

MINISTERIAL ADVISORY GROUP ON IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

AREA FOR ACTION 1: SAFELY REDUCING THE NUMBERS OF CHILDREN IN NEED OF CARE

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE WORKSTREAM

Introduction

In recognition of ongoing pressures in children's services and in the family courts, the Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) in June established a new workstream to focus on helping to reduce the numbers of children in need of care across Wales, especially through the provision of effective family support services.

The tasks associated with this workstream are set out in the MAG's overall Phase 3 work programme; Appendix 1 contains a brief overview. As in all the work undertaken by the MAG, the workstream seeks to incorporate in its activities the framework for public bodies to implement Children's Rights in Wales, published by the Children's Commissioner.

As a first step, workstream members sought to generate a more informed understanding of current best practice in the work being done to develop effective family support services. They wanted to see what factors were helping to achieve positive outcomes for children and families and what is needed to bring about further improvement. This involved a range of activities, which included analysing local authority returns to Welsh Government about the use made of £5 million invested in edge of care services during 2017/18.

The workstream also established a task force to carry out an 'appreciative inquiry' across a range of local authorities. Members of the task force visited six local authorities; during half-day sessions, relevant staff were invited to share problems, insights and solutions. Some of the key questions considered in these events can be seen in Appendix 2. The task force then produced an account of the exercise, *Report of an Appreciative Inquiry: Family Support Services in Six Local Authorities*. This report describes their understanding of the context for change and their findings in respect of:

- The Range of Family Support Services;
- Approaches to Workforce and Practice Issues;

- Whole System Models and Partnership Working; and
- Strategic Leadership.

For each area, they sought to identify: what is working well, what factors are enabling these service developments to work well, and what are the major challenges and how might they be tackled. The task force also set out some ideas about the sort of help required if local authorities and key partners are to deliver (across the whole continuum of family support services) the strategic and operational changes that will make a real and sustainable difference. As required by the MAG work programme, the taskforce reported its findings to members of the workstream which used them to produce the recommendations set out below, for consideration by the Ministerial Advisory Group.

We are acutely aware that finding effective solutions to the challenges identified in the course of this work has become even more imperative.

- The provisional figures for the overall number of looked after children on 31 March 2018 show a further significant increase. There were 6,407 looked after children in Wales, an increase of 8% (464 children) from last year. The number of new entrants into care (2,162) has reduced compared to last year (2,218) but the number of children/young people leaving care has reduced too, by 10% (1,724 children compared to 1,911 last year). This continues a trend seen in each of the last four years. Family support services within local authority areas need to respond by focusing even more on helping to achieve family reunification and to reinforce other exit points from care into permanence, such as adoption and special guardianship orders.
- Furthermore, some local authorities are reporting considerable difficulties in dealing with predicted budget overspends in children's services for the current financial year, partly because of increasing placement numbers or costs.
- More positively, Welsh Government has announced that it is investing another £15 million next year (via Regional Partnership Boards), to expand preventative and early intervention services so that children and families are supported to stay together. This represents a real opportunity for further change. It is important that we quickly provide Regional Partnership Boards and other stakeholders with authoritative advice about overall direction, best practice, and value for money issues in this complex area of work. All those tasked with implementing the recommendations should have regard to statutory requirements for upholding the rights of children, especially those set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

This report highlights efforts being made to ensure that services (both preventative and specialist) consistently deliver outcomes-focused and strengths-based relationship working with children and families. It also identifies some of the workforce and professional practice issues that can get in the way. Members of Workstream 1 concluded that the Workstream overseeing Area for Action 4 in the overall programme of the Ministerial Advisory Group (*Developing a Sustainable Workforce and Good*

Professional Practice) is better placed to make recommendations about how to deal with these challenges. There are implications also for the Workstream overseeing Area for Action 3 (*Supporting Children who are Looked After to have the best possible journeys through care and into adulthood*). Family support services in the community can play a vital role in assisting family reunification, exit from care or supporting children in care get access to the help they need.

Please note that the recommendations in this report can be divided into three sections in terms of their particular relevance for local authorities and their partners, regional bodies and national organisations. However, the workstream members recognise that delivering change on the scale required to meet current challenges will need strong elements of co-production and collaborative working within and across all tiers.

Many of the factors that drive the need for family support services can be tackled only by large-scale programmes within public services and beyond. There is widespread recognition that Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), such as physical and verbal abuse or being in a household where there is domestic violence, substance misuse, parental separation or mental illness can have a negative impact on a child's development. As the report of the Appreciative Inquiry states, the impact of such experiences can live on long after they take place, often with very serious consequences and with clear implications for child protection services. Reducing the number of harmful experiences suffered by children in Wales is a key driver to creating healthier and happier future generations. Understanding how children and young people develop resilience and providing support that helps to build it are key factors in helping to reduce the impact of exposure to ACEs.

While ACEs may not be directly attributable to poverty, the additional stresses created by living in poverty can create an environment in which ACEs occur more often. Research consistently shows a strong relationship between rates of child protection and children in care in Wales and deprivation in local areas. Often the work of children's social services is concentrated in Wales' poorest communities. Poverty reduction and dealing with social care inequalities need to be at the heart of social care support to families and of the agenda for reducing ACEs. Early intervention and prevention programmes, such as Families First and Flying Start, play a key part of our response to the challenge of tackling ACEs and building stronger and more resilient families and communities.

We know that good prevention and early intervention can help us to identify problems sooner and stop them getting worse. Investment in supporting vulnerable families on the edge of care, where it is safe and appropriate to do so, can help not only reduce the numbers of children in care but also free up resources within local authorities to focus on preventative action (and also improved support for children who are in care). In these circumstances, it is especially worrying that local authorities and their partners were reporting a threat to services that provide 'open access' facilities which support children, young people and their families in their own neighbourhoods and communities and tackle at an early stage the consequences of living with social disadvantage.

Recommendations

- 1. Each local authority should have a coherent strategy or change programme setting out how it intends to reduce safely the numbers of children in need of care by supporting families who need additional help.**

The strategy should consider how best to provide and organise a wide range of family support services within a framework that enables people to understand what help is available and how the whole system is meant to work. The strategy is likely to incorporate the overall service model (or similar) set out in Appendix 3. This provides a helpful way to conceptualise and direct whole system change, recognising the need for effective contributions from universal services and those meeting the needs of more vulnerable groups. It may need some modification to ensure that strategies focus also on helping children to exit care, where this is in their best interests.

- 2. The strategy should specify how the authority and its partners intend to commission and provide the services required to meet assessed need, with a clear mandate for engaging effectively with the third sector because of its crucial role in designing and delivering family support.**

The strategy will need to address concerns about how agencies can collectively and individually manage the volume of need that has been identified. It will guide the provision of services that are responsive, relevant, flexible, targeted and work to family strengths. There should be considerable emphasis on relationship working, practical support and dealing with urgent family crises through immediate and intensive help.

It is anticipated that services will be designed collaboratively, with strong elements of co-production. This means promoting Children's Rights and family participation, ensuring that the voice of the child and families is not only heard but acted upon to improve services. The role of advocacy services for children and for parents is crucial in service design/review and also in some areas of individual case management. The aim is to ensure that all relevant practitioners can help to achieve the meaningful relationships with children and families which encourage collaboration. It would be helpful if local authorities would consider adopting *Mutual Expectations - A charter for parents and local authority children's services*, developed by Your Family/Your Voice. Local partnerships should describe how the strategy will take into account the framework for public bodies to implement Children's Rights in Wales, described earlier in this report. They need also to encourage an intergenerational approach that acknowledges the family support role of services which work primarily with adults.

Good practice research indicates that the strategy will need to include the following key elements of support and assistance.

- Rapid response/edge of care services which make urgent and intensive help available to children on the edge of care (including a specific role for the Integrated Family Support Service or Team).

- Reunification provision to help children return home from care or to change their legal status.
- Services to help families experiencing domestic abuse or violence/mental health/substance misuse problems.
- Family group conferences or similar schemes, operating across the whole continuum of care and support but especially in circumstances where a decision is being made about a child moving into the care system (except as an emergency).
- Advocacy and mentoring for some parents, especially those who have children in care.
- An up-to-date policy in respect of circumstances where family and friends undertake to care for children, with clear commitments from all relevant part of the local authority and form partner organisations.
- A Reflect service that helps parents with issues which have led to children being removed from their care.
- Targeted therapeutic support (see Recommendation 9).
- Services to assist families which help children leave care and remain with their new carers, including post adoption support and help for families with special guardianship orders.
- A service to help families prepare for birth and infancy where there are concerns about parenting capacity.
- Information, advice and assistance/Family Information services.
- Early help and other preventative services grounded in community development and poverty reduction, such as neighbourhood family centres.
- Flying Start (including outreach).
- Families First services which contribute to Priority 2 (reducing the numbers of children in need of care) and Priority 3 (targeting the most vulnerable children not on a care and support plan).
- Interventions that act to increase family resources in areas such as finance, accommodation or managing the impact of disabilities.

3. Implementation plans should address how families can access these services (especially via integrated single points of contact or hubs) and describe the ‘care pathways’ that exist to help them negotiate what can be a very complicated set of processes and services.

The strategy needs to be communicated well to all stakeholders, including children and families. Service users and families often find it difficult to obtain a clear enough picture about who does what and why, especially in differentiating between a number of relatively small-scale projects and programmes. Co-ordination may be problematic and time-consuming for all. Families and children can experience a wide variety of care pathways taking them into, through and beyond the range of services on offer. Staff sometimes struggle to make systems for referral and information-sharing operate efficiently and effectively enough. There is a real risk of duplication and scarce resources not being used to best effect. Those responsible for the strategy should consider further how electronic case management/information systems such as the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) can assist good planning and liaison. Relevant agencies should contribute appropriately to the effective working of hubs or single points of

contact, especially in ensuring that practice within them is informed by research regarding the effects of trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

4. The strategy should be aligned closely to other corporate plans within the local authority for related areas such as finance, workforce, partnership working, corporate parenting and safeguarding.

Each local authority will want also to consider whether its operational and strategic structures ensure that it can deliver effective cross-authority links between different directorates, especially where there is divided responsibility for 'statutory' children's social services and for targeted prevention (including services such as Families First and Flying Start). Co-location of staff is likely to be a key component. Staff should feel that the strategy is owned and embedded across the local authority. Effective coordination of council-wide statutory responsibilities in areas such as safeguarding and corporate parenting are becoming more embedded in executive, scrutiny and senior management arrangements within local authorities. These areas of work must be given substantial priority and oversight. Local authorities will want to ensure that housing, education and social services functions are being delivered in ways that provided a coherent overall approach to the provision of family support services.

5. The effectiveness of the strategy should be monitored regularly by elected members and senior corporate managers, with performance management arrangements which measure impact and incorporate feedback from children and families who use the services.

The changes required in the overall pattern of family support services are inherently complex; they require a commitment over substantial periods. Even successful areas must find ways of reviewing and renewing their service reform programmes, to deal with new issues or any loss of momentum. Keeping track of what is happening and monitoring impact is difficult. Systems for sharing performance information and data sets need to be more robust and easier to use. Priorities should be based upon robust data analysis and evidence. Again, there may be merits in using the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) to provide a shared database within local authorities and with key partners.

6. Regional Safeguarding Boards and Regional Partnership Boards should play a principal role in helping to formulate and implement the strategy, providing the support needed in areas such as integration, thresholds and adopting whole system models such as Signs of Safety or Resilience.

Regional Safeguarding Boards and the Regional Partnership Boards should help local areas to achieve all the benefits of partnership working, with the best possible alignment between prevention and safeguarding responsibilities. There needs to be a consistent approach taken across children's services to thresholds or access criteria. It is important to find effective ways of managing some elements of risk (wherever possible) within preventative services, rather than through early recourse to more

'statutory' intervention or care proceedings. All stakeholders must be confident that this work is being done safely and with good outcomes.

The two bodies should provide opportunities for getting a multi-agency mandate for whole system change which will: locate more risk management further down the continuum of support. This means:

- sharing responsibility (not just referring on);
- endorsing new models of provision;
- reassuring those who may have legitimate concerns about the direction of travel; and
- encouraging integrated working.

The provision of an effective range of family support services, especially at the edge of care, requires that all relevant agencies regard leadership of and operational responsibilities for this agenda as a key priority. As set out in *Care Crisis Review: Summary of the Options for Change*, "social care leaders and partner agencies need to regularly review their organisation's systems and practice against the messages from research about (a) effective interventions and relationship-based practice and (b) agency vision."

7. In meeting their responsibilities for needs assessments, planning and commissioning, local authorities and Regional Partnership Boards should examine the extent to which current therapeutic services (offering emotional, behavioural and mental health support) are able to meet identified needs, especially for those children at the edge of care.

This includes the multi-disciplinary help provided to children and young people whose behaviour places them at risk of significant harm or whose development is significantly impaired by issues of emotional resilience. Notwithstanding additional investment in CAMHS and school-based counselling, children living in the community with unresolved and entrenched psychological issues (often caused by severely Adverse Childhood Experiences) are too often denied timely access to the early help and support they need. In some areas, even children who meet the CAMHS' thresholds for support are unable to get effective help. There are pockets of good practice, including places where children's social services have funded psychologist posts, but this is not consistently the case. The Welsh Government should consider the extent to which Regional Partnership Boards are exercising an effective leadership role in improving services in an area where integrated multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working together is crucial.

8. In their financial plans, local authorities and Regional Partnership Boards should set out how they intend to fund an appropriate and effective range of family support services, especially those services which help children at the edge of care to remain with their families. This includes making good use of all grants and opportunities for grant flexibility.

Investment in preventative, edge of care and other family support services has been designed to produce better outcomes for children. The Welsh Neglect Project and the research undertaken by Cardiff University demonstrates that, where concerns can be managed effectively without removal from the family, this helps children with their sense of identity, belonging and well-being while avoiding risks of multiple placements or placement breakdowns. We anticipate that successful strategies to support families will also help agencies to deal with some of their resource management, service demand and cost issues. Such services can play a crucial role in approaches for securing prudent social care, health services and crime reduction.

It appears to be the case that, at a local authority level, there are considerable differences in the way individual agencies demonstrate their commitment to sharing responsibility for preventative and other family support services. It would be helpful if Welsh Government, local government and other key stakeholders could look again at the frameworks used for planning children's services at local, regional and national levels to ensure recognition of the role played by Housing Services, Education Departments, Play, Leisure, Youth Services, Youth Justice Services, the NHS, the Police and the third sector. One area of particular concern is evidence of a growing shortfall in the provision of 'open access' facilities which support children, young people and their families in their own neighbourhoods and communities and which tackle the consequences of living with social disadvantage at an early stage. The Welsh Government should make an explicit commitment to providing leadership for this agenda.

If resource management issues which threaten service sustainability and resilience are to be tackled, budget-setting processes for children's services must be better structured and more transparent. This would encourage 'prudent social care' and value for money approaches across public services. Central government, local government and other stakeholders should look at ways of funding children and family support services that will assist efforts to align early help services (including information, advice and assistance), targeted prevention (e.g. Flying Start and Families First) and third tier/more 'statutory' intervention. Local authorities need to secure the best possible balance between the budgets for these services and for care placements.

With Welsh Government, Regional Partnership Boards should examine the extent to which they are equipped to take on new responsibilities for children's services and for allocating the £15 million investment next year to expand preventative and early intervention services. Given the current resource pressures and the scale of need, it is essential that this funding is used as effectively as possible, within commissioning strategies and service plans. The Boards will need to be instrumental in planning children's services that should be delivered on a bigger scale than local authority areas. We have been told about examples of good practice, with some Regional Partnership Boards producing a shared vision for children's services and putting in place arrangements for overseeing the programme of change needed for delivery. However, we must recognise also that Boards face considerable challenges in responding to increased expectations and in monitoring the impact upon outcomes for children and families.

9. Regional Safeguarding Boards should be acting to assist agencies in ensuring that whole system approaches to the provision of family support services can manage risks efficiently and effectively.

They can do so by assisting local agencies in the following areas of practice.

- Safeguarding partners should ensure that their plans and scrutiny arrangements include a focus on children and families on the edge of and in the care system, with clear expressions of intent about how all partners will work together to prevent children coming into or staying in care unnecessarily.
- Staff working in edge of care and other intensive services need to have readily available the policies, practice guides and toolkits which enable them to operate effectively in this context and to manage risk confidently.
- Appropriate use should be made of evidence-based tools for assessing and handling risks which guide professionals from all relevant agencies, generate consistent assessments, secure multi-agency involvement in case management and ensure proper levels of supervision and clinical oversight.
- Staff should consider carefully their responsibilities for using restorative approaches, early prevention and targeted intervention in order to stop needs from escalating and to reduce the likelihood of care proceedings. This means having care pathways that encourage de-escalation, including options such as Family Group Conferences.
- Staff from all agencies must understand the need to gain trust from parents and carers so that there is a shared sense of responsibility for minimising the risks to children from within and outside the family.
- Children and families must receive assistance in seeking reunification (where appropriate) or dealing with the trauma of separation.
- Agreed pathways should be used to produce prompt and effective action when court proceedings do become necessary, with consistent/transparent decision-making and appropriate work undertaken to generate the evidence required in a timely fashion.
- The work being done to review and amend the relevant Code of Practice and All Wales Child Protection Procedures should be supported so that the principles underpinning the legislation, including partnership and co-production with families, are clearly expressed and the processes for managing individual cases reflect the messages from research on the effectiveness of relationship-based practice. The statutory safeguarding partners should be required to draw on children and families' knowledge and expertise to inform service design, policies and provision.
- The local courts and CAF/CASS need to demonstrate their support for local authorities in putting effective strategies in place to reduce the number of children who need to be in care.

10. Local Family Justice Boards and local authorities must work together in resolving differences in performance levels, improve consistency in adopting best practice across agencies and developing further inter-disciplinary work across the family justice system by implementing local solutions to local problems. This includes delivery of strategies for reducing the numbers of children in need of care through increased use of intensive, relationship-based work with the

whole family, to achieve the changes needed for improved parenting and avoiding excessive reliance on court disposals.

Some local authorities have achieved major improvements in the way care proceedings are managed. Local courts demonstrate considerable trust in local authority assessments, plans and practice in relation to vulnerable children. Elsewhere, there can be unhelpful differences in interpreting the statutory framework. The overall system needs to be informed by a better understanding of new community-based, intensive services so that those working within it can avoid practice which is too risk averse. This means:

- developing and working to a far broader understanding of good performance than the timeliness of concluding care cases;
- multi-disciplinary training and knowledge exchange;
- discussion of local practice; and
- children and families helping design systems to ensure that their voices are heard.

The Family Justice Network in Wales should act to ensure that these issues are addressed effectively.

11. National bodies such as Welsh Government, Care Inspectorate Wales, Social Care Wales and the national Independent Safeguarding Board should take account of the messages from the *Care Crisis Review: Summary of the Options for Change* so that their work promotes the ability of local authorities and their partners to meet their duties for supporting families and promoting children’s upbringing within their family.

It is especially the case that a formal response is made by these bodies to:

- Option 2 Training and development
- Option 4 Inspections
- Option 7 Family and friends care of children
- Option 8 Advice and advocacy
- Option 9 Use of voluntary accommodation (ss76 and 34 Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014)
- Option 10 Pre- proceedings practice
- Option 11 26 weeks as a performance target
- Option 12 Court proceedings
- Option 13. Reunification
- Option 14. Post-proceedings support for family and friends carers
- Option 16. Family Justice Boards
- Option 18. The impact of Government policies
- Option 19. Shortfall in resources
- Option 20. Research matters..

APPENDIX 1

MINISTERIAL ADVISORY GROUP

AREA FOR ACTION 1: SAFELY REDUCING THE NUMBERS OF CHILDREN IN NEED OF CARE BY PROVIDING SUPPORT WHICH FAMILIES FIND RESPONSIVE AND HELPFUL

Outcome: Supporting families to stay together and reducing safely the need for children to be looked after by managing risk confidently and effectively when arranging support to families where the children need to be safeguarded and/or they are judged to be on the 'edge of care'.

What will success look like?

- reduced need for children to enter care and increased use of family reunification for care experienced children;
- integrated and holistic approach to providing help across social services, health, education, housing, third sector and communities;
- breaking the inter-generational cycle of care; and.
- whole system, sustainable change which is grounded in responding well to need within communities.

What areas are within the remit of the workstream?

- identifying best practice in 'edge of care' services;
- understanding the needs of children, listening to families and communities;
- examining new service models and restorative approaches for children and families who are in receipt of care and support;
- assessment of risk/safeguarding needs, care and support planning and pathways;
- effective safeguarding arrangements, both within the local authority and by relevant partners;
- monitoring the impact of strategies for diverting children and young people from care;
- co-production.

Design Principles

- i. Children's services plans in each local authority area should: demonstrate an understanding of the needs and demands of the population; ensure appropriate services are in place; promote integration; contribute to developing a competent and skilled workforce.
- ii. Most children are likely to thrive and achieve good outcomes if they are cared for within their own families, which should be supported in using their own resources and those of their communities in times of difficulties.
- iii. Proportionate assessment, preventative services and early intervention to support children in need and their families should be provided quickly to give them every chance to stay together.
- iv. The new models of care being developed across Wales share some common characteristics and a 'team around the family' ethos: a broad multi-disciplinary approach where well-trained people with a range of skills work effectively together and link well to their own organisation.
- v. All public services which provide for children and families have a responsibility for tackling social welfare inequalities and helping children and young people in need of care and support, especially if this reduces the chances of unnecessary admissions to care.
- vi. All agencies and professionals have a responsibility for making sure that support services are used appropriately, in ways that address risk and build on family strengths. Local authorities and their partners have a responsibility for ensuring that intensive family support is available on a multi-agency basis for families where children or young people are on the edge of care.
- vii. Intensive family support should be grounded in sound multi-agency practice which delivers: effective signposting and referral arrangements; outcome-focused and proportionate assessment; good care and support plans; relationship-based working and service delivery.
- viii. Securing best value in the use of scarce resources through efficient and effective service planning is crucial for public services to ensure that the provision of help and support is responsive to the needs and views of children and families at all levels (universal, targeted and complex).

APPENDIX 2

KEY QUESTIONS

A. The Range of Family Support Services

Key Question: To what extent have changing patterns in the provision of child and family services helped to ensure that especially vulnerable families receive an appropriate level of help, consistent with care and support plans?

- A1. Do the current range of services, especially those at the edge of care, meet assessed need (e.g. delays or waiting lists)?
- A2. Do the services, especially those at the edge of care, respond well to problems and emergencies (e.g. flexibility)?
- A3. Are the services well balanced to make the best use of the contribution from all relevant agencies and organisations?
- A4. Does early prevention and targeted intervention forms part of an effective and coherent continuum of support and intervention for families, enabling step-up and step-down to meet different levels of need (including moves between Edge of Care services and Flying Start/Families First/Supporting People/Communities First)?
- A5. Are there good arrangements for consulting with children and families about service effectiveness in delivering better outcomes and identifying gaps?
- A6. Is there a willingness and capacity for allocating an appropriate level of resources to outcomes-focused, community-based prevention and intervention?
- A7. Do child and family services, especially at the edge of care, have clear objectives and robustly monitor their impact?

B. Approach to workforce and practice issues

Key Question: How far have workforce and professional work practice issues been resolved so that services (both preventative and specialist) consistently deliver outcomes-focused and strengths-based relationship working with children and families?

B1. Does the local authority have a workforce strategy (based on comprehensive and reliable information) which ensures that child and family services have staff in sufficient numbers and with appropriate qualifications, training, experience and skills?

B2. Do staff working with children and families – and especially social workers – have enough time allocated to provide appropriate, outcomes-focused support and interventions to children and families (especially to children at the edge of care)?

B3. Do all relevant stakeholders, especially social workers and their managers, operate on the basis that there is a duty to use early prevention and targeted intervention in order to stop needs from escalating?

B4. Is there a clearly defined approach to providing complex social work and therapeutic practice in place that is understood and (where relevant) implemented by stakeholders?

B5. Do Courts, CAFCASS and the Council's legal team agree with the strategy to reduce the number of children who become looked after and do they trust local authority assessments and practice in relation to vulnerable children?

B6 Are there clear multi-agency care and support pathways and gatekeeping, focused on meeting need at the right level and managing demand (especially for Edge of Care services)?

C. Whole System Models and Partnership working

Key Question: To what extent have collaboration and partnerships across children's social services and with external stakeholders made children and family support a priority for public services, ensured better therapeutic support and averted the need for care proceedings?

C1. Is there a culture of mutual support and challenge in place to help bring about service improvements or change patterns of service?

C2. Do planning structures and processes for children and family services engage all the major stakeholders effectively?

C3. Are service and commissioning plans or strategies for children and family services firmly based on analysis of need and service demands, including aggregated data from care and support plans?

C4. Does the local authority and key stakeholders have clearly stated models of care (e.g. Signs of Safety), with regular review of implementation and impact?

C5. Have all relevant stakeholders bought into the strategy; do they understand the implications of locating more risk further down the continuum of support and do they share the responsibility for doing so?

C6. Do local safeguarding agencies have appropriate systems and tools for working together to manage risk across the continuum of service provision (especially in respect of Edge of Care services)?

C7. Do stakeholders collect high quality information and intelligence that gives insight into how effectively the system is working to protect and support children and their families?

D. Strategic Leadership

Key Question: To what extent have your strategies helped to develop effective edge of care services, keep families together and reduce safely the need for children to be looked after?

D1. Does the local authority as a whole (political and corporate) contribute well to achieving the statutory responsibilities of children's services?

D2. Does the local authority have effective arrangements for working with others (statutory agencies, third sector organisations and families) so that it is able to shape the pattern and delivery of children and family services?

D3. Does the local authority its partners make good use of resources and budget-setting processes (including the allocation of grants) to deliver on their strategic commitments to children's services and reshape them where necessary?

D4. Are children's services able to meet commitments and remain within allocated budgets?

D5. Is there an explicit strategy in place to reduce safely the need for children to be looked after and is the strategy effectively understood, enacted and scrutinised by all members of senior leadership teams, including senior corporate officers and elected members??

D7. Does the local authority and its partners have systems in place for identifying early warning signs of serious problems in the delivery of child and family services?

D8 What can Welsh Government do to assist successful strategies for developing family support services, including edge of care?

APPENDIX 3

THE WINDSCREEN MODEL FOR THE PROVISION OF FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

In its Families First guidance 2011, Welsh Government advised that a Windscreen Model for children's services planning should be adopted by local authorities and partner agencies. It shows the relationship between universal services and those meeting the needs of more vulnerable groups. This approach has been adopted and adapted by many areas. It has provided a helpful way to conceptualise and discuss change.

