

Meeting of:	CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING
Date of Meeting:	10 JANUARY 2025
Report Title:	BRIDGEND CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024
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:	The Bridgend Corporate Parenting Board was established in November 2022 and this report outlines its activities and achievements which are detailed in its first annual report for the period April 2023 - March 2024

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request that Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting endorse the 2023-24 Annual Report of the Bridgend Corporate Parenting Board (**Appendix 1**).

2. Background

- 2.1 The Bridgend Corporate Parenting Board was established in 2022 and comprises agencies who have specific responsibilities for care experienced children and young people and other organisations that work to help those agencies fulfil their duties. The Board works closely with a group of care experienced children and young people, called the Bridgend Youth Voice Forum, to make sure that the work that they do fits well with the priorities, needs and ideas of children and young people. The Board and the forum worked closely together to agree the things that should be worked on and this was put together in a plan called the Bridgend Corporate Parenting Strategy. A special event to inform people about the strategy was held in April 2023 where the youth forum introduced different guests and speakers including the Childrens Commissioner for Wales. The most important part of the strategy are the Board priorities as these were the things that both adults and their children and young people valued most. These were as follows:

- Having a voice.
- Good health and well-being.
- A comfortable, safe, stable home whilst in care and afterwards.
- Educational achievement, training, and employment.

- Getting ready for independent living.
- Celebrating our children and young people's important achievements and events.

2.2 Whilst the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting has received an update report at previous meetings this is the first formal Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board since its establishment in November 2022.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 The Corporate Parenting Board met regularly throughout 2023-24 and shared information and ideas on how they can work together to agree priorities to improve the lives of care experienced children and young people. It is very important to the Corporate Parenting Board that the children and young people they support feel valued and when they do something well this is recognised. To reflect this, in September 2023, the Board held a celebration event to praise those young people who had success in education, training or employment.

3.2 The annual report contains information about Board member roles and achievements including:

3.2.1 Children and Family Services - the local authority has statutory responsibilities towards all care experienced children. Care experienced children under 18 years old have allocated social workers and care leavers have allocated personal advisors until they reach the age of 25 years old. The allocated worker is responsible for developing, and overseeing care plans to ensure that all children and young people are working towards their identified outcomes and having their needs met. There were 370 care experienced children and 226 care leavers open to the local authority on 31 March 2024. There has been a 47% reduction in children experiencing 3 or more placements over the course of the reporting year which was a significant improvement. This provided children with stability within their home network. The majority of children who experienced 3 or more placement moves were those aged between 13 and 15 years of age.

3.2.2 Education - the Education Engagement Team works with school clusters to develop a clear and coherent plan to support our care experienced children and young people via their Pupil Deprivation Grant. The team offers a range of support schemes which are detailed in the report. As of 31 March 2024, there were 234 care experienced statutory school age learners. The team also support children placed in Bridgend by other local authorities. Each school has a designated co-ordinator as a point of contact.

3.2.3 Youth Justice Service - The Bridgend Youth Justice Service (BYJS) is dedicated to addressing the unique needs and strengths of every child it encounters. Notably, care experienced children are disproportionately likely to engage in offending or harmful behaviours. These children often present with more complex needs, prompting the BYJS to enhance its interventions to effectively manage risks and provide comprehensive care and support. BYJS were working with 92 children as of 1 April 2024. Among these, 12 (13%) were classified as care experienced.

- 3.2.4 Housing - The housing department oversees the Council's statutory responsibility for homelessness, rehousing and housing support. Applications for the above services are received directly from care experienced children, young people and care leavers. In 2023-24, 27 care leavers presented as homeless. Of these only 16 were assessed to be either homeless or threatened with homelessness. 16 homelessness duties were accepted and appropriate support provided. In 2023-24, Cabinet approved a Housing Support Programme Strategy. In developing this Strategy a comprehensive Statement of Need was undertaken, which included looking at data relating to homelessness applications by Care Leavers.
- 3.2.5 Health - The Health Board are responsible for completing the health assessments required under the Social Services and Wellbeing act. Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board currently collects information on the number of health assessments completed, along with the number of care experienced children who attend our emergency departments. This will include the number of children registered with General Practitioners and Dental services. During the reporting period 347 Health assessments were completed.
- 3.2.6 Advocacy - Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru is the statutory independent advocacy service commissioned for care experienced children and young people in Bridgend. Within this role 25 care experienced young people were referred for the 'Active Offer' of advocacy and 65 care experienced young people were referred for issue-based advocacy. TGP Cymru also facilitate the care experienced youth forum (Bridgend Youth Voice) and ensure children and young people are reminded of their rights and entitlements at regular intervals and referring into advocacy service or other support services as and when required.
- 3.2.7 South Wales Fire and Rescue - South Wales Fire and Rescue provide a number of prevention programmes which are detailed in the report. Whilst they do not currently target or record numbers of care experienced children and young people, their services are nevertheless available to them.
- 3.2.8 Bridgend College - Bridgend College take on a pivotal role in supporting our care experienced children, young people, and care leavers, ensuring that they receive consistent and professional support throughout their educational journey. Along with curriculum-based support, their responsibilities include regular liaisons with their social workers, support teams, and foster carers. During the 2023-24 academic year the College were aware of 43 students who were in care with three learners withdrawing from their programme during the first 56 days (this is the Welsh Government measure in education for retention), but with all other learners (93%) being retained on their programme after the first 56 days of the programme start date. Attendance for students who are in care was 89.4%, which is just above the overall College attendance, typically with the first part of the week seeing greater attendance (90%+).
- 3.2.9 Awen Cultural Trust - Awen works with partners to ensure that care experienced children can access, feel safe and enjoy cultural opportunities that will support social development and career pathways. Over the past year, Awen has supported the Corporate Parenting Board to further its celebration of the achievements of care experienced young people, while at the same time developing its own policies and activities that fosters better opportunities for young people, carers and families. The Santa Appeal promoted and managed by Awen in 2023 was one of the most successful to date. Awen is also an official Fostering Friendly employer, demonstrating their commitment to supporting colleagues who are considering fostering, or have

existing foster care responsibilities, with extra leave and flexible working arrangements.

- 3.3 The Board has agreed that their priorities for 2024-25 are to develop a clear action plan underpinned by a performance framework that can reflect how board member agencies are meeting the rights and needs of our children and evidence this in an outcome focused way. Alongside this, ways of celebrating children's wider achievements are also being developed.

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.
- 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, along with an extended multi-agency membership through its 5 sub-groups. This membership is intended to provide sufficient representation to cover who has specific responsibilities for our children and young people in particular circumstances. The purpose of the next Board meeting and the sub-group meetings being held in this quarter, is to identify where professionals and agencies need to work together in the future to forge a coherent approach to the care of our children and young people.
- 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. 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 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Committee endorse the content of the Bridgend Corporate Parenting Board's first Annual Report (**Appendix 1**).

Background documents

None