

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE**

**2 November 2010**

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - CHILDREN**

**Report on qualifications and performance achieved by looked after children for the academic year 2009/10**

**1. Purpose of Report.**

To inform the Committee on progress made over the past 3 years in relation to qualifications achieved by looked after children who have reached the age of 16 years, with particular reference to 2009/10.

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

Looked After Children are a key responsibility for the Council as corporate parents and connect with the theme 'Children Today Adults Tomorrow.'

Corporate Parenting supports the following corporate priorities:

- Children today, adults tomorrow,
- Supporting out disadvantaged communities,
- Creating learning communities;

and is connected to the following community strategy themes:

- Young Voices,
- Healthy Living,
- New Opportunities.

### **3. Background.**

It is well researched and documented that looked after children underachieve compared to 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 generally will do less well at later stages. Children become looked after often as a last resort and many are already disengaged with education. The education of our children and young people who are looked after is seen as vitally important by all who are concerned with outcomes and it remains a challenge for all agencies to raise standards and ensure that these children and young people regain an interest in education and achieve their full potential.

The Safeguarding and Family Support Service is required to provide data to the Welsh Assembly Government to evidence its performance against a number of key indicators. Within the service a number of these performance indicators are monitored on a monthly basis to ensure compliance and track progress as well as identification of any areas for further attention. In Bridgend, the LACE (Looked After Children in Education) team has become well established and is able to work with both schools and social workers on the issues relating to barriers to achievement for Bridgend's looked after children.

### **4. Current situation / proposal.**

- 4.1** For the academic year 2009/10, there were 19 looked after children who were at the end of Key Stage 4 compared to 15 in 2008/09 and 23 in 2007/08.

Of these 19 young people, 2 did not sit any recognised qualifications. One of these young people was placed in residential care outside of the authority and the other failed to re-engage in education after his long term foster placement broke down. Seven young people gained 20 grade B to C passes between them and 2 gained a GCSE at D grade. Four young people gained grades between E to G. 2 gained entry level GCSE's and 2 gained recognised accredited qualification.

In addition 7 of these young people achieved a range of other recognised qualifications, ranging from NVQ's Level 1, OCN National First Award and BTEC 1<sup>st</sup> Diploma in Public Services and City & Guilds Level 1.

'The People and Work Unit' were commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) to conduct the external evaluation of the RAISE Grant for the Education of Looked after Children. The RAISE Grant has been made available to local authorities from 2006 and will cease in September 2011. The grant remains focused on improving the outcomes for and providing support to looked after children at Key Stage 4. The outcome of the evaluation indicated that Bridgend's relative performance in terms of the attainment was favorable. The average GCSE point score within the authority for 2008/09 was markedly higher than the Welsh average which placed Bridgend in the 1<sup>st</sup> quartile. The average GCSE point score per looked after child within Bridgend has increased over the past three years.

A copy of this report and the Interim Report on the RAISE Grant November 2009 are included as appendices of this document.

- 4.2** Key Stage 2 results 2009/10 (01.04.09 – 31.03.10)  
The number of looked after children eligible for assessment at the end of Key Stage 2 was 13. The number of children achieving the key stage 2 core subject indicator was 4. The percentage of children achieving the Key Stage 3 core subject indicator was 23.08%. The corporate figure for all pupils was 78.8%.
- 4.3** Key Stage 3 results 2009/10 (01.04.09 – 31.03.10)  
The number of looked after children eligible for assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 was 10. The number of children achieving the Key Stage 3 core subject indicator was 4. The percentage of children achieving the Key Stage 3 core subject indicator was 40%. The corporate figure for all pupils was 58.8%.
- 4.4** Attendance  
The percentage attendance of looked after children in Primary school:  
01.04.08 to 31.03.09 88%.  
(Primary Attendance, Bridgend Ac Yr 07/08 – 93.3%)  
01.04.09 to 01.04.10 94.9%.  
(Primary Attendance, Bridgend Ac Yr 08/09 – 93.3%)  
  
The percentage attendance of looked after children in Secondary school:  
01.04.08 to 31.03.09 85%.  
(Secondary Attendance, Bridgend Ac Yr 07/08 – 91.1%)  
01.04.09 to 01.04.10 90%.  
(Secondary Attendance, Bridgend Ac Yr 08/09 – 91.3%)
- 4.5** Exclusions  
The percentage of looked after children who were permanently excluded from school:  
April to March 2008/09 0%

( 0.06% BCB, Ac Yr 07/08)  
April to March 2009/10            0%  
( 0.05% BCB, Ac Yr 08/09)

The average number of days spent out of school on fixed term exclusions:

April to March 2008/09            8.8%  
(0.05% of total possible days for all pupils in BCBC 07/08)  
April to March 2009/10            5.4%  
(0.06% of total possible days for all pupils in BCBC 08/09)

**4.6** Following the Estyn Inspection of Education, a few areas were identified as requiring further development, one of which being Para 83. “The authority could do more to help [*looked after children*] at key stage 3”. The post inspection plan to be submitted includes actions to respond to this and includes developing a protocol for KS2 -KS3 transition of looked after children in years 6 and 7 and establishing targeted support to help achieve the Core Subject indicator.

**4.7** WAO Education Study  
Following the WAO education study, the draft action plan has been completed to address issues identified in the self-assessment in relation to looked after children in Bridgend. A number of the actions identified are already being addressed through the newly developed LAC Education group which has already become a regular forum to monitor performance and ensure that the LA is meeting the needs of its looked after children and focus on areas of specific need to improve performance.

**5. Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules.**

None

**6. Equalities Impact Assessment**

None

**7. Financial Implications.**

None

**8. Recommendation.**

It is recommended that the Committee notes this report on educational attainment and outcomes for looked after children in 2009 – 2010.

**Hilary Anthony**  
**Corporate Director Children**  
**6<sup>th</sup> October 2010**

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**Background documents**

**Report 3.9.09 Qualifications achieved by looked after children for the academic year 2008/09.**

## Appendix 1

**Summary of findings from the RAISE database 2007/08: Bridgend (written by Hilary Hill, Policy Development Officer for Looked After Children's Education, Support for Learners Division, Welsh Assembly Government).**

### Introduction

The People and Work Unit (PWU) were commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) to conduct the external evaluation of the RAISE programme. Following our analysis of the RAISE database for 2007/08, the WAG requested that we produce a summary document for each individual Local Authority, presenting their performance within the national context. If read in conjunction with our Interim Report, Bridgend is local authority number 5. With this knowledge there is potential for Bridgend to consider benchmarking against the national standards. Local authority personnel are reminded that the information contained in the report and this performance letter are derived from local authority provided data which has not been independently verified. Further published data is available from Data Unit Wales ([www.dataunitwales.gov.uk](http://www.dataunitwales.gov.uk)).

### This summary

Using the RAISE data for looked after children in year 11 during 2007/08, and where possible, the average for 2006/07 and 2007/08, this summary document considers the relative performance of Bridgend's looked after children in a number of key areas including:

- Attainment;
- Attendance; and
- Fixed term exclusions.

The document also considers the impact of some of the key issues associated with growing up in care that contribute to the low educational attainment of many looked after children, It presents a national picture of benchmarking alongside the outcomes for looked after children in Bridgend in terms of:

- The percentage of looked after children with special educational needs; and,
- The number of care placements,

The data contained within this summary document has some limitations. The circumstances, needs and capabilities of looked after children vary. In one year, Local Authorities may have a very able group of looked after children, in another they may have a group with complex needs. This means that results often vary from year to year simply due to chance. This effect is likely to be particularly pronounced when there are small numbers of looked after children in each year group. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, we are confident

that the data presented in the report provides an indication of some of the key trends and issues relating to the attainment of looked after children.

## Attainment

The PWU conducted an analysis of the average GCSE point score per looked after child within Bridgend over a two year period and compared this with the national average for the same period.

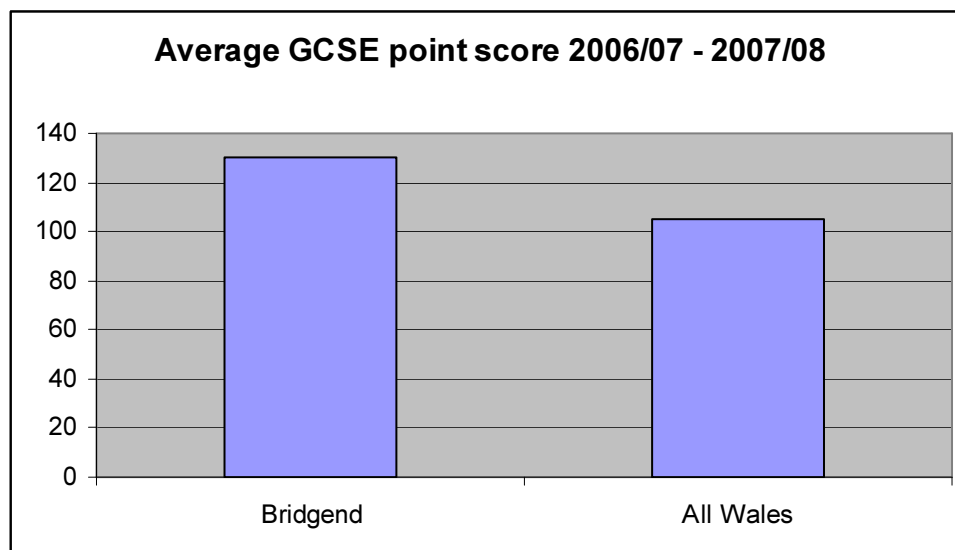


Chart 1 indicates that Bridgend's relative performance in terms of the attainment of looked after children is favourable. The average GCSE point score for looked after children within the authority is markedly higher than the Welsh average and places in the 1<sup>st</sup> quartile.

## Attendance

Due to inconsistencies in reporting for the database by all 22 local authorities, the PWU were unable to calculate the overall average number of sessions of education lost by looked after children across Wales for 2006/07 and 2007/08. However, because your authority completed the database we were able to calculate this figure for the majority of looked after children in Bridgend for this period.

**Table 1: Number of sessions of education lost by looked after children in Bridgend 2006/07 and 2007/08**

Year	Possible number of sessions of attendance	Actual number of sessions attended	Total number of sessions lost	Average number of sessions lost per looked after child
2006/07*	6084	4969	1115	61.9
2007/08*	7182	6237	945	37.8
<b>Overall</b>	<b>13266</b>	<b>11206</b>	<b>2060</b>	<b>47.9</b>

\* No data for 3 looked after children for 2006/07 and 2 looked after children for 2007/08



The average number of sessions of education lost by looked after children in Bridgend has dramatically decreased between 2006/07 and 2007/08. It is important to note that a high proportion of the non attendance may be due to the poor attendance of a small number of looked after children, which, when combined with the small number may skew the trend.

### **Fixed term exclusions**

Due to inconsistencies in reporting for the database by all 22 local authorities, the PWU were unable to calculate the overall average number of days school lost by looked after children due to fixed term exclusions across Wales for 2006/07 and 2007/08. However, because your authority completed the database, we were able to calculate this figure for the majority of looked after children in Bridgend for this period.

<b>Table 2: Number of days education lost by looked after children in Bridgend to fixed term exclusions</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total number of days lost to fixed term exclusions</b>	<b>Average number of days lost per looked after child to fixed term exclusions</b>
2006/07*	11	0.6
2007/08	14	0.5
<b>Overall</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>0.5</b>

\* No records for 1 looked after child

The average number of days lost per looked after child across 21 Local Authorities for 2007/08 was 1. Taken in this context, the average number of days lost per looked after child in Bridgend is lower. When considering the number of days of education lost to fixed term exclusions it is important to note that the figures may be the result of very few looked after children receiving a high number of days' exclusion. In addition, fixed term exclusions recorded on the database may pre date a child's entry into care.

### **The impact of special educational needs upon the attainment of looked after children**

The high proportion of looked after children with special educational needs is often cited as one of the reasons for the low levels of attainment amongst this group. Nevertheless, in our analysis of the database, the PWU identifies that having a high proportion of looked after children with special educational needs within a local authority was not necessarily determinative of poor performance. Table 3 consider the average GCSE point score for looked after children in Bridgend for 2007/08 in comparison to the average GCSE point score for looked after children across 21 Local Authorities and places these figures alongside the percentage with special educational needs and the percentage who have a statement for educational need.

**Table 3: Average GCSE point score for looked after children 2007/08 and percentage of looked after children with special educational needs and statements of special educational needs 2007/08**

Local Authority	Average GCSE point score for looked after children 2007/08	Percentage of looked after children with special educational needs	Percentage of looked after children with statements of special educational needs
Bridgend	131	63	22
Overall	111	48	25

Table 3 indicates that Bridgend had a significantly higher percentage of looked after children with special educational needs in 2007/08 and that the average GCSE point score for looked after children in Bridgend is higher than the average. However, when considering the impact of special educational needs, one must consider the severity of these needs, and Bridgend has a lower than average percentage of looked after children with statements of educational needs, children who are more likely to have the most complex needs. Equally, this difference may partly be accounted by difference in statementing procedures across Local Authorities.

**The impact of the number of care placements upon the attainment of looked after children**

Where there was available data, the PWU conducted an analysis of the average GCSE point score for looked after children according to the number of care placements. Data on the number of care placements listed was available for 19 Local Authorities and 333 of 421 looked after children for 2007/08.

**Table 4: Number of care placements an the average GCSE point score for looked after children**

Number of care placements	Number of looked after children	Average GCSE point score
1 care placement	197	140
2 or more	136	102
3 or more	48	83
4 or more	26	55

Table 4 indicates that the number of care placements has significant impact upon the attainment of looked after children, although we must be mindful of the small numbers involved and using one year's data.

<b>Table 5: The percentage of looked after children with 1 care placement</b>	
<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Percentage with 1 care placement listed</b>
Bridgend	77
Overall	59

Table 5 indicates that Bridgend has significantly higher levels of placement stability than the average across 19 authorities. This is likely to have a positive impact upon the attainment levels of looked after children within the authority.

### **Use of the RAISE database**

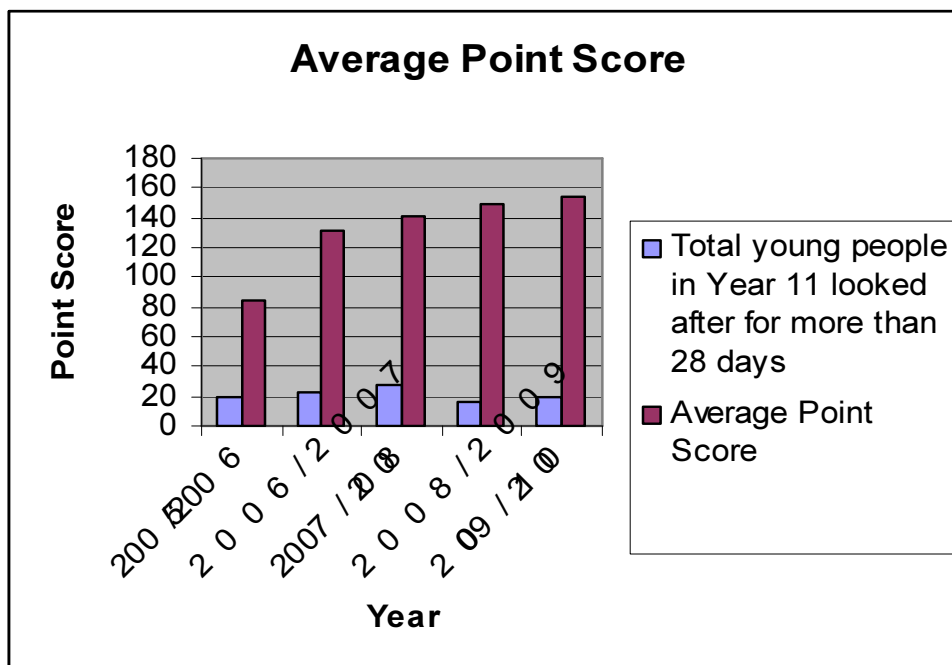
There were notable differences in the completion and use of the RAISE database across local authorities. In some cases, all relevant data was inputted, whilst in other a number of fields were incomplete. The database contains a range of data which may be useful when planning work with a cohort of looked after children. Effective use of the database can help ensure that support is tailored towards the characteristics and needs of a specific group of looked after children. For example, data on the stability of care and school placement, the proportion of looked after children with special educational needs, attendance, exclusions and the date of entry into care can all help in assessing the specific needs of particular cohort and inform the local authorities for appropriate resource allocation and assist them in planning services.

Understanding the specific needs of different cohorts of looked after children and tailoring support to meet those needs, cannot guarantee better outcomes, but it will help. Some looked after children have extremely complex needs, some may enter care late, and some may have last minute crises which makes supporting better outcomes difficult. Nevertheless, effective planning and more individualised approaches to support are very likely to contribute towards better academic outcomes for looked after children.

We hope Bridgend Local Authority will find the information here useful and informative for future planning of the services for looked after children.

### Average Point Score Comparison

YEAR	Total young people in Year 11 looked after for more than 28 days	Average Point Score	Total Point Score
2005/2006	19	83.6	1588
2006/2007	22	131.2	2886
2007/2008	27	140.4	3791
2008/2009	17	148.8	2529
2009/2010	19	153.8	2921.75



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## WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

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**Title:** Interim Report on the RAISE Grant for Looked After Children (2006-07 to 2007-08)

**Date:** 30<sup>th</sup> November 2009

**By:** Jane Hutt, Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

### **Introduction and Context**

The RAISE (Raising Attainment and Individual Standards in Education) programme, which I launched in April 2006, targets disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of young people. As part of this programme the Welsh Assembly Government has provided £1 million annually, to local authorities to promote the education of looked after children.

The grant was intended to enable educational support to be provided for looked after children, of the sort that parents would normally provide for their children, particularly when their children are approaching crucial examinations at the age of 16.

The vulnerability of looked after children is well known as is the fact that their educational achievement is well behind that of their peers. The RAISE grant was part of our approach to improve their educational achievement and develop long-term approaches with local authorities which would embed effective practices.

There is evidence that the RAISE grant for looked after children is making a difference to this vulnerable group's educational achievement, but we need to look at what specific elements of practice are making the most difference and ensure that good practice is shared and used across Wales. This is important to ensure that we make the most of public finance.

As part of the RAISE grant we asked local authorities to provide information on educational achievement and care placement for those in years 10 and 11. This represents a powerful source of information which we can use to ascertain what approaches make the most difference in raising the educational achievement of looked after children.

The interim report, produced by the external evaluators the People in Work Unit, covers the first two academic years of the grant (2006-08). It reflects on the work undertaken by local authorities to address educational performance in Years 10 and 11 and the perceptions of those in the local authority who work closely with schools, social workers and placement panels in addressing the children's identified needs.

The data collection for the RAISE programme includes care placement information as well as educational information. This has been a motivator for collaboration and discussion and the sharing of information between Education and Social Services, especially as we know how crucial placement stability is to educational outcomes. We now have some more detailed baseline data to build up our knowledge on the correlation between care placement, stability and educational achievement.

The data used in the analysis covers the qualifications achieved in 2006-07 and 2007-08 as reported by local authorities. The Report contains some key messages which I wish to ensure are shared across Wales.

In considering the Report we need to take care that the results are placed within the context of three main caveats. Firstly, that the RAISE funding provides **only one aspect** of a local authority's service provision for looked after children and other elements would contribute to performance. Secondly that the results for any individual authority may fluctuate from year to year, based on the particular cohort of learners for that year. This is particularly key for local authorities with small numbers of looked after children taking qualifications in any given year. Finally, local authorities are still in the process of developing, embedding and modifying their approaches on the back of the RAISE LAC funding and the improvements introduced through this development may not yet be fully reflected in the educational achievement of LAC.

## **Key points from the report:**

The Report shows that differences in the individual characteristics of local authorities' looked after children and therefore their needs and capabilities can explain some, but not all of the variation in the attainment of looked after children in different local authorities. For example, some authorities are doing very well in supporting their children who have special educational needs so that they achieve more qualifications than pupils with SEN in other authorities.

This suggests that we need to be more challenging of statements from local authorities that their low performance is due to a high level of pupils with certain characteristics. It is certainly more of a challenge where a high proportion of pupils have advanced needs but we need to learn from the best approaches in Wales for these pupils and raise our expectations on what can be achieved.

The Report also highlights that authorities are generally sufficiently aware and understanding of the range of issues impacting upon looked after children's and this itself does not explain the relatively low attainment of looked after children in some local authorities.

There is some evidence to suggest, however, that local authorities whose looked after children's attainment was above average have adopted more individualised support and learning for looked after children.

## **Using the Report to drive forward improvement**

I want to ensure that we use the information contained in the Report to continue to improve local authorities' approach to promoting the educational attainment of LAC.

Those local authorities who consistently do well in maximising the potential of looked after children need to be given full acknowledgement for their efforts and need to be fully involved in sharing their effective practices with others.

Those whose performance is below average will need to consider whether they are doing enough to improve outcomes for looked after children. The information in the Report gives them extra evidence to identify good practice and analyse their own approaches in comparison.

I will write personally to each local authority to share the findings of the report and ask them to assess what this says about their performance in relation to the educational outcomes of looked after children in their care. I want local authorities to use this and other information within a framework of continuous improvement and self-assessment of their approaches.

The Welsh Assembly Government will continue to work with individual authorities to use the information from the report and other sources to identify areas where this is potential for improvement. Nationally we will also continue to develop our approaches to networking and sharing good practice on the most effective ways of supporting looked after children to ensure that they reach their educational potential.