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Gwasanaethau Gweithredol a Phartneriaethol / Operational and Partnership Services
Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: (01656) 643148/643147
Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Andrew Rees

Ein cyf / Our ref:
Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad/Date: 13 October 2016

Dear Councillor,

CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

A meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting will be held in Committee Rooms 2/3, Civic Offices Angel Street Bridgend CF31 4WB on **Wednesday, 19 October 2016** at **2.00 pm**.

AGENDA

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Negeseuon SMS/ SMS Messaging: 07581 157014   Twitter@bridgendCBC   Gwefan/Website: www.bridgend.gov.uk
Cyfnewid testun: Rhowch 18001 o flaen unrhyw un o'n rhifau ffon ar gyfer y gwasanaeth trosglwyddo testun
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Yours faithfully
P A Jolley
Corporate Director Operational and Partnership Services
Distribution:

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 20 JULY 2016 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

MEJ Nott OBE   HJ Townsend   PJ White

Invitees:

Councillor E Dodd
Councillor EP Foley
Councillor KJ Watts
Councillor DBF White

Officers:

Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Nicola Echanis	Head of Education & Family Support
Val Jones	Regional Adoption Manager
Andrew Rees	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Zak Shell	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Natalie Silcox	Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services

129.   APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members:

Councillor N Farr
Councillor CE Smith
Councillor HM Williams

130.   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:

Councillor DBF White declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 – Implementation of the "When I am Ready" Scheme as he sits on a local British Legion Committee and agenda item 6 – Monitoring the Performance and Progress of the Western Bay Regional Adoption Service as he works for another local authority which sits under Western Bay.

131.   APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting of 7 April 2016 be approved as a true and accurate record.

132.   SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing reported on the work undertaken to safeguard children and young people in Bridgend. She stated that safeguarding is the action taken to promote the welfare of children and to protect them from harm. The Council is committed to safeguarding children and young people from harm and all

practitioners have access to a number of key documents which provide guidance and structure to their practice.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing outlined the current arrangements in operation in terms of providing overarching support, specialist input and monitoring a range of services, by chairing meetings and tracking issues in relation to complex cases, leading on child practice reviews and facilitating / undertaking case file audit activity. This was achieved through working with partners under the Western Bay Safeguarding Children's Board. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that core business was undertaken through established Management Groups and it was expected that these Groups review, establish, monitor and report to the Safeguarding Board against individual work plans and address individual actions set out within the Board's strategic priorities. She stated that the Independent Reviewing Service has an important Quality Assurance function and works towards ensuring all children within the care of the Council have a robust, effective care and support plan. The Independent Reviewing Officers independently review the care and support plans of all looked after children and children who are on the child protection register.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee of the current activity in relation to child protection, in that there are currently 179 children on the Child Protection Register and currently 385 looked after children in Bridgend. She highlighted the actions being taken to improve practice and to safely reduce the number of children being placed on the register. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing also informed the Committee of the process in relation to Public Law Outline, Care Proceedings and set out the arrangements for Child Practice Reviews. She stated that Bridgend was currently undertaking three Child Practice Reviews following the identification of concerns where criteria had not been met. The purpose of the reviews is to identify learning for future practice and is intended to generate professional and organisational learning and promote improvement in future practice. The recommendations from Child Practice Reviews are reported to and monitored by the Western Bay Safeguarding Children's Board and she stated that she would share the recommendations of the current reviews with the Committee.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee of the practices in place to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation and the partnership working undertaken with the police. She stated that there are currently 37 children in Bridgend who are subject to monitoring under the CSE protocol and good collaboration with the police is essential to tackling CSE. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing also informed the Committee that the Safeguarding Service is responsible for dealing with and managing allegations of abuse against a professional staff member or volunteer in contact with children and vulnerable adults. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing highlighted the approach Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements which are a set of arrangements to manage the risk posed by the most serious sexual and violent offenders. The arrangements bring together lead professionals from the Probation Service, Mental Health Service, Housing, Public Protection and Children's Services on a fortnightly basis.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that safeguarding is the responsibility of all and not the responsibility of Safeguarding service alone and is of paramount importance that all Members prioritise Safeguarding activities across the Council.

The Committee questioned whether there is a trend for children being placed on the register or whether there is one factor greater than another. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that neglect was likely to be the

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highest category and she undertook to provide the Committee with details of the reasons for children being placed on the register.

The Committee questioned whether more awareness raising could be done in schools on the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation. The Head of Education and Early Help informed the Committee that every child in year 8 receives training in the subject, the potential for increasing awareness raising amongst other year groups has been discussed but there was a capacity issue in pursuing this. She stated that teachers also receiving training in CSE. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that the SCDWP also deliver CSE awareness raising training which would be delivered to Members in the near future. The Committee commented on the effectiveness of the training delivered to schools and were keen to see it delivered and reinforced to year 10 pupils. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that a corporate safeguarding policy had been developed, with corporate leads in each Directorate and a safeguarding group established to get a better understanding of safeguarding. It was intended to roll out this training corporately. She also informed the Committee that Cabinet /CMB meetings have a standing item on safeguarding which highlights corporately the importance of safeguarding. The Cabinet Member Resources informed the Committee of her involvement in leading the Domestic Violence Group in the Llynfi Valley where children receive healthy relationship training and that she would link in the Head of Education and Early Help on the potential for delivering this training to children across the Borough.

The Committee referred to a recent case in Pembrokeshire which involved a child was home educated and had suffered neglect and questioned whether this Council has powers to monitor children in the Borough who are educated at home. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that there is no requirement on local authorities to monitor children who are home tutored. She stated that attempts were made by professionals in the Pembrokeshire case to visit the child which was met with resistance by the child's parents. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that she would bring a report on the recommendations made in this case which suggested annual checks of children who are home educated to the Committee. She stated that where officers are met with resistance by families to see children who are home educated would be discussed by the Directors of Social Services and Regional Board. The Head of Education and Early Help informed the Committee that the authority has no statutory powers to have access to children who are home educated; however a network has been developed locally with parents who educate their children where parents can also have peer support. She stated that approximately 70 children in the Borough are home educated.

A member of the Committee questioned how access could be gained to Child Practice Reviews. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that Child Practice Reviews are always publicised and there is an agreed protocol for the release of information on Child Practice Reviews and lessons learned would be looked at.

RESOLVED: That the developments in safeguarding of children and young people across the County Borough of Bridgend be noted and a report be brought to the Committee on the outcome Child Practice Reviews.

133.   IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 'WHEN I AM READY' SCHEME

The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services provided the Committee with an update on the implementation of the "When I am Ready" scheme and sought approval to of the "When I am Ready" Policy and accompanying "When I am Ready" Financial Policy.

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The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services informed the Committee that the Scheme had been implemented as of 6 April 2016 and developed by the Welsh Government in partnership with local government and key third sector partners to enable eligible care leavers to have the option of continuing to live with their foster carers once they attain 18 years of age. She stated that all looked after children are eligible to be considered for "When I am Ready". The Council must through a pathway assessment, ascertain whether a young person and their foster careers wish to make a post-18 years of age living arrangement, regardless of whether the young person is undertaking full or part time education, training or employment or none of these activities. There is an expectation that the young person commits to undertaking skills development to prepare for their future.

The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services informed the Committee that there were now 4 "When I am Ready" arrangements in place within the Borough, 7 arrangements had been agreed, with a further 9 arrangements to go ahead in the next year. She stated that each placement will cost the authority £185 per week, minus all relevant claimable benefits and as appropriate, contributions from the young people themselves which was contained in the policy. Housing benefit is dependent on the circumstances of individual applications, with contributions from young people being a minimum of £20 per week. The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services informed the Committee that the Supporting People Programme Grant provided funding of £69,252 for the year and further placement costs funded through the Just Ask Plus team budget.

In response to a request from the Committee, the Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services would circulate to the Committee the leaflets which had been produced by the Welsh Government on the scheme.

The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services informed the Committee that the scheme starts when the young person reaches 15 ½ years and that worked had been undertaken with Newbridge House where there is a personal adviser who advises on budgeting.

The Committee requested that an amendment be made to the policy to take into account young people who have undertaken basic training in the armed forces and who wish to have a living arrangement with their foster carers.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that a progress report would be brought to the Committee to include case studies of families who had entered into the scheme and to include where care leavers had moved on to.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the policies as amended be approved and that a progress report be brought to the Committee in 12 months' time.

134.   MONITORING THE PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS OF THE WESTERN BAY REGIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE

The Regional Adoption Manager reported on the performance and progress of the Western Bay Regional Adoption Service. She highlighted the key achievements of the regional adoption service, which had seen 15 placements taking place in Bridgend, as opposed to 7 placements made in the previous year. There had been a reduction of the use of Inter-agency placements and an increase in placements within Western Bay providing significant savings. She stated there had been an increase in the number of prospective adopters from 45 in 2014/15 to 53. There had been a reduction in the

number of children whose plan for adoption changed from 21 in 2014/15 to 4; however this may increase during the year due to decisions being made by the courts. A unified Adoption Allowance Policy had been developed and approved across the Region, which would be rolled across Wales. The Regional Adoption Manager informed the Committee that the Adoption Panel is well organised and very busy.

The Regional Adoption Manager highlighted the challenges facing the service in that performance reporting requires further development in light of new Performance Indicators and to ensure the accurate reporting on all data sets and the introduction of national and regional performance indicators in adoption support. She also informed the Committee that policies and procedures require review. The life story work requires development to comply with the target set by the National Adoption Service. She stated that adoption support is a key priority for the regional service and is high on the national agenda.

The Committee questioned the time taken for a child to be place for adoption shown in Quarter 4 Year End Performance Report. The Regional Adoption Manager informed the Committee that the figures contained in the performance report relate to when a child is placed for adoption. Once a Placement Order is granted the service can begin the process of searching for a placement for a child. She stated that persons adopting a child can apply for an Order to adopt a child no sooner than 10 weeks which is contestable by the birth parents and once granted, the child is legally adopted. The Regional Adoption Manager informed the Committee that period of 10 weeks relates to from the child being looked after to a placement being made. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that a decision to place a child for adoption is a difficult one to make with a significant amount of information to be considered in order to make the right decision.

The Committee questioned the composition of the Panel as it did not list representation from Bridgend Members.

The Committee questioned whether a member of staff could be tasked with championing the life story work. The Regional Adoption Manager informed the Committee that life book champions are being considered. Child Care Social Workers support children to understand their life journey.

The Committee questioned whether there would be a shortage of children to adopt. The Regional Adoption Manager informed the Committee there was no shortage of children to adopt, however more adopters had been found to meet the needs of children. She stated there had been an increase in the number of sibling groups requiring adoption and who had been placed by the regional service. The Regional Adoption Manager informed the Committee there is a need to re-focus the needs of adopters and to ensure the right support is available at the correct time. The National Adoption Service is looking at a pilot to adopt children who were harder to adopt. The Committee questioned whether work could be done to encourage foster parents to adopt.

The Committee questioned the reason for the number of children waiting for adoption increasing from 51 in 2013/14 to 92 in 2015/16. The Regional Adoption Manager informed the Committee that a number of children had been on the waiting list for a long time, but had since been found a home. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that the explanation of the figures in the Annual Report would be altered so that it was made clearer to the lay person. The Regional Adoption Manager informed the Committee that the number of children referred in 2015/16 was 58 and not 64 as reported resulting in a total of 195 children being referred and not 2012 as reported.

The Committee expressed concern at the lack of democratic accountability within independent adoption agencies as they did not local authority representation on their boards. The Committee did however note that the regional service complimented the national service.

The Committee questioned what had happened to the staff employed by the three local authorities prior to the establishment of the regional service. The Regional Adoption Manager informed the Committee that bringing the service together had been a challenge and initially, the service did not experience staff leaving when the service was co-located, however, staff had since left the service. She stated that interim measures had been put in place as initially morale was low. She stated that the Adoption Team Manager had driven forward change and staff now feel confident and skilled to provide support. She informed the Committee that all staff within the service are employed by their own local authority, however she is employed by the City and County of Swansea.

The Committee complimented the regional service on achieving permanency for many children.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the performance and review of the adoption service and its ability to meet the needs of those affected by adoption within the region.

135.   URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 3.56 pm

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

19 OCTOBER 2016

CHILD PRACTICE REVIEW

1.   Purpose of Report

1.1   To provide Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee with information in respect of the most recent Child Practice Review (WB B 15 2014) published on 24th August 2016.

2.   Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

2.1   The report links to the following priority in the Corporate Plan:

- Helping people to be more self-reliant.

3.   Background

3.1   In 2013, Child Practice Reviews replaced what were known as Serious Case Reviews (SCR).   This new process stems from the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales report published in October 2009 - *Improving Practice to Protect Children in Wales: An Examination of the Role of Serious Case Reviews.* This work was pivotal to where we are today, and concluded that action was required to replace the SCR process which had become ineffective in improving practice and inter-agency working.

3.2   A key element of the new framework is different types of review – known as 'concise' and 'extended' – depending on the circumstances of the child involved. Child Practice Reviews will be effective learning tools where it is more important to consider how agencies worked together. The formal review processes are underpinned by multi-agency professional forums that are critical to improving practice, and will allow practitioners to reflect on cases – and not only where things have gone wrong – in an informed and supported environment.

3.3   The guidance sets out arrangements for multi-agency Child Practice Reviews in circumstances of a significant incident where abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected.

3.4   The overall purpose behind the reform of the review system is to promote a positive culture of multi-agency child protection learning and reviewing in local areas, for which the Western Bay Safeguarding Children's Board and partner agencies hold responsibility.

3.5   A Multi-Agency Professional Forum is a multi-professional event facilitated for practitioners and managers, primarily to examine case practice and provide opportunity for consultation, supervision and reflection, and to disseminate findings

from child protection audits, inspections and reviews, in order to improve local knowledge and practice and to inform the Board's future audit and training priorities.

3.6   Concise Reviews - a concise Child Practice Review is carried out in cases where abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected and the child has:-
• died; or
• sustained potentially life threatening injury; or
• sustained serious and permanent impairment of health or development; *and*
  the child was neither on the child protection register or a looked after child on any date during the 6 months preceding the date of the event referred to above.

3.7   Extended Reviews - an extended Child Practice Review is carried out in cases where abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected and the child has:-
• died; or
• sustained potentially life threatening injury; or
• sustained serious and permanent impairment of health or development; *and*
  the child was on the child protection register and/or was a looked after child (including a care leaver under the age of 18) on any date during the 6 months preceding the date of the event referred to.

3.8   Bridgend has published one report and is currently undertaking two Child Practice Reviews following the identification of concerns where the above criteria have been met. One of the reviews is a historical review relating to a young person who, now that she is in a safe care arrangement, has disclosed she was sexually abused by her biological father.

3.9   The two other reviews include a Concise Review which involves a child who sustained serious head injuries and a Historical Review where a young person has been sexually abused by her father.

3.10   The purpose of the reviews is to identify learning for future practice and involve practitioners, managers and senior officers in exploring the detail and context of agencies' work with the child(ren) and family. The review is intended to generate professional and organisational learning and promote improvement in future practice.

3.11   Recommendations from Child Practice Reviews are considered and any actions agreed are reported to and monitored by the Western Bay Safeguarding Children's Board. The lessons to be learnt are shared with senior managers and disseminated through learning events and training to Safeguarding practitioners.

4.   Current Situation/Proposal

WB B 15 2014

4.1   This family has been known to BCBC since 2005 in relation to concerns about the quality of parenting and neglect issues.

4.2   The first child born to this mother resides with her paternal grandfather and is the subject of a Special Guardianship Order. The maternal grandparents care for the second and third children born. They are registered Foster Carers with BCBC in

respect of one child and they care for other child under the auspices of a Residence Order.

4.3   When the mother became pregnant with her fourth child she and this child spent 11 months in a mother and baby foster placement until such a time that she was able to reside independently but with continued support within the community. The mother was known to the Learning Disibility Adult Social Care Team in 2008.

4.4   Over the next few years the mother and her child were supported by Flying Start and this support continued during the years as the mother went on to have another three children. Throughout these pregnancies and the subsequent parenting of these children, no referral was submitted from any professional despite several agencies and professionals being involved.

4.5   In September 2013, there was a change in the Health Visitor who referred to Bridgend County Borough Council expressing concerns regarding the poor conditions within the home and with regard to the mother's ability to care for and manage all of her children. A referral to Early Help services was deemed appropriate but whilst waiting for transfer to this service the Health Visitor made a second referral in respect of a sibling who presented with a number of bruises to his face.

4.6   Child Protection Investigations were initiated and, to ensure safeguarding of the other children, the maternal grandparents entered into an agreement with the Assessment Team to supervise the mother with her children.

4.7   Whilst the investigation for the sibling was ongoing, the child subject to this review sadly died in the early hours of 1st January 2014. A post mortem was carried out on 7th January 2014 where it was confirmed that the Coroner had issued a Death certificate based upon Peritonitis.

4.8   The Paediatrician who examined the child noted she was a late developer with mobility problems, speech problems and was not potty trained. Various departments had been in touch with the family including speech therapy and physiotherapy but often appointments were not kept by the family.

4.9   The Section 47 Investigation in respect of the sibling who sustained facial bruises and had a Child Protection Medical examintion concluded that the causation of the bruising was non specific in terms of Non Accidental Injury.

4.10   The Local Authority issued care proceedings as a result of the combination of concerns and within the proceedings an independent Consultant Paediatric Surgeon was of the opinion that the combination of mother's learning difficulties and the child's delayed speech were contributing factors to her untimely death. Her death was not solely attributed to the neglect of her mother or other family members who were present at the time the child would have presented as being ill.

4.11   This mother has since had another child who is being cared for by the child's paternal family. The mother does not have any children in her care.

4.12 The Child Practice Review report was published on 24th August 2016 after the report was shared with the child's mother. It has also been presented at the Western Bay Safeguarding Children's Board. (attached at **appendix 1**)

4.13 The summary findings from this review are that professionals did not adequately consider historical concerns about the mother's ability to care for and parent her children and make the necessary referrals to the department. The extent of the mother's learning difficulties and her ability to therefore cope with her growing family were not assessed. Information sharing between professionals externally and internally was inadequate.

4.14 The implementation of actions recommended within the report will be overseen by the Western Bay Child Practice Review Management group. In addition Bridgend will convene team based learning events for practitioners between October and December 2016 and the findings will also be encorporated into core safeguarding training for employees.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

5.1 There is no impact on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 There are no equality matters relevant to this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no specific financial implications linked to this information report.

8. Recommendation.

8.1 The Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting is asked to note and provide comment about this report.

Susan Cooper,
Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
October 2016

9.   Contact Officer: Elizabeth Walton-James
                          Group Manager Safeguarding & Quality Assurance
                          Telephone: (01656) 642073
       Email: elizabeth.walton-james@bridgend.gov.uk

10.   Background documents:

   None

Child Practice Review Report

Western Bay Safeguarding Children Board

Concise Child Practice Review

WB B 15 2014

Brief outline of circumstances resulting in the Review

Legal Context:

A Concise Child Practice Review was commissioned by The Western Bay Safeguarding Children Board (WBSCB) on the recommendation of the Child Practice Review Management Group (CPRMG) in accordance with the Guidance for Multi-Agency Child Practice Reviews. The criteria for this Review were met under section 5.1 of the above guidance namely:

A Board must undertake a concise child practice review in any of the following cases where, within the area of the Board, abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected and the child has:

(a)   died; or
(b)   sustained potentially life threatening injury; or
(c)   sustained serious and permanent impairment of health or development

and

the child was neither on the child protection register nor a looked after child on any date during the 6 months preceding

- the date of the incident referred to above; or
- the date on which the Local Authority or relevant partner identifies that a child has sustained serious and permanent impairment of health and development.

The criteria for a concise review are laid down in the Local Safeguarding Boards (Wales) Regulations 2006 as amended 2012

Circumstances Leading to the Review

In the early hours of one morning over the Christmas and New year period of 2014 the child subject of this review died. This child was known to have special needs. At post mortem examination it was found the child had died of peritonitis. The onset of peritonitis can be rapid in young children and the conclusion of the pathologist was that it could not be concluded that the child had died due to neglect of the child's medical needs. However, subsequent to the child's death the other children in the family were removed from the family into local authority foster care.

Following lengthy debate by the Child Practice Review Management Group the recommendation was made to the Chair of the Western Bay Safeguarding Children Board the criteria for a Child Practice Review (CPR) had been met on the basis, not due to any neglect of the health needs of the child that had died, but that as a result of her death the long term neglect of the needs of all of the children living with mother was identified and resulted in their removal from her care. The family were well known to services, with two of the elder children being with maternal grandparents, one as kinship care and the other under a special guardianship order (SGO). At the time of the index child's death they were also responsible for supervising the mother's care of the four youngest children 24 hours a day albeit the children were living in their own home with mother. The mother's eldest child, who lives with her paternal family, is not subject to this review.

The scope for this review was 1st June 2013 – 17th July 2014.

Family Background.

The mother has seven children from four relationships. The mother is considered to have learning difficulties and struggled with the parenting of her children.

The Learning Events

Two learning events were held, one for practitioners and one for managers. Both were well attended

Practitioners' Event was attended by 22 staff members from the following agencies:

South Wales Police
Education
Social Services
Legal Bridgend County Borough Council(BCBC)
Flying Start
Health

Managers' Event was attended by 9 staff from the following agencies:

Flying Start
Health
Hafan Cymru – Housing
South Wales Police
Fostering
Action 4 Children

Some key managers were absent either due to having moved jobs or were on sick leave. This resulted in agencies identifying other professionals to attend in
the absentee's place that had had no direct contact with the family.
The GP for the family was unable to attend the learning event but met with the reviewers for a professional discussion to inform the review. The reviewers also met

with the relevant local authority team manager who now works out of area.

The family were contacted and offered the opportunity to meet with the Reviewers to discuss their thoughts and feelings in relation to the services they had received from agencies. The family declined this invitation as they are still grieving for the loss of the child and considered the meeting would have been too difficult. The family were contacted again prior to publication of the report in order to share the findings of the learning with them.

Practice and organisational learning

Areas for improvement:

Communication /information sharing

Unfortunately it is not unusual for information sharing between agencies to be highlighted as an area of concern in Serious Case Reviews/Child Practice Reviews. This was evidenced at the learning event where there were a number of issues that fell into this category, including:

- Children's Services did not know of some other agencies' information.
- Schools were not aware of concerns and did not know other agencies' information in relation to the elder children.
- Police involvement was not known by some agencies.
- It would appear the Christmas period had a negative effect on information sharing.
- Fostering Service did not know any information relating to the recent concerns until just before Christmas
- Information known within health was not always shared appropriately and there was inconsistency in reporting.
- There could have been more involvement with disabilities teams

 No individual agency had a full picture of what was going on within this family and in some cases information was not shared within their own agency

It was identified there needs to be a consistent approach to sharing Public Protection Notifications (PPNs) within schools with regards to domestic abuse. Participants at both events considered it was crucial that staff working with children where there have been PPNs should know about these so that they can be aware and sensitive to any behaviour changes in relation to the children. The process regarding PPNs within schools appeared to vary and relied on Head Teachers' discretion. PPNs were shared with schools but in some areas filed away and not always shared appropriately with teachers which could have a detrimental impact on the safeguarding of children.

Record Keeping
- Referrals to Children's Services should be recorded in the Records of every child within the family.

- There must be consistent processes for recording referrals within agencies.
- It was identified that Children's Services information systems do not allow for whole family information e.g. Status of children in LAC placement. This is considered to be a barrier to effective working with families.
- Referrers need to be reminded that any telephone referral should be followed up in writing within two working days.

Supervision

- There is a need for regular safeguarding supervision for practitioners in all agencies who work with families of concern. Both practitioners and managers identified the need for robust safeguarding supervision practices.
  The social worker for the family considered the supervision she received was not adequate for her needs and experience.

Flying Start

- There appeared to be a sense of complacency that because this family were in a Flying Start area this would act as a safety net and the children would be protected. Professionals working with children especially within Flying Start teams need to be mindful of this perception.

Good enough parenting including parents with a learning disability and children with global delay

What is good enough parenting?

- There was much discussion on this topic at both learning events and at panel meetings. It is important to remember there needs to be two parts to any assessments made, in order to conclude whether parenting is good enough; recording the history and analysis of the information.

- Some professionals knew the family and circumstances well. The mother was considered to be 'a nice woman' she and the family did not 'stand out' within the demographic area. It appeared any 'risks' were accepted as being the norm. Professionals saw the family as being of low to medium need based on the home conditions. Professionals involved, participated in a number of 'doing for' tasks such as folding clothes and tidying up and not actually assessing the risks to the children.

- The index child had special needs and the mother has learning difficulties and therefore although her parenting may have been deemed 'good enough' for some of her children this may not have been the case for the child with special needs. Participants at the learning events considered guidance is needed to help assess interventions with children with developmental delay. Also when a parent has learning difficulties, it is important to establish how these may impact on their ability to parent their child/ren. Therefore a formalised assessment such as Parenting Assessment Manual Software (PAMS) may be required. This mother had had an assessment in a mother and baby unit following the birth of

one of the older children. However it would appear there had been no consideration given to the need for a new assessment in respect of subsequent children.

Consent to share information

- The issue of consent to share information with other agencies and data protection issues needs to be clarified. There appeared to be a mis-held belief that information could not be shared with other agencies at 'Child in Need level' without the family's consent. Lord Laming made it very clear following the Climbie Inquiry (2003) that this is not the case but it is important to record the justification for sharing information.

Agencies understanding of kinship foster care

- During the learning events it became apparent that not all agencies were aware of the criteria/competencies required to be a registered foster carer and that they are at a higher threshold and therefore different than those required for kinship care. Placing a child with a family member may be preferable as it keeps the child within the family unit, however this should not be at the expense of ensuring the safeguarding of the child.

High risk v high need :Thresholds for concern especially re: neglect issues:

- Neglect is the most common reason children are made subject to child protection plans, albeit it could be argued that for a child's name to be made subject to a plan under this category it takes much longer than for a child to be made subject to a plan under the category of physical or sexual abuse, where one such incident could result in such a plan. This is often due to what is described as the failure to address the cumulativeness of neglect in reaching the threshold for a plan (Ayre (2010).)The understanding of 'what is good enough' is very subjective in that what is good enough for one group of professionals is not for another, as is the demography of an area, where the threshold for intervention can be higher than in other areas. Furthermore neglect is very complex; Howe (2006) identifies 4 forms of neglect: Emotional neglect, disorganised neglect, depressed and passive neglect and severe deprivation. The definition for neglect is usually referred to as the persistent and severe failure to meet a child's needs. This does not mean the neglect has to get progressively worse; the threshold can be met by the neglect concerns not getting any better despite professional intervention. It is noted, The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 has amended the definition and removed the word 'persistent' from the definition of neglect.
  The implementation of a formalised neglect assessment tool (such as The Graded Care Profile) with the commitment from all agencies to use it is needed across Wales. Alistair Davey (WG), identified in answer to a question posed at a Four Nations safeguarding conference in Cardiff in November 2015 that this should be in place by 2016.

5

Resolution of Professional Differences Protocol:

The Reviewers are mindful that this review has again highlighted a lack of awareness of this protocol as the following comments were made by participants:

1. Agencies requested 'a professionals' meeting" or strategy meeting and this was not granted by the Local Authority.
2. The same agencies did not consider their concerns were listened to when their level of concern was high.
3. A social services manager advised on two occasions that the requests did not warrant strategy meetings due to existing processes already in place.
4. Three months before the child's death, Health Visiting raised their assessment of need for professional intervention to high but considered their concerns were not listened to by partner agencies.
5. The social work manager for the social worker involved with this case did not recall that partner agencies raised concerns with her directly.

Unrealistic expectations of carers

- Participants noted their concern for the grandparents and that they were already under pressure with the kinship arrangements for the foster care of the eldest children. The grandparents were concerned about their ability to cope with the supervision arrangements required by them when mother returned to the family home with the younger children. These practicalities do not appear to have been addressed. For example it became clear through discussion after the death of the child, the grandfather did not fully understand what was meant by 'supervision'.
- There was a prevailing sense of optimism, potentially putting the children at risk and the expectation of mother's capabilities were not fully assessed.
- Midwife / Health Visitor / Flying Start knew most of the family information and felt reassured that there was a high level of family support and that supervision within the family would be adequate.

Perceived isolation of staff member under pressure

- One of the social workers was having difficulties within the team. It was noted the original plan for the social worker was to be office based and to catch up on paperwork and be relieved of front line work for a month but the social worker only completed two weeks of this plan preceding the child's death. The social worker considered that her caseload was unmanageable and that communication with management was poor. From the manager's perspective, she identified the social worker required additional support which she was given. She considered her decision to give the social worker space to catch up with her work was meant to be supportive and not punitive. However this was not how the social worker perceived it.

Structural Issues within the Local Authority

- The social work manager's recollection was that there was not enough staff to manage the caseloads. There was a significant level of staff sickness some of which the team manager identified as 'stress related'. Social workers were expected to carry caseloads which were significantly higher than the 18 cases which Lord Laming noted as being too high during the Victoria Climbie Inquiry. It is noted that another CPR undertaken in the same local authority also identified that social workers carried caseloads higher than recommended. It was also noted the team manager was under the impression the local authority's policy was not to employ agency staff. The local authority confirmed they have no such policy and agency staff were and continue to be employed when there is a demand on the service. The team manager also identified a high level of sickness across teams, not just in the assessment Team. This had an impact on the transfer of cases to other teams.

  With regards to the number of cases held by Social Workers within the Assessment Team, records show that the average caseload held at the time of the child's death was 20, with a number of workers having less than 10 cases. However, it is acknowledged that the Social Worker allocated to the child's case did have a higher caseload at this time. The Social Worker was allocated time to 'catch up' to enable her to close cases in order to reduce her caseload.

Areas where improvements have already been made

- Flying Start information can currently be recorded as a case note on DRAIG system (internal IT system) and this process will continue when Bridgend changes to the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) in April 2016.
- WCCIS: the business and technical design of the system will be citizen centred and will allow professionals to access and share information across organisational boundaries. The system has many benefits:
- Improve decision making – WCCIS will allow 24/7 access to records and information. Creating an information rich picture which can be reviewed at any time – supporting out of hours and other emergency services access to client data and processes.
- Improve coordination – WCCIS will enable health and social care services to work more closely and in a better coordinated way, where information is more easily shared and therefore better supports integrated working.
- Improve patient and service user safety – WCCIS will have the functionality to support a common referral process that will facilitate single point of entry across the whole system for initiating care and support referrals that will streamline and reduce complexity of current multiple referral processes.
- WCCIS will allow the use of suitable mobile devices to allow complete system access from all possible working locations.
- Reduce duplication in data capture and enable easier information sharing by the creation of a single citizen record for both health and social care.

Since this review commenced safeguarding social work teams have been relocated into multi-agency community hubs to improve locality working, joint working and assist in the sharing of information between agencies and professionals.

An internal audit of supervision has been added to BCBC's audit work plan.

The Resolution of Professional Differences Protocol has been redistributed to all Practitioners across Safeguarding within BCBC and ABMU Health Board.

Improving systems and practice

Recommendations

- **Flags/Alerts on GP systems**

  The GP practice associated with this case has a system which will alert the GP to the fact that a child is on the Child Protection Register and/or has been subject to a child protection conference. This is deemed as an example of expected practice and should exist within all GP practices.

- **PPNs in schools**

  A consistent approach should exist with regard to the dissemination of PPNs across all schools in the Western Bay Safeguarding Children Board area so that relevant information is shared with the children's teachers appropriately.

- **Initial referral being recorded on all children's records**

  Any referral recorded on a child needs to be linked to any other children in the family and recorded on their records too – 'Think child/ think family'. Since this case some changes have already been made but the continual need to be inquisitive is essential.

- **Global Delay/"Good enough Parenting"**

  Ensure there are guidelines on good enough parenting and how this may impact on developmental delay; and in addition, develop guidance in relation to the implications for parents with learning difficulties and whether they are able to achieve 'good enough parenting' for a child with developmental delay.

- **Manageable social work caseloads**

  There is a discrepancy in opinion between the team manager and the local authority in relation to caseload size albeit it is acknowledged there were issues regarding long term sickness and its impact on the service. The team manager

reported there was an expectation that they should be able to cope with high caseloads'. It is noted in the Local Authority report that it currently employs a number of agency staff and as noted previously did so at the time of this child's death. Caseloads can fluctuate but they are monitored regularly by senior managers and in regular performance meetings chaired by the Director and this should continue.

Reminders of existing practice

- **The need for regular safeguarding supervision across all agencies**

   To reinforce the importance of safeguarding supervision within all agencies and to be assured of implementation with regular auditing processes to support this.

- **Consent/information sharing/Data Protection**

   To reinforce principles of these issues not just across agencies but within disciplines as well. For example between community midwife and hospital midwife or between LAC social worker and child & family social worker.

- **Joint working arrangement**

   The need for a joint approach to practice across partner agencies when working with children and their families. When professional concerns are identified, clear structures need to be in place so that the best outcomes for the children are achieved.

- **Non-attendees at health appointments/DNA – Did Not Attend**

   A protocol has been developed within ABMU Health Board to address this and DNA has been changed for children not attending appointments to WNB – 'was not brought'. Although this is a positive step, this is relatively new and needs to be embedded into practice. A future audit of this would be useful to ensure implementation of this protocol.

- **Consistent processes for recording referrals**

   The WCCIS system when introduced in April 2016 will allow the creation of referrals on sibling files and enable greater oversight of the connections between relations and the involvement of different teams based within Social Services.

<u>**Current situation and conclusions**</u>

At the outset of this review it was identified that the index child's death was not considered to be due to neglect of her medical needs, however subsequent to her

death her siblings were taken into Local Authority care. Therefore this review does not suggest that the death of this child was preventable. However if she had not died appropriate protective action may not have been taken at the appropriate time for the wider sibling group and according to the views of the attendees at the learning event, the case may have continued to drift.

This review has identified a number of recurring learning issues and it is therefore essential these are addressed as soon as possible and should not wait for the publication of this report.

Statement by Reviewer(s)			
REVIEWER 1		**REVIEWER 2 (as appropriate)**	
Statement of independence from the case *Quality Assurance statement of qualification*		**Statement of independence from the case** *Quality Assurance statement of qualification*	
I make the following statement that prior to my involvement with this learning review:- • I have not been directly concerned with the child or family, or have given professional advice on the case. • I have had no immediate line management of the practitioner(s) involved. • I have the appropriate recognised qualifications, knowledge and experience and training to undertake the review. • The review was conducted appropriately and was rigorous in its analysis and evaluation of the issues as set out in the Terms of Reference.		I make the following statement that prior to my involvement with this learning review:- • I have not been directly concerned with the child or family, or have given professional advice on the case. • I have had no immediate line management of the practitioner(s) involved. • I have the appropriate recognised qualifications, knowledge and experience and training to undertake the review. • The review was conducted appropriately and was rigorous in its analysis and evaluation of the issues as set out in the Terms of Reference.	
Reviewer 1 *(Signature)*	*Daphne Rose.*	**Reviewer 2** *(Signature)*	
Name *(Print)*	DAPHNE ROSE	**Name** *(Print)*	VIRGINIA HEWITT
Date		**Date**	

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Chair of Review Panel (Signature) …………………. **Name** *(Print* ………LORNA PRICE……. **Date**

Family members

Mother aged 35 years
Maternal Grandfather aged 57 years
Maternal Grandmother aged 55 years

Index child (5th child in family) aged 4 years at time of death

Sibling

Child 6 Sibling aged 2 years 9 months

Half siblings

Child 1 The eldest child of the family has not been included in this review due to her separate long term living status and lack of involvement with her maternal family

Child 2 aged 13 years
Child 3 aged 10 years
Child 4 aged 8 years
Child 7 aged 18 months

Fathers
Father of children 1 and 2 aged 34 years
Father of children 3 and 4 aged 28 years
Father to index child and child 6 aged 36 years
Father of child 7 aged 26 years

Core tasks

- Determine whether decisions and actions in the case comply with the policy and procedures of named services and the Western Bay Safeguarding Children Board.

- Examine inter-agency working and service provision for the children and families.

- Determine the extent to which decisions and actions were child focused.

- Seek contributions to the review from appropriate family members and keep them informed of key aspects of progress. Take account of any parallel investigations or proceedings related to the case.

- Hold a learning event for practitioners and identify required resources.

- Was previous relevant information or history about the child and/or family members known and taken into account in professionals' assessment, planning and decision-making in respect of the child the family and their circumstances? How did that knowledge contribute to the outcome for the child?

- Were plans effectively implemented, monitored and reviewed? Did all agencies contribute appropriately to the development and delivery of any multi-agency plans?

- What aspects of the plan(s) worked well, what did not work well and why? To what degree did agencies challenge each other regarding the effectiveness of the plan(s), including progress against agreed outcomes for the child? Was the protocol for professional disagreement invoked? Were the respective statutory duties of agencies working with the child and family fulfilled?

- Were there obstacles or difficulties in this case that prevented agencies from fulfilling their duties? This should include consideration of both organisational issues and other contextual issues?

Specific tasks of the Review Panel

- The Chair for this Panel is Dr Lorna Price Paediatrician and Designated Doctor for Safeguarding Children Service (Public Health Wales). Daphne Rose Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children Service (Public Health Wales) will be the independent, internal reviewer for this case and will be shadowed for the purpose of professional development by Virginia Hewitt Head of Safeguarding Children (ABMU HB). All have declared independence from this case.

- The timeframe has been agreed to be a 12 month period with a brief synopsis of history prior to this if known within the agency. It was agreed the review needed to capture the birth of the youngest child as well as the subsequent care proceedings following the death of the index child and therefore dates are set for the scope to be: 1st June 2013 – 17th July 2014.

- The relevant agencies and services to be represented and required to contribute is as follows:

  BCBC – Children's Services
  BCBC – Education

Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ABMUHB)
Flying Start
Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust (WAST)

Action for Children

- Produce a merged timeline, initial analysis and hypotheses.

- Plan with the reviewer/s a learning event for practitioners, to include identifying attendees and arrangements for preparing and supporting them pre and post event, and arrangements for feedback.

- Plan with the reviewer/s contact arrangements with the child's family members prior to the event.

- Receive and consider the draft child practice review report to ensure that the terms of reference have been met, the initial hypotheses addressed and any additional learning is identified and included in the final report.

- Agree conclusions from the review and an outline action plan, and make arrangements for presentation to the WBSCB for consideration and agreement.

- Plan arrangements to give feedback to family members and share the contents of the report following the conclusion of the review and before publication.

Tasks of the Western Bay Safeguarding Children Board

- Consider and agree any Board learning points to be incorporated into the final report or the action plan.

- Review Panel complete the report and action plan.

- WBSCB send to relevant agencies for final comment before sign-off and submission to Welsh Government.

- Confirm arrangements for the management of the multi-agency action plan by the CPRMG, including how anticipated service improvements will be identified, monitored and reviewed.

- Plan publication on WBSCB website.

- Agree dissemination to agencies, relevant services and professionals.

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- The Board will manage any media interest and enquires in accordance with its Media Management Protocol and relevant LA communications officer(s).

For Welsh Government use only

Date information received ………………………………………………………..

Date acknowledgement letter sent to LSCB chair ……………………………….

Date circulated to relevant inspectorates/Policy leads ……………………….

Agencies	Yes	No	Reason
CSSIW	☐	☐	
Esteem	☐	☐	
HIW	☐	☐	
HMI Constabulary	☐	☐	
HMI Probation	☐	☐	

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

19 OCTOBER 2016

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW TRANSITION SERVICE MODEL FOR DISABLED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1.0   Purpose of Report

1.1   To inform Corporate Parenting Committee of the work being undertaken in respect of the development of a new service model for young people in transition from children's to adult's services; and

1.2   To seek approval to undertake wider engagement with staff and stakeholders in respect of the proposed new service model for transition in moving forward.

2.0   Connection to Corporate Plan

2.1   This report links to the following improvement priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- Helping people to be more self-reliant;
- Smarter use of resources.

Plus the following background document:

- Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

3.0   Background

3.1   The Western Bay Learning Disability Programme Team commissioned an independent consultant to undertake a piece of work to consider the development of a service model for young people in transition from children's to adult's services, to be used across the Western Bay region.

3.2   The report was produced during 2014, and it was approved by the Western Bay Learning Disability Programme Team in March 2015. At this meeting, the Western Bay Learning Disability Programme Team approved to look into developing an integrated multiagency transition team within each local authority area, as recommended within the report, and it was also agreed that each new service model would be developed locally, within each authority's local context and service development arrangements.

3.3   In order to take this recommendation forward in Bridgend, a multi-agency workshop was held, involving colleagues from; Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Finance, Human Resources, Legal Services, and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Local Health Board (ABMU), in order that all colleagues and stakeholders had an opportunity to discuss the initial viability and on-going sustainability of implementing the proposed new service model.

3.4   Within this multi-agency workshop and other related meetings, it was identified that a number of considerable changes had come into force, or were due to come into force, since the initial service model was developed and approved by the Western Bay Learning Disability Programme Team, which included:

- The directorate restructure that was implemented in BCBC in January 2015, when Children's Services and Adult Social Care came together within the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate – which had already brought about much closer working between service areas that cover transition; and
- The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, which was coming into force in April 2016 – which would have a considerable impact on those eligible for care and support, who prior to April 2016 would not have been

3.5   It was recommended that a multi-departmental project team would need to be established, who would reconsider and review the proposed new service model, in light of the considerable changes identified above. This approach was ratified by the Children with Disabilities Programme Board (CWD) who have a governance responsibility in respect of overseeing this project, providing the strategic direction and monitoring progress against key milestones.

4.0   Current Situation

4.1   A multi-departmental project team has been established to take this work forward, involving key stakeholders involved in transition, covering all specialties within Adult Social Care, as well as representation from the Disabled Children's Team in Children's Services – and the project has followed a project management approach, with support being provided by the corporate Project Management team.

4.2   A range of workshops have taken place involving those key stakeholders identified above, in order to:

- fully appraise the current transition service model in Bridgend;
- reconsider and review the proposal made via the Western Bay Learning Disability Programme; and
- refine the proposed new model, in order to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

Workshop 1 – themed "taking stock"

4.3   A number of targeted questions were asked in order to identify the elements of the existing model that are working well, which can be built-upon in moving forward; and also identify elements of the existing model that are not working well, which could be eradicated or mitigated in moving forward. A focused question was also asked about if and how the introduction of a new service model could benefit – with the focus being on the experience of the individual receiving the service.

4.4   The main findings from Workshop 1 identified that the parts of the service that are currently working well are 'people' related. i.e. Staff teams from various areas working well together already in informal settings, staff teams eager to change and enhance the service going forward, and there being positive and trusting relationships with individuals and their families/carers. The main disadvantages of the current service were more 'process' related. i.e. potential duplication of work

when undertaking assessments at the age of 16 and then again at 18 years of age, and also practical issues in respect of current arrangements at transition panel.

4.5   The findings from Workshop 1 were then used to help inform the development of potential new service model options going forward, which were:

- Integrated Transition Team covering ages 0-25 (Western Bay model)
- Integrated Transition Team covering ages 14-25
- Extended Adult Social Care Teams to cover ages 14+
- 'Virtual' Transition Team covering existing teams, for ages 14-25

Workshop 2 – themed "moving forward"

4.6   The options identified above were then fully appraised at Workshop 2, where a SWOT analysis was carried-out against each option, identifying the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

4.7   Based on the SWOT analysis, the project team discarded the options identified above for a number of reasons, with the main reasons being:

- Transition issues would not be addressed, as Child Protection and Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) would remain priority areas within existing teams;
- There could be a potential dilution of specialist knowledge that is currently provided from arrangements within existing, distinct teams;
- The size of an integrated team covering transition ages would be very difficult to implement and manage if attempting to introduce immediately
- Creating a new team would not address the required changes in eligibility resulting from the new Act

4.8   In response to this, an alternative 'phased approach' a proposal was then drawn-up by the project team, which addresses the concerns, is in-keeping with the requirements of the new Act, and is a manageable and realistic proposal in terms of being implemented effectively within the required timescales.

Phase 1 – Transition Keyworker model

- Disabled Children's Team (DCT) carry on 'as-is' for ages 0-18
- Adult Social Care (ASC) teams carry on 'as-is' for ages 18+
- New role/team created to focus solely on transition and vulnerable adults – to cover age range 14-25
- New role/team to focus on Transition, alongside social workers in DCT & ASC
- Proposed that 'transition keyworker' will be similar to the 'personal advisor' role for care leavers

Phase 2 – Western Bay optimal model

- Fully integrated team established for ages 0-25

4.9   It was agreed that this new proposal would need to be considered and evaluated by a wider range of stakeholders from other areas such as Families First and the Integrated Network teams in Adult Services, who were invited to a further workshop.

<u>Workshop 3 – themed "potential new service model"</u>

4.10 All wider stakeholders had an opportunity to revisit the original options considered (as stated in paragraph 4.5) and then discarded by the project team – where all in attendance were in agreement with the decision and the rationale for discarding each option.

4.11 All in attendance then had an opportunity to undertake a SWOT analysis and provide any further comments in respect of the proposed new service model, following which all in attendance were in agreement to endorse the proposed 'phased approach'.

4.12 In adopting the phased approach, officers feel that key lessons can be learned from Phase 1, and also the additional knowledge and experience that will be built-up in respect of the implications of the new Act (which came into force in April 2016) can be factored-in to help inform the future structure and make-up of the integrated team in Phase 2, and this proposal has been endorsed by the Children with Disabilities Programme Board.

4.13 It is acknowledged that wider engagement has not yet taken place with affected individuals, their families/carers or the staff members involved in transition, as it was only the managers of these teams who were part of the original project team who developed the options appraisal and proposed new service model.

4.14 It is therefore recommended that additional engagement is undertaken with those identified above, the findings from which will be used to help inform a final service model that officers would look to implement for transition services – which will be reported to relevant committees for scrutiny and approval, as required.

5.0 Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

5.1 There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.

6.0 Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 An EIA is not required at this time. When options in moving forward have been considered, and officers are in a better position to know which individuals and staff could be affected by the proposed new service model for transition in the longer-term, an EIA screening (and a full EIA if deemed necessary) will be undertaken, to assess any potential impact the new service model may have on individuals and staff.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 The premise that the project team are working towards when developing a new service model for transition is that any changes will need to made within existing resources and funding arrangements. However, should any additional funding for any elements of the new service model be required, approval will be sought via the necessary channels.

7.2   There are no specific MTFS savings requirements identified against this project, and it is not anticipated that any cost savings will be made in the early phases of the project. However, if any cost savings are made when developing the integrated service model for transition during the later phases of the project, they will contribute towards the below MTFS savings target:

MTFS	2018/19	2019/20	TOTAL
ASC28 Alternative Delivery Models	£1,214k	£1,202k	**£2,416k**

8.0   Recommendation

8.1   It is recommended that Corporate Parenting Committee:

- Note the information contained in this report;
- Approve to undertake wider engagement with staff and stakeholders in respect of the proposed new service model for transition in moving forward;
- Note that a further report will be presented to Corporate Parenting Committee in the future, proposing a new service model for transition in the longer-term – which will have been finalised based on the findings from the engagement

Susan Cooper
Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing
September 2016

9.0   Contact Officers
Wendy Wilcox – Group Manager, Disability Transition and Case Management
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10.0   Background documents
None

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE - CORPORATE PARENTING

19 OCTOBER 2016

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

INFORMATION ABOUT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL FOSTERING FRAMEWORK

1.   Purpose of Report.

1.1   The purpose of the report is to provide the Corporate Parenting Committee with information about the work done to date on establishing a National Fostering Framework.

1.2   This report should be read in conjunction with the National Fostering Framework briefing paper attached as **Appendix 1**. This paper provides additional information and was prepared by the project manager of the National Fostering Framework for the intention of enabling the strategic steering group to agree and support specific work streams and projects going forward. It has been revised to include BCBC specific data.

2.   Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority.

2.1   The report links to all of the corporate priorities:

- Helping people to be more self-reliant;
- Smarter use of resources;
- Supporting a successful economy.

3.   Background

3.1   A Reference Group was set up in 2015, with all the key stakeholders represented. It quickly produced a 'First Thoughts' paper which outlined the case for change, identified how we could achieve better partnership across the different sectors and presented some initial ideas about what could be delivered most effectively at national, regional and local levels.   A wide-ranging consultation programme followed which provided opportunities to engage with young people, foster carers in local authorities and the independent sector, staff in local authorities and our public service colleagues.   The Local Authority foster carers were contacted through the Fostering Network, all BCBC approved foster carers are registered with the Fostering Network in recognition of their status. Voices from Care were responsible for organizing feedback and events for looked after children, all looked after children have the opportunity to become involved with Voices from Care.

3.2   The outcomes of the work programme for 2015-16, including the messages from the consultation exercises, were brought together in the Phase One Report (**Appendix 2**).

3.3 The case for change was almost universally acknowledged and there was a strong consensus about creating a National Fostering Framework. Outlined below are the likely component parts:

- Increased co-ordination of strategies and plans. Working more closely with independent and third sector providers for identified services;
- More sector led improvements, policies could be regional or national; cares could move between Local Authorities if they move without a full re assessment or transfer protocols;
- A means of measuring, monitoring and improving performance and resource management, giving transparency to Local Authority services in comparison with independent providers;
- Greater accountability of all fostering services national data will be provided to ADSS;
- Search for economies of scale where appropriate. Harmonised payments and financial policies will be explored.

3.4 The agreement of the establishment of the National Fostering Framework reflected both the scale of people's concerns and also the need to support effective change, tackling some major challenges which can only be addressed at a strategic level. Views and opinions emerged from the strategic steering group and the consultations that took place about what such a 'National Fostering Framework' and its components should look like. The creation of a National Framework was seen as a means of ensuring that known concerns are addressed and to introduce greater consistency without sacrificing the acknowledged strengths and diversity of local accountability within the current system.

3.5 Above all, the steering group acknowledged that a National Fostering Framework is a means to an end and that the aim of such needs to be:
- improvement in permanence planning for children and quality of placement provision;
- a more cogent, compelling and strategic intent in relation to fostering services;
- increased collaboration and co-operation by all key stakeholders;
- greater transparency about performance of fostering services and efficient use of resources;
- economies of scale, where appropriate, but with a respect for localism;
- more shared services in planning and commissioning;
- consistent use of 'Best Practice' models for recruiting and supporting foster carers; and
- closer links to research and evaluation.

4. Current situation.

4.1 A Strategic Steering Group has been established, with representation from Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru, the Fostering Network, Association for Fostering and Adoption (AFA) Cymru, Voices from Care, a designated Doctor for Looked After Children, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Education, the Childrens Commissioning Support Resource (4C's) and Cascade. This group provides strategic oversight and direction. BCBC is represented by Councillor Huw David. Implementation of all of the recommendations endorsed by

the steering group is anticipated to take place over two to three-years through a workstreams programme.

4.2   The work programme for 2016-17 includes:

- Develop an agreed framework for allocating responsibilities at a national, regional and local authority levels and begin work on putting the appropriate structures in place;
- Develop a National Performance and Resource Framework to provide greater transparency about the performance of each local authority's fostering service and the efficient use of resources;
- Establishing a Welsh identity for local authority Foster Care, a national approach to marketing and use of social media for recruitment and retention;
- Achieve greater consistency in the use of Kinship Foster Care;
- Developing national arrangements for commissioning all placements, regardless of sector and building on the work of the 4Cs; and
- Benchmarking best practice in Corporate Parenting across Councils and other public services to improve outcomes for children and increase the resilience of foster placements.

4.3   A variety of methods is being used to take forward these proposals such as: working groups, workshops, national conferences, production of videos of young people talking of their experience of foster care.

4.4   Development of a national performance framework would provide us with opportunities to:
- have a consistent approach for collating a set of performance and resource management information;
- have access to performance and resource management information for benchmarking and improving fostering services;
- have a set of performance and resource management information that supports the evidence requirements for CSSIW inspections of Fostering Services;
- manage fostering services within a clear financial framework;
- understand what works best in the marketing and recruitment of foster carers;
- demonstrate improvements and raise standards nationally and locally.

5.   Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

5.1   There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.   Equality Impact Assessment

6.1   This report is concerned with performance information rather than policy or decision making therefore an equality impact assessment is not applicable.

7.   Financial Implications.

7.1   There are no specific financial implications arising directly out of this report.

8.   Recommendation.

8.1   That the Corporate Parenting Committee notes the information contained within the briefing note and the phase one report.

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Date: October 2016

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Background documents

Appendices
   A. National Fostering Framework Briefing paper
   B. National Fostering Framework Phase One report

National Fostering Framework: Briefing Note

1. **Introduction**

1.1 In many ways, foster care is public care at its best. Foster carers have a beneficial impact upon many of the vulnerable children and young people who are looked after by local authorities. The central aim in establishing a National Fostering Framework is to ensure that the best quality foster care placements are available to all the children and young people who need them in order to reach their full potential and that foster carers are valued, supported and receive excellent training.

1.2 The purpose of this note is to:

- provide background information on work done to date on establishing a National Fostering Framework;
- reinforce the 'case for change', the reasons why a National Fostering Framework is needed;
- describe the programme undertaken in Phase One (2015-16);
- inform key stakeholders about the current position;
- identify the lessons learnt from establishing the National Adoption Service; and
- seek support, in principle, for involvement in creating a National Fostering Framework which is best equipped to address the challenges involved.

1.3 It is intended that the note should be used as the basis to inform and engage with all stakeholder colleagues who would have an interest in this collective enterprise.

2. **Background Information**

2.1 For some years, key stakeholders have advocated the need for greater collaboration across all sectors, to address strategically the growing concerns about the overall effectiveness and sustainability of fostering services in Wales. ADSS Cymru, WLGA, AFA Cymru and the Fostering Network were keen to play a part in taking this work forward. A case was prepared which outlined the potential contribution that could be made by developing a national framework for the delivery of fostering services and this was presented to the Welsh Government. The Minster for Health and Social Services endorsed this proposal and provided funding for Phase 1 in 2015-16 and later for Phase 2 in 2016-17. This project became one of the four major work streams within the Welsh Government's work programme to 'Improve outcomes for Children'.

2.2 A Reference Group was set up in 2015, with all the key stakeholders represented. It quickly produced a 'First Thoughts' paper which outlined the case for change, identified how we could achieve better partnership across the different sectors and presented some initial ideas about

what could be delivered most effectively at national, regional and local levels. A wide-ranging consultation programme followed which provided opportunities to engage with young people, foster carers in local authorities and the independent sector, staff in local authorities and our public service colleagues. The mechanisms for engagement and consultation included:

o on-line surveys for foster carers and staff in all sectors, with leadership from the Fostering Network and local authorities;

o workshops with young people, provided by Voices from Care;

o an all Wales event for local authority managers, staff and public sector partners leadership for this event was provided by AFA Cymru; and

o attendance at existing forums and meetings, to meet directly with carers and providers

2.3 The outcomes of the work programme for 2015-16, including the messages from the consultation exercises, were brought together in the Phase One Report (Appendix 1). The case for change was almost universally acknowledged and there was a strong consensus about creating a National Fostering Framework. This reflected both the scale of people's concerns and also the need to support effective change, tackling some major challenges which can only be addressed at a strategic level. There emerged a wealth of ideas, view and opinions emerged about what a National Fostering Framework should look like and its likely components: increased co-ordination; more sector led improvements; a means of measuring, monitoring and improving performance and resource management; greater accountability; and a search for economies of scale where appropriate. It was seen as a means of ensuring that known concerns are addressed and of introducing greater consistency without sacrificing the acknowledged strengths and diversity of local accountability within the current system.

2.4 Above all, it was acknowledged that a National Fostering Framework is a means to an end and that its aims should to be:

o improvements in permanency planning for children and quality of placement provision;

o a more cogent and compelling and strategic intent in relation to fostering services;

o increased collaboration and co-operation by all key stakeholders

o greater transparency about performance of fostering services and efficient use of resources;

o economies of scale, where appropriate, but with a respect for localism;

o more shared services in planning and commissioning;

o consistent use of 'Best Practice' models for recruiting and supporting foster carers; and

o closer links to research and evaluation.

3. **The Case For Change**

3.1 The work undertaken so far has overwhelmingly identified the need for urgent solutions to:

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- o growing concerns about the overall effectiveness and sustainability of fostering services in Wales;

- o placement pressures and our current inability to consistently match needs and placement options to a good enough standard; and

- o difficulties in recruiting foster carer sand providing them with the range of skills and support needed for the complex and challenging work they undertake.

3.2   Significant investment of resources and staff time in each local authority has achieved some real improvements in some areas. However, this progress was not reflected in the overall national picture. The opportunities presented by the National Fostering Framework will help to promote cross-authority learning and to raise standards across all authorities.

3.3   In 2015, research published by the Fostering Network identified the need for an additional 550 foster care families in Wales. Over recent years, the total number of general foster placements across the whole of Wales has declined. The table below shows that the number of approved local authority foster carers was lower in March 2015 than it was in March 2012.

Number of approved local authority foster parents	Year ending
2,514	March 2015
2,596	March 2014
2,553	March 2013
2,524	March 2012

In BCBC

Number of approved BCBC foster parents	Year ending
155	March 2015
129	March 2014
120	March 2013
104	March 2012

3.4   Given that the average age of a foster carer in Wales is fifty-five, we will need to recruit more carers just to stand still. There are many very positive initiatives and innovative ways of working by dedicated and committed staff groups in terms of recruitment, retention and support but they do not appear to be sustained or get picked up uniformly across Wales.

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3.5   The work on performance and resourcing undertaken in Phase One work programme identified that our sources of information on fostering services are fragmented and sometimes difficult to access. The need to gather more performance information in relation to each local authority and to understand better the picture across Wales is recognised. Currently, every local authority has its own unique mechanism for collecting information about the performance of its fostering service. The information they provide to Welsh Government annually, made available on the Stats Wales website, is more consistent. However, it has limited value in performance management terms.[1] The proposed National Performance Framework would enable detailed information to be gathered consistently for each local authority and nationally.

3.6   The number of children looked after by local authority foster carers and by independent sector foster carers has not changed significantly over the last three years. We know the cost of these placements across both sectors. The table below indicates the comparative expenditure between the cost and number of local authority placements and those in the independent sector.

All Wales gross expenditure for fostering services, excluding kinship foster care.

	2012/13		2013/14		2014/15	
Local authority foster care	£49,382,143	2,230 children	£46,566,444	2,240 children	£51,320,559	2,200 children
Foster care provision from the independent sector	£58,967,864	1,300 children	£58,470,061	1,275 children	£52,271,037	1,205 children

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[1] Later in September, the Steering Group will undertake some further analysis of this data for the year 2015-16 to help each local authority understand their performance on a comparative basis.

BCBC gross expenditure for fostering services, including kinship foster care.

	2012/13		2013/14		2014/15	
Local authority foster care	2,817,477.19	205 children	2,923,740.15	209 children	3,032,556.49	215 children
Foster care provision from the independent sector	3,505,760.54	103 children	4,475,779.12	94 children	4,157,501.32	100 children

3.7   The cost per place of the foster placements in the independent sector appears to be double that of local authorities. Moreover, at the end of March 2015, 1,040 children were living in foster placements outside their local authority area; 710 of these placements were provided by an independent fostering agency. In summary, it looks as though the independent sector provides far more expensive placements, further away from a child's community and with all the potential problems associated with greater isolation - limited family contact, reduced oversight and difficulties in securing support from other agencies. There is no indication that this picture will alter significantly unless a more co-ordinated strategic intent is in place. The third sector fostering agencies have expressed a strong desire to develop stronger collaborative relationships with the local authorities that are distinct from the commercial sector.

3.8   The work during Phase One identified what we currently know about the performance of our fostering services but also some of the key information gaps.

o   How many enquiries do we receive each year from people interested in becoming foster carers?

o   How many foster carers are recruited each year?

o   How many recruitment campaigns are held each year and what were the outcomes?

o   How many foster carers had vacancies and were waiting for a child to be placed with them?

o   How many enquiries to foster are received by the independent sector?

o   How much do we spend on fostering fees and allowances?

In BCBC during the period April 1st 2015 to March 31st 2016 we received 166 enquiries

During the period April 1st 2015 to March 31st 2016 we recruited 35 foster carers

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In BCBC There are 6 campaigns held per year

Month	Campaign type/theme
January	Change a life this year
March	LGBT Adoption and Fostering Week
May	Foster Care Fortnight
September	Empty nesters
October	Sons and Daughters Week
November	Children in Need

BCBC marketing campaigns are evaluated by the Marketing Officer who has access to the following:

- Website hits
- Facebook advertising results
- GoogleAds results
- Amount of coverage
- Social media analytics (Twitter/Facebook)

3.9   Development of a national performance framework would provide us with opportunities to:

o   have a consistent approach for collating a set of performance and resource management information;

o   have access to performance and resource management information for benchmarking and improving fostering services;

o   have a set of performance and resource management information that supports the evidence requirement s for CSSIW inspections of Fostering Services;

o   manage fostering services within a clear financial framework;

o   understand what works best in the marketing and recruitment of foster carers;

o   demonstrate improvements and raise standards nationally and locally.

4.   Learning from other Regional and National Initiatives

4.1   Development of a National Fostering Framework takes place within the wider context of other services which are being remodelled within an approach that has greater national and regional elements. It is important that, while we benefit from the opportunities to delivery some fostering services on a national and regional level, we do not lose the advantages of localism

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and local accountability. There is an almost unanimous view that the statutory responsibility for children should remain within individual local authorities.

4.2   Some regional initiatives have taken place in recent years and again it will be important to draw on these examples. The South East Improvement Collaborative (SEWIC) have worked on development of a 'best practice model' in the recruitment of foster carers and some preparatory work on harmonisation of fees and allowances. North Wales has plans to deliver some elements of their fostering service on a regional basis: a consistent policy framework for 'When I'm Ready'; harmonisation of fees and allowances; and better marketing of fostering services. In addition to these more formal approaches, there are a number of local examples of collaborative working between local authorities, most notably around training and Foster Panels.

4.3   The development of a National Fostering Framework will benefit from the experience and learning that can be gained from other national initiatives, such as the national approach for children's advocacy Service and the National Adoption Service (NAS). The NAS has recently published its second Annual Report and so it is an opportune time to identify some of the headline benefits:

- o   an ability to see consistent performance information, nationally and regionally, which facilitates analysis of performance and making valid comparisons;
- o   well-evidenced improvements in performance and greater clarity about areas where performance and service development is needed;
- o   higher public profile and a recognisable brand for marketing purposes;
- o   a mechanism in place for creating a coherent marketing strategy at all levels;
- o   improved engagement with service users and opportunities for greater use of co- production methods in designing services;
- o   greater accountability, ownership and interest;
- o   the ability of local; government to provide leadership of a major change programme; and
- o   a unified approach to improvement, with contributions from a wide range of local authority, 3rd sector and key partners.

It is equally important that we learn from what could have been done differently, with the benefit of hindsight:

- o   recognising that there is no ''magic wand' and that collaboration is hard work requiring an investment of time, patience and persistence at many levels;
- o   identifying at an earlier stage the challenges around the resources required to set up the central team and the regional elements of the national service;

- o the need for more capacity, to undertake the detailed work required around the governance arrangements; and

- o the ability to marshal and direct some of the resources has to be shared.

5. The Work Programme for 2016-17

5.1   The Phase One Report 2015-16 has been produced, widely distributed to all key stakeholders, presented to the Welsh Government and its Strategic Steering Group to 'Improve Outcomes for Children' and discussed by relevant Cabinet Members via the WLGA . Welsh Government endorsed the work programme for Phase Two (2016-17) and approved a further grant. A real momentum for change is building and it is important that these opportunities receive a positive response.

5.2   A Strategic Steering Group has been established, with representation from Welsh Government, the WLGA, ADSS Cymru, the Fostering Network, AFA Cymru, Voices from Care, a Designated Doctor for Looked After Children, CAMHS, Education, the 4Cs and Cascade. This group provides strategic oversight and direction. Implementation of all of the recommendations is seen as being thought to be a two- to three-year work programme.

5.3   The work programme for 2016-17 includes:

- o develop an agreed framework for allocating responsibilities at a national, regional and local authority levels and begin work on putting the appropriate structures in place;

- o develop a National Performance and Resource Framework to provide greater transparency about the performance of each local authority's fostering service and the efficient use of resources;

- o establishing a Welsh identity for local authority Foster Care, a national approach to marketing and use of social media for recruitment and retention;

- o achieve greater consistency in the use of Kinship Foster Care;

- o developing national arrangements for commissioning all placements, regardless of sector and building on the work of the 4Cs; and

- o benchmarking best practice in Corporate Parenting across Councils and other public services, to improve outcomes for children and increase the resilience of foster placements

5.4   A variety of methods is being used to take forward these proposals: working groups, workshops, national conferences, production of videos of young people talking of their experience of foster care; etc. Progress reports are produced on a regular basis to the Strategic Steering Group.

6. Recommendations

6.1   A clear consensus has emerged that further progress depends upon Wales developing a far more cogent and compelling strategic intent in relation to fostering services, to address growing concerns about their overall effectiveness and sustainability. Continuation of the status quo is likely to be characterised by managed decline, especially when the operational and financial context for looked after children services as a whole is likely to be so challenging for the foreseeable future.

6.2   It is recommended that the principle of establishing a National Fostering Framework is accepted with more detailed reports on each of the recommendations being presented to all key decision makers and policy makers for consideration in due course.

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National Fostering Framework

Phase One Report

2015 – 2016

National
Fostering
Framework

Fframwaith
Maethu
Cenedlaethol

Contents

Summary and Recommendations

We can demonstrate that foster care is hugely beneficial to children and young people living away from their families. Having good placements and quality foster carers is a fundamental safeguard for children who are looked after and the key to their future life chances.

We can demonstrate that foster care is hugely beneficial to children and young people living away from their families. Having good placements and quality foster carers is a fundamental safeguard for children who are looked after and the key to their future life chances. In many ways, this is public care at its best. The services often work to exceptional standards and with good examples of well-conceived improvements. Our mission is to ensure that all relevant children and young people are able to have good quality care in which they can develop and thrive, and reach their full potential. This care needs to be provided by a well-supported body of dedicated foster carers who can provide a safe, caring and nurturing family environment. There is mounting anxiety that we are not getting very much closer to fulfilling these goals consistently enough.

We need an urgent solution to:

- growing concerns about the overall effectiveness and sustainability of fostering services in Wales;

- placement pressures and our current inability to match needs and placement options well enough; and

- difficulties in recruiting foster carers and in providing them with the range of skills and support needed for the complex and challenging work they undertake.

For example, research published by the Fostering Network in 2015 identified the need for an additional 550 foster care families in Wales. Over the last three years, the total number of general foster placements across the whole of Wales has declined year on year. In the same period, there has been a drop in the number of placements made with local authority foster carers and with Independent Providers. Given that the average age of a foster carer in Wales is 55, we will need to recruit more carers 'just to stand still' but local recruitment campaigns appear to have relatively limited impact. We know, of course, about considerable efforts to find more innovative ways of working, to tackle some of these major problems. However, too many good initiatives don't seem to have enough traction and do not get picked up uniformly across Wales, perhaps because they are not co-ordinated well enough or supported consistently during difficult times.

A clear consensus has emerged that further progress depends upon Wales developing a far more cogent and compelling strategic intent in relation to fostering services, to address growing concerns about their overall effectiveness and sustainability. Continuation of the status quo is likely to produce a situation characterised mostly by managed decline, especially when the operational and financial context for looked after children services as a whole is likely to be very challenging for the foreseeable future. This is why many key stakeholders advocate strongly the need for greater collaboration in the delivery of fostering services across all sectors and why they see development of a National Fostering Framework as a major priority. In 2015, they came together to develop this concept, motivated by principles of co-production.

This collective enterprise became one of the four major key workstreams within the programme of the Strategic Steering Group set up by Welsh Government with the task of 'Improving Outcomes for Children'. The Group seeks to take forward the policy agenda mandated in the Social Services and Well-being Act, together with the Codes of Practice in Part 6 of the Act, which will have profound implications for the way services for looked after children are delivered.

A reference group for National Fostering Framework was established. One of its key tasks was to produce a 'First Thoughts' paper – which outlined the case for change, identified how we can achieve better partnership across the different sectors and presented initial ideas about what can be delivered most effectively at national, regional and local levels. In order to get an overall picture of the work programme to date, this paper is an important reference document.

There followed a wide-ranging consultation programme, partly based on getting a response to the paper-providing opportunities to engage with many people (individually and in groups). We organised:

- on-line surveys for foster carers and staff in all sectors, with leadership from the Fostering Network and local authorities;

- workshops with young people, provided by Voices From Care;

- attendance at existing forums and meetings, to meet directly with carers and providers; and

- an all Wales event for local authority managers, staff and public sector partners. Leadership for this event was provided by AFA Cymru

The outcomes of the National Fostering Framework work programme for 2015/16, including messages from the consultation exercises, have been brought together in this Phase One Report.

The case for change put forward in the First Thoughts paper was almost universally acknowledged, and agreement that a National Performance Framework should be established. This reflected both the scale of people's concerns and also the need to support effective change, tackling some major challenges which can be addressed only at a strategic level. We received a wealth of ideas, views and opinions about what sort of National Fostering Framework is required and its likely components: increased co-ordination; more sector-led improvement; a means of measuring, monitoring and improving performance and resource management; greater accountability and a search for economies of scale where appropriate. People told us that it should be comprehensive and aspirational, collaborative and inclusive - a means of ensuring that known concerns are addressed and of introducing greater consistency without sacrificing the acknowledged strengths and diversity within the current system.

Above all, it was acknowledged that a National Fostering Framework is only a means to an end and that we need to pursue three common aims:

i. guarantee that fostering is seen as an essential, quality service provided to individual children and for the benefit of society as a whole;

ii. ensure that foster carers feel valued and supported by their fostering service and by all of us; and

iii. enable everybody to co-operate effectively in helping children in foster care to achieve the best possible outcomes, including good health and high levels of educational attainment.

We must find ways of delivering a National Fostering Framework Phase 2. A real momentum is building which we cannot afford to let slip. The work programme for the next phase is likely to involve developing a clear set of proposals and an outline implementation plan for what a National Performance Framework should look like, the structures and mechanisms and resources required to establish it. The proposals will need to consider which aspects of the service are best delivered on national, regional and local levels. This will build on the priority areas of action set out at the end of this Report.

The work will involve:

– Developing an agreed framework for allocating responsibilities at a national, regional and local authority levels and begin putting in place the appropriate structures (learning from the approach used in establishing the National Adoption Service)

– Creating a resource management and performance framework

– Establishing a Welsh identity for Foster Care, a national approach to marketing and use of social media

– Developing a national policy framework for foster care, to include a structure for training for foster carers

– Beginning a project to bring about greater consistency and transparency in the fees and allowances carers receive

– Addressing the issues raised in the initial scoping paper on Kinship Foster Care

– Producing strategies for commissioning placements between local authorities, with the independent sector (commercial providers) and independent providers (third sector).

If developing a National Fostering Framework is to improve outcomes for children and young people and support for foster carers, we must engage children and young people, foster carers, staff in the independent and third sector, and local authority staff and their public service partners in the work programme for Phase Two. Consideration must be given as to how this can best be achieved. Above all, principal decision-makers and leaders need to decide whether they are willing to commit to establishing a National Framework as the best means of responding to the concerns and aspirations expressed in a very unified way by the wide range of stakeholders who took part in the consultation exercises.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Evidence	Delivery
1. Develop a National Fostering Framework, including the allocation of functions at national, regional and local authority levels and begin putting in place the appropriate structures.	Support for a National Fostering Framework was expressed by all key stakeholders during the consultation programme, with consistent views emerging about what elements of the fostering service could best be delivered on a national, regional and local basis.	Year One
2. Establish the right balance between local authority foster care, third sector providers and commercial providers in terms of national policy objectives, service quality considerations and value for money requirements.	There is considerable concern about the way the current 'market' operates in practice. It is not generating the right number and types of placements, delivering best value for the investment of public resources. Part 2, Section 16 of the Social Services and Well-being Act requires further consideration about the role social enterprises, co-operatives, user-led services and the third sector in delivering fostering services.	Year Two
3. Establish an all-Wales public service fostering collaborative, delivering services regionally and locally, incorporating all the relevant services directly provided by local authorities.	Local authority fostering services have lost ground over the last twenty years to the commercial sector. In achieving the correct balance between the sectors, it is important that local authority fostering services are as well-equipped as possible to meet the needs of children for local, publicly managed placements.	Year Three

Recommendations	Evidence	Delivery
4. Produce a national policy framework for fostering services, to include the training and support of foster carers.	A strong message coming from the consultation programme from foster carers and staff was the need to have more common policies across Wales. The training of foster carers, post approval and the support to carers were issues frequently mentioned.	Year Two
5. Introduce a national performance and resource framework, aligning this with the work being done to deliver the Welsh Community Care Information Service (WCCIS). A phased approach to implementation will be developed. A distinct performance framework should be developed for the independent sector (commercial providers and third sector providers).	The work in Phase One provided clear evidence about how little is known regarding the performance and resourcing of fostering services across Wales and that what we do know is fragmented. Work on a performance and resourcing framework is considered essential to maximise the opportunities presented by the implementation of the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS).	Year One
6. Introduce a national web-site, social media, brand and identity for foster care in Wales, to underpin a marketing strategy for recruiting foster carers and improving communication.	The need to have an all-Wales identity for fostering was a very strong message from local authority staff and others during the consultation programme. This was seen as a key mechanism for improving the ability to communicate well with current foster carers and children and to encourage recruitment and retention.	Year One

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Evidence	Delivery
7. Ensure greater consistency in the use of Kinship Foster Care for children who are looked after, building on the initial scoping paper from Phase One.	The issues surrounding kinship foster care were very strong messages emerging from the consultation programme. Inconsistent use of kinship foster and a variety of practice approaches were identified through the work in Phase One. An issues paper was prepared, identifying the benefits that could be gained from developing a more national approach.	Year One
8. Develop national arrangements for commissioning all placements, regardless of sector but building on the work of the 4Cs.	Limited progress has been made in matching on an all-Wales basis, placement needs and the options available, partly because we have yet to develop appropriate tools for commissioning.	Year One

Recommendations	Evidence	Delivery
9. Harmonise policies for paying fees and allowances to local authority foster carers.	The payment of foster care allowances and fees was identified by foster carers and staff as a key issue during the consultation programme. The need for greater consistency and transparency were seen as key issues. It was recognised this will present particular challenges but one that should not be ignored.	Year Three
10. Benchmark best practice in corporate parenting across Councils and other public services – to improve outcomes for children and increase the resilience of foster care placements.	There were many examples of children in foster care achieving good outcomes as the result of positive family experiences in combination with help from social services, education, health, housing and other professionals. However, young people and foster carers expressed strong concerns were concerned about inconsistent and inadequate support.	Year One

Year One 2016-17: Draft Project Plan

Action required	Lead Responsibility	Timeframe
Secure continuation of the grant from Welsh Government for Phase Two and put in place project management capacity to take forward the work.	Welsh Government, Local Government	June 2016
Agree the governance arrangements to take forward the Phase 2 work programme, including involvement of the Regional Partnerships.	Welsh Government, Local Government, WLGA, ADSS Cymru, The Fostering Network, AFA Cymru	June 2016
Consider arrangements for the involvement of children and young people and foster carers in Phase Two.	Voices from Care, Fostering Network, AFA Cymru	July 2016
Strengthen the arrangements for involving health (including CAMHS) and education in the work of Phase Two.	Current Reference Group members	July 2016
Strengthen the arrangements for involving providers in the work to develop a National Fostering Framework.	4Cs Board, Third Sector Providers	July 2016
Develop a National Fostering Framework and a detailed set of proposals building on all the recommendations in this report. • Decide the allocation of functions at national, regional and local authority levels and begin putting in place the appropriate structures. • Introduce an interim national performance and resource framework, aligning this with the work being done to deliver the Welsh Community Care Information Service (WCCIS). A phased approach to implementation will be developed. A distinct performance framework should be developed for the independent sector (commercial providers and third sector providers).	Welsh Government, Local Government, WLGA, ADSS Cymru, The Fostering Network, AFA Cymru, 4Cs, Allied Public Services	June 2016 October 2016

Action required	Lead Responsibility	Timeframe
• Introduce a national web-site, social media, brand and identity for foster care in Wales, to underpin a marketing strategy for recruiting foster carers and improving communication.	Welsh Government, Local Government, WLGA, ADSS Cymru, The Fostering Network, AFA Cymru, 4Cs, Allied Public Services	December 2016
• Establish a plan for an all-Wales public service fostering collaborative, delivering services regionally and locally, incorporating all the relevant services directly provided by local authorities.		December 2016
• Decide how to ensure greater consistency in the use of Kinship Foster Care for children who are looked after, building on the initial scoping paper from Phase One.		December 2016
• Undertake a mapping exercise on the fees and allowances that carers receive in local authorities, independent providers (commercial) and independent providers (third sector).		February 2017
• Agree national arrangements for commissioning all placements, regardless of sector but building on the work of the 4Cs.		March 2017
• Benchmark best practice in corporate parenting across Councils and other public services – to improve outcomes for children and increase the resilience of foster care placements.		January 2017
Gain approval from policy makers and key decision makers to take forward the proposals.	Welsh Government, Local Government, WLGA, ADSS Cymru, The Fostering Network, AFA Cymru	September 2016 and ongoing

What is the National Fostering Framework?

Developing a national framework for fostering services is one of the four major key workstreams within the programme which has been established by the Strategic Steering Group set up by Welsh Government with the task of 'Improving outcomes for children'.

We need a system in Wales where every fostered child and young person is:

- provided with security and stability in their foster home;

- helped to make and maintain relationships;

- supported to stay until they are ready to leave; and

- helped to reach their potential.

Similarly, every foster carer deserves to be:

- respected as a professional child care colleague ;

- given all the information they need to care for each child properly;

- be fully involved in decision making; and

- empowered to make appropriate day-to-day decisions concerning the children in their care.

"Improving outcomes for children and young people"

The 'First Thoughts' Paper

November 2015: What was It? and What did it Say?

To view the 'First Thoughts' Paper and the accompanying Context Appendix 1 Paper, please click on your preferred language:

THE AIMS OF THE NFF: WHAT ARE THEY?

- Improvements in permanency planning for children and quality of placement provision
- A more cogent and compelling strategic intent for fostering services
- Increased collaboration and co-operation by all key stakeholders
- Sector-led improvements
- Greater transparency about the performance of fostering services and efficient use of resources
- Economies of scale, where appropriate, with a respect for localism
- More shared services planning and commissioning
- Consistent use of best practice models for recruiting and supporting foster carers across all sectors
- Closer links to research and evaluation

POLICY AND PRACTICE CHALLENGES: WHAT ARE THEY?

- Focusing on early intervention and prevention
- Improving the provision of permanency placements for children
- Addressing the underlying causes of the unacceptable differences in the rates of children becoming looked after in Wales
- Providing and commissioning a flexible and affordable mix of high-quality placements
- Improving outcomes for looked after children
- Over 1,000 children being placed outside their local area
- Recruiting, supporting and training foster carers who can provide high-quality care for children with complex needs and challenging behaviour
- An ageing population of foster carers

OUTLINE PROPOSALS FOR A NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL APPROACH

National Level:

- A national performance framework to provide an analysis of performance across Wales by all providers
- Promotion of a strategic approach to service delivery
- Co-ordination of marketing activity
- Development of strategic relationships with partners and service providers
- Establishing a national website

Regional Level:

- Foster Panels
- Establishing internal markets between local authorities in each region
- Regional marketing strategies
- Regional 'front door' to respond to initial enquiries
- Development of common policies
- Regional pre- and post-approval training
- Regional approaches to 'When I'm Ready'

Local Level:

- Placing and matching of children and young people
- Supervision and support of foster carers
- Annual foster care reviews
- Agency Decision Maker responsibilities
- Full fostering assessments
- Kinship Foster Carer assessments

The Work Programme for Phase One

WHAT DID WE SAY WE'D DO IN PHASE ONE?

- Secure resources for the project

- Appoint a Project Manager and Resources and Business Support Manager

- Establish a work programme for Phase One

- Establish a Reference Group to lead on an extensive programme of engagement and consultation

- Establish a Consortium Group to provide strategic oversight

- Consult widely on an initial set of proposals

- Gain consensus from a wide group of stakeholders for taking forward a new model and create an alliance for change

- Produce a Phase One report to be presented to Welsh Government's Strategic Steering Group

WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

- Grant secured. Financial management of the grant being undertaken by the Vale of Glamorgan's finance department

- Project Manager and Resource and Performance Manager in post and achieving the tasks in the work programme

- A Work Programme in place with monthly Progress Reports to the Consortium Group and Welsh Government

- Reference Group established, provided leadership on the consultation programme with different stakeholders

- Consortium Group established, monthly meetings, provided strategic oversight of the work and the Welsh Government grant expenditure

- Consensus emerging from key stakeholders on key issues that need addressing, more details later in this report

- Phase One report being presented to Welsh Government's Strategic Steering Group on 16th March 2016

Members of the Reference Group

Organisation	Name
Director of Social Services, Vale of Glamorgan, ADSS Cymru	Philip Evans
Director of Operations, National Adoption Service	Suzanne Griffiths
Policy Officer WLGA	Stewart Blythe
Welsh Government, Placements for Children and Adults	Elizabeth Lockwood and Huw Gwyn Jones, Deputising for Elizabeth Lockwood
Head of Children's Services, Vale of Glamorgan	Rachel Evans
Designated Doctor for Safeguarding / LAC, Safeguarding Children Service, Public Health Wales	Dr Carolyn Sampeys
4Cs Manager	Alison Smale
Chief Executive Officer, Voices from Care	Debbie Jones and Chris Dunn
Business Development and Community Manager for The Fostering Network Wales	Maria Boffey
Cascade	Dr Alyson Rees
North Wales Regional Consortium	Sarah Bartlett
Action for Children	Stacey Burnett
NHS Wales CAMHS	Dr David Williams
CSSIW	Vicky Poole
Head of Children's Services , Wrexham	Susan Evans
Head of Children's Services, Blaenau Gwent Chair of AWHOCS	Tanya Evans
NYAS Cymru	Sharon Lovell

Organisation	Name
Project Manager, Association of Fostering and Adoption Cymru (AFA Cymru)	Kathy S'Jacob
Head of Children's Services, Gwynedd	Marian Hughes (via Skype)
Foster Swansea, City and Council of Swansea	Donna Houlston
DHSS DPH Maternal and Child Health	Dr Heather Payne
Data Unit Wales	Richard Palmer
Public Health Wales	Karen Toohey
Children in Wales	Catriona Williams
Foster Swansea, City and Council of Swansea	Karen Benjamin
Head of Children's Service, Carmarthenshire	Stefan Smith
Head of Children's Services, Swansea	Julie Thomas
Director of Social Care and Housing, WGLA	Naomi Alleyne
Director for The Fostering Network (Wales)	Emily Warren
NFF Resource & Business Support Manager	Cath Hywwod
NFF Project Manager	Jane Moore

Performance Information: Fostering Services

We looked at what performance measures are available in relation to fostering services and what this tells us about the current position.

The majority of our information comes from individual child level data in relation to looked after children, which is collected through the 'looked after children census'. Returns from the Looked After Children dataset (SSDA903) are reported in the form of national statistics, which provide high level headline information about the numbers of children who are looked after in local authority and independent fostering services.

National statistics can be broken down to individual local authorities for purposes of benchmarking and are available to be used through the Welsh Government statswales website.

Looking at the picture of fostering services across Wales we found:

1. FOSTER PLACEMENTS

Statistics are as at 31st March, for each year, and exclude kinship foster care placements.

a) All-Wales total number of children looked after and total number of children looked after in general foster placements

■ Children looked after in general foster placements
■ Total number of children looked after in Wales

Year	Children looked after in general foster placements	Total number of children looked after in Wales
2013	3560	5765
2014	3515	5745
2015	3405	5615
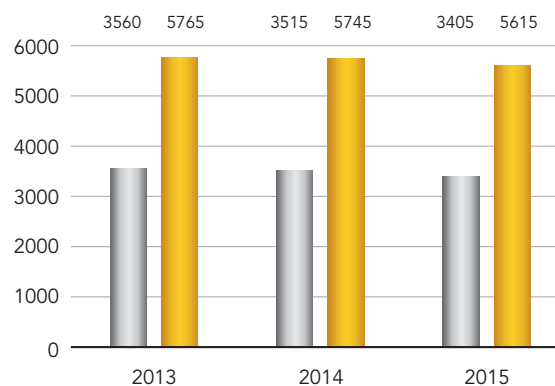
Data for 2013 – 2015 shows that the overall numbers of children who are looked after has decreased slightly but the majority of children who need to be looked after are placed with foster carers. Although the overall number of children who are looked after has decreased, changes in court processes have resulted in children entering and leaving care more quickly and there remains a high level of demand for foster placements.

b) Total number of children placed with local authority foster carers and independent fostering providers

■ Children placed with local authority foster carers
■ Children placed with independent fostering providers

Year	Children placed with local authority foster carers	Children placed with independent fostering providers
2013	2230	1330
2014	2240	1275
2015	2200	1205
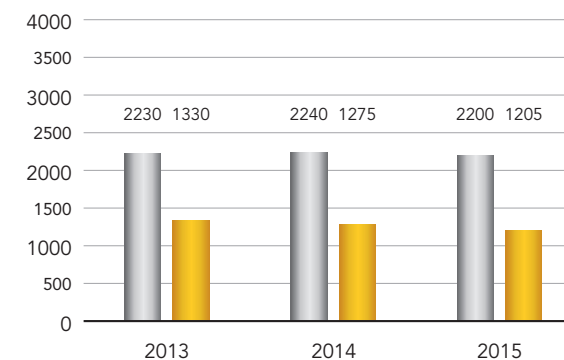
The proportion of placements made with local authority foster carers has remained consistently just below two thirds of the total number of children in general foster care with one third of children placed with foster carers with independent (commercial and third sector) fostering providers. Currently, information collected in regard to placements not made with a local authority's own foster carers does not distinguish between children placed with third sector fostering agencies and children placed with commercial fostering agencies; and is recorded as placements with independent providers.

2. FOSTER PLACEMENTS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF LOCAL AUTHORITY BOUNDARIES

All statistics are as at 31st March and exclude kinship foster care.

Where possible children are placed within the boundary of their local authority in order to maintain links with their family, friends, school and community, promoting stability for the child and maintaining their identity. National statistics show that we have a significant number of children placed with foster carers who are living outside the local authority boundary.

a) All-Wales statistics for 2015

Out of a total of 3,405 children in placement with general foster carers there were 1,040 placed outside the local authority boundaries and 2,365 were placed inside the local authority boundaries.

Some placements outside the home local authority may still be geographically close to their school, community and significant people in their life. Local authorities strive to place children within a reasonable distance but access to cross-authority services for health and education can be inconsistent and result in challenges to providing appropriate support for a child and their foster carer.

b) As at 31st March 2015

Across all of Wales we had a total of 1,040 children placed outside local authority boundaries 330: of those placements were with local authority foster carers and 710 placements were with independent (commercial and third sector) provider foster carers.

With over 58% of children with independent (commercial and third sector) provider foster carers living outside the local authority boundary, there is a greater chance when commissioning an independent provider placement of not being placed in the local community.

Chart a)

1,040
2015

2,365
2015

Key

■ Children placed outside local authority boundaries

■ Children placed inside local authority boundaries

Chart b)

330
2015

710
2015

Key

■ Children placed with independent agency carers

■ Children placed with local authority foster carers
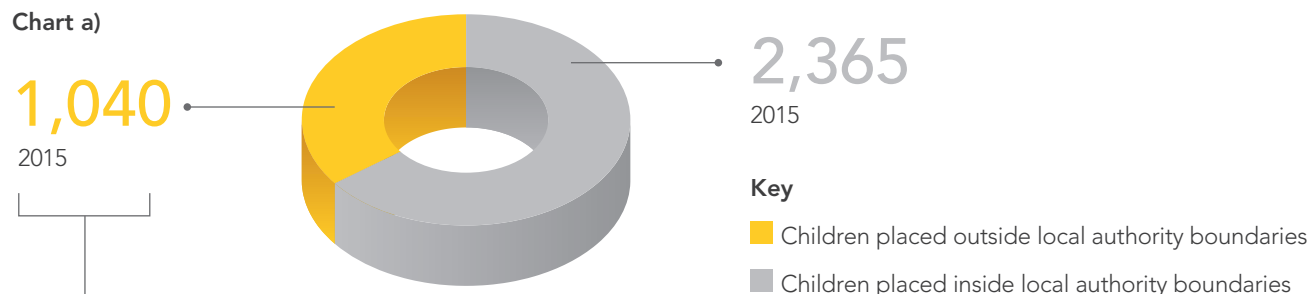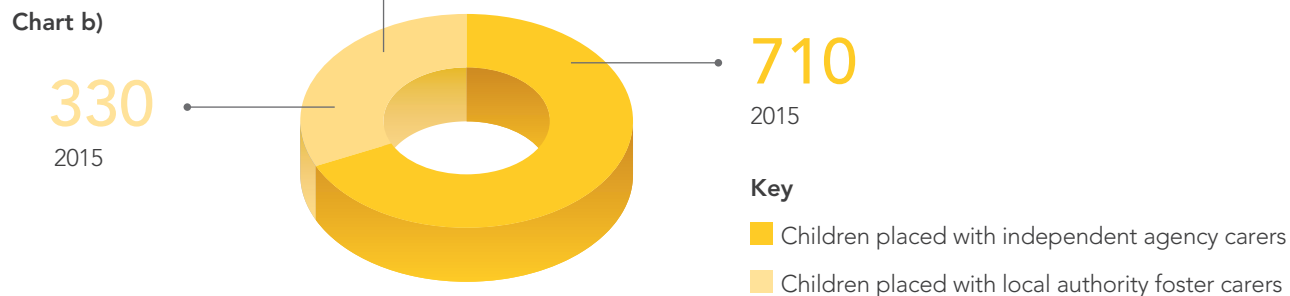
3. KINSHIP FOSTER CARE

Some children who are looked after are cared for by a close member of the family or a friend under fostering arrangements. Kinship foster carers are assessed and approved by local authority fostering services, which continue to provide supervision and support for as long as the child is in their care and they are registered foster carers.

Numbers of kinship foster carers vary for each local authority, but for some local authorities the assessment and support of the arrangements can place significant demand on the fostering service.

All-Wales statistics are as at 31st March of each year.

a) Total number of children placed with kinship foster carers

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
	850	856	890	865	855	820	670	655	670	640	620
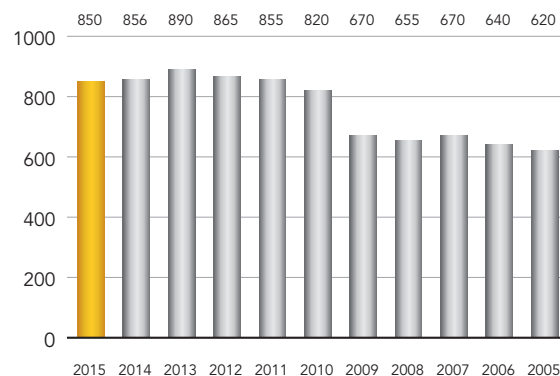
Over the past 10 years the number of children placed with kinship foster carers has increased by 23%, however since 2010 the number has stabilised and in the past three years remained at 25% of the total number of children in foster care.

Current Sources of Information

In order to understand how fostering services are performing and inform proposals for the development of a National Performance and Resource Framework, we needed to know what information is currently available about the performance of fostering services and how this is used.

WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF THIS INFORMATION?

WHAT DO WE GET FROM WHERE?

HOW IS THE INFORMATION USED?

Data source	Publishing organisation	Frequency of collection	Location	Data reference period	How the data is currently used
National Statistics – Children looked after (SSDA903)	Welsh Government	Annual	https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/	31st March for each year	Provides both national and local statistical information on the performance indicators for Welsh Government. Available to the general public and used to advise ministers, benchmark local authority services and in research and academic studies.
Report: Adoptions, outcomes and placements for children looked after by local authorities	Welsh Government	Annual	https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/adoptions-outcomes-placements-children-looked-after/	Period covered is the year ending 31st March with a report release date of the following September	Available to the general public. An annual report that presents information on those on care orders and other children provided with accommodation by their local authority. Statistical information presented on an all-Wales basis with some context but no analysis.
Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales Inspection Report	CSSIW	Annual	http://cssiw.org.uk/our-reports/regulated-reports/	Period covered is the 12 months since the last Fostering Inspection.	Available to the general public. Used on a local level by the fostering services to inform service development, by commissioners and also used by prospective foster carers when considering the fostering service of their choice.
Quality of Care Report for Fostering Services	Individual Fostering Service Provider	Annual	Varied locations – some fostering providers have the Quality of Care Report available via their website and some have uploaded the document on Children's Commissioning Support Resource database.	Period covered is the 12 months since the last Quality of Care Report was completed.	Available to the general public. Used on a local level by fostering services to evidence the requirements under regulation 42 of The Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 and service activity.

| Data source	Publishing organisation	Frequency of collection	Location	Data reference period	How the data is currently used
4Cs Baseline Report	Childrens's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs)	Quarterly reports that then inform an annual report	Distributed to all Welsh local authorities by 4Cs.	Cover financial year from 1st April – 31st March.	Baseline reports cover foster placement activity both with local authority foster carers and with independent (commercial and third sector) providers on an all-Wales basis and broken down to individual local authority level. Can be used by local authorities to compare market positions.
Fostering Service Providers	Local Authority Fostering Services, Third Sector Fostering Services and Commercial Sector Fostering Services	Not known	Most fostering services maintain their own performance management systems	Not known	Fostering services collate performance management information as part of regulatory requirement as well as indicators of their own performance for reporting arrangement within the organisation.

What does our current performance look like?

Current sources of information on fostering services performance are fragmented and sometimes difficult to access. We have inconsistency in what and how we are collecting information.

On a national and local level we have statistics that provide information on numbers and types of placements, if children are placed within the local authority boundaries and numbers of placement moves. We have some indicators of commissioning arrangements local authorities have with other fostering providers and some information about resources and local authority spend on fostering services.

a) All Wales

Statistics are as at 31st March and include kinship foster carer data.

■ Children looked after by the local authority
■ Children in foster care placements

| | 5765 4450 | 5745 4380 | 5615 4255 |
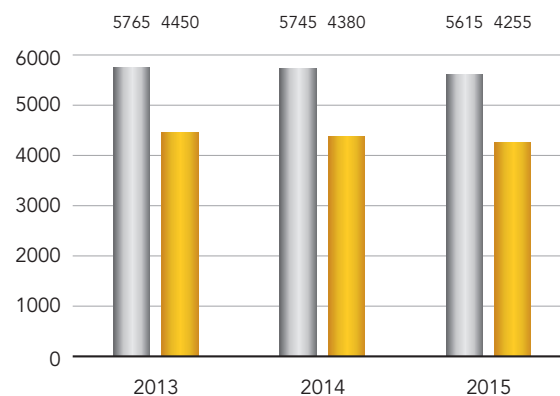
We know that the number of children who are looked after has not reduced significantly across Wales and the majority of children are cared for within a fostering arrangement. Over the last three years at least 75% of the total number of children who were looked after were being cared for by approved foster carers.

b) All Wales

Statistics are as at 31st March.

■ Children cared for by general foster carers
■ Children cared for by family and friend foster carers

| | 3560 890 | 3515 865 | 3405 850 |
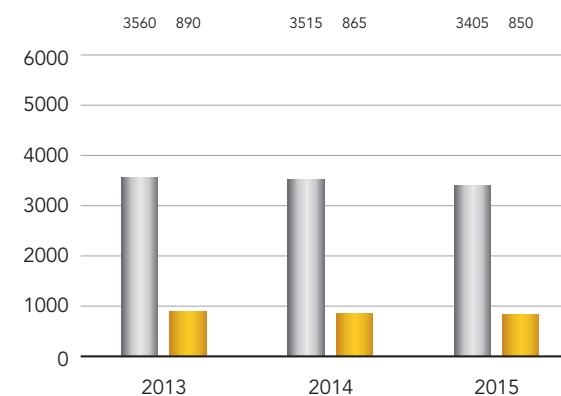
When a child cannot be cared for by their parent and alternative arrangements are needed, family members are often the best option to provide continuity and stability for the child. Where a child needs to be looked after, the family arrangement will need to be formalised through the completion of a fostering assessment and continue to be supported by the local authority fostering service.

c) Total number of children placed with local authority foster carers and independent fostering providers

■ Children placed with local authority foster carers
■ Children placed with independent fostering providers
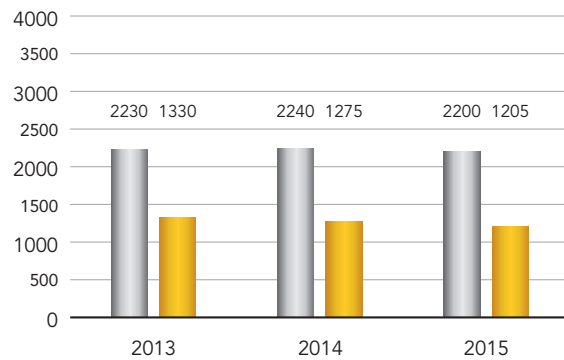
National statistics are available to provide information of the numbers of children we place with local authority foster carers and with foster carers approved with independent (commercial and third sector) fostering providers, which is also supported by baseline scorecard information provided to local authorities from the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs) on placement activity. However, this does not provide detail of local authority activity in commissioning placements from each other or distinguish between third sector and commercial providers.

d) Local authority use of fostering providers

Statistics are as at 31st March 2015.
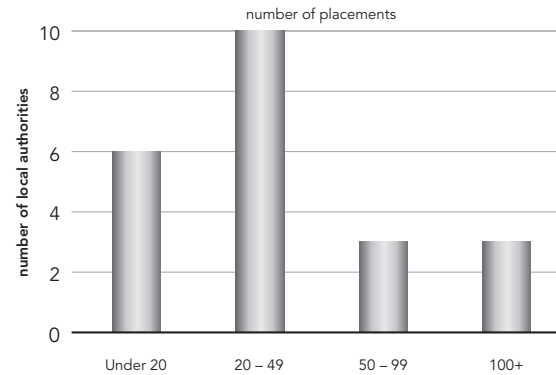
Across Wales there is a wide variety of practice in the commissioning of foster placements with the independent (commercial and third sector) providers. Information is not currently collated and shared on a regular basis about what drives the need for local authorities to commission from another source. This could be used to understand the variety in practice, to share good models of practice and develop a more strategic approach to the development of effective fostering services that meet the needs of children who are looked after.

e) Children with three or more placements

Statistics are as at 31st March but INCLUDE kinship foster care as the information is not separated out.
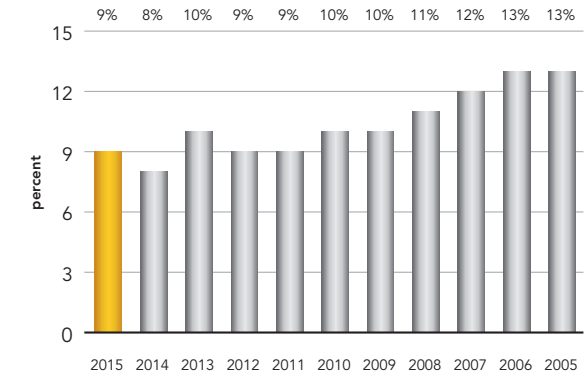
We know that performance measures have improved over the last 10 years for the number of children who have had three or more placement moves, however, it has not dropped lower than 8% of the total population of children who are looked after. Welsh Government use this as an indicator of placement stability for children in foster care, but some moves can be positive e.g. move to permanent placement or adoption.

What we don't know about our performance

While national statistics and other sources of performance information provide some information about fostering services performance, much of the information needed is collected on a local level by individual fostering service providers and not available to use to inform and improve service development or benchmark against other fostering service providers. How do we know we are delivering effective fostering services?

WE DO KNOW

- Majority of children who are looked after are placed in foster care.

- Numbers of kinship foster carers make up about 25% of the total of foster carer approvals across Wales

- All-Wales numbers of local authority foster carers are decreasing.

- Fostering Network have estimated in Wales in 2015 we need to recruit another 550 foster families.

- Across Wales local authorities have just under two thirds of children with their own foster carers and just over one third of children placed with independent (commercial and third party) fostering agencies.

- We have 1,040 children placed outside their local authority boundaries.

- We know the number of children who experience three or more placement moves.

BUT WE DON'T KNOW

- How many recruitment campaigns are being held, when and by whom and what the outcomes are?

- How many enquiries did we have from people wanting to become foster carers with all fostering providers?

- How many foster carers were approved last year?

- How the provision of 'When I Am Ready' arrangements will impact on the number of foster carers retained by fostering services?

- How many placement breakdowns were there that resulted in a child needing to move?

- How many sibling groups that needed to be placed together were placed separately?

- How many foster carers were vacant and waiting for a placement?

- How much did we spend on fostering fees and allowances?

- How much did we spend on recruitment, training, support and retention of foster carers?

Proposals to develop a National Fostering Framework as outlined in the First Thoughts paper have given an opportunity to produce an agreed and effective approach to performance and resource management that helps to quantify the extent to which local authorities and other fostering agencies deliver best practice.

Development of a National Performance and Resource Framework for all fostering service providers will support the aims of a National Fostering Framework in improving permanency planning for children and quality of placement provision; a more cogent and compelling strategic intent in relation to fostering services; and provide a greater transparency about the performance of fostering services and the efficient use of resources. As a work stream of the Improving Outcomes for Children – Strategic Steering Group, the development of a National Performance and Resource Framework will be closely aligned with the implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the National Outcomes Framework.

Development of a National Performance and Resource Framework will provide an opportunity for the first time for fostering services to be included as a mainstream data system by aligning the development with the work being done to deliver the Welsh Community Care Information Service (WCCIS).

PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPING A NATIONAL PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCE FRAMEWORK FOR FOSTERING SERVICES

- To support all fostering service providers in Wales to fulfil their statutory obligations to collate performance management information on the delivery of fostering services

- To develop a culture within all fostering services of continuous improvement of services using performance management information

- To promote good outcomes for children and young people in line with the work of the Improving Outcomes for Children – Strategic Steering Group

- To develop a performance benchmark for all fostering services across Wales regarding the delivery of foster services

- To develop a benchmark for cost-effectiveness of fostering services

- To promote a collective approach by fostering services to responding more effectively to pressures within the care system

- To provide transparency in the delivery of fostering services for service providers and service users

BENEFITS FOR FOSTERING SERVICES

- To have a consistent approach for collating a set of performance and resource management information

- To have clear definitions of what performance indicators are to be collected

- To have a clear timetable for the collation of information in line with other data collation requirement

- To collect information that is meaningful to the needs of fostering services

- To have access to performance and resource management information for benchmarking and improving fostering services

- To provide opportunity for fostering service providers to provide information to put context around the data collated

- To have a set of performance and resource management information that supports the evidence requirements for CSSIW inspections of fostering services

- To use information available in the recruitment and retention of foster carers

- To operate fostering services within a financial framework

- To raise standards nationally

Resourcing of Fostering Services

WHAT DO WE CURRENTLY KNOW ABOUT THE RESOURCES?

We know that the spend on fostering services increased year on year from 2005 to 2013 but decreased in 2014/15 but we do not know if this is in relation to spend on placements or spend on provision of a fostering service. We do not know what providers in the commercial and third sector spend on provision of a fostering service. We know that there is a vast variation of spend by local authorities but do not know why.

NET EXPENDITURE

The revenue out-turn survey is conducted by the Welsh Government and data is collected via annual returns from Welsh local authorities. The survey is conducted every summer with results available in October.

a) **All-Wales statistics over the past 10 years showing net expenditure by local authorities on fostering services excluding placements with kinship foster carers**
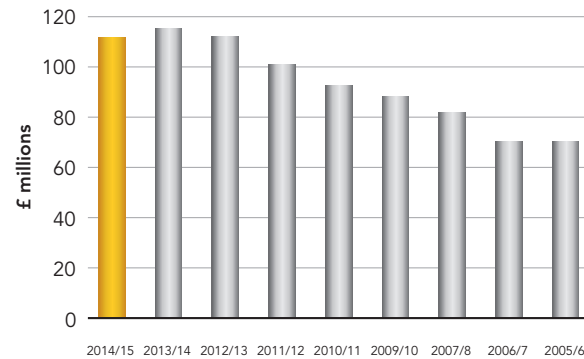
Net expenditure includes fees and allowances for foster carers and staff costs for fostering services but all other costs are not included.

b) Variation of expenditure across the 22 local authorities in 2014/2015
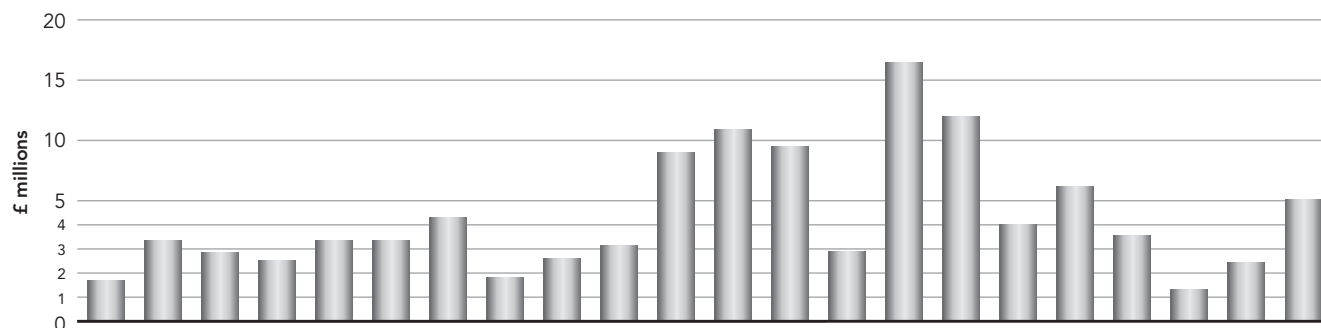
What the variation is in spend by local authorities on placements with the independent (commercial and third sector) providers does reflect is the wide variety of practice in relation to commissioning placements. However, there is not a direct correlation between the size of the local authority and the commissioning of placements with two local authorities of the same size having a variation of spend between £1,008,000 and £5,802,000.

c-i) All-Wales gross expenditure for fostering services excluding kinship foster care

	2012/2013		2013/2014		2014/2015	
Local authority foster care	£49,382,143	2230 children	£46,566,444	2240 children	£51,320,559	2200 children
Foster care provision from independent sector	£58,967,864	1330 children	£58,470,061	1275 children	£52,271,037	1205 children

Local authorities have consistently, over the last three years, had a larger gross expenditure on foster care provided by the independent (commercial and third party) sector than the gross expenditure on own services. Gross expenditure on local authority fostering services includes payment of fees and allowances to foster carers and staff costs; gross expenditure on independent sector (commercial and third sector) placements are inclusive of the payment to foster carers and the provider's management fee for each placement.

The Consultation Programme

WHAT WAS IT?

The National Fostering Framework Reference Group led on an extensive programme of consultation from November 2015 to the end of February 2016. All key stakeholders actively engaged in this and made positive contributions. Due the tight timescales involved, existing consultation mechanisms were used as well as new ones developed specifically for this purpose.

- Fostering Network led on the consultation with foster carers.

- Voices from Care led on the consultation with Children and Young People.

- AFA Cymru provided invaluable support in organising the All Wales Event to consult with local authorities and their public sector partners.

- A group of local authority managers led on the consultation with local authorities.

A very special thank you goes to all these organisations and individuals for the invaluable contribution they have made to the Phase One of the work on the NFF.

We have consulted with:

- Children and Young People
- Foster carers in the independent sector, third sector and in local authorities
- Independent (commercial and third party) fostering services
- Local authority staff and their public service partners
- All Wales Heads of Children's Services.

CONSULTATION METHODS USED:

- All key stakeholders have had opportunities to submit the views from their organisations.

- Individual responses have also been encouraged.

- A powerpoint presentation on the NFF was developed for use by individuals in their own organisations to stimulate discussion.

- Online surveys for: young people, foster carers in the independent (commercial and third party) sector, and local authorities, staff in the independent (commercial and third party) sector and local authorities

- A structured telephone interview with foster carers.

- Workshops with children and young people.

- Attendance at existing forums/meetings.

- All Wales event for local authorities and their public sector partners.

- Presentation at an All Wales Heads of Children's Services meeting on 4th March 2016.

Consultation: Children and Young People

Voices from Care led on a number of interactive workshops with young people. Young people expressed their views on:

- What makes a good foster care placement?
- What can wreck a placement?
- What can stop a foster placement from being wrecked?

BUILDING THE PLACEMENTS

The groups initially discussed what attributes and actions you would like to see in foster carers. All the young people felt that it is vital that young people feel supported, loved, that they 'matter' and that they are listened to.

"*A place you can feel safe*"

Being valued:

"*Treats as though we matter*"
"*Love and kindness*"
"*Help us when we are low*"
"*Teach us skills – managing to independence*"
"*Be there for me*"
"*I loved being understood*"
"*Ask us our similarities*"
"*Having similarities with the family*"
"*Someone who understands you*"
"*Someone who listens to you*"
"*Someone who gets to know you*"
"*Supports us to do activities/clubs that we enjoy*"
"*They helped with school*"
"*A chance to heal old wounds*"
"*A place you can feel safe*"
"*Calming*"
"*Who you can talk to*"
"*Emotionally supportive*"

Acknowledgment of achievements was important and at the foundation of stable, loving and happy placement.

"*Celebrate your successes*"
"*Be proud of you*"
"*Praising us for the things we have done, doesn't take time showing us our faults*"
"*Celebrates successes and is proud of you*"

Importance of emotional bonds and relationships:

"*Treat us the way you wish to be treated*"
"*Treats us equal*"
"*They treat me like their own children*"
"*Respect our privacy*"
"*Treat you like their own*"
"*Be consistent with us*"
"*Be able to relate to you*"
"*Not choose their own children over us*"
"*Equality and being fair*"
"*Holidays like normal families*"

Consistency

"*When I first came, they [foster carers] spent lots of money on me and we did lots of activities. This was really nice, but after a while this stopped. I'm not saying they should spend lots of money on me all the time but be consistent.*"

"*Someone who understands you*"

"*Celebrates successes and is proud of you*"

"*Treats us equally*"

Proactive preparation for placement moves

"Foster carers could have a pen picture of me"
"Meet with people [foster carers] first"
"I was asked if I wanted to meet my foster carers. We went on a day out, which was great."
"Meet with the foster kids before you move"
"My foster carer came to see me before I moved, this made the move a lot easier on me."
"My potential foster carers had a picnic ready for me, with all my favourite foods. It was amazing, they had rung my social worker to find out."

Importance of Information

Having information on the foster carers, the house and the area that the young people are going to live in before they move was seen as a great way of reducing the anxiety, uncertainty and stress of placement moves. Having this information in a format that is relevant to young people was discussed: the groups felt that making sure information was accessible on computers or on smartphones and delivered through videos, simply typed documents or virtual tours.

"Young people could have a virtual tour of the house and their bedroom before they move in, so they know what it looks like"
"Info about the placements online"
"Info before we move in – names, ages, details on family, house rules expectation on us and the way you live"
"Where I'm going to live?"
"If you have any pets or children, what their names are and how old they are"
"Practical information like bus stops, meal plans, family information, bed times, curfews, local shops"

> *"My potential foster carers had a picnic ready for me, with all my favourite foods. It was amazing, they had rung my social worker to find out."*

> *"Lay out expectations, from the start"*

We are happy when:

"They take us out"
"Everyone's kind"
"Having new experiences"
"Giving us space when getting used to the people"
"(When we have) routine"
"(They) give me more opportunities"
"(They are) positive role models"
"It's a nice place to live"
"You need to talk to someone, they are there"
"From the start lay out expectation, spend time with carers, help clean the house, you know spend time with them…. Bonding time."
"More participation activities – meeting up with other young people who are looked after"
"(They) teach me to do things right"
"People are kind"
"Helps you flourish"
"Listens to my worries"

THE WRECKING BALL

Young people were asked what they feel can harm positive relationships, how placements can break down and what make young people feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Many of the ideas young people came up with are the contrasting views to those given when discussing building a positive placement.

"Not enough praise given to young people."
"Not knowing about the carers"
"Not sticking up for you"
"Carer takes the child's side and treats you differently"
"Not being (feeling) loved"
"Being scared of people"
"Feeling unsafe"
"Favouritism to one foster child over another – you should treat everyone equally"
"When they don't relate to you"
"Not looking after you"
"Feeling left out"
"Not talking to us"
"Not being treated the same, this make us feel sad and left out"

Communication

Young people felt that communication, with young people or with others, can evolve small issues into feelings of insecurity and vulnerability, which over time can lead to breakdowns in relationships and placements.

"Having strangers to me in the house. We need to know who is coming into the house and how they fit in with family and friends."
"Being fake – be natural and don't be someone you're not in front of social workers"
"Not introducing you to their families"
"Not being able to talk to someone"
"Not taking you to your appointment"
"Causing arguments for no reason"
"Not listening to the child's problems eg. bullying"
"Not understanding my needs and values"
"Being told wrong information"
"No communication"
"Being placed in area that you know nothing about and you have to start your life over again"

Decisions

Young people discussed issues or decisions that the foster carers have no involvement in but can still cause relationships and placement to break down. Below are some of the key comments and thoughts.

*"Being moved to a cheaper placement"*
"Being labelled as a problem child"
*"The lack of foster homes"*
"No one in school I could talk to"
"I cried when I moved"
"When you are expecting to move"
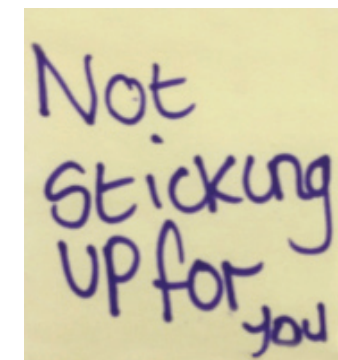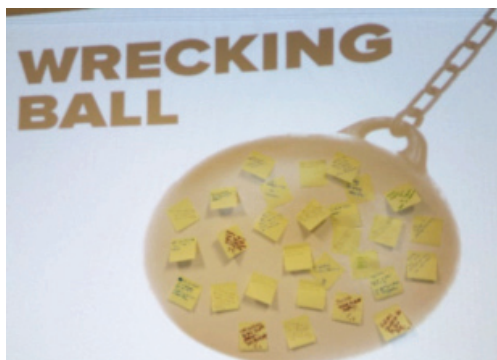
Care Leavers Views

"If you don't feel safe, listened to or that your placement isn't stable, what do you do?"

It is important that the young person knows about advocacy or that they are able to talk to someone such as a social worker, independent reviewing officer or a teacher.

"There is a social stigma surrounding being looked after; this can really damage young people self-esteem". – We need to promote positive care leaver role models, best practice on dealing with stigma, which in time will educate the wider public. It's not our fault we are in care.

"Not being able to see friendship group's cause of placements". – Foster carers need to encourage socialisation and participating in different activities and groups. This does not have to be with just looked after children but sometimes this helps. A problem shared is a problem solved.

"When money comes before happiness" – There needs to be better preparation so young people are not unnecessarily moved on.

"Not being given time to adjust to new surroundings" – Support is needed for the whole family, to help everyone to adjust to a new placement. Meeting the carers before you move would speed up the bonding process.

THE WALL: HOW TO STOP THE WRECKING BALL

Young people gave some ideas on the support that is needed to keep placements happy and minimise the risk of placement and relationship breakdown.

"Explains why decision are being made"

"If we have to move placement where possible allow us to be in the same school"

"If there are arguments or disagreement between the young person and the foster carers, offer some sort of informal resolution support. So everyone sits down and is given the chance to tell their side of the story in a safe environment."

"Making it work" – There should be a list of attributes and actions that the foster carer and young person agree to… so like respect each other, help out around the house, being able to see friends. So there are a series of agreed expectations that people have to stick by.

Young people should be involved in deciding who becomes a foster carer. We should be involved in some part of the process even if we are not able to make the final decision.

Consultation: Foster Carers

HOW DID WE CONSULT?

Fostering Network led on the consultation programme with foster carers in the independent (commercial and third party) sector and local authority carers.

A focus group was carried out with four foster carers who are members of the Fostering Network's Foster Carer Advisory Group (FCAG) and key informers. This was supplemented by eight in-depth, part structured telephone interviews with foster carers from most parts of Wales, and an online survey was completed by a further 64 foster carers.

The numbers involved in the consultation were quite small and probably included the more active foster carers so we should not assume they represent the views of foster carers in general. However, the report is based upon the first-hand experience of these well-informed foster carers which gives confidence regarding findings in relation to quality factors relating to fostering services.

KEY MESSAGES

Foster carers believed they should have an important role in helping ensure services are delivered to agreed standards. In very general terms, therefore, it is possible to say that participants were concerned about improving practice across Wales in relation to:

1. training provision;

2. developing foster carers' support groups;

3. sharing good practice regarding payments and finance including greater transparency about the financial assistance that is available;

4. ensuring the same social worker is able to provide support to a family over a reasonable period of time;

5. improving other aspects of support including, supervision practice, out of hours support, support for all the family and respite provision;

6. addressing general issues of communication;

7. ensuring foster carers are involved more equally in decision making including ensuring services are delivered to agreed standards.

It is more difficult to be clear about findings in relation to the allocation of functions between national, regional and local levels.

In general terms again, the main conclusion that may be drawn is that participants would want the national functions to concentrate on policy, strategy and accountability issues in order to establish, monitor and assure high standards of service. Foster carers should be involved in these processes. They felt that delivery functions should be the responsibility of regional or local structures.

The focus group of foster carers considered that fostering responsibilities could be delivered at a national, regional and local level as described in the table, right.

Finally, what was obvious from the consultation was the dedication and responsibility that foster carers felt towards the children and young people they fostered. Whilst they recognised the structural limitations within which they fostered, what was clear was their will to ensure that each looked after child or young person reached their potential.

Allocation of functions between national, regional and local levels by focus group participants

NATIONAL LEVEL
- Development of common policies
- The Independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM)
- Approaches to "When I am Ready"
- Grant system
- Financing – national and transparent
- Development of core training programme
- Standards, policies and procedures for foster carers
- Guidelines for marketing – separate considerations for IFAs and LAs

REGIONAL LEVEL
- The exchanging of placements between IFAs and LAs
- Agency or authority decision maker responsibilities
- Annual foster care reviews
- The placing and matching of children and young people (split decision: three voted for regional, one for local level)
- Undertaking full fostering assessments
- Marketing and recruitment activity to recruit carers
- Collaboration between services
- Support
- Out of hours service – social workers on call – not 9 to 5

LOCAL LEVEL
- Undertaking of kinship foster care assessment
- Responding to initial enquiries to foster (split decision: one voted for national, one for regional and two for local levels).

Consultation: Independent (Commercial and Third Sector) Staff

HOW DID WE CONSULT?

Fostering Network led on an online survey for staff with the independent (commercial and third sector) providers and in local authorities.

Staff in the commercial and third sector fostering agencies were encouraged to express their views and many did through the Nationwide Association for Fostering providers.

The Project Manager for the NFF attended an Independent (Commercial and Third Sector) Providers Forum hosted by Fostering Network in December 2015.

A combined written response was received from independent (commercial and third sector) providers following a meeting they held to discuss the NFF, detailing the key issues for commercial and third sector fostering services providers.

Third sector – not for profit – agencies were represented on the Reference Group and an individual response was also received from two organisations.

The combined response from the independent (commercial and third sector) providers identified some current tensions surrounding the commissioning framework. They also identified some issues that should be considered in developing a NFF and some areas of good practice. This was their response:

- Members voiced concerns over the sequential placement finding procedures and how this potentially eliminates the most appropriate placement for a child from a placement search.

- Members would like to see opportunities for local authorities and providers to work together to enable

better forward planning. To share the same knowledge on unmet needs and the market position. Providers say that without this, it is difficult for them to accurately shape development plans to meet future needs.

- Our members are concerned about the level of placement disruption and want there to be a greater focus on stability. Examples were given of well matched placements in the independent sector that had been disrupted as the local authority had moved the child to an in-house carer. They want there to be a greater emphasis on developing positive and trusting relationships and for there to be recognition that a foster carer with a commercial or third sector provider may be best placed to provide a long-term placement for a child.

- IRM – Providers do not feel this offers value for money and that efficiencies could be made if alternative processes are used.

- There was a suggestion of LAs and independent (commercial and third sector) providers holding joint recruitment events. They have identified that if one agency (LA or independent) has a recruitment drive, then all agencies see an increase in enquiries. They would like to see consideration of foster care recruitment events, which would enable potential carers to talk to a number of agencies.

- A wish for a better understanding of what 'local' means. Members want to develop positive relationships with their local authority commissioning and social work colleagues. Providers questioned how LAs can favour other local authority placements in other local authority areas, rather than place a child locally with an independent (commercial and third sector) foster carer. Independent

(commercial and third sector) providers would like discussions regarding this and for there to be a shared consensus that if 'local' is an important criteria for a child, then all local options will be explored, regardless of the provider, before a placement further afield is considered.

- There is real concern about the quality of referral information that is placed on the CCSR. Members said this was often inaccurate and out of date and it makes it very difficult to consider whether or not they have an appropriate carer to offer as a possible match. Providers gave some examples of how placements had failed due to mismatching (because referral information was incorrect). Providers feel there is a lack of quality monitoring of the referral information and little support for them when contractual issues arise as a result of the poor information initially received.

IFPs identified as working well:

- Some said that there can be delays in receiving individual placement contracts from local authorities and that the 4Cs have been helpful in chasing the local authorities for these, ensuring that they are sent to providers. This intervention is much appreciated by providers.

- Members said that they unfortunately have experienced some hostility from the 4Cs and a number of local authority colleagues who give the clear impression that they resent working with the independent sector. However, some local authorities colleagues are more modern in their thinking, friendly, helpful and more eager to work in genuine partnership and this often results in a more efficient and child-centred service. (I think unfortunately the negative experiences they have had do sometimes overshadow some of the good work that some

local authority colleagues do.)

- There are some good relationships with other fostering organisations, residential services and some support services.

- There was also a view that there are some experienced, resilient social workers with good organisational and communication skills who could co-ordinate a team around the child effectively. These individuals advocated for the child (even if this meant challenging management) and they showed respect for the Independent (commercial and third sector) provider, treating them as an equal. Providers felt this was often key to ensuring the success of a placement. (Again, whilst this was acknowledged, our members said that practice varied enormously and unfortunately this partnership work was not always in place.)

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE THIRD SECTOR FOSTERING AGENCIES

One third sector provider responded as follows:

1. We welcome the opportunity to ensure that looked after children in Wales experience a consistency of care across all fostering providers. In particular, we would welcome any work undertaken to bring local authority fostering services in line with the expectations of the All Wales Fostering Framework contract and reduce the disadvantage "built in" to the current system for some children. For example – the provision of a savings account for all children in foster care and reporting on measured/scored outcomes for Looked After Children – these are contractual requirements for IFAs but not LAs.

2. We are continuing to see a reduction in the provision of therapeutic support for looked after children in Wales, whilst many children in foster care have complex emotional and behavioural difficulties. CAMHS services are stretched and expensive private therapeutic services are increasingly being used to fill the gaps. This raises concerns about a lack of consistent quality and approach across the sector for all looked after children in Wales. Therapeutic services for children within 'When I'm Ready' are also stretched and funding is less available in such placements to commission private sector therapy.

3. There has been an increase in the number of looked after children in Wales experiencing three or more moves in a year (10% in 2015). This should be a key priority for improvement, with services ensuring that they can provide stability for both younger and older children. Care planning should consider appropriately funded placements earlier on in the planning, rather than reacting to multiple placement moves later on in the child's life.

The third sector fostering agencies expressed a strong desire to develop stronger collaborative relationships with local authorities that were distinct from those local authorities have with the independent sector. Their view is that one of the consequences of the commissioning framework is there has been little opportunities for this to develop. They see the development of the NFF as an opportunity to forge these new relationships, working more closely with local authority partners to support and enhance fostering provision in Wales. In addition, third sector fostering agencies are aligned with the development of the NFF as a way of producing quality data to inform decision making, leading to improved outcomes for children.

It is interesting to note the statutory relationship between local authorities and independent (commercial and third sector) fostering providers is different in Scotland from that of England and Wales. In Scotland, only not-for-profit fostering organisations are permitted by statute. The Social Services and Well-being Act is requiring local authorities to promote the relationships with third sector and not-for-profit organisations.

Consultation: Local Authorities and Public Service Partners

HOW DID WE CONSULT?

Fostering Network led on an online survey for staff in local authorities.

A PowerPoint presentation on the NFF was developed and used in a number of different settings to generate discussion and debate.

An all-Wales event for local authority staff and their public service partners was held on 12th February, this was attended by approximately 80 staff.

KEY MESSAGES EMERGING FROM THE CONSULTATION

1. An active willingness to consider how we might deliver fostering services differently to improve performance.

2. An acknowledgement that the performance on an all-Wales basis does not demonstrate continued improvement.

3. There have been significant improvements in performance, in some areas and in some aspects of the service. However, improvements are often hampered by changes of personnel and/or reductions in funding.

4. Kinship Foster Care was a significant issue for some authorities and was having an impact on their capacity to recruit mainstream carers, as Kinship Foster Care assessments were often court directed with tight timescales. For other authorities their use of Kinship Foster Care placements was much lower. A Kinship Foster Care: First Thoughts and Initial Scoping paper has been produced by Alison Crane RCT, Jo Goodwin NPT, Sarah Bartlett North Wales and Kathy S'Jacob AFA Cymru.

   To view the Kinship Foster Care Paper, please click the link
   https://www.dropbox.com/s/8eplexo6hrir3zr/NFF%20
   -%20Kinship%20Care%20Paper.pdf?dl=0

At the all-Wales event on 12th February for local authority staff and their public service partners, participants considered what could be better delivered on a national, regional and local basis.

There was considerable agreement on some aspects of service delivery but not all, as much will depend on the detail. However, it was acknowledged that the following should at least be considered at a national, regional and local level.

National	Regional	Local
Marketing Strategy • Brand identity • Logo/strap line • National campaigns • Website	Marketing strategies linking into the national campaign	Local knowledge feeding into regional and national activity as well as retaining local marketing activity – 'knowing what works in your local area'
Common Policy Framework, for example • Eligibility to become a foster carer • Foster Panels • Recruitment • Reg 42 reports • Smoking/pets		
Training framework setting standards for post-approval training	Post-approval training could be delivered on a regional basis Pre-approval training could be delivered on a regional basis if it helped reduce any 'waiting' time for applicants	Pre-approval training if there were no delays for applicants
Kinship Foster Care – a national framework to ensure a consistent approach across Wales		Reg 38/kinship foster care assessments/approvals – important to keep links with children's services teams
	Post-placement support services with health, CAMHS and education	
National recruitment policy should set standards/timescales for applications to foster	Responding to initial enquiries to foster, to ensure a strong 'customer ethos' service from the first point of enquiry	Initial enquiries could be carried out at a local level if authorities can evidence standards/timescales are being met.
	Full fostering assessments, to avoid any delay	Full fostering assessments could be done by local authority if able to evidence national standards/timescales are being met
	Foster Panels could avoid delay for applicants	Foster panels could be held locally if authorities are able to evidence meeting of standards in national policy
		Matching and placing of children
	Peer Group support services for foster carers	Support for foster carers

PUBLIC SERVICE PARTNERS VIEWS:

The Welsh Medical Group (medical advisers in fostering and adoption and paediatricians with a special interest in adoption, fostering and looked after children from across Wales) is supported by AFA Cymru.

The suggested plans for a NFF are sensible and the idea of standardising services – recruitment, assessment, panel process is welcomed. The group consider the following issues to be of importance asd would wish them to be included as we move into Phase Two.

- Making the role of medical adviser in fostering a statutory one. If the role of the medical adviser in fostering was a statutory role and this included attendance at foster panel, health boards would be required to support paediatricians who carry out this role and identify time in job planning. At present, this is difficult in some areas.

- Regional panels may cause difficulties for medical advisers logistically as current panels are busy. Any increase in workload would need the bullet point above addressed first. At present, there is no requirement for the medical adviser to attend panel – we do it as we feel it is good practice. It is highly likely that health boards would not support any increase in medical advisers time and may relook at what they currently provide.

- We would welcome more consistency and understanding about delegated responsibility.

- We value the professional role undertaken by foster carers.

- We have significant concerns about looked after children placed out of area:

  – We are developing an all Wales looked after children out of area notification protocol (with LAC nurses and safeguarding children service).

  – We think health should have a clearer role in out of area placement panels – where decisions are made about these placements. Every placement panel in Wales is different.

- We are not happy with the current PIs for health. They do not measure quality and are not outcome focussed. We would wish to develop improved performance indicators for health services with regard to looked after children.

- We feel health should be represented on regional fostering management committees.

- We are concerned that residential placements in the independent sector are in the "too hard" list for the NFF at present as we have safeguarding concerns about them being established without consultation.

- We have concerns about CAMHS support for foster carers and looked after children. This should be standardised across Wales. We would welcome fast tracking of Looked After Children within CAMHS if they do not have a dedicated Looked After Children service available and a recognition that input and support can stabilise a placement. In some areas CAMHS are signposting to school or social service support, but these decisions must be multi-agency. Good universal provision must also allow for fast tracking when necessary.

- Kinship Foster Care – we currently have concerns about differing standards of assessment.

- Special Guardianship Order – we are mindful of lack of assessment of carers which is not appropriate and doesn't safeguard children appropriately. The Welsh Government will be setting up a technical group in May 2016 in regard to Special Guardianship Orders.

Learning from One Another

All the consultaion methods have been used to indicate there is some excellent practice in the delivery of foster care services. Foster carers have demonstrated their care and commitment to the young people they look after and and young people have spoken passionately of the care they have received from their foster carers. Staff have also spoken with pride of the devices they have been responsible in shaping. We have not been able to capture all the examples of good practice in this report, but here are just a few.

EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE IN WALES

Working together to improve fostering services in North Wales

The local authority fostering teams are working together to improve their services. Regional projects begun by the North Wales Commissioning hub include '*The Skills to Foster™*' training, sharing in-house foster carer provision and joining the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs). The local authorities also worked together to produce a form for the assessment of kinship foster carers or other connected persons as carers. The second phase of the project is focussing on marketing, recruitment and streamlining policies and processes for in-house fostering services. Work completed to date includes:

- A joint website for the North Wales local authorities to promote fostering opportunities
  www.northwalesfostering.gov.uk
  www.maethugogleddcymru.gov.uk

- Working together to implement the 'When I'm Ready' scheme including a joint assessment of the financial impact, developing a policy, streamlining allowances and developing a train the trainer course.

- Producing a draft foster carer assessment form.

The next steps for the project are to continue working together to carry out joint marketing and look at the options for streamlining fees and payments. Project management support is being provided by the North Wales Social Care and Well-being Services Improvement Collaborative.

Fostering Healthy Futures

As part of the Confidence in Care research, Cascade (Cardiff University) are currently involved in a feasibility study to investigate whether the Fostering Health Futures (FHF) model of working with foster children, developed in Colorado, USA, would be relevant and practical to run in Wales. The underpinning philosophy of the intervention is preventative. The model is strengths based, aiming to reduce the development of mental health difficulties, promote self-esteem and enhance the resilience of young people. The model involves offering skills groups and mentoring to young people age 9–11 years, living away from home in foster care, over a nine month period. The skills groups run with 8 young people (four boys and four girls). In the US model, the mentoring is provided by postgraduate social work students as part of their practice learning opportunity. Each student mentors two young people which provides the opportunity for intensive direct work with children. The student as part of their role further liaises with the foster carers, schools, birth parents, youth offending team as appropriate, allowing for some multi-disciplinary working.

The quality of the evidence base relating to the impact of FHF on improving outcomes for looked after children in Colorado has been independently verified by the California Evidence-based Clearing House on Child Welfare. Professor Heather Taussig has written widely about the scheme. The feedback from the feasibility study has to date been positive and we would hope to apply for further funding to run a pilot in Wales.

MIST (Multi-disciplinary Intervention Service Torfaen)

MIST is a multi-agency partnership working to repatriate looked after children from residential care. It works seamlessly across statutory agencies to provide an effective and cost-saving alternative to residential care for looked after children with highly complex needs. MIST, hosted by Action for Children, has been running for 12 years.

Together, the team at MIST has the necessary resources to meet these children's complex needs. Making a long-term commitment and working in true partnership with professional colleagues, and most importantly with children themselves and their families, creates a significant resource of knowledge, skills, creativity and determination. The result is safer, happier and more resilient young people.

Success has been achieved by repatriating those children already in residential care to intensively supported therapeutic foster care placements and kinship placements. These placements include specialised education packages and individually tailored packages of multiple psychological therapies.

Fostering Outside Play

Fostering Outside Play (designed and delivered by Learning Through Landscapes) is a 4-day course which aims to improve the physical and mental health outcomes for Looked After Children by supporting carers and practitioners to provide high-quality, frequent and regular activities and play outside and in the natural environment. The course is delivered almost entirely outdoors and aims to build the capacity of foster carers to use their local green spaces (including their own gardens) for outside play and learning. During the course, carers use outdoor experiences to build trust and independence, provide alternative opportunities for contact, prepare children for moving on and appreciate the benefit of taking risks in order to build resilience.

Foster Swansea

The problem

At the end of the financial year in 2011 Foster Swansea reported a net gain of 0 foster carers after only recruiting the same number of foster carers who de-registered. The team were working hard to recruit and had a full time designated marketing officer producing quality campaigns that produced a total of 348 enquiries that year, however only 1 in 29 of these enquiries converted into an approval.

What we did

A member of the team undertook a marketing exercise to fully understand the new competition that had developed around them in the growth in IFP's. They also completed extensive research into the financial rewards and needs of foster carers so they can complete the task well and feel fully rewarded for their role. The outcome of this work resulted in significant changes to the financial package for foster carers and a complete overhaul in the recruitment process from start to finish.

The main changes were:

- We created two new teams: one to focus on mainstream recruitment/assessment and support of foster carers and the other to focus on assessing and supporting kinship foster carers

- The team structure of the mainstream team included a generic team with SSW recruiting, assessing and supporting foster carers, allowing for a greater number of assessments to be completed (caseloads of 12 carers 2 assessments)

- Introduction of a designated senior SW to oversee every aspect of recruitment, to quality assure and prioritise this work. Monitoring and responding to need

- A daily duty officer to take calls from enquirers and always respond promptly – the whole team was trained in the 'person centred business-like approach'

- Home visits to be booked within 7days of the initial phone call

- An information pack to be sent the same day so it is always received within 24 hours

- Proactive call backs to applicants who aren't quite ready to proceed

- Speedy and effective preparation training and allocation for assessment (achieved by increasing the team of assessors and introducing strict 4-6 month timescales)

- Marketing focus on the intrinsic values of foster carers to ensure the advertising was directed correctly

- Proactive response to transferring carers – developing an in-house transfer pro-forma to assist in smooth transfers

The result – Within 12 months at the end of the financial year 2013 Foster Swansea reported a net gain of 28 foster carers and significant increases in conversion rates with 1 in 6 enquiries resulting in an approval. 12 foster carers transferred from IFP's within this period and 6 Swansea children were returned to in-house placements. The Local Authority invested heavily in foster carer finances in order to reduce its IFP spend alongside improved consistent recruitment procedures to increase placement choice in-house. This resulted in 75% of children referred that year being placed in-house and a total saving of £ 106,283.00 to the IFP spend.

Moving forward

The impact of recruitment over the last few years resulted in 93% of children needing foster care during 2014-2015 being placed in-house. Foster

Swansea now provide for 65% of the total looked after children population within in-house placements, compared to only 49% in 2012. This model can be replicated across other Fostering Services if an "invest to save" approach is taken.

What have we learnt from Phase One?

There is an eagerness by all key stakeholders to consider how we can improve our fostering services in Wales. All key stakeholders have expressed a desire to be involved in this endeavour.

We need to keep how we improve outcomes for children and young people at the heart of all our work.

Engagement with our public sector partners, particularly those in health, including CAMHS and education, will be key to any developments for a National Fostering Framework.

- Engagement with foster carers and keeping their issues a priority will be central if we are to make a real difference.

- The third sector has an important contribution to make in the provision of placements and new models of delivery.

- Independent (commercial and third sector) providers are keen to be involved in the development of the NFF.

- The diversity issues in Wales of culture, geography and language are of significance.

- We can learn lessons from how the National Adoption Service was established and its first 18 months of operation.

- There is some agreement that aspects of the fostering service could be better delivered on a national or regional basis.

- Kinship Foster Care provides local authority fostering service providers with very significant challenges that need addressing as a matter of some urgency.

- We do not know enough or have the right type of information for us to effectively manage our fostering services across Wales.

To develop a National Fostering Framework will not be easy but it is the right thing to do if we are serious about improving outcomes for children who are looked after.

Desired Outcomes from Phase One

These are the major themes that have emerged from what we knew already about our fostering services, the consultation programme and the work programme of Phase One.

All the priority areas for Phase Two will need to have at their core how they will improve outcomes for children and young people and for foster carers.

Priority area	How will this improve outcomes for children and young people?	How will this improve outcomes for foster carers?
1. National performance and resource framework	We will know more about what is working and what is not so we can have plans to improve the areas that require attention.	We will know more about what is working and what is not so we can have plans to improve the areas that require attention.
2. National policy framework for fostering services	The policy framework will achieve greater consistency for all children and young people whatever foster home they may live in.	The policy framework will achieve greater consistency for foster carers wherever they may live in Wales.
3. Kinship Foster Care	All children living with a Kinship Foster Carer will receive care of a consistent nature.	Provide a consistent approach to the assessment, support and training of foster carers.
4. Commissioning of placements – internally and externally	Ensure the maximum placement choice possible for children and young people and for them to be better informed about placement options.	Improved matching between children and young people and foster carers, increasing placement stability.
5. National training framework for foster carers	Children and young people will be looked after by carers who are better equipped for the task.	Foster carers will be better trained and supported to provide quality care and stability for children and young people.
6. National marketing strategy – website/ logo	Increase the numbers of foster carers and give more placement choice for children and young people.	Raise the profile and status of foster carers across Wales.
7. Payment structure for foster carers – fees and allowances	Ensure all carers are able to provide good quality care for children and young people.	Greater consistency and transparency for carers.

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

19 OCTOBER 2016

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION & FAMILY SUPPORT

STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO THE SUPPORT OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN

1.   Purpose of Report

1.1   The purpose of this report is to update and inform committee on the support being delivered to improve the educational performance of vulnerable children in Bridgend.

2.   Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priorities

2.1   This report relates to the Corporate Improvement Plan priorities:-

- Supporting a successful economy
- Helping people to become more self-reliant
- Smarter use of resources

3.   Background

3.1   It is recognised that the gap in performance between vulnerable groups and their more advantaged peers puts them at increased risk of exclusion, poor attendance, behavioural problems as well as social-emotional issues. This can result in these children leaving education without the skills or qualifications needed to become independent adults.

3.2   The Education and Family Support Directorate has been developing more strategic approaches to supporting vulnerable groups of learners. 'Vulnerable Groups' is a wide ranging term that can include pupils who are eligible for free schools meals, looked after children, those on the Child Protection register, identified as a child in need, those for whom English is an additional language, those with additional learning needs, young carers, those excluded from school and young offenders (this list is not exhaustive).

3.3   There have been some significant early benefits to adopting these strategic approaches to help to close the gap in educational performance between some of these vulnerable groups of children and others. This includes helping those entitled to free school meals and looked after children.

3.4   Across Bridgend, there is an improving trend in GCSE performance at grades A* - G for looked after children and in 2014/15 no looked after children left education at the age of 16 without a qualification.

DESCRIPTION	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Provisional 2015/16
Looked after children as at 1st April	34	41	23	36
% A* - C GCSE	41%	49%	42%	42
% A* - G GCSE	74%	88%	92%	69
LEFT WITHOUT QUALIFICATIONS	21%	2.40%	0%	0.03

Equivalent data for all children (Source: StatsWales):

DESCRIPTION	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Provisional 2015/16
Whole cohort at PLASC	1797	1680	1617	1529
% achieved 5 passes at A* - C GCSE	72%	80%	84%	86.7
% achieved 5 passes at A* - G GCSE	93%	93%	95%	94.4
LEFT WITHOUT QUALIFICATIONS	0.45%	0.06%	0.06%	0.3

3.5 The performance of pupils eligible for free school meals is generally improving in every key stage (with a drop at key stage 4 in 2014 which was followed by strong performance in 2015). This is similar to the national trends in which there are improvements in every key stage.

The performance of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than their non-eligible counterparts in every key stage. This is also the case nationally.

The gap increases at each key stage. This is also the case nationally.

The gap in performance has generally narrowed over time with some fluctuations. Compared to national performance, the gap in Bridgend is lower at every key stage.

Foundation Phase*

FPOI	eFSM	nFSM	Bridgend Gap	National Gap
2012	66.4	86.4	-20	-18.3
2013	69.8	86.6	-16.8	-17.7
2014	74.5	88.3	-13.8	-16.2
2015	78	91.7	-13.7	-14.9

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Key Stage 2*

KS2	eFSM	nFSM	Bridgend Gap	National Gap
2012	62.5	85.1	-22.6	-20
2013	67.6	86.9	-19.3	-18.3
2014	73.5	89.1	-15.6	-17.7
2015	76.3	90.9	-14.6	-15.7

Key Stage 3*

KS3	eFSM	nFSM	Bridgend Gap	National Gap
2012	41.8	73	-31.2	-29.6
2013	51.5	78.7	-27.2	-28.5
2014	56.7	85	-28.3	-24.3
2015	68.4	88.2	-19.8	-22.2

Key Stage 4*

KS4	eFSM	nFSM	Bridgend Gap	National Gap
2012	25.4	56.5	-31.1	-33.2
2013	26.4	58.1	-31.7	-32.7
2014	25.1	61.4	-36.3	-33.8
2015	37.1	64	-26.9	-32.5

* 2016 provisional data not available until 21.10.16

How we are maintaining and building on the improvements

- All challenge advisers have a corporate performance management objective 'To ensure all schools in the local authority to which the challenge adviser is attached plan, monitor and evaluate strategically and improve the attainment of e-FSM pupils.'
- All schools are required to publish their plans in relation to how they are using the pupil deprivation grant. Challenge advisers have evaluated the schools use of PDG and reported on it in the spring term note of visit.
- Schools that are particularly successful in improving outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals are used as good practice examples for other to learn from.
- Resources developed by Bridgend secondary schools in relation to improving the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals have been placed on the CSC web site for all schools to benefit from http://www.cscjes.org.uk/Knowledge-Bank.aspx under 'Closing the gap.'
- The Maesteg Cluster is engaged with the South Wales e-FSM Valleys Project and will disseminate the good practice emerging from the project.
- All schools have access to the Sutton Trust Toolkit, which exemplifies effective approaches to improving outcomes for e-FSM pupils.
- The improvements in attendance across the borough are contributing to improvements in the attainment of all pupils but particularly those e-FSM pupils.

- A 'Good to Excellent' strategy to improve teaching and learning started in the spring term. Improving the quality of teaching will improve outcomes for all pupils. Vulnerable pupils are disproportionally affected when the quality of teaching is not good.

How do we know how well we are doing?

Challenge advisers work with schools at the start of the year to ensure that the targets they set for all pupils are appropriately challenging. For example, if the key stage 4 target for 2015/16 for pupils eligible for free school meals is met 43.05% of pupils will achieve the level 2 threshold indicator which would be a good continuation of the improving performance to date. In year tracking data for the current Year 11 cohort indicates that schools are on track to meet this target.

The notes of visits from challenge advisers indicate that all schools are making appropriate use of their PDG.

Practices underpinning the improvements

- Effective use of data not just for data's sake but seeing pupils behind the data.
- Mentoring based on tracking data. (This refers to identifying pupils who are underachieving and providing a mentor to help them to understand that they are under achieving and what they need to do in order to get back on track. There is a strong research base that indicates that this approach works well).
- Making sure every teacher is aware of e-FSM pupils and including e-FSM progress on departmental meetings. (This essentially increases the focus and attention on e-FSM pupils which in turn impacts on how they respond to the learning situation. In research terms this is known as the Hawthorne Effect).
- Identify departmental strengths and areas for improvement in relation to e-FSM pupils and feedback to staff.
- Awareness of successful teaching and learning approaches with e-FSM pupils, such as approaches that develop oracy skills as well as the understanding of the curriculum. For example paired discussion before whole class question and answer sessions. (A common trait in e-FSM pupils is poor language skills which is associated with a range of learning barriers including lack of confidence to answer questions in front of the rest of the class. Strategies such as paired discussion of a question before whole class question and answer allows pupils to develop and rehearse language patterns which then give them more confidence to speak in front of a wider audience.)
- Avoidance of the 'poor dab' syndrome – high expectations and challenge for all.
- High expectations of E-FSM pupils. (This is linked to the Hawthorne Effect but also to the need to install high expectations and a 'can do' attitude in e-FSM pupils themselves. Low achievement linked to poor language development in the early stages of education can lead to pupils having low self-esteem in relation to education and low expectations of themselves. It can also lead to low expectations from their teachers. Successful schools challenge these low expectations, set high targets for all pupils and do not use e-FSM percentages as an excuse for poor performance).

- Effective feedback and meta cognition. (Metacognition refers to having an understanding of how you learn and the thinking skills involved in learning. In order to develop pupils as life-long learners we need to develop their understanding of how they learn and the skills needed to learn. The development of learning-to-learn skills benefits all pupils but especially e-FSM pupils).
- E-FSM under achievement is tracked and intervention planned for. (This is the most common approach used by schools. The interventions usually take the form of small group additional literacy or numeracy sessions).
- Significant in all categories of the National System for categorisation. (The national categorisation system drives schools to maintain a high priority on e-FSM pupils).
- Lots of one-to-one, specialist support, targeted interventions.
- The percentage of e-FSM can affect the gap due to the amount of intervention that may be needed. (This refers to the fact that some schools have a larger proportion of the cohort eligible for free school meals and so may need to plan a wider range of interventions than others.)
- Engagement with parents is key but difficult.
- Appropriate curriculum. (Pupils need to see the curriculum as being relevant to them in order to be motivated to work hard).
- E-FSM pupils' attendance is likely to be lower. (Therefore strategies to improve attendance have a disproportionate impact on the attainment of e-FSM pupils.
- E-FSM pupils may not have access to enrichment activities such as music, peripatetic lessons, trips etc. Curriculum choice – variety of courses. (A number of schools use their Pupil Deprivation Grant to provide the type of enrichment activities that would be normally experienced by non e-FSM pupils).
- Engaging parents is key and attendance.
- Providing enrichment is important.

4. Current Situation

4.1 There has been a multi-level strategic approach to supporting and targeting the educational performance of vulnerable groups of children in Bridgend. It is a priority in the Children's Directorate business plan and has been a key project overseen by the Children's Change Programme Board. At a local level a multi-agency group has developed a strategy to improve the attainment of vulnerable groups (**Appendix A and B**). The work of this group has been closely aligned with the recently published 'Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales'.

4.2 The strategy identifies a range of groups of children who are deemed to be vulnerable. It is expected that the interventions and practices that are proven to have the greatest impact and sustainability in raising the attainment of looked after children and those entitled to free school meals will be replicated to benefit other vulnerable groups, particularly as a result of training staff in these strategies.

4.3   In developing this work, the Directorate has researched and identified known good practice in driving up attainment and ambition among vulnerable groups of children. For instance, it has established that being in school has a disproportionately positive impact on those identified as being vulnerable, it has recognised the importance of tracking and monitoring individual pupil performance and engaging with parents/carers and the value in appointing designated teachers and governors to champion the cause of identified groups of learners, helping to develop appropriate teaching and learning strategies and/or education provision.

4.4   The Vulnerable Groups Strategy highlights the potential for mechanisms to embed these approaches via the action plan. Training provided to school personnel who work with children identified as vulnerable is likely to impact positively on a wider cohort than the specified group as the increased skill-set will be transferable to other situations. For instance, Thrive training, funded from the Pupil Deprivation Grant for Looked After Children (PDG/LAC), is designated to support children's engagement and progress in learning so that they are ready for school, willing to join in, curious and keen to learn meaning that looked after children at risk of exclusion can be maintained in education, and helped to re-engage with learning to achieve their potential. It also helps young people to take responsibility for their behaviour and to increase their attendance and attainment. It is anticipated that this training will assist with provision for other children at risk of exclusion. To date, good progress has been made with Thrive training for a member of staff in each secondary and special school and a member of staff from each primary cluster to support children's engagement and progress in each cluster of schools and there has been increased interest in extending this training to more schools.

4.5   Schools in receipt of PDG/LAC funding are expected to provide impact evaluations of the interventions that have been funded and the information gleaned from this will be audited and shared among providers to maximize learning about helpful strategies. Likewise, pilot clusters of schools have been established to utilise the Achievement for All (AFA) coaching project as a further platform to advance this work further.

Exclusions and The Fair Access Strategy

4.6   Following the pattern of a high number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions, a Fair Access Strategy Group was formed and an action plan written for 2015-2016 (Appendix D). The implementation of the Fair Access Strategy Group has ensured that there is a strategic approach to enable all pupils to have a fair access to education. The Headteachers work in partnership with local authority officers to ensure that pupils are supported and educated in the most appropriate educational establishment. This group meets every six weeks at different schools with the focus upon the sharing of best practice.

4.7   The first action in the Fair Access Action Plan identifies the need to have robust tracking, in order to analyse the data and provide targeted early prevention and intervention to meet the needs of children and young people. (Appendix C) This is now in place and full reports are produced on a termly

basis which is shared with all schools. This has greatly improved the ability for local authority officers to respond to the needs of the individual pupils and schools. Visits to all Secondary Schools have been undertaken during the Spring Term 2016. The purpose of these visits are to discuss the reason for the exclusions; identify patterns and also to glean an understanding of the graduated response, namely the internal alternatives that are in place within each school to avoid an exclusion. Visits will be repeated during the Autumn Term 2016 for all Secondary Schools. Primary School visits will be undertaken initially during the Autumn Term 2016, for those schools with the highest rate of exclusions.

4.8   There was one permanent exclusion for Primary Schools during 2015-2016, compared to two for the academic year 2014-2015. There were three permanent exclusions for Secondary Schools during 2014-2015 and six permanent exclusions during 2015-2016. The six permanent exclusions for 2015-2016 were from two schools. Since these exclusions much work has been done with schools in order to identify a child or young person at risk of permanent exclusion at an earlier stage. There will be occasions whereby the incident could be deemed serious which may warrant a permanent exclusion. There have been no permanent exclusions for LAC since 2012.

4.9   The number of fixed-term exclusions for both Primary and Secondary Schools during 2015-2016 does not compare favourably to 2014-2015. There has been a rise of 18% in actual fixed term exclusions in this period. Discussions have been held with schools regarding the coding of the fixed-term exclusions. The importance of correct coding has been highlighted and the avoidance of using the "other" code. As a result appropriate interventions can be put in place in order to support children and young people. In 2015-2016 the number of 'other' fixed term exclusions dropped significantly from 207 to 72 overall.

4.10   The good partnership working between schools and local authority officers has resulted in the avoidance of further permanent exclusions in the last academic year. For example, as a result of working creatively with the Bridge Alternative Provision and a Primary School, a transition programme for four pupils who were at risk of permanent exclusion in Year 6 has been agreed. These pupils will transition with support to Secondary School in September 2016.

4.11   Teams which comprise of local authority officers from Integrated Working and Family Support; Inclusions Service; YOS; and outside agencies where applicable have been established in order to support one Secondary school and two Primary Schools. The Secondary school is being supported as a result of being placed in Estyn category of Special Measures and the two Primary schools as fixed term exclusions were increasing. The schools involved with these teams have welcomed this support and as a result there has been an avoidance of permanent exclusions and a reduction of fixed-term exclusions in these three schools. There has been a restructure of the behaviour and wellbeing team. This team is now line-managed by the Teacher in Charge at The Bridge Alternative Provision. There is an improved focus of

the team, targeting support early and reviewing the interventions on a regular basis and no longer than six weeks.

4.12   There have been no permanent exclusions at Heronsbridge; Ysgol Bryn Castell and The Bridge Alternative Provision during 2014-2015 and between September 2014 and April 2015. This is a positive picture as numbers have increased in all three educational establishments and as a result there have been greater challenges. The number of fixed- term exclusions between September 2015 and April 2015 at Ysgol Bryn Castell compare favourably to 2014-2015. The number of fixed- term exclusions at The Bridge Alternative Provision have reduced for this same period of time. The Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) KS3 class has opened at Ysgol Bryn Castell and a KS4 class will be opened during the Autumn Term 2016.

5.   Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules

5.1   There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules.

6.   Equality Impact Assessment

6.1   There are no direct equality impact issues arising from this report.

7.   Financial Implications

7.1   There are no financial implications arising from this report as the initiatives described throughout this report are met through a combination of Pupil Deprivation Grant for looked after children and existing resources.

8.   Recommendation

8.1   To ask the Committee to consider and discuss the content of the report and provide any comments.

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Background documents
'Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales' (January 2016)

Report to Corporate Parenting Committee, 7th April 2016, 'Looked After Children Deprivation Grant'

Appendices

Appendix A: Vulnerable Groups Strategy (including action plan)
Appendix B: VGS – Roles and Responsibilities
Appendix C: Exclusions Data
Appendix D: Fair Access Action Plan (2015-2016)

Vulnerable Groups Strategy

This document describes Bridgend County Borough Council's strategy to tackle the potential educational underachievement of children who are vulnerable.

1. **Overview**

    This strategy has been structured using an Outcome Based Accountability Framework:

Definition	'Vulnerable Groups' (VG) is a wide ranging term that can include pupils who are eligible for free schools meals (FSM), Looked after children (LAC), on the Child Protection register (CP), identified as a Child in Receipt of Care and Support (CRCS) as well as those for whom English is an additional language (EAL), those with additional learning needs (ALN), young carers, those excluded from school and young offenders (although this list is not exhaustive).
Vision	All children and young people are properly equipped for learning and the world of work; All learners will have high levels of self-esteem and resilience enabling them to access learning and become autonomous learners.
Outcome	To close the gap in performance between vulnerable groups of children and their peers.
Data used to inform the strategy	Vulnerability Assessment Profile (VAP) Academic performance progress data Attendance data Exclusion data Work experience opportunity /take-up data Needs analysis data related specifically to performance of looked after children - from Thrive and Achievement for All
Stakeholders	Education and Family Support, Group Manager School Improvement Headteacher/Deputy Headteachers LAC in Education Coordinator and LACE team Education and Family Support, Group Manager Inclusion Central South Consortium representatives Social Services/Safeguarding Team Governor representative School Nurse Coordinator Integrated Working Team Manager/Hub Manager Youth Engagement and Progression Coordinator Flying Start Manager Inclusion Service Childcare Team Data Team Lead workers Health Service Professionals - school nurse coordinator Parent / Carers

	Governor representatives Pupils – learner voice Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service
Aims	• Develop a consistent approach at all levels to raise aspirations and attainment • Partnership Working to support and train those who work with 'vulnerable groups' to improve outcomes, including parents • Replicate successful interventions for FSM/LAC for other identified vulnerable groups. • Clarify roles and responsibilities for those involved in the lives of vulnerable children, young people and their families. • Enhance communication to provide the best service for each child in the identified groups.

2. Introduction

The underperformance in educational attainment of identified groups of children deemed to be vulnerable is well reported[i]. Whilst there has been a particular Welsh Government focus on the performance of children who are eligible for free schools meals (FSM) and those who are looked after (LAC), there is also recognition that there are other vulnerable groups of children who under-perform including those who are on the edge of care, on the Child Protection register (CP), and those who are identified as Children in Receipt of Care and Support (CRCS). Furthermore, there is a high correlation between the children identified as being vulnerable and other barriers to learning including having Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

This gap in performance between vulnerable groups and their more advantaged peers puts them at increased risk of exclusion, poor attendance, behavioural problems as well as social-emotional issues. This can result in these children leaving education without the skills or qualifications needed to become independent adults.

1. This is a joint strategy between Bridgend County Borough Council's Children's Directorate, Social Services and external partners to ensure that through collaborative working the educational ambitions aspirations and outcomes of children who are deemed to be 'vulnerable' are raised to ensure they are properly equipped for further learning and the world of work.

2. The strategy has been informed by consulting with a range of stakeholders as listed in the overview above and by reference to key strategies and policy documents[ii].

3. Across Bridgend, there is an improving trend in GCSE performance for all children. However, when this data is examined in detail the improvement across the full cohort is not evenly distributed. In line with the performance across Wales, identified groups such as FSM, LAC, CP, CRCS, SEN are not performing as well as their more advantaged peers.

4. Following interventions to improve outcomes for FSM pupils there has been a marked improvement and the gap in performance between FSM/non-FSM is

narrowing in each Key Stage, although the gap is still too wide especially at KS4.

5. Lessons learnt from these successful FSM interventions have been studied with a view to replicating for other vulnerable groups. Research indicates that similar strategies will be effective for them.

3.   Action Plan

3.1   Following some of the successes of interventions related to improving outcomes for children entitled to FSM and Looked After Children, the Local Authority needs to implement similar interventions for other identified groups in the belief that comparable results will be achieved for them.

3.2   A consistent approach should be adopted at all levels to raise aspirations and attainment making use of interventions proven to have the greatest impact and sustainability in raising the attainment.

3.3   Roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined for those involved in the lives of vulnerable children, young people and their families. (See Appendix 1)

3.4   Continue to improve communication through multi-agency working to provide the best service for each child in the identified groups.

3.5   Welsh Government publish national targets to raise performance of FSM pupils and Looked After Children and 'close the gap' in attainment. These are closely monitored by the Local Authority and Central South Consortium and this has assisted in spotlighting the need for improvement. Target setting of other identified vulnerable groups (at local authority) will assist with effective monitoring of the progress of these groups. We are currently undertaking a feasibility exercise to see what data we have and what it is possible to report upon.

3.6   There are a number of strategies that are already in place to help to close the gap in attainment. These include:

- Uses of Pupil Deprivation Grant for FSM determined by schools
- Regional Plan for uses of Pupil Deprivation Grant for Looked After Children
- Central South Consortium's Closing the Gap strategy
- Central South Consortium's Good to Great strategy for those more able pupils.

Good practice identified from these strategies can inform practice for other vulnerable groups and will be disseminated by Central South Consortium and via school to school work as part of the self-improving system.

3.7   There is a multi-level approach to supporting and targeting the educational performance of FSM and Looked After Children in Bridgend. This is a priority in the Children's Directorate business plan and is a key project overseen by the Children's Change Programme Board. Progress is reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Performance Management

Board (PMB). At a local level a multi-agency group has been established to develop the strategy and action plan to improve the attainment of looked after children and other identified vulnerable groups. This work needs to be extended to incorporate a wider group of vulnerable children.

3.8 Access to education training and employment is a key performance indicator for the Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service (YJ&EIS) and is reported to the Strategic Management Board and the Youth Justice Board. There is a measure of the hours offered and attended by children and young people known to the service with the expectation that the hours offered and attended will increase through the intervention of the service. The YJ&EIS has two specialist education workers based in the Bridgend Locality team. The children at risk of offending and reoffending are often disengaged from education or training provision.

3.9 Each school has a designated teacher (DT) and governor with responsibility to monitor and promote the education of looked after children. Ideally these roles will be extended to cover other identified vulnerable groups of children but this may depend on capacity, especially in small schools in areas of high deprivation.

3.10 At local authority level there are key performance indicators and targets related to the attainment of FSM and looked after children. These are reported quarterly through CPA.

Appendices

- **Appendix 1: Roles and Responsibilities**
  Includes Overview of Family Support Services; Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service; Central South Wales Consortium's 'A Strategy for Closing the Gap, 2016-2017'

Action Plan

Action	Milestone(s)	Responsible Officer *	Timescale
1. Roll out similar interventions related to improving outcomes for children entitled to FSM and Looked After Children to other identified groups.	1.1 Guidance notes for dissemination and agreed communication plan	SR	Sept 2016
	1.2 Knowledge bank of good practice developed for sharing	BJ	1st draft Sept 16
	1.3 Audit of school based activities available to Vulnerable Groups 1.4	BJ and schools	March 17
	1.5 Develop tracking to monitor individual pupil attainment/progress (using SIMS)	BJ/DD	Sept 2016
	1.6 Review Service delivery to identify team activities in relation to vulnerable groups and children with SEN across the Inclusion Service	LS/FJ	March 2017
2. Adopt a consistent approach to raise aspirations and attainment making use of interventions proven to have the greatest impact and sustainability in raising the attainment.	2.1 Provision of appropriate training programmes for parents/carers to assist children in their learning and raise aspirations	BJ and DW	March 2017
	2.2 Delivery of training programmes for staff (teaching/non-teaching) with useful strategies to assist VG e.g. Thrive/ELSA/Growth Mindsets/Successful Lives/Mindfulness	LS; KM and Achievement For All	April 2017
	2.3 Refine Training Directory to provide training opportunities for teachers and	MH LS/FJ/VCW	Sept 2016

	learning support staff to enable them to raise aspirations and attainments of vulnerable groups and pupils with SEN		
	2.4 Creation of a menu /database of good practice of strategies compiled and shared with schools so that they may select strategies suited to specific contexts	BJ/Schools	Sept 2017
3. Clarify roles and responsibilities for those involved in the lives of vulnerable children, young people and their families.	2.5 Identify support agencies in place e.g. 'Team around the Cluster'; lead workers/school nurse/FEO/EWO	Education and Family Support Group Managers	Sept 2016
	2.6 Develop a menu of school based activities for Vulnerable Groups	BJ	Sept 2016
	2.7 Continue to develop the Fair Access Strategy. Evaluate and identify alternative provision through provision mapping.	Group Manager Inclusion	Ongoing
	2.8 Update the overview of the roles and responsibilities of services area within the Inclusion Service	MH LS/FJ/VCW	December 2016
4. Continue to improve communication through multi-agency working to provide the best service for each child in the identified groups.	4.1 Learner Voice Activities	Education and Family Support Group Managers	March 2017

	4.2 Roll out Person Centred Planning approach to illicit the views of multiagency professionals, child and parent	LS/FJ/VCW	July 2017
5. Set targets for identified vulnerable groups	5.1 Access to SIMS - Investigate access to SIMS data for coordinators to measure progress	BJ/DD	March 2016
	5.2 Undertake a feasibility exercise to see what data we have and what it is possible to report upon.	DD	July 2016
	5.3 Liaise with schools to set targets set for identified vulnerable groups	Group Manager(s) School Improvement / BJ / schools	Baseline by Sept 2016
	5.4 Set targets for LAC children through the Thrive programme and on-line assessment in conjunction with schools	LS/BJ/Designated teachers	July 2017
	5.5 Explore the use of IEPs and their effectiveness in target setting for SEN	LS/FJ/VCW	July 2017
6. Disseminate good practice identified from proven strategies to inform practice for other vulnerable groups	6.1 Facilitate sharing good practice between schools via workshops/meetings for Designated Teachers/ Governors	BJ/Schools	March 2017
7. Report on progress of a wider group of vulnerable children to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and	7.1 Reports shared.	Virtual Headteacher/ SR	March 2017

	Performance Management Board (PMB).		
8.	Ensure access to education training and employment for children and young people known to the YJ&EIS with the expectation that the hours offered and attended will increase through the intervention of the service.	8.1 Specialist education workers based in the Bridgend Locality team YJ&EIS continue to provide access to education provision for children at risk of offending and reoffending to ensure that they do not become disengaged from education or training provision.	DM/AT	March 2016
9.	Recommend that a designated teacher (DT) and governor with responsibility to monitor and promote the education of looked after children be extended to cover other identified vulnerable groups of children.	9.1 Recommend that Governing Bodies appoint Governor Champion for VG – Already a Governor for LAC	SR	July 2016
10.	Continue to report on key performance indicators and targets related to the attainment of identified vulnerable groups	10.1 Performance of FSM and looked after children reported through CPA.	SR/PW	March 2016
		10.2 YJB Indicators (Access to a minimum of 25 hours provision for school age children and a minimum of 16 hours for post school age pupils)	CD/DM	March 2016

* See Glossary of Initials in Action Plan (page 13-14)

3. Related documents/resources

- http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/160127-lac-strategy-en.pdf
- Easy read: http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/151218-easy-read-lac-strategy-en.pdf
- ACTION PLAN http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/160127-lac-action-plan-en.pdf

Roles and responsibilities:

1. Family Support Services Available to Safeguarding Teams

Connecting Families

Rapid Response Service
For cases where there is no current support service in place. The Social Worker is to have assessed the crisis situation, by way of visit to family. Rapid response referral completed. The support to be offered to the family, within 24 hrs of the referral being received.

Social Worker to complete **Request for Help Form** for ongoing support to then be offered.

Edge of Care Service
11-16 year olds who are at risk of entering care system due to some of the following issues:

- ♦ Parental MH/SM/DA
- ♦ Poor school attendance/attainment
- ♦ High levels of Police Call Outs
- ♦ Housing Issues
- ♦ ASB issues

12 week Intensive Service to address crisis points. Progress is then monitored for a 9 month period with option for Follow up support should additional problems arise.

Rehabilitation Home Support
For LAC cases where intervention is required to either support care plan for child to return home or to develop alternative care plan following intensive intervention.

12 week intensive service with progress monitored for 9 month period with option for follow up support should additional problems arise.

Family Support
General family support service around parenting, home conditions, budgeting etc.

Parenting Groups
Parenting groups will be offered on a rolling basis. Team Managers will be informed when groups are running and how to refer.

These include:

NVR – Parenting programme for children who are displaying challenging and aggressive behaviours.

Incredible Years – Parenting programme for younger children exploring attachment, routines, boundaries and play

Grobrain – Early years programme for parents with babies looking at secure attachment, interactions and play

Connecting Dads – a programme for fathers looking at their role as a Dad and the importance of this.

Chill Out Group – Group for teenagers looking at anxiety and stress management and strategies to deal with this.

Stop it Now Wales – Parents Protect course - Group for any parent to raise awareness to the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Young People Services

Lead Workers
Attached to schools and in place to reduce the risk of YP becoming NEET. Support offered to ensure educational needs are met. Will address work around issues leading to risk of becoming NEET e.g. substance misuse, ASB, offending, aggression

Health and Wellbeing Group
Offering support in community for YP's at risk of sexual exploitation, requiring sexual health advice, substance misuse support, general advice and support for YP's.

Project Workers
16+ services for YP's who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET and looking at developing self-esteem, confidence for education, training and / or employment opportunities

Play Therapy
Counselling service for children aged 3-10 years

Community Counselling
Youth counselling service for 11-25 year olds.

Western Bay Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS)

Aims of Service

The aim of the Western Bay IFSS is to keep families affected by parental substance misuse together by empowering them to take positive steps to change and improve their lives whilst addressing any safeguarding concerns.

Using evidence based interventions we aim to bridge the gap between children and adult services across Local Government, non-statutory sectors and health partners.

Referral Criteria

- There is a parental drug and/or alcohol problem in the family
- Families (with children at home) are in a crisis and there is a risk of the children being placed on the Child Protection Register.
- Where there is a reunification plan that IFST may contribute to
- Expectant parent(s) where there is identified substance misuse

And

- The family agree to a referral being made
- Social worker will continue to have case responsibility during IFSS intervention

Accessing Our Service

- Contact us via email or by telephone to arrange a Consultation.

☎ 01656 815410 or ✉ IFSSWesternBay@bridgend.gov.uk

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2. Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service

Referral criteria – at risk of ASB/Offending behaviour

Youth Offending Services/Teams (YOS/Ts) are statutory multi-agency partnerships who have a legal duty to co-operate in order to secure youth justice services appropriate to their area funded from a variety of sources including UK Government, Welsh Government and the statutory partners. (i.e. the Local Authority, Police, the National Probation Service and Health).

The service performance is measured by key performance indicators:

- Reducing first tine entrants into the criminal justice system – prevention and early intervention with those identified as at risk of ASB/Offending.

- Reducing reoffending – working together to help the young avoid further offending behaviour through a balance of confronting behaviour and supporting the young person to move on.

- Reducing the use of custody by offering alternatives to the court.

- Access to services – Accommodation; substance misuse; mental health and education training and employment.

In order to meet these indicators it is important to identify and divert children and young people away from the system in the first place and make every effort to achieve positive change once a child has entered the system. Accessing and sustaining education and training provision is a key component to a child or young person moving away from offending behaviour.

Accessing support from   Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service:
Referrers can access prevention/early intervention services delivered by the multi – agency team by contacting Daniel Morgan Daniel.morgan@bridgend.gov,uk or Angharad Thomas Angharad.thomas@bridgend.gov.uk
Or by filling in the **referral from** accessed by ringing 01656 5815655.
Every child or young person is assessed and based on identified needs can access services that include:

- Parenting support,
- Restorative Approaches in the community and in schools,
- Skills development programs to assist them back into school/make them employment ready,
- tutoring,
- Family mediation,
- Family Group Conferencing,
- Specific programs of delivery based on behaviours displayed eg knife crime, emotional wellbeing, sexual health, Rapid English, constructive activities and more

Bespoke targeted programs of support are based on assessment of risk, safety and wellbeing and are delivered jointly with referrers or by the service taking case responsibility.

3. Central South Consortium's Strategy for Closing the Gap, 2016-2017

'A Strategy for Closing the Gap, 2016-2017' accessed via
http://www.cscjes.org.uk/getattachment/Knowledge-Bank/Closing-the-Gap/Strategy-2016-final-(1).pdf.aspx;

Glossary of Initials in Action Plan

Action	Initials	Name	Title
1.1	SR	Sue Roberts	Education and Family Support, Group Manager, School Improvement
1.2	BJ	Bev Jones	LAC Education Officer
1.3 / 1.4	BJ and schools	Bev Jones	LAC Education Officer
1.5	BJ/DD	Bev Jones Dawn Davies	LAC Education Officer Principal Officer, Knowledge Management and Learners
1.6	LS/FJ	Lorraine Silver Fran Jones	ALN Casework Manager Team Manager, ALN
2.1	BJ and DW	Bev Jones	LAC Education Officer
2.2	LS, KM and Achievement for All	Lorraine Silver Kathryn Morgan	ALN Casework Manager Senior Educational Psychologist
2.3	MH/LS/FJ/VCW	Michelle Hatcher Lorraine Silver Fran Jones Victoria Cox-Wall	Education and Family Support, Group Manager Inclusion ALN Casework Manager Team Manager, ALN Teacher in Charge, The Bridge
2.4	BJ/Schools	Bev Jones	LAC Education Officer
3.1	Education and Family Support Group Managers		
3.2	BJ	Bev Jones	LAC Education Officer
3.3	Group Manager Inclusion	Michelle Hatcher	Education and Family Support, Group Manager Inclusion
3.4	MH/LS/FJ/VCW	Michelle Hatcher Lorraine Silver Fran Jones Victoria Cox-Wall	Education and Family Support, Group Manager Inclusion ALN Casework Manager Team Manager, ALN Teacher in Charge, The Bridge
4.1	Education and Family Support Group Managers		
4.2	LS/FJ/VCW	Lorraine Silver Fran Jones Victoria Cox-Wall	ALN Casework Manager Team Manager, ALN Teacher in Charge, The Bridge
5.1	BJ/DD	Bev Jones Dawn Davies	LAC Education Officer Principal Officer, Knowledge Management and Learners
5.2	DD	Dawn Davies	Principal Officer, Knowledge Management and Learners
5.3	Group Managers(s) School Improvement /BJ/Schools	Bev Jones	LAC Education Officer
5.4	LS/BJ/Designated	Lorraine Silver	ALN Casework Manager

	teachers	Bev Jones	LAC Education Officer
5.5	LS/FJ/VCW	Lorraine Silver Fran Jones Victoria Cox-Wall	ALN Casework Manager Team Manager, ALN Teacher in Charge, The Bridge
6.1	BJ/Schools	Bev Jones	LAC Education Officer
7.1	Virtual Headteacher / SR	To be appointed/ Sue Roberts	Education and Family Support, Group Manager, School Improvement
8.1	DM/AT	Daniel Morgan Amie Taylor	Locality Manager Behaviour Support / Access to Learning Assistant
9.1	SR	Sue Roberts	Education and Family Support, Group Manager, School Improvement
10.1	SR/PW	Sue Roberts Paul Wolstenholme	Education and Family Support, Group Manager, School Improvement Education and Family Support, Group Manager, School Improvement
10.2	CD/DM	Caroline Dyer Daniel Morgan	Service Manager, Western Bay Youth Offending Service Locality Manager

EXCLUSIONS DATA

PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS

Primary

Period	Number	Reason
2011-2012	3	1 x Assault/Violence 2 x Assault of a pupil
2012-2013	0	
2013-2014	1	1 x Physical Assault
2014-2015	2	2X Physical Assault
(September 2015-April 2016)	1	1x Physical assault against an adult

Secondary

Period	Number	Reason
2011-2012	3	3 x Defiance of rules/discipline
2012-2013	13	4 x Defiance of rules/discipline 2 x Possession/use of a weapon 2 x Assault/Violence (pupil) 2 x Substance Misuse 1 x Sexual Harassment 1 x Damage to Property
2013-2014	10	2 x Defiance of Rules/Discipline 2 x Assault/Violence Pupil 1 x Assault/Violence Staff 1 x Physical Assault 1 x Threatening Behaviour 2 x Substance Misuse 1 x Sexual Harassment
2014-2015	3	1X Physical assault of a Pupil 1 x Drug and alcohol related 1 X Other
(September 2015-April 2016)	4	1 X Persistent disruptive behaviour 1 X Physical assault against an adult 1 X Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult 1 X Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against a pupil

Note: Exclusions from Special Schools and PRU are not included in this PI data.

FIXED TERM EXCLUSIONS – PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Period	No. of Fixed Term Exclusions	No. of pupils involved	No. of school days lost
2011-12	53	31	197
2012-13	56	34	140
2013-14	47	32	145
2014-15	107	46	283.5
September 2015- April 2016	74	32	183.5

Reasons for Fixed Term Exclusions	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Sept 2015-April 2016
Assault/Violence (Pupil)	13	13	12	14	12
Assault/Violence (Staff)	18	14	23	4	19
Threatening/Dangerous Behaviour	1	3	1	17	5
Verbal Abuse	8	4	3	0	0
Bullying	0	1	0	0	0
Disruptive Behaviour	3	5	3	3	35
Defiance of Rules/Discipline	7	13	5	0	0
Racial Harassment	0	0	0	17	0
Sexual Harassment	0	1	0	10	0
Substance Misuse	0	0	0	13	0
Damage to Property	1	1	0	8	3
Theft	0	0	0	16	0
Other	2	1	0	5	0
TOTAL	53	56	47	107	74

Notes:
- Only pupils of compulsory school age are included in this data.
- Lunchtime exclusions are not included in this data.
- Exclusions from Special Schools and PRU are not included in this PI data.

FIXED TERM EXCLUSIONS – SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Period	No. of Fixed Term Exclusions	No. of pupils involved	No. of school days lost
2011-12	565	344	1445
2012-13	488	285	1078.5
2013-14	305	193	616
2014-15	428	236	1214.5
September 2015- April 2016.	358	202	788

Reasons for Fixed Term Exclusions	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Sept 2015- April 2016
Assault/Violence (Pupil)	99	74	58	76	48
Assault/Violence (Staff)	16	14	10	2	11
Threatening/Dangerous Behaviour	34	15	14	80	137
Possession/Use of a Weapon	5	8	2	0	0
Verbal Abuse	110	107	81	0	0
Bullying	7	3	0	0	2
Disruptive Behaviour	59	73	36	35	69
Defiance of Rules/Discipline	148	131	44	0	0
Racial Harassment / Abuse	7	8	7	7	3
Sexual Harassment / Misconduct	5	4	4	2	3
Substance Misuse/Drug and Alcohol Related	19	25	18	23	14
Damage to Property	19	8	5	0	9
Theft	19	8	7	1	4
Other	18	10	19	202	58
TOTAL	**565**	**488**	**305**	**428**	**358**

Notes:

- Only pupils of compulsory school age are included in this data.
- Lunchtime exclusions are not included in this data.
- Exclusions from Special Schools and PRU are not included in this PI data.

EDU/010B - The percentage of school days lost due to fixed-term exclusions during the academic year, in secondary schools (compulsory school age pupils only)

PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS - SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Period	School.	Number of permanent exclusions
2014/2015	• Heronsbridge • Ysgol Bryn Castell • The Bridge Alternative Provision	0 0 0
Sept 2015 – April 2016	• Heronsbridge • Ysgol Bryn Castell • The Bridge Alternative Provision	0 0 0

FIXED- TERM EXCLUSIONS - SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Heronsbridge Special School.

Period	Number of fixed-term exclusions
2014/2015	0
Sept 2015 – April 2016	0

Ysgol Bryn Castell

Period	Number of fixed-term exclusions
2014/2015	72
Sept 2015 – Apr 2016	72

The Bridge Alternative Provision

Period	Number of fixed-term exclusions
2014/2015	94

Sept 2015 – April 2016	27

FIXED -TERM EXCLUSIONS- LAC

School Type	2014/2015		September 2015 – April 2016	
	Number of LAC FTEs	% of Overall FTE Number	Number of LAC FTEs	% of Overall FTE Number
Primary	1	0.9%	8	10.3%
Secondary	69	16.1%	23	6.4%
Special- YBC	15	20.8%	22	30.6%
The Bridge	37	39.4%	3	11.1%
All Schools	122	17.4%	56	11.6%

NOTE:- There have been no permanent exclusions for LAC since 2012.

FIXED-TERM EXCLUSIONS E-FSM

School Type	2014/2015		September 2015 – April 2016	
	Number of FSM FTEs	% of Overall FTE Number	Number of FSM FTEs	% of Overall FTE Number
Primary	83	77.6%	31	39.8%
Secondary	168	39.3%	134	37.1%
Special-YBC	30	41.7%	38	52.8%
The Bridge	44	46.8%	20	74.1%
All Schools	325	46.4%	223	41.4%

FAIR ACCESS ACTION PLAN (2015-2016).

Action	Lead	Timescale	Monitoring	Expected Outcome
1. Robust tracking and analysis of exclusions • Comparison of fixed-term exclusions-Sims and Central Pupil Database with exclusions reported through paper system to Learner Support. • Guidance. New; detailed guidance regarding how to capture all necessary information. • Eradicate duplication of activity for schools and the Local Authority. • Discontinue paper reporting system. • Clarify relevant and associated Attendance code recording. • Liaising with schools regarding	Robin Davies (Group Manager) Dawn Davies (Principal Officer Knowledge Management and Learner Support) Melanie Treharne (School Support Officer) Michelle Hatcher (Group Manager Inclusion)	April 2015 ongoing	Regular meetings between key stakeholders. Regular monitoring of exclusion data.	Reduction in number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions. Targeted early intervention and prevention to meet the needs of the Children and Young people at an early stage.

	081/2012 guidance. • Exclusions report specification for the Central Pupil Data Base				
2.	To establish a Fair Access Strategic Group which will address the following: • Fixed term and permanent exclusions • Fair access protocol • Managed moves • Behaviour and attendance strategies and policies within Primary and Secondary schools.	Michelle Hatcher (Group Manager Inclusion)	April 2015-March 2016	Members of the group • Secondary Headteachers or Deputy Headteachers. • Primary Headteacher representation • YBC and PRU representation • EWS • Integrated Working team • YOS • Learner support Six weekly meetings.	Partnership working to reduce the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions and provide early intervention and prevention.
3.	The Bridge Alternative Provision Restructure. The behaviour and wellbeing teams to come under The Bridge Alternative Provision.	Michelle Hatcher (Group Manager Inclusion)	December 2015	Fortnightly meetings between Group Manager Inclusion and the Teacher in Charge- The Bridge Alternative Provision. Meetings with Chair Management Committee and the Challenge Adviser.	New structure in place. Positive Pathways which includes the behaviour and wellbeing teams functioning as a revolving door. Early Intervention and Prevention

				and reintegrating children and young people into mainstream.
4. Analysis of exclusions at Ysgol Bryn Castell and The Bridge Alternative Provision. Identify strategies.	Michelle Hatcher (Group Manager Inclusion) Lorraine Silver (Complex Cases and Lead Educational Psychologist) Caroline Dyer (Western Bay Regional Manager YOS)		Regular monitoring.	Reduction in fixed-term and permanent exclusions. Children and Young people in appropriate educational placements and following appropriate pathways
5. To implement ASD Proposals and provide ASD Provision Locally. To continue to implement the Pre-Pad Pathway	Michelle Hatcher (Group Manager Inclusion) Lorraine Silver (Complex Cases Manager and Lead Educational Psychologist)	September 2015	Fortnightly meetings between Group Manager Inclusion. and Complex Cases Manager and Lead Educational Psychologist.	Children's needs are identified at an early stage and are in appropriate placements to avoid vulnerable groups receiving a fixed-term or permanent exclusion.
6. Robust process of TAF in place. Fixed Term Exclusions to prompt a JAFF referral.	Mark Lewis (Group Manager Integrated Working and Family Support) Early Intervention	September 2015.	Regular meeting between Group Manager Integrated Working and Family Support and the Early Intervention Locality Managers.	Early Intervention and prevention of fixed-term and permanent exclusions. Issues are highlighted

	Locality Managers.			and the engagement of appropriate services is implemented at an early stage.
7. To conduct annual PRIP (Planning; Reviewing in Partnership) meeting with Primary and Secondary Schools. Analysis of behaviour and wellbeing team activity.	Michelle Hatcher (Group Manager Inclusion) Lorraine Silver (Lead Educational Psychologist) Fran Jones (Team Manager ALN)	March 2016.	Individual meetings with all Primary and Secondary schools.	Appropriate targeted support in place for vulnerable groups leading to a reduction of fixed-term and permanent exclusions and timely; targeted support implemented.
8. To further strengthen Links with Youth Offending Service	Caroline Dyer (Western Bay Regional Manager YOS) Daniel Morgan (Locality Manager Bridgend YOS) Michelle Hatcher (Group Manager Inclusion)	July 2016	Attendance at Fair Access Strategic Group and the Resettlement and Reintegration panel.	Early Intervention and prevention of fixed-term and permanent exclusions. Children and Young people in appropriate educational placements and following appropriate pathways.
9. Implementation of the Youth Engagement Progression Framework.	Mark Lewis (Group Manager Integrated Working and Family Support)	September 2015	Regular meetings and monitoring of the process.	VAP identifying young people at risk of exclusion. Lead worker in

	Owen Shepherd (Engagement Progression Co-ordinator)			place to support and identify additional support required.
10. Attendance at South Wales Behaviour Forum for Managers.	Michelle Hatcher (Group Manager Inclusion)	Termly meetings	Feedback to Fair Access Strategy Group.	Sharing of good practice and networks across South Wales. Reduction in number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions.

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[i] Wales Audit Office, 2012; Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales' (January 2016)

[ii] Welsh Government Strategy: Raising The Ambitions And Educational Attainment Of Children Who Are looked after in Wales (Jan 2016)
Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015
Welsh Government's 'Qualified for Life' strategy
End Child Poverty Network's, 'Tackling Child Poverty in Wales: A Good Practice Guide for Schools' (Children in Wales/Welsh Government)
Research conducted by the Sutton Trust / Education Endowment Foundation
Research conducted by Central South Consortium regarding what is being done in Wales to reduce the impact of poverty on pupils' achievement. Wales Centre for Equity in Educationii
Pencoed Comprehensive School 'Closing the Gap' Case study

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