

BRIDGEND CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT 2024 - 2026

2024 - 2026





Introduction

Within Bridgend County Borough, the corporate parenting Board offers a space for the Local Authority and its partners to come together to hold each other accountable to the care experienced children and young people of Bridgend.

In 2023, alongside care experienced children and young people of Bridgend, the Board’s priorities were set. Below are the 6 priorities which the Board focuses their work.

Our Priorities

1. Having a voice.
2. Good health and well-being.
3. A comfortable, safe, stable home whilst in care and afterwards.
4. Educational achievement, training, and employment.
5. Getting ready for independent living.
6. Celebrating our children and young people’s important achievements and events.

The Work of the Board

The Corporate Parenting Board met 5time in the year April 2024 – March 2026.

Attendance of Board members

[Table key: **Y** – attended **N** – no attendance **Rep** – represented by a colleague of their organisation]

| Board member | 14 th May <i>Civic Offices</i> | 5 th July | 27 th September <i>Ogmore Vales Fire Station</i> | 13 th December <i>Kenfig Hill RFC</i> | 11 th February <i>Maesteg Fire Station</i> | 8 th April 2025 | 15 th July 2025 | 9 th September 2025 | 18 th November 2025 CANCELLED | 20 th January 2025 |
|---|--|----------------------|--|---|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Corporate Parenting Officer, Bridgend CBC | Y | | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | | Y |
| BCBC children’s services | Y | | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | | Y |
| Education and Early Help, Education and Family Support Directorate BCBC | Rep | | Rep | Rep | Rep | REP | REP | REP | | REP |



| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|---------|-----|-----|-----|---|---|
| Prevention and Wellbeing, BCBC | N | N | Y | N | N | N | N | N | N |
| Partnership Services, BCBC | Rep | Y | Rep | Rep | REP | REP | N | | N |
| Learning Disability, Mental Health and Substance Misuse, BCBC | N | N | N | N | N | N | N | | N |
| Employability BCBC | N | N | N | N | N | N | N | | N |
| Safeguarding and Looked After Children, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board | Rep | Rep | Rep | N | REP | REP | N | | N |
| South Wales Police | Y | Y | Rep | Y | N | N | N | | Y |
| Bridgend College | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | N | N | | N |
| Fire & Rescue Service | Y | Y | Y | Y + rep | Y | Y | Y | | N |
| Awen Cultural Trust | N | N | N | Rep | REP | REP | N | | N |
| Tros Gynnal Plant | N | N | N | N | N | N | N | | N |
| Halo Leisure | N | Y | N | N | N | N | N | | N |
| Western Bay Adoption Service | N | Y | N | N | Y | N | REP | | N |
| Youth Justice Service BCBC | Y | Y | Y | Rep | N | Y | N | | N |

It must be noted that each of the above meetings had additional non Board members invited to present or to attend for their expertise on a topic being discussed.

Over the course of the year the Board has been determining baseline data to understand how we are meeting the needs and priorities of our care experienced children and young people.



Bridgend Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting

Whilst the Corporate Parenting Board is not a statutory body, it is closely aligned with Bridgend County Borough Council's (BCBC) governance through its relationship with the Cabinet Corporate Parenting Committee that receives reports that provide oversight and accountability to the Councils' statutory functions in regards to care experienced children, young people and care leavers.

Children and Family Services and other Council departments provide quarterly reports to the Cabinet Corporate Parenting Committee. Reports presented to the Committee are also shared with the Corporate Parenting Board. Reports presented over during 2023-34 and 2024-25 include:

- Corporate Parenting quarterly update
- Employability Service update
- Basic Income Pilot
- Youth Justice Service update
- Children & Families 3-year Plan
- Independent Reviewing service Annual Plan
- Annual Report of Inspections
- Regional Advocacy Service Annual Report
- Regional Adoption Service Annual Report
- Inspection updates
- Foster Wales Bridgend Annual report
- Policy and strategy updates
- Annual report of Inspections on BCBC registered homes
- Housing Pathways for Care Experienced Children children's homes and Young People

Listening to the views of our children and young people

The Board has worked closely with care experienced children and young people, ensuring that their voices lead the Board's direction.

In October 2025, the Board held a Care Experienced Summit. This was the first of its kind in Bridgend County Brough Council. The Summit offered an opportunity for professionals and young people to come together, to build relationships and for professionals to understand the lived experience of our care experienced young people. The Summit focused on 4 topics:

- Your Voice
- Your Future
- Your Education
- Your Health

A workshop was held for each topic and the young people were offered a space to offer their views, wishes and feelings.



Some quotes from our young people from the workshops included:

Your voice

“Just give them a voice (listen to YP views) as may have good ideas about what options are available”

“Make sure young person knows why they in care and don’t blame themselves”

Your Future

| <i>My hopes for the future:</i> | <i>My worries about the future are:</i> |
|--|---|
| <i>“To be a pharmacist”</i> | <i>“Losing relationships with the people I know”</i> |
| <i>“I want to go to university to study PE and get a PGCE”</i> | <i>“Not having a successful job and not passing my GCSEs”</i> |
| <i>“Always change myself - every little second”</i> | <i>“AI”</i> |
| <i>“Getting a good job to help my future”</i> | <i>“Securing a good job”</i> |

Your Education

There are staff at school who are kind and understanding and want to help

“[It’s] annoying and upsetting when communication is poor. We need school staff to sometimes acknowledge that they have caused us to be in a difficult situation by not telling other teachers our circumstances”

“School is too focused on us knowing what we want to do next and if we are going to college or going to get a job. We feel our friends don’t have the same pressures because they are not care-experienced”

Your health

“In a recent hospital stay staff were friendly and supported me, I felt listened to and they got to know my likes and dislikes”

“don’t just talk to my carer”

“it’s hard to open up about private things to someone new”

With this feedback children’s services and its partners can work with young people to improve services to ensure they are inclusive and respond to the learning we have had from this event. The feedback will also feed into the priorities for the next year will be explored and agreed.



Alongside the Summit, the Board held a care experienced fun day to celebrate our children and young people. The day was hosted by Bridgend College at their Pencoed Campus. Together with partners, there was a wide range of stalls and activities that included: face painting, silent disco, giant jenga, bracelet making, clay modelling, giant connect 4, mega darts, bean bag toss, catching sticks, story telling, smack the rat, rock painting, Halloween activities, wooden pumpkin carving, drawing competition, photo booth, name the teddy, card competition and Beti the dog mentor. Cardiff City Football and Bridgend Ravens Rugby tested skills in the sports hall with some great give aways and a chance to meet Ronnie the Raven.

Over 150 children, young people, carers and staff attended the event with feedback on the day, and messages from carers since, providing extremely positive comments stating that our children and young people had lots of fun and thoroughly enjoyed themselves!



Board Member support for our children and young people

Children and Family Services



Number of Care Experienced Children by Age and Gender:

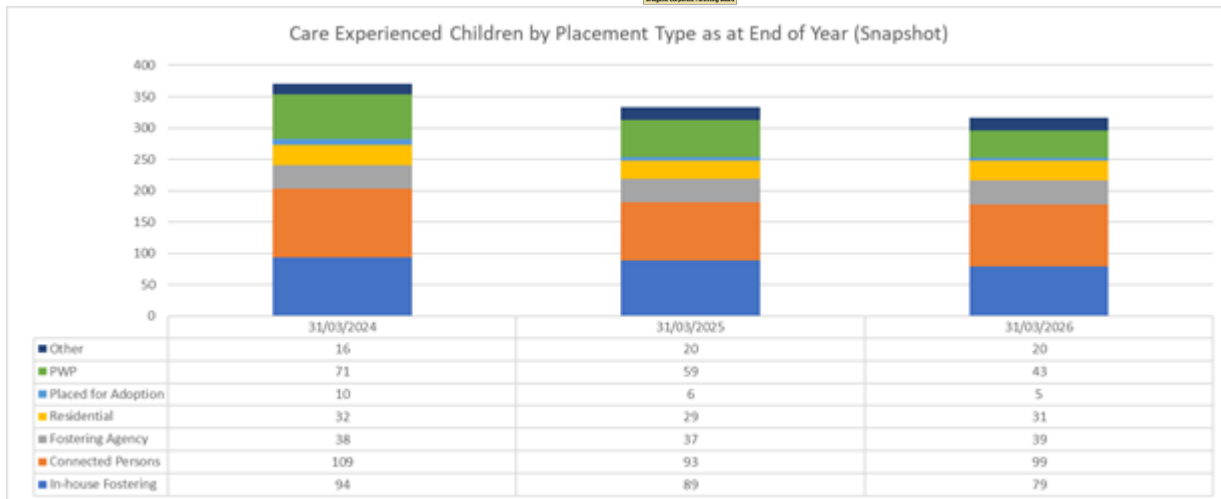
| | As at 31/03/2024 | | | As at 31/03/2025 | | | As at 31/03/2026 | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|------------|------------|------------------|------------|------------|------------------|------------|------------|
| No of Care Experienced Children | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male | Total |
| Under 1 | 3 | 8 | 11 | 7 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 7 | 10 |
| 1-4 Years Old | 28 | 32 | 60 | 19 | 30 | 49 | 18 | 18 | 36 |
| 5-9 Years Old | 37 | 48 | 85 | 34 | 48 | 82 | 40 | 49 | 89 |
| 10-15 Years Old | 73 | 72 | 145 | 66 | 59 | 125 | 58 | 60 | 118 |
| 16-17 Years Old | 29 | 40 | 69 | 27 | 41 | 68 | 23 | 40 | 63 |
| Total | 170 | 200 | 370 | 153 | 180 | 333 | 142 | 174 | 316 |

The local authority (LA) has responsibility for all care-experienced children. Care experienced children under 18 have allocated social workers and care leavers have allocated personal advisors. The allocated worker is responsible for developing and overseeing the care plans to ensure that all children and young people are working towards their identified outcomes and having their needs met. There were 333 care experienced children and 245 care leavers supported by the Local Authority on 31st March 2025. By March 2026 this figure has further reduced to 316 (-4.8%) care experienced children.

At its highest in April 2024 with 373 care experienced young people being supported. The number of care experienced children has steadily decreased throughout 2024 – 2026. In 2024 the Local Authority launched its safe reduction of care experienced children strategy. The Local Authority has worked closely with families to identify those where children and young people are safe to exit care and reunify with their families. The practice model of Signs of Safety has also contributed towards the safety planning, keeping children within their families and reducing the need to become looked after.

There is a systemic approach to the process of discharging care orders which provides clear expectations for social workers working with children and families. There is joint working between the Care Experienced Children's Team, Kinship and Permanence Team and Independent Reviewing Services which supports working together to ensure high quality care planning and timely progression of care plans.

The graph below shows the placement types within which our care experienced young people reside.



Connected Person placements continue to be the greatest proportion of placements with in house fostering being the second highest. The service continues to strategically evaluate its exit from care strategies and as such this is reflected in the number of Care experienced young people decreasing over the last 12 months in particular.

In 2024-2025 there was a 21% increase in children experiencing 3 or more placements over the course of this year compared with the previous year. The main impacting factor for this was placement sufficiency.

These strategies have proved effective as in 2025-2026 there was a **14% decrease** in children experiencing 3 or more placements over the course of this year compared with 2024/25. The main impacting factor for this is placement sufficiency of the right accommodation care and support arrangements to meet children's needs. Addressing this is a priority with many plans in place to support the right placements and placement support for children and carers. In 2025/26 **7.81%** of care experienced young people experienced 3 or more placement moves during the year.

In the year 2024-2025 there was a change in the through care team who now work with children from 15 not 16 years. Young people are allocated a Personal Advisor (PA) up until the age of 25. Legislation dictates that pathway plans only have to be reviewed up until this age unless a young person is being supported through a programme of education (largely university). The PA service is now fully staffed but did experience some staffing challenges due to this period as a number of PAs were seconded to undertake social work training. Continuity of PA is key for young people as they transition from childhood to adulthood. The 15+ team continues to support those who are eligible for the Basic Income Pilot for Care Leavers. All our care leavers who were eligible for the scheme signed up. Benefits have been seen for our young people in this scheme and plans are in place to ensure there is no ongoing impact when the pilot ends. Young people aged 16-25 have access to the St David's Day fund which is used to support with access to opportunities to assist with their development and successfully transition into adulthood. This is often used for course fees and study materials, equipment, transport etc.

The Independent Reviewing service offers accountability and oversight of Care Experienced children and young people's care plans. Throughout 2024-2026 the IRO service has worked closely with the



children’s social workers across the service alongside the Advocacy service offered by TGP to ensure the voices of our Care Experienced children are heard and acted on as part of the Care Experienced Review process.

BCBC (and all UK local authorities) is part of the Home Office National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people. The NTS is a United Kingdom (UK) government scheme which enables the planned transfer of an unaccompanied seeking child from one LA to another. All Councils in the UK are subject to a mandatory duty to comply with the scheme. The purpose of the NTS is to ensure a fairer and equitable distribution of care to unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people.

In 2025/26, of the 30 UASC the table below shows how many reside in and out of the LA as at 31/3/26:

11 are Care Experienced and 19 are Care Leavers.

| | UASC | Former UASC Care Leavers |
|-----------------------------------|------|--------------------------|
| Placed within Local Authority | 7 | 8 |
| Placed outside of Local Authority | 4 | 11 |

The Local Authority continues to work as Foster Wales Bridgend to recruit more local authority foster carer households. There is ongoing recruitment activity to increase the number of high-quality foster carers for children and young people. Foster cares have access to their own supervising social worker and training packages and events to ensure they are supported and have opportunities for development. There are opportunities for planning for placements within our monthly placements planning meetings and out of authority panels. Children services have now appointed a When I’m Ready and Supported Lodgings Social Worker dedicated to recruiting and supporting providers of this

service to enable stable and secure placements as the young person makes the transition into adulthood.

Education

As at March 2025 there was 207 statutory school age Bridgend care-experienced children in Education.



The Education Engagement Team support Bridgend care experienced children and children placed in Bridgend by other local authorities. Each school has a designated co-ordinator as a point of contact. There are two seniors are a point of contact for BCBC children placed outside of Bridgend County.

From September 2024 to September 2025 the number of children looked after accessing intervention from the Youth Justice Service increased from 6 to 10, suggesting that while fewer children are subject to early or high-level safeguarding interventions, a small number now require more stable care arrangements.

Care-experienced learners generally show improved stability and increasing participation in education, training and wellbeing support. Attendance and attainment remain variable, but targeted support has helped many learners sustain placements, re-engage with school, and access specialist emotional and behavioural support.

Care experienced children in Bridgend face greater barriers to educational success than their peers. Outcomes align broadly with regional patterns: higher Additional Learning Needs (ALN) rates, more complex needs, and a greater likelihood of disrupted education. However, Bridgend's focus on early intervention and multi-agency working places it in line with, or ahead of, other comparable authorities.

Strong corporate parenting arrangements, robust multi-agency collaboration, and early-help approaches (including trauma-informed practice) underpin improving outcomes. Many care experienced learners benefit from bespoke tutoring, stable foster placements, targeted wellbeing support, and consistent relationships with social workers and education advisors. Engagement in positive activities and post-16 progression opportunities is increasing.

Challenges include attendance fluctuations, higher exclusion risk, emotional and mental health needs, placement instability for a small cohort, and delays in securing specialist provision. Transition points (Year 6–7 and post-16) remain pressure points. Limited capacity in health, ALN services and specialist education settings affects timely support.

The local authority is strengthening trauma-informed practice in schools, expanding personal tuition and mentoring, enhancing multi-agency planning, and improving transition support. Work is underway to reduce exclusions, increase post-16 participation, and ensure earlier identification of ALN needs. Future actions include widening access to wellbeing services, increasing placement stability, and strengthening data tracking to target support more precisely.



Bridgend Youth Justice Service

Bridgend Youth Justice Service (BYJS) works with children aged 10–17 who are care-experienced, on the edge of care, or experiencing risk factors such as exploitation, school exclusion, emotional dysregulation or unsafe environments.

Many of the children we support have multiple and complex needs, and a significant proportion are already open to Children's Social Care. BYJS plays a vital role in safeguarding these children, ensuring their voices are heard, and helping them to navigate adversity safely.

BYJS responsibilities during the year included providing a trauma-informed, relational, and child-centred service, with early engagement at the prevention stage through to statutory court orders, resettlement and custody and we operate a multi-agency, safety and wellbeing approach. We deliver direct work across safety, wellbeing, education, health, family relationships and community reintegration while ensuring children feel understood, supported and included.

The Youth Justice Service work closely with Social Care, Education, Police, Health, Child and Adolescent mental Health Services (CAMHS), Substance Misuse services and the wider third sector to ensure that care experienced children receive personalised and proportionate interventions. BYJS also supports families and carers, recognising the important role they play in stability and recovery. Throughout 2024–26, BYJS strengthened its approach to contextual safeguarding, the management of exploitation, early identification of the child's safety and wellbeing needs, trauma embedded practice and the use of restorative practice to keep children and communities safe.

Care experienced children made up approximately 12% (11) of the BYJS caseload, though their needs were often more complex than the wider cohort. All care experienced children were screened for trauma, exploitation, speech and language needs, mental health, substance misuse, and their wider family and contextual risks.

Health & Emotional Wellbeing

BYJS continued to benefit from a dedicated CAMHS practitioner who provided consultation, screening and direct intervention for children with neurodevelopmental or mental health concerns. Many children also received additional help through our health practitioner, who coordinated referrals into paediatrics, substance misuse services, GPs and sexual health clinics. Children with complex trauma were supported through structured, trauma-informed sessions and external therapeutic services when required.

Education

Education outcomes remained a priority, particularly as many care-experienced children face exclusion, anxiety or disengagement from learning. BYJS engaged schools, Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) provision, the Bridge, and college partners to secure personalised re-engagement plans. Children accessed vocational pathways such as bike mechanics, construction tasters, agriculture, outdoor learning and the Building Skills Project. Transport support, attendance monitoring and daily contact were used to maintain consistency.



Safety & Stability

All care experienced children were jointly reviewed at multi-agency safety and wellbeing meetings, where current risks and protective factors were analysed. Exploitation screening tools, risk management plans and contextual safeguarding mapping were used where deemed necessary in conjunction with our Childrens Services partners. BYJS worked with housing to secure emergency accommodation, prevent homelessness and support safe transitions. When children were at risk of going missing, exploitation or self-harm, BYJS coordinated fast-time planning with police and social care to reduce harm and improve stability.

Priorities for Q4 2025/26 moving into 2026/27 will be to improve safety, stability and life chances for care experienced children open to YJS through a trauma-informed and co-ordinated planning, alongside strengthening participation, voice and influence of care experienced children within the service processes and development.

Bridgend Council Housing Department

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. The department, in conjunction with colleagues in Children and Family Services complete a quarterly return with regards to care leavers who have presented throughout the year.

In 2024/25, 13 care leavers presented as homeless, that is a reduction of more than 50% (27) from 2023/24. In strategic response to care leavers presenting as homeless, the LA has developed a joint protocol between Children's services and Housing. This assessment will be completed by the 15+ team alongside housing ensuring a holistic assessment of need is completed when any young person 16+ is presenting as homeless to the Local Authority.

Health

Cwm Taff Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB) provides all universal and secondary health services to care experienced children within its footprint and is responsible for any health referrals to regional centres of care. The health board are also responsible for completing the health assessments required under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2014). 261 health assessments were completed with 44 outstanding for care experienced young people. Steps have been taken to manage this which included recruiting into the team leader role alongside an administration role. CTMUHB 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 the General Practitioners and Dental services.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board is participating in the national CIVICA survey, which gathers feedback on how children and young people experience their health assessments. In addition,



a Children's Rights Oversight Board provides strategic direction across all directorates, ensuring that the rights of children and young people are embedded throughout service delivery. The launch of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Baby and toddler voice is a charter that captures and represents the rights and needs of very young children. There is an experience and engagement service level meeting in Children's Social Care Bi-monthly where any issues are discussed escalated or celebrated. CTMUHB children's charter included the views of local children and young people.

TGP Cymru – Advocacy Support

TGP Cymru is the statutory independent advocacy service commissioned for children open to Child and Family Services which includes those open on a Care and Support basis, Child Protection and Care experienced children and young people in Bridgend. According to information received from Bridgend, TGP report 132 children and young people across the service became eligible for the AO during the year, 130 less than in the previous year. A total of 66 children and young people were referred, meaning that if we assume those referred became eligible in the year, 50% of those eligible were referred, compared to 27% last year.

Of the 66 young people referred, 54 AO meetings took place, and 39 young people accepted the AO and went on to received IBA, 27 less than in the previous year. A focus in 2026/27 will be to create more visibility to our Care experienced young people of the opportunities that come from professional advocacy. Alongside TGP advocacy services, BCBC is also working alongside the Parent Advocacy Network in developing a parent peer advocacy model to further support the outcomes of children and families in Bridgend.

Alongside the Active Offer, TGP Cymru also facilitate the care experienced youth forum (Bridgend Youth Voice) and ensuring 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. Bridgend Youth Voice (BYV) Forum has a regular cohort of children and young people aged between 12 and 22 yrs old who meet on a monthly basis and school holidays.

TGP Cymru actively promotes rights around education, training and employment via independent advocacy provision. This year, 18 young people provided feedback about the advocacy service they received. Of those 18, 17 stated they found the service helpful, 16 felt the service made a difference to their situation, 16 felt they knew more about their rights, 14 felt more confident since receiving support, 16 felt more included in decisions, and 17 felt their views were fully considered and their rights represented. All of the young people providing feedback this year stated they would use the service again. Whilst explaining why they felt the service was helpful, one young person said: "Tony found out the answer of something I could not answer."

When explaining why they felt more confident about things since having advocacy support, one young person said: "I now feel I can talk without being judged and looked at different with my opinions". Whilst explaining why they felt the service made them feel more included in decisions, and led to them knowing more about their rights, one young person said: "I feel I have more options in life and I feel that I can have my own say" and "I know more about the fact that I have my own choices and my own voice".



South Wales Fire and Rescue

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS) has delivered 103 REFLECT sessions to 1,001 attendees aged between 11 -25 years old. The REFLECT Project aims to engage with young people to raise awareness and educate them in the dangers of Arson, Car Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour, developing confidence, citizenship and promoting positive behaviours to champion the needs of children and young people wherever they are on their life journey, ensure we give them a voice and provide support and education to enhance positive decision making.

In addition, the service has completed 39 Phoenix project sessions to 267 attendees. The Phoenix Project provides an opportunity for both primary and secondary schools, colleges, alternative education agencies, and pupil referral units to refer young people to a five day interactive course where they learn all about the Fire and Rescue Service, who we are, what we do and how we engage with the communities we serve. The aim of the programme is to address issues experienced by young people, ranging from low self-esteem and lack of confidence to anti-social behaviour and/or fire related problems. It provides an opportunity for children and young people to learn new skills, interact as part of a team and unearth previously under used or undiscovered talents against a Fire Service backdrop. The Phoenix Project provides attendees with the opportunity to take part in a wide variety of activities such as working with real fire service equipment, using specially adapted fire engines, climbing ladders, and taking part in staged rescue scenarios.

The service also provides a Fire cadet programme at 12 locations through the service area for 13 to 16-year-olds. The programme offers young people an unique insight into working within an emergency service. The service offers fun and challenging inclusive opportunities for young people and work to develop personal and social skills through activities which promote self-discipline, teamwork and citizenship. The programme offers the opportunity to gain awards and work towards achieving a recognised qualification.

In addition, South Wales Fire and Rescue Service has delivered road, fire and water safety education to 49,156 children and young people in key stages 1-4.

South Wales Fire & Rescue offer the following educational opportunities through their youth intervention projects and programmes and these:

- Enhancing key citizenship skills and build confidence.
- Developing transferable, practical skills for future training or employment.
- Gaining a nationally recognised BTEC qualification.
- Playing supportive roles in their local community and develop positive peer relationships. • Attending a local fire station one evening a week, work alongside SWFRS
- Representing SWFRS at prestigious events.

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. This collaboration helps in maintaining a unified approach to each student's welfare. Each care experienced student is assigned a safeguarding lead, and has a safeguarding lead care experienced champion, enhancing the personalised care by establishing a reliable point of contact for students to approach when in need. These leads play a crucial role in managing the students' reviews and fostering a supportive environment where students can develop trust and rapport.

From April 2024 – March 2026, Bridgend College have actively engaged in providing essential services like advocacy and housing support and have directed students to necessary external agencies for further assistance, such as Assisting Recovery in the Community (ARC) and Barod. This comprehensive support structure not only addresses immediate educational needs but also ensures a broader spectrum of welfare and guidance, reinforcing our commitment to the well-being and success of our care-experienced students.

There were 77 enrolled care experienced students in the academic year 2024/25. In 2025-26 28 care experienced young people enrolled in full time education with a marked improvement in retention figures recorded for the first term with 100% recorded with all 28 learners remaining in education following October 2025 half term. Retention of care experienced young people has previously been noted as below the overall college retention rate (-5.9% in 2025) and as such, this has been added as a priority area of focus and improvement within the colleges quality improvement plan for 2025/26.

In 2024 and 2025 the college also hosted the celebration event and young people's summit, working with the local authority to provide an accessible venue to celebrate and engage care experienced young people of all ages.

AWEN Cultural Trust

Awen Cultural Trust 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.

Awen provides opportunities and activities that support the well-being of young people, creating new experiences that enhance emotional and physical health. These include activities at Bryngarw Park where we know care experienced children enjoy school visits, access to events such as events at Maesteg Town Hall. Awen also works with partners to develop schemes for young carers which in 2024 included an iBroadcast project based on the Grand Pavilion. <https://ow.ly/sSG650SG2uI>

At Bryngarw, we organised a 'relaxed' Santa's grotto (Santa's Grotto: A Relaxed Encounter | Awen Box Office), providing a safe and inclusive space for families to enjoy a Christmas experience and which may support care experienced young people.



Awen became a Fostering Friendly place means that they:

Organisation this year, having the policy in

- offer flexible working for foster carers and those going through the approval process.
- can allow up to 5 days of paid leave. This could be for foster carer training, meetings with social workers or settling a child into their new home for instance.
- will promote Foster Care Fortnight™, The Fostering Network's annual campaign, which raises the profile of fostering.

Western Bay Adoption Service

Western Bay Adoption Service provides the adoption service for Bridgend. The service recruits and assesses any potential adopters from Bridgend, twin tracks and family finds for children in Bridgend who have a plan of adoption being considered or agreed by the court and provides an adoption support service to adoptive family and birth parents who reside in Bridgend.

From April 2024 to March 2025, the service worked with 20 twin tracking (potential adoption) referrals, 7 Bridgend children were made subject of a placement order, i.e had an agreed plan of adoption, and the service placed 6 children. The service recruited and approved 5 adoptive families.

In the year 2025-26, the service worked with 24 twin tracking referrals, 11 Bridgend children were made subject of a placement order, and the service placed 6 children with adopters. 7 children were made subject of an Adoption order. 6 adoptive families were also approved from Bridgend.

The service has a wide variety of support services available to adopted children and their families, including Virtual Hub consultations, birth parent support groups which are held monthly, access to a youth club specifically for adopted young people, support with life-journey work and identity, play group for adoptive families, and numerous support events in which adoptive families can come together. They also offer support to adopted adults to access their adoption information.

Celebrating our children and young people's important achievement and events

In October 2025 the Corporate Parenting Board held their first Care Experienced Summit and Fun day events for care experienced children, offering a space to share their voices to support service development and a space to be celebrated and praised for their achievements. Below are some photos from the day...





Next steps - our priorities in the coming year 2026/27

Over the past 2 years, the corporate parenting board has offered some accountability and oversight for partners and the Local Authority in relation to their duties and responsibilities to Care Experienced young people. There has been some great success between the services and in collaborating with care experience young people; putting the voice of our young people at the centre of what we do within our different systems, however there remain challenges in relation to how our systems work together to ensure we achieve the best possible outcomes for our Care Experienced children and young people. The data set continues to be a challenge with many elements of the data required to understand the impact of the board's initiatives on outcomes alongside themes that support strategic direction are missing.

In the coming year, the Board will continue to develop 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. The Boards main priorities will be understanding who our Care Experienced young people are, how are they achieving in education, understanding their current outcomes and their trajectories; working together on a plan which aims to ensure we are meeting the needs of our young people and their outcomes are the best they can be.

As we continue to offer space and time to work with children and young people, to listen to their lived experience and collaboratively work together to improve services for care experienced children, the aim of the Board is to ensure the needs, rights and entitlements of our care experienced young people are met by the Local Authority and its partners and that they are offered opportunities to thrive.