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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Nick Ramsay AM
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

14th November 2016

Dear Nick

Public Accounts Committee – Looked After Children

Thank you for your letter dated 17 October. I have pleasure in enclosing a paper which provides the detail you requested.

I hope the information given will complement your scoping paper and help the Committee reach an appropriate decision.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carl Sargeant". The signature is written in a cursive style.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Public Accounts Committee (PAC) – Supporting information for Scoping Paper on Looked After Children

1. Purpose

The Public Accounts Committee has indicated it wishes to undertake an inquiry into some aspects of Looked After Children and has asked for details of all Welsh Government grants and funding streams, across policy portfolios, specifically targeted at improving outcomes for looked after children.

To support this request, information has been collated below setting out the range of Welsh Government grants and funding streams that specifically target improving outcomes for looked after children from each policy department. Information has also been provided about the Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group and the budget provided for taking forward its programme of work.

The Public Accounts Committee will wish to note that consideration was given to include funding provided for preventative and early intervention programmes that seek to build resilience within families and communities, such as Families First and Flying Start, as well as other programmes designed to remove individuals from poverty or improve inequality. As these programmes are not specifically focussed on improving outcomes for looked after children they do not fit within the scope specified in the Chair of the Committee's request and have not been included in this paper.

2. Social Services led grants and funding streams

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 sets the legislative framework for local authorities when carrying out their duties for looked after children. Part 6 allows us to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people and those on the edge of care. It provides a greater emphasis on diverting children from care and providing support to enable families to stay together.

The majority of funding for children's social services in Wales is provided by the Welsh Government to local authorities via the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). As a non-hypothecated grant, local authorities have flexibility to spend these funds for any purpose they choose in delivering the services for which they are responsible, including for looked after children.

Local authorities in Wales are also able to apply for additional funding through Welsh Government grant programmes. These grants can only be used for the specific purposes for which they are provided. Examples of such grants provided by Welsh Government are provided below,

Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act's focus on prevention and early intervention provides an opportunity to address the challenging outcomes for looked after children and sets the over-arching strategic context for the Improving Outcomes for Children work programme.

The Improving Outcomes for Children Strategic Steering Group was originally established by the former Minister for Health and Social Services, Mark Drakeford AM, to help improve outcomes for looked after children and identify what early intervention and preventative action could be taken to help reduce the numbers of children taken into care. The Group was chaired by Albert Heaney, Director of Social Services and Integration.

Following the Assembly elections, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities for Children agreed to reconvene the Group and changed its status to a Ministerial Advisory Group, chaired by David Melding AM. The Group met for the first time on 3 October and is taking forward a phase 2 work programme, building upon the recommendations and work streams undertaken during phase 1, and developing a national approach for looked after children.

The Group's terms of reference are as follows:

- To support families to stay together and reduce the need for children to be looked after by ensuring a focus on prevention and early intervention action across all service provision for children, including statutory and independent providers.
- To enable relevant agencies and professionals to manage risk confidently and provide support at the 'edge of care', making sure that needs are accurately assessed and met, so that only the right children are accommodated at the right time.
- To shape a national approach to looked after children.
- To ensure that local authorities provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality placements that meets the diverse range of children's needs.
- To give children and young people clearly planned journeys through care which remain focused on care plans, prevent drift, enable them to be reunited with family and friends where possible, have stable placements and move into independent adulthood positively.
- To maximise support and secure the best outcomes for care leavers.
- To build a picture of why children become looked after and individual care experiences by promoting the systematic capture and consideration of data and evidence available.

The Group's membership includes stakeholders who work with looked after children, foster carers and adopters such as lead officials from across local government, the third sector and Welsh Government policy leads across policy portfolios (education, housing, tackling poverty and public health).

Phase 2 of the programme is based around three key themes:

- preventing children entering care and early intervention,
- improving outcomes for children already in care, and;
- supporting care leavers to successful futures and independent living.

Working within the 3 key themes, the programme will seek to develop an integrated approach to looked after children, focussing upon:

- Professional Practice
- Assessment of Risk and Edge of Care Services
- Permanency Planning and Building Stable Placements

Through its work, the group will contribute to reducing the incidences of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), seek to build resilience within the family, focus on prevention and early intervention and improve outcomes for children in care.

£100k has been set aside to support the improving outcomes for children work programme, the Ministerial Advisory Group and its work streams. It is anticipated that £100k will also be made available in 2017/18 to continue this work.

Budget 2016/17	£100k
Indicative Budget 2017/18	£100k

Integrated Family Support Services (IFSS)

An example of a service that falls within scope of the Revenue Support Grant is the Integrated Family Support Service. IFSS provides intensive support to families before children become at risk of being taken into care, including families affected by drug and alcohol issues. IFSS works with parents to improve their parenting capacity and capabilities, build on their strengths and empower family members to effect long term positive behavioural change. This service offers preventative, targeted crisis interventions to help families receive the right support when they need it, thereby avoiding care proceedings where possible.

£4.5m Welsh Government funding for IFSS transferred to the RSG in 2014. Funding has been maintained in 2015/16 and 2016/17 as part of local authorities allocation in the RSG.

Budget 2016/17	£4.5m
Indicative Budget 2017/18	£4.5m

Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant 2016-19

The Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant 2016-19 replaced the four Welsh Government social services grants previously available to the third sector. The grants which have been replaced are:

- the Children and Families Organisations Grant (CFOG);
- Section 64 programme grants;
- the Older Person Grant; and
- the Family Fund Trust

The purpose of the Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant 2016-19 is to support Welsh Ministers' priorities of a new and equal relationship between people and practitioners; early intervention and prevention; and transforming the way people's needs for care and support are met. This was first set out in *Sustainable Social Services – a Framework for Action* and has been placed on a statutory footing by the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. .

Please see **Table 1 below** detailing projects that have been supported through the Third Sector Grants scheme that impact upon improved outcomes for children. The Grant scheme operates from 2016 to 2019 and as such there is no spend for financial year 2015/16.

In addition, local authorities in Wales are able to apply for additional funding through Welsh Government grant programmes. These grants can only be used for the specific purposes for which they are provided.

Children and Family Organisation Grant Scheme (CFOG)

Following the demise of British Association for Adoption and Fostering Cymru on 4 September 2015, some of its legacy work was transferred to different organisations to carry out along with the funding to support such services. BAAF received a grant of £157,360 during 2015-16 of which £67,699 was spent on its core functions during the run up to its closure. The remaining funding from this grant was transferred over to St David's Children Society as a 'one off' CFOG grant payment of £89,661 to carry out the training and consultancy services as well as providing other services around fostering and adoption.

BAAF Cymru was also successful in their bid to run the Welsh Adoption register and the contract for the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). The contract for the Welsh register was £76,000 of which £43,163 was transferred to National Adoption Services (which is hosted by Cardiff City Council) on 5 September 2015.

On 14 September following the demise of BAAF, Children in Wales officially agreed to take over and run the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for fostering and adoption services for 18 months (from September 2015- March 2017) on behalf of the Welsh Government. The remaining funding of £48,440 from this contract was transferred over to manage the service during 2015-16 financial year. A procurement exercise is currently being undertaken during 2016-17 to determine the IRM contract for the next few years where it is expected that Children in Wales will submit a bid to retain these services.

Please see **Table 2** below.

3. Pupil Deprivation Grant – Looked After Children

The Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) was created in December 2011 and is the Welsh Government's principal means of providing financial support for reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment. The PDG is allocated to support:

- learners who are eligible for free school meals and who are educated in maintained schools; in 2016-17 this will include learners who are educated in Pupil Referral Units
- eligible learners in Early Years settings where Foundation Phase is delivered
- looked after children, and former looked after children who have been adopted from care or who are to a special guardianship or residence order.

The PDG portion that supports learners, who are looked after, within the context of the school improvement agenda, is calculated using the Social Services Departments Activity (SSDA) validated data on looked after children from the previous year. In 2016-2017- for each child aged 4-15 who is looked at 31 March of the previous year as reported in the SSDA data, the consortia received £1,150 through the PDG.

In April 2015 we introduced new arrangements to support the educational performance of looked after children through the PDG; the grant for LAC was retained by the regional education consortia rather than be pass-ported through to schools, making consortia accountable for delivering results. These arrangements have enabled consortia to strategically deliver better targeted and flexible interventions on a regional basis.

There is also flexibility built into the terms and conditions to enable the use of this PDG funding to support interventions aimed at former looked after children who have been adopted from care or are subject to special guardianship orders.

As a result it is possible for consortia to implement interventions which have a beneficial impact on all children, even though it is expected that they will have a greater potential benefit on children who are or were looked after.

Consortia continue to work closely and constructively with the relevant local authorities, schools and other partners to develop effective interventions that support the improved educational outcomes of this group of learners and to ensure they reach their full potential. All proposals have to be considered for sustainability beyond the lifetime of the grant.

Budget 2015/16	£3.9m
Budget 2017/18	£3.8m

The draft budget for the wider PDG in 2017-18 is £ 93,746. The Cabinet Secretary for Education is considering a refreshed approach to the grant to ensure greatest impact and the exact details will be provided in due course.

4. Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People at Risk of Offending Grant funding

Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People at risk of offending funds projects aimed at diverting young people away from crime and anti-social behaviour.

Funding is allocated across six Regional Partnerships across Wales. Each area decides which projects to run in line with criteria set, as they are best placed to decide on the needs of young people in the area.

The funding focuses on projects that target those most at risk of offending, but this would also target those likely to disengage from school or be at risk of needing CAMHS or Social Services support. This includes a number of regional projects involving Looked after Children both in the foster care and residential care settings.

Budget 2016-2017	£4.330m
Indicative Budget for 2017-2018	£4.330m

TABLE 1**Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant 2016-19**

Organisati on	Project	Purpose	Total Funding agreed 2016/17- 2018/19	2016-17	Indicative allocations – subject to Ministerial agreement	
					2017-18	2018-19
After Adoption / Adoption UK	Adoption Support Wales – Getting it right for every child	<p>This joint project aims to provide high quality adoption support services which focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing support information and counselling to adoptive families, adopted children, young people, birth parents and birth relatives • develop peer to peer preventative and early intervention approaches to reduce demand on statutory services • maximise the adopter’s voice by participating with adoptive parents and by engaging with young people to promote individual wellbeing and reduce adoption disruptions • reunite people separated by adoption and contribute to the establishment and 	£564,477	197,888.45	187,994.03	178,594.33

		practice work with National Adoption Service (which includes offering a matching service).				
Action for Children	Skills for Living (S4L)	<p>The project is aimed at young people leaving care (YPLC) and is delivered by a partnership between Action for Children and Llamau.</p> <p>S4L is a clinically-backed model tailored to equip YPLC with the emotional tools, practical skills and education, employment and training opportunities they need to progress onto a happy, healthy, independent life.</p> <p>SYMF matches young people with work placements in a wide range of industries as well as developing employability skills.</p>	£1,500,000	£524,957	£495,000	£479,992
Children in Wales	The Getting More Involved in Social Care Project	To improve well-being and voice and control of looked after children and care leavers and create mutual support groups for kinship carers	£662,935	233,416	221,648	207,871
St David's Childrens Society	Child centred recruitment and developing a centre of excellence for adoption support	<p>The project will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a centre of excellence in adoption support services • develop a recruitment and placement plan, especially for those harder to place children such as children over the age of 4, siblings and children who have complex emotional, medial needs. • expand the St David's training 	£342,300	120,000	114,000	108,300

		programme, including a conversion course to broaden adopter preferences and skills.				
St David's Childrens Society	Securing permanence – a knowledge hub and best practice centre	<p>The project will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve early care planning by disseminating research, case law, evidence base through training courses and advice service for professionals • Improve foster care, special guardianship and kinship care outcomes (by implementing the Safe Base model, Fostering Framework, parent and child fostering to keep families together) • improve outcomes from adoption (e.g. improve Life Story books, telling children difficult information) and from special guardianship (e.g. improving assessments and developing innovative support packages) 	£399,350	140,000	133,000	126,350.
The Fostering Network	Excellence in Foster Care Wales	<p>The project will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish a National Centre for foster care training and development, to promote excellence in foster care across Wales • train foster care ambassadors and mentors (including 6 young people) to support recruitment and retention • continue the Foster Line's helpline for prospective and existing foster carers, 	£860,000	£302,774	£286,498	£270,651

		kingship carers and special guardians, and develop resources and information packs for young people.				
Voices from Care	United Voices	The purpose of the project is to tackle the inequalities that Looked after children are faced with by providing a national hub that offers a seamless network that would aim to improve the outcomes. The project will offer an effective engagement and participation blueprint being led by our members, offering local regional and national platforms of representation and associated opportunities.	£840,000	£294,479	£279,755	£265,767

TABLE 2**Other grants for specific projects**

Organisati on	Project	Purpose	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Children in Wales	Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)	<p>Children in Wales are managing the IRM Cymru service on an interim basis until 31 March 2017, following the collapse of the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) in 2015.</p> <p>The Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) is set up to carry out reviews of 'qualifying determinations'. Adopters and foster carers who have received a 'qualifying determination' have a legal right to have the decision reviewed by an independent panel. The panel considers all the documents and information relating to the qualifying determination, and makes a recommendation to the adoption or fostering agency. A review of the current IRM service is currently being undertaken ahead of a new contract being put in place in April 2017.</p>	£43,000	£65,000	£65,000

		This is made up of fixed costs are £53,778 and unit costs of £1,413 per review up to five reviews. £65k has been set aside for 2016-17 and 2017-18 in indicative budgets.			
National Adoption Service (hosted by Cardiff Council)	Wales Adoption Register Grant	<p>The Wales Adoption Register was established in April 2014, and is currently managed by the National Adoption Service via a Welsh Government grant to Cardiff City Council (which hosts the central functions of the National Adoption Service). The register aims to maximise the number of successful matches of children and adopters and it is used by all Regional Adoption collaborations and Voluntary Adoption Agencies in Wales. In addition the register also provides the following services:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Family-Finding events across Wales. These are two adoption exchange days which draws together adoption agencies, prospective adopters and social workers and practitioners across Wales to meet and to facilitate potential matches of children/ sibling groups who are hard to place for adoption • Court searches – the register carries out searches on its database for potential children should adoption become their plan. 	£96,100	£102,500	£125,000 (indicative amount to be agreed)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wales adoption register / adopter enquires • Welsh adoption register reports and information. The register provides regular data and reports on children and adopters to the NAS and weekly updates of numbers of children and adopters on the register to the adoption regions and VAAs. 			
<p>National Adoption Service (hosted by Cardiff Council)</p>	<p>Development of Adoption Support Services</p>	<p>Funding was provided to the National Adoption Service in 2015-16 to help implement and develop adoption support projects which were identified as a result of their first annual report and from the recommendations stemming from the Children and young people and Education Committee's follow up inquiry into adoption services. The projects in 2015-16 included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing adoption support services, • rolling out training in response to child/adolescent to parent violence, • developing a professional recruitment campaign and engaging adopters and adopted children and young people in the work of the National Adoption Service. <p>During 2016-17 funding of £90,000 was provided to NAS to continue its work to further develop a strategic approach to adoption and</p>	<p>£135,000</p>	<p>£90,000</p>	<p>£110,000 (indicative amount based on bids previously submitted by NAS)</p>

		<p>adoption support services in Wales. Part of the funding will be used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and Implement a Framework for Adoption Support Services (a detailed mapping exercise of the needs, demand, costs and current service availability against the frameworks' three tiered approach to provide adoption support services will be undertaken during 2016-17); • Developing resources to support and implement adoption support materials • Developing research based practice in adoption services • Provide ongoing development of communication and engagement 			
ADSS Cymru / Vale of Glamorgan LA	National Fostering Framework	<p>Developing a national framework for fostering service is a key element in our programme for improving outcomes for looked after children. This work is being led by the Association of Directors of Children's Services, with support from other key fostering stakeholders. The Welsh Government has provided funding for project management.</p> <p>Phase 1, undertaken in 2015-16, involved an extensive consultation and engagement programme with foster carers, young people and</p>	£87,800	£90,000	£0.00

		<p>fostering agencies, to map out what a national fostering service might look like. Scoping work was also undertaken on a new national performance management framework for fostering services.</p> <p>Ministers have agreed further funding for Phase 2, to further develop and implement the framework during the next twelve months. The National Fostering Framework will aim to deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvements in permanency planning for looked after children • a flexible and affordable mix of high-quality foster placements • more shared planning and commissioning of fostering services, and greater regional collaboration • greater transparency about the performance of fostering services • shared good practice in recruitment and supporting foster carers. 			
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