



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

C.Hanagan
Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
The Pavilions
Cambrian Park
Clydach Vale CF40 2XX

Meeting Contact: Sarah Daniel - Senior Democratic Services Officer 07385 086 169

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a meeting of **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held virtually on **WEDNESDAY, 22ND SEPTEMBER, 2021** at **5.00 PM.**

Non Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to Democratic Services by Monday, 20 September 2021 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

AGENDA

**Page
No's**

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Note:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest: and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.

2. MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 21 July 2021

5 - 12

REPORTS OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS

3. CONSULTATION LINKS

Information is provided in respect of relevant [consultations](#) for consideration by the Committee.

4. SCRUTINY RESEARCH

A scrutiny research facility is available within the Council Business Unit to support Members' scrutiny responsibilities and their roles as Elected Members. Such research strengthens scrutiny Committees work programmes to ensure outcome-based topics are identified. For any scrutiny research requirements please contact:

Scrutiny@rhonddacynon-taff.gov.uk

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

5. GATSBY PROJECT REPORT

13 - 20

REPORTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

6. CARE INSPECTORATE WALES (CIW) REPORT

21 - 34

7. KINSHIP CARE (NOTICE OF MOTION)

35 - 46

8. INFORMATION REPORTS

The following reports are provided for the information of Members:

[School Holiday Enrichment Programme](#)
[Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report](#)

(For Members to acknowledge the information contained within these reports but any queries relating to the item can be directed to Scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk)

9. CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE

To reflect on the meeting and actions to be taken forward.

10. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any items, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee (County Borough Councillor S. Rees-Owen and County Borough respectively)

County Borough Councillors:

Councillor J Edwards, Councillor J Brencher, Councillor A Calvert, Councillor S Evans, Councillor A Fox, Councillor E Griffiths, Councillor D Owen-Jones, Councillor S Morgans, Councillor S Powell, Councillor M Powell, Councillor G Stacey, Councillor S Trask and Councillor D Williams

Co-Opted Members:-

Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mrs R Nicholls, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mr L Patterson, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mr M Cleverley
Ms A Jones, Representing UNITE
Mr C Jones, Representing GMB
Mrs C Jones, Representing the National Union of Teachers and Teachers' Panel
Mr D Price, Representing UNISON
Mr A Rickett, Voting Diocesan Authorities' Representative

This page is intentionally left blank



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting held virtually on Wednesday, 21 July 2021 at 5.00 pm

County Borough Councillors - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor S. Rees-Owen (Chair)

Councillor J Edwards	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor A Fox	Councillor S Morgans
Councillor S Powell	Councillor M Powell
Councillor S Trask	Councillor D Williams

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services
Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Ms A Lloyd, Service Director, Children's Services
Ms A Richards, Temporary Service Director - 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Mr B Harries, Youth Services Manager
Ms Z Lancelott, Head of Community Wellbeing & Resilience

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/2022. The Chair took the opportunity to thank non- returning Members for the contribution they had made to the committee in the previous year and also welcomed new Members to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Apologies were received from the following County Borough Councillors:

A Calvert
S Evans
E Griffiths
G Stacey
D Owen Jones
and Co-opted Voting Members Ms R Nicholls and Mr L Patterson.

2 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations

made pertaining to the agenda.

3 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 03/03/2021, 24/03/2021 and 21/04/2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

4 Consultation Links

The Senior Democratic Services Officer referenced the open consultation links that are available on both the Welsh Government website and reminded Members of the procedure that is in place to participate if they so wish.

Members **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the information

5 Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Draft Work Programme 2021/2022

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications provided Members of the Children & Young People Scrutiny with the suggested Draft Work Programme for the 2021/22 Municipal Year.

Members were reminded that the Scrutiny Work Programmes have a reduced number of meetings for this Municipal Year to enable the Committee to focus on key topics and create a more outcome-focused way of working and to add value to the work of the Council. It also allows for more a more flexible approach to any items that may require a working group setting.

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications continued to inform Members of the items set out in the Work Programme attached at Appendix A of the report. He explained that there had been agreement with the Chair to one amendment that the Early Years Report will now come to December's meeting.

The Chair explained to Members that the SHEP Report would come as an information report as there is strict criteria form Welsh Government whilst a very important item it will be for information only.

The Chair welcomed comments from Members before finally looking for agreement of the Work Programme.

A Member asked for clarity in respect of the changes of available data for scrutiny to consider at a strategic level, the member stated that he had concerns how the Committee were going to understand what is going on from an education outcome perspective going forward. In response, officers explained that concerns were raised from the pandemic, and this has been raised with Welsh Government and officers are looking to put appropriate actions in place.

The Chair thanked the officer and took Members to the recommendations, Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Agree the Children & Young People Scrutiny Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2021/ 22
- Agree the Work Programme be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure the items identified for inclusion are relevant.

6 Director of Social Services Draft Annual Report

The Group Director Community and Children's Services thanked Members for the opportunity to present the Draft Director of Social Services Annual Report for 2020/2021 year.

It was explained that Members are asked to consider the draft version of the report before going to public consultation and reminded Members that feedback from this meeting will be considered before the final report is presented to Cabinet for its approval.

Members were reminded that the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 includes in Part 8 A Code of Practice with regards to the role of the Director of Social Services. The Code of Practice states that the Director of Social Services must prepare and publish an annual report about the exercise of the Local Authority's social services functions and that the annual report must be published as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of the financial year.

The Group Director gave an overview of the response to the COVID -19 Pandemic, graphs were presented to the Committee for consideration showing the rates of cases across the Authority. Members were also asked to consider the impact on the staff across the services throughout this time. Members took time to acknowledge the work that has been carried out by staff across the sector and asked for it to be recorded that Members thanked all staff for their hard work and resilience throughout these unprecedented times.

Officers explained that staff wellbeing has been at the forefront for the service and a new staff wellbeing model has been developed. Members were presented with an overview of the community and wellbeing support that was delivered during the last twelve months.

The Group Director gave a summary of the financial support for the service, he also highlighted the ongoing work with partners such as Health etc.

The Director of Children's Services gave an overview of the work throughout the last year within Children's Services under the following headings:

- Demand on the Service;
- Child Protection Register;
- Children Looked After;
- Improving Performance , Working towards improvement;
- Work of Children's Services;
- Future development
- Challenges.

Finally, the Group Director concluded by explaining that the service will continue

to work towards strengthening family support, ensuring where possible that accommodation for children looked after is brought as close to home as possible, and they will listen to the voice of the young person when developing interventions and making early intervention and prevention key priority.

The Chair thanked the officers for a very informative report and opened up the meeting for Member's questions and observations.

A Member asked a question on support for staff whilst working from home during the pandemic especially single parents having to adapt to the digital policy and could members see the policy. He also wanted clarity on the work of CAMHS and asked if there could be an update from schools that have had input from the service.

The Group Director explained that the Council had reacted quickly to agile working and provided equipment to staff across the authority to carry out their roles. The majority of instances staff have welcomed this and this was reflected in a staff survey that had been carried out with a positive response. In terms of CAMHS, Members will be able to put their points to officers responsible for CAMHS when they attend Scrutiny later this year but Members may wish to explore access and waiting times and the range of services available.

Members asked for more qualitative data than quantitative data in the report and felt this would show more of individual story going forward. Officers acknowledged the request and stated they would consider this going forward.

Members put forward comments on the support for young people during the summer holidays, the work of the resilient families' service and whether families and young people's needs are being met especially with the lack of face to face interaction. Officers replied that work is being carried out to ensure support is available even though it may be via a hybrid approach and anyone one needing face to face contact is able to under strict guidelines.

One main concern for Members is that of staffing and staff retention especially with the sickness rates and the amount of people being contacted by the track and trace application for Covid -19.

Members asked what procedures are in place to try and attract staff to the service and also wanted clarity on what the authority had in place to retain staff as they are crucial in providing a safe haven for our child and young people and families across the County Borough.

The Chair asked if there could be a staff survey to get an understanding of what the authority can do to retain staff within the service and develop their knowledge. The Chair also raised concerns in respect of the provision of mental health and wellbeing services for our children and young people especially after what has been a very stressful twelve months.

Officers explained that there is work being carried out in respect of a pay review also looking at strategies to develop the service however this is very challenging and we will continue to work with staff etc. to get the best outcomes for our children and young people.

In relation to the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people officers explained that they are working with health and regional partnership

board to develop new strategies for the future, joint planning workshops are considering new strategies and officers would bring any information back to the Committee when they are able.

After further discussion Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Acknowledge the content of the report;
- Receive reports back in relation to staffing recruitment and sickness absences when they are able;
- That feedback from the Committee would be consider when finalising the report.

7 Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Assurance Check 2021

The Group Director Community and Children's Services explained to Members that the purpose of the report is to update the Committee on the Findings Letter from Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) in respect of their recent assurance checks of the Council's Social Services.

The Group Director highlighted that the CIW assurance checks provides the Council with a high level of assurance regarding how well the Council is discharging its statutory duties in respect of social services and providing help and support to adults and children to protect safety and promote well-being. The Group Director continued to explain that this has been achieved during the extremely challenging times of the pandemic and thanked the workforce for their hard work and resilience during this time.

There had been many strengths identified within the check along with a few areas for improvement which have been identified within the delivery plans and the action plans will be brought back to Members at a future meeting.

Member put forward further questions and observation and **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the report and agreed to receive an update against the action plans and consider any aspects the wish to scrutinise n great depth.

8 Youth Engagement and Participation Service : An overview of the Support and Provision During Covid -19

Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee received an overview of the support and provision carried out by the Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPs) during the Covid - 19 pandemic.

With the aide of a Power- Point presentation the Youth Service Manger explained that on the 23rd March 2020, the YEPS suspended all face to face work with young people and colleagues as a direct result of the country entering lockdown. Members acknowledge the resilience of staff within the service to adapt to the fast changing situations and to ensure that young people's needs were met.

The Officer continued to inform the Committee with an overview of activities during Covid- 19 some of which can be found below:

- Referral work:
- Mental health and wellbeing work work:
- Wellbeing packs:

- Reflective practice sessions:
- Emergency childcare hubs:
- School based support;
- Summer holiday childcare:
- Tackling youth homelessness:
- Street –based youth work: and
- Virtual youth offer along with many more provisions.

The Youth Service Manager also present data on the impact of the service to data. It was explained that over the course of the year 2020/21 the service has provided targeted support to:

- 1035 individual young people on a 1:1 basis through its referral work which includes 784 new referrals accepted during the year. The number of referred open cases peaked at 504 in November 2020.

The Officer continued and highlighted that the service has provided open access opportunities to young people to the level of:

- 250 exciting virtual activity programmes for young people to take part in during lockdown, totalling 708 individual sessions;
- 1,521 individual young people attended these sessions over the year;
- 124 street based sessions in the Autumn 2020 (the were not introduced until October 2020 and had to be suspended in December 2020) and during those sessions officers made contact with 2785 young people on the streets of RCT.

Members also considered the response of the consultation with young people in response to the pandemic along with staff feedback and explored the recovery planning and next step that the service aim to have in place.

The YEPS provided Members of the Committee with a video that captured the work of the service and the interaction staff had with young people across the County Borough. Members commented that it was very humbling to see and congratulated staff for some very inventive ideas, which made the young person's experience during the pandemic a less frightening.

The Chair thanked the Youth Service Manager for an extremely comprehensive report and opened up the meeting for Members questions.

A Member wanted clarity in respect of the views of the young persons and asked various questions in relation to the demographics of youth services, and asked if young people across Rhondda Cynon Taf will be able to access a safe place to meet with friends without having to go back to an education setting. Along with provision for young people during the summer holidays.

In response the Youth Service Manager explained that some education settings work well as youth club settings and where this hasn't worked the service has aimed to move to a community setting. Covid hasn't allowed to have an open access service and the street- based setting has allowed the service to travel around which has provides the provision further afield, street shelters are being considered as a work for the future.

Another Member asked a question around the community provision and asked if the service is aware of where the gaps are and how are addressing disengaged young people. In reply the officer explained the work that is being carried out. The Officer continued to explain the work with is being done with disengaged young people and highlighted that this cohort of young people will have the first opportunity of all provision and will be monitored very closely.

Another Member wanted to thank the service for all its hard work in her community and wanted to praise the staff and young people who have taken part in the provision.

Members request information of services to be distributed to the Committee to enable them to direct young people to the services and activities such as poster, web pages etc.

The Chair asked for figure of young people who have been referred to the service for mental health issues and requested that this be sent to the Committee for future reference.

After further discussion Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Acknowledge the information contained in the report and to receive further updates at a future meeting:
- Receive any promotional content which will allow Members to promote the Service within their communities.

9 Summer Term Update in relation to Education's Latest Position in response to Covid- 19

The Head of Capital Projects & Support Services Management provided Members with some contextual information on the most recent changes in Education during the summer term in response to the changing COVID -19 position.

Members were reminded that the local authority continues to work very closely with all schools and provides advice and guidance to school staff as well as regular updates to parents and carers. It was explained that operational guidance continues to be provided in relation to re-opening of schools and this is regularly updated to reflect the latest advice and announcements from Welsh Government. The Officer explained that guidance is also updated and shared in relation to the offer of lateral flow testing for all school staff and learners in Year 10 and above.

The Head of Capital Projects & Support Services Management provided Members an update of provision under the following headings:

- Remote learning:
- Digitally Excluded Learners (DELs):
- Examinations:
- Business Continuity Plans:
- Health & Safety:
- Managing Confirmed Cases:
- Lateral Flow Testing:

- Attendance:
- Partnership working:
- Free School Meal Provision:
- Breakfast Club Provision: and
- Childcare Settings

The Officer concluded her report and explained that any further changes will be brought forward to the Committee when appropriate.

The Chair thank the Officer for a very informative report and invited Members to put forward their questions.

A Member raised concerns in respect of the more complexity of the guidance framework document and felt that this document should be made simpler for schools and governing bodies.

Members found the significant growth in the number of learners eligible for free school meals quite alarming and along with the extra pressures on IT provision Members wanted to know if these pressure have had any major impact on any other part of the service with regards to delivery and capacity and how was this going to be addressed.

FSM figures in partnership with CSC is looking at strategy to address issues and gave examples.

Members also raised questions in respect of examinations and central assessed grades, remote learning and attendance. Officers gave an overview of the work carried out amongst schools and the authority.

Further question were put forward and Members **RESOLVED** acknowledge the content of the report and receive further information when available

10 Chair's Review and Close

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for a very productive meeting and advise that the next Meeting would be 22nd September 2021.

This meeting closed at 7.45 pm

**CLLR S REES-OWEN
CHAIR.**



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 21/22

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22ND SEPTEMBER 2021

**The GATSBY GOOD CAREER BENCHMARKS PILOT
UPDATE AND FUTURE PLANNING**

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author(s): Kate Owen, Gatsby Benchmark Manager

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to provide information on the Gatsby Good Career Benchmark pilot conducted in 22 Rhondda Cynon Taf secondary schools from January 2019 to December 2021. The report will outline the continuing work of the GBM and plan to develop and enhance the use of the Gatsby Benchmarks in RCT schools.

Key Terms	
GBM	Gatsby Benchmark Manager – responsible for the development of the Gatsby Good Career Benchmark pilot.
CWRE	Careers and Work-Related Experiences
CEIAG	Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Consider the content of the report and the impact of the project on Careers and Work-Related Experiences (CWRE) in schools.
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish the Director of Education and Inclusion Services to report on further information in any future meetings.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide Members with an update on the impact of the project on CWRE in schools.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Gatsby Benchmarks derive from the 'Good Career Guidance' report from The Gatsby Foundation, funded by the Sainsbury Foundation. Through investigation and research using CWRE models from across the world; the Gatsby Foundation identified a set of eight benchmarks that schools can use as a framework for excellence in CWRE.

- 4.2 The Benchmarks are widely acknowledged as a breakthrough in the development of Careers Education. They are now part of the formal Careers Education strategy in England and are born from extensive research into what "Good Careers Education looks like" by Sir John Holman on behalf of the Gatsby Foundation.

- 4.3 They are:

- A stable careers programme;
- Learning from career and labour market information;
- Addressing the needs of each pupil;
- Linking curriculum learning to careers;
- Encounters with employers and employees;
- Experiences of workplaces;
- Encounters with further and higher education;
- Personal guidance.

- 4.4 Careers Wales stated in its 2019 Strategy for Career Leadership, as linked below, that Wales should: "Formally adopt the Gatsby benchmarks as measures of the different components of Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)":

<https://www.gwegogledc.cymru/a-strategy-for-career-leadership-in-wales/>

- 4.5 Rhondda Cynon Taf was selected by Welsh Government to host a pilot of the Gatsby Benchmarks in its secondary schools, with a view to the benchmarks being rolled out across all Welsh schools.

In January 2019, Kate Owen was appointed as Gatsby Benchmark Manager (GBM) to manage the pilot on a two-year secondment from her substantive post as Deputy Head of the School of Support in Ysgol Nantgwyn. Kate Owen had previously been an Assistant Headteacher and Head of English with responsibility for Safeguarding and Wellbeing in Tonypany Community College for 12 years and has taught in Welsh secondary schools since 1998.

- 4.6 The GBM and members of the RCT Employment Education and Training Team

visited the team responsible for developing the Gatsby Benchmarks in the English pilot in Newcastle. The GBM worked closely with the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, the Careers and Enterprise Company and the Career Development Institute to learn from the experiences of the English Gatsby pilot and develop a model that would be suitable and effective for schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf. An audit plan was developed and the GBM approached secondary schools in RCT to develop their knowledge of the Gatsby Benchmarks. This took the form of one-to-one discussions with Headteachers and the development of the role of Career Leader. The GBM developed a role description for the Career Leader and an audit process to measure progress against the benchmarks.

- 4.7 By September 2019 all 22 schools offering secondary provision to pupils in Rhondda Cynon Taf had a Career Leader in post and had been audited against their progress in the benchmarks at least once. This include EOTAS provision and special schools.
- 4.8 Career Leaders began meeting with the GBM on a half termly basis. During these sessions the GBM and staff from the Employment Education and Training team would support the development of the Career Leader role and enhance the CWRE provision in the pilot schools. Members from the North East pilot travelled from Newcastle to Rhondda Cynon Taf to support this work and a range of partner organisations have supported by sharing provision opportunities and sharing best practice.
- 4.9 During the course of the pilot and during the ongoing work using the Gatsby Benchmarks in RCT schools, there has been recognition that the standard of the progress we have made has been excellent.

Hayley Jacobs, Career Leader at Bryn Celynnog Comprehensive has twice been shortlisted for the prestigious UK wide Career Development Institute Career Leader of the Year award, winning the title in 2021. Hayley was asked to and wrote an article on her approach to Career Leadership in a national publication.

Bryn Celynnog was approached to be showcased in the BBC Teach programme linked below:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/teacher-support/using-creative-enterprise-projects-and-links-with-external-organisations/z42bf4j>

The GBM has been approached by national publications to share what we are doing and has had articles on our Gatsby Benchmark approach before and during the Covid-19 pandemic published. An example of one of the articles is linked below and can be found on page 28:

<https://futuretalented.co.uk/future-talented-magazine-issue-8-autumn-winter-term-2020/>

The Careers Education programme run jointly with the GBM and the RCT Employment Education and Training Team were finalists in the 2021 UK wide Rate My Apprenticeship awards for the Best Career Programme.

5. UPDATE/CURRENT POSITION

Project Development

- 5.1 A system of tracking, using software already in use in our schools, was developed in the early stages of the pilot and is now used across all the pilot schools. The tracking ensures that schools can evidence that at least 91% of pupils have experienced the various elements of the Gatsby Benchmarks.
- 5.2 The Gatsby Foundation sent representatives to visit 2 pilot schools in 2019. They were very complimentary about what they described as our “innovative approach” to tracking and shared the model with schools in England.
- 5.3 The GBM had regular meetings with the then Minister for Education, Kirsty Williams, who visited schools in RCT to see the impact of the Gatsby Benchmarks in our schools. She was universally complementary of the work undertaken by the GBM and the school’s development using the benchmarks.
- 5.4 In the second formal audit in December 2019; all 22 pilot schools showed significant progress in the development of careers in the wider curriculum. This was quality assured during the Gatsby audit process.
- 5.5 Career Leaders began sharing good practice from across the pilot with their Curriculum Leads to support specific links between curriculum areas and career and further education options. Three curriculum working parties were initiated in July 2021, allowing teaching staff from Science, English, P.E and Humanities departments to discuss how CWRE interactions can improve and enhance pupil motivation and teaching experiences.
- 5.6 All schools now have a Career Plan that outlines the way they will address careers education and how pupils will be enabled to have the experiences as outlined in the Gatsby Benchmarks. This is reviewed by the GBM and Career Leader during the Gatsby audit process.
- 5.7 The Gatsby Benchmarks have been discussed with School Governing Bodies, with an update from the Career Leader now appearing as an annual agenda item. Headteachers and Governing Bodies have also been issued with a guidance document looking at how to utilise the role of Career Leader, using the excellent practice and outcomes seen in Bryn Celynnog school as a measure of good practice.
- 5.8 At the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the GBM, working closely with the RCT Employment, Education and Training team, developed a set of “Covid Benchmarks” for schools to use as an emergency measure. This ensured that despite schools being unable to offer face to face work experience and employer

engagement, they could follow clear guidelines to allow pupils to continue linking their curriculum to future careers and access all elements of the benchmarks.

- 5.9 The GBM was asked to share the emergency version of the benchmarks and the guidance issued to our schools with The Gatsby Foundation and the Career and Enterprise Company as they developed a strategy to support schools in England.
- 5.10 Prior to the pandemic, an interim report was commissioned by Welsh Government to assess the progress of the pilot. In March 2020. The report was made at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, just as schools closed for most pupils.
- 5.11 The report can be viewed using this link:
<https://gov.wales/gatsby-benchmarking-pilot-interim-evaluation>
<https://llyw.cymru/gwerthusiad-interim-or-peilot-meincnodi-gatsby>

Project Conclusion

- 5.12 Welsh Government made the decision not to lengthen or expand the pilot beyond December 2021 or to roll the Gatsby Benchmarks out across Wales.

14 January 2021 Statement from <https://gov.wales/decision-reports->

“The Minister for Education has agreed to cease the Gatsby Pilot as originally planned on 31 December and that Careers Wales should take forward the development of a new Quality Award for good careers guidance in schools and process for rolling out across Wales.”

- 5.13 As an alternative to rolling out the benchmarks across Wales, a Toolkit for CWRE in Primary and Secondary schools has since been developed by Careers Wales. Its aim is to give schools the information they need to develop their own approach to CWRE.
- 5.14 The GBM was invited to sit on the steering group for this work. To date the new toolkit has not been released for consultation, published or launched.
- 5.15 In April 2021, the GBM was invited to sit on the UK Career Development Institute, Community of Interest in Careers Education Board, acting as the representative for Wales. This has involved collaborating with and co-writing a section of a new Career Development Framework as linked below. This framework has not been adopted by Welsh government, however Professor Tristram Hooley and other key members of the COICE group were part of the team responsible for developing the new toolkit for CWRE in Wales.
https://www.thecdi.net/write/CDI_98-Framework-skills_by_key_stage-A3_portrait-web.pdf
- 5.16 RCT senior leadership have since decided to continue the work started by the pilot in Rhondda Cynon Taf initially for another two years. The GBM has been seconded for a further two years to continue developing The Gatsby Good Career Benchmarks in RCT schools.

- 5.17 The GBM will support schools in the best use of the new toolkit when it is published. The Gatsby Benchmarks will continue to be used as a measure of excellence and the GBM will continue to audit and support their development.
- 5.18 The GBM has developed a new layer of Gatsby support for schools. This is known as Gatsby+ and aims to provide bespoke and intensive career planning, work experience; and links between career plans and curriculum learning for pupils who are not reaching their academic potential.
- 5.19 The GBM is trialing this work in Ysgol Nantgwyn, Porth Community School and Pontypridd High and Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda. The aim is to initially use Gatsby+ to support up to five pupils in each of these schools and train staff in each school to be able to implement the approach for more pupils in need of this type of support. A main focus of Gatsby + is to motivate pupils and inspire them beyond the limits they may have set for themselves.
- 5.20 The GBM will then work with a further three schools using Gatsby+ each term.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not currently required - the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 There is no requirement to undertake any consultation.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.
- 8.2 The salary of the GBM is no longer funded by Welsh Government and is now funded corporately.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.
- 9.2 It is the understanding of the GBM that the new CWRE toolkit is not intended to be legislation or for compulsory use.

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

- 10.1 This is an information report presenting the overview of progress made by the local authority in relation to the impact of the project on CWRE in schools.

However, this report is clearly connected to one of the priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan 2020- 2024 that is:

- Ensuring **People:** *are independent, healthy and successful;*
Within this priority one of the Council's commitments is to ensure it has "*Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do*"
- Creating **Places:** *where people are proud to live, work and play;*
Within this priority one of the Council's commitments is to ensure it has "*good schools so all children have access to a great education*"

11. **CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 To conclude, the Gatsby Good Career Benchmarks have had a positive impact on the delivery of CWRE in schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf and will support schools in the use of the new toolkit.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
22ND SEPTEMBER 2021

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
AND INCLUSION SERVICES**



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/22

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22nd SEPTEMBER 2021

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CARE INSPECTORATE WALES

Author: Catherine Tyler, Service Development Manager Children Services.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Scrutiny Members in relation to progress with action plans associated with Inspection of the Disabled Children's Service and Focused Activity in the 16+ Service.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the information contained within the report.
2.2 Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In October 2020, Scrutiny Committee received its first report about the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) reports relating to:
- The inspection of children's services, focusing on support for disabled children in (December 2019)
 - Focused activity with regard to support for care leavers (March 2020)

- 3.2 Prior to this, a report outlining the findings of the Disabled Children’s Service Review and proposed next steps was brought to Scrutiny Committee on the 4/12/2019 for consideration and comment. See link below:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/ChildrenandYoungPeopleScrutinyCommittee/2019/12/04/ChildrenandYoungPeopleScrutinyCommittee04Dec2019.aspx>

4. DISABLED CHILDREN’S SERVICE

- 4.1 Children’s Services received CIW’s Inspection Report on the provision of early help, care and support and seamless transition for disabled children and their families in Rhondda Cynon Taf in March 2020. See link below:

<https://careinspectorate.wales/sites/default/files/2020-03/200309-support-and-arrangements-for-children-disabled-rctcbc-en.pdf>

- 4.2 The report identified the following strengths and areas for improvement :

Strengths	Areas For Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong vision for remodelling services for disabled children. • An effective and improved response at the ‘front door’ of children’s services. • The multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) evidenced good joint working arrangements. • An understanding of the social model of disability within our prevention and early intervention services and an The Children with Additional Needs Service (CANS) is an effective and valued service, with a focus on family strengths and the achievement of personal outcomes. • Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) provides its own psychological support for children and practitioner consultation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased focus on family strengths and the identification of personal outcomes. • Improved practice in relation to assessments of parent carers. • Ensuring greater promotion of the voice of the child including the use of advocacy. • Greater support for siblings of disabled children. • To develop alternative approaches to providing respite/short breaks. • The local authority and the health board need to reach greater resolution on eligibility for continuing care arrangements for children with complex needs. • Improving quality assurance within DCT. • Consideration to be given to the benefits to disabled young people of earlier active

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That staff were positive and felt well supported by colleagues and managers. • Evidence of partnership working in the development of an emotional well-being service jointly with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board. • intention to improve equality of access for disabled children. 	<p>involvement by adult services social workers and Personal Advisors (PAs).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-establish the disability register • CTMUHB and RCTCBC to continue to focus efforts to achieve a more joined up strategic approach to the advantage of citizens.
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

4.3 As outlined in the December 2019 Disabled Children’s Service Review Report to Scrutiny Committee, work was already underway to change the delivery model for disabled children prior to the CIW inspection. Where further areas for improvement were identified they have been incorporated into the Disabled Children’s Services Remodelling Implementation Plan.

4.4 Progress against the post inspection Action plan is outlined at Appendix 1.

5. CIW FOCUSED ACTIVITY 16 + TEAMS

5.1 AT the end of March 2020, Children’s Services received CIW feedback in relation to the focused activity undertaken earlier that month with the 16+ teams. This did not lead to a written and published report owing to the status of the work but there was feedback in letter format. The letter identified the following Strengths and areas for improvement :

Strengths	Areas For Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Assistants (PAs) were committed to promoting the well-being of young people • that young people valued their PAs; • and that there were good examples of good contact between the PAs and other professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the outcome focused approach, ensuring that young people’s wishes and feelings are evident in pathway planning • Ensuring Pathway Plans are reviewed in a timelier manner and involve updates from relevant agencies. • Improving quality assurance. • Ensuring young people have an active offer of a service in Welsh.

The associated improvement plan can be found at Appendix 2

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 This is an information report.

6.2 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the implementation process.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 This is an information report.

7.2 Further consultation will however be undertaken as part of the implementation process.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 There are no direct financial implications aligned to this report.

8.2 Funding opportunities may need to be explored to take forward elements of the Action Plans.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 The legal requirements for children and young people are set down within the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP

10.1 This consultation links to the corporate priority of promoting independence and positive lives for everyone by ensuring that the Council listens to the people it provides for.

10.2 It also contributes to the following well-being goals:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales.
- A healthier Wales.
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A globally responsible Wales

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 Progress has been made against both action plans which also highlight the areas where progress is still required.
- 11.2 There is a strong commitment within RCT Children's Services to support the Disabled Children's Service and the 16+ Teams to implement positive change, whilst acknowledging and building upon the strengths identified. Steering groups have been established and the action plans provide a clear framework to facilitate and drive change to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people within RCT.

Appendix 1: Disabled Children’s Service Post CIW Inspection Improvement Plan

Children’s Services received CIW’s Inspection Report on the provision of early help, care and support and seamless transition for disabled children and their families in Rhondda Cynon Taf in March 2020. The action plan below tracks progress and barriers with the improvements identified as necessary by the inspection.

Improvement area 1: Well-being	What Needs to be Done	Who / When	Update 7.9.21	RAG
1.1 There should be increased focus on strengths, the voice of the child and clear outcomes for assessment and care and support within the Disabled Children’s Team (DCT).	Review documentation, Assessment, Care and Support Plan, supervision to ensure it captures the voice of the child and has regard to the needs of siblings. Ensure documentation supports a strength based, outcome focused approach.	HoS /SM/TMs & training 30.4.21	Revised templates implemented.	Completed
	Agree approach to strength based work (solution focused /restorative practice). Review available inhouse resource: trainers, mentors, training dept support etc. Develop a sustainable training programme to be piloted within the DCT and 16+ Teams.	30.4.21	Research element is complete. Steering group have endorsed an RCT approach. RCT Model of Practice will now commence in March 2022. We are in the midst of a recruitment and retention challenge and current level of vacancy would be a barrier to implementation. However, preparatory work will take place.	

	Detailed implementation plan to be developed.		Staff Engagement sessions held in June 2021, considered our vision and values, which will inform the model of practice.	
1.2 There should be increased effective management oversight and quality assurance within DCT.	Work commenced to develop bespoke quality assurance tools e.g. audit and supervision tools.	HoS / SDO 1.5.21	Revised templates etc implemented.	Completed
	Children's Services Quality Assurance Framework to be embedded within the service and WCCIS as a priority. DCT detailed performance report to be developed by the Management Information Team.	HoS /SDO / BPM 31.7.21	Service QA Plan has been developed and is being implemented. Subgroup established, performance report under development.	
1.3 There should be greater support for siblings of disabled children.	To review the commissioned services against DCT's new model of intervention and support for siblings.	SMs / SDO 31.7.21	Work with the Resilient Families Service to take forward joint working to support siblings of disabled children paused, will recommence in Autumn 2021. Undertaking a review of Action For Children's commissioned services in RCT.	

Improvement area 2: People – voice and choice	What Needs to be Done	Who / When	Update 7.9.21	RAG
<p>2.1 There needs to be greater promotion of the voice of the child throughout services for disabled children, including advocacy.</p> <p>There should be more specialist training undertaken by practitioners in DCT.</p>	<p>See 1.1 Script developed and shared, further information and guidance provided practitioners clear all children automatically to be referred to TGP for advocacy. Monitoring tool discussed as part of interface meetings.</p>	<p>SDM HoS Completed</p>	<p>Completed</p>	
	<p>Develop specialist training for DCT practitioners.</p>	<p>SDM</p>	<p>Further specialist training for DCT practitioners will be provided as the need is identified.</p>	<p>Completed</p>

Improvement area 3: Partnerships and integration	What Needs to be Done	Who / When	Update 7.9.21	RAG
<p>3.1 CTMUHB and RCTCBC should continue to focus efforts to achieve a more joined up strategic approach</p>			<p>Service Director taking forward CC and MAPP directly with CTMUHB.</p> <p>Meeting held in April 2021 with reps from LHB and CS; where it was agreed to establish regular meetings</p>	

to the advantage of citizens.			<p>to achieve a more joined up strategic approach to service development for disabled children and their families.</p> <p>SM SDO to co-ordinate the initial meeting June/July 2021. Meeting delayed to be scheduled in Autumn 2021.</p> <p>Population needs assessment has commenced.</p>	
3.2 Current service provision for disabled children and their families should be evaluated and planning of services undertaken against projected future needs. This information would inform improved joint commissioning.	<p>To review the commissioned services against DCT's new model of intervention. Need to ensure that all services are working to support the new model.</p> <p>Ensure opportunities for joint commissioning are identified E.G. COT agreement with Adult Services to be reviewed. Review of Rhondda Family Support.</p>	HoS SDM	<p>Review of commissioned services continuing</p> <p>Initial discussions held with Adult Services re provision of COT services going forward.</p>	
3.3 There should be resolution of the funding of continuing care.	<p>Work with health colleagues to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clear process for accessing CC. • Lack of engagement at MAPP • Funding difficulties • Transition 	CSD	LHB has developed its policy and further work is required on implementation.	

<p>Consideration should be given to the benefits to disabled young people of earlier active involvement by adult services social workers and Personal Advisors (PAs).</p>	<p>Create a 16+ PA post within the new DCT's structure.</p>	<p>SDM HoS 14.2.21</p>	<p>PA in post, operational, mechanisms established, improved links and joint working.</p>	<p>Completed</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------

Improvement area 4: Prevention and early intervention	What Needs to be Done	Who / When	Update 7.9.21	RAG
<p>4.1 All assessments must be sufficiently thorough (proportionate) and analyse need (and not be viewed as a process just to secure a specific resource).</p>	<p>See 1.1</p>		<p>Post in Early Intervention Teams (IAA/EAT) operational. Good working practice established</p>	<p>Completed</p>

Appendix 2: 16+ Post CIW Focused Activity Improvement Plan

At the end of March 2020, Children’s Services received CIW feedback in relation to the focused activity undertaken earlier that month with the 16+ teams. The resulting letter highlighted the areas of strengths and improvements. This action plan tracks progress and barriers with the related improvements.

Improvement	What Needs to be Done	Who / When	Update 7.9.21	RAG
<p>1.PAs should use an outcome focused approach with young people to identify personal outcomes and ensure the young person’s wishes and feelings are evident in pathway planning.</p>	<p>Agree approach to strength based work (solution focused /restorative practice).</p> <p>Review available inhouse resource: trainers, mentors, training dept support etc.</p> <p>Develop a sustainable training programme to be piloted within the DCT and 16+ Teams.</p> <p>Detailed implementation plan to be developed.</p>	<p>HoS / SM/ TMs & training</p> <p>30.4.21</p>	<p>Research element is complete. Steering group have endorsed an RCT approach. RCT Model of Practice will now commence in March 2022. We are in the midst of a recruitment and retention challenge and current level of vacancy would be a barrier to implementation. However, preparatory work will take place.</p> <p>Staff Engagement sessions held in June 2021, considered our vision and values, which will inform the model of practice.</p>	<p>Implementation of RCT Model of Practice has been delayed, will now commence in March 2022.</p>
<p>2.Reviews of pathway plans should be meaningful, timely and involve updates from relevant people and agencies. Progress against outcomes should be evaluated and plans and actions</p>	<p>Review documentation, Assessment, Pathway Plans, supervision to ensure it captures the voice of the young person and supports a strength based, outcome focused approach.</p> <p>See point 3 Begin to embed the actions outlined in point 3 into practice and monitor implementation.</p>	<p>HoS/ SM 1.7.21</p>	<p>SMs have regular performance meetings with TMs (inc Pathway Plans) utilising the data contained within the Performance Report.</p> <p>HoS review of documentation to support QA, focus, supervision and case audit tool completed.</p> <p>Implementation of supervision and audit tools to commence in the Autumn 2021</p>	

changed where appropriate			Further changes to documentation will be led by the work on the RCT Model of Social Work Practice.	
3. Quality assurance practice should be improved. This should involve greater use of available information to analyse and explore outcomes for young people and thereby identify effective approaches	16+ Performance Report has been developed by the Management Information Team. Report has been shared with TMs. Children's Services Quality Assurance Framework to be embedded within the service and WCCIS as a priority.	HoS SMs 31.1.21 30.5.21	Performance meetings established. Programme of focused audits being implemented. Service QA Plan has been developed, in the initial stages of implementation.	
4. Managers must ensure young people receive the active offer for services in the Welsh language	To pursue incorporating a trigger question regarding the Welsh language into the 16+ documentation. To be included in any wider changes made to the Pathway Review/ Plan templates on WCCIS.	SM PM 30.4.21	X	Completed
5. Managers should consider a systemic review of capacity, allocation practice and use	First step to focus on team development. Consider the culture of the team, how things currently operate, strengths, opportunities for development.	HoS/SM 31.1.2021	As a result of recruitment difficulties, the team development training has been put on hold so that new staff joining the service will have the opportunity to take part in the sessions.	

of resources across the current team structures and take any immediate action necessary	Capacity and resources have been addressed.			
6. RCTCBC may be able to improve its offer to care leavers by a more proactive approach from housing.	Recommence the 16+ Accommodation and Support Strategy as it has been placed on hold due to the pandemic. Identify priority areas to take forward.	CSD HoS	<p>16+ Accommodation Strategy priority actions areas being progressed:</p> <p>Mercury Project report and recommendations delivered. Housing Solutions Officer identified as lead for Care Leavers in Housing. Further work scheduled to develop a clear pathway to housing for care leavers. Improve the interface between housing and Children's Services.</p> <p>Appointed to SW post Supported Lodging Scheme, changes made to the recruitment pathway of supported lodging providers.</p> <p>2 Mentor posts 16+ Teams now out to advert.</p> <p>ICF Bid for the Care Leavers Accommodation (PassivHaus) awarded 24.8.21.</p> <p>Autumn 2021 exploring options re utilising the training flats, linking with</p>	

			the new mentor posts and care leavers accommodation.	
--	--	--	------------------------------------------------------	--

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/22**

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22ND SEPTEMBER 2021

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

KINSHIP CARE

**Authors: Alistair Cope Regional Development Manager and
Annabel Lloyd Director of Children's Services, Community &
Children's Services**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Scrutiny Committee with information arising from a survey of kinship carers who receive services from the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee Members:
- 2.2 Consider the contents of this report and;
- 2.3 Consider their formal response to the motion and any recommendations for consideration by Cabinet

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide assurance to Members regarding the service that is provided to kinship carers in line with the Council's duties.
- Note the information contained within this report.
 - Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 On 13th January 2021 Children and Young people Scrutiny Committee received a report in response to a Notice of Motion in the names of County Borough Councillors J James and L Hooper that is included below at paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4. Following questions on 13th January 2021, it was decided that a future report should be submitted in relation to the results of a planned survey with kinship carers.

4.2 Notice of Motion

- 4.3 It is estimated that there are 200,000 children being brought up by family members or friends in the United Kingdom in what is termed as 'Kinship Care'. These kinship carers have stepped in to care for children whose parents are unable to look after them and keep their families together, and it represents three times the number of children in the national foster care system – and is a growing figure. Kinship care is one of the main ways to provide a sense of security, continuity and belonging for children who cannot live with their parents and it provides high levels of stability and enduring support well into young adulthood. However, the support that is offered to kinship carers throughout the country lacks consistency, and carers often feel isolated, abandoned and 'hung out to dry'. This is in marked contrast to the support that foster carers and adoptive parents can receive.
- 4.4 This Council recognises the invaluable work that kinship carers do for their loved ones, often under the most trying of situations, and is committed to providing the help, engagement and support that they need. This Council requests that a report be considered by the Children & Young People's Scrutiny Committee to look further into the role of kinship care in the County Borough and to work closely with Grandparents Plus to identify ways in which it can meet the needs of kinship carers and those in kinship care.

5. THE COUNCIL'S DUTIES TO KINSHIP CARERS

- 5.1 'Kinship carer' is sometimes used as an umbrella term to cover the following:

Kinship Carer Type	Definition	RCTCBC Duty
Connected Person	<p>These are approved RCTCBC kinship foster carers who are known to or connected to a child who needs safeguarding, and there is a duty to provide accommodation, most often the child is subject to a Care Order.</p> <p>In practice these are children who might otherwise be placed with an RCTCBC mainstream foster carer, but the carers are known to the child due to being a relative or connected person.</p> <p>These carers are assessed and approved in line with foster carer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out assessment in line with national guidance and fostering regulations • Provide an allowance in line with RCTCBC policy and national minimum allowances • Provide support in the same way as a mainstream foster carer. This includes allocation to a supervising social worker, access to training and development • As at 31.8.21 were 145 connected people approved as RCTCBC foster carers in for specific connected

	regulation	children in their care
Special Guardian	<p>Special Guardians are people with a relationship to the child appointed by the Court following application by the Special Guardian. The Special Guardian has parental responsibility, and cares for a child whose parents are unable to do so and a Care Order is not necessary.</p> <p>A plan of support normally accompanies a Special Guardianship Order shaped by the unique needs of the child given their background and circumstances.</p> <p>Where a child was looked after immediately before a Special Guardianship Order was made, the local authority which looked after the child will remain responsible for meeting any special guardianship support needs for a period of three years after the order is made, regardless of where that child is living.</p> <p>As at 31.8.21 RCT Children's Services were providing support to 243 Special Guardians.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duty to provide information advice and assistance • Carry out assessment • Duty to implement the support plan or aspects of it for which children's services are responsible, and to carry out reviews • RCT Children's Services has a policy to carry out financial assessment and provide financial support in cases where SGO is supported as a more suitable alternative to the looked after system for a child
Informal kinship carers	<p>There are many and various informal arrangements, not all of which will be known to Children's Services.</p> <p>Where there is involvement by Children's Services with children who are living away from their parents with other family members or family friends, support is accessed and managed by the responsible Enquiry Assessment or</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information, advice and assistance or assessment where it appears that a child has needs for care and support. • Co-produce, implement and review a care and support plan for children identified by assessment as having care and support needs.

6. RCT CHILDREN'S SERVICES WORK WITH GRANDPARENTS PLUS

6.1 Grandparents Plus has changed its name to Kinship. The Fostering Service has been working closely with a local project provided by Kinship Cymru, the project is called Kinship connected. Referral routes and awareness raising has been achieved. The service provides attuned independent advice and support to kinship carers that is well appraised by carers and professionals. A further meeting has been planned for later in the Autumn in relation to future service provision.

7. CONNECTED PERSONS (KINSHIP FOSTER CARERS) CONSULTATION

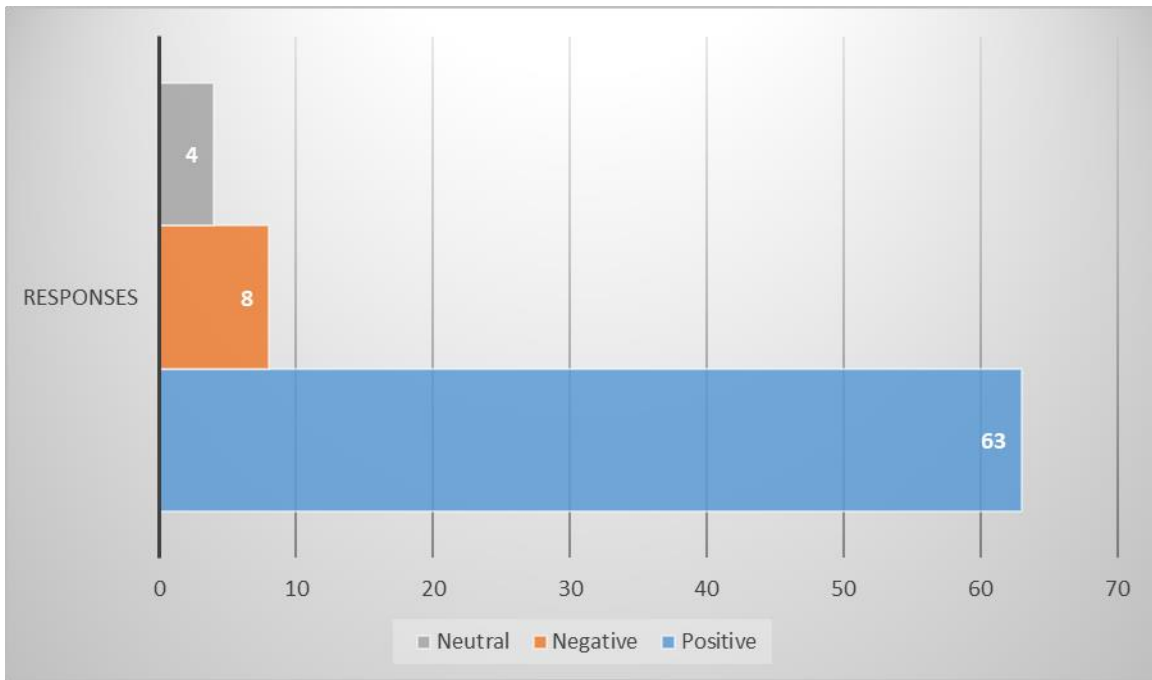
7.1 During March 2021 RCT Fostering Service undertook a consultation exercise with connected persons (Kinship) foster carers to find out their thoughts and feelings in relation to the assessment and support provided by the service and identify where improvements could be made.

7.2 The consultation exercise was set up as an online survey, however those who didn't have access to the internet or the necessary skills to complete the survey online were offered the opportunity to complete this via telephone with a student social worker.

7.3 Once completed any results were anonymised and fed back to the service. In total there were 77 respondents who completed the survey and highlighted in this report is an overview of their responses.

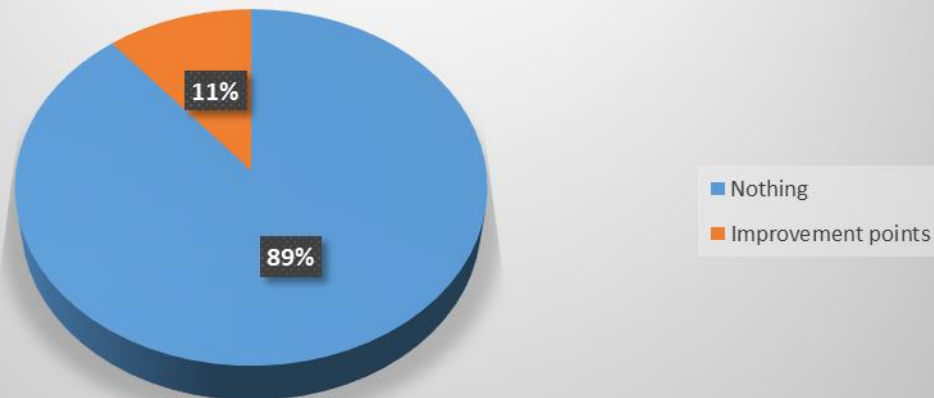
8. ASSESSMENT

What did you find most helpful during the assessment/ review process?



84% of respondents had positive responses to the question, with the majority highlighting the support from their social worker as the most helpful element of the assessment/ review process. Comments from connected persons include: *“Non judgemental assessor, looked at me now and who I have become, empathetic. Built up trust made such a difference”* and *“Explained everything. Really helpful. Not cut and dried, parents had special needs, some confrontational family members. Assessors were calming and supportive.”* Some of the negative comments were around the complexity of the assessment process and that applicants found questions difficult to answer and one comment around the length of time taken for formal approval *“Child living with us in August and not approved until January.”*

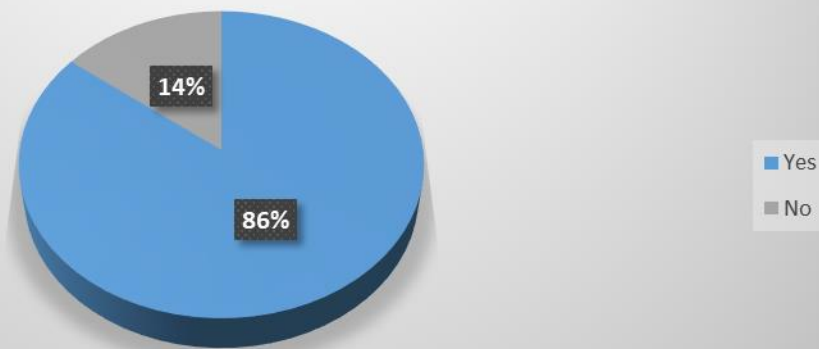
What do you feel the assessing social worker could have done to improve your experience and help you during the assessment process?



Overall 89% of respondents didn't feel the assessing social worker could have done any more to improve their experience of assessment. Comments included

“Nothing she could’ve done. She was there every step and was only a phone call away to provide any advice.” A few respondents described the process as feeling “rushed” and one respondent fed back that “We were given very little information about the child to be placed with us and little information about what the process was from the child’s side.”

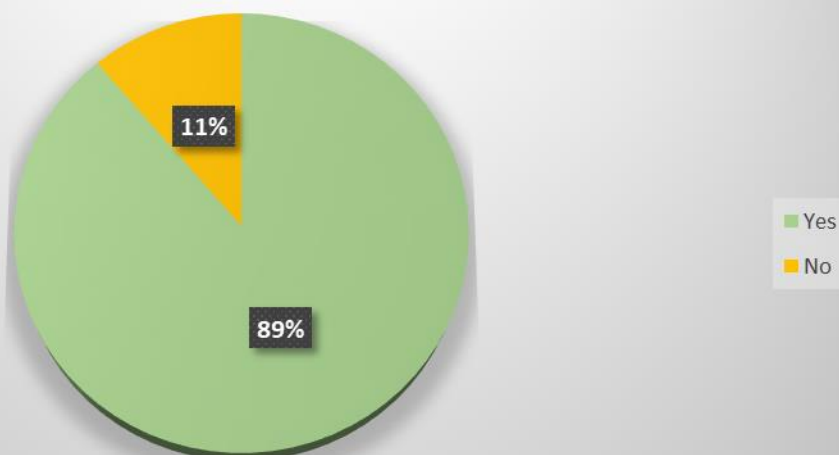
Do you feel you were provided enough information about the role of a Kinship foster carer at the beginning of the assessment process?



86% of respondents felt that they had been given enough information about the role at the start of assessment and many described being given “lot of information” and highlighted the fostering social worker as a good source of information. However, those who felt that they were not provided enough information demonstrated strong feelings about this and highlighted a lack of clarity and information from the children’s social work teams and around the legal process.

9. FOSTER PANEL

Did you attend RCT Foster Panel prior to your approval as a Kinship foster carer?

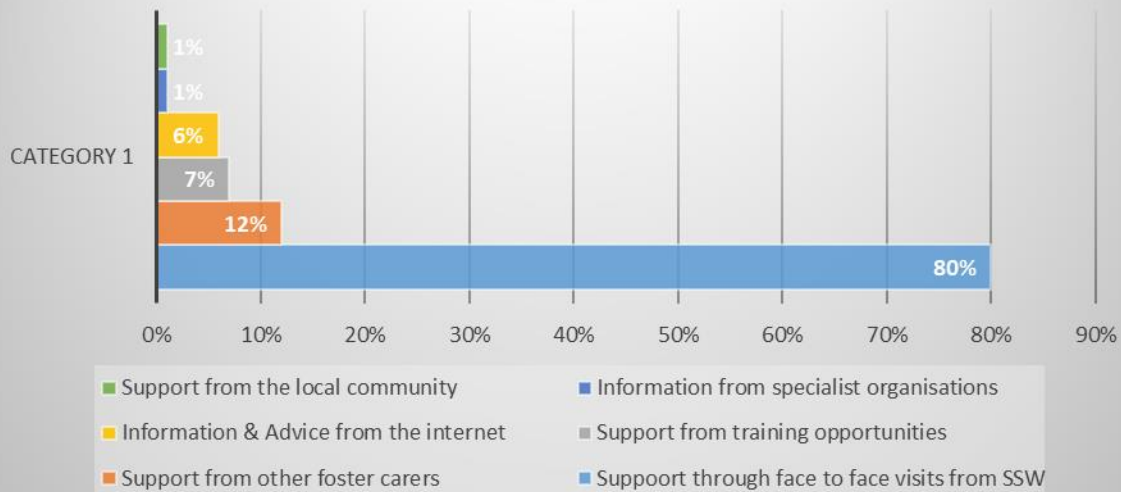


Respondents who attended foster panel generally fed back that panel were warm, friendly and supportive with one respondent stating *“Able to ask questions to people on the panel. I also felt welcome and everyone was really nice to me.”* and *“they made me feel like I was being listened to.”*

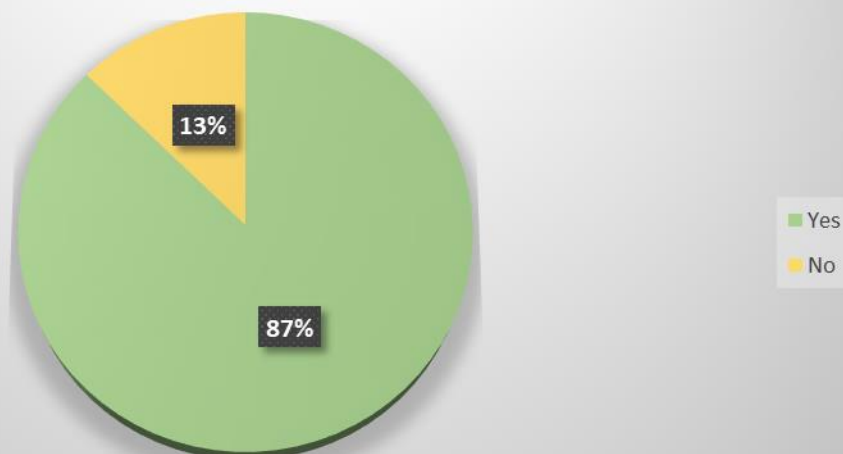
However a few applicants identified panel as a “scary” and “intimidating” experience, which was helped by reassuring assessing social workers. One respondent highlighted the need for information to be gathered prior to panel starting *“I went 4 times to panel, additional information was raised every time and this needed exploring and clarifying. All these things should have been sorted before even having panel date. This left me deflated at times.”* A few also highlighted that they were happy being able to go through panel despite Covid restrictions with one respondent stating *“I was on my phone camera, being able to show and express myself made all the difference.”*

10. SUPPORT

What forms of support are most useful to you in your role as a foster carer?

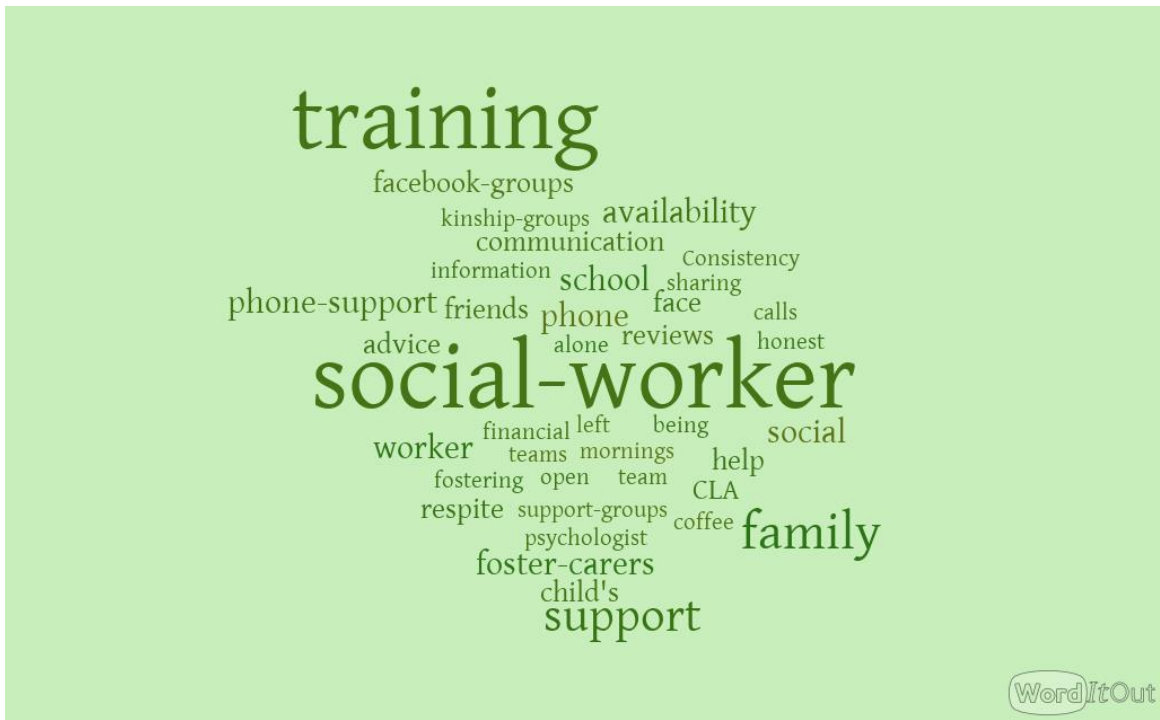


Do you feel you are receiving enough support for your role as a Kinship foster carer?



62 of respondents (87%) felt they were receiving enough support as part of their role and 80% of responses highlighted that visits from their supervising social worker are the most useful form of support. One respondent stated *"Whenever I have any questions I will text and my worker will call me within the hour. Always there for me and to speak to me and reassure me. They are always there"* Another highlighted the need for more peer support *"I would like to see other kinship carers. I would like to be able to have an informal support group with carers in my area. I have looked up things myself."* A few also highlighted the difficulty in terms of changing social workers and staff turnover within the childcare teams as a concern.

What are the 3 things that you feel work well and support you in your role as a Kinship foster carer? Below is a summary of comments from foster carers with the most common responses in larger/bolder print.

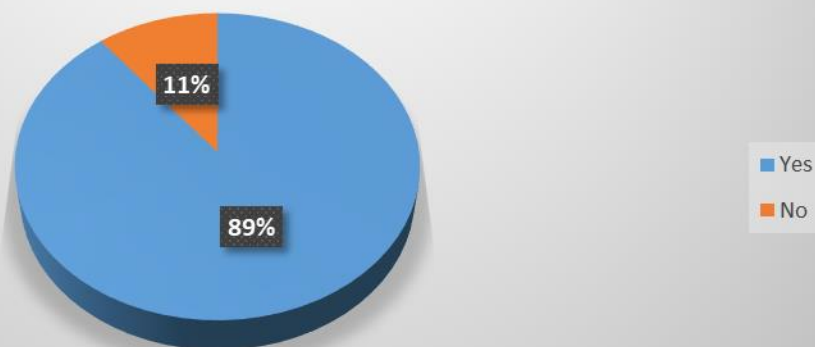


What are the 3 things that you feel don't work well and the fostering support team and children's services could improve on? Below is a summary of comments from foster carers with the most common responses in larger/bolder print.



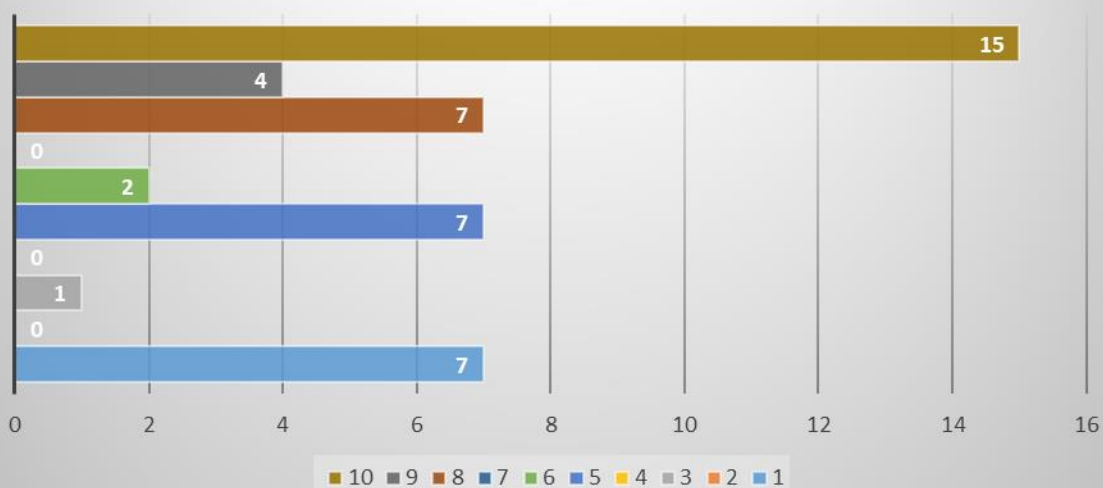
11. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Have you been offered opportunities to attend any training or other learning and development opportunities since being approved as a foster carer?



67 Foster Carers (89%) reported that they had been offered learning and development opportunities.

On a scale of 1 to 10 please rate how well the training met your needs.



35% of respondents rated the training meeting their needs 10 out of 10. 65% rated this as 6 out of 10 or higher. Some comments around the barriers to learning and development were that *“training was based in RCT and I live out of area so it has been difficult to attend”* and *“Training has been cancelled due to Covid.”*

Other areas that were identified as difficult for foster carers were that training was largely online during the pandemic and foster carers did not have the required skills, equipment or space away from children to attend. Other positive comments included *“I find training really good. I have plenty of opportunities to do different things. Training dept are good at getting back to me”* and *“I have had a lot of support for training and I learnt a lot. It made me understand the trauma and how*

this affects children.”

Please comment on the learning and development opportunities that you would like to see offered to assist you in your role as a foster carer.

Opportunities highlighted from respondents included:

- Safe Care
- Teenage Years
- Special needs- Autism
- Behaviour Management
- What rights are for children
- The impact of children in care homes
- ICT and computers,
- ASD, Neuro Development
- First Aid
- Mental Health
- Skills to Foster- Kinship
- Face to Face training.

Many of these courses are already offered through the foster carers training calendar, which is open to both mainstream and kinship carers.

12. SUMMARY

12.1 On the whole feedback from Connected Persons (Kinship) foster carers was positive. We have been able to ascertain how the service is performing in relation to the assessment, support and ongoing development of Connected Persons foster carers and have had strong feedback which we can use to further develop the service. To have had 77 responses is positive and shows the engagement we have with foster carers across the service. A summary of positives and areas for development, as highlighted by respondents can be found below. The areas for development will be included in discussion with managers and staff with a view to addressing these matters.

Positives	Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thorough explanation and support from assessing social workers• Support from supervising social workers• Availability of support• Responsiveness of fostering teams• Training opportunities• Panel Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment process often seems rushed• Staff turnover and absence• Timely information sharing• Panel can sometimes be intimidating• Peer support• Specific support groups

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of services through the pandemic • Facebook Group • Respite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific preparation training. • Specific post approval training • ICT skills and equipment
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

13. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no implications associated with this report.

14. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

14.1 There are no consultation implication arising from this report.

15. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

15.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

16. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

16.1 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, associated regulation and guidance sets out Children’s Services duties in relation

16.2 The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 gives CIW powers to register and/or inspect our fostering service.

17. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

17.1 The authority has a plan in place for the next 3 years to safely reduce the numbers of children who need to be looked after as part of our ambition to improve the well-being of vulnerable children. Providing good and continuously improving support to all kinship cares is central to delivering that ambition.

18. CONCLUSION

18.1 The survey provides some degree of assurance about the quality and impact of the support provided to connected people. It also and provides insight into the priorities for development

18.2 The fostering service has developed good lines of communication with Kinship Cymru and will continue to develop that given the additional and important support that can be made available to all kinship carers in the context of that collaboration.