

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

03 NOVEMBER, 2009

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - CHILDREN

QUALIFICATIONS ACHIEVED BY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2008/2009

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 To inform the Committee as to progress made over the last three years in relation to qualifications achieved by looked after children who have reached the age of 16 years, with particular reference to 2008/9.

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

- 2.1 Looked after children are a key responsibility for the Council as corporate parents; this connects to the corporate theme of "Young Voices".

3. Background.

- 3.1 It is well-known that looked after children do less well than their peers in terms of educational attainment and are less likely to progress into further education or training. There are a range of reasons for this but, in general, where a child is failing at an early stage of their education, not attending school regularly, with little support and encouragement at home, they will do less well at later stages. Children become looked after often as a last resort and many are already disengaged with education. It is a challenge for all agencies to raise standards and ensure that these young people regain an interest in education and achieve their potential in terms of educational outcomes.
- 3.2 In Bridgend, the LACE (Looked After Children in Education) team supports schools to maintain looked after children in the most appropriate setting and works with school staff to target support to looked after children through personal education plans (PEPs).

4. Current situation / proposal.

- 4.1 In the 2008/09 academic year, there were 15 looked after children at the end of key stage four age range compared to 23 in 2007/8 and 27 in 2006/7. Of these 15 children, 1 did not sit GCSE or entry level examinations; five children gained 18 grade A - C passes between them and ten gained 46 passes at grade D - G. In addition, a range of other qualifications through courses were gained, ranging from alcohol and drug awareness through personal fitness and bullying to applying for jobs and safety in the workplace (see Appendix 1).

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- 4.2 In 2008/9, only one young person left school with no qualifications of any kind, for specific reasons, compared with four and two in 2006/7 and 2007/8 respectively. In

percentage terms, 14% left without qualifications against 57% in 2006/7 (see Appendix 2).

- 4.3 The improved outcomes shown may partly be attributed to the additional RAISE Welsh Assembly Grant and the post of the RAISE Coordinator, who works intensively with our Key Stage 4 looked after children to achieve greater educational outcomes. The funding has enabled us to facilitate educational support for our Looked After Children, of the sort that parents would normally provide for their children, at Key Stage 4 and particularly when they are approaching crucial examinations at 16. There is comprehensive data available for on this cohort and the RAISE progress report (2008-09) – 3rd year of funding is available if required.
- 4.4 The funding will continue to be made available until September 2011 following the adherence to the terms and conditions of the grant e.g. submission of initial proposal for 2008-11, progress reports and data, after which the Council will be expected to look at developing sustainable approaches to supporting our looked after children and tie-in with the Welsh Assembly Government's forthcoming strategy and legislation on Vulnerable Children, including Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

A Wales Audit Office (WAO) study on educational outcomes for looked after children has concluded that Bridgend's self-assessment is accurate across all dimensions. The Directorate is in the process of developing an action plan to progress areas of practice that require improvement. The final WAO report is not yet available but will be presented to the Committee as soon as it is published, together with Bridgend's action plan.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

5.1 None.

6. Legal Implications.

6.1 None.

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 None.

8. Recommendation.

8.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes this report on educational attainment for looked after children in 2008/9.

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Background documents

None.