

Evidence Paper to the Public Accounts Committee

Inquiry into Care Experienced Children and Young People

Purpose

This paper provides evidence to the Public Accounts Committee of the expenditure and value for money of public services for care experienced children and young people and the action being taken across Welsh Government to improve outcomes for looked after children.

Introduction

Welsh Government welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Public Accounts Committee's long term Inquiry into Care Experienced Children and Young People that will span the course of this fifth Assembly Term. At this stage, the Committee has indicated it wishes to focus on the expenditure and value for money of public services for care experienced children and young people. This paper provides written evidence to the following four areas identified by the Committee:

1. The overall cost to and value for money of the range public services aimed at improving outcomes for care experienced children and young people;
2. Whether the Welsh Government's desired outcomes for care experienced children and young people are being delivered by the current levels of public expenditure;
3. Whether the extent of spending specific to care experienced children and young people is sufficiently transparent across the range of public services;
4. Whether public bodies have placed sufficient emphasis on a long-term preventative spend approach, in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, to maximise the benefits of public expenditure for this group of children.

Additional information is also supplied to the Committee on the areas requested by the Committee on 14 February, concerning the Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group and the funding that has been allocated to local authorities to help improve outcomes for children in Wales.

Context

The Programme for Government, *Taking Wales Forward* commits to "examine ways of ensuring looked after children enjoy the same life chances as other children and if necessary reform the way they are looked after". This is reinforced by our national strategy *Prosperity for All*, with social care as one of the five priority areas, with actions to:

- raise the educational attainment and improve the life chances of children in care, adopting a child centred approach, through the collaboration of education, social services and others.
- strengthen edge of care services to provide families with timely support to reduce the numbers needing care provision and provide assistance in the key transitional phase post 16 to access further education, jobs and housing for all those leaving care.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets the framework within which public bodies in Wales must work together to improve the well-being of Wales, working in an integrated and collaborative way, engaging with people and communities to take account of the long-term and to help prevent problems occurring or getting worse. We know that outcomes for looked after children do not compare favourably with their peers. They are less likely to achieve good educational qualifications, have greater health and housing needs, are more likely to become involved in substance misuse and come into contact with the criminal justice system.

As of 31 March 2017, there were 5,954 looked after children in Wales, an increase of 5% from last year. The rate of looked after children is 95 per 10,000 in Wales, compared to 62 per 10,000 in England. The rates of looked after children vary across local authorities in Wales and whilst they generally correlate to levels of deprivation there are authorities with significant levels of deprivation that have relatively low looked after children rates.

There is recognition, across the UK, of the growing pressures that are being placed on the child welfare and family justice systems. Over the last decade we have seen a steady increase throughout the UK in the numbers of looked after children. Of the number of children who started to be looked after in 2016-17, 62% were taken into care due to abuse and neglect. This highlights the number of children that are being safeguarded from further abuse or neglect in Wales.

The Committee will be aware of the ongoing Care Crisis Review being undertaken across England and Wales by the Family Rights Group looking at the rise in applications for care orders and the number of children in care. Officials and partners across sectors in Wales are engaged with the review which is due to close in June 2018.

Welsh Government recognises that providing safe, appropriate care for children places a significant cost pressure on local authorities. In 2016/17, almost 16,000 children received support from children's services. Three quarters of looked after children are accommodated in foster care placements, at an estimated cost to local authorities of around £110m per year. Approximately 5% of looked after children are placed in residential care. The remaining children will have other arrangements such as placements with kinship carers or adoption.

The Committee will already be aware from evidence provided in previous sessions of the average cost of placements in Wales - £23,327 for a local authority foster placement, £43,378 for a placement from an Independent Foster Agency. The average cost of residential care in Wales is between £3,000 - £3,500 per week

although we know specialist placements do often cost more. A Secure Accommodation placement in Hillside costs approximately £800 per night.

1. The overall cost to and value for money of the range public services aimed at improving outcomes for care experienced children and young people

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 safely from care and providing support to enable families to stay together.

The vast majority of funding for social services provided by the Welsh Government is delivered through the un-hypothecated local government settlement in the form of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and re-distributed Non Domestic Rates (NDR). In addition to this, each authority has a range of funding sources available to it, including council tax, specific grants and income from fees and charges.

The un-hypothecated nature of the settlement means that it is up to authorities how they spend this funding for any purpose they choose in delivering the services which they are responsible, according to local priorities and pressures, and including for looked after children.

The core revenue funding provided to local authorities each year is distributed according to relative need, using a formula which takes account of a wealth of information on the demographic, physical, economic and social characteristics of authorities. This funding formula has been developed in consultation with local government through the Distribution Sub Group (DSG) and overseen by the Finance Sub Group (FSG) of the Partnership Council for Wales.

The settlement funding formula breaks the total amount of available funding plus assumed council tax income down into around 50 notional services areas called Indicator Based Assessments (IBAs). A formula is then applied to each IBA to model the relative need to spend across all authorities and across all services.

The settlement formula for 2018-19 will distribute £445 million on the children and young persons' social services formula. It is important to note that these IBAs are not spending targets.

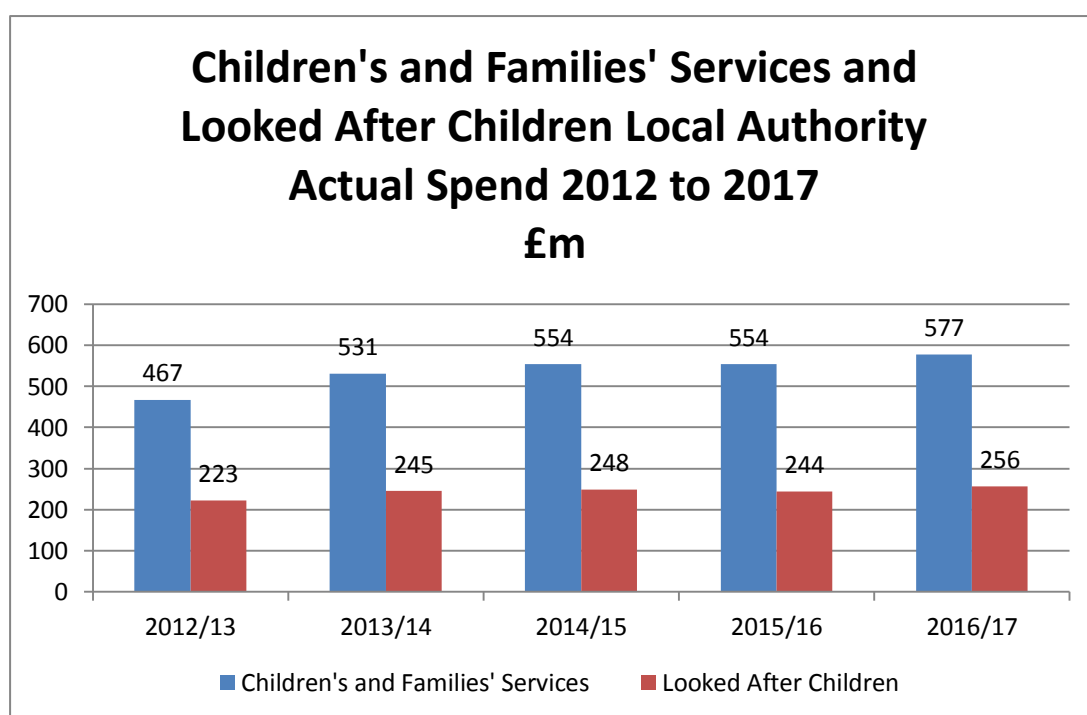
In addition to the main young persons' formula, over £7 million transferred into the 2018-19 settlement to deliver priorities around Looked After Children. This money was part of the UK budget consequential provided in 2017-18 by Welsh Government to local authorities.

Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs), provided for by the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, are required to promote the use of pooled budgets. Particularly, they are required to consider establishing pooled budgets when health boards and local authorities are jointly developing services in response to their population needs assessments to help deliver value for money and better

outcomes. Statutory guidance sets out that RPBs must prioritise the integration of services in relation to children with complex needs. Ministers have powers to direct partners to establish pooled funds.

Local Authority Children's Services

The chart below illustrates the national local authorities' spend¹ on children's and families' services and looked after children's services over the past five years.

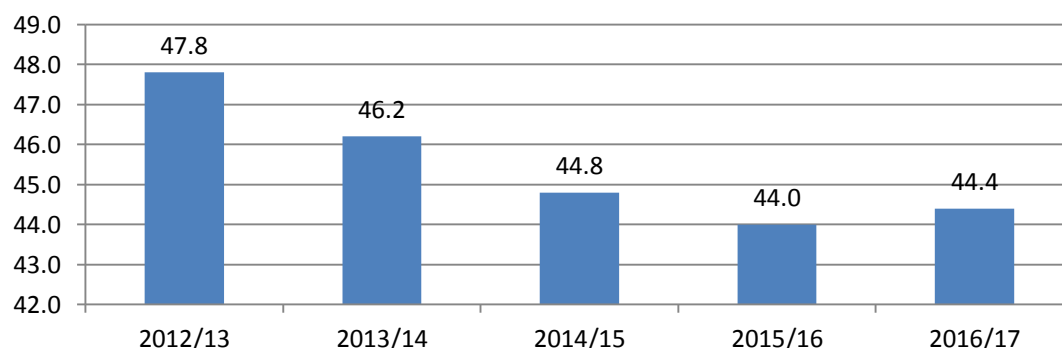


The increasing trajectory of actual spend is in line with the small rise in numbers of looked after children since 2015.

It is worth noting that on a national level, Children's and Families' Services actual spend has increased over the five year period by 24% and the looked after children actual spend over the same period has increased by 15%.

¹ Stats Wales (October 2017). Social services revenue expenditure by client group (£ thousand)
<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Local-Government/Finance/Revenue/Social-Services/social-services-socialservicesrevenueexpenditure-by-clientgroup>

All Wales % of Children's and Families' spend allocated to Looked After Children Services 2012-2017



Whilst the national picture shows spend allocated to looked after children has increased, the overall amount of the children and families' budget apportioned to looked after children by local authorities has slightly reduced.

Welsh Government Social Services Led Funding for Looked After Children

Improving Outcomes for Children Programme

The Improving Outcomes for Children programme was set up to 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 programme's budget for 2017-18 was £125k, and it has been proposed to increase the budget to £270k for 2018-19 (subject to approval), to incorporate other areas of work that fall within the MAG programme.

2017-18 - £8m investment for Looked After Children

Following the £20m UK budget consequential for social care, Welsh Government provided an additional £8m recurring funding to local authorities to support looked after children and care leavers. The delivery of improvements funded by this money has been incorporated into the Ministerial Advisory Group's work programme. This funding is being used to:

- £5m to expand local authorities' edge of care services.
- £850k to roll out the Reflect project across all 7 regions in Wales, to support mothers who have had children taken into the care system to prevent future incidences occurring.
- £400k to implement the National Fostering Framework across Wales.
- £125k to develop a national approach to adoption support
- For those leaving care, local authorities are using funds to:

- £625k to ensure their own traineeships and work placements have a focus on care leavers.
- £1m to extend the provision of personal advisers for care leavers from age 21 to 25.

During 2017-18, this money was distributed as a grant to local authorities and will transfer to the RSG from 2018-19 onwards. To note, funding provided to support national services will be routed through the WLGA for onward distribution to the local authority hosting the service, as follows:

- £400k for National Fostering Framework going to the Vale of Glamorgan Local Authority
- £125k for adoption support to Cardiff Local Authority
- £60k (of the £850K) for national Reflect responsibilities to Newport Local Authority

Local authorities have provided mid-year spend and will submit end of financial year returns. These will be compiled into an end of year report for Welsh Ministers and the MAG to consider. A summary of progress so far is provided below:

£5m Edge of Care Services

This additional funding has been provided to local authorities to establish or enhance existing edge of care services to support families to help prevent children becoming looked after. Intervention focuses on building capacity and resilience through coherent restorative actions enabling families to achieve behavioural change.

The funding was allocated in recognition of the varying types of edge of care services being delivered across Wales and the different starting points for each local authority. It is anticipated this investment has the potential to prevent around 300 children entering the care system annually.

Case Study

Newport has a well-established Edge of Care service which has been positively externally evaluated by IPC. The service is run as a partnership with Barnardo's. The service encompasses a range of provision including Preventions, Family Support Team (FST), Family Assessment Support Team (FASS) and the Contact Service.

The additional funding is all being used to increase capacity in the existing service ranging from extra posts in Preventions and FASS to additional physical space for the Contact Service.

Newport has during this period recommissioned its Edge of Care services and is currently working with Barnardo's to review and enhance the existing provision of evidence based interventions. This includes reviewing a number of elements of the existing interventions and consideration of changing the scope of some elements of the work. This will inform the longer term deployment of the additional funding from April 2018.

£850k – Reflect Project

The additional £850k has helped to support the roll-out of the Reflect project across all seven Welsh regions following the initial launch of the Reflect project in the Gwent region in March 2017, also supported by Welsh Government funding.

The Reflect project has been developed to engage and support women who have experienced the compulsory removal of a child to the care system to help prevent further incidences. The aims of the project firmly align with our prevention and early intervention agenda. We know recurrent care proceedings have such a significant human cost on the mothers themselves, their children and their families.

A 'Reflect' national learning event is being held in May 2018 to take stock of developments with Reflect across Wales over the last year. The event will help to share learning and drive forward consistency in practice across Wales as the service develops at pace.

Case Study

Woman A was referred to the Reflect Project in May 2017. She has had both of her children removed from her care in March and May 2016. This resulted with the eldest child being cared for by the child's paternal grandparents under an SGO and the youngest child being placed in foster care with the possibility of adoption.

Woman A is a 28 year old care leaver and has a history of being in relationships that are abusive. She has been diagnosed with border line personality disorder which impacts on her ability to maintain relationships, assess risk due to being impulsive and being unable to rationalise situations. She also suffers from anxiety and depression.

Reflect has been supporting her to improve her mental and emotional resilience, helping her to access sexual health services and providing practical support in respect of housing and finances.

£400k - National Fostering Framework

A full update on progress with the National Fostering Framework and its implementation is provided in the additional briefing.

£125k - Adoption Support

An additional £125k has been invested to deliver therapeutic adoption support. The National Adoption Service has developed a 'Framework for Adoption Support' which sets out how it seeks to improve adoption support and post adoption support services over a period of time.

The Framework has been developed through consultation and engagement with service users (primarily adopters and adopted children and young people) and is based on a model of universal, targeted and specialist services. There is an ongoing development plan to implement the framework alongside seeking new resources and the re-targeting of existing resources to implement the improvements required.

The Framework has delivered:

- The offer of 1 year membership of AUK for all new adopters
- New post adoption support assessments
- Improvements to the way life journey work is provided
- Work with health and education to ensure their services are 'adoption aware' including for CAMHS services.
- Promotion of models of good practice e.g. the psychology service that supports emotional well being assessments and services to children who are, or are to be, adopted

Work continues to be taken forward to develop a revised framework, toolkit and practice guidance for life journey work and guides (funded by WG Education) for teachers and adopted parents about supporting adopted children in school, supported by masterclasses.

Care Leavers

In her *Hidden Ambitions* report, the Children's Commissioner highlighted the additional support needs of care leavers and the continuing corporate parenting responsibilities of local authorities to their care leavers as they make the transition to adulthood and independence. Additional funding provided by Welsh Government has enabled national and local government to develop services and take forward the recommendations set out in the Children's Commissioners' Report.

£1m for Personal Advisers

Local Authorities have received additional funding to extend personal adviser support for care leavers aged 21-25. Local authorities have been using this funding to increase personal adviser workforce capacity so that an extended provision is offered to care leavers aged 21-25.

Welsh Government is also examining potential legislative options to make it a duty for Local Authorities to provide personal adviser support for care leavers until the age of 25.

Case Study

Neath Port Talbot (NPT) has begun the process of re-opening cases on an 'opt-in' basis and has written to all former Category 3 young people under the age of 25 years old.

To date NPT has had twenty enquiries and are using the model established by the Reconnect to Care process, completing a proportionate CYPS assessment to identify areas of need prior to allocation to a YPA for on-going support.

The support provision will be in line with care leaver support – signposting, advice, guidance. NPT will continue to promote independence including maximising support from third sector, access to benefits and funding streams and promoting employment, education and training opportunities. Discretionary financial support will be provided if there is an evidenced need.

NPT are keeping all young people open for personal adviser support until their 25th

birthday, unless they request to close. NPT has recruited an additional YPA to meet this need.

£625k for LA Apprenticeship/Traineeship schemes

Funding has been provided to local authorities to` expand on or enhance their traineeships and work placements specifically to young care leavers aged between 16 and 18 years. By doing this, local authorities are fulfilling part of their corporate parenting responsibilities by offering a 'family business' type approach to work experience for care leavers.

The Welsh Government is in the process of developing its own work placement scheme for care leavers which is intended to be in place this coming financial year.

Case Study

Flintshire local authority has developed a local authority scheme called Boost. The scheme is available to anyone 16 and over and receiving a leaving care service and is designed to boost career opportunities in areas such catering, care, construction or gardening. Participants will be offered a work experience opportunity of 1 day a week over a 12 week period, will learn interview skills and how to complete a CV and will be provided with a reference at the end of the programme. In addition, each care leaver will be allocated a mentor matched to each individual.

£1m St David's Day Fund

On the 1 March 2017 a £1 million St David's Day Fund was announced to support young people who are or have been in local authority care access opportunities that lead them towards independent and successful lives.

The Fund is for young people aged 16-25, who are or have been in local authority care, access opportunities that lead them towards independent and successful lives. The Fund is administered flexibly and creatively by local authorities, as corporate parents, to meet the needs of their young people in the same way that birth parents help their children. Examples of financial support include setting up home, equipment for education, training or employment, paying for transport, housing bonds, passports and activities which help to remove social isolation and so on.

Case Study

By utilising the St David's Day grant, Bridgend local authority has been able to provide incentive training payments equivalent to training allowances to care leavers accessing courses such as Vocational & Engagement programmes including Prince's Trust, Fairbridge project and YMCA Ready 2 Engage. To support training Bridgend has funded weekly bus passes and train tickets for care leavers who are in low income employment (minimum wage/Zero Hours contracts), education (not eligible via college bus pass criteria) and training.

One care leaver who is currently in receipt of £57.90 benefits a week had to pay £15 train fare each week in order to attend college. This took a considerably proportion of his benefits and he struggled to manage his money. By providing this young person with a monthly train pass he reports that he is now no longer experiencing as much financial hardship and is no longer considering stopping going to college. He now attends college every day and has also been enabled to travel freely to meet up with family and peers in evenings and on weekends which is subsequently reducing his feelings of social isolation and increasing his overall wellbeing.

The St David's Day Fund is within the scope of the Flexible Funding scheme for the 7 pilot local authorities from April 2018. If the pilot scheme is successful, it is anticipated the fund will be provided to all local authorities through this scheme.

Sustainable Social Services Third Sector Grant 2016-19

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.

Over the lifetime of the 3 year grant (2016-19), Welsh Government will have invested over £5m in grants schemes designed to support better outcomes for looked after and adopted children from the following organisations:

- Adoption UK
- Action for Children
- Children in Wales
- St David's Childrens Society
- The Fostering Network
- Voices from Care

Further information about the grants awarded to the third sector was provided to the Public Accounts Committee in the Welsh Government's scoping paper of November 2016.

Advocacy – Children and Young People

With our partners, Welsh Government has developed a National Approach to Statutory Advocacy for looked after children, children in need and other specified individuals. This means a consistency of entitlement and good practice in the commissioning, delivery and awareness of statutory advocacy provision in Wales. The implementation of the National Approach has been costed at around £1 million.

At the Children, Young People and Education Committee's Inquiry into Statutory Provision, the then Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children gave a commitment that Welsh Government would make a contribution of up to £550k to the Social Services Regional Collaboratives to deliver the active offer in full and support the approach. The rest of the funding will come from the local authorities' own funds. This funding will be provided via a grant to local authorities for a second year in

2018-19. The Welsh Government has committed to review its implementation at the end of 2018/19.

Implementation of the National Approach began last July. It was agreed that Welsh Government should establish a Task and Finish Group (T&FG) to drive forward implementation and monitor its effectiveness. The Group is chaired by Albert Heaney, Director Social Services & Integration, Welsh Government and held their first meeting on the 21 February.

In addition, Welsh Government provides funds of £550k to Pro-Mo Cymru to deliver the MEIC project to provide an advice and advocacy helpline for children and young people in Wales up to the age of 25 years.

Education

Pupil Development Grant – Looked after children

Our joint education and social services strategy '*Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales*', published in January 2016 aims to strengthen arrangements to support the education of children who are looked after and supported by PDG funding.

Since April 2015, the looked after children element of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) has been delegated to the four Regional Education Consortia to support a more strategic, regional approach to improving outcomes for looked after and adopted learners. Working with their local authorities and schools, the consortia has responsibility for how PDG for looked after children is invested.

Allocations to consortia are calculated on the basis of numbers of looked after children within their area which means they are in receipt of a sufficient quantum of resource to be able to commission services strategically, thereby achieving economies of scale and value for money.

In March 2017, the Cabinet Secretary for Education extended PDG eligibility to support more looked after learners (including 3 year olds). A total of 3,907 looked after learners were eligible for PDG in 2017-18.

In 2017-18 over £90m was invested into the PDG and there are plans to invest a further £187m over the next two years. The total funding available specifically for looked after children increased to £4,493,050 for 2017-18 (from £3,770,850 in 2016-17).

Regional coordinators work closely with the Welsh Government to ensure the PDG delivers an agreed, strategic programme of work based on local and regional priorities.

In terms of evidencing value for money and effectiveness, the Welsh Government has commissioned ICF Consulting Limited to evaluate the way in which PDG for looked after children has been implemented and managed by consortia in the financial years 2015-16 and 2016-17. This research will examine what different

arrangements are in place at consortia, local authority and school level. ICF Consulting has also been tasked with investigating how the funding has been spent across Wales and to consider how stakeholders determine what the most effective approaches are in meeting the aims and objectives of the grant.

A report of the research findings will be published in May 2018 and this will inform our future plans for the grant.

Other Expenditure for Looked After Children in Education

A further £250k within the Education MEG supports the development of policies which remove barriers to learning. The budget is retained by Welsh Government and is used to fund actions such as developing guidance, delivering events for practitioners with a responsibility for looked after children, and safeguarding. Activities have included sponsoring the Fostering well-being pilot project, commissioning Cardiff University to host the online community of practice, stakeholder consultations, promoting the guide for the designated person for looked after children in schools and developing training resources, developing good practice guidance to help support care experienced young people attending Further Education Institutions and facilitating the Looked After Children in Education National Strategic Group.

Housing

In October 2016, the Welsh Government published the Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway and the Care Leavers Accommodation Framework to help support vulnerable young people to find suitable and appropriate accommodation.

The Care Leavers Accommodation Framework is designed to help all organisations work together to help children leaving care to prepare them for independent living and also ensure they find a suitable home. The Pathway for the Prevention of Youth Homelessness sits alongside the Care Leavers Accommodation Framework and ensures every young person is supported to find and retain good housing.

Planning is the key to preventing homelessness and the framework documents explore a whole system approach from information to accommodation provision. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places duties on local authorities to provide information on how to access help with housing and take steps to help to end and prevent homelessness.

The Supporting People Programme helps vulnerable people to find and keep a home or accommodation and to live as independently as possible. It makes a significant contribution to preventing homelessness. Care leavers are over represented amongst the homelessness and benefit from a whole range of services provided through Supporting People such as developing self esteem and budgeting skills.

Young People who are Care Leavers

Year	Funding	Units	Outcomes
Spend Plan 2014/15	£940,097	88 Units	619
Spend Plan 2015/16	£758,668	85 Units	579
Spend Plan 2016/17	£682,049	90 Units	145 (First 6 months)
Spend Plan 2017/18	£606,669	82 Units	TBC

Health

The Welsh Government has invested significantly in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in recent years with almost £8m new funding per annum to recruit new specialist staff and develop new services such as neurodevelopment, crisis care and early intervention in psychosis. This means children and young people now have easier access, in a more timely fashion to an appropriate service to meet their emotional and mental health needs.

CAMHS in common with wider NHS provision, does not provide priority treatment to any specific group or cohort, such as children and young people in care. Rather, the central tenet of NHS provision is that it is provided on the basis of clinical need of the individual, with priority given to those with the greatest clinical need.

The latest figures for 2015-16 show expenditure on child and adolescent mental health services of £45.8m (up from £41.3m in the previous year) representing seven per cent of total mental health expenditure of £683m during the year.

CAMHS performance data shows an improving trend in those waiting to access CAMHS over the last 12-18 months, with more young people now being seen within our new 28-day target for specialist CAMHS services.

The Resilience and Early Intervention Work Stream of the Together for Children and Young People Programme was established in June 2017 to consider building universal resilience in children and young people and early intervention where this is required to young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health. Identifying available support for the most vulnerable children and young people including Looked After Children (LAC) and adopted children is a key priority of the workstream.

2. Whether the Welsh Government's desired outcomes for care experienced children and young people are being delivered by the current levels of public expenditure

The Welsh Government's desired outcomes for care experienced children and young people are set out in its Programme for Government, *Taking Wales Forward*, which commits to "examine ways of ensuring looked after children enjoy the same life chances as other children and if necessary reform the way they are looked after".

The national strategy, *Prosperity for All*, includes social care as one of the five priority areas, with actions to:

- raise the educational attainment and improve the life chances of children in care, adopting a child centred approach, through the collaboration of education, social services and others.
- strengthen edge of care services to provide families with timely support to reduce the numbers needing care provision and provide assistance in the key transitional phase post 16 to access further education, jobs and housing for all those leaving care.

These outcomes are embedded into the Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group's work programme. The MAG work programme is an evolving programme which is expected to last for the duration of this National Assembly term. It is dynamic both in terms of aspiration and its reach and is designed to be flexible so that as progress is made, new priorities can be taken on board.

Phase 1 was completed in 2015-16, and the former Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children agreed a Phase 2 programme to be undertaken in 2016 under the leadership of a Ministerial Advisory Group, chaired by David Melding AM. In November 2017, the Minister for Children and Social Care agreed the Group was to continue to provide advice to the Minister.

The Group's work is based around three key themes:

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

It is taking forward a broad and wide reaching work programme as part of Phase 2, split across three specific work streams:

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

Each work stream is chaired by a local authority Head of Children's Services and is vice-chaired by a representative from the third sector. A new Prevention and Early Intervention work stream is being established. The work programme consists of 27 work areas covering research, pilot projects, policy developments and improvements

to professional practice. This programme aims to contribute to reducing the incidences of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

The Group has recently established a Task and Finish Group with responsibility for develop a suite of sentinel indicators which can evidence the outcomes and impact of the MAG work programme. These indicators will align with the social services outcomes framework and the goals set out in The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

On behalf of the Minister, the Group has produced a *Framework for Action*, setting out a vision to ensure the life chances of looked after children are the same as for other children. The Framework, which describes how the Group's work will help realise the Government's ambition as set out in *Taking Wales Forward* by 2020 is due to be published in the near future. For example:

Our joint 3 year education and social services plan '*Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales*', published in January 2016 and aims to strengthen arrangements to support the education of children who are looked after. We are encouraged that at Key Stage 4 (summer 2016) 23% of looked after children in Wales achieved Level 2 inclusive, a 10% increase from 2013. The investment in the PDG continues referred to above, provides financial stability to regional education consortia so they can continue to focus educational support to looked after children, resulting in a far greater understanding of the barriers facing looked after learners and ways in which those barriers can be removed.

Investment in a social pedagogy pilot project, led by The Fostering Network in partnership with the Cwm Taf Social Services and Wellbeing Partnership Board. The project supports all those involved in the lives of fostered children and young people to understand and respond to developing education and life skills in a holistic way.

We know that 39% of care leavers (at age 19) are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) and local authorities are working closely with Careers Wales, youth services, schools, colleges, work based learning providers and other partners to ensure those most at risk of becoming NEET or who are already NEET are identified and provided with the support they need to help them become economically active. Specifically, we have provided £625k funding to local authorities to establish or enhance 'family business' schemes, offering training and job opportunities to care leavers in their many areas of employment.

The Diamond Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales recommended that those with experience of care should receive the maximum level of maintenance support to attend higher education. The

Welsh Government is legislating to enable those who have been in a care setting to receive the maximum level of maintenance grant from 2018/19.

Between 20 and 30% of all young homeless people have been in care. An allocation of £83,000 has been made to Llamau to take forward the End Youth Homelessness Cymru (EYHC) partnership. In December, the First Minister announced an investment of £10m to go towards a decade-long plan to end youth homelessness in Wales in support of the Welsh Government's mission to end the country's youth homelessness by 2027.

The Welsh Government is working with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and local authorities to consider granting dispensation from paying council tax for all care leavers between the ages of 18-25. At this time, we are aware of 6 local authorities who are considering exemptions for care leavers from 1st April 2018. We anticipate other local authorities will follow suit and will be happy to update the Committee as this work progresses.

3. Whether the extent of spending specific to care experienced children and young people is sufficiently transparent across the range of public services.

As set out at the beginning of this paper, the vast majority of funding and expenditure for care experienced children and young people is delivered by local authorities, much of which is allocated by Welsh Government via the Revenue Support Grant. The un-hypothecated nature of the settlement is designed to provide local authorities with the flexibility and governance over how these funds are spent according to their population needs.

As part of the Welsh Government's policy to provide greater transparency in the publication of the annual local government revenue settlement, Welsh Government publishes its Green Book as a statistical companion to the Local Government Finance Report. The Green Book provides information on each authority's share of the spending allocation at the level of each component service within the settlement.

Budget information and allocations to local authorities are publicly accessible on StatsWales. In addition, local authorities are required to report outturn expenditure data to Welsh Government on an annual basis, which includes a breakdown of spend for children and families.

Decisions taken by Welsh Ministers on Welsh Government programme budgets and grants are placed in the public domain via decision reports and written statements.

4. Whether public bodies have placed sufficient emphasis on a long-term preventative spend approach, in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, to maximise the benefits of public expenditure for this group of children.

Preventative approaches, which tackle problems before they develop, minimise costs in the long run and provide enhanced outcomes for individuals, taxpayers and society as a whole. The benefits from early intervention are shown to be most marked for disadvantaged children and families. There is a growing body of evidence which demonstrate the effectiveness, value and high return on investment in early years intervention programmes in tackling inequalities, giving children the best start in life and improving the development of children and their prospects in adulthood.

Cost benefits of Families First

Families First aims to improve services by offering support which caters for whole families, rather than individuals, and to promote greater multi-agency working to ensure families receive joined-up support when they need it. The intention is to provide early support for families with the aim of preventing problems escalating. These earlier interventions are designed to prevent families from needing expensive remedial care through statutory services in the future. The programme takes a strengths-based approach where families are supported to recognise what is working well in their situations to support empowerment and ownership of their growth and development.

Welsh Government has invested over £290million into the Families First programme since its development. Indicative financial analysis undertaken as part of a three year programme of evaluation suggested services provided through the Families First programme have the potential to offer large cost savings where families are helped to avoid poor long-term outcomes.

In December 2017, Wavehill Research was commissioned to lead a project to develop a cost savings tool which can be used to identify the savings which can be made through the Families First programme. This project is being funded collaboratively by all 22 Families First teams in Wales, with support from the Welsh Government, to ensure Families First continues to maximise the long term cost saving which can be achieved through the early intervention and prevention approach. As part of the project, Wavehill will consider whether the tool can be applied across other early intervention programmes such as Flying Start.

Cost Benefit – Flying Start

Flying Start contains 4 elements where there is international evidence around the contribution to positive outcomes for children. One of these elements is parenting and we know there is robust evidence of the benefits of evidence based parenting programmes. The costs of delivering parenting programmes, compared to remedial interventions, are very low. Even if only a small number of families benefited from the programme and the costs associated with these negative outcomes were avoided a cost saving would be made. The long-term benefits of any parenting programme would, therefore, only have to be small to make the very small investments in parenting programmes efficient.

Flying Start budget

Flying Start is a geographically targeted early years programme which aims to make a decisive difference to the life chances of children aged 0 to 4, in the areas which it runs. The four elements include; free quality childcare, parenting support, intensive health visitor support, and support for speech, language and communication. The programme remains central to the Welsh Government's approach to the early years and is a key priority in Taking Wales Forward.

The Flying Start Programme is targeted using income benefit data provided by the Department of Work and Pensions and HM Revenue and Customs. The data provides Local Authorities with information on geographical areas called Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), which show the highest proportions of children less than four years of age living in income benefit households. The programme is universally available to all children aged under 4 and their families in the areas in which it runs. During 2013-14 and 2014-15 there was an expansion of the programme into additional LSOAs.

The Welsh Government has invested more than £628 million since its inception. We have met our target of providing Flying Start services to 36,000 children for the third year running and in 2016/17, 37,628 children benefited from the programme.

Families First and Flying Start use the 'Incredible Years' model. Incredible Years has undergone several cost-benefit analyses, all demonstrating considerable financial savings when the programme is implemented effectively. The Social Research Unit at Dartington estimates a 'rate of return on investment' of 6% and a benefit-cost ratio (pounds saved for each pound invested) of £1.37.

Both these programmes are included as part of the Flexible Funding scheme in 2018-19 which is being trialled by 7 local authority pathfinders.

Early Years

As a Government we recognise the fundamental importance of investment in the early years which is so crucially important for children's long-term health and development and their achievements in later life.

To achieve our ambition for every child to get the best start in life, we need to ensure that all programmes and services for the early years come together seamlessly to get the best value for parents and children, from the limited resources available.

Officials have begun discussions with colleagues across Welsh Government from Health, Social Services and Education, to scope how to take this forward with the goal of achieving a more coherent and focussed approach to the early years.

A key component of this programme will be an intensive co-construction project with two Public Service Boards, one in the Valleys and one in North Wales, to explore how early years services might be re-configured based on closer working between local health boards, local authorities and Welsh Government.

The overall aim will be to design services which will support a preventative, long-term approach in keeping with the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which potentially could offer a model to be utilised more widely across Wales.

Additional Briefing Requested by the Public Accounts Committee

The Public Accounts Committee has asked for additional briefing to be included as part of this Evidence Paper in readiness for the evidence session on 18th March.

Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group

1. An update on progress made in delivering the seven desired outcomes identified in the Phase 1 report of this group on the National Framework Fostering Services and what the Welsh Government funding of £400k to deliver a Fostering Framework for Wales is being spent on?

A three year programme to implement the NFF began in 2017-18, following the scoping work undertaken during Phase 1 (2015-16) and the development work in Phase 2 (2016-17). A progress report on Phase 2 was published in April 2017², and a report on the first year of implementation (Phase 3) will be published in April 2018.

The NFF implementation programme is being led by local government in partnership with other agencies including third sector partners. The Welsh Government provided project management funding to support Phases 1 and 2 (£45k in 2015-16 and £90k in 2016-17), and has provided £400k to support the first full year of implementation. The Welsh Local Government Association has secured agreement from its members to ring-fence the £400k in 2018-19, when the funding goes into the Revenue Support Grant.

Alongside the NFF, the Welsh Government continues to implement the programme of legislative change introduced by the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Services (Wales) Act 2016. Consultation on a new set of fostering regulations will take place in the summer 2018, to come into force in April 2019. This will be supported by a code of practice for local authorities, and guidance for independent fostering agencies (IFAs) on the provision of fostering services. Together with implementation of the NFF, this will establish a new legislative and policy framework to improve outcomes for children and young people in foster care and their foster carers.

Outcomes from Phase 1

The NFF scoping work identified seven priority areas to support better outcomes. Progress against each is summarised below. Full details will be published in the Phase 3 progress report in April.

1. National performance and resource framework

² The Phase 2 report is published on the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru website: <http://www.adsscymru.org.uk/media-resources-list/national-fostering-framework-report-phase-2-2016-2017/>

Scoping work had found that sources of information on performance was fragmented and sometimes difficult to access, and that there was inconsistency in what and how information is collected. The national performance framework was developed so that local authorities across Wales collect a consistent set of data. It was piloted in nine local authority areas during 2016-17 before being rolled out to all authorities. An All-Wales report was produced in November 2017, and has been used to create regional profiles and develop regional work programmes.

2. National policy framework for fostering services

The Welsh Government continues to provide strategic policy direction through its membership of the NFF Strategic Steering Group, and the development of new regulations and guidance on fostering services. Our specific policy objectives for foster care are: a more integrated approach to the provision of fostering services; greater investment in the recruitment, training and retention of foster carers, especially by local authorities; more effective commissioning of foster placements; and greater consistency across Wales in outcomes for fostered children and young people, and in support for foster carers. The NFF, co-produced with local government and other key partners, establishes a collaborate framework to achieve these objectives at national, regional and local levels, with different functions being delivered at the appropriate level. The delivery model is set out in the Phase 2 report (pages 22-24).

3. Kinship foster care

Our aim is to ensure that all children living with a kinship foster carer will receive care of a consistent nature, and to provide a more consistent approach to the assessment, support and training of kinship foster carers across Wales. This element of the NFF programme has been led by the Association for Fostering and Adoption (AFA) Cymru, and has involved extensive scoping and consultation with practitioners and kinship care to establish good practice models. A best practice guide and implementation plan will be published in the summer 2018, and will be incorporated into the regional work programmes.

4. Commissioning of placements

Following a national commissioning workshop in October 2016, the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (the 4Cs) has developed a common template and guidance to assist local authorities to develop their placement commissioning strategies. This will help them to fulfil their duty, under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, to take steps (as far as is practicable) to ensure that they are able to provide looked after children with accommodation within the local area that meets the children's needs. The guidance was launched at a national commissioning conference in January 2018. The local strategies will be used as a basis for developing regional approaches to commissioning foster care and residential placements.

5. National training framework

The Fostering Network and AFA Cymru have developed a national training framework during 2017-18, which will be launched in the summer and incorporated into the regional work programmes.

6. National Marketing strategy

Development of an all-Wales brand for fostering, supported by marketing activity at national and regional level, is still at an early stage. Following a workshop in October 2017 a number of approaches have been made to potential providers to map out what would be required. Taking this forward will be a key priority for the NFF in 2018-19.

7. Payment structure for foster carers fees and allowances

Mapping of local authority fees and allowances for mainstream foster carers was undertaken during 2016-17, and a follow up report with recommendations will be published in April. During 2017-18, a similar mapping exercise has been carried out for kinship care fees and allowances. Further work to develop an all-Wales approach will be undertaken during 2018-19, in consultation with all relevant partners. This will include consideration of different models and approaches, and the need to develop further policies and guidance for local authorities. The aim is to harmonise fees and allowances, to ensure that foster carers across Wales are treated fairly when it comes to financial and other support.

Allocation of Welsh Government £400k grant

The Welsh Government grant of £400k was allocated to the Vale of Glamorgan local authority to manage on behalf of the NFF Strategic Steering Group, which set up a Grant Monitoring Group to monitor expenditure and progress.

The funding was allocated to the following specific pieces of work to support delivery of the priority work areas outlined above:

- Create capacity for an extended National Adoption Service central team to provide co-ordination and leadership for the NFF.
- Establish regional work programmes.
- Implement the national performance framework across all local authorities.
- Create an all-Wales brand for local authority fostering and a marketing strategy at national and regional levels.
- Develop a national approach to commissioning fostering services, including a needs analysis and placement commissioning strategy in each region.
- Develop a best practice guide for kinship care and an implementation plan.
- Continue work on harmonising fees and allowances for foster carers.
- Develop a national training framework for foster carers.
- Maintain programme and programme manager capacity.

The largest expenditure and priority action for 2017-18 was to establish the regional work programmes. £40k was allocated to each region for this. The national performance framework is being used to determine regional priorities, and the

regional work programmes will form part of the overall business plan for the Regional Partnership Boards.

Exact expenditure on each of the above elements of the work programme will be available in April.

2. Progress made to date in terms of the Work Plan for Phase 2 including any work strands that sit beneath the three main headings and the timescales for each piece of work.

There are 3 work streams that currently make up the Ministerial Advisory Group consisting of 27 work strands. Progress is summarised below:

Workstream 1 – Professional Practice

Work Strand	Progress	Timescale
1. Develop National Practice Standards for IROs setting out the role, function, status and remit of the IRO and responsibilities of key practitioners in the review process.	Contract awarded to AfA Cymru to prepare IRO Practice Standards. 1 st draft due in March and to be shared with targeted group of stakeholders for comment ahead of finalising and publication.	June 2018
2. Develop National Practice Standards for IVs to enable relevant children to have a single, consistent adult relationship to rely upon.	Contract awarded to NYAS to develop IC Practice Standards. Steering Group currently engaging with stakeholders on requirements.	Sept 2018
3. Develop research on the number of children diverted from care and families supported to stay together.	Research tender to be developed.	Dec 2019
4. Undertake research on placement outcomes for children looked after following Section 31 order.	IPC awarded contract to undertake research. Final draft being prepared and publication due in March and research seminar to be arranged.	March 2018
5. Improve the educational attainment of looked after children.	37 actions identified in 3 year strategy, <i>'Raising the Ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after'</i> . Year 1 report published in May 2017 identified 16 have been delivered, 9 partially. Year 2 report due in July 2018.	April 2019
6. Support Implementation of the National Approach to Statutory Advocacy for Children and Young People.	Task & Finish Group established to drive implementation of the national approach and focus on the active offer of advocacy support.	Sept 2018
7. Deliver pilot of the Bright Spots Survey to measure looked after children's subjective well-being and help influence improvements in the way local services are delivered.	£40k funding provided to deliver pilot survey across 6 LAs in Wales. Survey findings and outcomes to be considered ahead of potential roll-out across all 22 LAs.	April 2018

8. Establish a clear approach to workforce priorities to support staff engaged with children to have sufficient experience, skills and knowledge, taking into account increased requirements for direct work.	Social Care Wales has established a Steering Group to oversee the Review of Degree in Social work, including the Continuous Professional Education and Learning framework for social workers and post qualifying education.	
9. Continue to support and embed outcomes focussed practice with individuals working with children.	Social Care Wales delivering training and awareness sessions across Wales . Offer for champions and mentors to be made to LAs in consultation with Heads of Service.	

Workstream 2 – Assessment of Risk and Edge of Care Services

Work Strand	Progress	Timescale
10. Following the £5m investment in edge of care, undertake an assessment of edge of care services across all 22 LAs, including the effectiveness of IFSS.	£5m budget allocated to LAs. WG to compile end of FY report to assess how money is being used.	Ongoing
11. Consider the development of a 'Pause Pilot' in Wales to support mothers who have had repeated children taken into the care system and prevent further incidences.	Reflect projects established in 7 regions in Wales. Regional leads meeting in March and National Conference in April.	Ongoing
12. Implement measures to reduce the number of looked after children entering the youth justice system.	Wales Action Plan published in July 2017. Task & Finish Group established to monitor its delivery.	August 2018
13. Undertake research to identify the number of children who have parents with a learning disability and who no longer live at home and the reasons behind their change of status.	Research tender developed. Awaiting comments from KAS and All Wales Heads of Adults Services before issuing for tender in the new financial year.	April 2019
14. Explore the approaches and tools used by local authorities for assessing and identifying risk, to help ensure a consistent approach across children's services.	Social Care Wales have developed a scoping paper for MAG discussion on how this can be taken forward.	Dec 2019
15. Examine whether Regional Safeguarding Boards have in place effective mechanisms for proportionate, multi-agency,	As with the objective above, to link and merge.	Dec 2019

intelligence-led risk and /need screening, assessments and planning).		
16. Consider the evidence produced as part of the Population Assessments undertaken within each region of Wales under the Social Services and Well-being Act.	Social Care Wales published National report and summary of regional population assessments.	June 2018
17. Review the formal quality assurance frameworks in place within local authorities for bringing key information together in one place, to provide an overview of activity across children's social services.	Sentinel Indicators Task & Finish Group established to develop core indicators to help monitor MAG progress.	June 2018

Workstream 3 – Permanency Planning and Building Stable Placements

Work Strand	Progress	Timescale
18. Implement the National Fostering Framework.	Implementation continuing at pace (see Q.1 above). National Conference and Annual Report in March 2019	Ongoing
19. Revise and extend Corporate Parenting guidance so that senior officers in housing, education, criminal justice, health and other public services are aware of their corporate responsibilities for looked after children.	Corporate Parenting event held on 8 February. Voices from Care working on refresh of guidance in 2018/19 FY.	May 2019
20. Review Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) and develop new regulations and a code of practice for consultation early in 2017.	WG considering responses from consultation and any further changes needed to Regs and Code which are due to come into force June 2018.	June 2018
21. Develop a co-ordinated approach to improving outcomes for children and young people in residential care.	Task & Finish Group established and supported by £100k to deliver its work programme. 4 projects being undertaken: profile of children in residential care, mapping models of provision, When I'm Ready for residential care, and good practice on out of area placements.	Dec 2019
22. Consider delivering a pilot in Wales that will test and evaluate social pedagogy principles (focused on education and the	The Fostering Network are delivering pilot in partnership with Cwm Taf region. First set of masterclasses completed and recruitment of foster carer champions underway.	April 2019

upbringing of children) in a foster care environment.		
<p>23. Develop an active offer for care leavers to help support them make a successful transition to independent living, covering areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased supported accommodation options which promote choice for care leavers - Financial and skills awareness training for care leavers - Support into apprenticeships and traineeships 	<p>£1m St David's Day Fund to support care leavers allocated across all LAs. End of FY to compile end of year report.</p> <p>£625k allocated to LAs to develop 'apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities within each LA for care leavers.</p> <p>Engaging with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ending Youth Homelessness Campaign - Financial inclusion teams re skills training - Local government re exemption of council tax 	Ongoing
24. Develop a national model of adoption support to ensure better support for children within their adoptive families and a more consistent service across Wales	£125k provided to develop a national model of adoption support. Implementation of framework of adoption support begun including the delivery of life journey work for adopted children.	April 2019
25. Ensure that Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children resettled in Wales are properly supported and integrated into communities in Wales.	Continued engagement with Home Office, devolved administrations and the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership re Dubs transfers and the National Transfer Scheme.	Ongoing
26. Examine the placement/commissioning strategies in place within local authorities to establish how effective they are in securing an appropriate range of placements which are good quality and value and respond to children's needs	The Public Accounts Committee inquiry is examining placement and commissioning strategies and the MAG will wish to consider the Committee's findings and recommendations.	April 2020
27. Ensure all looked after and care experienced children are provided with the right level of support to reduce the impact of ACEs and promote emotional health and well-being.	Improving Outcomes for Children team engaging with Mental Health colleagues to ensure alignment with the Together for Children and Young People project to ensure emotional health needs for LAC are better supported.	Dec 2019.

3. What work is being undertaken by the group or by the Welsh Government to improve the range of data specifically on the outcomes for this group of children (rather than Social services performance data), within the context of the National Outcomes Framework having one indicator in respect of care experienced children.

Well-being, for those who receive care and support and carers, is measured nationally by the social services national outcomes framework. The framework sets out fifty-two national outcome indicators defined under eight aspects of well-being that relate to all areas of an individual's life. As the framework stands, there is currently one indicator that relates to looked after children:

- The average external points score for 16 year old looked after children.

This indicator monitors the educational attainment of looked after children at 16 years of age. The indicator is wider than attainment at key stage 4 as it includes all external qualifications.

There are seven indicators relating to children in need of care and support (includes children on the child protection register, looked after):

- Key Stage 4 Results for CiN
- Key Stage 2 Results for CiN
- School attendance rates of CiN
- Percentage of CiN achieving expected level of learning or above at foundation phase
- Percentage of CiN with mental health problems
- Percentage of CiN with up-to-date immunisations
- Percentage of CiN with up-to-date dental checks

During 2018 we will continue to review this performance framework to ensure it truly captures the outcomes of those who receive care and support and carers who receive support, which includes care experienced children. The review will also include considering how this framework can align with Health and Public Health outcomes frameworks and within the strategic context of Prosperity for All and the Parliamentary Review.

To ensure that the data we collect remains comprehensive, fit for purpose and robust Welsh Government is working in partnership with local authorities and key partners to develop more robust approaches to social care data for 2019/20.

Following the commencement of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act in April 2016 data relating to care experienced children and young people changed. Current collections now include 'Looked After Children census' and 'Children Receiving Care and Support census'. The first year of data was published between October 2017 and February 2018 on the Welsh Government website.

In addition, the Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group has established a Sentinel Indicators Task and Finish Group, chaired by David Melding AM, to help develop a set of core sentinel indicators that will help the Group measure progress and outcomes against its work 2017-2020 programme. Any indicators developed will need to align with existing legislation including the social services

outcomes framework, performance measures and the national indicators set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

The group met for the first time on the 12th February to consider set of indicators (no more than 10 to 15) based around the MAG's 3 core themes - preventing children entering care, improving outcomes for children in care and supporting care leavers to adulthood and independence.

The group identified a number of areas for further development covering areas including educational attainment, availability and stability of placements, housing options for care leavers, corporate parenting and workforce stability. These include data from existing statistics and targets already in place but also some areas where new recording requirements will be required. Once agreed, the group will consult with a targeted set of stakeholders and put to the MAG for agreement and it is proposed the MAG will report against the indicators on an annual basis.

Funding

4. The rationale behind the Welsh Government's proposal to move the £8 million allocations for various work-streams relating to looked after children and preventing children going into care, into the Revenue Support Grant from April 2018 given that funding was provided to help drive a 3 year change programme which commenced in 2017.

Following the UK budget in March 2017, an additional £8m recurrent funding was allocated to support looked after children and care leavers. This funding was issued as a direct grant to local authorities in 2017-18 and local authorities were informed at the time that this allocation will move into the Revenue Support Grant in the Local Government MEG from 2018-19.

Adopting a grant management approach in the first year of allocation has allowed Welsh Government the opportunity to set clear expectations for the use of these funds in a consistent manner across Wales. Local authorities have been required to report on mid year spend and will be required to provide a further progress report at the end of the financial year. An end of year report for each grant will be compiled for the Minister's and Ministerial Advisory Group's consideration.

Over £800 million of revenue funding and £215 million of capital funding is provided to Local Government in Wales as specific grants from the Welsh Government. There is recognition however that the multiplicity of grants provided by Welsh Government can be a barrier to effective and joined up citizen centred services.

Grants do present an administrative burden to the Welsh Government and Local Government. The WAO has estimated that between 5% and 10% of the value of a grant can be absorbed in administration costs. Local Government has consistently lobbied for revenue grants to be transferred into the unhypothecated settlement on the basis that this would give authorities greater flexibility to manage financial pressures. There has been a clear mandate from Welsh Ministers to move funding into the RSG, particularly for smaller amounts of funding.

A number of initiatives have been undertaken within the Welsh Government with regard to the provision of specific grants, with a view to ensuring the funding is focused on current priorities and managed as efficiently as possible.

There have been a number of exercises to review the grants across portfolios and £285 million has been transferred into the settlement since 2011-12.

5. The rationale behind the Welsh Government's plans to move the recently created £1m St David's Day Fund for care leavers into the RSG.

As with the £8m consequential funding referred to above, the same rationale for moving the St David's Day Fund into the RSG applies. The Committee will wish to be aware that the St David's Day was established as a 2 year grant scheme and will move into the RSG from April 2019.

Due to the novel nature of the grant scheme in providing direct funding to care leavers to help them undertake activities that will help them achieve their ambitions, establishing the scheme as a 2 year grant will help to firmly embed the Fund within local authorities. Due to the size of the fund when split across all 22 local authorities, this will also help local authorities to manage funding flexibly across a 2 year period to best meet the needs of their care leaver populations.

The Committee will also wish to be aware that the St David's Day Fund has been included as part of the Flexible Funding scheme in 2018-19 which is being trialled by 7 local authority pathfinders.