

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

17 OCTOBER 2018

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN EDUCATION

1. Purpose of report

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

2. Connection to corporate improvement objectives/other corporate priorities

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

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

3. Background

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

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

4. Current situation

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

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

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

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

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

Bridgend LAC school attainment

Foundation Phase

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

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

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

Key Stage 2

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

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

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

Key Stage 3

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

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

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

Key Stage 4

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

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

6. Equality Impact Assessment

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

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

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

8. Financial implications

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

9. Recommendations

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

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Background documents

None

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

Case study one

Year 10 LAC

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

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

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

Case study two

Year 11 LAC

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

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

Feedback from social worker:

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

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