

# Public Document Pack

## Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr

### Bridgend County Borough Council



Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont, CF31 4WB / Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

*Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg.  
Rhowch wybod i ni os mai Cymraeg yw eich  
dewis iaith.*

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let us know if your language choice is Welsh.*



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

Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 / 644099 / 643694

Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Democratic Services

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Eich cyf / Your ref:

**Dyddiad/Date:** Tuesday, 30 April 2024

Dear Councillor,

### **CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING**

A meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting will be held Hybrid in the Council Chamber - Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB/Remotely via Microsoft Teams on **Wednesday, 8 May 2024 at 10:00.**

#### **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 - 8  
To receive for approval the minutes of 01/02/2024
4. Basic Income Pilot Scheme Exit Strategy 9 - 14
5. A 3 Year Sustainability Plan To Improve Outcomes For Children And Family Services In Bridgend - Year 1 Report On Progress 2023/24 15 - 46
6. Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Inspection Of Foster Wales Bridgend 47 - 74
7. Youth Justice Service Update on Care Experienced Young People 75 - 80
8. 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.

Note: This will be a Hybrid meeting and Members and Officers will be attending in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Angel Street Bridgend / Remotely via Microsoft Teams. The meeting will be recorded for subsequent transmission via the Council's internet site which will be available as soon

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as practicable after the meeting. If you have any queries regarding this, please contact cabinet\_committee@bridgend.gov.uk or tel. 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513 / 643696

Yours faithfully

**K Watson**

Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy

Councillors:

F D Bletsoe  
JPD Blundell  
RJ Collins  
HJ David

Councillors

N Farr  
J Gebbie  
W R Goode  
M Lewis

Councillors

J E Pratt  
JC Spanswick  
T Thomas  
HM Williams

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2024 AT 10:25

Present

Councillor J Gebbie – Chairperson

F D Bletsoe  
W R Goode

JPD Blundell  
J E Pratt

HJ David  
JC Spanswick

N Farr  
HM Williams

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Maxine Lewis

Officers:

Steve Berry	Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer
Nimi Chandrasena	Democratic Services Officer - Support
Stephen Griffiths	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Manager
Laura Kinsey	Head of Children's Social Care
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Oscar Roberts	Business Administrative Apprentice - Democratic Services
Nichola Rogers	Regional Adoption Services Manager - Western Bay Regional Adoption Service

**CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING - THURSDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2024**

Mark Shephard

Chief Executive

Title of Report	Apologies for Absence
Decision Made	Councillor Maxine Lewis
Date Decision Made	1 February 2024

Title of Report	Declarations of Interest
Decision Made	None
Date Decision Made	1 February 2024

Title of Report	Approval of Minutes
Decision Made	That the minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting dated 05/10/2023 be approved as a true and accurate record. The following correction to the minutes were noted : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Deputy Leader / Chairperson wanted it noted that the meeting dated 05/10/23 was chaired by the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Wellbeing and that the Deputy Leader herself was present but had to leave part way to attend another engagement.</li></ul>
Date Decision Made	1 February 2024

Title of Report	Corporate Parenting Development Update
Decision Made	The Report was presented by the Corporate Parenting & Participation Officer. The purpose of which was to provide the Cabinet Committee with an update on the development of Corporate Parenting in Bridgend and to request that the Cabinet Committee sign up to the All-Wales Corporate Parenting Charter.

The Chairperson and Deputy Leader stated that it was inspiring to see the young people and their work at the Corporate Parenting Launch. She noted that Newport Council had declared all care experience children as a protected characteristic though not mentioned in the pledge and explained the possible reasoning behind the decision.

Questions were raised around Corporate Parenting training and Performance indicators (PIs), to which the Committee were reassured by the Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing that the Social Care Workforce Development Team were engaged in Corporate Parenting training, but that more was required corporately to ensure everyone understood their responsibilities across the Council. The link would then be made with the Corporate Plan and PIs.

responded that The Strategic Plan of three years around commitments towards children and family was on track which had very specific measures around corporate parenting.

Members inquired about pledges and how they were measured, incorporated into the action plan as well as how success would be measured and how young people were engaged in the consultation process

The Corporate Parenting & Participation Officer addressed these questions including detailing how the action plan would be taken forward and implemented as well as measured via PIs. In relation to consultation with young people the Youth Forum had openly stated that they do not wish to be consulted on everything, however they raised very clear points in discussions which were fed through by the Corporate Parenting Participation Officer, either to the Board or to Children's Services. He highlighted that it was meaningful feedback was provided to young people in order that they feel their voice has been heard and their views valued.

Queries were also raised around Newport Council's declaration that all care experience children be considered a protected characteristic, with a request that this be explored with Newport Council to determine if this was something that Bridgend could replicate, and possibly even Welsh Government to make this a national priority.

The Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing responded that she would follow this up with her counterparts in the Newport LA.

**Resolved** : It was agreed that the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting, on behalf of Bridgend County Borough Council, would sign up to the 'Corporate Parenting Charter – A promise for Wales A Shared Parenting Pledge.

It was also agreed that Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting noted the progress made by the Specialist Participation Service that supported care experienced Youth Forum as identified within the

	report.
Date Decision Made	1 February 2024

Title of Report	Monitoring The Performance And Progress Of The Western Bay Regional Adoption Service
Decision Made	<p>The report was presented by the Regional Adoption Manager, to provide information about the performance and progress of the Western Bay Regional Adoption Service. This included the Quality of Service Report for Q3 &amp; Q4 2022-23 and the Quality of Service Report for Q1 &amp; Q2 2023-24 as depicted in the enclosed appendices of the report.</p> <p>Questions were raised around the adoption process which it was clarified by the Regional Adoption Manager usually takes on average between six to twelve months from application to the final adoption order to be granted.</p> <p>Members requested that in the future an analysis be undertaken to reflect the performance of the process across the region with a view to improving the Authority's services.</p> <p>Members inquired about training in schools to assist them in supporting care experienced children and young people including those in Secondary Schools facing challenges with regards to their origins. The Regional Adoption Manger addressed these questions stating that there were two different workshops for primary and secondary schools, with the Secondary school session having an emphasis on social media, as this was now where young people went to if they had questions about their birth family members.</p> <p>Members requested that the education department in the Authority liaises with head teachers to remind them about undertaking the awareness sessions around adopted children in schools to ensure teachers are able to recognise the needs of these children and provide appropriate support.</p> <p>In response to a suggestion made, the Head of Children's Social Care stated that the Board would not be opposed to the idea of having more than one education representative sit on the Board.</p> <p>On the subject of abandoned babies and support for young women, the Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing responded that the Authority work very closely with partners in the Health Board and in Education, particularly around sexual health services to make sure that vulnerable children, young people and women got advice and education at a very early stage.</p> <p>It was recognised that such groups were particularly vulnerable and a key part of the care providers was around healthy relationships and encouraging healthy behaviours. The Head of Children's Social Care added that support services had been extended to pregnant mothers with 'Baby in Mind' and those types</p>

	<p>of services were aimed at supporting and equipping parents to confidently and safely look after their children so they don't become care experienced. The Regional Adoption Manager stated that there was a national process for relinquished children and they worked closely with the local authority's front door team to ensure those families have the support they require.</p> <p>In relation to sibling groups and children with varied ethnic origins, who historically faced more challenges in waiting for their 'forever home', the Regional Adoption Manager explained that both the national marketing campaign and local campaigns featured heavily on sibling groups, however challenges were faced where one of the siblings had additional needs posing complex potential issues for the children. She stated that their marketing campaigns utilised social media and in person community events where the team try joining events across the region reaching out to different cultural backgrounds.</p> <p>The Cabinet Committee congratulated the officers and their teams as she stated that the overall the position of the adoption service was very positive and was a direct result of the staff delivering the service.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b> The Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting agreed to consider and note the performance and progress of the Regional Adoption Service</p> <p>It was also agreed that future reports would include a glossary to acronyms mentioned within reports.</p>
Date Decision Made	1 February 2024

Title of Report	Urgent Items
Decision Made	None
Date Decision Made	1 February 2024

To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this [link](#)

The meeting closed at 10:25



<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>8 MAY 2024</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>BASIC INCOME PILOT SCHEME EXIT STRATEGY</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>SHEREE DIXON GROUP MANAGER CASE MANAGEMENT AND TRANSITION</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There are no implications for the policy framework or procedure rules.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<b>In February 2022, the Welsh Government announced plans to implement the Basic Income Pilot Scheme. The scheme was to provide all eligible young people leaving care between 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 with a basic monthly income of £1,600 pretax for 24 months. The scheme was to run for a total of 3 years. Young people are soon to begin their transition out of the scheme. This report provides information in relation to the plans of Bridgend County Borough Council to support participants as they make this transition in accordance with Welsh Governments' exit strategy.</b>

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting with an update on the exit strategy of the Welsh Government's Basic Income Pilot (BIP) Scheme for eligible care experienced young people.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 The BIP Scheme was announced by Welsh Government in February 2022. It is a 3 year pilot scheme which offers eligible care leavers in Wales who turn 18 between 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 a monthly income of £1,600 before tax for a period of 24 months, with the overall aim to support them to make a successful transition into adulthood. The pilot is intended to last for three years in total.

## 3. Current situation/ proposal

- 3.1 In February 2022, the Welsh Government announced the BIP Scheme. In March 2022 the cohort of care experienced young people who would be eligible to participate in the scheme in Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) were identified. There were a total of 25 eligible young people identified. The first eligible young person received their initial BIP payment in September 2022. All eligible young people have opted to join the scheme and all have continued to remain on the scheme to date. No young people participating in the scheme have disengaged with the local authority during the pilot.
- 3.2 The BIP scheme is a 3 year pilot in total. The first eligible person is due to receive their final payment in August 2024, with the remaining 24 having their payments ceased in the months leading up to June 2025.
- 3.3 At the onset of the BIP scheme being implemented, a champion was identified within the 16+ Team to take the lead on all matters relating to the scheme in conjunction with the Team Manager, who had responsibilities for linking in with dedicated points of contact within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) , Citizens Advice (CA) and Welsh Government, whilst supporting the social workers and personal advisors in the team with their day to day practice relating to the BIP Scheme.
- 3.4 In January 2024, The Welsh Government developed a document entitled 'Basic Income for Care Leavers in Wales Pilot: Exit Strategy' which provides comprehensive information for local authorities to support with developing their arrangements for supporting young people as they transition out of the BIP Scheme. This document outlines core principles and approaches that should be adopted by the local authority in its planning to support young people as they transition out of the scheme and has provided the foundations for the development of BCBC's approach to their exit strategy.
- 3.5 A comprehensive timeline has been developed for practitioners' encompassing elements of the Welsh Government exit strategy and practitioners and young persons checklists, outlining roles and responsibilities with clear timescales to ensure consistency of practice by all practitioners in their delivery of support to young people.
- 3.6 As with all care experienced young people aged 18- 25 years, those participating in the scheme are allocated a Personal Advisor (PA) who is responsible for supporting their Pathway Planning. Reviews of plans are typically every six months, however, to ensure a person centred approach, the frequency is determined based upon individual need in agreement between the young person and their PA which is outlined in their Pathway Plan.
- 3.7 Throughout the duration of the scheme, the young persons Pathway Plans have detailed information on their transition when the pilot comes to an end. The discussions and considerations for planning along with potential impacts have been ongoing throughout their participation. This will also include planning to ensure the young person has sufficient income and funds to support them should there be any gap between their final BIP payment and any income being received or benefit payments being processed. The plans also include any implications for their housing situations and steps that will be taken should the need arise.
- 3.8 All young people are encouraged, and supported, to attend a meeting with Citizens Advice three months prior to their final BIP payment to enable them to access

independent advice to ensure they are fully informed about their rights and entitlements. Young people will also be reminded of their right to, and supported to, access advocacy services should they wish to.

- 3.9 A flow chart has been developed by the DWP to provide guidance for young people, along with their PA's if the young person is to make a claim for benefits. The young person will be supported to make and attend the appointments in accordance with the timescales outlined within the flowchart to avoid any delays in applications being made, processed and payments being provided.
- 3.10 As part of the local authority's commitment to providing ongoing support to care experienced young people, there will be planned drop in sessions in August held between the 16+ Team, representatives from DWP, CA, Housing and Youth Development. In addition to this, budgeting workshops are being planned with the Multiply worker based within 16+ Team. This support will further enhance what is already provided by the Personal Advisor within the pathway planning process.
- 3.11 When young people cease to be looked after by the local authority at the age of 18 years, they are allocated a Personal Advisor who will support them up to the age of 25 years. Their engagement with us becomes voluntary, therefore our ongoing involvement and levels of contact can vary significantly between each young person. Whilst on the BIP scheme, the LA have retained contact with all of the young people though to varying levels.
- 3.12 In terms of feedback from young people, it must be remembered that, whilst some young people will shortly be receiving final payments, some will have over a year of payments left to receive. To date, those who have participated in the BIP scheme report positive impacts as a result. There have been no significant issues or any reported safeguarding matters arising for any young people as a result of participating. However, how the intended objectives of the BIP scheme have been achieved appears to vary between each young person. Two young people report that they have saved a considerable amount of their BIP allowance which they plan to invest in a deposit on their own home in the future which supports the objective of achieving long term financial stability. The BIP scheme has supported a young person to access private rented accommodation which they would not have been able to without the scheme. A concern relating to affordability of this individual arrangement following the BIP scheme ceasing is something being identified by Officers. On the whole, most young people are residing with family, friends or partners with 4 in supported accommodation. There is no evidence to suggest that for those who were already in employment, education or training participation in the BIP scheme has resulted in any non-engagement in these areas.
- 3.13 As with all pilot schemes, it is imperative that there is effective data collection, analysis and evaluation to consider for future planning. At the outset of the BIP scheme, all eligible participants were encouraged to complete a baseline survey with a view to a follow up at the end of their participation. Young people will be supported by their Personal Advisors to submit their responses to this survey which will support them to have a voice and contribute to any future developments. The Welsh Government is offering a 'thank you' payment as an incentive for completion of this survey.

3.14 On a wider level, the Welsh Government has commissioned a four year evaluation of the BIP Scheme which is being led by the Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE) at Cardiff University. The local authority is engaging with this and will also continue to encourage and support young people to be involved throughout the duration of the evaluation as far as possible.

#### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

#### **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

5.1 Long term – the Basic Income Pilot Scheme is intended to provide care experienced young people with a level of financial security and stability with the overall aim to develop a path to long term independence whilst enhancing skills of financial independence and a motivation to support oneself therefore reducing reliance on welfare benefits. It is hoped that the scheme would support equality enabling care experienced young people to have the opportunities that would be afforded to their peers who are not care experienced.

5.2 Prevention – the aim of the scheme is for young people to develop their independence skills, reduce the risk of poverty and decreased likelihood of reliance on welfare benefits.

5.3 Integration – with an increased level of independent living skills and motivation to support oneself, it is envisaged that young people would integrate within their local communities through local employment and accessing education and training opportunities. Young people will have increased access to local health and leisure facilities which will subsequently support them to live happy, healthy and fulfilled lives with improved well-being. Young people will be able to actively contribute to their communities.

5.4 Collaboration – the success of the rollout of the Basic Income Pilot scheme has required the local authority working with the Welsh Government and Citizens Advice Cymru to ensure that effective systems and process have been in place to for effective implementation.

5.5 Involvement – from the onset of the announcement of the scheme, and identification of the eligible young people, planning commenced to ensure young people were fully involved in the process. They were made fully aware of the scheme and supported by their social worker and/or personal advisors in conjunction with Citizens Advice Cymru to enable them to make the decision as to whether they wished to participate. Young people have been kept fully up to date with all development relating to the scheme through the implementation process.

## **6. Climate Change Implications**

6.1 There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1 Throughout the duration of the BIP Scheme, young people have had the support of their Personal Advisors who have provided advice relating to budgeting and finances in addition to signposting where relevant, to enable them to further develop their independent living skills and achieve long term financial stability. This would have provided a level of safeguard to safeguard the young person from any financial abuse or exploitation as a result of participating in the BIP scheme.

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. The scheme is fully funded by the Welsh Government.

## **9. Recommendation**

9.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting considers and notes the progress and exit strategy relating to the Basic Income Pilot Scheme.

## **Background documents**

None

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<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>8 MAY 2024</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>A 3 YEAR SUSTAINABILITY PLAN TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES IN BRIDGEND  YEAR 1 REPORT ON PROGRESS - 2023/24</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>ANNETTE PARKES BUSINESS CHANGE PROGRAMME MANAGER</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<b>The 3-year sustainability plan to improve outcomes for children and families in Bridgend was approved by Council in September 2023. This report outlines progress against milestones and actions within the plan for improvement in Children’s Social Care Services within Bridgend County Borough Council between September 2023 and March 2024.</b>

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on service progress against milestones identified for improvement within the 3-year sustainability plan to improve outcomes for Children and Family Services in Bridgend at the end of Year 1; September 2023 to March 2024. The Year 1 Action Plan is found at **Appendix 1**.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 Although the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Improvement check, which took place in November 2022, recognised progress since the ‘serious concerns’ that were identified in the Performance Evaluation Inspection undertaken in May 2022, it was

clear that services for children and families continued to require improvement to be sustainable and achieve better outcomes for children and families.

2.2 The analysis undertaken by the Institute of Public Care (IPC) which was included in the Sustainable Children's Services Analysis Report, in May 2023, identified that a number of things needed to change for sustainable improvement including:

- Sufficiency of workforce.
- A changed operating model between prevention (early help) and statutory services which provides an integrated service in which more children and families with complexity of need are supported preventatively where families are motivated and consent to change.
- Continued focus on implementing the Signs of Safety and Wellbeing model of practice.
- Commissioning the right quantum and quality of service.
- Enhanced working in partnership with professionals and partners and co-productively with children and families

2.3 Therefore, the 3-year sustainability plan sets out a sustainable future operating model for Children's Social Care in Bridgend, which is based on:

- A realistic assessment of the staffing capacity and associated financial investment required to meet demand to the required standards.
- Lessons learnt from a strong evidence base, experience and best practice elsewhere in terms of the Council-wide service, workforce and financial strategy to best improve outcomes for children and families in a way which reduces the need for statutory intervention.

2.4 The 3-year sustainability plan is the Council's response to the expert analysis on how Bridgend achieves sustainable improvement in outcomes for children and families. The action plan is split into 7 overarching themes. Each theme has a number of objectives and associated actions with timescales attached.

### **3. Current situation/ proposal**

3.1 The Action Plan for Year 1, September 2023 – March 2024, is split into the following key themes:

- Hearing and acting on the voice of children and families
- Securing a stable well-supported, motivated and permanent workforce
- Improving Practice
- Maximising the impact of services and interventions
- A more effective response to families with complex needs
- Seamless working with partners
- Better intelligence and information systems

3.2 Each theme identifies a number of key actions for Year 1 of the plan. The Action Plan identifies key progress to date, and the associated Red, Amber, Yellow, Green (RAYG) status.



- 3.3 A number of key metrics are included in the Action Plan associated with the relevant theme. Further metrics are also being developed for Year 2.
- 3.4 The Year 1 Action Plan includes those actions that were identified for immediate progress within Year 1. These were identified specifically in response to the inspection activity that had already taken place and the likely future monitoring of progress by CIW.
- 3.5 Many of the areas identified in Year 1 are also included in the 2 subsequent years of the plan for further action and work to embed and make the sustainable long-term changes required within the service.
- 3.6 A number of actions have been completed, and milestones have been met. However, although significant work and progress has been made within the service and with key partners including across the regional footprint, a number of areas are still being developed fully, and will be rolled forward into the Year 2 Action Plan for full implementation and to achieve sustained change. These include the following areas:
- Revision of the Children's Services Quality Assurance (QA) framework
  - Development of the updated commissioning strategy for family support services
  - Full implementation and delivery of the 'Signs of Safety' Programme across the service together with the agreed future training plan for this model of practice.
  - Review and development of the delivery plan for the early help and family support services, (IAA) information advice and assistance, locality social work, and early intervention, and a single point of contact
  - Work with regional partners to ensure sufficient quantity and quality of provision for children whose needs cannot be met in standard residential or fostering provision
  - Work with Foster Wales to recruit enough foster carers within the local authority
  - Work jointly with partners to deliver the priorities in this plan

#### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

- 4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

#### **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

- 5.1 A summary of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 assessment is listed below:

Involvement	There has been detailed engagement in the development of this plan from key stakeholders including children and families, workforce, Welsh Government and partners.
Long term	The plan sets out to identify the long-term structures and plans for children and families over a 3 year period.
Prevention	To prevent challenges and issues that have arisen in Children's Social Care (CSC) over recent years and provide greater safeguarding and support to children and young people across Bridgend County Borough.
Integration	The plan sets out more integrated support arrangements for children and families with a range of partners who work to support children and families in Bridgend.
Collaboration	The plan identifies areas where improvements to working collaboratively with a range of partners and working regionally can benefit the lives of children and families within Bridgend County Borough.

## 6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 There is no impact or link to Bridgend County Borough Council's climate change aspirations as a result of this report.

## 7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 This 3-year sustainability plan outlines and proposes changes, reflecting expert advice, which are required to maintain our statutory safeguarding accountabilities. Implementation of the plan will ensure effective safeguarding arrangements and support the wellbeing of care experienced children (CEC) for whom the Council is corporate parent. The elements of the plan are based on a robust evidence base of what works in safeguarding, protecting, and improving outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

## 8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The 3-year sustainability plan to improve outcomes for Children and Family Services in Bridgend was approved by Council on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023, with a budget virement of £1 million approved for Children's Services and the additional use of up to £2.5 million of earmarked reserves whilst a more permanent funding solution was sought.
- 8.2 Council approved £2.5 million as the balance of the £3.5 million budget pressure on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024 as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28, £2 million for Social Services and Well-being and £500k for Education and Family Support.
- 8.3 The funding will be used to address the level of resourcing for the children's services workforce and enhancement of early help as outlined in the IPC report, following a review of service provision and demand, and is required to strengthen the Council's statutory safeguarding accountabilities. The permanent budget pressure will replace the temporary earmarked reserve funding previously allocated.

## **9. Recommendation**

- 9.1 The Committee is requested to note and make comment on the progress made by Children's Social Care Services against the milestones identified in the Year 1 Action Plan.

### **Background documents**

None

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**Bridgend County Borough Council**  
**Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate, Children's Social Care Service**  
**Think Family – A 3-year Plan to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families in Bridgend**  
**Action Plan – Year 1 – 2023-24 (including immediate actions by December 2023)**

RAYG STATUS	
<b>RED</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
<b>AMBER</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
<b>YELLOW</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>GREEN</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>GREY</b>	<b>Completed</b>

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES TO DECEMBER 2023			
THEME 1: Hearing and acting on the voice of children and families			
ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	PROGRESS	RAYG
Develop an engagement and involvement framework by December 2023.	Corporate Parenting Officer /GM Case Management & Transition	A young people forum has been established run by Tros Gynal Plant (TGP) which meets on a regular basis to ensure Care Experienced Children (CEC) have opportunities to have their voices heard, express their wishes and feelings on matters important to them and be involved in shaping and service delivery. Group Manager and Corporate Parenting Officer to further develop opportunities for engagement and involvement of CEC. The strategic framework is in place, and the forum and work continue to run.	<b>Completed</b>

<p>Revise the children’s services QA framework by December 2023.</p>	<p>QA Officer/ Policy Officer</p>	<p>Work to embed the current Quality Assurance (QA) Framework continues with regular quarterly reports submitted to Childrens Social Care (CSC) and Senior Management Team (SMT). Practice guide and exemplars are available for managers where reports, audits, and practice aids, can be located. This will improve qualitative and quantitative data from audits and increase reference to Signs of Safety (S of S) implementation and the meaningful measures agenda. This will underpin the imminent review of the Directorate QA Framework.</p>	<p style="background-color: yellow;"></p>
<p><b>THEME 2: Securing a stable, well-supported, motivated and permanent workforce</b></p>			<p><b>RAYG</b></p>
<p>Implement new structures in children’s social care by September 2023.</p>	<p>Deputy HoS</p>	<p>A review has been completed on operational and management arrangements of CSC. Following budget confirmation of sustainable investment, a restructure report has been submitted and once agreed will progress to implementation.</p>	<p style="background-color: lightgreen;"></p>
<p>Develop a workforce plan including a revised business case for the Bridgend ‘Grow our own Social Work Programme’ by December 2023.</p>	<p>HoS/Workforce Development Manager SCDWP</p>	<p>There have been several specific workforce related activities such as international recruitment, use of agency staff, review of job descriptions, introduction of market supplement, introduction of a new social worker career progression framework, marketing, and recruitment initiatives – all workforce initiatives that would come under the umbrella of a workforce plan.</p> <p>Growing our own Social Workers. - Proposal presented to Adult Social Care (ASC) Continuous Improvement Group (CIG) and CSC Planning on 12<sup>th</sup> January 24. For academic programme entry September 24. Number and qualifying routes agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 trainees</li> <li>• 4 secondees</li> </ul> <p>Application process to commence in April 2024.</p>	<p><b>Completed</b></p>
<p><b>THEME 3: Improving Practice</b></p>			<p></p>

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<p>Complete stage 1 of the 'Signs of Safety' Programme - implementation by December 2023.</p>	<p>Principal Officer Transformation</p>	<p>The majority of staff have completed 2-day and 5-day training for Signs of Safety. Partner agency briefings completed. Work to embed framework in IT system and into staff supervision is ongoing.</p> <p>An ongoing training plan for future years is under development.</p>	<p style="background-color: yellow;"></p>
<p>Implement an evidence-based re-unification framework by September 2023.</p>	<p>GM Case Management &amp; Transition/Principal Officer Placements</p>	<p>This work will be taken forward, but the target timeline will be delayed and will need to be dove tailed with other policies and processes within the service eg Signs of Safety.</p> <p>Framework to go live from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. And will be subject to review in terms of effectiveness in year 2 of the 3-year plan.</p>	<p><b>Completed</b></p>
<p>Complete stage 1 of the bespoke management and leadership development Programme by September 2023.</p>	<p>Workforce Development Manager SCDWP</p>	<p>The programme, which was co-produced with Institute of Public Care (IPC) and BCBC commenced with an opening workshop followed by 4 x 4 focused workshops:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From Compliance to Excellence</li> <li>• Quality and Performance</li> <li>• Leadership excellence.</li> <li>• Partnership working.</li> </ul> <p>All managers, Deputy Team Managers and Team Leaders could access coaching as part of the Programme.</p> <p>The programme is currently being evaluated with next steps under consideration.</p>	<p><b>Completed</b></p>
<p><b>THEME 4: Maximising the impact of services and interventions</b></p>			
<p>Develop an updated commissioning strategy for family support services focused on supporting families with complex needs to remain independent and resilient by December 2023.</p>	<p>GM Commissioning/Deputy H o S</p>	<p>IPC are supporting the development of this strategy; current position is at mapping stage which will then be profiled to what is required based on priority areas defined in the Population Needs Assessment and Market Stability reports.</p>	<p style="background-color: yellow;"></p>

Develop a commissioning strategy for the provision of accommodation, care and support services for children with disabilities by December 2023	GM Commissioning/Contract Management Officer	Commissioning Strategies have been developed for Children, Young people and Transition Services which have these areas identified as priority areas. The Commissioning strategies cover a 5-year period setting out commissioning intentions for these services during this time.	Completed
Develop a commissioning strategy with key partners to meet the accommodation, care and support needs of care experienced children and young people and care leavers by December 2023.	GM Commissioning/Contract Management Officer	Commissioning Strategies have been developed for Children, Young People and Transition Services which have these areas identified as priority areas. The Commissioning strategies cover a 5-year period setting out commissioning intentions for these services during this time.	Completed
Complete the establishment of the children's assessment hub at Brynmenyn and commence provision from September 2023.	HoS	Completed	Completed
<b>THEME 5: A more effective response to families with complex needs</b>			
Introduce new arrangements for an integrated IAA, early help, locality social work, locality early intervention and edge of care teams service.	HoS/Dep HoS	IPC completed a review of the current Early Help model, recommendations accepted by Corporate Management Board (CMB). Consultation has concluded with senior managers and phase 2 of the consultation is underway followed by implementation in April 2024	
Develop a single point of access for all children and family services and a single no wrong door process for families and professionals including schools from January 2024.	Dep HoS	IPC completed a review of the current Early Help model, recommendations accepted by CMB. Consultation has concluded with senior managers and phase 2 of the consultation is underway followed by implementation in April 2024	
Review population needs, planning and commissioning external services and managing grants to support the effective delivery of grant funded services	GM Commissioning/ Dep H o S	This will be included in the work supported by IPC above Theme 3, point no. 1. It will include key partners in Finance/Central Grants and Education and Family Support.	



Appendix 1

to complement Council provision by January 2024.			
Agree a single set of measures and monitoring framework by November 2023.	HoS/Dep HoS	There is a current agreed dataset in place for Early Help and Children’s Social Care. Once the consultation in respect of Early Help and Edge of Care is concluded further work will be undertake in respect of measures and monitoring	<b>Completed</b>
<b>THEME 6: Seamless working with partners</b>			
Agree a new set of arrangements with partners for working together to support children by November 2023	Dep HoS	Work has commenced on the development of multi-agency threshold guidance. Plans to finalise this document in April 2024. This is intended to assist professionals identify where support for children and families is best placed and refer appropriately to these services. Meeting planned with partners to implement and go live in quarter 1 2024	
<b>THEME 7: Better intelligence and information systems</b>			
Work with partners regionally and nationally to ensure that children’s social care teams have an effective management IT system which enables integrated working and supports strength-based practice and the Safeguarding and protection of children.	Director/HoS	The GOSS ICT system in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) went live 10.10.23. The system is reported to be dependable and easy to navigate and use. The relevant partners are now live with the new system and the Teams channel has been set up to mirror that in Rhondda Cynon Taf/Merthyr Tydfil MASH. This will improve and streamline information sharing. Implementation of Teams channel is due in the next weeks.  Work has commenced to identify a replacement Social Care System as WCCIS is coming to the end of its life, a project group to oversee this development and implementation will be put in place as part of the Programme Planning. This work is ongoing	<b>Completed</b>
Introduce live performance dashboards for each team from October 2023	GM Perf and Business		<b>Completed</b>

THEME 1: Hearing and acting on the voice of children and families				
OBJECTIVES:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with children and families in a co-productive way based on mutual respect and an emphasis on strengths.</li> <li>• Have better arrangements in place which enable all staff to work in this way.</li> <li>• Ensure that all staff can take account of the experience and perspective of children and families they work with.</li> </ul>				
YEAR 1: 2023 - 24				
ACTION	TIMESCALE	RESPONSIBLE	PROGRESS	RAYG
Develop an advocacy, engagement and involvement framework so children and young people have an opportunity to become meaningfully involved in all aspects of the work of children’s social care in Bridgend.	March 24	GM Case Man & Transition/Corp Parenting Officer	A young people’s forum has been established run by TGP which meets on a regular basis to ensure CEC have opportunities to have their voices heard, express their wishes and feelings on matters important to them and be involved in shaping and service delivery. GM and CPO to further develop opportunities for engagement and involvement of CEC. The strategic framework is in place, and the forum and work continue to run.	Completed
Revise children’s services QA framework so that QA practice enables the quality and effectiveness of practice to be evaluated through the lens of the experience of the children and families who we work with and for.	March 24	QA Officer/Policy Officer	Work to embed the current Q and A Framework continues with regular quarterly reports submitted to CSC SMT. Practice guide and exemplars are available for managers where reports, audits, and practice aids, can be located This will improve qualitative and quantitative data from audits and increase reference to S of S implementation and the meaningful measures agenda. This will underpin the imminent review of the Directorate QA Framework.	

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Celebrate the achievements of our children and families with an annual celebration event.		March 24	GM Case Man & Transition/Corp Parenting Officer	A celebration event was held in September 2023 and an education achievement event is planned for the spring of 2024. Annual celebration events will be held and is a key role of the CPO responsibilities.			Completed
Launch the co-produced Corporate Parenting Strategy, develop and implement an action plan on Priority 1 'having a voice'		March 24	GM Case Man & Transition/Corp Parenting Officer	Launched with a celebration event in April 2023			Completed
Reference	Metric Description	2022/23 Actual		Qtr 1 2023/24	Qtr 2 2023/24	Qtr 3 2023/24	2023/24 Actual
SSWB55	The percentage of eligible carers offered a carers assessment (to exceed 80%).	100%		100%	100%	100%	
CH/042	The percentage of visits to children experiencing care which are timely (to exceed 80%).	81.13%		81.51%	83.01%	82.70% Accumulative	
CH/030	The percentage of visits to children on the child protection register which are timely (to exceed 80%).	82.14%		82.67%	84.84%	85.17% Accumulative	
CH/056	The total number of children during the year who received the Active Offer of advocacy.	78		11	16	17	
CH/057	The total number where an Independent Advocate was provided.	70		9	12	12	
CH/057 (repetition)	The number of children and young people who access independent advocacy to support their rights (to exceed 185).	70		9	12	12	

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CA/011	The total number of contacts to statutory social services by young carers or professionals contacting the service on their behalf received during the year.	119	27	23	25	
CA/014	The total number of young carers needs assessments undertaken during the year.	111	24	28	18	
CA/017	The number of young carers with a support plan	0	0	0	0	

**THEME 2: Securing a stable well-supported, motivated, and permanent workforce**

**OBJECTIVES:**

- **Improve staff terms and conditions so they are competitive with other Welsh local authorities.**
- **Get the right balance of skills and experience in our teams.**
- **Attract and recruit the most able staff to our service.**

**YEAR 1: 2023-24**

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TIMESCALE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE</b>	<b>PROGRESS</b>	<b>RAYG</b>
Implement new structures for grade 1, 2 & 3 social workers in children's social care and continue market supplement to address vacancies for children's social workers.	Completed	HoS	Completed	<b>Completed</b>
Review skill mix in children's social care and develop a workforce plan for the optimal numbers of social workers, consultant social workers, social work support officers, social work assistants,	April 24	Dep HoS/HoS	A review has been completed on operational and management arrangements of CSC. A restructure report has been submitted and once agreed will progress to implementation.	

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social services practitioners, support officers, business support, other professionals such as mental health specialist workers, behaviour analysts.				
Develop a revised business case for the Bridgend 'Grow our own Social Work Programme' which sets out the resource requirements for Bridgend to achieve a sustainable permanent recruitment by supporting workforce to develop their careers to become qualified social workers through secondment and traineeship.	March 24	Workforce Development Manager SCDWP	Proposal presented to ASC CIG and CSC Planning on 12 <sup>th</sup> January 24. For academic programme entry September 24. Number and qualifying routes agreed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 trainees</li> <li>• 4 secondees</li> </ul> Application process to commence in April 2024.	Completed
Ensure timely and effective trauma-informed support to workforce including through effective line management support, appropriate caseloads, time to reflect, peer support and timely access to specialist support.	March 24	Workforce Development Manager SCDWP/Corporate HR	Staff have access to specialist support through the Corporate Human Resources (HR) Programme. The Social Care Workforce Development Team (SCDWP) have provided bespoke wellbeing workshops for teams, facilitated by staff experienced in trauma informed practice.	Completed
Continuously improve our recruitment processes, drawing on marketing expertise to enhance campaigns and ensure the most efficient selection processes.	March 24	Workforce Project Board	The directorate has appointed a dedicated Marketing and Communications Officer to drive forward recruitment campaigns over the next two years. During 2023 several recruitment campaigns, focusing on recruiting Children's Social Care Workers has taken place. Investment in promotion via media outlets and social media platforms, has taken place together with improvements to BCBC website recruitment pages, increasing our online presence, raising awareness. This has resulted in gaining further reach to suitable candidates. There has been close working with HR to ensure candidates are directed to the correct routes to apply for roles. Work is on going	Completed

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Reference	Metric Description	2022/23 Actual	Qtr 1 2023/24	Qtr 2 2023/24	Qtr 3 2023/24	2023/24 Actual
	Reduce the proportion of social work staff on temporary or agency contracts (to below 20%).		38%	36%	30%	
	A reduction in the proportion of posts which are unfilled or vacant at any one time	Metric being developed with HR colleagues				
	The percentage of staff completing safeguarding awareness training (100%).	78.49%	81.13%	80.43%	83.55%	
	Increase in the level of positive staff feedback about working in Bridgend.	Waiting for results of Staff Survey				
	Reduction in the level of stress-related absences	Metric being developed with HR colleagues				
	Increase in the proportion of staff able to speak Welsh.	Metric being developed with HR colleagues				
	An increasingly equal opportunity, diverse and inclusive workforce as measured by annual HR survey	Metric being developed with HR colleagues				

**THEME 3: Improving Practice**

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Ensure that staff and partners are all working within a common ‘Signs of Safety and Wellbeing’ framework and that this is seen as a valuable approach.
- Successfully develop and disseminate clear guidance for managers and workers on key areas of practice including re-unification, learning from practice reviews and family group conferencing, strength-based reflective practice and supervision.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successfully develop and implement a framework for practice quality assurance.</li> </ul>				
YEAR 1: 2023-24				
ACTION	TIMESCALE	RESPONSIBLE	PROGRESS	RAYG
Delivery of the 'Signs of Safety' Programme as planned across the service (in line with the principles and standards of any national model).	March 24	Principal Officer Transformation	<p>The majority of staff have completed 2-day and 5-day training for Signs of Safety. Partner agency briefings completed. Work to embed framework in IT system and into staff supervision is ongoing.</p> <p>An ongoing training plan for future years is under development.</p> <p>Work is ongoing within system alignment in order to incorporate Signs of Safety to ensure practitioners are able to reflect the framework within their assessments and plans. Forms are being systematically developed and tested prior to going live. The first few forms are now live on the system, the assessment is being built and tested and Care Plans are at the early stage of being developed.</p> <p>This will be carried forward to Year 2 of the Plan.</p>	
Delivery of a comprehensive ongoing training and development programme to ensure effective and consistent implementation of the preferred strength-based model of social work practice	March 24	Workforce Development Manager SCDWP	<p>Childrens Social Care continues to offer 'Back to Basics' training providing a foundation for strength-based practice within safeguarding.</p> <p>Following the launch of the Signs of Safety strength-based model of practice in March 23.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multi-agency briefing workshops have taken place.</li> <li>A Signs of Safety on-line padlet resource has been developed.</li> <li>Signs of Safety Learning &amp; Development Group established.</li> </ul>	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signs of Safety Training Strategy for 2024/25 is being finalised</li> </ul> <p>This will be carried forward to Year 2 of the Plan.</p>	
Implement our care experienced children reduction strategy by safely reducing admissions and introducing an evidence-based framework to enable practitioners to make good judgment about the potential for safe reunifications and alternative orders / permanency arrangements.	March 24	GM Case Man & Transition	<p>There are a number of activities which support the CEC reduction agenda. All activities are to be embedded into a framework which will ensure a coordinated response from all parts of the system.</p> <p>There are a number of activities which support the agenda for the safe reduction of CEC, and a number of targets are in place these are monitored in terms of progress by the Social Services Improvement Board and also Social Care Senior Management Team.</p> <p>Framework to go live from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. And will be subject to review in terms of effectiveness in year 2 of the 3-Year plan.</p>	<b>Completed</b>
Ensure that learning from CPRs and other in-depth analysis is systematically embedded through learning, training and development and follow up quality assurance and review with partners.	March 24	Workforce Development Manager SCDWP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7-minute briefings on published Child Practice Reviews (CPR's) together with the reports are circulated to teams.</li> <li>• Workshops on learning from Bridgend CPR's have taken place.</li> <li>• CTM Regional Safeguarding Board held workshops during Safeguarding week (November 23) on recently published CPR's..</li> <li>• Reviews are referenced to in core safeguarding training.</li> <li>• Childrens Social Care Group Manager Safeguarding and the Directorate Quality Assurance Officer are members of the CTM Regional Safeguarding Board, Childrens Quality Assurance and Performance Group.</li> </ul>	<b>Completed</b>



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<p>Ensure the effective implementation of the agreed quality assurance framework across the service.</p>	<p>March 24</p>	<p>Workforce Development Manager SCDWP</p>	<p>The Directorate has recruited to the Quality Assurance officer position who commenced in Oct 23.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) Qtr 1 &amp; 2 report for April – September 23 completed.</li> <li>• QAF intranet site developed.</li> <li>• QA officer working with Team Managers to improve consistency of approach when undertaking QA case file audits.</li> <li>• QA officer working with specialist service areas on the development of bespoke audit forms.</li> </ul>	<p></p>
<p>Commission a bespoke management and leadership development Programme to support all managers in children’s social care to develop their skills in leading teams and services.</p>	<p>March 24</p>	<p>Workforce Development Manager SCDWP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The IPC/BCBC bespoke Leadership and Management Programme has concluded. IPC will be undertaking an analysis of the programme.</li> <li>• The Directorate is supporting Team Managers to access the National Team Manager Development Programme delivered by Oxford Brookes University.</li> <li>• ILM Level 3 and 5 Awards in Leadership and Management are available.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Completed</b></p>
<p>Ensure that reflective practice is embedded in across the service and supported in supervision and peer support.</p>	<p>March 24</p>	<p>Workforce Development Manager SCDWP</p>	<p>The Directorate has reviewed and revised the BCBC Supervision policy. A second policy has been created specifically for direct care services. Supervision training for supervisors, and supervisees to support the introduction and use of the supervision policies has run on 6 occasions this year. This training has been offered to both Supervisors and Supervisees.</p>	<p><b>Completed</b></p>

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Ensure the recommendations from the PLO working group reforms are embedded in our operating models	March 24	GM Locality Teams	Training has been delivered and cascaded all relevant parts of the organisation and the guidance and principles are now followed in the operating models.  Work to ensure consistency across the LFJB judicial region is also complete.				Completed
Integrate the priorities and elements of the Corporate Parenting Strategy that children services have responsibility for into all other strategic plans and policies across the directorate.	March 24	GM Case Management and Transition	The mechanism is established for the CPO to feed into and embed into current and future strategic plans across the Directorate and this is therefore ongoing.				Completed
Establish a Children's Services dataset for the Corporate Parenting Board that relates to KPIs and Strategy Priorities	March 24	GM Case Man and Transition/Corporate Parenting Officer/Performance Team Manager	A rolling programme of multi-agency reporting, and key PI's is established, this will continue in line with the work plan.				Completed
Reference	Metric Description	2022/23 Actual		Qtr 1 2023/24	Qtr 2 2023/24	Qtr 3 2023/24	2023/24 Actual
	Overall compliance with the QA Framework will exceed 80%	Metric being developed					
	Metrics listed in section 4.6 concerned with numbers of contacts, referrals, interventions and court proceedings for children and young people.	As below		As below	As below	As below	As below
	Positive evaluation of the impact of the Signs of Safety approach through staff feedback and formal evaluation.	Metric being developed					

<b>THEME 4: Maximising the impact of services and interventions</b>				
<b>OBJECTIVES:</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review needs and services in key internal and commissioned service delivery areas to ensure they are operating cost effectively and drawing on latest evidence of impact.</li> <li>• Ensure that where there are gaps in provision or emerging needs they are addressed.</li> <li>• Ensure that we work closely and effectively with key partners to deliver these services.</li> </ul>				
<b>YEAR 1: 2023-24</b>				
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TIMESCALE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE</b>	<b>PROGRESS</b>	<b>RAYG</b>
Review family support and early help needs and trends and develop a development and delivery plan for these services.	March 24	HoS/Dep HoS	IPC completed a review of the current EH model, recommendations accepted by CMB. Consultation has concluded with senior managers and phase 2 of the consultation is underway followed by implementation in April 2024	
Develop an updated commissioning strategy for family support services	March 24	GM Commissioning/ Dep H o S	IPC are leading the development of this strategy. A report for Cabinet approval will be provided by the end of 2023/24, for implementation in early 2024/2025.	
Develop a commissioning strategy for the provision of accommodation, care and support services for children with disabilities, working closely with education.	March 24	GM Commissioning/Contract Monitoring Officer	Commissioning Strategies have been developed for Children, Young people and Transition Services which have these areas identified as priority areas. The Commissioning strategies cover a 5-year period setting out commissioning intentions for these services during this time	<b>Completed</b>

Appendix 1

Develop a commissioning strategy with key partners to meet the accommodation, care and support needs of care experienced children and young people and care leavers	March 24	GM Commissioning/Contract Monitoring Officer	Commissioning Strategies have been developed for Children, Young people and Transition Services which have these areas identified as priority areas. The Commissioning strategies cover a 5-year period setting out commissioning intentions for these services during this time	<b>Completed</b>
Complete the establishment of the children's assessment hub at Brynmenyn and commence provision.	March 24	HoS	Completed	<b>Completed</b>
Continue to work with Foster Wales to recruit enough carers to provide foster placements within the local authority.	March 24	Team Manager Fostering	<p>Dedicated recruitment officer in place to coordinate recruitment activities. A Placement commissioning strategy is in place but will be subject to ongoing review.</p> <p>In January 2024 and through to the Spring, a national campaign was launched, supported by PR, television, radio, digital and physical activation. This was supported in Bridgend by a Town Centre mural which was officially launched and widely promoted via social media campaigns.</p> <p>The recruitment manager and liaison foster carers have been engaging with schools and businesses with teachers and pupils supporting fostering.</p> <p>Pop-up events have been scheduled in the County 3-4 times a month to enable members of the public to access meet and greet sessions.</p>	
Commission and implement a placement support service to ensure the right multi-agency therapeutic input for children, young people, and their carers.	March 24	Principal Officer Placements/ Contract Monitoring Officer	<p>Unable to secure an organisation to create the Placement support service, therefore an in-house service is being developed.</p> <p>A board is in place to oversee the project plan</p>	

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Reference	Metric Description	2022/23 Actual	Qtr 1 2023/24	Qtr 2 2023/24	Qtr 3 2023/24	2023/24 Actual
CH/001	The number of contacts for children received by statutory social services during the year	8334	2945	2843	2998	
CH/005a	The number of contacts and referrals where physical punishment by a parent or carer was a factor.	69	11	6	14	
CH/003	The percentage of children safeguarding referrals immediate response within 24 hours (to reach 100%)	99.53%	99.86%	99.64%	99.65%	
SSWB62	The percentage of child protection investigations in statutory timescales.	Establishing Baseline	Annual	Annual	Annual	
CH/007a	The total number of new assessments completed for children during the year where needs were only able to be met with a care and support plan, and where needs were able to be met by any other means.	Care & Support Plan – 679 Any other Means - 1229	C&S-187 AOM -198	C&S-132 AOM -264	C&S-155 AOM -286	
CH/019c	The number of reviews of care and support plans or support plans that were completed in time.	88.13%	90.95%	92.67%	92.14%	
CH/015	The total number of children with a care and support plan.	1202	1480	1430	1384	
CH/022	The total number of Section 47 Enquiries completed during the year that progressed to Initial Child Protection Conference.	406	94	87	72	

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CH/023	The total number of children that were placed on the Child Protection Register by category.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="5">The total number of children that were placed on the Child Protection Register during the year under the category of:</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Category of Abuse</th> <th>2022/23</th> <th>Q1 2023/24</th> <th>Q2 2023/24</th> <th>Q3 2023/24</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>a) Neglect</td> <td>92</td> <td>24</td> <td>22</td> <td>13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b) Physical abuse</td> <td>101</td> <td>36</td> <td>19</td> <td>23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>c) Sexual abuse</td> <td>19</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>d) Emotional abuse</td> <td>111</td> <td>15</td> <td>23</td> <td>17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>e) Financial abuse</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>f) Neglect and physical abuse</td> <td>41</td> <td>2</td> <td>16</td> <td>17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>g) Physical and sexual abuse</td> <td>5</td> <td>0</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>h) Neglect and sexual abuse</td> <td>5</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>i) Neglect, physical and sexual Abuse</td> <td>5</td> <td>0</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total Additions</b></td> <td><b>379</b></td> <td><b>81</b></td> <td><b>90</b></td> <td><b>83</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					The total number of children that were placed on the Child Protection Register during the year under the category of:					Category of Abuse	2022/23	Q1 2023/24	Q2 2023/24	Q3 2023/24	a) Neglect	92	24	22	13	b) Physical abuse	101	36	19	23	c) Sexual abuse	19	3	3	10	d) Emotional abuse	111	15	23	17	e) Financial abuse	0	0	0	0	f) Neglect and physical abuse	41	2	16	17	g) Physical and sexual abuse	5	0	3	2	h) Neglect and sexual abuse	5	1	2	1	i) Neglect, physical and sexual Abuse	5	0	2	0	<b>Total Additions</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>83</b>
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d) Emotional abuse	111	15	23	17																																																														
e) Financial abuse	0	0	0	0																																																														
f) Neglect and physical abuse	41	2	16	17																																																														
g) Physical and sexual abuse	5	0	3	2																																																														
h) Neglect and sexual abuse	5	1	2	1																																																														
i) Neglect, physical and sexual Abuse	5	0	2	0																																																														
<b>Total Additions</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>83</b>																																																														
CH/030	The total number of visits to children placed on the child protection register that were due during the year that were completed within approved timescales.	82.14%	82.67%	84.84%	85.17%	Accumulative																																																												
Local	The percentage of children on the CPR for more than 12 months (to be less than 14%)	14.44%	14.34%	18.43%	14.29%																																																													
CH/037a	The number of children becoming looked after during the year.	109	35	19	19																																																													
CH/040	The number of children receiving (S76) short breaks.	0	0	2	2																																																													
CH/037b	The number of new episodes of children becoming looked after during the year.	109	35	19	19																																																													
CH/047	The total number of children looked after who are placed within Wales, but outside of Bridgend.	88	90	90	85																																																													

Appendix 1

CH/046	The total number of children looked after who are not placed with parents, family or friends.	195	205	194	193	
CH/054b	The percentage of care leavers who have completed at least 3 consecutive months of employment, education or training in 24 months since leaving care (to be above 65%).	62.07%	62.50%	54.55%	60% Accumulative	
CH/052	The percentage care leavers who have experienced homelessness during the year (to be less than 10%)	10.27%	0%	4.13%	4.48% Accumulative	
CH/051	The total number of young people that required allocated a personal advisor during the year.	29	8	7	3	
CH/031	The total number of reports of children who go missing during the year.	339	121	247	368 Accumulative	
CH/034	The total number of reports of child exploitation received during the year by categories.	72 CSE -56 CCE- 20 Trafficking -0	30 CSE -23 CCE- 14 Trafficking -1	45 CSE -30 CCE- 14 Trafficking -1	19 CSE -12 CCE- 8 Trafficking -3	
CH/055	The number of young people leaving care who move into a 'When I am Ready' placement.	9	3	0	0	

**THEME 5: A more effective response to families with complex needs**

- OBJECTIVES:**
- Reduce the proportion of children who experience safeguarding and care interventions and keep more children safely with their families.
  - Respond more effectively to families who require support, particularly those with more complex or long-term problems.
  - Improve the systems and processes which ensure that families get the right response at the right time.

**YEAR 1: 2023-24**

ACTION	TIMESCALE	RESPONSIBLE	PROGRESS	RAYG
Propose and engage on management arrangements for IAA, early help, locality social work, locality early intervention and edge of care teams experience an integrated management approach.	March 24	HoS/Dep HoS	IPC completed a review of the current EH model, recommendations accepted by CMB. Consultation has concluded with senior managers and phase 2 of the consultation is underway followed by implementation in April 2024	
Review how whole system partners work most effectively together to improve outcomes for children and families, across the tiers of need, from universal to highly specialised. This will be based on best practice in Wales and ensure there is integrated working of all partners on a locality/ cluster footprint.	March 24	HoS/Dep HoS	IPC completed a review of the current EH model, recommendations accepted by CMB. Consultation has concluded with senior managers and phase 2 of the consultation is underway followed by implementation in April 2024	
Develop a single point of access for all children and family services and a single no wrong door process for families and professionals including schools.	March 24	Dep HoS	IPC completed a review of the current EH model, recommendations accepted by CMB. Consultation has concluded with senior managers and phase 2 of the consultation is underway followed by implementation in April 2024	



Appendix 1

Review population needs, planning and commissioning external services and managing grants to support the effective delivery of grant funded services to complement Council provision.	March 24	GM Commissioning/Dep H o S	This will be included in the work supported by IPC above Theme 3 no. 1. And will include key partners in Finance/Central Grants and Education and Family Support.			
Agree a single set of measures and a single monitoring framework to use as the basis of maintaining a close handle on demand, activity and performance.	March 24	GM Performance and Business	A monthly PI Report is established with narrative provided by GM's.	Completed		
Work with regional partners in Cwm Taf Morgannwg ensure there is sufficient quantity and quality of flexible provision for children whose needs cannot be met in standard residential or fostering provision.	March 24	HoS	The regional children's board have agreed an ambition to develop a regional residential accommodation facility for children and young people with complex emotional wellbeing needs. To support this, three Project Managers are being sought to work with partners to develop facilities across CTM; one will focus on children's residential accommodation, and the other two will be available to support the findings in the 10-year Regional Capital Strategy. Carry forward to year 2			
Implement the Direct Payments Policy	March 24	GM Case Man & Transition	The policy is in place, and the project group meets every fortnight to progress implementation of the operational guidance, Carry forward to year 2	Completed		
Reference	Metric Description	2022/23 Actual	Qtr 1 2023/24	Qtr 2 2023/24	Qtr 3 2023/24	2023/24 Actual
CH/039	A safe reduction of the number of care experienced children to below 374	397	394	387	383	

CH/026	A safe reduction of the number of the number of children on the child protection register to below 270.	270	244	217	203	
	Improvements in the attendance and attainment rates of children supported by early help and social care.	Metric being developed				
	Proportion of our expenditure spent on supporting families through early help, safeguarding, residential and fostering care experiences respectively.	Metric being developed				

**THEME 6: Seamless working with partners**

**OBJECTIVES:**

- To work more effectively with partners at operational service and strategic levels to agree shared priorities for service improvement and implement them.
- Ensure there is no wrong door for access to help and support in Bridgend

**YEAR 1: 2023-24**

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TIMESCALE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE</b>	<b>PROGRESS</b>	<b>RAYG</b>
Put arrangements in place to ensure that senior health, education, housing, NHS and partners work with children’s social care services strategically and operationally to deliver the priorities in this plan.	March 24	HoS/Dep HoS	IPC completed a review of the current EH model, recommendations accepted by CMB. Consultation has concluded with senior managers and phase 2 of the consultation is underway followed by implementation in April 2024	

Appendix 1

Review existing Bridgend children's partnerships to ensure the most effective set of arrangements for joint and integrated working.	March 24	HoS/Dep HoS	The Joint Operational Group continues to meet monthly to review working practices between partner agencies. This has been identified as good practice within recent inspections and provides a forum for discussion on best practice related to safeguarding between partner agencies. This forum also reviews the development of the joint action plan that was created following the Joint Inspection for Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) in June 2023.	<b>Completed</b>
Implement our multi-agency exploitation strategy.	March 24	GM Locality Teams	Exploitation panel in place consisting of 15 key agencies meetings monthly hearing 10-15 cases at panel each month. The regional approach is currently being agreed, and a pan Wales exploitation exchange and best practice forum is being developed to support the work around exploitation.  Carry the regional and pan Wales implementation forward to year 2.	<b>Completed</b>
Provide representation and commitment to the Corporate Parenting Board	March 24	GM Case Man & Transition/ Corporate Parenting Officer	There is representation on the board and sub-groups by Directorate officers.	<b>Completed</b>
Agree Corporate Parenting Strategy action plan that shares ownership of aims, objectives, performance indicators and intended outcomes	March 24	GM Case Man & Transition/ Corporate Parenting Officer	Work is underway with partners to ensure shard ownership of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.	<b>Completed</b>

THEME 7: Better intelligence and information systems				
OBJECTIVES:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the information that operational staff and managers are using is of the highest possible quality.</li> <li>• Ensure that information can be shared appropriately more often and more usefully with partners</li> </ul>				
YEAR 1: 2023-24				
ACTION	TIMESCALE	RESPONSIBLE	PROGRESS	RAYG
Work with partners regionally and nationally to ensure that children’s social care teams have an effective case management IT system which enables integrated working and supports strength-based practice and the safeguarding and protection of children.	March 24	Director/HoS	<p>GOSS system in MASH went live 10.10.23. The system is reported to be dependable and easy to navigate and use. The relevant partners are now live with the new system and the Teams channel has been set up to mirror that in RCT/MT. This will improve and streamline information sharing. Implementation of Teams channel is due in the next weeks.</p> <p>Work has commenced to identify a replacement social Care System as WCCIS is coming to the end of its life, a project group to oversee this development and implementation will be put in place as part of the Programme Planning. This work is ongoing</p>	<b>Completed</b>
Enhance the use of business intelligence within children’s social care teams, through live performance dashboards which support safe and effective practice and management oversight and decision making.	March 24	GM Perf and Business	Dashboards have been established broken down to team level to provide oversight and monitoring of services, these are reviewed to ensure they meet the needs of the service	<b>Completed</b>

Appendix 1

Reference	Metric Description	2022/23 Actual	Qtr 1 2023/24	Qtr 2 2023/24	Qtr 3 2023/24	2023/24 Actual
	Improved satisfaction with information systems and infrastructure shown in staff surveys.	Metric being developed				
	Improved confidence of senior officers in the data, dashboards and reports from information systems as shown in annual evaluation and review	Metric being developed				

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# Agenda Item 6

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>8 MAY 2024</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>CARE INSPECTORATE WALES (CIW) INSPECTION OF FOSTER WALES BRIDGEND</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES &amp; WELLBEING</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>LAURA KINSEY HEAD OF CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<p><b>Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) are the independent regulators of social care and childcare services in Wales and inspect care service providers against the requirements of relevant legislation including the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (RISCA) and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.</b></p> <p><b>CIW are required to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Carry out functions on behalf of Welsh Ministers to provide assurance on the quality and safety of services</b></li> <li>• <b>Decide who can provide services</b></li> <li>• <b>Inspect and drive improvement of regulated services and local authority social services</b></li> <li>• <b>Undertake national reviews of social care services</b></li> <li>• <b>Take action to ensure services meet legislative and regulatory requirements</b></li> </ul> <p><b>This report provides Cabinet with information on the regulatory activity undertaken by CIW within Foster Wales Bridgend in November 2023.</b></p> <p><b>The inspections report against core themes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Well-being</b></li> <li>• <b>Care and Support</b></li> <li>• <b>Leadership and Management</b></li> <li>• <b>Environment</b></li> </ul>

	<p><b>A summary of the inspection is contained in this report and includes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Key findings of how we have performed against standards in our residential and domiciliary regulated services.</b></li> <li>• <b>Activity undertaken to meet regulatory standards.</b></li> <li>• <b>Actions to address areas of improvement</b></li> </ul>
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## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report is being presented as an information report to Cabinet to update on the outcome of the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspection of Foster Wales Bridgend November 2023. The report will be accompanied by a presentation on the work of Foster Wales Bridgend to address the sufficiency issues in foster care capacity in the county borough.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The inspection was conducted in line with the CIW Inspection framework for local authority fostering services, to evaluate the services' adherence to legislative and regulatory requirements, principally The Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018. The inspections are undertaken in consideration of four core themes:

- The wellbeing of individuals receiving care and support
- The quality of care and support provided to individuals.
- The leadership and management of the service
- Environment

The reports are presented with a short summary, followed by findings under these core themes.

- 2.2 Foster Wales Bridgend comprises a General Fostering and Placement Team and Kinship and Permanence Team. The General Fostering and Placement Team considers the needs of children referred to the service and finds suitable care provisions, either in-house or externally. General foster carers are assessed and approved to look after children, providing respite, short and long-term care. The service has one parent and baby carer and one family link carer. The Kinship and Permanence team assess and approves connected carers, who are usually friends or family members of children. At the time of inspection, there were approximately 77 approved general foster carers caring for 103 children and 71 approved connected persons carers, caring for 111 children.
- 2.3 During the inspection the inspectors review a range of information including policies, statements of purpose, written guides, complaints information, incident reports, supervision data, training data, safeguarding referrals and quality assurance reports. The inspector may ask for this information to be provided electronically and uploaded onto the secure portal CIW Online.



- 2.4 All reports are initially received prior to publication from CIW along with an Inspection Response Form, which can be used to comment on the factual accuracy or the fairness and proportionality of findings within the reports.
- 2.5 There is a requirement under the Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018 to have a Registered Manager for the service, which at the point of inspection was the Interim Principal Officer for Placement and Provider Services, however each Team has a Team Manager. The Registered Manager has responsibilities relating to the oversight of the adequacy of resources, making reports to the local authority provider, ensuring that there are systems in place to record complaints and ensuring that policies and procedures are kept up to date.

**3. Current situation / proposal**

- 3.1 The report (at **Appendix 1**) identified several key strengths within the service and areas of improvement, which are being addressed via an action plan within the service. It is noted within the report that the service had recognised areas of development for the service in advance of the inspection and taken steps toward achieving these.
- 3.2 The report acknowledged the current context in which the service is operating, commenting that, *'the number of children who are referred to the service, outnumbers foster carers available. Just over half of care experienced children within the Local Authority are provided care and support by the service. Demand on the service is high and with a limited number of vacancies, a number of general carers have been made subject to 'exemptions', providing care to higher numbers of children than they are approved for. Additional resources are provided to try to support these arrangements.'*

As can be seen in the table below, we have experienced a net loss of 9 fostering households and 25 foster placements. The greatest losses have arisen from an ageing foster carer population with most carers retiring or experiencing age related health concerns, followed by family commitments. There are times that placement numbers reduce or carers cease fostering for positive reasons, such as obtaining Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) for children in their care or by providing When I'm Ready placements for children.

<b>General Foster Carer Households and Placements</b>		
	<b>H.HOLDS</b>	<b>P'MENTS</b>
<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2023</b>	84	181
<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2024</b>	74	153
<b>Totals</b>	<b>- 10</b>	<b>- 28</b>

3.3

The local authority, including corporate parenting partners, need to promote and support the recruitment and retention of

foster carers to recruit enough foster carers to cover the losses experienced and maintain sufficient numbers of suitably skilled carers to meet the diverse needs of our care-experienced children. The local authority have put in place a Fostering Friendly policy recognising that more people will need to work alongside fostering following cost of living challenges and bedroom tax. Further detail about this will be provided in the presentation to accompany this report.

- 3.4 The local authority has enhanced the support available to foster carers utilising grant funding to upskill the fostering team via training, embedding a behaviour analyst

within the service and will shortly be advertising additional roles within the service. These include additional Placement Support Workers who provide tailored support to foster carers and the creation of an Intensive Placement Support Team who will provide wrap around support (including out of hours) to families and carers supporting children who may otherwise require Residential Placements.

### 3.5 Identified Strengths

The service provides an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language. It anticipates, identifies, and meets the Welsh language and cultural needs of people who use, or may use, the service.

**Wellbeing** – Children receive information about the care, support and opportunities available to them, including how their voices are heard and how to raise a complaint. Children's views and voices are heard in several ways, and they are supported to access advocacy. The Bridgend Youth Voice Forum has provided opportunities for children to be involved in the development of the service and the recruitment and selection processes of staff. Children are supported to be healthy and active with several events for foster families taking place over the year. The Multi Agency Permanency Support Service (MAPSS) assesses the needs of children and provides a range of interventions for children and their carers to support processing of past experiences. Children are supported to attend education and reach their potential. Children are supported to have healthy, safe relationships with people important to them and several children have been able to remain living with their carers under 'When I'm Ready' arrangements.

**Care and Support** – Standards of care and support foster carers must provide are set out clearly within the statement of purpose, policies, and procedures for the service. The suitability of placements with connected persons are considered fully within their assessments which are completed quickly to avoid delay for children. The General fostering team undertakes matching of children's needs with foster carers and support colleagues to ensure information is suitably detailed to enable the best possible matches. The placement planning meeting that takes place within the matching process considers children's history and needs and how these will be met in placements and ensures transitions are planned. Foster carers receive regular supervision that considers children's integration into family life and how they are supported to achieve wellbeing. Most foster carers advised the inspectors that they have positive relationships with their social workers, some have been impacted by changes in workers in the team. Unannounced visits are undertaken in compliance and the placement stability process in place is having a positive impact.

**Environment** – The office premises (Civic Offices) is suitable and fit for purpose as the fostering service has its own designated area which allows enough distance from others to maintain confidentiality and meeting room access. The building is secure, and records are securely stored. Foster Carers' homes are assessed and monitored routinely via announced and unannounced visits with action taken to address issues as soon as they arise. Appropriate checks are undertaken as part of foster carers' annual reviews and children are able to have a say in how their bedrooms are decorated to personalise them. The local authority has also supported families to make adaptations to their homes to meet the needs of children.

**Leadership and Management** – The service has identified areas for development and updated policies and procedures prior to inspection to address these shortfalls. Safe recruitment checks are carried out with all staff and the Signs of Safety model is being embedded within the service. There are arrangements in place for oversight and quality assurance of the service with Quality of Care and quarterly reports identifying patterns and considering actions to improve outcomes for children. Feedback from carers about their support is mixed with almost half reporting they have good levels of support and most feel communication has improved since permanent team managers have been in post. The carers value use of social media to communicate. The liaison carer role is highly valued and supports recruitment and out of hours support. Carers value the events held over the year that support their wellbeing and retention. Assessments and annual reviews are detailed and scrutinised by the Foster Panel to ensure they are thorough. Foster carers receive training and advice to support delivered in a variety of ways and support groups offer additional peer support.

### 3.6 Areas of Improvement and Priority Actions Notices

The Inspection noted a number of areas of improvement which will be considered when a further inspection is undertaken in a year's time (this is anticipated to be November 2024 as the inspection visits took place during November 2023).

Regulation	Summary
3	The Local Authority service provider must have clear arrangements for the oversight and governance of the service to establish, develop and embed a culture which ensures that the best possible outcomes are achieved for children using the service and to meet the requirements of the Regulations.
10 (4)	The Local Authority provider must put arrangements in place to ensure that the service is provided in accordance with its policies and procedures.
13	The Local Authority provider must ensure that foster parents give care and support to a child placed with them in a way which maintains, protects and promotes the safety and well-being of the child.
15	The Local Authority provider must have effective arrangements in place to monitor and review the obligations placed upon foster carers as set out in the foster care agreement.
19	The local authority provider must put arrangements in place to ensure that children placed by it are safe and are protected from abuse, neglect and improper treatment.
20 (3)	The local authority provider must ensure that its safeguarding policies and procedures are operated effectively.
41 (1)	The Local Authority provider must ensure foster carers receive the support, training, and information necessary to enable them to provide care and support to a child they foster.
41 (3)	The local authority provider must ensure prospective foster parents receive such training, information and advice as is considered necessary.

3.7 Specific areas of improvement identified within the report and the actions taken to address these can be found in **Appendix 2**. The areas of improvement broadly cover the following 4 areas:

- **Matching**

It was noted that too many carers are being asked to look after children with complex issues, often in emergency situations, and consequently going over numbers (through the exemption process). This can result in children not being well matched and carers' resilience being impacted upon.

The service had developed a matching process in recognition of these needs prior to inspection to evidence decision making and management oversight. At the point of the inspection the process had not been embedded fully into the service, therefore whilst the process was felt to be of good quality, there was no evidence to support its consistent use within the recording system. A long-term placement matching process needs to be developed in partnership with children's social work teams and will be developed over the next quarter.

- **Safer caring**

There need to be more robust safe care arrangements that consider all members of the household and are explicit regarding how placements are supported.

The service approach to safe care has been to complete a new safe care agreement for each individual child. Since the inspection the process to accompany the updated arrangements has been developed in consultation with staff, system integration compliance and updated safer care agreements are now in place that consider the needs of the household.

- **Responding to allegations /safeguarding**

It was identified that foster carers who have experienced an allegation have an updated annual review and return to foster panel in a timely manner. It was highlighted that there was a need for consistency in approach, records of decision making and safeguards on file.

An audit has been undertaken by the Quality Assurance Officer for the local authority with recommendations as to how to improve practice. Workshops will be scheduled across teams to ensure the processes regarding allegations against foster carers is fully understood. Within the service mandatory training has taken place in February and a significant events form developed to support the recording of safeguarding issues, actions taken and decision making. Team Managers are live to the requirements for foster carers to return to Foster Panel following an allegation and discussions have taken place with individual staff members about compliance.

- **Policies and Procedures**

Whilst the inspectors can see that policies and procedures for the service are in place their use was not evident in recordings owing to their recent implementation. It was noted that the recording systems used needed development to enable managers to have sufficient oversight to enable compliance.

A dedicated team meeting has taken place to cover policies and procedures for the service and the local authority Policy Officer attended to ensure all staff members are clear how to use the intranet to access these documents. A separate action plan has been developed with business support and ICT partners to align the system and

develop dashboards for Team Managers to support their oversight and enable them to monitor compliance.

- 3.8 The areas for improvement are being addressed and achievement of the actions is monitored through regular Silver Management and Performance Meetings undertaken with the Head of Children's Services and Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing.

#### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

- 4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

- 4.2 Despite no equality impact assessment being conducted the information contained in the report positively describes the use of the Active Offer of the Welsh Language.

#### **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

- 5.1 The implementation of the duties and responsibilities under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA), in turn, supports the promotion of two of the seven goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 within the County Borough of Bridgend. By promoting an environment that maximises people's physical and mental well-being and by supporting children, young people, adults and their carers and families to fulfil their potential no matter what their circumstances, the wellbeing goals of a healthier and more equal Bridgend and Wales are supported.

- 5.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Authority should work to deliver wellbeing outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report:

- Long Term – Social Services is demand led and the SSWBA focusses on sustainable prevention and wellbeing outcomes for the future. There is a requirement to meet the needs of people in the longer term and, because of rising demographics and increasing complexity, the remodeling and transformation of services continues to be a priority.
- Prevention – the report is about the new approaches adopted by the Directorate in line with the SSWBA, for example, the provision of support services to promote placement stability for children. This will ensure that need is anticipated and resources can be more effectively directed to better manage demand.

- Integration – the implementation of the SSWBA requires local authorities to work with partners, particularly the NHS and the Police, to ensure care and support for people and support for carers is provided.
- Collaboration – The support of Corporate Parenting partners is key when delivering support to care experienced children population. Strategic partnerships are required to enable timely access to support services as well as the promotion of recruitment and retention of sufficient foster carers to meet the needs of our children.
- Involvement – the key stakeholders are the people who use social care. There is evidence within the report of the service having good systems in place to ensure that care experienced children’s voices are heard, recorded, and sought out to aid the development of the service.

## **6. Climate Change Implications**

6.1 There are no climate change implications associated with this report.

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1 It is a regulatory requirement that BCBC’s Safeguarding Policy meets Part 8 of The Regulated Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2017 which is to ensure service providers have in place the mechanisms to safeguard vulnerable individuals to whom they provide care and support. This includes arrangements that:

- Support vulnerable individuals using the service
- Support and underpin staff knowledge, understanding and skill in identifying risks and action to take where abuse, neglect or improper treatment is suspected or identified; and
- Ensure the service provider works collaboratively with partners to prevent and take action where abuse, neglect or improper treatment is suspected or identified

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **9. Recommendation**

9.1 Cabinet Corporate Parenting Committee is recommended to note the outcome of the CIW Inspection of Foster Wales Bridgend and the work that is progressing which will be presented to Committee to improve sufficiency of foster carers in the county borough.

## **Background documents**

None

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## Inspection Report on

**Foster Wales Bridgend  
Level 2 the Civic Offices  
Angel Street  
Bridgend  
CF31 4WB**

## **Date Inspection Completed**

13/11/2023

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## About Bridgend County Borough Council Family Placement Team

Type of care provided	Local Authority Fostering Service
Registered Provider	Bridgend County Borough Council Adults and Children's Services
Language of the service	English
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	04/02/2016
Does this service promote Welsh language and culture?	The service provides an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language. It anticipates, identifies, and meets the Welsh language and cultural needs of people who use, or may use, the service.

### Summary

Foster Wales Bridgend comprises of a General Fostering and Placement Team, and Kinship and Permanence Team. An Interim Principal Officer (IPO) is the registered manager of the service, and each team has a team manager. The General Fostering and Placement Team, considers the needs of children, referred to the service and finds suitable placements, either in-house or externally. General foster carers are assessed and approved to look after children, providing respite, short and long-term care. The service has one parent and baby carer and one family link carer. The Kinship and Permanence team, assess and approve connected carers, and complete special guardianship order applications to promote children remaining with family or friends. At the time of inspection, there were approximately 77 approved general foster carers caring for 103 children and 71 approved connected persons carers, caring for 111 children.

Prior to inspection, the Local Authority provider had identified a number of areas of the service which require further development. This includes the recruitment and retention of a skilled workforce, and foster carers to meet children's needs. Shortfalls have been identified in standards of care and support, which includes the process for matching children with foster carers, safeguarding, policies and procedures and the requirements in relation to the provision of the service. The Local Authority provider has provided assurances action will be taken to address these shortfalls and improve outcomes for children.

## Well-being

Children receive information about the care, support and opportunities available to them. A guide to the fostering service provides important information about their rights and entitlements, how their voices will be heard and how to raise a complaint. Further guides are being developed to meet the needs of children of different ages and needs.

Children have a variety of opportunities to express their views about the care they receive. Children are consulted as part of their child looked after reviews, and they are supported to attend where possible. Foster carers are strong advocates for children. Children's views are gathered as part of their foster carers annual review of fostering; however, children's views are not sought when relationships with foster carers have broken down and they have experienced disruption. Children are made aware of their rights to independent advocacy.

The Bridgend Youth Voice Forum, run by an independent charity, provides opportunities for children and care leavers aged 11-21 to be consulted and have a say in the development of the service. Members of the forum have been invited to be part of recruitment and selection processes for staff. The forum has been part of reviewing guidance for supporting children in managing their money. Members have provided positive feedback to the service regarding their involvement. This includes feeling their *'voice can make a difference'*.

Children are supported to be healthy and active. A number of events are held for children and their foster families during the year. This includes Christmas and Halloween parties; and a summer fete. Each foster home is provided a leisure card, which enables all household members to access a variety of free leisure activities including local gyms. Children are registered with health services and attend routine and specialist health appointments. Additional services are available to children with more complex emotional health needs. This includes support services, who assess children's needs and provide a range of interventions for children and their foster carers, to support them process past experiences. The Local Authority provider is developing further support services to meet the needs of care experienced children.

Children are supported to attend education and reach their potential. Their foster carers value the importance of education, promote attendance and advocate on their behalf during education meetings. Additional support is provided by an educational engagement co-ordinator, who liaises with all professionals involved in children's lives, to ensure their educational needs are met. The exact number of children, supported by the service who are not accessing statutory education is not known. We were told by foster carers and staff, some children are not accessing statutory education, which impacts children's outcomes and is placing additional pressure on the fostering household.

Children are supported to have healthy, safe relationships with their families and people who are important to them. A number of children are remaining with their foster families

after they reach adulthood and are being supported to achieve positive outcomes via 'when I'm ready' arrangements.

Foster carers understand their role, are trained in safeguarding, and provide support to reduce risks to children's well-being. However, safeguarding procedures are not consistently followed. Where allegations have been made against foster carers, information sharing between teams, consideration of risks and decision making is not robust. Children cannot be assured that all risks have been considered and mitigated when they are matched with foster carers. Some children have experienced high levels of disruption in their care, with a number of moves, which further impacts their stability and outcomes.

## Care and Support

The service does not have sufficient numbers of foster carers to meet the needs of children referred to the service. Just over half of care experienced children within the Local Authority, are provided care and support by the service. Demand on the service is high and many foster carers are often asked to care for more children than they are approved for. Additional resources are provided to try to support these arrangements. However, these are routinely used with carers who look after children with complex needs, without robust consideration of the impact and risks involved.

The service clearly sets out the standards of care and support foster carers must provide to children within its statement of purpose, policies, and procedures. Most children who are cared for by connected persons, have an established relationship and their carers who know them well. The suitability of these arrangements are fully considered as part of connected persons assessment. The service ensures these assessments are carried out quickly to avoid delay for children. When children require a foster home with general foster carers, the team considers referrals to the service and the matching of children's care and support needs with foster carers. The team is supporting colleagues who refer children to the service, to ensure paperwork is detailed, so the best possible matches can be made for children.

As part of the matching process key information is shared during a planning meeting. Consideration is given to how children's needs will be met, and transitions are planned, however, these meetings are not completed consistently. There are shortfalls in the service considering the needs of all household members and carers capacity, when matching children. Children who need long term care, are matched with carers, without a thorough assessment of their long-term needs, how these change over time, carers commitment and understanding of these needs. Some children have experienced many moves and breakdowns in relationships, contributing to further loss and trauma. Poor matching has been identified during internal quality assurance checks and the matching policy has been recently updated to ensure action is taken to address this.

Children are not effectively safeguarded. Risk assessments and decision making when foster carers are subject to safeguarding concerns are not robust. Foster care agreements and safer caring agreements are in place, but these are not completed thoroughly, considering children's individual needs and those of other household members. They do not provide clear guidance to foster carers on actions they should take to safeguard children and manage risks. We were told the service is implementing a more robust safer care process. When foster carers have been subject to safeguarding concerns, delays have occurred in completing annual reviews and presenting these to foster panel, which would support effective oversight and scrutiny of a foster carer's approval. Action is needed to improve safeguarding arrangements, to keep children safe.

Foster carers are supported through regular supervision, where the care and support needs of children are considered. Discussions are held on how carers have welcomed children and supported them to settle as part of the fostering family, and how they are being supported to achieve positive well-being. The service is reviewing how they can improve monitoring of children's personal outcomes. Most carers told us they have positive relationships with their supervising social worker. Some foster carers have been impacted by a number of changes within the team resulting in inconsistent support at times.

Supervising social workers spend time with children, observe and seek their views on the care they receive. Unannounced visits are completed at least annually, which provide further opportunities to observe family life and how children's needs are met. Children have provided positive feedback to the service regarding the care they receive. Following an internal quality assurance review, recent improvements have been made to support provided to foster carers, when relationships are at risk of breaking down. Meetings are planned with foster carers and other professionals regularly and consider any additional support which can be provided. These meetings are having a positive impact on improving relationships and promoting stability for children. The service is developing their support services for children. We were told a behaviour analyst will be based at the service within the next few months, who will support the teams understanding of children's behaviour, their needs and how best to respond.

Foster carers are committed to children they care for and want what is best for them. A Foster Carers Charter has recently been implemented within the service, which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the service and foster carers to achieve positive outcomes for children. The emphasis is on foster carers being seen as professionals, working in partnership, information sharing, clarity around decision making and support available to carers to meet the needs of children. Feedback from foster carers has been mixed regarding its implementation. Some report they feel well supported by the service to meet the needs of children, others say they feel they are not seen as professionals, report multiple changes in children's social workers, impacting the relationships formed and information sharing and decision-making needing to be improved.

## Environment

The office premises is large and open plan, suitable and fit for purpose. The fostering service has its own designated area. There is enough distance between the service and other teams to maintain confidentiality. There are a number of meeting rooms available which provide privacy for the supervision of staff. Records are stored securely, including password protected electronic records, in line with legislation. Access to the office is secure via keycards. Access to members of the public is restricted to the main reception area, where a number of meeting rooms are available. Events which are arranged by the service, including coffee mornings and training are held in venues across the borough.

Foster carers' homes are assessed when they are recruited to determine their suitability in meeting children's needs. Supervising social workers visit fostering homes during announced and unannounced visits, which provide opportunity to monitor the environment. Children's bedrooms are routinely seen, as part of visits. Action is taken to address any concerns with foster carers as soon as these arise. Standards of health and safety in foster carers' homes are considered as part of the formal annual review process, together with pet assessments which consider risks. Children have a say in how they want their bedrooms to be decorated and personalise these, to their taste. The suitability of the environment children live in, is further monitored during reviews of their care and support plan. The Local Authority has supported children's families to make suitable adaptations to their homes, to support children remaining with their families and ensuring the environment meets their needs.



## Leadership and Management

The Local Authority provider has identified areas which require improvement, and we were told, action is being taken to address shortfalls. A number of policies and procedures have been updated prior to inspection, to reflect the changes needed. The service is not currently operating in line with these policies and procedures which is impacting children's outcomes. The current recording systems do not support effective oversight and smooth operation of the service. Tracking of key information is being completed manually, which is time consuming. Some key information, including the DBS checks for foster carers support networks are not monitored effectively. The service is looking at ways to better utilise the database system to provide this information and has increased the number of business support staff, to provide an additional resource. Not all records were accessible to CIW during the inspection.

The service has experienced a high turnover of staff in all areas, including management. The senior management position is currently vacant. This has impacted consistency of support provided and the development of the service. The Kindship and Permanence Team is mostly staffed by agency supervising social workers. Team managers are spending time inducting new staff and have been unable to delegate to senior staff within the team. Foster carers report changes in staff has been a concern. The Local Authority provider is aware of these issues and a recruitment strategy has been developed to support improvements in recruitment and retention. The service has ensured there are appropriate numbers of staff who are suitably fit and have taken action by terminating contracts, if concerns arise. Safe recruitment checks are carried out on all staff; however, evidence of updated DBS checks needs strengthening. Staff told us they feel supported in their role through regular supervision and training. The Local Authority is currently implementing a new model of practice called 'signs of safety', and staff are receiving training. We found examples of 'signs of safety' being used within records. The service has plans to imbed this model into practice via workshops and team reflections.

There are arrangements in place for the oversight of the service and quality assurance processes, which review the standards of care and compliance with regulations. The Interim Principal Officer (IPO) has completed a quality-of-care review which identifies strengths and areas for development. Their quarterly reports identify patterns and consider actions to be taken by the service to improve outcomes for children. Staff review their carers and meet weekly to discuss the current needs of those who require additional support. The service introduced a quality assurance and learning framework in March 2023, which details how audits should be completed. This has not been implemented consistently across the whole team, due to competing demands within the service.

Feedback from carers regarding the support they receive is mixed. Almost half report feeling they receive good levels of support while almost half feel, improvements are needed. Most carers told us they feel communication from the service has improved in the past year, since permanent team managers have been in post. The introduction of social media to communicate with carers is valued. Carers are invited to consultation events twice

a year and their views are captured in their annual reviews. Most carers told us they have positive relationships with their supervising social workers, who are very supportive. However, some report they are not confident if they raise concerns, that these are taken seriously. The service has five liaison carers who are involved in recruitment, answering out of hours queries and provide peer support. They receive support monthly, by the general team manager. Foster carers and staff told us the liaison carers are a huge asset to the service. The service is considering how it can further support carers out of hours. Many foster carers told us staff are already providing this and are dedicated to their roles.

The service has recently appointed a recruitment and retention officer, whose role is to increase and support the recruitment of foster carers. Family link carers provide short breaks for children with disabilities. This area of the service has reduced in numbers considerably. Foster carers told us they value the events which are held during the year for children and their families. Many of these are arranged with the support of foster carers. Events which celebrate foster carers achievements also support their well-being and retention. The Local Authority is looking at ways it can be creative and continue to host these events.

Not all prospective foster carers have received the information and training they require prior to their assessment. We were told the service will take action to address this. Assessments of prospective foster carers are detailed and are presented to foster panel to determine whether they should be approved. Foster panels, scrutinise the content of assessments and ensure these are thorough, detailed and all checks are complete. The service's process for completing annual reviews, includes presenting these back to panel every three years or sooner if concerns arise. This has not always happened within reasonable timescales. Annual reviews are detailed and consider whether carers are competent in meeting children's needs. They consider the views of children, household members and key professionals including social workers and school. When relationships between children and their foster carers break down, a review of the reasons for this does not always include the views of children and foster carers, which would help the service reflect and identify learning.

Approved foster carers, receive training and advice to support them in their role. A mixture of online, face to face and e-learning is offered which cover a range of topics. Most carers told us they prefer the opportunities for face-to-face training. Some foster carers report training does not meet their needs fully as they care for children with more complex needs. Monthly coffee mornings are held, which offer opportunities for peer support and guest speakers. The service is developing a group for foster carers in the evening, to ensure all have opportunities to attend. Foster carers receive regular supervision, where their well-being and needs of children are considered. The information foster carers are provided at the time children are matched, including risks and how they can safeguard, needs improvement.

### Summary of Non-Compliance

Status	What each means
<b>New</b>	This non-compliance was identified at this inspection.
<b>Reviewed</b>	Compliance was reviewed at this inspection and was not achieved. The target date for compliance is in the future and will be tested at next inspection.
<b>Not Achieved</b>	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was not achieved.
<b>Achieved</b>	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was achieved.

We expect those responsible in the local authority to take immediate steps to address and rectify any areas identified for improvement. These will be followed up at the next inspection.

### Area(s) for Improvement

Regulation	Summary	Status
3	The Local Authority service provider must have clear arrangements for the oversight and governance of the service in order to establish, develop and embed a culture which ensures that the best possible outcomes are achieved for children using the service and to meet the requirements of the regulations.	New
10 (4)	The Local Authority service provider must put arrangements in place to ensure that the service is provided in accordance with its policies and procedures.	New
13	The Local Authority service provider must ensure foster carers give care and support to a child placed with them in a way which maintains, protects and promotes the safety and well-being of the child.	New
15	The Local Authority service provider must have effective arrangements in place to monitor and	New

	review the obligations placed upon foster carers as set out in the foster care agreement.	
19	The Local Authority service provider must put arrangements in place to ensure that children placed by it are safe and are protected from abuse, neglect and improper treatment.	New
20 (3)	The Local Authority service provider must ensure that its safeguarding policies and procedures are operated effectively.	New
41 (1)	The Local Authority service provider must ensure foster carers receive the support, training, and information necessary to enable them to provide care and support to a child they foster.	New
41 (3)	The Local Authority service provider must ensure prospective foster parents receive such training, information and advice as is considered necessary.	New

### **Was this report helpful?**

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**Date Published** 11/01/2024

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## Appendix 2 – Improvements and Actions

Area of Improvement	Action taken
Children's views to be actively sought following placement endings.	The End of Placement Process and accompanying forms have been amended so it is mandatory to obtain children's views.
Some children are not accessing statutory education, impacting on outcomes, and increasing pressure on foster carers.	Processes are now in place to gather information regarding children who are not receiving full time education who are receiving Placement Support intervention to enable this to be discussed with partners in Education.
Safeguarding procedures are not consistently followed. Information sharing between teams, consideration of risks and decision making is not robust.	Safeguarding procedures have been reviewed via the Senior Management Team with a plan for workshops to be held across the Teams. Mandatory training has taken place with the fostering team in February 2024 and a Significant Events form developed on the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) for Supervising Social Workers to record issues that occur and actions taken in response. The information will be reviewed within quarterly reports by the Management Team within the service to consider how to improve systems and support for foster carers and children.
Foster care agreements and safer caring agreements are in place, but these are not completed thoroughly.	The Safer Care process and Agreement form have been reviewed and updated to ensure they are thorough, and training scheduled for the team in May 2024. The changes are being discussed with foster carers at a consultation event taking place in April 2024.
There are shortfalls in the service considering the needs of all household members and carers capacity (matching)	An updated matching process is being embedded within the service with matching decisions evidenced via form on WCCIS that takes account of all household members, monthly reports are being completed to monitor compliance with the process.
When foster carers have been subject to safeguarding concerns, delays have occurred in completing annual reviews and presenting these to foster panel.	Timescales have been addressed with Team Managers and individual staff members performance addressed.
Some children have experienced high numbers of moves, which impacts their stability and outcomes.	Placement Support processes are in place and noted to be a strength within the report however support for foster carers has been enhanced via training provided to Supervising Social Workers, the Behaviour Analyst

Area of Improvement	Action taken
	commencing within the Team and the local authority developing processes to better enable early identification and support where there are emerging issues alongside the expansion of Placement Support Workers and a dedicated Intensive Placement Support Team.
Demand on the service is high and many foster carers are often asked to care for more children than they are approved for. Additional resources are provided to try to support these arrangements. However, these are routinely used with carers who look after children with complex needs, without robust consideration of the impact and risks involved.	<p>This has been addressed via an updated matching process, the updated Safe Care process and scheduled training for Safe Care and Risk assessment and Matching training scheduled for the team in May and June.</p> <p>A Placement Referral Officer is now in place within the service via Foster Wales Grant Funding. The role serves as a liaison between children's Teams, Fostering and Placements. The Officer supports with placement referrals, ensuring they are the best quality to enable searches to be undertaken, approaches potential carers to care for children and facilitates the placement planning and matching processes.</p>
As part of the matching process key information is shared during planning meetings, however, these meetings are not completed consistently.	Placement planning meetings are now a form on WCCIS compliance is monitored via monthly reports.
Children who need long term care are matched with carers without a thorough assessment of their long-term needs, how these change over time, carers commitment and understanding of these needs.	A long-term matching process needs to be developed in partnership with children's social work teams, this has not yet been completed.
The service is reviewing how they can improve monitoring of children's personal outcomes.	Discussions are taking place with the performance team regarding ability to run reports on WCCIS regarding outcomes for children in BCBC fostering placements.
Feedback from foster carers has been mixed regarding the foster carer charter implementation, information sharing and decision-making needing to be improved.	The Charter needs to be embedded across the local authority. There is a plan in place for the Foster Wales Recruitment Officer together with a Liaison Foster Carer to attend Team Meetings with children's teams to discuss the Charter. The Regional Foster Wales Development Manager is working together with us to develop a plan to further embed this into the local authority and will attend the Extended Team Managers Meeting taking place on 22 <sup>nd</sup> April.



Area of Improvement	Action taken
Several policies and procedures have been updated prior to inspection, to reflect the changes needed. The service is not currently operating in line with these policies and procedures which is impacting children's outcomes	Our Policy Officer has attended the Fostering Team Meeting to ensure the team are aware of the Social Services and Wellbeing (SSWB) page on the Intranet and how to access policies and procedures. A dedicated team meeting took place on 6 <sup>th</sup> March to go through policy and procedure and give team members opportunity to raise any queries or questions.
The current recording systems do not support effective oversight and smooth operation of the service. Some key information, including the DBS checks for foster carers support networks are not monitored effectively.	Regular meetings are in place to develop WCCIS to enable oversight via the development of dashboards to monitor performance. Business support arrangements are in place to ensure DBS checks for foster carers and their household members are completed. There is a separate action plan in place to support this ongoing piece of work.
The service has experienced a high turnover of staff in all areas.	Agency numbers have significantly reduced within the fostering service with 1 vacant post in Kinship and Permanence and 1 vacant post in the General Fostering Service. There have been some challenges in relation to staff sickness.
Evidence of updated DBS checks for staff needs strengthening.	DBS check compliance is recorded on the updated Supervision proforma's for staff members.
Quality assurance and learning framework has not been implemented consistently.	Service demands/ sickness and vacancies have impacted on managers' completion of case file audits. A meeting is taking place with the local authority Quality Assurance Officer on 19 <sup>th</sup> April to discuss how we better implement the framework within the service.
Not all prospective foster carers have received the information and training they require prior to their assessment	1 General carer was highlighted during inspection which was an anomaly. In other cases, these are kinship carers subject to court timescales as part of their assessments who often have children in their care impacting their ability to undertake the training fully as part of the assessment.
Some foster carers report training does not meet their needs fully as they care for children with more complex needs.	Regular meetings with training take place regarding foster carer's needs and a member of the department is attending a foster carer consultation event this month to gather carers views. Foster carer compliance with training requirements is challenging across local authorities. We have reviewed processes to support, such as the Annual Review process and form to monitor foster carer agreement compliance and ensure that foster carers are

<b>Area of Improvement</b>	<b>Action taken</b>
	evidencing engagement in learning and development in accordance with requirements.
Additional guides for children reflecting different ages and needs to be developed.	Children's guides will be updated following the creation of the National Fostering Handbook expected September 2024; the handbook is being developed for all local authorities via Foster Wales.

# Agenda Item 7

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>8 MAY 2024</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE UPDATE ON CARE-EXPERIENCED CHILDREN</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>LINDSAY HARVEY</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>CHRISTA BONHAM-GRIFFITHS</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no impact on the policy framework or procedure rules.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<p><b>The report provides an update on Youth Justice Service provision for care-experienced children or those at risk of becoming care-experienced. The service is committed to responding to the needs and strengths of all children who come to the attention of the service. There is an increase in complexity of those children’s needs which has required the service to develop its interventions to optimise those provisions of risk management, care and support.</b></p> <p><b>Developments in service provision for all our children but specific to those with complex needs, include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>• individualised trauma support and planning;</b></li><li><b>• improved speech and language support;</b></li><li><b>• mental health and substance use support;</b></li><li><b>• resettlement and transition planning;</b></li><li><b>• exploitation planning, safeguarding support and planning; and</b></li><li><b>• referrals to external partners for specific support for children where necessary.</b></li></ul>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update the Committee on the Bridgend Youth Justice Service (BYJS) provision available for care-experienced children who enter the criminal justice system.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 BYJS is a statutory multi-agency partnership that has a legal duty to co-operate to secure appropriate local youth justice services. The service is funded from a variety

of sources including UK Government, Welsh Government, and the statutory partners (that is, Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC), South Wales Police, the Probation Service and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board).

- 2.2 Statutory duties to prevent offending are outlined in criminal justice and civil legislation, including the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Standards for Children in the Youth Justice System 2019. The principle aim of Youth Justice Services in England and Wales is to prevent offending and re-offending by children in line with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Local authorities in Wales also have statutory duties to provide preventative services contained in section 15 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Local authorities must provide services to:
- encourage children not to commit offences;
  - avoid the need for children to be placed in secure accommodation and enable children to live their lives as independently as possible; and
  - work with victims of crime in compliance with the Code of Practice for Victims to offer restorative services and referral to specialist support services where necessary. The aim of this intervention is to repair harm and ensure the needs of victims are met.
- 2.3 Currently, BYJS is currently working with 92 children (as at April 2024), 12 (13%) of them are children who are classified as looked after. Among these children, 9 (10%) have undergone a formulation process and trauma-responsive assessment, resulting in the development of a comprehensive plan that includes timelining and mapping of their progress. Of the three who have not received formulation to date, one case is still awaiting early years information from the original home authority, and the other two cases are awaiting BYJS trauma assessments.
- 2.4 The criminal disposal for the nine children who have undergone the formulation process and assessment are diversified. Two children are under a youth rehabilitation order, while another two are engaged in voluntary interventions. Additionally, three children are participating in prevention interventions, one is undergoing a youth restorative disposal, and one is enrolled in a section 250 of the sentence Code and is on a custodial through care programme.
- 2.5 Of the nine, three of the children fall within the 14 to 15 age bracket, five are aged between 16 and 17, and one is 18 years old. Among these nine children, there are eight males and one female, reflecting the general gender composition of service.
- 2.6 All BYJS cases receive an ASSET Plus assessment (the youth justice specific risk of offending and harm assessment tool), a child-centred plan, and their voice is integral to this process in ensuring that it is child first, offender second approach. Additionally, a risk and vulnerability planning meeting can be convened for those children who are high risk in the BYJS three domains of risk which include risk of offending, risk of harm to others and their own and safety and wellbeing.

### **3. Current situation/proposal**

- 3.1 BYJS has aligned its intervention strategies for care-experienced children with several key frameworks and legislation, including:

- the Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales (Welsh Government, 2019), emphasising a child-first approach and early trauma recognition;
- the All-Wales Protocol for reducing the care-experienced children and young people, focusing on safeguarding and promoting the well-being of vulnerable youth; and
- the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which mandate local services to prevent children from offending and promote their future welfare.

### 3.2 Initiatives to meet these requirements include:

- early trauma recognition (BYJS has bolstered its capacity to identify and address early signs of trauma in youth involved in the justice system, ensuring timely and appropriate support);
- Prevention and Diversion Panel: through collaborative efforts, BYJS diverts at-risk youths towards supportive interventions, focusing on prevention and positive development[
- child-first approach: central to BYJS's ethos is prioritising the needs and well-being of children, ensuring that interventions are tailored to meet their individual circumstances and support their best interests;
- consideration of first-time entrants: BYJS provides targeted support to children who are navigating the justice system for the first time, aiming to prevent further involvement in criminal activities and promoting positive pathways.
- safeguarding measures: robust safeguarding protocols are implemented by BYJS to ensure the safety and protection of care-experienced children within the justice system, prioritising their well-being and security;
- support in education, training, and employment: comprehensive support is provided to help care-experienced children access educational and vocational opportunities, empowering them to build brighter futures and achieve their full potential;
- speech and language support: recognising the importance of effective communication, BYJS offers specialised support to address speech and language barriers among care-experienced children, facilitating their integration and participation;
- mental health support: BYJS prioritises the mental health and wellbeing of care-experienced children, providing access to appropriate resources and interventions tailored to their unique needs, ensuring they receive the support they require for optimal wellbeing;
- substance use: the service offers one to one support through its Barod service, and the intervention worker will work on a one-to-one harm reduction model of practice with any child experiencing substance issues to assist them overcoming those difficulties and reducing the risk of harm through that use;
- BYJS implements a multi-agency constructive resettlement and transition approach for all care-experienced children, collaborating with relevant stakeholders to ensure smooth transitions and holistic support as they navigate through various life stages; and
- as an active participant in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board (CTMSB) Exploitation Steering Group and the CTMSB Safeguarding Board, BYJS plays a crucial role in ensuring the implementation of relevant multi-agency safeguarding measures to protect care-experienced children. Additionally, BYJS has conducted an extensive child sexual exploitation

mapping exercise aimed at identifying children who may be at risk of exploitation, further reinforcing their commitment to safeguarding vulnerable youth within the community.

#### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

#### **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

5.1 The well-being goals and principles prescribed for within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 connect directly to the approach to supporting children, young people and their families. The approach is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle and more specifically as follows:

Long term	Early Help services focus on meeting the needs of a wide range of service beneficiaries including children, young people, adults, and families.
Prevention	The focus of Early Help services is upon early identification of need and ensuring that there is appropriate provision to meet individual needs.
Integration	The approach to Early Help services addresses the need for a coherent delivery of economic, social, environmental, and cultural outcomes.
Collaboration	A fundamental principal of the approach to family support focuses on improving collaboration and creating a unified system.
Involvement	Ensuring that children, young people, adults, and families are at the heart of the system and that needs are discussed in a person-centered way.

#### **6. Climate change implications**

6.1 There are no climate change implications resulting from this project. However, we are committed to supporting the implementation of the local authority's 'Bridgend 2030 – Net Zero Carbon Strategy' and Welsh Government's carbon reduction commitments.

#### **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent implications**

- 7.1 BYJS has a commitment to establishing and maintaining effective ties with Children’s Social Care and this is evident through their engagement across various pivotal areas, including the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) services, long-term teams, and safeguarding leads. Involvement with these services ensures quality of strategy and planning meetings, thereby fostering improved coordination and integrated planning for children subject to interventions from BYJS and social care. Managers and staff are integrated into team meetings, safeguarding sub-groups, training and specific forums and panels to ensure consistency of service delivery for those children who are involved with both services.
- 7.2 In a clear demonstration of the proactive approach to holistic safety planning, BYJS staff have participated in the comprehensive ‘Signs of Safety’ model training alongside their counterparts in social care. This synchronicity in training equips both teams with a shared framework, vocabulary, and methodology, allowing for consistent and coherent safety planning. This endeavour reinforces the vital connection between BYJS and Children’s Social Care, creating a unified front in safeguarding and nurturing the well-being of the children they collectively serve. In line with this commitment to holistic safety planning, BYJS integrates trauma interventions that align closely with the principles of the ‘Signs of Safety’ model, ensuring a cohesive and unified approach to addressing the complex needs of young individuals.
- 7.3 BYJS’s continuing involvement with care-experienced children provides a wider depth of understanding of the unique challenges and needs faced by these individuals who have traversed the care system. The child’s experience in foster care, residential care, or other forms of out-of-home placement necessitates a tailored and empathetic approach of support. BYJS recognises the imperative of comprehending the intricate tapestry of these care journeys to deliver interventions that are sensitive, relevant, and efficacious. The trauma model enables robust multi-agency formulation and understanding of the child’s needs and strengths, how to avoid re-traumatisation and provide an improved response to those needs.
- 7.4 Aligned with this ethos, the Youth Justice Board Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 underscores BYJS’s alignment with a broader vision that seeks to shield children from undue criminalisation that stems from their vulnerabilities and the obstacles they encounter. This overarching plan provides a commitment to empowering children to overcome challenges and thrive in a nurturing environment.
- 7.5 BYJS’s multi-faceted engagement with Children’s Social Care, their emphasis on tailored care for those with unique experiences, and their alignment with progressive strategic goals exemplifies an organisation that not only recognises the importance of collaboration and understanding but actively champions the holistic well-being and development of all children under their care.

## **8. Financial implications**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. The ongoing development work is funded through the Youth Justice Grant, Welsh Government, Police and Crime Commissioner, Ministry of Justice Turnaround fund, Youth Endowment funding and Bridgend County Borough Council and partner agency funding.

**9. Recommendation(s)**

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting notes the contents of the report.

**Background documents**

None