

## Key Action Area 1

### 1. Safely reducing the number of children in need of care.

This area of action is focused on supporting families to stay together and reducing the need for children to be looked after by managing risk confidently and arranging support to vulnerable families whose children are judged to be on the 'edge of care'.

The work strands under this area of action are set out below with a summary of key activity.

#### Work strand 1 - Supporting local, regional and national approaches to reducing the need for care.

- The First Minister has highlighted the increasing numbers of looked after children in Wales as a priority area. He is clear that too many children are removed from their families into the care system. The First Minister has set the following priority areas to:
  - reduce the numbers of children in care,
  - reduce numbers of children placed out of county,
  - reduce numbers of children placed out of Wales; and,
  - reduce the number of children removed from parents with a learning disability.
- This is informed by the following evidence base:
  - Cordis Bright published research in 2013 (<https://www.cordisbright.co.uk/admin/resources/all-wales-heads-of-childrens-services-research-on-differences-in-lac.pdf> ) found variation in the numbers and rates of looked after children across local authorities but highlighted that demographic and socio-economic factors only go part of the way to explain differences between local authorities.
  - The Care Crisis Review published in June 2018 explores the factors which have contributed to the number of children in care across England and Wales - [https://www.frg.org.uk/images/Care\\_Crisis/CCR-FINAL.pdf](https://www.frg.org.uk/images/Care_Crisis/CCR-FINAL.pdf)
  - The Wales Centre for Public Policy published its Analysis of the Factors Contributing to the High Rates of Care in Wales - <https://www.wcpp.org.uk/publication/analysis-of-the-factors-contributing-to-the-high-rates-of-care-in-wales/>
- Welsh Government is working collaboratively with local authorities to co-produce bespoke reduction expectation plans that are tailored to their populations and demography. Reduction expectations will span the course of 3 years,

commencing in March 2019. Monitoring arrangement will commence in October 2019.

### Work strand 2 - Strengthening arrangements for Kinship carers and Special Guardianship Order arrangements

- Guidance has been developed to enable better partnership working with families at the earliest stage so children can live safely at home or with wider family members. <http://www.childreninwales.org.uk/resource/kinship-care-guide-wales/>
- Work to develop a national framework for special guardianship support services has been commissioned from AfA Cymru. Once completed a link will be provided here.

### Work strand 3 - Research to identify number of children removed from parents with a learning disability.

- Through the IO4C work programme, a lack of information about the extent to which children with parents who have a learning disability are involved in care proceedings and the reasons why they may be involved in care proceedings.
- Welsh Government has commissioned the Institute of Public Care (IPC) at Oxford Brookes University to carry out pioneering research to:
  - Establish the extent to which parents with a learning disability in Wales are involved with / in receipt of Children's Social Care Services
  - Gain a multi-perspective understanding of the factors driving patterns of involvement of parents with a learning disability with Children's Social Care Services.
  - Understand effective and less effective practice in order to support an improvement agenda in this area of public services.
- Research findings are due to be published in October 2019. Once published a link to the report will be provided here.

### Work strand 4 - Identifying approaches which help to avoid use of court proceedings, encourage the use of measures rather than care orders and promote consistent judicial practice.

- The Targeted Family Justice Review (TFJR) has been established as a joint Ministry of Justice/Department for Education project to understand better, and develop proposals to address, the impact of rising levels of demand and local variability in the family justice system. This builds on the findings of the Care Crisis Review ( [https://www.frg.org.uk/images/Care\\_Crisis/CCR-FINAL.pdf](https://www.frg.org.uk/images/Care_Crisis/CCR-FINAL.pdf) )

- The Family Justice Board ( <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/family-justice-board> ) agreed a work programme to help address rising volume and local variation in public law.
- The Welsh Government is working with the Ministry of Justice on the Targeted Family Justice Review to align with activity being undertaken in Wales. The Review is focussing on 3 themes:
  - Pre-proceedings
  - The use of S.20/S.76 as a viable and appropriate alternative to care proceedings
  - More effective sharing of best practice within the system.