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Bridgend County Borough Council



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**Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief  
Executive's Directorate**

Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 /  
643147 / 643694

Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Mr Mark Anthony Galvin

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Eich cyf / Your ref:

**Dyddiad/Date:** Thursday, 11 October 2018

Dear Councillor,

**CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING**

A meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting will be held in the Committee Rooms 2/3  
- Civic Offices Angel Street Bridgend CF31 4WB on **Wednesday, 17 October 2018 at 14:00.**

**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  
1 September 2008.
3. Approval of Minutes 3 - 6  
To receive for approval the minutes of 11/07/2018
4. Looked After Children In Education 7 - 14
5. Review of the Model for Early Intervention Services 15 - 22
6. Urgent Items  
To consider any other item(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in  
accordance with Part 4 (paragraph 4) of the Council Procedure Rules and which the person  
presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should be reason of special circumstances be  
transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Yours faithfully

**K Watson**

Head of Legal and Regulatory Services

Councillors:

MC Clarke

N Clarke

Councillors

CA Green

RM James

Councillors

CA Webster

DBF White

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HJ David  
J Gebbie  
T Giffard

D Patel  
RL Penhale-Thomas  
CE Smith

PJ White  
HM Williams  
RE Young

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3 - CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 11 JULY 2018 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor PJ White – Chairperson

D Patel

CA Webster

HM Williams

Apologies for Absence

J Gebbie and CE Smith

Officers:

Susan Cooper

Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing

Julie Ellams

Democratic Services Officer - Committees

Laura Kinsey

Head of Children's Social Care

172. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors HJ David, CE Smith and RE Young

173. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

174. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting meeting of 18 April 2018 be approved as a true and accurate record.

175. INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES - ACTION PLAN

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing presented an update on the action plan relating to the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Inspection of children's services in June 2017. She also updated the Committee on the progress made in addressing the recommendations and arrangements for monitoring any outstanding actions. This was a six monthly update following consideration of the report in January 2018.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing gave a brief summary of the findings and explained that the Action Plan was monitored by the Early Help and Safeguarding Board which was chaired jointly by the Corporate Directors for Social Services and Wellbeing and Education and Family Support. The Inspection had taken place a year ago and positive progress had been made but there were some areas that required improvement.

A member noted that most of the actions were green, a few were amber and she asked if there was anything that might not be completed in a reasonable time or anything not progressing as expected. The Head of Children's Social Care explained that if there were any areas of concern then they would be coloured red. Most of the amber actions were long term pieces of work which would take time to achieve. A member was pleased to see the number of blue actions that had been completed.

A member asked what plans were being made in preparation for the change to the Cwm Taff area. The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing explained that the Bridgend part of the area plan would be transferred to Cwm Taff. A Transition Board had been set up by Cwm Taff and ABMU and staff sat on that board looking at work streams around partnerships. It was important to continue to provide a quality service and a Commissioning Officer had already established links with Cwm Taff. A member asked how staff were coping with the additional work. The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing explained that the teams were coping at the moment but she was concerned that staff would be unable to sustain the additional workload long term. The workload would continue to increase and additional resources would be required from Welsh Government. The Health Boards also required additional resources and a meeting had been set up to discuss the matter. It was recognised that this would be a huge piece of work for the Health Boards and it was important to make sure the partnership arrangements were maintained and that grants were disaggregated appropriately. The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help added that the additional resources would also be required after the transfer to bed new systems in.

A member asked how the actions were evaluated. The Head of Children's Social Care explained that the officers updated the Action Plan and reported to the Directors and the Board for challenge. Progress was also reported to CIW.

A member referred to the recommendation in the report regarding the quality of front line staff supervision and asked if this service was being maintained and if there was capacity to continue doing this. The Head of Children's Services explained that that the managers were able to supervise the frontline staff and currently there were no vacancies. They were not concerned about staff turnover and the position was closely monitored at EXIT interviews. The number of agency staff had reduced to two, one full time and one part time and they were due to finish early autumn when new staff were in place. It was recognised that a number of staff were newly qualified and they needed an induction and the right level of support. BCBC had recently been informed that it had received an accolade and been shortlisted to the final for support to staff in their first year of practice.

A Member asked if there had been any impact on the average number of cases allocated to each social worker. The Head of Children's Services explained that they aimed for 18 cases and this figure was monitored closely. Some social workers had more depending on the complexity of cases.

A Member asked if there were problems with recruitment and retention. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing explained that until recently there had been no vacancies but this had since changed. There were new quality assurance and supervisory processes in place and this had improved the position. Members asked if there were any recurring themes at EXIT interviews. The Head of Children's Services reported that there were no recurring themes and there appeared to be a diverse number of reasons for leaving including promotion and the opportunity to work closer to home.

A member referred to the Festival of Learning, an event that had recently taken place where experiences and knowledge had been shared to benefit those who both taught as well as students and asked if there were any similar schemes in children's services. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing explained that they were looking to do work with the training unit and that in the last year they had met the 21 new starters at the start of the year and they would see them again at the end of the year to hear how they were settling in and to promote the positivity of Bridgend.

A Member asked how the council would increase the voices of children and families in shaping service planning. The Group Manager Children's Regulated Services explained that children were instrumental in shaping the direction of travel. LAC met and presented their views and a young person had recently been appointed to join the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee note the CIW report on the Inspection of Bridgend's Children's Social Care and comments on the associated Action Plan.

**176. APPROVAL OF THE STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE FOR RESIDENTIAL SERVICES**

The Group Manager, Children's Regulated Services presented a report on the revised statements of purpose for the current residential services provision in Bridgend County Borough Council. She explained that it was a requirement under the Council's constitution that these were presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee.

The Group Manager, Children's Regulated Services explained that BCBC currently had four children's residential homes delivering services to 47 children and young people aged 0 – 19 years. The purpose of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2018 was to build on the success of regulation in Wales and to reflect the changing world of social care. Regulation would move beyond compliance with minimum standards and focus more on the quality of services and the impact they had on the people receiving them. She explained that each Local Authority would be issued a certificate of registration and all Statements of Purpose would be presented in a more uniform way.

The Group Manager, Children's Regulated Services explained that there were no changes to the statement of purpose for Newbridge House and Harwood House, for Sunnybank there was a change to the service offering medium to long term placements for children and young people aged 8 to 17 years and for Bakers Way, there were changes to the service operating hours following restructure and the staffing structure. A new statement of purpose would be produced in September 2018 for the remodelled residential service provision in Newbridge House as this would become the emergency and assessment hub in October 2018.

A member requested further information on the change to the operating hours at Bakers Way. The Group Manager, Children's Services explained that they still had the same number of stays but the hours had been reduced because they were not at full occupancy. Occupancy figures had increased to 92% and this followed a significant consultation process. Feedback following the changes had been very positive. Bakers Way was currently being refurbished and there were ongoing discussions with each family keeping them updated on developments.

**RESOLVED:** Members noted the content of the report and approved the statement of purpose for each of the residential services provision.

**177. REVIEW OF DECISION MAKING ON THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) PATHWAY**

The Head of Children's Social Care presented the Institute of Public Care (IPC) review report and associated action plan. She explained that effective oversight and management of the looked after children population was a key priority for the Council and there was a further commitment to further improve both early intervention and statutory services for children, young people and their families.

In November 2017, IPC undertook a review of the pathways experienced by children and young people who had become looked after in the last year. The purpose was to review decision making and analyse practice across their care pathway and explore interventions and how decision making could be more effective. The Head of Children's Social Care referred to the recommendations in the report and the action plan attached at Appendix 2. This had been developed to progress the recommendations and was monitored by the Early Help and Safeguarding Board which was chaired jointly by the Corporate Directors for Social Services and Wellbeing and Education and Family Support.

A member referred to the recommendation to improve consistency of social work assessments and asked what had been done to address this. The Head of Children's Social Care explained that social workers had been given mandatory training and the risk assessment guidance had been revised. The new system would be launched over the next few weeks and reviewed after 12 months.

The Head of Children's Social Care referred to a pilot scheme in Newport for families in challenging circumstances. This service was successful and a similar initiative was being developed by Cwm Taff with Barnardos. A number of families had been referred and the success of the scheme would be fed back at a later date.

RESOLVED: Committee noted the IPC report and comments on the Associated Action Plan.

178. URGENT ITEMS

None

The meeting closed at 11:10

## BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

17 OCTOBER 2018

#### REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

#### LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN EDUCATION

##### 1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Corporate Parenting Committee with an update on the support for Looked After Children in Education (LACE) across the local authority. The report will specifically focus on the support provided to, and the attainment outcomes of, Bridgend's Looked After Children (LAC) for the school year 2017-2018.

##### 2. Connection to corporate improvement objectives/other corporate priorities

2.1 This area of work supports the achievement of the following corporate priorities:

- **Supporting a successful economy** – taking steps to make the county a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county.
- **Helping people to be more self-reliant** – taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

##### 3. Background

3.1 It is well researched and documented that LAC often under achieve compared to their peers in terms of educational attainment and are less likely to progress into further education or training. There are a range of reasons for this, but, in general, where a child is struggling at an early stage of their education, not attending school regularly, with little support and encouragement at home, they will generally do less well at later stages.

- 3.2 Children become looked after often as a last resort and many are already having problems with their education. The education of our children and young people who are looked after is rightly seen as vitally important by all who are concerned with achieving positive outcomes. It remains a challenge for all agencies to help raise standards and ensure that children and young people maintain or regain an interest in education and achieve their full potential when residing within the care system.
- 3.3 In May 2018, the role of supporting LACE moved into the newly created Vulnerable Groups Team (VGT). The local authority continues to discharge its statutory responsibilities for LAC through this team. In addition, the team offers advice, support and training to schools while also working in close partnership with Children’s Social Care and other Early Help services to ensure LAC are accessing good quality education that meets their needs. The team also works with school clusters around a consistent approach in utilising the LAC Pupil Development Grant (PDG).

#### 4. Current situation

- 4.1 The Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data on LAC showed that as at January 2018, there were 278 LAC pupils in Bridgend. These can be profiled against the following school clusters:

School cluster	Number of LAC
Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School	10
Brynteg School	48
Bryntirion Comprehensive School	23
Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen	47
Cynffig Comprehensive School	27
Maesteg School	29
Pencoed Comprehensive School	34
Porthcawl Comprehensive School	24
Special Schools	24
Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd	12

- 4.2 Locally, a significant amount of work is being undertaken to ensure that the right support for all pupils, including LAC, is achieved. This includes the development of the access to education panel (AEP). The panel has been created to ensure that all children are accessing education that meets their needs in a timely manner. Any child who is having difficulties in a school setting leading to them being at risk of dropping out of education is discussed and planned for. This panel also considers LAC learners where issues in education are identified.
- 4.3 As indicated earlier in the report, the role of supporting LACE moved into the recently created VGT. The development of the VGT has provided a single point of contact for all agencies including schools, Children Social Care and other Early Help services for information, advice, training and guidance for vulnerable learners including LAC. The



team deliver training to the schools and remain a point of contact for the Designated Teacher related to Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and any other issues presenting for LAC. In addition to this, the team has worked with each school cluster to develop a clear and coherent plan to support LAC via the PDG. This plan includes the development of a training package for all schools and specifically for the Designated Teacher. Please see Appendix 1 for examples of support from the VGT.

- 4.4 The VGT training includes raising awareness across schools on the impact of becoming a looked after child. This training covers the impact of trauma and how this can affect a child's ability to engage in learning. Research from Public Health Wales linked to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) highlights that those individuals affected by four or more ACEs are seven times more likely to be absent from school than those with no ACEs. In addition, the team will also facilitate mental health first aid training to schools in response to the impact on LAC emotional wellbeing.
- 4.5 The local authority has also been central to the development of a work experience and apprenticeship opportunity for LAC. This opportunity was developed as a pathway for those learners leaving education in the summer with the aim of securing an employment opportunity. All Year 11 LAC learners were presented with the opportunity to engage in work experience over their summer holidays. Seven of those learners took up this opportunity. Outcomes from this project include four of those securing an Agored qualification. Agored Cymru is an officially recognised awarding organisation that operates within both the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). One further LAC young person secured an apprenticeship within the local authority.
- 4.6 Recent visits to schools in the county also highlight how a number have introduced learning support assistants within their provision to assist with literacy and numeracy of LAC. This support offers a consistent member of staff for the learner. It is well known that consistency in workers for LAC is a crucial factor in developing relationships and resilience given their experiences of loss and trauma. Research conducted by the Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE) highlights that disruptions to their day in the form of visits from social workers and other professionals that were scheduled in school hours impacted on their learning. The fact that an increasing number of schools are now providing learning support assistants dedicated to LAC pupils is a positive response to this and enables more consistency of support.

## **Bridgend LAC school attainment**

### **Foundation Phase**

**Children achieving the Foundation Phase indicator at the end of the Foundation Phase**

	BCBC LAC					
Academic Year	No. achieved FPI	Cohort	% achieved CSI	BCBC (All Children)	CSC Children) (All	Wales (All Children)
2015-16	7	18	38.9%	87.1	88.6	87
2016-17	9	13	69.2%	89.1	88.6	87.3
2017-18	17	22	77.3%	86.3	84.7	82.6

Positively, 77.3% of children achieved the foundation phase indicator which is an increase on previous years. However, caution is needed when making comparisons due to the relatively small numbers and the changeable nature of some looked after children placements

### Key Stage 2

#### Children achieving the Core Subject Indicator at the end of Key Stage 2

	BCBC LAC					
Academic Year	No. achieved CSI	Cohort	% achieved CSI	BCBC (All Children)	CSC Children) (All	Wales (All Children)
2015-16	20	27	74.1%	87.9	89.5	88.6
2016-17	20	30	66.7%	89.4	90.2	89.5
2017-18	11	23	47.8%	88.3	90.3	89.5

47.8% of LAC in Bridgend achieved the core subject indicator in 2017 – 18. This is a decrease on previous years but again caution needs to be given when looking to make comparisons.

### Key Stage 3

#### Children achieving the Core Subject Indicator at the end of Key Stage 3

	BCBC LAC					
Academic Year	No. achieved CSI	Cohort	% achieved CSI	BCBC (All Children)	CSC (All Children)	Wales (All Children)
2015-16	17	25	68.0%	87.4	86.7	85.9
2016-17	14	27	51.9%	89	87.9	87.4
2017-18	15	21	71.4%	90.2	88.7	88.1

71.4% of LAC achieved the core subject indicator in 2017-18. Positively, this is an increase on previous years but again would need the caveat that the cohort may be stonger and is statistically a small amount for analysis

### Key Stage 4

#### Children achieving the Level 1, 2 and 2+ thresholds at the end of Key Stage 4

Level Threshold	BCBC LAC					
1	No. achieved threshold	Cohort	% achieved CSI	BCBC (All Children)	CSC (All Children)	Wales (All Children)
Academic Year						

<b>2015-16</b>	17	26	65.4%	95.4	95.4	95.3
<b>2016-17</b>	22	32	68.8%	94.1	94.3	94.4
<b>2017-18</b>	19	26	73.1%	94.0 provisional	n/a	94.0 provisional

This appears to be a positive upward trend of closing the attainment gap for children who are LAC but again is a small statistical group.

<b>Level Threshold</b>	<b>2 BCBC LAC</b>					
<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>No. achieved threshold</b>	<b>Cohort</b>	<b>% achieved CSI</b>	<b>BCBC (All Children)</b>	<b>CSC (All Children)</b>	<b>Wales (All Children)</b>
<b>2015-16</b>	13	26	50.0%	88	87.1	84
<b>2016-17</b>	4	32	12.5%	67.9	67.6	67
<b>2017-18</b>	9	26	34.6%	70.0 provisional	n/a	67.0 provisional

This appears to be a positive upward trend of closing the attainment gap for children who are LAC and a reversal of the less positive outcomes in the prior year but again is a small statistical group.

<b>Level Threshold</b>	<b>2+ BCBC LAC</b>					
<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>No. achieved threshold</b>	<b>Cohort</b>	<b>% achieved CSI</b>	<b>BCBC (All Children)</b>	<b>CSC (All Children)</b>	<b>Wales (All Children)</b>
<b>2015-16</b>	5	26	19.2%	61.7	60.9	60.3
<b>2016-17</b>	3	32	9.4%	53	54.5	54.6
<b>2017-18</b>	9	26	34.6%	57.0 provisional	n/a	55.1 provisional

When the level 2 and level 2 plus children are added it means that 69% of the Year 11 LAC achieve a level 2 or more which is a significant increase on the 22% comparison from the preceeding year and is the same as the combined outcomes for 2015-16.

## **5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules**

5.1 There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules.

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 There are no direct equality impact issues arising from this report.

## **7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment**

7.1 The work of the schools and the local authority to support children who are LAC is aligned with the aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

## **8. Financial implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report. However, the Committee may wish to note that the LAC PDG which is distributed to schools for 2018-2019 amounts to £240,987.

## **9. Recommendations**

9.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Committee notes the content of the report.

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## **Background documents**

None

## **Appendix 1 – Examples of Support from the Vulnerable Groups Team (VGT)**

## **Case study one**

### **Year 10 LAC**

September 2018 school rang Vulnerable Groups Team (VGT) seeking advice on how to permanently exclude a child. It then transpired that the child was LAC and that due process had not been adhered to.

Following VGT advice, school issued a 10-day, fixed-term exclusion. The team has followed up, linking in with the child's social worker and advising of support for including a preventative Youth Justice referral due to the nature of the incident.

Outcome – permanent exclusion avoided, school supported and child accessing support in community that meets their needs.

## **Case study two**

### **Year 11 LAC**

The VGT met with a LAC, the social worker and the parent to discuss a possible change of school. The young person in question was about to enter into Year 11 but was for a variety of reasons seeking to change school at this critical phase.

The VGT Coordinator was able to meet with the young person and ascertain his wishes and feelings and address his concerns about upsetting family members in his schooling wishes. His wishes were conveyed to the social worker and parent and it was agreed that the young person involved would remain in his current school with some additional mentoring support.

Feedback from social worker:

"I just want to say thank you for attending the meeting last Friday with \*\*\*. Due to the complexities of educational issues it was refreshing to have someone who is child centered and knew what support and resources available for him.

\*\*\* father said he was "very impressed" how you explained things to \*\*\* and made sure that \*\*\* fully understood his options. I for one, will most definitely be calling you in the future to support other young people on my caseload in similar situations as \*\*\*."

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## BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

17 OCTOBER 2018

#### REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

#### REVIEW OF THE MODEL FOR EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

##### 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Corporate Parenting Committee with an update on the work completed to date in response to one of the recommendations made by the Institute of Public Care (IPC) specifically around the impact of early help services.

##### 2. Connection to corporate improvement objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This area of work supports the achievement of the following corporate priority/priorities:

- **Helping people to be more self-reliant**– taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
- **Supporting a successful economy** – supporting young people into education, employment and training.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

##### 3. Background

- 3.1 IPC was commissioned by Bridgend's Children's Social Care Management Team to undertake a learning review of selected cases where children have become looked after. The purpose of the review was to consider whether there were areas for improvements in practice, guidance and protocols that could be achieved. IPC reviewed 35 cases across the following age ranges

- pre-birth;
- 0 to 11 years-old; and
- 13 to 17 year-old.

- 3.2 The recommendations which came from that review were:

- Strengthen earlier assessments of pre-birth families.
- Review services that are available to parents following the removal of their children with a view of preventing future removals.
- Parenting and psychological assessments completed at Child Protection or Public Law Outline stage.

- Utilise Family Group Conferences.
- Ensure completion of chronologies.
- Improve consistency in social work assessment.
- Work with partner agencies to improve information sharing.
- Ensure good quality supervision of cases is administered.
- Review the impact early intervention services have to ensure that they are making a difference for children and families.

#### **4. Current situation/proposal**

- 4.1 In response to the final recommendation (ie to review the impact early intervention services have to ensure that they are making a difference for children and families), the Family Support Services Manager reviewed existing services available within the Central Hub that support children and young people open to Children's Social Care. These services include:

##### **Connecting Families**

- 4.2 This is a multi-agency team offering a 12-week intensive intervention to families whose children are at risk of becoming looked after or are already looked after but require additional intervention to return home to family. The support consists of intensive support (2 to 3 visits a week). The service has been operational since 2011.
- 4.3 During 2017-2018, the service worked with 204 children who were deemed to be at risk of coming into the care system. Following support, 91% (186/204) were prevented from becoming looked after and remain out of care.

##### **Western Bay Integrated Family Support Services (IFSS)**

- 4.4 The statutory Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) works with parents with substance misuse issues to prevent children becoming looked after or who are in care, with a plan to return home. The service is a Western Bay collaboration which is led by Bridgend and delivers intensive (3 to 4 visits a week) evidenced-based interventions to whole families for 4 to 6 weeks.
- 4.5 The service is relatively small and worked with 33 children during 2017-2018. Positive outcomes include 6 children being deemed no further action and closed to Children's Social Care following intensive support.

##### **Rapid Response**

- 4.6 A rapid response service was introduced in August 2017. This service was introduced in recognition that there are occasions when children and families require support in an immediate fashion in order to prevent issues escalating. The workers offer intensive support (3 to 4 visits a week) for a 4 to 6-week period including early mornings, evenings and weekends.
- 4.7 The service worked with 121 children who were deemed to be at risk of entering the care system from August 2017 to March 2018. Following support, 92.6% (112 / 121) remain out of care.



## **New Services**

- 4.8 It is important to note that the Central Hub has developed new services to assist in the prevention of children becoming looked after. These include the Baby in Mind and Reflect services.

### ***Baby in Mind Service***

- 4.9 The Baby in Mind service provides intensive multi-agency support at a crucial time for parents of pre-birth and post birth babies. It ensures that risks can be managed, and would prevent the baby from becoming either separated from its parent(s) or being placed in a mother/parent and baby placement. In 2016-2017, the local authority utilised 23 parent and baby placements. These are high cost and raise questions as to whether these families could have been supported in the community. There was a clear need for a local service to assist pregnant mothers and their partners to develop the necessary skills to keep their children safe. This new service assists social workers in assessing and care planning for these children and families where there is a risk of care proceedings and the care system possibly being required. This had been highlighted as an issue within the IPC review. The service was fully recruited to in July 2018 and at this stage it is too early to demonstrate the anticipated positive impact of the service.

### ***Reflect Service***

- 4.10 The Reflect Service is a Welsh Government initiative developed to work with mothers who have had children removed from their care following care proceedings. There is a wealth of evidence that highlights the vulnerabilities for these individuals in respect of repeat pregnancies. Across Bridgend (as at 1 October 2018) there were 74 children in care whose mothers had previously had children removed suggesting that there were some missed opportunities in preventing repeat pregnancy leading to children social care involvement. The Reflect project has been developed in response to this. This project is being delivered as part of a regional arrangement with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. The service became operational in May 2018 and the service has engaged with 11 parents from Bridgend to date.

## **Summary of local authority visits and workshop**

- 4.11 Following the IPC recommendations, the Family Support Services Manager in Early Help and Principal Officer within Children Social Care undertook joint visits to three other local authorities, who were deemed to have good early help services. These were Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Newport City Council and Carmarthenshire County Borough Council. In addition, a workshop with managers across early help and children social care was held in May 2018. The purpose of which was to review existing services, share good practice from the three local authorities visited, and identify any perceived gaps in service provision.
- 4.12 The rationale for visiting these three local authorities can be seen at Appendix 1. Each of these local authorities has been able to demonstrate a consistent reduction in looked after children (LAC) (per 10,000 population) over the past four years (2014-2017) and exploration as to how this has been achieved was required.

- 4.13 Following the visits and the workshop, it is apparent that there is no significant difference in the way in which Bridgend delivers its edge of care services compared to the local authorities visited. There was no substantial evidence from other local authorities or via the workshop that there needs to be significant changes or re-direction of services at this time. It is important to note that there are a number of new services that have come into effect around the prevention of LAC in 2018 and it will be important to evaluate the impact of these services in due course. If it is evident that these services are not supporting the reduction of LAC following evaluation, then a re-direction of resources will be considered.
- 4.14 What was, however, apparent during this work was the significant similarities between the delivery models within family support services across comparator local authorities. In particular, the focus on intensive support for children and families along with evidenced based interventions.
- 4.15 What was also evident in relation to support services were the concerns that all local authorities visited had in respect of the impact of IFSS on children and families. All commented that they were considering alternative ways in delivering the IFSS work to ensure value for money. This is an area that is already being explored in Bridgend with a restructure of the service currently being implemented.
- 4.16 It is important to note, that all the three local authorities have developed social work models of practice that have been embedded for a number of years. All these models appear to focus on outcomes for children and families alongside managing risk. The three local authorities were clear in their delivery of such models and its benefit for staff for example improved retention of social work staff with a focus on service users and an ability to manage increased risk.
- 4.17 All local authorities commented on the positive joint-working relationship between Early Help and Children's Social Care in Bridgend. It was evident that Bridgend is more advanced in relation to step up/step down work between Children's Social Care and Early Help and seamless transitions for children and families. All local authorities appeared to be facing similar challenges. There are clearly pressures for Early Help in relation to increased service demand and Safeguarding thresholds. It must be noted that each local authority visited as part of this review expressed that they were under pressure to reduce its spending which has led to increased focus on their LAC population. Careful consideration needs to be given as to how Early Help and Children's Social Care can continue to provide positive support to children and families given the risks associated with predominately annual grant monies to fund Early help services and associated service demand.
- 4.18 The workshop that was held between staff within Early Help and Children's Social Care reflected a significant amount of what was identified through visits to the other local authorities, in that no significant changes were felt to be necessary. The group acknowledged the benefit of having a social work model of intervention and how this would assist in recruitment and retention of social workers but also provide some consistency in the approach to engaging with children and families. It was noted that edge of care services offer good quality interventions and assist social workers in undertaking assessments of families around whether children are at risk of coming into care. This assertion is supported by performance data. However, it was also noted that at times services could be more responsive. Alongside this, the

need for specialist support for children with disabilities where behaviors are leading to the child being at risk at coming into care was raised within the workshop.

- 4.19 Bridgend's financial policy in respect of Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) was also discussed during visits to the three local authorities and within the workshop. This policy has been recognised as being equitable and robust by other local authorities. However, it may be that an improved financial offer to potential Special Guardians who are existing foster carers could lead to an increased number of applications being made. The cost implications of any new financial policy would need to be closely examined. However, it is likely that an improved financial policy would support the local authority to decrease its LAC population.

## **5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules**

- 5.1 There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules

## **6. Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 There are no equality issues arising from this report.

## **7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment**

- 7.1 No assessment has been undertaken to date. However, the emphasis of this report is around intervening at the earliest stage with children and families with the aim of preventing issues from escalating. The work between both services can achieve this aim in terms of improving the well-being of future generations and improving outcomes for children and families.

## **8. Financial implications**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report at present. However, for any of the considerations below to be developed further they will first need to be assessed individually for any financial implications. These will continue to be part of the monitoring process going forward and will be reported as part of the forward work programme.

## **9. Considerations**

- 9.1 The following matters for consideration and discussion were presented to the local authority's Corporate Management Board (CMB) on 27 September 2018:
- 9.2 There is a need to reconfigure IFSS to work across a Cwm Taf footprint in future as well as expanding the criteria to include work with families affected by mental health and domestic abuse in line with guidance from Welsh Government. Further to this, the service will also begin to work with more cases than the previous guidance has issued with the hope of demonstrating an improved impact in relation to prevention of LAC. This work has commenced.
- 9.3 Re-brand the Central Hub to ensure clarity on edge of care services.
- 9.4 Additional capacity to meet the increased demand at the front door of Early

Help services. (This has recently been actioned).

- 9.5 A model of social work intervention for the local authority should be agreed and implemented by March 2019 in order to align social work practice with other local authorities who have demonstrated a decrease in LAC numbers.
- 9.6 Review the re-unification work undertaken within Children's Social Care and Central Hub to determine ways to increase the number of children returned home to family following a period in care by December 2018. This review will need to include recommendations relating to the Care Crisis review and specifically the use of the NSPCC toolkit.
- 9.7 Evaluate the new service provisions of Baby in Mind, Rapid Response Team and Reflect service in April 2019.
- 9.8 Secure a resource to introduce three practice support worker roles within the family placement teams to assist with direct work, crisis intervention, placement support for LAC including weekend and evening working.
- 9.9 Review Bridgend County Borough Council's SGO policy to consider alternative packages of financial support which may contribute to a reduction in LAC by April 2019.
- 9.10 To explore options linked to the Facing the Challenge service within Western Bay to support children with a disability who are at risk of coming into care. Further exploration into the need, cost and demand for the service will need to be undertaken to ensure any decision to commission support is evidenced based.

## **10. Recommendations**

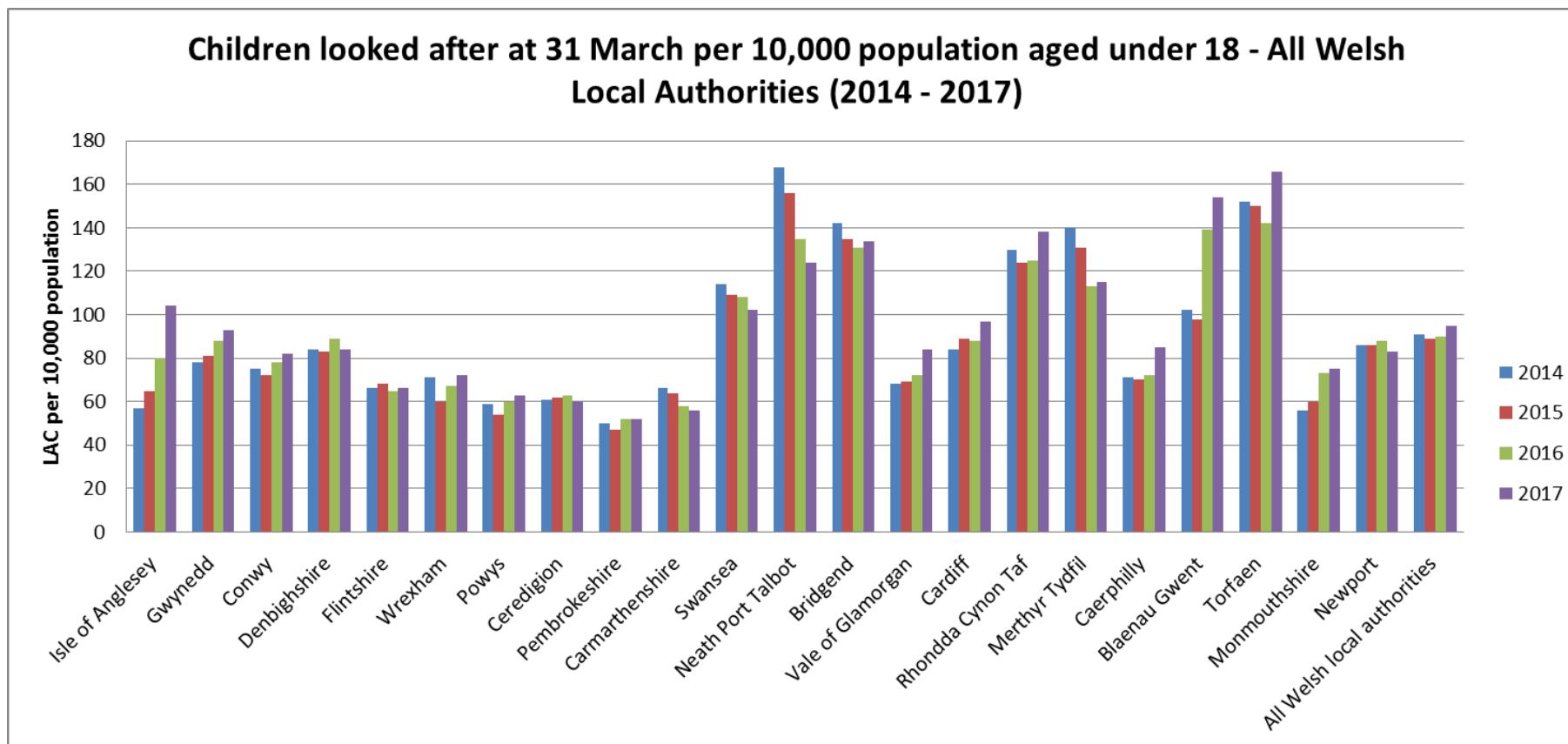
- 10.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Committee notes the considerations above and monitors progress towards the implementation of these as part of its forward work programme.

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## **Background documents**

None

## Appendix 1 Looked After Children Data



- The number of Looked After children in Bridgend per 10,000 of population aged under 18 decreased from 142 in 2014, to 131 in 2016.
- This figure increased slightly in 2017 to 134 per 10,000, however this is in line with the average across all Welsh local authorities, with 68% of local authorities reporting an increase in the LAC figures from 2016 to 2017.
- The reduction in the LAC figures could in part be attributed to the restructure of Early Help services in April 2015

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