

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

29 April 2013

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - CHILDREN

Report on qualifications and performance achieved by looked after children for the academic year 2011/12

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform the Cabinet Committee of progress made over the past 3 years in relation to educational support developments and to highlight the qualifications achieved by looked after children and those who have recently left the care of the local authority.

2. Connection to Corporate Plan

- 2.1 Looked after children are a key responsibility for the Council as corporate parents and connect with the following corporate priorities:
- Raising aspirations and driving up educational achievement,
 - Supporting children and families by helping them to deal with their problems as early as possible,
 - Helping vulnerable and older people to stay independent,
 - Encouraging healthy lifestyles to reduce health inequalities.

3. Background

- 3.1 It is well researched and documented that looked after children often 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.
- 3.2 Children become looked after often as a last resort and many are already having problems with their education. The education of our children and young people who are looked after is seen as vitally important by all who are concerned with achieving positive outcomes and it remains a challenge for all agencies to help raise standards and ensure that these children and young people regain an interest in education and achieve their full potential.

3.3 The Welsh Government explain that ‘Regular and systematic assessment of a pupil’s on-going progress throughout compulsory schooling is an essential complement to the National Curriculum. Its primary purpose is to provide a clear picture of what pupils have achieved against individual subject attainment standards by the end of three key stages of a pupil’s school life i.e. broadly ages 7, 11 and 14. The National Curriculum is applied to 4 key stages of pupil development. Reference in this report will be made to those Key Stages which broadly speaking are:

	Pupil’s Age	Year Groups
Key Stage 1	5-7	1-2
Key Stage 2	7-11	3-6
Key Stage 3	11-14	7-9
Key Stage 4	14-16	10-11

3.4 The Council is required to provide data to the Welsh 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 e.g. the progress of Personal Education Plans (PEPs), attendance and exclusions.

3.5 In Bridgend, the LACE (Looked After Children in Education) team has become well established; its aim is to improve the life chances of looked after children (LAC) in Bridgend by promoting and supporting their education. Direct interventions, advice and support are provided for LAC and much of the team’s work involves helping and supporting social workers and carers. The team can offer advice when dealing with particular problems and also offers training sessions to those wishing to improve their understanding of the education system and their ability to support children’s learning.

3.6 The LACE team consists of:

Looked After Children Education Coordinator, an Assistant Coordinator, three Behaviour Support Assistants and a Data and Admin officer. The team is based at Glanogwr Offices in Bridgend town.

4. Current Situation

4.1 Key Stage 4

4.2 For the academic year 2011/12, there were 27 looked after children who were at the end of key stage 4 compared to 23 in 2010/11 and 19 in 2009/10.

Table 1 Key Stage 4	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Number of young people at end of Key Stage 4	19	23	27
Young Person (YP) not sitting any recognised qualifications	2	3	2*

4.3 Reasons in 2011/12 for young people not sitting any recognised qualifications:

- YP 1) had a statement of educational needs for severe learning difficulties and attended a local authority special school and was not entered for any examinations
- YP 2) had experienced a total of 6 foster placement breakdowns during the academic year. Due to the timing of these placement changes, it was extremely difficult to successfully continue with chosen options and match examination boards accordingly. This young person eventually refused to engage in formal education but did access education other than at school provision (EOTOS) but was not able to secure any formal examinations at that time.

4.4 In 2011/12;

14 young people gained a total of 47 grades A* to C at GCSE level;

4 young people gained a minimum of a D grade and

7 young people gained between E to G grades.

4.5 By way of comparison, the achievements for the previous year are noted in terms of numbers of young people achieving and the quantity of results achieved.

4.6 2010/11

10 young people gained a total of 40 grades A* to C at GCSE level

2 young people a minimum of E to G.

4 young people gained entry level qualifications.

4.7 In addition to the outcomes above for the period 2011/12, 14 of our young people achieved a range of other recognised qualifications ranging from the Welsh Baccalaureate to BETC qualifications in sport, applied science and vehicle technology, key skills, entry level GCSE and ASDAN Certificate of pre-vocational qualification (COPE) Bronze and Silver awards.

4.8 The average qualification point score reported to Welsh Government for this academic year 2011/12 has again increased, a trend repeated year on year. This year it was 251 compared to 164 for 2010/11, 162 for 2009/10 and just 139 in 2008/09. This shows a significant increase over the 4 year period.

4.9 Bridgend County Borough Council also have 5 care leavers in Higher Education and studying courses at degree level. These include:

- Events Management at Glamorgan University

- Youth and Community Studies at Cardiff Metropolitan University
- Early Childhood Studies at University of Glamorgan
- Public Services at Swansea Metropolitan University
- Fine Art Photography at Stafford University

4.10 Key Stage 3

4.11 For the academic year 2011/12, there were 30 looked after children who were at the end of key stage 3.

Table 2 Key Stage 3	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Number of children at end of Key stage 3 achieving the Core Subject Indicator (teacher assessment)	No data	5	9
Number of children eligible for assessment at end of key Stage 3	No data	20	23
The percentage of looked after children eligible for assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 achieving the Core Subject Indicator, as determined by Teacher Assessment	No data	25%	39.1%

4.12 Key Stage 2

4.13 For the academic year 2011/12 there were 18 looked after children who were at the end of key stage 2.

Table 3 Key Stage 2	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Number of children at end of Key stage 2 achieving the Core Subject Indicator (teacher assessment)	No data	7	4
Number of children eligible for assessment at end of key Stage 2	No data	8	15*
The percentage of looked after children eligible for assessment at the end of Key Stage 2 achieving the Core Subject Indicator, as determined by Teacher Assessment	No data	87.5%	26.7%

Of those 15 children (2011/12) eligible for assessment at the end of Key Stage 2:
 5 had a Statement of Special Education Needs;
 2 had Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and attended an MLD provision within a mainstream school;
 4 were at School Action or School Action Plus;
 4 had no additional needs and attended mainstream school.

4.14 Attendance

4.15 The percentage attendance of looked after children in Primary school has remained fairly consistent in the last three years:

April 2009 to March 2010	94.9%.
April 2010 to March 2011	94.8%
April 2011 to March 2013	94.3%

4.16 The percentage of attendance of looked after children in secondary schools has dipped very slightly over the three year period:

April 2009 to March 2010	90.0%.
April 2010 to March 2011	89.7%
April 2011 to March 2012	88.6%

4.17 Exclusions

4.18 The percentage of looked after children who were permanently excluded from school has been consistently zero:

April 2009 to March 2010	0%
April 2010 to March 2011	0%
April 2011 to March 2012	0%

4.19 The average number of days spent out of school on fixed term exclusions has reduced since last year to the same level of 2009/10:

April 2009 to March 2010	5.4%
April 2010 to March 2011	8.9%
April 2011 to March 2012	5.4%

5 Improvements and Effectiveness

5.1 The School Effectiveness Grant (SEG) has a ring fenced element for promoting the educational achievements of looked after children and care leavers. That is linked to Priority 3: Reducing the impact of poverty and disadvantage on Educational Attainment and will continue until 31st August 2014. As a local authority, 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 bursaries;

- improving the arrangements for gathering, recoding, analyzing, 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;
- continuing to develop networking and sharing good practice in the most effective way with our regional consortia.

6 Initiatives, Partnerships and Innovations

- 6.1 The LACE team continue to carry out a number of successful initiatives to improve outcomes for our looked after children. These demonstrate the proactive and innovative team approach to improving educational attainments for LAC and care leavers.

University and Further Education Preparation

- 6.2 The team continues to support young people to attend the Cardiff University Coursework Mentoring Club and the University 'Confident Futures Summer School'. This year 8 looked after young people have attended fortnightly group meetings at the university, each are supported by a student mentor studying in their 3rd year.
- 6.3 The meetings create an opportunity to meet up, get help with their course work, inspire and encourage them to achieve their goals and build on confidence. 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.
- 6.4 At the end of the 12 week mentoring 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 participants 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 young people will be identified for the next programme in December 2013.
- 6.5 The LAC team continues to arrange 4 workshop carousels with Glamorgan University, through the HEFCW 'Reaching Wider – Reaching Higher' project. Up to 10 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 continue to prove to be very successful with our young people. This particular initiative was reported on in the Welsh Audit Office (WAO) study on '*The educational attainment of looked after children and young people*'

(completed August 2012) as a case study and has been passed on to the Good Practice Exchange team with the WAO and has been uploaded to their 'Good practice website'. (see Appendix 1).

- 6.6 Other events in the reporting period included the summer residential activity. Ten young people attended a five day residential activity holiday in Pembroke in August 2012. 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 to learning, building on confidence and self-esteem.

Other activities

- 6.7 The LACE Team have been involved in the 'Letterbox Club' for the past 4 years which is a Welsh Assembly Government initiative, a project that targets Year 3, 5 and 7 children to stimulate reading and educational activity in their home with carers. Each child identified receives a parcel of 2 reading books, stationary items, drawing book, book marker and a maths game, these parcels are distributed by the LACE team. The key benefits of taking part in the Letterbox Club were:

- increased involvement of children in their own learning
- gains in levels of reading and number for many children
- enjoyment for the child receiving a series of personalised parcels
- increased involvement of carers

- 6.8 An evaluation of this initiative is now available and it is hoped that further funding will be made available from Welsh Government to continue with this project (see Appendix 2).

- 6.9 The Achievements Award Ceremony for Bridgend looked after children took place on 22 March 2013 and was attended by over 500 people including approximately 120 children, young people, foster carers and their own children and professionals supporting them. This event continues to grow in success and size, a total of 180 nominations were received. The event was a huge success and each child nominated received a gift and a framed certificate.

- 6.10 The aim of this event is to demonstrate how the authority recognizes and celebrates the success of its looked after children.

WAO Education Study

- 6.11 The outcome of the Study 'The educational attainment of looked after children and young people' was eventually reported and presented by the Auditor General for Wales to Welsh Government on 22 August 2012, it is worth noting that this study began in October 2008.

- 6.12 The summary of the report concluded that the attainment of looked after children and young people is improving slowly and reported that policies and initiatives of

Welsh Government and local authorities have contributed to some improvement. Within the report reference is made to a number of examples of Bridgend initiatives to support the education of looked after children carried out by the LACE team. (The full report is attached as Appendix 3).

7 Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

7.1 None.

8 Equalities Impact Assessment

8.1 None.

9 Financial Implications

9.1 None.

10 Recommendation

10.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes this report on educational attainment and outcomes for looked after children in 2011 – 2012.

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Background documents

Appendix 1 The Education Attainment of LAC & YP WAO.

Appendix 2 The Letterbox Club, Wales.

Appendix 3 The WAO study of “The educational attainment of looked after children and young people”.