

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

15 NOVEMBER 2011

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - CHILDREN

**Interim report on qualifications and performance achieved by looked after children
for the academic year 2010/11**

1. Purpose of Report.

To inform the Committee as to progress made over the past 3 years in relation to qualifications achieved by looked after children, with particular reference to 2010/11.

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

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

Corporate Parenting supports the following corporate priorities:

- Children today, adults tomorrow,
- Supporting our 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 is 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 usually as a last resort and many are already disengaged with education when they are accommodated. 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 retain 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 able to work with schools, social workers and carers on the issues relating to barriers to achievement for Bridgend's looked after children. The team works to fulfill the objectives set out in the Bridgend's Children and Young Peoples Plan and other relevant policies.

Data Capture from Bridgend and all other Welsh authorities is reported in March 2012 and as such a comparison of the last academic year's performance will not be available until some time after this date.

4. Current situation / proposal.

4.1 For the academic year 2010/11 there were 23 looked after children who were at the end of Key Stage 4 compared to 19 in 2009/10 and 15 in 2008/09.

Of these 23 young people, three did not sit any recognised qualifications, one of whom returned to Bridgend to reside with her mother from an out of county residential unit in December 2010 and failed to successfully re-engage in education. One young person was placed in a specialist residential out of county unit in January 2011 due to extremely challenging behaviour and failed to engage in the education provision offered on site. Due to the timing of these placement changes it was extremely difficult for these two young people to successfully continue with their chosen options and match examination boards' requirements accordingly. The third young person attends Heronsbridge School but did not enter any examinations.

Ten young people gained a total of 40 GCSE passes at grades A* to C between them. Four gained GCSE's at D grade. Two young people gained six passes at between grades E to G. Four gained entry level qualifications.

In addition four of these young people achieved a range of other recognised qualifications, including BTEC 1st Diploma in Public Services, BTEC Sports Level 2, BTEC Level 2 Certificate in Applied Science, BTEC Level 2 Award in Mathematical Applications and a Diploma in Digital Applications. The average GCSE point score in Bridgend has increased over the past three years. This year the average point score for looked after young people has increased to 165, compared to the average point score of 162 in 2009/10.

The Raising Attainment and Individual Standards in Education (RAISE) Grant was made available to local authorities from 2006 and ceased in September 2011. The grant was focused on improving the outcomes and providing support to looked after children at Key Stage 4. The outcome of the external evaluation of the RAISE grant indicated that Bridgend's relative performance in terms of attainment was favourable. It noted that local authorities had made significant progress in improving educational outcomes for their looked after children and through the grant were able to offer targeted support for their personal development and well-being.

The RAISE Grant has been replaced by the looked after children element within the School Effectiveness Grant (SEG) which is ring-fenced funding for looked

after children and care leavers. This SEGLAC Grant will continue until 31st August 2014. As a local authority we are required to demonstrate that the grant will be used to build on our work to improve the learning and well-being of our looked after children by:

- strengthening multi-agency working and home-school links to ensure more effective support for our looked after children, including those in out-of-county placements;
- providing individual looked-after children with personalised study support and, where required, statutory higher education bursaries;
- improving the arrangements for gathering, recoding, analysing, using and sharing information about progress of our looked after children, especially those who reside outside of Bridgend;
- tailoring teaching and learning to the specific needs of our looked after children and directing them towards recognised qualifications that are more meaningful to potential employers.

The SEGLAC proposal for spend 2011-2014 has been submitted and approved by the Welsh Government.

4.2 The following tables provide further information in relation to key indicators of LAC educational achievements and performance.

Key Stage 2 NC Assessment

Indicator	Outcome (%)
Core Subject	87.5
Comments: This is a significant increase compared to last year of 31.0%	

Key Stage 3 NC Assessment

Indicator	Outcome (%)
Core Subject	25
Comments: This is a decrease compared to last year of 15%. This decrease may have been contributed by the fact that 48% of this cohort were on various stages of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.	

Attendance in Primary School

Date	Attendance (%)
01.04.08 to 31.03.09	88
01.04.09 to 01.04.10	94.9
01.04.10 to 01.04.11	94.8
Comments: These figures indicate that in the last two years Bridgend has retained a consistently favourable position.	

Attendance in Secondary School

Date	Attendance (%)
01.04.08 to 31.03.09	85
01.04.09 to 01.04.10	90
01.04.10 to 01.04.11	89.7
Comments: The trend over the last three years is, in the main, increasing with	

a marginal drop last year.

Permanent Exclusions

<u>Date</u>	<u>Exclusion (%)</u>
April to March 2008/09	0
April to March 2009/10	0
April to March 2010/11	0
Comments: In terms of permanent exclusions Bridgend has maintained for the last three years an impressive record.	

Fixed Term Exclusions

<u>Date</u>	<u>Exclusion (%)</u>
April to March 2008/09	8.8
April to March 2009/10	5.4
April to March 2010/11	8.9
Comments: There has been a small rise in this figure in the last year.	

- 4.3** A number of successful initiatives are being carried out by the Looked After Children's Education (LACE) team to improve outcomes for our looked after children. The team has forged links with Cardiff University Coursework Mentoring Club and the University 'Confident Futures Summer School'.

Up to six looked after young people have attended the monthly group meetings at the University. Each is supported by a student mentor studying in their 3rd year. The monthly meetings are an opportunity to meet up, eat, chat and get help with their course work, inspire and encourage them to achieve their goals. It also offers the opportunity to experience the university environment, meet and make friends whilst offering an insight into life at university and raise aspirations.

At the end of mentoring the program, our young people are given the opportunity to attend the 'Confident Futures Summer School'. This is a two day event aimed at giving young people in care the chance to experience student life in a safe and supported environment. It includes an overnight stay in the halls of residence, where they are paired with university student buddies to take part in everyday student activities, including shopping for food, cooking dinner in student flats, going out for meal, using public transport, organising a social event and finding their way around the campus. A new group of six young people will be identified for the next programme in December 2011.

The LACE team arranges four workshop carousels with Glamorgan University, through the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) 'Reaching Wider – Reaching Higher' project. Up to ten young people at Key Stage 4 are invited to the events and enjoy a day at the university sampling a range of courses such as, drama, animation, music and film making. These initiatives are proving very successful with our young people.

Other events include the summer residential activity. Ten young people attended a five day residential activity holiday in Pembroke this year. This activity continues to be very successful in offering our young people the

opportunity to achieve outside of formal education providing an exciting, physical medium for learning and building on confidence and self esteem.

Plans are underway for the 2012 Looked after Children's achievement awards. It is hoped to build on the success of this year's event, at which over 60 children and young people were awarded for their individual achievements. The aim of the event is to demonstrate how the authority celebrates the success of its looked after children.

4.4 *Welsh Audit Office (WAO) Education Study*

The draft action plan was completed in 2009 to address issues identified in the self-assessment in relation to looked after children in Bridgend. A number of the actions identified are being addressed through the LAC Education group which has become a regular forum to monitor performance and ensure that the authority is meeting the needs of its looked after children and focuses on areas of specific need to improve performance. We are still awaiting the final report from WAO concerning this study, which began in October 2008.

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 2010 – 2011.

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17th October 2011

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Background documents

None