

Agenda



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Date: Wednesday, 24 April 2024

Time: 5.00 pm

Venue: Committee Room 4 / Microsoft Teams

To: Councillors E Stowell-Corten (Chair), C Baker-Westhead, B Davies, P Drewett, F Hussain, J Jones, A Morris, M Pimm, A Screen and K Whitehead

Item	Wards Affected
1 <u>Apologies</u>	
2 <u>Declarations of Interest</u>	
3 <u>South East Wales Adoption Service Update</u> (Pages 3 - 22) a) Officer presentation b) Committee questioning and discussion c) Formation of comments and recommendations	
4 <u>Fostering Service Update</u> (Pages 23 - 32) a) Officer presentation b) Committee questioning and discussion c) Formation of comments and recommendations	
5 <u>Scrutiny Adviser Reports</u> (Pages 33 - 38) a) Actions Plan (Appendix 1)	
6 <u>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th March 2024</u> (Pages 39 - 44)	

Contact: Neil Barnett, Scrutiny Adviser
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Date of Issue: Wednesday, 17 April 2024

All meeting recordings can be found [here](#).

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Scrutiny Report

Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Part 1

Date: 24th April 2024

Subject South East Wales Adoption Service Update

Author Scrutiny Adviser

The following has been invited to attend for this item:

Invitee:	Designation
Sally Jenkins	Strategic Director – Social Services
Natalie Poyner	Head of Children Services
Becky Jones	Service Manager – South East Wales Adoption Service
Rhian Brook	Service Manager – Childrens Teams
Councillor Stephen Marshal	Cabinet Member for Children Services

Section A – Committee Guidance and Recommendations

1. Recommendations to the Committee

The Committee is requested:

- To consider the South East Wales Adoption Service Update Report
- To determine whether it wishes to make any comments.

2 Context

Background

- 2.1 The Committee approved its Forward Work Programme on 19 July 2023 to include an update report from the South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) in its April 2024 Committee Meeting. ***(A link to the Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships held on 19 July 2023 Report and Minute is included in the Background Papers in Section 7 of this report.)***
- 2.2 The South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) is one of five regional adoption services in Wales. It was established in April 2014 and covers the local authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Monmouthshire, Caerphilly, and Newport. SEWAS is hosted by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and is funded by the five partner local authorities.

3 Information Submitted to the Committee

- 3.1 The following information is attached to the report for the Committee's consideration:

Appendix A - South East Wales Adoption Service Update report

4. Suggested Areas of Focus

4.1 Role of the Committee

The role of the Committee is to:

- **Consider the report upon Adoption Services**
 - **Assess and make comment on:**
 - The progress being made by the South East Wales Adoption Service in partnership working;
 - How effectively the Services worked together to date;
 - What mitigating actions have been put in place to address risks;
 - What barriers are there to achieving outcomes.
 - **In drawing its conclusions, the Committee should assess:**
 - What was the overall conclusion on the information contained within the report?
 - Is the Committee satisfied that it has had all of the relevant information to base a conclusion on the report?
 - Does the Committee wish to make any comments upon the report?

4.2 Suggested Lines of Enquiry

In considering the report, the Committee may wish to explore some of the following areas of focus:

- To what extent have objectives been achieved?
- How effectively have Services worked together to achieve outcomes? What lessons have been learned as a result and how would they be fed back?
- What have been the resource implications of partnership working? Has it maximised the resources available?
- What are the key lessons learned from the initial implementation of Welsh Early Permanence placements, and how does SEWAS plan to build on this approach in the future?
- Have there been any unintended consequences of joint working and if so, what impact has this had?

- How is SEWAS ensuring the voices of adopted children and young people are captured and incorporated into the continuous improvement of adoption services?

4.3 Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act

The Committee's consideration of the report should consider how working in partnership is maximising its contribution to the five ways of working. The following are examples of the types of questions to consider:

5 Ways of Working	Types of Questions to consider:
Long-term The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.	What long-term trends will impact upon service outcomes? How will changes in long term needs impact upon outcomes in the future?
Prevention Prevent problems occurring or getting worse.	What issues are facing service users at the moment? How are Services addressing these issues to prevent a future problem?
Integration Considering how public bodies' wellbeing objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.	Are there any other organisations providing similar / complementary services? How do the Services' performance in the Plans impact upon the services of other public bodies and their objectives?
Collaboration Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the organisation itself).	Who has the Service been working with to deliver outcomes? How are the Services using knowledge / information / good practice of others to inform / influence outcomes?
Involvement The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area, which the body serves.	How have Services sought the views of those who are impacted by service delivery? How have Services taken into account diverse communities in decision-making?

Section B – Supporting Information

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Characteristics of Effective Partnership Scrutiny set out in the Guidance for Local Authority Scrutiny Committees on the scrutiny of Public Services Boards issued by Welsh Government in August 2017 can equally be applied to the scrutiny of other Partnerships and states that:

“Research into the practice of collaborative or joint scrutiny in England and Wales identifies that arrangements are effective when they demonstrate the following characteristics:

Characteristics of effective partnership scrutiny:

- Scrutiny regards itself as a form of 'critical friendship with positive intent' in which scrutiny practitioners act as advocates for the success of joint working.
- Collaborative performance is evaluated from the citizen's perspective.
- Strong efforts are made to understand the complexity of partnership arrangements and to facilitate learning about the culture and assumptions of different organizations.
- Scrutiny creates positive expectations by focussing on issues regarded as useful to the partnership or where there is consensus that 'things need to change'.
- Scrutiny demonstrates intellectual independence and investigative rigour in all of its activities.
- Scrutiny demonstrates a positive impact by developing clear, timely, evidence-based recommendations aimed at enhancing collaborative performance.
- Scrutiny critically evaluates its own performance utilising partnership perspectives.

(A link to the full Welsh Government Guidance is included in Section 7 of this report in the Background Papers for Members' information.)

6 Links to Council Policies and Priorities

- 6.1 The report links with the Wellbeing-being Objectives and Aims of the Council's Corporate Plan 2022 – 2027;

Well-being Objective	1 – Economy, Education and Skills	2 – Newport's Environment and Infrastructure	3 – Preventative and Equitable Community and Social Care	4 – An Inclusive, Fair and Sustainable Council
Aims:	Newport is a thriving and growing city that offers excellent education and aspires to provide opportunities for all.	A city that seeks to protect and enhance our environment whilst reducing our carbon footprint and preparing for a sustainable and digital future.	Newport is a supportive city where communities and care are at the heart of what we do.	Newport City Council is an inclusive organisation that places social value, fairness and sustainability at its core.

7 Background Papers

- [Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships 23 July 2023 Report \(Item 7\) and Minutes](#)
- [Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships 4 December 2019 Report and Minutes \(Adoption Services Update\)](#)
- [The Essentials - Wellbeing of Future Generation Act \(Wales\)](#)
- [Welsh Government Guidance for Local Authority Scrutiny Committees on the Scrutiny of Public Services Boards](#) (Issued August 2017)
- [Corporate Plan 2022-27](#)

Report Completed: 24 April 2024



Introduction

This report is compiled for Newport city council's performance scrutiny committee. The aim is to give an overview of South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) and report on performance, progress and developments. The report will also outline how SEWAS works in partnership by providing adoption services to all those affected by adoption in the Newport area.

Background

Adoption services in Wales regionalised following the formation of the National Adoption Service (NAS). SEWAS is one of five regional adoption services in Wales.

South East Wales Adoption service was established in April 2014 and as a region it covers Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Monmouthshire, Caerphilly and Newport Local Authority's and the service is hosted by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. The service is funded by all 5 LA's and the funding contribution per LA is calculated via a formula agreed based upon Children Looked After population.

SEWAS management committee is fully compliant with the Direction of Powers Regulations, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Regulations Wales). There is a partnership agreement in place for the 5 partner local authorities and membership representation from health and education. Monitoring and governance of the service is the responsibility of the management committee, who meet on a quarterly basis.

The service is delivered within a functional model and as such has three distinct teams. Recruitment & Assessment; who recruit and assess prospective adopters and undertake stepparent adoption work. Family Finding who match and place children with adopters and Adoption Support who provide post adoption support to all adoptive families as required, provide independent support to birth families, access to adoption records for adopted adults and facilitate indirect letterbox contact for adopted children and their birth families. All three teams are supported by a Business Support team within the service.

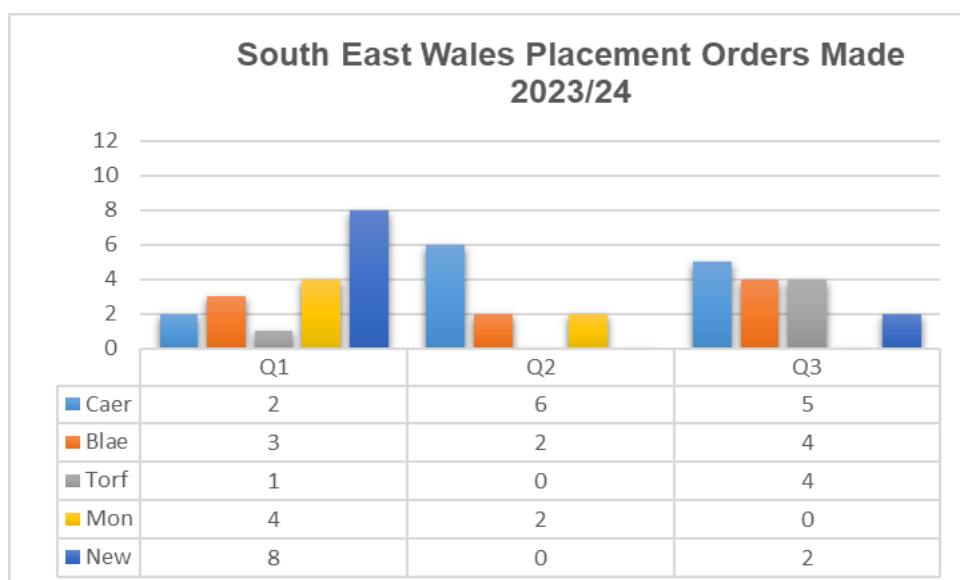
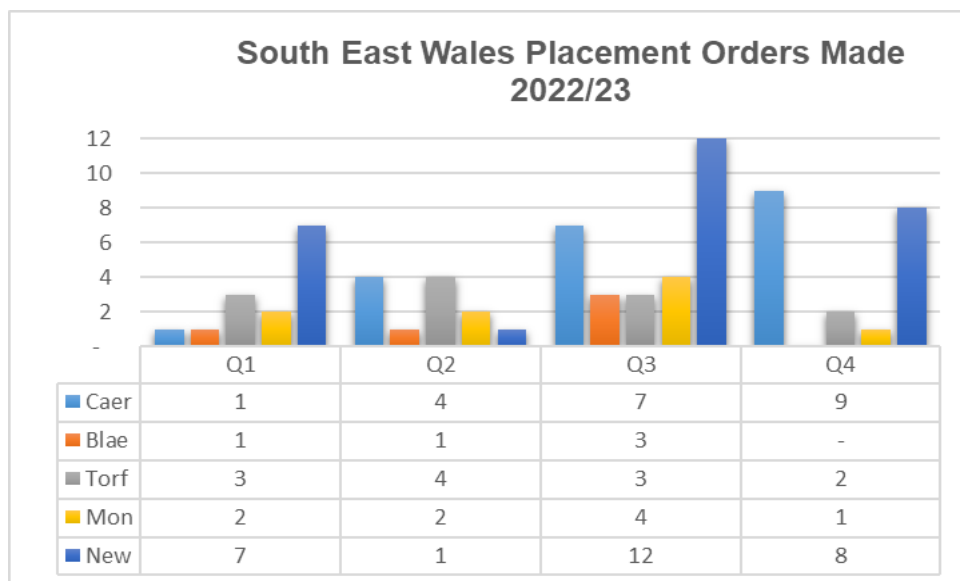
SEWAS also has the added advantage of having direct access to a Psychology Service that provides a range of services to staff, children and adopters in all aspects of adoption support. There are several staff providing adoption support as a result of ongoing Welsh Government investment money, allowing the service to promote initiatives like Pathways (previously known as TESSA) and Connected, as well as specific roles to support the matching and transitions of children to adoption. Adopted children and their families, birth families of adopted children and adopted adults from the Newport area all have access to this provision.

SEWAS holds Adoption panel weekly and has operated a central list for panel members since January 2018. This list works well for the service in terms of availability and a greater diversity of panel members attending each panel. Panel memberships includes professionals from social care, health and education and independent members. Newport has three social workers who are part of panel membership rota.

Performance information

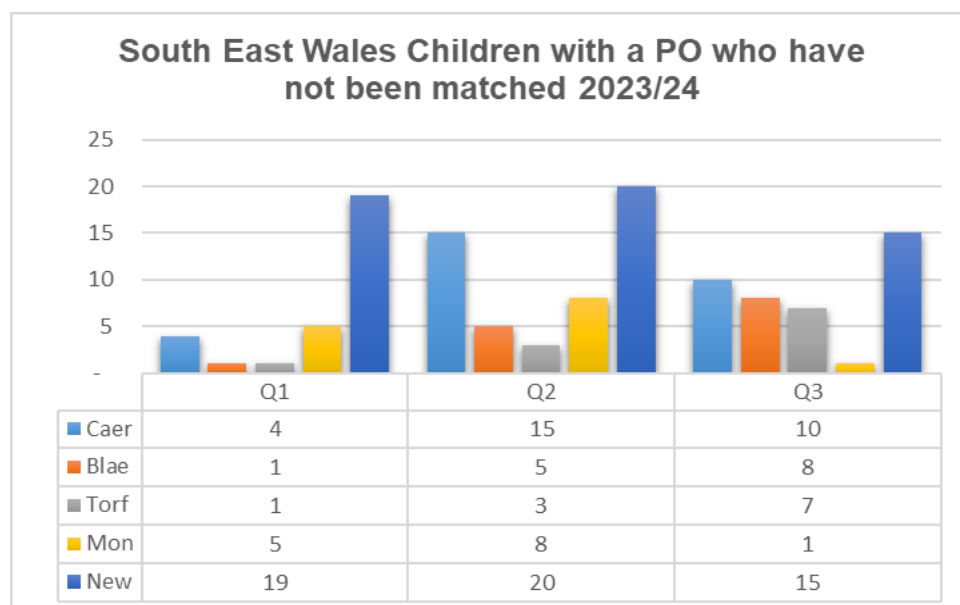
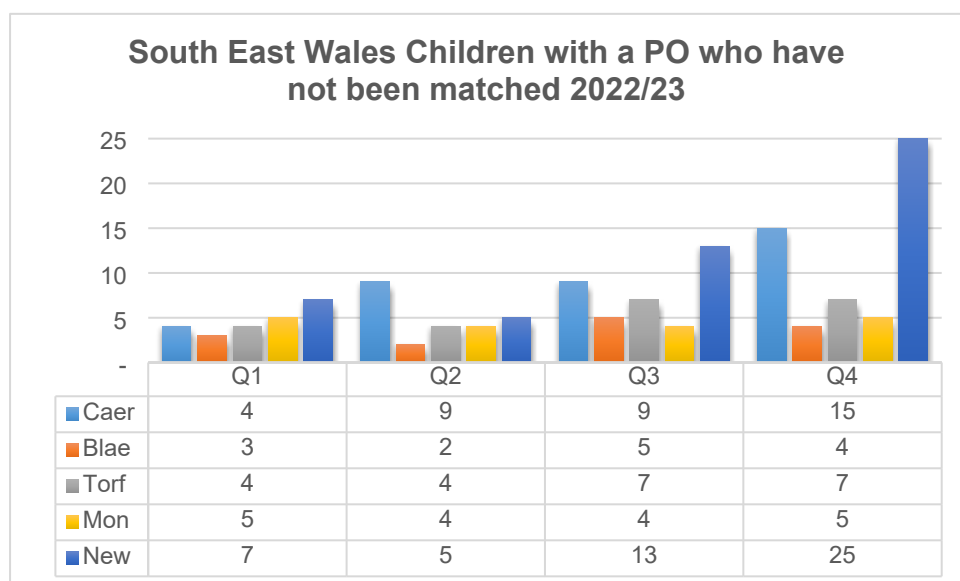
Performance measures are gathered quarterly by each region and submitted to the national adoption service. The following graphs show the areas where performance is measured and include 3 quarters from the current year and the previous year figures. Newport's information appears in the darker blue colour in each graph. It is useful to note that figures vary from each LA primarily linked to size of population in each LA.

Placement Orders Made for children.



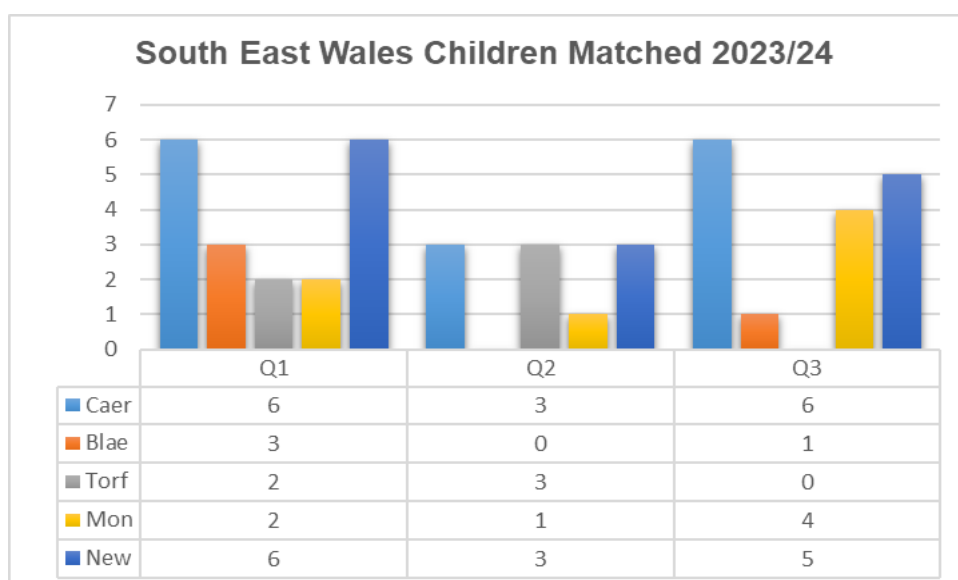
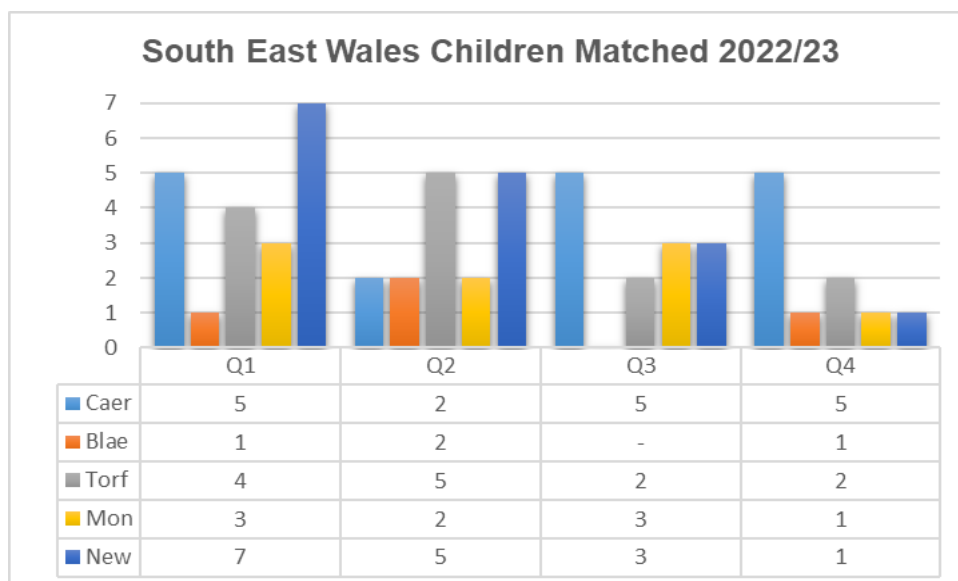
In 2022/23 the number of placement orders made for Newport children was 28. This current year for 3 quarters there are 10 placements orders so there is likely to be a reduction this year.

Children with a placement order waiting to be matched with adopters



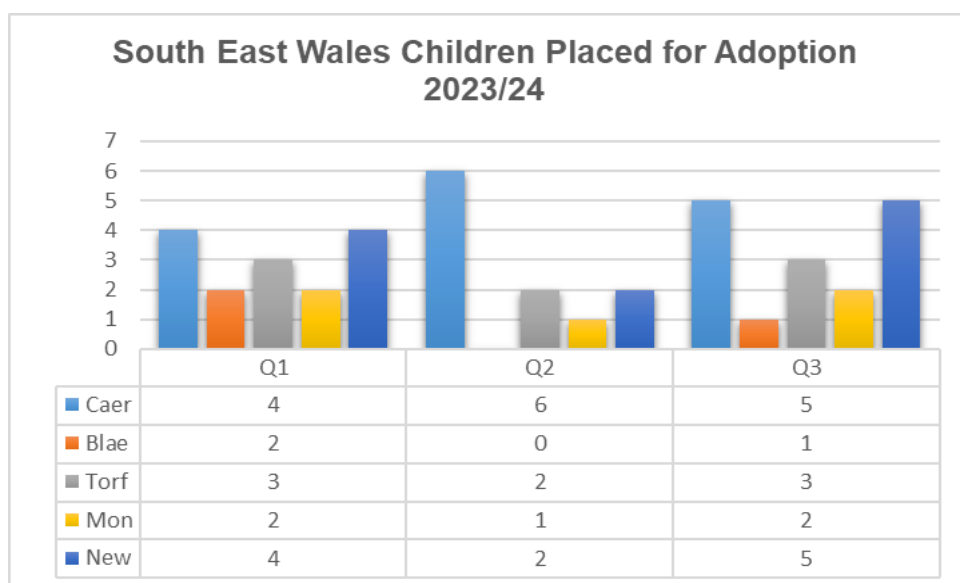
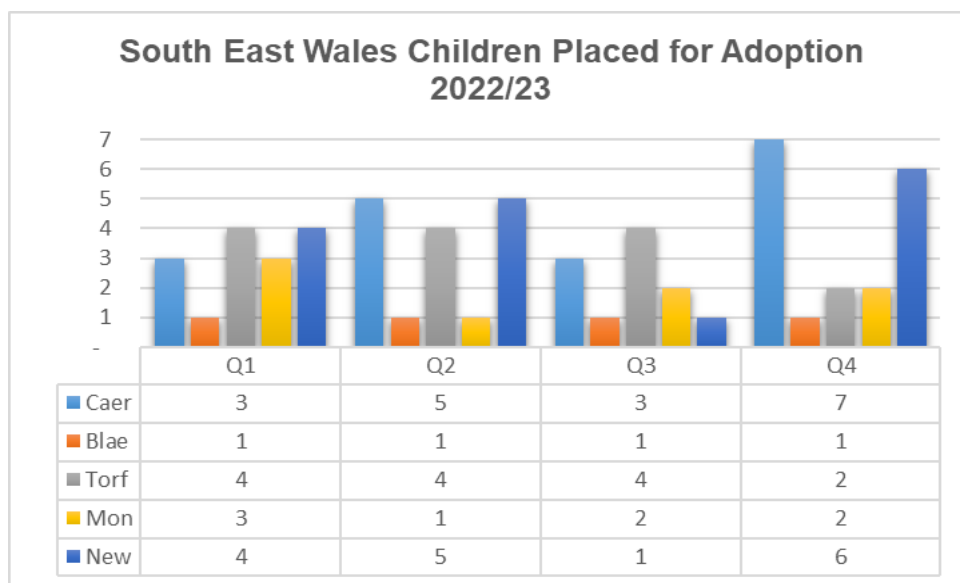
The number of Newport children with a placement order who are not yet matched with adopters is currently 15 and we can see this number was higher at the end of the previous financial year at 25. It was noted that some Newport children were waiting longer for a match than children in some of the other LA's and by looking into the reasons we found this was due to a high number of approved adopters waiting being from the Newport area therefore those adopters could not be considered for Newport children.

Childrens matched with adopters



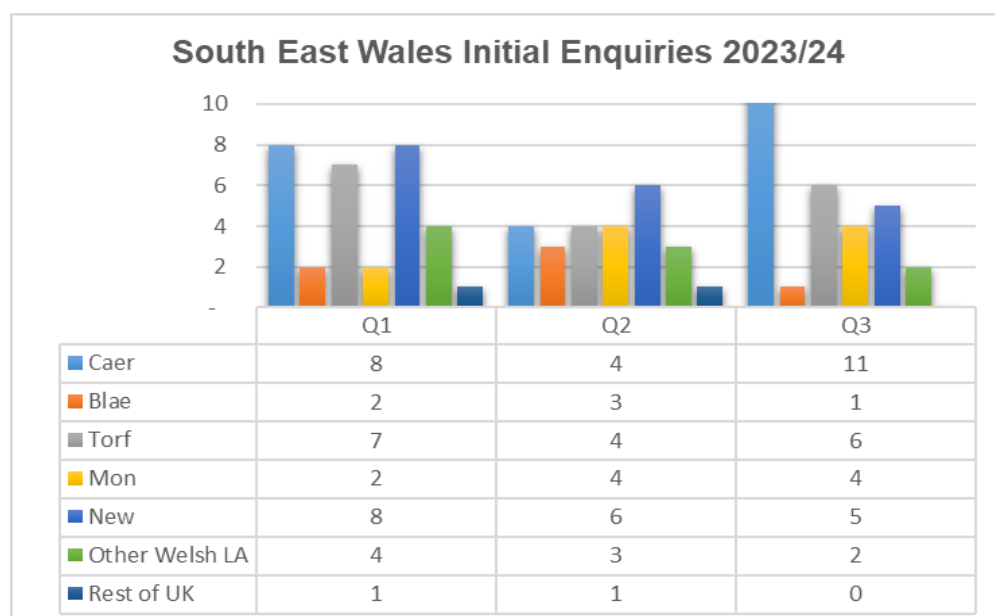
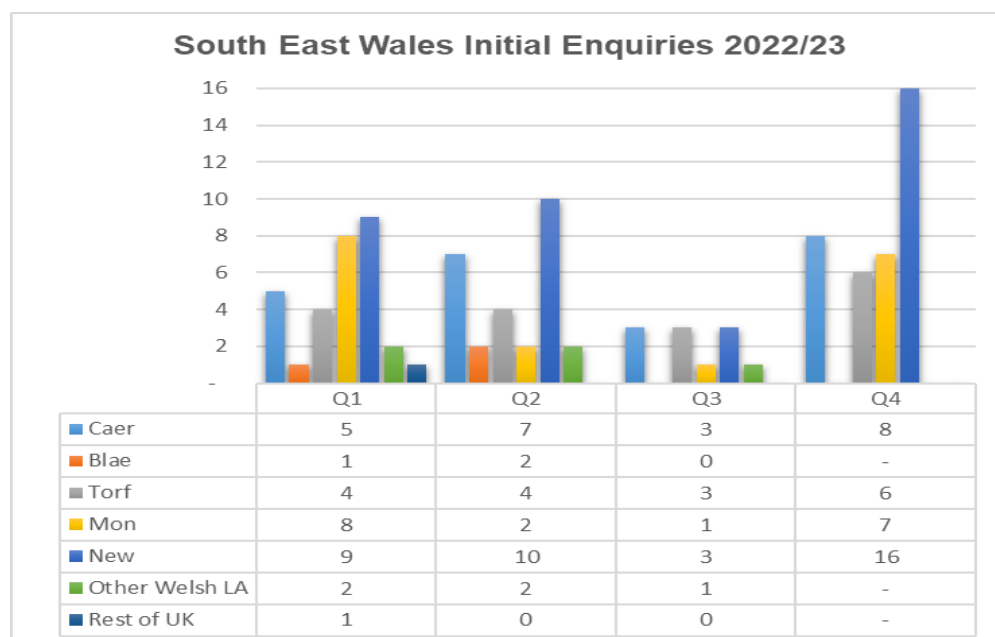
From April 2023 – December 2023 14 Newport children were matched for adoption. 3 of these children are being adopted by their foster carers so SEWAS also undertook child specific adoption assessments for these. 16 Newport children were matched for adoption in the previous financial year.

Children placed with adopters.



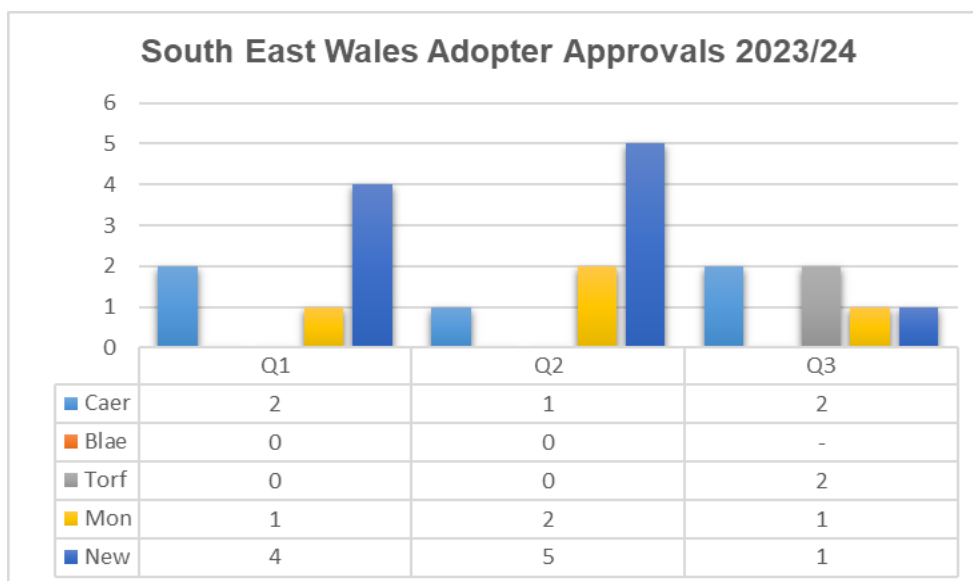
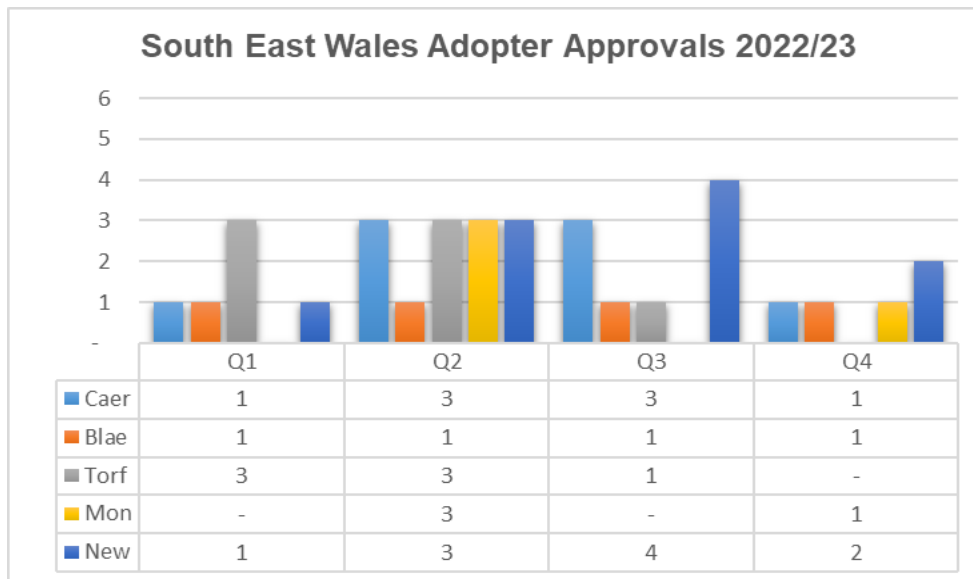
11 Newport Children have been placed with their adopters up to quarter 3 of most recent financial year and 16 children were placed with adopters in the previous financial year.

Enquiries to adopt.



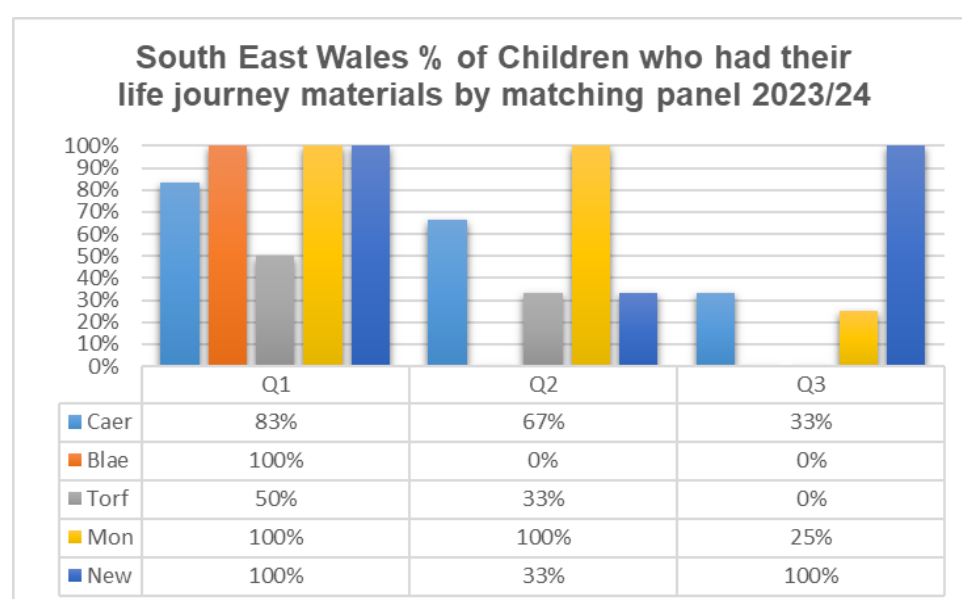
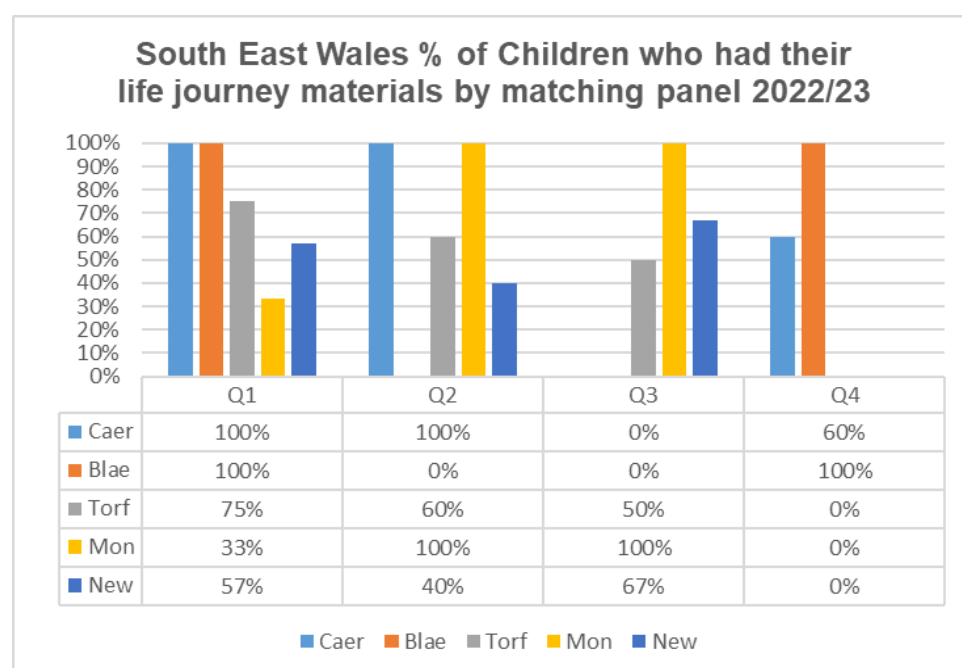
Enquiries to adopt reduced right across Wales post covid pandemic. There were 38 enquiries from people living in Newport in 22/23 and for 23/24 first 3 quarters there were 19 enquiries. SEWAS have been targeting marketing in areas outside of Newport more recently due the need to recruit more adopters from outside Newport area. National adoption week in October 2023 saw an increase in enquiries compared to other times throughout the year. SEWAS service manager and a SEWAS adopter were on a radio Wales show during that week raising awareness of adoption.

Adopters' approvals

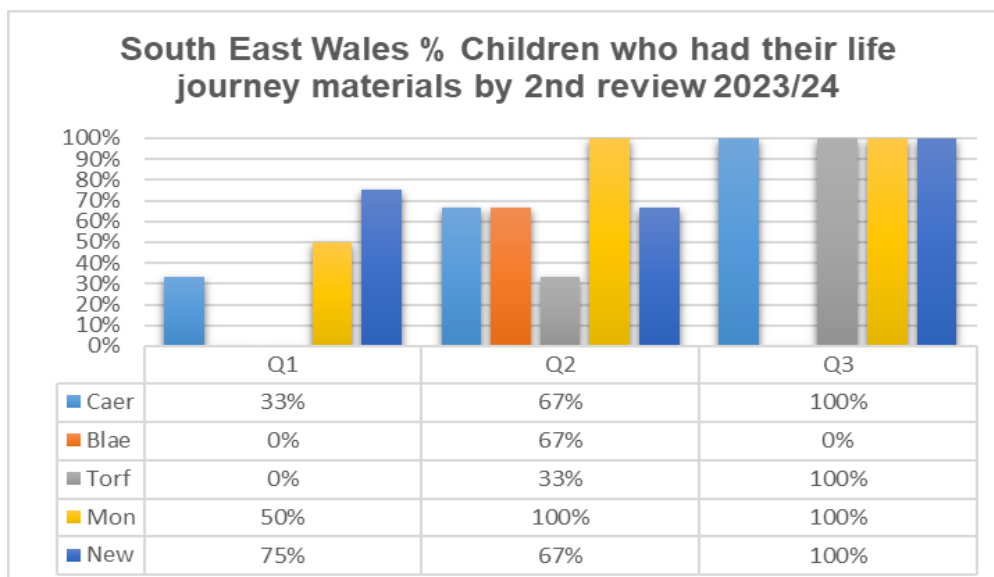
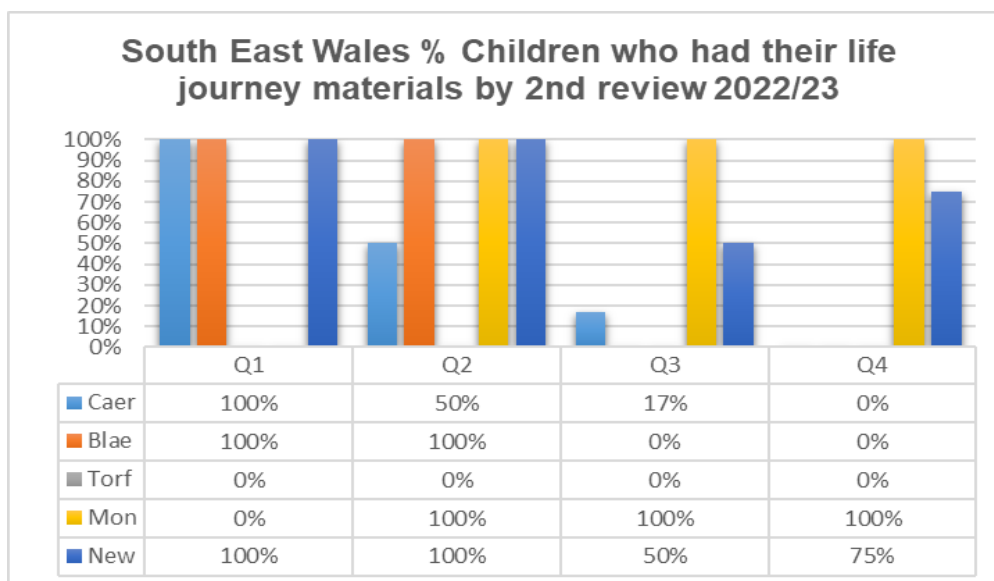


We can see that adopter approvals are higher in Newport area than the other LA's in both financial years, with 10 approvals each year. As identified earlier the higher proportion of adopters living in Newport can mean Newport children may wait longer to be matched with SEWAS adopters. When SEWAS adopters cannot be identified then a search is made outside of SEWAS which will incur a cost for the local authority.

Life journey materials for children.



NAS identified an area of improvement across all of Wales being the production and quality of children's life journey materials. Most local authorities fluctuate with meeting this target and we can see that most recently in quarter 3 of the last financial year Newport reached 100% which is promising.



By the child's 2nd adoption review; when they are living with their adopters, all should have received their life journey materials. Each child placed for adoption has a Life journey book and this is completed by their social worker or a support worker within the team. Alongside this SEWAS has a life journey work coordinator who provides advice support and training to all staff involved. Over the year 20 staff from Newport children services have accessed training or a drop-in session with the SEWAS worker and this links to the improvements seen in this area.

Children

SEWAS receives referrals from childcare social workers at an early stage for children when twin tracking/parallel planning. A family finding social worker is allocated to link in with the child's social worker throughout the process of matching a child with adopters. In an addition designated social workers within SEWAS undertake Understanding the child days for children over 2 years old. For these days a trauma nurture timeline is completed and shared at the day which is attended by all those involved in the child's life. This good practice is followed in line with NAS Good practice guidance which SEWAS contributed to the making of. These days aim to enhance prospective adopters' knowledge and understanding of a child's needs and assist the matching process. It also assists all professionals involved to consider what the support needs may be for the future. In the past year there have been 10 understanding the child days for Newport children and direct work undertaken with 5 of these children to aid transitions to the adoptive homes.

Adoption Support

As mentioned earlier there are several areas of adoption support work. Over a year SEWAS received 59 requests/enquiries for support for adoptive families, 18 of these were for families living in the Newport area (or for children placed by Newport within the first 3 years of their adoption). These families have an assessment of adoption support needs and a support plan to follow this with a plan of intervention. All adoptive families can access 'Pathways' and 'Connected' both run by Adoption UK. Pathways offers a parent partner; like a buddy for adopters and some additional training/workshops and Connected is a group run monthly for adopted young people facilitated by Adoption UK and a support worker from SEWAS.

There are a number of tiers of support to adoptive families and there are times that the adoption service will need to refer to the relevant LA for additional support or intervention. All safeguarding matters are referred to the LA in line with All Wales safeguarding procedures. Some families where the adoption service and the LA are involved can present dilemmas as to who is best placed to provide the support. This can be due to a child presenting with behaviours that may or may not be linked to fact

they are adopted and some issues that SEWAS workers will not have expertise in. Also, sadly for some families facing crisis and with risks to the stability of the adoptive family then the LA have access to interventions that SEWAS doesn't and there is then a need for the LA to become involved as well as SEWAS. These situations are in the minority however SEWAS is aware of the pressures on childcare social workers and some frustrations they may feel with the process. Another area of challenge is where an adoption support need is identified that is outside of anything SEWAS can provide, and financial support is required to meet that need. SEWAS doesn't have access to a budget for this so would need to refer to the relevant LA for a child. This puts pressure on the LA as except for Caerphilly none of the other 4 LA's have a separated budget for adoption. SEWAS utilises its relationship and strong links with Newport via adoption lead service manager Rhian Brook to manage requests for adoptive families to alert the frontline teams at point of referrals and avoid duplication for families.

Check ins with adoptive families are a new initiative following good practice guidance. 15 Newport families have been offered a check in review one year post adoption order with an aim for signposting to generic support groups/events/activities growing their adoption community and creating earlier links for support if required.

SEWAS held an event for adoptive families at Llandegfedd reservoir last summer, which was also attended by Julie Morgan, Deputy Minister, she spoke with adoptive parents on the day and provided some feedback for our adopters newsletter.

Birth Parent Support

All birth parents whose children are referred for adoption are offered support from SEWAS. In a year 24 birth parents took up individual support and 11 of these were parents from Newport. This support includes supporting them through the adoption process, goodbye contact sessions and with a one-off meeting with prospective adopters where appropriate. There is also a birth parent group that runs 4-6 times per year. In December 2023 13 birth mothers attended this group and received gifts donated by staff from SEWAS. As well as receiving support from SEWAS workers birth parents are also referred on to Reflect service; who work with parents who have has children permanently removed from their care.

Adopted Adults

52 requests for access to adoption records were received over the year, 6 of these were from adopted persons living in Newport area. SEWAS doesn't provide an intermediary service for adopted persons as there isn't a statutory requirement to do this however Disclosure of Adoption Information Post Commencement regulations (2005) legislation means that for anyone adopted after 31st December 2005 SEWAS will need to provide access to records and search and reunion work with adopted adults and birth relatives.

Letterbox (indirect contact)

Indirect letterbox contact for adopted children is managed by SEWAS. From April 2023 to March 2024, 234 letterbox files were managed for children placed by Newport LA. These 234 files generated 820 exchanges between children and their birth families. Overall for all five LA's the service managed 1091 files which facilitated 2946 exchanges.

Budget

In January 2023 a financial review of SEWAS was undertaken instructed by Gwent directors and Heads of Service. There was an exercise to consider what savings of 5% and 10% would mean for the service. The outcome and decision from this review was to end the contract for accommodation in the offices at Mamhilad park Estate and move to share office space with the Emergency Duty Team who are also based at Mamhilad.

Compliments

Following Circle of security groups - An adopter commented:

"I would advise anyone considering attending to do so in a heartbeat. I think it is a key course with valuable information every parent should be aware of. The course coordinators do a brilliant job of bringing the course to life with valuable real life examples."

From adopters:

"You listened and talked me through the process, helping put to bed our worries and concerns. I just wanted to thank you for this as now we have just finished our final court hearing having adopted our 2 amazing boys. I always intended to reach out to thank you and to update. From that initial phone consultation, we had the motivation to adopt thanks to you talking us through the process and our worries at the time. I just wanted to reach out to say a huge thank you again."

From Adopter receiving adoption support:

"You have been the only one that has offered any help, even when it's difficult you listen and try to support us so thank you."

Feedback from a birth parent and adopters meeting:

"I wanted to feedback. It was such a beautiful meeting, moving and emotional but so valuable. X was amazing; she really showed how she wants the boys to be loved and cared for and put them above her. C, you clearly prepared her so well and I can see she really values the relationship with you. Relationships are so important for valuable work. It was truly emotional; something I like they will think about for the foreseeable future."

Feedback from a professional:

Childcare social worker *'the complexity of adoption support cases is something I have never realised in this depth before, it has been eye opening working alongside you.'*

Feedback from a school:

'It has been helpful to have the space to think about how I respond to him, I find it really helpful thinking about why he is doing what he does not getting stuck in the behaviour. Sometimes I wish in the moment I could ring you and say right this did work this didn't, let's have a think. But I'm starting to be able to do it myself now and with colleagues.'

Complaints

An Adopted adult complained about length of time to access her records. The delay was caused by a misspelling of her birth surname on the original archived file at the time she was adopted.

Future developments

The key priorities of the NAS Adopt Cymru 2025 plan are:

- The best families for our adopted children
- Great Adoption Support when and where it is needed
- Healthier contact through better birth family services
- Better adoption records and access to information at any age.

For SEWAS, in respect of adopters, our focus is to recruit and assess enough adopters to meet the National target set for the year for the SEWAS region. The target for 2023/24 was set at 33 adopters. This target took into account 19 adopters who were waiting at the time the figures were calculated, so an expectation of 52 adopters over a year. Taking into account quarter 4 data that is not yet verified SEWAS has met the target of 33 new approvals for the year. SEWAS is aware of the need to recruit adopters from areas outside of Newport area and we are targeting events in other LA's. Our prospective adopters will benefit from transitional support where needed and will have access to the Adoption UK Passport for additional support.

During the last year Welsh Early Permanence (WEP) has been introduced in Wales where prospective adopters can be assessed as foster carers alongside adoption to allow a child to be placed with them in a fostering to adopt situation. SEWAS has one approved WEP carer with a recent placement and we are currently assessing 2 more WEP carers and would anticipate this to be considered in care planning options for Newport children in the next year.

In line with the good practice guide for contact and the NAS 2025 plan, SEWAS will continue to work alongside childcare social workers to consider contact planning for children with a plan for adoption, as we are beginning to consider alternative methods of contact outside of letterbox exchanges. This could also bring about challenges for the service when we consider how contact is monitored in the early stages; for

example, supported by a professional and how resource is managed to meet this need.

A challenge for the service could potentially be the demand in relation to post commencement referrals for adopted adults and birth relatives, the volume of these will be monitored over the next 6 months to ascertain how best to utilise existing resources to meet this need.

SEWAS colleagues will continue to work alongside our local authorities to improve performance in relation to life journey work by continuing to roll out workshops and drop-in sessions.

The service is also updating internal policy and procedures to ensure SEWAS procedures are in line with this All Wales Policy and procedures for Adoption.

Becky Jones

Service Manager

South East Wales Adoption Service

2nd April 2024



Scrutiny Report

Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Part 1

Date: 24th April 2024

Subject **Fostering Service Update**

Author Scrutiny Adviser

The following has been invited to attend for this item:

Invitee:	Designation
Sally Jenkins	Strategic Director – Social Services
Natalie Poyner	Head of Children Services
Rhian Brook	Service Manager – Childrens Teams
Louise Quatermass	Residential and Resources Service Manager
Councillor Stephen Marshall	Cabinet Member for Children Services

Section A – Committee Guidance and Recommendations

1. Recommendations to the Committee

The Committee is requested:

- To consider the Fostering Service Update Report
- To determine whether it wishes to make any comments.

2 Context

Background

- 2.1 The Committee approved its Forward Work Programme on 19 July 2023 to include an update report from Fostering Services in its April 2024 Committee Meeting. ***(A link to the Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships held on 19 July 2023 Report and Minute is included in the Background Papers in Section 7 of this report.)***
- 2.2 Newport's Children Looked After population stands at approximately 349 children, the majority of whom (83%) are placed with the local authority's own foster carers. The authority's priority is to support these vulnerable young people as close to home as possible, maintaining their essential family, friend and community connections through local placements. To this end, Newport has a strategic plan in place to reduce its reliance on external residential and independent fostering agency (IFA) provisions, aiming instead to meet children's needs through an enhanced in-house foster care capacity.

3 Information Submitted to the Committee

- 3.1 The following information is attached to the report for the Committee's consideration:

Appendix A - Fostering Service Update Report

4. Suggested Areas of Focus

4.1 Role of the Committee

The role of the Committee is to:

- **Consider the report upon Adoption Services**
- **Assess and make comment on:**
 - The progress being made by the Fostering Service in Wales and developments at both a regional and local basis;
 - How effectively the Services worked together upon developments to date;
 - What mitigating actions have been put in place to address risks;
 - What barriers are there to achieving outcomes.
- **In drawing its conclusions, the Committee should assess:**
 - What was the overall conclusion on the information contained within the report?
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4.2 Suggested Lines of Enquiry

In considering the report, the Committee may wish to explore some of the following areas of focus:

- To what extent have objectives been achieved?
- How effectively have Services worked together to achieve outcomes? What lessons have been learned as a result and how would they be fed back?
- What have been the resource implications of partnership working? Has it maximised the resources available?

- How is the fostering service monitoring and evaluating the impact and outcomes of the efforts to "eliminate private profit from the care of children looked after"? What metrics are being used to track progress?
- What specific recruitment and retention strategies are being employed to increase the pool of kinship foster carers and supported lodgings carers, beyond just general foster carers?
- How is the fostering service engaging with children and young people in care to understand their experiences and preferences when it comes to placement type and location? How are their voices being incorporated into service planning and development?
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4.3 Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act

The Committee's consideration of the report should consider how working in partnership is maximising its contribution to the five ways of working. The following are examples of the types of questions to consider:

5 Ways of Working	Types of Questions to consider:
Long-term The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.	What long-term trends will impact upon service outcomes?
	How will changes in long term needs impact upon outcomes in the future?
Prevention Prevent problems occurring or getting worse.	What issues are facing service users at the moment?
	How are Services addressing these issues to prevent a future problem?
Integration Considering how public bodies' wellbeing objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.	Are there any other organisations providing similar / complementary services?
	How do the Services' performance in the Plans impact upon the services of other public bodies and their objectives?
Collaboration Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the organisation itself).	Who has the Service been working with to deliver outcomes?
	How are the Services using knowledge / information / good practice of others to inform / influence outcomes?
Involvement The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area, which the body serves.	How have Services sought the views of those who are impacted by service delivery?
	How have Services taken into account diverse communities in decision-making?

Section B – Supporting Information

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Characteristics of Effective Partnership Scrutiny set out in the Guidance for Local Authority Scrutiny Committees on the scrutiny of Public Services Boards issued by Welsh Government in August 2017 can equally be applied to the scrutiny of other Partnerships and states that:

“Research into the practice of collaborative or joint scrutiny in England and Wales identifies that arrangements are effective when they demonstrate the following characteristics:

Characteristics of effective partnership scrutiny:

- Scrutiny regards itself as a form of ‘critical friendship with positive intent’ in which scrutiny practitioners act as advocates for the success of joint working.
- Collaborative performance is evaluated from the citizen’s perspective.
- Strong efforts are made to understand the complexity of partnership arrangements and to facilitate learning about the culture and assumptions of different organizations.
- Scrutiny creates positive expectations by focussing on issues regarded as useful to the partnership or where there is consensus that ‘things need to change’.
- Scrutiny demonstrates intellectual independence and investigative rigour in all of its activities.
- Scrutiny demonstrates a positive impact by developing clear, timely, evidence-based recommendations aimed at enhancing collaborative performance.
- Scrutiny critically evaluates its own performance utilising partnership perspectives.

(A link to the full Welsh Government Guidance is included in Section 7 of this report in the Background Papers for Members’ information.)

6 Links to Council Policies and Priorities

- 6.1 The report links with the Wellbeing-being Objectives and Aims of the Council’s Corporate Plan 2022 – 2027;

Well-being Objective	1 – Economy, Education and Skills	2 – Newport’s Environment and Infrastructure	3 – Preventative and Equitable Community and Social Care	4 – An Inclusive, Fair and Sustainable Council
Aims:	Newport is a thriving and growing city that offers excellent education and aspires to provide opportunities for all.	A city that seeks to protect and enhance our environment whilst reducing our carbon footprint and preparing for a sustainable and digital future.	Newport is a supportive city where communities and care are at the heart of what we do.	Newport City Council is an inclusive organisation that places social value, fairness and sustainability at its core.

7 Background Papers

- [Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships 23 July 2023 Report \(Item 7\) and Minutes](#)
- [Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships 4 December 2019 Report and Minutes \(Fostering Update\)](#)
- [The Essentials - Wellbeing of Future Generation Act \(Wales\)](#)
- [Welsh Government Guidance for Local Authority Scrutiny Committees on the Scrutiny of Public Services Boards](#) (Issued August 2017)
- [Corporate Plan 2022-27](#)

Report Completed: 24 April 2024

Briefing report to Performance and Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Date: 24th April 2024

Subject: Fostering services update

Purpose: To ensure Members are fully sighted on the progress and plans of the fostering service. To scrutinise the report and consult scrutiny on future reports.

Background:

Within Newport we currently have a Children Looked After population of around 349 children. Children are cared for by Local Authority foster carers, supported lodgings carers, Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) carers and residential homes. 15 NCC foster carers are family members caring for their relatives. These are children subject to Care Orders due to the level of risks posed to the carers/children by the parental circumstances but where alternative family members have the capacity to provide safe, positive and nurturing care.

Of all the children living with foster carers, around 83% are in NCC fostering arrangements. NCC fostering arrangements include children placed with general foster carers, kinship foster carers and under regulation 26 arrangements.

The priority is always to support children as close to home as possible and in settings that most fully meet their needs for the short, medium and long term. There is a long-term strategic plan to return our Out of County children to Newport from both Residential and Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements. If we do not work towards a long-term aim to increase foster carer numbers then costs of IFA placements will continue to increase.

Our aim as a fostering service is to recruit local families to provide foster placements within the local authority boundaries to be able to maintain the child's links with their family, friends, and community.

Present:

Eliminate profit from care

The Welsh Government's Programme for Government contains a number of key commitments relating to a new vision for Children's Social Care. At its heart, the Welsh Government wants to see fewer children and young people entering care.

For children in care, the aim is for them to remain as close to home as possible so they can continue to be part of their community and for their stay in care to be for a short period.

The Programme for Government contains a commitment to 'eliminate private profit from the care of children looked after during the next Senedd term.'

Eliminating profit from care is about transitioning to a not for profit model of care in Wales, focussing on values and not finances, fundamentally changing how we care for children and their families as part of a network of local, community-based services that have the welfare of the young person as the absolute priority. The aim is to ensure that public money invested in accommodation for care experienced children is not extracted as profit, but instead is reinvested back into the system to support better outcomes, services and professional development.

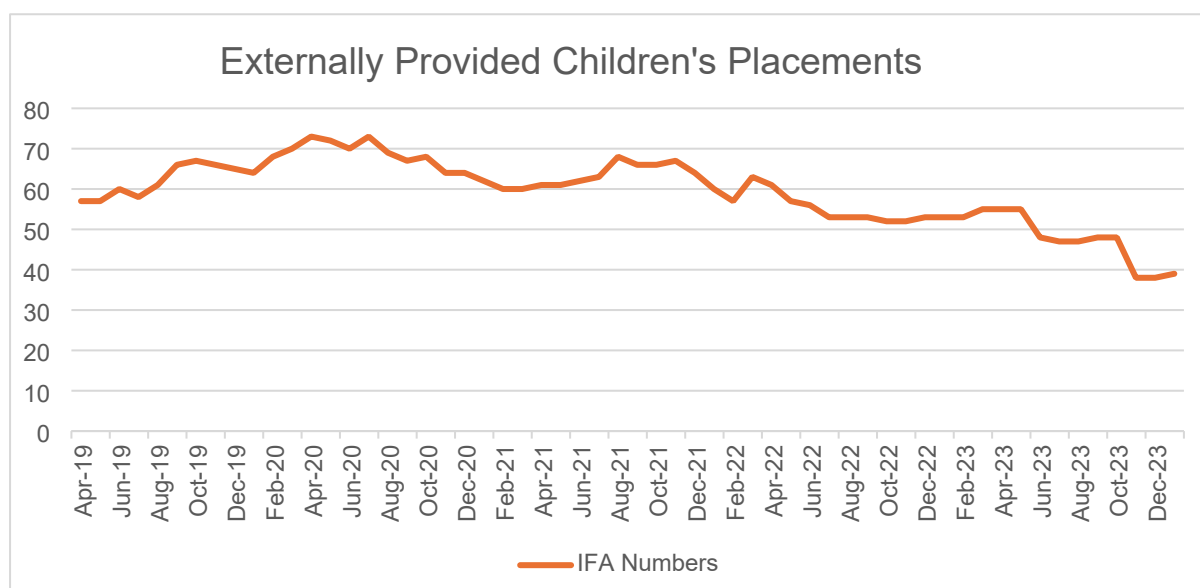
Newport has seen a steady reduction in the use of IFA foster carers and there are currently 35 children cared for by IFA foster carers. Of this number, 22 are placed with commercial IFA carers and 13 with 3rd sector, not for profit IFA carers. We continue to place more children with our in-house foster carers than with agency foster carers.

Of the 35 children living with IFA foster carers, 27 children live outside the local authority boundary, which is 77.1% of the placements we have commissioned from the agencies.

As of 31st March 2024, we have one parent and child foster placement, commissioned via an independent fostering agency. This specialism is an area of work that is being specifically targeted for development in-house.

Newport have recently commissioned the development of a full parent and child training programme, in order to be able to upskill foster carers to be able to proactively support parents and their babies from an early stage.

The chart below demonstrates the reduction in use of IFA carers over the past 5 years.



Work is being undertaken under the elimination of profit agenda to continue to reduce the number of children cared for by commercial IFA foster carers.

In order to support this, we need to continue recruiting more fostering households and supporting the retention of approved foster carers to continue to be able to offer local placements for our children.

Having a dedicated budget for foster carer recruitment and a recruitment officer is invaluable to our recruitment activity.

Recruitment

Foster Wales is the national network of 22 Welsh Local Authority fostering services. As part of their work, they have created specific National media campaigns to highlight Local Authority foster care.

There has been a significant national and combined LA recruitment effort in the past 3 years, focussing on both the recruitment and retention of LA foster carers.

Foster Wales successfully secured funding for a 2 year fixed term post of recruitment officer, within the Fostering team. This has provided a consistent and dedicated resource for recruitment, allowing us to respond to enquiries and take applicants up to the point of assessment, within consistent timescales.

As this was a national bid, funding posts across all 22 LA's, it has also created a national network of recruitment officers, through Foster Wales, to share good practice and support each other.

Newport's recruitment officer came into post at the end of July 23 and has already positively impacted upon marketing for recruitment, with 18 dedicated recruitment events to date.

These include;

- monthly coffee mornings in a local business venue,
- community events at the local train station and the Christmas Lights switch on,
- library drop in sessions,
- a charity Walk for NSPCC to raise money for the charity and awareness of fostering and
- presence at local supermarkets.

There have also been some notable campaigning events in Newport such as the "Bringing something to the table"; a celebrity chef event held at Newport Market and the support of Newport County football team, using a home game to invite one of our foster families to be match mascots, having an electronic board throughout the match with the details of Foster Wales Newport and making announcements throughout the match in regard to fostering.

Below is the recruitment activity data covering the last 12 months.

Enquiries	Initial Home Visits	Assessments allocated	Assessments completed	Assessments ended at stage 1.	Fostering households approved	Number of places
89	15	12	7	2	8	9

Fees

In Newport this year we have been able to build in a 3% increase to the entire allowance for all Foster carers, within our allocated budget.

The average annual cost per child placed with an NCC foster carer is £19,916

Amongst their programme of work, Foster Wales are undertaking a project to seek a harmonisation of foster carer fees across all Welsh LA's. The work was due to complete at the end of March 2024 however this has been delayed.

Welsh Government asked Foster Wales to complete the work necessary to identify the cost and produce a business case to meet any detriment.

In April 2023 Foster Wales commissioned an external partner, Practice Solutions, to support this work. A project steering group has been established, including local authority finance representatives, regional development managers and the WLGA.

Welsh Government have been made aware that local authorities will require significant investment in order to achieve harmonisation, however this is something that there is a strong will to achieve.

Future:

We will continue our work to recruit and retain general NCC foster carers through our dedicated recruitment campaigns.

We will move forward with recruiting and training foster carers who can offer placements to parents and their babies in order to support families to stay together

We will focus on developing specialist fostering placements with a psychological support team to avoid residential admissions unless in the best interest of the child.

Risk:

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
Insufficient numbers of foster carers to meet demand	H	M	Recruitment strategy in place, supported by Foster Wales. A dedicated officer is in post to focus on recruitment activity. Packages of support are being developed and	Head of Children's Services, Strategic Director of People

			<p>include advice clinics with a psychology team.</p> <p>24/25 increase in foster carer fees to help with recruitment and retention.</p>	
<p>Insufficient specialist carers to support children with the most complex needs.</p>	H	H	<p>MyST team are in place to offer intense support to identified placements.</p> <p>Joint working in place across service teams in order to identify the correct support practitioners.</p> <p>Targeted recruitment campaigns planned</p>	<p>Head of Children's Services, Strategic Director of People</p>

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Scrutiny Report

Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships

Part 1

Date: 24th April 2024

Subject Scrutiny Adviser Report

Author Scrutiny Adviser

The following people have been invited to attend for this item:

Invitee:	Role
Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Adviser)	Present the Committee with the Scrutiny Adviser Report for discussion and update the Committee on any changes.

Section A – Committee Guidance and Recommendations

Recommendations to the Committee

The Committee is asked to:

1. Action Plan

Consider the Actions from previous meetings (**Appendix 1**):

- *Note the responses for the actions;*
- *Determine if any further information / action is required;*
- *Agree to receive an update on outstanding issues at the next meeting.*

2 Context

Background

- 2.1 The purpose of a forward work programme is to help ensure Councillors achieve organisation and focus in the undertaking of enquiries through the Overview and Scrutiny function. Effective work programming is essential to ensure that the work of Overview and Scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services.
- 2.2 Further information about the work programming process, including the procedures for referring new business to the programme, can be found in our Scrutiny Handbook on the Council's Scrutiny webpages (www.newport.gov.uk/scrutiny).

- 2.3 The Centre for Public Scrutiny's Good Scrutiny Guide recognises the importance of the forward work programme. In order to 'lead and own the process', it states that Councillors should have ownership of their Committee's work programme, and be involved in developing, monitoring and evaluating it. The Good Scrutiny Guide also states that, in order to make an impact, the scrutiny workload should be co-ordinated and integrated into corporate processes, to ensure that it contributes to the delivery of corporate objectives, and that work can be undertaken in a timely and well-planned manner.

Action Sheet from Previous Meetings

- 2.4 Attached at **Appendix 1** is the Action Sheet from the Committee meetings. The updated completed actions are included in the table.
- 2.5 Any actions that do not have a response will be included on the Action Sheet at the next meeting to ensure that the Committee can keep track of outstanding actions.

3 Information Submitted to the Committee

- 3.1 The following information is attached:

Appendix 1: Action Sheet from Previous Meetings.

4. Suggested Areas of Focus

Role of the Committee

The role of the Committee in considering the report is to:

- **Forward Work Programme Update - Appendix 1**

Consider:

- Are there any amendments to the topics scheduled to be considered at the next Committee meeting?
- Are there any additional invitees that the Committee requires to fully consider the topics?
- Is there any additional information that the Committee would like to request?

- **Action Sheet from Previous Meetings - Appendix 2**

- Consider the responses to the actions from the meeting;
- Are you satisfied that you have received the necessary information?
- Are there any further issues arising from the responses that you would like to raise?

For the actions that do not have responses – these actions will be rolled over to the next meeting and reported back to the Committee.

Section B – Supporting Information

5. Links to Council Policies and Priorities

- 5.1 Having proper work programming procedures in place ensures that the work of Overview and Scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services, contributes to the delivery of corporate objectives, and ensures that work can be undertaken in a timely and well-planned manner.
- 5.2 This report relates to the Committee's Work Programme, Actions from Committee's and Information Reports that support the achievement of the Scrutiny Committee, in accordance with the Law and Regulation Service Plan, Objectives, Actions and Measures and the Wellbeing objectives.

6 Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act

- 6.1 The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 which came into force in April 2016 sets the context for the move towards long term planning of services.
- 6.2 **General questions**
- How is this area / policy affected by the new legislation?
 - How will this decision / policy / proposal impact upon future generations? What is the long term impact?
 - What evidence is provided to demonstrate WFGA has been / is being considered?
 - Evidence from Community Profiles / other data?
 - Evidence of links to Wellbeing Assessment / Objectives / Plan?
- 6.3 **Wellbeing Goals**
- How are the Wellbeing goals reflected in the policy / proposal / action?
 - *A prosperous Wales*
 - *A resilient Wales*
 - *A healthier Wales*
 - *A more equal Wales*
 - *A Wales of cohesive communities*
 - *A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language*
 - *A globally responsible Wales*
- 6.4 **Sustainable Development Principles**
- Does the report / proposal demonstrate how as an authority we are working in accordance with the sustainable development principles from the act when planning services?
 - **Long Term**
The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs
 - **Prevention**
How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives
 - **Integration**
Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies
 - **Collaboration**

Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives

- **Involvement**

The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

7 Background Papers

- [The Essentials - Wellbeing of Future Generation Act \(Wales\)](#)
- [Corporate Plan 2022-2027](#)

Report Completed: 24th April 2024

Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships

ACTION SHEET – 20th March 2024

	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome
1	Education Achievement Service (EAS) - Value for Money (Phase 1 - December 2023)	The Committee considered the report of the Education Achievement Service (EAS) - Value for Money (Phase 1 - December 2023)	Scrutiny / EAS / Head of Education	ACTIONED – Comments from the Committee forwarded to the partnership on 21st March 2024.
2	Safer Newport Strategic Needs Assessment 2024-2029	The Committee considered the report of the Safer Newport Strategic Needs Assessment 2024-2029	Scrutiny / Safer Newport Partnership	ACTIONED – Comments from the Committee forwarded to the partnership on 21st March 2024.
2	Safer Newport Strategic Needs Assessment 2024-2029	The Committee requested to receive a data pack of the information about areas of residence which was collected during the public engagement but was not contained within the report to enhance their understanding of the geographical distribution and associated safety concerns within Newport.	Scrutiny / Safer Newport Partnership	COMPLETED – Information sent to the Committee on 17th April 2024
3	Serious Violence Duty: Gwent Strategic Needs Assessment and Strategy	The Committee considered the report of the Serious Violence Duty: Gwent Strategic Needs Assessment and Strategy	Scrutiny / Safer Newport Partnership	ACTIONED – Comments from the Committee forwarded to the partnership on 21st March 2024.

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Date: 20 March 2024

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors E Stowell-Corten (Chair), B Davies, P Drewett, F Hussain, J Jones, M Pimm, A Screen and K Whitehead

In Attendance: Sarah Morgan (Head of Education), Geraint Willington (Education Achievement Service (EAS) Director: Resources, Business and Governance), Marc Belli (Education Achievement Service (EAS) Principal School Improvement Partner), Ed Pryce (Education Achievement Service (EAS) Assistant Director: Policy and Strategy), Rhys Cornwall (Strategic Director – Transformation and Corporate), Janice Dent (Policy and Partnership Manager), Helen Gordan (Senior Policy and Partnership Officer), Sam Slater (Head of Strategy, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent), Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Adviser), Katharine Majer (Deputy Democratic and Electoral Services Manager), Taylor Strange (Governance Officer) and Emily Mayger (Governance Officer)

Apologies: Councillors C Baker-Westhead and A Morris

1 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Pimm declared an interest due to connections involved in agenda item 5 and 6.

The Committee members declared interests on item 4 as it relates to governorship on school boards within Newport.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6th December 2023

The Minutes of the previous meeting were held as a true and proper record.

3 Education Achievement Service (EAS) - Value for Money (Phase 1 - December 2023)

Invitees:

- Sarah Morgan (Head of Education)
- Geraint Willington (Education Achievement Service (EAS) Director: Resources, Business and Governance)
- Marc Belli (Education Achievement Service (EAS) Principal School Improvement Partner)
- Ed Pryce (Education Achievement Service (EAS) Assistant Director: Policy and Strategy)

The Head of Education introduced the report. The Education Achievement Service (EAS) Director: Resources, Business and Governance and Education Achievement Service (EAS) Assistant Director: Policy and Strategy gave an overview of the report.

The Committee asked the following:

- The Committee queried the importance of baselines for measuring school improvement. The EAS Assistant Director advised against ranking schools but saw baselines as necessary. He emphasised caution when setting baselines, focusing on working with schools over older methods of ranking schools. The Committee asked why few schools had set baselines. It was clarified that EAS, not schools, were setting baselines for themselves to highlight schools that required support.
- The Committee enquired about EAS's role. They were advised EAS was working with a 40-school regional sample but did not know which schools were involved in the sample. The Committee sought to understand EAS's input on choosing the sample schools and sample size. The EAS Director explained an independent advisor determined 30 was the minimum sample size, with 40 being above minimum based on constraints. The EAS Assistant Director further explained restricting the sample helped maintain better continuity in EAS's work. The Committee asked why the EAS were not aware of the sampled schools' identities. The EAS Assistant Director stated this reduces bias towards those schools.
- The Committee queried if EAS impacted School Development Plans. The EAS Principal School Improvement Partner noted schools set their own plans, with EAS supporting their needs. The EAS Assistant Director stated this was based on the 40-school sample, not all schools. The Head of Education explained schools evaluate themselves, with Officers helping to analyse development plans' focus on aims and objectives.
- The Committee noted the increased funding gap for EAS and asked if students would get priority with additional funds. The EAS Director: Resources, Business and Governance explained EAS strived to work within provided funding, ensuring funds went to the right place.
- The Committee asked if EAS would use technology like Artificial Intelligence (AI). The EAS Assistant Director noted they do not directly implement technology changes in schools, as this responsibility lies with the local authority, but they do encourage schools to facilitate its use. The EAS's internal team uses technology and training is being created to address schools' fears around AI. The EAS Principal School Improvement Partner stated AI should be incorporated, not used as a replacement.
- The Committee questioned if Wales struggled academically compared to other countries due to cost constraints and spending cuts. The Head of Education stated accurate comments could not be made on 'Wales' academic achievement, which was a complex issue, but literacy and numeracy were high EAS priorities.
- The Committee raised concerns over bias from self-evaluation. The EAS Assistant Director: Policy and Strategy stated supported self-evaluation allows more collaborative and accurate evaluation rather than in isolation.
- The Committee asked how schools viewed EAS's involvement in schools. The EAS Assistant Director noted annual surveys and headteacher feedback groups

highlighted the staff found EAS involvement was helpful, with a critical but supportive approach. The Committee queried if school staff could give anonymous feedback. The EAS Assistant Director confirmed options for anonymity existed.

- The Committee asked officers if there were areas for EAS improvement. The EAS Assistant Director noted key priorities are highlighted in the report such as focussing on outcomes in school plans.

The Committee thanked the officers for attending.

Conclusions

- The Committee praised the EAS partnership for its excellent work in providing financial support for schools, noting this was encouraging for Members to hear and emphasised the importance of maintaining this practice.
- The Committee expressed that the report seemed very layered and required repeated reading to fully grasp the content. Suggestions were made to make future reports less drawn out, avoid copy and paste content, and aim for more concise and understandable presentation.
- The Committee commended the involvement of EAS School Improvement Partners in analysing School Development Plans during meetings with schools to discuss priorities, emphasising the importance of tailored plans.

4 Safer Newport Strategic Needs Assessment 2024-2029

- Rhys Cornwall Strategic Director- Transformation and Corporate)
- Janice Dent (Policy and Partnership Manager)
- Helen Gordon (Senior Policy and Partnership Officer)
- Sam Slater (Head of Strategy, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent)

The Strategic Director introduced the report to the Committee. The Policy and Partnership Manager and the Senior Policy and Partnership Officer then gave an overview of the report.

The Committee asked the following:

- The Committee praised the report being created in various languages and questioned how they approached community groups for responses, as uptake of responses was low in areas with diverse communities. The Senior Policy and Partnership Officer noted they consulted Community Connectors and similar groups but were unsure why consultation uptake was low. They stated a face-to-face consultation was set up at the Gap Centre. The report reflected more qualitative data, with the majority feeling safe in Newport. The Policy and Partnership Manager noted people likely felt safe due to secure housing and feeling safe in one's community leads to taking pride in it.
- The Committee queried using other methods to gain wider participation from Newport's diverse population. The Strategic Director stated best practices from other consultations were being examined to garner more responses. The Policy and Partnership Manager noted they could learn from partner organisations' participation

with community groups, such as Gwent Police. They also noted the issue of consultation fatigue and the need to be smarter when consulting with community groups.

The Committee praised the report's quality but was surprised by Newport's population distribution. They questioned how rural areas with sparse populations felt about safety and sought assurances that rural populations were not forgotten. The Strategic Director noted the varied population spreads faced different challenges in terms of crime but the Council worked with Gwent Police on these challenges. The Committee requested a breakdown of responses by location, which the Senior Policy and Partnership Officer agreed to provide.

- The Committee asked if housing associations were contacted for feedback. The Senior Policy and Partnership Officer explained partnership work occurred with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) but needed building upon, though no specific issues were raised.
- The Committee questioned how housing associations disciplined anti-social behaviour. The Strategic Director noted partners are used tactically for specific RSL issues, but that information was not collected for this report.
- The Committee asked how report information feeds into community wellbeing profiles. The Policy and Partnerships Manager stated the Intelligence Hub would share information with partners.

The Committee thanked officers for attending.

Conclusions

- The Committee praised the report's presentation and accessibility. Additionally, they commended the effort to distribute the report in multiple languages, recognising the importance of reaching a diverse audience and ensuring inclusivity in communication.
- The Committee emphasised the importance of recognising the safety and security of individuals living in rural areas as being equally significant as in urban areas. It was suggested that safety concerns in rural areas should not be overlooked or forgotten, indicating a need for specific attention and measures to address safety issues in these communities.
- The Committee requested to receive a data pack of the information about areas of residence which was collected during the public engagement but was not contained within the report to enhance their understanding of the geographical distribution and associated safety concerns within Newport.
- The Committee expressed concern about the low engagement rate from diverse communities. Despite the report being translated into multiple languages and efforts to reach out to community groups, participation remained low. The Committee recommended exploring ways to improve engagement with these communities to ensure their perspectives and concerns are adequately represented.

5 Serious Violence Duty: Gwent Strategic Needs Assessment and Strategy

Invitees:

- Rhys Cornwall Strategic Director- Transformation and Corporate)
- Janice Dent (Policy and Partnership Manager)
- Helen Gordon (Senior Policy and Partnership Officer)
- Sam Slater (Head of Strategy, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent)

The Strategic Director introduced the report to the Committee. The Policy and Partnership Manager, Senior Policy and Partnership Officer and the Head of Strategy, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent then gave an overview of the report.

The Committee asked the following:

- The Committee noted a discrepancy on page 179 of the report regarding “Weapon-related crime” and “Rape and Sexual offences” statistics, which appeared to show the same figures for both Newport and Gwent as a whole. The Policy and Partnership Manager advised this would be corrected.
- The Committee highlighted the importance of county lines drug dealing and the use of alternative bladed weapons in crime. They asked if these were included in the knife and gun crime data. The Head of Strategy at the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner's Office noted all weapons were included in the knife and gun crime statistics.
- The Committee noted a reduction in criminals attending hospitals due to criminal injuries. The Head of Strategy at the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner's Office highlighted that while the data shows a drop, it doesn't identify the cause, which would be explored further.
- The Committee asked if the report stood alone or was linked to community profiles. The Head of Strategy at the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner's Office noted it fulfils Home Office requirements, but the report fed into localised planning.
- The Committee asked for ward-by-ward data to be provided and for the challenges faced with consultation, such as anonymity, to be highlighted. The Strategic Director noted that since the report is in its infancy, there is room for growth. The Committee was informed that the report would be brought back to them. The Strategic Director further highlighted that some of the data's real-world impacts are relatively small compared to their percentages. The Head of Strategy, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent, explained that local engagement is a key priority.
- Concern was raised by the Committee over the reality of increasing crime rates. The Committee also expressed concern regarding the increase in sexual crimes against women. The Policy and Partnership Manager highlighted that the issue of crimes against women needed to be explored in more detail.
- The Committee highlighted the positive impact of more women coming forward about crimes they had experienced. The Policy and Partnership Manager agreed with the Committee's observation.
- The Committee queried if hate crime was increasing and whether specific ethnic groups were being targeted both by perpetrators but also by law enforcement. The Strategic Director noted this is an important point, highlighting its importance within the counter-terrorism and community reports.

- The Committee asked for clarification on the term "community safety domain." The Strategic Director noted it is covered under the Welsh Government index but would clarify the term in all future reports.

The Committee thanked the officers for attending.

Conclusions

- The Committee commended the report stating that it was very accessible and informative.
- The Committee noted a discrepancy on page 179 of the report regarding "Weapon-related crime" and "Rape and Sexual offences" statistics, which appeared to show the same figures for both Newport and Gwent as a whole. They recommended a clarification or correction of this data.
- The Committee suggested including a detailed breakdown of the ethnicity of targeted groups in hate crimes within the Safer Newport Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA). This analysis will help contextualise the link between hate crimes and serious criminal activities, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the assessment in addressing these specific issues.
- The Committee observed that presenting data as percentage increases (e.g. a 300% increase in homicides) could be misleading due to the small numbers involved. They suggested that presenting the actual figures might provide a clearer and less alarming picture.

6 Scrutiny Adviser Reports

- Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Adviser)

a) Forward Work Programme Update (Appendix 1)

The Scrutiny Adviser presented the Forward Work Programme, and informed the Committee of the topics due to be discussed at the next committee meeting:

Wednesday 24th April 2024, the agenda item;

- Wastesavers Partnership
- Fostering and Adoption Services Update

b) Actions Plan (Appendix 2)

The Scrutiny Advisor updated the Committee on the actions sheet and advised all actions are up to date.

The meeting terminated at 7.02 pm