

From: REDACTEDS40 (CY) <REDACTEDS40@barnardos.org.uk>

Sent: 18 February 2025 15:52

To: REDACTEDS40 (HSCEY - Social Serv & Chief Social Care Officer - Enabling Division) <REDACTEDS40@gov.wales>; REDACTEDS40 (HSCEY - Social Serv & Chief Social Care Officer - Enabling Division) <REDACTEDS40@gov.wales>; REDACTEDS40 (HSCEY - Social Serv & Chief Social Care Officer - Enabling Division) <REDACTEDS40@gov.wales>; REDACTEDS40 (HSCEY - Social Serv & Chief Social Care Officer - Enabling Division) <REDACTEDS40@gov.wales>

Cc: REDACTEDS40< REDACTEDS40@barnardos.org.uk>; REDACTEDS40< REDACTEDS40@barnardos.org.uk>; REDACTEDS40< REDACTEDS40@barnardos.org.uk>; REDACTEDS40< REDACTEDS40@barnardos.org.uk>

Subject: Barnardo's Cymru - Reflect

Good afternoon,

thank you all for meeting with us recently to discuss Reflect. We are grateful to WG for supporting the model and for your ongoing consideration of parent's needs. It was reassuring to hear about the activity you are already undertaking regarding the concerns raised by us about the support for 'Reflect' parents in Wales.

Please find the presentation shared with you in the meeting and the report prepared from the last multi-agency conference. I've also attached the Cost Benefit Analysis completed for Newport referenced in the presentation, so you have sight of the data used.

As indicated in the meeting REDACTEDS40 will be the key contact responsible for the continued delivery in Gwent and you can also liaise with REDACTEDS40 and REDACTEDS40.

Best wishes,

REDACTEDS40

REDACTEDS40

Assistant Director Children's Services, Barnardo's
Cyfarwyddwr Cynorthwyol Gwasanaethau Plant, Barnardo's

M: REDACTEDS40

E: REDACTEDS40@barnardos.org.uk

Ely Family Centre, 87a Grand Avenue, Ely, Cardiff. CF5 4LE

REDACTEDS40

barnardos.org.uk





Newid Plentyndod.
Newid Bywydau.
Changing childhoods.
Changing lives.

Barnardo's is a charity (216250 and SC037605) and
a company limited by guarantee (61625 England) Registered
Office: Tanners Lane, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex, IG6 1QG

Attachment 1

Barnardos Cymru

Wales Reflect Conference 2022: recommendations report Overview

The Reflect National Conference, facilitated by Barnardo's was delivered online in March 2022. The conference brought together all the Reflect and associated services and multi agency professionals from across Wales and beyond to consider how we deliver on best practice in terms of support to birth parents who have had their children permanently removed.

The aims of the conference:

- To establish best practice in relation to supporting birth parents and to compare the experiences of parents and professionals alike in terms of the challenges in reaching this standard.
- To provide an opportunity to influence policy makers, by making recommendations for the future in terms of enabling agencies to support birth parents more effectively in line with key research and policy guidelines.

In order to achieve these aims the conference took the following approach:

1. Good practice; messages from research and policy: inviting key experts in the field to share evidence from research and policy, representing best practice in birth parent support. **REDACTEDS40** of the Centre of Child and Family Justice Research, Lancaster University and **REDACTEDS40**, Consultant for AFA Cymru. **REDACTEDS40** presented the research findings from several years of research on the needs of birth parents; while **REDACTEDS40** presented the best practice guides on birth parent support that were developed by AFA Cymru on behalf of Welsh Government.
2. Parent Consultation: undertaking a consultation with Reflect service users across Wales on their experience of support from services following the removal of their children.
3. Professional Working Groups: arranging working groups of professionals from agencies that are crucial in supporting birth parents to ascertain what the challenges are for professionals on the ground in terms of achieving best practice support for birth parents.

Coproduction:

The conference took a participatory approach. The Barnardo's Reflect Peer Forum, made up of parents who have received the service, designed and developed the conference, which included the questions and format of the parent consultation that was undertaken with Reflect service users across Wales. Additionally, many Reflect parents attended on the day with two parents sitting on the expert panel for the question-and-answer session, to ensure that parents' voices informed all conference activity.

Conference Content

1. Good practice; messages from research and policy:

REDACTEDS40 of Lancaster University presented a summary of findings in research between 2014 and 2020, in a presentation entitled, "Parents beyond child removal: the importance of a holistic, multi-agency response to improve life chances". The Overall findings were as follows.

- The consequences of child removal are multiple and far-reaching
- Mothers and fathers with fragile and restricted life chances – further dented by involvement in family court proceedings and child removal
- By more fully describing the range of consequences of child removal - we can better recognize and respond to the challenges faced by parents
- Arguments are now substantiated by a growing body of research

REDACTEDS40 went on to describe the 'collateral consequences' of court ordered child removal on parents. This term is used to describe the diminished psychological, social and economic wellbeing parents experienced through this process. This was broken down into the following headings:

- Complicated grief
- Social stigma and isolation
- Restrictions in welfare entitlements (e.g., home and housing loss)
- Stigmatised identities and professional service use Restricted and distorted family roles Role loss

Finally, **REDACTEDS40** identified the Significant barriers in addressing the 'collateral consequences' that birth parents experience:

- Difficulty in developing effective pathways into partner services
- Timing of assessments
- Significant barriers to accessing adult focussed services
- Lack of join up between support services, 'team around the adult'
- Inflexible approach by services, one size fits all
- Relationships are key; services are not always able to provide relational support due to resource constraints

REDACTEDS40, Trainer Consultant AFA Cymru, presented the recommendations from the Good Practice Guides for working with birth parents. In summary the guides suggest that the following factors are integral for working positively with birth parents:

- Taking a trauma informed approach
- Providing support from earliest point and for as long as needed
- Support for birth parents should be independent from decision making for the child
- Services should work to understand parent circumstances and the barriers parents face in terms of accessing support
- Taking a relational approach: developing trusting relationship and providing emotional and practical support

2. Parent Consultation:

Parent consultation was undertaken with 20 parents; 18 mothers and 2 fathers; from across Wales. The questions and format of the consultation were developed by the Barnardo's Reflect Peer Forum and distributed to Reflect practitioners to be undertaken with parents willing to participate. Reflecting the focus of the conference on the holistic support needed by both parents, questions were designed to capture parents own experiences of the support they received following the removal of their children.

The overarching experience of support parents reported post removal were as follows:

- The quality of support was inconsistent or insufficient or services offered did transpire.
- For the majority of parents, support wasn't provided early enough for parents to be able to benefit and evidence change.
- Communication between services and parents was poor; many parents did not understand what was happening or what support was available to them
- Most parents distrusted the process and the services involved, particularly social services.
- More positively, there were examples of good practice where parents had been offered support services in a timely and compassionate manner, although these were in the minority.
- There was a lack of compassion and understanding experienced from professionals about the impact of the loss of a child and this translated into practice, with particular concerns raised around the planning process and how this was managed.

3. Professional Working Groups:

Following the completion of the parent consultation, the conference structure was determined, with a focus on exploring multi-agency working as a means to provide the right support for parent's post-removal. Five working groups were arranged to ascertain the challenges facing professionals in trying to support birth parents. Each working group began with a presentation from providers evidencing good practice to provide the starting point for discussions. Thus, the working groups were as follows:

1. Housing: led by **REDACTEDS40** and **REDACTEDS40**, Homeless Service, The Salvation Army

2. Mental Health: led by **REDACTEDS40**, Former Operational Manager Primary Care Liaison Service Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
3. Sexual Health: led by **REDACTEDS40** and **REDACTEDS40** of Barnardo's Reflect service
4. Born into Care: led by **REDACTEDS40**, Reflect National Programme manager
5. Identifying parents' needs: led by **REDACTEDS40**, Project Unity Service Manager, NYAS All working groups followed the same framework, facilitators led the groups in a discussion that was structured via the same questions as follows:

- What are the issues we experience?
- What are the barriers we experience?
- What and who are the enablers to help us make the changes needed?
- What would good look like for everyone?
- Suggested recommendations

Overall recommendations

The following recommendations are a combination of learning from the Reflect Service, the professional working groups and content of the conference:

1. Housing:

- Housing agencies should take steps to raise awareness of the specific needs of birthparents engaged in care proceedings or family assessments and make reasonable adjustments to support them. This may include steps to help families to avoid accumulating rent arrears.
- We would urge Welsh Government to consider how this can be reflected in the White Paper on the right to adequate housing which was included in the Programme for Government. Welsh Government should work with both professionals and those with lived-experience to ensure that the needs of birth parents are well reflected in this work.
- Housing agencies would receive training to understand the trauma experienced by families who have seen their children removed (i.e., care proceedings).
- Suitable and affordable accommodation should be provided to families.
- Sensitivity to birthparents needs should be applied by housing agencies who should work in partnership with those agencies offering support to families engaged in family court proceedings. Where a child has been removed sensitivity should be given to the emotional needs of the birthmother.
- Integrating the knowledge around supporting birth parents into housing initiatives such as Housing First.

2. Mental Health:

- Firm diagnostic criteria should not be applied when assessing the needs of birth parents. Specific recognition should be given to the full quantum of their previous and current circumstances.
- MH professionals would receive training to understand the trauma experienced by families who have seen their children removed (i.e., care proceedings).

- Birth parents' cases remain open if appointments are missed at or following the removal of a child. Liaison should be undertaken with those services involved with the mother to determine the most appropriate response to missed appointments or disengagement.
- Personality disorder, and cooccurring problems such as substance misuse or learning disability should not be used as a rationale for exclusion but instead a motive for inclusion.
- Professionals should support birthparents to access mental health services advocating on their behalf contextualizing the very specific experiences a birthparent will have experienced.
- Mental Health practitioners, and in particular peri-natal mental health staff, should be trained to recognise and understand the pre- and post-natal needs of women whose children will be or have been removed at birth. This should be included as part of the implementation of the Trauma-Informed Framework across Wales.
- We understand that the Deputy Minister for Mental Health will spend the coming year spending time with people with lived experience of poor mental health to inform the development of the refreshed 10-year strategy. We would be pleased to work with the Deputy Minister for her to hear directly from birth parents to understand their needs and experiences.

3. Sexual Health:

- Agencies working with birth parents should promote the importance of sexual health and sexual health choices. This can be achieved by tackling the stigma and embarrassment associated with sexual health. Specific attention should be paid to cultures and faith communities where stigma and shame are particularly prevalent.
- Professionals should consider the psychological and biological issues to be considered when addressing sexual health choices. This would support women to understand how they think and the impact this has on their behaviour and the most suitable birth control options available to individual women and their partners.
- Training to be provided to sexual health professionals to consider how the life experiences of parents impacts upon their sexual health choices.

4. Born Into Care:

- Specific training should be provided to professionals involved in cases where a baby is to be removed at birth. This should include an understanding of the processes involved and the provision of compassionate care to the birth family. This may serve to prevent their disengagement.
- Above training should include information about support services such as Reflect so that parents can be referred at earliest opportunity and to maximise the number of parents receiving support.
- Maternity wards should ensure the availability of suitable spaces which provide adequate privacy to mothers who will be having their baby removed at birth. If required or requested a single room should be provided to the birth mother to reduce the distress experienced of being in the company of mothers who will be taking their children home with them.
- Social work care plans should be developed in advance of the birth. Arrangements to ensure the availability of the Social Worker to communicate

with the birthmother when delivery occurs out of hours should be established. Guidance on when social workers should engage should be provided including at which point a referral to services such as Reflect should be made. Support from midwifery, social work and other agencies should not cease at the point of birth. Post-natal physical and mental health support should be provided to the birth mother in her own right. This could include the appointment of a key worker or a birth parent advisor.

- Post adoption procedures should be reviewed to ensure that where appropriate sensitive final contact arrangements are made and a meeting established between the birthmother and adoptive parents. As Welsh Government explores legislation to further integrate health and social care, this should be of benefit to birth parents who are disproportionately affected and isolated due to a lack of understanding and joined up care and support offered by health and social care.

5. Identifying Parents' Needs:

- All agencies involved in care proceedings should be aware of the importance of supporting parents and the availability of services in their area. Training be provided to all stakeholders in this context, which would include the impact of the loss of a child can have on parents and the likely implications of this. A process is enshrined in practice whereby referral to Reflect is made at the earliest possible opportunity during proceedings, and that the Family Court instructs social workers to do so. Consideration of attaching a more formal role to Reflect for ensuring parents needs are identified and provided for by other agencies, rather than relying on the child's social worker to undertake this. Reflect to sit more closely with the Family Courts and that referrals to the service be opened to include Family Law Practitioners, Courts themselves and other stakeholders in this context. To maximise access to the service, referral routes be widened to allow for other stakeholders such as GPs, housing etc. Care plans include referral to Reflect. A mapping exercise to capture the different support services available to parents across Wales at different stages of childcare proceedings (e.g., Baby and me; parent advocacy and Reflect). Taking a relational approach to support services.
- Support is provided over the longer term and is tailored to the needs and strengths of individual parents.
- Funding support and advocacy services as part of the Programme for Government is welcomed by Barnardo's Cymru, and this should include specialist services for birth parents, co-produced by those with lived experience.

Future Proposals: The way forward

Over the past five years the Reflect service has been established on a pan-Wales footprint. National Reflect data demonstrates that the service model has been very successful in preventing further pregnancy of parents while they are open to our services (95% of women remaining pregnancy free in 2021-22). As such, along with other key service developments like Baby and Me and parent advocates, it remains a vital service provision in the context of

Welsh Government's efforts to reduce the number of children looked after in Wales. It is evident, from the testimonies provided by both birth parents and the multi-agency professionals that attended the Reflect conference, however, that birth parent support on the ground is not yet consistent with what research and policy identifies as best practice. There remain a number of challenges that hamper professionals' ability to provide adequate support for parents. These range from a lack of understanding of the impact on parents following the loss of a child, to more practical issues such as awareness of services, referral thresholds and criteria, and ineffective communication between agencies.

In order to increase the consistency and quality of support to birth parents, it is proposed that a programme of improvement be established which addresses the recommendations put forward by parents and professionals alike. In line with the findings of key researchers in this field, such as the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory, the improvements necessary to ensure impactful support to birth parents fall into the following categories:

- A specialist understanding of the impact of trauma on parents who have had children removed from their care
- Effective partnership and collaborative working
- Effective coproduction to ensure transparency and choice
- Effective processes and service alignment
- Timely and compassionate planning
- Adequate, available and appropriate resource
- Change oriented practice

In order to work collaboratively with birth parents and relevant organisations in order to implement these changes, we are recommending that the National Reflect Programme Manager role be utilised. In this context an action plan for delivery on the key recommendations would be developed that is linked to the implementation of the Trauma Informed Framework in Wales. The action plan will include actions across agencies and also within individual agencies to ensure that the findings of the conference are acted upon. While it is not practical to include all of the actions necessary here, it is worth outlining that the programme will deliver the following key activities:

- Trauma-informed birth parent training for multi-agency professionals
- Service mapping and awareness raising so that all agencies understand what is available to them in their areas
- Mechanisms for more efficient processes and greater service alignment
- Coproduction work to ensure that birth parents have an opportunity to influence the design and delivery of support services.

Barnardo's would welcome the support of the Welsh Government to support the development and implementation of the Action Plan.

Attachment 2

Cost-benefit analysis of Reflect – October 2023

A. Summary

1. The Barnardo's Economist has conducted a high-level economic assessment of the Reflect service in Gwent. The analysis calculates local authority savings as result of the service's work. In the financial year 2022/23, Reflect supported 38 parents, of whom 34 were mothers.¹ These findings should be viewed as an initial assessment to provide an indication of the magnitude of savings, rather than a rigorous piece of analysis.
2. Reflect seeks to offer therapeutic, behavioural and practical advice to women and their partners who have experienced, or are at risk of, repeat removals of children from their care. The service aims to break this cycle; offering women and their partners the opportunity to develop new skills and provide support for positive change in their lives. Reflect is funded through contributions from Welsh Government and local authorities in Wales where the service is provided.
3. **The analysis finds that for every £1 invested in the service, the benefit to local authorities is about £4.10, and is equivalent to net local authority savings of about £497,000.** Furthermore, this figure is likely to underestimate the impact of the service as the analysis doesn't calculate other government savings or other wider social/economic benefits such as improvements in mental health and wellbeing. The independent review of children's social care estimated the significant wellbeing, productivity and public services costs over a lifetime after spending a childhood in care².

B. Approach

4. The analysis uses a cost savings approach which has two main elements:
 - **Factual scenario:** calculating the costs of delivering the Reflect service in 2022/23.
 - **Counterfactual scenario:** calculating the local authority costs that would have been incurred in the absence of the service, which can be interpreted as cost savings.
5. The difference between the two values obtained in the factual and counterfactual scenario is the total net cost savings. The total local authority savings divided by total Reflect costs produces the benefit-cost ratio (i.e. amount saved for every £1 invested in the Reflect service).
6. The second element above is referred to as the 'counterfactual' as it involves making assumptions and estimating a scenario that does not actually occur.

¹ The other four service users were fathers.

² The independent review of children's social care (2022), 'Paying the Price', p.15.

Based on conversations with the Reflect service manager, we have assumed that in the absence of Reflect, some of the women who the service supports would have additional children taken into care. In these instances, we have assumed these children would be placed for adoption although they would be in foster care for a period before the adoption placement is completed. The next section provides details of the assumptions used and the evidence that underpins them.

C. Assumptions

Reflect costs

7. The cost of providing the Reflect service in Wales during 2022/23 was £161,000.

Local authority costs

8. For the local authority cost savings, there are two main ways in which costs are saved:
- i. avoiding the cost incurred of children going into foster care; and
 - ii. avoiding the cost of placing a child for adoption (interagency adoption fee).
9. To estimate the foster care costs, we used data from StatsWales which shows that for children under the age of one, they are usually in local authority care for approximately 1 year and 9 months before they are adopted.³ Data from the Assembly for Wales indicates that the annual cost of a local authority placement was £23,327 in 2018, equivalent to £29,315 in 2023.⁴ Combining this with the assumption that a child is in care for 1 year and 9 months indicates a total cost of £51,301 per child.⁵
10. The adoption interagency fee is £35,565.⁶ Combining this with the foster care costs outlined above indicate total savings of £86,866 per child not removed from a parent by the local authority. To account for the fact that these savings occur in the future, a discount rate is applied to this figure, which reduces it to £77,264—see appendix for more details.

Number of children not taken into care as a result of Reflect

11. Reflect supported 38 parents, of which 34 were mothers, who had children removed by the local authority. Analysis by the University of Lancaster indicates that 1 in 4 mothers who have had a child removed will have at least one more child removed during the next 7 years.⁷ We have therefore used this assumption

³ StatsWales (2023), 'Adoptions of looked after children during year ending 31 March by age of child at start of last period of care and the length of time until adoption'. For more information, see:

<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/Adoptions/adoptionsofchildrenlookedafterduringyearending31march-by-ageofchildatstartoflastperiodofcare-lengthoftimeuntiladoption>

⁴ National Assembly for Wales: Public Accounts Committee (2018), 'Care experienced children and young people', November, p.24.

⁵ The exact amount of time is 1.75 years.

⁶ Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (2023), 'Inter-agency fee levels and guidance'. See: <https://cvaa.org.uk/for-professionals/resources-info/interagency-fee/>

⁷ Lancaster University (2017), 'Vulnerable Birth Mothers and Recurrent Care Proceedings: Final Summary Report', p.5.

to estimate the number of children that would be taken into care and placed for adoption in the absence of support from Reflect which is equal to 8 or 9 children.

12. In the factual scenario, i.e. where parents are supported by Reflect, we have assumed that no parents have children taken into care during the seven years after they were supported. This is based on data which shows, that during support (usually for around a year), no mothers became pregnant and had children taken into care. However, we do not have data about children taken into care in the period after they're supported. Given this, it is recommended that further analysis is conducted to test the validity of this assumption.

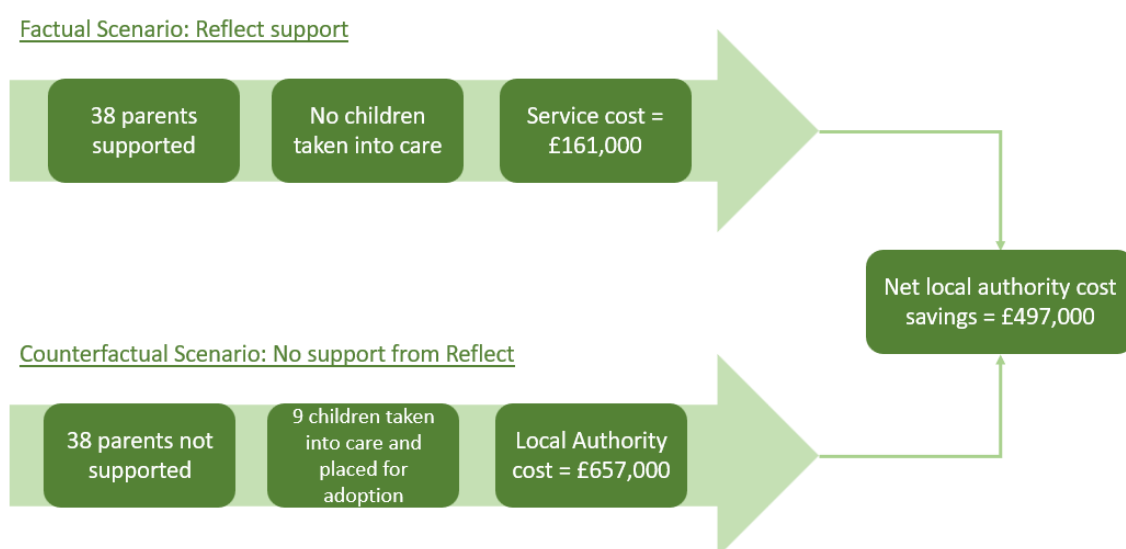
Other considerations

13. There are also likely to be other wider economic and social benefits associated with the Reflect service. However, it is difficult to accurately calculate how Reflect contribute to these benefits (e.g. improvements mental health and wellbeing) in monetary terms.
14. In the counterfactual scenario, parents could also have more than one child removed in the future, which would increase the cost savings. Further analysis would need to use specific data related to the parents Reflect supports in order to help provide a more accurate estimate of the number of children that would be removed in the absence of the service.

D. Results

15. Using the approach and assumptions outlined above, the results below were produced, and indicate net savings of about £497,000 to the local authorities.

Figure 1: Results



Note: All monetary values expressed in 2023/24 prices and discounted using the social discount rate. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

16. Put in other terms, for every £1 invested in the service, the benefit to the local authority is about £4.10.

E. Appendix: adjusting costs using a discount factor

Social discount factor

A social discount factor is used to discount future local authority savings that occur from the support that Reflect provides and account for the preference that local authorities have to save now rather than in the future. Future values have therefore been discounted at the social discount rate (3.5%) in accordance with the guidance in the HM Treasury's Green Book.⁸

Discounting the cost savings

As the savings could anytime during the seven years after a parent is supported, we have assumed they occur during the middle of this period – i.e. after four years. The table below summarises the adjustments to the costs outlined in Section C which are used to calculate the results in Section D.

Table 1: Adjusting costs

	Value (undiscounted)	Year savings occur	Discount applied	Value (discounted)
Cost of local authority placement	£51,301	2024/25	90%	£46,271
Cost of adoption placement	£35,565	2026/27	87%	£30,993
Total cost	£86,866			£77,264

Note: All monetary values expressed in 2023/24 prices. The results also account for future savings. Prices may not sum due to rounding. The social discount rate applied is 3.5% per year.

⁸ For further details, see HM Treasury Green Book, available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-green-book-appraisal-and-evaluation-in-central-government>