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Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr

Bridgend County Borough Council



Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont, CF31 4WB / Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

*Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg.
Rhowch wybod i ni os mai Cymraeg yw eich
dewis iaith.*

*We welcome correspondence in Welsh. Please
let us know if your language choice is Welsh.*



Annwyl Cyngorydd,

Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive's Directorate

Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 / 643147 / 643694

Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Democratic Services/ Gwasanaethau Democrataidd

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad/Date: Dydd Gwener, 14 Gorffennaf 2023

PWYLLGOR Y CABINET DROS FATERION RHIENI CORFFORAETHOL

Cynhelir Cyfarfod Pwyllgor Y Cabinet Dros Faterion Rhieni Corfforaethol Hybrid yn Siambr y Cyngor - Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr, CF31 4WB / O Bell Trwy Timau Microsoft ar **Dydd Iau, 20 Gorffennaf 2023 am 10:00.**

AGENDA

1. Ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb
Derbyn ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb gan Aelodau.
2. Datganiadau o fuddiant
Derbyn datganiadau o ddi-ddordeb personol a rhagfarnol (os o gwbl) gan Aelodau / Swyddogion yn unol â darpariaethau'r Cod Ymddygiad Aelodau a fabwysiadwyd gan y Cyngor o 1 Medi 2008.
3. Cymeradwyaeth Cofnodion 3 - 8
I dderbyn am gymeradwyaeth y Cofnodion cyfarfod y 19/04/23
4. Adroddiad Blynyddol y Gwasanaeth Adolygu Annibynnol 2022-2023 9 - 42
5. Diweddariad ar Ddatblygu Rhianta Corfforaethol 43 - 46
6. Adroddiad Blynyddol Tros Gynnal Plant Cymru 2022-23 47 - 74
7. Materion Brys
I ystyried unrhyw eitemau o fusnes y, oherwydd amgylchiadau arbennig y cadeirydd o'r farn y dylid eu hystyried yn y cyfarfod fel mater o frys yn unol â Rhan 4 (pharagraff 4) o'r Rheolau Trefn y Cyngor yn y Cyfansoddiad.

Nodyn: Bydd hwn yn gyfarfod Hybrid a bydd Aelodau a Swyddogion mynychu trwy Siambr y Cyngor, Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr / o bell Trwy Timau Microsoft. Bydd y cyfarfod cael ei recordio i'w drosglwyddo drwy wefan y Cyngor. Os oes gennych unrhyw gwestiwn am hyn, cysylltwch â cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk neu ffoniwch 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513 / 643696.

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Cyfnwyd testun: Rhowch 18001 o flaen unrhyw un o'n rhifau ffon ar gyfer y gwasanaeth trosglwyddo testun

Text relay: Put 18001 before any of our phone numbers for the text relay service

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg. Rhowch wybod i ni os yw eich dewis iaith yw'r Gymraeg

We welcome correspondence in Welsh. Please let us know if your language choice is Welsh

Yn ddiffuant

K Watson

Prif Swyddog, Gwasanaethau Cyfreithiol a Rheoleiddio, AD a Pholisi Corfforaethol

Dosbarthiad:

Cynghorwyr

F D Bletsoe
JPD Blundell
RJ Collins
HJ David

Cynghorwyr

N Farr
J Gebbie
W R Goode
M Lewis

Cynghorwyr

J E Pratt
JC Spanswick
T Thomas
HM Williams

Presennol

Y Cynghorydd J Gebbie – Cadeirydd

JPD Blundell
T Thomas

HJ David
A Wathan

N Farr
AJ Williams

J E Pratt
HM Williams

Ymddiheuriadau am Absenoldeb

W R Goode a/ac JC Spanswick

Swyddogion:

Steve Berry	Swyddog Rhianta Corfforaethol a Chyflogiad
Rachel Keepins	Rheolwr Gwasanaethau Democrataidd
Claire Marchant	Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol - Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol a Lles
Nimi Chandrasena	Swyddog Gwasanaethau Democrataidd – Aelodau a Maerol

21. DATGANIADAU O FUDDIANNAU

Dim

22. CYMERADWYO'R COFNODION

PENDERFYNWYD: Cymeradwyo cofnodion cyfarfod Pwyllgor Rhianta Corfforaethol y Cabinet dyddiedig 12 Ionawr 2023 fel cofnod gwir a chywir.

23. DIWEDDARIAD AR DDATBLYGIAD RHIANTA CORFFORAETHOL

Cyflwynwyd yr adroddiad gan y Swyddog Rhianta Corfforaethol a Chyfranogi ar gyfer Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr a'i bwrpas oedd rhoi diweddariad i Bwyllgor Rhianta Corfforaethol y Cabinet ar ddatblygiad Rhianta Corfforaethol ym Mhen-y-bont ar Ogwr.

Dyweddodd, fel y soniwyd yn yr adroddiad, bod y gwasanaeth mewn sefyllfa lle roedd cyfarfodydd is-grwpiau yn cael eu cynnal yn chwarterol, roedd cyfarfod y bwrdd wedi cael ei integreiddio'n llawn, gan bartneru gyda nifer o asiantaethau ac roeddent mewn sefyllfa lle roedd eu strategaeth yn barod i gael ei lansio ddydd lau, y 27^{ain} o Ebrill 2023.

Cynlluniwyd y strategaeth newydd gyda chyfieithiad i'r Gymraeg ac roedd yn egluro pwrpas y gwasanaeth, eu cynlluniau, eu blaenoriaethau, sut yr oeddent yn bwriadu gwerthuso cynnydd a deall gofynion y dyfodol.

Dyweddodd y Swyddog Rhianta Corfforaethol a Chyfranogi hefyd eu bod wedi sicrhau 45 o addewidion o fewn y strategaeth a dyna oedd eu hymrwymadau hwy fel gweithwyr proffesiynol amlasiantaethol, arweinwyr ac uwch reolwyr. Roeddent yn mynegi eu bwriadau, pob un yn ei swydd ei hun, i gefnogi plant, pobl ifanc a'r rhai oedd yn gadael gofal, oedd wedi cael Profiad o Ofal. Roedd y gwasanaeth i gael ei ddwyn i gyfrif gan y Fforwm Ieuenctid ac roedd mesurau wedi cael eu sefydlu gan y Fforwm i'w galluogi i gael cymorth i gwestiynu unrhyw un o'r addewidion hyn a gwerthuso cynnydd gyda chefnogaeth Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP Cymru). Mae TGP yn ddarparwyr eiriolaeth ac maent yn cynorthwyo'r fforwm ynghyd â'r Swyddog Rhianta Corfforaethol a Chyfranogi.

Gorffennodd drwy wahodd yr holl aelodau i fynychu'r Lansiad a drefnwyd yn ddiweddarach yn y mis.

Dyweddodd y Cadeirydd ei bod yn falch o'r broses a ddilynwyd a'r cynnydd a wnaed. Roedd yn falch o gael gwybod bod mecanwaith cadarn ar waith yn awr i sicrhau bod plant a phobl ifanc yn cael eu clywed ac yn cael gwrandawriad.

Dyweddodd eu bod wedi ei weld yn ddiddorol pan oeddent yn cychwyn ar y daith hon nad oedd sefydliadau eraill oedd â chyfrifoldeb am rianta corfforaethol yn deall beth oedd eu cyfrifoldebau a'u dyletswyddau. Ers hynny, mae'r Sefydliadau hyn wedi bod yn ymgysylltu mwy ac mae gan CBS Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr ffocws gwell ar yr hyn sy'n ofynnol ar gyfer pobl ifanc sydd â Phrofiad o Ofal.

PENDERFYNWYD: Bod y Pwyllgor wedi ystyried cynnwys yr Adroddiad ac yn cefnogi cynnydd datblygiad Rhianta Corfforaethol.

24. **FY NHÎM CYMORTH AC ADOLYGIAD GWASANAETHAU PRESWYL A THERAPIWTIG**

Cyflwynwyd yr Adroddiad gan Bennaeth Gofal Cymdeithasol Plant, a'i ddiben oedd rhoi diweddariad i'r Pwyllgor Rhianta Corfforaethol ynghylch:

- Cyllid grant a sicrhawyd gan Lywodraeth Cymru, o dan y Rhaglen Genedlaethol Gwella Canlyniadau i Blant, Dileu Elw Preifat, er mwyn datblygu a gweithredu gwasanaeth Fy Nhîm Cymorth (MyST).
- Adolygu gwasanaethau preswyl a therapiwtig o'r top i'r gwaelod.
- Y gwasanaeth preswyl newydd sydd wrthi'n cael ei ddatblygu ar gyfer plant.

Dyweddodd fod yr adroddiad yn rhoi'r wybodaeth ddiweddaraf i'r pwyllgor am ddatblygiadau pellach yn y gwasanaeth lleoli, yn enwedig o fewn y ddarpariaeth breswyl ym Mhen-y-bont ar Ogwr, a'r cymorth therapiwtig oedd yn cael ei gynig i'r Plant â Phrofiad o Ofal fel yr amlinellwyd yn yr adroddiad.

Dyweddodd Pennaeth Gofal Cymdeithasol i Blant fod y gwasanaeth wedi cyflwyno bid i Lywodraeth Cymru yn ystod hydref 2022 dan agenda dileu elw er mwyn gwella eu darpariaeth a'u datblygiad presennol ymhellach, sef y modelau yr oeddent yn gobeithio ymhelaethu arnynt, a ddisgrifiwyd yn fanwl yn yr adroddiad.

Dyweddodd eu bod wedi sicrhau cyllid i ehangu'r staff a'r sefydliad ar draws y ddarpariaeth breswyl ym Mhen-y-bont ar Ogwr fel y gallent gael set sgiliau fwy amrywiol o brofiad yng ngharfan y staff i gartrefi sy'n darparu ar gyfer plant sydd wedi bod mewn gofal ar hyn o bryd.

Ymhelaethodd Pennaeth Gofal Cymdeithasol Plant ar rôl gwasanaeth "Fy Nhîm Cymorth (MyST)" gan nodi ei fod yn ymwneud â chreu tîm o amgylch y plentyn, fydd yn asesu ei anghenion ac yn nodi'r dewis gorau ar gyfer sefydlogrwydd a'r cymorth cofleidiol i sicrhau hynny. Cyn cwblhau'r rôl, comisiynwyd y Sefydliad Gofal Cyhoeddus i adolygu'r dulliau gweithredu presennol a gyflwynwyd hyd yma a gofynnwyd am argymhellion ynghylch y ffordd orau i wneud y gorau o'r cyllid i adeiladu ar brosesau presennol er mwyn darparu mwy o gymorth i blant a phobl ifanc ag anghenion cymhleth, y mae arnynt angen ymyriadau dwys i oresgyn trawma. Dywedodd mai'r nod oedd cofrestru'r ddarpariaeth newydd "Meadows View" erbyn Mehefin 2023 a'r gobaith oedd y byddai'n barod i agor gyda'r tîm newydd yn ei le. Daeth â'i chyflwyniad i ben a gwahoddodd gwestiynau iddi hi ei hun a/neu'r Swyddog oedd yn Unigolyn Cyfrifol - Gofal Cymdeithasol Plant.

Dywedodd y Cadeirydd ei bod yn teimlo bod y model wedi'i lywio gan drawma yn fodel ardderchog o arfer da. Dywedodd ei bod yn teimlo ei fod yn hyblyg iawn ar gyfer gweithio gyda'r galwadau cynyddol a chymhlethdod yr achosion oedd yn cael eu derbyn. Cafodd Meadows View ei enwi gan blant Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr a'i barn hi oedd ei bod yn bwysig bod ganddynt berchnogaeth dros eu cartref eu hunain oherwydd mai dyna oedd hwn yn mynd i fod iddynt.

Mynegodd y Cadeirydd bryderon bod y gwasanaeth yn cynnig cytundebau cyflogaeth i'r staff newydd am ddwy flynedd tra roedd hi'n teimlo bod angen iddo fod yn barhaol gan na allai ddychmygu na fyddai angen y staff ar ôl y cyfnod hwnnw o ddwy flynedd.

Ymatebodd Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol y Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol a Llesiant drwy ddweud, fel rhan o'r broses gofrestru, gyda golwg ar y ffordd y câi staff eu cyflogi, y câi pwysau cyllidebol eu rhoi gerbron, ac y byddai'r Cyngor yn eu cymeradwyo yn ôl y gyllideb oedd yn cael ei phennu ar gyfer blwyddyn 2023. Roedd hyn yn ei gwneud yn bosibl sefydlu'r gweithlu parhaol gorau posibl. Fodd bynnag, defnyddid hyblygrwydd hefyd gan ddileu arian elw gan Lywodraeth Cymru, sef cyllid grant 2 flynedd ar hyn o bryd. Roedd heriau yn wynebu nid yn unig y gwasanaeth hwn ond llawer o wasanaethau yn y fwrdeistref sirol oedd yn dibynnu ar arian grant, nad oedd yn para y tu hwnt i'r dyraniad cychwynnol. Roedd yn hanfodol i'r gwasanaeth gael cynllun cynaladwyedd ariannol. Fel gwasanaeth, rhagwelid y byddai gostyngiad yn nifer y plant oedd yn gorfod symud allan o'r sir i gartrefi gofal preswyl drud yn y sector annibynnol o ganlyniad i'r ddarpariaeth hon.

Dywedodd y byddent yn rhagweld y byddent mewn ffordd gynaliadwy yn lleihau nifer y plant yr oedd arnynt angen cymorth gofal preswyl hirdymor, oherwydd drwy'r dull asesu dwys a'r dull therapiwtig hwnnw, y gobaith oedd y byddent yn medru byw mewn teuluoedd maeth yn y fwrdeistref sirol. Dywedodd Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol y Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol a Llesiant ei bod yn hollbwysig defnyddio'r gyllideb honno'n fwyaf effeithiol dros y ddwy flynedd nesaf er mwyn cyrraedd sefyllfa lle y cyflawnid contractau hirdymor cynaliadwy ar gyfer y gweithlu tra'n lleihau costau mewn rhannau eraill o'r system.

Holodd yr Arweinydd am y berthynas a'r bartneriaeth gyda Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Cwm Taf o ran y cymorth y disgwylid fyddai'n cael ei ddarparu am fod angen iddo fod yn ddi-dor. Dywedodd fod ateb anghenion iechyd y plant a'r bobl ifanc hyn yn hanfodol ac y byddai angen cydweithio â'r Bwrdd Iechyd i sicrhau bod y cymorth yn ddiwiniad.

Atebodd y Pennaeth Gofal Cymdeithasol i Blant, er nad oedd y Bwrdd Iechyd wedi gwneud ymrwymiad pendant o ran y gwasanaethau y byddent yn eu darparu, y byddent yn cymryd rhan yn yr adolygiad gydag argymhellion i'r gwasanaeth eu cyrraedd.

Awgrymodd yr Arweinydd y dylid gwahodd cynrychiolwyr o'r Bwrdd Iechyd i gyfarfod a thrafod y ffordd orau o gyflawni cyfrifoldebau.

Ymatebodd Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol y Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol i'r Arweinydd gan ddweud, o ran yr adroddiad blaenorol, fod ganddynt ymrwymadau gydag eglurder gan yr holl bartneriaid, ac y cafwyd cynrychiolaeth dda ar lefel uwch o'r holl bartneriaid hynny ar y bwrdd a gadeirir gan y Dirprwy Arweinydd. Dywedodd y byddai'n rhagweld, wrth symud ymlaen, y byddai'r holl bartneriaid hynny yn dod yn eu tro i mewn i Bwyllgor ffurfiol y Cabinet i esbonio sut y maent yn cyflawni yn erbyn eu hymrwymadau o ran y manylion yn yr adroddiad.

Dywedodd Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol y Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol ei bod yn bwysig bod ymgysylltu â'r Sefydliad Gofal Cyhoeddus (IPC) yn arwain at ganlyniad lle roeddent yn glir bod eu cyfraniad hwy yn nhermau arweinyddiaeth broffesiynol a goruchwyliaeth glinigol dros y gwasanaethau a ddarperid.

Aeth ymlaen i ddweud y treuliwyd llawer o amser gyda Llywodraeth Cymru ynglŷn â'r agenda hon a'u bod wedi tynnu sylw at enghreifftiau o arfer da o fannau eraill yng Nghymru, lle roedd mewnbwn y Byrddau Iechyd yn gryf mewn termau ymarferol iawn o ran materion darpariaethau preswyl tebyg oedd yn cael eu datblygu.

Dyweddodd fod yna nifer o fecanweithiau yn ychwanegol at adolygiad y Sefydliad Gofal Cyhoeddus; roedd yna Fwrdd Partneriaeth Rhanbarthol, yr oedd y Dirprwy Arweinydd yn ei gadeirio, oedd wedi derbyn partneriaeth plant fel rhan o hynny a bod datblygu darpariaeth breswyl yn un o'r blaenoriaethau allweddol drwy'r partneriaethau preswyl. Roedd cyfarfodydd ar lefel uchel iawn ar ddod gyda'r Bwrdd Iechyd lle y disgwyliad trafodaethau ynghylch blaenoriaethau CBSP a'u blaenoriaethau ar gyfer plant a phobl ifanc.

Gwahoddodd y Cadeirydd yr Unigolyn Cyfrifol - Gofal Cymdeithasol Plant i rannu gwybodaeth bellach a dywedodd y byddai rhan nesaf adolygiad y Sefydliad Gofal Cyhoeddus yn weithdy neu'n sesiwn adborth gyda CAMS ac roedd Addysg yn cael eu gwahodd hefyd.

Gofynnodd yr Arweinydd a oedd y model newydd yn cael ei weithredu yn y ddarpariaeth newydd ym Mrynmenyn ac atebodd y Cadeirydd ei bod yn bwysig defnyddio un model o ymarfer fel bod staff a phlant, pwy bynnag oedd yn eu rheoli, yn eu cefnogi ac yn byw gyda hwy, i gyd yn cael eu rheoli a'u cefnogi yn yr un ffordd.

Ategwyd hyn gan Bennaeth Gofal Cymdeithasol Plant.

Gofynnodd yr Arweinydd hefyd a oedd cynlluniau yn eu lle i weithio gyda darpariaeth addysgol arbenigol gydag Ysgol Bryn Castell, Heronsbridge a'r Bont er mwyn sicrhau bod y model a gâi ei fabwysiadu yn gyson ar draws bywyd y person ifanc hwnnw, gan y cydnabyddir bod rhan fawr o fywyd plentyn yn yr ysgol ac mewn addysg ac felly ei bod yn ofynnol i'r dull fod yn ategol ac yn gyson.

Atebodd y Dirprwy Arweinydd mai un o'r pethau a wnaed fel rhan o'r strategaeth Rhianta Corfforaethol oedd cyflwyno arwyddion diogelwch. Byddai'r model ymarfer yn mynd i bob sefydliad i gyfrannu lefel sylfaenol o ddealltwriaeth am y ffordd y mae'r gwasanaeth yn gweithio.

Dyweddodd Pennaeth Gofal Cymdeithasol i Blant, pan luniwyd y cais am grant yn ystod hydref 2022, fod cydweithwyr o'r Gyfarwyddiaeth Addysg a Chymorth i Deuluoedd wedi gweithio arno gyda'r gwasanaeth a'u bod wedi edrych i mewn i'r angen i ddatblygu darpariaeth addysg yn Meadows View.

Fe'i hawgrymwyd fel dewis ond nid oedd digon o arian. Roedd yn well gan y Gwasanaeth i'r plant â Phrofiad o Ofal fynychu'r lleoliadau presennol yn ogystal â threulio amser gyda'r plant y tu allan i'r cartref yr oeddent yn byw ynddo hefyd.

Cadarnhaodd fod y gyfarwyddiaeth Addysg a Chymorth i Deuluoedd wedi chwarae rhan a dywedodd, er nad oedd darpariaeth addysg yn cael ei datblygu, y bu sgysiau am ddatblygu gwasanaeth Fy Nhîm Cymorth.

Hysbysodd y pwyllgor ei bod wedi cael ei gwahodd i'r digwyddiad i randdeiliaid y cyfeiriwyd ato'n gynharach a'i bod yn hyderus y byddai cydweithwyr eraill o'r ysgolion y cyfeiriwyd atynt hefyd yn cael eu gwahodd oherwydd mai'r ysgolion a enwyd oedd y rhai yr oeddent mewn cysylltiad â hwy yn bennaf.

PENDERFYNWYD:

Argymhell bod Pwyllgor y Cabinet - Rhianta Corfforaethol yn nodi cynnwys yr adroddiad.

25. GWEITHREDU PANEL ATAL CAMFANTEISIO PEN-Y-BONT AR OGWR

Cyflwynwyd yr Adroddiad gan Reolwr y Grŵp Peripatetig, a'i ddiben oedd hysbysu'r Pwyllgor am y cynnydd hyd yma o ran datblygu a gweithredu Panel Atal Camfanteisio gweithredol amlasiantaethol ym Mhen-y-bont ar Ogwr.

Rhannodd gyflwyniad gyda'r pwyllgor a gwahoddodd gwestiynau.

Dywedodd y Cadeirydd ei bod yn falch o weld cynnydd yn digwydd a gofynnodd am rywfaint o eglurder. Gofynnodd a oedd yr offer a grybwyllwyd yn y cyflwyniad yn cael eu defnyddio mewn Cymorth Cynnar ac Adrannau Damweiniau ac Achosion Brys oherwydd bod y strategaeth yn un ranbarthol. Dywedodd fod yr arolygiad wedi nodi ei fod yn rhywbeth i'r holl bartneriaid ac mai edrych am sicrwydd yr oedd hi.

Atebodd Rheolwr y Grŵp Peripatetig drwy gadarnhau bod Cymorth Cynnar yn rhan o ddefnyddio'r offer a grybwyllwyd ond rhoddodd sicrwydd i'r pwyllgor y byddai'n estyn allan i'r Ysbytai hefyd.

Gofynnodd aelod sut yr oedd yn bwriadu ymgysylltu â rhieni er mwyn sicrhau nad yw plant yn cael eu hecsbloetio.

Atebodd Rheolwr y Grŵp Peripatetig gan gyfeirio at waith a wnaed yn ei rôl mewn Awdurdod Lleol blaenorol, a dywedodd y byddai'n hapus i rannu'r adnoddau a ddefnyddid a thrwy hynny eu rhannu â chynulleidfia ehangach, ond dywedodd hefyd, fodd bynnag, mai gwaith yn datblygu ydoedd o fewn y lleoliad presennol.

Gofynnodd aelod a fu ystyriaeth i ymestyn ymgysylltiad cymunedol tuag at economi'r nos, sef tafarndai, clybiau nos a goruchwylwyr drysau.

Atebodd Rheolwr y Grŵp Peripatetig gan ddweud bod datblygu eu perthynas â'r gymuned ehangach yn hanfodol i'r strategaeth ac er ei bod yn broses araf, ei fod yn waith oedd yn mynd yn ei flaen.

Ychwanegodd yr Arweinydd fod camfanteisio o'r fath yn cael ei gelu a'i guddio lle 'roedd y bobl ifanc eu hunain yn cael eu gweld fel troseddwyr oherwydd bod rhai wedi camfanteisio arnynt i gyflawni troseddau. Holodd beth oedd rôl Heddlu De Cymru, oherwydd, er bod rôl hollbwysig gan yr awdurdod o ran diogelu a gwasanaethau cymdeithasol, bod rôl yr un mor bwysig gan Heddlu De Cymru i wneud y gyfraith yn glir i bobl/i'r cyflawnwyr, am mai plant a phobl ifanc y fwrdeistref oedd yn cael eu hecsbloetio. Fel y cyfryw, dylid ei ystyried yn drosedd ac felly roedd angen gwaith gyda Heddlu De Cymru i sicrhau bod y troseddau hynny'n cael eu canfod a'r troseddwyr yn cael eu dwyn gerbron y llys.

Dywedodd y byddai'n croesawu diweddariad yn y dyfodol gan Heddlu De Cymru.

Dywedodd Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol y Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol a Llesiant fod gan Heddlu De Cymru eu strwythur a'u bod yn cefnogi'r gwaith a wnaed i atal ac i fynd i'r afael â chamfanteisio. Roeddent wedi creu adnodd canolog yn BCU oedd yn gysylltiedig â Heddlu De Cymru. Mae yna hefyd Uned Atal Trais (VPU) yr oedd y bwrdd diogelu wedi gwneud cais iddi, yr oeddent wedi'i nodi yn yr adnoddau ar gyfer CBSP. Dywedodd fod disgwyl i CBS Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr gael mwy o adnoddau strategol ar lefel ranbarthol i symud ymlaen a datblygu'r strategaeth ar draws CTM. At hynny, roedd Rheolwr y Grŵp Peripatetig wedi bod yn arwain partneriaethau ar lefel arbenigol i wneud yn siŵr, yn weithredol, bod CBS Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr lle y mae angen iddo fod. Awgrymodd efallai, ymhen chwe mis i flwyddyn, y byddai Cyfarwyddiaeth y Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol yn

ailymweld â'r pwyllgor gyda'i phartneriaid i roi'r wybodaeth ddiweddaraf am y cynnydd oedd wedi cael ei wneud.

Croesawodd yr Arweinydd hyn gyda phwynt gweithredu ychwanegol sef bod y pwyllgor yn derbyn adroddiad gan bartneriaid. O ystyried difrifoldeb a maint yr her, credai y byddai chwe mis yn bwynt amserol i fesur y cynnydd a wnaed.

PENDERFYNWYD:

- Argymhell bod y Pwyllgor yn ystyried yr adroddiad ar y cynnydd presennol yn y gwaith ynghylch camfanteisio ac yn cefnogi'r cynnig i sefydlu Panel Atal Camfanteisio amlasiantaethol ym Mhen-y-bont ar Ogwr.
- Bod y Pwyllgor i dderbyn adroddiad gan bartneriaid ymhen 6 mis.

26. **EITEMAU BRYD**

Dim

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10:19

Agenda Item 4

Meeting of:	CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING
Date of Meeting:	20 JULY 2023
Report Title:	INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES & WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	RAEANNA GRAINGER GROUP MANAGER, INFORMATION, ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE SERVICE & SAFEGUARDING
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There are no effects on the policy framework or procedure rules arising from this report.
Executive Summary:	<p>The report details the work undertaken by the Independent Reviewing Service between April 2022-March 2023.</p> <p>The report sets out the legislative framework that governs the work undertaken by the Independent Reviewing Service. Primarily the Independent Reviewing Officer's (IRO) role is to ensure the child's care plan is appropriate and meeting their developing needs, that they challenge any issues of delay in achieving the objectives of the care plan and/or any issues of delay. The role has a strong emphasis on quality assurance and challenging the Local Authority when they are not satisfied in areas of decision making.</p> <p>The IRO's in Bridgend also undertake the chairing of Child Protection Conferences, their role is to ensure professionals make decisions based on evidence and safeguarding procedures. Most importantly the IRO Service must ensure the child's voice is central to decision making and that they are informed of their rights and their circumstances.</p> <p>There is a strong focus on qualitative data in the annual report and compliance rates but also strengthened processes and how the service has met the annual plan objectives.</p> <p>The report considers how the service has responded to increased demand and rising numbers of children subject to the Child Protection registration and what is being done to reduce this figure.</p>

	<p>The report also sets out the improvements made in relation to the child’s voice being central to decision making and how the significant increase in referrals to advocacy are supporting this.</p>
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	<p>The updated annual plan can be read at the end of the report in Appendix 1, and this highlights the aims for the next reporting period.</p>
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a report to Corporate Parenting Committee in line with The Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance (Wales) 2004.

2. Background

- 2.1 The appointment of Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO’s) by Local Authorities is a legal requirement and their core functions are governed by legislation and guidance as follows:

- The Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- The Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance (Wales) 2004.

The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service has an authoritative role, in assuring the quality of care planning is achieved. The Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance (Wales) 2004 states that the Independent Reviewing Service report must identify good practice but must also identify issues for further development, including those where urgent action is required. The guidance urges the Local Authority to make effective use of the reports from its IRO service so that it can be satisfied that its services can achieve best outcomes for the children and young people concerned.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The Independent Reviewing Service report, **Appendix 1**, covers the work of the IRO service from April 2022 to March 2023. The report contains performance information in respect of the statutory reviewing of children who are Care Experienced, including children with plans for Adoption and Young People with Leaving Care LAC/Pathway Plans (under 18) by Bridgend County Borough Council. It also includes information on children subject of a child protection plan and reviews of these plans at Child Protection Case Conferences.
- 3.2 The report also includes information that relates to regulatory requirements in respect of resolution of case disputes, IRO caseloads, participation and consultation of young people in their Reviews, challenges and achievements in the reporting period, and service priorities for 2023-2024.
- 3.3 As described in the report the IRO’s chaired/reviewed 406 (51% increase) Initial Child Protection Case Conferences between April 2022 and March 2023 compared to 200 the previous year. A total of 659 Review Child Protection Case Conferences (RCPC)

between April 2022 and March 2023 were convened compared to 508 (23% increase) in the previous reporting period. All RCPCs were held within the statutory timescales. In this reporting period, 1,125 Care Experienced review meetings were held between April 2022 and March 2023 compared with 1,159 the previous year. This reduction is mainly as a result of greater placement stability.

- 3.4 Following each meeting the IRO completes a quality assurance audit. The Audit is available to the Social Worker and the Team Manager to notify them of outstanding work/actions. The audit supports the IRO in the tracking of the case and supports the identification of good practice and areas for improvement. The audit also supports the Team Manager when carrying out supervision with the Social Worker.
- 3.5 Previous work has been undertaken to improve the consultation document for children and young people. However very low response rates were still experienced. The introduction of Microsoft Teams has enabled a greater number of young people to attend their meetings, particularly their Care Experienced Review meetings. The introduction of Signs of Safety will place much greater emphasis on participation and it is expected that this will be reflected in the data.
- 3.6 The report does highlight a significant increase in referrals for advocacy which supports and captures the voice, wishes and feelings of the children and young people worked with.
- 3.7 The IRO service continues to work with the safeguarding teams, education, the Health Visiting services, School Nurses and Midwifery Services to improve practice around child protection conferences. The next stage is to work at improving the quality of Looked After Children reviews on a multi-agency basis. The IRO Service Manager in this period has facilitated training on the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and partner agencies are included in the roll out of the Signs of Safety practice model and the training for this.
- 3.8 Continuous service improvement is always sought after and as such the IRO Service aims to continue to have a greater impact in terms of improving the quality of the lives of care experienced children and young people. The IRO Service Action Plan is incorporated towards the end of the report in **Appendix 1** and reflects the areas of focus for improvement over the 12 months following the timescale of the reporting period for the service which will be under constant review.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The implementation of the duties and responsibilities under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (SSWBA) 2014, in turn, supports the promotion of two of the seven goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 within the County Borough of Bridgend. By promoting an environment that maximises people's physical and mental well-being and by supporting children, young people, adults and their carers and families to fulfil their potential no matter what their circumstances, the well-being goals of a healthier and more equal Bridgend and Wales are supported.

5.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Authority should work to deliver well-being outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report:

- **Long Term** – The IRO Service has a legal requirement to assure the quality of care planning is achieved for children and young people enabling them to reach their full potential in life.
- **Prevention** –the IRO service works closely with safeguarding practitioners and Early Help services in developing a comprehensive outcome focused plan for the child or young person, to maximise their opportunities and identify focused support at the earliest stage.
- **Integration** – the implementation of the SSWBA requires local authorities to work with partners, to ensure care, support and protection of all and more specifically its most vulnerable. The report evidences consultation between professionals and partner agencies with a specific focus on the safe care planning and protection for children and young people within the County Borough of Bridgend.
- **Collaboration** – This is currently managed in order to provide the best possible intervention for children and young people across Bridgend.
- **Involvement** – the key stakeholders are the care experienced children and young people of Bridgend. The IRO service's engagement with these individuals is essential to ensure their voices are heard and included in their meetings. The IRO service speak to children and young people and utilise consultation documents, quality monitoring forms, complaints process and advocacy services to support this. The provision of accessible information and advice helps to ensure that the voice of children and young people is heard and responded to.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no specific climate change implications arising directly from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 This report sets out the work undertaken by the IRO Service in respect of safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children, young people and families. The report sets out the role of the IRO Service in ensuring there are effective practices are in place throughout the Council and its commissioned services.

8. Financial Implications

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

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Committee notes this report and the IRO Service Action plan

Background documents

None

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**Independent Reviewing Service
Annual Report for the period from
April 2022 to March 2023**



Report Context:

- Introduction
- Legal Context
- Core IRO Functions
- Composition of the IRO Service
- Review Activity – Children subject to Child Protection
- Review Activity – Care Experienced children
- Number of Reviews and Timeliness
- Reviewing Performance
- Caseloads
- Business Support

General Themes

- Consultation
- Case Dispute Resolution and Complaints
- Achievements and Challenges
- IRO Service Development and Achievements
- IRO Service Priorities

Introduction

The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service has an authoritative role, in assuring the quality-of-care planning is achieved. The Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance (Wales) (2004) states this report must identify good practice but must also identify issues for further development, including those where urgent action is required. The guidance urges the Local Authority to make effective use of the reports from its IRO service so that it can be satisfied that its services can achieve best outcomes for the children and young people concerned.

This Independent Reviewing Service report focuses upon the work of the IRO Service from April 2022 to March 2023. As part of the service's quality assurance role, the report contains performance information in respect of the statutory reviewing of children who are Care Experienced, including children with plans for Adoption and Young People with Leaving Care Pathway Plans (under 18) by Bridgend County Borough Council. It also includes information on children subject of Child Protection plans and reviews of these plans at Child Protection Case Conferences.

The report also includes information that relates to regulatory requirements in respect of resolution of case disputes; IRO caseloads; participation and consultation of young people in their Reviews, challenges and achievements in the reporting period and service priorities for 2023-2024.

Legal Context

The appointment of the IRO Service by local authorities is a legal requirement and their core functions are governed by the legal regulatory framework outlined below:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (detailed the requirement on local authorities in respect of the appointment of IROs)
- The Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance (Wales) 2004
- Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015 (Wales)

Core Functions

The Independent Reviewing Service has an important quality assurance function and works towards ensuring all children within the care of Bridgend County Borough Council have a robust effective care plan. This plan is aimed towards improving outcomes for children and young people in providing a stable and secure childhood where their health, education and emotional wellbeing is promoted through effective care planning. It is the function of the Independent Reviewing Service to ensure the care plan is appropriate and progresses safeguarding for children and young people whilst ensuring all their identified needs are being met.

Independent Reviewing Officers are required to independently review the care plans of all Care Experienced children (CEC) and those children with a Child Protection Plan and whose names are on the Child Protection Register (CPR). The Review meeting will include consultation with and attendance of relevant agencies (health, education, and Police etc.) and will usually include the child/young person, their Social Worker, carers, and family members. Time scales for Reviews are set out in the Children Act (1989) and Section six of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2014), with the first review taking place within 20 working days of placement. The next review is held within three months following the initial review and then subsequent reviews are held within six months from the second review. Subsequent reviews are held every six months unless there has been an unplanned change of placement where a Review must be held within 20 working days.

Within Bridgend County Borough Council, the IRO Service has the following roles and responsibilities:

- The IRO Service has a statutory responsibility under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, Wales Safeguarding Procedures and the IRO Guidance for Chairing Child Protection Conferences and multi-agency Care Experience Reviews (CER), including those children placed for adoption.
- To review and oversee the effectiveness and the appropriateness of the care plans for those children and young people for whom the local authority has responsibility and who are subject of a child protection plan and those children and young people within its care.
- The IRO Service are responsible for ensuring all CERs, Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) and Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPC) take place within compliance as outlined in regulations. To provide a report for each meeting to include recommendations as to any changes to the child/young person's care plan and to monitor the progress of the care plan by tracking cases between reviews.
- To ensure the child/young person's rights are protected and enhanced.
- To ensure the voice of the child is heard throughout the care planning process and to monitor the child's wishes and feelings and ensure they are recorded and documented throughout the care planning process.
- To support and advise through a mentoring and coaching role to social work staff in relation to effective care planning.
- To raise IRO concerns through the agreed resolution protocol and to escalate unresolved concerns regarding care planning to the appropriate level of the local authority management structure. To consider the need to seek independent legal advice and possible referral of a case to CAF/CASS. The quality assurance function of the IRO Service aims to highlight concerns around specific cases and any trends relating to care planning practice. It also has a duty to highlight good practice.
- To ensure all CEC and young people are subject of health plans to promote health and development. The IROs have the responsibility to ensure the health plans are monitored and meeting the children's needs with the CER process.
- All CEC and young people are subject to Personal Education Plans (PEP). The social worker and school are responsible for ensuring this is in place, but the child's IRO will ensure this and make any recommendation and timescale in the CER should a PEP not be in place.
- Under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014, the role of the IRO has expanded to cover for the child's case and not just the review and this is set out in the IRO Standards.

Composition of the IRO Service

During the financial year from April 2022 to March 2023 there was a significant increase in the number of referrals to the IRO Service. This has meant a significant increase in the number of cases held by individual IROs. Currently the team is comprised of one full-time Manager, seven full-time IROs who are permanent members of staff (one of whom has been on maternity leave throughout much of the year), one permanent member of staff who works three-and-a-half days per week and one permanent member of staff who works three days per week. In response to the increased demand, the local authority has agreed funding for just over three (FTE) agency workers for the team.

The current IRO cohort have a wealth of experience, and all have been qualified social workers for a substantial period of time. In February 2022 the Service Manager was re-deployed to the position of interim Group Manager. Since this time the IRO Service Manager has been filled by an agency personnel.

Caseloads and Increased Demands

The average full time IRO caseload is currently between 80-90 cases whilst part-time staff are holding average caseloads between 50-60. During the period under review, the team had two members of staff on long-term sick leave and one person on maternity leave. Whilst the previous report did not raise any concerns about the numbers of cases held by the IRO's in Bridgend, the pressures placed on the team has highlighted the lack of capacity and resilience across the team during times when there is added pressures due to sickness or other long-term leave. In response to these pressures the Service Manager carried out consultation with IRO services across Wales to make comparison of caseloads. The consultation revealed the IROs in neighbouring authorities have an average caseload of 40-70 which is significantly lower than Bridgend.

The Service Manager consulted with IRO Services across Wales and obtained responses from 13 Local Authorities about their caseload numbers. In North Wales they have an average of 75 cases per full time IRO. Two of the 5 Local Authorities were funding an additional 5 IRO roles to reduce caseload numbers.

Only 2 Local Authorities from Mid Wales responded, and their caseloads range from 55-64 per full time IRO. In South Wales there is quite a mixed picture with caseloads ranging from 40-100. However, only two other Local Authorities have similar caseload numbers to Bridgend and one of these areas said they were not meeting their statutory duties because of their high numbers.

In Bridgend, we strived to have caseloads held by IROs capped to no more than 90 per IRO (FTE).

Since the Covid pandemic, the IRO Service has largely undertaken its duties virtually via MS Teams. This has and continues to work well; many children, young people, and parents report that they prefer this way of working. As a team we have successfully managed to meet our statutory duties in terms of compliance in both the Care and Child Protection arena. However, as with many areas within Children's Social Care, we face several challenges and increases in workload demands.

The IRO Standards require the IRO to undertake far greater levels of tracking in between CERs, this also includes a mid-point review to ensure the recommendations are on-track and to ensure progress is being made and the child's care plan continues to reflect their needs. The IROs continue to complete quality assurance documents following every CER or Child Protection Conferences, this document requires cross reference against the child's file and is used to identify any outstanding pieces of work or documents to which the child's/young person's social worker and team manager are alerted. This tracking and monitoring process requires the IRO to liaise with the child's/young person's social worker and often the team manager and in some cases other professionals. This is a time-consuming piece of work, it requires lengthy reading of the child's file and recording of the discussions held.

An over-arching principle of the service has been to maintain the same IRO wherever possible so that children and young people have an element of continuity in their lives. Often the IRO is the only person who has remained consistent for the children who are often faced with changes of social workers, team structures and placements. This strategy also ensures that valuable information held by IROs, particularly knowledge of the child's history and family dynamics is not lost. IRO are now visiting children face to face so need to factor travel time into their week to enable them to do this.

Covid restriction initially delayed our work with creators of a Phone App to assist in consultation with young people and since restrictions were lifted the App is not being used by other Local Authorities.

A priority of the IRO Service as set out in the Action Plan is to increase our rates of consultation with children and young people subject to the CPR or being discussed at a Child Protection Conference for the first time. This will also impact on the workload of the conference chairs. There has been an unprecedented increase in the number of children whose names are on the CPR. This has resulted in a significant increase in the IRO chairing Conferences. The highest point was in January 2023 at 306. We have seen an increase in the complexity of cases coming through the front door in our Information, Advice and Assistance Service (IAA). This requires more input from the conference chairperson and a greater level of planning and preparation prior to the CP conference. Since January 2023, we have seen a gradual reduction in the numbers of children whose names are on the CPR; but have not reached our pre-Covid numbers.

As a result of the challenges in recruitment and retention in Children's Services, greater demands have been placed on the IRO Service. The combination of changes of social workers and at times lower staffing levels in some areas has required the IROs to undertake more tracking, increased rates of initiating concerns, chasing reports/information, addressing areas of practice. We are also aware the revised Public Law Outline (PLO) guidance will have an impact on the role of conference chair, and will require much like LAC cases, a greater emphasis on tracking and monitoring in-between conferences.

We continue to meet our statutory responsibilities however many areas of the IRO service have not had the focus we would like, and we recognise to continue to improve standards across the board, we need to invest in the staff and provide them with the tools and time to undertake their duties to the highest standards. This includes IRO specific training, reflection time, and sufficient time in the working day to undertake meaningful work.

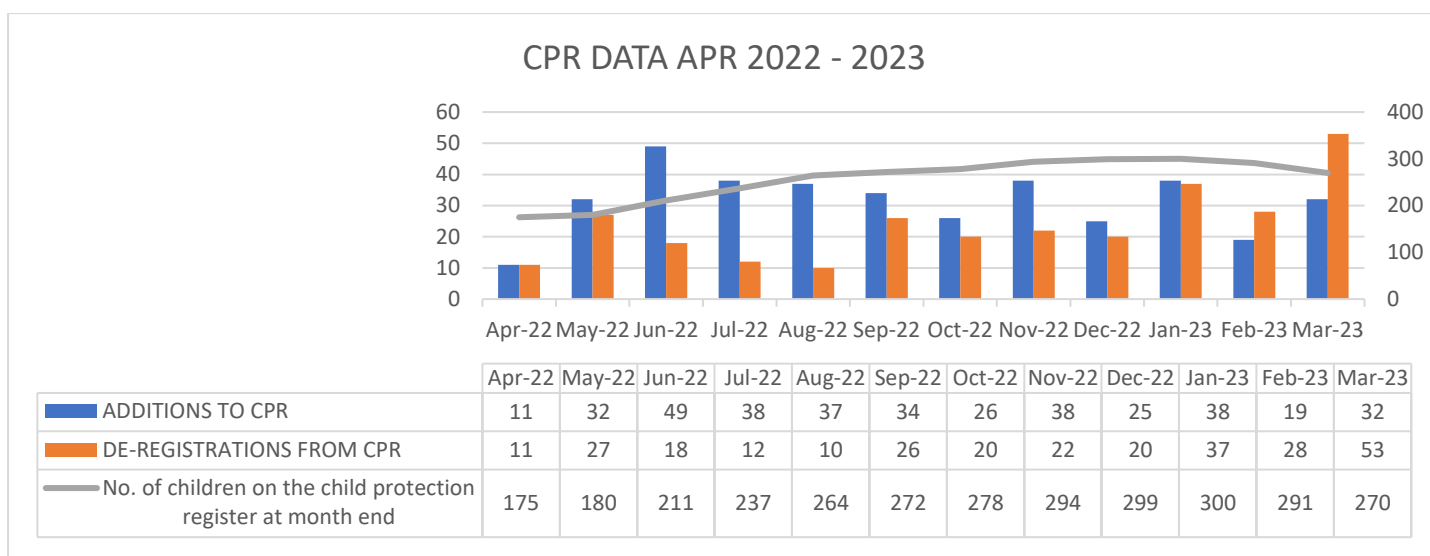
Process Involvement

In this period some changes have been implemented to support the LA's objectives of reducing the length of time children's names remain on the CP register:

- Monthly meetings between the IRO Service Manager and the Group Manager for the safeguarding teams take place to consider all the children subject of the CPR for more than 18 months.
- IRO Service Manager audits all cases of re-registration when the request for an ICPC is received and looks at whether lessons can be learnt.
- Where IRO's identify cases at the second RCPC where limited progress has been made, they inform the Group Manager of their concerns. The Group Manager then examines the case and where appropriate arrange a consultation with the Social Worker to consider all options to progress the plan.
- The IRO Service Manager audits all requests for CP conference to consider themes and potential gaps in support services.
- If a conference chair recommends legal advice should be sought, they will inform the Group Manager to raise awareness of the cases being escalated

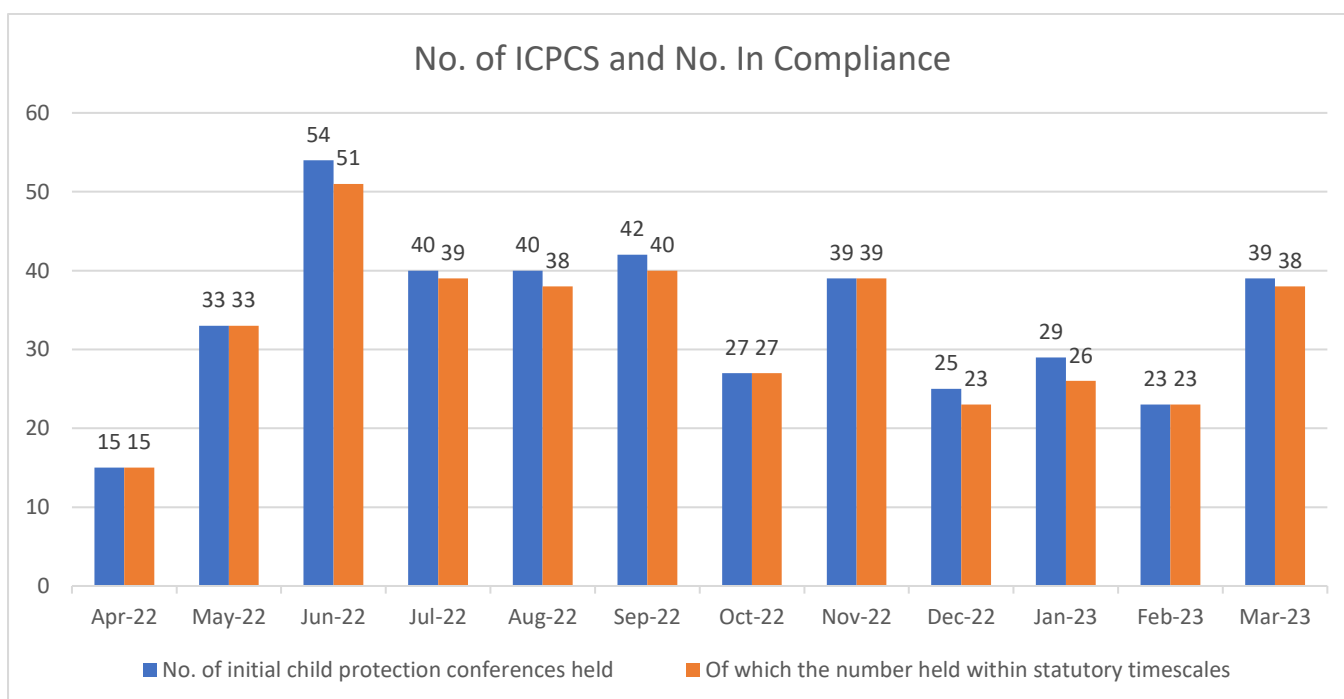
Child Protection Register (CPR) Population

Chart 1 – Child Protection Register Data from APRIL 2022 – MARCH 2023



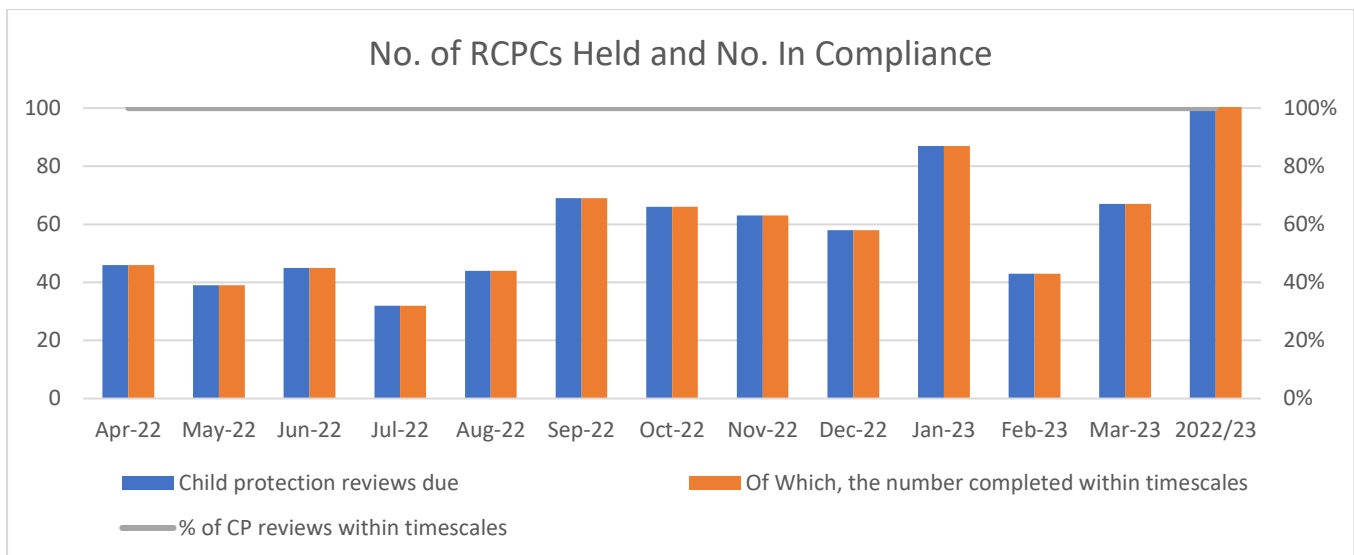
The number of children subject to Child Protection registration continued to increase significantly throughout this period with the highest end of month figure being in January 2023 at which time there were 300 children's names on the CPR. In total, there were 379 children's names added to the CPR and 284 names removed from the CPR during this period.

Chart 2 – Number of ICPCs and Number Held Within Statutory Timescales



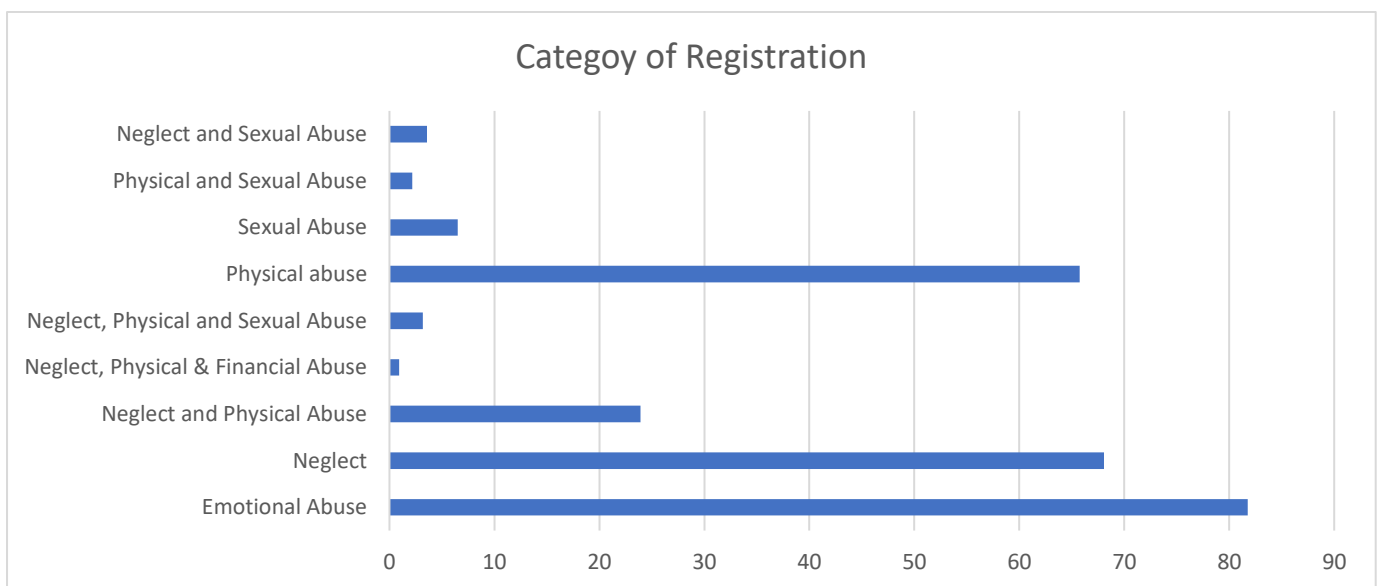
During the period of April 2022 – March 2023, the IRO Service chaired 406 Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) of which 392 were held within statutory timescales. Which means that despite the large increase of meetings, 97% were convened within statutory timescales. In the same period 2021-2022, there were 200 ICPCs convened. This represents an increase of over 51% in the number of ICPCs.

Chart 3 – No. of CP Reviews Held and No. in Compliance



The IRO Service held 659 Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPC) in the period compared with 508 in the previous reporting year. This represents an increase of over 23%. Despite the increase in the numbers of RCPCs, the IRO Service was able to convene every RCPC within statutory timescales.

Chart 4 – CPR Categories



As can be seen from this chart, there has been a change since the previous report in that Emotional Abuse is the most common category of registration overall. However, if we consider the data overall and combine the categories which include Neglect, it remains high throughout the period under review. It is common that Emotional Abuse is frequently used when the issue of the case is parental domestic abuse.

Definitions of the Categories of Abuse:

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse means deliberately hurting a child or young person. It includes physical restraint, such as being tied to a bed, locked in a room, inflicting burns, cutting, slapping, punching, kicking, biting, or choking, stabbing, or shooting, withholding food or medical attention, drugging, denying sleep, inflicting pain, shaking, or hitting babies, fabricating or inducing illness (FII).

Emotional or Psychological Abuse

This describes physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, or financial abuse (and includes abuse taking place in any setting, whether in a private dwelling, an institution, or any other place).

Sexual Abuse

There are two different types of child sexual abuse. These are called contact abuses and non-contact abuse. Contact abuse involves touching activities where an abuser makes physical contact with a child, including penetration. It includes sexual touching of any part of the body whether the child's wearing clothes or not, rape or penetration by putting an object or body part inside a child's mouth, vagina, or anus, forcing, or encouraging a child to take part in sexual activity, making a child take their clothes off, touch someone else's genitals or masturbate. Non-contact abuse involves non-touching activities, such as grooming, exploitation, persuading children to perform sexual acts of the internet and flashing. It includes encouraging a child to watch or hear sexual acts, not taking proper measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activities by others, meeting a child following sexual grooming with the intent of abusing them, online abuse, including making, viewing or distributing child abuse images allowing someone else to make, view, or distribute child abuse images, showing pornography to a child, sexually exploiting a child for money, power, or status (child exploitation).

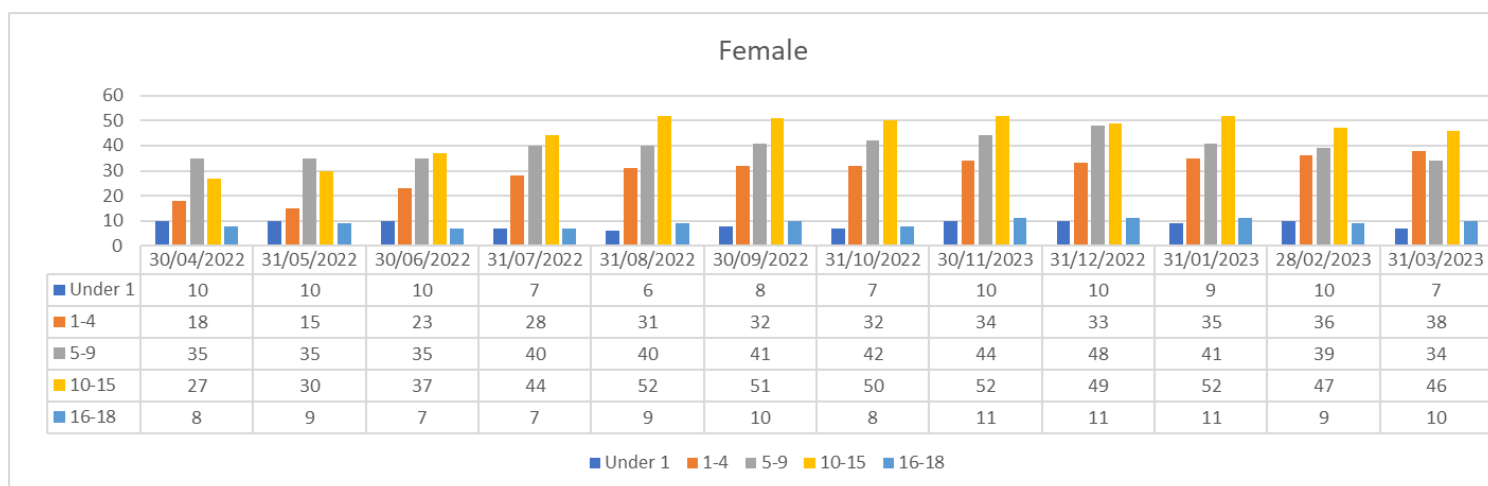
Financial Abuse

Financial abuse includes theft, fraud, pressure about money, misuse of money.

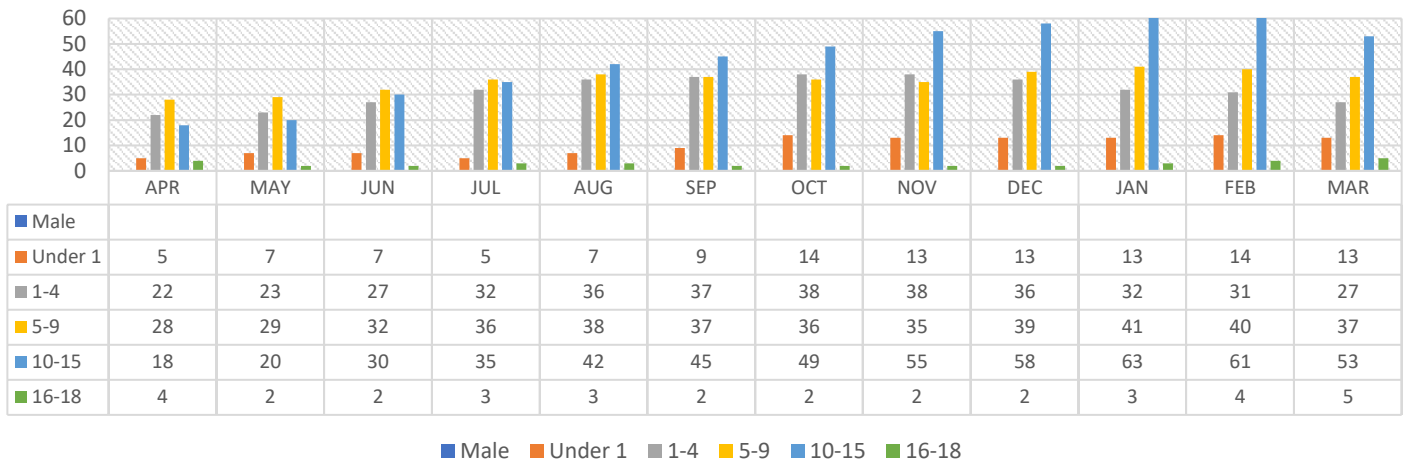
Neglect

This means failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional, social, or psychological needs, which results in an impairment of the child's wellbeing (for example, an impairment of the child's health).

Chart 5 & 6 – CPR – Gender and Ages



Male



In Chart 5, we can see that on average each month, female children between the ages of 10-15 years makes up the majority of those on the Child Protection Register. Similarly, Chart 6 indicates that male children between the ages of 10 - 15 years make up most children whose names are on the Child Protection Register.

Chart 7 – Total No. of Females on CPR as at 31/03/2023 by Age

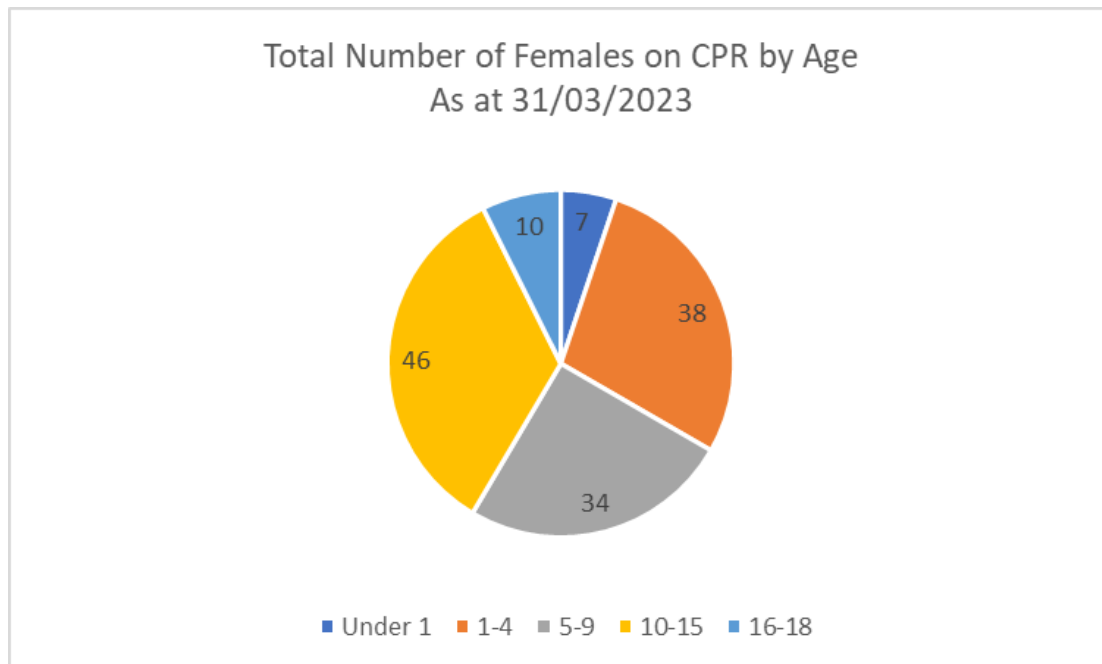


Chart 8 - Total No. of Males on CPR as at 31/03/23 by Age

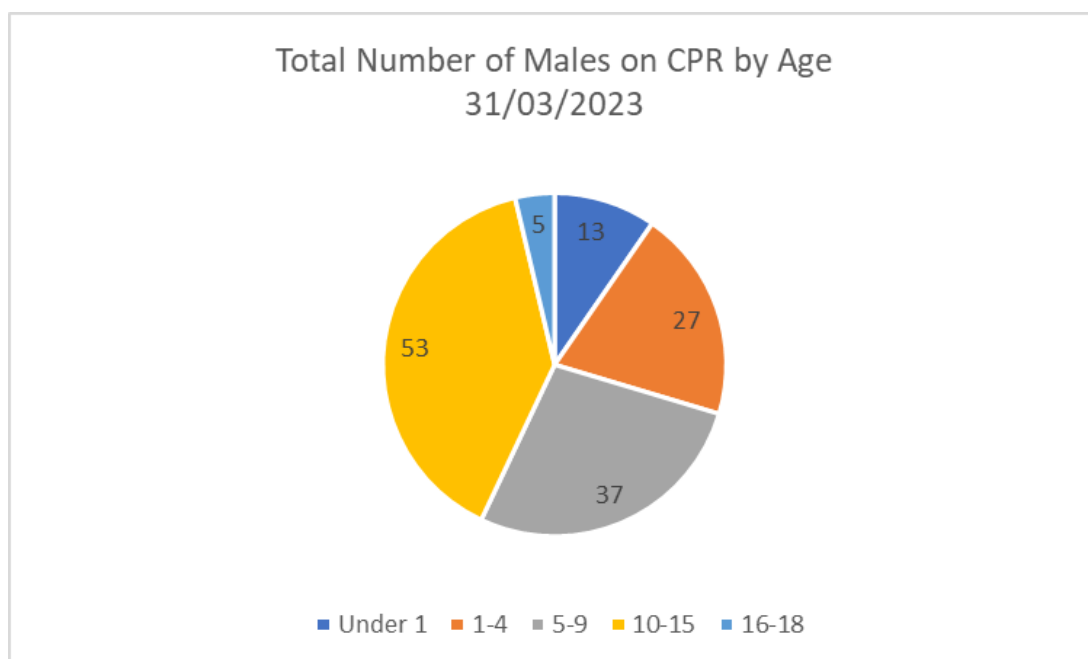
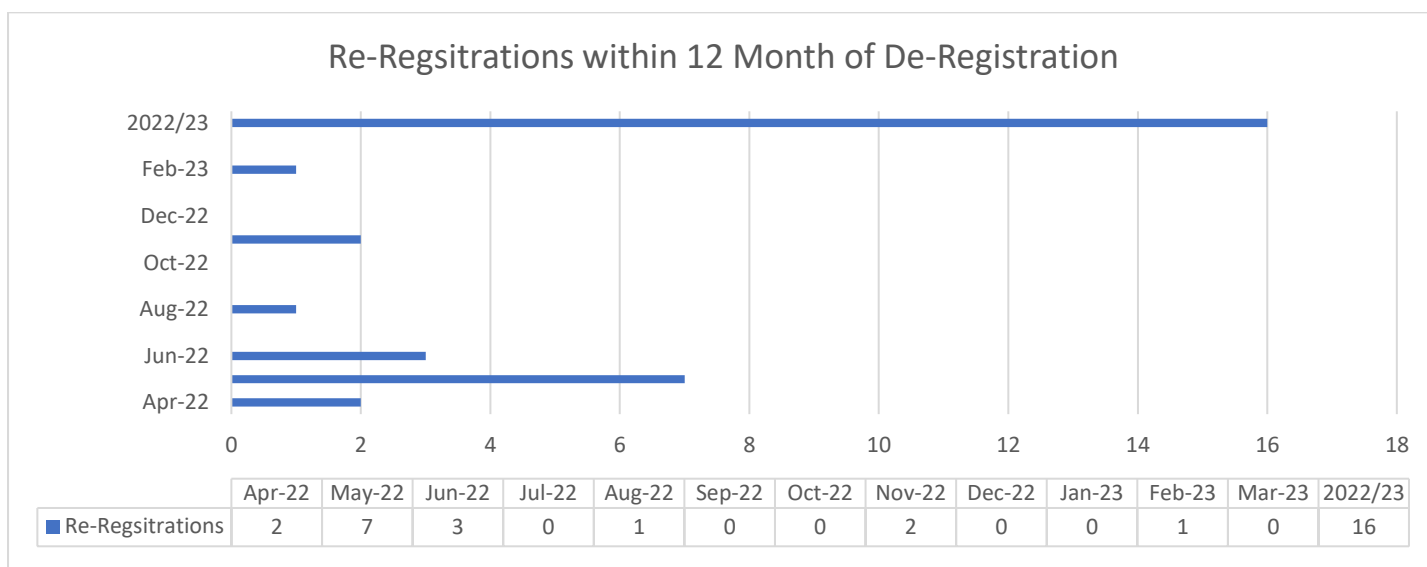


Chart 9 – Re-registration within 12 Months of De-registration



Any case that returns to an ICPC within 12 months of being de-registered will be audited by the IRO Service Manager to scrutinise the processes that were followed and consider themes and any lessons that can be learnt. There has been an increase of one case where re-registration has taken place within the year.

Children subject to the CPR for more than 18 months.

The IRO Service Manager and the Group Manager plan to meet on a monthly basis to consider the children who have been subject to the CPR for more than 18 months. Given the changes to the SMT membership, there has been some disruption to this meeting taking place consistently. A new Group Manager for the Safeguarding Teams is starting in the role in August and this will support a more consistent approach to these meetings.

The IRO Service Manager completes a comprehensive audit of these cases prior to the meeting and during the meeting actions are agreed to progress these cases. General themes have become apparent from undertaking the audits:

- No stand-alone Child Protection Plans
- Child Protection plans not being SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and tie-bound) plans
- Changes in allocated Social Workers creating a delay while the new Social Worker gets to know the case and the family

The lack of stand-alone Child Protection plans is a concern, this is the document that sets out the objectives, the expectations on a parent and what will be provided by Children's Services and partner agencies to mitigate the identified risks. This plan should be provided to all parties and discussed, reviewed and amended at the 4-6 weekly Core Group meetings. Without this plan there is no clear direction and simply put, progress cannot be achieved if nobody is clear about what the objectives are for the child.

The IRO Service identifies all cases that do not have a stand-alone Child Protection plan and highlights this to conference and in their Quality Assurance document which informs the Team Manager of the childcare team.

Children's Participation at Child Protection Conferences

Children's participation at their ICPC and RCPC is hugely important, however it is recognised it may not be appropriate for children or young people to attend any or all the meetings but there are mechanisms in place to enable them to attend part of the meeting and meet with the chairperson separately.

The pandemic and all the challenges it brought has exacerbated difficulties already recognised in respect of receiving consultation documents from children, young people, and their parents/carers. The previous way consultation documents were sent out was not possible during the pandemic as it relied upon face-to-face interaction. Since the pandemic, most of the meetings continue to be convened remotely as the anecdotal feedback from service users is that this is preferable to face-to-face meetings. However, this means that there continues to be a difficulty in using consultation documents. However, to address this issue, one IRO will be asked to take the lead on developing a new consultation document which is easy to use but one that provides useable data on how the service can improve and ensure that all service users' voices are heard; and most importantly the voices of the children and young people.

Signs of Safety

Bridgend has launched the Signs of Safety practice model; this will support how we support the children and families we work with. The approach expands the investigation of risk and encompasses family and individual strengths, periods of safety and good care that can be built upon to stabilise and strengthen a child's and family's situation.

Signs of Safety places greater emphasis on consent and co-production, building of relationships with both families and professionals. It values simplicity of language and focuses on 'what works' in the family's situation. The model will help to create a practical and realistic plan which will protect the child/ren.

Signs of Safety will result in a significant change to the way the IROs undertake the management and chairing of meetings. We expect to see a greater number of children and young people who attend their meetings.

Care Experienced Population

All children who are placed with Foster Carers are allocated a named IRO on the same day the IRO Service receive the notification from the Childcare Teams.

Chart 10 – Care Experienced Data from April 2022 – March 2023

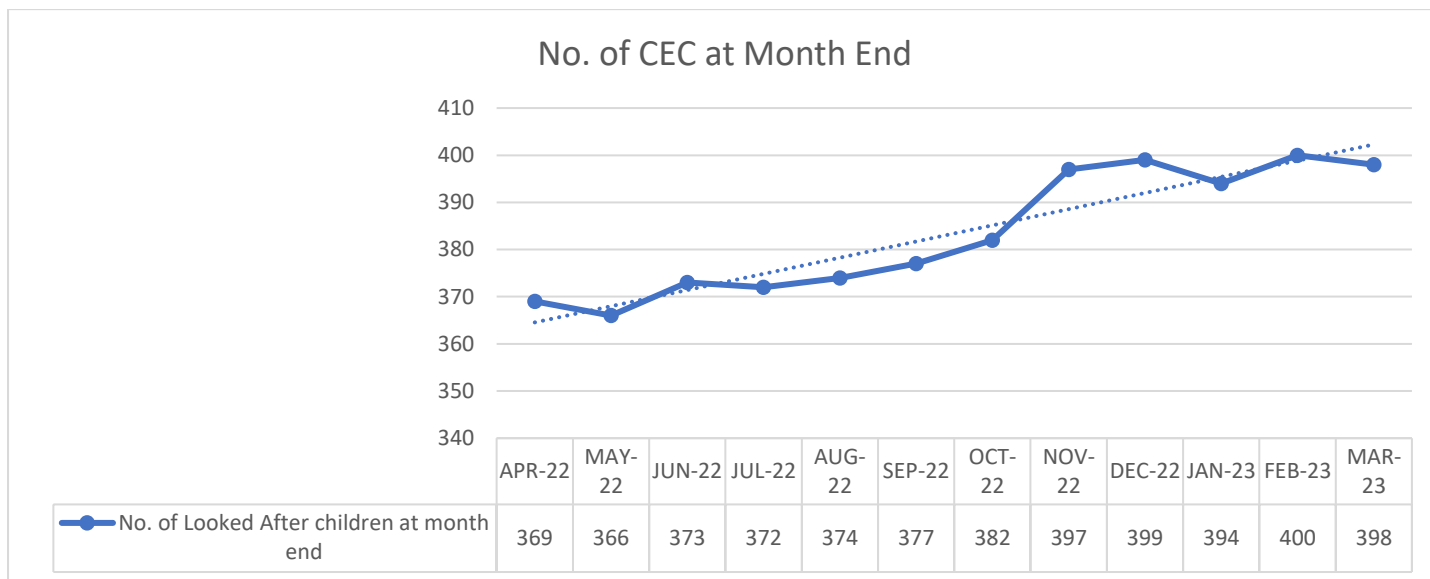


Chart 11 – Number of Child who became looked after and those who ceased to be looked after

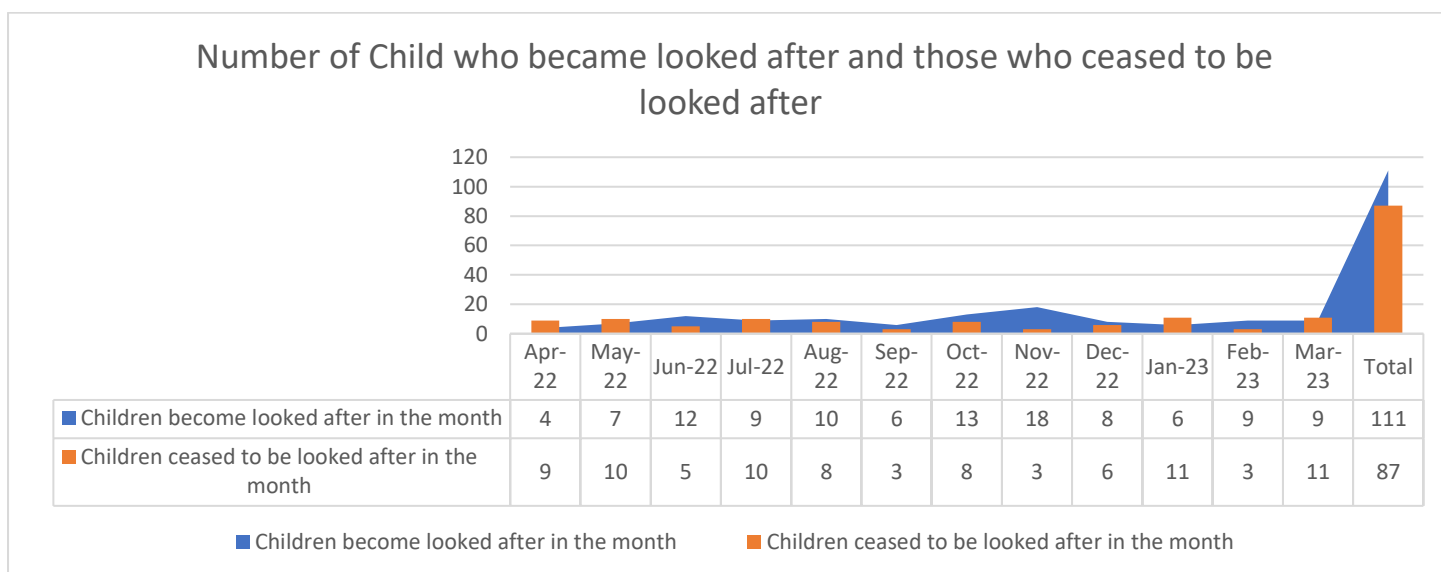
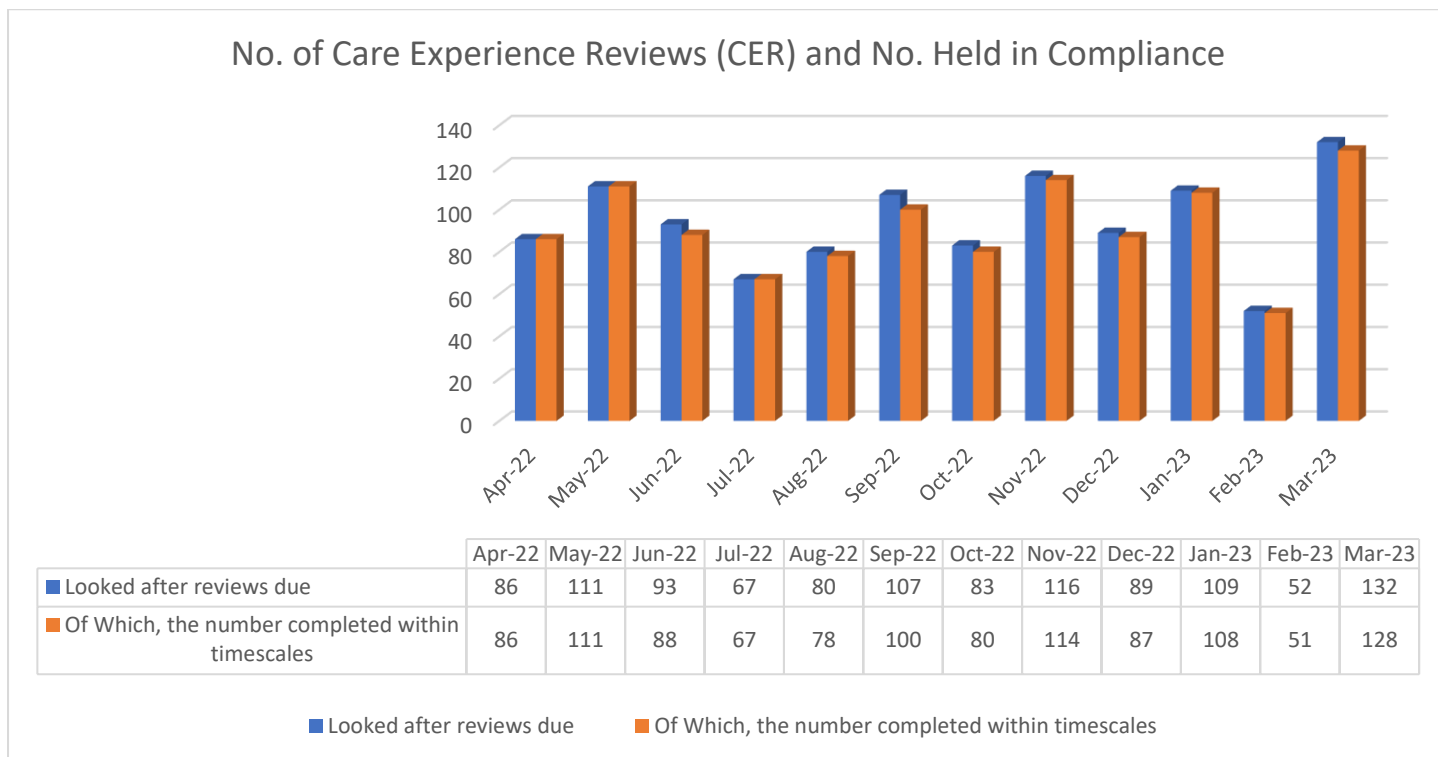


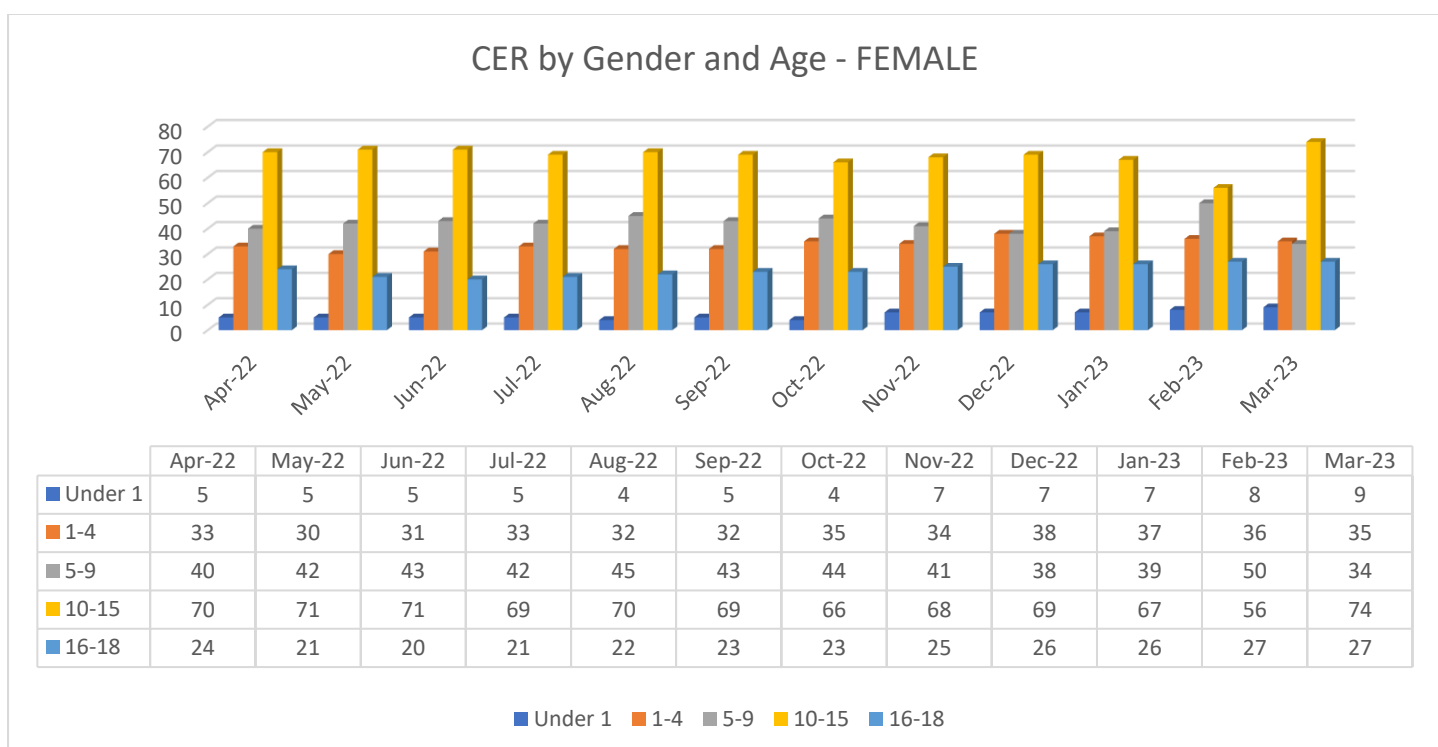
Chart 8 details the number of children who were in the care of Bridgend County Borough Council over the period from April 2022 – March 2023. The monthly average is just over 383 children throughout this period. This is a decrease from the same period in 2021 -2022. Chart 9 highlights the number of admissions and the number of children who ceased to be looked after by Bridgend County Borough Council. In total 111 children came into the care of the local authority whilst 87 children left the care of the local authority.

Chart 12 – No. of Care Experience Reviews (CER) and No. Held in Compliance

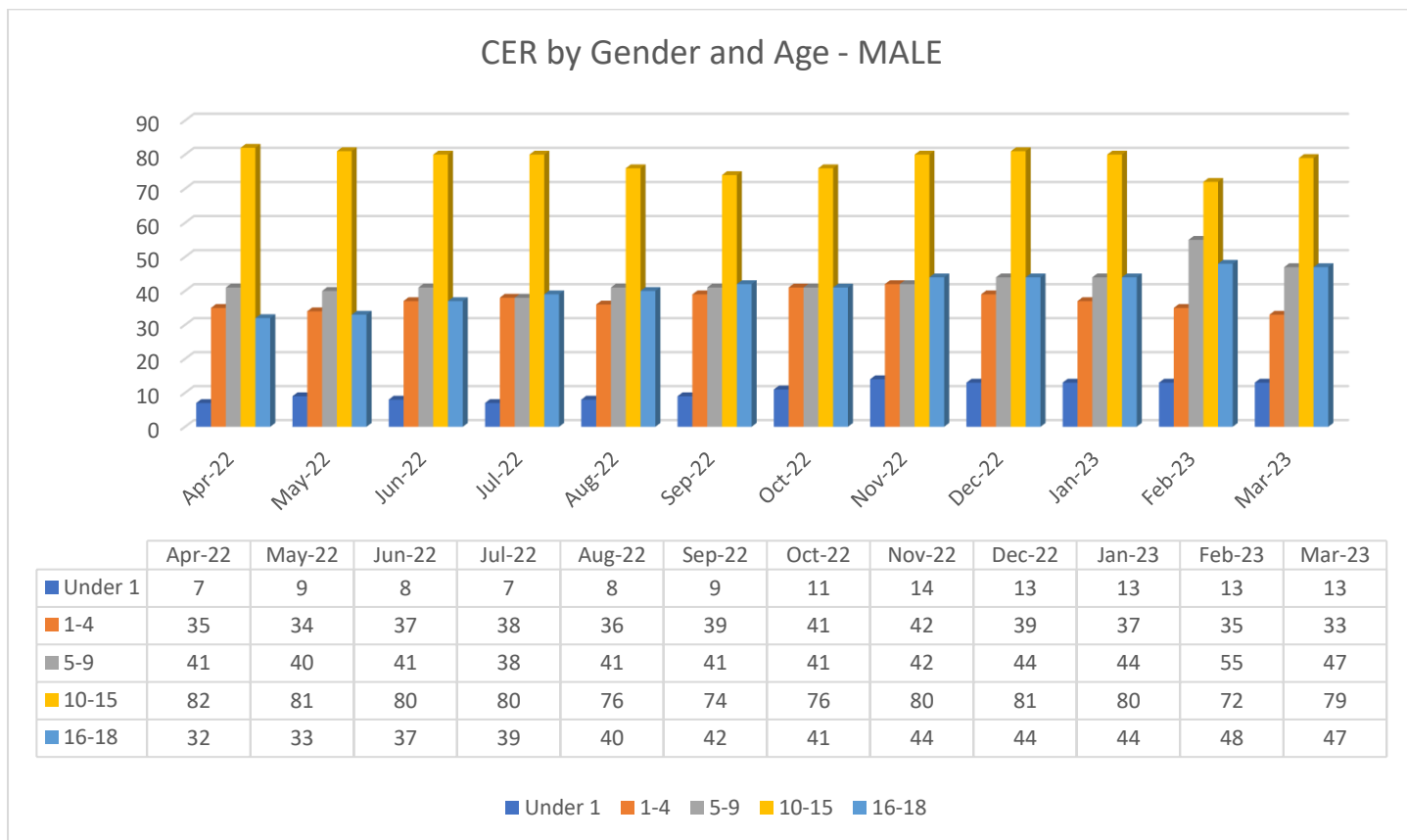


In total, over the period under review, there were a total of 1125 CERs of which, 1098 were convened within statutory timescales. This represents 97.6% of the total convened CERs. This is a decrease in percentage from the last reporting period. The IRO Service believe that part of this decrease can be attributed to the lack of stability within the social worker workforce. Some cases have seen numerous changes of social worker and when this happens, dates of reviews are missed, or the social worker has a pre-existing commitment at the time of the scheduled review. Every effort is made to arrange the review within timescales, but this is not always possible. The IRO Manager is monitoring these cases and will highlight concerns to senior managers as necessary.

Chart 13 & 14 – Care Experienced Children (CEC) by Gender and Age



In respect of female CEC, the largest age group continues to be those between the ages of 10-15 years. However, for female CEC there is less disparity than between the other age groupings except for child under one year.



From Chart 14, one can see that the trend continues whereby the largest cohort of male CEC are those between the ages of 10– 15 years.

Advocacy

During this reporting period our referrals to Tros Gynnal Advocacy have increased. 224 young people accessed the Issue Based Advocacy (IBA) service, presenting with 275 issues compared to 155 young people presenting with 204 issues in 2021-22. This represents a notable increase in young people accessing IBA when compared to the previous year. Some 123 young people accessed the service for the first time, compared to 67 in the previous year. Active Offer (AO) referrals also increased significantly, more than doubling from 37 in the previous year, to 101 this year.

310 children and young people became eligible for the Active Offer during the year, of this figure 101 children and young people consented to a referral being made.

Of the 101 young people referred, 86 Active Offer meetings took place, and 80 young people accepted the Active Offer and went on to receive issue based advocacy, 47 more than the previous year.

Children and Young People in the CP arena made up 85% of those referred for the Active Offer throughout the year, compared to 84% in the previous year.

Active Offer referrals for Care Experienced Young People rose from 6 in the previous year, to 15 this year, while referrals for those children and young people in the Child Protection arena increased even further from 31 in the previous year to 86 in this year.

It remains a priority for the IRO Service to ensure all children involved in the Child Protection process or Care Experienced Children can access advocacy support. The IRO's ensure they discuss this when they consult with children and young people. They raise the issue of advocacy at all meetings and record advocacy numbers in the quality assurance audits. The IRO's ensure every child or young person receives an Active Offer for Advocacy services. The Active Offer ensures the Social Worker has explained what Advocacy is and how it can support them. Children and young people who become looked after and/ or are being discussed at a Child Protection Conference are entitled to receive an Active Offer of advocacy support. However, the Active Offer should be consistently and regularly revisited with children and young people.

Business Support

Business Support have continued to support the core functions of the IRO Service during this period. The IRO Service and Business Support have frequent interface meetings to address any challenges and monitor any issues of compliance. During this period, there has been an ongoing consultation to consider the configuration of our Business Support colleagues and how they can best support, not only the IRO Service but the other services and teams throughout the local authority.

Team Meetings

The IRO Service continue to have monthly team meetings to ensure that any issues are identified and addressed and to impart news from the wider local authority. The IRO Service manager continues to have quarterly meetings Western Bay Adoption Service, Cafcass Cymru, and other meetings with our regional partners in Cwm Taff Morgannwg.

Case Dispute Resolution and Complaints

In this period the formal case resolution process has not been initiated. Any escalating concerns have been resolved at an informal stage. There has been one stage two complaint which was primarily involving the safeguarding team, but the role of the IRO was considered.

IRO Quality Assurance Audit

The IRO's complete quality assurance audits after every CER, ICPC and RCPC. The quality assurance audit form provides data on practice standards and captures data and information relating to the IRO standards. Once completed by the IRO following the meeting, the form automatically goes to the Safeguarding Team Manager of the case holding team for their scrutiny and management oversight. This form also alerts the Safeguarding Team Manager to any outstanding pieces of work, compliance issues and identifies areas of good practice and this has continued during this period.

The IRO Service Manager also sits on the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Quality and Performance sub-group. This group undertakes audits and seeks to identify themes, learning and improve practice. In this period a Domestic Abuse audit was undertaken and at our next meetings we will share the learning from this.

IRO Standards

The IRO guidance and practice standards were introduced at the beginning of 2019. IRO's have worked to improve tracking and monitoring as advised within the Practice Standards and Good Practice Guide. Arrangements for Independent legal advice for IRO's have been agreed with a reciprocal arrangement between Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot legal departments. The IRO's have accessed this support on several occasions. However, the standards have introduced a new process to completing CERs which includes the involvement of the Team Managers. This is achieved when the IRO sends the Team Manager the meeting recommendations within 5 days of completing the Review and that Team Manager has 5 days to respond to these recommendations. This is now embedded and working well within the service quickly identifying any area of disagreement and enabling these issues to be resolved at the earliest stage. IROs are holding mid-point meetings with the allocated social worker, and this is also supporting the identification of drift early.

Cafcass Cymru

The IRO service has a direct relationship with Cafcass Cymru and can, if required, refer matters of concern or report directly to Cafcass Cymru where deficits in care planning for care experienced young people cannot be resolved locally but are sufficiently significant as to impact on the outcomes for children and young people. To date, the IRO service has had no cause to refer to Cafcass Cymru but liaises with them regularly on individual cases within the public law arena. IROs in Bridgend work to a standard that has improved liaison between the Cafcass Cymru children's guardians and Safeguarding Social Workers within family proceedings. As a result, IROs are alerted more quickly to issues arising in the court process and can liaise at an earlier stage where disputes arise with the Local Authority. This relationship provides Children's Guardians with the means to communicate issues arising directly with the IRO that are relevant to the on-going development and monitoring of a care plan, either during proceedings or following an order being granted.

Service Priorities

- To fully implement the Signs of Safety model of practice.
- To recruit sufficient IROs to enable us to achieve best practice caseload numbers.
- To increase the contact between the IRO with children and young people.
- To work alongside safeguarding colleagues to achieve permanency for all children and reduce the numbers of care experienced children within a safe and appropriate plan.
- To ensure appropriate care plans are progressing in a timely manner to prevent and avoid drift in children's cases.
- To continue to focus on increasing participation of children and young people at their meetings.
- To ensure every Care Experienced Child and Young Person has a stand-alone and in date care plan.
- To ensure that the IRO is fully involved in all aspects of a child's care planning.
- To collate thematic practice issues identified from the QA's and use these to develop learning themes and improve practice
- IROs will continue to promote advocacy services and the Active Offer to children and young people and make these referrals where consent has been given to support the child/young person's voice.
- To implement recommendations from independent audits.
- Consider and implement any IRO specific recommendations from the Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) inspection.

Service Priorities – Action Plan

B	Completed
R	A problem needs serious attention and action now
A	Issues are being managed and if addressed should not affect delivery
G	On track, in progress, any minor risks/ issues being managed
NYS	Not Yet Started

IRO Service								
	Owner	Due date	Recommendation	Action	Evidence	Update	Last RAG	RAG
1	IRO Service Manager and each IRO.	April 2024	To increase the contact between the IRO with children and young people.	<p>IRO Service Manager will continue to be involved in the progress of the MUSE App.</p> <p>Each IRO will ensure they give the child/YP the opportunity to meet with them to discuss their LAC review or CP Conference.</p>	<p>IRO Service Manager will attend all consultation meetings in relation to the development of this APP.</p> <p>Data collection of consultation rates will be included in the 6 monthly IRO Report.</p>	<p>Due to the Covid pandemic work focussing on a consultation APP ceased and is yet to be restarted.</p> <p>However, progress has been noted in terms of IRO consultation with young people and this is felt to be as a result of virtual platforms being preferred by many children and teenagers.</p>	Amber	Amber

2	IRO Service Manager and each IRO.	April 2024	To work alongside safeguarding colleagues to achieve permanency for all children and reduce the numbers of Care Experienced Children within a safe and appropriate plan.	<p>IROs to check at the 2nd LAC Review the plan for the child is clear. If the plan isn't clear, the IRO will track the case and inform the appropriate Safeguarding Team Manager.</p> <p>IROs to ensure they consider all appropriate options for Care Experienced Children such as SGOs.</p>	<p>IRO Service Manager to attend the LAC reduction Strategy Meeting held on a bi-monthly basis.</p> <p>IRO Service Manager will identify any children who may be suitable for alternative Orders and will discuss this with the allocated IRO.</p>	<p>This process is currently working well. IRO Service Manager has identified a number of cases where alternative care options could be considered resulting in the child no longer being Looked After.</p> <p>In IRO Supervision the IRO Team Manager ensures discussion takes place around the children who have been identified as possible candidates for an alternative Order such as a Special Guardianship Order which would end their LAC status. The IRO Service Manager</p>	Green	Green
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						<p>attends the monthly LAC Reduction Strategy meetings and provides updates.</p> <p>Cases where there isn't a permanency plan at the second review is due to care proceedings not being finalised.</p> <p>Group Manager IAA & Safeguarding attends a monthly interface with the Legal Team where these cases can be discussed in detail.</p>		
3	IRO Service Manager	April 2024	The development of child and young person consultation and participation through a more accessible medium.	<p>IRO Service Manager will continue to be involved in the progress of the MUSE App.</p> <p>Each IRO will ensure they give the child/YP the opportunity to meet with them to</p>	IRO Service Manager will attend all consultation meetings in relation to the development of this APP.	<p>All work around an App ceased in Covid.</p> <p>Signs of Safety will increase our rates of consultation.</p>	NYS	NYS

				discuss their LAC review or CP Conference.	Data collection of consultation rates will be included in the 6 monthly IRO Report.			
4	IRO Service Manager and each IRO.	April 2024	To work alongside Safeguarding Teams and SCDWP to improve practice around Care Experienced Children and their meetings.	<p>IROs will ensure they complete the IRO Quality Assurance document following every LAC Review. This will automatically be sent to the Safeguarding Team Manager for their scrutiny.</p> <p>Should the IRO identify concerning practice, they will raise this with the IRO Service Manager and the Safeguarding Team Manager. They will track the progress to a resolution and initiate the IRO Protocol where necessary.</p> <p>IRO Service Manager will facilitate training alongside the Training</p>	The rates of completed QA forms will increase in the next year and the data will be included in the IRO 6 month report. IRO Service Manager will attend all IRO protocol Meetings to support the IROs and facilitate resolution.	<p>IRO Service Manager continues to raise cases of concern with the individual Social Workers, their Team Managers and Group Manager where appropriate.</p> <p>IRO Service Manager continues to present training alongside the training department and is facilitating introductory sessions to new starters and newly qualified staff.</p>	Green	Green

				<p>Department to support and improve practice.</p> <p>IRO Service Manager will facilitate induction sessions to new starters and newly qualified Social Workers to support their professional development.</p>				
5	IRO Service Manager and each IRO.	April 2024	To ensure appropriate care plans are progressing in a timely manner to prevent and avoid drift in children's cases.	<p>At every LAC Review the IRO will check the child has a Care Plan that is up to date and meets the child's needs. The IRO will recommend at each LAC Review that the Care Plan is updated to reflect the changes agreed at the current LAC Review.</p> <p>The IRO will track each child and ensure their Care Plan has been updated. The IRO will hold mid-point meetings to prevent drift and take action where</p>	<p>The rates of IRO Quality Assurance forms being completed is increasing and this will continue moving forward.</p> <p>IROs are holding mid-point meetings for each child who is Looked After however there are times the child's SW does not respond. In these cases the IRO will raise this with their Service Manager</p>	<p>In this period the IROs identified all children whose Care Plan was out of date and informed the respective Social Workers and Team Managers and provided a timescale for completion. On the whole progress was made but not in every case. IROs will continue to monitor all children's Care Plans and where there is a Care Plan that is out</p>	Green	Green

				<p>drift is identified.</p> <p>Each IRO will complete the IRO Quality Assurance form following each LAC review as this informs the SW and their Team Manager of any out of date Care Plans.</p>	and the safeguarding Team Manager.	<p>of date or not reflective of the child's circumstances they will raise this appropriately and track to ensure completion .</p> <p>IRO Service Manager ensures when attending the LAC Reduction Strategy meeting and monthly Performance meeting that for any child who is discussed, the date of their Care Plan is checked to ensure it is up to date and where not it is flagged with the Safeguarding Team Manager.</p>		
6	IRO Service Manager and each IRO.	April 2024	To continue to focus on increasing consultation and participation of children	IROs to ensure they offer to consult with each LAC child as appropriate	The IRO Quality Assurance form captures the consultati	Since Covid restrictions have been in place IROs have found	Amber	Amber

			and young people at Looked After Children Reviews.	for their age and level of understanding and to use a means of communication that the child chooses. This includes face to face meeting, phone, Skype and MS Teams.	on data and this will be included in IRO 6 month report. IRO Service Manager will during Supervision sessions discuss the importance of consultation and ensure it remains a priority for each IRO.	many young people prefer to be consulted via virtual means such as Skype. IROs report many young people have attended their LAC reviews while in the lockdown period as they have had greater availability to attend. IRO Service Manager has added Consultation as a Supervision agenda item to ensure it is discussed in Supervision sessions with each IRO.		
7	IRO Service Manager and each IRO.	April 2024	To ensure every Care Experienced Child and Young Person has a stand-alone and in	At every LAC Review the IRO will check the child has a Care Plan that is up to date and meets the	The rates of IRO Quality Assurance forms being completed is increasing	In this period the IROs have continued to identify drift on cases and where care plans are	Green	Green

			<p>date Care Plan.</p>	<p>child's needs. The IRO will recommend at each LAC Review that the Care Plan is updated to reflect the changes agreed at the current LAC Review.</p> <p>The IRO will track each child and ensure their Care Plan has been updated. The IRO will hold mid-point meetings to prevent drift and take action where drift is identified.</p> <p>Each IRO will complete the IRO Quality Assurance form following each LAC review as this informs the Social Worker and their Team Manager of any out of date Care Plans.</p> <p>The IRO will enquire whether a child's care plan has been shared with it's carers.</p>	<p>g and this will continue moving forward.</p> <p>IROs are holding mid-point meetings for each child who is Looked After however there are times the child's SW does not respond. In these cases the IRO will raise this with their Team Manager and the safeguarding Team Manager.</p>	<p>not up to date.</p> <p>On the whole progress was made in this area.</p> <p>IRO Service Manager ensures when attending the LAC Reduction Strategy meeting and monthly Performance meeting that for any child who is discussed, the date of their Care Plan is checked to ensure it is up to date and where not that this is flagged with the Safeguarding Team Manager.</p>		
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8	IRO Service Manager and each IRO	April 2024	To collate thematic practice issues identified from the QA's and use these to develop learning themes and improve practice.	The data will be scrutinised for the 6 monthly IRO Report.	<p>Any practice themes identified will be provided to the Training Department and Team Managers at the weekly Team Meeting.</p> <p>If required the IRO Service Manager will be available to support the Training Team in facilitating training sessions to address these deficits.</p>	<p>The Quality Assurance forms are being used currently to identify out of date Care Plans as a theme and this is being addressed by the IROs with the Social Workers and their Team Managers.</p> <p>We also have two independent audits being undertaken around our LAC and CP decision making. The recommendations and learning will be fully considered at the completion of these pieces of work.</p>	Green	Green
9	IRO Service Manager and each IRO.	April 2024	IROs will continue to make children and young people aware of the advocacy service.	This is currently monitored via the IRO Quality Assurance form and will be scrutinised for the IRO 6 month report.	The referral numbers to Tros Gynnal from Bridgend are the highest in the	Advocacy referral rates have significantly increased.	Green	Green

				<p>IROs will ensure when consulting with young people they ask if they would like the support of the Advocacy Service.</p> <p>IRO Service Manager will liaise with the Group Manager for Case Management and Transition periodically to check the referral rates have not decreased.</p>	<p>Western Bay area.</p> <p>IROs report good evidence of advocacy discussions and offers being made between Social Workers and Children.</p>			
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Agenda Item 5

Meeting of:	CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING
Date of Meeting:	20 JULY 2023
Report Title:	CORPORATE PARENTING DEVELOPMENT UPDATE
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES & WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	STEVE BERRY CORPORATE PARENTING & PARTICIPATION OFFICER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	THERE IS NO EFFECT ON THE POLICY FRAMEWORK
Executive Summary:	UPDATE REPORT TO INFORM THE CABINET COMMITTEE OF PROGRESS IN RELATION TO THE CORPORATE PARENTING ACTIVITY. PARTICULAR POINTS TO NOTE ARE THAT THE CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY HAS BEEN LAUNCHED AND A PROFESSIONALS' ENGAGEMENT EVENT HAS TAKEN PLACE TO UNDERTAKE ACTION PLANNING FOR FUTURE WORK.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting with an update on the development of Corporate Parenting in Bridgend.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting has received an update report on Corporate Parenting Development at each meeting since the commencement of the Corporate Parenting & Participation post. Each of the reports have provided progress on the following areas:

- Establishing a shared vision for Corporate Parenting Responsibilities.
- Establishing a governance structure that supports the strategic and operational approach to Corporate Parenting.
- Establishing a Corporate Parenting Performance Framework.
- Establishing care experienced forums to provide our children and young people with a collective voice.

2.2 It is proposed that update reports on these areas will continue to be presented to the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting until these areas have been fully established.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 Establishing a shared vision for Corporate Parenting Responsibilities

3.1.1 The “Bridgend Corporate Parenting Strategy “Our plan for you...” was launched at the Heronston Hotel on Thursday 28th April 2023 with our care experienced young people and care leavers, represented as Bridgend Youth Voice Forum, facilitating proceedings. The Deputy Minister for Social Services, Julie Morgan MS and The Children’s Commissioner for Wales, Rocio Cifuentes were keynote speakers at the event where they praised the partnership working of agencies to embrace their corporate parenting responsibilities within a co-produced strategy.

3.1.2 The Bridgend Youth Voice Forum presented media clips that they had produced to explain what the priorities of the strategy meant to them and how important it is for professionals to recognise and champion their right to have a say on matters that affect them.

3.1.3 The event was attended by professionals of all levels and departments within Bridgend County Council (including elected members), partner agencies including South Wales Police, South Wales Fire & Rescue, Barnardos, TGP Cymru, Halo, Awen, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, Bridgend College and Welsh Government.

3.1.4 The Corporate Parenting Strategy is now live and available on the Bridgend County Borough Council website:

English version: <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/media/ndgnsudl/bridgend-corporate-parenting-strategy-eng.pdf>

Welsh version: <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/media/ttjebv4c/bridgend-corporate-parenting-strategy-cym.pdf>

3.2. Establishing a governance structure that supports the strategic and operational approach to Corporate Parenting

3.2.1 The subgroup meetings for the Board have been put on hold until a decision is made by the Corporate Parenting Board to hold them in the future. It was recognised that due to the fact that each of the subgroups were being held at the early stages of corporate parenting development, it was difficult to facilitate meaningful pieces of work without a coordinated approach through a strategy and workplan.

3.2.2 Now that the strategy is in place there are clear areas of work to focus on. To address the need to have greater detail to turn the strategy into tangible activity, an action planning engagement event was held on Thursday 22nd June 2023 involving a total of 50 Board members and subgroups members.

3.2.3 The action planning engagement event sought to draw out specific pieces of work for each of the strategy's 6 priorities. During the event the professionals discussed and agreed on a list of actions / task recording

3.3. Establishing a Corporate Parenting Performance Framework

3.3.1 At the last Corporate Parenting Board meeting held in March 2023, it was agreed that housing, education, children services and health would seek to provide regular data to the Board. The September Board meeting will seek to rationalise what data is going to be requested on a quarterly basis to formulate a Corporate Parenting dataset.

3.3.2 In addition to the proposed dataset, it is hoped that the action planning engagement event will produce an agreed list of objectives, for each of the strategy priorities, that will be timebound and have owners with measurable indicators and outcomes. All of these objectives will be drawn together to produce an action plan for the strategy that will be presented at the September Board for consideration and review.

3.4. Establishing care experienced forums to provide our children and young people with a collective voice

3.4.1 It must be noted that the involvement of our young people in the strategy development and more especially the launch event was praised by both the Children's Commissioner for Wales and Welsh Government.

3.4.2 The engagement and involvement of our young people continues to be a challenge due to clashes with education, employment, training and leisure pursuits. Nevertheless our young people have been involved in engagement events to inform the commissioning of supported accommodation and also staff recruitment.

3.4.3 The youth forum worker is planning on holding more regular youth forum meetings, sharing dates with our young people well in advance and there will be engagement events during the school holidays where our young people will be invited to inform strategic planning along with other pieces of work.

4. **Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, or socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. **Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

5.1 Long term – the establishment of the Corporate Parenting Board will address how agencies can address their responsibilities for Corporate Parenting in a strategic manner to make robust plans for the future.

- 5.2 Prevention – the proposals that have been made mean that the responsibilities we all have for Corporate Parenting are identified and established into what we need to report on. Measuring and reporting on these responsibilities through the Corporate Parenting Board will enable us to take early action on any issues identified.
- 5.3 Integration – the Corporate Parenting Board has a multiagency membership, along with an extended multiagency membership through its 5 subgroups. This membership is intended to provide sufficient representation to cover who has specific responsibilities for our children and young people in particular circumstances. The purpose of the next Board meeting and the subgroup meetings being held within this quarter, is to identify where professionals and agencies need to work together in the future to forge a coherent approach to the care of our children and young people.
- 5.4 Collaboration – the success and effectiveness of our Corporate Parenting in Bridgend is dependent on how well agencies work together to achieve shared goals and aspirations for our children and young people. These goals and aspirations are cited within the ‘Bridgend Corporate Parenting Strategy – Our plan for you....’
- 5.5 Involvement – due consideration has been given to how different ‘providers of care’ are involved in the proposals around Corporate Parenting. Specific attention and proposals are given to enabling the voice and lived experience of our children and young people.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 There is no direct impact on Climate Change through the implementation of this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 All safeguarding implications have been fully considered within Corporate Parenting development. No safeguarding issues were raised within the work cited in this report.
- 7.2 The subject matter of this entire report relates directly to corporate parenting and any implications are discussed within it.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 Corporate Parenting development does not have a specific allocated budget. Where costs have arisen to support participation of children and young people, engagement, meetings and training of professionals the costs have been absorbed within the Children’s Services core budget.

9. Recommendation(s)

- 9.1 For the Cabinet Committee to note the progress made identified within this report and invest in the future development of Corporate Parenting activity to establish better outcomes for our children and young people

Background documents

None

Agenda Item 6

Meeting of:	CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING
Date of Meeting:	20 JULY 2023
Report Title:	REGIONAL ADVOCACY SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	RICHARD THOMAS, COMMISSIONING OFFICER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules
Executive Summary:	<p>Summary of annual service delivery for 2022-23 of statutory advocacy for children and young people. The information and data shows a continually improving level of service delivery in Bridgend, favourably comparable to the Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) region as a whole.</p> <p>The ongoing recovery from the Covid pandemic is demonstrated in the increasing number of children and young people who are accessing the advocacy service. There is good evidence of an increase in delivering the ‘Active Offer’ of advocacy, which is a key requirement of the national service model.</p> <p>There is evidence of the service provider working as a proactive and innovative regional partner in delivering statutory advocacy, alongside other services that help children, young people or their families.</p>

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to highlight the key aspects of service delivery from our regional provider, Tros Gynnal Plant. Detailed performance reports are included as appendices as follows:

Appendix 1: Bridgend Annual Advocacy Report 2022-2023

Appendix 2: CTM Regional Annual Advocacy Report 2022-2023

2. Background

- 2.1 Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) provides a regional advocacy service in Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM). TGP has delivered advocacy services in Bridgend for many years and is a well-established provider locally, as well as being the largest provider of advocacy to children and young people in Wales.
- 2.2 This regional service is based on the National Approach to Statutory Advocacy (NASA), which is prescribed by Welsh Government.
- 2.3 Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) receives an element of Welsh Government funding towards this service, which is administered by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCT CBC), on behalf of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region. RCT are also the contracting authority for this regional service.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 Detailed quarterly performance reports are provided by TGP. TGP also provide an annual report for both Bridgend locality and the CTM region. They cover the key service aspects of Issue Based Advocacy, and the Active Offer of advocacy.
- 3.2 During the year, 224 young people accessed the Issue Based Advocacy (IBA) service, presenting with 275 issues (see **Appendix 1**). This represents a notable increase in young people accessing IBA when compared to the previous year, and the year before that, maintaining a positive trend in increasing referrals. It also represents 47% of total IBA referrals (476) within the CTM region (see Appendix 2), meaning the Bridgend service compares very favourably.
- 3.3 Some 123 young people accessed the IBA service for the first time, compared to 67 in the previous year (**Appendix 1**). Most children and young people referred for IBA this year were in the Child Protection arena, with over 50% of IBA referrals. The majority of IBA referrals continue to be made for young people aged between six and 11, although referrals for young people aged 12-16 more than doubled from 40 last year, to 97 this year.
- 3.4 'Self-referral' continues to be the most established route into the IBA service, followed by social services referrals. This demonstrates good awareness of the service amongst the young people it is designed for. There were also 26 IBA referrals made by third sector organisations, mostly TGP Cymru's Family Group Conferencing and Restorative Approaches Service (which sit separate to the statutory advocacy service).
- 3.5 There are a wide range of issues that young people need support with, but 'contact' with family or issues with 'home life' continue to be the most prevalent. Contact issues may be where a young person wants more, or sometimes less, contact with a parent or family member.
- 3.6 An 'Active Offer' (AO) of advocacy is a core element of the statutory service, where all eligible children and young people, which includes Children Looked After and those over the age of 4 who are on the Child Protection Register, should be made

aware of their right to advocacy, via an 'Active Offer'. The majority of young people referred for AO in Bridgend last year were aged between 6 and 11.

- 3.7 **Appendix 1** sets out that 310 children and young people became eligible for the AO during the year, 101 were referred, meaning 33% of those eligible were referred. The percentage in Bridgend is consistent with the CTM region as a whole (Appendix 2), and represents an increasing trend, where 19% of eligible young people in the region were referred for AO in the previous year. There has been ongoing work between TGP and BCBC in making this offer to as many eligible young people as possible. Partnership work continues to raise this proportion further still.
- 3.8 TGP, like most social care service providers, have experienced some challenges with recruitment and retention. However, they have used their regional capacity to ensure the service continues to be delivered, and importantly have ensured some crucial elements of the service are in place, namely Independent Visiting, where a volunteer acts in a befriending capacity to young people in care who may have minimal or no contact with family or friends, and also Residential Visiting Advocacy, where advocates make regular visits to children's residential homes to ensure young people can express themselves and have their voices heard in relation to the support they receive.
- 3.9 TGP continues to be responsible for facilitating young people's participation and consultation groups in Bridgend, now called Bridgend Youth Voice Forum, or 'BYV' Forum. The aim of the group is to allow care experienced young people and care leavers to have a voice in wider Bridgend forums, including the Bridgend Corporate Parenting Board.
- 3.10 TGP continue to develop new and innovative ways for young people to provide feedback to help improve the advocacy service, e.g. through the use of a QR code that they can scan from their mobile phones and which links to a short questionnaire.
- 3.11 TGP have noted that social workers are not always able to respond to some case communications, resulting in some young people's advocacy cases remaining open longer than they need to be. This is noted in both the local Bridgend report (Appendix 1) and the regional report (**Appendix 2**). The volume of work being managed in statutory children's services will have impacted and focused work to safely reduce caseloads will assist in improving responsiveness.
- 3.12 Following recent changes in BCBC Children's Services, including the appointment of a new Responsible Individual (whose role is to promote, monitor and improve service quality, TGP has met and engaged with BCBC on a number of levels to further develop working relationships and improve awareness and understanding of referral processes for advocacy. TGP's Advocacy team manager attended the Bridgend Corporate Parenting Pledge event in March, where the following promise was made:

"Care experienced children and young people in Bridgend, along with care leavers, are able to access good quality and responsive advocacy services at a time and place that suits them."

This promise has been written into the new Bridgend Corporate Parenting Strategy.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Authority should work to deliver wellbeing outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report.

Long Term. The operation of a statutory advocacy service is prescribed by Welsh Government and the service operates in a similar way across Wales and into the long term.

Prevention. Advocacy includes providing people with information, advice, and support to help people prevent issues from escalating further.

Integration. The regional service operates across the 3 CTM local authority areas as a single service.

Collaboration. The regional authorities work in close partnership with our service provider.

Involvement. One of the basic principles of advocacy services is the inclusion and involvement of the children and young people who use the service.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 Beyond necessary staff travel and operational administration activities, there is no direct impact on Climate Change through the provision of this advocacy service.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 The provision of statutory advocacy is a key element in ensuring the safety and welfare of children and young people.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the content of the report.

Background documents

None

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National Approach to Statutory Advocacy

Local Authority Report - Bridgend 2022 - 2023

Collated Annual Report

April 22 - March 23

Headline Report

During the year, 224 young people accessed the Issue Based Advocacy (IBA) service, presenting with 275 issues. This represents a notable increase in young people accessing IBA when compared to the previous year. Some 123 young people accessed the service for the first time, compared to 67 in the previous year. Active Offer (AO) referrals also increased significantly, more than doubling from 37 in the previous year, to 101 this year.

Active Offer

According to information received from Bridgend, 310 children and young people became eligible for the AO during the year. A total of 101 children and young people were referred, meaning that if we assume those referred became eligible in the year, 33% of those eligible were referred.

Of the 101 young people referred, 86 AO meetings took place, and 80 young people accepted the AO and went on to received IBA, 47 more than in the previous year. Children and young people in the CP arena made up 85% of those referred for AO throughout the year, compared to 84% in the previous year. AO referrals for Care Experienced young people rose from six in the previous year, to 15 this year, while referrals for those children and young people in the Child Protection (CP) area increased even further from 31 in the previous year to 86 in this year.

This year, the majority of AO referrals were for females while more males than females were referred in the previous year. While AO referrals for males increased by 15 when compared to the previous year, referrals for females increased almost fourfold, from 17 last year, to 67 this year.

The majority of young people referred for AO were aged between 6 and 11, although increases in AO referrals were observed across all categories. The largest of these was an increase of 32 referrals for young people aged between 12 and 16 when compared to the previous year.

Some 70% of young people referred for the AO received it within five working days of referral. Several visits were delayed following a long-term illness within the advocacy team. Most delays throughout the year happen when an advocate is unable to contact a parent or carer to arrange a visit. When this happens, the advocate will always contact the referrer for support in contacting the young person.

Issue Based Advocacy

For the second year running, we have observed an increase in young people accessing IBA with 224 young people being referred this year, compared to 155 in the previous year. 123 of the 224 young people referred for IBA this year were accessing advocacy for the first time, 56 more than in the previous year.

As in the previous year, most children and young people referred for IBA this year were in the CP arena and again made up over 50% of IBA referrals. We observed increases in referrals for all service areas including for young people subject to Care and Support plans and Care Leavers.

Despite an increase in referrals for both males and females this year, the gender split remains as it was in the previous year with 57% of referrals being made for females. One young person defining as gender neutral was also referred for advocacy this year.

Headline Report Cont'd

This year we observed increases in referrals for all age groups. The majority of IBA referrals continue to be made for young people aged between six and 11, although the split between this age group and the 12-16 age group is far more equal this year after referrals for young people aged 12-16 more than doubled from 40 last year, to 97 this year.

'Self-referral' continues to be the most popular route into the IBA service, followed by social services referrals. This year, self-referrals increased by 45, while social services referrals increased by ten. This can be explained by the increase of AO offers received this year, and we predict that in the previous year, some IBA referrals made by social workers should have been AO referrals. This year 26 IBA referrals were also made by third sector organisations, mostly TGP Cymru's Family Group Conferencing and Restorative Approaches Service.

This year, we implemented a change to the way we record how children and young people are supported at meetings in order to capture more data about what young people are sharing. For example, when a young person requests advocacy support at a meeting, instead of recording the issue as 'support at meetings' the advocate will record the issue as the main issue the young person would like to present at the meeting, such as contact, home life or access to services. We are still able to record advocacy attendance at meetings, but we now do this separately. This has resulted in a reduction of 'support at meetings' issues but will tell us more about what issues young people want to discuss both in and out of meetings.

This year, the most popular issue young people wanted support with was contact, this being raised 70 times, although if we combine issues relating to where young people live; placement and homelife, these were raised 108 times throughout the year. Due to the increase in contact issues, this year we have amended our recording system which has enabled us to access more detailed data about who young people want to spend their time with. In quarters three and four, most young people raising contact issues were requesting to spend more time with a family member, although a significant number of young people also requested to spend less time with a family member or stop seeing them altogether.

This year, 'support at meetings' was the main issue 50 times, however, advocates supported children and young people to share wishes and feelings at 166 meetings, 84 of which they attended all or part of in person. The meetings were made up of mostly Child Protection Case Conferences, Core Group meetings, CLA Reviews and Family Group Meetings.

During the year, 74% of young people had contact with their advocate within five working days of the IBA referral being made.

Residential Visiting Advocacy (RVA)

Face-to-face visiting advocacy continues in Sunnybank on a monthly basis.

We are currently in the process of conducting a review of our RVA service and have sent out surveys to all LA community homes in CTM. The surveys focus on RVA service promotion as well as asking more general questions about systems the homes already have in place to support young people to raise issues and complaints, as well as to share positive experiences. When the surveys have been returned, we plan on consulting with young people before making appropriate changes to ensure the RVA service is working as effectively as possible for young people living in community homes across Cwm Taf.

At the beginning of March, the Advocacy team manager met with Daniel Bolton the Principal Officer/Responsible Individual for Children's residential services to talk about RVA. A plan was made to look at complaints as part of the RVA review process and re-establishing RVA in Bakers Way and Harwood House. We have contacted those individuals suggested by Dan and are currently awaiting a response to discuss how they would like to proceed.

Service Information

CAFCASS and the Advocacy Providers have recently developed a joint protocol, which provides a framework to encourage a strong working relationship between advocates and guardians, explaining the differences in roles and responsibilities alongside examples of shared principles. A short event to launch the protocol was held in January and attended by the Advocacy team manager as well as TGP Cymru's Director of Advocacy Services.

Advocacy quarterly progress reports have been presented at Bridgend Corporate Parenting Board (CPB). TGP Cymru agreed to produce a separate report specifically for the CPB which will ensure accurate and appropriate information about advocacy take-up within the Bridgend Care Experienced and Care Leaver population only is shared. The Advocacy team manager attended the Bridgend Corporate Parenting Pledge event in March. We made the promise that:

“Care experienced children and young people in Bridgend, along with care leavers, are able to access good quality and responsive advocacy services at a time and place that suits them.”

This promise will be written into the new Bridgend Corporate Parenting Strategy.

TGP Cymru continue to be responsible for facilitating young people’s participation and consultation groups in Bridgend, now called Bridgend Youth Voice Forum, or ‘BYV’ Forum. The aim of the group is to allow care experienced young people and care leavers to have a voice in wider Bridgend forums, including the Bridgend Corporate Parenting Board.

Unfortunately, one of our team members has been struggling with a long-term illness, and as a result of medical advice has had to make the very difficult decision to resign with immediate effect. We will shortly be going to recruitment to cover this gap and address the increase in referrals we have recently observed.

Two new recruits, an Independent Visitor (IV) Coordinator and a casual Independent Professional Advocate (IPA) have joined the team in quarter four. The IV Coordinator is currently working 30 hours per week and is employed to coordinate the IV service across both Cwm Taf Morgannwg and Mid and West Wales. We are hopeful that by combining the posts, we will be able to pool resources and grow this service area.

In recent months, advocates have reported difficulty in obtaining feedback for young people when they have sent wishes and feelings reports to some social workers. On receipt of referral, social workers are made aware that the expectation is that the recipient of any wishes and feelings report will respond to the young person’s wishes and feelings and the advocate will then visit the young person again to discuss the response. The lack of response, as well as being frustrating for the young person, also adversely affects the capacity of the advocate as it can mean some young people’s cases are open longer than they need to be.

Young People’s Feedback

After meeting as a team to discuss making it as easy as possible for young people to evaluate the service they have received from TGP Cymru, we are in the process of implementing more options for young people to do so and we hope to see a further increase in the number of young people providing feedback after a slight increase in forms received in quarter four.

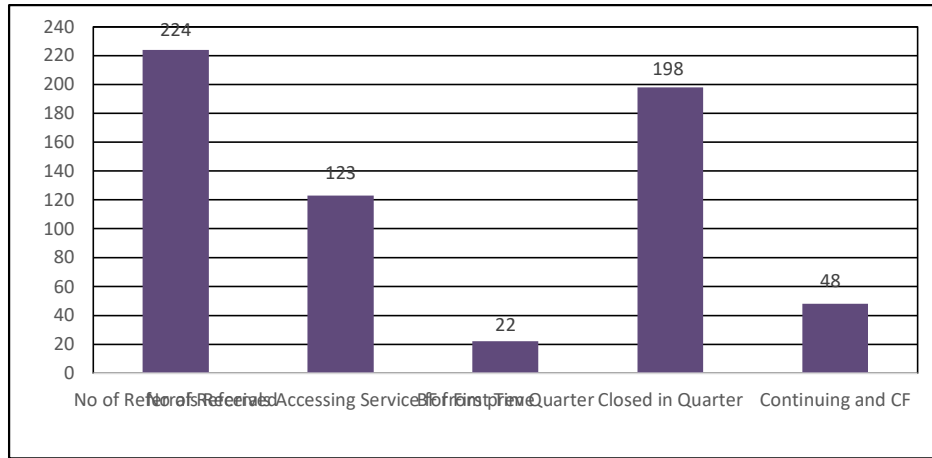
Young people can scan a QR code which allows them to fill in a short questionnaire about the advocacy service on their own mobile phones. Advocates carry this code with them, and they are also sent to young people following the end of a piece of work. A paper copy of the feedback form is also sent by the Quality Assurance Officer at the end of a piece of work along with a Freepost envelope. Young people can either post the form, scan the code or take a picture of the filled in form and email or text it to the service. From quarter four on, advocates will also carry the Freepost envelopes with them in case a young person wants to fill in the form during the final or closing visit. Advocates are also encouraged to remind young people their thoughts and opinions about the service they receive are very important to TGP Cymru and they are welcome to share them in whichever way they feel comfortable.

Feedback from the 14 young people who completed the consultation forms throughout the year has been overwhelmingly positive with all 14 saying they would use the service again.

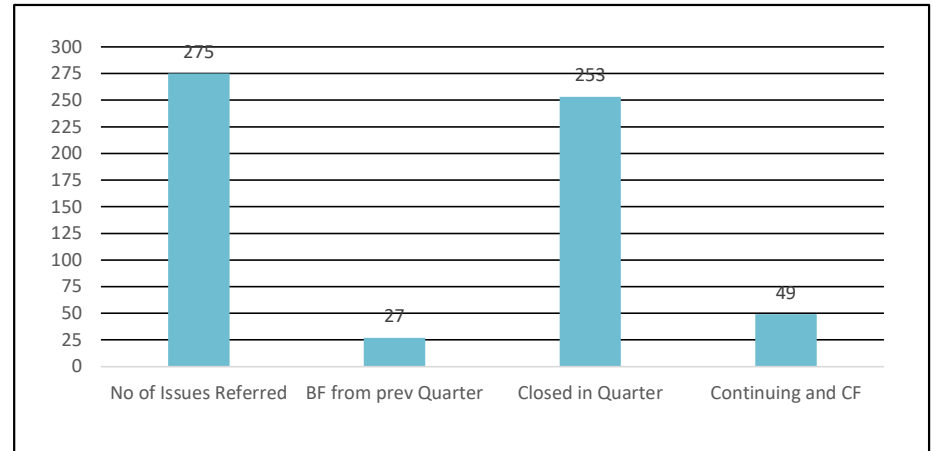
When explaining how advocacy made her feel more included in decisions, one young person said:

“I know my voice matters”

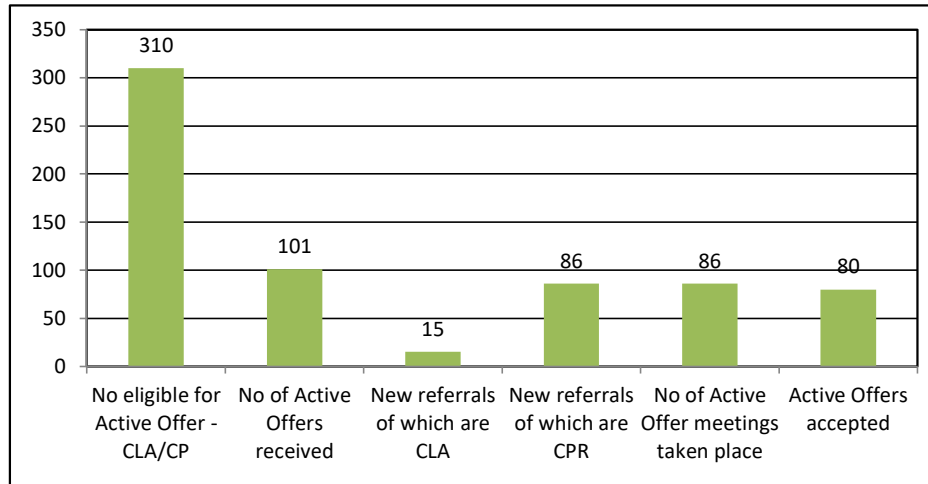
1a. Advocacy Cases - Young People - Issue Based Advocacy



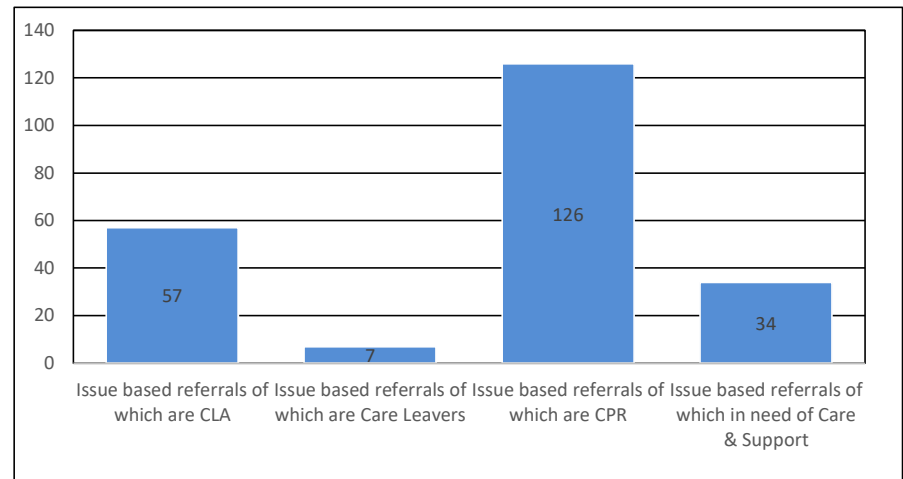
1b. Advocacy Cases - Interventions - Issue Based Advocacy



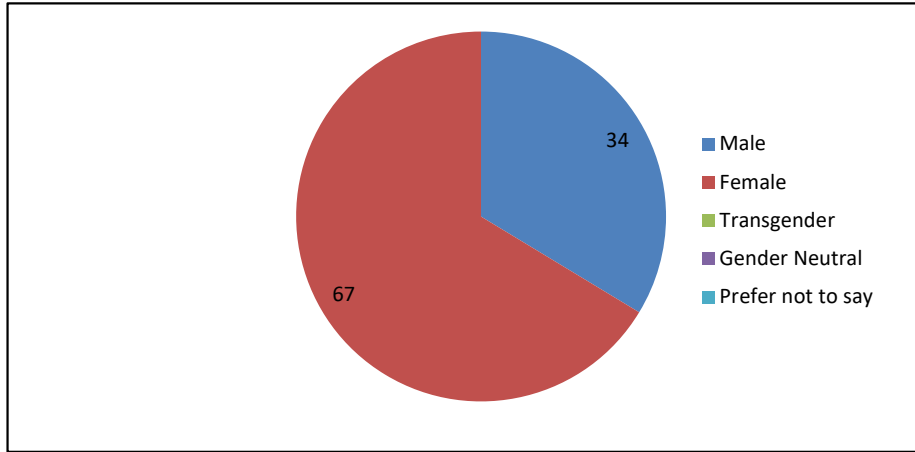
2a. Eligibility Criteria: Active Offer



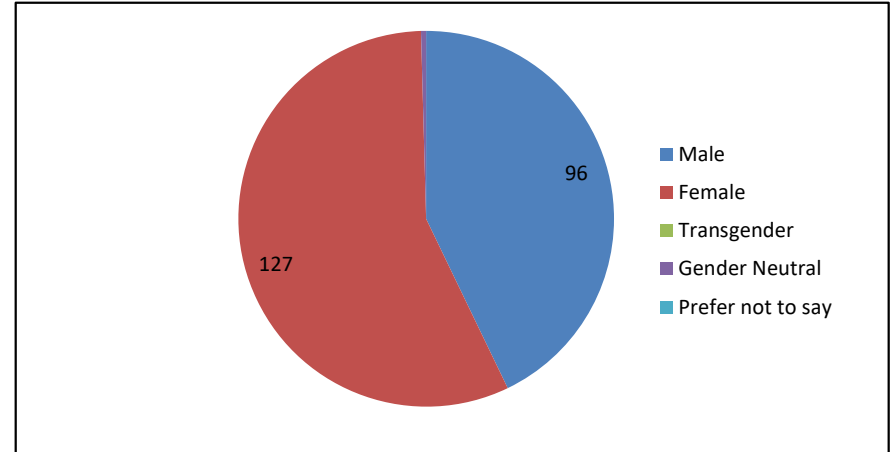
2b. Eligibility Criteria: Issue Based



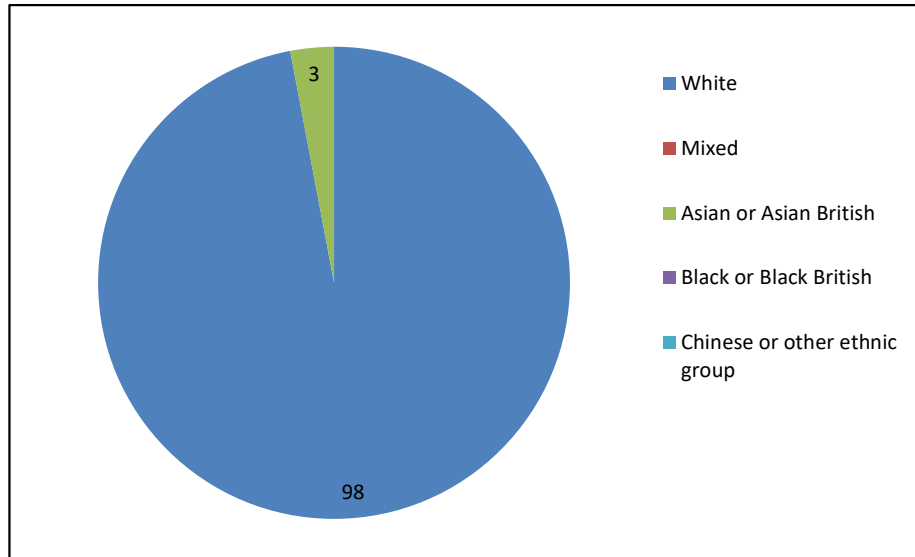
3a. Demographics: Gender - Active Offer



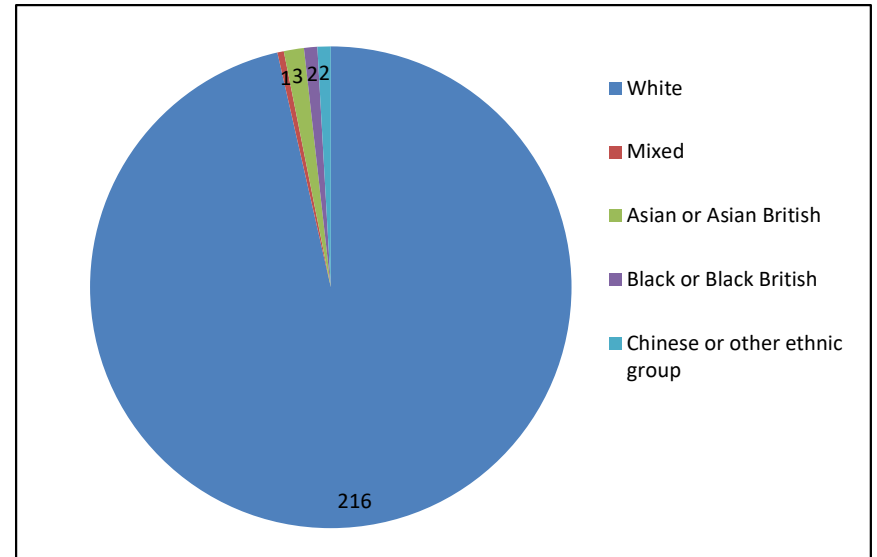
3b. Demographics: Gender - Issue Based



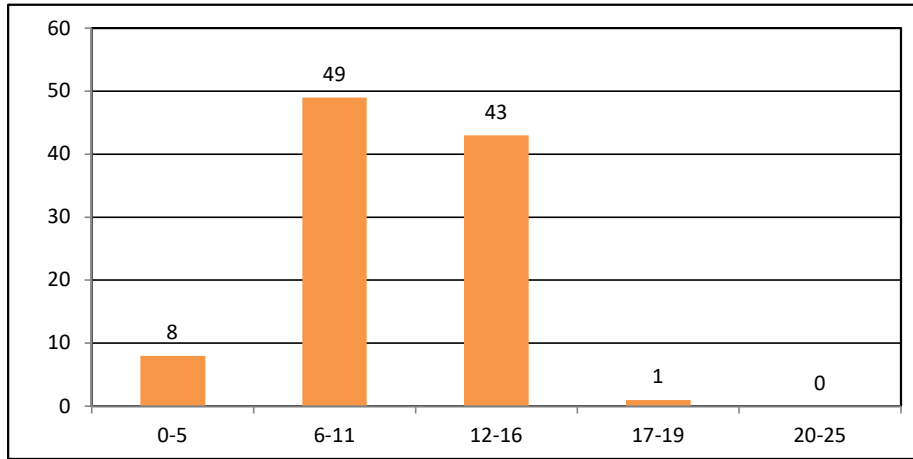
3c. Demographics: Ethnicity - Active Offer



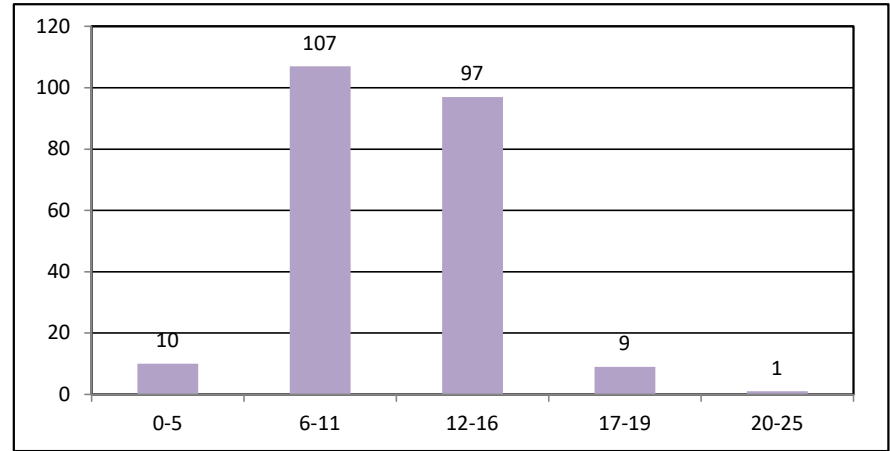
3d. Demographics: Ethnicity - Issue Based



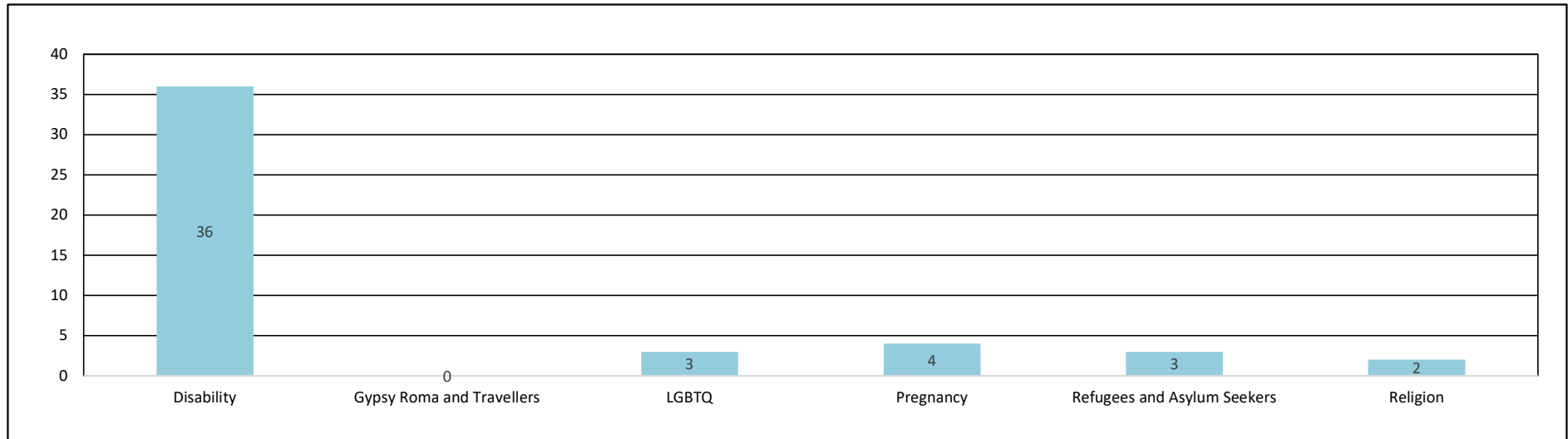
3e. Demographics: Age - Active Offer



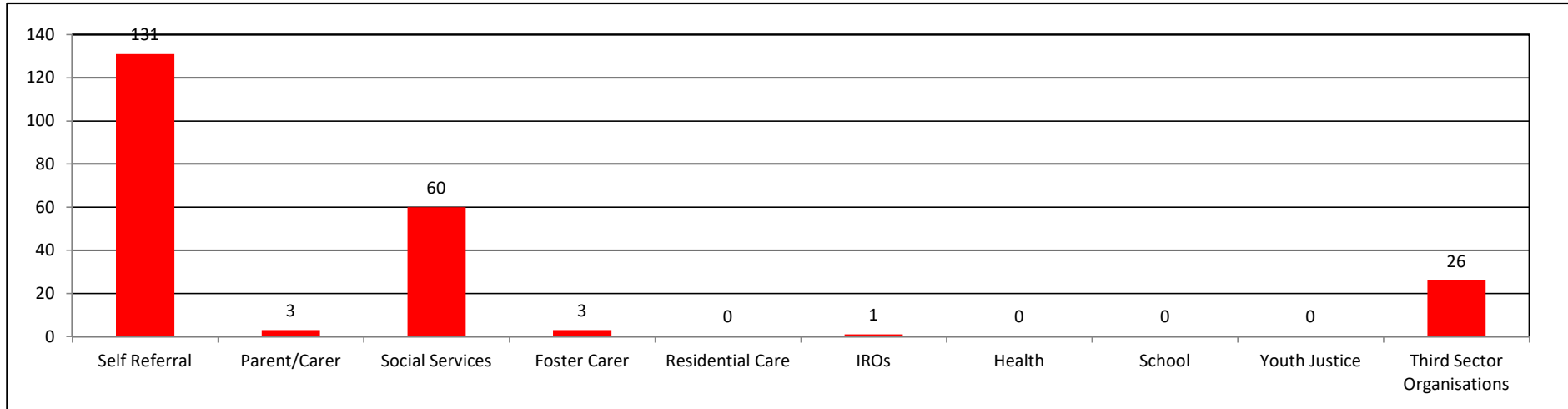
3f. Demographics: Age - Issue Based



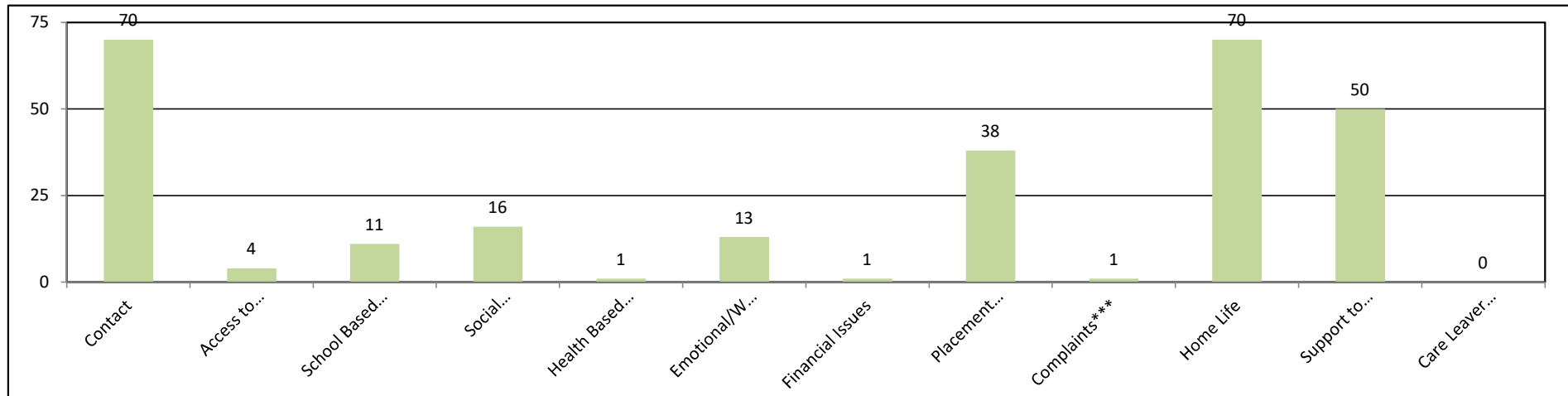
4. Protected Characteristics



5. Referral Source per young person - Issue Based only



6. Issues Presented

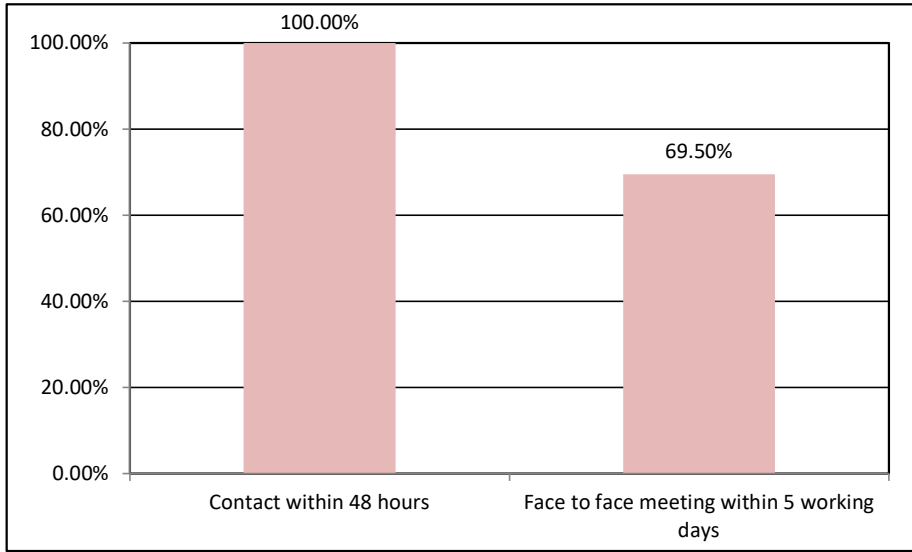


* School based issues including: SEN/ALN, exclusions, bullying, transport.

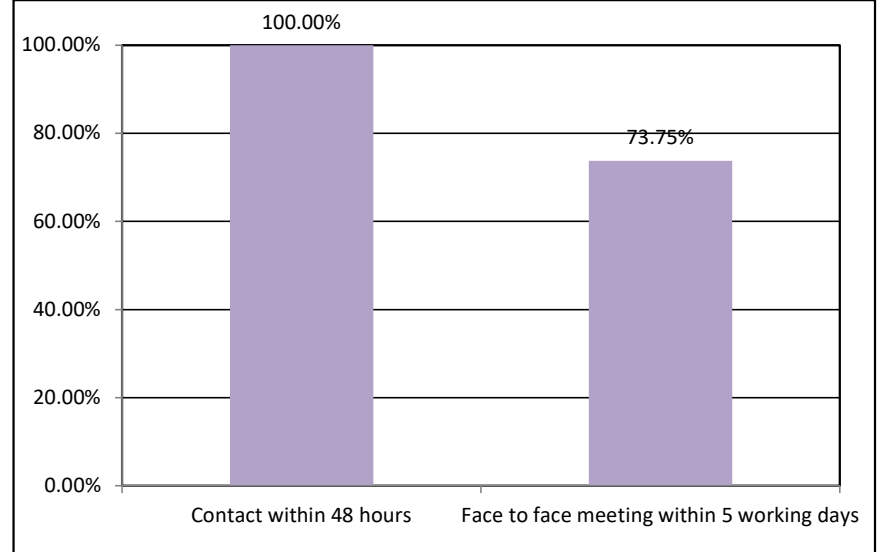
** Social Services based issues including: relationship with worker, care plan, service provided.

*** Complaints refer to any complaints made against statutory services, including Social Service, Police, Health, YJS

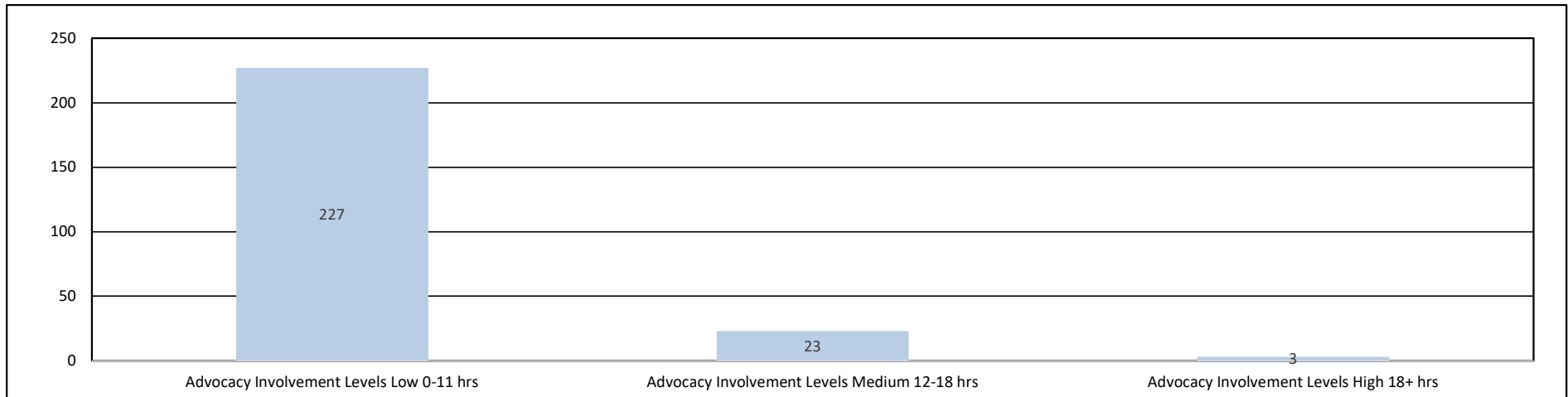
7. Service Performance - Active Offer



Service Performance - Issue Based



8. Level of Advocacy Intervention at point of Issue Closure



9.Outcomes: linked to The National Advocacy Standards & Outcomes Framework

		Comments
Outcome 1	Children and young people find good quality independent advocacy easily available and accessible.	<p>Across the two service areas, 72% of young people had contact with their advocate within five working days of referral.</p> <p>Advocates continue to support young people placed out of county, both virtually and in person if requested.</p> <p>This year we have produced and shared two presentations. The first aims to raise awareness of TGP Cymru services in general. The second focuses on the Active Offer, and aims to support front line practitioners, specifically social workers to promote the Active Offer to eligible young people and their carers. The team manager will continue to be available to attend social services team meetings over the next year.</p> <p>As soon as a new advocacy referral is received, our administrator posts a comprehensive advocacy pack to the child or young person. The pack includes lots of information about advocacy, our service and other support services available in Cwm Taf. The advocate is then able to follow up on this during their initial meeting and use the pack as a resource to introduce some of the key concepts such as advocacy and Children's Rights, directly with the child or young person. The young person is then able to keep the pack and have access to this information, even if they choose not to continue with advocacy support.</p>
Outcome 2	Children and young people have their privacy and confidences respected and their wellbeing safeguarded and protected.	<p>The vast majority of direct work with young people continues to take place during face-to-face visits. We ask the referrer to tell us where the young person would like to meet the advocate at the point of referral, and the advocate will always attempt to visit the young person at a place they have specified. This is usually in their home or at school, and advocates report many young people find it easier to share how they feel about their home life while at school, where privacy and confidentiality is often easier to maintain.</p> <p>This year, we have received multiple requests from referrers to take young people out of the home when a school visit is not an option, as they are aware that maintaining confidentiality in the family home may be difficult. If the advocate does take the young person out in their car, this is always fully risk assessed and the advocate will always confirm with the young person that this is what they want.</p> <p>We continue to offer virtual contact to those few young people who prefer to engage over the phone or via a video call. Due to capacity issues caused by long term sickness in the team, some phone calls have happened when, for example, an advocate has been unable to visit a young person before a meeting. This is always with the consent of the young person and a follow up face-to-face visit is always offered at a later date.</p> <p>This year, one safeguarding referral was made by an advocate.</p>

Outcome 3	Children and young people are valued for their diversity, treated with respect and all forms of discrimination against them are challenged.	<p>During this year, we have provided IBA to young people with a wide range of disabilities and learning needs including young people diagnosed with anxiety disorders, ADHD, and ASD.</p> <p>Two unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people have been referred for advocacy support this year, and advocates have supported them to receive the service in the language of their choice.</p> <p>Two pregnant young people have accessed IBA this year, as well as young people identifying as gender neutral, and LGBTQ.</p>
Outcome 4	Children and young people are empowered to take the lead in relation to advocacy services and their rights, wishes and feelings and championed.	<p>Young people consistently tell us they feel empowered to speak up for themselves following advocacy intervention and advocates always encourage young people to speak for themselves when they feel able to do so.</p> <p>When explaining why they felt more confident since receiving advocacy on their feedback form, one young person wrote: <i>"I feel confident about asking questions without being scared to" and "I now feel confident when I join meetings with social services. I can ask questions as well."</i></p> <p>One young person was supported to attend his CLA review virtually from his school. The advocate was able to arrange an appropriate space in the school and sat next to him while supporting him to share his wishes and feelings at the meeting.</p>
Outcome 5	Children and young people participate in the design, planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of advocacy services.	<p>The CTM Advocacy Service Participation Lead will continue to be responsible for keeping up to date with participation and consultation opportunities within Cwm Taf Morgannwg.</p> <p>All contracted staff have attended a training session in participation practices this year. The session was designed to bring staff up to date with and understand different participative practices and how important it is to include young people's feedback to further develop TGP Cymru.</p> <p>All young people receiving advocacy support will continue to be offered the opportunity to feedback to TGP Cymru to allow us to monitor the services provided and make improvements where needed. We are hopeful the changes we have made to the feedback process will result in more young people expressing their views about the service they have received.</p> <p>At the beginning of the year, several young people from the CTM region took part in a Welsh Government consultation regarding the transition from CAHMS to AMHS, facilitated by TGP Cymru.</p> <p>As detailed above, in the coming months we plan to consult with young people living in local authority community homes to capture their thoughts about visiting advocacy. We will also consult with BYV forum when the community home staff have returned the surveys. Following this consultation, we will, in partnership with managers of the homes make any necessary changes to ensure all young people are able to access an effective visiting advocacy service.</p>

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National Approach to Statutory Advocacy

Local Authority Report - Regional 2022 - 2023

Collated Annual Report

April 22 - March 23

Headline Report

During the year, across Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM), 476 young people accessed the issue-based advocacy (IBA) service, presenting with 573 issues. Some 236 young people were referred for Active Offer (AO).

Active Offer

According to information received from CTM, 752 children and young people became eligible for the AO during the year. A total of 236 children and young people were referred, meaning that if we assume those referred became eligible in the year, 32% of those eligible were referred. This compared to 19% of eligible young people being referred in the previous year.

Of the 236 referrals received, 203 AO meetings took place, and 178 young people accepted the AO and went on to receive IBA, 90 more than in the previous year.

Children and young people in the CP arena made up 78% of those referred for AO throughout the year, compared to 79% in the previous year. AO referrals for both Care Experienced young people and those in the CP arena more than doubled when compared to the previous year.

As in the previous year, this year, the majority of AO referrals were for females. AO referrals for both genders more than doubled compared to last year.

The majority of young people referred for AO were aged between 6 and 11, although increases in AO referrals were observed across all age categories.

Some 58% of young people referred for the AO received it within five working days of referral. Several visits were delayed following a long-term illness within the advocacy team. Most delays throughout the year happen when an advocate is unable to contact a parent or carer to arrange a visit. When this happens, the advocate will always contact the referrer for support in contacting the young person.

Issue Based Advocacy

For the second year running, we have observed an increase in young people accessing IBA with 476 young people being referred this year, compared to 372 in the previous year. 283 of the 476 young people referred for IBA this year were accessing advocacy for the first time, 75 more than in the previous year.

As in the previous year, most children and young people referred for IBA this year were in the CP arena and again made up over 50% of IBA referrals. We observed increases in referrals for all service areas including for young people subject to Care and Support plans and Care Leavers.

This year, we observed an increase in referrals for both males and females but as in the previous year, the majority of young people accessing IBA were female, making up 53% of IBA referrals, although the female share did decrease from 57% in the previous year.

Headline Report Cont'd

This year we observed increases in IBA referrals for all age groups. The majority of IBA referrals continue to be made for young people aged between six and 11, followed by those aged 12-16. The biggest increase in referrals was for those aged 12-16 when compared to the previous year.

'Self-referral' continues to be the most popular route into the IBA service, followed by social services referrals. Self-referrals are usually the result of young people accepting the Active Offer, or young people who have previously used the service contacting their advocate directly to access the IBA service for a new issue. This year, self-referrals increased, while social services referrals decreased. This can be explained by the increase of AO offers received this year, and we predict that in the previous year, some IBA referrals made by social workers should have been AO referrals. This year 47 IBA referrals were also made by third sector organisations, mostly TGP Cymru's Family Group Conferencing and Restorative Approaches Service.

This year, we implemented a change to the way we record how children and young people are supported at meetings in order to capture more data about what young people are sharing. For example, when a young person requests advocacy support at a meeting, instead of recording the issue as 'support at meetings' the advocate will record the issue as the main issue the young person would like to present at the meeting, such as contact, home life or access to services. We are still able to record advocacy attendance at meetings, but we now do this separately. This has resulted in a reduction of 'support at meetings' issues but will tell us more about what issues young people want to discuss both in and out of meetings.

This year, the most popular issue young people wanted support with was contact, this being raised 168 times, although if we combine issues relating to where young people live; placement and homelife, these were raised 204 times throughout the year. Due to the increase in contact issues, this year we have amended our recording system which has enabled us to access more detailed data about who young people want to spend their time with. In quarters three and four, most young people raising contact issues were requesting to spend more time with a family member, although a significant number of young people also requested to spend less time with a family member or stop seeing them altogether.

This year, 'support at meetings' was the main issue 105 times, however, advocates supported children and young people to share wishes and feelings at 318 meetings, 198 of which they attended all or part of in person. The meetings were made up of mostly Child Protection Case Conferences, Core Group meetings, CLA Reviews and Family Group Meetings. During the year, 79% of young people had contact with their advocate within five working days of the IBA referral being made.

Residential Visiting Advocacy (RVA)

Face-to-face visiting advocacy continues in RCT and Bridgend on a monthly basis.

We are currently in the process of conducting a review of our RVA service and have sent out surveys to all LA community homes in CTM. The surveys focus on RVA service promotion as well as asking more general questions about systems the homes already have in place to support young people to raise issues and complaints, as well as to share positive experiences. When the surveys have been returned, we plan on consulting with young people before making appropriate changes to ensure the RVA service is working as effectively as possible for young people living in community homes across Cwm Taf.

More detail regarding RVA is available in individual LA reports.

Service Information

CAFCASS and the Advocacy Providers have recently developed a joint protocol, which provides a framework to encourage a strong working relationship between advocates and guardians, explaining the differences in roles and responsibilities alongside examples of shared principles. A short event to launch the protocol was held in January and attended by the Advocacy team manager as well as TGP Cymru's Director of Advocacy Services.

Advocacy quarterly progress reports have been presented at Corporate Parenting Boards (CPB) in Bridgend and RCT. TGP Cymru agreed to produce a separate report specifically for the CPB which will ensure accurate and appropriate information about advocacy take-up within the Care Experienced and Care Leaver population only is shared.

Further detail about events attended in quarter four, including panels, and promotional visits, can be found in individual LA reports.

Unfortunately, one of our team members has been struggling with a long-term illness, and as a result of medical advice has had to make the very difficult decision to resign with immediate effect. We will shortly be going to recruitment to cover this gap and address the increase in referrals we have recently observed.

Two new recruits, an Independent Visitor (IV) Coordinator and a casual Independent Professional Advocate (IPA) have joined the team in quarter four. The IV Coordinator is currently working 30 hours per week and is employed to coordinate the IV service across both Cwm Taf Morgannwg and Mid and West Wales. We are hopeful that by combining the posts, we will be able to pool resources and grow this service area.

In recent months, advocates have reported difficulty in obtaining feedback for young people when they have sent wishes and feelings reports to some social workers. On receipt of the referral, social workers are made aware that the expectation is that the recipient of any wishes and feelings report will respond to the young person's wishes and feelings and the advocate will then visit the young person again to discuss the response. The lack of response, as well as being frustrating for the young person, also adversely affects the capacity of the advocate as it can mean some young people's cases are open longer than they need to be.

Young People's Feedback

After meeting as a team to discuss making it as easy as possible for young people to evaluate the service they have received from TGP Cymru, we are in the process of implementing more options for young people to do so and we hope this will translate into an increase in the number of young people providing feedback over the next year.

Young people can scan a QR code which allows them to fill in a short questionnaire about the advocacy service on their own mobile phones. Advocates carry this code with them, and they are also sent to young people following the end of a piece of work. A paper copy of the feedback form is also sent by the Quality Assurance Officer at the end of a piece of work along with a Freepost envelope. Young people can either post the form, scan the code or take a picture of the filled in form and email or text it to the service. From quarter four on, advocates will also carry the Freepost envelopes with them in case a young person wants to fill in the form during the final or closing visit.

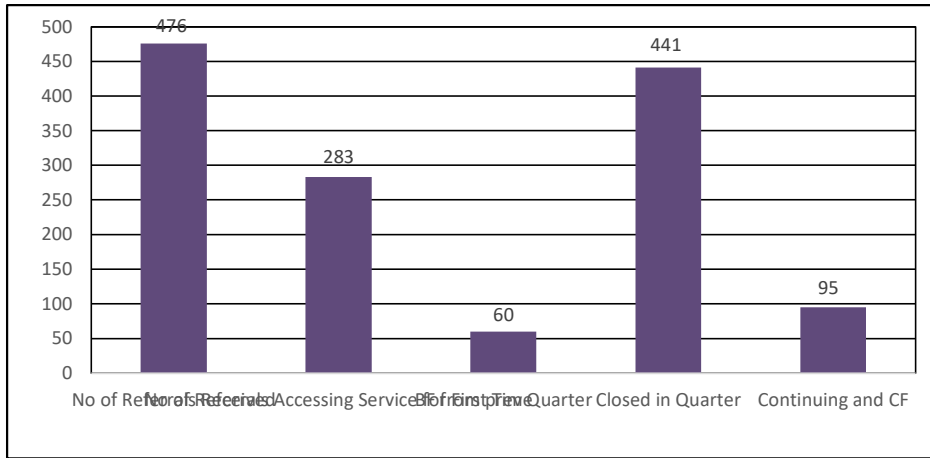
Advocates are also encouraged to remind young people their thoughts and opinions about the service they receive are very important to TGP Cymru and they are welcome to share them in whichever way they feel comfortable.

Feedback from the 39 young people who completed the consultation forms throughout the year has been overwhelmingly positive.

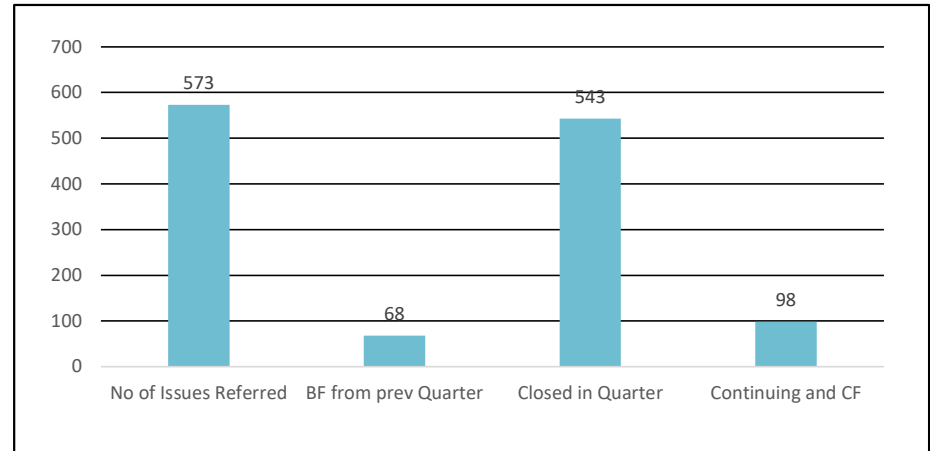
When explaining how advocacy made her feel more included in decisions, one young person said:

'Because advocacy showed me I should be'.

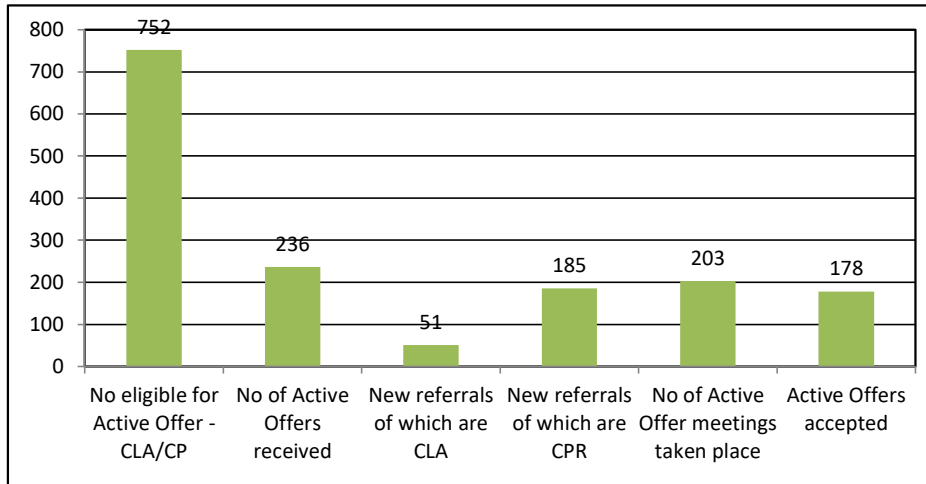
1a. Advocacy Cases - Young People - Issue Based Advocacy



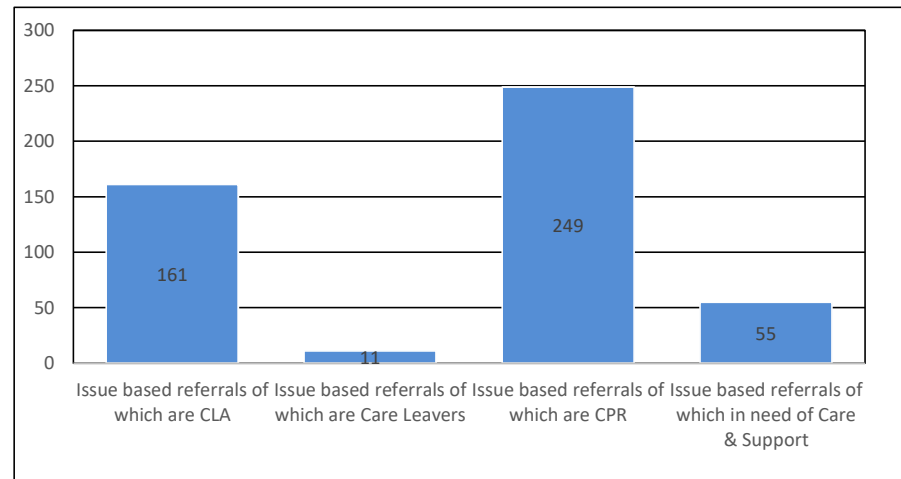
1b. Advocacy Cases - Interventions - Issue Based Advocacy



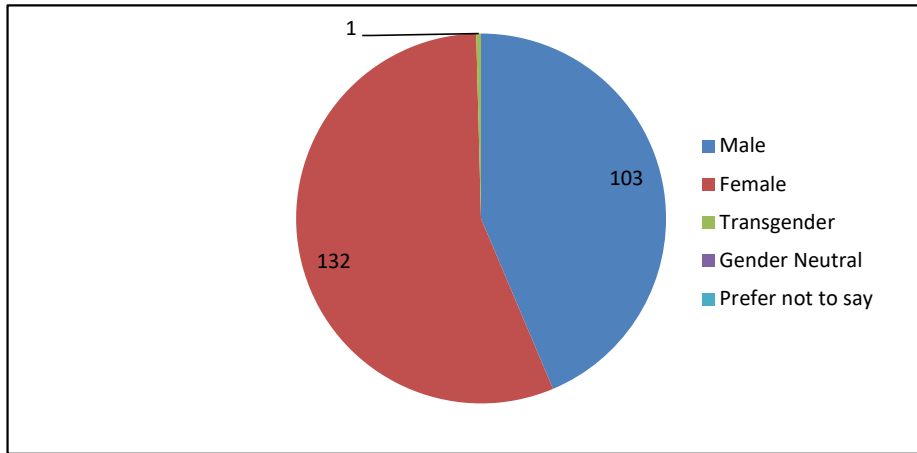
2a. Eligibility Criteria: Active Offer



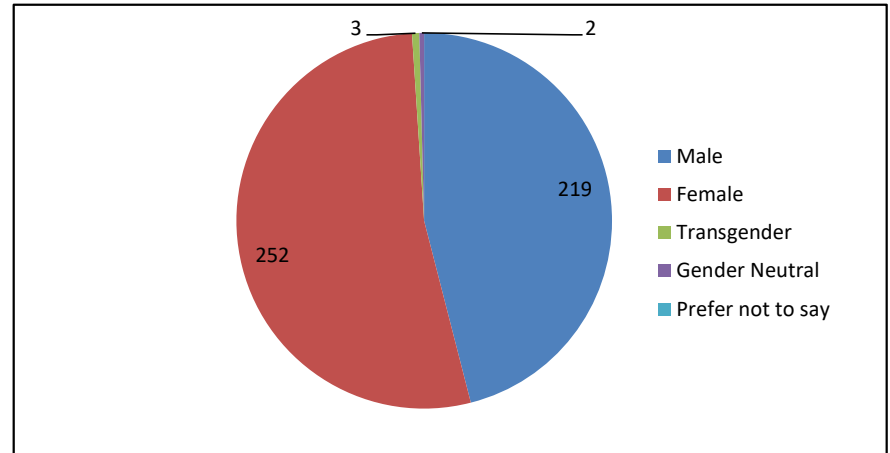
2b. Eligibility Criteria: Issue Based



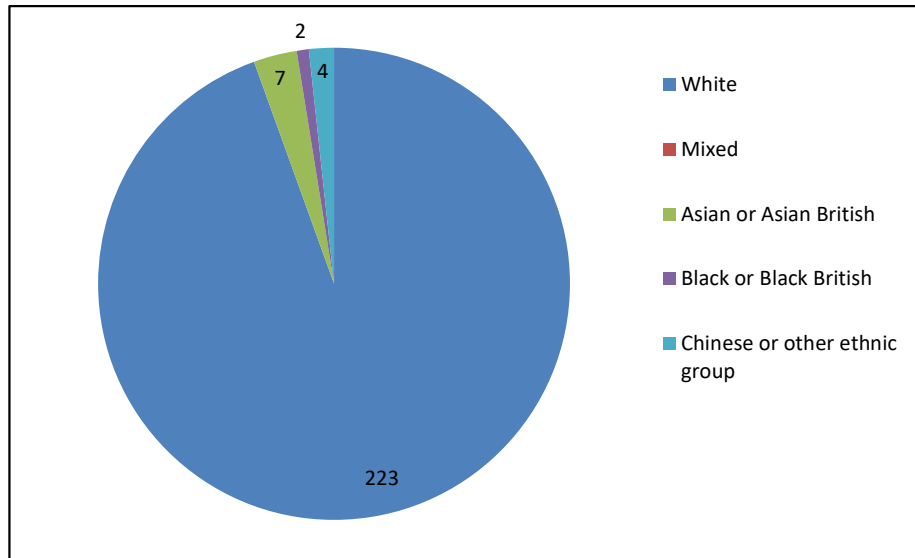
3a. Demographics: Gender - Active Offer



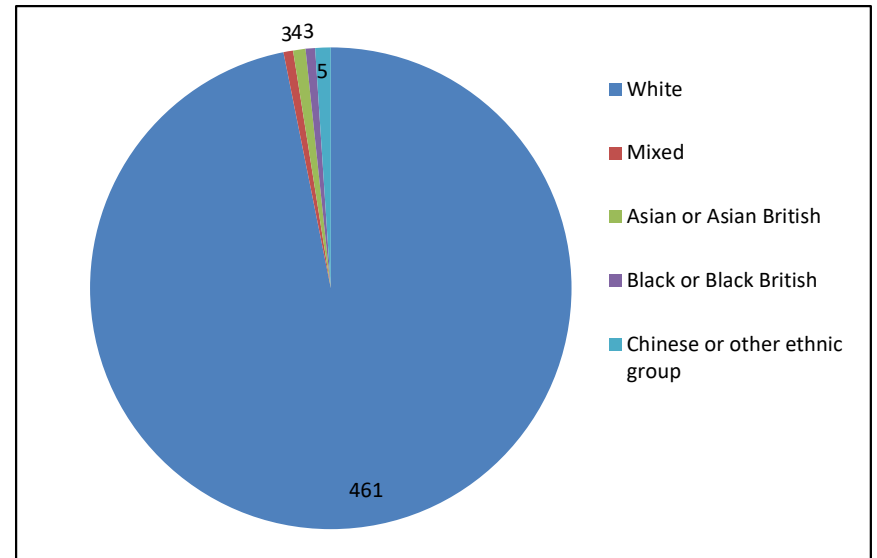
3b. Demographics: Gender - Issue Based



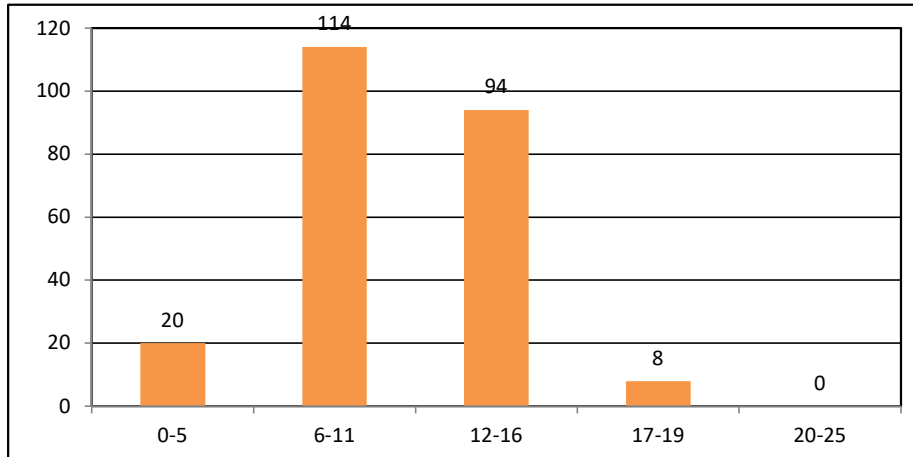
3c. Demographics: Ethnicity - Active Offer



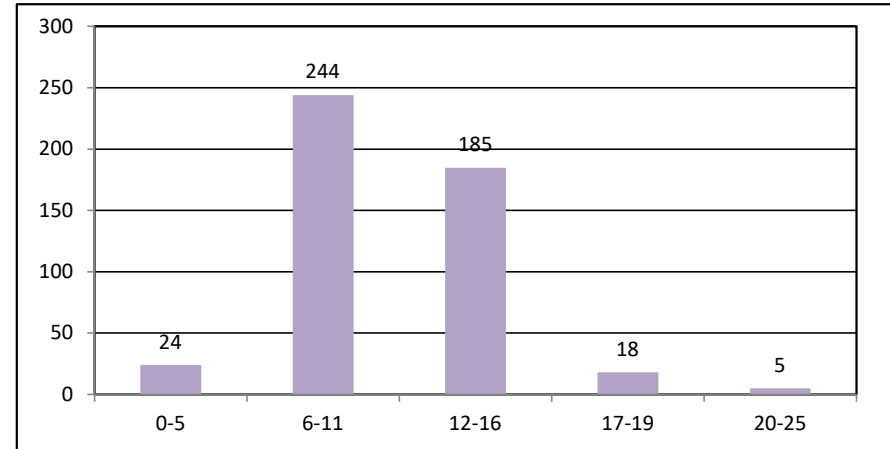
3d. Demographics: Ethnicity - Issue Based



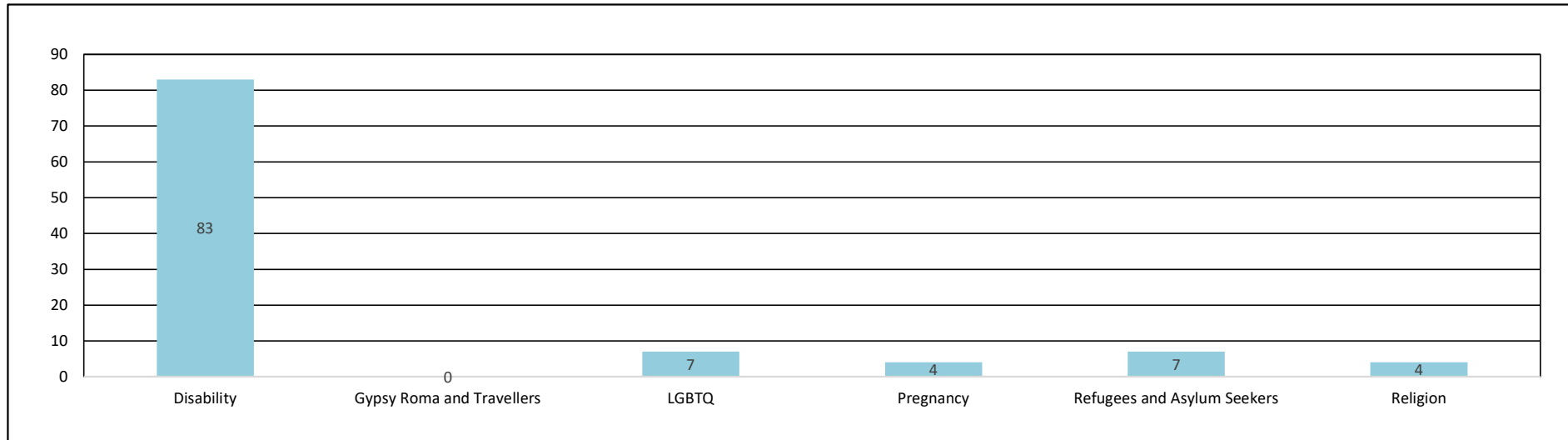
3e. Demographics: Age - Active Offer



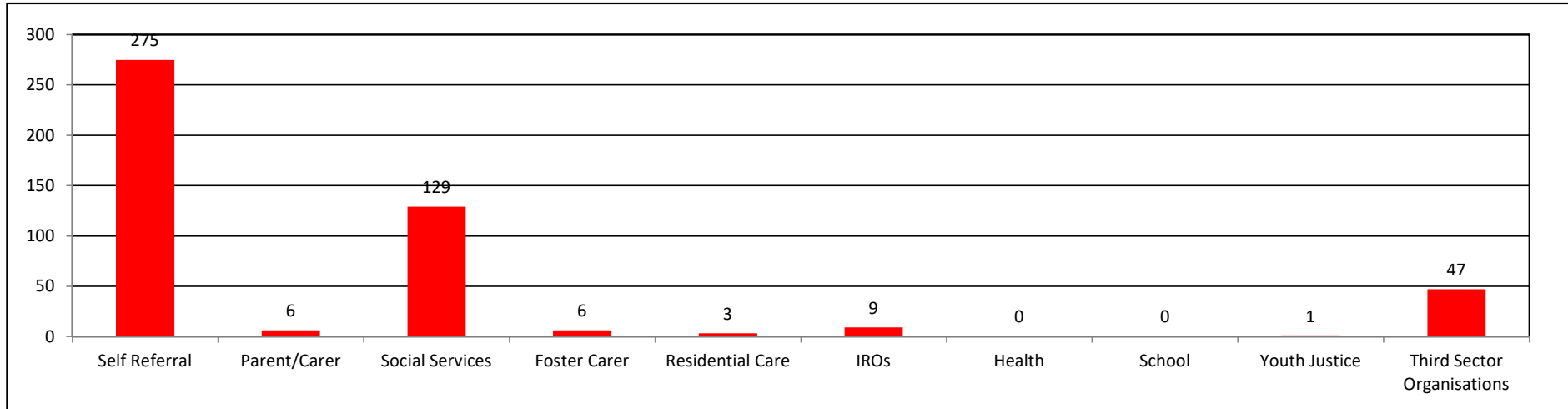
3f. Demographics: Age - Issue Based



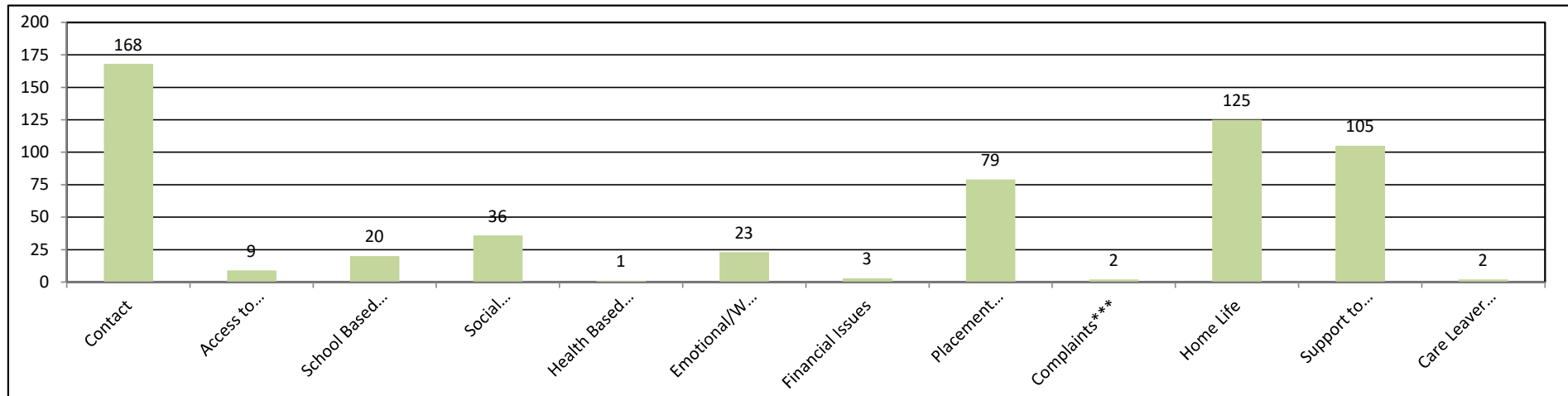
4. Protected Characteristics



5. Referral Source per young person - Issue Based only



6. Issues Presented

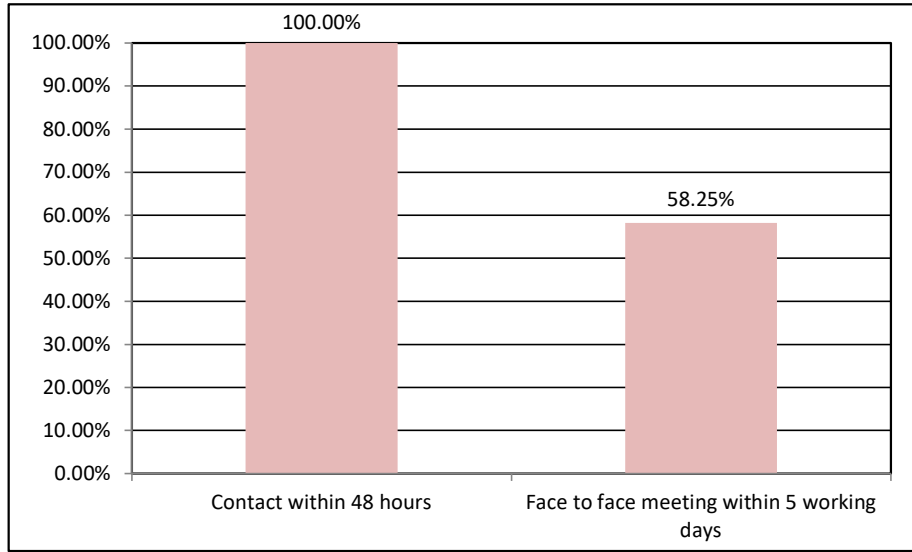


* School based issues including: SEN/ALN, exclusions, bullying, transport.

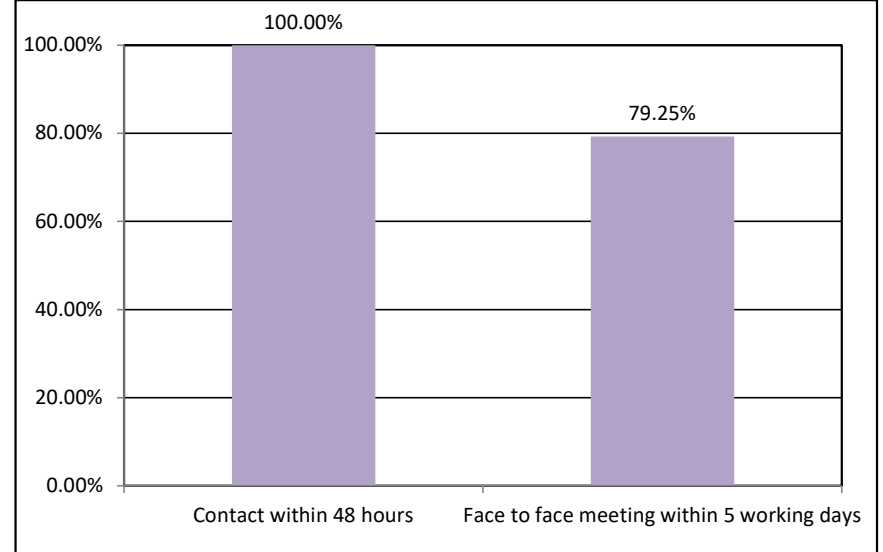
** Social Services based issues including: relationship with worker, care plan, service provided.

*** Complaints refer to any complaints made against statutory services, including Social Service, Police, Health, YJS

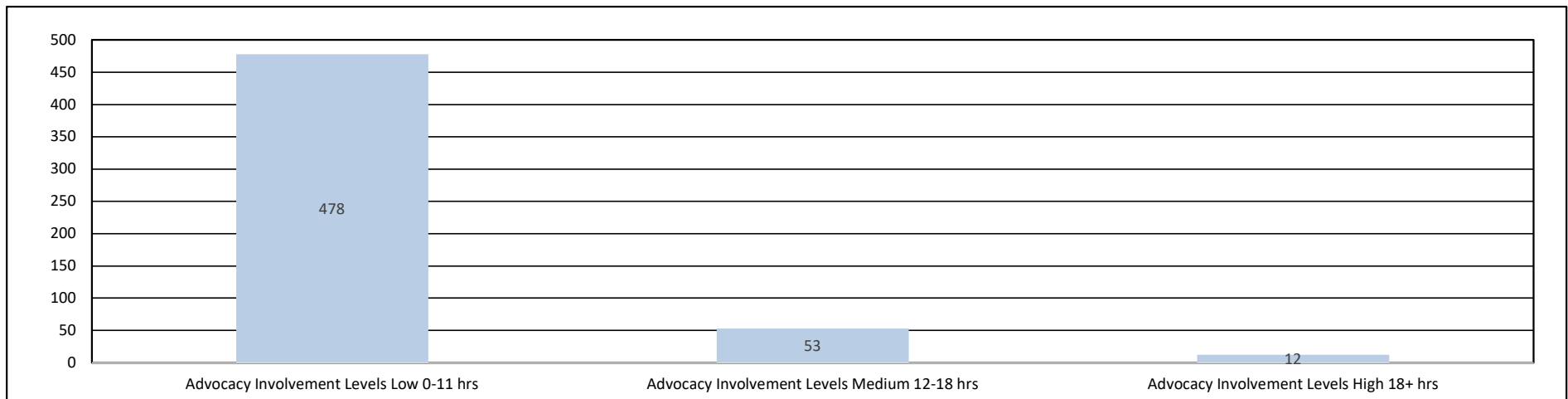
7. Service Performance - Active Offer



Service Performance - Issue Based



8. Level of Advocacy Intervention at point of Issue Closure



9.Outcomes: linked to The National Advocacy Standards & Outcomes Framework

		Comments
Outcome 1	Children and young people find good quality independent advocacy easily available and accessible.	<p>Across the two service areas, 72% of young people had contact with their advocate within five working days of referral.</p> <p>Advocates continue to support young people placed out of county, both virtually and in person if requested. This year we have produced and shared two presentations. The first aims to raise awareness of TGP Cymru services in general. The second focuses on the Active Offer, and aims to support front line practitioners, specifically social workers to promote the Active Offer to eligible young people and their carers. The team manager will continue to be available to attend social services team meetings over the next year.</p> <p>As soon as a new advocacy referral is received, our administrator posts a comprehensive advocacy pack to the child or young person. The pack includes lots of information about advocacy, our service and other support services available in Cwm Taf. The advocate is then able to follow up on this during their initial meeting and use the pack as a resource to introduce some of the key concepts such as advocacy and Children's Rights, directly with the child or young person. The young person is then able to keep the pack and have access to this information, even if they choose not to continue with advocacy support.</p>
Outcome 2	Children and young people have their privacy and confidences respected and their wellbeing safeguarded and protected.	<p>The vast majority of direct work with young people continues to take place during face-to-face visits. We ask the referrer to tell us where the young person would like to meet the advocate at the point of referral, and the advocate will always attempt to visit the young person at a place they have specified. This is usually in their home or at school, and advocates report many young people find it easier to share how they feel about their home life while at school, where privacy and confidentiality is often easier to maintain.</p> <p>This year, we have received multiple requests from referrers to take young people out of the home when a school visit is not an option, as they are aware that maintaining confidentiality in the family home may be difficult. If the advocate does take the young person out in their car, this is always fully risk assessed and the advocate will always confirm with the young person that this is what they want.</p> <p>We continue to offer virtual contact to those few young people who prefer to engage over the phone or via a video call. Due to capacity issues caused by long term sickness in the team, some phone calls have happened when, for example, an advocate has been unable to visit a young person before a meeting. This is always with the consent of the young person and a follow up face-to-face visit is always offered at a later date.</p>

Outcome 3	Children and young people are valued for their diversity, treated with respect and all forms of discrimination against them are challenged.	<p>During this year, we have provided IBA to young people with a wide range of disabilities and learning needs including young people diagnosed with anxiety disorders, ADHD, and ASD.</p> <p>Six unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people have been referred for advocacy support this year, and advocates have supported them to receive the service in the language of their choice.</p> <p>Two pregnant young people have accessed IBA this year.</p> <p>Young people identifying as transgender, gender neutral, and LGBTQ have also accessed IBA services this year.</p>
Outcome 4	Children and young people are empowered to take the lead in relation to advocacy services and their rights, wishes and feelings and championed.	<p>Young people consistently tell us they feel empowered to speak up for themselves following advocacy intervention and advocates always encourage young people to speak for themselves when they feel able to do so.</p> <p>When explaining why they felt more confident since receiving advocacy on their feedback form, one young person wrote:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"I feel confident about asking questions without being scared to" and "I now feel confident when I join meetings with social services. I can ask questions as well."</i></p> <p>Several young people have been supported to attend and speak in their social services meetings throughout the year. More information about how advocates support young people's involvement in their meetings is available in individual LA reports.</p>
Outcome 5	Children and young people participate in the design, planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of advocacy services.	<p>The CTM Advocacy Service Participation Lead will continue to be responsible for keeping up to date with participation and consultation opportunities within Cwm Taf Morgannwg.</p> <p>All contracted staff have attended a training session in participation practices this year. The session was designed to bring staff up to date with and understand different participative practices and how important it is to include young people's feedback to further develop TGP Cymru.</p> <p>All young people receiving advocacy support will continue to be offered the opportunity to feedback to TGP Cymru to allow us to monitor the services provided and make improvements where needed. We are hopeful the changes we have made to the feedback process will result in more young people expressing their views about the service they have received.</p> <p>At the beginning of the year, several young people from the CTM region took part in a Welsh Government consultation regarding the transition from CAHMS to AMHS, facilitated by TGP Cymru.</p> <p>More information about TGP Cymru participation and consultation work is available in individual LA reports.</p>