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Bridgend County Borough Council
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Ask for / Gofynnwch am: Andrew Rees

Our ref / Ein cyf:
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Date / Dyddiad: 6 October 2015

Dear Councillor,

CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

A meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting will be held in Committee Rooms 2/3, Civic Offices Angel Street Bridgend CF31 4WB on **Monday, 12 October 2015 at 10.00 am.**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
To receive apologies for absence (to include reasons, where appropriate) from Members/Officers.
2. Declarations of Interest
To receive declarations of personal and prejudicial interest (if any) from Members/Officers in accordance with the provisions of the Members' Code of Conduct adopted by Council from 1 September 2008.
3. Approval of Minutes 3 - 10
To receive for approval the minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee of 30 July 2015.
4. Overview of Western Bay Regional Adoption Services 11 - 20
5. Overview of Services to Young Carers in Bridgend 21 - 26
6. Independent Reviewing Service 27 - 46
7. Urgent Items
To consider any other item(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in accordance with Part 4 (paragraph 4) of the Council Procedure Rules and which the person presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should be reason of special circumstances be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

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Yours faithfully

P A Jolley

Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Regulatory Services

Distribution:

Councillors:

HJ David

M Gregory

MEJ Nott OBE

Councillors

CE Smith

HJ Townsend

PJ White

Councillors

HM Williams

Invitees

Chairperson of the Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Champion – Cllr EP Foley

Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Champion – Cllr E Venables

Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Champion – Cllr DBF White

Community Environment & Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Champion – Cllr RD Jenkins

Corporate Resources & Improvement OSC Champion – Cllr E Dodd

Partnerships & Governance OSC Champion – Cllr KJ Watts

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 30 JULY 2015 AT 10.00 AM

Present

Councillor HJ David – Deputy Leader & Chairperson

Councillors:

CE Smith - Cabinet Member Regeneration & Economic Development
HJ Townsend - Cabinet Member Children's Social Services & Equalities
PJ White - Cabinet Member Adult Social Care and Health & Wellbeing
HM Williams – Cabinet Member Communities

Officers:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Susan Cooper | Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing |
| Deborah McMillan | Corporate Director - Education & Transformation |
| Catherine Parry | Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support |
| Mark Shephard | Corporate Director - Communities |
| Colin Turner | Head of Safeguarding and Family Support |
| Mark Lewis | Group Manager - Integrated Working |
| David Wright | Family Support Services Manager |
| Andrew Rees | Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees |

97. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members for the reasons so stated:

Councillor MEJ Nott OBE – Other Council Business
Councillor M Gregory – Holiday
Councillor E Venables – Child care commitments
Councillor DBF White – Work commitments.

98. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

99. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee of 13 April 2015 be approved as a true and accurate record.

100. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL APPROACH TO STATUTORY ADVOCACY FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN, CHILDREN IN NEED AND OTHER SPECIFIED INDIVIDUALS

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support reported on the development of a national approach to statutory advocacy for looked after children, children in need and specified individuals in Wales.

He stated that the Welsh Ministers in October 2014 reviewed a range of evidence provided by recent reports which concluded there was a need to bring refreshed focus and impetus to securing children's rights and entitlements ahead of the implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and the extended focus on advocacy for all ages. He informed the Committee that a draft code of practice for advocacy had been issued for consultation, which specified when local authorities must consider the needs of an individual, together with the range of circumstances where an individual may face additional risks or barriers that can heighten their needs for advocacy support.

The Association of Directors of Social Services had recognised the need to form a Strategic Leadership Group for Advocacy. A Task and Finish Group had also been established, chaired by Colin Turner which he would continue to chair on leaving the authority and he offered to provide regular updates on the project to the Committee. The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support stated that the Strategic Leadership Group and Task and Finish Group would ensure the involvement and engagement of children and young people at key stages during the development and delivery of the national approach. He also stated that the Group will drive forward the delivery of the National Approach to Statutory Advocacy, with children and young people being at the heart of this approach. Options would be delivered to the Minister in October 2015 for delivery of the National Approach by 1 April 2016. He also stated that the "Active Offer" which seeks to ensure that every child eligible for independent advocacy is actively offered this will be rolled out from 1 April 2016.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support reported that as part of the key components there would be a performance management framework and a record of children and young people who had taken up the offer of advocacy or had turned it down. Each local authority would be inspected against the performance management framework.

The Cabinet Member Children's Social Services and Equalities welcomed the proposals for developing advocacy for children and questioned the impact of the national approach on the Council's existing contractual arrangements with Tros Gynnal Plant for the provision of independent professional advocacy services. The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support stated that the Council has a 1 year rolling contract with Tros Gynnal Plant, however due to the development of the national approach it was likely advocacy would be provided on regional or national arrangements.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Head of Safeguarding and Family Support explained the different levels at which an advocate can function and stated that most children and young people would prefer to have their teacher or youth worker represent them. He stated it was fundamentally important that looked after children are reminded that advocacy is always available to them.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that an interim report on Statutory Advocacy for Looked After Children be added to the Informal Forward Work Programme for the next meeting of the Committee and a report on the conclusion of the project be presented to the following meeting of the Committee.

101. **CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support reported on the actions and strategies adopted to respond and prevent incidences of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), in light of the recent widespread revelations concerning the plight of children living in the County Borough of Rotherham.

He stated that BCBC is committed to protecting the most vulnerable members of the community from sexual exploitation and as such all practitioners have access to a number of key documents which provide guidance and structure to their practice. He informed the Committee of the processes in place for practitioners to assist in the early identification of child sexual abuse. He also informed the Committee that CSE meetings are held on a weekly basis which identifies the level of risk posed to children and young people and the monitoring of those who present a risk to children. Such individuals are being identified within a number of cases and are closely monitored by the Police and attending agencies to assist in the protection of young and vulnerable children and in the prosecution of offenders.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support reported on the joint working being undertaken with the police, whose priority it is to protect children and young people through the investigation and the prosecution of offenders. The police have a problem profile for the Bridgend area regarding children who are at risk of being sexually exploited and the perpetrators of exploitation. The Public Protection Department are currently reviewing past cases as well as taking new matters forward. BCBC holds a data base of all young people subject to CSE meetings and this information is now cross referenced with the Police to ensure that Police CSE markers are placed against the names of those identified as being at risk.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support drew the Committee's attention to the joint working with the ABMU whereby the A&E Department within the Princess of Wales Hospital has direct access to the Child Protection Register as does the children's ward. He also reported on Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), which are a set of arrangements in place to manage the risk posed by the most serious sexual and violent offenders. These arrangements within Bridgend bring together lead professionals from the Probation Service, Mental Health Service, Housing, Public Protection and Children's Services on a fortnightly basis. These professionals are experienced in this arena and are effective in the sharing of important information between agencies which is key in protecting the most vulnerable people in society. He stated that staff in schools, further education colleges and other education establishments in Bridgend are uniquely placed to recognise and refer children who are believed to be vulnerable to CSE. CSE had been recognised as one of the strategic priorities for the Western Bay Children's Safeguarding Board.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support reported on a CSE case study highlighting the effective multi-agency procedures and practice across Safeguarding services within Bridgend is cited in the recent conviction of a male from Cardiff who has been sentenced to serve a 4 year custodial prison term for several sexual offences against a young vulnerable female who was Looked After by BCBC. He stated that there are significant blocks to young people reporting CSE due to the perpetrators of CSE being skilled and manipulative of young people and that the grooming process is very significant preying on vulnerable young people. In some cases the parents would also be groomed by the perpetrators. He informed the Committee that the proactive work undertaken by the Group Manager Safeguarding and Quality Assurance on CSE had been cited as good practice for use elsewhere.

In response to a question from the Committee on the resettlement of offenders, the Head of Safeguarding and Family Support stated that a constant risk assessment is made of those who have been convicted and they would be subject to ongoing treatment and on licence and placed on the register. When offenders are released, MAPPA arrangements are put in place to consider safeguards and measures where offenders are housed from schools, children's homes and community and leisure centres. The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing informed the Committee that the role of

elected Members is crucial in their communities in raising the awareness of CSE. An awareness training session on CSE has taken place for Members and a further session was planned, the details of which would be communicated to Members. The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing also informed the Committee that the NSPCC are developing a helpline and details would be forwarded to Members once it had been set up.

The Cabinet Member Children's Social Services and Equalities commented that awareness of CSE be raised at primary schools due to children being exposed to risks at earlier ages. The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support informed the Committee that in addition to engagement with schools, awareness raising would also be carried out with the business community.

Members commented on the sophisticated intelligence gathering locally on CSE by the various agencies and questioned how this compared with other areas. The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support informed the Committee that CSE is a corporate priority and also a priority for the Western Bay Safeguarding Children's Safeguarding Board. He stated that the authority did not stand out as being more prolific than other authority's, but it was important that strategies are in place to tackle CSE and that the authority had taken enforcement action against taxi drivers, while the police had used exclusion orders which excluded people from going to certain localities or addresses. The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support commented on the importance of raising awareness of CSE with children of all ages due to the prevalence of online threats and the increasing use of social media sites by children and young people. The Committee considered the importance of raising awareness of CSE to every primary school at Year 6. The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing informed the Committee that CSE also needed to be highlighted at the Local Service Board, CSE is also a standing item on agendas of meetings of the Community Safety Partnership. The Committee requested the Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing consider holding a CSE event for the Business Forum to raise awareness.

The Committee whether children had come forward with incidences of CSE as a result of the training they had received. The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support commented that it was known that 1 in 5 children had met someone in the real world whom they had first met online.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

102. APPROVAL OF THE STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE FOR REGULATED SERVICES

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support presented a report which sought approval of the revised Statements of Purpose for the current regulated services provision in the County Borough. He stated that the Council has three children's residential homes and a fostering service delivering services to children and young people aged 0-18 years.

Statements of Purpose were required for:

Newbridge House
Sunny Bank
Bakers Way
Fostering Services

He highlighted the changes to each of the Statements of Purpose.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support informed the Committee that all 3 homes had been the subject of inspection in the last 9 months and all of these establishments had received praise for the way in which they are managed with no compliance notices given.

The Committee commended all staff for their commitment in delivering these services.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the Statements of Purpose for each of the regulated services provision be approved.

103. **CONNECTING FAMILIES EDGE OF CARE**

The Committee received a presentation from the Group Manager Integrated Working and Family, and Family Support Services Manager which updated the Committee on progress with the Connecting Families Edge of Care work.

The presentation provided the following information to Committee:

- Between 2007/8 and 2011/12, the Bridgend LAC population increased by 40% compared to a 24% increase across Wales
- Children under 2 and young people aged between 14 to 16 accounted for almost 50% of BCBC's LAC population between 2008 and 2013

The LAC population in Bridgend had reduced from 410 as at April 2014 to 384 as at today.

The Family Support Services Manager highlighted the Edge of Care proposal to Committee which was:

- The high number of children coming into the care system was a focus of an LSB workshop in January 2014
- There was an agreement to subsequently to focus some Connecting Families resources on targeting those children on the edge of care to avoid LAC status
- An Annual target set of working with 20 children (and their families) aged 11-16 years at high risk of entering the care system
- Initial age focus informed by high numbers of teenagers entering the care system

He further added that the approach Connecting Families would take would be targeted support that would be offered based on research of the current data to include:

- children of high risk of becoming looked after
- children currently or previously on the Child Protection register or previously LAC
- Families known to the probation service
- Families affected by domestic violence, substance misuse and mental health
- Families with a history of School Exclusions
- Families affected by housing issues

The Family Support Services Manager informed the Committee of progress of the Edge of Care project and explained that the service went live on the 1st May 2014. He also stated that 30 families accessed the Edge of Care service during 2014-15 which included 52 children (including siblings) which significantly exceeded the target. He added that some of those families are now utilising support via Early Help Hubs.

He added that prior to intervention each family on average had cost Public Services approximately £40k per annum. Following public intervention the average costs avoided for public services was reduced to a projected £23k per annum. He stated that the total costs avoided to the Public Sector were approximately £707k once the service costs of £135k for Connecting Families were deducted, producing significant cost avoidance / savings.

The Family Support Services Manager concluded that the developments and next steps for the Connecting Families Service were:

- The Family Support Team has been amalgamated into Connecting Families
- All eight Family Support Workers/ Intervention specialists now completing work around children at risk of entering care system. Those in care (including rehab home) and general family support work
- Group work developed including Parenting, Sexual Exploitation Prevention, Attachment and Dads Group

The Committee thanked the officers for their informative presentation.

The Chairperson of the Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee expressed the Committee's concern regarding the burden on Social Workers' caseloads. The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support informed the Committee that the authority aimed to have children at home with their families and there was a balance to be struck between reasonable caseloads for Social Workers and for children to be supported appropriately at the right time and place to enable them to be safe. The Chairperson commented that the authority had invested in the Safeguarding Team and that if the LAC population continues to fall, the caseloads of Social Workers would become more manageable which would enable them to do more direct work with families. The Group Manager Integrated Working and Family informed the Committee that his team works very closely with the Safeguarding Team and that targets were set to reduce the numbers of Looked After Children. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee that good progress had been made, despite that the integrated teams had only been up and running for the past 3 months. She stated there is pressure to reduce the budget for non-statutory functions. If the pressure on children's social services were alleviated there would be an opportunity to utilise resources more flexibly.

The Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee Champion questioned the sufficiency in the budget for looked after children; the latest numbers and costs of looked after children; whether the trend is increasing or decreasing and also, the impact on the increase in the number of adoption placements on looked after children. The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing informed the Committee that it was about the service does in relation to its resources and ensuring value for money. She stated that looked after children are very clearly a statutory requirement which is at the top of the agenda corporately. A whole systems approach had been adopted for looked after children which involved working with partner agencies. She explained that children come into care for various reasons due to substance and alcohol abuse and also due to court orders. The numbers coming into care is very volatile which would also attribute to the budget for the service being volatile. She stated that there was now a downward trend for looked after children numbers and this needed to be the case over a sustained period. The biggest cost was out of county placements which is the focus of attention for the service. The number of looked after children had reduced from 410 in April 2014 down to 388 and as at today stood at 384. There was a need to reduce looked after numbers safely which was uppermost for the service. The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing informed the Committee there is a need to invest in early intervention services. There is

tracking of children of where they are placed and the cost of their placements. The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing informed the Committee there is an overspend on fostering services due to an increase in in-house fostering which had seen a reduction in the amounts paid to fostering agencies.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Head of Safeguarding and Family Support informed the Committee that it was a challenge to attract foster carers for teenage children due to very complex behavioural issues they may have. The Cabinet Member Children's Social Services and Equalities complemented the work of the Fostering Panel in placing large sibling groups with foster carers.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

104. INFORMAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - JULY 2015 TO OCTOBER 2015

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing presented a report which sought approval of the proposed Informal Forward Work Programme (IFWP) covering the period from July 2015 to October 2015. She stated that the topics detailed had previously been accepted for inclusion in the Informal Forward Work Programme.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Informal Forward Work Programme be approved;
- (2) That the report on Services to Young Carers in Bridgend report be moved to the April 2016 meeting and reports on Child Sexual Exploitation and the Development of a National Approach to Statutory Advocacy be added to the Informal Forward Work Programme;
- (3) That officers be requested to review the frequency of meetings in view of the number of reports on the Informal Forward Work Programme.

105. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairperson informed the Committee that Colin Turner was leaving the authority today; he thanked him for his contribution in turning around the service from one which had previously been subject to a protocol to the service it is today.

Mr Turner thanked the Committee for its support and stated that it had been a pleasure to have worked with the Members who had always been very supportive of the service he had led.

The meeting closed at 12.00 pm

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

12 OCTOBER 2015

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

OVERVIEW OF WESTERN BAY REGIONAL ADOPTION SERVICES

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the current position regarding the Western Bay Regional Adoption Service.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

- 2.1 The report links to the following Corporate Priorities:

- Working together to raise ambitions and to drive up educational achievements
- Working with children and families to tackle problems early
- Working together to help vulnerable people to stay independent
- Working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles

3. Background

- 3.1 The creation of a National Adoption Service is one of the key policy strands of the Welsh Government, as enacted in the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014. A new model for delivering Adoption Services was introduced by Welsh Government, which dictated that all Councils are expected to deliver Adoption Services collaboratively. In the case of City and County of Swansea, Bridgend County Borough Council and Neath Port Talbot County this is the Western Bay footprint.

- 3.2 A Regional Adoption Project was initiated under the Western Bay Programme and was funded via the regional collaboration grant in 13/14 and 14/15. The aims of the project were:

- To carry out the functions of the national service and deliver a comprehensive adoption service regionally
- To ensure compliance with legislation, regulations, minimum standards, local procedures and the performance management framework set by the National Board
- To develop a recruitment strategy which ensures a range of adoptive placements are available regionally
- To provide a child focussed placement service to ensure that children are appropriately matched with adopters who can meet their needs throughout their childhood.

- 3.3 Western Bay Adoption Service aims to increase the recruitment of local adopters by 100% given the high number of looked after children across the Western Bay Region. This can then significantly reduce the time that children spend waiting for an adoptive placement.
- 3.4 The Host Authority was approved at Cabinets in Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend, with the City and County of Swansea taking on this role in April 2014.
- 3.5 A detailed Cabinet report was presented to all three local authority Cabinets in December 2014 which approved the financial model, service structure, joint panels and co-location of staff.
- 3.6 The Regional Adoption Service became operational in February 2015, being co-located in Port Talbot.

4. Current situation / Proposal

- 4.1 Membership of the Regional Management Board/Committee which has replaced the Steering Group has been agreed and complies with the requirements set out in The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015.
- 4.2 The flexible/remote working arrangements as part of the functional model are working well. At the initial set up of the Western Bay Adoption Service, differences to staff terms and conditions caused some difficulties. These issues have now been resolved.
- 4.3 Performance in the first quarter of the year and to date has been good in relation to a number of PI's:
- Enquiries 76
 - Adopters approved 25
 - Adopter Assessments underway 39
 - Children matched 44
 - Children placed 35
 - Adoption Orders granted 40
 - Children placed within the region 20
 - Children placed outside the region 15
- 4.4 The figures above are demonstrating a positive trend for the service. There is also a positive impact in reducing the time it takes to place children from the Placement Order being granted to placement date, with Western Bay achieving the shortest average time across Wales at five months in Quarter 1. The Wales average in Q1 is 9 months.
- 4.5 Western Bay achieved 50% of the children matched within six months although doing well compared to performance across Wales, it is an area that needs improvement.
- 4.6 The conversion rate of enquiries to approvals is the highest in Wales.

- 4.7 As with other regions in Wales there are some PI's where improvement is required, however, Western Bay have done well given the amount of changes the staff have had to deal with in a short space of time and the challenges that this brings.
- 4.8 **Appendix one** and **Appendix two** show the qualitative performance to date across the region with the specific cumulative Bridgend numbers of children being reflected at August 2015.
- 4.9 These numbers reflect an increase in adoption activity locally and through appropriate timeliness the Authority is able to interrogate data produced to reflect care proceedings and securing of adoption status for those children and young people requiring permanence arrangements to be secured.
- 4.10 The Region held its official launch of the new service on 25th September 2015.
- 4.11 Facebook and Twitter accounts are now live and making use of social media to attract adopters to Western Bay.
- 4.12 Health representative from ABMU has been nominated on the regional management board/committee and will be attending the next meeting in November 2015.

Key Issues

- 4.13 There are currently a number of social work and business support vacancies which have placed some pressures on the service since it became operational. There is a strategy in place to address this with a combination of both permanent and temporary arrangements being progressed, including collaboration with one of the partner Voluntary Adoption Agencies. The risk in not being able to fill these positions in a timely way could impact adversely on the regions performance in the coming months and affect staff morale.
- 4.14 The Service is still awaiting a named person from Education to fulfil the role of the representative on the regional management board.

Priorities

- 4.15 The key milestones/priorities for the coming year continue to be:
- Increasing the number of enquiries and converting these into an increased number of approved adopters
 - Increasing the number of children matched and placed within the region particularly those harder to place children
 - Reducing the length of time children wait for a placement
 - Developing and improving the range of adoption support provision through commissioning and up skilling staff
 - Improving service user engagement/involvement
 - To meet NAS targets in relation to key PI's

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

- 5.1 None.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 The regional service should make a significant contribution to the financial sustainability plans for Children's Services across the region as there is considerable scope for reducing the future spend on independently commissioned adoptive placements. The regional adoption service will also contribute to the looked after children permanency and placement strategy, and linked savings within the MTFS.

8. Recommendation

8.1 It is recommended that the Committee note this report.

Susan Cooper
Director of Social Services & Wellbeing

5th October 2015

Contact Officer: Natalie Silcox

Telephone: (01656) 642319

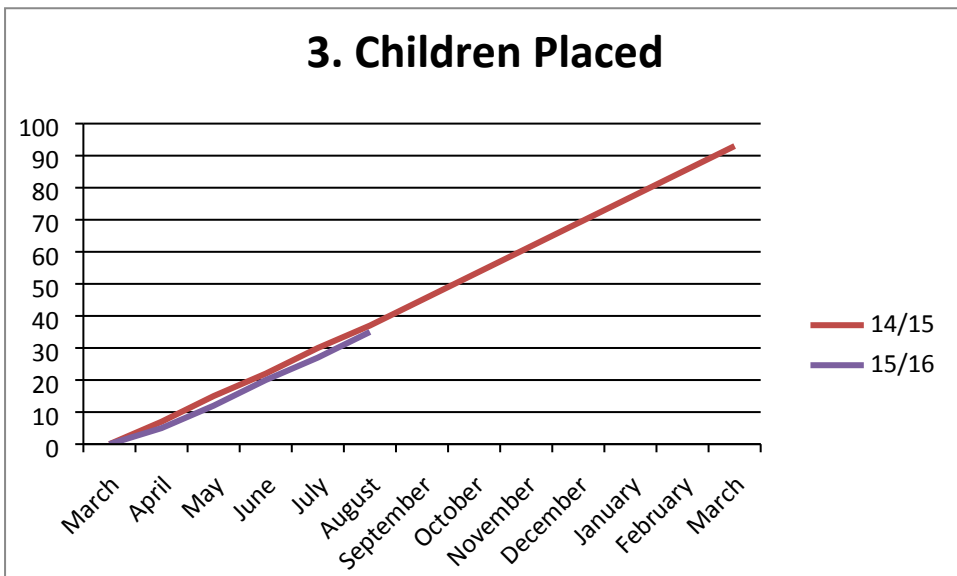
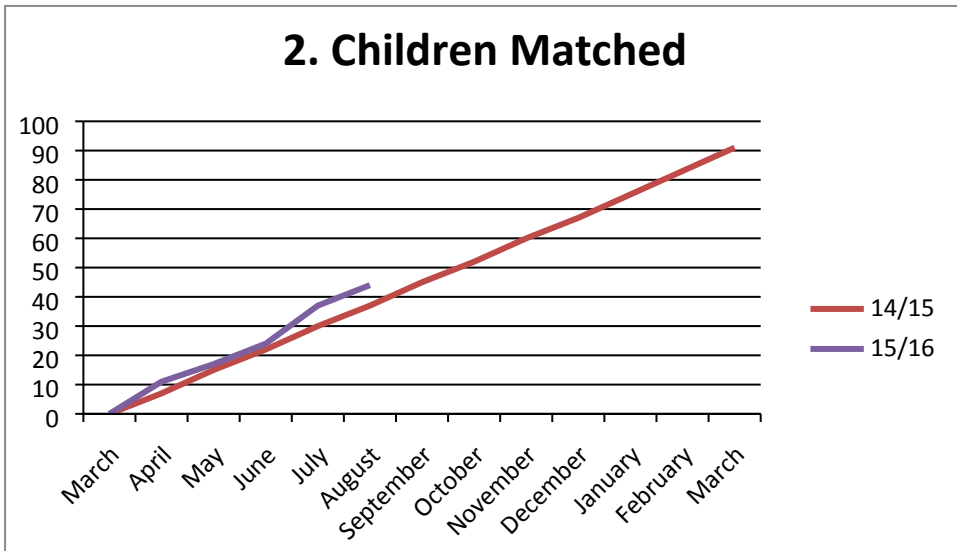
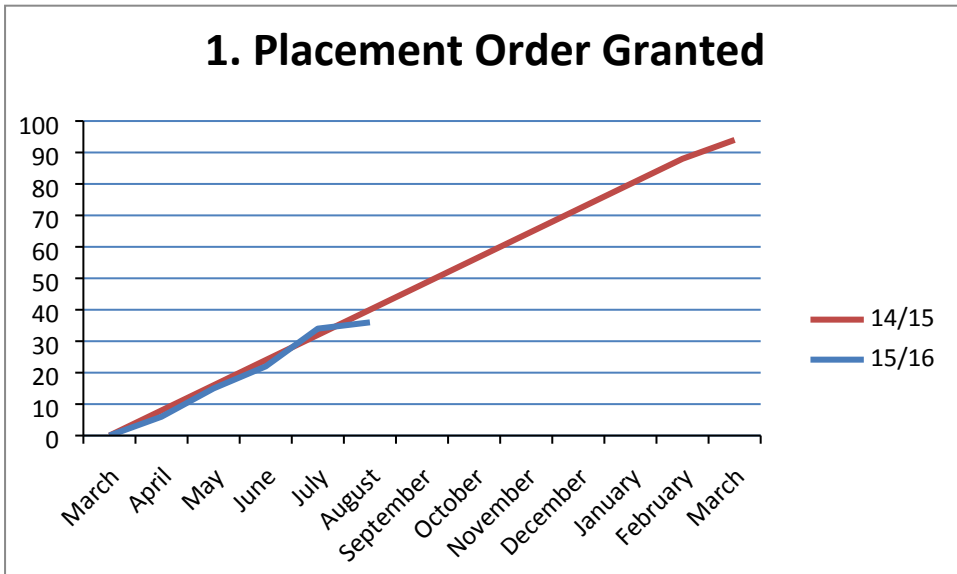
e-mail: Natalie.Silcox@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address Children's Directorate, Civic Offices, CF31 4WB

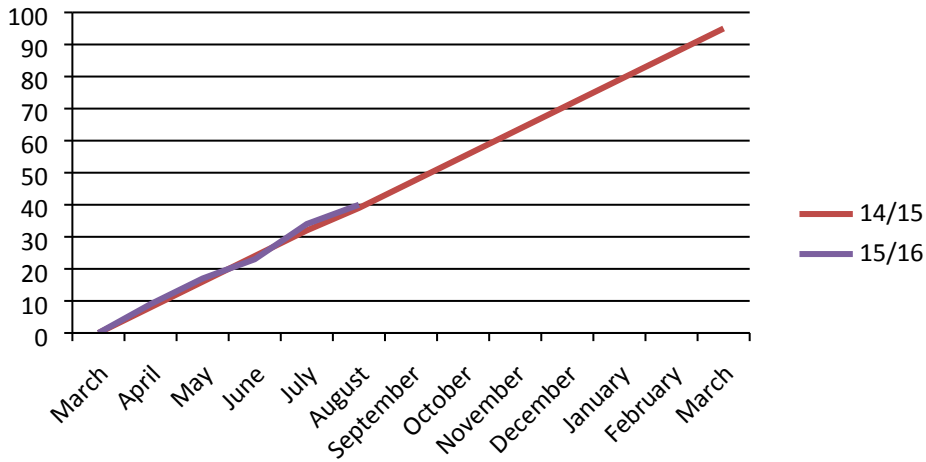
Background documents

None

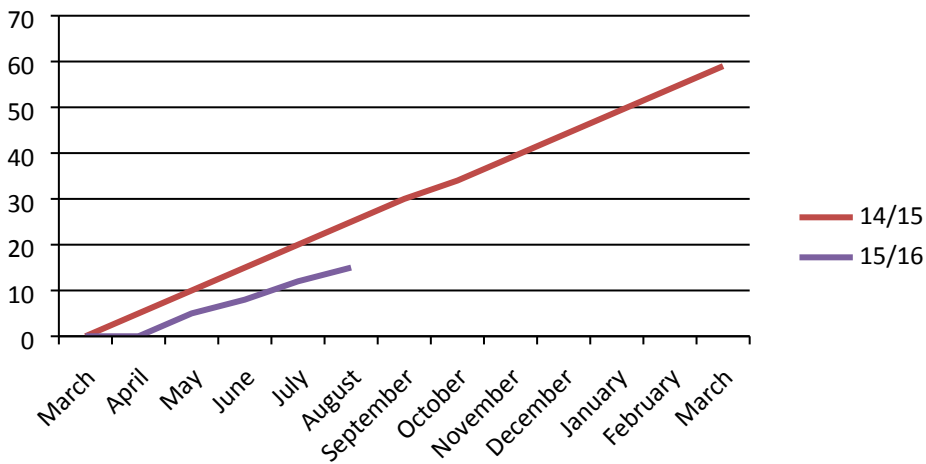
Supplementary charts for year to date performance – April to Aug



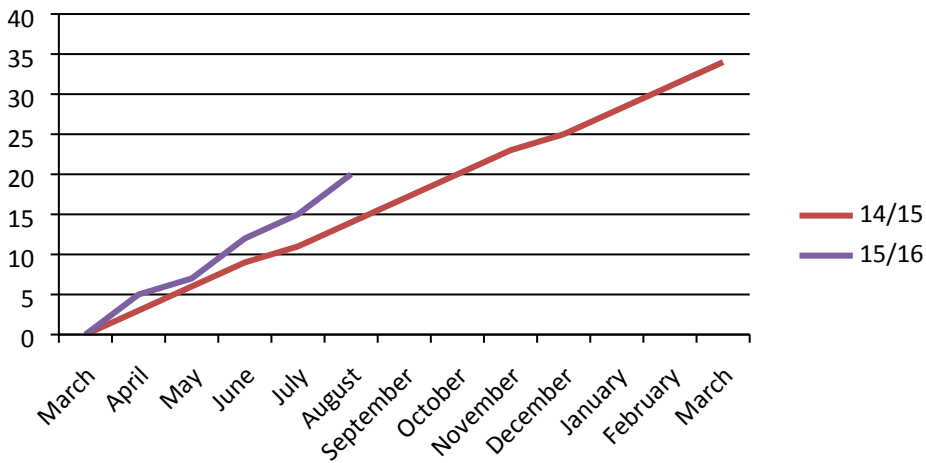
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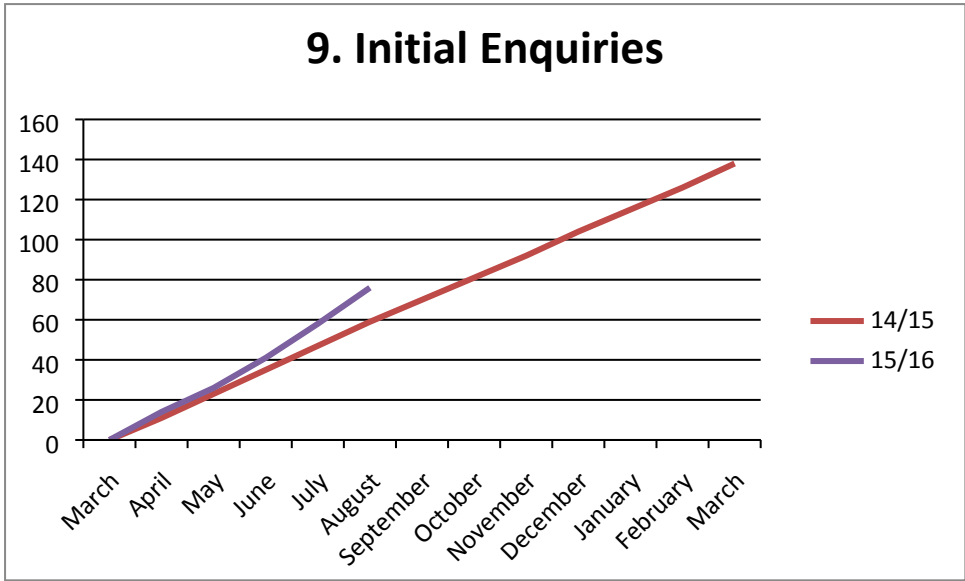


7. Placed out of region

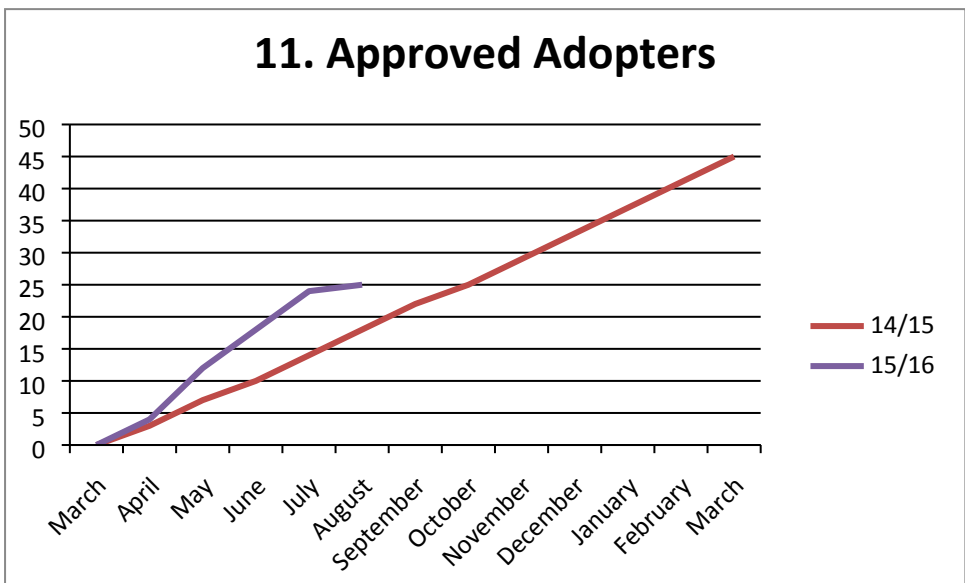


8. Placed within region





August is typically a quiet month for enquiries so this level of performance is positive.



There was only approval in August mainly to one panel being cancelled as it wasn't quorate but performance should be back on track in September as an additional panel has been arranged.

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Month - August 2015

| | Bridgend | NPT | Swansea | WBAS |
|--|----------------------------------|-----|---------|-----------|
| CHILDREN | | | | |
| 1. Number of PO Granted | | | | |
| Monthly | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Year to Date | 14 | 13 | 9 | 36 |
| 2014/15 year end data | 25 | 36 | 33 | 94 |
| 2. Number of children matched | | | | |
| Monthly | 5 | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| Year to Date | 14 | 14 | 16 | 44 |
| 2014/15 year end data | 28 | 27 | 36 | 91 |
| 3. Number of Children Placed | | | | |
| Monthly | 4 | 3 | 1 | 8 |
| Year to Date | 10 | 11 | 14 | 35 |
| 2014/15 year end data | 28 | 28 | 37 | 93 |
| 4. Number of Children waiting to be Matched (family finding) | | | | |
| Current | 15 | 25 | 15 | 55 |
| 5. Number of AOG | | | | |
| Monthly | 3 | 3 | 0 | 6 |
| Year to Date | 17 | 14 | 9 | 40 |
| 2014/15 year end data | 21 | 34 | 40 | 95 |
| 6. Number of Children in Adoptive P'ment where AOG not yet granted | | | | |
| Monthly | 22 | 15 | 35 | 72 |
| 7. Number of Children placed inter agency | | | | |
| Monthly | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| Year to date | 3 | 7 | 5 | 15 |
| 2014/15 year end data | 24 | 20 | 15 | 59 |
| 8. Number of Children Placed with WBAS Adopters | | | | |
| Monthly | 3 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Year to Date | 8 | 3 | 9 | 20 |
| 2014/15 year end data | 7 | 9 | 18 | 34 |
| 9. Disruptions | | | | |
| Monthly | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Year to Date | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 2014/15 year end data | 0 | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| ADOPTERS | | | | |
| 10. Number of Enquiries | Western Bay Regional data | | | |
| Monthly | 18 | | | |
| Year to Date | 76 | | | |
| 2014/15 year end data | 138 | | | |
| 11. Number of Prospective Adopters going through assessment process | Western Bay Regional data | | | |
| Current | 37 | | | |
| 2014/15 year end data | 39 | | | |
| 12. Number of Adopters Approved | Western Bay Regional data | | | |
| Monthly | 1 | | | |
| Year to Date | 25 | | | |
| 2014/15 year end data | 45 | | | |
| 13. Number of Adopters where Income has been generated | Western Bay Regional data | | | |
| Year to Date | 0 | | | |
| 2014/15 year end data | 5 | | | |

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

12 OCTOBER 2015

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

OVERVIEW OF SERVICES TO YOUNG CARERS IN BRIDGEND

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an overview of the current service provision for Young Carers in Bridgend.

2. Connection to Corporate Plan / Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 This report supports the following priorities in the Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017:

- **Priority 3:** Working with children and families to tackle problems early
- **Priority 5:** Working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles
- **Priority 6:** Working together to make the best use of our resources

- 2.2 Supporting carers is a priority in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. A key feature of the Act is to provide equal rights for carers, putting them on a similar legal footing as those they care for.

3. Background

- 3.1 A carer is defined in the Carers Strategy (Wales) Measure 2010 as an individual, whether an adult or a child, who provides or intends to provide a substantial amount of care on a regular basis for:-

- a) A child who is disabled within the meaning of part 3 of the Children Act 1989, or
- b) An individual aged 18 or over

- 3.2 According to Carers Wales research, there are currently over 369,186 unpaid Carers in Wales with 17,855, in Bridgend. This is an increase of 10% since the previous census figure which was 16,164. Carers in Wales save the economy £7.72 billion per annum which is more than it costs to run the NHS. The NHS and Social Services rely on the willingness and ability of carers to provide support to people with health and social needs. The cost of replacing this care has been estimated at £7.72 billion each year. The 2011 Census identified 1372 Young Carers in Bridgend. (Carers UK, 2011).

- 3.3 A Young Carer is someone aged under 18 years old who takes responsibility for someone who is disabled, elderly, experiencing mental distress or affected by substance misuse, or has substantial responsibility for caring for a sibling (ABMU Carers Strategy 2013-2016).

Young Carers often take on practical and/or emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult. The tasks undertaken can vary according to the nature of the illness or disability, the level and frequency of need for care and the structure of the family as a whole. Some Young Carers may undertake high levels of care, whereas for others it may be frequent low levels of care. Either can impact heavily on a child or young person.

- 3.4 The table below illustrates the number of children who are carers in the Bridgend area based on the 2001 and 2011 Census data.

| Number of Young Carers 2001 | Number of Young Carers 2011 |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 509 | 1372 |

4. Current Situation / Proposal

4.1 Local Support for Young Carers

A Carers Strategy for Bridgend County Borough has been developed by the Bridgend Carers Forum in partnership with statutory and non-statutory organisations and was reported to Cabinet in April 2010. Young Carers are specifically mentioned in page 12 of the ABMU Carers Strategy, highlighting their specific needs.

4.2 Carer Strategy (Wales) Measure 2010

The Carers Strategy (Wales) Measure enabled the National Assembly of Wales to introduce legal duties on the NHS (lead organisation) and Local Authorities in Wales to work together and, in consultation with Carers, to prepare, publish and implement a joint Carers Information and Consultation Strategy. The Measure is not targeted at specific age groups but encompasses Carers of all ages including Young Carers (under the age of 18) and Young Adult Carers (aged 18 – 25 years).

4.3 Guidance issued by Welsh Government in relation to the Information and Consultation Strategy, specifically seeks to ensure that:

- Carers have the right information at the right time to support them;
- all health staff (including GPs) and Social Care organisations coming into contact with Carers can recognise their needs, provide them with appropriate information and signpost them to relevant services;
- Statutory agencies properly engage with Carers as partners in the provision of care involving them at all levels in the assessment, delivery and evaluation of care arrangements;
- A partnership is established between each Local Health Board, Local Authority, and Carers Service, so that a commitment is made to the ongoing joint working to improve the lives of Carers in the Local Health Board area;
- To ensure that action plans set out specific actions for Young Carers and Black, Minority Ethnic Carers.

- 4.4 Senior managers in Childrens and Wellbeing work closely in relation to the Carers Strategy, a component part of which is Young Carers. Childrens Directorate has responsibility for the identification and assessment of Young Carers. It also has responsibility for the assessment and disability services for disabled children and young people. There is a connection with the Carers Strategy given the caring responsibilities undertaken by parents of disabled children and the caring role their siblings undertake.
- 4.5 ABMU Carers Partnership Board has worked with Young Carers to develop information that is important to them, identified their needs through consultation and liaised with Young Carer groups regarding service development.
- 4.6. An ABMU wide Young Carers sub group meets regularly to plan services and support to Young Carers across the Western Bay area e.g. in 2014 the sub group arranged and funded a Young Carers residential consultation event.
- 4.7 Funding from the Carers Measure to date has enabled the purchase and provision of a range of resources to Young Carers. These include:
- A comprehensive booklet that can be used by Young Carers and professionals working with Young Carers, the booklet was designed in partnership with the ABMU wide Young Carers partnership and with Young Carers themselves;
 - A leaflet specifically for schools to assist with working with Young Carers;
 - A DVD produced by Young Carers themselves 'Too Tough to Teach' to raise awareness of Young Carers issues, in particular some of the challenges they face at school;
 - A board game designed by Young Carers which can be used at schools as part of PSE lessons to highlight Young Carer's issues;
 - I.D Cards and associated leaflets (see below).
- 4.8. In October 2013, a Carers Coordinator for both Adult and Children's services was appointed. A component part of the role is the development of services for Young Carers.
- 4.9 In October 2014, the Carers Coordinator organised a Young Carers conference for professionals that may encounter Young Carers. Young Carers attended this event to share their experiences and their views and to assist in identifying gaps in current service provision. The key issues the Young Carers identified were the 'missed opportunities' by professionals to identify Young Carers; and the difficulties Young Carers themselves have in self identifying themselves to staff at school, and the need for an I.D. Card. These two priorities have shaped the work plan for the Carers Coordinator for the past 12 months.

- 4.10 In response to the issues raised by the Young Carers, a training programme was devised to raise awareness of Young Carers' issues which has been delivered to 9 schools with 2 further sessions scheduled. The training has also been delivered to some of the social work teams in adults and children's services and has also been delivered to all of the school health nurses. As a direct result of the training, referrals to the Young Carers Coordinator have increased significantly as awareness is being raised.
- 4.11 The Carers Coordinator and Young Carers Coordinator have also jointly delivered training to young people at school via PSE days.
- 4.12 Following a consultation exercise undertaken by Action for Children and the Young Adult Carers Community Voice project, a Young Carers I.D card has been designed and developed. These cards were formally launched on 11th September 2015 at Brynteg Comprehensive School. Following the launch, the Carers Coordinator has emailed every school in Bridgend explaining that the card has been launched, enclosing a leaflet explaining the expectations on schools when the card is presented. To date there has been very positive feedback from members of the public and other partner agencies regarding the card. The I.D card will now be issued to every Young Carer as an outcome of a statutory assessment which has confirmed the Young Carer status. The Young Carer's Coordinator will maintain a central database of all I.D cards issued, and will review historical Young Carer assessments in order to issue the eligible Young Carers with an I.D. card.
- 4.13 The Young Carers Coordinator has also developed and implemented a new assessment tool for Young Carers.
- 4.14 In July 2014, a Young Carers Coordinator was appointed. The primary role of this post holder is to undertake statutory Young Carers assessments but has also assisted in development work with the Carers Coordinator. As an outcome of a statutory assessment, if the Young Person has been identified as a Young Carer a support plan will be developed with the Young Carer which could include a referral to a specialist service or support to access a mainstream provision, e.g. a youth worker to support the young person to commence attending a local youth club or activity.

The following is an overview of service provision for Young Carers and young adult carers within the county borough to date:

- The Young Carers' project based at Action for Children Family Centre in Brackla currently provides support to 50 Young Carers aged 8-18. There are currently 3 Young People on the waiting list for a service; these will be allocated a place by November 2015. Term time support groups are run on a Monday evening between 5.30 pm and 7.30 pm. The groups are split into 3 age groups, 8-11; 12-14 and 15-18. The purpose of the groups is to enable the young people to have opportunities to socialise and to provide an outlet to ask for further support.

During school holidays, the service provides trips and activities for the young people. In the summer 2015 school holidays the service worked with the Adult Young Carers service and Bridgend Carers Centre to provide additional activities. The Young Carers were able to access activities such as trips to Thorpe Park; Midlands Safari Park; ski-ing; horse-riding and gorge walking. There is a graffiti workshop and laser tag workshop booked for October half term holidays.

The service also offers 1:1 support and working with the whole family as and when required. This work covers such issues as bullying, school work, anxieties, relationships and supporting quality family time.

- The Young Adult Carer Community Voice Project based at The Carers Centre, is Big Lottery funded resulting from a joint bid by The Carers Centre and Action for Children. The project supports Young Adult Carers between the ages of 16-25 and provides training to Young Adult Carers in assertiveness and confidence building. Most Young Adult Carers attending this project have transferred from the Action for Children Young Carers project, with the aim being to provide continuity of support as they make the transition themselves into adulthood. The project is currently working with 20 Young Adult Carers, and over the past four months the Young Adults Carers forum has continued to meet, the service has also facilitated Mindfulness training; emotional health workshops; peer mentoring; Skills for Success training in addition to trips to Go Ape and a Wales rugby match. The project has undertaken consultations with Welsh Assembly Government and for research at the University of Birmingham. The project has also commenced a YAC editorial group to manage and create a new Young Adult Carers newsletter. The project is currently supporting 20 Young Adult Carers.
- A Young Carers E-learning resource is the process of being developed and rolled out.
- There are now lead workers (ex Youth Service) based in every comprehensive school in Bridgend who can work with Young Carers if they so wish. With the consent of the Young Carers who have been identified via the statutory assessment process, the Young Carers Coordinator has notified every lead worker of the names of the Young Carers within their school to enable them to make contact and offer support. This therefore, provides a consistent daily support to Young Carers in addition to/or in place of attending one of the specialist services referred to above.
- There is a Young Carers steering group which meets on a 4-6 weekly basis. This group is made up of key stakeholders from the specialist support services and from within BCBC, The group is chaired by the Group Manager for Disability Transition and Case Management, and oversees the issues and developments in relation to Young Carers.

5. Effect on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

5.1 There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no current budget cost pressures for this financial year ending March 2016. However for the last three years The Welsh Government has allocated a “carer’s measure” grant which funds activities and the carer’s coordinator post. This grant funding we believe ceases at the end of March 2016 and Local Authorities will be responsible for securing the young carers activity through core budgets. As noted above the post of carer’s coordinator has been instrumental in securing the required statutory process and services to date and the Local Authority will need to replicate this going forward to ensure it remains statutorily compliant and inspection ready. The young carer’s assessor is within early help core budget and also requires annual review and budget allocation.

8. Recommendations

8.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes this report.

Susan Cooper
Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing

Date 05.10.2015

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Background documents

None

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

12 OCTOBER 2015

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide a report to the Committee that is in line with the statutory duties under the Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance (Wales) 2004. This report will provide an overview of the role and function of the Independent Reviewing Service.

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

- 2.1 This report is connected to all the corporate objectives relating to Looked After Children (LAC). The central one being to achieve best outcomes for Looked After Children through high quality Care Planning. It is linked to the current Looked After Children's Placement and Permanency Strategy and reflects information about the Local Authority's investment in the provision of appropriate placements for Looked After Children and Young People.
- 2.2 The work of the Independent Reviewing Service is carried out under the Children Act 1989, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance (Wales) 2004.

3. Background.

- 3.1 The Independent Reviewing Service has an important Quality Assurance function and has a duty to oversee and ensure that all children and young people within the care of Bridgend County Borough Council have a robust effective care plan in place that is meeting their needs and helping them to be safe in some cases.
- 3.2 This care plan is responsible for improving outcomes for children and young people by ensuring they are provided with a stable and secure childhood where their health, education and emotional wellbeing is promoted through effective care planning. It is the function of the Independent Reviewing service to ensure the care plan is appropriate and that children and young people are being assisted to make progress in all their identified needs.
- 3.3 Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) are required to independently review the Care Plans of all Looked After children and in Bridgend they also independently oversee those children with a Child Protection Plan subject to the Child Protection Register (CPR) through child protection conferences.
- 3.4 The Looked After Children Statutory review process requires the IROs to undertake bi annual and annual reviews of children and young people's circumstances and

they must consult with and ensure the attendance of relevant agencies including health, education and Police in some instances.

- 3.5** In addition the child or young person should attend in addition to their Social Worker, carers and family members if appropriate.
- 3.6** Time scales for Reviews are set out in the Children Act 1989, and monitored by Welsh Government. The initial review is to be carried out within 28 days of placement and then at 3 months, 6 months and annually.
- 3.7** Within Bridgend County Borough Council, the IRO Service is responsible for the following:
 - To Review and oversee the effectiveness and the appropriateness of Care Plans for those Children and Young People the Council has responsibility for. This includes the Chairing of all Child Protection Conferences with Bridgend County Borough Council area on behalf of Western Bay Safeguarding Children Board, Looked After Children Reviews, which includes children who are Looked After and placed in foster care, residential care, secure units, placed with parents, placed for Adoption and young people subject to Pathway Plans (for young people moving towards independent living and for those living Independently up to age of 21 years old or 25 if in full time education).

4. Current situation / proposal.

4.1 Composition of the IRO Service

There has been some change in the composition of the Team since the last Annual Report dated April 2014. There are currently 6 full-time posts and one ½ time post.

- 4.2** The current IRO cohort have a wealth of experience and all have been qualified Social Workers for a substantial period of time. The IRO Manager has been in her current post since June 2013.

4.3 IRO Caseloads

In line with Local Authorities across Wales, Bridgend County Borough Council has seen an increase in the number of Looked After Children and the number of children subject to a Child Protection plan over recent years. However, over the last year, Bridgend County Borough Council is beginning to see a reduction in both its LAC population and the number of children on the Child Protection Register. Consequently, the IRO caseloads are beginning to reduce with full-time caseloads currently around 100 cases.

- 4.4** However this caseload average to secure effective and robust management oversight should usually be an average of between 50 and 80 children and young people only. A review of volume capacity and demand will be required going into the new financial year alongside the reducing Looked After Children's population to ensure IRO have enough capacity to securely deliver their quality assurance function.

4.4 Reviewing Activity

Between April 2014 and March 2015, the IRO Service carried out 1187 reviews on Looked After Children and 1139 of these were within compliance. Between April 2014 and March 2015, 801 Child Protection conferences were held and 780 of these were held within compliance (further details in the IRO Annual Report 2014/15).

4.5 Qualitative Information

The IRO service continue to work to improve standards and ensure robust Care Planning is taking place for children, young people and families within Bridgend County Borough Council.

Information received from IRO's during Team Meetings, Supervision and the analysis of the IRO monitoring form have highlighted some general themes which are recorded below along with the concerns raised by the IRO's. However, it is important to note the information received is only a snapshot sample of the number of cases we have reviewed this year.

The capturing of the qualitative data will be improved during 2015/16 with the introduction of the IRO Audit/Monitoring Tool along with the introduction of the Electronic Consultation Document to obtain the wishes and feelings of the children and young people.

4.6 Case Dispute Resolution and Complaints

There have been 8 cases taken through the formal stage of the IRO Resolution protocol between April 2014 and March 2015. IRO Concern was raised on 22 cases at the informal stage of the Resolution protocol and all issues were resolved within five working days before reaching the formal stage.

The IRO Service has received 2 complaints between April 2014 and March 2015.

4.7 Challenges 2014-15

The IRO Service faced a number of challenges and achievements between April 2014 and March 2015 (documented within the IRO Annual Report **Appendix One**)

4.8 Service Priorities

- To continue to work to improve performance of the IRO service;
- To continue to work to improve Care Planning for children and young people;
- Improved monitoring/auditing of children's cases through the Quality Assurance role of the IRO service;
- Improved emphasis upon the transition to Pathway Planning for young people Looked After by the Local Authority;
- To improve consultation and participation of children and young people in the care planning process by continuing to develop ways to capture the voice of the child;
- To continue to work to improve standards of Looked After Children Reviews, Child Protection Conferences and Pathway Reviews.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

5.1 None.

6. Equality Impact Assessments.

6.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 All work will be carried out within existing budget. There were no cost pressures within this service for 2014/15.

8. Recommendation.

8.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of this report and the accompanying Annual Report of the Manager of the Independent Reviewing Service.

Susan Cooper
Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing
October 2015

9. **Contact Officer:** Jacqueline Morgan
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10. Background documents

None

Bridgend County Borough Council

Independent Reviewing Service

Annual Report 2014-15

Report To Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee

April 2015

**Report To The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing
Directorate**

Children Safeguarding

Report Context:

- Introduction
- Legal Context
- Core IRO Functions
- Composition of IRO Team
- Caseload
- Business Support
- Reviewing Activity

Number of Reviews and timeliness

Reviewing Performance

Performance Indicators

- Qualitative Information

General Themes

- Case Dispute Resolution and Complaints
- Challenges 2014-15
- IRO Service Development and Achievements 2014-15
- IRO Service Priorities

Introduction

It is a requirement of the manager of the IRO service to produce an Annual Report for the scrutiny of Members of the Corporate Parenting Board in line with the regulations under the Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance Wales (2004). The IRO service has an authoritative role, in assuring the quality of care planning is achieved. The guidance states this report must identify good practice but must also identify issues for further development, including those where urgent action is required. The guidance urges the Local Authority to make effective use of the reports from its IRO service so that it can be satisfied that its services can achieve best outcomes for the children and young people concerned.

This Annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) report focuses upon the work of the IRO service from April 2014 to March 2015. As part of the Quality Assurance role, the report will contain performance information in respect of the statutory reviewing of children who are looked after by Bridgend County Borough Council, and children subject to Child Protection Case Conferences. The report will consider an analysis of the quantitative data with information drawn from internal reports. The qualitative data is drawn from IRO monitoring forms, supervision and Team Meetings.

The report also includes information that relate to regulatory requirements in respect of: resolving case disputes; IRO caseloads; participation and consultation of young people in their Reviews, challenges and achievements in the reporting period, in addition to service priorities for 2015-16.

Legal Context

The appointment of IRO's by Local Authorities is a legal requirement and their core functions are governed by the legal regulatory framework outlined below:

- The Adoption and Children Act 2002 detailed the requirements on Local Authorities in respect of the appointment of IRO's.
- The Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance (Wales) 2004

Core Functions

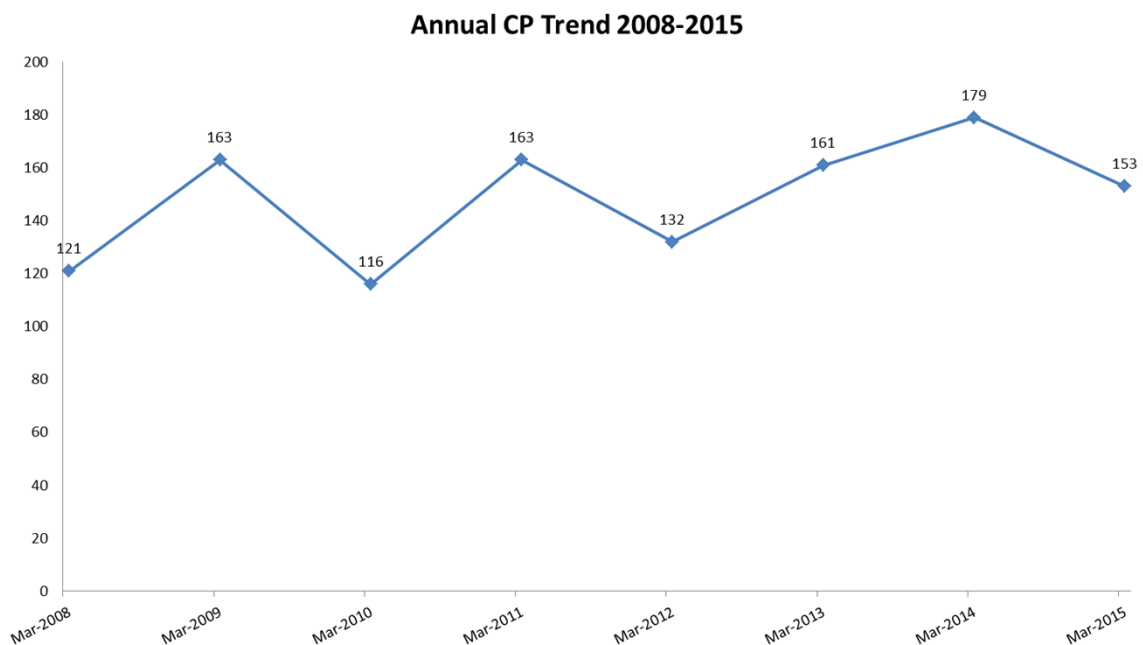
The Independent Reviewing Service has an important Quality Assurance function and works towards ensuring all children within the care of Bridgend County Borough Council has a robust effective care plan. This plan is aimed towards improving outcomes for children and young people in providing a stable and secure childhood where their health, education and emotional wellbeing is promoted through effective care planning . It is the function of the Independent Reviewing Service to ensure the care plan is appropriate and progressing in Safeguarding children and Young People whilst ensuring all their identified needs are being met.

Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) are required to independently review the Care Plans of all Looked After children and those children with a Child Protection Plan and subject the Child Protection Register (CPR). The Review will include consultation with and attendance of relevant agencies (health, education and Police etc) and will usually include the child/young person, their Social Worker, carers and family

members. Time scales for Reviews are set out in the Children Act 1989, with the first Review taking place within 28 days, next Review is held within three months following the initial and then subsequent Reviews are held six months from the second Review. Subsequent Reviews are held every six months unless there has been an unplanned change of placement where a Review will need to be held within 28 days.

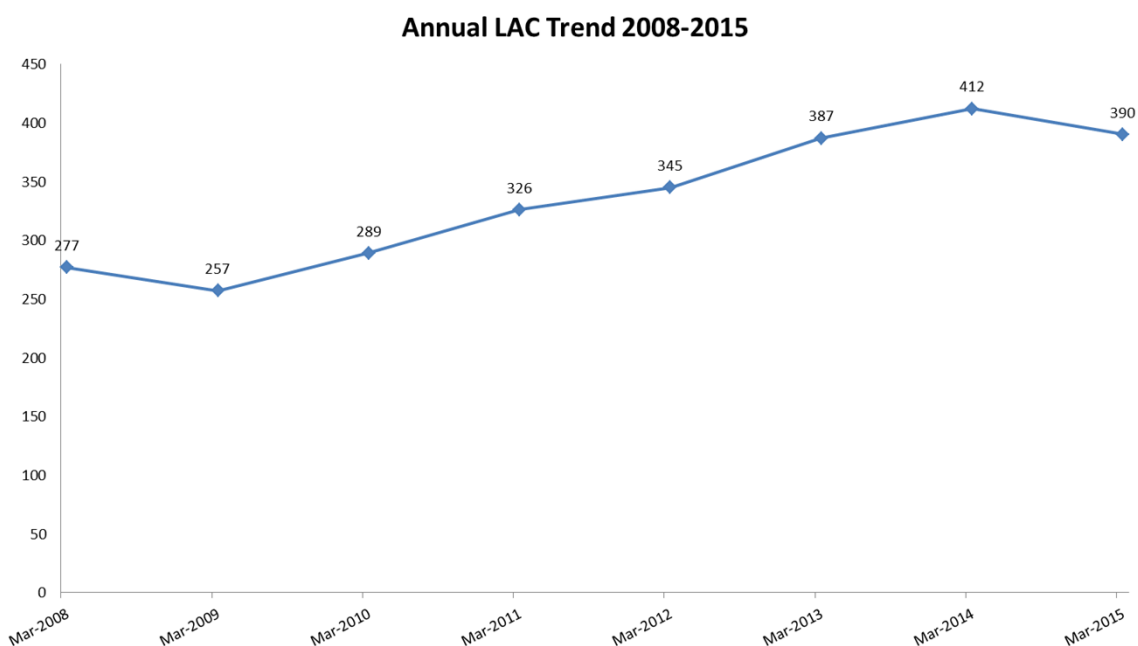
Within Bridgend County Borough Council, the IRO Service has the following roles and responsibilities;

- To Review and oversee the effectiveness and the appropriateness of Care Plans for those Children and Young People the Council has responsibility for who are subject to a Child Protection Plan and those children and young people Looked After.
- The IRO service are responsible for Chairing all Child Protection Conferences within Bridgend County Borough Council area on behalf of Western Bay Safeguarding Children Board; to Chair multi-agency Looked After Children Reviews, including those children placed for Adoption and young people subject to Pathway Plans (young people moving towards independent living and for those living Independently up to age of 21 years old or 25 if in full-time education).
- The Independent Reviewing Service are responsible for ensuring all LAC Reviews and Children Protection Conferences take place within compliance as outlined in regulation.



- To provide a report on each Review held which includes recommendations to any changes to the Care Plan and to monitor the progress of the Care Plan by tracking cases between Reviews.

- To ensure the child/young person's rights are protected and enhanced.
- To ensure the voice of the child is heard throughout the care planning process and to monitor the child's wishes and feelings have been recorded and documented throughout the Care Planning process.
- To support and advise through a mentoring and coaching role to social work staff in relation to effective care planning.
- To raise IRO concerns where they have been identified through the agreed Resolution Protocol and to escalate unresolved concerns regarding care planning to the appropriate level of the Local Authority's management structure.
- To consider the need to seek independent legal advice and possible referral of a case to Cafcass.
- The Quality Assurance function of the IRO service aims to highlight concerns around specific cases and also any trends relating to care planning practice. It also has a duty to highlight good practice.
- All Looked After Children are subject to Health Plans to promote their health and development. The IRO's have responsibility to ensure the Health Plans are monitored and meeting the children's needs within the Looked After Children Reviewing process.
- All LAC children are subject to a Personal Education Plan (PEP). The IRO is responsible for ensuring this is in place and are regularly reviewed to ensure all educational needs are being met.



Composition of the IRO Service

There has been some change in the composition of the Team since the last Annual Report dated April 2014.

There are currently 6 full-time posts and one ½ time post. However, from 1st April 2015, one full-time staff has reduced his hours from five to four days and the half time post increased their hours to three days from 2 ½. Over the year one full-time IRO has left to work as an IRO for Newport CBC (his home area); one part-time IRO left due to retirement and one part-time IRO left to work for a Social Work Agency. We have recruited three full-time posts and one ½ time post. Following the recruitment success we were able to bring the IRO service up to full capacity and as a consequence, the agency worker left in September 2014. The IRO Service is now settling after a period of change. They have recently been informed they have been successful with their Job Evaluation Appeal. It was acknowledged the post is unique and should be placed outside of the Job Families.

The current IRO cohort have a wealth of experience and all have been qualified Social Workers for a substantial period of time. The IRO Manager has been in her current post since June 2013 and also assisted the Safeguarding and Case Management service from June to January 2015 due to challenging staffing capacity in the group manager officer cohort.

IRO Caseloads

In line with Local Authorities across Wales, Bridgend County Borough Council has seen an increase in the number of Looked After Children and the number of children subject to a child protection plan over recent years. However, over the last year we in Bridgend County Borough Council are beginning to see a reduction in both our LAC population and the number of children on the Child Protection Register. Consequently, the IRO caseloads are beginning to slightly reduce. Full-time caseloads are currently around 100. However, it is important to note that caseloads remain significantly high and the recommended caseload figure is advised to be between 50-80 per full-time IRO. Colleagues in Newport, Neath Port Talbot, Vale of Glamorgan and Carmarthenshire have reported much lower caseloads.

TOTAL NUMBER CASES WITHIN THE IRO SERVICE (AT TIME OF WRITING MAY 2015)

| Child Protection | Looked After Children | Looked After Children and those subject to a Pathway Plan (16-18 year olds) | Pathway Plan 18+ - 21years | Total |
|------------------|-----------------------|---|----------------------------|-------|
| 129 | 328 | 61 | 103 | 621 |

Business Support

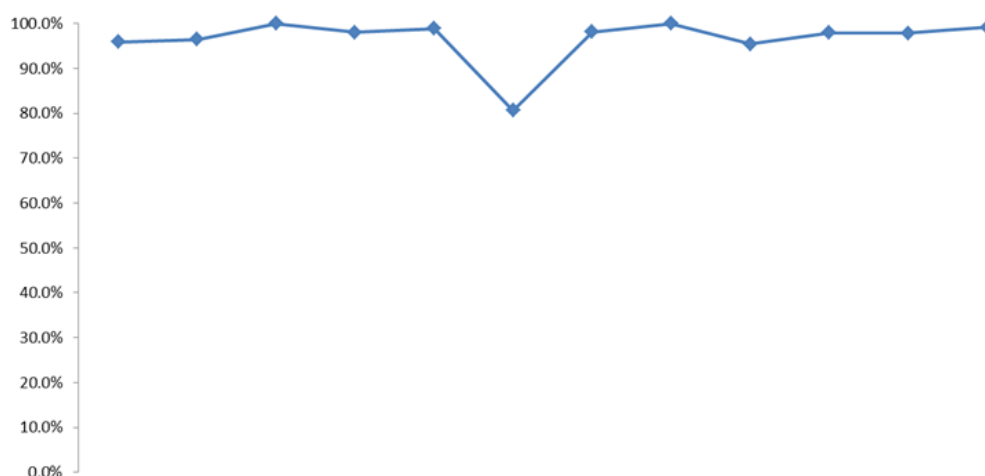
Under regulation, the Local Authority is “required to provide sufficient administration support to facilitate the delivery of efficient and effective review process”. Business Support within the Independent Reviewing Service performs a number of functions and these include liaising with Social Workers and IRO’s to arrange dates and venues for Initial LAC Reviews; forward planning and organising LAC invite letters/consultation papers for Reviews; creating ICS documents on Draig, co-ordinating cancellations/re-arrangements, collating monitoring/feedback forms, dealing with telephone queries. Distributing minutes as well as validating LAC data for performance indicators. Following the recent restructure, the Independent Reviewing Service has seen a reduction in Business Support.

Child Protection Conferences are supported by 4 clerks who collate information and reports for conference; verify attendance, take minutes and distribute minutes; maintain the Child Protection Register, Pre Birth and Temporary Register. They will arrange venues for Review conferences and coordinate invite letters, log and process GP invoice for GP reports, chase up professional reports.

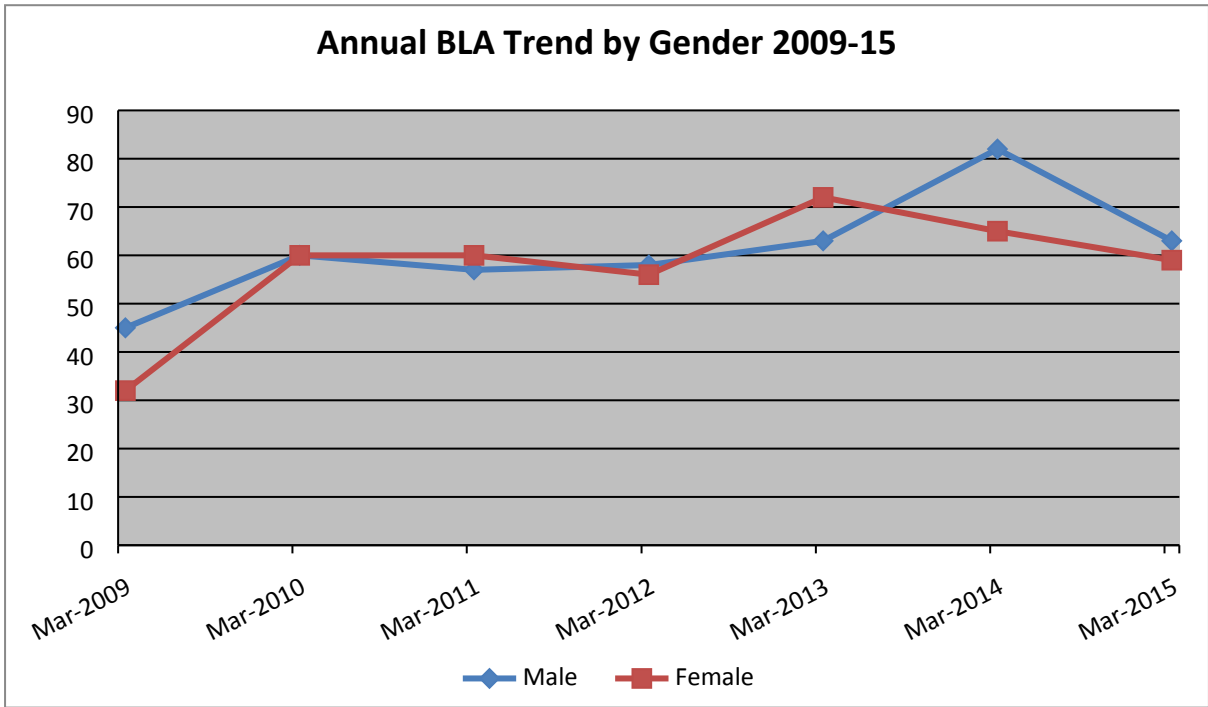
Reviewing Activities

Between April 2014 and March 2015, the IRO Service carried out 1187 Reviews on Looked After Children and 1139 of these were within compliance.

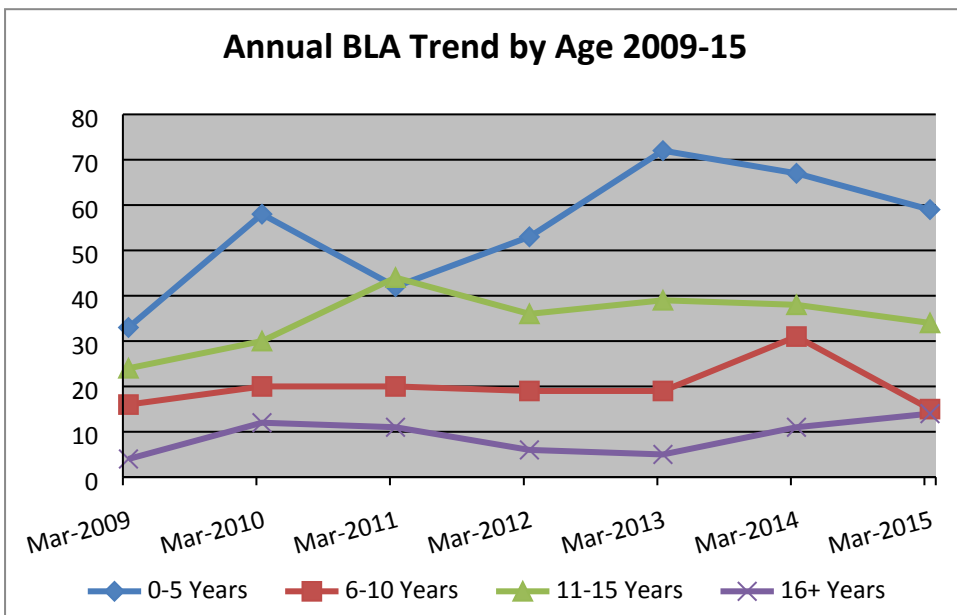
LAC Review Compliance April 2014 to March 2015



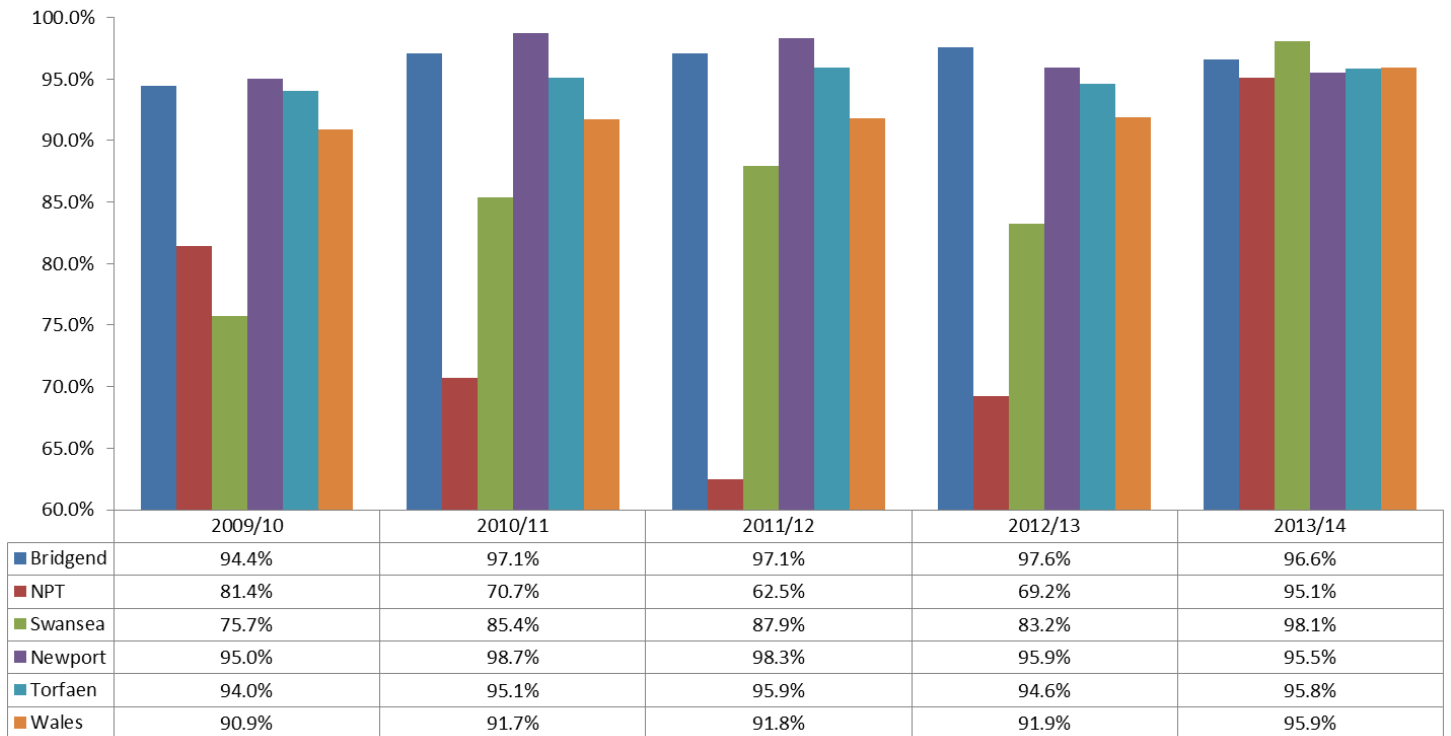
| | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | 2014/15 year end figure |
|------------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------------|
| LAC Rev. in Compliance | 139 | 82 | 82 | 97 | 88 | 104 | 104 | 86 | 104 | 96 | 45 | 112 | 1139 |
| LAC Rev. Due | 145 | 85 | 82 | 99 | 89 | 129 | 106 | 86 | 109 | 98 | 46 | 113 | 1187 |
| % Complaint | 95.9% | 96.5% | 100.0% | 98.0% | 98.9% | 80.6% | 98.1% | 100.0% | 95.4% | 98.0% | 97.8% | 99.1% | 96.0% |



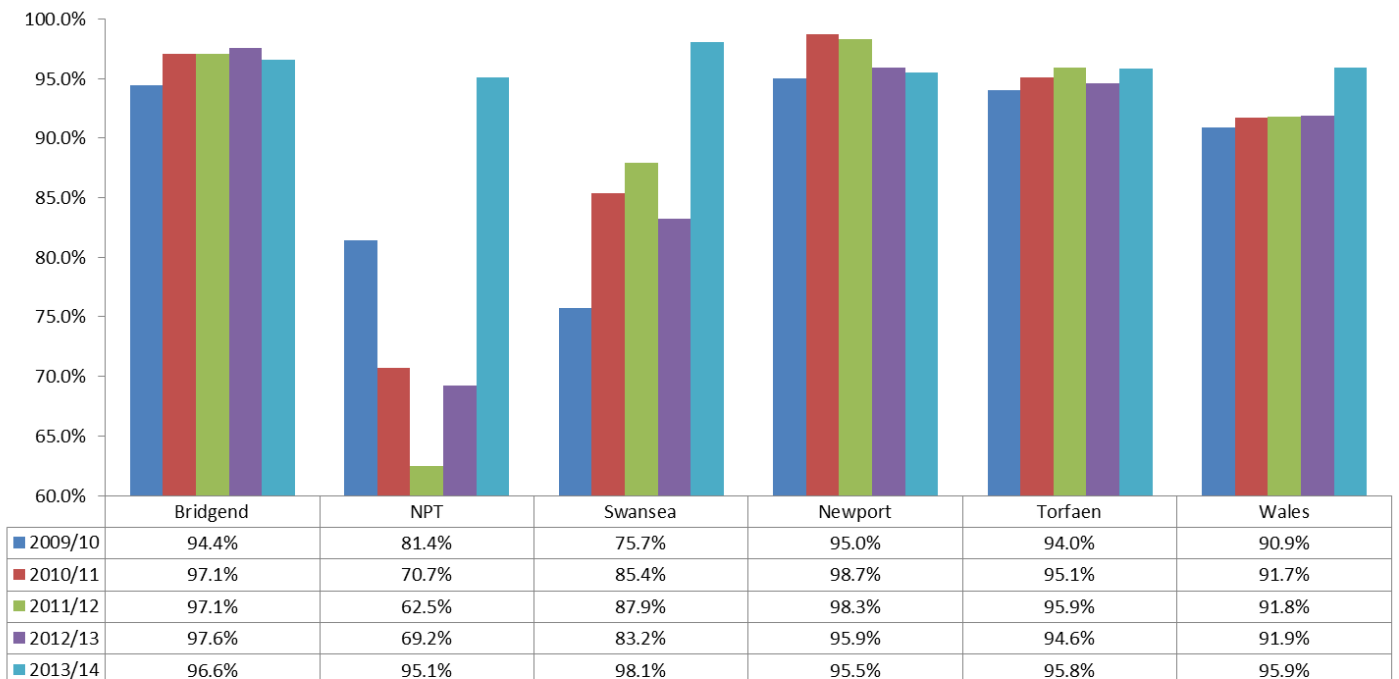
| | Male | Female |
|----------|------|--------|
| Mar-2009 | 45 | 32 |
| Mar-2010 | 60 | 60 |
| Mar-2011 | 57 | 60 |
| Mar-2012 | 58 | 56 |
| Mar-2013 | 63 | 72 |
| Mar-2014 | 82 | 65 |
| Mar-2015 | 63 | 59 |



LAC Review Compliance (5 year trend) comparison to similar authorities in Wales

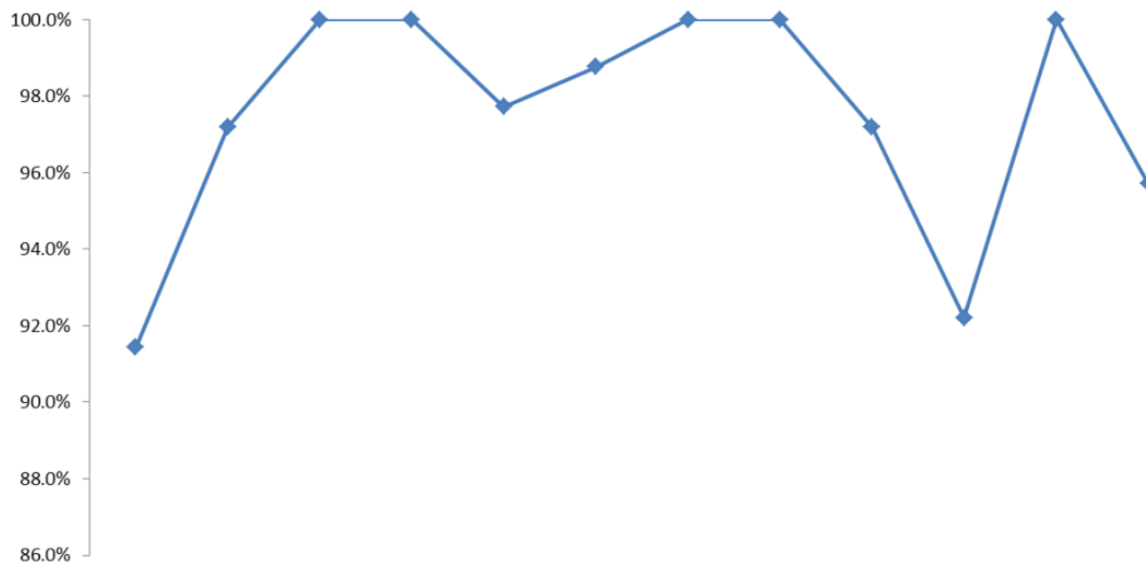


LAC Review Compliance (5 year trend) comparison to similar authorities in Wales



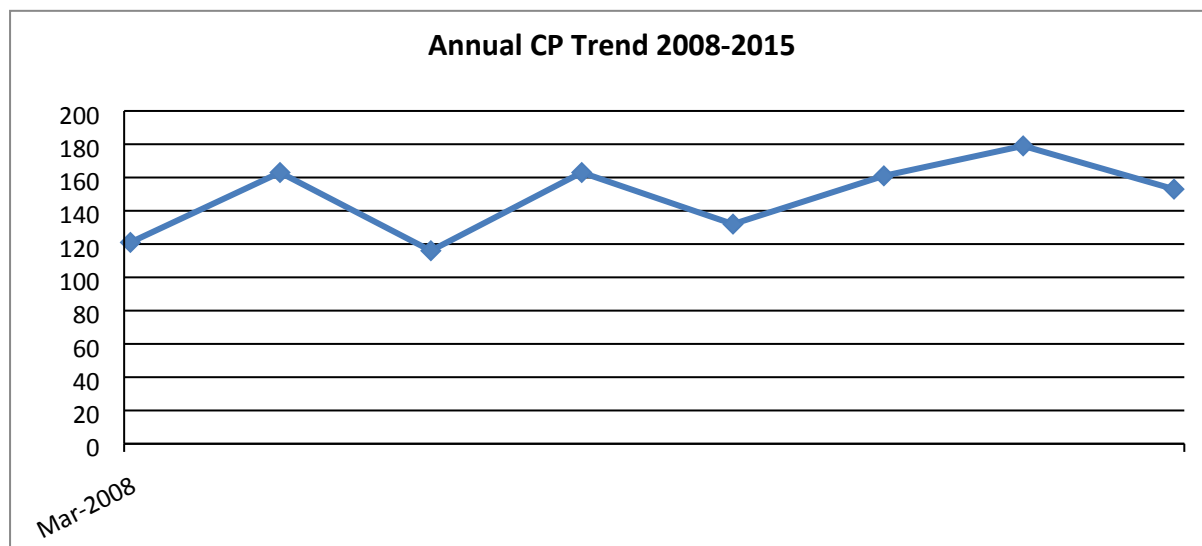
Between April 14 and March 15, there were 801 Child Protection conferences held and 780 of these were held within compliance.

CP Conference Compliance April 2014 to March 2015



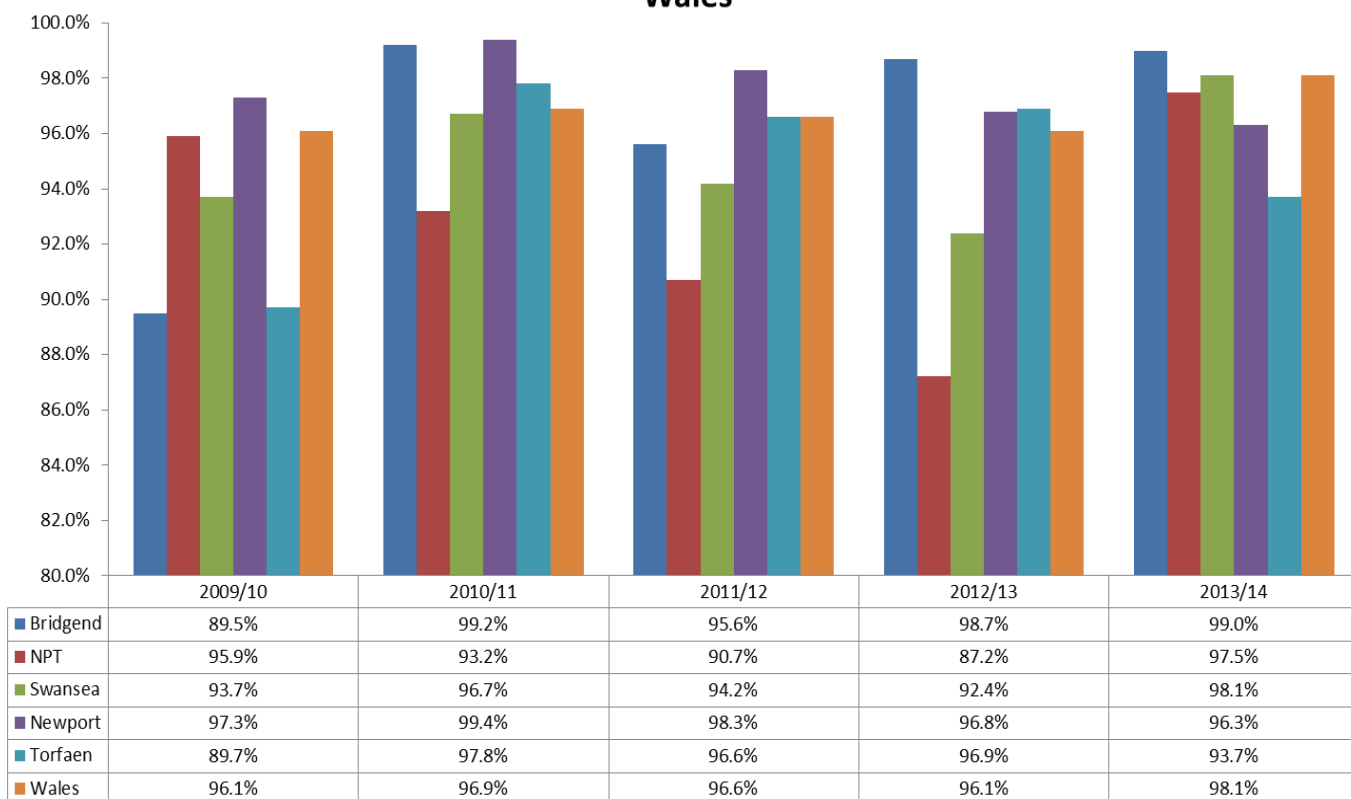
| | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | 2014/15 year end figure |
|------------------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------------------------|
| CP Conf. in Compliance | 64 | 69 | 92 | 72 | 43 | 80 | 52 | 57 | 69 | 71 | 44 | 67 | 780 |
| CP Conf. Due | 70 | 71 | 92 | 72 | 44 | 81 | 52 | 57 | 71 | 77 | 44 | 70 | 801 |
| % Complaint | 91.4% | 97.2% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 97.7% | 98.8% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 97.2% | 92.2% | 100.0% | 95.7% | 97.4% |

Annual CP Trend 2008-2015



| Year ending | Mar 08 | Mar 09 | Mar 10 | Mar 11 | Mar 12 | Mar 13 | Mar 14 | Mar 15 |
|-------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| No. CP | 121 | 163 | 116 | 163 | 132 | 161 | 179 | 153 |

CP Review Compliance (5 year trend) comparison to similar authorities in Wales



Qualitative Information

The IRO service continue to work to improve standards and ensure robust Care Planning is taking place for children, young people and families within Bridgend County Borough Council. Information received from IRO's during Team Meetings, Supervision and the analysis of the IRO monitoring form have highlighted some general themes below and the concerns raised by the IRO's are recorded below. However, it is important to note the information received is only a snapshot sample of the number of cases we have Reviewed this year. The capturing of the qualitative data will be improved during 2015/16 with the introduction of the IRO Audit/Monitoring Tool along with the introduction of the Electronic Consultation Document.

General themes reported through Supervision, Team meetings, Case discussions and IRO monitoring Form.

- Out of 257 Lac Reviews + 55 Pathway Reviews held between January and March 2015, 135 monitoring forms were received 92 LAC Reviews & 43 Pathway Reviews: 62 where Social Workers provided reports for the meeting; 68 children and young people attended their Review & 46 consulted with the IRO prior to the Review. **Comments made by the IRO were** "Care Plan out of date", "PEP out of date", "Stat Visits out of compliance", "Reports not being received in readiness of the Reviews".

- Between January to March 2015, 191 Child Protection Conferences were held. 27 monitoring forms were received. Only 12 reports were received 3 days prior to the conference date. Six were without a Care plan on coming to Conference. **Comments made by IRO's were** "poor quality report" "parents not provided with the opportunity to read report prior to conference" and "Strategy meetings & Section 47 paperwork was not signed off by Team Managers".
- Standard of Social Work reports for case conferences are reported to be inconsistent. Some are reported to be of a very good standard and include good analysis while others are of poor standard with no analysis and no care plan attached. Some Social Work reports are not signed off by Team Manager. IRO's are not receiving reports 3 working days prior to the Review/Case Conference. Reports are often received late and are usually received on the day of the Child Protection conference itself and some reports having not been signed off by the Team Manager.
- Reports such as Section 47, statutory visits and core group minutes are often not written up and signed off by the Team Manager in time for the conference.
- Not all agencies are submitting reports to case conference. GP reports for conference are generally received but are often of poor quality.
- IRO's have raised concern when no reports have been received for the LAC Review meetings and duty workers are in attendance.
- During Supervision and Team Meetings IRO's have reported Pathway Plans are generally of a good standard which is an improvement from last year's annual report. However, reports are often not received prior to the pathway Review and there has been some delay in cases being transferred from Safeguarding Teams to Just Ask+.

There are a number of cases which are making good progress with robust and effective care planning to establish improved outcomes for Looked After Children. The numbers of Looked After Children are reducing with 24 children in receipt of Adoption Orders; 22 Special Guardianship Orders and 3 Child Arrangement Orders.

- The number of children and young people subject to a Child Protection Plan has reduced over the last year to 129. The reasons for this decrease are unknown but are likely to be attributed to a number of factors;
 - A number of large sibling groups being removed from the CPR
 - Children and young people are remaining less time on the CPR due to the impact of PLO.
 - IRO's have focussed on the threshold criteria.

- Ensuring the voice of the child and young person throughout the Care Planning process is a priority for the IRO service. The Consultation and participation of children and young people in their Reviews was an area the IRO service had identified to improve during the last Annual Report. It is noted that without accurate data to substantiate the level of activity, it is very difficult to judge what progress has been made. However, during January to March 2015, out of 257 LAC Reviews + Pathway reviews, 68 children and young people attended their Review and 46 consulted with the IRO prior to the Review. Service users have reported they have not received the consultation document in time for the review and others merely fail to complete the document. This is recognised as an area to be improved and the IRO service have been working with the Communications Team to develop an interactive Electronic Consultation Document for Children Young People, their families and carers. It is expected the document will become live during May/June 2015.

Case Dispute Resolution and Complaints

There have been 8 cases taken through the formal stage of the IRO Resolution Protocol between April 2014 and March 2015. Of these cases, 5 were resolved at the first stage and 3 were resolved at stage two. An example of the concern had been where a child had been placed for adoption and the care plan was not progressing and was not proceeding to Court with an application for an Adoption Order. Delay was caused by the Adoption Service failing to make the funding arrangements for therapeutic support. There were also concerns that BCBC had not conducted the statutory visits for a period of time. The matter has now been resolved and the case is progressing.

IRO Concern was raised on 22 cases at the informal stage of the Resolution Protocol and all issues were resolved within five working days before reaching the formal stage. IRO's have raised concerns where cases have not been allocated or where there is drift in the care planning process or that Care Planning arrangements are inappropriate.

The IRO Service has received 2 complaints between April 2014 and March 2015. The first complaint was received from a family member around the Chairing of a Child Protection Conference. The second complaint was received from a family concerned about the Child Protection Conference process. Both matters were resolved at the initial stage and required no further input.

Challenges 2014-15

The IRO Service faced a number of challenges over the last year;

- The increase in LAC & CP population had initially led to high caseloads which inevitably led to increased pressure on the service ensuring Reviews and Conferences are held within compliance.
- The changes in staffing and recruitment at a time when the IRO Manager was also acting as Interim Group Manager had put increased pressure on the management and support for the IRO service.

- The lack of conference facilities when Sunnyside closed whilst waiting for the venues to become available within Civic Offices. This has now been addressed by the use of temporary venues at the Safeguarding Hubs, along with schools and health venues.
- The lack of Social Work reports provided for LAC Reviews continues to be of concern for the IRO Service.
- Internal systems and processes not being followed by Social Work staff impacts upon the IRO service performance Indicators and compliance. Notification is often received late due to a failure to follow the defined process.
- The pressures and demands experienced within the Safeguarding Teams have impacted upon the IRO service in terms of re-arranging LAC Reviews and Case Conferences, reports not being provided etc. Whilst efforts are always made to avoid any cancellation and re-arrangement of Reviews for Children and young people, we are often in a position where there is no choice, e.g. such as when the Social Worker is needed to attend Court.
- The IRO service has recently moved from Sunnyside to Level 2 at Civic Offices.
- The IRO's have raised concern with some cases being unallocated and duty workers attending the Review meetings with little or no information to share. This hinders the ability to effectively progress quality Care Planning.
- Despite a slight reduction, IRO caseloads continue to remain at an unacceptable high level. High caseloads have impacted upon the IRO's capacity to meet and consult with children and young people prior to their Review. It also impacts upon their capacity to effectively track cases.
- Minutes of LAC Reviews have been a particular challenge due to the high caseloads. Some IRO's have had a number of outstanding LAC Review minutes but this continues to be monitored on a monthly basis and individual action plans are put in place to address the delay.
- There are delays in reports for Child Protection initial and review conferences; they are often received on the day of the conference itself. Consequently, these reports are not always being shared with families the day before Conference which places pressure on the Conference Chair to ensure families are provided with the opportunity to read the report and address any discrepancies before proceeding with conference. In some cases, this has caused delay and even led to the cancellation of conference due to some families wanting to share the content of the report with their legal advisors prior to conference. The IRO service considers this to be unacceptable practice and have attended Safeguarding Team Meetings and Team Manager Meetings to address this issue, as well as raising the concern with the Senior Management Team. The IRO service have spoken with the training

department and are in the process of arranging training mornings for Social Work staff to be facilitated by the IRO service on the standards and expectation of preparation and attendance at Child Protection Conference.

Service Development & Achievement

- The IRO service has regular monthly Team Meetings where other professionals are invited to attend to discuss information on their service development. This is a means of ensuring the IRO service is kept fully informed of service provision and changes within Social Services & Well Being Directorate.
- The IRO Service attends quarterly All Wales IRO meetings. This enables the service to keep up to date with developments across Wales. The Service will be attending the All Wales IRO Annual Conference in September 2015 which is centred on Child Sexual Exploitation of children and young people.
- Children and Young People continue to be a priority of the IRO service. Work has commenced to develop ways in which improved consultation can take place with children, young people and families. An interactive electronic Consultation Document is currently being developed and it is hoped this will be introduced during May/June 2015.
- The IRO service have adapted the monitoring form and developed an Audit tool to ensure the IRO service increases the level of Auditing of cases within the Safeguarding service on a more frequent basis. It is expected to be introduced during May/June 2015.
- The previous Job Evaluation decision had caused some unsettlement within the IRO Service and had resulted in some long standing professionals deciding to leave and take up other positions outside of the Local Authority. The morale was low in June 2013 when the new IRO Manager took up post. However, the IRO's had appealed against the outcome of the Job Evaluation decision and won their appeal in March 2015, with the recommendation their professional position was unique within Children Services and should remain outside of the current job family.
- The IRO Service Manager and the Group Manager for Safeguarding are now responsible for Chairing all the Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy meetings and attend the Child Sexual Exploitation Task Force.
- The IRO Service has attended Safeguarding Team Meetings to work to raise standards at Looked After Children Reviews and Child Protection Case Conferences. This work is to continue and arrangements are being to hold a number of mentoring sessions for Social Work staff over the next few months.

- The IRO Service has continued to participate/facilitate within the Western Bay Multi-Agency Child Protection Training.
- Changes to the LAC Review document. Adaptations to the separation of the Social Work Report and the IRO Report have made improvements.
- Head of Service met with the IRO's in April 2015, and it is planned these meetings will take place on a bimonthly basis. The purpose of these meeting is for the IRO to share concerns and themes picked up by the IRO service.

Service Priorities

- To continue to work to improve performance of the IRO service.
- To continue to work to improve care planning for children and young people.
- Improved monitoring/auditing of children's cases through the Quality Assurance role of the IRO service.
- Improved emphasis upon Pathway Planning for young people Looked After by the Local Authority.
- To improve Consultation and participation of children and young people in the care planning process by continuing to develop ways to capture the voice of the child.
- To continue to work to improve standards of Looked After Children Reviews, Child Protection Conferences and Pathway Reviews.

Jaci Morgan
Independent Reviewing Service Manager
May 2015.