

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.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh. Please let us know if your language choice is Welsh.



Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive's Directorate
Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513
Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Gwasanaethau Democrataidd

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

Dyddiad/Date: Dydd Iau, 1 Mai 2025

Annwyl Cyngorydd,

PWYLLGOR Y CABINET DROS FATERION RHINI CORFFORAETHOL

Cynhelir Cyfarfod Pwyllgor Y Cabinet Dros Faterion Rhini Corfforaethol trwy Siambr y Cyngor, Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr / o bell Trwy Timau Microsoft, CF31 4WB ar **Dydd Mercher, 7 Mai 2025 am 10:00.**

AGENDA

1 Ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb

Derbyn ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb gan Aelodau.

2 Datganiadau o fuddiant

Derbyn datganiadau o ddiddordeb personol a rhagfarnol (os o gwbl) gan Aelodau / Swyddogion yn unol â darpariaethau'r Cod Ymddygiad Aelodau a fabwysiadwyd gan y Cyngor o 1 Medi 2008.

3 Cymeradwyaeth Cofnodion

5 - 10

I dderbyn am gymeradwyaeth y Cofnodion cyfarfod y 10/01/2025

4 Adroddiad Trosolwg O'r Gwasanaethau Iechyd a Ddarperir i Ofalu Plant A Phobl Ifanc Profiadol

11 - 18

5 Maethu Cymru Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr Diweddariad

Ffon/Tel: 01656 643643

Facs/Fax: 01656 668126

Ebost/Email: talktous@bridgend.gov.uk

Negeseuon SMS/SMS Messaging: 07581 157014 [Twitter@bridgendCBC](https://twitter.com/bridgendCBC)

Gwefan/Website: www.bridgend.gov.uk

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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



19 - 30

6 Monitro Perfformiad a Chynnydd Gwasanaeth Mabwysiadu Rhanbarthol Bae'r Gorllewin
31 - 76

7 Ffocws Ar Ymgysylltu - Llais Y Plentyn
77 - 90

8 Diweddariad gan y Gwasanaeth Cyfiawnder Ieuenctid ar Blant sydd wedi Profiad o Ofal
91 - 98

9 Cefnogaeth Tîm Ymgysylltu Addysg ar gyfer Plant sydd wedi Profiad o Ofal
99 - 104

10 Materion Brys

I ystyried unrhyw eitemau o fusnes y, oherwydd amgylchiadau arbennig y cadeirydd o'r farn y dylid eu hystyried yn y cyfarfod fel mater o frys yn unol â Rhan 4 (pharagraff 4) o'r Rheolau Trefn y Cyngor yn y Cyfansoddiad.

Nodyn: Bydd hwn yn gyfarfod Hybrid a bydd Aelodau a Swyddogion mynychu trwy Siambr y Cyngor, Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr / o bell Trwy Timau Microsoft. Bydd y cyfarfod cael ei recordio i'w drosglwyddo drwy wefan y Cyngor. Os oes gennych unrhyw gwestiwn am hyn, cysylltwch â cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk neu ffoniwch 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513 / 643159

Yn ddiffuant

K Watson

Prif Swyddog, Gwasanaethau Cyfreithiol a Rheoleiddio, AD a Pholisi Corfforaethol

Dosbarthiad:

Cynghorwr:

F D Bletsoe

E L P Caparros

P Davies

M J Evans

N Farr

J Gebbie

D M Hughes

M Jones

J Llewellyn-Hopkins

J E Pratt

JC Spanswick

A Ulberini-Williams

HM Williams

Ffon/Tel: 01656 643643

Facs/Fax: 01656 668126

Ebost/Email: talktous@bridgend.gov

Negeseuon SMS/SMS Messaging: 07581 157014 [Twitter@bridgendCBC](https://twitter.com/bridgendCBC)

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PWYLLGOR Y CABINET DROS FATERION RHINI CORFFORAETHOL - DYDD GWENER, 10 IONAWR 2025

COFNOD O BENDERFYNIAD CYFARFOD O'R PWYLLGOR Y CABINET DROS FATERION RHINI CORFFORAETHOL A GYNHALIWDYD
HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB AR DYDD GWENER, 10 IONAWR 2025
10:00

Yn bresennol

Y Cyngorydd J Gebbie - Cadeirydd

E L P Caparros
J C Spanswick

P Davies

M J Evans

M Jones

Yn Bresennol yn Rhithiol

F D Bletsoe
HM Williams

N Farr

J E Pratt

A W Ulberini-Williams

Ymddiheuriadau am Absenoldeb

D M Hughes, Steve Berry

Swyddogion:

Claire Marchant
Dave Wright
Mark Lewis
Daniel Bolton
Paul Miles
Mark Galvin
Oscar Roberts

Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol a Llesiant
Dirprwy Bennaeth Gwasanaethau Plant a Theuluoedd
Rheolwr Grŵp - Blynnyddoedd Cynnar a Phobl Ifanc
Rheolwr Grŵp - Gwasanaethau Darparu
Rheolwr Grŵp - Adnoddau Dynol a Datblygiad Sefydliadol
Uwch Swyddog Gwasanaethau Democrataidd - Pwyllgorau
Prentis Gweinyddu Busnes - Gwasanaethau Democrataidd

Datganiadau o Fuddiant

Dim.

60. Cymeradwyo Cofnodion

Penderfyniad	<u>PENDERFYNWYD</u> : Y Pwyllgor wedi derbyn cofnodion y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 04/09/2024 fel cofnod gwir a chywir.
Dyddiad y Penderfyniad	10 Ionawr 2025

61. Adroddiad Blynnyddol Bwrdd Rhianta Corfforaethol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr
2023 - 2024

Penderfyniad	<p>Cyflwynodd y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol - Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol a Llesiant adroddiad yn crynhoi'r cynnydd yng ngofal a chymorth i blant Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr ledled y Fwrdeistref Sirol, yn dilyn cyhoeddi'r Strategaeth Rhianta Corfforaethol a chydabod rôl rhanddeiliaid yn y cyngor ac yn allanol, ynghyd â rôl ysgolion a darparwyr eraill ar gyfer gweithio tuag at y nodau hyn. Cafodd rôl y bartneriaeth gref â CAMHS hefyd ei chrybwyll fel rhan allweddol i gyflawni'r nodau a chyflawniadau sydd wedi eu cynnwys yn yr Adroddiad Blynnyddol.</p> <p>Gofynnodd y cynghorwyr gwestiynau ynghylch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Y gefnogaeth i ofalwyr carennnydd.• Y rhesymau dros sawl symudiad ar gyfer plant sydd â phrofiad o fod mewn gofal.• Statws ariannol awdurdodau eraill/ plant sydd mewn cyfleusterau ym Mhen-y-bont ar Ogwr.• Cyflogadwyedd ieuenctid ar gyfer plant sydd â phrofiad o fod mewn gofal.• Hyrwyddo cyllid perthnasol i blant sydd â phrofiad o fod mewn gofal.• Nifer y plant o awdurdodau eraill sydd wedi eu rhoi ym Mhen-y-bont ar Ogwr, a'r ffordd arall.• Eglurhad ar y 47% o ostyngiad mewn niferoedd sawl lleoliad dros y flwyddyn ddiwethaf.• Dadansoddiad o blant nad ydynt yn y system ofal, ond yn dal i fod angen cymorth, a'r canlyniadau sy'n gysylltiedig â'r achosion hynny.• Diweddariad ar ymgorfforiad y Strategaeth Gostyngiad Diogel yn nifer y Plant sydd â Phrofiad o fod mewn Gofal.• Presenoldeb rhai swyddogion a phartneriaid mewn cyfarfodydd y Bwrdd Rhianta Corfforaethol bob chwarter.
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PWYLLGOR Y CABINET DROS FATERION RHINI CORFFORAETHOL - DYDD GWENER, 10 IONAWR 2025

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cymharu nifer o blant Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr sydd â phrofiad o fod mewn gofal mewn amryw o sefyllfaoedd gydag awdurdodau cymharol eraill. <p>Bu i Ddirprwy Bennaeth y Gwasanaethau Plant a Theuluoedd, y Rheolwr Grŵp - y Blynnyddoedd Cynnar a Phobl Ifanc a'r Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol - Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol a Llesiant ymateb i'r cwestiynau hyn, gan gytuno i barhau i wella cyflogadwyedd ieuencid fel rhan o'r nod barhaus dan arweiniad y Bwrdd Rhianta Corfforaethol.</p> <p><u>PENDERFYNWYD:</u> Cymeradwyodd Bwyllgor y Cabinet gynnwys yr adroddiad, gan ychwanegu bod yr ymroddiad a ddangosir gan swyddogion a phartneriaid tuag at y Cyngor i gynorthwyo plant sydd â phrofiad o fod mewn gofal yn ysbrydoledig ac yn hynod bwysig i'r llwyddiant sydd wedi ei gyflawni, a chynnydd pellach i'w gyflawni yn y dyfodol. Yn ogystal, cytunwyd y byddai union niferoedd pobl ifanc Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr mewn awdurdodau/lleoliadau eraill yn ogystal â nifer y bobl ifanc o awdurdodau eraill sydd mewn lleoliadau Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr yn cael eu canfod a'u dychwelyd i Bwyllgor y Cabinet.</p> <p>Cytunwyd ymhellach i ddod â gwybodaeth i'r Pwyllgor yn y dyfodol ynghylch y Rhaglen Ysbrydoli a mentrau eraill sy'n cefnogi plant sydd â phrofiad o fod mewn gofal, ynghyd â faint sy'n cymryd rhan, i gasglu gwybodaeth bellach ar y gostyngiad mewn niferoedd sawl lleoliad, ac i ofyn cwestiynau i Wasanaeth Tân ac Achub De Cymru ar eu metrigau perfformiad yn yr ardal hon, yn ystod eu hymweliad i'r Cyngor yn y dyfodol agos.</p>
Dyddiad y Penderfyniad	10 Ionawr 2025

**62. Archwiliad Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru (Agc) ar Wasanaethau Rheoledig
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr mewn Gofal
Cymdeithasol Plant (CBSPO)**

Penderfyniad	<p>Cyflwynodd y Rheolwr Grŵp - Gwasanaethau Darparu adroddiad yn amlinellu'r cynnydd a'r darganfyddiadau o archwiliadau mewn amgylcheddau gofal ledled Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr, gan gynnwys Sunny Bank, Tŷ Harwood a Golygfa'r Dolydd, a darparu sawl argymhelliad ar gyfer cynnydd yn y dyfodol, sydd bellach wedi derbyn sylw, gyda chynlluniau gweithredu ar gyfer pob lleoliad.</p> <p>Gofynnodd gynghorwyr gwestiynau ynghylch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faint o le sydd yn y lleoliadau.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Llety ar gyfer plant sydd tu allan i'r sir mewn lleoliadau Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr.• Gwelliannau i gynlluniau gofal.• Gwelliannau amgylcheddol gofynnol.• Cadarnhad posib ar leoliadau.• Y rhesymau dros beidio dilyn gweithdrefnau a'r goblygiadau sydd ynghlwm â'r penderfyniadau hynny.• Y system economi daleb sy'n cael ei chrybwyll yn yr adroddiad.• Rhybudd cyn cynnal archwiliadau ar gyfleusterau.• Statws gwiriadau addasrwydd staff ymysg staff parhaol a staff asiantaeth.• Hyder swyddogion i roi'r argymelliadau ar waith. <p>Cafodd yr ymholiadau hyn eu hateb gan y Rheolwr Grŵp - Gwasanaethau Darparu, y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol - Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol a Llesiant a'r Rheolwr Grŵp - Adnoddau Dynol a Datblygiad Sefydliadol.</p> <p><u>PENDERFYNWYD:</u> Nododd Bwyllgor y Cabinet ganlyniadau'r archwiliadau o fewn yr adroddiad, a diolch i Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru am eu harchwiliadau.</p>
Dyddiad y Penderfyniad	10 Ionawr 2025

63. Cynllun Cynaliadwyedd 3 Blynedd i Wella Canlyniadau ar gyfer
Gwasanaethau Plant a Theuluoedd ym Mhen-y-bont ar Ogwr -
Adroddiad Cynnydd Canol Blwyddyn (2) - 2024/25

Penderfyniad	<p>Cyflwynodd Dirprwy Bennaeth y Gwasanaethau Plant a Theuluoedd adroddiad yn ystyried cynnydd y gwasanaeth Plant a Theuluoedd yn erbyn cerrig milltir sydd wedi eu hadnabod ar gyfer gwelliannau yn y cynllun cynaliadwyedd ledled Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr, yn dilyn sawl adroddiad annibynnol.</p> <p>Gofynnodd gynghorwyr gwestiynau ynghylch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Y rhesymau dros ostyngiad mewn ymweliadau at deuluoedd.• Y bylchau sydd wedi eu canfod yn y wybodaeth yn yr adroddiad.• Nifer presennol o staff dros dro/asiantaeth yn yr adran.
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PWYLLGOR Y CABINET DROS FATERION RHINI CORFFORAETHOL - DYDD GWENER, 10 IONAWR 2025

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yr oedi wrth gwblhau'r arolwg staff. • Y rhesymeg wrth wraidd y gostyngiad sylweddol yn nifer yr achosion cam-driniaeth. <p>Atebwyd y cwestiynau hyn gan Ddirprwy Bennaeth Gwasanaethau Plant a Theuluoedd a'r Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol - Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol a Llesiant.</p> <p><u>PENDERFYNWYD</u>: Nododd Bwyllgor y Cabinet yr adroddiad, gan gydnabod y cynnydd sydd wedi ei wneud yn erbyn yr argymelliadau i wella lefelau gwasanaeth, a llongyfarch y staff am eu gwaith a'u hymroddiad tuag at y nodau hynny.</p>
Dyddiad y Penderfyniad	10 Ionawr 2025

64. Eitemau Brys

Penderfyniad	<u>PENDERFYNWYD</u> : Dim.
Dyddiad y Penderfyniad	10 Ionawr 2025

Er mwyn edrych ar y drafodaeth bellach a gafwyd ar yr eitemau uchod, cliciwch y [ddolen](#) hon

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 11:30.

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Meeting of:	CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING
Date of Meeting:	7 MAY 2025
Report Title:	OVERVIEW OF HEALTH SERVICES PROVIDED TO CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE REPORT
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES & WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	NICOLA JONES SENIOR NURSE CWM TAF MORGANNWG UNIVERSITY HEALTH BOARD
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.
Executive Summary:	The report provides an overview of Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Boards contribution to the support services afforded to care experienced children and young people in the region.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a broad overview of the health services provided by Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB), accessed by care experienced children and outlining how CTMUHB services can achieve the outcomes of the Corporate Parenting Charter – A Promise for Wales.
- 1.2 This report will highlight the key touchpoints within the health board that care experienced children are likely to access. The information provided will demonstrate how the health board is contributing to the overarching aim of the board to improve outcomes for children and young people who are care experienced.
- 1.3 CTMUHB has three local authorities that are within its boundaries and is requested to provide pertinent health information for all three authorities.
- 1.4 This report will also illustrate how the health board supports the six key priorities outlined in the Bridgend Corporate Parenting Board terms of reference;
 - *Having a voice*
 - *Good health and wellbeing*
 - *A comfortable safe stable home whilst in care and after*
 - *Educational achievement, training, and employment*

- *Ready for living independently*
- *Celebrating our children and young people's milestones*

2. Background

- 2.1 CTMUHB has been part of the Corporate Parenting Board in its current format since 2022. The health board signed up to the corporate parenting pledge in 2024 and is committed to work with partners to support the aims and objectives of the Corporate Parenting Board.
- 2.2 As a health board we are committed to ensuring that children, young people, and those who care for them have access to the appropriate healthcare and advice needed to support their physical, mental, and overall well-being. Every child has the right to the best possible health and care, as outlined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, articles 24 and 39. By participating in the development of the corporate parenting strategy, the health board can ensure that the health needs of children and young people are captured by identifying and promoting joint working either within health and/or with partner agencies to achieve optimal results.
- 2.3 CTMUHB currently have 1,485 care experienced children residing within its footprint, of which 420 are placed within the locality of Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC). It is worth noting that other children who are under the care of different local authorities are also placed within BCBC borders and will also have access to CTMUHB health service provision.

3. Current situation / proposal

Linked to the following priorities of the corporate parenting terms of reference 24/25

- **Having a voice**

- 3.1 The launch of the national CIVICA survey on the 1st of April 2025, will gather feedback from children, young people, and foster carers on their experience with mandatory health assessments. This will be conducted through three questionnaires: two age specific for children and one for foster carers. The findings will ensure that improvements in service delivery are informed by the voice and experiences of children and young people at both local and national levels.
- 3.2 Several Organisational developments support the corporate parenting boards six key priorities.
- 3.3 A Childrens Charter has been developed by CTMUHB to ensure children and young people are aware of their rights and subsequently have their rights met by services across the health board.

<https://ctmuhb.nhs.wales/patient-advice/support-for-children-young-people-and-families/ctm-childrens->

[charter/#:~:text=The%20rights%2C%20known%20as%20our,and%20young%20people%20of%20CTM.](#)

- 3.4 This charter is accompanied by a booklet and guidance for health board staff, providing direction on its implementation and core principles.

<https://ctmuhb.nhs.wales/patient-advice/support-for-children-young-people-and-families/ctm-childrens-charter/the-10-rights/assets/childrens-charter-booklet/>

- **Good health and wellbeing**
- **A comfortable safe stable home whilst in care and after**

- 3.5 The health board provides a dedicated health team committed to supporting its responsibilities in delivering additional services for care-experienced children in accordance with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2014). The health board undertakes both initial and review health assessments for children who are placed within the CTMUHB footprint; the timeframe of these assessments are outlined in the legislation. These assessments can be undertaken by either a medical practitioner, nurse specialist or a health visitor.

- 3.6 Those children under five will receive a twice-yearly assessment and those over five receive a yearly assessment. In the last year the health board have completed 420 health assessments for children and young children who are currently within BCBC footprint. The health assessments offer a comprehensive and holistic overview of the individual's wellbeing and aid future health planning by supporting existing health conditions, while also incorporating relevant public health messages during the assessment. The health assessment also provides an opportunity to deliver public health messages to foster carers and residential placements who support children and young people. The health assessment captures the voice of the child or young person, including their feelings about their current placement. All the relevant information is gathered and used to develop a plan that will provide clear direction around both physical and emotional health. This health plan supports BCBC as the corporate parent, to be fully informed about what support and care is required to achieve optimal health and emotional outcomes.

- 3.7 The health team also attends monthly complex placement panel meetings across the three local authorities including BCBC to provide any additional health related information that may support placements and placement moves.

- 3.8 Care experienced children under five receive the Healthy Child Wales Programme which is a universal service which is needs led, by our health visiting team. The health board as part of the early year's transformation partnership signaled a change in Organisational culture towards greater respect, consideration and inclusion for the rights and voice of the pre-verbal infant. This has led to the development and adoption of Baby 'voice' a term to convey an understanding that babies have their own minds, want to communicate from birth and have unique non-verbal ways of expressing themselves. Specifying the unique needs and rights of the baby/ infant in the first years of life is needed in order to motivate infant oriented actions, policies, service design and delivery at health board, community and societal level.

<https://ctmuhb.nhs.wales/news/news-files/final-ctm-baby-amp-toddler-voice-poster-pdf/>

- 3.9 All unaccompanied asylum-seeking children placed by BCBC, within CTMUHB are offered an appointment with the medical advisor. This arrangement is in place as the health board recognise that these group of children and young people often arrive in the country without medical history, having experienced trauma, with limited prior health care and incomplete vaccination records.
- 3.10 In collaboration with partners of Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board, guidance has been developed to support staff working with care experienced children to obtain appropriate consent when children and young people are accessing secondary care services.

<https://www.cwmtafmorgannwgsafeguardingboard.co.uk/En/Professionals/ChildrenPoliciesAndProcedures/CTMGuidanceConsentforMedicalTreatmentforCLA.pdf>

3.11 **Neurodevelopmental Service (NDS)**

Although the majority of support in the region (both for families and within the Education System) is available based on need and not diagnosis, as a health board we recognise the frustration with long waiting times for Neurodevelopmental assessment and potential diagnosis. The health board also recognise the positive impact of having a diagnosis formally confirmed, even when this has possibly been suspected, both for the family / young person themselves, but also the wider system. As the health board is aware if this information there and part of wider service improvements a pilot program has been launched in Bridgend January 2025 to explore more efficient methods of triaging assessments, to reduce numbers on the waiting list for ND assessment and to improve waiting list times for all. The overarching aim will be to reduce the long waiting times for those children where an accurate diagnosis can be made from written information submitted at the point of referral by family / school. The pilot will be measured against a series of outcomes with the primary focus being reduced wait times. Service wide improvements are:

- New referral paperwork for school aged children launched at the beginning of January and positive response from school to date.
- Impact in terms of fewer referrals being received and accepted anticipated although we will need to see some data on this over the next 6 months or so.
- Microsoft Forms options available for families and schools which families are using a lot to submit information.
- Much more information is being gathered from families now at the start of the assessment process which they can add to while they are on our list.
- In January, February and March we have been accepting old and new paperwork but from the 1st April will move to new paperwork only.
- Development of a health board wide early years referral for to enhance information gathering – currently out for consultation.
- Welsh Government funding has been secured to support service enhancement and at the point of completion of this report, waiting times for

children who were referred to us when they were 2 or 3 years old is now 12 months. Waiting times for everyone else is still around 20-22 months, but gradually reducing. We committed to taking an additional 550 children off the waiting list this year with the funding and by the end of March 2025 we completed 750 extra assessments, as well as paying for over 1050 extra follow up appointments,

- Joint monthly clinics between NDS and CAMHS started in Summer 2024 and are being extended into 2025/26 because of their success. Dedicated NDS assessment / diagnostic capacity for high-risk children and young people known as CAMHS.

Linked to the following priorities of the corporate parenting terms of reference 24/25

- **Ready for living independently**
- **Celebrating our children and young people's milestone**

- 3.12 The health board offers opportunities for all young people including those in care, to gain work experience and apply for apprenticeships. Young people with additional needs can access project search to secure work placements.
- 3.13 Resources are in development to share with partner agencies to promote the opportunities and develop guidance to support care experienced young people to apply.
- 3.14 As part of the broader transition work within the health board, the team has created a leaflet which will have personal information and health history inserted to help young people navigate universal health services when transitioning to adult services.
- 3.15 The Medical director for CTMUHB is the strategic lead for planning approaches to transition care for children and young people. Work is in progress to develop this area of work, to include a transition and handover 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

Long Term

- 5.1 The health board is committed to providing a dedicated health resource to support the health needs of children and young people who are care experienced. The Children and Families Care group also provides specific resources to care experienced children as there is a Clinical Nurse Specialist that supports the Medical Advisors in undertaking health assessments and developing care plans. There is also the health visiting service that provides the health child Wales Programme for all children under the age of five, and the school nursing service that provides additional services for school age children. Changes made to the neurodevelopmental service have been identified at a national level as good practice and supporting the life outcomes of children and young people. This sits within the six priorities of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Prevention

- 5.2 The public health messages that the health board embed in their services, particularly midwifery, health visiting, Children Looked After team, medical advisors, dental primary care and those Children who access secondary services will support good health and wellbeing.

Integration

- 5.3 The health board participates in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board, working to develop a collective public service that put people in our communities at the centre. Our communities will include our care experienced children who reside within CTMUHB footprint. There are other partnership boards including the Mental Health Partnership Board, the Area Planning Board, Community Safety Partnership and Regional Safeguarding Board. Service led agreements are in place with other local authorities to work with the Youth Justice Service to provided dedicated service and assessment time to those children who are known to the youth justice system.

Collaboration

- 5.4 The health board supports a collaborative approach through the attendance and membership of partnership arrangements as detailed above, also attendance of relevant panels that support the national corporate parenting agenda. These include, complex care planning panels, exploitation panels and youth offending forums.
- 5.5 The health board actively engages with service users to inform and improve service delivery, this includes the national CIVICA survey for health assessments, ongoing surveys undertaken within Paediatric departments and the dedicated Child Protection Medical Hub.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 There is no direct impact on Climate Change through the implementation of this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 All CTMUHB staff are required to comply with Wales Safeguarding Procedures and complete mandatory training to meet this standard. Those involved in direct service provision and care planning for children and young people must undertake Level 3 training and hold a professional responsibility for compliance. Additionally, all health board staff must adhere to CTMUHB policies and protocols.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 CTMUHB team for care experienced children consists of one team leader, two full time nurses and 4 part time nurses, who undertake the statutory duty of undertaking health assessments. These posts are funded under the regional health board.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting notes the report and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board's contribution to supporting care experienced babies, children and young people.

Background documents

None

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Meeting of:	CABINET COMMITTEE – CORPORATE PARENTING
Date of Meeting:	7 MAY 2025
Report Title:	FOSTER WALES BRIDGEND UPDATE
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR – SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	DAN BOLTON GROUP MANAGER – PROVIDER SERVICES
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There are no implications for the policy framework and procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	<p>This report provides an overview of Foster Wales Bridgend's key developments and activities over the past 12 months, aligning with the Welsh Government's commitment to eliminate profit from the care of looked-after children. It outlines local and regional initiatives aimed at enhancing placement sufficiency, stability, and support for foster carers.</p> <p>Key highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative Implementation: Progress in response to new legislation phasing out for-profit provision in children's care services. • Recruitment and Retention: Launch of national initiatives, alongside the introduction of tools such as the Big Welcome App and Refer a Friend App to support carer recruitment and experience. • Development of Placement Schemes • Carer Support Initiatives: Transition from Liaison Carers to Pioneer Carers to enhance peer support, and the strengthening of training and engagement opportunities through Information and Consultation Events (ICE). • Operational Enhancements: Formation of a Remodelling Fostering Board to improve placement recruitment, support and retention. • Kinship and Permanence: Strengthening of kinship care through national pilot projects, new assessment tools, and increased Special Guardianship Orders—

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet Committee - Corporate Parenting with an update on Foster Wales Bridgend Service Developments.

2. Background

- 2.1 As part of the Welsh Government's Programme for Government 2022-2027, there are a number of commitments that taken together describe a new vision to transform children's services. The delivery of these commitments will effect change across the whole care system here in Wales.
- 2.2 A key component of this new vision for children's services is the Programme for Government commitment to remove private profit from the care of care experienced children.
- 2.3 The aim of the Programme for Government commitment is to ensure that public money invested in accommodation for care experienced children does not lead to profit, but instead any surpluses are reinvested into children's services to deliver better outcomes, service improvement and further professional development.
- 2.4 The Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill received Royal Assent in March 2025. Foster Wales teams will work in collaboration with wider children's services and key partners to ensure clear and consistent communication of The Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill's implications to all in-house foster carers, as well as those within independent fostering agencies. In February 2025, Foster Wales also launched a public campaign to celebrate and highlight foster carers who have chosen to transfer to their local authority fostering service.

The key timeframes and milestones below are set out in the legislation and provide the framework for implementation of the changes brought about by The Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill:

- 1st April 2026 - no new for-profit providers of registered children's services, including care homes, fostering, and secure accommodation, will be permitted to register in Wales. In response, Foster Wales Bridgend will use 2025 as a critical year to strengthen local sufficiency, focusing on the development and implementation of new schemes to meet the needs of children and young people.
- 1st April 2027 - existing for-profit providers of children's care homes, secure accommodation, or fostering services will no longer be able to add additional beds or recruit new foster carers in Wales. In preparation for this, efforts will be focused on strengthening the engagement and overall experience of

current foster carers, recognising their vital role in promoting fostering through word-of-mouth and supporting future recruitment.

- 1st April 2030 - no new placements of children within existing for-profit children's care homes, fostering and secure accommodation service providers by English placing authorities except in exceptional circumstances specified in regulations. No new placements from Welsh placing authorities unless there is Ministerial approval via the supplementary placements process set out in The Health and Social Care (Wales) Bill.

- 2.5 Bridgend has experienced a net loss of foster carers over the past three years. There is a well-documented shortage of foster carers across the UK, with some movement between fostering agencies, but an overall decline in foster care capacity in both Wales and the wider UK.

Locally, Bridgend faces a significant shortage of skilled and experienced foster carers who are equipped to meet the long-term needs of children and young people who:

- Are aged between 10 and 15 years old
- Present with trauma-related behaviours and require support for emotional wellbeing
- Are at risk of exploitation or exclusion from education
- Have disabilities

There is also a particular gap in the availability of foster carers with the skills and capacity to offer a range of placement types, especially short-term arrangements such as parent and child placements (including support and assessment), shared care, and short breaks.

This report provides evidence of how Foster Wales Bridgend is working to address the challenges outlined above. It highlights the service developments and strategic actions being taken to improve placement sufficiency, carer support, and outcomes for children and young people.

- 2.6 Our Vision Statement within Foster Wales Bridgend is:

We aim to ensure that Foster Carers are recognised as professionals whose views are actively sought and considered when decisions are being made about children in their care. Foster Carers will be provided with the right support at the right time to ensure that children and young people in their care achieve the best possible outcomes.

3. Current situation/ Proposal

National/Regional

- 3.1 Over the last 12 months there have been some key developments across Foster Wales. This includes the launch of our National refer a friend app, allowing foster

carers to receive financial incentives for encouraging members of their community to enquire into becoming a foster carer. While the app has had a positive impact across Wales, uptake in Bridgend has been lower than anticipated. The recruitment officer continues to promote the app, and the fostering remodelling project has identified that improving carer experience is key to encouraging peer referrals. We will continue to learn from other local authorities who have had success with the app and how this approach can be embedded locally over the next 12 months. This includes the use of the App to promote the need for foster families for specific children, such as a child identified for step-down from residential care. This is currently in discussion.

- 3.2 We have launched our Big Welcome App. This has been funded centrally through Foster Wales by Welsh Government. It provides an electronic solution to ensure all children placed in foster care—regardless of the urgency—have the opportunity to view a child-friendly profile of their foster family before placement. It will provide a child friendly profile with pictures that can help to reassure a child before being placed. Foster Wales Bridgend carers who will be welcoming new children have now completed these profiles, which will be shared with placing workers from April 1st 2025.
- 3.3 Foster Wales Bridgend have continued to work with regional partners facilitated by the regional development manager to develop three regional placement schemes. This includes a new Parent and Child Scheme, a new Support care scheme which aims to recruit and support a new group of part-time foster carers who can provide flexible, short-term care to children and families in various situations, such as those on the edge of care, children with disabilities, or foster placements needing respite and a Step-down scheme which will recruit foster carers specifically to take children who are coming from a residential placement. These would enable us to strengthen support and recruit carers for specific placement types, including mother and baby placements, respite placements and children with complex needs or those currently in residential care whose care plan identifies fostering as the preferred option. All three of these schemes are in the development stage.
- 3.4 Foster Wales launched their 'Bring Something to the Table' Campaign in January 2024. This was developed as an awareness campaign to build a better public perception of what it takes to be a foster carer. It has allowed us to engage a broader range of applicants with diverse backgrounds and skillsets applying. The campaign was launched with three different TV adverts all focused on how a table brings families together. This included the dinner table, caravan table and baking a cake. All based on real stories from Foster Wales families.
- 3.5 'Bring Something to the Table' has acted as a foundation for further campaigns in 2024/25, including the 'Support Bubble' campaign, which highlighted the incredible social workers and support workers who are on hand to help our foster families, and children of Foster carers month, sharing positive stories from children, whose parents foster, to address concerns some applicants may have about fostering while raising children while their children are still young.
- 3.6 In response to the new Act being passed by Welsh Government, we received approval to adopt a more assertive campaign approach to encourage foster carers from independent agencies to transfer into local authority fostering. In February 2025, on National Care Day we launched an Eliminate Profit Campaign, which we delivered locally, generating strong engagement and media coverage in local news outlets. It consisted of three case studies of carers who had moved to the local authority and

the benefits they have seen since doing this. The campaign aimed to dispel common myths about local authority fostering, often perpetuated by profit-making agencies.

- 3.7 Foster Wales's position on marketing during this transitional period will remain prioritising increasing sufficiency of foster homes in the market by strategies to encourage new carers to take up fostering. However, we will continue to strengthen messaging around the benefits of transferring to local authority fostering and highlight the benefits of fostering with the local authority. We will also work closely with other children's services staff who are responsible for care planning and the discussions they can have with carers in Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) who are looking after Bridgend children.
- 3.8 Foster Wales Partners was launched in 2024, as a scheme that links with The Fostering Network's Fostering Friendly policy. This policy encourages employers to support staff who foster and raise awareness of fostering within their communities. While there are currently no businesses in Bridgend formally accredited through the national Fostering Friendly scheme, Foster Wales Bridgend continues to promote this initiative and support local adoption of fostering-friendly practices. Awen Cultural Trust has already adopted a fostering-friendly policy, and further engagement is ongoing with partners including Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO). Additionally, all members of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board are currently exploring the development and implementation of policies that would support fostering-friendly employment practices within their organisations. Through the Foster Wales Partners initiative, smaller businesses that are unable to meet the full requirements of the Fostering Friendly policy can still demonstrate their support. This includes sharing recruitment campaigns, offering free or discounted services to foster families, or providing community space for carer events and peer support.
- 3.9 With the appointment of a new workforce development officer covering foster carer learning and development in Bridgend last summer, there has been significant progress in offering foster carers a flexible and accessible programme of learning and development, including face to face training days. The officer has also joined the national group for fostering learning and development leads and has been able to increase the understanding of opportunities available through the national network. This includes ensuring Foster Wales Bridgend embed the national fostering framework for learning and development.
- 3.10 Foster Wales Bridgend has had five 'Liaison carers' in post for the past few years. The Liaison carer's role was to support an allocation of carers in their roles, alongside supporting the service in the development of the service, support and in areas of recruitment. Across 2024 we have consulted with our liaison carers and are now in a period of transition to becoming 'Pioneer Carers'. This is a national scheme, promoted, support and received some funding from The Fostering Network. This will mean our Pioneer carers will receive free training and support from the national network along with peer idea sharing with Pioneers from across Wales. Our Pioneers will also have specific remits and will be expected to evidence their impact on the fostering community.
- 3.11 We have recruited two new posts funded via Foster Wales. One post allocated to supporting the general fostering team and the other post is a regional recruitment and retention officer allocated to Bridgend. Our Recruitment Officer has been in post since December 2023 and sits within the regional recruitment hub managed by the regional development manager. This post works along recruitment officers from Rhondda

Cynon Taff and Merthyr Tydfil and with two regional marketing officers. Together the team has an annual plan on the page strategy for each local authority, which filters into regional and national campaigns. Since the recruitment officer has come into post, we have seen a significant increase in the number of awareness raising events we have been able to attend, businesses we have been able to connect with and enquiries from potential foster carers. This post continues to implement best practice recruitment. However, our conversion from initial visit to assessment is low and work is being carried out around these processes-

April 24 – March 25	Target	Actuals
Enquiries	77	79
Initial Visits	32	28
Approvals	11	6

Local/General Fostering

- 3.12 In November 2023, Foster Wales Bridgend was subject to inspection by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). The inspection identified a number of strengths across the service, as well as areas for improvement which are now being addressed through a detailed and regularly reviewed action plan. The service has benefited from the appointment of a permanent team manager, which has provided much-needed stability following a period of interim arrangements. The action plan focuses on key areas such as matching, safe care, safeguarding, and embedding policies and procedures into everyday practice. Progress is overseen through Silver Management and Performance Meetings, and the team remains committed to embedding these improvements ahead of the anticipated follow-up inspection in late 2025.
- 3.13 Across 2024-25 we recruited six new families as mainstream foster carers. However, there is insufficient in-house foster care capacity to meet all foster placement requests. Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) has experienced a net loss of in-house foster carers over the past three years as referenced in the table below and these challenges are predicted to increase in the near future due to Bridgend having an aging foster care population (30% are aged 60+). There is both a shortage of foster carers in numbers and in levels of experience and skills to manage children with higher needs, which means matching has previously been poor which has led to increased placement disruptions or the child requiring a residential placement.

Year	Number of approved fostering households at 31st March	Number of in house foster placements at 31st March	Net loss/gain of placements
2024-25	63	124 (137 if siblings)	-29
2023-24	72	153	-28
2022-23	85	181	-8

- 3.14 Foster Wales Bridgend has established a Remodelling Fostering Board to address the decline in in-house fostering placements and strengthen local sufficiency. The Board brings together internal and regional partners to co-produce solutions aimed at recruiting and retaining foster carers, improving placement stability, and ensuring care experienced children can remain within their communities. The project aligns with key national and local strategies and is structured around four interrelated themes: recruitment, support, our offer, and retention. This work will continue to evolve throughout 2025, with an agile and collaborative approach that responds to feedback from carers and professionals alike.
- 3.15 We have continued to hold a yearly Foster Carer Appreciation Event. In December 2024 this was held at the Hi-Tide in Porthcawl and was enjoyed by a variety of General and kinship Foster Carers. Feedback from our Foster Carers was that it was an enjoyable event, that celebrated the strengths of our Bridgend Fostering Service and how highly valued and appreciated they are. The event included a very moving account of a young person who credits her success in all areas of her life to the love and support she has had and continues to have from her foster carers.
- 3.16 Foster Wales Bridgend continues to provide strong opportunities for engagement and consultation with management. Our recent Information, Consultation Event (ICE) meeting was held in March 2025 and enabled positive engagement from the foster carer community into the remodelling project. The attendance figure was 104 foster carers and professionals from the Fostering Service, Senior Management and wider Corporate Parenting umbrella. This event allowed us to reset and redefine areas of focus, needed to support, recruit and retain carers based on 'what matters most' to them. From a survey that was undertaken prior to the event, we were able to identify areas where our foster carers felt that if developed, improved, would support them in their role. These were communication, benefits/incentives and therapeutic support. Using a problem-solving method based on a Hackathon style of co-production, we were able to identify areas that could be improved upon within a short, medium, and longer-term timescale. The feedback of the day from foster carers was that they felt we had the right people in attendance, that they felt listened to and included in being part of Remodelling Fostering. We have committed to keeping our Foster Carers up to date with progress being made prior to our second ICE meeting in September 2025 where we will come back together to provide an update of what has been achieved and potentially what we have not been able to achieve and to work on how we continue developing the service moving forward.
- 3.17 Also in place are bi-monthly coffee mornings and national consultation opportunities. Coffee mornings are well attended both by mainstream and kinship carers. They have grown in attendance in the last 12 months and have seen all new foster carers attend on a regular basis. Some attendees are now also organising a male carer specific support group launching in April 2025. Our Retention officer is also exploring putting on walk and talk sessions for more informal get together for peer support.
- 3.18 BCBC is working with colleagues in Foster Wales in relation to recruitment and retention. Foster Wales Bridgend has a 'plan on a page' that sets out recruitment strategies including targeted advertisement campaigns and events over the course of a year. As stated in this report communication to Independent Foster Agency (IFA) carers is going to be increased, making them aware of the eliminate policy. There are

currently 19 Bridgend children placed with IFA carers in Bridgend with 18 placed with IFA out of area.

Kinship/permanence

- 3.19 The aim of the Kinship and Permanence Team is to continue to support Kinship Carers to feel confident and supported to provide permanent placements to children at the earliest opportunity. The Team Strategy for how this will be developed and improved is currently being developed through co-production working with our carers, children, staff and invested partners and will be reflected in our Team Plan which will feed into our Remodelling Service Plan and to the Think Family - 3-year Plan and into our quarterly and six-monthly CIW reports. We are confident that we have the right vision and basic processes in place now to ensure children and families are not kept in fostering arrangements or in care longer than needed.
- 3.20 It is positive to note that over the past year, children being placed within their family has remained the leading alternative care provision for our children in Bridgend this year. 36 Connected Person Assessments were completed of which 23 new kinship carers were approved offering an additional 31 placements. This brings the number of kinship fostering placements as of the 31st March 2025 to 93 placements. Two of our existing Kinship Foster carers have been approved to convert to General Fostering, able to provide 2 additional placements, evidencing the skill, quality and commitment to caring for children demonstrated by kinship carers.
- 3.21 In addition to this, 23 Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) were awarded in Court bringing the number of children being cared for under a Special Guardianship Order as of the 31st March 2025 to 163 children by 122 Special Guardians. From a kinship perspective, the numbers of care experienced children are declining because they are spending less time in kinship fostering arrangements – proceeding to Special Guardianship sooner than previously, which as stated is a key part of the kinship & Permanence Team plan. Now we have begun this trend, it is an opportunity to start mapping timelines between the time a child spends in a kinship foster placement to achieving permanence via SGO. The aim of this would be to review service quality and ability to deliver to not only sustain this trend, but to develop it for our families.
- 3.22 Kinship and Special Guardianship Carers have continued to have their own monthly Support Group where they have appreciated having a space of their own to reflect on their situations with other kinship carers, making important connections, sharing information whilst processing what has happened within their family and how their family now will need to function differently. We continue to support our carers to feel empowered and to be proud of the role they have taken on in caring for children. We celebrated Kinship Week in October 2024 by having staff serve afternoon tea for Kinship Carers and by having a well-being session delivered to our carers by which the carers really appreciated.
- 3.23 In a joint project with Swansea Fostering Service, our Kinship Team Manager worked with the Association for Fostering, Kinship and Adoption (AFKA) to develop a national transfer protocol for Special Guardians to ensure that they experience consistency of service when they move to another local authority area. AFKA have taken this into their good practice guidance and has placed it before the Welsh Government for inclusion into the Special Guardianship Code of Practice. We are also part of a new National Pilot Project to create a new Kinship and Special Guardianship Assessment template called Form K – which has been successfully trialled in England. Alongside

a select number of other authorities, we will be able to reflect the voices of our carers in the creation of this new Kinship Assessment ensuring that it reflects Welsh Kinship Care, the needs of our care experienced young people alongside our legislation, that has distinct differences from England.

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:

Long-term	Foster Wales Bridgend's work is focused on building a sustainable fostering service that meets current and future needs. By increasing placement sufficiency, reducing reliance on external providers, and improving recruitment and retention, the service is supporting long-term outcomes for care experienced children.
Prevention	The remodelling of the fostering service is designed to reduce placement breakdowns, increase stability, and prevent escalation into residential care. Initiatives such as the Remodelling Fostering Board, targeted carer support, and the use of Eliminate Profit Grant funding to embed therapeutic support and behaviour analysis are all helping to address issues early.
Integration	Foster Wales Bridgend works in close partnership with regional fostering services, children's social care teams, and health and education partners to ensure integrated planning around the child. National schemes such as Pioneer Carers and digital tools like the Big Welcome App are embedded locally in alignment with regional development plans and corporate parenting objectives.
Collaboration	The service takes a collaborative approach to co-production with carers, children and young people, and professionals. Events such as the ICE (Inform, Consult, Engage) meeting and carer appreciation events demonstrate a commitment to shared decision-making. Collaboration also underpins regional placement development and the national Foster Wales recruitment strategy.
Involvement	Children, young people, and foster carers are actively involved in shaping services. Engagement mechanisms include bi-annual ICE events, feedback surveys, and targeted co-production

activities such as the Hackathon event and Kinship strategy development. These structures ensure that lived experience is used to influence decision-making, inform planning, and build trust within the fostering community.

6. Climate Change Implications

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

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 This report provides updates regarding how Foster Wales Bridgend are meeting their duties to promote the wellbeing of children via undertaking activities to support recruitment of foster carers and supporting children to reside with connected persons where assessed as safe to do so.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

9. Recommendation

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

Background Documents

None

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Meeting of:	CABINET COMMITTEE CABINET REPORT CORPORATE PARENTING
Date of Meeting:	9 MAY 2025
Report Title:	MONITORING THE PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS OF THE WESTERN BAY REGIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR – SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	NICHOLA ROGERS – REGIONAL ADOPTION MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	The content of the report does not have any impact on the policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	The report is to update the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting of the work of the Regional Adoption Service during 2024-25. The Regional Service is based on the old Western Bay footprint (Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Councils), and this is set out in legislation. In terms of operational work the service functions well and offers the adoptive families across the region an effective service. The report and its attachments highlight the breadth of work the region now covers and highlights key performance information over the last 12 months.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Cabinet Committee about the performance and progress of the Western Bay Regional Adoption Service, including the Quality of Service Report for Quarter 3 & Quarter 4 2024-25 (**Appendix A**) which includes the end of year performance information.

2. Background

- 2.1 Adoption has, and continues to receive, high levels of attention from both the UK and the Welsh Government. Members will be aware that the creation of a National Adoption Service (NAS) is one of the key policy strands of the Welsh Government, as enacted in the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014. This Act provides powers, under Part 9, for Ministers to direct local authorities to collaborate in relation to adoption services and to prevent any local authority from withdrawing from these collaborations in the future.
- 2.2 The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 came into force on 13th March 2015. The primary purpose of these

Directions is to ensure effective joint arrangements are in place between local authorities in Wales for the delivery of adoption services

- 2.3 Schedule 1 of the Directions sets out which local authorities must collaborate with each other. For the Western Bay region the local authorities are Swansea, Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot. Swansea host and manage the regional service on behalf of the partner agencies, this having been approved by Cabinets in all three local authorities in April 2014.
- 2.4 The Western Bay Adoption Service (WBAS) is integrated into the National Adoption Service (NAS) as one of the five identified regional collaboratives. The National Service is underpinned by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015.
- 2.5 The Regional Service is overseen by a Management Board chaired by a Director (currently the Director from Neath Port Talbot Council). The Board is comprised of the Heads of Children's Services from the three local authorities, a representative from health (currently the Medical Advisor from Swansea Bay University Health Board), education (currently the Team Manager for Pupil Support in Swansea), the National Adoption Service Central team and also a representative from the Voluntary sector (currently the Director of Adoption UK). The Management Board meets quarterly, and twice yearly joint committees are also held which are attended by the three Heads of Service and the three lead cabinet members for children.

3. Current situation/ proposal

- 3.1 Western Bay Adoption Service became fully operational in April 2015. Prior to this adoption services were delivered locally via the three local authorities.
- 3.2 The regional adoption service provides a range of services and interventions across the following key domains to those affected by adoption, these being:
- Assessing and supporting prospective adopters
 - Assessing non-agency (parent/carer, formerly step parent adoptions)
 - Birth Record Counselling and Intermediary Services (BRC & IS)
 - Adoption support (assessments and support services to anyone affected by adoption including Birth family members)
 - Twin tracking and Family Finding (TT&FF), which involves working with birth families of children in or following care proceedings and, once a Placement Order has been granted by the Court, in searching for an adoptive placement
 - Birth parent support
 - Support to adopted young people

Performance and Activity

- 3.3 The attached Quality of Service report at **Appendix A** outlines the performance for the regional adoption service for 2024-25. This report is a regulatory requirement and has to be completed every 6 months. The attached report covers the activity in the

service for the last six months, October 2024 to March 2025 along with the performance information for the whole year.

The reports demonstrate that the service has continued to deliver on both local and national objectives and maintain many aspects of performance.

3.4 Key achievements for the year 2024-24 for Bridgend children include:

- The number of children referred for twin-tracking to the service saw a 50 % decrease in the figure in comparison to the trend in numbers of referrals since 2020-21. Consequently there was also a 50% reduction in the number of children who had an agreed plan of adoption at the end of care proceedings. The service has seen a downward trend of Placement Orders being granted for children across Bridgend over the last three years, most likely attributable to the stabilisation of the work force and the implementation of a new practice model in the service.
- The number of Bridgend children placed in 2024-25 was 6. Across the Region placements for children were achieved within 9.6 months, from the time the placement order was granted until the date of placement. The target is 6 months. At the end of Quarter 3 the region had achieved an average time scale of 6.7 months with 75% of children being placed within the 6 month benchmark. We are seeing that children have increasingly complex needs and the work to transition them to placement is hugely complex and time consuming. The data for this year is showing that this length of time to place has increased slightly due to the time taken to place sibling groups and children with complex needs.
- Regionally, of the children placed during the year we continued to place more children with Western Bay adopters than in inter-agency placements (IAs). By year end, the service had placed 29 children within Western Bay and at the same time reduced the number placed in inter-agency placements to only 6.
- There continues to be collaboration between the Family Finding and Adoption Support functions within the service to put together packages of support for more complex children or where placements need additional support. The service is now working hard to implement the Understanding the Child Day meetings which identifies children's likely support needs earlier on.
- The number of Adoption Orders granted (AOG) increased very slightly with 11 Bridgend children being made subject of an Adoption order compared to 10 the previous year, although this number will further reduce due to the lower numbers of children with an agreed plan of adoption.
- Following a number of strategies implemented by Western Bay Adoption Service, including development of the role of life-journey worker using Welsh Government Grant funding, there has been a significant improvement in this area with 97% of children going to matching panel having a draft life-journey book and later life letter. In relation to final versions being available at the second adoption review

performance has steadily improved from 51% in 2018-19 to 88% at the end of Q3 in 2024-25.

- 2024-25 has continued to be a difficult year in relation to the number of enquiries received from prospective adopters, which was 194 compared to 213 the previous year. This is a situation that is being replicated across all the regions and there is ongoing work taking place at the National Marketing and recruitment sub group to explore the reasons behind this and to consider what the regions can do to address this. The marketing officer post is now firmly embedded in the service and is working closely with the three local authority marketing teams and Cowshed. Cowshed are the Marketing company commissioned by the National Adoption Service Central Team to support with the national marketing activity. Although there has been a continued marketing presence in the Bridgend area, the service approved fewer adopters from the Bridgend Area (5) than in the previous year (8).
- Despite the reduction in enquiries, there was a slight increase in the number of adopters that were approved, 29 compared to 27 the previous year.
- The additional Welsh Government funding has enabled the adoption support team to meet the demand and be able to focus on early intervention strategies to support adoptive families. The service does not have a waiting list of families needing an initial or adoption assessment. The service operates a virtual hub arrangement when adopters not currently open to the service are able to meet with service staff to discuss any emerging adoption support needs. This means that the right support can quickly be provided.
- The service works closely with the CLASS service in Bridgend to ensure that adopted children's therapeutic needs are met.
- The additional resource has also enabled a focus to be given to support birth parents. Three monthly support groups are held; the Bridgend group meets in the Hope Church hall the first Tuesday of every month. Birth parents from across the region also come together every quarter for a wellbeing event. We currently have over 50 birth mothers engaged in the groups across the Region.
- The service has also developed a regional youth group which is held weekly and is attended by 18 young people, most of whom have been unable to engage with their peer group previously due to their challenging and additional needs.

3.5 The service plan reflects the key priorities for the coming year. The service are very aware that the forthcoming years will be very difficult due to budget pressures facing the local authority. Areas and priorities for future development for the forthcoming year are:

- Reviewing Adoption panel membership to ensure that panel represents the diversity of our adoption community.

- Update the service young person's guide to adoption and develop an adoption support guide for young people accessing adoption support.
- Re-modelling of the service to align with the available budget, a forward look at the service over the next 1, 3 and 5 years.
- Re-instate the adopter focus group to ensure that our adopters continue to feed into new service developments.
- Implement an adoption support evaluation pack to gather the views of those using the service and to measure the effectiveness of the interventions that are offered, this will include measuring the distanced travelled by families against the goals they set as part of the intervention plan.

Concluding Comments

- 3.6 The current overall position of the regional adoption service remains positive. The overall assessment of the service is good and performance has very much remained on target in the majority of areas, the service has continued to develop significant areas of the service such as post adoption contact and birth parent support and a growing number of adopters are now supporting marketing activity, Morale in staff across the service is good and staff actively support new service developments. There is a growing community of adoptive families in the region that actively attend support events, playgroups and support groups.

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 implementation of the duties and responsibilities under the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) (SSWBA) 2014, 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 well-being goals of a healthier and more equal Bridgend and Wales are supported.
- 5.2 The Wellbeing 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 relevant well-being goals have been considered in this report:

- Long Term – Social Services is demand led and the SSWBA focusses on sustainable 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 transformation of services continues to be a priority.
- Integration – the implementation of the SSWBA and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 requires local authorities to work with partners, particularly the NHS and Education, to ensure care and support for people and support for carers is provided. The report evidences work with partners to enable children to be placed in permanent arrangements.
- Collaboration – The collaborative approaches described in the report, are managed and monitored through the regional collaborative management board and the National Adoption Service Advisory Group and Governance Board where there is local authority and sector stakeholder representation.
- Involvement – the key stakeholders are the people who use social care. There is considerable engagement including surveys, stakeholder meetings, feedback forms and the complaints process. The provision of accessible information and advice helps to ensure that the voice of adults, children and young people is heard.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 The service strives to work in line with the Councils climate change ambitions.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 The service works under the BCBC Safeguarding Policy to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and adults at risk of abuse or neglect and to ensure that effective practices are in place throughout the Regional Adoption Service.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no specific financial implications arising directly out of this report.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting considers and notes the performance and progress of the Regional Adoption Service.

Background documents

None



GWASANAETH MABWYSIADU
Bae'r Gorllewin
Western Bay
ADOPTION SERVICE



Quality of Service Review





GWASANAETH MABWYSIADU
Bae'r Gorllewin
Western Bay
ADOPTION SERVICE



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu | **National**
Cenedlaethol | **Adoption**
Service



Cyngor Abertawe
Swansea Council

Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol



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1. Introduction

The requirement to provide six monthly reviews of the Adoption Service is set out in Regulation 39 of The Local Authority Adoption Services (Wales) Regulations 2019. The aim of this report is to bring into one document a presentation and analysis of the activity of each of the local authority adoption agencies, operating as a regional service. In addition, Section 15 (c) of The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 sets out the responsibilities of regional collaborative to report to the Director of Operations for the National Adoption Service on a quarterly and annual basis.

The report and information within it will be used for:

- The Review of Service (Regulation 39 report).
- Given the broad content of this report it will be used for informing senior managers, cabinets, scrutiny committees and corporate parenting Boards.
- Quarterly and annual reports to NAS.

This report is in respect of the period 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025.. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information presented is an accurate record of the activity and quality of the Adoption Service and consider targets for the forthcoming year.

2. Current Position

The service has settled well in to its new location in Neath town centre and the office space is being well utilised by the whole staff team. The space has a fully equipped play room, direct work room and family meeting space. The new office space is invaluable in terms of the space it provides all of the service activities to be undertaken on site reducing the reliance on external room bookings.

The service has continued to make good progress in relation to areas of development with the NAS Synergy plan and the modernising agenda for adoption.

Areas identified for development at the end of last year:

Action	Update Match 2025	Plan
A flexible approach to adoption support and good interface with the Local Authorities teams in relation to specialist support such as edges of care support services and respite	The service has continued to improve the interface between the LA front door/Early help teams to ensure that communication and co-working our most complex cases is seamless	This work has become as business as usual
Re-modelling of the service to align with the available budget, a forward look at the service over the next 1, 3 and 5 years	This work is ongoing and has been more complex due to the need to review the entire budget formula	Will be completed by Dec 2025
To have a continued focus on adopter approvals and to ensure a continued marketing focus in each of the LA areas	The reduction of adopters coming from Bridgend remains a worry and the marketing plan has been redeveloped for 2025-26 to maximise our marketing opportunities across the region	Ongoing

Action	Update Match 2025	Plan
Further implementation of the BUSS model of sensory processing, with staff members progressing on to phase 3 of their development	The implementation plan has been hugely successful with leaplets groups running quarterly and three members of staff undertaking their qualification to complete 121 interventions	Business as usual the implementation of BUSS across the service will be evaluated in 2025-26
To continue to roll out the Understanding the Child Day as part of the transition service, increasing the confidence of the family finding team to grow capacity in the service.	Family Finding SW's are now completing TNT and UTC consultation analysis on all their family finding cases. Some further work on how full UTC days will be undertaken will be developed in April 2025	Ongoing
Review all Letterbox post 18. We will contact all adopters when their child reaches 17 to ask adopters and young person if they would like to continue letterbox post 18, this can continue until age 25	This is happening when adopters contact us post 16 and the active offer is made to continue post 18	Ongoing

3. Staffing

Staffing has remained fairly stable throughout the last two quarters with low absence rates. Work has been undertaken to ensure that all staff in work have an appraisal during 2024-25, and an audit of supervision has been undertaken which did not identify any significant areas of concern. Two long standing experienced members of staff have retired during this reporting period which is a loss in terms of the skills and knowledge they brought. Agreement has now been given for the additional temporary support workers to remain in position until the end of March 2026 whilst a service restructure is undertaken.

4. Adoption Panel

All Panel members have had an appraisal and the themes from these appraisals were shared at one of the quarterly Business meetings held with panel members.

Panel continues to have a central list of members. Panel has continued on a virtual basis although two face to face panels have taken place, these coincide with the Panel business meetings. Two of the three LA lead cabinet members are now sitting as members of the panel. The independent panel chair has had some sickness absence during Q4 but panels have continued as normal with the two Vice chairs being able to cover the chairing role. The panel chair is returning to work in April.

16 Panels were held in the timeframe.

5. Children

Performance in relation to children can be seen in the performance section at the end of this report, this section will consider the qualitative information.



The number of referrals for children has reduced from 110 last year to 85. Bridgend have seen a 50 % decrease in referrals on previous years.



There is a similar theme for Placement Orders which have remained fairly steady since 2021. The big difference this year to date is in relation to a much smaller number of children with a PO in Bridgend. This has been discussed in Interface meetings with the LA and the embedding of a new practice model. SOS has been credited with a re focus on work with families. Swansea has seen a sharp increase.



The number of children matched in the year was 33, compared to last years 43. We are seeing the complexity of children's needs increase and so matching children has taken longer. We have looked creatively at attending new profile events and re starting a monthly profile booklet and specific profiling of children across our social media channels.



The number of children placed has steadily reduced over the last three years. Positively all but 6 of the children placed in this timeframe were placed with regional adopters ensuring those children can continue to be supported when the need arises.



During this reporting period the average timeframe from placement order to placement was at 9 months this is due to the placement of two siblings groups who had been waiting for an extensive period of time and also a child for whom there were extensive appeal processes before



The number of children waiting and for whom the service is actively family finding has remained at a similar level to this time last year (25). The average length of time children have been waiting is 5 months, the shortest time is 5 days and the longest time is 19 months.

There have been no disruptions of regional children in this reporting period. However sadly the placement of two external children placed with WBAS adopters have disrupted shortly after placement. Both of these children were slightly older. We are awaiting the disruption meetings for these cases.



There were 44 Adoption Orders made in the timeframe, a small increase on the amount last year.



Staff in the region continue to embed the Name Change Policy. Of the children who have been made subject of an AOG in the reporting period 82% kept their first name maintaining the improved previous year performance.

6. Adopters

Enquiries and Adopter Approval



The number of initial enquiries to adopt continued to fall slightly during this reporting period. The pattern of enquiries continues to be difficult to predict with some defined peaks and troughs. Most enquiries come through from the Swansea area, there has been little activity from NPT or BCBC despite a continued marketing effort in those areas. The complexity of issues faced by prospective adopters remains challenging.



Adopter approvals increased by 2 this year from 27 to 29. Approving adopters in the right location to match with the location of the children we have in Family Finding remains a challenge.



The number of adopters waiting is 4. This is lower than previous years. The slow start to 2024-25 in relation to enquiries and approvals has meant that we have matched our regional adopters with children reducing the pool of waiting adopters.



The number of referrals for Non-Agency Adoptions slight increase from the position last year - although the robust system in place allows for these to be well managed.

7. Marketing

October was a very eventful month for the service and adoption across the country as we celebrated 10 years of working with the national adoption service and our regional counterparts in Wales.

To mark the occasion we held an exhibition at the Court Coleman Hotel in Bridgend, bringing together staff, professionals and families in an effort to appreciate just how far we've come over the 10 years as a service.

The exhibition displayed and told the story of all the different aspects of the WBAS service from birth parent support to marketing and our youth club. Adding a creative flourish there were also two original poetry pieces performed – one from award-winning poet Rhian Edwards and another from WBAS staff!

Talks were also held during the exhibition from birth parents and adopters around emotive subjects such as contact. Topping off such a special occasion were our special WBAS bakes and merchandise which went down a storm!



Going forward into the winter extensive marketing activity has resumed with the return of the marketing officer in late February - new social media campaigns, blogs and networking at the Wales Air Ambulance Coffee and Cake event in Dafen notable starts.

We've also put into place our marketing plans for the year ahead including activities such as attendance at the Urdd Eisteddfod in Margam Park, new outdoor advertising on bus rears in Bridgend and Neath and radio adverts in the build up to National Adoption Week.

Other notable activities which are ongoing include updating and refreshing of our brand, website and collateral.

8. Adoption Support Performance & Development work

Virtual Hub Consultations

27 Virtual Hubs consultations were provided during the whole year. Feedback is very positive. 19 of the 27 families scored prior and after the session, 17 moved at least one point up on the confidence scale following their consultation.

The last two families remained at the same level. Of the 13 families that rated the consultation in terms of helpfulness, ten families rated it as a 10, 2 rated a 9 and one rated it as an 8.

Signposting from Virtual Hub:

PATHway

11

Buss Group

6

Therapy

5

**Life Journey
Support**

5

**Youth
Clwb**

1

**Schools
Support**

2

**Therapeutic
parenting
programme**

2

9 families identified ADHD/ASD presenting behaviours/ assessments commencing, and one family FASD and 11 families reported school based issues. 21 of the families reported issues with emotional regulation, aggressive outbursts, rage and biting behaviours. Worryingly three families were experiencing issues with their child displaying self harm behaviours.

Contact and Life Journey Hub

Summary

11 contact and Life-journey Hubs took place during the year, the development only commenced late in 2024 and we are already seeing that it is becoming very busy. Child care social workers are also able to book in to discuss Life Journey Work on their cases.

8 of the 11 families completed the confidence score prior and after attending hub. 7 of the families moved at least two points on the confidence scale following the consultation. Three of the families rated the opportunity to talk though their worries as 10/10 in terms of usefulness.

Themes in relation to issues discussed at hub included:

- Increasing SW's confidence in completing their LJ books and Later life letters. Supporting them to be able to deliver difficult information within these.
- Advice and support to adopters in progressing contact or requests to re engage birth parents to make Post adoption contact more meaningful
- Adopters requesting support to explain to their children difficult information such as them experiencing Non Accidental injuries as young babies, birth parents being in prison and birth parents sadly passing away.
- Support to adopters and a young person who has contacted birth family via social media

- Support to adopters whose child doesn't want them to write letters for birth family

Check-ins

Annual Check-in Reviews have continued to be undertaken with birth parents and adoptive families at both the 12 month and 3 year point post Adoption order granted. These Check-ins continue to provide early intervention support to those that engage in them with support being identified at the earliest point.

Adopters/Check-ins



**Adopters for 33 children
engaged in the Check-in**

**Adopters for 4 children were
already receiving Adoption
Support**

**Adopters for 12 other children
were contacted but declined a
Check-in**

From these Check-ins adopters were signposted on to the Life Journey workshop and now the Life Journey and Contact Hub, the Therapeutic Parenting Programme, Pathway referrals and to attend the Leaplets group.

It is encouraging to note that all but 2 adopters reported that their children had an age appropriate understanding of their Life Journey Story. All talked positively about the importance of their ongoing contact with their child's foster carer and there was lots of discussion about post adoption contact arrangements.

Positively those children who had plans for direct sibling contact agreed at the time of the order had maintained that. Adopters who had not embraced writing an annual update were encouraged to restart this.

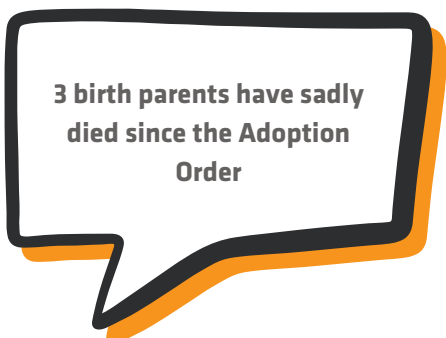
Birth Parents



**Birth parents for 16 children
engaged in the Check-in**



**A further 44 birth parents
were contacted**



**3 birth parents have sadly
died since the Adoption
Order**

Some birth parents talked about positive change they have managed to achieve, birth parents were reminded of the support they could receive in receiving and responding to their annual letter and many were referred to the team for one to one support and to attend the birth mothers group. Several birth fathers requested support and were referred to one of the male workers in the team.

PATHways

There are currently 36 AUK Pathways cases open to WBAS. Between October 2024 and March 2025 there were 10 new referrals made to Pathways and there is currently one further case which is likely to be referred before the end of March. Of the new referrals, 6 were referred to Pathways following Virtual Hub Consultations, 3 were referred through the duty system and 2 were known to and referred by their social worker/therapist within Western Bay Adoption Service. One of the new referrals is a re-referral to Pathways.

In December 2024, Pathways announced that they had achieved the agreed number of referrals for the current 2-year funding cycle and stopped processing referrals. This was an opportunity for AUK to review the Parent Pathways programme; AUK and NAS agreed to pilot a new model of service. Pathways launched the new pilot programme in January 2025 - Pathways Multi-Disciplinary Team service (MDT). The pilot consists of 30 cases across Wales. WBAS were allocated 5 cases (based on the proportion of Adoption Grant funding).

Of the 11 current referrals, 6 are accessing the previous Parent Pathways Programme, 4 have been accepted for the new MDT programme and the one potential case will also access the MDT programme if accepted.

The adopters currently open and accessing the previous Parent Pathways programme have access to the three pillars of Parent Pathways -psychological consultation, parents support partner and reflective group.

Although all adopters access the consultation session with the psychologist/therapist; engagement with Parents Support Partners and the Pathways Reflective Group is significantly lower (as previously reported) and this has been a theme experienced nationally by Pathways and significant in the decision to review the Pathways programme.

Four families have been accepted for the new MDT programme and are due to commence work shortly. Under the new MDT programme, each family will meet with a member of the multi-disciplinary team to identify their needs. The multi-disciplinary team will then consider the most appropriate package of support which will include up to 10 sessions with a member(s) of the multi-disciplinary team.

Therapeutic intervention will be available on a range of issues designed to meet each family's unique needs including, for example; Therapeutic parenting, Family therapy, Neurodiversity, Education issues, Life journey work, Sensory issues and Individual therapy.

Youth Clwb

During the period October 2024-March 2025 we have delivered 17 sessions of our Western Bay Youth Clwb. Our young people are aged between 11-16 years old and come from all across the Western Bay Region. We continue to attract on average around 12 young people each week and have 4 members of staff. During this period we have welcomed 5 new members to youth clwb and 3 young people have returned. We are also looking to train up an older adopted young person to volunteer with the group on a regular basis. This has already been a great experience for him as he starts to develop an understanding of the role and responsibilities of a youth worker. He is building great working relationships with our group of young people. We can see his self-esteem and confidence building and his mum is super proud of him.

Clwb continues to keep to the same structure each week which includes popular activities such as cooking, arts and crafts, indoor and outdoor games. All of these activities provide the perfect opportunity for the group to learn new skills, make new friends and seek support and guidance from the youth workers.

Our highly skilled and experienced youth work team have regular discussions with young people about a range of issues affecting them. During this period there have been discussions around death, anxiety, adoption, court hearings, online safety, self harm, bullying, vaping, sleep deprivation, periods, appropriate touching, questioning pro-nouns, identities, birth names.

In October we took 2 young people to the 10 Year celebration event at Court Coleman Manor Hotel. Both young people thoroughly enjoyed the day. O ended the day's celebration with an emotional speech about his experience of adoption. He was amazing and an absolute natural at public speaking!

Through these experiences he has really found something he excels at and which makes him feel good. He hopes to have further opportunities in public speaking at other events in the future.

Another one of our new young people had not attended school since the age of 11. With the support of her WBAS worker, she was very brave and attended our youth clwb. This was an email we received from her mum.

“Thank you so much for taking E to Youth Club. She has really enjoyed and has come back so happy.

“She is looking forward to next week already”

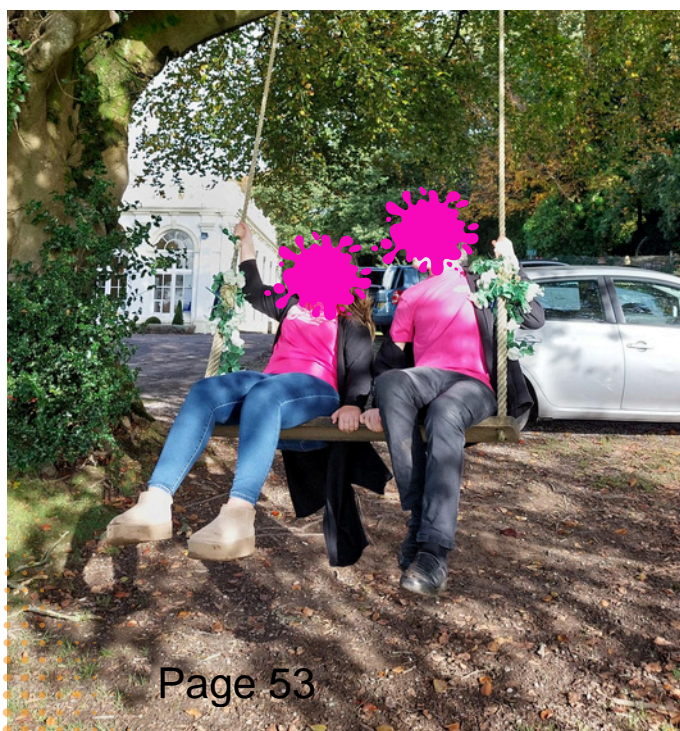
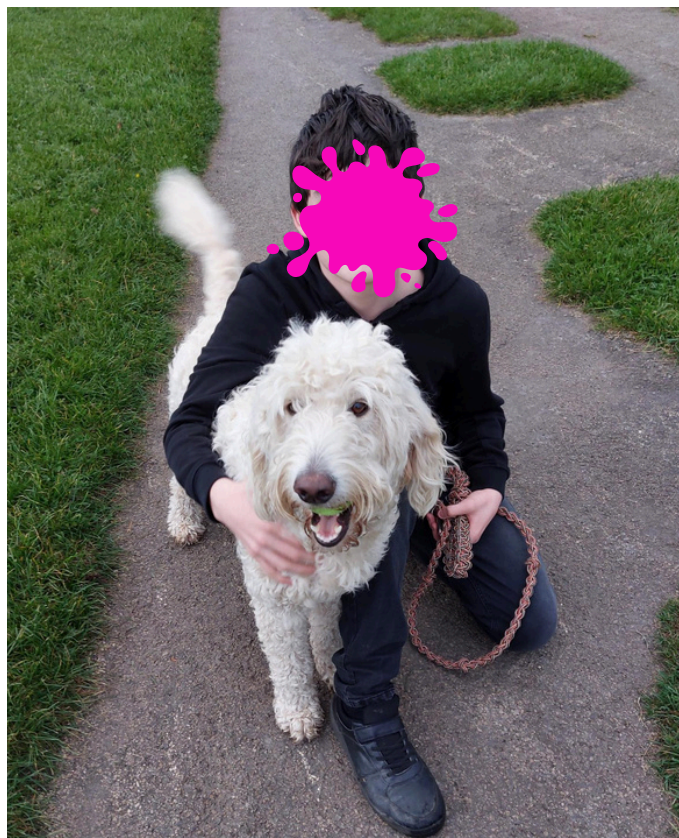
Shortly after this E decided to try school and has attended school ever since. We strongly believe that making the step to attend Clwb first, was crucial in her recognising that she was also able to use similar coping strategies to attend school. We are so pleased for her.

In November we invited Barod to one of our sessions to help our group understand the risks associated with vaping. This was very successful and insightful for all involved. We have also established a strong relationship with the Evolve team of youth workers at Stadwen. They are great at including us in a whole range of opportunities and events.

In January 2025, we were fortunate to acquire Swansea City Council COAST funding. Our group chose to attend Lazerzone. We had a fantastic turn out with 16 young people attending. Everyone had a fantastic night.

We continue to be really pleased with the success of WBAS Youth Clwb, one of our young people expressed to his court Guardian that he had found his best friend at WBAS Youth Clwb.

We are really making a positive difference!








Birth Parent Support

Monthly birth parent support groups continue to run in all three Local Authorities with approximately 30 Birth Mothers engaging regularly. Numbers in Neath Port Talbot have been low and so workers attended the Willow project to speak to birth mums there.

The team have also:

- Supported 8 mums with Letterbox ✓
- Supported 1 mum who previously attended with Letterbox ✓
- Supported 1 mum twice with Letterbox October / January ✓
- Supported 7 mums to attend yoga retreat in November ✓
- Team supported 17 mums to attend Winter well being event/food/hamper/wellbeing bag/raffle prizes provided ✓
- Picked up and dropped off food hamper from Church for mum who has attended group and gone on to care for her second child in the community ✓
- Supported 1 mum one to one emotionally prior to Christmas ✓
- Met with Family Finder to discuss 1 vulnerable mum to support with letterbox and adopter meeting – regular check ins with her ✓
- Regular check-ins with 1 mum due to stress of sibling residing with her – recently linked the same mum with SW from NPT to discuss these issues ✓
- Regular check ins with 1 vulnerable mum – this mum referred to adult services in January and now has support from them ✓
- 2 new mums supported to attend January group – 1 referred by duty and 1 referred by AS SW ✓

- Two workers met with 1 mum for emotional support after her ill health 
- Supported 4 mums to attend different venue in Feb – 3 mums accessed free clothing from the charity shop attached to the venue 
- 1 mum supported to attend another contact with adopters 
- 1 mum who previously attended group supported to meet adopters for the second time 
- 3 mums supported to link in with RISE project Bridgend 

Therapy Team

The Psychology and Therapy team continue to integrate their practice throughout the Service. There are currently 12 children and families accessing Play Therapy or Filial Therapy, 16 families accessing Systemic Family Therapy, 3 accessing BUSS and 28 families accessing therapeutic consultations with the psychologist or therapist.

Our team of therapists have been depleted recently due to long term sickness so we have needed to find creative ways to continue to provide quality support throughout the service by working through consultation as well as individual case work. We have recruited a Drama Psychotherapist, who is due to start on 24 March.

Our work throughout the year has included:

- Therapeutic Parenting Course - Ran from Oct to Dec with 6 attendees (3 couples) who fed back that they benefitted greatly from a better understanding of the theory and the opportunities to discuss individual challenges.
- Virtual Hub - Working alongside therapeutic adoption support social workers to support parents, widening parents' access to the therapy team. This addition to our service has been very well received by families with them reliably feeling more confident in dealing with presenting issues following the session.

- Facilitating a group for parents of teenage children - Our systemic family therapist has worked with adoption support social workers for parents to explore issues that arise in adopted children in their teenage years.
- Understanding the Child Work - Our psychologist and play therapist continue to work closely with the Family Finding team and have now embedded the Understanding the child work throughout WBAS processes. Family Finders are more confident in considering the impact of the child's genetics, birth families' epigenetics and early history and how this can inform matching with adopters. Family Finders, CSWs and fostering social workers worked alongside the UtC team in drawing up Trauma Nurture Timelines and Circles of Understanding for complex cases and sibling groups and are confident in completing these in all of their cases. We have also introduced Preparation Through Play consultations where children's social workers, supervising social workers and Family Finder Social workers can discuss how best to prepare children in foster care for their move to adoption with a play therapist specialising in transition.

Some families need a bit of additional support in early placement. Our psychologist and play therapist provide therapeutic consultations at times of need.

- Assisting with differential diagnosis - It can be difficult to tease out symptoms that are associated with developmental trauma from those that could be suggestive of an underlying neurodevelopmental difficulty.

Our psychologist supports parents and schools to think about potential roots of behaviour and has acted as a 'professional friend' to schools when diagnostic assessment is needed and has also been able to undertake cognitive assessments to support the understanding of a child's needs.

9. Policies and Procedures

National Adoption Policies and Procedures which were a collaborative piece of work involving all the regions and VAA's were formally launched in October 2023.

10. CSSIW

The service was last inspected during 2018-19 and an appropriate subsequent plan drawn up which has been reviewed at the Management Board with actions completed. WBAS were the only region to be inspected. CSSIW have confirmed that all Regional services will face an inspection of their service in the next 12 months.

11. Local Monitoring and Governance

The Management Board is fully compliant with the Directions Powers Regulations, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) 201. The terms of reference in place.

Monitoring and governance of the service is the responsibility of the Management Board, which now meets on a quarterly basis. The Board members interrogate data provided on a quarterly and annual basis. Strategic decisions are shared with the board for approval whereas, in the main, operational decisions are overseen by the Regional Manager who is supervised by the 'Host' authority Head of Service. The service is measured on both the service plan and the national performance indicators through regular reports, presenting the achievements of the service compared to previous years and where data is available, with other regions across Wales. The formation of a Regional Joint committee has now happened and these meetings will take place twice a year.

A six monthly report is available to Scrutiny Committees in all three local authorities. Periodically, reports are submitted and shared with Cabinet, Scrutiny Panels and Corporate Parenting Cabinets/Committees. Performance indicators are reported to the National Adoption Central team on a quarterly basis, this information is provided to the Advisory Group and the Governance Board of the National Adoption Service.

During this financial year the Regional manager has presented information to all three of the LA's corporate parenting forums, the Corporate parenting Committee in Bridgend, to the Cabinet Committee in NPT and the Scrutiny Committee in Swansea.

12. Consultations and engagement of those who use the Service

The use of surveys and qualitative data continues to be used to receive feedback from families and professionals that have experienced the service. We are in regular contact with our adopters through our closed Facebook page where they are able to also provide feedback about their experience of the service and the events that are run. A working group attended by adopters from various stages of the adoption journey is being re-launched from April 2025.

The service is also implementing a pre-evaluation pack with all new families who commence with support from 1 April 2025, introducing a wellbeing scale to ensure that the work that is undertaken is positively impacting on individuals wellbeing. Mid point and Post evaluation feedback will also be sought throughout the intervention to ensure that the intervention is achieving the goals set for the family.

Since December surveys are in place for all workshops, panels, support groups and training events. 155 adopters, young people, social workers and foster carers have responded following attending a session.

Some of their feedback is summarised on the next page.

Support Group for Parents of Teenagers



Improving emotional wellbeing 8.60/10



Reducing isolation 9.40/10



Usefulness 10/10



Speaking to others and getting ideas from others to feel supported and not alone

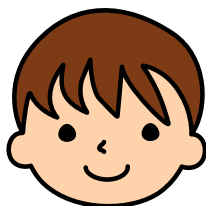
Youth Clwb



YP Feel listened to 9.30/10



Would recommend to other YP 9.60/10



I love going to Youth Club, I have found my best friend and everyone is super friendly!

Day 4 post approval training



A really useful workshop 9.75/10



Medical discussion was really useful, it gave me better insight into medical conditions and their impact plus hearing from the adopter first hand was incredible!

Support workshop for approved adopters

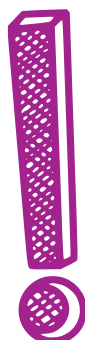
 Usefulness 9.53/10



Confidence in preparing for the next stage in the adoption journey increased from 7.27 at the start of the session to 8.87 at the end. These sessions had focused on PATHways/Adoption Support and post adoption contact.

Understanding the Child Work

 Usefulness 9.79/10



Those who attended rated their confidence in understanding the needs of the child at 5.89 at the start of the session, this increased to 9.26 at the end.



13. Quality assurance, compliments, comments, complaints, safeguarding issues, whistleblowing and representation

Attempts are made to address any complaints received by the service at the informal stage but registered with the relevant local authority within the region. Fortunately complaints remain very low with many issues being resolved informally before reaching the formal process. The service has had four new complaints during 2024-25 all 5 have been dealt via Stage 1.

14. Overall assessment of the service

The overall assessment of the service during this reporting period is good and the priorities identified within the good practice guide and the Adopt Cymru plan continue to be developed creatively within the service. The service continues to be able to manage the adoption support function effectively with no waiting list for adoption support.

Family Finding and Recruitment and Assessment continue to respond to the challenges of the sector, the level of complexity for both children and prospective adopters is increasing, adopter enquiries remain inconsistent and approving adopters in the locations that the service needs is challenging. The service is mindful of the budget constraints being faced by the Local Authorities and has commenced a review of the service structure which has remained the same since 2015 to ensure that the service can remain affordable.

Next steps identified 2025-26

The service has a developmental plan in place for 2025-26 which is based on the National Adoption Service plan for the forthcoming year but in addition specifies some regionally specific actions. In the table below the regional actions for Q1 Q2 have been summarised.

Service Timeframe	Timeframe	By Whom
Undertake two case file audits	September 2025 and January 2026	RAM and TM's
Implement the Pre evaluation pack and review after three months	Launch April/May 2025 Review template and forms September 2025 Consider YP evaluation pack	Whole service
Reinstate the Adopter focus group	June 2025	R&M manager MRO
Update Young Persons Guide and consider development of a adoption Support guide for young person. Consult and work with Young people in designing the guide.	September 2025	RAM Youth workers
As part of annual appraisal of panel members review panel make up to ensure that panel reflects the diversity of our adoption community.	September 2025	RAM R&A manager
Embed the new regional process for accessing files to ensure a more timely response is given to individuals wishing to access information.	May 2025	Access Team
ASSA notifications and process to be reviewed Audit to consider notifications at matching and 3 years post placement	September 2025	TM Adoption Support and TM Family finding
Review of service structure Review of budget formula	September 2025 May 2025	RAM Management Board

Nichola Rogers

Nichola Rogers | Regional Adoption Manager
April 2025



GWASANAETH MABWYSIADU
Bae'r Gorllewin
Western Bay
ADOPTION SERVICE





GWASANAETH MABWYSIADU
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Western Bay
ADOPTION SERVICE



Performance Summary in respect of Children and Adopters

Oct - March 2024/25

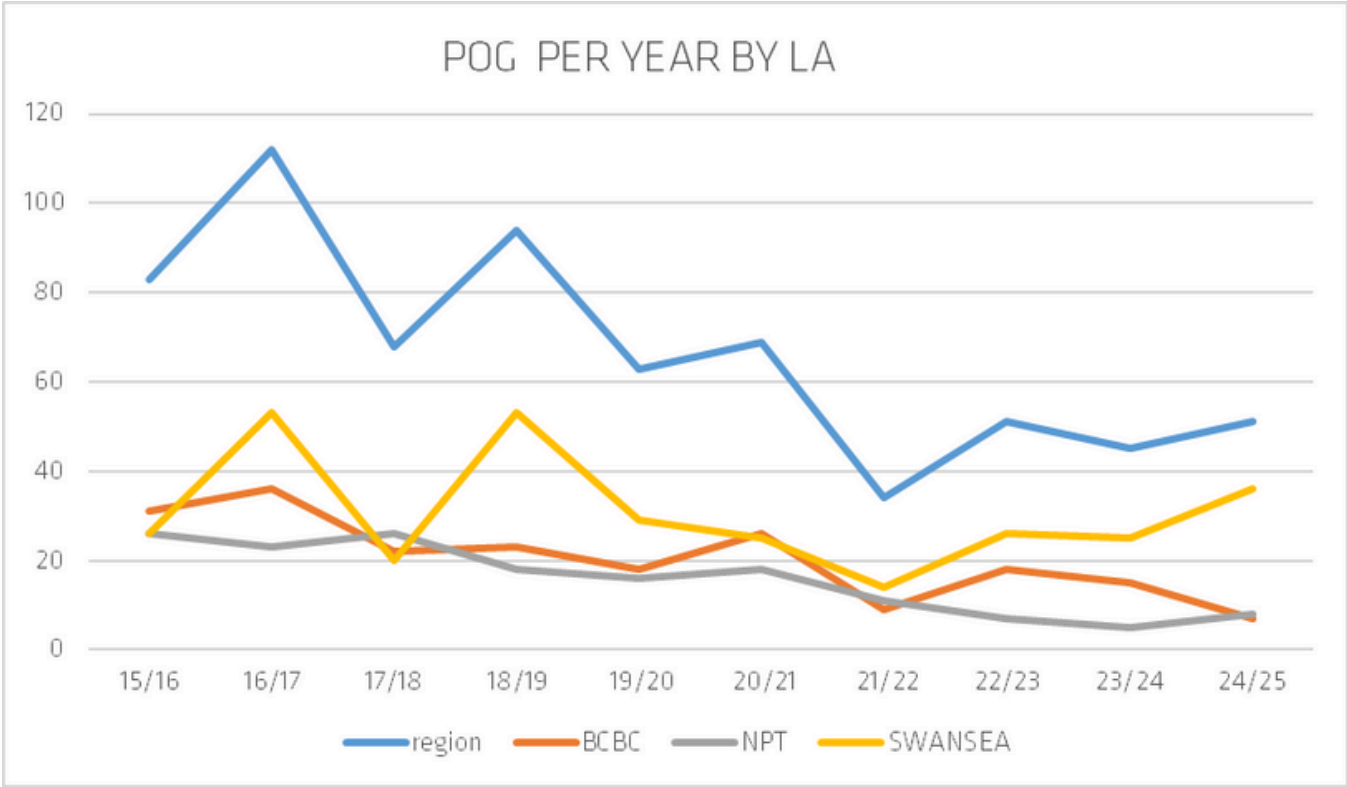
End of Year Summary 2024-25

	2019/20	2020/21 COVID	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number of Referrals	153 BCBC 62 NPT 32 SC 59	129 BCBC 44 NPT 39 SC 46	118 BCBC 41 NPT 21 SC 56	115 BCBC 49 NPT 17 SC 48	110 BCBC 42 NPT 16 SC 52	85 BCBC 20 NPT 17 SC 48
Number of POG	63 BCBC 18 NPT 16 SC 29	69 BCBC 26 NPT 18 SC 25	34 BCBC 9 NPT 11 SC 14	51 BCBC 18 NPT 7 SC 26	45 BCBC 15 NPT 5 SC 25	51 BCBC 7 NPT 8 SC 36
Number of children matched	80 BCBC 22 NPT 22 SC 36	79 BCBC 23 NPT 19 SC 37	51 BCBC 15 NPT 14 SC 18	38 BCBC 8 NPT 7 SC 23	43 BCBC 15 NPT 9 SC 19	33 BCBC 6 NPT 6 SC 21
No of children placed	79 BCBC 20 NPT 21 SC 38	69 BCBC 20 NPT 17 SC 32	49 BCBC 17 NPT 14 SC 18	35 BCBC 11 NPT 5 SC 19	43 BCBC 15 NPT 10 SC 18	35 BCBC 6 NPT 5 SC 24

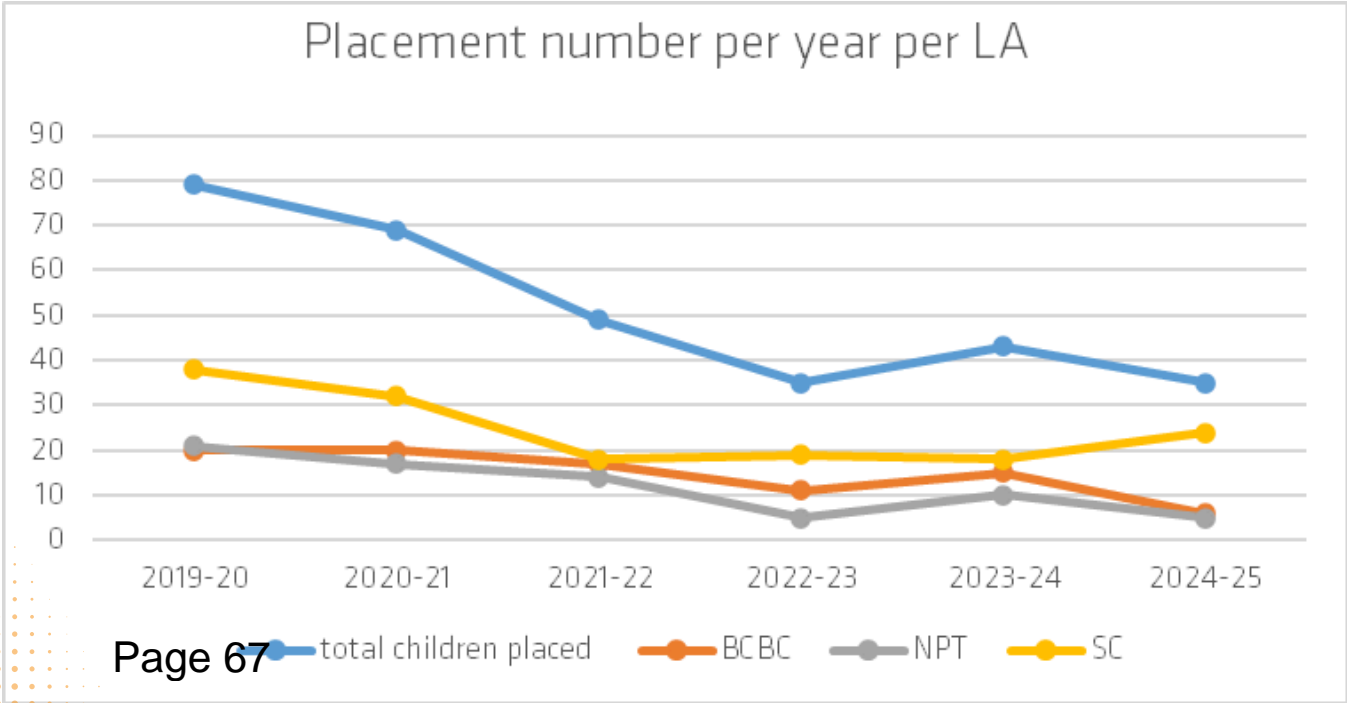
Of these children number of children placed with WBAS adopters	44	55	32	21	37	39
Of these children number placed via the Market share Project			3	3	2	2
Of these children number of children placed with Non regional adopters	35	14	14	11	4	4
Number of AOG	62 BCBC 17 NPT 14 SC 31	63 BCBC 20 NPT 13 SC 29	61 BCBC 16 NPT 15 SC 30	46 BCBC 17 NPT 10 SC 19	35 BCBC 10 NPT 7 SC 18	44 BCBC 11 NPT 7 SC 26
Number of Enquiries	166	260	224	169	213	194
Number of adopters approved	54	53	52	31	27	29

POG

Trend analysis since 2015 in relation to POG

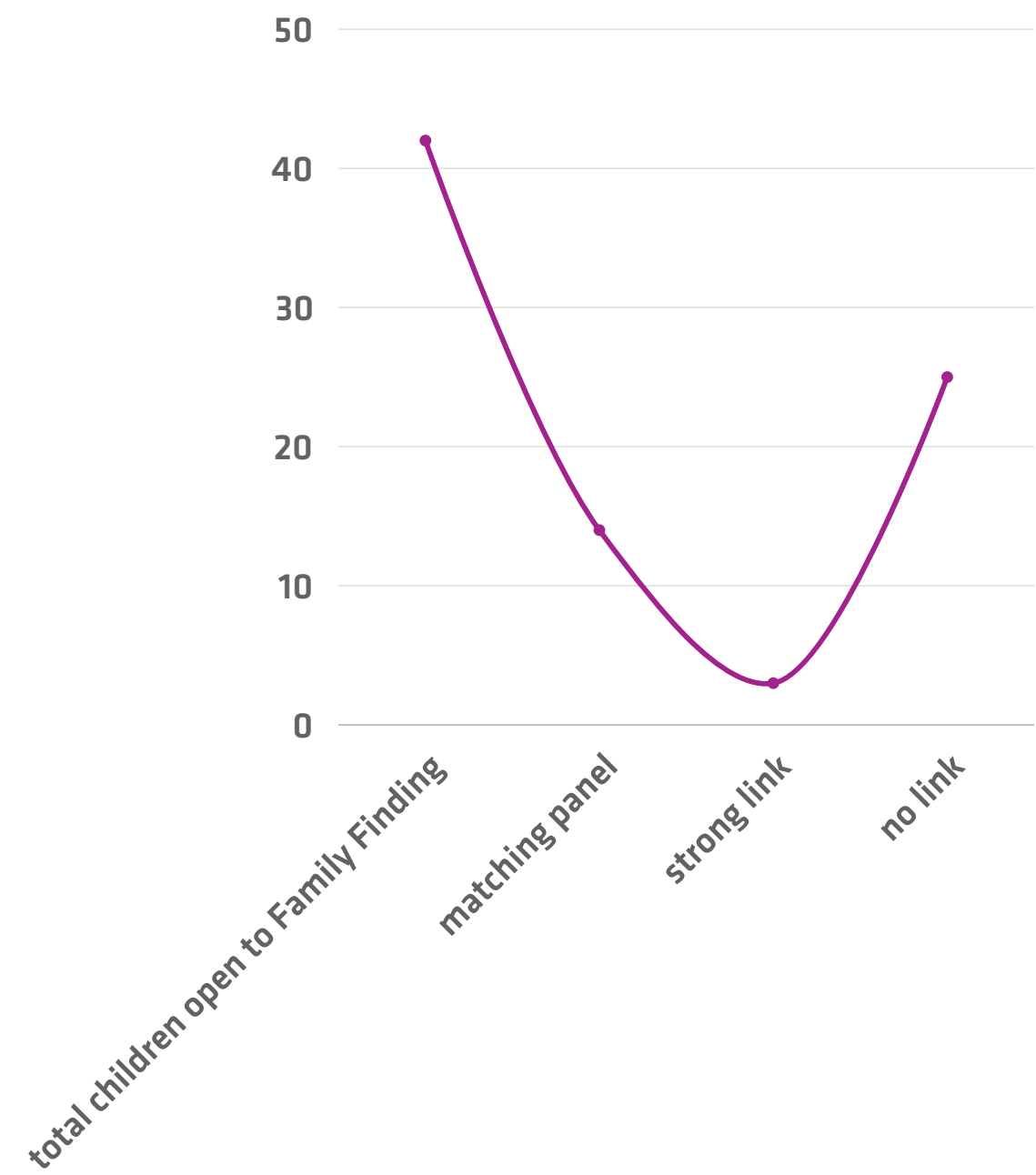


Children Placed



Of the 35 children placed this year, 29 were placed with regional adopters, 2 children were placed via the market share project in Wales (2 St David's). 4 children were placed out of the region. 3 of these children were placed in Scotland and 1 in England.

Children within the Family Finding Section



Children waiting

At the end of quarter 4:



25 children were waiting without a strong link or matching panel booked



For 10 of these children the PO was only granted in February/March 25



The average length of time that children have been waiting is 5 months, the longest time is 19 months.

11 of the children have complex medical conditions and/or potential presenting ASD behaviours which makes Family Finding hugely challenging. There are 3 sibling groups of 2 children



Children Placed


Average Length of Time from Placement Order to Placed for Adoption


This year has seen an increase in the length of time from placement order to placed for adoption, this is primarily due to the placement of two siblings groups who had been waiting for an extensive period of time and also a child for whom their were extensive appeal processes before the court.


	WB 2019-20	WB 2020-21	WB 2021-22	WB 2022-23	WB 2023-24	WB 2024-25
Placement Order to Placed for Adoption average (months)	8.1	9.2	9.7	9.1	7.7	9.79
Placement Order to Placed for Adoption shortest (months)				3.5	3.25	3
Placement Order to Placed for Adoption longest (months)				24.6	18	23.75
Placement Order to Placed for Adoption average (months)	8.1	9.2	9.7	9.1	7.7	9.79

Name change

In 2023 a name change policy was implemented to try and address the number of children whose first name was changed at point of AOG.

Of the children placed in 2022-23 only 60% retained their first name. With the implementation of the policy this increased to 80% of children retaining their first name in 2023-24. 

Of the 44 children subject to an AOG in 2024-25, 36 (82%) retained their first name. For the other 8 their first name moved to their middle name due to its uniqueness and identifiability. 

The process and report was completed in all these cases so the child has a clear record of the decision that was made and the reason for it. The implementation of the policy continues to be effective. 

Birth parent adopter meetings

Of the 29 children placed this year, 46 birth parents were offered meetings with the adopters (31 birth mothers and 15 birth fathers).

The parents of 16 children attended these meetings (in total 15 BM and 6 BF attended) and for a further 3 children there was an exchange of questions and information between Birth parents and Adopters.

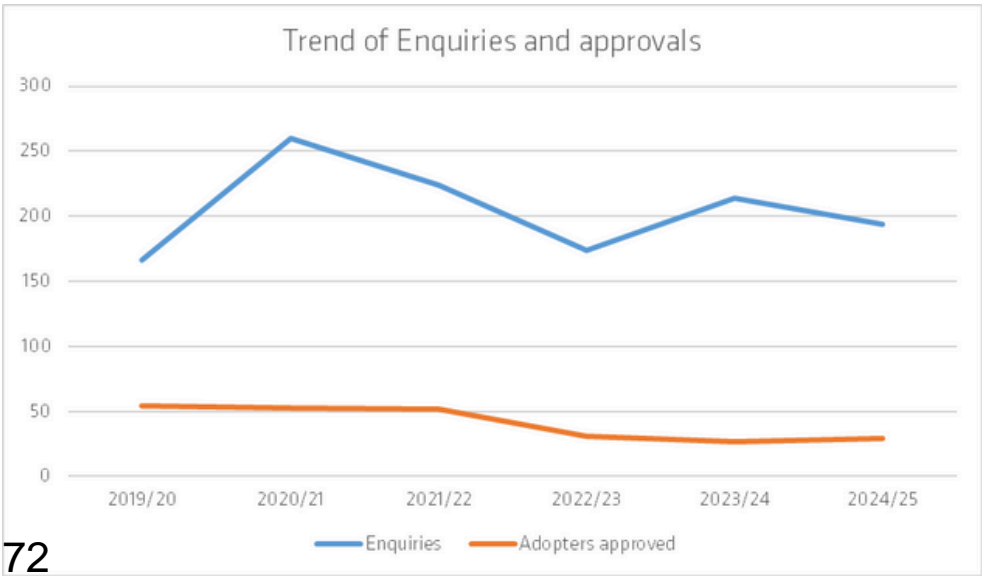
Where meetings have not taken place some exploration is still ongoing as to whether a meeting can be undertaken in the future with 1 birth mother and 1 birth father who did not feel able to manage these meetings at the time of placement. All the meetings were seen as hugely positive and beneficial to those involved.

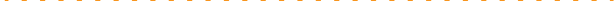
Of significance for 6 children of the 35 children placed adopters met extended family members and most importantly siblings and their carers.

It is hoped that the forming of these initial relationships will serve to strengthen the opportunity for siblings to maintain a more significant level of contact. 5 of the children placed now have plans for ongoing direct sibling contact including 1 case where the sibling is living with the birth father.

Enquiries and Adopter Approval

	2019/20	2020/21 Lockdown	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number of Enquiries	166	260	224	174	214	194
Number of adopters approved	54	53	52	31	27	29





An audit of the 29 approved adopters at end of year March 2025 has been undertaken and the following identified:

	Number of families approved 2020-21 (53)	Number of adoptive families approved 2021- 22 (52)	Number of adoptive Families Approved 2022-23 (31)	Number of adoptive families approved 2023-24 (27)	Number of adoptive families approved 2024-25 (29)
Bridgend	9	10	14	8	5
Swansea	25	22	7	9	13
Neath Port Talbot	8	11	4	7	5
Cardiff Area	7	5	2	1	4
Carmarthenshi re and Tenby	3	5	3	2	1
England	1	1	1	0	1

Of the 29 approved adopters this year, they can further be broken down into approvals of:

- 3 single adopters
- 6 adopters from same sex relationships
- 6 foster carers and 14 heterosexual couples

Currently there are 5 adopters waiting without a link or match.

Non Agency – Step Parent/ Non Relative Applications

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/2025
Number of Referrals	52 BCBC 15 NPT 18 SWN 19	26 BCBC 9 NPT 11 SWN 6	35 BCBC 12 NPT 10 SWN 13
Number of Referrals	52 BCBC 15 NPT 18 SWN 19	26 BCBC 9 NPT 11 SWN 6	35 BCBC 12 NPT 10 SWN 13

Meeting of:	CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING
Date of Meeting:	7 MAY 2025
Report Title:	FOCUS ON ENGAGEMENT – VOICE OF THE CHILD
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES & WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	STEVE BERRY CORPORATE PARENTING & PARTICIPATION OFFICER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There are no implications for the policy framework and procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	An update report to inform Cabinet Committee of the Specialist Independent Participation Service support to our Care Experienced Youth Forum.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting with an overview of the Care Experienced Youth Forum activity for the year April 2024 to March 2025.

2. Background

- 2.1 TGP Cymru is commissioned by Bridgend County Borough Council Children Services, in connection with the Bridgend Corporate Parenting Board, to deliver specialist independent participation support to gain the views of care experienced young people and care leavers on a range of themes identified by Bridgend Corporate Parenting Board and Bridgend County Borough Council Children Services, Bridgend's independent advocacy provider and the forum members themselves. This three-pronged approach is supported by regular attendance to the forum by advocacy staff, including the advocacy team manager, and by Bridgend County Borough Council via the Corporate Parenting & Participation Officer.

3. Current situation/ proposal

- 3.1 TGP Cymru has produced a report covering the activities that the Bridgend Youth Voice Forum have been involved in from April 2024 to March 2025 (**Appendix 1**).
- 3.2 **Appendix 1** provides an insight to the range of activities that the forum have been involved in and also sets out what the Forum are looking to undertake in the future.

- 3.3 There were 13 Forum sessions held between April 2024 and March 2025 with 103 attendances recorded. This attendance was made up of 13 individual young people from our care experienced population.
- 3.4 During the past year, the Forum have been involved in local and National projects and initiatives that have included:
- Meeting with Bridgend County Borough Council Officers to inform service improvement, training courses and share their experiences
 - Taking part in recruitment and selection panels for the appointment of TGP Cymru staff
 - Engagement session with Director of Social Service & Wellbeing for Bridgend County Borough Council to inform the Director report for 2023-2024
 - Gaining recognition for previous work by winning two different awards for their involvement in the 'These are our voices' project which is now displayed as a mural in Bridgend town centre
 - Involvement in the [Lwc / Luck Project](#) where the experiences of children in care were illustrated through a variety of mediums with in a 'pop up foster home' erected within the Senydd during November.
 - Workshop with Children In Wales to inform the production of an information padlet providing resources for young people leaving care
 - Co-production activities to inform the Achievement Awards of care experienced children and young people in Bridgend County Borough
 - British Transport Police field trip to Port Talbot
 - Engagement event at the Children Commissioner for Wales office that included consultation with Welsh Government Education Department to inform the review of Personal Education Plans
 - Involvement in the Voices from Care Cymru 'Proud to be me' event in Swansea that included workshops and activities
- 3.5 Within the report, young people have also offered their views on being part of the Forum:
- "Forum gives me a place where I feel accepted, and my voice is listened to"*
"I can be myself and discuss my mental health openly"
"I feel accepted even though I have autism, and I feel I can influence important decisions"
- 3.6 The Forum has seen several challenges over the past year, listed within the report, however these are being addressed in their forward plan for the coming year.
- 3.7 For the coming months, the Forum is seeking to increase the number of attendees to the group sessions and activities through a recruitment drive, receive more guest speakers and explore other opportunities for care experienced young people in Bridgend County.

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

- 4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, or socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

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

- 5.1 Long term – the establishment of the Corporate Parenting Board will address how agencies can address their responsibilities for Corporate Parenting in a strategic manner to make robust plans for the future – this includes the activity of the Bridgend Youth Voice Forum.
- 5.2 Prevention – the proposals that have been made mean that the responsibilities we all have for Corporate Parenting are identified and established into what we need to report on. Measuring and reporting on these responsibilities through the Corporate Parenting Board will enable us to take early action on any issues identified.
- 5.3 Integration – the Corporate Parenting Board has a multi-agency membership. This membership is intended to provide sufficient representation to cover who has specific responsibilities for our children and young people in particular circumstances and regular liaison between the Youth Forum and the Board is undertake through the work of the Corporate Parenting Officer.
- 5.4 Collaboration – the success and effectiveness of our Corporate Parenting in Bridgend is dependent on how well agencies work together to achieve shared goals and aspirations for our children and young people. These goals and aspirations are cited within the ‘Bridgend Corporate Parenting Strategy – Our plan for you....’
- 5.5 Involvement – due consideration has been given to how different ‘providers of care’ are involved in the proposals around Corporate Parenting. Specific attention and proposals are given to enabling the voice and lived experience of our children and young people.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 There is no direct impact on Climate Change through the implementation of this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 All safeguarding implications have been fully considered within Corporate Parenting development and the Youth Forum. No safeguarding issues were raised within the work cited in this report.
- 7.2 The subject matter of this entire report relates directly to corporate parenting and any implications are discussed within it.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 Corporate Parenting development does not have a specific allocated budget. Where costs have arisen to support participation of children and young people, engagement, meetings and training of professionals the costs have been met from within the Children's Services core budget.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 For the Cabinet Committee to take note of report in **Appendix 1** and give recognition to the work Bridgend Youth Voice Forum where appropriate

Background documents

None

APPENDIX 1

Overview of Bridgend Specialist Participation Service

Bridgend Youth Voice (BYV) Forum

2024 – 2025



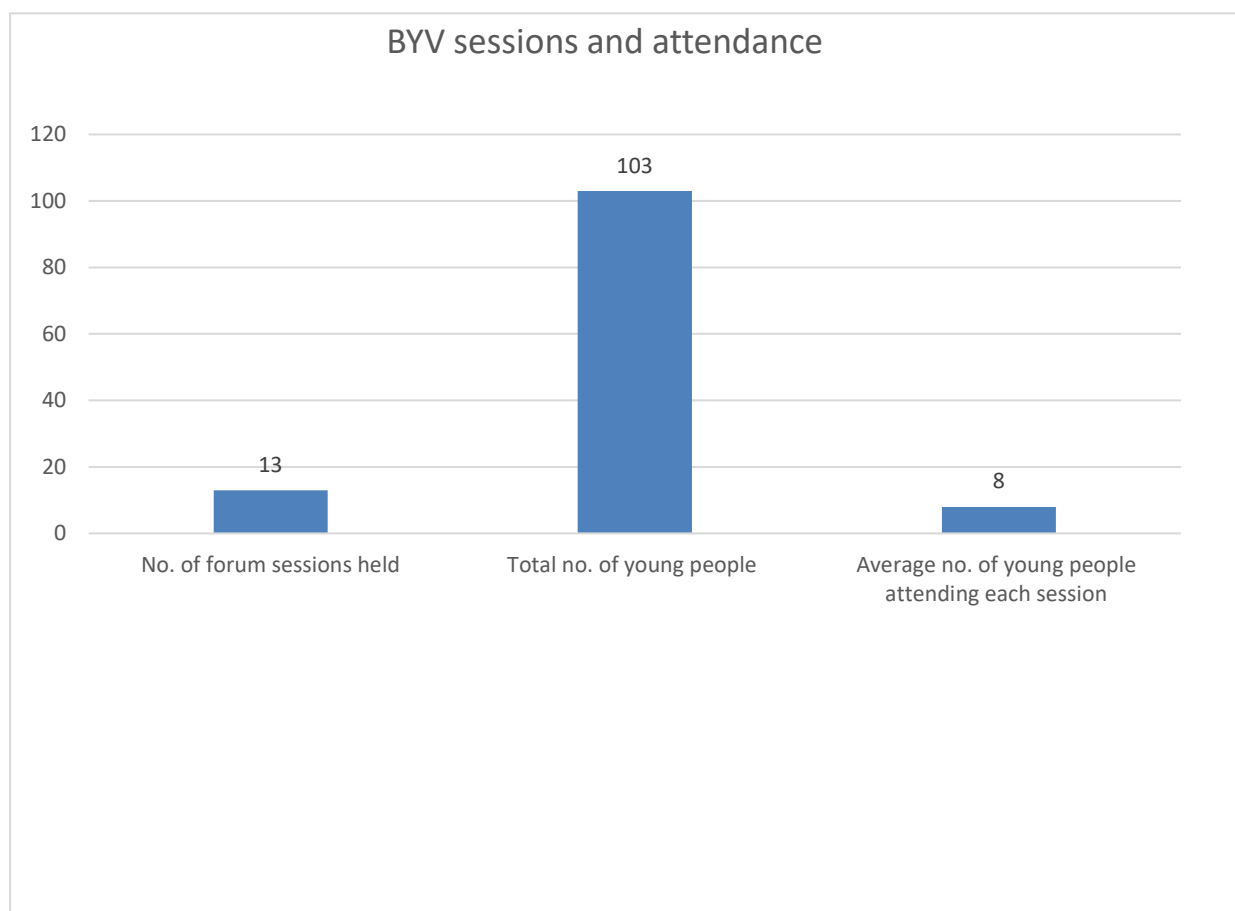
Scope

TGP Cymru is commissioned by Bridgend County Borough Council Children Services to deliver specialist participation support to gain the views of care experienced young people and care leavers on a range of themes identified by Bridgend Corporate Parenting Board and Bridgend County Borough Council Children Services, Bridgend's independent advocacy provider and the forum members themselves. This three - pronged approach is supported by regular attendance to the forum by advocacy staff, including the advocacy team manager, and by Bridgend County Borough Council via Steve Berry, *Corporate Parenting & Participation Officer*. We have also experienced positive engagement from LA staff and personal advisors who have assisted in some sessions.

Activity Overview

Between April 2024 and March 2025 13 participation sessions have been held with Bridgend care experienced young people.

The sessions have been attended by 103 young people overall. A total of 16 unique young people in attendance, ten male, five female, one young person identifying as transgender. One young person diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder has also attended forum sessions regularly.



Achievements and Activities Summary

Q&A session with Bridgend Complaints Officer Sarah Tripp

The Bridgend Complaints Officer shared copies of Bridgend Complaints policy with the Bridgend Youth Voice Forum members and explained the complaints procedure and answered questions put forward by forum members.

Independent Professional Advocate (IPA) Recruitment

Forum members were invited to be involved in the recruitment of a new Independent Professional Advocate into the Cwm Taff Morgannwg Regional Advocacy Service. One member sat on the interview panel, asked questions along with TGP Cymru staff and was involved in discussion and scoring following the interview. Their insights were invaluable and resulted in wider planning and discussions about how young people can be involved in advocacy recruitment in the future.

Questionnaire from Corporate Director of Social Services Claire Marchant

Claire Marchant attended Bridgend Youth Voice Forum to consult with forum members in relation to their experiences with social services over the previous year.

Award for previous 'These are our Voices' work.

Bridgend Youth Voice Forum were informed of their success in winning two awards for a previous piece of work 'These Are Our Voices' in which forum members were supported to spend a day with young people's poet Laureate Connor Allen, along with the Foster Wales and We are Cowshed and created a unique poem reflecting their feelings about being care experienced. Their work is now displayed publicly in Bridgend town. The awards were the Low Budget Campaign Award at the PRCA DARE Awards Cymru, honouring outstanding PR and communications. The same week at the CIPR Excellence Awards in London (a UK-wide PR awards ceremony), the campaign won gold in the low-budget campaign category! 'These Are Our Voices' was up against the likes of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, Weetabix, Paddy Power, Brewdog and Virgin Media O2.

Reflecting on the campaign, judges said they were:

"Impressed by how this campaign was grounded in the real experiences of young people in care which led to an emotional insight the campaign was built around, based on a shared experience of this group".

Collaboration with Childrens Commissioners for Wales Office

Forum members were consulted and asked to contribute to an interactive and immersive exhibition being held at the Senedd in November 2024. Jordan Doherty, Childrens Commissioner for Wales Officer, gathered views, thoughts and ideas from the group and invited them to a session taking place early November.

Bridgend LA consultation 'What makes a Good Home'

Forum members were consulted in relation to LA run community homes. As a result of opinions shared by members during the consultation, it was agreed that the new home would be equipped with double beds rather than single beds. Forum members shared

they felt this was important to allow for “spreading out and having a large space to chill with friends”.

Children in Wales consultation on Padlet.

Forum members were consulted on an online memo board designed by Children In Wales. They shared views on content and the visual aspects of the design. Changes were made to the online resource following feedback from forum members and Padlet launched in Bridgend.

Bridgend Achievement Awards

Forum members assisted the Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer in designing these awards in previous forum sessions and their views were gathered on several occasions regarding venue, logo, categories, fundraising, activities for the day etc.



TGP promoted their Advocacy and Independent Visitor Services at the award ceremony as well as the Bridgend Youth Voice Forum. We were also pleased to be able to fund a DJ workshop at the event and the creation of the helping hand poster which was for children and young people to nominate an adult that was important to them or had helped them or listened to them.

Children’s Commissioner for Wales office visit in Neath Port Talbot.

Forum members met with British Transport Police before travelling with them on a train to Port Talbot. They shared information on train and track safety and how to report concerns. This was also a great opportunity for forum members to view the police in a positive light.



Forum members along with other young people from Swansea and Neath Port Talbot assisted the Childrens Commission for Wales Office with the visual display and created voice clips. TGP Cymru staff attended as well as Steve Berry.

During this session we also met with Senior Policy Manager Welsh Government Lucy Akhtar who consulted with young people on PEP's (Personal Education Plans).

Lucy Akhtar said:

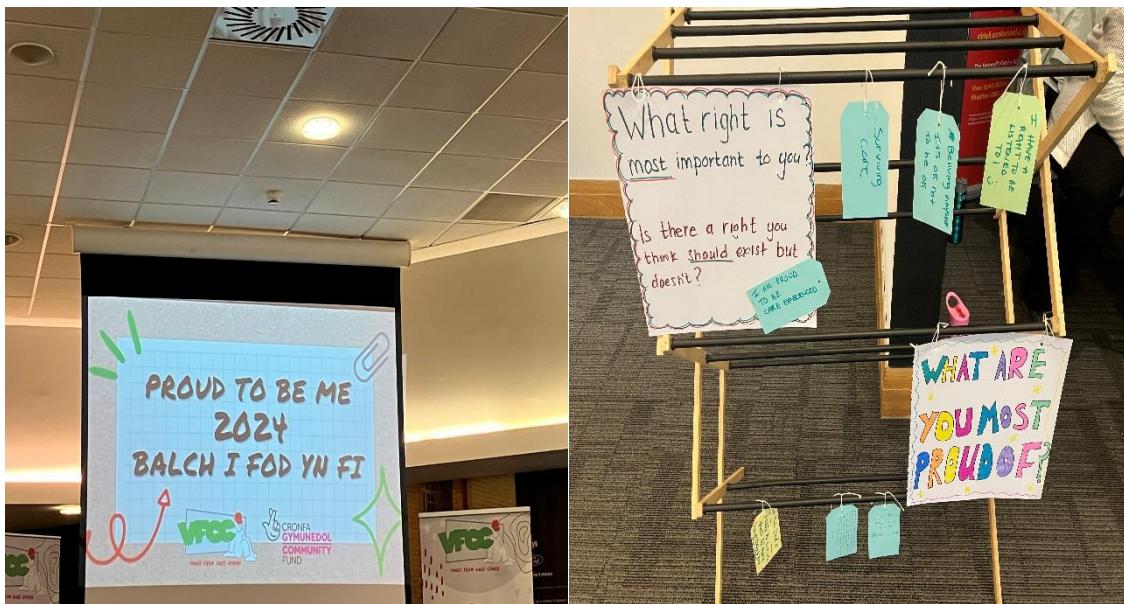
"It was a real pleasure and also an honour to meet the young people at the event at the Children's Commissioner for Wales's office on 30 October. I was very grateful that they spared the time to share their thoughts and ideas so openly and with such dignity.... Through all this activity it has been really valuable for me to hear what the young people had to say and to reflect on that in terms of future policy development at Welsh Government in relation to the education of care experienced young people."

Lwc/Luck Event

Three forum members attended the Senedd and their contributions to the Children Commissioner for Wales exhibition were on show and attended by over 100 people which described their experiences of placement moves and unfamiliar surroundings.

Voices from Care Proud to Me event.

Four forum members attended the event held in Swansea along with TGP Cymru staff. All forum members were recognised at the event for their contributions to forum over the previous year. During the event, members were able to meet with other care experienced young people from across Wales and took part in activities and workshops throughout the day.



Christmas Party

A Christmas party session was held for Forum members, at their request. Forum members have formed supportive relationships over the previous year and wanted to spend time together having fun with no agenda.

Corporate Parent Online Training

Forum members were invited to record voice clips to assist with Corporate Parenting online training and to remind those attending training that our children and young people are at the forefront of all that they do.

Consultation with Bridgend Fostering Team Managers

Bridgend Fostering Team Managers attended the February forum meeting to consult with forum members on a new project happening in the fostering service called “Remodelling Fostering”. The project is aimed at ensuring that children and young people who live in foster care are getting the best care and opportunities. Forum members were asked to answer a list of questions honestly, based on their own experiences of being care experienced.

Consultation with the Bridgend Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer

Forum members were asked how they felt their views, wishes and feelings were considered by adults that they know.

Consultation on ‘Eliminate Agenda’

Discussions with forum members regarding engagement with Voices From Care Cymru regarding Eliminate agenda and progress on radical reform. Plan for members to attend engagement events in April 2025.

What has worked well?

Bridgend Youth Voice Forum now has a permanent home in Evergreen Hall. This has allowed the forum facilitator to book sessions for the whole year in advance. Forum members have been very positive about this change, highlighting the range of activities on available, kitchen facilities and comfortable break out rooms.

Following a period of consistent forum attendance, we have noted positive and supportive relationships developing between members of the forum. One young person said:

“It’s a great place for community in terms of people who are and who were in foster care. It’s a way for us to connect with each other and share our views on the people around us e.g., foster carers, social worker and advocates...we actually get to discuss and deal with issues we deal with and have to go through on a daily basis and it’s a great place to vent off frustrations safely....things in the community like our mural to raise awareness and educate others on how a foster child lives and how things are different. It’s also a great place to meet various important people who we might need to speak to if we have issues so we know where we’re going”

Other forum members said:

“Forum gives me a place where I feel accepted, and my voice is listened to”

“I can be myself and discuss my mental health openly”

“I feel accepted even though I have autism, and I feel I can influence important decisions”

“I feel like I have a place to make changes for young people in care”

We have also received positive feedback from carers. One foster carer said:

“This is so important for these young people to have...these forums have definitely enhanced our boys’ confidence. This is very important and makes a huge difference to young people!”

Increased engagement with other organisations and LA staff. As highlighted above, this year, BYV forum have collaborated and consulted with various external organisations and staff from within Bridgend County Borough Council.

Zoe Morgan, the facilitator of the BYV forum TGP Cymru, has a positive and supportive relationship with Bridgend County Borough Council Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer Steve Berry. They meet regularly to discuss the progress of the forum.

Information about the advocacy service is always available to young people in the group, and several have used or are currently using the service. Young people are updated on a quarterly basis on advocacy themes and any views and ideas gathered to address these themes. This year, the forum has been promoted in several Bridgend Social Work team meetings by the Advocacy Team Manager, Forum Facilitator and Steve Berry.

The Forum Facilitator also provides the Independent Visiting Advocacy (IVA) for two LA community homes. Part of Zoe's role is to share information about Bridgend Youth Voice Forum with the young people in residence. Some young people living in LA community homes have attended forum, sharing a wider perspective of being care experienced in Bridgend.

All staff have enhanced DBS checks and have been able to respond appropriately when they have concerns. During this period, two safeguarding referrals were made by the forum facilitator. One referral resulted in the facilitator attending a strategy meeting. Concerns are discussed fully with social workers and carers, with knowledge of the young person. Forum sessions are often supported by wider staff within the statutory advocacy team.

Young people have responded well to incentives to be involved in some events and activities. Although we are pleased to be able to offer this, it is positive that the group is well attended by established members without any monetary incentive.

We are also pleased to note the consistent membership of some young people who have had difficulty in engaging and remaining engaged with professionals and groups in the past.

Challenges

- **Getting a fully representative group of children and young people and ensuring any work that is completed is based on a wider collective voice.**
Although group attendance has improved over this period, we have not been able to hold two separate sessions for a younger and older group as planned. This is mainly due to the average age of forum members being 14 years or above. Splitting the group would result in low attendance in the younger age category. We hope to be able to recruit young care experienced young people over the next year with the support of social workers and Personal Advisors.
- **Unknown young people turning up on the day of forum.**
It's important that potential new group members are known to the forum facilitator before they attend to ensure we can support young people to attend Bridgend Youth Voice Forum safely. Forum members are aware they must speak to the facilitator before inviting new young people to forum sessions.
- **Age range of forum members.**
As highlighted earlier, sessions are often attended young people aged 13 years to over 18 years. Although there are many positive aspects to a mixed age group of this nature, we are aware that on occasion this can be difficult to manage when older forum member wish to discuss topics of a more adult nature. We aim to resolve this by revisiting behaviour expectations with forum members and supporting forum members with more facilitators during sessions. The new venue has several areas which can be used to split forum sessions if necessary.
- **Evaluating the impact of consultation with Bridgend Youth Voice Forum**
Forum members have enjoyed engaging with a wide variety of services and organisations but we a yet to understand the wider impact of this.

Future objectives

- More guest speakers to attend forum (chosen by forum members). We have recently contacted South Wales Police and plan to invite a representative to a future forum session.
- Attendance at Fostering / Kinship Teams' ICE events and coffee mornings by TGP Cymru
- Clear expectations to be revisited by forum in relation to behaviour and consequences.
- Explore making links with staff responsible for Care Experienced young people in local schools.
- Redesign of membership form to include any safeguarding concerns.
- Explore ways to allow older and young members of the forum to share experiences separately.
- Design an exit/signposting strategy for older forum members who may want explore opportunities with other organisations/bodies when they feel they want to move on for Bridgend Youth Voice Forum.
- Explore opportunities for forum members to support with promoting Bridgend Youth Voice Forum to other Care Experienced young people.

Conclusion and looking forward.

We are pleased to have established a consistent membership of the forum despite some challenges. Forum members describe Bridgend Youth Voice Forum as very important to them and they are invested in sharing it with other Care Experienced young people in Bridgend over the next year.

Consultation and collaboration with so many different groups and organisations throughout the year has meant the impact of Bridgend Youth Voice Forum has been wide-reaching and forum members are hopeful this will make a positive difference to the lives of all Care Experienced children and young people in Bridgend, as well as those who attend forum sessions.

Over the next year, we aim to better understand the wider impact of Bridgend Youth Voice Forum by inviting some of those who have engaged with us to share how consulting with forum members has influenced their work with Care Experienced children and young people in Bridgend and across Wales.

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Meeting of:	CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING
Date of Meeting:	7 MAY 2025
Report Title:	YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE UPDATE ON CARE-EXPERIENCED CHILDREN
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	LINDSAY HARVEY – CORPORATE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, EARLY YEARS AND YOUNG PEOPLE
Responsible Officer:	CHRISTA BONHAM-GRIFFITHS – SERVICE MANAGER, BRIDGEND YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	<p>The report provides an update on Bridgend Youth Justice Service provision for care-experienced children. The service is committed to responding to the needs and strengths of all children who come to the attention of the service.</p> <p>There is often an increase in complexity of care-experienced children’s needs which has required the service to develop its interventions to prioritise stability, safety, wellbeing, recovery from trauma and desistance from offending or harm-related behaviours.</p>

1. Purpose of report

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

2. Background

- 2.1 The BYJS operates as a statutory multi-agency partnership, underpinned by a legal requirement to collaborate in delivering appropriate local youth justice provision. The service receives financial support from multiple streams, including the UK and Welsh Governments, as well as key statutory partners - Bridgend County Borough Council, South Wales Police, the Probation Service, and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.
- 2.2 Legislation governing youth justice sets out the duty to prevent offending, including the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, and the Standards for Children in the Youth Justice System (2019). The core objective of youth justice services in both England and Wales is to reduce offending and reoffending among young people,

as stated in the Crime and Disorder Act. In addition, Welsh local authorities are legally obliged under section 15 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to deliver preventative services that:

- 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.

2.3 As of 1 April 2025, BYJS was working with 95 children. 11 (12%) of these are children who are classified as care-experienced. Of the 11 children, the data below outlines the number of children who have received a trauma intervention.

Assessment status	Number of children	Notes
Completed formulation and trauma-responsive assessment	6	Plans include timelines and mapped progression completed
Scheduled for April	3	Awaiting a formulation
Awaiting trauma assessment	2	To be scheduled

2.4 The intervention strategies for the 11 children are as indicated below.

Intervention type	Number of children
Youth Restorative Disposal (voluntary intervention where child accepts responsibility for the incident)	4
Outcome 22 (educational preventative disposal)	1
Youth Rehabilitation Order (statutory community court order)	1
Section 250 Through Care Programme (statutory custodial court order)	1
Detention Training Order / Custody Programme (statutory custodial court order)	1
Preventative work (voluntary intervention programme for children at risk of offending)	3

2.5 Demographics of the 11 care-experienced children are:

Age group	Number of children
10-12	1
13-15	4
16-17	5
18	1

Gender	Number of children
Male	8
Female	3

- 2.6 All BYJS cases receive either a Prevention and Diversion Assessment or an ASSET Plus assessment. This is a child-centered 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 assessed as high risk in the youth justice three domains of concerns which include concerns for future offending, concern of safety and wellbeing to others and concerns for their 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 (2019), which promotes a child-centred and trauma-aware model;
- the All-Wales Protocol aimed at reducing the criminalisation of care experienced children, focusing on their protection and well-being; and
- the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which mandate early intervention and long-term support to improve outcomes for children.

- 3.2 Initiatives to meet these requirements include:

- **Early trauma identification:** Increased efforts to recognise and respond to trauma at an early stage to ensure timely support.
- **Prevention and diversion panel:** Collaborative work that diverts children away from the justice system towards constructive and preventative solutions.
- **Child-first philosophy:** Ensuring that the needs and rights of children are at the centre of all decision-making and intervention strategies.

- **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.
- **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.
- **Partnership with multiple agencies:** through the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board (CTMSB) and its Exploitation Steering Group to support and implement safeguarding measures for care-experienced children. As part of this collaborative effort, BYJS remains actively involved in a multi-agency child sexual exploitation mapping exercise, aimed at identifying children at risk and enhancing targeted safeguarding responses across the region.

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	Family support services focus on meeting the needs of a wide range of service beneficiaries including children, young people, adults, and families.
Prevention	The focus of family support services is upon early identification of need and ensuring that there is appropriate provision in place to meet individual needs.
Integration	The approach to family support services addresses the need for a coherent delivery of economic, social, environmental, and cultural outcomes.
Collaboration	A fundamental principle 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 and Family Services 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 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 2023-2025 underscores BYJS 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 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. Recommendations

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet Corporate Parenting Committee:
- consider the contents of the report; and
 - provide feedback.

Background documents

None

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Meeting of:	CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING
Date of Meeting:	7 MAY 2025
Report Title:	EDUCATION ENGAGEMENT TEAM SUPPORT FOR CARE-EXPERIENCED CHILDREN
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	LINDSAY HARVEY – CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION, EARLY YEARS AND YOUNG PEOPLE
Responsible Officer:	MEGAN APSEE – EDUCATION ENGAGEMENT TEAM MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	<p>The report provides an update on the Education Engagement Team (EET) support for care-experienced children. The local authority must safeguard and promote the wellbeing of care-experienced children. The EET works in close partnership with schools, social services, and other professionals and agencies to ensure that every child receives the necessary support.</p> <p>We recognise that educational outcomes for care-experienced children rarely compare favourably with other children. We know that many of these learners will have suffered disrupted learning and may have missed extended periods of school. The gaps in their learning and in many cases the emotional impact of their experiences are likely to have become significant barriers to their progress.</p> <p>The complexity of this fragmented experience needs careful assessment and planning.</p>

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting on the support provided by the Education Engagement Team (EET) for care-experienced children.

2. Background

- 2.1 Nationally, care-experienced children often achieve lower educational outcomes compared to their peers. Frequent placement moves can result in school changes which can disrupt learning and relationships. Across Wales, care-experienced children have higher rates of persistent absence due to instability, emotional wellbeing issues or disengagement. Care-experienced children present with a higher likelihood of fixed-term exclusions compared to non-looked-after peers. Many pupils have experienced trauma, impacting their ability to engage in education. Care-experienced children often face significant challenges in education.
- 2.2 Local authorities must safeguard and promote the well-being of the child it looks after (section 78 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) and this promotion of wellbeing should continue through a young person's development, which includes transition to adulthood. The EET is responsible under the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004, to co-ordinate the child's educational plan and address the educational needs of care-experienced children in Bridgend. The EET is responsible for ensuring that every care-experienced child has an effective and high-quality Personal Education Plan (PEP).
- 2.3 Children who are care-experienced are likely to have experienced similar difficulties in their early years. The impact of those early negative experiences increases the risk of poor educational progress compared to other children.
- 2.4 The EET plays a vital role in supporting the education of care-experienced children across Bridgend. Educational settings have a duty under section 175 (1) of the Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- 2.5 Section 20 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 states that the governing body of a maintained school must designate a member of staff ("the designated person") as having responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of children who are looked after in the school. This duty applies regardless of whether there are looked after children on the school roll, as schools need to be sufficiently prepared to respond quickly to the needs of looked after children who they may receive at very short notice. Section 20 of Children and Young Persons Act 2008 does not apply to pupil referral units (PRUs). There is no duty for the Management Committee of PRUs to designate a member of staff for care-experienced children.

3. Current situation

- 3.1 The local authority has a duty to ensure care-experienced children receive high-quality education and the necessary support to achieve positive outcomes. The local authority has a responsibility to act as a corporate parent ensuring care-experienced children have access to the best possible education. The EET works towards Welsh Government objectives on the education of care-experienced children . It supports the promotion of education for all care-experienced children for whom the local authority is the corporate parent, whether placed in or out of the county borough. As at 31 March 2025, Bridgend had 256 care-experienced children including statutory and non-statutory school age pupils in educational settings.
- 3.2 Through tailored interventions, guidance, and resources, the EET supports schools to help care-experienced children overcome barriers to learning and achieve their full potential. The EET works in close partnership with schools, social services, and

other professionals to ensure that every child receives the necessary support. Education settings provide one-on-one mentoring, academic assistance, and emotional wellbeing initiatives designed to foster positive educational outcomes. Additionally, the EET collaborates with caregivers and foster families to establish a stable, nurturing learning environment that empowers children to succeed both academically and personally.

- 3.3 Despite these efforts, care-experienced children in Bridgend continue to face systemic challenges that impact their educational achievement. These include trauma-related learning difficulties, inconsistent care planning, and fragmented interagency collaboration. While the EET provides crucial support, persistent issues remain, such as delays in reviewing processes, variable quality in PEPs, and inadequate long-term outcome tracking.
- 3.4 Nationally, 9% of looked-after children aged 16 or over who ceased being looked-after in the year ending 31 March 2024, achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A* to C. This is significantly lower than the overall average of 66.4% in Wales. As at 31 March 2023, there were 7,210 children in the care of local authorities in Wales, an increase of 2% from the previous year.
- 3.5 In 2023-2024, 38 care-experienced pupils were entered for GCSE examinations across Bridgend. In Wales, the Level 2 threshold for GCSEs requires a student to achieve five GCSEs or equivalent at a grade C or above. Of the 38 pupils entered for examinations, only 4 of pupils achieved level two threshold. Of those pupils who met the level 2 threshold, 2 of the pupils were male and 2 were female. Additionally, 6 of the care-experienced pupils received three or more GCSEs at grade C or above. Of the pupils entered for GCSE examinations, 22 achieved at least one grade C or above.
- 3.6 Although secondary school outcomes for care-experienced children in Bridgend compare favourably with regional averages, concerns persist in relation to narrowing the gap. To address these challenges, there is ongoing work within the early years and young people's sector, focusing on the implementation and development of trauma-informed practices to better support the educational journey of care-experienced children .
- 3.7 The EET delivers children looked after (CLA) friendly training to school governors in Bridgend for school governing body members to understand the complexities for care-experienced children and to effectively consider the support mechanisms to their care-experienced children population.
- 3.8 The local authority receives funding through the Pupil Development Grant (PDG CLA) to support the educational attainment of children looked after, children who have been adopted and children who are subject to a Special Guardianship Order (SGO).
- 3.9 The local authority uses the PDG CLA to support improving outcomes for care-experienced children and young people and to reduce the difference in attainment between this cohort and their peers.
- 3.10 Bridgend schools provide tailored intervention programmes that have improved engagement and attainment. The development of leads within schools to support care-experienced children has strengthened targeted support and intervention.

These staff members have responsibility for overseeing the academic progress and wellbeing of care-experienced children. This staff member works closely with social workers and foster carers to ensure continuity of support.

- 3.11 The directorate ensures that there is priority for care-experienced children in relation to school placements and supports reduced risks linked to unnecessary school moves. There are currently 26 care-experienced children identified as being appropriate for specialist educational provision. This equates to 10.16% of the overall current population of care-experienced children. As at 31 March 2025, 60 care-experienced children were placed in out-of-county educational settings. This equates to 23.43% of care-experienced children in educational settings.
- 3.12 Some schools have embedded trauma-informed practices, by training staff to understand and respond to the emotional needs of care-experienced children. This can include creating safe spaces, using restorative approaches to behaviour management and offering flexible support. To further improve educational outcomes for care-experienced children, the local authority recognises that it can support schools to access trauma-informed training to adopt whole-school approaches to supporting care-experienced children, especially where children have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).
- 3.13 Schools tailor learning plans to meet specific needs of care-experienced children addressing gaps in education and supporting emotional resilience. There are examples where tuition, mentoring and literacy and numeracy support have helped close the attainment gaps. As at 31 March 2025, there were 61 care-experienced children with a local authority individual development plan (IDP) this equates to 23.83% of the overall population of care-experienced children in educational settings. As at 31 March 2025, 16 care-experienced children were on pastoral support plans (PSPs).
- 3.14 Care-experienced children in schools have access to counselling, nurture groups and pastoral staff teams who support and manage emotional difficulties and build resilience. The EET completes vulnerable group surgeries with all schools to ensure robust support structures to challenge schools and to obtain how care-experienced children are engaged in education. The surgeries allow schools to discuss any perceived challenges with this cohort of care-experienced children .
- 3.15 The EET, in collaboration with schools, completes both a safeguarding and attendance audit. The focus on these is for the EET to collate good practice within our schools to promote stability and engagement for our care-experienced children.
- 3.16 The EET recognises that traditional educational settings may not suit everyone. We work with the local authority to ensure alternative learning opportunities that align with individual aspirations and circumstances are explored.
- 3.17 The local authority supports schools to prevent unnecessary exclusions. In 2023-2024, there were 30 pupils permanently excluded. Of this cohort, two of the pupils were care-experienced children. As at 31 March 2025, there were 19 permanent exclusions in Bridgend schools. Of this cohort, one pupil is a care-experienced child.
- 3.18 The EET is dedicated to supporting care-experienced children and young people in accessing and succeeding in education, training, apprenticeships, and employment.

Our approach is tailored to meet individual needs, ensuring that every young person can achieve their full potential. The EET works with partners to ensure wherever possible every care-experienced child has a destination post-16.

- 3.19 The school attendance of care-experienced children in Bridgend schools overall is positive. We have three identified thresholds for pupil attendance, under 90%, under 80% and under 50%. The percentage of care-experienced children with school attendance under 90% overall is 33.68%, within specialist educational settings it is 2.63% and within mainstream it is 31.05%. The percentage of care-experienced children with school attendance under 80% overall is 17.89% within specialist settings it is 2.10% and within mainstream it is 15.79%. The percentage of care-experienced children with school attendance under 50% overall is 6.31% within specialist setting 0.52% and mainstream is 5.79%. We have four care-experienced children who have moved out of the area and are waiting to start new schools. These pupils are still on-roll in Bridgend schools but unable to attend due to distance and this negatively impacts the overall attendance.
- 3.20 The EET recognises further improvements are required. The EET will complete an evaluation to enhance and review the use of the PDG CLA.
- 3.21 The EET will support improved communication and collaboration between education, social care and health services.
- 3.22 The EET would support a review of the PEP processes and complete quality assurance work on the PEPs completed by schools.
- 3.23 While challenges remain, the combined efforts of schools, the local authority and support services can lead to positive developments in the education of care-experienced children with continued investment in good practice and targeted interventions. Further improvements can be made to ensure that all care-experienced children receive the education and support they need to succeed.

4. Equality implications (including socio-economic duty and Welsh language)

- 4.1 The potential impacts of this report on the protected characteristics under the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty, and the Welsh Language Act have been considered. As this is an information report, no formal Equality Impact Assessment is required. It is anticipated that there will be no significant or adverse equality implications arising from the contents of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations Implications and Connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The goals and principles set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 align closely with the EET approach. The five ways of working are integral to the service delivery, as outlined below:
- **Long-term:** the EET provides support to children and families, ensuring a wide range of beneficiaries are supported in the long term.
 - **Prevention:** focus is placed on early identification and ensuring appropriate services are provided to meet individual needs.

- **Integration:** the service ensures a holistic delivery of social, economic, environmental, and cultural outcomes.
- **Collaboration:** the EET fosters collaborative working with partner agencies to improve coordination and create a unified system of support.
- **Involvement:** children and families are central to the process, with their needs discussed in a person-centred manner.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 There are no specific climate change implications arising from this project. However, the EET is committed to supporting 'Bridgend 2030 – Net Zero Carbon Strategy' and Welsh Government's carbon reduction goals.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 The EET maintains strong links with the Children and Families Service, ensuring collaborative working in areas such as the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and safeguarding leads. This collaboration ensures comprehensive planning and integrated service delivery for children receiving support from both EET and social care.
- 7.2 EET staff have participated in Signs of Safety training alongside social care teams, ensuring a shared framework for consistent and effective safety planning. Trauma-informed approaches are embedded within these practices, promoting safety and well-being.
- 7.3 The service's engagement with care-experienced children is integral to understanding their specific needs and providing the tailored support required.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The full impact of the PDG CLA on the educational outcomes of care-experienced children in Bridgend is unknown. While it provides targeted funding to address barriers faced by these children, challenges remain in fully closing the attainment gap.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting considers the contents of the report and provides feedback and recommendations as required.

Background Documents

None