

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

16 JANUARY 2013

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - CHILDREN

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - PERFORMANCE DATA UPDATE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Welsh Government produces annual data on adoption, outcomes and placements for children Looked After by local authority each year, in the autumn for the period in the same year up until 31st March. This information, taken from the National Statistics Office, is the primary source used to provide information to elected Members regarding the national and local performance indicators (PIs). The information, together with internal data and activity, is used to generate a comparison of the local authority's performance within Wales. The data provided and the corresponding performance is presented in the context of the year on year increase in the LAC population nationally. This increase has seen the LAC population in Wales rise by 22%, over the three year period between 2009 and 2012. The report will reflect performance this year and provide a comparison against previous years. The report will also provide some commentary on activity to improve the outcomes across these measures in Bridgend.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

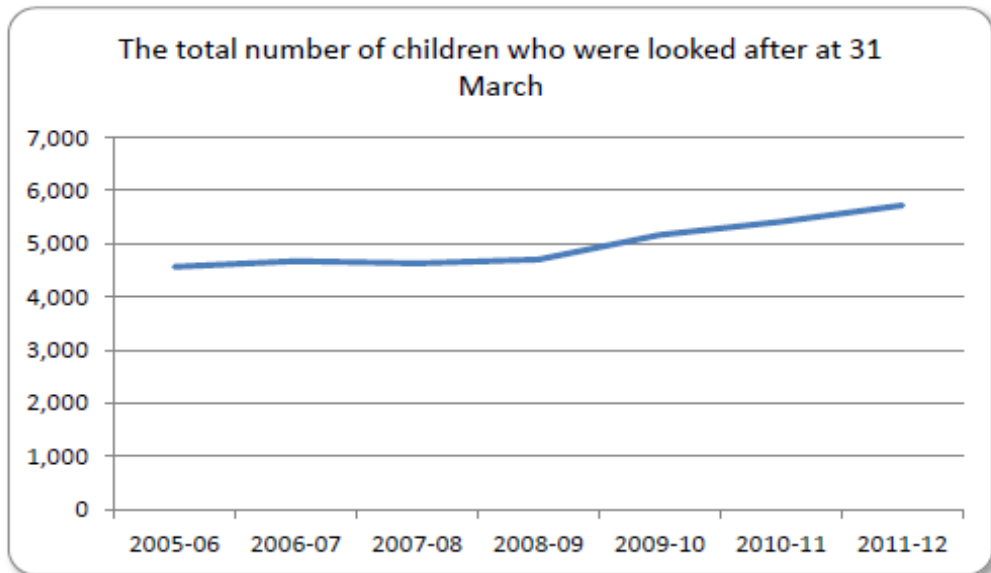
- 2.1 Looked After Children are a key responsibility for the Council as corporate parents and, as such, are included within the following community strategy themes:
- Young Voices,
 - Healthy Living,
 - New Opportunities.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Safeguarding and Family Support Service is required to provide data to the Welsh Government to evidence its performance against a number of key performance indicators or PIs. Within the service, a number of these PIs are monitored on a monthly basis to ensure compliance, track progress and identify any significant issues that require remedial attention. They are reported on routinely within the Corporate Performance Assessment process.

4. Current Situation / Proposal

- 4.1 As corporate parents, local authorities are required to ensure the safety and wellbeing of looked after children, and to ensure that they are given the same opportunities as their peers. There were over 5,700 children in the care of local authorities in Wales at the end of March 2012.



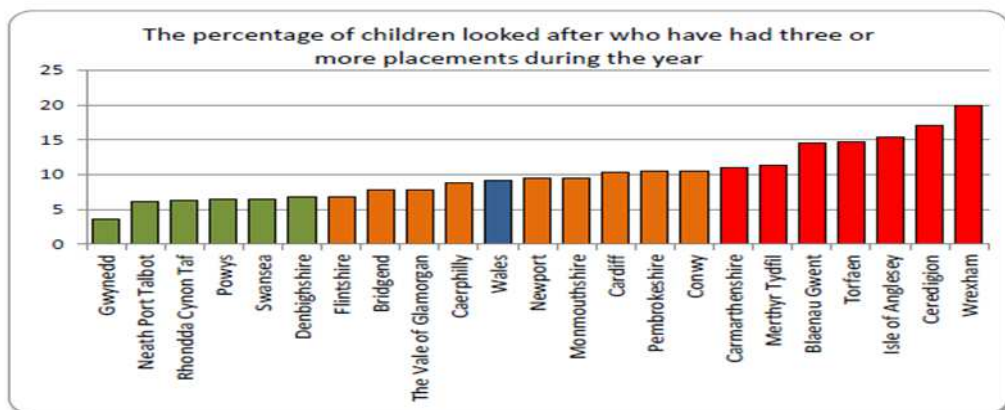
Number of LAC in Wales

- 4.2 At the time of writing this report, the LAC population in Bridgend had risen to 380 which is an increase of 35 children in the three quarters of 2012-13. The figures show a year on year rise with some 90 additional children being looked after since 2010 when the figure stood at 290. With the increasing LAC population across Wales, challenges are faced to ensure the service meets all its statutory obligations to LAC and ensure a quality service is provided.
- 4.3 The table on the next page illustrates the types of placements within which children and young people are currently looked after.

Count of Client No	
Placement	Total
A4 Placed for adoption with consent (under section 19 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer	2
A5 Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) with current foster carer	1
A6 - Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer	10
F1:Inside La:- Foster Placement With A Relative Or Friend	50
F2:Inside La:- Placement With Other Foster Carer Provided By La	123
F3:Inside La:-Placement With Foster Carer, Through Agency	42
F4:Out Of County:-Foster Placement With A Relative Or Friend	17
F5:Out Of County:-Placement With Other Foster Carer Through La	13
F6:Out Of County:Placement With Foster Carer, through Agency	54
H2:Secure Unit Outside La Boundary	1
H3:Children Homes Regs:- Homes & Hostels Inside La Boundary	6
H4:Children Homes Regs:- Homes & Hostels Outside La Boundary	11
P1:Placed With Own Parents Or Person With Parental Responsibility	40
P2:Independent living , e.g. in flat, lodgings, bedsit, B&B or with friends, with or without formal support	6
R5:Other Res Setting:- Young Offender Institution Or Prison	2
S1:Schools:-All Residential Schools, Except Where Dual Reg	1
Z1:Other Placements	1
Grand Total	380

4.4 The national data was made available in early autumn and provides a helpful Wales-wide barometer by which to measure the Safeguarding and Family Support Service performance (appendix 1 & 2). More locally, information across the reporting fields is collated monthly. This local information in turn provides strong indicators to senior and frontline managers on levels of activity and where to focus attention in order to improve performance and outcomes for LAC.

4.5 Stability is recognised as important for the wellbeing of children in care. Nationally 9.2% of LAC experienced three or more placements during 2011-12 (compared to 9.1% in 2010-11). The figure ranged from 3.6% in Gwynedd to 20.0% in Wrexham. Bridgend has improve performance in this field since the previous year when performance was at 9%, slightly above average in Wales, to just 7.4% for 2011-12 placing us below the Welsh average. Bridgend now ranks as 8th in Wales in this field.



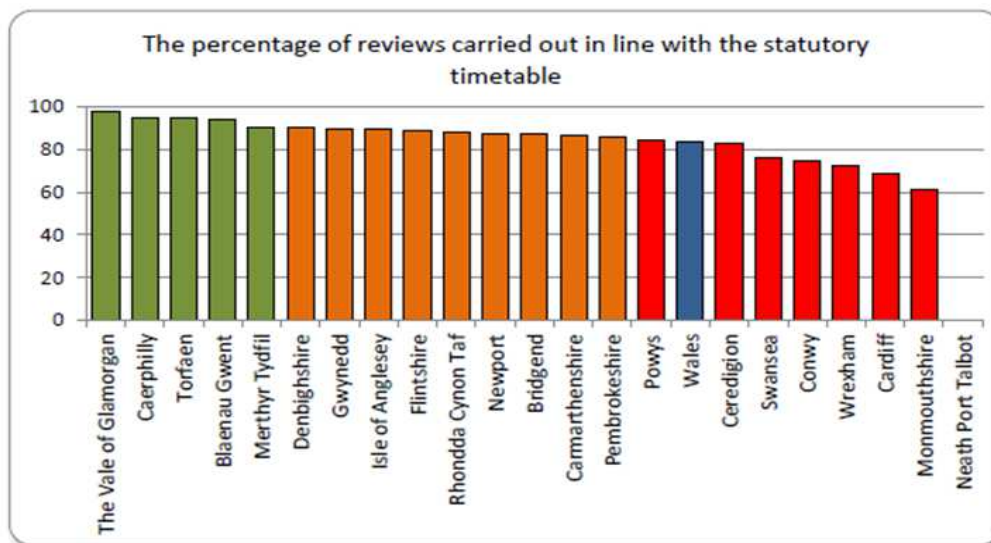
Stability of placements

4.6 It is noted that nationally, and specifically within Bridgend, there are the following trends:

- over the last few years, there has been a steady increase in the number of looked after children (on average 6 - 7%). Within Bridgend, the increase was 35 children in 2010-11 and 20 children in 2011-12.
- The trend of increasing LAC adds pressure to management and practitioners in terms of continuing to achieve and meet targets and expectations. It is also inevitable that rises in LAC numbers have increased pressures in accommodation and support services such as fostering, adoption and residential care.

4.7 Inevitably, these increases across the Safeguarding and Family Support Service have put additional pressures on the directorate budget. Nevertheless, throughout the past year, we have been able to ensure that all LAC have had, at all times, an allocated case worker and mostly qualified social workers. Where this has not been the case, a small number of Looked After Children, placed in stable, long term placements, have been allocated to experienced social work assistants, with management oversight provided by qualified workers. In 2010-11, a policy was introduced that now ensures that all new LAC cases are automatically allocated to qualified workers.

4.8 Monitoring of placements and care plans for LAC is a key role for the Independent Reviewing Service. Nationally in 2011-12, 83.6% of LAC reviews were carried out within statutory timescales. This ranged from 97.4% in the Vale of Glamorgan to 61.5% in Monmouthshire. Within Bridgend performance has continually improved. In 2011-12, Bridgend ranked as 12th highest in Wales, higher than the Wales average with 99.4% of reviews carried out within statutory times scales compared to 97.1% the previous year.



Reviews carried out within statutory timescales.

- 4.9 Of the 25 key performance indicators listed in Appendix 1, performance has improved or been maintained in 18 fields compared with 17 in the previous report. In the remaining 7 fields, there was some deterioration on performance in 6 fields compared with 7 in the previous year. In one field, there is no data available. Across the full range of data collected, there is evidence of continued improvement despite the increase in LAC numbers. In 4 fields, there was a significant improvement and for three the performance was above the Welsh average.
- 4.10 For some PIs, where there are small numbers of children or young people being considered little changes can cause a significant impact on the percentage increases or decreases. Large percentage changes may only relate to a few young people. Where available, the Appendix includes relevant commentary.
- 4.11 Activity to further improve performance continues to be a priority. Our management information systems are of a high quality and now have the capacity to produce reports on performance to individual managers on individual cases. Likewise, data can be produced quickly about specific issues such as compliance rates on statutory visiting and completion of core assessments, both of which are a statutory duty and on which the local authority is measured.
- 4.12 Management information is routinely sent to managers of teams to indicate which cases are overdue for visits, have visits due or to provide some indication of the remaining time left for the visit to take place. In a busy, increasingly challenged service, this level of management support provides frontline and senior managers with the information needed to assist workers to prioritise, carry out and write up visits, thus improving the frontline work with children and young people and improving performance generally.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 This report is concerned with performance information rather than policy or decision making. Each looked after child's needs are identified on an individual basis. Hence, an equality impact assessment is not applicable.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The increase in the number of looked after children each year, which also continues to be the position nationally, results in greater reliance on independent foster placements. This results in continued financial pressures and creates volatility within the budget of the Safeguarding and Family

Support Service. This is alongside an increase in the number of care proceedings and the costs incurred for the Authority's Legal Service when making such applications.

7.2 For 2011-12 the budgets and corresponding spend for looked after children and safeguarding and family support in general were as follows:

	Budget 2011/12	Outturn 2011/12	Under/(-) Overspend
Out of County Residential	1,951,335	1,748,676	202,659
Independent Fostering	2,754,520	2,976,795	- 222,275
In House Fostering	2,236,648	2,808,153	- 571,505
Commissioning and Social Work	3,741,174	4,108,743	- 367,569
Total	10,683,677	11,642,367	- 958,690

7.3 In terms of Children Looked After (the first 3 lines above) the pressure on budgets amounts to £592k overspend, which clearly shows the pressures the service are facing. The overspend against Commissioning and Social Work primarily relates to the need for the service to employ agency staff to cover vacancies and maternity and other absences. The service has worked hard to reduce reliance on agency staff and 2012/13 is showing an improved position with much fewer agency workers. The overall overspend for the service was offset with a transfer from contingency at year end of £301K to reduce overspend on LAC.

8. Recommendation

8.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Committee notes this update report on the performance of the Safeguarding and Family Support Service in meeting the needs of children and young people within its care.

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Background documents

Appendix 1 – LAC Performance Data Table 2008-12

Appendix 2 – LAC Performance Data Table 2007-11