

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

1. Purpose of Report

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

2. Background

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

3. Current situation/ proposal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. Climate Change Implications

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

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

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

8. Financial Implications

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

9. Recommendation

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

Background documents

None