at the home receives a personal educational plan which details how residential staff will work with the school to contribute and implement the plan and meet the needs assessed.

14. Arrangements to promote children's participation in hobbies, recreational, sporting and cultural activities

Children/young people at the home are actively encouraged and fully supported to continue with or take part in suitable activities and hobbies. These may include after school clubs, local clubs, gymnastics, swimming, youth clubs etc. The children/young people are also offered staff supervised activities; e.g. Cinema, leisure centres, outdoor pursuits, walks in local gardens, parks and beaches.

The home has its own transport so that staff can convey the children/young people as needed, thus enabling them to access a range of social and recreational opportunities. There are also a range of DVDs, computer consoles, board games books and sensory toys available at the home.

In accordance with Bridgend County Borough Council policy appropriate risk assessments are completed as necessary according to the activity being considered.

15. Arrangements for consultation with children about the operation of the home

The home holds a monthly children/young people meeting where everybody is able to contribute and offer suggestions to ensure the home remains a happy place to live. The home is committed to empower children/young people, to have their say and their views and opinions are heard in a positive manner.

Staff are alert to the child's/young person's wishes, feelings and needs. These can be expressed verbally and non-verbally; and staff consistently responds in a sensitive and appropriate manner. Children/young people are encouraged to participate in planning activities and care within the home and in the wider community during their placement, taking into account individual preferences. This ensures that the day to day operation of the home is responsive to the needs and views of the children who receive the service.

The service will annually send out quality assurance questionnaires to children/young people resident, parents/carers and social workers. On leaving the service there will be a leaving/exit interview/questionnaire completed. This will be in the child's/person preferred choice of language/communication levels.

16. Policy on Behaviour Management/use of restraints

Some children/young people present concerning behaviours which may place themselves or others at risk. These would be identified via a Risk Assessment undertaken by the social worker/care manager and provided with the referral to (NAME 52 week). In situations whereby a child/young person presents concerning/challenging behaviour, an individual behaviour management plan will be completed by the residential manager in conjunction with parents/carers and social worker. This behaviour management plan will include a description of the presenting behaviour, first signs of agitation and what triggers the child to present the behaviour. A detailed plan of preventative and responsive strategies for staff to use with the child to ensure firm boundary settings and a consistent approach is delivered safely.

A copy of the plan is kept on the child/young person's individual's file and discussed in team meetings. This is updated following any incident of challenging behaviour.

It is Harwood House practice to involve all children in decision-making as far as possible. This will hopefully result in incidents of challenging/concerning behaviour being managed safely and effectively. Boundaries are clearly discussed and explained to the children/young people and parents/carers during the introductions to the placement.

Low level sanctions are used in accordance with individual behaviour management plans at Harwood House this includes boundary setting and distraction/diffusion techniques. A restorative approach/work is also completed where possible with the child.

A record of any sanction is kept on individual children's files and recorded in Bakers way Sanction book. There are strict guidelines and policy on the use of restraint which staff need to comply with.

Physical restraint is only used as a last resort and if there is clear evidence, or genuine belief that a child/young person's actions may lead to physical injury which will harm them and/or others. In this case physical restraint will be used in accordance with Bridgend County Borough Council policy and guidance, the minimum force necessary will be used and all cases of restraints will be formally recorded. Staff will be trained to use the 'Team teach' and restorative practice approach.

17. **Arrangements for Child Protection and to Countering Bullying**

Many children receiving the service at Harwood House have communication difficulties, and it is recognised that disabled children/young people can be more vulnerable to abuse/neglect. Harwood House staff will therefore be continually alert to any expression, verbal or non-verbal or any other signs, that a child may be experiencing abuse. If this is suspected the All Wales Child Protection Procedures will be implemented.

Countering Bullying

The key principles on which to base work with children and families are found in the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004 Guidance, Care standards Act 2000 and national minimum Standards for residential services and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which the UK is a signatory and the home fully subscribes. All children/young people deserve the opportunity to achieve their full potential. They should be able to;

- Be as physically and mentally healthy as possible
- Gain the maximum benefit possible from good quality educational opportunities
- Live in a safe environment and be protected from harm
- Experience emotional well being
- Feel loved and valued, and be supported by a network of reliable and affectionate relationships
- Become competent in looking after themselves and coping with everyday living
- Have a positive image of themselves and a secure sense of identity, including cultural and racial identity
- Develop good inter-personal skills and confidence in social situations

Careful consideration of placement compatibility will minimise or prevent possible friction between individuals and avoid any unnecessary conflict. However, if bullying does occur staff would take immediate action to stop the behaviour, protect the individuals and address the behaviour if the child/young person continues bullying. Parents and others will be informed as appropriate to discuss the behaviours and prevent further escalation

18. Unauthorised Absences

The children who stay at Harwood House are restricted to the house and garden area to safeguard their own wellbeing. A secured keypad system is in place to ensure access in and out of the premises are monitored and controlled safely. Adequate staffing levels ensure that children are supervised or monitored at all times. Should some impulsive behaviour result in a child running off, and the child cannot be located, Bridgend County Borough Council Missing Person's Policy will be followed and the relevant people will be informed immediately.

The following would be informed:-

- Police
- Parent/person with parental responsibility
- Social Worker/Emergency Social Worker out of hours
- CSSIW

19 Surveillance

Children/ young people are appropriately monitored by staff in line with providing quality standard of care. These may include observations of behaviour and self- expression such as the child/young person being withdrawn, agitated or showing a change to their usual mood that evokes concern. Staff will complete records on a daily basis in relation to the progress of the child/young person, with key workers making more extensive observations as part of their monthly key working reports.

At night there will be a member of staff on waking duties to observe and monitor the children for health, care and safety needs.

20. Fire precautions/procedures

A Fire Alarm and smoke detection system is in operation throughout the premises. Self-closing doors are connected to the alarm system. Fire-fighting equipment is installed in the form of fire-blankets and extinguishers and an evacuation Rescue mat.

All members of staff undertake the Fire Prevention Course and are familiar with emergency procedures.

Fire drills are planned when the children/young people are present. To alleviate any distress or panic, we advise the children/young people that an alarm may go off shortly, reassuring them that there is no need to panic and explaining to them what course of action they need to take.

Fire Drills take place monthly, whilst the alarms are tested weekly. All equipment is checked on an annual basis. The Health and Safety Officer together with the Residential Manager also carry out annual Safety Fire Risk assessments.

In the event of a fire, staff would have followed the written procedures of the house, the fire service would have already been contacted.

As part of a fire prevention programme there is a strict No Smoking policy in the home, all electrical items are checked and should be disconnected when not in use (particularly at

night). We operate a safe storage system for all flammables and potentially dangerous liquids such as bleach and for safety reasons aerosols are kept in a lockable cupboard.

21. **Arrangements for Religious Instruction**

Children/young people have the choice to follow their own particular beliefs and can be supported to attend local places of worship

22. **Arrangements made for contact**

Children/young people residing at Harwood House are allowed to have contact with their parents/carers as agreed by their social worker, both inside and outside the home, unless legal considerations preclude this. Children and young people have a choice of rooms to use during visits from their friends and relatives.

Some of the children that live in Harwood House limited communication skills. Some have issues in relation to being able to communicate their anxieties about being separated from their family and that which is familiar to them. Staff will be sensitive to their emotional needs and feelings, giving comfort and reassurance when needed.

23. **Representation and Complaints**

If a child or a parent/carer wishes to make a complaint about any part of the service, the Registered manager would address these issues immediately with the parent /carer concerned to resolve the matters informally. If the parent/carer or young person wishes to make a formal complaint, the Registered manager will provide the complaints procedure leaflet and request they complete and send it in to the Complaints officer in Bridgend County Borough council where it will be processed. The Social Services Wellbeing Directorate has a statutory complaints procedure, which is followed. In accordance with the Children's Homes (Wales) Regulations.

The following procedures are followed: -

Manager of the Home is informed.

The Complaints Officer is notified.

Contact is made with the parent.

An attempt is made to resolve the matter informally by the Registered Manager in the first instance however; if this cannot be resolved the complaints will be dealt with via the complaints procedure Stage 1, Stage 2.

If the nature of complaint is in relation to staff conduct practices the matter will be investigated by the service and in line with disciplinary procedures.

Some of the children/young people may find it difficult to communicate their problem or concerns. When this occurs it can be frustrating to the child. This in turn could result in a change in their behaviour. Staff are vigilant in recognising the signs and responding appropriately. Staff at Harwood House would support children/young people, where appropriate, to follow their concerns through to resolution.

Arrangements are in place for members of Tros Gynnal, an independent advocacy service, to visit the unit. The children could be supported to use the complaints procedure by an advocate from Tros Gynnal, if appropriate.

24. **Arrangements for reviews of care and support plans**

Children/young people's plans will be reviewed regularly in accordance with statutory requirements. The first review will be within four weeks of a child/young person becoming looked after. The second review will be held 3 months later. Subsequent reviews will be held after a period of no more than six months and on an ongoing basis. Within this process the role of the staff is to assist in the completion of the consultation documents and to advocate on behalf of the child/young person to assist with meeting the needs, whilst giving an informed view point about the child/young person's progress whilst placed at Harwood House.

The purpose of the reviews is to monitor progress and review care and support plans.

Independent reviewing officers are employed by Bridgend County Borough Council to chair the review meetings. Before their sixteenth Birthday, young people should also have an aftercare (Pathway) planning meeting; this will look at the ways in which the service can assist the young person when they leave residential care. A pathway plan in accordance with the Leaving Care Act 2000 will be formulated to help facilitate this.

25. Type of accommodation and sleeping arrangements

Harwood House provide a home for three children/young people at any given time. At night there is one member of staff undertaking sleeping in duties and one member staff undertaking wakeful duties.

26. Details of any specific therapeutic techniques used and arrangements for their supervision

Harwood House will provide each child with individualised services and interventions through the delivery of their care and support plans which will be routinely reviewed in accordance with statutory timescales. If the children's care and support plans identify that their assessed need is to have specialist therapeutic techniques then we will use outside agencies to support the home. E.G. CAMHS, YOT etc

27. Policy on anti-discriminatory practice

Staff at Harwood House strive to maintain and encourage appropriate and positive relationships based upon honesty and mutual respect with every person they have contact with. To this end anyone receiving our service is expected to treat staff and others similarly in accordance with professional and personal boundaries. Expectations of behaviours for staff and children/young people are clearly understood and negotiated by those living and working at the home, this includes appropriate control over children/young people in the interests of their own welfare and the protection of others.

Disabled children are at significant risk of experiencing discrimination. Staff members are especially alert to practices which disadvantage disabled children/young people and seek to redress them, where possible.

Bridgend County Borough Council has a policy on Anti-discriminatory practice. Children/young person's rights are respected in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as referred to earlier. Cultural sensitivity is essential so that consideration is given to different religious beliefs and cultural traditions for different racial, ethnic and cultural groups. Staff need to guard against myths and stereotypes-both positive and negative.

The home has a comprehensive manual of policies and procedures which can be accessed upon request and is continually revised and updated as required.

28 **Address and telephone number of appropriate officer from Welsh Government Assembly**

CSSIW South West Region
Government Buildings
Picton Terrace
Carmarthen,
SA31 3BT.

Tel No : 03007900126
email:cssiw.southwest@gov.wales

29. **Address and telephone number of Children's Commissioner for Wales**

Children's Commissioner for Wales,
Oystermouth House,
Phoenix Way
Llansamlet,
Swansea,
SA7 9FS
Tel no. 01792 765600

Written: 22.09.2017

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

18 OCTOBER 2017

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

MONITORING THE PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS OF THE WESTERN BAY REGIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with information about the performance and progress of the Western Bay Regional Adoption Service, including the Annual Report on Regional PI Performance 2016/17 which is attached at **Appendix A**.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority.

- 2.1 The report links to the following corporate priorities:

- Helping people to be more self-reliant;
- Smarter use of resources.

3. Background

- 3.1 Adoption has, and continues to receive, high levels of attention from both the UK and the Welsh Government. Members will be aware that the creation of a National Adoption Service is one of the key policy strands of the Welsh Government, as enacted in the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014. This Act provides powers, under Part 9 Section 170, for Ministers to direct local authorities to collaborate in relation to adoption services and to prevent any local authority from withdrawing from these collaborations in the future.
- 3.2 The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 came into force on 13th March 2015. The primary purpose of these Directions is to ensure effective joint arrangements are in place between local authorities in Wales for the delivery of adoption services
- 3.3 Schedule 1 of the Directions sets out which local authorities must collaborate with each other. For the Western Bay region the local authorities are Swansea, Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot. Swansea host and manage the regional service on behalf of the partner agencies, this having been approved by Cabinets in all three local authorities in April 2014.
- 3.4 The Western Bay regional service is integrated into the National Adoption Service (NAS) as one of the five identified regional collaboratives. The National Service is underpinned by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015.

3.5 The broad aims of the joint adoption arrangements across Wales as specified in the Directions include:

- Consistent and high quality service
- Keeping delay to a minimum
- Widest choice possible of placement
- Eliminating waiting lists for training and assessments
- Improving the matching process
- Streamlining adoption services improved liaison between adoption social workers
- Keeping breakdowns to a minimum by providing adequate adoption support
- Collaborative working between local authorities, voluntary agencies, health and education services

3.6 The Management and oversight arrangements of the National Service consist of:

Governance Board

Includes representatives from each agency:

- Spokesperson and Deputy Spokesperson from WLGA for Health & Social Services
- Mayor or executive leader by the Lead Authority
- Independent Chairperson of the Advisory Group
- Representative on behalf of the voluntary agencies
- Elected Member representation for each region

3.6.1 The functions of the Governance Board include: strategic direction, approval of annual work programme, ensuring the views of stake holders are represented and the monitoring and oversight of performance, complaints, engagement with voluntary agencies, service user representatives, budget and financial, Welsh language and reporting to the Welsh Ministers.

3.6.2 The nominated elected member representative on the Governance Board will be decided in due course.

Advisory Group

3.6.3 Includes the following representatives from:

- each collaborative Head of Children's Service
- the Association of the Directors of Social Services Cymru
- the Association of Directors of Education in Wales
- the WLGA
- 3 from voluntary organisations
- Legal adviser from the lead local authority
- Health professional for Looked After Children
- Medical advisor to an adoption panel
- CAMHS
- Service User
- Social Research Centre

3.6.4 The functions of the Advisory Group include:

- Provision of professional advice and

- Support to the Governance Board
- Supporting the effective operation of the service
- Notifying the Welsh Minister of any issues

3.6.5 The City of Cardiff Council has been given the role of Lead Authority for the National Adoption Services and as host authority will work with key partners to run an all-Wales adoption website, develop a centre of excellence for adoption services and employ a Director of Operations for Wales.

Director of Operations and Central Team:

3.6.6 The National Adoption Service has appointed Suzanne Griffiths as Director of Operations, along with a Business and Performance Manager, Policy and Practice Officer and Administrative Assistant.

3.6.7 The functions of the Director of Operations and Central Team include:

- Production of an annual work programme to include priorities and targets
- Financial plans and budget responsibilities
- Monitoring and analysis of performance data
- Determine actions to address issues arising
- Improvements and developments of the service
- Submission of a 6 monthly and annual progress and financial report
- Analysis of reports from regional collaboratives
- Establish and maintain website
- Co-ordination of pre-approval training and adoption support services

3.6.8 In addition to the development of the National Service and the Central Team, a Wales Adoption Register has been developed which is hosted by the Central Team operating on the principle of keeping Welsh children in Wales.

4. Current situation/Proposal.

4.1 Western Bay Adoption Service (WBAS) became fully operational in April 2015. Prior to this adoption services were delivered locally via the three local authorities.

4.2 The regional adoption service provides a range of services and interventions across the five key domains to those affected by adoption. Those being:

- Assessing and supporting prospective adopters
- Assessing non-agency (parent/care, formerly step parent adoptions)
- Birth Record Counselling and Intermediary Services (BRC &IS)
- Adoption support (assessments and support services to anyone affected by adoption)
- Twin Tracking and Family Finding (TT&FF), which involves working with birth families of children in or following care proceedings and once a Placement Order (PO) has been granted by court in searching for an adoptive placement

4.3 The attached annual performance report outlines the performance within the regional adoption service for 2016/17.

Key achievements for the year include:

- We continue to place more children within WBAS than with Inter Agencies (IA) this has been despite some challenges encountered i.e. children having complex needs, sibling groups/older children and a sustained picture of adopters wishing to have the more straightforward and younger children. We placed 39 children within WBAS and 32 with IAs. For Bridgend, 13 were placed with WBAS and 11 with IAs.
- The length of time taken from 'becoming looked after' (LAC) to placement for adoption has reduced from 19.5 months with the average time now being 15.3 months. This however has not met the national bench mark of 13 months and further work is needed within the local authorities (LAs) to address this.
- The average time it takes for children who wait longer than six months from Should Be Placed Decision (SBPD) to placement for adoption has increased but only very slightly from 9.25 to 10 months. However there have been considerable successes with a number of children placed in very short timescales; the lowest for WB being 104 days (3.5 months). This success includes a case from BCBC with its lowest being 140 days (4.6 months). This is attributed to the close working between Recruitment & Assessment (R&A) and Family Finding (FF) functions to identify early the needs of children and adopters so that where suitable the link can be progressed without delay.
- There has been greater collaboration between Family Finding (FF) and Adoption Support (AS) to put together packages of support for more complex children or where placements need additional support.
- Enquiry rates are consistent despite a focus on harder to place and more complex children as part of the recruitment message which has been devised jointly by the managers of R&A and TT&FF. This focusses on prioritizing adopters who are interested in taking older children, those in sibling groups and those with complex needs. Whilst this has seen some success the reality is that many adopters are still presenting themselves as wanting younger children which is in line with national research.
- The average time taken to approve adopters from the inquiry stage to Agency Decision Maker (ADM) decision has decreased compared to last year from 10.1 months to 9.7 months.
- There has been, as a result of a number of WBAS and LA strategies a small increase in the number of children presented to panel where there is evidence of Life Story Materials (LSM). This is particularly noticeable in the last quarter where the jump in performance goes from 1 in Q3 to 11 in Q4.
- Performance in the number of Birth Parents referred and offered a service has been sustained.
- There continues to be evidence that there are more direct interventions from the adoption support service than previously thus reducing the need for higher cost commissioned services.

- Successful placement of a number of sibling groups. This includes four sibling groups of two from Bridgend.
- The Children's Guide has been launched and appears to have been received positively in the three LAs. It has also been placed on the WBAS website so adopters can access directly if they choose.
- There has been a review and revised guidance for the Child Adoption Report-Annex B (CAR-B) to improve quality of information. This has been backed up by training offered by WBAS and mentoring by the TT seniors for workers / managers who have requested additional support. In 2016/2017, approximately 60 staff from Childrens Social Care in Bridgend were offered/provided with the training.
- Development and implementation of the Transition/Moving on proposal to assist in improving the preparation of children for adoption and in the provision of LSM. This was showcased in a workshop at the recent NAS Conference in March.

4.4 The challenges/developments that the service will need to undertake in the coming year include:

- To further increase the number of WBAS placements. The service plans to address this through a number of initiatives such as a local 'profiling' event, a year of targeted recruitment specialising on identified children and developing further the website and recruitment and information materials on offer.
- Where possible to further reduce the time from LAC, SBPD and Placement Order (PO) to placement for adoption. This will be through a joint focus by WBAS and the LA's, currently a number of strategies are in place from the TT&FF function to ensure that the service does not impact adversely on this measure.
- The number of adoption orders granted (AOG) has dipped significantly from 94 the previous year to 69 this year. Whilst there are currently 36 adoption applications before the court, it is recognised that a focus is now needed to address where if any the delays in the various stages of progressing an application.
- Introduce in the TT&FF function local performance indicators and more robust monitoring of activity to ensure delays are kept to a minimum.
- There needs to be a robust and whole region approach to the improvement of LSM in relation to quality and timeliness. The current NAS measure is by 2nd review however, WBAS with the support of the senior management in the LAs has agreed that this measure should be the longest time and the best practice aim is on placement.
- There is a desire to improve Birth Parent take up of the service on offer to them and this will be addressed though a revision to the facilities on Oracle, (the service IT system) as it is evident that the FF and AS functions have

been under reporting significantly in this area. This will be addressed through guidance and training events in Q1-2017/18.

- There is need to improve the time taken to approve adopters. The assessment itself is not problematic but areas outside of the service control need to be accommodated so that measures are taken by the service to avoid incurring unnecessary delays.
- Inclusion of the adoption support network in the pre-approval training will be re-introduced in the coming year. It is envisaged at this point that additional training events will be run for family and friends, alongside the pre-approval training. This will further equip adopters and their support network to meet the needs of more complex children and harder to place children.
- Expanding adoption support is a key focus for the coming year. Utilising the fostering training as part of the post adoption support provision is planned.
- Partnership working with neighbouring regions to develop services to meet the needs of children and particularly birth parents.
- Greater use of IT system by all functions in WBAS this is a particular challenge in TT&FF and will be the main focus for the coming year. Improvements across all three functions will equip management to accurately collate and report on performance and underperformance.
- The continuing development of policies and procedures is a key priority for the coming year.
- Addressing the significant backlog of non-agency assessments through a number of strategies.

4.5 The service plan reflects the key priorities for the coming year with the focus being on:

- Ensuring that all children in the region for whom adoption is the agreed plan are found adoptive homes that meet their needs. This includes reducing the time any child waits for an adoptive placement but also that children who are part of a sibling group can be placed together.
- Improving the number of children who have life story work provided at placement.
- Increasing the numbers of children placed within the region.
- Increasing the range of adoptive parents available to meet the needs of children in the region who have an adoption plan. This includes ensuring that prospective and approved adopters receive good quality, timely assessment and support services when they need them.
- Implementing the National Framework for Adoption Support which aims to provide an improved range of information, advice and support services available universally or following assessment according to need for children, their adoptive parents, birth parents and for other adults and children affected by adoption.

- Achieving an overall improvement in the performance of the adoption service across Wales.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

5.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 This report is concerned with performance information rather than policy or decision making therefore an equality impact assessment is not applicable.

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 There are no specific financial implications arising directly out of this report.

8. Recommendation.

8.1 That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee notes the performance and review of the adoption service and its ability to meet the needs of those affected by adoption within the region.

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October 2017

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Background documents

None

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ANNUAL REPORT AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

For Period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017

Annual Report on PI data for WBAS 2016/17

Introduction

This report reflects the region's second full year's performance as a collaborative service.

It is fair to say that some areas of performance in which we were doing well last year have seen a dip in performance this year. The report highlights those areas where we need to focus attention and improve along with those where we have demonstrated improvement and provides analysis to demonstrate the reasons and challenges.

There is still a great deal of work to be developed and progressed within the service as a whole, including the ongoing development of adoption support services.

This report demonstrates the Western Bay Adoption Service (WBAS) performance activity against the key national PI measures. It provides data for the region as a whole, along with comparative data across the three partner agencies, comparative data against the national benchmarks and averages along with comparative data across the regions.

Section 1 – Progress update

During the past year the primary focus has been on developing the Adoption Support service while at the same time aiming to maintain performance in the recruitment of adopters and the placement of children.

Areas of development within Adoption Support include:

- Co-creation/engagement with stakeholders, Adopters, Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) and statutory partners in the development and design and delivery of support services.
- A robust training programme for staff

- Continual improvements in the IT system to deliver on day to day operational work and to assist in data capture and measuring performance
- The introduction of the transfer protocol across functions

In addition to working locally within the service, Western Bay Adoption Service (WBAS) has been an active participant in some of the national developments:

- A Wales wide adoption allowance policy which aims to ensure equity for applicants across Wales.
- The national Family Finding Model providing a baseline of practice applied to all children's cases.
- An Inter-country Adoption policy, enabling a clear structure and uniformity in Wales.
- Co- working between WBAS and other regional services to enable the sharing of ideas and materials to improve practice.
 - development of an assessment framework for adoption support- South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS)
 - development of an inter-regional transfer process with for adoption support cases- Valley, Vale and Cardiff (VVC)
 - assisting VVC and SEWAS to create their own caseload weighting systems

The assessment of Adopters has remained a key focus in the last year and the service achieved a little above the intended target. There has been an increased focus on:

- Equipping adopters to understand the need for and role of their support network which dovetails with the developments of the Social Services and Well Being Act
- Service user consultation and engagement.
- Introduction of a family support meeting as part of the assessment
- Involvement of adoption support workers and adopters in the pre and post approval training and support events resulting in positive feedback from adoption panel and applicants
- Development of a continuous improvement agenda, to ensure adopters are equipped for the task of adopting
- Reducing overall the time taken to approve adopters

The number of children being placed this year has reduced from 93 last year to 71 this year. Whilst this is recognised as being an area to improve, some achievements have been encouraging in that we have placed more complex children including sibling groups, two sibling groups of three, some children with complex health and development issues and those who have been harder to identify adopters for where the measure indicates these children have taken a considerable time to place.

The key achievements:-

- We continue to place more children within the region than with Inter-Agencies (IAs) and this has been despite some challenges encountered whereby some children having complex needs, sibling groups and a sustained picture of adopters wishing to have the more straightforward and younger children. We placed 39 children within WB and 32 outside.
- The length of time taken from 'becoming looked after' (LAC) to placement for adoption has reduced from 19.5 months with the average time now being 15.3 months. This however has not met the national bench mark of 13 months and further work is needed within the Local Authorities (LAs) to address this.
- The average time it takes for children who wait longer than six months from Should Be Placed Decision (SBPD) to placement for adoption has increased but only very slightly from 9.25 to 10 months. However there have been considerable successes with a number of children placed in very short timescales. The lowest being 104 days (3.5 months). This is attributed to the close working between Recruitment and Assessment (R&A) and Family Finding (FF) teams to identify early the needs of children and adopters so that where suitable the link can be progressed without delay.
- There has been greater collaboration between FF and Adoption Support (AS) to put together packages of support for more complex children or where placements need additional support.
- Enquiry rates are consistent despite a focus on harder to place and more complex children as part of the recruitment message which has been devised jointly by the managers of R&A and Twin Tracking & Family Finding (TT&FF). This focusses on prioritizing adopters who are interested in taking older children, those in sibling groups and those with complex needs. Whilst this has seen some success the reality is that many adopters are still presenting themselves as wanting younger children which is in line with national research.
- The average time taken to approve adopters from the inquiry stage to Agency Decision Making (ADM) decision has decreased compared to last year from 10.1 months to 9.7 months.
- There has been, as a result of a number of WBAS and LA strategies a small increase in the number of children presented to panel where

there is evidence of Life Story Materials (LSM). This is particularly noticeable in Q4 where the jump in performance goes from 1 in the previous quarter to 11 in Q4.

- Performance in the number of Birth parents referred and offered a service has been sustained.
- There continues to be evidence that there are more direct interventions from the adoption support service than previously thus reducing the need for higher cost commissioned services.
- Successful placement of a number of sibling groups.
- The Children's Guide has been launched and appears to have been received positively in the three LA's. It has also been placed on the WB website so adopters can access directly if they choose.
- There has been a review and revised guidance for the Child Adoption Report – Annex B (CAR B) to improve quality of information. This has been backed up by training offered by WBAS and mentoring by the TT seniors for workers / managers who have requested additional support.
- Development and implementation of the Transition/Moving on proposal to assist in improving the preparation of children for adoption and in the provision of life journey material. This was showcased in a workshop at the recent National Adoption Service (NAS) Conference in March.

Challenges:-

A number of challenges have been identified for the coming year and these include –

- To further increase the number of placements within the region. The service plans to do this through a number of initiatives such as a local profiling event, a year of targeted recruitment specialising on identified children and developing further the website and recruitment and information materials on offer
- Where possible to further reduce the time from LAC, SBPD and Placement Order (PO) to placement for adoption. This will be through a joint focus by WBAS and the LA's, currently a number of strategies are in place from the TT&FF function to ensure that the service does not impact adversely on this measure

- The number of Adoption Orders Granted (AOG) has dipped significantly from 94 the previous year to 69 this year. Whilst there are currently 36 adoption applications before the court, it is recognised that a focus is now needed to address where if any the delays in the various stages of progressing an application
- Introduce in the TT&FF function local performance indicators and more robust monitoring of activity to ensure delays are kept to a minimum
- There needs to be a robust and whole region approach to the improvement of Life Story Materials (LSM) in relation to quality and timeliness. The current NAS measure is by 2nd review however, WBAS with the support of the senior management in the LAs has agreed that this measure should be the longest time and the best practice aim is on placement
- There is a desire to improve Birth Parent take up of the service on offer to them and this will be addressed through a revision to the facilities on Oracle, (the service IT system) as it is evident that the FF and AS have been under reporting significantly in this area. This will be addressed through guidance and training events in Q1 – 2017-18.
- There is need to improve the time taken to approve adopters. The assessment itself is not problematic but areas outside of the service control need to be accommodated so that measures are taken by the service to avoid incurring unnecessary delays
- Inclusion of the adoption support network in the pre-approval training will be re-introduced in the coming year. It is envisaged at this point that additional training events will be run for family and friends, alongside the pre-approval training. This will further equip adopters and their support network to meet the needs of more complex children and harder to place children
- Expanding adoption support is a key focus for the coming year. Utilising the fostering training as part of the post adoption support provision is planned
- Partnership working with neighbouring regions to develop services to meet the needs of children and particularly birth parents
- Greater use of IT system by all functions in WBAS this is a particular challenge in TT&FF and will be the main focus for the coming year. Improvements across all three functions will equip management to accurately collate and report on performance and underperformance.

- The continuing development of policies and procedures is a key priority for the coming year
- Addressing the significant backlog of non-agency assessments through a number of strategies

Section 2 - Performance

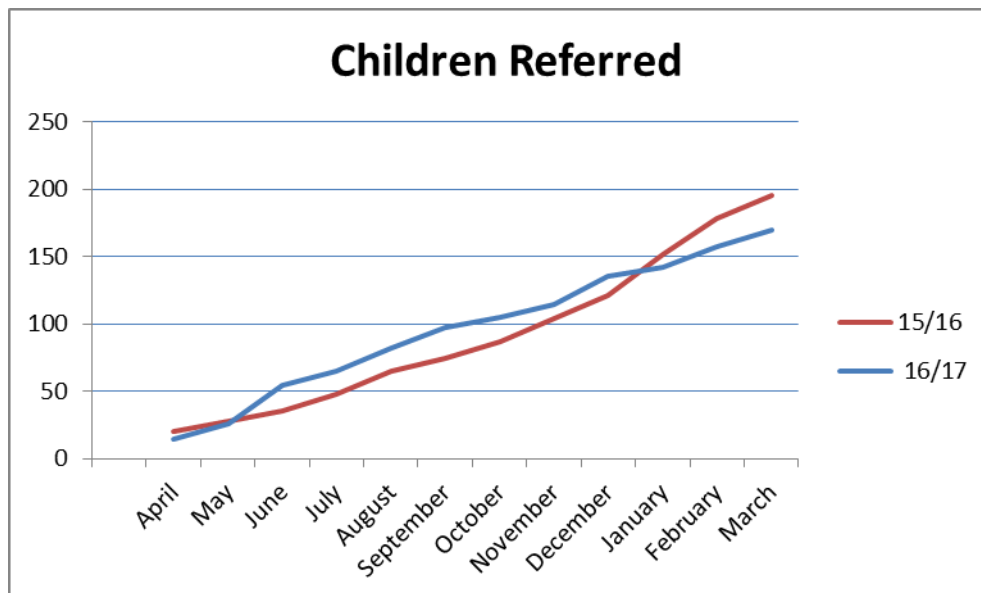
The purpose of this section is to highlight some of the key performance areas for WBAS for the year 2016/17. The report is based on data that has been supplied to the NAS on a quarterly basis throughout the year and provides some comparison data with national performance and performance across regions.

1. Children Referred 2016/17 - 170

During the first six months of the year the number of referrals for children had initially risen with 97 children having being referred in the first two quarters compared to 74 in the same period the previous year. However, the overall picture demonstrates that there has been a drop in referrals, with Swansea seeing a significant decrease over the year, Neath Port Talbot (NPT) remaining fairly stable and Bridgend (BCBC) showing an increase.

The current data represents an overall decrease of 13% when comparing with 2015/16 where there were 195 children referred and 170 this year. However, when comparing with the number of referrals that were withdrawn last year (57) to this year (11) it is evident that there has been a refinement in the cases being referred from the local authorities as more are being converted through the SPB process and into POs.

Children Referred TOTAL	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	
2016/17	72	43	55	170
2015/16	58	45	92	195
2014/15	68	56	79	203



The figures for other regions in Wales are Mid and West Wales Adoption Service (MWW) 81, North Wales Adoption Service (NWAS) 58, South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) 204, Valley, Vale and Cardiff (VVC) 278.

2. Should Be Placed Decision (SBPD)

The number of children that progressed to have a 'should be placed decision' in Western Bay totalled 112 compared to other regions across Wales, WBAS had the second highest number of SBPD with VVC having the highest at 117, MWW 49, NWAS 4, SEWAS 86.

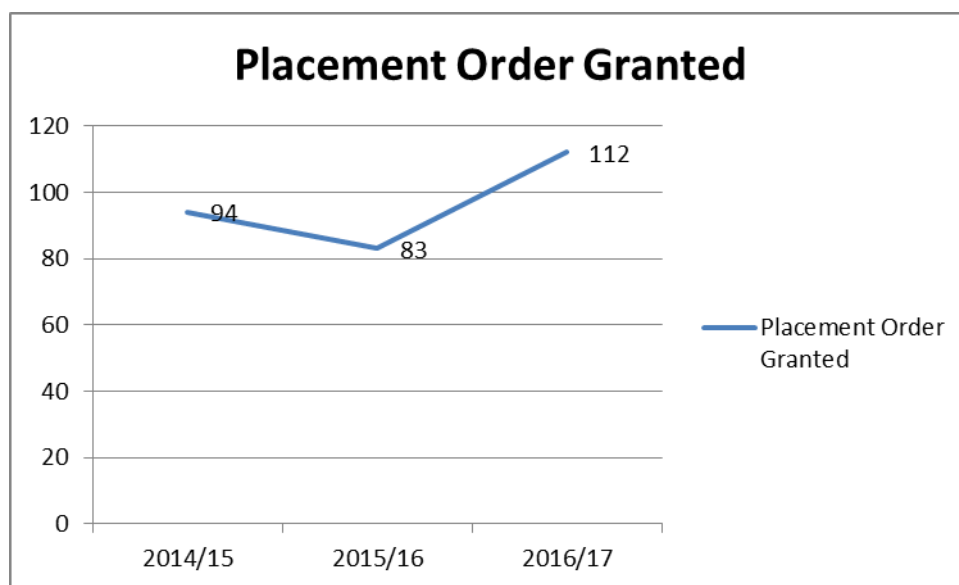
3. Placement Orders Granted = 112

WBAS regional data

There has been an increase in POs this year with 112 being granted compared to 83 last year showing a 35% increase. This reflects the spike in referrals at end of Q4, 2015/16 with 32 of our POs developing from these referrals namely from Swansea. Overall, the more appropriate referrals that have been received have led to a higher conversion rate of children culminating in placement orders. This has reversed the trend we were seeing last year where we saw a decrease in POs made, which at the time was also the national trend.

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2016/17	30	31	24	27	112
2015/16	22	18	17	26	83

POG	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2016/17	36	23	53	112
2015/16	31	26	26	83
2014/15	25	36	33	94



In comparison to the other regions across Wales, WBAS had the highest number of placement orders granted at 112, MWW 31, NWAS 43, SEWAS 76, VVC 96. This increase will impact on workload in the coming year.

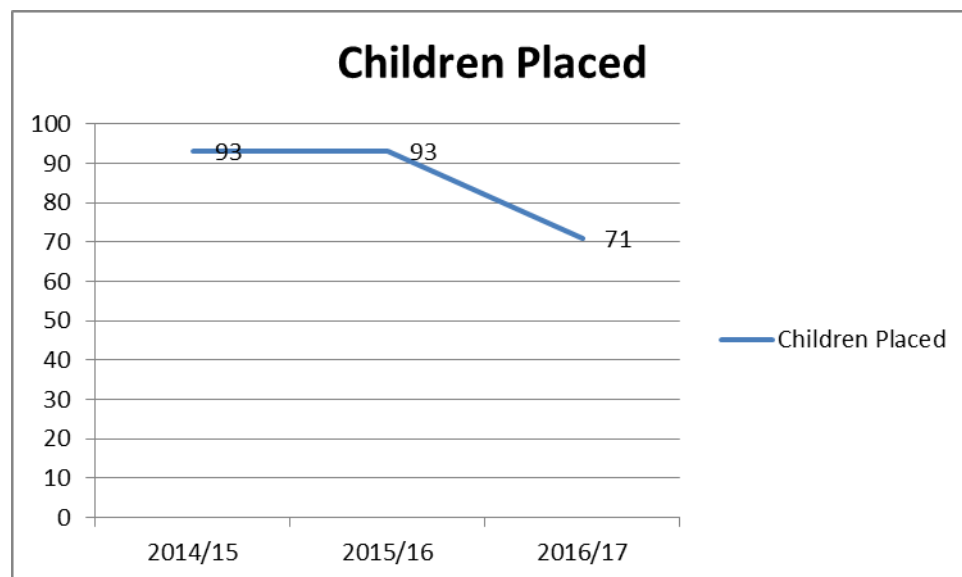
4. Children Placed = 71

Statistics have evidenced that in the year there has been a 21% reduction in the number of children being placed for adoption by WBAS. Those being placed are a combination of children that represent harder to place and more straight forward children. An action plan has been devised to interrogate why there is a reduction in children being placed so that remedial and proactive

measures can be developed and implemented in Q1 2017/18 the plan includes revising the information recently shared with TT&FF staff on the need to impress timeliness. Management and to some extent seniors will embark on a process of monitoring cases by case. This will include diarising key dates and expected activities that ensure every effort is made to ensure children are placed in a timely manner.

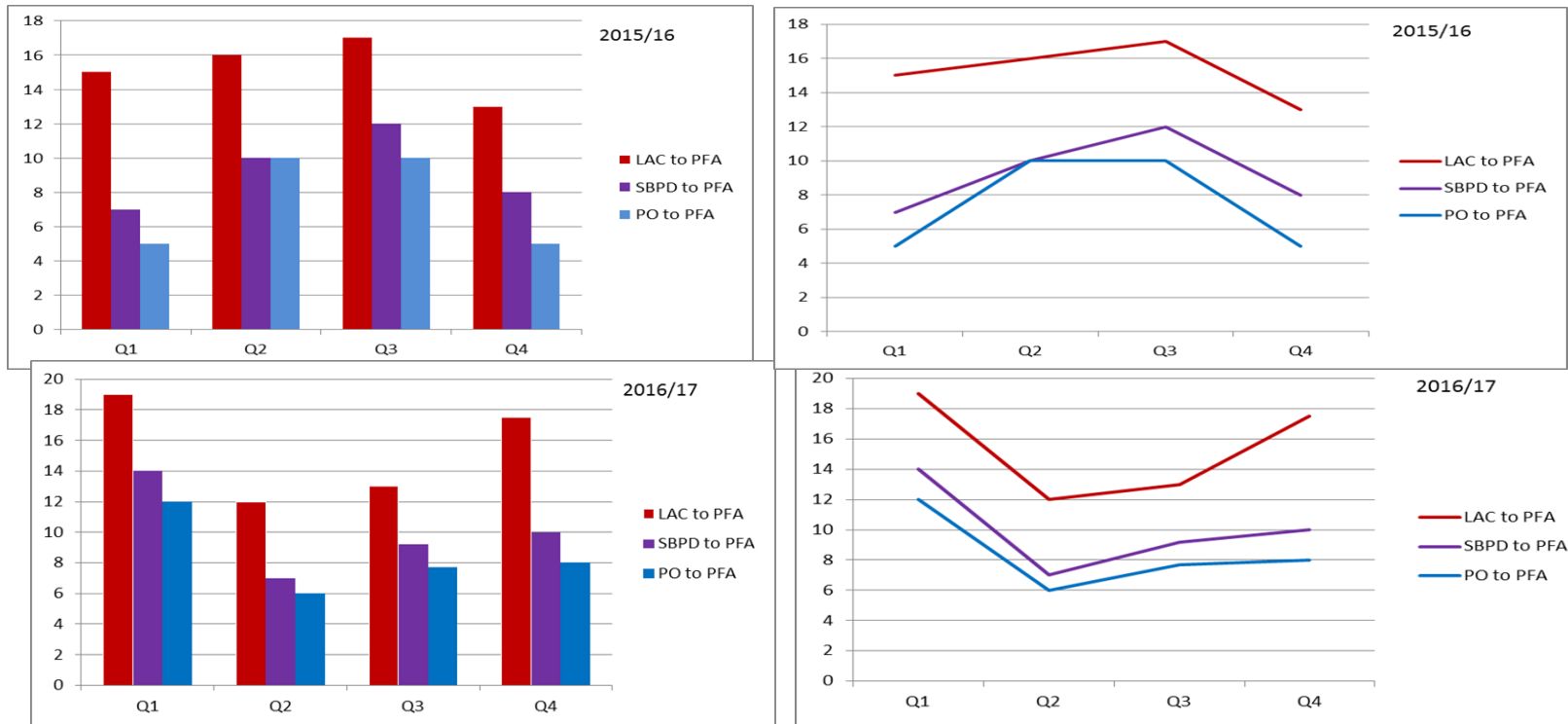
Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2016/17	13	17	23	18	71
2015/16	20	25	21	27	93

Children Placed	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2016/17	24	17	30	71
2015/16	24	40	29	93
2014/15	28	28	37	93



Performance in other regions across Wales is as follows, MWW 23, NWS 44, SEWAS 84, VVC 81.

5. Average Time (in months) Taken for Children to be Placed.



Average Time in Months (days)

	15/16					16/17				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year Total
LAC to PFA	15 (455)	16 (484)	17 (507)	13 (482)	19.5 (482)	19 (590)	12 (374)	13 (396)	17.5 (572)	15.3 (351)
SBPD to PFA	7 (232)	10 (309)	12 (372)	8 (291)	9.25 (302)	14 (417)	7 (222)	9.2 (281)	10 (312)	10 (283)
PO to PFA	5 (154)	10 (294)	10 (308)	5 (157)	7.5 (228)	12.4 (373)	6 (17)	7.7 (235)	8 (240)	8.4 (255)

LAC to Placed For Adoption (PFA) – 15.3 months.

2016/17 has shown a decrease in the average time taken from LAC to PFA, this now being 15.3 months compared to 19.5 months the previous year. The national bench mark is 13 months or less and while within WBAS the average time for the year did not meet the bench mark, Q1 and Q4 showed there were outliers where a small number of children in each quarter took much longer to place therefore impacting on the average length of time for the year. For example in Q4 there were 5 children who increased the average time, these were two separate sibling groups of 2 and 3 children. The sibling group of 2 taking 817 days (27 months) each from becoming LAC to being placed and a sibling group of 3 who took 678 days (22 months) each from becoming LAC to being placed. Although this has impacted on our figures it is still a good news story that these children have now been placed.

Compared to other regions Western Bay are the second lowest with SEWAS 14 months, NWAS 18 months, MWW 17.8, VVC 17.3 months with the national average being 15.4 months.

SBPD to PFA – 10 months.

2016/17 has shown a slight increase in average time taken from SBPD to PFA, this now being 10 months as opposed to 9.25 in the previous year. This measure has been interrogated and it is clear that whilst there is a slight drop in performance, there are more complex children being placed which has necessitated increased social work activity. For example, this may include additional staff resources and extended time scales when children are placed

outside of WB. Of the children placed, 7 in particular have adversely impacted on performance due to their complex needs.

In exploring the performance over the year, while the average has increased there have been a number of children who were placed in much shorter time frames the lowest being 3.5 months, 104 days.

Moving forward, as with the other areas of FF, the measures in place to ensure delays are reduced will impact positively on this measure.

Compared to other regions WBAS are higher than the national average and the third lowest compared to other regions, MWW 9.1 months, NWS 11.8 months, SEWAS 9.7 months , VVC 10.8 months with the national average being 9.6 months.

PO to PFA – 8.4 months.

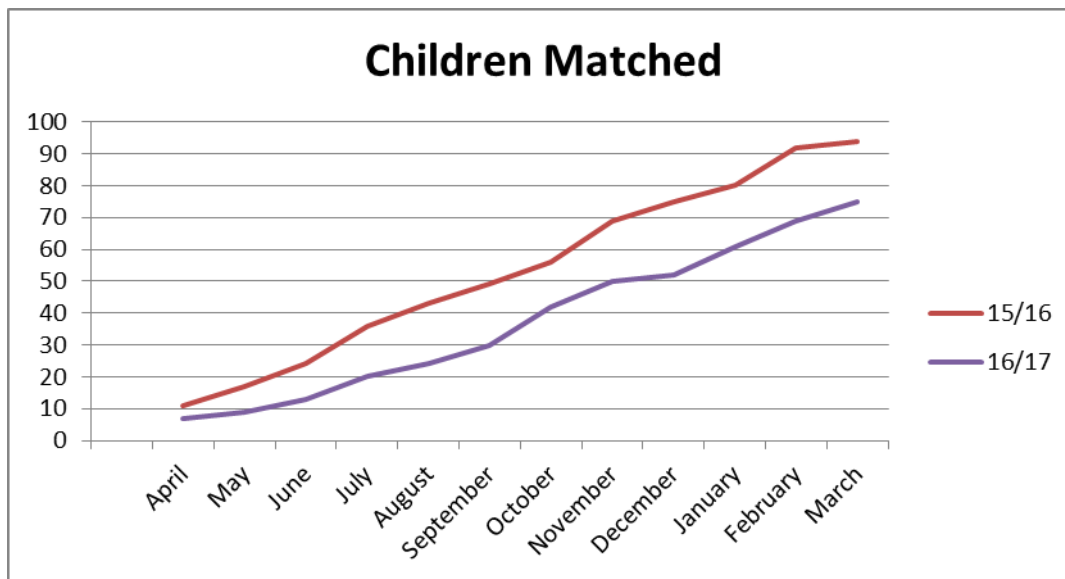
As detailed in the table above there has been a dip in performance compared to the previous year with the average increasing from 7.5 months to 8.4 months. Of the 71 children placed, 42 were placed in 6 months or less with the shortest time being 3.5 months.

Compared to other regions WBAS are just over the national average and the second lowest compared to other regions, MWW 4.5 months, NWS 10.5 months, SEWAS 9.7 months , VVC 9 months with the national average being 8 months.

6. Children Matched = 75

Compared to the previous year there has been a significant drop in the number of children matched but this is in line with the activity level of placing children which stands at 71. The introduction of monthly monitoring and local Performance Indicators (PI) timescales at key stages will assist in improving this measure and will be available to be measured and monitored via the Head of Service (HOS) reporting. However, this is a fluid picture and needs to be considered in the context of the number and types of children needing placements and the availability of adopters both within region and wider who can meet the needs of children waiting.

Matched	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2016/17	26	17	32	75
2015/16	25	39	30	94
2014/15	28	27	36	91



Performance in other regions is, MWW 22, NWAS 34, SEWAS 76, VVC 85.

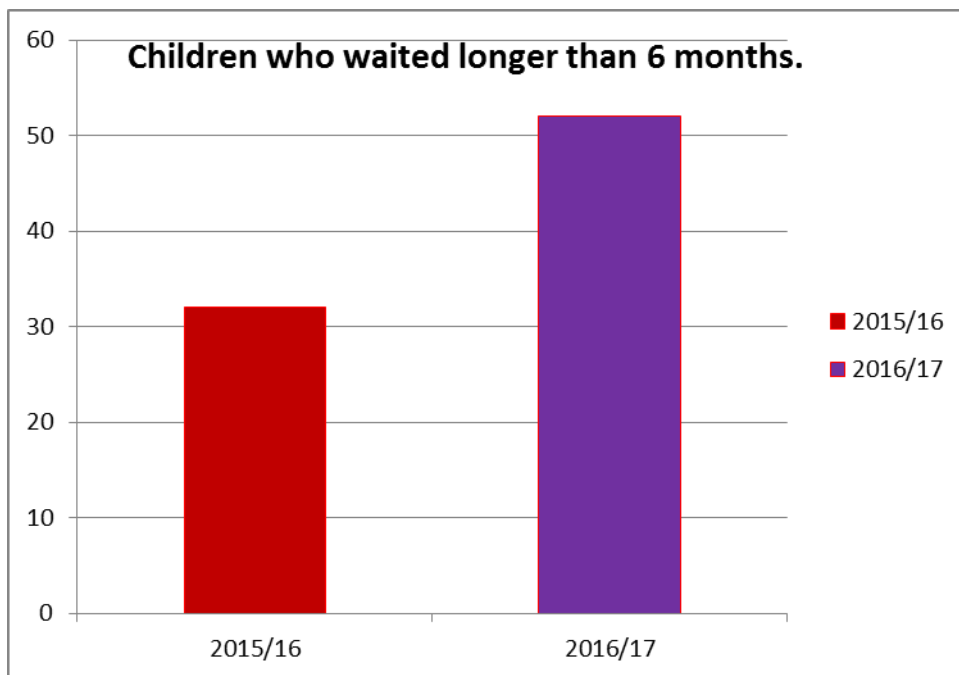
7. Number of children matched who have waited longer than 6 months to progress from SBPD to agency decision to approved match.

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2016/17	7 (54%)	12 (71%)	12 (55%)	21 (91%)	52 (67%)
2015/16	12 (50%)	8 (32%)	8 (31%)	4 (21%)	32 (34%)

Performance in this area is significantly lower than last year with 20 more children waiting longer than six months compared to last year's performance. As can be seen by the table above Q4 has seen an increase, however there has been good news stories with the following harder to place children being matched during this quarter. Sibling group of 2 with significant needs, sibling

group of 3, one child with significant needs, sibling group of 2 (age 4 & 3) and a sibling group of 2 (age 6). Overall there has been an increase in time children wait with 67% of children this year waiting longer than 6 months to be matched compared with 34% last year.

WBAS is not performing as well as some of the other regions and has not met the national benchmark of 40%. MWW 8 (49%), NWAS 16 (48%), SEWAS 63 (80%), VVC 44 (55%).



A number of factors have played a part in this drop in performance this includes:

- An increase in complex and harder to place children
- Adopters to meet the needs of those children are not readily available both within the region and wider afield resulting in delays

Whilst strategies in WBAS have been very successful, for example, identifying potential adopter's earlier and working with adoption support to explore what packages of support are needed to enable a placement to proceed, more systematic work is needed on harder to place children.

8. Adoption Orders Granted (AOG) = 69

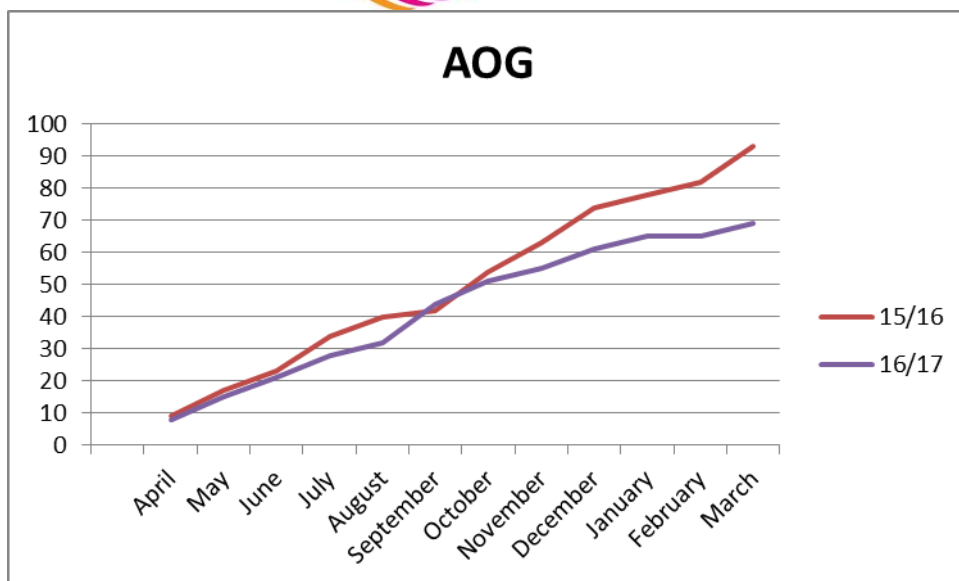
Whilst there is no one single significant reason, it is evident that there are multiple reasons and some these are then cumulative. They include;

- Timeliness in the provision of the annex A
- Completion by the worker(s) of the necessary documents needed for the application
- Identified or emerging adoption support needs reducing the number of applications being lodged
- Court delays

Activities to address some of the delays include:

- Introduction by the TT&FF manager of local performance indicators for staff at key stages
- The introduction of placement stability meetings where there are children placed and where there are emerging issues, needs or potential for delay
- Development of action plans and potentially a need for adoption support packages to put in place

AOG's	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2016/17	12	27	28	69
2015/16	24	36	34	94
2014/15	21	34	40	95



There are currently 36 applications submitted to court and are at various stages of the process.

In comparison to the other regions across Wales, WBAS is the second highest achieving with MWW 24, NWAS 58, SEWAS 81, VVC 59.

9. Children Waiting = 102

The number of children waiting is rising, within WBAS of the 102 children waiting 80 (78%) of those had a SBPD decision and a PO but have not yet been matched, 3 (3%) Children had SBPD, PO and matched.

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	End of year
2016/17	97	100	100	102	102
2015/16	105	111	74	92	92
2014/15	101	94	100	92	92

The data for other regions is below.

MWW - Of the 33 children waiting 22 (66%) of those had a SBPD decision and a PO but have not yet been matched, 1 (4.5%) Child had SBPD, PO and matched.

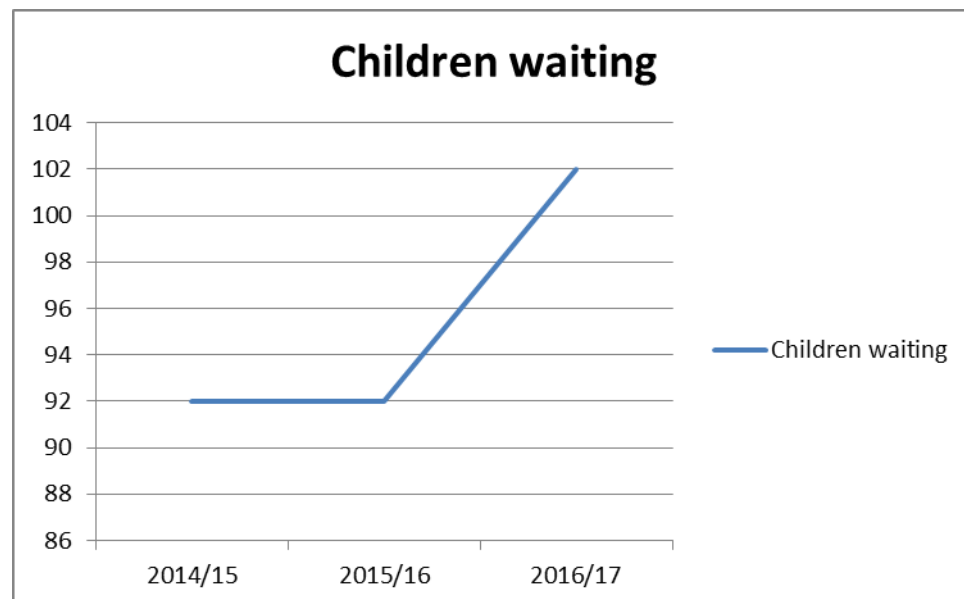
NWAS - Of the 44 children waiting 39 (88%) of those had a SBPD decision and a PO but have not yet been matched, 4 (10%) Children had SBPD, PO and matched.

SEWAS - Of the 61 children waiting 47 (77%) of those had a SBPD decision and a PO but have not yet been matched, 3 (6%) Children had SBPD, PO and matched.

VVC - Of the 103 children waiting 95 (92%) of those had a SBPD decision and a PO but have not yet been matched, 0 (0%) Children had SBPD, PO and matched.

By adding the local PIs to key stages where delays can occur it is anticipated that this is likely to improve performance in the coming year. This will need to be a whole service and regional effort. Steps are already taking shape to include monthly monitoring of key stages which will alert much sooner where there could be an avoidable potential for delay so remedial action can be taken.

Children waiting	TOTAL
2016/17	102
2015/16	92
2014/15	92



10. Number of Inter-Agency Placements = 32

Of the 71 children placed with approved adopters in the period less than half of the children were placed in IA placements, this is lower than the previous year but we are still placing more children within the region than outside. This has again had a positive impact on the overall budget set aside for placements in WBAS.

A consistent number of children are being placed within the region despite more children being classed as harder to place. This is as a result of:

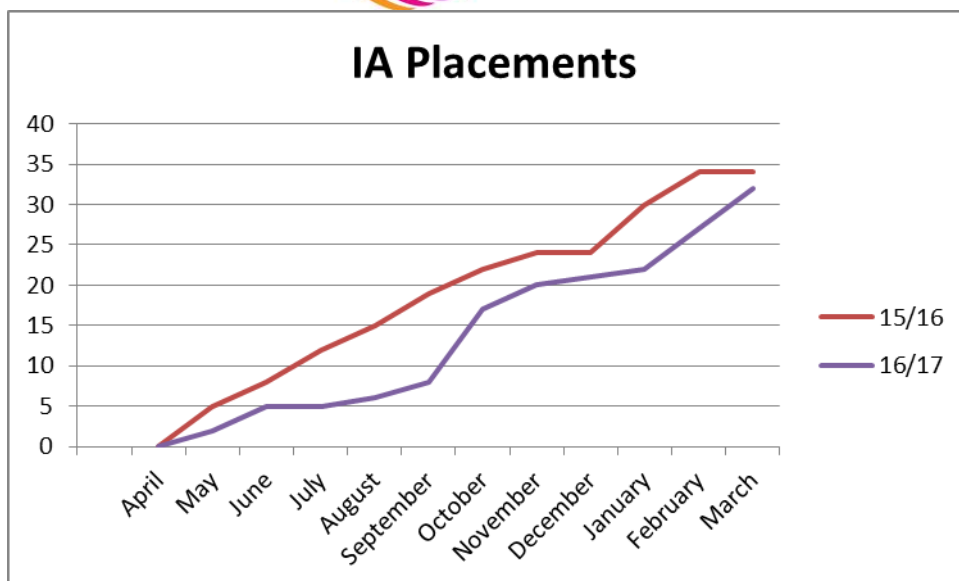
- linking meetings within the service enabling proactive links to be identified and progressed within the region, some of these have been achieved in a very short timescales
- Use of Link Maker and networking nationally a good strategy for identifying potential links outside of the region.

The challenge is:

- Availability across Wales continues to be one aspect impacting on the numbers of children being placed. A more proactive approach to those adopters outside of the region is needed to improve performance in the coming year and some of the strategies and local monthly monitoring will assist in improving early access to limited adopters nationally.

The regional/local picture is outlined in the table and graph below.

IAs	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2016/17	11	6	15	32(45%)
2015/16	8	20	7	35(38%)
2014/15	24	20	15	59 (63%)



11. Number of WBAS Placements = 39

We continue to place more children within the region than externally, however compared to performance last year there have been less children placed within the region overall.

The arrangements/processes in place that contribute to achieving these are:

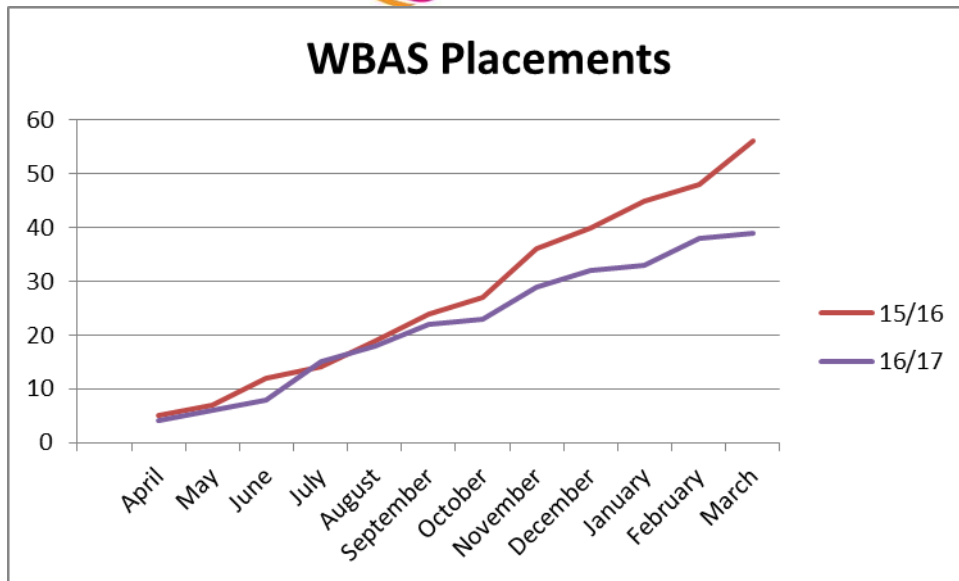
- Continued close liaison between FF and R&A through the monthly linking meetings remains a strong and effective activity in WBAS to identify children and adopters locally
- Links made locally have the potential to be achieved in a very timely manner given that early information is available and access to adoption support is within the service
- Further work within FF is planned to increase use of this forum to link and progress links in a timely manner
- Adapting marketing and recruitment activity to prioritise adopter enquiries who can meet the needs of children waiting
- Development of robust assessment, marketing and information materials
- Training and use of adoption support has resulted in a number of adopters taking more complex children
- Use of the Welsh Register and Link Maker to assist adopters to see in detail a range of children, usually with complex needs who are waiting for placements

Further work in the coming year between FF and the three LA's is planned to help social workers be more receptive to the currently approved adopters. In addition, there will be a regional exchange event and if successful will be expanded to provide a (restricted) online version and a repeat exchange event which will help adopters to see the range and needs of the children currently waiting for placements.

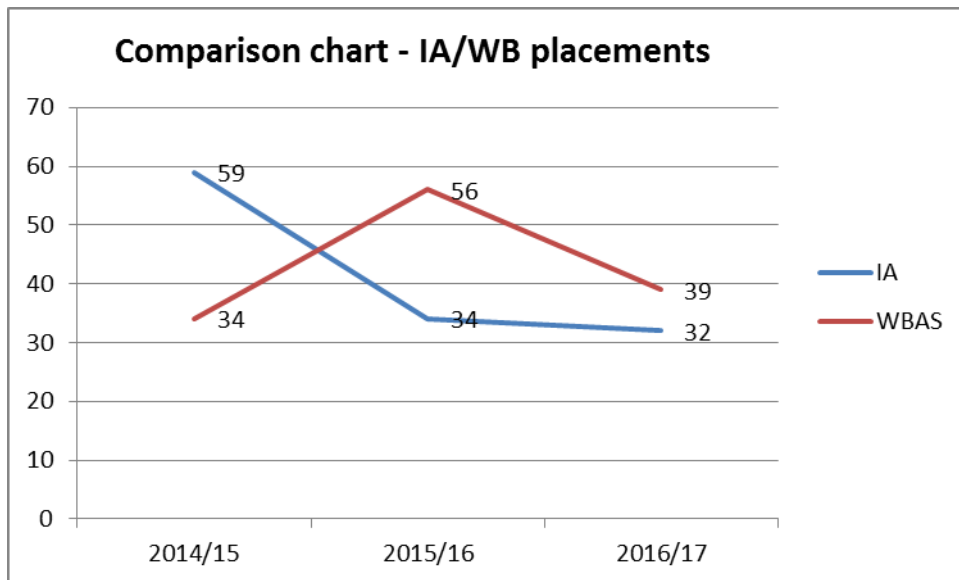
There also needs to be further interrogation within the FF function to ensure there are no procedural delays and that practice becomes more robust to ensure children where possible and appropriate are placed locally or are placed in a timely way if outside of the region.

The regional/local picture is outlined in the table and graph below.

WBAS	BCBC	NPT	SWAN	TOTAL
2016/17	13	11	15	39 (55%)
2015/16	14	18	22	56 (62%)
2014/15	7	9	18	34 (36.5%)



The comparison chart below continues to demonstrate that the reversal in the trend for IA placements and WBAS placements over a three year period though recognising this this gap has narrowed.



12. Number of Adopter Approvals = 56

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2016/17	15	10	9	22	56
2015/16	18	16	15	4	53
2014/15	6	12	19	8	45

Performance has continued to increase year on year. Regular monitoring has been in place to

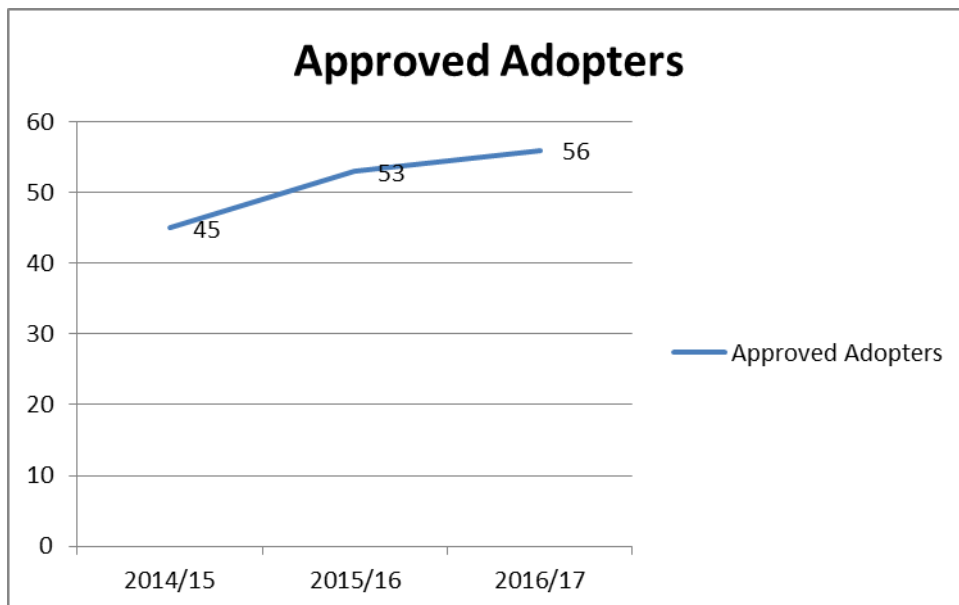
- Utilise lean and agile strategies
- Make good use of team meetings and focus events to ensure every effort has been used to increase the number of adopters, improve the range adopters will consider and equip adopters with greater awareness around the need for adoption support networks
- Monitor the number of placements generated
- Take remedial action to ensure targets are met

In the previous year 53 adopters were approved generating 65 placements. In this year 56 adopters were approved generating 63 placements, just 8 short of the number of children placed compared with 27 placements short on the previous year.

As can be seen from the data there was a downward trend in Q2 & Q3 however in Q4 exceptionally impressive achievements were made taking the number of approved adopters from 9 the previous quarter to 22.

Whilst every effort is made to increase the number of adopters, the range of placements they wish to be considered for and the timeliness, this activity is also heavily reliant on a robust, timely and proactive family finding process.

Year	Total
2016/17	56
2015/16	53
2014/15	45



WBAS is the second highest achieving region in this respect with MWW 22, NWAS 33, SEWAS 59 and VVC 47.

13. Average Time to Approve Adopters = 9.7 Months

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	AVERAGE
2016/17	9.7 Months (294 days)	10.7 Months (324 days)	9.5 Months (286 days)	9 Months (270 days)	9.7 Months (293 days)
2015/16	10.2 Months (294 days)	10.6 Months (320 days)	10.8 Months (326 days)	8.8 Months (264 Days)	10.1 Months (313 days)
2014/15	10.2 Months (232 days)	8.6 Months (305 days)	12.3 Months (255 days)	8.8 Months (310 days)	9.8 Months (275 days)

Despite pressures within the service, the increase in approvals has been seen as a real success. In addition, the team have reduced the time taken to approve adopters from 10.1 months to 9.7 months overall, the lowest whole year figure since WBAS co-located. Encouragingly, in Q4, timescales were just 9 months despite the numbers being assessed being more than double the previous month. Looking at how WBAS has performed compared to other regions it is the second highest performing region with MWW 11.5 months (346.5 days), NWAS 8.5 months (255 days), SEWAS 13.1 months (393 days), VVC 12 months (362 days). With the national average being 10.8 months (326 days) it is encouraging to note that WB were below the national average time taken to approve. Western Bay's performance however, did not meet the required benchmark of 8 months.

WBAS continues to measure both the date of enquiry and the date the assessment commences which has, as hypothesised last year, led to activity to reduce internal delays. We are confident now that delays are down to worker absence or external factors outside of WBAS control. However, this will continue to be monitored on a monthly and quarterly basis.

14. Numbers of Initial Adopter Enquires - 175

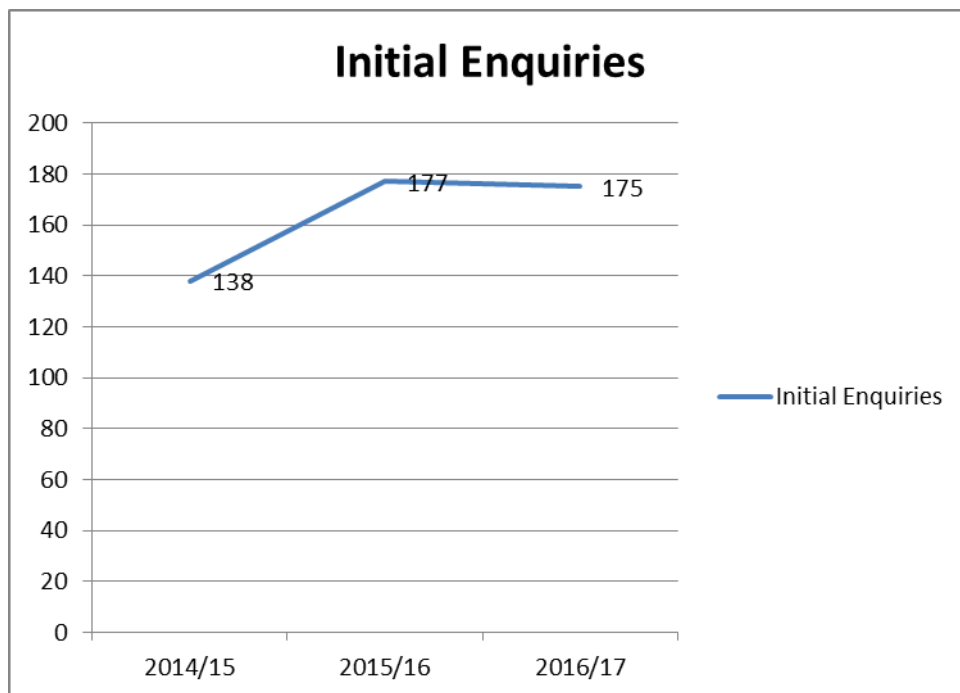
Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2016/17	45	46	37	47	175
2015/16	41	59	34	42	177
2014/15	44	35	26	33	138

There has not been a significant increase in the number of enquiries in 2016/17 despite NAS running an extensive campaign which WBAS were actively involved in. It is fair to say that despite this campaign and our own efforts, which included improving the website (which most adopters cite as their main search mechanism next to word of mouth), holding events locally and actively participating in national adoption week, the number of enquiries were fairly consistent, dropping slightly by just 2.

It also noteworthy to point out that WBAS maintained its recruitment of adopters throughout the year where it is apparent other agencies were indicating to enquirers that they were not in a position to undertake assessments. WBAS have maintained quality screening and have actively used the 'script' for NAS which prioritises enquiries for harder to place children, sibling groups, and older

children. Even with these efforts we are aware that nationally as well as locally those wishing to adopt still wish to be considered for younger and less complex children. From our close working relationship within the service it is evident to see that there remains a need to approve adopters for young children alongside those deemed to be the harder to place.

Year	Total
2016/17	175
2015/16	177
2014/15	138



Comparing WBAS performance to other regions it had the highest number of enquiries, with MWW 82, NWS 168, SEWAS 159 and VVC 150.

15. Life Journey Material

Table 1.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. of children presented to panel for matching	11	18	19	22	70
No. of children where evidence of LJM materials/direct work undertaken.	5	1	1	11	18

Table 2.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. children who had a 2 nd adoption review in the quarter.	27	12	14	29	82
No. children placed for adoption in the quarter where life journey material has been provided to adopters by the time of the 2 nd adoption review.	11 (41%)	7 (58%)	1 (7%)	6 (21%)	25 (31%)

The national target for this performance measure is 75% of children who receive life journey material by the 2nd adoption review. Performance in the region did not meet this required target for the year, the average being 31%. While the first 6 months of the year was showing some improved performance it is still lower than the average for the previous year which was 55%. A variety of measures/actions have been undertaken across the region in partnership with the 3 local authorities to influence improvements to performance related to life story work. These include the following

- Within two Authorities life story work project groups have been established
- Standards for life journey work have been developed and shared with WBAS and the three LAs
- Training has/is being delivered to all practitioners who are involved in undertaking life journey work with children
- 'Champions' have been identified within each Local Authority to act as links with WBAS for Life journey work and Fostering

- Measures are being put in place to capture the number and quality of materials at matching panel and aim as good practice for these to be provided by time of placement
- The need to ensure life journey materials and evidence of preparing children age appropriately for adoption is being fed back to the LAs to ensure where materials are not available this is being addressed
- Development of an audit tool which is being considered within the Principal Officer group for use across the region.
- Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) in each LA have been advised they are to cover this matter in adoption reviews and to ensure it is being undertaken and captured as part of the process

Comparative table.	MWW	NWAS	SEWAS	VVC	WBAS
No. children who had a 2 nd adoption review in the year.	19	32	58	79	82
No. children placed for adoption in the in the year where life journey material has been provided to adopters by the time of the 2 nd adoption review.	15 (81.5%)	8 (38%)	25 (58%)	47 (62%)	25 (31%)

WBAS performs the lowest in terms of provision of life story material by the second review and it is envisaged that a multi-faceted approach will not only improve this measure but the experiences of the children and adopters for whom this is a tangible need.

Adoption Support

16. Number of Birth Parents referred and who were offered a service.

2015/16	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Referred.	38	17	51	35	141
Offered a service.	38	17	51	35	141

2016/17	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
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Referred.	63	80	68	63	274
Offered a service.	63	80	67	56	266

Comparative table	MWW	NWAS	SEWAS	VVC	WBAS
Referred.	59	18	251	387	274
Offered a service.	59 (100%)	18 (100%)	251 (100%)	386 (99%)	266 (97%)

There were a number of birth parents whose whereabouts were not known at the time the service received the referral and this impacted on the figures shown. Our performance in relation to those birth parents who take up a service is very low with only 23 taking up a service in the year this being 8.6% and significantly below the national bench mark of 50%. It has become evident that in both the FF and AS functions there has potentially been some under reporting in this area, to address this the IT system has been revised to ensure that the first contact from a birth parent is recorded both pre and post order. This has recently been refined further to differentiate between the number of birth mothers and birth fathers who take up the service.

In the coming year a number of strategies are proposed to further improve performance in this area and these include:

- Providing training to staff on how to log birth parent take up of a service
- Improving the letter sent to birth parents to ensure the wording is more inviting
- Active engagement by the FF function to try and log their efforts to engage birth parents.

17. Number and Percentage of children placed for adoption that has had an assessment for adoption support, the plan has been discussed by adopters.

2015/16	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. who have had an assessment.	20	23	21	26	90
Plan has been discussed.	20 (100%)	23 (100%)	21 (100%)	26 (100%)	90



2016/17	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No. who have had an assessment.	13	15	23	18	69
Plan has been discussed.	13 (100%)	15 (100%)	23 (100%)	18 (100%)	69 (100%)

For this measure, 100% of children placed have an adoption support plan in place at the time of matching panel, in preparation for the placement for adoption. In every case, the support plan is shared with adopters and they are consulted on the content

17. Adoption Support Referrals.

This is new PI data that has been added to the NAS PI framework from 1st April 2016.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Number of other birth parents who took up a service in quarter	8	5	4	4
Number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from birth siblings in quarter	3	4	0	1
Number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from other adults (relatives/former guardians) affected by the adoption of a particular child in quarter	5	9	8	0

The figures above for three of the adoption support measures demonstrate that the service has improved its method of categorising the type of referral for post adoption support. However, it is believed that in AS function, there has been some under reporting in this area. For example, in working with birth parents around letterbox, we have recorded this as one referral against, usually the birth mother whereas we are aware that birth fathers or siblings for example are also contained in that work but not counted.

In the coming year the AS function will be working more closely with FF and neighbouring regional services to improve the amount of services and information for birth parents. This will include:

- providing training to staff on how to log birth parent take up of a service
- Improving the information for birth parents to ensure the wording is more inviting

- Working with colleagues in two neighbouring regions to explore the feasibility and viability of birth parent support groups.

In terms of the information we have captured to date it appears to be a consistent picture in terms of birth parents contacting the service for support and in all cases this was around dormant letterbox cases, where help was needed to come to terms with loss and to engage in letterbox. In the coming year the service needs to work towards developing this further as part of the adoption support team, offering a more proactive approach rather than reacting to self-referrals.

Where letterbox is set up within the FF function, their intention to be more proactive may improve the take up of services more generally by birth parents around adoption support. In addition, the new manner in which letterbox is now managed, namely an identified worker per case will enable the team to be more proactive. They will be able to follow up on dormant cases or inactive new cases where the FF has not been able to engage families, to try and re-instate letterbox between siblings, this will have the impact of encouraging more take up across a range of services for birth families.

Comparative Chart	MWW	NWAS	SEWAS	VVC	WBAS
Number of other birth parents who took up a service in quarter	12	7	67	39	21
Number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from birth siblings in quarter	0	4	21	2	8
Number of requests for an assessment for post adoption support from other adults (relatives/former guardians) affected by the adoption of a particular child in quarter	13	2	3	2	22

18. Birth Records and Intermediary Services Referrals.

Again this is new PI data that has been added to the NAS PI framework from 1st April 2016.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Number of requests for access to birth records in quarter (BRC)	12	5	17	11
Number of requests for Intermediary Services (IS) in quarter	2	6	5	5

There has been considerable work undertaken on reviewing how Birth Record Counselling (BRC) and Intermediary Services (IS) cases have been managed. Improved processing and monitoring of cases has enabled the manager of AS to fully gauge the quantity of work coming into the service. There has been a small drop in Q 4 of those applying for BRC from 17 to 11. However, over the year there have been a total of 45 requests for this service. This is considerably higher than last year and, now that these numbers are being recorded more robustly, it is possible to plan work and mobilise resources more effectively reducing the time people wait for a service.

In relation to IS this is a consistent picture throughout the year, with the same number of referrals in Q4 as in the previous quarter. There were a total of 18 referrals for IS over the year and as above, it is now possible to plan more robustly how we deploy services to meet demand.

	MWW	NWAS	SEWAS	VVC	WBAS
Number of requests for access to birth records in quarter	39	48	64	59	45
Number of requests for Intermediary Services (IS) in quarter	24	24	20	20	23

Date of report 8th May 2017
Revised 18th May 2017

By virtue of paragraph(s) 12, 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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