



ADDENDUM TO THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES

STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2015-16



- **Introduction**

The Children and Young People Service (CYPS) in Neath Port Talbot has made significant improvements over the past two years. The service now has a stable and more experienced workforce; practice that is procedurally sound and performance that is amongst the best across Wales. The “back to basics” work has now been completed and it is time for the service to fulfil its aspirations to move from the good service it is now to an excellent service. With continued support and a comprehensive understanding from Councillors and Senior Managers across the Local Authority, CYPS is now in a position to become a centre of excellence and good practice within the Welsh context. It is an exciting time and there is huge potential within the service if the priorities for the immediate future can be approached with the same rigour and clarity that has been applied to workforce, practice and performance issues. This Strategy aims to set out the vision and priorities for 2015-16 in an accessible and concise format in order that it can be easily referenced and understood. This strategy is an addendum and update to the overarching Children and Young People Services Strategic Improvement Plan 2013-16 and should be read in this light.

- **Vision**

Our vision for Children & Young People and the service remains:

- All children and young people in Neath Port Talbot are protected and grow up in supportive families to achieve their potential.
- The children and young people services department is highly regarded by children, young people and the wider community and is a great place to work.

This vision is underpinned by the values we have and our work will be rooted in the values of the social work profession and the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child:

- To hear the voice of the child or young person in everything that we do.
- Promoting social justice.
- Acting with integrity.
- Treating all people with compassion, empathy and care.
- Ensuring the proper stewardship of scarce public resources.

Alongside our vision and values CYPS has agreed a common articulation of the way in which we expect to practice in the future. We are clear that on an individual, team and service basis we stand for:

“Achieving quality, supporting families and effectively managing risk”.

These are the key themes we will continue to reflect upon as we measure the positive impact of the service going forward.

- **Current Situation**

CYPS has made large advances in improving its practice, stabilising and developing its workforce, developing strong leadership and transforming its performance. Following a positive Peer Review in September 2014 commissioned through the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) it was agreed that CYPS should expand its aspirations to move from providing a good service to an excellent one. The new standard will be one in which the service can evidence the positive impact its interventions make on families and recognise and move quickly to address any deficits identified. To this end the well-rehearsed mantra of back to basics will be replaced with that set out in above:

“Achieving quality, supporting families and effectively managing risk”.

Although the service remains on the Welsh Government Serious Concerns Protocol it has now resolved to set out a new set of priorities which, when achieved, will place NPT CYPS amongst the best in Wales and England. This does not mean that we will not continue to monitor and develop previous priorities such as workforce, social work practice and performance management.

For example, we will continue to deliver the workforce strategy to ensure that we have a stable, experienced and well trained staff group. We will maintain stability by continuing to follow good people management and leadership practices such as timely recruitment, good induction, regular supervision, performance management, maximising attendance, minimising the use of agency workers, succession planning, effective two way communication between staff and managers and partnership working with the Council's recognised Trade Unions.

To ensure that the service can fulfil its aspiration to move from being a good service to being an excellent service, we will seek to develop the workforce in a targeted and systematic way in order to achieve continuous improvement in quality and practice and to comply with current legislation. We will continue to promote a workforce culture that is supportive, that rewards success and achievements and is focussed on the outcomes of the families we work with. Capability, disciplinary and grievance issues will be promptly and appropriately dealt with. Our actions will continue to be underpinned by the CYPS Recruitment and Retention Strategy and the NPT People Charter.

In relation to performance management the service remains committed to maintaining and developing the use of accurate and timely information which will inform our workforce about the work it is doing. Having taken time to embed this practice the Service will now seek to link this with the Outcomes based approach discussed in the priorities section of this paper.

- **Priority Areas**

The service has made considerable improvements over the past 2 years by having collective clarity over which areas of work were absolute priorities. The service understood that although there was much work to be done on a wide and diverse agenda significant impact would only be made through the adoption of a limited number of priorities. In the past these have included the development of a workforce that was properly trained and had a balance of experience, the reintroduction of basic policies and procedures, supportive IT structures and building a comprehensive performance management framework.

Having achieved success in these areas, we intend to further build on this progress and develop and implement individual strategies to support the priorities we intend to focus on over the next 2 years. These priorities are as follows:

- **Ensuring A Consistency And Depth Of Quality In The Work That We Complete On A Day To Day Basis**

Since its launch in 2013 our Performance and Quality Assurance Framework has continued to be implemented across the service. This has incorporated the setting of the high quality standards we endeavour to achieve consistently across the service, the establishment of methods for measuring and evaluating the quality of our interventions with families and using findings to identify priorities for improvement and further develop services.

All staff participate in an induction and receive supervision and training that explicitly demonstrates our approach to delivering services and assessing children, young people and their families. We will implement a consistent approach to staff appraisal across the service.

On a routine basis we continue to undertake audit activity through the scrutiny of cases, supervision and feedback mechanisms established in the Independent Reviewing Service. We will train team managers to develop their skills in auditing and we will embed routine audit activity across the service including extending peer review audits across the teams. We will establish a suite of feedback and consultation mechanisms for children and young people, parents, carers and partner agencies, and we will develop a method for collating and reporting information to assist with service delivery and development.

We have recognised that there was a need for dedicated resource in order to undertake a further step change and equip the service to embed quality assurance throughout its everyday activity. We have established a Performance, Quality and Practice Development Team – Performance, Quality and Practice Manager; Complaints Officer; Engagement and Participation Officer - to drive this forward.

- **Evaluating Outcomes Based Upon A Framework That Will Evidence That We Are Making Significant Positive Differences In The Lives Of The Children And Families We Deal With**

Having achieved significant improvements against quantitative measures, such as KPI's; we are mindful that performance indicators are essentially a measure of activity, and not outcomes. We recognise the importance of developing systematic methods to evidence whether we are making a positive difference in the lives of children and families that we deal with.

We intend to establish an Outcome Based Framework which captures and acts upon the views of children, parents, carers and professionals. The framework will complement the proposed requirements placed upon Local Authorities in the '*Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014*', such as co-production and goal setting with families. It will also draw strength from the SSIA pilot on developing an outcome based framework.

Care planning and review mechanisms will be key to measuring outcomes, to this end; it is our intention to develop ICT Systems to support this function and ensure we can monitor the 'direction of travel' at key junctures during the intervention process.

- **A Safe And Measured Approach To Reducing The Number Of Children Looked After**

We have developed a Looked After Children strategy which sets out the intentions of the Service to achieve best possible outcomes for Looked after children, young people and their families. We recognise the impact of the high number of children who are looked after and we have set out our target for safely reducing the LAC population in the Looked after children strategy.

We intend to further strengthen our procedures for admissions to care, and to extend this to making improvements to the way we support children on the edge of care through commissioning arrangements and by establishing an edge of care panel.

Where children can be safely returned to their families we will support this to happen, and where children cannot return we will ensure that they have permanency plans in place. Wherever it is possible we will ensure that children who cannot return to their families have the opportunity to be cared for without remaining in the care system.

For those children who need to be looked after we will ensure that our fostering services are developed and structured in a way which can provide a choice of high quality, stable, local placements for children and young people, including those with specialist or complex needs. We will develop a foster carer recruitment strategy.

- **Developing And Delivering A Robust And Effective Family Support Strategy Which Will Ensure A Targeted Approach To Supporting Children, Young People And Their Families**

We have developed a Draft Family Support Strategy (FSS) to assist in delivering targeted support services to children and families. The FSS supports joint working with the Think Family Partnership to ensure a joined up approach through the Tiers of need from early intervention through to Tier 4 specialist support. We will remodel a number of support services including Action for Children support and Dewis housing support, taking into consideration the needs for our most vulnerable children and young people. This will ensure we deliver targeted support to the families most in need.

The Think Family Partnership commissioning of Family First Services is in place and new contracts will be established by April 2015 incorporating services which include Family Group Conferencing, Young Carers Support and Counselling Support for families.

We have worked with partners to refocus services and ensure that we have a shared vision for priorities:

- Team Around the Family (TAF) has become a crucial support to families and a key part of Children's Services partnership working. The development of a robust Step Up/Down Protocol has ensured the right supports are in place. By April 2015 a TAF social worker will be part of the common front door for the Intake Team to ensure that all referrals access a single point of contact.
- YOT has actively participated with CYPS utilising their Prevention Team and this support will become formalised within social work practice.
- IFSS has been operational since April 2013 in Western Bay and has recently been formally reviewed. Discussions are underway to have a re-focus on the strategic needs of CYPS.
- NSPCC – following negotiations the NSPCC Neglect Programme will be part of the prevention strategy.
- CALAN DVS Project will be in place by April 2015 offering direct support to families and basing a number of supports within children's' services.

- **An Approach To Participation And Engagement Of Children, Young People And Their Families Which Takes Account Of Their Views And Where Co-Production Of Service Delivery Is The Goal**

We have reviewed our Participation, Engagement and Advocacy Protocol which describes our mission to support the children and young people we work with to have a strong voice. We have established a Performance,

Quality and Practice Development team which who will now formulate and implement an action plan to deliver the Protocol.

An Engagement and Participation Officer will be appointed to increase capacity and ensure its swift, consistent implementation of the action plan across the Service. The plan will include promotion of the UNCRC ; mapping of existing consultation forums/workshops; a more coordinated approach to the running of existing and new consultation for a; information for Children and Young People which raises their awareness of their rights/role (s) in decision making alongside service improvement and development; the adoption of age appropriate tools and methods to facilitate meaningful engagement.

CYPS is resolved to approach these priorities with the vigour and discipline that has been applied to other areas where significant improvements have been made. Pace will continue to be a key element of the new strategy as will building in sustainability. We look forward to building on the established improvements to continue to develop a high quality service which promotes the best outcomes for children and families.