

# Cardiff's Multi Agency Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024





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## Foreword

Our looked after children are some of the most vulnerable in society. It is crucial we as Corporate Parents work collaboratively with a range of partners to ensure that our children looked after and care leavers are supported in order for them to be safe, happy and thrive.

Through consultation with our children looked after and care leavers across the city this three year Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines our commitments, challenges and the key steps we shall take to ensure that our children have the best possible outcomes in life. Public services, the voluntary sector and the wider community all have their part to play. By working together we can support our children and those leaving care to take advantage of the range of opportunities our great city can offer to help them to reach their full potential.



**Councillor Sarah Merry**

*Deputy Leader of the Council.*

*Chair of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee.*

*Cabinet Member for Education, Employment and Skills.*



**Councillor Graham Hinchey**

*Cabinet Member for Children & Families*

# Corporate Parenting

When a child or young person enters the care of the Council, the role of being a parent is taken on by the local authority. This is known as Corporate Parenting. The term describes how Cardiff Council collectively fulfil their parenting responsibilities, by seeking positive outcomes for children looked after and young adults who are care leavers in the same way we do for our own children. From early years into adulthood all our children, young people and young adults should be kept safe, are happy and have every opportunity to thrive.

## Leadership & influence

Effective Corporate Parenting requires not only strong collective ownership and leadership, but influence at the most senior level. The Cardiff Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee brings together strategic partners to work with the Councillors elected by the citizens of Cardiff to improve outcomes for children looked after and care leavers.

## Values and Principles

The Committee are determined the right results can only be achieved by listening to children and young people to find out what matters to them, and by all professionals working together.

These Values and Principles underpin the strategy and the work of the Committee:

### Values and Principles of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee shall actively work to promote the life chances of looked after children in the care of Cardiff Council and those young people who are care leavers. This shall be achieved through the Committees work programme and key performance indicators.

**The voice of Children Looked After shall drive the Committee agenda and priorities.**

**The Committee shall ensure their agenda focuses on what Children Looked After identify as relevant for their growth and development.**

The Committee shall monitor services that shall be delivered across all statutory and voluntary sector organisations.

Social Services, Health, and Education, the statutory agencies, shall influence and share responsibility by listening to Children Looked After to deliver relevant and dynamic services.

Throughout this document we shall refer to children and young people who are looked after or leaving care as “our children and young people”. This is fundamental to our vision.

# Cardiff - a Child Friendly City

As a capital city, Cardiff aspires to be a 'child friendly city' and a great place to grow up. A city which has children and young people at its heart, where the rights of children and young people are respected and where all have an equal opportunity in life.

Cardiff is the first city in Wales to participate in UNICEF UK's Child Friendly Cities and Communities initiative. Since 2017 UNICEF have provided leadership and support to the Council, building upon the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as its foundation.

[Cardiff's Child Friendly City strategy 2018](#) outlines 5 keys goals that need to be reached in order for Cardiff to be a great place to grow up in. These goals connect to the priorities set out in this Strategy. These include to be listened to, to grow up in a safe and supportive home, to have a good education and to have positive physical and emotional health.



## Children's Rights and Corporate Parenting

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the rights that must be realised for children and young people to reach their full potential.

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee recognise the Convention as a vision for every child and young person in their care. They recognise that each looked after child and care leaver is an individual and a member of a family and community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to their age. Our children and young people have the same human rights as adults but also specific rights that recognise their status as children who are dependent on adults to keep them safe.

We have set out in this strategy how the Committee and its partners as corporate parents recognise the fundamental dignity of all children and young people in our care and the urgency of ensuring their well-being and developmental milestones are supported. We wish to make clear the principle that a good quality of life is the right of every child and young person who is looked after, rather than a privilege enjoyed by a few.

Achieving this aspiration shall require partnership and coproduction to create a city where the voices, needs, priorities and rights of our children and young people are at the heart of public policies, programmes and decisions. This shall be facilitated through the role of the Committee. Fundamental to that task shall be to acknowledge and respond to the following:

- Children and young people are individuals.
- Children start life as totally dependent beings.
- The actions, or inactions, of the Local Authority and partner organisations impact children for whom they are corporate parents more strongly than any other group in society.
- Children and young people's views should be heard and considered in the processes that affect them.
- Many changes in society are having a disproportionate, and often negative, impact on children and young people.
- The healthy development of children and young people is crucial to the future well-being of our society.

# Inclusion and Safeguarding at the heart of every priority

Safeguarding and inclusion are fundamental to Corporate Parenting. They are at the heart of our pledge to our children and young people and central to every priority in our strategy.

## Safeguarding

Our children and young people are some of the most vulnerable in society. It is the collective responsibility and legal duty of all public services to work together.

Local authorities must safeguard and promote the well-being of the child it looks after (S.78 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) and this promotion of well-being should continue through a young person's development, which includes transition to adult hood.

In some families this need will be identified pre-birth, for others during childhood, or as a young person transitions into adulthood. We know that abuse and harm can be caused from within or outside their family and from a range of contexts.

We know that as our children and young people develop, grow and mature their behaviour and needs will also change.

The transition from young person to adulthood can be an unsettling and confusing time. It is important that agencies are able to adapt approaches in order to prepare young people in becoming adults. This shall be further developed in the forthcoming Adolescent Strategy which is currently in development.

We know that as young people grow up to adulthood they mature and their behaviour will change. Feedback from young people was that they should be allowed to make mistakes and that these mistakes should not follow them into the future.



## Youth Justice Service

Of those young people who are in contact with Cardiff Youth Justice Service 49% of them are known to Children Services and 14% are Looked After. Therefore it is important that we work closely with our Youth Justice Service in order to support our most vulnerable young people who are children on the cusp of or within the youth justice system.

The Youth Justice Services development strategy 2020 – 2022 sets out a number of ways to achieve these outcomes for some of our most vulnerable young people and share common themes with this Strategy. Examples being placing young people's voice at the centre of what we do, working closely with a range of partners and building the resilience of a young person.

## Inclusion

All of our children have their own identity and factors that make them unique individuals. Some of our children and young people are more vulnerable than others and require additional support to be safe and thrive. Children and young people with additional needs, including those who are disabled, unaccompanied asylum seekers, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, or have other protected characteristics may require additional consideration. There is evidence that they are more likely to become looked after, remain in care for longer and have a higher risk of being placed inappropriately in comparison to other children.

Opportunities, services and care planning must be inclusive and person centred. The aims and aspirations we hold for these individuals must, as for all other children, be tailored through individual care plans to support all of our children to reach their full potential.

We know that some individuals and groups will need specialist services. For this reason, during 2021 we shall launch our strategy for disabled children.



# This Strategy

This Strategy sets Cardiff's approach to Corporate Parenting (2021-2024). This Strategy's development has been an inclusive process led by elected members, involving children, young people and professionals supported by an action plan.

## The co-production process

- Over 20 of Cardiff's care experienced young people, living in a range of care settings, aged 5 - 27 and including children with additional needs, through real life and virtual workshops.
- 255 (44%) of Cardiff's children looked after participated in the 2018 Your Life, Your Care survey. The survey was conducted in partnership with Coram Voice and Bristol University, funded by the Hadley Trust/Children's Commissioner for Wales. Findings are referenced against each priority.
- 70 professionals from across agencies and sectors contributed.
- Over 20 carers and kinship carers we consulted in a feedback session

The work outlined in the strategy shall be overseen by the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee advised by an integrated reference group of young people and a network of multi-agency professionals. The strategy shall evolve over time to meet changing need.

The Committee shall report its findings to full Council and the Regional Partnership Board with regular dialogue between relevant scrutiny committees. This shall ensure the highest level of democratic and multi-agency oversight.

## How it fits with the wider legislative and strategic context

The key drivers are (this is not exhaustive):

- The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) act 2014
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015
- Cardiff Local Wellbeing Plan
- The Regional partnership Emotional and Mental Health strategy
- The National Review of Care for Children in Wales 2019, CIW
- Delivering Excellence in Children's Services and the Youth Justice Development Strategy: All our futures 2020-22.






# National Context

In Wales **6,846** children were looked after on 31 March 2019

109 per 10,000 population aged under 18

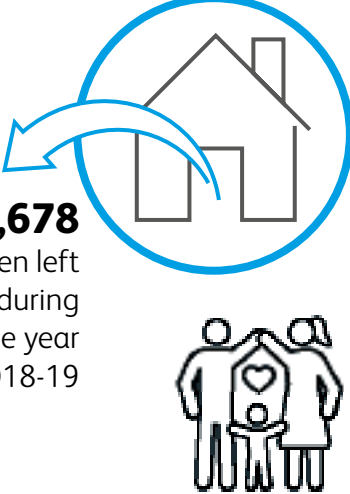
An increase of 439 (7%) on the previous year



**2,125** children started to be looked after in 2018-19


**1,678** children left care during the year 2018-19

**47%** returning to live with parents or family



**309** children were adopted from care in 2018-19

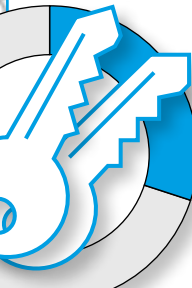
An increase of 3 (1%) on the previous year




Around **700** young people aged over 16 leave care each year. 1/3 of those being over 18

**27%** of care leavers moved into independent living arrangements during 2018-19

**12%** of care leavers experienced homelessness in 2018-19



**49%** of children looked after have a mental health difficulty




**54%** who left care in 2018/19 were in education, employment or training 1 year after


**18%** of children looked after have special educational needs

**67%** of children looked after achieved the core subject indicator at key stage 2 in 2017/18

**18%** of children looked after achieved the core subject indicator at key stage 4 in 2017/18



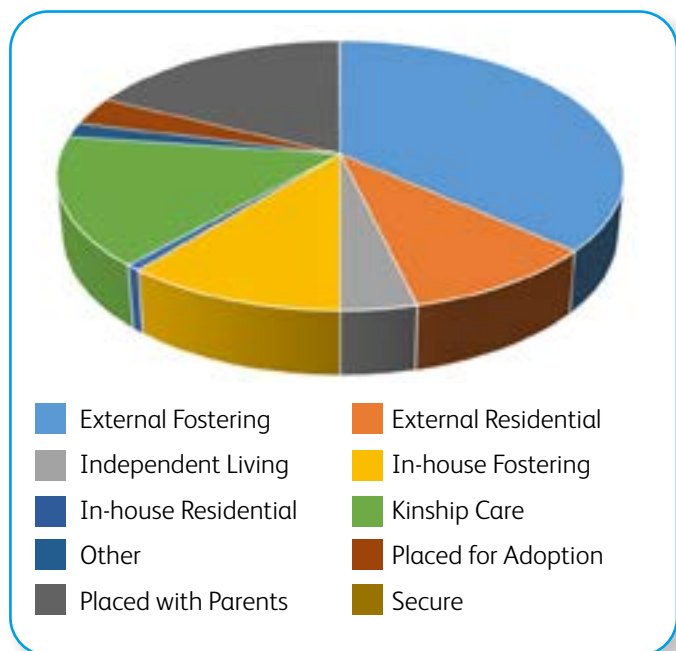
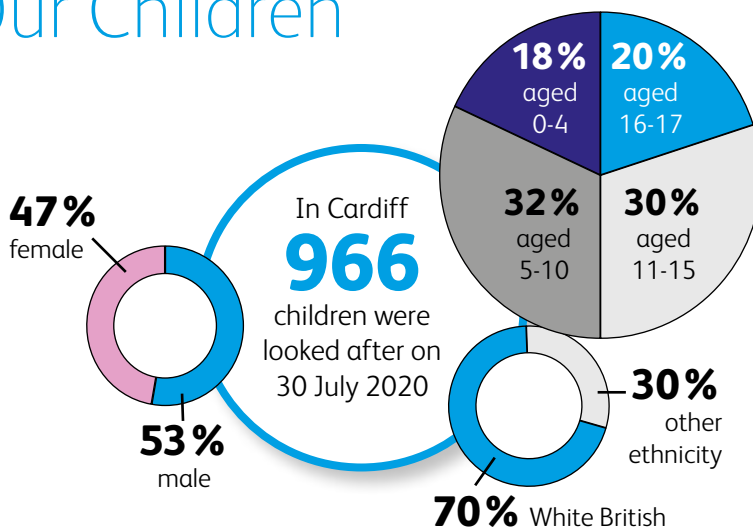

# The Local Context – Our Children



**51** Children on Residence Orders and supported by Local Authority

**271** children on Special Guardianship Orders

**3.8%** of children were adopted from care in 2019-20

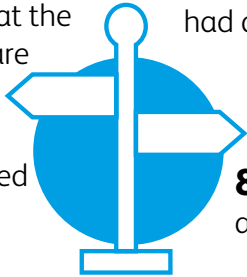
**1046** children (52%) remained at home

**255** children started to be looked after in 2019-20

**8%** had 3 or more placement moves

**203** children left care during the year 2019-20

**7%** returned home



**94%** of care leavers were in suitable accommodation at the time of leaving care

**93%** of those who left care had a personal adviser in 2019/20

**21%** of care leavers experienced homelessness in 2019-20

**87%** had a pathway plan

**54.1%** who left care in 2018/19 were in education, employment or training 1 year after

**62%** of children looked after at Key stage 4 have special educational needs



**76%** of school aged children looked after have a Personal Education Plan

Primary school aged children looked after had **94.76%** attendance in Cardiff schools

# Messages from our Children and Young People

The following messages are from consultation with over 20 children and young people aged between 5 and 27 from a range of backgrounds. Cardiff is a Signs of Safety local authority. The consultation was structured in line with this model with the house of good things, the house of worries and the house of hopes and dreams.



## Good things

Our Children and young people told us they enjoy the normal simple things in life that most children and young people want.

Two significant themes emerged:

- **Relationships**

Having a secure, safe and trusting relationship with professionals is essential to know how they fit into and operate within 'the system'.

A strong relationship with another (a professional adult or partner) is essential for them to know who they are and have a sense of identity and worth.

- **Education**

They see school and college as a positive. That it provides options for further hope and a career. But more importantly it is a place where they can just be a 'normal teenager', talking about and doing teenage stuff, getting up to everyday mischief. Whether school is a good or bad teenage experience, it is the same as their peers.



## Worries

Our Children and young people told us they feel the same pressures as most young adults.

- World affairs and politics leaves them feeling helplessness.
- They fear not being heard.
- They feel stressed.
- They worry about being bullied, friendships, not having friends and being lonely.
- They worry about College, lack of qualifications, not having transport and not getting a job.

But these worries are amplified by particular issues associated with their life experiences and being youngsters in care or leaving care:

- Their stress involves additional anxiety, anger, violence, worries about addiction or fear of dying.
- They worry about being able to care for themselves. About not having enough money and a home / about paying the rent.
- They feel isolated and stigmatised by being in care and worry about their parents.
- They worry about not being understood by other people such as their social worker and a lack of understanding and awareness about foster care in society.



Two significant themes emerged:

- **Emotional Health and Wellbeing**

Stress was a big issue in the conversations. They told us it is a multi-layered experience. That stress is heightened by experiences outside the normal day to day arena. That their ability to unload, unpack and process these issues is hampered by not having parental support.

This is why it is so important to have at least one strong steady dependable relationship.

- **Stigma**

This formed the basis of bullying. They feel they are perceived as victims and therefore prone to be easy targets of victimisation. They told us, they have been bullied because they are perceived to have 'bad' parents who did not care about them, were not loved and are therefore unlovable. This caused feelings of isolation and loneliness.

## Dreams

Our Children and young people told us they want security and control to build a stable future:

- To feel safe and be cared for.
- To build strong relationships with others. To find, be closer, or go home to family. To have their own family. To be a parent and to be a good parent. To be and have good friends and to feel connected.
- To achieve good grades to get on a college course, so that they can get a good job / dream career, earn money and have the income to own a home, have a car and be independent.



Three solid desires for their futures emerged:

- **They want to own a home**

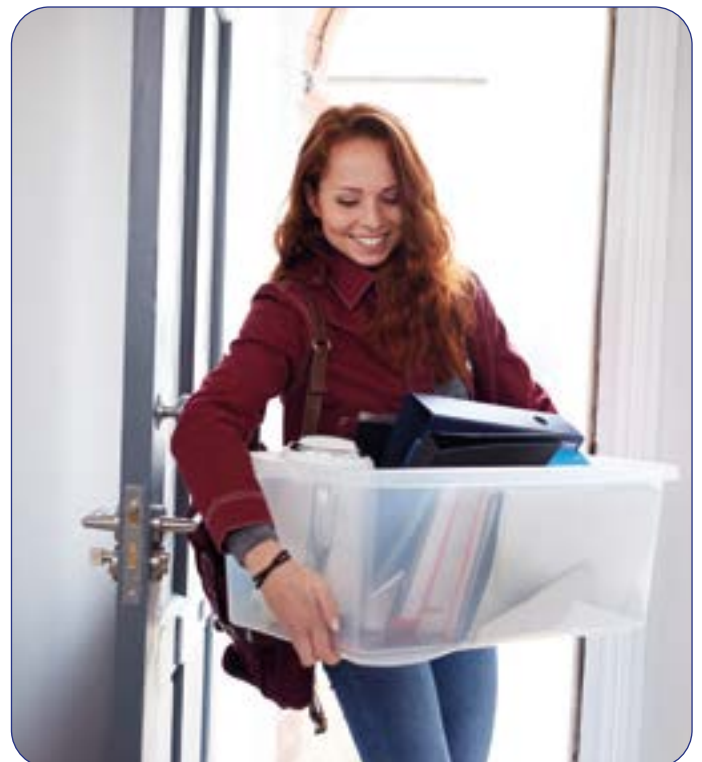
This was a big issue. They told us they want to have a place that is theirs. They want somewhere they can make their own decisions about how it looks. A place that is their sanctuary and comfortable.

- **They want family and identity**

They told us they want family. By being reunited with their own family, by changing their name back, or wanting to start their own biological family, to be parents themselves.

- **They want their own career**

They told us they want to gain independence by earning a decent income from a decent job / career. This is their ticket to getting their own place and earning good money to have the things they never had. This is why they are particularly anxious about College and not doing well.



## Our Pledge to you

### We shall

- Provide a safe, stable and comfortable home as a child and support you when you leave care.
- Ensure there are people who support and care for you.
- Help you have good relationships with the people who are important to you.
- Help you stay healthy and have good emotional wellbeing.
- Provide activities and interests you enjoy.
- Provide a first class education and the right training.
- Help you to feel ready for the future.
- Help you find fulfilment, purpose and ambition.
- Actively ask and listen to you particularly when decisions are made.
- Improve the things we aren't doing well.
- Celebrate your achievements and treat you with the dignity and respect you deserve.

To successfully deliver our pledge, we shall centre our activity on the following five Priorities, developed from the messages our children and young people told us.



## Priority 1: Improving emotional wellbeing and physical health

### This is important because...

Our children and young people have the same core health needs as all children, but their backgrounds and experiences mean they may be particularly vulnerable to poorer health outcomes. This is because children who enter our care may have unaddressed or current health issues which have arisen through poverty, neglect or abuse.

We also know children and young people who have experienced disrupted childhoods, trauma and inconsistent relationships with their parents and families are more likely to struggle with their emotional wellbeing. Young people can experience Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), these are stressful events occurring in childhood such as being a victim of neglect and child abuse, growing up in a household with adults experiencing substance misuse, mental health conditions or domestic violence.

The transitional period when care leavers experience during and after they leave care can present particular challenges to their emotional well-being.

### Key facts

The Your Life, Your Care (2018) survey of our children and young people in Cardiff identified:

**45%** of children in foster care to **75%** of those in residential have mental health difficulties.

**61%** of 8-11yr olds and **71%** of 11-18yr olds worried about their feelings or behaviour. **18%** of 11-18yr olds thought they were not getting support with these worries.

**17 (13%)** of 11-18yr olds were identified as having low well-being. They were more likely to be girls and have poor relationships with their social worker and carers.

**95%** of 8-11yr olds had the chance to explore the outdoors. Not having contact with nature was associated with low well-being.



### What our children and young people said

*"It's really fun and we get to go down the caravan" (4-7yrs)*

*"I felt in my previous foster placement I could have received better emotional support as I needed to attend court as a victim" (11-18yrs)*

*"I would like to have a pet because I believe this would improve my mental wellbeing, preferably a dog" (11-18yrs)*

*"I like having my voice heard. I feel the social worker needs to listen to me more and remember that it's my life and not Dad's" (8-11yrs)*



## Our current activity

The health of our children is overseen by a Medical Lead and Designated Nurse for Children Looked After. They ensure our children have an assessment of their health needs and individual action plan.

All our children must be registered with a dentist and GP by their carers and be supported to have their health needs met. Our children have access to Paediatricians if required to ensure physical health needs are met.

In relation to emotional well-being, there are a range of therapeutic Psychology and Mental Health services provided by the University Health Board including;

- Enfys (formerly the Developmental Trauma Service)
- Children's Intensive Support Service for disabled children
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Therapeutic support via the multi-agency Brighter Futures Panel
- The Resilience Project which works primarily through educational settings

- Primary Mental Health Specialists who are part of the Cardiff Family Advice and Support Service.

The Education Directorate and schools are currently adopting a THRIVE approach. This is a dynamic, developmental and trauma-sensitive approach underpinned by child development and attachment theory. Each school has a designated member of staff for a children looked after to share and talk about any worries and concerns they may have. Many of our schools also have designated safe spaces for our young people to share any worries in private and to actively support their wellbeing.

Advocacy, befriending, consultations and specific support groups such as Bright Sparks and the Young Person's Advisory Group provide structured opportunities for our young people to express and share their feelings and views. This is important to support our children and young people's emotional well-being.

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## How we shall achieve our aims

This strategy is underpinned by a detailed action plan connected to each priority.

### Key actions are:

- Emotional Mental Health and Well-being is a key delivery priority of the Starting Well Partnership via the Regional Partnership Board. This includes multi-agency activity to strengthen joined up therapeutically led social and education services.
- Understand, through enhancing data systems in our children, young people and care leavers achieving their health and well-being outcomes. This will identify any gaps and improve outcomes.
- To improve how we listen to our children, young people and care leavers across our services to improve service improvement, design and delivery
- Ensure improvement in the timeliness and sharing of health assessments which is a statutory duty for all our children and young people.
- Ensure emotional well-being and therapeutic services meet need and demand
- Improving wellbeing through strengthening the offer for outdoor play, sport, leisure and cultural activities by working with senior leaders in the Council, partners and the private sector.
- Ensuring children placed out of area or who move between placements have portability of services and as minimal a disruption as possible through the multi-agency Brighter Futures Panel
- Ensure that life story work is completed with our children and young people
- Develop ways to increase the resilience of our children, young people and care leavers



## Priority 2: Better connections, improved relationships

### This is important because...

We know a trusted adult has been shown to be the main factor in helping children recover from traumatic events. We also know our children and young people want better connections and improved relationships in their lives.

Spending time with people important to our children and young people is a basic right and need. Sometimes staying in touch with certain people is not in a child's best interests. This can be harder to achieve for our children and young people who experience placement moves, for those placed outside of Cardiff, or as young people transition into independent living in adulthood.

We also know children and young people who have experienced disrupted childhoods, trauma and inconsistent or broken relationships may find it hard to form attachments with new people around them.

### What our children and young people said

*"We love seeing Mum and baby sister and we want more" (11-18yrs)*

*"I want to see my mum less"*

*"Social workers shouldn't abandon the young person and move around jobs. Don't like having to meet new people/workers all the time"*

*"I'd like to say to other kids in care – don't be scared. You'll be ok. If you have troubles you'll always have someone by your side. You'll get to see your family one day. Don't give up hope" (11-18yrs)*

### Key facts

**100%** of the 4-7yr olds, **95%** of the 8-11yr olds, and **90%** of the 11-18yr olds thought their carers noticed how they were feeling.

The level of trust in social workers was high amongst the younger children but decreased in the older age groups. **22%** of 8-11yr olds did not know they could speak to their social worker on their own.

The Your Life, Your Care survey of our children and young people identified:

**19%** of 8-11yr olds and **24%** of 11-18yr olds had no face to face contact with either parent. Most children and young people wanted more contact with family members and people who are important to them. Some children wanted less contact.

**98%** of children aged 8-11yrs had a trusted adult, but **1 in 10** 11-18yr olds did not. Not having a trusted adult was associated with low well-being.

**98%** of children (4-7yrs); **87%** of aged 8-11yrs; and **93%** of young people (11-18yrs) trusted their carers. **61%** of young people talked regularly with their carers about things that mattered to them. That is a similar proportion to the **65%** of young people in the general population who talk to their parents.

## Our current activity

We seek to keep our children and young people living with family or friends wherever possible. We strive to keep siblings together unless not in their best interests pending a thorough assessment. Practitioners acknowledge connections are broad. A sense of belonging is derived not only from family, but also from community and sense of place formed through social, leisure and cultural opportunities.

Children's Services work with children and families in a strengths based way, using a Signs of Safety framework. This approach involves Family Network meetings to identify family and friends to look after children before foster or residential care is considered.

Cardiff is implementing the Reunification Framework to support permanency planning for children and build on kinship care.

We make sure, where safe, our children and young people regularly keep in touch and have contact with the people who are important to them.

Relationships are supported by advocacy, befriending, positive role models and networking opportunities. We recognise children have the right to live in Cardiff or as close to home as possible, unless there are safeguarding reasons why this cannot be promoted. We are working to develop greater numbers of local placements (Priority 3).

Where children and young people have developmental trauma or therapeutic needs, Enfys and the Children's Intensive Support Service for disabled children support and strengthen relationships with key people (Priority 1).

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## How we shall achieve our aims

This strategy is underpinned by a detailed action plan connected to each priority.

### Key actions are:

- Helping our children, young people and care leavers to develop support networks including whilst in care, leaving care and into independence
- Supporting more children and young people to remain at home and enhancing the support available.
- Supporting more family members to become kinship carers or special guardians and enhancing the support available in a connected person first approach
- Introduce the Reunification Framework to support our children and young people who are already looked after to live safely with a family member
- Continue to improve recruitment and retention in Children's Services to enable relationship based practice
- Listen to our children, young people and care leavers to understand what they want to stay connected to the people and places important to them
- Adopt different ways of maintaining family time and contact with important people though virtual means, that for some, works better.
- Connecting care leavers to the Early Help Services if needed, to access early parenting advice and support as they become parents themselves. This will support a positive blueprint of parenting and prevent the potential inter-generational issues

## Priority 3:

### A comfortable, safe and stable home whilst in care and after

#### This is important because...

All our children and young people need and deserve a safe, comfortable, stable home. Home can be with parents, with a kinship carer, special guardian, foster carer, at a children's home, residential school, in supported accommodation or independently with floating support. But sometimes also includes secure accommodation or remand. This includes stable accommodation as an adult, including opportunities for home ownership.

No matter where a child lives, they must be supported to have positive outcomes and reach their full potential. Each setting must be chosen and matched to meet our children and care leavers' individual needs.

For most we hope this will be a positive, safe and comfortable experience, where new connections are formed with nurturing carers. But we understand that not every placement will go as expected, and our children and young people must have a positive and well planned alternative if things don't work out.

#### Key facts

The Your Life, Your Care survey of our children and young people identified:

**87%** of our children and young people reported that they felt safe 'all or most of the time' in their placements compared to only **75%** of children (8-13yrs) in the general population. **84%** of 11-18yrs old felt safe where they lived.

**61%** of young people 11-18yrs felt settled where they live. 7 children and young people reported they 'never' felt settled.

The vast majority of children and young people liked their bedrooms.

**84%** of 11-18yr olds wrote that they were taught independence skills 'All or most of the time' or 'Sometimes'. **16%** thought this was 'hardly ever' or 'never' true.



#### What our children and young people said

*"Being in care made my life better by having a safe house and a bedroom" (8-11yrs)*

*"I love being in care because the people I live with are very nice and love me very much" (8-11yrs)*

*"Things could be fairer. Sometimes we can't make choices on our own and we have to have meetings before we can do things like go on holiday" (8-11yrs)*



## Our current activity

Children's Services is currently seeking to shift the balance of care (priority 2) so that more of our children and young people are placed with family or people they know.

We are working with partners to improve the volume and range of placements within Cardiff, to reduce the number of placements outside the County. This shall be achieved through implementation of the Children's Services placements Commissioning Strategy: The Right Home and the Right Support for our Children Looked After 2019-2022.

Where in-county placements are not possible, all requests for out of county placements must be made through the multi-agency Brighter Futures Panel which seeks to ensure all care, education and health needs are met.

Pathway Planning addresses the changing needs of our children and young people to plan changes in where they live and transition out of care or into supported adulthood and ultimately independence.

The Young Persons Gateway to Accommodation and Support follows a Positive Pathway model to provide information advice and assistance, supported accommodation and floating support with consistent pathways into settled adult accommodation.

Regardless of the location of the placements or age of the child or young person Independent Reviewing Officers, Independent Visitors and Advocates ensure the voice of our children and young people are heard and their wishes and rights are acted upon.

This strategy is underpinned by a detailed action plan connected to each priority.

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## How we shall achieve our aims

This strategy is underpinned by a detailed action plan connected to each priority.

### Key actions are:

- Implementing Cardiff's Commissioning Strategy to increase placement sufficiency including;
  - Increase local placements for local children by increasing local capacity such in house placements, Oakway emergency placement for young people and the Assessment Centre with a multi-agency approach.
  - Continue to work with Independent Fostering Agencies and Care providers sufficient provision to meet need
- Ensuring there is appropriate support for placements to prevent breakdown
- Continuing to provide the Young Person's Gateway and develop additional provision to ensure demand is met
- Further enhance our data systems for care leavers in achieving a safe and stable home and well-being outcomes.
- Strengthen systems to plan accommodation and transition for young people transitioning to independent living and adulthood.
- Further develop the Kinship Team to support more family members to become kinship carers or special guardians and enhance the support available.
- Continue to working in partnership so that a placement move does not adversely impact on to education, training or health outcomes
- Explore how the council and partners can support care leavers to own their own homes such as shared ownership schemes
- Improving contextual safeguarding for risks outside of the home through the development of an Adolescent and Safeguarding Strategy and implementation of the RSB Exploitation Strategy.
- Children's Services with ENFYs will work to ensure that in house fostering an kinship carers are trained in PACE and Therapeutic Parenting models of care.

## Priority 4: Educational Achievement, Employment and Training

### This is important because...

There are 709 Looked after children in our Cardiff schools. 54% are of primary school age and 46% are at secondary school.

We want our children and care leavers to achieve the best possible educational and employment outcomes so that they can lead fulfilled and successful lives. Our children and young people told us this is their aspiration. Having a good job with a good income was seen as a means to obtaining their own home, income, fulfilment and to have the things they never had.

But we also know that due to the circumstances which led our children and young people into care, some will feel disenfranchised or have disengaged from school. Some will have changed school when entering or changing placement.

This disruption means that some young people may need additional assistance to achieve or they may achieve their accomplishments later than others. Research suggests that children looked after and young people are more likely to have a statement of special educational needs, to be excluded from school, and to leave school with no qualifications compared with children in the general population.

It is important to ensure that Education is considered fully when a change of placement is necessary, to ensure there is as little disruption to relationships and learning as possible. This can be particularly challenging when young people are placed outside Cardiff where provision may not be comparable.

We want to provide the best possible opportunities for all our children and young people, where all have the right to access a quality, broad and balanced education, in line with their needs and wherever possible in a mainstream school.

### Key facts

The Your Life, Your Care survey of our children and young people identified:

**75%** of the 11-18yrs group liked school or college 'a lot' or 'a bit'.

**94%** of children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) felt that their carers showed an interest in their education 'Most of the time' or 'Sometimes'.

**13%** wrote that they 'hardly ever' or 'never' were given trusted roles in school.

**87%** had access to the internet at home compared with **98%** of households with children and two adults in Wales; and **90%** of single parents in Wales

### What our children and young people said

*"More contact with social worker finding jobs etc would make care better"  
(11-18yrs)*

*"It also upsets me that I may not have anyone outside of the care system to help me with financial problems (if I have them)"*

*"I feel extremely proud of myself at the moment with everything I have achieved" (11-18yrs)*

## Our current activity

The education of our children and young people is overseen by a dedicated Achievement Leader and Looked After in Education Co-ordinator who liaise strategically and operationally with schools and social services.

Each of our children and young people have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is monitored and reviewed regularly. The information held in the Virtual School, which includes the individual's attainment and progress data, helps us to ensure there is the earliest intervention and response to any underachievement. The Improvement Partners in the Consortium help us to monitor the progress and achievement of Looked after Children and ensure their needs are being fully considered by the school.

Such intervention is aided by a Pupil Development Grant, which is currently used to train all teachers to meet the needs of children in care. Designated teacher forums share good practice across schools, and training is available for all partners including governors, specialist teams, social workers and carers to ensure all are working together.

Education teams including specialist teachers and educational psychologists have pledged specific

support for our children looked after and young people. The pathway planning process when a young person is 16 ensures that care leavers have practical and financial support when they participate in any further or higher education.

The Bright Futures project as part of the Into Work Advice Service supports our young people equipping them for employment or returning to education. Young people are assigned their own mentor and bespoke employment support, with access to free training, finance and interview preparation. When ready and confident they progress to a six month work placement.

Work experience, traineeships and apprenticeships are provided children who are looked after or leaving care by or through the Council's Economic Development Directorate, but also through The Cardiff Commitment. The Commitment is a partnership between Into Work Advice Service, education providers and employers to ensure that all young people in the city secure a job that enables them to reach their full potential.

This strategy is underpinned by a detailed action plan connected to each priority.

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## How we shall achieve our aims

This strategy is underpinned by a detailed action plan connected to each priority.

### Key actions are:

- Ensure our children and young people placed out of area or move placements have their educational needs met and minimal disruption as possible through the multi-agency Brighter Futures Panel
- Understand, through enhancing data the provision available and outcomes to children looked after and care leavers to identify any gaps and improve outcomes.
- Ensuring all our children have access to the IT resources they need for education at home and minimising the impact of Covid 19.
- Transferring best practice from schools that are excellent in supporting and nurturing our children and young people city wide.
- Further develop access to employment and work experience opportunities in the Council, partners and the private sector
- Strengthen access to cultural, social and leisure opportunities in the council, with partners and the private sector to support the wider education needs of our children and care leavers
- Listen to and work with our children and young people to see what would make the difference to them with this priority.

## Priority 5: Celebrating our children and young people

### This is important because...

Many of our young people have had a difficult start in life and are likely to have faced barriers. It is vital our children and young people feel valued and their achievements are celebrated. It is important that they are treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve and our contact with children and care leavers reinforces this.

Our children and young people told us they worry about not being understood by other people. They identified a lack of understanding and awareness about children looked after in society and felt stigmatised by being in care. Some described being bullied as a result of being in care.

We know that each of our children looked after are unique, with their own life experiences. It is important that they are supported to develop their talents and share their strengths. This builds resilience for the future. As Corporate Parents we must support children looked after and care leavers to reach their full potential and champion their rights.

### What our children and young people said

*“Adults that know you are in care should keep it to themselves” (11-18yrs)*

*“I feel extremely proud of myself at the moment with everything I have achieved” (11-18yrs)*

*“My foster carers ... don't trust me and think I steal and lie which is hurtful to me because I don't” (11-18yrs)*

*“No, I don't have a really good friend”*

### Key facts

The Your Life, Your Care survey of our children and young people identified:

**98%** of the 4-7yr olds, and **98%** of the 8-11yr olds had a really good friend. **11%** of young people 11-18yrs wrote that they did not have a really good friend feeling isolated from friends was a strong theme from focus groups.

**25%** of 8-11yr olds looked after children and **30%** of 11-18yr olds were afraid to go to school because of bullying. Girls were more likely than boys to report feeling like this.

All 8-11yr olds felt supported with this. But a quarter of 11-18yr olds did not.

**12%** of young people recorded that adults did things that made them feel embarrassed about being in care.

**54%** of 11-18yr olds responded that they got a second chance 'all or most of the time'. **9%** felt they 'hardly ever' or 'never' got second chances.

**39%** of young people (11-18yrs) thought they were given opportunities 'all or most of the time' to show they could be trusted. **4%** wrote that they were 'never' given the opportunity to be trusted.

## Our current activity

Currently there are a range of interventions and support available to help support our young people and families to build resilience.

Annually a Bright Sparks Award Ceremony celebrates the success of our children and young people across the city. This event is an opportunity to acknowledge their achievements. Not only does it provide celebration and recognition for our children and young people who participate, but as a sponsored event the successes of our children and young people are promoted to local businesses.

The Cardiff Commitment offers our young people work placements and training opportunities in the world of work. These provide our children and young people with opportunities to hold positions of trust, to gain knowledge, skills and confidence. The initiative not only helps overcome barriers our young people face in accessing or maintaining employment, but also provides employers and their staff the opportunity to meet our young people and receive training to better understand their needs.

Cardiff's Fostering Campaign and the National Adoption Campaign in seeking prospective foster and adoptive carers are also important public facing publicity campaigns. They raise awareness of our children and young people to wider society and raises awareness of fostering and adoption to increase the number of placements available.

The Police Crime Commissioner Project works with children and young people who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system or becoming victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. This project challenges stereotypes and perceptions of young people. It uses a child rights-based approach to address the criminalisation of care experienced young people.

The police have committed to not treating our children as offenders when behaving in ways many children behave at home. Children should be allowed to make mistakes and prevented from entering the criminal justice system.

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## How we shall achieve our aims

It should be noted this is the most challenging of our priorities, because it needs to reach beyond our sphere of direct influence. It is a developmental priority. It is the basis for our Big Ask of Our City and Communities. Members of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee are champions for children looked after and care leavers. They shall promote the interests and opportunities for children looked after in their interactions with businesses, the voluntary sector and communities. Professionals shall seek new opportunities in the spirit of this strategy and action plan evolving over time. This strategy is underpinned by a detailed action plan connected to each priority.

### Key actions are:

- Work with our children and young people to develop their own version of this strategy and further develop the pledge
- Strengthen participation for our children, young people and care leavers
- Develop stronger links between CPAC and our children, young people and care leavers.
- Exploring the subject of bullying prevention with schools to determine if there are opportunities to apply lessons learnt more widely.
- Develop a corporate parenting network of stakeholders to champion corporate parenting and meet the aims of this Strategy
- Supporting our children and young people in their campaigning and influencing work in a rights based way.
- Monitoring and making links with the Cardiff Commitment to promote our children and young people.
- Challenging negative stereotypes and educating others as to the reality of care experience.
- Exploring how the aspirations of our young people can be met through wider Council policy and initiatives including home ownership and access to services.



## Making it happen

To achieve the right results, we know we need to get our message out, have a shared understanding and strong direction, ensure clear and effective leadership, and report on our priorities to the right people.

To do this we are going to make three big asks.

- The Big Ask of young people whose lives are affected.
- The Big Ask of our fantastic professionals.
- The Big Ask of our City and Communities.

# The Big Ask of our children and young people whose lives are affected

We are proud of each and every one of our children and young people and want everything we do to be driven by what they need to be happy and established for life.

To do that, like every good parent we need to continually know what they experience, feel and think. We need them to get involved, tell us if we are getting it right and help us find the right way if we are not.

The Big Ask of our children and young people whose lives are affected by care, outlines eight key areas where we shall ask our children and young people to get involved to make a difference for now and the future, for themselves and for others.

Get involved in the Bright Sparks youth club for care experience children and young people, to do the following:

- Decide how the club is run - events, activities, and location.
- Decide on creative ways to decide what matters.
- Come to our Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee meetings or events if you want and tell us what to listen to.
- If you don't want to, tell us by animations, videos, pictures, or another way.
- Invite us to the places that matter to you if you want us to see for ourselves.
- Reach out to other clubs and communities with the help of our youth workers and advocates. Be their voice.
- Listen to our ideas about what might help.
- Tell us if we get it right and if we get it wrong.

Cardiff's social workers, foster carers, children's homes, advocacy providers, youth teams and young people themselves shall have a key role in promoting and advertising the big ask of young people whose lives are affected.

## The Big Ask of our fantastic professionals

We know that professionals care. They want to make a positive difference to every young person's life.

So we asked professionals what is important to them in being a good Corporate Parent. They told us:

*They fundamentally believe that Corporate Parenting is everybody's responsibility.*

*That we need to understand the needs of young people, advocate on their behalf, and search for solutions through the lens of wellbeing instead of risk aversion.*

*That every professional needs to understand and decide how their organisation shall contribute.*

*We should collectively aspire to achieve the best for our young people in every aspect of their lives. That there must be monitoring of progress and accountability.*

The Big Ask of our fantastic professionals therefore outlines six key areas where we shall ask foster carers, residential workers, social workers, teachers, nurses, youth workers, therapists, housing providers and others to make a difference.

- We know you are working hard and are already making a difference. Come to our meetings and tell us about it.
- Listen with us to what young people tell us.
- Encourage children and young people to tell us what they think. Get involved and be the voice of young people who are disenfranchised or lack confidence.
- Work with us to find new creative solutions to deliver our priorities.
- Make a pledge.
- Build that in to your team or service area plan.
- Help us evaluate if the changes we make together work.

Cardiff's public sector, third sector and contracted service leaders and senior managers shall have a key role in promoting and advertising the big ask of professionals to their workforce.

## The Big Ask of our City & Communities

We are ambitious for children in care and care leavers and we know the City and its communities are too.

The Big Ask of our City & Communities outlines four key areas where we shall ask businesses, the voluntary sector and communities to make a difference.

- Help celebrate the achievements of children in care and care leavers by sponsoring our Bright Sparks Awards or donating a prize.
- Pledge access to your organisation's sport, music, arts, leisure, cultural, or faith based activities for children in care, foster families and care leavers at low or no cost.
- Become a Fostering Friendly employer by promoting fostering in the work place or promote fostering in your venue. Help us let everyone know how important it is that our communities better understand that Children in Care Matter.
- Pledge work experience, traineeships, apprenticeships and work based mentoring to children in care and care leavers through Cardiff Bright Starts programme.

Cardiff's County Councillors as elected community leaders shall have a key role in promoting and advertising the Big Ask of our City and Communities.



## Pulling it together – the role of the Committee

Our strategy is based on the evidence we have now from working together, driven by elected members who want to make the difference.

We know we can do more to understand the issues. We know there are solutions we haven't yet found. We know there is more we can do to work together.

We also know that over the lifespan of the Strategy, the context of young people's lives will change. We hope they will improve as we implement our plans, but we also anticipate there will be new challenges, not least arising from the wide ranging social and economic impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic.

For that reason we believe it is important that our strategy is a living document that is continually monitored and evolves. That we seek out new activity and identify new actions as we proceed.

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee is our vehicle for this. Not only for governance, but also for engagement and development.

The Committee shall pull together all three Big Asks:

- Young people shall inform the Committee.
- Professionals shall continue to search for new solutions by listening and working together.
- Elected members shall lead cohesion, partnership and champion the cause of our children and young people for whom they are corporate parents.

### How we shall do it

The Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee shall monitor the implementation of the strategy.

The Committee shall plan its meetings thematically according to the Priorities of the strategy.

The Committee shall consider feedback from children and young people engagement groups and creative feedback methods so that it can listen and further its understanding of each Priority in even greater depth.

Multi-agency groups shall work on delivering the individual priorities.

The Committee shall be the forum for cohesion and partnership in seeking solutions.

The Committee shall report its progress.

Finally it is important to stress, our corporate parenting principles and strategy do not exist in a vacuum. They should shape the mind-set of culture in every partner organisation, in how each carries out all of its functions.