



Well-being Objective 1

Start Well - Help to give every child the best start in life and improve their early life experiences

The number of Children Looked After has *significantly reduced*

Carmarthenshire has the lowest number of children in care throughout Wales, and figures are reducing steadily year-on-year with more and more families being supported to stay together.

Supporting Families to stay together

- ❖ One of the simplest, yet most effective, changes made in recent years is to **integrate** and align teams working across children's services and education and bringing staff with specialist skills together to provide a whole team around a family in need, opposed to attaching a single social worker to an individual case.
- ❖ This **collaboration** has allowed sharing of skills, perspectives and ideas to provide a bespoke package of support for each family, as well as creativity in finding different ways of linking in with families and keeping them together.
- ❖ Teams focus on **involving** families and building relationships with families to fully understand their needs, and what intervention will work best for them – often inviting families to work with them to commission tailor-made specialist support ensuring their needs are met in a way that best works for them.
- ❖ **Prevention** and early years intervention is also a key feature – in a recent six months period, the service supported 18,000 families with a range of community-based services to build resilience and prevent the need for families to have contact with the statutory social care system.
- ❖ It is not about targets, but about keeping families together **long term**, and reducing the number of children requiring care without ever compromising safe practice. There is a willingness to work differently and try new approaches to support families in need and prevent them from needing our services.



“Carmarthenshire Council is doing some great work to keep families together and avoid children going into care. Carmarthenshire stands out because the team is prepared to think and do things differently. As First Minister, I want to build on the work happening here, understand why it is having an impact and to share the good practice throughout Wales so we can help to keep more families together.”

Mark Drakeford - First Minister of Wales

Why it is important

- Because giving every child the best start in life is crucial to reducing inequalities across the life course
- Early intervention is key to long term health and well-being. What happens during these early years has lifelong effects on many aspects of health and well-being – from obesity, heart disease and mental health, to educational achievement and economic status
- Because Looked After Children (LAC) are more likely to have been exposed to multiple risks associated with poor long term outcomes before entering care.

Success Measure



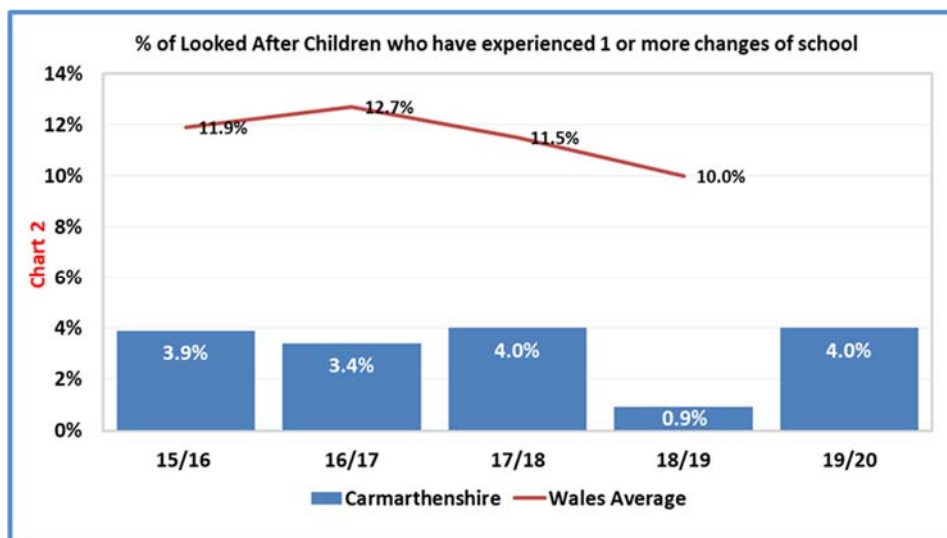
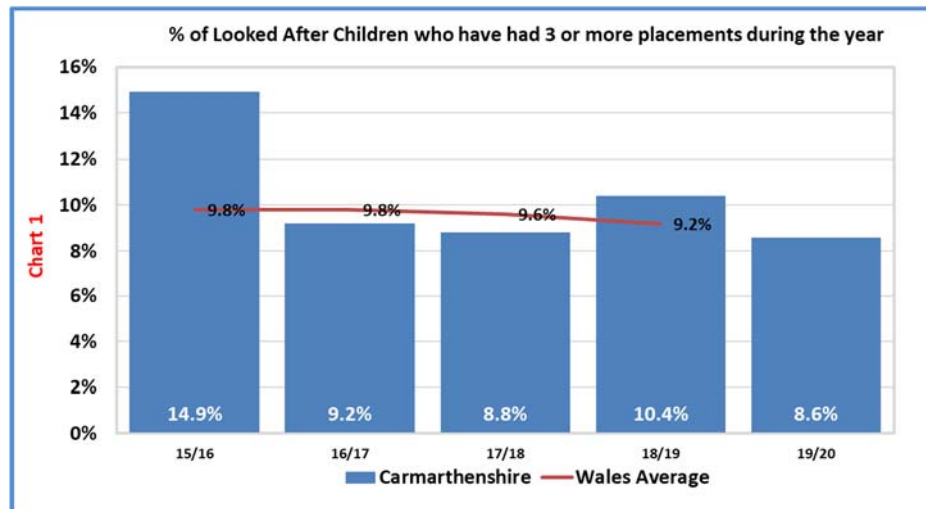
The % of children in care who had to move 3 or more times has reduced to **8.6%**



Explaining the Results

We are pleased to have seen an improvement in placement stability with a reduction in the number of children having moved 3 or more times during 19/20, with 8.6% (14 out of 163) compared to 10.4% (19 out of 183) in 18/19 and below the Welsh Average of 9.2%. (See Chart 1)

We consistently perform well in maintaining looked after children in the same school, which is also an important factor in improving outcomes.



During 19/20 4 out of 101 children changed schools (See Chart 2). Remaining in the same school is not always in the best interests of a child e.g. distance to travel or academic needs not being met. In the **long-term** our focus is on **prevention** and maintaining children at home with families and out of the care system wherever possible, as well as providing extra resources for foster carers to support the children in their care to maintain placement stability and avoid the need to move wherever possible.

Progress made

- ⊙ We have continued to **transform children's social work practice** integrating **systemic practice and Signs of Safety** into a coherent approach to delivering children social work services. It has been informed by research as well as feedback from stakeholders.
- ⊙ We have continued to extend and refine the **TAF (Team Around the Family)** approach across the county for 0-25-year olds. The new TAF in schools team commenced 1/4/19.
- ⊙ The **30 hours free Childcare Offer** has now been available county wide for over a year to all eligible working parents/carers. **1,222** applications have been processed to date. **203** childcare providers have registered, and another 168 are currently taking part. On Average £143,000 is paid to Childcare Providers in Carmarthenshire per month. This is a significant saving for many families who are reporting now being able to plan their first ever family holiday and consider working additional hours.
- ⊙ We have reviewed our **services for disabled children**, young people and their families with the setting up of a 0-25 'through age' model which will deliver a consistent care pathway with input from health and education based on need, not age so that children and their families receive the services they need, when they need them and where they can best access them.
- ⊙ The **Families First (FF)** programme (0-25 years) continues to deliver early intervention support services for disadvantaged children, young people and families. The three focus areas are: - Parenting, Young People and Disability support. During 19/20 projects supported 11,682 individuals (3,890 families).
- ⊙ **Flying Start** early years' service has been undergoing a 3-year expansion to increase capacity and is now being delivered across 18 areas covering 767 post codes across Carmarthenshire to families with children aged 0-3 living in some of the most disadvantaged areas.

Celebrating success of Looked After Children and Care Leavers

The Annual celebration of the achievements and accomplishments of Looked after Children and Care leavers took place in the Xcel Bowl, Carmarthen on 25th October 2019.

Awards were presented for success in school, art, music, sport and for volunteering.



*As Corporate Parents we have a responsibility to ensure that all our children and young people succeed and are supported to achieve their aspirations. Well done to all who received awards and to all our partners for their support. A special thank you to a newly former choir, **VOICES ALOUD** who entertained us and persuaded us to sing!*



The way we work

Working together for disabled children Delivering what families want - not what we think they want.

By working together with the parents of special needs disabled children and including them every step of the way we achieved a better afterschool and holidays scheme.

The parents and volunteers involved, remain involved to ensure the children have a good time. It was not a quick fix, but it worked. One parent said "knowing the Council is on your side is just brilliant - it's a way of being"

"This new way of working together has developed relationships and is a true reflection of collaborative working and co-production. For the approach of co-production to work, there must be investment in the process. It provides a greater understanding of customer needs and builds relationships.

Sarah Bolton, Inclusion co-ordinator



The work won the Council's annual award for Transformation, Innovation and Challenge



**Executive Board Member For Education & Children
Cllr Glynog Davies**