

Action plan arising out of the CSSIW inspection of Safeguarding and Care planning of looked after children and care leavers, who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviours.

Forward

In February 2014, CSSIW undertook the above inspection in Bridgend. The aim of the national inspection was to assess the quality of care planning across Wales and whether it effectively:

- Supports and protects looked after children and care leavers;
- Identifies and manages the vulnerabilities and risky behaviour of looked after children and care leavers;
- Promotes rights based practice and the voice of the child;
- Promotes improved outcomes for looked after children and care leavers;
- Promotes compliance with policy and guidance

The inspection focused on the work undertaken with looked after children over eleven years of age and care leavers who were identified as being vulnerable and/or involved in risky behaviours, against defined criteria.

The inspection considered the above areas against the following five questions.

QUESTION 1

Did the authority effectively discharge its corporate parenting roles and responsibilities promoting the stability, welfare and safety of looked after children and care leavers?

QUESTION 2

Were care and pathway plans informed by relevant assessments, including explicit risk assessments, which supported a comprehensive response to the needs and experiences of children and young people?

QUESTION 3

Were operational systems and procedures in place that ensured responsive coordinated action was taken to mitigate risk and achieve safe continuity of care?

QUESTION 4

Did Independent Reviews and quality assurance arrangements promote safe care and best outcomes for young people?

QUESTION 5

Did care and pathway planning effectively capture and promote the rights and voice of the child?

At the conclusion of the inspection, CSSIW inspectors noted a significant number of positives referenced to the above five questions. However, they also note some areas for improvement. This action plan has therefore been devised to address areas that inspectors assessed required improvement.

QUESTION 1

Did the authority effectively discharge its corporate parenting roles and responsibilities promoting the stability, welfare and safety of looked after children and care leavers?

Areas for improvement	Proposed Action	Responsible Person	RAG status
<p>1. Elected members had recognised the significance of both their safeguarding and corporate parenting role and the need to provide greater challenge to ensure that they are achieving best outcomes for looked after children and care leavers, including the most vulnerable and challenging. Members needed to assure themselves that strategic aims are being effectively owned and translated into action across the local authority and partner agencies</p>	<p>Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee will routinely gather evidence from senior officers that seek to assure Cabinet that strategic aims are being effectively owned and translated into action across the local authority and partner agencies. CP Committee will agree a formal work programme for its meetings that specifies the reports it requires to provide assurance around specified activity</p>	<p>Lead Member for Children/Head of Safeguarding and Family Support.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>2. The authority's systems did not routinely capture a profile of the looked after children and care-leaving populations assessed needs or detailed thematic information regarding</p>	<p>The local authority will appoint a senior lead officer (Principal Officer) to lead on the authorities "Placement and Permanency Strategy" and to ensure a strategic overview of the authorities LAC profile The principal officer will also ensure available data is translated into action</p>	<p>Head of Service</p>	<p>Green</p>

<p>vulnerability and risk. This information is essential if the authority is to evaluate the effectiveness of its placement and permanency strategies and predict future resource needs. The reports reviewed in relation to looked after children often relied on extensive use of data and lacked a clear analysis in respect of the issues identified, action needed and how progress would be evaluated.</p>	<p>plans to inform strategic developments to meet the changing profile of LAC population. Regular reports on themes trends and issues will be presented Corporate parenting Committee at relevant periods throughout the year.</p> <p>An inter-agency LAC Board will be established, chaired by the Directors to ensure inter-agency buy-in to progressing the placements and permanency strategy.</p>	<p>Corporate Director - Children</p>	<p>Green - Completed</p>
<p>3. Children's services had developed multi agency panel arrangements, including an out of authority panel, to co-ordinate access to placements and promote effective permanency and care planning. These arrangements were viewed as a useful approach but staff expressed frustration that these mechanisms had different information</p>	<p>All relevant staff will receive team based training/briefings to ensure staff are clear about the terms of reference of both the weekly "accommodation and permanency panels" and the monthly out of authority panels. Such panels will inevitably require different information to ensure appropriate decisions are made that focus on positive outcomes for children.</p>	<p>Senior Management Team Team Managers</p>	<p>Green - Completed</p>

requirements.			
<p>4. Despite their multi agency nature, the panels had little ability to accelerate access to services. In some cases the oversight of the panel was viewed as delaying decision making while not ensuring effective contingency planning that, for example, prevented the need for emergency placement or ensured timely transition planning for young people leaving out of authority placements. The panel arrangements would benefit from being refreshed to ensure timely oversight of issues and escalation of cases.</p>	<p>Panel arrangements will be reviewed to ensure the role and functioning of both panels are fit for purpose. Outside of the panel processes, staff will be reminded about how they can escalate issues to senior management when urgent decisions are required about LAC placements or resource issues.</p> <p>Within Connecting Families, a new initiative will be developed to provide intensive family support to families where their child is at a significant risk of entering the care system. This project will be known as the "Edge of Care" project.</p>	<p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Consultant Social Worker within Connecting Families.</p>	<p>Green – Completed</p> <p>Green - Completed</p>
<p>5. Children's social services were working with both the Well Being directorate and Housing Directorate to</p>	<p>An accommodation needs analysis for care leavers will be undertaken in partnership with the authorities housing department to ensure a strategic response is in</p>	<p>Group Manager – Disability, Transition and Leaving Care Group Manager-Regulated Services</p>	<p>Green - Ongoing</p>

<p>strengthen young people's access to services. Although some progress had been made for example to improve the interface between children's services and adult mental health, more work was needed to agree service thresholds. The interface between children's social services and housing had been significantly strengthened, for example, through the inclusion of housing staff as part of the 'Just Ask Plus' service. Despite some positive developments the availability of appropriate 'move 'on housing and accommodation for looked after young people and care leavers was identified as a gap by staff and service users. Given the known age profile of the looked after children population this is an area that will require ongoing</p>	<p>place to meet the needs of young people leaving care.</p> <p>Managers of the Just Ask Plus Service, Bridgend Foster Care and the Placement Team managers will in future attend the Supporting People Board meetings held monthly.</p> <p>The Supported Lodgings scheme will be reviewed, standards raised and the overall carer cohort positively increased to meet the increasing demand for young people's placement being supported during their transition into independent living.</p> <p>A range of commissioning projects have been in touch with the Group Manager Regulated Services and also the Group Manager for case management, disabilities and transition to look at specific cases and to identify future needs of young people.</p> <p>The Group Manager for Regulated Services will meet with the housing department and agree some initial proposals and ideas to scope for future joint projects.</p> <p>An initial paper will be produced that will be shared with the Supported People board in BCBC.</p> <p>The role and function of the transition panel will be reviewed and awareness raising</p>		
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cross directorate focus.	activity will ensue.		
<p>6. Despite some good operational engagement the authority's relationship with health services appeared overly dependent on children's social services providing funding and resources to assess and meet the therapeutic needs of looked after children and care leavers.</p>	<p>An integrated Health and Social care Board will be established co-chaired by the ABMU Director and the LA Director – Children. This will aim to improve joint working arrangements between the council and ABMU at both a strategic and operational level. Its Purpose will be::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To oversee the programme of work relating to the integration of health and social care in the Bridgend Locality as relating to children's services. • To ensure quality outcomes for the citizens of Bridgend • To ensure appropriate links are made with the Western Bay Board and Changing for Better workstreams • To agree the budget process and approve any related business plans showing savings/cost avoidance for both organisations and to evaluate and make recommendations on joint/pooled budgets • To discuss and remove blockages to progress • To receive reports for decisions and by 	<p>HOS will attend along with Group Manager</p>	<p>Green – Board established and meeting regularly</p>

	exception agreed plans	against project plans	
<p>7. From the cases seen it was identified that the care plans of young people who remain looked after for longer periods were not routinely informed by a relevant shared written assessment. Where assessments were undertaken some good information gathering was evident but the quality of the analysis remained variable. It was however positive that the authority had recently refreshed the use of progress and action records.</p>	<p>When undertaking statutory reviews of LAC, IRO's will continue to scrutinise the quality and progress of the care plan. Where it is felt that care plans are not sufficiently informed by thorough assessment, appropriate recommendations will be made by IRO's and timescales set to track progress being made .If sufficient progress is not being achieved, IRO's will escalate their concerns to senior management and if appropriate may consider invoking the IRO protocol.</p> <p>Team based training will be provided in respect of providing analysis of assessments and report writing. IRO's will also contribute to training and development sessions for social workers and other agencies.</p>	<p>IRO's IRO Manager, Team managers and social workers.</p>	<p>Green - ongoing</p>
<p>8. There was an insufficient range of placements available including those accessed through external providers. The authority had been proactive in working to increase the</p>	<p>Bridgend Foster Care (BFC) will continue to recruit and approve carers for a range of different ages and needs, specifically; difficult to place teenagers and children with disabilities. BCBC will also seek to appoint foster carers for large sibling groups. The Local Authority will constantly refresh its</p>	<p>Group Manager – Regulated Services</p>	

<p>number of foster carers able to meet the complex needs of young people but this remained an on-going challenge.</p>	<p>established marketing strategy. Under the direction of a bespoke marketing officer who will lead on an advertising and recruitment campaigns Throughout the year the profile of LAC will be regularly reviewed to ensure any gaps in provision are identified and campaigns set up for specific recruitment to address changing needs.</p> <p>There remains “difficult to place young people” due to the complexities of their needs and sometimes the location of a placement required. The Local Authority will continue to be a member of the Childrens Commissioning Consortium Cymru (CCCC) and use the resource database for all placements</p>		
<p>9. Although staff recognised and were active in relation to identifying risk, such issues often appeared to be managed as separate episodes, risk assessments and risk assessment tools were available and used but the resulting actions were not clearly recorded or shared. In some cases changes in staff and</p>	<p>Team based training</p>	<p>Training Managers. Team Managers</p>	<p>Green - Ongoing</p>

<p>placements resulted in a loss of continuity and it was difficult to know if issues had been effectively concluded.</p>			
<p>10. There was recognition of a long standing disconnect between the access threshold applied by the CAMHS service and the presenting emotional resilience needs of looked after children and care leavers. Although some CAMHS advice was available through a weekly surgery and also the Just Ask Plus service there was a considerable waiting list for CAMHS intervention. Staff highlighted that the lack of such support services for young people and their carers adversely impacted on the sustainability of placements.</p>	<p>See action 16 below.</p>	<p>Head of service</p>	<p>Amber</p>
<p>11. The quality of care plans seen</p>	<p>Team based training will be provided to</p>	<p>Training Manager/Team</p>	<p>Green - Ongoing</p>

<p>were variable. Most included broad overarching statements but did not articulate the objectives and how the desired outcomes for the young person were to be achieved. There was a lack of clarity about the responsibility for updating the care plan.</p>	<p>address this area and IRO's will continue to provide advice and support to social workers to improve consistency of quality of care plans linked to clear objectives for the child/young person.</p> <p>IRO team manager will attend team meetings to clarify the responsibility for updating care plans.</p>	<p>managers</p>	
<p>12. Issues were raised regarding the quality and impact of therapeutic interventions provided by some out of authority placements and the need for greater quality assurance mechanisms.</p>	<p>The LA will insist on regular reports in respect of therapies being provided to LAC children and the impact these are having. These will be reviewed by IRO's who will escalate any concerns about perceived inappropriate or ineffective therapies being provided to individual children.</p>	<p>IRO's Out-of Authority Panel Social Workers</p>	<p>Green - ongoing</p>

QUESTION 2

Were care and pathway plans informed by relevant assessments, including explicit risk assessments, which supported a comprehensive response to the needs and experiences of children and young people?

Areas for improvement	Proposed Action	Responsible Person	Action status
<p>13. From the cases seen it was identified that the care plans of young people who remain looked after for longer periods were</p>	<p>As part of the IRO's responsibility, expectations will be placed upon them to review care plans to ensure they are routinely informed by a relevant shared written assessment that are informed by</p>	<p>IRO's</p>	<p>Green - Ongoing</p>

<p>not routinely informed by a relevant shared written assessment. Where assessments were undertaken some good information gathering was evident but the quality of the analysis remained variable. It was however positive that the authority had recently refreshed the use of progress and action records.</p>	<p>appropriate evidenced analysis.</p>		
<p>14. There was an insufficient range of placements available including those accessed through external providers. The authority had been proactive in working to increase the number of foster carers able to meet the complex needs of young people but this remained an</p>	<p>Whilst significant progress has been made in increasing the number of in-house foster placement within the Bridgend locality, this will remain a key priority for the Children's Directorate. This will involve targeted marketing and foster care recruitment campaigns.</p>	<p>Group Manager – Regulated Service/fostering services Team manager.</p>	<p>Green – ongoing.</p>

on-going challenge.			
<p>15. Although staff recognised and were active in relation to identifying risk, such issues often appeared to be managed as separate episodes, risk assessments and risk assessment tools were available and used but the resulting actions were not clearly recorded or shared. In some cases changes in staff and placements resulted in a loss of continuity and it was difficult to know if issues had been effectively concluded.</p>	<p>Team based training will ensure to address these points and social workers will be expected to maintain up-to-date chronologies of significant episodes. IRO's will be expected to ensure that contemporary assessments are undertaken within the historical nature of the case.</p>	<p>Training manager Team manager</p>	<p>Green - Ongoing</p>
<p>16. There was recognition of a long standing disconnect between the access threshold applied by the CAMHS service and</p>	<p>To address these issues an ABMU Children and Young People's Mental Health Planning Board will be established. This Board will work with its partners, to ensure that children and young people living in the ABMU</p>	<p>Board Members including representation by the Head of Service (BCBC)</p>	<p>Amber - ongoing</p>

<p>the presenting emotional resilience needs of looked after children and care leavers. Although some CAMHS advice was available through a weekly surgery and also the Just Ask Plus service there was a considerable waiting list for CAMHS intervention. Staff highlighted that the lack of such support services for young people and their carers adversely impacted on the sustainability of placements.</p>	<p>area will have access to a range of high quality, safe, effective and efficient services that will address their physical, emotional, social and educational needs.</p> <p>The C&YP Mental Health Planning Group will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Oversee implementation of key actions related to the core business of adult mental health services and the needs of all children, young people and their families across the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg region; 2. Advise the local <i>Together for Mental Health</i> Partnership Board on progress, emerging issues and future priorities via regular reports; 3. Develop, agree and implement specifications for the services provided for the ABMU population by Cwm Taf and other service providers; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that local 		
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	<p>implementation of <i>Together for Mental Health</i> is based on a human rights approach, advancing equality and tackling inequalities, and supports children and young people and their families;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider and influence All Wales work on provision of complex care for Children and Young People's with Mental Health problems. • Oversee Transition and Intelligence Network of Children receiving treatment out of County. Important to note that these children still remain our responsibility <p>.</p> <p>It will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring appropriate engagement of stakeholders including the wider public, service users, families and carers; • Overseeing work of any 		
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	<p>sub-groups and task and finish groups established to delivery for the Planning Group;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring appropriate links and reporting to other planning groups across the Region and partners as required; • Reviewing the annual progress report on implementation of the Delivery Plan priorities in the area; • Preparing and providing an annual C&YP progress report for the National Mental Health Partnership Board and other relevant forums; • Agreeing priorities in relation to subsequent Delivery Plans provided to drive implementation for the 10-year course of the Strategy; • Sharing learning and good practice on improving mental wellbeing and supporting 		
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	<p>those with mental illness;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve multi agency links with the three Local Authorities. • Improve links with HMP Parc, Bridgend. • All members acting as advocates for the broader aims and aspirations of the strategy and its local implementation. 		
<p>17. The qualities of care plans seen were variable. Most included broad overarching statements but did not articulate the objectives and how the desired outcomes for the young person were to be achieved. There was a lack of clarity about the responsibility for updating the care plan.</p>	<p>Team based training will ensue to address these points and social workers will be expected to ensure care plans are outcome focused and regularly reviewed. IRO's and team managers will be expected to ensure that care plans are outcome focussed and regularly updated</p>	<p>IRO's Team Managers</p>	<p>Green - ongoing</p>

QUESTION 3

Were operational systems and procedures in place that ensured responsive coordinated action was taken to mitigate risk and achieve safe continuity of care?

Areas for improvement	Proposed Action	Responsible Person	Action status
<p>18. Although statutory child protection procedures and thresholds were generally well understood the management pathway for looked after young people and care leavers exhibiting 'risky' behaviours needed greater clarity.</p>	<p>Team based training will ensue to ensure that all social workers are clear about the management pathway for looked after young people and care leavers exhibiting 'risky' behaviours and the processes and procedure that should be followed. This will include the management of child at risk of sexual exploitation, missing person's protocol, mental health and substance misuse.</p>	<p>Team managers/training department.</p>	<p>Green - Ongoing</p>
<p>19. The assessment and management of risk particularly when involving more than one agency needed to be more effectively recorded and shared. The progress made in mitigating risk was not always evaluated or recorded. It was not apparent the</p>	<p>Team managers will ensure that social workers ensure that their reports detail the contribution made by other agencies and ensure that assessments of risk are informed by multi-agency perspectives. Social workers will also be reminded of the importance of thorough recordings. This will be backed up with a rolling programme of team based training.</p>	<p>Team managers and social workers.</p>	<p>Green - ongoing</p>

<p>extent to which young people were directly involved in the process.</p>			
<p>20. The authority had recently restructured services and the support for looked after children, prior to attaining 16 years of age, was now provided by five safeguarding teams. Social workers reported that although this had reduced case loads, the generic nature of their work meant that child protection and court work had to take priority. Some staff stated that they did not have capacity to undertake direct planned work.</p>	<p>Inherent within the proposed Children's Directorate restructure, the Council intends to deliver a Whole Systems Approach to supporting children and families in need, at the right time, in the right place and at a level appropriate to needs. This will enable the council to deliver services within the communities where families live by decentralising a number of social work practitioners, co-locating them within one of our three safeguarding hubs within the East, North, and West of the County. It is proposed that each of the three hubs will have a Hub Safeguarding Team Manager who will be supported to lead a team comprising of senior practitioners, social workers, social work assistants and supervised contact workers. Safeguarding teams will be co-located with the council's prevention and early help teams. It is envisaged that many CIN cases will be transferred to the</p>	<p>Director/HOS/SMT</p>	<p>Amber</p>

	early help teams, thereby reducing social workers case load to allow more time for direct work.		
21. Despite a strong commitment to training, staff reported that case pressures did not always enable them to attend training. The level of caseload protection provided for social workers in the first year of practice was also said to be dependent on work load pressures.	Managers will routinely discuss training requirements with social workers and make appropriate arrangements for social workers to attend and benefit from agreed training requirements. Managers will also monitor caseloads and match case complexity with social workers competence and confidence.	Team Managers	Green - ongoing

QUESTION 4

Did Independent Reviews and quality assurance arrangements promote safe care and best outcomes for young people?

Areas for improvement	Proposed Action	Responsible Person	RAG Status
22. Although some staff experienced reviews as providing challenge, this was not evident on case files and IROs felt unable to exert necessary influence. Lack of progress	IRO will record their advice and views on case files and discuss any blocks to monitoring progress of care plans with the team managers and the IRO manager. If necessary, IRO's will be encouraged to invoke the IRO protocol when it is considered necessary to do so.	IRO's IRO managers and team managers.	Green - ongoing

<p>against the care plan, even in the most complex cases, needs to be effectively challenged. Any blockages to care plan objectives particularly in relation to placement stability and also leaving care arrangements should be pro-actively monitored and escalated if they cannot be resolved within appropriate timescales.</p>			
<p>23. IROs did not routinely meet with young people prior to reviews and evidence from files identified that review minutes were subject to significantly delayed.</p>	<p>IRO manager will introduce monitoring form to elicit quality information about children and young people's participation within the reviewing process.</p> <p>IRO manager work with IRO's to introduce improved systems and processes to monitor the timeliness of minutes being completed.</p> <p>The LA will consider innovative methods to communicate with children and young people, though, for example, the development of an</p>	<p>IRO Service</p>	<p>In progress</p>

	IRO service micro site specifically for LAC and children on CPR.		
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QUESTION 5

Did care and pathway planning effectively capture and promote the rights and voice of the child?

Areas for improvement	Proposed Action	Responsible Person	RAG status
<p>24. Some young people said they liked their social worker and there was a view that they 'did their best'. Generally however, looked after children identified that they didn't see their social worker enough, found them hard to contact and slow to return calls. Care leavers were able to compare this level of service with what they felt was the good communication and responsiveness they currently experienced from their personal advisors.</p>	<p>Team managers will remind social workers of the importance of informing young people of the various methods of communication between social workers and young people, including text, phone and email and ensure that timely responses are made to young people upon receipt of any kind of contact/request.</p>	<p>Team managers/social workers.</p>	<p>Green - ongoing</p>

<p>25. Young people highlighted the significant impact changes of social workers and placement had on their ability to form trusting relationships.</p>	<p>Team managers will ensure that changes of social workers are kept to a minimum and ensure that it is only in exceptional circumstances that young people will have a new social worker such as when social workers leave or changes are required to cover long term sickness.</p>	<p>Team managers</p>	<p>Green- ongoing</p>
<p>26. Looked after children and care leavers said that they felt they had little choice or ability to exert influence around placements or accommodation. Although these views need to be balanced against the authority's child protection responsibilities to take protective action.</p>	<p>As far as possible children and young people will be routinely consulted about planned changes of social workers with their views, wishes and feelings being recorded on the case file. All children and young people will be offered an independent advocate to assist them in getting their voice heard and appropriate professional representation</p>	<p>Social Workers/IRO's</p>	<p>Green - ongoing</p>
<p>27. Young people raised issues regarding speed of consent and inconsistent funding decisions.</p>	<p>A new "delegated authority policy" will be launched and widely disseminated to children, young people and their carers.</p>	<p>Group Manager – Regulated Services. Team Managers</p>	<p>Green - Completed</p>
<p>28. While young people were able to participate in sporting and</p>	<p>Young people wishes and feelings concerning their engagement in sporting and leisure</p>	<p>IRO's, Social Workers</p>	<p>Green - ongoing</p>

<p>leisure activities this often depended on the support provided by the carers and continuity of placement.</p>	<p>activities and their ability to access these will be discussed within LAC and pathway reviews.</p>		
<p>29. Young people had mixed views regarding whether they would like opportunities to meet together. Care leavers believed that their insight into being 'looked after could be better utilised by the authority to support others.</p>	<p>Through the youth service aspects of the Just@plus service the views of care leavers will be canvassed to consider the proposition of setting up a care leavers support group which could be used as a platform to seek young people participation and engagement in relevant consultation exercises.</p>	<p>Team manager – Jusk@plus. Leaving Care Social workers.</p>	<p>Red – outstanding action</p>