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Bridgend County Borough Council



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Gwasanaethau Gweithredol a Phartneriaethol / Operational and Partnership Services

Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643147
Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Andrew Rees

Ein cyf / Our ref:
Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad/Date: 7 October 2017

Dear Councillor,

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee will be held in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices Angel Street Bridgend CF31 4WB on **Thursday, 13 October 2016** at **2.00 pm**.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
To receive apologies for absence from Members.
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 01 September 2008 (including whipping declarations).
3. Approval of Minutes 3 - 22
To receive for approval the minutes of the meetings of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 16 June and 21 July 2016.
4. Forward Work Programme Update 23 - 28
5. Early Help and Permanence Strategy and Action Plan 29 - 62
Invitees:

Cllr Huw David, Leader
Cllr Hailey Townsend, Cabinet Member, Childrens Social Services and Equalities
Susan Cooper, Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing
Laura Kinsey, Head of Safeguarding and Family Support
Deborah McMillan, Corporate Director – Education and Transformation
Elizabeth Walton-James, Group Manager Safeguarding & Quality Assurance
Mark Lewis, Group Manager Integrated Working & Family Support
6. Estyn Report of Central South Consortium 63 - 92

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Invitees:

Cllr Huw David, Leader
Deborah McMillan, Corporate Director – Education and Transformation
Nicola Echanis, Head of Strategy Commissioning and Partnerships
Hannah Woodhouse, Managing Director – Central South Consortium

7. Urgent Items

To consider any 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 by reason of special circumstances be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Yours faithfully

P A Jolley

Corporate Director Operational and Partnership Services

Distribution:

Councillors:

PA Davies
DK Edwards
N Farr
EP Foley

Councillors

CA Green
PN John
M Jones
G Phillips

Councillors

RL Thomas
C Westwood
DBF White
KJ Watts

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 16 JUNE 2016 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor EP Foley – Chairperson

DK Edwards
M Jones

N Farr
G Phillips

CA Green
C Westwood

PN John
DBF White

Officers:

R Keepins - Scrutiny Officer
GP Jones - Head of Democratic Services

Invitees:

Councillor HJ David - Deputy Leader
D McMillan - Corporate Director – Education and Family Support
Nicola Echanis - Head of Education and Family Support
M Hatcher - Group Manager – Inclusion
S Cooper - Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
L Kinsey - Head of Children’s Social Care

222. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members:

Councillor PA Davies
Councillor RL Thomas
Councillor H Townsend
Councillor K Watts

223. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

224. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Committee queried the outcome of the questions shown on pages 13 and 14 of the agenda pack. The Scrutiny Officer advised that she was awaiting one response and that she would circulate all of the responses as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings of the Children and Young People’s Overview and scrutiny Committee held on 21 January and 9 March 2016 be approved as a true and accurate record.

225. STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO THE SUPPORT OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN

The Committee received a report from the Corporate Director – Education and Family Support which described the development of more strategic approaches to supporting vulnerable groups of learners. This included pupils who are eligible for free schools meals, looked after children on the Child Protection register identified as a child in need, those for whom English is an additional language, those with additional learning needs, young carers, those excluded from school and young offenders.

It was explained that there has been a multi-level strategic approach to supporting and targeting the educational performance of vulnerable groups of children in Bridgend which was a key priority in the Directorate business plan. The report outlined the Vulnerable Groups Strategy which identified a range of groups of children who were deemed to be vulnerable. It was expected that the interventions and practices which are proven to have the greatest impact in raising the attainment of looked after children and those children entitled to free school meals will be replicated to benefit other vulnerable groups.

Following the pattern of a high number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions, a Fair Access Strategy Group was formed and an action plan written for 2015-2016. The implementation of the Fair Access Strategy Group has ensured that there is a strategic approach to enable all pupils to have a fair access to education. Robust tracking and data analysis was used to provide targeted early prevention and intervention to meet the needs of children and young people.

The report provided information regarding the number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions in previous years. Partnership working had resulted in no further permanent exclusions. This has been due to the creative use of the Bridge Alternative provision with pupils who were at risk of permanent exclusion.

The Committee indicated that the use of fixed term and permanent exclusion were only used as a last resort but these created additional pressures for finding suitable placements. Members were advised that provision mapping was being undertaken and that although Heronsbridge School had no physical space extra funding was being used as part of the 21st Century Schools to improve special needs capacity. It was intended that all fixed term exclusions needed to attend Ysgol Bryn Castell (YBC) but permanent exclusions would attend a different school.

Members queried the reasons for fixed term exclusions and were advised that exclusions were for a variety of reason as shown in the report which included Racial Harassment, Theft and Substance misuse. Officers were working to tighten up in these criteria to enable specific issues to be identified and managed appropriately. The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support added that the culture to exclude pupils had changed since her arrival and exclusion was the last resort. The figures identified that the number of days lost had been halved in the last period.

The Committee queried the support which a child could expect. It was explained that although the provision varied they could be provided with a youth worker, Family support and counsellors. The Deputy Leader offered to provide an explanatory note to members to of the work being undertaken as part of the Bridge alternative provision and the support that was available at YBC.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support described the data and work carried out to develop the 3 hubs in the County Borough and the collective working of the support teams. Members welcomed the benefits that the hubs could achieve and it was requested if the Public Service Board could provide top-down support for the long term sustainability of the hubs. The Corporate Director explained that the Authority were committed to the model and were working with other agencies to progress the opportunities for early intervention.

The Cabinet Member for Education explained that the authority had a legal and moral responsibility to provide all children in the county borough with a good quality of education.

Members queried the sufficiency of the support able to be provided. It was explained that the service was leaner but due the multi-disciplined approach the authority was able to provide more support for the available funding.

The Committee asked for clarification for the range of reasons for exclusion and the number of exclusion for racial harassment and theft. It was explained that the existing data was being analyse further to identify patterns of behaviour which could then be addressed accordingly. Further work was also being undertaken to hone the categorisation in order for detailed and common descriptors to be used when recording data which with minimise the use of "other" categories.

The Cabinet Member commented that Show Racism the Red card programme was being offered to all primary school. This was becoming increasingly important given the level of publicity that the immigration debate was having recently and which was being picked up by young children.

Conclusions

1. The Committee commented on the fact that whilst the report contained a lot of detail on pupils eligible for free school meals, Looked After Children and pupils at risk of exclusion; there did not appear to be the same detail afforded to other vulnerable pupils such as young carers or those with English as an additional language. The Committee asked that strategic approaches be balanced out appropriately to ensure that there are no gaps in support and that provision for other vulnerable groups such as those mentioned above be made more obvious in the supporting documentation.
2. The Committee expressed concern over the exclusion data for fixed term exclusions for reasons such as Racial Harassment, Assault/Violence and Substance Misuse. The Committee recommended that:
 - a) the programme 'Show Racism the Red Card' be promoted more with school governors to try and encourage more schools to sign up: and
 - b) that the Police be approached to offer more support through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs.

Additional Information

1. The Committee asked for the data of any charges that have been brought against secondary school pupils from Bridgend's schools.
2. The Committee asked for further breakdown and analysis of the exclusion data, particularly focusing on data for 2014-15 for fixed term exclusions in Primary and Secondary Schools.
3. Members asked for an explanatory note on the various types of provision under the Fair Access Strategy.

226. CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE - OVERVIEW

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing presented a report which updated the Committee on the recent changes to Children's Social Services since the function was transferred to her six months ago. She advised of the introduction of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act, the implementations of the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) being led by Bridgend and the current budget pressure faced by the Authority and the Directorate. She added that this was a complex statutory service with a high demand and the importance of protecting children from harm.

Members queried the retention of staff and their training and development to enable them to stay with the authority. The Corporate Director responded that there was a training budget provided by the Welsh Government to enable the Social Care Workforce Development Partnership (SCWDP) to provide training as directed. She advised that there was no indication that this arrangement would change. Social workers were also able to undertake training as part of their ongoing development with the Care Council for Wales, Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL) consolidation programme.

Members queried the differences between the social worker vacancies numbers in the report. It was explained that the service has ensured that all vacancies are covered either by temporary or agency staff. A wide portfolio of further foundation training was available to staff in the western bay region and the authority was proactively identifying staff with the necessary experience and an interest in coaching being trained to undertake senior roles.

Members asked how many Looked After Children were currently being supported by the authority. The committee was informed that the service was currently supporting 390 children.

The Committee queried the progress of the implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. They were informed that the preparation made before its implementation had increase awareness of the act and its implications. The increased level of assessments were reducing and the authority was responding to the new codes of practice.

The committee queried the effectiveness of the Multi agency safeguarding hub being based in the civic offices. The Cabinet Member indicated that discussions regarding the most suitable location for the hub were ongoing.

Conclusion

1. Members strongly supported the continued promotion of the 'grow your own' approach for social workers.
2. The Committee recommend that the Bridgend MASH and the Just Ask Service be relocated from the Civic Centre to a more suitable location within the community in order to aid them in being more user friendly.
3. The Committee proposed that a Pre-Council Briefing take place on the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs.

Additional Information

1. The Committee asked for further information on the current staffing structure within Children's Social Services including anonymised details of number of FTEs, current Agency figures, as well as detail on roles, team structures etc.
2. Members asked for information on whether the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs were now all fully operational and whether there had been any difficulties experienced with the agencies working together.
3. Members asked for further information on the mix of skills and services available within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs and specifically what assistance is available for those in transition from Children's to Adult Services.

227. CORPORATE PARENTING CHAMPION NOMINATION

The Scrutiny Officer outlined the role of the Committee's Corporate Parenting Champion and explained that Councillor DBF White was the current appointee. After some debate it was:-

RESOLVED: That Councillor DBF White be re-appointed as the Committee's Corporate Parenting Champion

228. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2016-17

The Corporate Director-Operational and Partnership Services provided a report which requested that the Committee consider and approve its Forward Work Programme for the year.

1. In Relation to the item on Children with Disabilities public consultation, the Committee requested that the Youth Council be invited to attend and engage on the subject.
2. The Committee asked that the report on Early Help, Permanency and Placement scheduled for October 2016 incorporate an update on the current LAC numbers, as well as some detail or examples of the costings of foster placements, both in house and Out of Authority. Members also asked that an external view be sought for this meeting with advocate(s) invited to speak to provide perspectives on the services for LAC.
3. Members put forward the subject of 'Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service' (CAHMS) as an item to pilot for Collaborative Scrutiny and asked that should this go forward, a representative from Cwm Taf and ABMU be invited to attend.

229. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Following the discussion during the previous item the Committee requested that the proposals be confirmed at its next meeting.

230. URGENT ITEMS

None

The meeting closed at 4.35 pm

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 21 JULY 2016 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor EP Foley – Chairperson

PA Davies	DK Edwards	N Farr	CA Green
PN John	M Jones	G Phillips	RL Thomas
C Westwood	DBF White	KJ Watts	

Officers:

Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny

Invitees:

Nicola Echanis	Head of Education & Family Support
Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Councillor Huw David	Deputy Leader
Natalie Silcox	Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services
Sarah Keefe	Senior Development Worker - Central Hub
David Wright	Family Support Services Manager

231. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Officer:-

D McMillan

232. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:-

Councillor N Farr, personal interest in agenda item 3., in that she was a Social Worker in Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

W Bond, personal interest in agenda item 3., as a Member of Heronsbridge School governing body

233. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing presented a report, that informed the Committee of the work that has been undertaken as part of the Children with Disabilities Transformation programme, and to introduce the proposals and new models in moving forward for specialist 52-week provision for children and young people with complex needs, and overnight short breaks services for children with disabilities.

She confirmed that the report demonstrated that good progress was continuing to be made on the back of the initial work previously carried out, as alluded to in paragraphs 3. of the report, containing background information relating to the transformation programme.

She explained that the aim for BCBC, was for children and young people to remain within their local community with friends/family, for reasons of stability and continuity in their lives, and to comply with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, the provisions of which came into force in April 2016.

There was a need to provide specialist 52 week provision available In-County for children and young people with complex needs, with the only option currently being an Out of County placement, which often proved very expensive and meant that young people were moving from their local area and their family.

An initial consultation exercise had been carried out with services users and key stakeholders etc, which confirmed that this proposal was supported, and particularly by families of children who already had been placed Out of County.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that the potential models considered for such specialist 52 week provision for children and young people with complex needs included:

- Commissioning an independent In-County provider to deliver this provision, though following market testing and detailed discussions, it had been concluded there were limited opportunities to do this at this time;
- Refurbish and utilise buildings at Heronsbridge School, in order to provide the 52 week provision, with staff there delivering the extra service. This option was not pursued due to considerable registration and staffing implications;
- Refurbish and utilise buildings at the school in order to secure the 52 week provision (In-County), with further BCBC staff delivering and staffing the service. This was the Option that was supported and endorsed by the project team who developed the Options appraisal.

She proceeded by advising that during the last 10 years, there had been an average of 3 Out of County placements every year, at a cost of £4 – 5k a week to the Authority.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that in terms of the preferred option, a Programme Board had been established to manage the option and prepare a Business Case going forward, for which a capital bid had been approved by Council earlier this year.

She then referred to the Short Breaks (respite) service for Children with Disabilities, presently being provided through a combination of services, that included Bakers Way, Family Link (disabled respite foster carer service) and Direct Payments.

The establishment at Bakers Way, provided an overnight short break service through the provision of a 5 bedded home providing regular, planned short break overnight stays for disabled children and young people aged 0 – 18 years, together with an Outreach service.

A review of this service had been undertaken however, and this revealed that although the service provided at this location was generally effective, there were changes that if introduced, could improve provision at this facility.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing, confirmed that following engagement between the relevant staff and stakeholders, an Options Appraisal was developed for short breaks for children with disabilities in moving forward. The options considered were:

1. Remodelling overnight short breaks (Baker's Way)
2. Commission the overnight service from an independent provider
3. Stop providing the overnight service from Baker's Way

A Consultation exercise was undertaken and following feedback from this, Officers developed the 'Remodelling the overnight short breaks service' option, (ie Option 1 above), and further consultation was scheduled to take place on this during July/August 2016, so that views could be invited on this new proposal.

She then advised Members of the longer term plan for short breaks services, and these were proposed in paragraph 4.24 of the report.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing, concluded her submission by advising that paragraph 7.1 of the report outlined the savings that would be realised through the development of a specialist 52 week provision for children and young people with complex needs, avoiding the need for Out of County placements, whilst paragraph 7.2 of the report confirmed the savings that could be achieved through remodelling the overnight short break service at Baker's Way.

The Chairperson then opened up the meeting for questions.

A Member noted that one of the main drivers behind providing an In-house facility for children and young people with complex needs, was to ensure that the best interests of service users were met, as well as to save costs under the MTFs. He noted that mapping and profiling recently undertaken, also showed that there were a number of children/young people currently receiving other forms of care, whose needs and complexities were increasing to such a degree, that 52 week specialist provision may be required for them in the near future. Hence the change from the current 38 week provision. Considering the above against paragraph 7 of the report and the potential savings that could derive from the proposed change, he asked for clarification that such savings were being based upon 3 Out of County placements year on year recurring, with this estimated amount being provided for instead In-house at Heronsbridge school (as opposed to Out of County), at a reduced cost. He asked also if dialogue had taken place with current providers Out of County on the proposed changes and neighbouring local authorities, on models that may meet future needs of the service not just for young people in the County Borough, but those within other neighbouring authorities that could use the new service, and in doing so bring in income for BCBC per se, or through a shared service. To accommodate some of the above, he also asked if there was scope to increase the number of 3 bed units, should in future the demand arise to do so.

The Group Manager, Children's Regulated Services, explained that based on the current provision a 3 bedroom facility was being fully utilised based on the present 38 week provision. One of the reasons to extend the provision to 52 weeks, was to accommodate young people for longer periods as they became older, for example aged 15, 16 and 17. The reasoning behind this was that their parents whilst being able to cope with challenging behaviour from their children when they were younger, often struggled to do so as their child started to enter into adulthood, as they were then larger individuals and in extreme cases could become unmanageable. A 52 week provision would also maintain a better occupancy rate than the current 38 week provision.

A Member added however, that provision for 3 placements, would only cater for what presently existed, rather for any increase in this figure.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing, reiterated that the current 3 bed provision at Heronsbridge School was based on patterns that had applied consistently over the last 10 or so years, and it was estimated that, this was therefore not anticipated

to significantly increase. This provision was also supplemented by a Family Link service that could support young people with complex needs and/or challenging behaviour. The situation would be monitored as developments progress, and if necessary, some modifications could be made to the proposals if or when this was required in the future.

A Member referring to paragraph 4.7 of the report, enquired if there was evidence to suggest that as part of the consultation process, efforts had been made to look at the existing service facility being provided by Out of County providers (as there was no interest In-County), or the service being provided jointly with a neighbouring authority, which would be part of a cost sharing exercise, to go toward obtaining the necessary savings required.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing, confirmed that a huge piece of scoping work had been carried out in respect of options such as those referred to by the Member, including with a company called Western House who provided care support, but not to the extent for young people that required this on a specialist basis. However, this work had not proved to be successful for a number of reasons, and this was why Officers had pursued the model that had been recommended in the report.

The Group Manager Children's Regulated Services, confirmed that there was very little in the way of choice of providers that would be suitable to support young people with the needs subject of those presently being supported. There had been one in Cardiff but this had now closed, and a further such facility in Brecon which had expanded to cater for an increased number of cases. She had made other enquiries in order to ascertain if an establishment to support young people with complex needs was going to be introduced In-County within the immediate or short term future, but she was not aware of any on the horizon, so therefore this meant that options were not available, and that is why it had been agreed to extend the current provision at Heronsbridge School. There would be scope to commission placements to neighbouring authorities however, such as the Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taf, should places become available.

A Member noted the proposal to provide a 52 week specialist provision of support care at Heronsbridge School, as opposed to a 38 week care package, and she asked are there minimum staffing levels within which to cover this increased level of care. She also asked if the staff would be permanent, temporary or agency, and if the staffing compliment existed or was yet to be recruited.

The Group Manager Children's Regulated Services confirmed that the 52 week care provision was something that was entirely new, and therefore, some new staff were likely to be introduced through the probable advertisement of posts. There was scope however, for existing staff at Heronsbridge to apply for any new jobs, should they so wish, as well as extending their shift patterns to cover the extra hours of provision. In terms of the total number of staff required to support the service she confirmed that as of yet this was not known.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing added that the Commissioning Team had been carrying out a scoping exercise regarding possible staffing proposals. She reiterated that there was a possibility also as well as recruiting new staff, to call upon existing staff who worked in Adult Social Care and other Adult Respite Units to assist the support of service users in Heronsbridge School. The scoping exercise included financial profiling of services, and it had been established that increased savings could be made if extra resources for Heronsbridge were found in-house rather than externally or through extra recruitment of staff. As had also been discussed previously, supporting individuals in-house rather than them going Out of County, would also achieve considerable savings in itself.

The Group Manager Children's Regulated Services further added that there were national minimum standards that had to be statutorily complied with when supporting individuals in Care Homes in terms of staffing numbers, and therefore, these had to be in place regardless of any staffing arrangements being proposed through any recruitment exercise.

The Chairperson asked the Invitees when the Project at Heronsbridge School was due to go live.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that that the new provision would hopefully be up and running by the next financial year.

A Member referred to paragraph 3.1 of the report, where reference was made to it being identified that local delivery, instead of Out of County placement for delivery of Autistic Spectrum Disorder provision, was identified as a potential source of savings. He understood that savings had to be made within different Directorates under the terms of the MTFs, but hoped Officers were making plans to realise these, without any compromise to the safety and wellbeing of young people that relied on long-term and sometimes specialist support.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that the wording of the above paragraph of the report did possibly give rise for Members to think that the changes proposed both at Bakers Way and Heronsbridge were purely due to a cost cutting exercise. However, she gave an assurance to Committee that this was far from the case. It was incumbent upon her to achieve the savings that the Council had required her to make under the MTFs, but these savings would be achieved through methods that would not in any way compromise young people who required specialised care.

There was considerable work in progress to achieve the above, and not implement changes proposed to Bakers Way and Heronsbridge School, but also to look at the way in which other types of care packages are provided. One of these proposals was to see if there was any merit in combining some respite services for adults and children together/young people entering adulthood, and possibly looking to engaging support for this outside of the Authority, i.e. through commissioning an external provider and firstly establishing if this was financially viable. These were longer term options with regard to care packages the Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing added, and that more work would be carried out on this in the autumn, especially in respect of different methods of care support for adults.

A Member, whilst noting that one of the reasons proposed for bringing young people out of an Out of County placement, was due to the fact that they could be closer to their family and friends which would benefit all parties, in that the young person was nearer to home. However, he felt that Invitees should note that some individuals may wish to remain Out of County due to them being settled in an environment which was familiar to them and one which they were happy in.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that all Out of County placements would be assessed, in order to ascertain issues such as that which the Member referred to, and the extent of their individual needs, taking into account their state of health. She added that continuity in terms of support was very important in young (and older) people with autism for example. Care requirements were also examined to establish if any changes were required, during transition from children to adults.

A Member referred to page 6 of the report and paragraph 4.20, which advised that a public consultation had been undertaken in respect of the changes to Bakers Way Care Centre, ie to invite views on the proposal to review short breaks services at this establishment, to which 71 responses had been received. He asked what the percentage was of these responses compared to the number of people who accessed the services. Also, with reference to the type of questions that were asked as part of the consultation exercise, for example those listed on page 21 of the report's Appendix, he felt that some of these questions were very personal in their nature and he wondered whether this was both suitable and relevant. He hoped that any information completed as part of the consultation remained confidential, and that this could not be accessed by departments other than Social Services.

The Cabinet Member Children's Social Services and Equalities advised that this information was retained as confidential information, and that people who completed the form did not have to fill in those sections of this that they weren't comfortable completing, for example, the disclosure of very personal information. The form was completed also for Equalities monitoring purposes she added, and information submitted by persons who completed the form was also used to establish or amend certain Council policies. It was not mandatory that the form be completed at all she further added, it was down to the individual if they wished to complete this. She proceeded by advising that the first consultation undertaken, was carried out in order to shape what changes were required along the lines outlined in the report and supporting document, and what clientele would be affected by these changes. She would ascertain from Officers what the 71 responses equated to, in percentage terms when compared with the number of people who received services, and provide this figure to the Member outside of the meeting. A further consultation was also due to be initiated and the Council's Marketing Engagement team had been involved in these consultation exercises, the results of which when fully known, would be made available with certain information also being placed on the Council's web site.

The Member felt that a considerable response was required from service users, in order that their views and observations could be considered fully, with regard to any future re-shaping of services along the lines detailed in the report.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing, confirmed that there had been both considerable and meaningful consultation and engagement with families that would be affected by changes in the way services would be provided in the future at Heronsbridge School and Bakers Way, and this would be continued and widened as further proposals were made and subsequently consulted upon.

This concluded debate on the above item, and therefore, the Chairperson thanked the Invitees for attending and responding to questions on this item.

Children with Disabilities Transformation Programme

Specialist 52 week provision

1. The Committee asked for further information on the staffing numbers required for the additional weeks under the new 52 week provision proposed for children with disabilities, as well as detail of where these staff will be coming from and how they will be funded?
2. The Committee concluded that there was insufficient evidence of dialogue with the current providers out of county as well as other Local Authorities on models that would meet current and future needs. Members questioned whether three places

would be sufficient given that there could be opportunities for income generation from other LAs utilising more spaces.

The Committee also questioned how savings could be identified despite not knowing the cost of the future provision. Members asked for clarification and evidence of where the projected savings were coming from and what information has been sourced from current providers and other LAs.

Short Breaks (respite) Services

3. The Committee expressed concern over the presentation of the consultation data in that it was reported that there were 71 responses but no detail as to how many people were consulted in total. The Committee asked for further detail of the number of participants, who they were and how they were consulted.
4. Members queried the changes to staffing in Bakers Way in that the plan was to look to existing staff to extend their shifts. Members questioned how agreeable staff had been to this in the consultation and expressed concern over whether agency staff could have to be utilised to meet the minimum requirements under the legislation. The Committee asked for clarification including the associated costings.

Further comments

5. The Committee commented on the need for caution when asking for generic personal information in consultation exercises to ensure that potential consultees are not deterred from participating. The Committee proposed that enhanced confirmation be incorporated within any consultation document that the information is strictly confidential.

234. PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

The Chairperson welcomed the Invitees to the meeting in order to discuss the above Strategy (attached at Appendix 1 to the report), and Members proceeded straight into a question and answering session.

A Member referred to page 24 of the report and paragraph 4.3, where it made reference to the Bridgend Youth Council being supported by staff within the Integrated Working and Family Support Team, which will be recognised as the platform through which all children and young people throughout the County Borough will be encouraged to influence positive changes within services and decisions which will affect them. It also stated that the Youth Council will be the primary platform through which children and young people may engage in the democratic and decision making processes that affect them. He asked Invitees how this intended to be both delivered and sustained, given the budget cuts that the Youth Council had faced in recent years under the Council's MTFs. He added that page 29 of the Strategy, confirmed that participation was the active involvement of children and young people in making decisions about the services that affect them or which they use, including involvement in decision making processes, and giving feedback on how their contribution has made a difference. He questioned in practical terms if this was tokenistic or realistic. The Member also referred to page 35 of the Strategy where it quoted that encouragement should be given to ensure young people have an involvement and input within the implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. He also noted from page 37 of the Strategy, that it made reference to there being good opportunities for young people to have their say in the decisions that affect them. He asked what evidence there was of this, ie possibly through case studies or the like.

Finally, he referred to page 32 of the Strategy, and that the level of involvement of children and young people will increase as the Participation Strategy is developed. He referred to the 'Ladder of Participation' produced by UNICEF, which measured the involvement of children and young people. He asked Invitees what rung of the ladder young people in the County Borough were currently on.

The Head of Education and Early Help, advised that statutory guidance had been issued by Welsh Government to local authorities, to promote and facilitate participation by children and young people in decisions that may affect them.

Within the necessary guidance, there was an emphasis on the role of the young person in implementing the 7 wellbeing goals through inclusion in the decision making process. There were also some further recommendations for local authorities to adhere to, and to the National Participation Standards (shown at Appendix 2 to the report), which will ensure effective working practices are followed.

She added that Bridgend would deliver its commitment to embedding the participation agenda in all aspects of the delivery and reviewing of services through the implementation of the Strategy, in line with the 'Shared Purpose: Shared Future' Core Guidance, which has encompassed the National Participation Standards and the commitment in Wales, to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). A self –assessment within Bridgend would take place, and would be guided by the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards Self-Assessment Toolkit, attached to the report at Appendix 3.

In part response to the Members questions, the Head of Education and Early Help confirmed that a dedicated post had been introduced to drive forward a lot of the work that would be involved in the development and progression of the Participation Strategy.

The Head of Education and Early Help confirmed that as the Participation Strategy was still work in progress, no case studies had yet been undertaken that would evidence or otherwise that young people have had their say in decisions that affect them. However, page 33 of Appendix 1, outlined and gave examples of instances whereby participation in the Strategy would provide wide ranging benefits for children, young people and their families, as well as for the organisations working with them and for the communities they live in.

There is a standard paragraph in all reports that are submitted to Committee meetings of the Council detailing whether or not an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) had been or would be carried out in respect of the topic the report related to, it is intended that in the future a Child Impact Assessments would also be undertaken in addition to the EIA in respect of all proposed policy changes.

Officers were also going through an exercise whereby different schemes led by the Council and its key stakeholders ie relating to children and young people were being looked at to see if they could have an active involvement in these schemes in order that they may 'have their say'. This could mean anything that the Council as a whole are involved in, and not just something that emanated from the Children's and Families Directorate.

In response to the Members point with regard to young people having an input in any work generated from the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, the Head of Education and Early Help confirmed that there was a considerable amount of work arising from this legislation that would involve children and young people. The reason for this, was that work within the Directorates of Adult Social Care and Children's did

overlap to a degree, particularly with regard to engagement in the early intervention and prevention agenda.

A Member felt that it was important for Members to be reminded of the key provisions of the above Act, and how these impacted upon any of the work to be considered in the future, by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Cabinet Member, Children's Social Services and Equalities, confirmed that the Cabinet Committee Equalities would assist in monitoring the above, including looking further at the subject of Child Impact Assessments as part of Equality Impact Assessments, in respect of issues that directly affected them, including those that are incorporated in the Future Generations Act.

She added that a 'Girls Network' had been established, which comprised of primarily young women who held workshops where adults were invited to. These workshops included sharing what activities these individuals were involved in, and new ideas for what type of health and wellbeing activities they wished to pursue, including as part of school's curricula. She further added that sport involving females at school particularly within comprehensive and secondary schools, had increased since teachers had involved asking pupils what activities they wanted to do, as opposed to telling them.

A Member advised that in future, he hoped to see evidence through case studies and the like, of the extent that young people become involved in with regard to future work that comprises the Participation Strategy. He added that currently the Youth Council were involved in developing 6 different Strategic Work Plans.

The representative from the Youth Council reiterated that the level of involvement of children and young people would increase as the Strategy developed further. That said, there were already a number of youth-led activities in being, where there was little or no input to these from adults.

The Senior Development Worker added that the local authority was looking to second extra roles within the Youth Council, to give increased support to the agenda of the Participation Strategy. There was also a proposal she further added, to place young people on Public Service Boards being established to sit under the Future Generations Act.

The Family Support Services Manager also added that work would be progressed with Unicef, to further establish the rights children have while being educated in school.

A Member noted that much had been made of the Strategy, including explaining how it would develop. There was reference in the report to the support of the Strategy by the Youth Council. He asked however, what work had been carried out if any, to engage with young people through other partner and outside organisations, as only a minority of young people within the County Borough were represented by the Youth Council.

The Head of Education and Early Help stated that Officers were aware of the fact that the Youth Council was not the voice for all young people situated within the County Borough. She added that recently an open day for young people had been convened, where individuals who attended had been advised of the avenues they could pursue if they wanted their voice to be heard, through different initiatives such as the Participation Strategy, in order that there was increased involvement in work relating to the development of this, and other newly developed legislation that may affect people's lives at a young age. She further reported that representation at that event was from a very wide range of children including children from vulnerable groups.

The Senior Development Worker added that there was a Participation Strategy Network that was made up of various different stakeholders, who had a connection with young people over and above the Youth Council. This Network also encouraged the participation within it of disabled young people. Further work was being carried out with a view to developing the rights of young people, through appointing Champions through Youth Clubs and other Associations, once more to increase and encourage the involvement of young people in the development of youth led initiatives. Further to the last point made by the Member, she would arrange for an audit to be undertaken in order to ensure that there were no 'gaps', in terms of trying to engage with all young people to this end.

The Deputy Leader confirmed that the topic under discussion was a Strategy rather than an Action Plan, but a primary aim of the Strategy was to ensure that better outcomes are delivered for children and young people, and to achieve this they needed to be involved more in what key organisations such as the local authority were doing. He was happy for a report to be produced for the Committee annually on the work of the Strategy as it developed further. He added that schools had been made aware of the Strategy; so therefore, a considerable number of young people would have been made aware of it together with its aims and objectives, as well as through organisations such as the Youth Council.

A Member asked if there was any work ongoing in the County Borough with children aged 0 – 10.

The Senior Development Worker replied that work was ongoing with Unicef, with a view to setting-up a project in 5 primary and 5 secondary schools, specifically designed for young children over 5 years of age, to look at ways within which very young children's rights could improve in terms of their participation in things that affect them. If this exercise proved useful, then the intention was to expand it further to other schools. A Service Level Agreement was currently being developed with Unicef, and the work it was anticipated, would commence in September 2016.

The Deputy Leader explained that the voice of a student had expanded in Bridgend County Borough in recent times. An example of this was that in some schools there had cases of pupils being included in the appointments of teachers and head teachers. All schools as far as he was aware, had also set-up a School Council, where they could become involved in a number of different issues, including examining issues of accountability in the Education Authority. Children at schools were also now as a matter of course, consulted upon when there were plans to amalgamate schools they attended under the Council's School Modernisation proposals, including any views they had on issues such as this, being taken on board just like any other consultees would. He added that appropriate sections within other Directorates would need to be signed up to commit to the Strategy, more particularly Parks and Playing Fields, Highways (specifically public transport), as opposed to just the Childrens Social Care and Education Department's.

The Cabinet Member Equalities and Children's Social Services advised that a training programme would be rolled out in the Authority over the next few months, with a view to increasing the quality of Environmental Impact Assessments.

A Member who was on the Board of Governors at Brynteg Comprehensive School, commented upon the fact of how little he was in contact with students.

The Chairperson replied by stating that things would improve to that end through initiatives such as the Participation Strategy, which as well of encouraging more participation from the younger element of society, would hopefully also lead to increased

engagement with them. He added that it was positive news in hearing that the representative of the Youth Council at today's meeting (who was also the Youth Mayor of BCBC), was providing an active role in School Service Boards. He suggested that he also attends at least one School Governing Board meeting serving each of the Schools in the County Borough, together with a meeting of the Bridgend Governors Association to advise of and reinforce the Participation Strategy.

The Youth Council representative confirmed that he would be happy to go along with these suggestions.

The Deputy Leader concurred, and added that ideas such as those mentioned above, would be an important voice for the changes in curriculum.

A Member referred to Appendix 1 of the report at page 61, where reference was made to the Participation Consortium which was a multi-agency strategic body working at a national level, to develop capacity and practice in terms of the Participation of children and young people in decision making in Wales. She asked how many young people under 25 years of age were involved with this.

The Senior Development Worker confirmed that the majority of young people involved in the Consortium were under 25, as it was specifically designed for 0 – 25 year olds, and usually connected with various Youth Council's. She added however, that the National Participation Network was much more productive than this all Wales initiative.

She added in response to a follow-up question, that she was not totally au fait with all the groups that comprised the membership of the Consortium, though she was familiar with one or two, for example Funky Dragon, who were a very effective youth support group.

A Member closed the debate on this item by asking how far advanced the Participation Strategy currently was.

The Head of Education and Early Help, advised that the Strategy was presently in its infancy stage and that the Action Plan was an important component, in that the aims and objectives of this would assist in terms of populating and developing the Strategy further.

Participation Strategy

1. The Committee recognised the work that was being undertaken in relation to the participation of Children and Young People but commented on the lack of detail of this within the Strategy and the need for the Strategy to be sold more widely .
2. The Committee expressed concerns over the lack of detail for engagement of children and young people outside of the youth council such as those hard to reach or considered vulnerable as well as primary aged pupils. Officers reported that work with Unicef for example was being undertaken, working with primary aged pupils.
3. Members were also concerned over the lack of monitoring or evaluation of participation work and commented that if this information is not consistently gathered it would prove difficult to provide it when needed; for the purposes of the self-assessment.
4. The Committee commented that the strategy is not written in a user friendly manner for children and young people and that this, along with the lack of detail in terms of 'how' children and young people can get involved, makes it difficult for them to access and understand how they can participate.

5. The Committee noted the comment from Officers on the need for other Directorates to take on the Strategy but suggested that in order for this to happen the Strategy needs significant expansion and detail to enable other Directorates to sign up to it.
6. Following their conclusions, Members recommended the following changes to the Strategy for incorporation in the final text:
 - a) That more information on other organisation involvement be incorporated into the strategy;
 - b) That more examples of the 'How' aspect be incorporated into the strategy;
 - c) That the strategy be more accessible and user friendly for children and young people;
 - d) That the strategy recognise and evidence more the importance of engagement with other children and young people outside of the Youth Council and detail how this this is going to take place;
 - e) That the action plan be incorporated within the strategy to evidence how the work is being targeted, monitored and evaluated;
 - f) That the action plan be expanded for the whole Authority to incorporate other Directorates.

Further Comments

7. The Committee were delighted that the Youth Council was to be represented on the Public Service Board.
8. The Committee asked that the Bridgend Governors Association be contacted and asked to raise with all Chairs of Governors the requirement for pupil representation on Governing Bodies.
9. The Committee commented on the need for Scrutiny to engage with more youth organisations; getting more young people to attend Scrutiny Committees or provide written evidence. Members stressed that this needed to be taken forward across all Scrutiny Committees.

235. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Corporate Director Operational and Partnership Services submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to present the items due to be considered at the Committee's meeting on 13 October 2016, and seeking confirmation of the information required for the subsequent scheduled meeting to be held on 15 December 2016, and finally, present a list of further potential items for prioritisation by the Committee.

RECOMMENDED: That the Committee:-

- (1) Noted the items due to be considered at the next scheduled meeting on 13 October 2016, as outlined in paragraph 4.1 of the report, as well as the Invitees for this meeting.
- (2) Noted the items to be considered at the subsequent meeting scheduled for 15 December 2016, as outlined in paragraph 4.2 of the report, and the suggested Invitees for this meeting.
- (3) Further noted the remaining items to be considered as part of the Committee's Forward Work Programme going

forward, as recommended in paragraph's 4.3 and 4.4 of the report.

236. URGENT ITEMS

None.

The meeting closed at 4.30 pm

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REPORT TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 OCTOBER 2016

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – OPERATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- a) present the items due to be considered at the Committee's meeting to be held on 15 December 2016 and seeks confirmation of the information required for the subsequent scheduled meeting to be held on 2 February 2017;
- b) present a list of further potential items for prioritisation by the Committee.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives / Other Corporate Priorities

2.1 The improvement priorities identified in the Corporate Plan 2016-2020 have been embodied in the Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes. The amended Corporate Plan adopted by Council on 10 March 2016 formally set out the improvement priorities that the Council will seek to implement between 2016 and 2020. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees engage in review and development of plans, policy or strategies that support the Corporate Themes.

3. Background

3.1 At its meeting 16 June 2016, the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee determined its Annual Forward Work Programme for 2016/17.

4. Current Situation / Proposal

Meetings of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4.1 In relation to the Committee's next scheduled meeting to be held on 15 December 2016, the table below lists the items to be considered and the invitees due to attend.

Topic	Invitees	Specific Information Requested	Research to be Undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Unit
Directorate Budget Consultation Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deborah McMillan, Corporate Director – Education and Family Support • Cllr Huw David, Deputy Leader 	MTFS Proposals for 2017-18	

Topic	Invitees	Specific Information Requested	Research to be Undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Unit
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan Cooper, Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing • Cllr Hailey Townsend, Cabinet Member, Childrens Social Services and Equalities • Nicola Echanis, Head of Strategy Commissioning and Partnerships • Laura Kinsey, Head of Safeguarding and Family Support 		

4.2 The table below lists the item to be considered and the invitees due to attend in respect of the subsequent meeting of the Committee to be held on 2 February 2017.

Topic	Invitees	Specific Information Requested	Research to be Undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Unit
Annual School Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deborah McMillan, Corporate Director – Education and Family Support • Cllr Huw David, Deputy Leader • Cllr Hailey Townsend, Cabinet Member, Childrens Social Services and Equalities • Sue Roberts, Group Manager – School Improvement or • Paul Wolstenholme, Bridgend Link Adviser • Mike Glavin, Assistant Director CSC • Nicola Echanis, Head of Strategy Commissioning and Partnerships • Hannah Woodhouse, Managing Director - CSC 	Annual school performance report from CSC	Detail research / To be confirmed
Schools Strategic Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deborah McMillan, Corporate Director – Education and Family Support • Cllr Huw David, Deputy Leader • Nicola Echanis, Head of 	Options and Appraisal planned for July, followed by consultation on options - Possibly Committee receive before goes to Cabinet and out to consultation and the	

Topic	Invitees	Specific Information Requested	Research to be Undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Unit
	Strategy Commissioning and Partnerships • Sue Roberts, Group Manager – School Improvement or Paul Wolstenholme, Bridgend Link Adviser Workstream Leads	outcome of consultation once again before Cabinet between September & December? Aim is for January 2017 decision. Qs - what advantages are there to taking sixth forms out of schools?	
Member and School Engagement Panel	• Deborah McMillan, Corporate Director – Education and Transformation • Cllr Huw David, Deputy Leader Hannah Woodhouse, Managing Director - CSC	Response from Corporate Director - Education and Transformation and Managing Director - CSC to Committee's Annual Report from MSEP. (January 2016). (Information Report)	

4.3 The table below lists all potential items that the Committee approved at their meeting on 16 June 2016, which are put to the Committee for reprioritisation as appropriate.

Topic	Proposed Date	Specific Information Requested	Research to be Undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Unit
School Modernisation	01-Apr-17	One of Programmes under Corporate Priority 3 - Smarter Use of Resources. What will Band B look like? How will programme link in with Schools Strategic Review?	Detail research / To be confirmed
FE Sector	01-Apr-17	How FE Sector operates, what are the strategic plans of the college, what is its relationship with secondary schools and the CSC?	Detail research / To be confirmed

4.4 Extra Items for Consideration

Youth Engagement and Progression Framework	Outcome Report and Action Plan resulting from the Youth Review Consultation. Further information as to how the FE College were engaging and assisting schools regarding reducing the number of young people becoming NEET.
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CAMHS	To consider the links between CAMHS / domestic abuse / Substance misuse / Homelessness/LAC etc. (Has been proposed as a possible collaborative Scrutiny item).
Social Services Recruitment and Retention	Follow up from September 2015

Corporate Parenting

- 4.3 Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe the responsibility of a local authority towards looked after children and young people. This is a legal responsibility given to local authorities by the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004. The role of the Corporate Parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children. The Council as a whole is the 'corporate parent' therefore all Members have a level of responsibility for the children and young people looked after by Bridgend.¹
- 4.4 In this role, it is suggested that Members consider how the services within the remit of their Committee affects children in care and care leavers, and in what way can the Committee can therefore assist in these areas.
- 4.5 Scrutiny Champions can greatly support the Committee in this by advising them of the ongoing work of the Cabinet-Committee and particularly any decisions or changes which they should be aware of as Corporate Parents.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

- 5.1 The work of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee relates to the review and development of plans, policy or strategy that form part of the Policy Framework and consideration of plans, policy or strategy relating to the power to promote or improve economic, social or environmental well being in the County Borough of Bridgend.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 None

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 None.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 The Committee is recommended to:
- (i) Note the topics due to be considered at the meeting of the Committee for 15 December 2016 and confirm if it requires any additional specific information to be provided by the invitees listed or the Overview & Scrutiny Unit;

¹ Welsh Assembly Government and Welsh Local Government Association 'If this were my child... A councillor's guide to being a good corporate parent to children in care and care leavers', June 2009

- (ii) Determine the invitees to be invited to attend, any specific information it would like the invitees to provide as well as any research that it would like the Overview & Scrutiny Unit to undertake in relation to its meeting for 2 February 2017;
- (iii) Revisit and consider the list of future potential items for the Committee's Forward Work Programme and reprioritise as the Committee deems appropriate.

Andrew Jolley,
Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services

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Background documents: None

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13th OCTOBER 2016

JOINT REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING and THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

EARLY HELP AND PERMANENCE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To share the draft Early Help and Permanence Strategy and Action Plan with the Committee;
- 1.2 To provide information about the numbers and associated costs of the current Looked After Children cohort in Bridgend;
- 1.3 To provide information about the costs of providing the associated placements;
- 1.4 To provide information about the strategies and work being undertaken to manage the Looked After Children population in Bridgend.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

2.1 The report links to the following priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- Helping people to be more self-reliant;
- Smarter use of resources.

3. Background

- 3.1 “Looked After” Children are those children and young people aged between 0 to 18 years who cannot safely remain with their family and are cared for by the Local Authority.
- 3.2 Research indicates that outcomes for children who have been “Looked After”, are not as good as those for other children. Children and young people who have been exposed to very poor parenting, neglect and/or abuse require not just care but also support in coming to terms with their experiences. We also know that the difficulties and negative behaviours experienced by “Looked After” children and young people may be repeated when they become parents themselves.
- 3.3 Early help, support and intervention at the earliest opportunity is essential to ensure children, young people and their families receive the correct level and type of service intervention. Such intervention will ‘turn around’ children’s lives to reduce the likely repetition of harmful behaviour amongst future generations.

- 3.4 Research suggests that some variation in the numbers and rates of “Looked After” children across Local Authorities can be explained by differences in the demographic and socio-economic profile of each Local Authority.
- 3.5 This is especially the case in relation to population size, deprivation and the proportion of households that are lone parent families. Other aspects affecting the numbers and rates of “Looked After” children relate to factors more within the control of the Local Authority and their partners – especially the way that local areas lead, organise and deploy their services for vulnerable children and families.
- 3.6 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee last considered this item in October 2014 at a time when the Permanency and Early Strategies were separate but were within the same Directorate.
- 3.7 In January 2015 the Director of Wellbeing assumed line management responsibility for Children’s Social Services and assumed the new title of Director of Social Services and Wellbeing. The Early Help and Prevention Services remained under the Director of Education and Family Support. Both Directors ensure there remains close working relationships between both sides and have recognised the necessity for a single overarching strategy.

4. Current situation

Overview of the Current Looked After Children Population and Monitoring of Expenditure

- 4.1 As at the 30th June 2016, Bridgend CBC had 385 “Looked After” children. The breakdown of placement type is listed below:
1. Care Order (CO) S.31 Children Act 1989 – The Local Authority has parental responsibility (PR) for children and has placed them in a regulated placement. A regulated placement is with approved foster carers which can include family members who have been approved as foster carers as they require the ongoing support of the Local Authority to manage the placement.
 2. Interim Care Orders (ICO) – The Local Authority has PR for children and has placed them in a regulated placement for the duration of care proceedings, the final care plan for the child has not yet been agreed by the Court.
 3. Voluntary accommodation S76 SSWBA – children have been voluntarily accommodated with the consent of their parents into the care of the Local Authority often whilst assessments are undertaken or via the Public Law Outline (PLO) process where parents retain PR. There is often a clause that should the parents seek to remove the children from S.76 care then the Local Authority will seek immediate legal action as the child would be at risk of significant harm.
 4. Regulation 26 of the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations (Wales 2015) – immediate or emergency placement of children with relatives or family friends under a temporary approval agreement. These placements are overseen and managed within the Local Authority often whilst a full unified assessment is undertaken of those family members/friends as part of care proceedings.

5. Placement with Parents (PWP) S16 Social Services and Wellbeing Act (SSWBA) – Children who are accommodated under a full care order but placed with their parents upon the conclusion of care proceedings.
6. S.38(6) placements, Children Act 1989 – The Court makes an interim care or supervision order and directs, as it considers appropriate, that the child be assessed. This can include the child being assessed whilst placed 1) with parent/s in a residential placement; 2) with family members and 3) in a residential placement alone for a period of assessment.
7. Remanded into custody - All children and young people who are remanded into custody become “Looked After” children as they are placed into the care of the Local Authority.
8. Placed for adoption – Placed with prospective adoptive parents prior to the application and granting of an Adoption Order. Once an Adoption Order is granted children cease to be “Looked After” children.

- 4.2 Table 1 sets out the numbers of children and their legal status;
Table 2 sets out the numbers of children and their placement type.

Table 1

Legal status	Number
CO	245
ICO	46
S.76	43
Remand	2
Placement order (for adoption)	49

Table 2

In house foster care including reg.26	205
Independent foster care	91
In house residential setting	11
External residential setting	8
PWP	43
Placed for adoption	19
S38(6)	6
Remanded (Young Offenders institute)	1
Secure (remanded)	1

- 4.3 It is evident that there are different types of provision. Wherever possible, children are placed with in house foster carers within the Bridgend area.
- 4.4 All independent foster and residential agency placements are tendered via the Childrens Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR) framework; if, no expressions of interest are forthcoming then off the framework placements will be sought. The Framework is pan-Wales and gives the Local Authority assurance that the agency is reputable and has met stringent and robust standards in order to be entered into the framework.

Routes into accommodation

- 4.5 Children can be accommodated in an emergency by the Police using Police Powers of Protection (PPO).
- 4.6 Children’s services aim to have placements for children made in a planned manner but this is not always possible due to the nature of the reasons for accommodation and placement breakdowns.
- 4.7 Social Workers are expected to attend a multi-disciplinary Accommodation and Permanence Panel, which is held on a weekly basis, for all planned and emergency placements. This process supports the principle that requests for accommodation should be made only where all other care planning arrangements have been explored and considered inappropriate or not viable.
- 4.8 In order for families to enter the PLO process, Social Workers and their Managers attend Legal Gateway meetings. These are chaired by the relevant Safeguarding Group Manager and also in attendance is a senior childcare legal representative. If the decision to issue care proceedings is initiated and there is a plan for a placement to be provided, the Social Worker must book into the Accommodation and Permanence Panel for agreement to a placement and for consideration to be given to the most appropriate type of placement.
- 4.9 We undertook a snapshot of the numbers of children and the reason for admission into the “Looked After” system between March and May 2016; see Table 3.

Table 3

Route in	court	A and P	Legal gateway	emergency	total
ICO	10				
PPO	6				
S.76	5				
S.26				6	
S38.(6)				4	
Total	21			10	31

- 4.10 Within this overall cohort were one sibling group of 5, three sibling groups of 3 and one sibling group of 4. This goes to demonstrate that overall numbers increased exponentially due to only 6 family groups of children. 4 were planned through Court processes and 1 via PPO.
- 4.11 It is of note that out of all the entrants into care, 20 were through the Courts (ICO and S38(6)) and PPOs that were exercised by police.
- 4.12 Should it be necessary to safeguard a child or sibling group outside of the agreement of the Accommodation and Permanence panel, then Group Managers (GM) must have agreed any placement after exhausting all other available options. The Senior Management Team have agreed that any GM agreeing to the accommodation of a child will let the other GM’s, the Permanence Team and the Placements Team know of their decision and the reasons for this behind this decision along with any actions to be carried out i.e., timescales, type of provision.

Monitoring of placements and care planning

- 4.13 The Local Authority is required to carry out a first review of a child's care planning within 20 working days of the date on which the child becomes "Looked After". The second review **must** be carried out no more than three months from the first review. Subsequent reviews **must** be carried out no more than six months after the previous review. The responsibility to change/amend the child's care plan is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Social Worker and Manager and it is this plan which is reviewed at the Looked After Children's Review. The review is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer
- 4.14 Looked After Children's Reviews are a performance measure reported to Welsh Government.
- 4.15 The Accommodation and Permanence Panel, in addition to the primary function of considering placement requests, will also undertake a range of functions in relation to the management of the LAC placement arrangements. These will include monitoring of assessment placements, considering children where drift has been identified, making permanent placement decisions and considering requests for therapeutic intervention. At the end of every panel the number of children who became "Looked After" as of Monday that week are recorded as is all children and young people who cease to be "Looked After". Reasons why are recorded to ensure all agencies have been notified under the brighter lives stable futures guidance.
- 4.16 Legal Gateway meetings plan and monitor the Public Law Outline process for entrance to accommodation but also the legal change of care plan for exiting the "Looked After" children system via revocation or discharge of orders. There is a legal tracker managed jointly by the childcare legal representative and Safeguarding Group Manager (chair) and this is reviewed at each Legal Gateway meeting for accuracy and to prevent drift.
- 4.17 Within Bridgend Foster Care there is a weekly meeting which monitors every 'live' referral for all children requiring or moving placements and update on the progress of any searches approaches or move on dates. Within the team brief all new referrals whether they come to fruition or not are recorded and where appropriate reference to needing and a request being made to attend Accommodation and Permanence Panel are noted.
- 4.18 Monthly meetings are held between the GM for Regulated Services, GM for Disability Case Management and Transition, the Commissioning and Placement Officer and the Team Manager for the Just Ask Plus (JAP) team. This reviews every 17 year old open to the JAP and their current Pathway plan, given the age and independent nature of these young people we carefully track and monitor their evolving plans as they are liable to short notice change.
- 4.19 Out of Authority Panel is a multidisciplinary senior management panel held monthly. The purpose of the panel is to:
- determine that there is no placements in the area capable of meeting the child's needs, or that an out of area placement is more consistent with the child's well-being;

- satisfy themselves that the child's health and educational needs will be met in the proposed placement;
- agree arrangements for meeting the child's health and educational needs, and who will be responsible for what;
- agree funding for the placement;
- review existing out of county placements on a no less than 3 monthly basis.

Placement Support and Stability

- 4.20 In order to support Foster Carers and residential staff to safely care and maintain placements, multi-agency partnership working is critical. In particular for those children/young people with the most complex needs who have a history of absconding, challenging behaviour and placement breakdown.
- 4.21 There are now established regular meetings held at the two residential children's homes (Sunnybank and Newbridge House) which involve representatives from Children's Social Services, Police, YOS, Early Help (e.g. Youth Engagement Officers). These meetings are to ensure that the day to day care planning of each young person within the unit does not contradict or potentially negatively influence the management of the young people on a day to day basis, i.e. curfews.
- 4.22 Multi-agency collaboration meetings are now held on a quarterly basis at Ysgol Bryn Castell. These meetings are chaired by the Headteacher and Group Managers from Children's Safeguarding, YOS, Police, LACE coordinator and Early Help Managers also attend. The purpose of these meetings is to share information regarding the 'high end' pupils, and to agree plans to address concerns which will also include placement issues. Therefore, all agencies are working together effectively in a coordinated and informed manner to give consistent messages to the children and young people.
- 4.23 Additionally when a foster placement is at risk of breakdown, a Placement Stability meeting will be convened. These MUST be held before any agreement is given to cease a placement. This is chaired by the Senior Practitioner or above within Bridgend foster Care for in-house placements. In the case of Independent Fostering Agencies the agency will host and wherever possible, a member of the Placements Commissioning Team will attend along with the case managing Safeguarding Social Worker. The purpose of the these meetings is to establish what is leading to the placement breaking down, and what additional support/resources can complement the placement in order to maintain and sustain it. If no additional services can be identified then the meeting can agree that notice can be served. Notice is 28 days from the date of the meeting, providing the child has been in placement for 28 days. We are mirroring this practice in terms of a notice placement with our in-house foster placements.

Preventing Children becoming Looked After

- 4.24 In April 2015, a significant restructure of Integrated Working and Family Support Services was implemented. Drivers included the need to support children, young people and families in a more joined-up way with a greater focus on preventative services to avoid escalation into statutory services. There were significant barriers for families to access services due to imposed threshold constraints and lack of consistency with the assessment of needs.

- 4.25 A change programme ran alongside the re-structure which resulted in:
- one front door\one referral form for Early Help Services;
 - a common assessment;
 - co-located multi-disciplinary locality teams (co-located with safeguarding);
 - a greater emphasis on staff development and evidence based interventions;
 - improved multi-agency working.
- 4.26 The benefits of this re-structure are already evident including:
- a 200% increase in the number of completed family assessments in 2015/16 compared with 2014/15 (681 completed assessments in 2015/16 compared to 228 in 2014/15);
 - one referral pathway to early help services which has resulted in reduced duplication and confusion for referrers;
 - co-location of a range of family intervention workers who support the team around the family and team around the school approach of working;
 - an agreed step up and step down process for cases between Safeguarding and Early Help Services;
 - mentoring and support for Early Help and Safeguarding staff from consultant social workers within the Integrated Family Support Service.
- 4.27 Other work is underway including the creation of a joint ‘front door’ for Early Help and Safeguarding services before the end of this calendar year.
- 4.28 The Early Help and Permanence Strategy describes the services available to children, young people and their families within Bridgend. Such services support and enable where possible children and young people to safely remain in the care of their family and/or safely return to their family or an alternative carer. Where this is not possible the Strategy describes the alternative care arrangements we provide and commission for our “Looked After” Children to improve their outcomes by affording them opportunity’s available to all children.
- 4.29 Children’s Services across both Directorates within BCBC are driving a ‘whole system’ approach to supporting Looked After Children and keeping families together. Together with the Early Help and Permanence Strategy, they form a multi-agency approach to improving outcomes for children, you people and their families.
- 4.30 Early Help refers to a way of working which will ensure that children, young people and families who are at risk or vulnerable to poor outcomes are identified early and that their needs are effectively assessed and met by agencies working together. The aim being to prevent their escalation rather than to respond only when the difficulty has become so acute as to demand attention.
- 4.31 Permanence is the long term plan for the child’s upbringing and provides an underpinning framework for all social work with children and their families from Early Help through to adoption. It ensures a framework of emotional, physical and legal conditions that gives a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment, identity and belonging.

- 4.32 The Strategy includes guidance on the Step up and Step down of cases between the Early Help and Safeguarding teams. As we know the needs of children, young people and their families are not static, these may escalate e.g. in the face of a crisis or unanticipated incident, equally they may diminish, e.g. as a result of a successful intervention, an increase in protective factors, reduction in risk and enhancement of resilience. The Step up and Step Down guidance is underpinned by the fundamental principle that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- 4.33 The Early Help Hubs (EHH), Children with eligible Care and Support Needs, Child Protection (CP), and Looked After Children (LAC) systems are all multi-agency and multi-disciplinary processes which differ only in terms of their threshold focus.
- 4.34 The co-location of the Early Help Hubs in the three localities, i.e. North, West and East in addition to the central hub based at the Civic Centre, enables timely discussions and information sharing which will inform decisions regarding the need to step up or step down intervention with families, including Connecting Families.
- 4.35 Since April 2014, Connecting Families approach has been to a) target families where the children and young people are at risk of becoming accommodated (*Edge of Care families*), b) rehabilitate children and young people home and c) provide Family Support services. Connecting Families also offers a rapid response service and group work with service users.
- 4.36 Integrated family support services (IFSS) is a programme unique to Wales. Its work is described in detail in the Child and Family (Wales) Measure 2010 and associated regulations. IFSS has been available across Wales since 2014.
- 4.37 A Local Authority may refer a family to an Integrated Family Support Team when there are concerns about the welfare of children, such as:
- substance misuse
 - domestic violence or abuse
 - history of violent or abusive behaviour
 - mental health issues.
- 4.38 Families who experience such difficulties might be at risk of having their children placed into care or having their names placed on the Child Protection Register. IFSS work with families to help them to make positive changes, so that any concerns are lessened and children can stay safely at home.
- 4.39 Connecting Families and IFSS are component parts of the range of Early Help services which includes individual and group work. Data collated from an overview of the impact some of the services in May 2016 is as follows:
- a) Between 01/04/14 and 31/03/16, 126 children out of the 144 of the children / young people prevented from becoming Looked After have remained out of the care system following the end of Connecting Families EOC involvement.
 - b) 18 children and young people have been rehabilitated home, 5 in 2014 / 2015 and 13 in 2015 / 2016.

- c) Between 01/04/15 and 31/03/16, Group Work - 79 individuals have benefited from participating in group work around Grobain (*13 participants*), Connecting Dad's (*15 attendees*), Non Violent Resistance (*NVR*) (*43 parents*) and the Chill Out Group (*COG*) (*8 teenagers*).
- d) Connecting Families received 80 referrals – between 01/04/15 and 31/03/16, which is more than in previous years. This included 13 more referrals for Edge of Care support and 10 more referrals for Rehabilitations Home. It is also important to note that the 3 streams of Connecting Families offer an intensive 12 week intervention to families so the support they receive is exactly the same regardless as to which part of the service they access.

4.40 The Early Help and Permanence Strategy Action plan for 2016/2017 (attached in **appendix A**) identifies a range of joint working activity between the Early Help and Safeguarding Service areas, and sets down actions/milestones. Some of these key actions/milestones which are particularly significant for managing the population of Looked After Children are as follows:

- a) Agree and promote a clear referral pathway for both Safeguarding and Early Help Services, in order for Children and Young People's needs to be identified and met in a more timely manner.
- b) Agree transfer points into Early Help Services from Safeguarding in order for Families to receive a consistent seamless service with clearly defined transfer points.
- c) Put mechanisms in place to alert Early Help services to any children\YP that become looked after in order to be proactive in increasing the number of children who cease to be Looked After.
- d) Review Early Help thresholds to determine the trigger for Team Around Family (TAF) work. This will ensure that help is provided to families early in the emergence of a problem, and is well coordinated and recorded through multi-agency arrangements.
- e) Review of Connecting Families service to assess it remains fit for purpose with regards to the focus on front door/preventative services i.e. to avoid step up to Safeguarding Team.
- f) Review the work of Bridgend IFSS (Integrated Family Support Service) to consider offering support to a broader range of families open to Safeguarding Teams.
- g) Utilise existing preventative resources to facilitate Early Help services at Primary School stage e.g. early indicators of neglect, poor school attendance, domestic violence, challenging behavior, aiming to ensure children's needs are met in a more timely manner.
- h) Identify services to work with mothers between pregnancies where their children have been removed from their care through SSD involvement. This will aim to address the issue of repeated pregnancies resulting in a cycle of children needing to be removed and placed into the care of the Local Authority.

- i) Recruit a practitioner to engage and develop programs of work with fathers. This practitioner has already been appointed and will work to enable fathers to become more involved in working with agencies to improve their parenting.
- j) The Personal Assistants within the Just Ask Plus Team are to lead and agree a work plan to engage young people who are/have been Looked After in educative work around child development and parenting. This would ensure that Looked After children and those leaving Care have the skills and support when they become parents themselves, again aiming to address the cycle of pregnancies leading to removal of children into the Care of the Local Authority.
- k) Continue to identify and assess potential carers for Special Guardianship Orders. This will ensure that Permanency is achieved for more children and young people and they will no longer be Looked After by the Local Authority.
- l) Continue to review Children and Young People accommodated subject to Section 76 SSWBA. This will ensure that children return home with the support they need and when it is safe for them. If this is not possible, they live in stable placements where they are helped to build positive relationships and maintain contact with their family and friends where this remains in their best interests.
- m) Continue to review Children and Young People subject to the Public Law Outline to prevent drift and ensure appropriate legal orders are considered.
- n) Continue to review Children and Young People subject to Placement Orders for over 2 years. This will ensure that an appropriate Care Plan is in place and a potential reduction in the “Looked After” children population.
- o) Staff in the early help hubs to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of disabled children and their families to enable preventative work to be undertaken with the families. This is critical to enable disabled children to remain living within their families with support if assessed as a need. It is acknowledged that family breakdown resulting in a disabled child needing to become Looked After, will likely require a placements which will be high cost and usually long term.
- p) Review of the Support Care service and whether it can be used to facilitate rehabilitation of children home as well as preventing children coming into care.

Exit routes from Local Authority Care/Accommodation

4.41 The table below provides a snapshot of the children who are projected to cease to be Looked After by the Local Authority between July and September, 2016.

Month	Rehab home	SGO	CAO	Cease LAC (18)	Other
July				5	
August	1	1		3	
September				2	
Total	1	1		10	
Overall Total					12

- 4.42 All children who are “Looked After” by the Local Authority must have a Care and Support Plan in line with the requirements of Part 6 of the SSWBA.
- 4.43 The review of a Part 6 Care and Support plan is a key component of the care planning process. The purpose of the review meeting is to consider the plan for the well-being of the child, monitor progress and consider recommendations to support the plan. In order to comply with the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015, the Local Authority must appoint Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) who have the responsibility for chairing the reviews and a range of responsibilities to ensure decisions are made in the best interest of the child who the Local Authority is Looking After.
- 4.44 Possible exit routes out of Local Authority Care/Accommodation are as follows:
- a) The young person reaches the age of 18, at which point the Care Order expires.
 - b) The young person reaches the age of 16 and is not subject to a Care Order but is accommodated under S76 of the SSWBA. At this point the young person can sign themselves out of the “Looked After” system. This must be ratified via the LAC review meeting. Sometimes the decision for the young person to cease to being “Looked After” is in relation to a planned move on to another form of placement. Placement in other types of arrangements for Looked After Children who are over the age of 16 will be made because they are the best way to meet the assessed needs and intended outcomes set out in the young person’s Part 6 Care and Support Plan, and in the Pathway Plan (which subsumes the young person’s Care and Support Plan at the age of 16). Generally these will be outcomes connected to preparing the young person for leaving care and helping the young person make the transition to more independent adult living. The placement options are likely to include:
 - supported lodgings
 - supported living accommodation
 - independent accommodation with floating support from housing support workers.
 - c) A LAC Review of the Care and Support plan whereby the legal status is a Care Order and Placement with Parents Arrangements determines that sufficient progress has been made to enable the Local Authority to no longer need to share Parental Responsibility for the child with the parents, and a decision is then made to either go back to Court to seek a step down to a 12 month Supervision Order, or to discharge the Care Order. Plans for ongoing support are put in place to ensure the child and family remain sufficiently supported during this process. Following such a decision reviewed via a LAC Review, the case must be presented to the weekly Legal Gateway meeting whereby the responsible Group Manager in consultation with the Senior Lawyer, will if in agreement with the plan, endorse the decision. At the Legal Gateway meeting, timescales are agreed with the legal department for the completion of the necessary Court documentation, to enable an application to be made to the Court as soon as possible.
 - d) An Adoption Order is granted.

- e) A person who has Parental Responsibility for a child who has previously consented to voluntary accommodation under S76 of the SSWB Act withdraws that consent and requests the child to return home. The Local Authority will need to determine if there are ongoing risks/eligible needs which can be safely met through the provision of services and support without the child remaining "Looked After", and if not, immediate legal advice is sought with a view to issuing Care Proceedings.
- f) A child who is accommodated under S76 of the SSWB Act is successfully rehabilitated to parents.
- g) A child is made subject to a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangement Order.

Financial oversight of placements

4.45 The looked after budget is mainly made up of:

- In-house and out of county residential budgets
- In-house fostering budgets
- Independent fostering budgets
- Special Guardianship Orders
- Supported Lodgings

The total net budget in 2016/17 is £10.6m. The net budget in 2014/15 was 11.1m. The net budget has been reduced by £557k over these two years as part of the MTFS as below:

- CH22 – Residential reductions £200k 2016/17
- CH25 – LAC placement related reductions £357k 2016/17

4.46 There are further reductions of £260k planned in 2017/18 and £260k in 2018/19. This was based on a reduction of 35 placements at a cost of £15k per placement. However, a review of LAC costs has identified that it is impossible to put an average cost £15k against LAC placements as costs can vary greatly between different placements.

4.47 Based on early projections in 2016/17 it has been estimated that average placement costs are as follows:

- Out of County Residential Costs – £160k
- Independent Fostering Placement - £48k
- In-house fostering placement - £19k
- Foster placement with friend / family - £9k

4.48 Over the last 18 months the numbers of looked after children has fluctuated and although children have ceased to be looked after, new children have come into care and therefore the position at the end of September 2016 of 378 shows that the total LAC numbers have actually reduced over a 18 month period from 390 to 378. However, the annual equivalent cost has actually increased; this is mainly due to a small increase in numbers for high cost out of county placements.

- 4.49 The Head of Service and the Group Manager for Regulated Services are the only people permitted to authorise funding for independent fostering placements. No placements are confirmed with providers until funding authorisation has been obtained by the Placements or Safeguarding Team. In their absence no one below Group Manager level can authorise such placements.
- 4.50 The Head of Service and Director of Social Services are the only people permitted to authorise funding for independent residential placements. In their absence no-one below Head of Service level can authorise those placements.
- 4.51 Every external placement is provided with its own individual contract which clearly states the price of the contract and any discounts which are to be applied. Discounts include sibling and long term placements. Any additional service being commissioned within a placement must be additionally agreed and the cost made clear so permission for funding can be sought.
- 4.52 Each independent fostering agency or residential placement has an individual invoice which is printed and verified weekly by the Placements Team, this is then authorised by the GM for Regulated Services. Placement dates are checked against known placement move dates and anticipated dates are noted on the invoices for finance.
- 4.53 Monthly meetings are diarised between Finance, Commissioning and Placements Officers and the GM for Regulated Services to forecast placement moves, ensure placements have ended on correct dates and invoices match known move on dates.
- 4.54 The Early Help and Safeguarding Board will continue to have oversight of the application of the Early Help and Permanence Strategy along with its action plan.

5. Effect upon 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 matters relevant to this report.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. However, current looked after children costs continue to be a significant budget pressure for the local authority. All potential costs identified as a result of action taken to safeguard children and young people will be considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

8. Recommendation.

- 8.1 The Committee is requested to note the developments in the safeguarding of children and young people across the County Borough of Bridgend and provide comments on the draft strategy and action plan.

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September 2016**

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September 2016**

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10. Background documents:

None



Early Help and Permanence Strategy 2016

Introduction/Background

The purpose and aims of the strategy

This Early Help and Permanency Strategy focuses on how we will improve and promote outcomes for children and young people in Bridgend. The term early intervention has been replaced by the term early help. The successful delivery of early help to children, young people and families in Bridgend is reliant on the strength of partnership working, leadership and management commitment, and having a clear, robust and agreed framework from which to work.

This strategy supports the delivery of the priorities in the Authority's Corporate Plan and associated Directorate Business Plans. The scope of this strategy includes a clear focus on supporting families to stay together wherever it is safe to do so, and minimising the need for children to become "Looked After" in the first instance or receive other statutory interventions.

The Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate along with the Education and Family Support Directorate are driving a 'whole system' approach to support children, young people and families.

The focus of this strategy is on describing what will change in relation to our work with children, young people and their families at the earliest possible stage. The strategy contains an action plan for the future rather than an attempt to cover every detail of our current services and support.

There is wide agreement in Bridgend that we want all our children and young people to:

- thrive and make the best of their talents;
- live healthy and safe lives;
- be confident and caring individuals throughout their lives;
- know and receive their rights.

Early Help and Permanence

The Social Services and Wellbeing Act, Section 15, requires that Local Authorities must provide or arrange for the provision of a range and level of preventative services which they consider will achieve the following purposes:

- a) Contributing towards preventing or delaying the development of people's needs for care and support
- b) Reducing the needs for care and support of people who have such needs

- c) Promoting the upbringing of children by their families, where that is consistent with the well-being of children
- d) Minimising the effect on disabled people of their disabilities
- e) Contributing towards preventing people from suffering abuse or neglect
- f) Reducing the need for:
 - i. proceedings for care or supervision orders under the Children Act 1989
 - ii. criminal proceedings against children
 - iii. any family or other proceedings in relation to children which might lead
 - iv. to them being placed in local authority care, or
 - v. proceedings under the inherent jurisdiction of the High Court in relation
 - vi. to children
- g) Encouraging children not to commit criminal offences avoiding the need for children to be placed in secure accommodation;

Early intervention is about taking action as soon as possible to tackle problems for children and families before they become more difficult to reverse. Early help with families will ensure that children, young people and families who are at risk or vulnerable to poor outcomes are identified early and that their needs are effectively assessed and met by agencies working together.

There is a substantial body of evidence that demonstrates that particular early interventions can be very effective at improving outcomes for young people and families.

Our Ambition

Know which children need safeguarding

Know which children need early help

Help individuals, families and communities to help themselves

Work in strong partnerships

Swift, sensitive and effective intervention;

Understand how successful we are

Key Objectives in Early Help and Permanence Planning

The aim of early intervention is to prevent the needs of the children and families from escalating rather than to respond only when the difficulty has become so acute as to demand attention to:

- Improve outcomes and life chances for children, young people and families placing the well-being of the child / young person at the centre of all that we do.
- Increase access to timely, targeted and appropriate services.
- Manage highly predictable risk better (e.g. parents who have been in care themselves and parents who have previously had children removed.)
- Refocus resources and expenditure from crisis intervention to early help, investing in proportion to need.
- Provide a focus on the whole family and the role of the family in the planning and delivery of early help.
- Ensure interventions have a strong evidence base and any services commissioned are able to evaluate and demonstrate impact and outcomes.
- Further develop multi-agency and integrated working, including using and sharing data and information more effectively.
- Strengthen the role of universal services provision in early help.
- Communicate the early help offer and how it can be accessed
- Develop skills and management support/supervision for early help workers

Underpinning principles of Early Help

- A focus on identification of need and swift access to appropriate early help.
- Support available for the child/ young person's journey throughout all key life stages offering continuity and flexibility wherever possible.
- Equality of access to early help provision.

- Families recognised as central to defining and addressing problems and empowered as partners in the process of early help.
- Work with the whole family, including fathers and other carers.
- Promotion of personal responsibility and resilience rather than dependency.
- Active engagement of children, young people and families in the planning and delivery and evaluation of services.
- Commitment to collaboration, joint commissioning and multi-agency working and to overcoming organisational barriers to achieving better outcomes.
- Shared systems in place to provide effective early help.

Strategic Plan for Early Help

- High quality universal services are the building blocks of effective early help.
- Childrens workforce is able to identify additional needs at an early stage.
- Childrens workforce has a clear understanding of the levels of need, and how services and support may be accessed.
- There is a clear process in place to support effective multi- agency co-ordination of targeted support.
- There is a clear step up and step down process in place.
- A co-ordinated delivery programme of early help services and support across all ages and stages of a child’s development.

If good outcomes are achieved, the different needs of children and young people – social, physical, emotional, cultural and learning – will have been met. However, not all children and young people have the benefits of good health, a stable and nurturing family, the necessary personal and social skills or other attributes which will secure their safety and wellbeing.

Striving for stability and permanence for “Looked After” children.

“Looked After” Children are those children and young people aged between 0 to 18 years who cannot safely remain with their family and are cared for by the Local Authority. Children are accommodated by the Local Authority either as a result of

Court proceedings because they have been or are in danger of being harmed, or with parental agreement. A significant proportion of children who become “Looked After” have a history of neglect or abuse. The majority of children and young people “Looked After” by Bridgend are placed in foster care, with only a small proportion of young people placed in residential care, usually due to their more complex needs.

All the research indicates that, in general, outcomes for children who have been “Looked After”, particularly for long periods of time or after a long period of poor parenting and neglect are not as good as those for other children. Children and young people who have been exposed to very poor parenting, neglect and/or abuse require not just care but also support in coming to terms with those experiences which often will have been extremely traumatic and harmful. We also know that the difficulties and negative behaviours experienced by “Looked After” children and young people may be repeated when those young people become parents themselves, often with consequent negative impacts on their children and their children’s children.

Hence, we must intervene as early as necessary to ensure that children and young people do not suffer; we need to provide good parenting and (often specialist) support when children are in our care; and we need to put in place plans which will ‘turn around’ children’s lives as quickly and permanently as possible. All these things will help to reduce the likely repetition of harmful behaviour with future generations.

However, being a good corporate parent is expensive. In a world of finite, and diminishing, resources, it is critical that we act swiftly and effectively to ensure we use those scarce resources as efficiently as possible

To achieve these aims, all partners - the young person, his or her family and the support services – must each understand that they have a responsibility to put the interests of the child or young person first. This is not the same as saying that the child’s wishes will always be met, but that his or her views are respected and taken account of when any decisions are made which affect his or her life.

The increase in the number of children and young people becoming “Looked After” in Bridgend is not unique but we know, from national studies, that some authorities appear to be managing the difficulties more successfully than others, despite similarly challenging socio-economic circumstances. A number of research studies have been undertaken in Wales and England to identify the characteristics of such successful Local Authorities. Hence, we have looked closely at these studies and the situation in both Bridgend and other Authorities has helped us refresh both our strategic approach and our practice.

Research suggests that some variation in the numbers and rates of “Looked After” children across Local Authorities can be explained by differences in the demographic and socio-economic profile of each Local Authority. This is especially the case in relation to population size, deprivation and the proportion of households that are lone

parent families. Other aspects affecting the numbers and rates of “Looked After” children relate to factors more within the control of the Local Authority and their partners – especially the way that local areas lead, organise and deploy their services for vulnerable children and families.

A Welsh study, published in June 2013, concluded that there is no ‘magic number’ for the rate of “Looked After” children that would help a local area calculate whether numbers are ‘too high’ or ‘too low’

The study, in which Bridgend participated, highlighted five main areas that can contribute to local efforts to reduce the number of looked after children, i.e.:

- strategy and leadership;
- prevention and early intervention;
- approach to practice;
- partnership working, and
- information and intelligence about performance.

The Permanency Team will drive the opportunities to promote Special Guardianship Orders, Child Arrangement Orders, and track and monitor other long term arrangements with foster carers or extended family. We will rigorously pursue the discharge of Care Orders where these are no longer necessary and work towards increasing the number of children who are to be adopted.

Promoting a collective responsibility and response to rising numbers in Looked After children.

Historically, activity to manage the increasing “Looked After” population has primarily focussed on Social Services’ responses and systems. This has included continuous review of the threshold criteria for admission into accommodation, tight gate keeping by Senior Managers to ensure threshold criteria for admission are adhered to, with a clear focus on permanency policies and procedures.

Whilst Social Services intervention is targeted at the most vulnerable children and their families, a number of other agencies across the borough have a role to play in supporting families in their task of raising children safely. To succeed, the scope of this strategy to reduce the “Looked After” population must be sufficiently broad to encompass the role of partner agencies to ensure that there is a shared responsibility across agencies for its development and implementation. This will require continued commitment from all agencies to multi-agency working, so that the provision of preventative family support services ensures early intervention before families reach crisis status.

USING A THRESHOLDS OF NEED MODEL TO SUPPORT PRACTICE (See Appendix 1)

Because a child or family can experience an array of problems all at once, early intervention requires a multilevel, holistic approach. For example, at a local level early intervention may involve Family Engagement officer and a youth offending team working together to get to the root of a family's issues and refer them to the best support for their particular situation.

Threshold levels of Intervention act as a guide to professional decision making aiming to maximise opportunities for the right level of support to be offered at the right time, to ensure that a child or young person's needs are met in a proportionate, robust and timely way, improving life chances and keep children and young people safe. The thresholds should always be viewed as a clear and fluid continuum, responsive to changing circumstances and environments through which children may travel both down and up and will on occasion be accessing services across the continuum, as need determines.

As we know the needs of children & young people and their families are not static, these may escalate e.g. in the face of a crisis or unanticipated incident, equally they may diminish, e.g. as a result of a successful intervention, an increase in protective factors, reduction in risk and enhancement of resilience.

Evidence tells us in such circumstances a seamless integrated transition between thresholds is indicated, which can assist a family to maintain positive momentum or indeed manage a crisis or incident, without additionally and instantly losing the input and support of the lower threshold agencies.

It is also intended that this model be used to enable practitioners and their partner agencies to communicate their concerns about children using a common format, language and understanding of levels of need, concern and/or risk for children, young people and their families.

USING THE MODEL TO IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE SERVICES

Having identified an overview of a child and family's needs, practitioners will be able to use the detailed threshold examples to reach a collective understanding of the most appropriate services to respond to identified need this is expected to aid consistent and rationalised decision making.

PERMANENCE

The objective of planning for permanence is to ensure that children have a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond and to give them a sense of security, continuity, commitment, identity and belonging. It is also important to remember that older children and young people also need to achieve permanence in their lives although they may not wish (for a variety of reasons) to be in a foster home or to be adopted. For example, they may prefer to live in a children's home where they can also achieve a sense of security and belonging.

The question "how are the child's permanence needs being met?" must be at the core of everything we do.

Where it is necessary for a child to leave his or her family:

- This should be for as short a time as needed to secure a safe, supported return home; or
- If a child cannot return home, plans must be made for alternate permanent care. Family members and friends should always be considered in the first instance with the permanence secured through the appropriate legal order to meet the child's needs;
- Where it is not in the child's best interests to live within the family network, it will usually be in the interests of the child for alternative permanent carers to be identified and the placement secured through adoption, long term foster care, Child Arrangements Orders or Special Guardianship Orders;

- Residential group living is provided only when a need for this is identified within the Care Plan and when substitute family care is not appropriate;
- For older children arranging for their independent living must be considered.

Where it is clear that families and children are unable to live together, planning must be swift and clear to identify permanent alternative settings.

Wherever possible, care should be provided locally unless clearly identified as inappropriate.

Contact with the family, Connected Person and extended family should be facilitated and built on (unless clearly identified as inappropriate).

The professionals involved will work in partnership with parents/families to meet the above objectives. The wishes and feelings of the child will be taken into account. The older and more mature the child, the greater the weight should be given to his or her wishes.

Whilst it is important, when undertaking permanence planning, to promote the child's links with his or her racial, cultural and religious heritage, this should not be allowed to introduce delay in achieving permanence for the child. (Note that due consideration no longer has to be given to a child's religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background when matching a child and prospective adopters).

Joint Action Plan

JOINT EARLY HELP AND PERMANENCE- ACTION PLAN

	Resp. Officer	Due Date	Key Actions/Milestones	Outcomes	Evidence	Update
FRONT DOOR ARRANGEMENTS						
1	DW/JC	Implementation Date: Dec 2016	Revise current multi-agency referral forms to ensure fit for purpose and compliant with the SSWB Act	Children and Young People's (YP) needs are identified and met in a more timely manner	New referral form which is Act-compliant	Draft multi agency referral form going through consultation prior to implementation
2	JC/ML	Nov-2016	Agree and promote a clear referral pathway for both Safeguarding and Early Help Services	Children and Young People's needs are identified and met in a more timely manner	New referral pathway in place	Promotion and engagement events to be held Oct, Nov.
3	LK/JD	Sep-2016	Implement DEWIS to develop a directory of community and voluntary services	Families become more self-reliant	DEWIS implemented across the Authority	Complete DEWIS is now live

	Resp.	Due Date	Key Actions/Milestones	Outcomes	Evidence	Update
4	JC\ML	Jul-2016	Review and agree skills and staffing levels required for joint front door	Records of action and decision are clear and up to date.	Staff have appropriate skills to identify risk and individual needs compliant with the recommendations within the Act	Complete: Staff have been realigned to meet the new requirements
5	JC/ML	Sep-2016	Explore the provision of a Health Visiting post being part of screening and information sharing at the earliest opportunity.	Children and Young People's needs are identified and met in a more timely manner	Health Visitor part of the front door arrangements	Interviews held w/c 12 th Sept
6	ML/JC	May-2016	Agree a timescale for Early Help screening practitioner to be located within the IAA service.	All referrals screened and allocated to appropriate service in a timely manner	EH screener located within IAA service	Complete May 2016
7	JC/ML/D W	Jul-2016	Agree transfer points into Early Help Services from Safeguarding.	Families receive a consistent seamless service with clearly defined transfer points	Agreed transfer points in place	Complete Process in place
8	JC/ML	Jun-2016	Put mechanisms in place to alert Early Help services to any children\YP that become looked after	Increase in the number of children ceased to be looked after	Early Help Managers and BS included in Stable Life email group	Complete June 2016
9	JC/ML	Nov-2016	Review process for how PPNs are screened on open cases to Early	Clear procedure for responding to PPN's and	Revised EH guidance	In Progress Process is been

	Resp.	Due Date	Key Actions/Milestones	Outcomes	Evidence	Update
			Help	risk to children and young people are assessed and dealt with appropriately		reviewed: awaiting new staffing arrangements which will reflect the new process
INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION						
10	ML	Jun-2016	Review EH thresholds to determine trigger for Team Around Family (TAF) work	Help is provided early in the emergence of a problem and is well coordinated and recorded through multi-agency arrangements	Amendment to existing EH guidance	Complete
11	ML/DW/JC/WW	Jul-2016	Review and put arrangements in place for Early Help practitioners to attend appropriate meetings e.g. strategy meetings, Accommodation & Permanency Panel, Legal Gateway meetings	Early Help and Central hub will be aware of possible transfers at an earlier stage	Representation agreed	EH Managers currently attend all relevant key meetings in order to prevent escalation into Safeguarding or being looked after

	Resp.	Due Date	Key Actions/Milestones	Outcomes	Evidence	Update
12	DW	Oct-2016	<p>Review of Connecting Families service to assess its fit for purpose with regards to the focus on front door/preventative services i.e. to avoid step up to Safeguarding Teams</p> <p>To prevent children from becoming looked after and to increase reunification numbers</p>	Decisions about children and young people becoming looked after are made using high-quality assessments about the risk of harm or actual harm to them and the likelihood of change in their family	Fewer children becoming accommodated	Review underway
13	ML	Mar-2017	Western Bay Region Work: Review of Bridgend IFSS to offer support to a broader range of families open to Safeguarding Team	Children and families are able to successfully access education, employment, training and safe housing	Reduction in looked after numbers	Regional workshop scheduled Sept 16
14	ML	Mar-2017	Utilise existing preventative resources to facilitate Early Help services at Primary School stage e.g. early indicators of neglect, poor school attendance, domestic violence, challenging behaviour	Children and Young People's needs are identified and met in a more timely manner	<u>Longer term</u> reduction in looked after children numbers	This will be looked at in line with Recommissioning of Families First
15	ML/DW	Sep-2017	Identify services to work with parents between pregnancies where their children have been removed from their care through SSD involvement	Improved outcomes for children, YP and families	<u>Longer term</u> reduction in looked after children numbers	A scoping exercise in respect of a pilot needs to be carried out with a resource analysis exercise to determine requirements

	Resp.	Due Date	Key Actions/Milestones	Outcomes	Evidence	Update
16	ML	Aug-2016	Recruit a practitioner to engage and develop programmes of work with fathers	Fathers become more involved in working with agencies to improve their parenting	Dad's worker in post	Complete June 2016
17	NS	Dec 16	Review of the Support Care service and whether it can be used to facilitate rehabilitation of children home as well as preventing children coming into care	Children and families could be supported when they return home from foster care in a planned way	Review paper	A pilot exercise is underway. Progress report and review paper will follow
18	SCDWP/ SWP/EW J	Jan 17	To develop training for the Chairs of Strategy meetings to ensure thresholds are consistent and consideration is given to support services as a safety preventative measure	To reduce the number of cases escalating to the Child Protection process and reduce the number of children and YP being looked after	Training Plan	New action – Oct 16
REHABILITATION AND PERMANENCE						
19	DW NS	TBC	Agree a work plan to engage young people who are/have been Looked After in educative work around child development and parenting	Looked after children will have the skills and support when they become parents themselves	<u>Longer term</u> reduction in looked after children numbers	A scoping exercise in respect of staffing capacity to be carried out with a resource analysis exercise
20	RW/JLJ Safeguarding Practitioners and	Jan 17	Continue to identify and assess potential carers for Special Guardianship Orders	Permanency is achieved for more children and young people and they will no longer be Looked After by the Local	Reduction in looked after children numbers	Existing JDs in Permanence Team to be expanded to address the whole spectrum of LAC and re-alignment

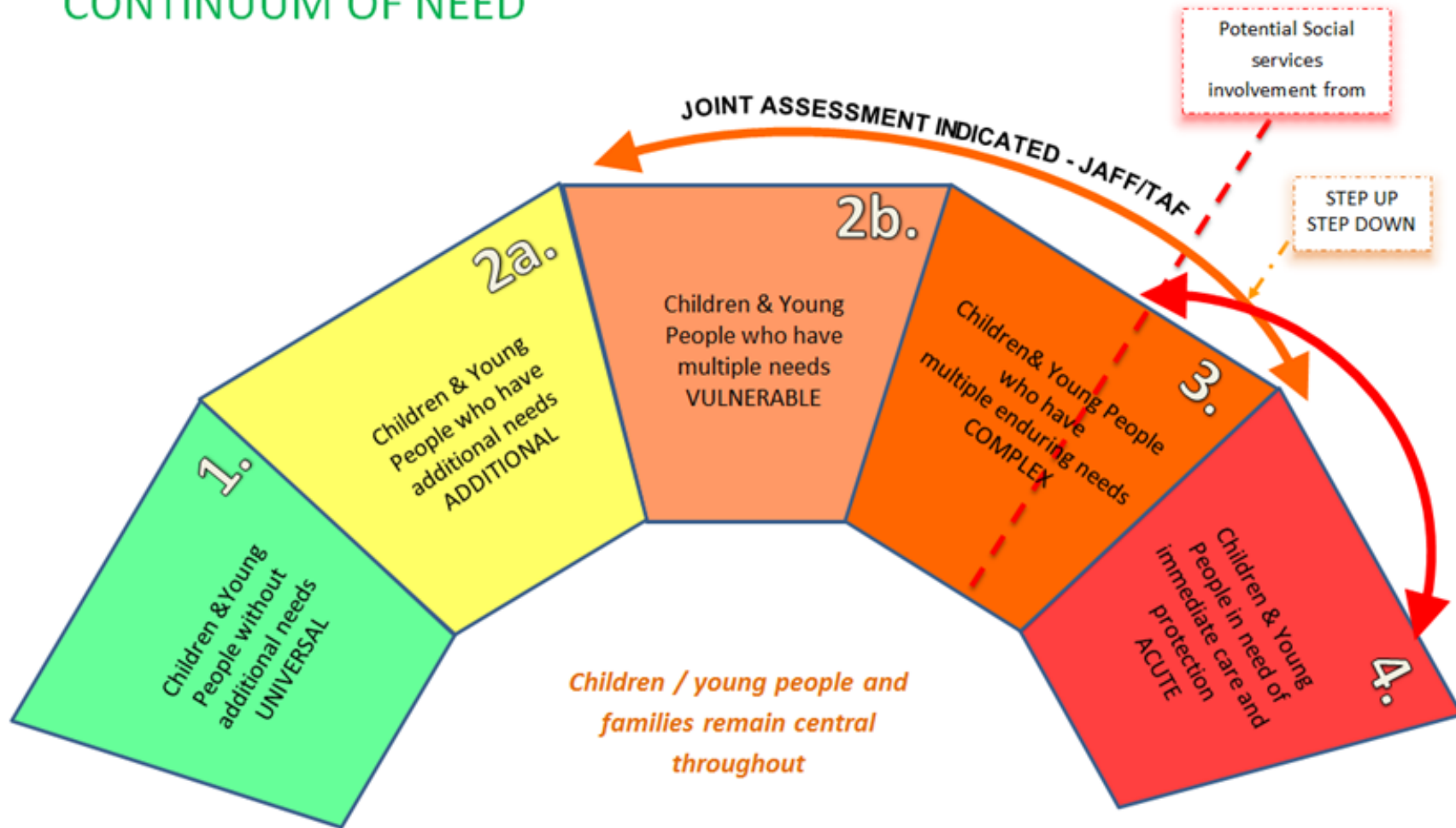
	Resp.	Due Date	Key Actions/Milestones	Outcomes	Evidence	Update
	nce Team					of management structure
21	NS/EWJ/ DW & Permanence Team	Ongoing	Continue to review Children and Young People accommodated subject to Section 76 SSWBA	They return home with the support they need and when it is safe for them. If this is not possible, they live in stable placements where they are helped to build positive relationships and maintain contact with their family and friends where this remains in their best interests	Reduction in looked after children numbers	Ongoing
22	WW/JM /EWJ & Permanence PO	Completed Tracker – work will be ongoing	Continue to review Children and Young People subject to the Public Law Outline to prevent drift and ensure appropriate legal Orders are considered	Care plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that the child or young person's current and developing needs continue to be met	Reduction in looked after children numbers	Complete Legal Gateway Tracker produced
23	JC/WW/E WJ & Western Bay Adoption Rep	Ongoing	Continue to review Children and Young People subject to placement orders for over 2 years	Appropriate care plan in place and potential reduction in looked after children numbers	Children's Permanence plan remains focussed and suitable to meet their needs	Ongoing
MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB						
24	WW/DW/ BW	When MASH is established	Staff in the Early Help hubs to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of children with	Enable disabled children live within their families with support if assessed	Disabled children and their families have appropriate	Updated training options to be explored and

	Resp.	Due Date	Key Actions/Milestones	Outcomes	Evidence	Update
			disabilities and their families to enable preventative work to be undertaken with the families	as a need	support and intervention	raising awareness to staff

DRAFT

Appendix 1

CONTINUUM OF NEED



CONTINUUM OF NEED

1.

At this level, support is 'universal', which means that it is generally available to all children and young people, such as schools, leisure centres, GP surgeries. Children and young people are making good overall progress across all areas of development. It is likely they live in a protective environment where their needs are well understood and met. These children need no additional support other than those universally available within public services.

2a.

Children and young people who need additional support, this may relate to their health, educational or social development. Support is required to improve the chances of reaching their full potential, if not identified and addressed at an early stage, these issues may escalate and become increased concerns under level 2b or 3.

2b.

Children, young people and their families have a range of needs. Multi-agency support is required to reduce levels of vulnerability and/or to reduce risk taking behaviours. If needs are not met then children's health, social development, or educational attainment may be significantly impaired. A Joint Assessment (JAFF) is required along with the appointment of a Lead Professional who will coordinate the support through the establishment of a Team around the Family (TAF).

3.

Children with complex needs which appear chronic and enduring, these children are considered highly vulnerable or living in the greatest level of adversity. The needs of many of these children and young people can be met through a Joint assessment and plan (JAFF) with a lead professional coordinating support. There will be occasions when a child or young person requires a STEP UP* specialist assessment and support from a range of specialist agencies.

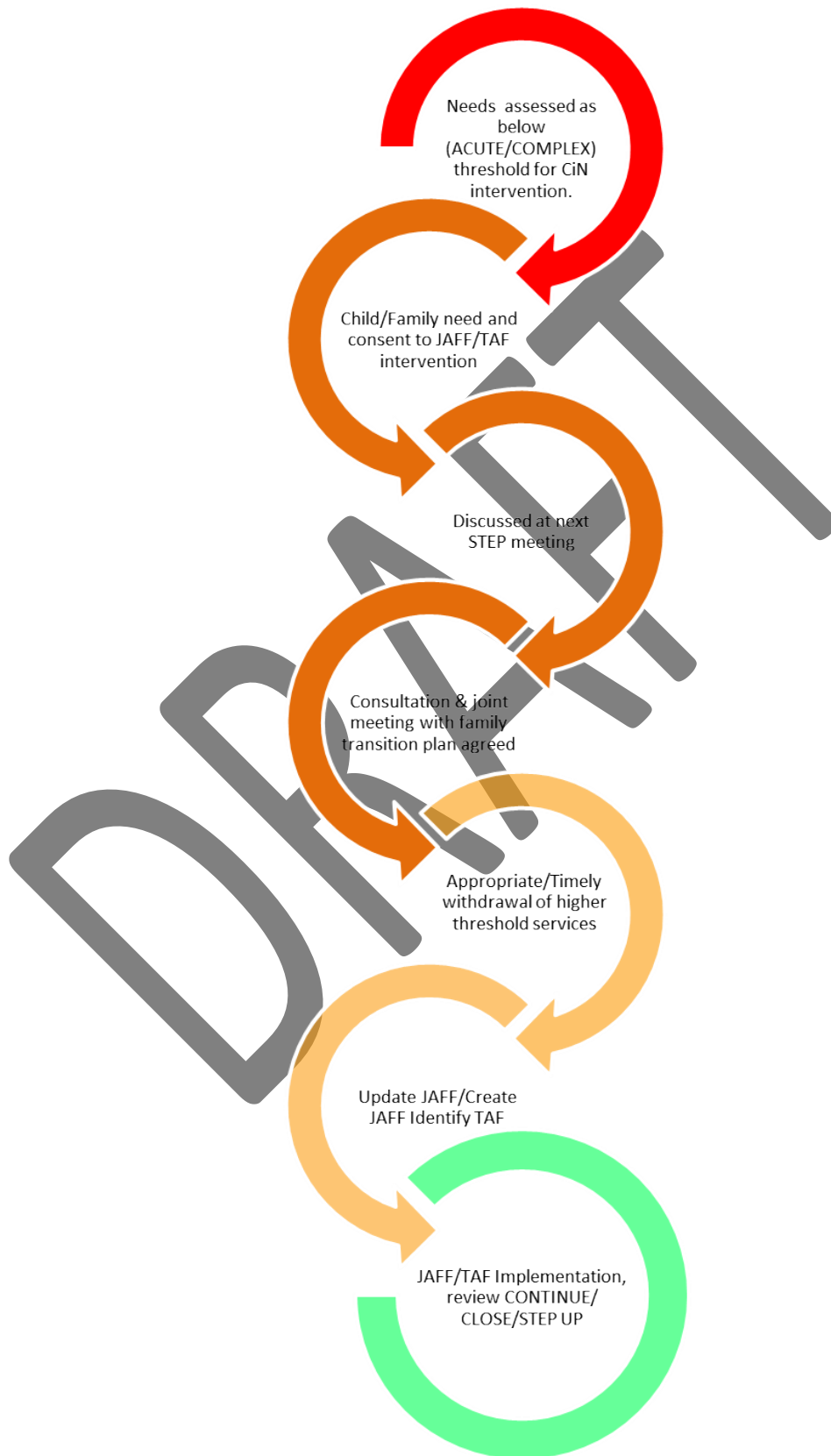
** See STEP UP Procedure*

4.

Children in need of immediate care and protection, this is the most urgent category and always requires an immediate referral to children's social care. These are children and young people whose care is so compromised as to place them at risk of significant harm and in need of a Child Protection Plan, and all children and young people already subject of a Child Protection Plan.

This level includes children and young people who are identified as at risk of becoming looked after by the local authority, and all children and young people already looked after by the local authority. These children/young people will be subject to the 'STEP DOWN' process once safety is secured. **See STEP DOWN Procedure*

Step Down Process – Appendix 2



BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 OCTOBER 2016

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR- EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

ESTYN REPORT OF CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the findings of the Estyn Report on the Central South Consortium.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The information in this report relates to the strategic priority in the Corporate Plan 'supporting a successful economy'.

3. Background

- 3.1 Consortia were established by the previous Labour government in 2012 and have taken some time to become established across Wales. Consortia are tasked to deliver school improvement services on behalf of Local Authorities. This means providing challenge and support in the form of a Challenge Adviser to each school and commissioning sources of support for schools to draw upon in their improvement planning.
- 3.2 Central South Consortium covers 400 schools across Wales and over a third of the children in Wales. It is one of the most deprived regions in Wales and in 2012 it was one of the lowest performing regions. All five constituent authorities, Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan were in a form of Estyn monitoring.
- 3.3 Since 2012 the region has seen the fastest improvement of any in Wales. Results in all key stages have risen to or above the national average and the pace of improvement at key stage four has been more than double that seen nationally. At the same time all five authorities have been removed from monitoring by Estyn and in all cases the contribution of the Consortium was noted.
- 3.4 In 2014 the five authorities in Central South Consortium launched "The Central South Wales Challenge" which set out a school led strategy for improvement. This was designed to identify and support schools to lead improvement across the region at both a system level and at a school level. At the same time there were changes to the challenge adviser function and many more seconded head teachers were encouraged to become challenge advisers.
- 3.5 Estyn inspected the Central South Consortium in March 2016. It was the first Consortium to be inspected under a new Consortia Inspection Framework.

- 3.6 The report was mostly positive recognising the scale of improvement across schools within the Central South region since Consortium working began in Wales in 2012. It gave 'good' judgements for leadership, self evaluation and improvement planning and partnerships.
- 3.7 Judgements for support for school improvement and resource management remained 'adequate' which in Estyn terms means 'strengths outweigh areas for improvement'. There were four recommendations for the Consortium to take on board ahead of a likely revisit by Estyn in the Autumn of 2017.
- 3.8 The Consortium was the first of the four consortia to be inspected. All four have now been inspected (see Appendix A).
- 3.9 The inspection took two weeks and involved 9 inspectors. More than 50 head teachers and governors were interviewed as were all Council Leaders and Cabinet Members, Chief Executives, Directors, S.151 officers, the senior team of the Consortium and many staff. The inspection, which was undertaken in January, was supported by a survey of all head teachers and governors, to which more than 50% of schools responded.
- 3.10 The report (Appendix B) was published on the 26th May and it is expected that all consortia will be revisited to measure progress against their recommendations from the autumn of 2017 onwards.

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 The report made five judgements within its framework with a context section on performance and outcomes. Against each area the judgements were:-
- a. Support for School Improvement – adequate
 - b. Leadership – good
 - c. Improving Quality – good
 - d. Partnerships – good
 - e. Resource Management – adequate
- 4.2 The report recognised the rapid improvement across the five authorities in the region, the fastest improvement nationally and that the Consortium was now sitting at or above the national average in all indicators. However, it also noted that performance across the local authorities is "too variable".
- "In 2015, over half of the schools in the region are in the higher 50% when their performance is compared to that of similar schools for all the main indicators in the Foundation Phase and key stages 2, 3 and 4. This is the only region where this is the case. Overall, performance in this region has improved at a faster rate than in the other regions over the last three years, although for several indicators this has been from a low base.*
- 4.3 The report recognised a number of areas of strength in the way that the Consortium operates and delivers impact. In particular it noted:-
- a. Increased consistency and quality of challenge advisers, use of data and implementation of the categorisation process;

- b. The wide range of professional learning opportunities for schools across the region delivered as part of the self improving school system;
- c. Effective leadership and appropriate governance of the Consortium by the five authorities working together;
- d. Effective self evaluation and improving planning processes reflected in the Consortium Business Plan 2016/17;
- e. Clarity of vision and strategy within the self improving school system strategy work and the strength of engagement with head teachers and authorities, also the effective use of resources.

“The consortium has a clear vision and strategy to improve schools that is understood by most stakeholders and underpins the support for school improvement well. Almost all schools across the regions are engaging purposefully with schools-to-school working.”

“Over the last two years, the consortium has developed into a reflective organisation that is committed to evaluating and improving its own practice and performance.”

4.4 There were also a number of areas for improvement in the four recommendations within the report. These were to:-

- 1. Ensure that school improvement services address the variability of performance across schools and local authorities, particularly at key stage 4.
- 2. Improve the accuracy of the evaluations of schools by Challenge Advisers in order to ensure a greater focus on improving teaching and leadership.
- 3. Strengthen the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of school improvement work.
- 4. Evaluate progress against the regional consortium’s operational plans more effectively.

4.5 The Consortium has reviewed action plans against the recommendations and added to them where necessary. Attached at Appendix C is a summary of each of the recommendations with actions and impact against them. These sit within the business plan and are monitored monthly as part of our self evaluation processes.

4.6 Following the inspection, stakeholders and Directors in the region carried out a stocktake to review progress and to identify further areas where focus was needed. These included:-

- a. A need for a focus on strengthening leadership succession planning and future leadership capacity also recruitment of core subject (mathematics particularly) teachers in the region;
- b. A focus on developing pedagogy and joint practice development at teacher level through school to school working;
- c. A focus on engagement in particular with teachers, governors and elected Members about the role of the consortia and impact to schools which do not make sufficiently rapid progress;
- d. A focus on consistent intervention and a sharp response to schools which do not make sufficiently paid progress;
- e. A need to review the role of challenge advisers with a view to increasing impact and sharpening reporting;

- f. A need to engage with pace on national strategies and agendas in the region in a way that builds capacity and streamlines change management.
- 4.7 Actions arising from these areas have also been reflected in our action plans underpinning the business plan which are monitored monthly.
- 4.8 There are risks to the delivery of these recommendations in the next year particularly including:-
- a. The implementation of the new qualification for core subjects at key stage 4 may well destabilise the improvement seen across the region hitting schools which serve deprived areas hardest. This is being monitored and we are working with these schools particularly to support their planning;
 - b. Leadership capacity and particularly capacity to recruit core subject staff remains a significant issue for the region. The four consortia are working together on a national recruitment campaign for the autumn;
 - c. National priorities change as the new government establishes itself leading to reduced impact and a need to further communicate strategies and progress;
 - d. Financial resources remain tight and will become more so. The Consortium is taking a small cut to revenue resources in 2016/17 and 2017/18 and judge this to be manageable, but major changes to grant will affect our ability to deliver school to school strategies for improvement. We are working with Welsh Government to reflect and address these issues within the context of increasing delegation to schools.
- 4.9 These risks are on the Consortium's risk register and being monitored closely.
- 4.10 The Consortium has reviewed action plans as set out in this report and will report against progress to the Advisory Board and the Joint Committee termly.
- 4.11 Each Scrutiny Committee also receives an annual report in the late autumn / early spring term from the Consortium which will also focus on progress against these recommendations.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There is no impact on the Council's policy framework or procedure rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no equality impact implications arising from this report.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this information report.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee should note the inspection report and recommendations (Appendix A) and the actions to address recommendations (Appendix B).

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Appendices:-

Appendix A	Estyn Judgements for the Four Education Consortium in Wales
Appendix B	Estyn published report for Central South Consortium
Appendix C	Summary table of recommendations, actions and impact.

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Estyn Judgements For The Four Education Consortiums in Wales

	CSC	EAS	GWE	ERW
Support for School Improvement	Adequate	Good	Adequate	Good
Leadership	Good	Good	Adequate	Good
Improving Quality	Good	Good	Adequate	Adequate
Partnerships	Good	Good	Adequate	Good
Resource Management	Adequate	Good	Unsatisfactory	Good

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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales



WALES **AUDIT** OFFICE

SWYDDFA **ARCHWILIO** CYMRU

A report on the quality of the school improvement services provided by the Central South Consortium

**Central South Consortium
Tŷ Dysgu
Cefn Coed
Nantgarw
Treforest
CF15 7QQ**

February 2016

by

Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

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Publication date: 27/05/2016

Context

Regional profile

Central South Consortium provides school improvement services for a region of five local authorities: Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan.

The number of pupils of compulsory school age in the region in 2015 was 111,121. This represents 31% of all pupils in Wales. There are 398 maintained schools in the region, 25% of all maintained schools in Wales (PLASC, 2015).

In 2015, 20.7% of pupils in the region are eligible for free school meals. This is above the Wales average and only 0.1 percentage point below that of the region with the highest proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

In the region, 11% of people aged three and over say that they can speak Welsh compared to the Wales average of 19% (2011 Census, ONS).

As of 31 December 2015, ethnic minorities account for 7% of the population in the region, and this is just above the Wales average.

As of 31 March 2015, 2,015 children in the region are looked after by a local authority and this represents 36% of looked-after children in Wales.

Performance profile

There has been strong improvement in the outcomes for pupils in the main indicators for performance in all the key stages over the last three years across the five local authorities served by the central south consortium. However, since September 2012, only a minority of secondary schools inspected have been judged good or better for their standards. This is a marginally lower proportion compared to the rest of Wales.

In 2015, over half of the schools in the region are in the higher 50% when their performance is compared to that of similar schools for all the main indicators in the Foundation Phase and key stages 2, 3 and 4. This is the only region where this is the case. Overall, performance in this region has improved at a faster rate than in the other regions over the last three years, although for several indicators this has been from a low base.

Over the last three years, performance in the Foundation Phase indicator and key stage 2 core subject indicator has increased at the fastest rate in Wales. When inspected, a higher proportion of primary schools in central south Wales have been judged good or better for their standards compared to those in the rest of Wales.

The proportion of pupils gaining the expected level in the core subject indicator at key stage 3 has improved rapidly in central south Wales over the last three years, and at a faster rate than the Wales average. In 2015, performance was close to being the highest in Wales. The majority of schools in the region are in the higher 50% when their performance is compared to that of similar schools.

The percentage of pupils achieving the level 2 threshold including a GCSE grade A*-C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics has improved at a particularly rapid pace over the last three years. Performance in every local authority in the region met or exceeded the benchmark target set by the Welsh Government in 2015. Almost two-thirds of schools in the region are in the higher 50% compared to similar schools, and only around one-sixth of schools are in the bottom 25% when compared to similar schools. The performance of pupils eligible for free school meals has improved at a faster rate than in the other regions over the last three years, albeit from a very low base. The gap in performance between girls and boys is the smallest for any of the four regions. However, boys' performance across the local authorities is far too variable.

At key stage 4, performance in the average capped wider points score has improved well over the last three years. Performance in four of the five local authorities in the region met or exceeded the benchmark target set by the Welsh Government in 2015. Just over half the schools in the region are in the higher 50% when their performance is compared to that of similar schools, and one-fifth of schools are in the bottom 25% compared to similar schools.

Although performance in the level 1 threshold at key stage 4 has improved, performance in the region has been the lowest in Wales for the last two years. However, despite this, half of the secondary schools are in the higher 50% when their performance is compared to that of similar schools.

The proportion of pupils achieving five A* or A grades or at GCSE or equivalent has been above the Wales average for the last two years, having improved at the fastest rate across the four regions. However, performance across the local authorities is too variable.

Performance in English is particularly strong in the region. Performance at level 2 is above the Wales average in 2015 and nearly two-thirds of secondary schools are in the higher 50% when their performance is compared to that of similar schools.

Performance in mathematics is the weakest of the core subjects, although central south Wales is the most improved region over the last three years.

Attendance has improved well in the region in recent years, increasing at a slightly faster rate than the Wales average. Attendance rates in a majority of primary and secondary schools place them in the higher 50% compared to similar schools in Wales.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that school improvement services address the variability of performance across schools and local authorities, particularly at key stage 4
- R2 Improve the accuracy of the evaluations of schools by challenge advisers in order to ensure a greater focus on improving teaching and leadership
- R3 Strengthen the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of school improvement work
- R4 Evaluate progress against the regional consortium's operational plans more effectively

Main findings

Support for School Improvement: Adequate

The consortium has a clear vision and strategy to improve schools that is understood by most stakeholders and underpins the support for school improvement well. Almost all schools across the region are engaging purposefully with school-to-school working.

The consortium's 'Support and Challenge Framework' provides useful guidance for challenge advisers, local authority officers and schools. The framework outlines the process for categorising schools clearly. It also indicates how challenge advisers should work with schools in different categories of support. Following an evaluation, the consortium has recently reviewed the framework to emphasise schools' self-evaluation and improvement planning. They have also focused more sharply on the improvement priorities for the region. This appropriately includes raising the achievement of vulnerable groups of pupils.

Consortium leaders are developing the arrangements for collecting data to inform school improvement processes and to improve their knowledge of schools well. This includes collecting pupils' performance data throughout the year, which allows the consortium to track progress with greater accuracy in its schools. Many challenge advisers use this data appropriately to challenge each school's view of its standards and capacity to improve, and to make informed decisions about the school's support needs.

The categorisation process is increasingly robust and fair, and identifies clearly those aspects that require improvement. The process allows for a more open dialogue between schools and the consortium and, overall, schools have a sound understanding of what to expect. In the last two years there has been a reduction in the proportion of schools requiring a higher degree of support. However, in a minority of schools, there are still significant concerns.

Most challenge advisers' reports on schools are based appropriately on first-hand evidence, such as the scrutiny of pupils' work and observations of teaching. The consortium has suitable processes to quality assure the work of challenge advisers. Senior challenge advisers make joint visits with challenge advisers and review the quality of reports to schools. These activities have improved the consistency and clarity of the reports provided to schools. However, in a few cases, challenge adviser notes of visits to schools do not focus on the most important aspects requiring improvement, such as the quality and consistency of teaching. In addition, in a few instances, reports provided to Estyn in advance of an inspection do not reflect well enough the findings of the inspection team, especially regarding the evaluation of teaching and leadership.

In many schools, challenge advisers broker support appropriately and draw well on the consortium's provision for a wide range of school-to-school support and targeted interventions.

The consortium works effectively with its local authority partners to share information about the performance of schools across the region, and to identify schools causing concern. Meetings to review the progress of schools in the highest categories of support are regular and place an appropriate emphasis on the role of the headteachers and governors to provide evidence of progress. Where there are concerns about a school's progress, the consortium acts swiftly to alert the local authority and provides timely advice to support the local authority's use of statutory powers to intervene in the school.

Teacher assessment across the region is increasingly accurate. Generally, schools are well-engaged and moderation processes have improved, helped by involvement in the national verification programme. Challenge and strategic advisers support all moderation events. The consortium has been proactive in including the Foundation Phase in their verification processes, and this provides effective support for practitioners.

To address national and regional priorities, the consortium has developed the role of strategic advisers, who lead approaches to support schools in key areas. This includes a regional strategy group to tackle poverty and disadvantage that is working with a group of schools to identify, evaluate and develop effective practice across the region. This work is well-planned, and has included commissioned research resulting in a series of best practice case studies on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. This has helped to raise schools' awareness of strategies to tackle disadvantage.

The 'Central South Wales Challenge' is the consortium's key strategy for school improvement. It provides a wide range of professional learning opportunities for schools across the region, at all levels of support, which reflect well the vision for a self-improving school system. The strategy has four main activities; School Improvement Groups (SIGs), 'Pathfinders', 'Hubs' and 'Peer enquiry,' which together form a coherent and well-designed approach to school-to-school-working.

All schools in the region belong to a SIG and most schools have engaged very positively with this activity. The SIGs provide well-structured opportunities for schools to work together on improvement priorities that are specific to their context, and to share best practice. Engagement in this work has promoted productive school-to-school working across the region.

Where more targeted school-to-school working is required, the consortium has paired a number of schools in 'Pathfinder' partnerships through which effective schools support those schools in need of improvement. This strategy has brought about improvements in many of the schools involved.

'Hub' schools provide professional learning in specific priority areas, such as teaching and leadership. There is a robust application process for schools to become hubs to ensure that the lead school has the capacity to provide support. This is a mutually beneficial process for both lead schools and those attending the programmes. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this work.

The consortium has rolled out two pilot cohorts of 'peer enquiry' in the region. This involves two head teachers and a deputy head who are invited into a third school to review self-evaluation and improvement planning, including lesson observation and talking to learners and the senior leadership team. It is a method of building leadership capacity and reflection and improving self-evaluation between peer head teachers. The consortium has developed a clear methodology for its approach to peer enquiry and there are early indications that it is having a positive effect on improving leadership capacity. However procedures for evaluating its impact are underdeveloped.

These support opportunities have motivated teachers across the region to become more active in and reflective on their own learning, and to support the development of others. Although participation has been high, and teachers have welcomed these opportunities for improvement, the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of this work on standards, teaching and leadership are underdeveloped. The consortium is beginning to address this shortcoming.

There is a wide range of provision to improve literacy and numeracy in schools, including core support for curriculum developments. It also addresses the needs of specific groups of pupils, and provides valuable approaches to develop school-to-school support to address the particular needs of individual schools. Improvement in English has generally been good but the impact on pupils' standards in mathematics has been more limited. Overall, schools rely too heavily on interventions in literacy and numeracy to improve outcomes rather than on the development of teaching and leadership in these areas.

Following an extensive review of provision in the Foundation Phase, the consortium established the Foundation Phase Alliance, a group of specialist schools and settings for the Foundation Phase. The schools are committed to delivering professional learning events to share their good practice. Case studies show examples of improved practice. However, this work is at an early stage of development.

The consortium is developing a comprehensive suite of programmes to improve leadership across the region. This includes a broad range of programmes for headteachers at various stages of their careers to improve their practice, to gain the skills to support other headteachers, or to lead more than one school. School leaders show a strong commitment to developing a school-led self-improving system, and there has been a high take-up of leadership programmes. The Central South Wales Challenge (CSW) strategy group of headteachers provides a useful forum for school leaders to discuss and develop the school-to-school working system. Furthermore, there are valuable opportunities for teachers to develop their leadership skills through the CSW Challenge, by leading school improvements in the SIGs and in 'Hub' schools. These development opportunities are beginning to build capacity for improvement across the region, although it is too early to identify any sustained impact on schools.

The recruitment of a regional lead officer for governor training has improved the consortium's capacity to work with local authorities to provide support for governors.

Leadership: Good

Strategic leadership and management in the consortium are strong.

Senior leaders in the five local authorities and the senior management team in the consortium have a clear shared strategic vision for the regional school improvement service. These elected members and officers have worked effectively together to develop this strategic vision and to put in place the appropriate governance structure to drive this forward.

The consortium's governance structure is set out clearly in the recently revised legal agreement, which takes good account of the Welsh Government's guidance on implementing the National Model for School Improvement. This agreement confirms that the consortium is a jointly provided school improvement service and establishes an effective framework that allocates governance responsibilities and accountability to a joint committee, an advisory board, strategic and operational management groups and a host authority.

This agreement directs appropriate representation from each local authority at lead director, chief executive, and lead member levels. Every local authority is represented, and responsibilities are distributed between the five local authorities with key posts rotating periodically. All of the five local authorities engage with the governance structure well and have taken up their allotted representative posts and duties.

The joint committee and the advisory board provide clear direction to the consortium's managing director and senior management team. These groups provide the means by which the local authorities' senior leaders exercise their oversight of the work of the consortium. The consortium's officers and the members of these two groups understand their respective roles and responsibilities, and they generally discharge these well. The consortium's managing director and senior management team are also supported well by other groups of stakeholders such as the education directors' strategic group, the headteachers' steering group, and the governors' steering group.

The consortium has a clear and well-articulated vision for their self-improving schools model. The vision has been communicated effectively through regular reports, newsletters, briefings and its website and this has led to a high level of 'buy-in' by all stakeholders. However, not all school governors and elected members understand well enough the role of the consortium in raising pupils' standards and the outcomes it has achieved so far. The consortium is aware of this and is currently setting out in more detail how its vision will develop over the medium term in line with national expectations.

As well as working together well to develop the work of the consortium as a joint school improvement service, the chief executives and directors of education of the five local authorities are increasingly sharing other areas of common interest. This has led to improvements in governor support, human resource services, and data analysis. The five local authority chief executives have also recently commissioned a

useful scoping exercise to identify other education services where joint working may bring added value.

The consortium's current business plan sets out well the strategic goals for the consortium within a three-year vision, as well as its high level goals for the current year. These take good account of both the Welsh Government's school improvement priorities and those for the region.

The consortium has worked well with the local authority scrutiny committees to improve the impact of their oversight and challenge. There is now in place an agreed cycle of visits by the managing director and chair of the joint committee to each scrutiny committee. During these visits, the consortium presents a report setting out clearly its evaluation of the outcomes from the work of the consortium for the local authority's schools and pupils. The consortium has also worked effectively with each scrutiny committee to provide data and related information, as well as training, in order to help the committee hold schools and officers to account for performance. However, scrutiny chairs remain unclear about which aspects of the consortium's work they can and cannot scrutinise more directly.

Improving quality: Good

Over the last two years, the consortium has developed into a reflective organisation that is committed to evaluating and improving its own practice and performance. Senior leaders take good account of the views of a wide range of stakeholders and adjust plans and processes when necessary to ensure these meet needs more effectively. This is enabling leaders to secure increasingly accurate self-evaluation arrangements and improvements to the current business planning processes.

Leaders and managers use a wide range of first-hand information well to inform the self-evaluation process. This includes the careful analysis of data from consortium to individual pupil level. As a result, the consortium has agreed a set of appropriate key performance indicators against which it will measure progress over a three-year cycle.

The current self-evaluation report provides a fair and balanced view of the consortium's overall performance. A wide range of stakeholders contribute to the self-evaluation process and their views help to inform the final report. At the end of each key question, the report provides a useful evaluative summary of the areas the consortium identifies as in need of improvement.

Operational action plans for 2015-2016 reflect work streams required by the Welsh Government and contain a brief outline of key milestones over the next three years. The overarching business plan also includes annexes that set out how the consortium tailors its work to support each local authority's additional priorities. These plans focus on important areas for improvement and include time scales and costings but do not always identify clearly a lead individual to be held to account for progress. Overall, the actions in the plans lack clarity and specific success criteria. This makes it difficult for senior leaders to measure progress accurately. Senior leaders monitor progress regularly against the actions and key priorities in the operational plans through a colour-coded system, but this tends to focus on process

rather than outcomes. Other arrangements to monitor the progress of the 2015-2016 operational plans are often too complicated and are unclear about what is being measured.

For the 2016-2017 business planning process, leaders have taken good account of the recommendations in the Estyn report of June 2015 'Improving Schools through Regional Consortia'. The overarching business plan sets out clear performance targets for schools for the next three years at each key stage. In addition, there are precise targets to narrow the gap between the attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals and other pupils and for raising attendance in primary and secondary schools. These targets underpin effectively the three main improvement priorities in the overarching business plan. The targets focus well on raising standards in literacy and numeracy, supporting schools to become self-improving and ensuring that the consortium is a high performing organisation. These improvement priorities form a sound basis for the 2016-2017 operational action plans.

The operational plans link well to the consortium's agreed key priorities and the self-evaluation report. They contain explicit performance targets for a three-year period. Each strategic activity details clear actions with specific success criteria and timescales and a named responsible leader. There are appropriate costings to support the implementation of actions but because budget level planning is built on a single-year model dependent upon Welsh Government funding, these costings are appropriate for a one-year period only. Good quality assurance procedures ensure that all the plans contain the required information in a consistent format and meet quality standards. These plans provide a sound foundation to move work forward across the consortium.

There are appropriate procedures and processes to ensure that the consortium identifies and deals with risks at different levels.

The consortium is strengthening its performance management arrangements for individual members of staff. However, agreed objectives and identified success criteria are not always precise enough to enable senior leaders to judge accurately the quality of the work of their teams. There are appropriate arrangements in place across the consortium to deal with underperformance through agreed informal and formal processes.

Partnerships: Good

The consortium has successfully developed strong relationships with a range of partners. This has led to a shared understanding of strategic priorities and a clear commitment to working together to improve standards for all pupils.

The consortium has developed an effective partnership with its schools. This is enabling it to move purposefully towards delivering its vision for a self-improving school system.

There is a positive working relationship between consortium and local authority senior managers. Directors, chief executives, senior officers and elected members realise the benefits that can be gained from working within a wider region, and

demonstrate a clear willingness to explore other opportunities for greater collaboration both with the consortium and with each other.

The consortium is developing its partnership with governors through the development of a governor steering group, governor briefings and mandatory data training. This is helping governors to gain a better understanding of their role. The consortium has started to involve experienced governors in school-to-school support through the appointment of consultant governors.

The consortium is developing its partnership appropriately with a range of local authority services. Close working with human resource (HR) departments and trade unions across the five authorities has resulted in the development of shared capability and performance management arrangements and this is improving the support that schools receive.

The appointment of regional co-ordinators for HR, governance, attendance and looked-after children is facilitating increased collaboration and sharing of good practice between the five authorities. However, overall, this development is at an early stage.

The consortium has appropriately recognised the need to develop closer working between challenge advisers and inclusion staff to share information about vulnerable groups of pupils. Across the region there are examples of useful collaboration between these services in terms of joint meetings and visits to schools. A recently formed inclusion strategy group is providing valuable opportunities for managers in the five authorities to develop collaborative working and greater consistency across the region. However, the collation and analysis of data about vulnerable pupils are at an early stage of development.

Partnership with the diocesan authorities has improved, with regular meetings between the diocesan education directors and consortium managers. This has led to improved dialogue with senior officers about issues relating to faith schools.

There has been an improvement in the communication and working relationships between consortium challenge advisers and Schools Challenge Cymru advisers. This includes more effective sharing of data and reports as well as regular attendance at meetings.

The consortium has developed a few useful links with external partners. For example, links with higher education institutions have enabled the consortium to develop a range of professional development opportunities for new and experienced headteachers.

Collaboration with the other consortia has provided useful opportunities for sharing good practice. Examples of these include the developments relating to Welsh medium secondary education and the 'Valleys Project'. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this work.

Resource management: Adequate

The consortium has sound financial management processes in place, which allow for budgets for core funding and grant expenditure to be set robustly and monitored

carefully. Costs are kept under regular and tight review by consortium staff, education directors and the joint committee. The consortium is managing the challenges of grant allocation well. This is helped by solid relationships between finance officers in the consortium and local authorities.

The link between the business planning process and spending decisions is developing well. The consortium is making good use of data to allocate resources against key priorities. As part of its priority of school-led support, the consortium increased the proportion of grant funding delegated to schools from 2015-2016 compared with previous years. This proportion is higher than Welsh Government requirements.

The local authority core funding to the consortium is lower than set out in the Welsh Government's National Model for Regional Working, although this is partly because local authorities continue to provide certain services such as HR support. The consortium has been proactive in identifying efficiencies by reducing both administration costs and duplication of work and increasing external income from the use of its office space. This has enabled the consortium to reduce the local authority core funding by 5% for 2016-2017 and a further 5% for 2017-2018 without impacting on core services. Plans are in place to review other areas for collaboration across the region, such as governor support, further to reduce costs and improve the effectiveness of the services.

The consortium has started to assess its value for money, although it recognises that there is still further work to do to develop this process and demonstrate that the use of resources is having the best possible impact on outcomes. The consortium has used the results of its value for money reviews to reconfigure particular services such as Foundation Phase support. This has led to a reduction in costs in this area. However, it is too early to assess the impact of these changes to determine if they have delivered better value for money.

Appendix 1

The inspection team

Iwan Roberts	Reporting Inspector
Sarah Lewis	Team Inspector
Caroline Rees	Team Inspector
Rhona Edwards	Team Inspector
Mark Champion	Team Inspector
Gerard Kerslake	Team Inspector
Jassa Scott	Team Inspector
Margaret Elisabeth Davies	Team Inspector
Sophie Knott	WAO
Sue Walker	Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Glossary of terms

National Curriculum

Expected National Curriculum levels

- By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach Foundation Phase outcome 5 and the more able outcome 6.
- By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of eleven, learners are expected to reach level 4 and the more able to reach level 5.
- By the end of the key stage 3, at the age of fourteen, learners are expected to reach level 5 and the more able to reach level 6 or level 7.

Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6). The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase: literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language; mathematical development; personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity. Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

Core subject indicator in key stages 2, 3 and 4

The core subject indicator relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum. Learners must gain at least the expected level in either English or Welsh first language together with mathematics and science to gain the core subject indicator.

External examinations at key stage 4 or post-16

Core subject indicator – as above.

Level 1 qualification – the equivalent of a GCSE at grade D to G.

The Level 1 threshold – learners must have gained a volume of qualifications equivalent to five GCSEs at grades D to G.

Level 2 qualification – the equivalent of a GCSE at grade A* to C.

The Level 2 threshold – learners must have gained a volume of qualifications equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C.

The Level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics – learners must have gained level 2 qualifications in English or Welsh first language and in mathematics as part of their threshold.

Level 3 qualification – the equivalent of an A level at A* to C.

The Level 3 threshold – learners must have gained a volume of qualifications equivalent to two A levels at grade A* to E.

The **average wider points score** includes all external qualifications approved for use in Wales at the relevant age – for example at age 16 or 18. To calculate this, the total points gained by all learners in the cohort is divided by the number of learners.

The **capped average points score** only includes the best eight results for each pupil from all qualifications approved for use in Wales at age 16.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Schools and local authorities may refer to performance relative to their family of schools. These families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.

Recommendation	What are we doing?	Expected Impact
<p>R1 Ensure that school improvement services address the variability of performance across schools and local authorities, particularly at key stage 4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Improving provision of pupil level data through the establishment of a pupil level database. ✓ Collecting schools' self-evaluation reports, improvement plans and targets much earlier in the academic year so that we are able to identify at an early stage whether the targets set will reduce variability of performance between schools and authorities. ✓ Enabling challenge advisers to challenge expectations and the targets set where they are not high enough to ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the variations against key indicators reduce; • we see continuing improvement across the region in all schools. ✓ Collecting information about pupils' progress towards targets in secondary and primary schools more readily through the year to help monitor progress. ✓ Developing and coordinating a strategy to improve performance in secondary schools across the region both pre- and post sixteen. ✓ Establishing an intervention strategy to achieve a consistent approach across the region that will secure improvement at pace in schools causing the greatest concern, including use of the local authority's statutory powers. ✓ Strengthening the coordination of joint working with local authorities' inclusion services when supporting schools requiring red or amber support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The targets in the Foundation Phase and at key stages 2 and 3 are met in 2016 as set out in the business plan at the expected level and the expected level +1. ➤ When targets are reset for 2017 and 2018 they will demonstrate intent to reduce the variation between schools and local authorities in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the gap between boys' and girls' achievement in literacy/ English/ Welsh in all authorities and boys' literacy outcomes especially in Merthyr; • girls' outcomes in mathematics in all authorities but especially in the Vale; • the gap in outcomes achieve by eFSM pupils at the expected and above expected levels, especially in the Vale and RCT; • the outcomes of looked after children in all authorities; • the achievement of pupils with SEN particularly in Bridgend, Cardiff, RCT and the Vale; • the outcomes of pupils with EAL especially in Cardiff. ➤ The proportion of schools across the region in the top two benchmarking quarters will continue to increase to exceed two-thirds in the FP and key stage 2 and four fifths at key stage 3. ➤ Over two-thirds of pupils will achieve the level 2+ threshold at key stage 4 in line with targets for the next three years. ➤ The Welsh government's targets for the proportion of eFSM pupils overall achieving the level 2+ threshold

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Continuing work to monitor and improve the consistency of teacher assessment. ✓ Taking action to raise standards further and improve the quality of teaching and leadership in literacy and English/ Welsh and mathematics. ✓ Increasing the supply of secondary mathematics teachers. ✓ Working with schools to improve the outcomes achieved by eFSM pupils, looked after children, more able pupils, pupils with SEN or EAL and in so doing narrowing the gaps overall on the basis of improvement by all pupils. 	<p>by 2017 will be met (37%) and by 2018 all individual secondary schools will meet the target.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The number of schools where less than 50% of pupils achieve the level 2+ threshold will reduce from 18 currently to 3 by 2018. ➤ The variations in outcomes against the level 1 threshold, especially in Cardiff, will reduce significantly so that in no authority less than 97% of pupils reach this threshold by 2018. Variations in the capped points score will also reduce. ➤ When targets are reset the proportion of A*/A grades at GCSE will improve especially in Merthyr and RCT and performance will not be below the current average of 17% for the region in any authority. ➤ The proportion of pupils achieving A*/A grades at A level will improve especially in Bridgend and RCT. ➤ Over 90% of primary and secondary schools will be in the two benchmarking quarters for attendance (just over half currently in primary and two-thirds in secondary). ➤ No additional schools will require significant improvement or special measures by September 2017.
R2 Improve the accuracy of the evaluations of schools by challenge advisers in order to ensure a greater focus on improving teaching and leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reviewing and developing further the service's protocol, assessment criteria for writing reports and exemplar materials to ensure consistency. ✓ Making the evaluation of teaching and leadership more explicit. ✓ Ensuring this is a focus in the professional development of senior challenge advisers, challenge advisers and the strategic teams. ✓ Linking this with the performance management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ All report writing will meet agreed assessment criteria for quality and accuracy. ➤ There is a strong correlation between the outcomes of categorisation and inspection and this is also reflected in the comments made in challenge advisers' writing of the local authority's pre-inspection briefing reports. ➤ All challenge advisers meet nearly all or most aspects of their performance objectives.

	<p>objectives of staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Intensifying action to quality assure written report. ✓ Continuing the practice where senior challenge advisers accompany challenge advisers when undertaking work in schools to assure quality and promote consistency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The further improvements in the outcomes of categorisation and the reduction in the number of red and amber support schools and the increase in green and yellow will occur as set out in targets and indicated against R3 below. ➤ The progress made by amber and particularly red support schools will be strong in most cases and will meet targets as set out below.
<p>R3 Strengthen the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of school improvement work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Review and revise the Framework for Challenge and Support to strengthen the impact of the monitoring, evaluation and brokerage activity of challenge advisers in order to meet the expectations inherent in recommendation 1 above, namely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing the variations in performance between schools and authorities; • improving the performance of secondary schools; • improving the outcomes of specific groups vulnerable to underachievement. ✓ Using the regional analysis of needs that has been completed to guide the work of the hubs, SIGs and the intervention in red and amber support schools. ✓ Establishing baseline measures and success criteria at the outset to support evaluation of the impact of the support provided by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • professional learning and curriculum hubs in the English and Welsh-medium sectors, including the Foundation Phase Alliance; • lead practitioners; • SIGs; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The targets as set out above against R1 are met. ➤ Strong progress is made towards achieving the improvement targets and success criteria in individual schools and groups of schools through the collaborative work of the hubs, SIGs, Foundation Phase Alliance and pathfinder partnerships. ➤ The proportion of schools whose improvement capacity is judged to be either A or B reaches 89% (primary-4% improvement), 79% (secondary- 7% improvement) 95% (special- 5% improvement) by October 2016 and continues to improve further in the following two years. ➤ The proportion of schools where leadership is judged to be at least good improves from the current baseline (70% primary, 50% secondary, 80% special) to reach 75%, 60% and over 80% respectively by September 2016 and over 90% in all cases by 2018. ➤ The proportion of schools where teaching is judged to be at least good improves from the current baseline (72% primary, 60% secondary, 80% special) to reach 76%, 67%, and over 80% respectively by September 2016 and over 90% in all cases by 2018.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pathfinder partnerships; • the leadership development programmes; • peer enquiry; • programmes to improve the quality of learning and teaching' consultant leaders and consultant governors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Continuing work to assess the progress of red and amber support schools against clear targets and success criteria. ✓ Implementing the research and evaluation strategy, supported by researchers from Cardiff University, integrating this with an annual plan for assessing value for money against our key strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The proportion of schools requiring red or amber support is reduced by a further 25% by September 2016 and reduces further in line with revised targets in each of the following two years. ➤ All schools requiring amber or red support make strong progress by the end of the academic year against the priorities in their improvement plans. ➤ All schools receiving consultant governor support make strong progress in the quality and effectiveness of governance.
R4 Evaluate progress against the regional consortium's operational plans more effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Providing internal challenge by continuing to monitor progress against operational action plans monthly. ✓ Refining the service's performance dashboard to evaluate noteworthy progress, barriers and risk and action in response. ✓ Ensuring that monitoring assesses progress against termly milestones as well as key actions and evaluates the extent to which improvement is occurring as intended. ✓ Providing external challenge through the meetings of the advisory board and joint committee. ✓ Implementing the service's new system – CRONFA- to improve information management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The targets in the business plan relating to reducing the variation between schools, authorities and specific groups of pupils are met as set out in the business plan and as referred to against R1 and R3 above. ➤ Monthly monitoring of progress by the performance board is robust, records strong progress against the plan's actions and milestones and derives evidence of the impact on securing improvement against the key measures. ➤ The monitoring process enables effective remedial action to be taken where there are barriers to progress. ➤ The potential effects of risk are anticipated and mitigated effectively and in a timely manner. ➤ The advisory board and joint committee provide effective challenge and support that aid the improvement process.

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