



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CYNGOR BWRDEIS TREF SIROL RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

A Virtual meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Board** will be held
on

30 March 2023 at 10.00 am

Contact: Hannah Williams - Council Business Unit, Democratic Services (07385401954)

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

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 approve, as an accurate record, the minutes of the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 26th January 2023.

(Pages 5 - 10)

3. EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

To receive information in respect of the Employment, Education & Training Programmes available for Children Looked After.

(Pages 11 - 14)

4. VIRTUAL SCHOOL MODEL PILOT - YEAR 1 PROGRESS UPDATE

To receive an overview of the Virtual School Wales Model, and an update on the progress of the pilot of Year 1 of the Virtual School for Children Looked After in Wales, including next steps.

(Pages 15 - 28)

5. YOUNG CARERS ANNUAL REPORT

To receive an update on the work with young carers in RCT during 2022-2023 Municipal Year.

(Pages 29 - 56)

6. TROS GYNNAL PLANT (TGP) CYMRU

To receive the Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru quarterly progress report.

(Pages 57 - 68)

7. TO CONSIDER PASSING THE FOLLOWING UNDER-MENTIONED RESOLUTION:

“That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended) for the next items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Act.”

8. RESIDENTIAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY: CHILDREN IN OPERATING WITHOUT REGISTRATION SETTINGS

To receive the exempt report of the Director Children’s Services

(Pages 69 - 76)

9. SOCIAL SERVICES QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

To receive an overview of the operation and effectiveness of the statutory Social Services complaints procedure.

(Pages 77 - 94)

10. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any urgent business as the Chairman feels appropriate.

Circulation:

County Borough Councillors:

Councillor G Caple (Chair)
Councillor R Lewis (Vice-Chair)
Councillor C Leyshon
Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor S Rees
Councillor S Trask
Councillor S Evans
Councillor P Evans



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL
CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

Minutes of the Virtual meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on Thursday, 26 January 2023
at 10.00 am.

This meeting was recorded, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

County Borough Councillors – The following Councillors were present:

Councillor G Caple (Chair)

Councillor R Lewis Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor S Rees Councillor P Evans

Officers in attendance

Mr N Elliott, Interim Director of Social Services
Ms A Lloyd, Service Director, Children's Services
Ms C Miles, Childcare Solicitor
Ms S Edwards, Service Manager, Children's Services
Mr L Lewis, Acting Head of the Youth Offending Service
Ms C Williams, Service Manager - Disabled Children
Ms L Hawkins, Virtual School Head Teacher
Ms N Katchi, Graduate Participation Officer (Children's Services)
Voices from Care Cymru Representative
Young Person Representative

Apologies for absence

Councillor C Leyshon Councillor S Trask
Councillor S Evans

25 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

26 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED:** to approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on the 24th November 2022.

27 The implementation of ALNET Act and ALN Code for Children Looked After

The Virtual School Head Teacher provided an update to the Corporate Parenting Board on the implications of the ALNET (Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal) Wales Act (2018) and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code 2021 for Children Looked After with an ALN and to update the Board on the implementation of the above in Year 2 of the National ALN Implementation

timetable in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

The Chair thanked the officer for the comprehensive report and opened the floor to questions.

One Member acknowledged that the transition period was often a difficult time for young people and questioned whether the educational aspect of the Educational Healthcare Plan was given as much impetus as the health aspect, in terms of transition. The officer advised that in respect of the Individual Development Plan, approximately 80% of it was education based and explained that during a PCP meeting, four areas of need are considered (Cognition and Learning; Social, Emotion and Behaviour; Communication and Interaction; and Sensory). Members were informed that once the specific needs are captured, the intended outcomes are identified, and the school is then supported to provide additional learning provision.

One Member noted that from experience, some parents had objected to the term 'special school' and questioned if there was any intention to rebrand the phrase. The officer advised that the information would be sought and brought back to a future meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language spoke positive of his attendance at a Virtual School event, which he felt had highlighted both the way forward and its challenges. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the raft of new statutory responsibilities for the Local Authority and provided assurance that the Cabinet recognised that it was an area of pressure within the Education service, which requires additional funding and resource. The Cabinet Member spoke of two reports considered by Cabinet in 2022 in respect of an additional special school within the County Borough and additional funding for ALN.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To acknowledge the content of the report; and
2. To receive a further report on ALNET (Wales) Act and ALN Code implementation for Children who are Looked After at a later date if necessary.

28 Independent Sector Placements Monitoring Report

The Head of Family Support and Accommodation and the Regional Commissioning Manager, Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4c's) provided Members with an overview and update on RCT Children's services commissioning and monitoring of external placements for children looked after.

Referring to a concerning incident in an English Local Authority whereby the Ofsted reports were positive, one Member stated that as a Corporate Parenting Board, the focus was the wellbeing of the children placed out of the country and sought assurance that the reviews of placements and advocacy arrangements were robust within RCT. The Regional Commissioning Manager of the 4C's acknowledged the Member's concerns and explained that there is a layered approach to safeguarding and monitoring of standards. The officer advised that CIW were the regulatory body in Wales, with a framework in terms of registering, notifications of any issues and regular inspection reports. The officer explained that within Wales, there's strong mechanisms in terms of existing communication

with CIW and were told the 4C's have monthly meetings whereby both formal information such as inspection feedback, and softer information and concerns are shared. The officer then spoke of the framework providers, 4C's and the various monitoring visits (both formal and unannounced) to providers. The officer concluded by assuring Members that the teams work closely alongside RCT's Placement Team and that additional training had taken place with the Contract Monitoring Officer.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the contents of the report and the actions being taken to ensure RCT obtain quality external placements for children.

29 Participation Update for Care Experienced Children and Young People

The Graduate Officer for Participation provided Members with an update about RCT Children's Services engagement activities and the Participation Strategy for 2023. Members were advised that a further update on the Implementation Plan and Strategy would be provided at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

As part of the update, a young person from Voices From Care Cymru was present to provide Members with an overview of the work undertaken to support care-experienced young people in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The officer emphasised the importance of engaging with young people who had used the service, to help develop the Strategy and explained that, although there had only been a 7% response rate to the Get Involved survey to date, officers were working on increasing the number.

Members were invited to join a task group, to consider whether the membership of the Corporate Parenting Board could be amended to include care experienced young people, to involve young people in the governance arrangements. The Service Director advised that should Members be minded to join the group, proposals would then be brought back to the Corporate Parenting Board for consideration. The Chair asked that the Service Director forward the details to the Council Business Unit for circulation.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To acknowledge and comment on the information contained within the report.

30 Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service

The Head of the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on the work of the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (YOS) for 2022/23. This includes an update on current service delivery following the restructure of the service in August 2021, to outline some of the current priorities and to inform members of future service priorities, challenges/risks.

One Member sought further information in respect of the work undertaken with Primary Schools and acknowledged that it was key in preventing escalation of issues. The officer advised that a Return to Learning Officer had undertaken work in secondary schools with children who had either been involved in

offending behaviour or were on the cusp of offending. The role involved talks with the young person about the dangers and potential consequences of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour. It was explained that, although in its infancy, this approach was being replicated in primary schools and dealt with more age-appropriate issues such as social media as opposed to knife crime. The Members agreed that it would be beneficial to receive a future update on the progress of the roll-out to primary schools.

The Chair thanked the officer for the informative update and the Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To acknowledge the changes made within the YOS, and the direction and challenges that lie ahead as a result of service changes following restructure and strategic change in relation to YOS performance measures; and
2. To receive further reports in due course in order to be satisfied of the progress and improvements made and how this contributes to better outcomes for children and families.

31 Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service - All Wales Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Care Experienced Children and Young People 2022

The Head of the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service informed the Corporate Parenting Board about the 'All Wales Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Children and Young People 2022'.

This protocol is intended to help professionals who encounter care experienced children and young adults while carrying out their work, and in sharing a common framework of principles and expectations informed by an approach that actively promotes children's rights and which safeguards and promotes their wellbeing.

The Chair thanked the officer for the update and questioned whether the exploitation of children and young people was a problem in RCT. The officer advised that as a result of the pandemic, anti-social behaviour and drug-use had increased, along with children being exploited to carry drugs for older people. Members learned that an Exploitation Strategy was planned across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region and that the challenge would be a shared understanding what that means as different agencies may have different perspectives.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To acknowledge the report; and
2. To receive further reports in due course in order to be updated on local/regional data and how progress and improvements made contributes to better outcomes for care experienced children.

32 Fostering Quality of Care Annual Report

The Service Manager provided the Corporate Parenting Board Members with the Annual Fostering Service Quality of Care Report.

This report was compiled as required under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. Regulation 52 of the Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018 also requires the local authority manager to put suitable arrangements in place to establish and maintain a system for

monitoring, reviewing, and improving the quality of service.

One Member spoke positive of the recruitment of foster carers for mother and baby placements and questioned how this would work. The officer advised that the approach was needed but acknowledged that it would be a challenge going forward. One option was to work with Foster Wales to directly target eligible people to come forward, such as Health Visitors; another was to convert the foster carers already in place into the role; and another option was through a community style role.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To acknowledge the information contained within the report.

33 To consider passing the following under-mentioned Resolution:

It was **RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraphs 13 and 14 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act.

34 Carn Ingli Children's Home Complaint Investigation

The Head of Family Support and Accommodation provided the Corporate Parenting Board with the report containing exempt information.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To improve communication between Officers and Members in relation to Residential Services
 - Annual meeting with Ward Members to update on current provision in their Ward, corporate parenting responsibilities and how to report a concern.

This meeting closed at 11.35 am

**Councillor G Caple
Chair.**

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

30th March 2023

EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION & TRAINING

Author: Emma Brabon - Employment, Education & Training Team

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an update in respect of the Council's dedicated programmes to support Children Looked After, Care Leavers and those with care and support needs into employment, education and training.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board:

- 2.1 Note the content of the report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To inform Members of the various employment, education and training programmes available for Children Looked After, Care Leavers and those with care and support.

4. PROGRAMMES

4.1 Step in The Right Direction

Step in The Right Direction programme is a two year paid traineeship for young people aged 16-25 living in and leaving care in Rhondda Cynon Taf. We have extended the eligibility of the scheme to include those who have a Care and Support Plan (CASP). Trainees are given work opportunities within a variety of Council departments and are managed by the Traineeship Coordinator, supported by an allocated 16+ Worker and overseen day to day by a Placement Manager. These young people have all the support needed to gain the work experience and training required to help them gain full time employment at the end of the programme.

Breakdown of Outcomes from April'22 – March'23:

Trainees Recruited – 9

Trainee Placements Secured – 13

Internal Placements:

- Social Care – Tegfan Resource Centre
- Social Care - Learning Curve Day Services
- Social Care - Cwmni Dda Day Centre (Dementia)
- Social Care – The Barn (Supported Living)
- ICT – Front Line Support
- Parks – Aberdare & Pentre Park
- Leisure – Ystrad Leisure Centre
- Abercynon Primary School
- Pontrhondda Primary School
- Play Development
- Waste Management

External Placements:

- TJ Plumbing
- Tollgate Engineering Services

Trainees securing employment in RCT Council – 3

Trainees securing employment externally - 1

4.2 Care2Work

Providing children looked after and care leavers aged 15-25, with encouragement and support to identify and access a range of employment and training opportunities. Care2Work Coordinators support the young people through listening, advising, boosting confidence, offering reassurance and emphasising the positive aspects of a job or career. Access to relevant work experience placements are provided, along with employability courses and training. The ultimate aim of the Care2Work programme is to ensure young people living in and leaving care, within Rhondda Cynon Taf, are provided with individual tailored support in order to access suitable training and development opportunities to maximise their potential.

Breakdown of Outcomes from April'22 – March'23:

Referrals Received – **70**

Secured Employment - **12**

Entered Education and Training - **12**

Work Experience – **7**

Currently still working with Care2Work – **24**

Did not engage - **15**

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1. There are no consultation implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 There are no legal implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

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

- 9.1 Supporting children who are looked after to achieve the best possible outcomes supports the Council's Corporate Priorities to build a strong economy and to promote independence and positive lives for everyone and ensures that the Sustainable Development principle and the Wellbeing Goals of the Wellbeing for Future Generations Act (Wales) underpin the vision and working practices of the service.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 There are various employment, education and training programmes available for Children Looked After, Care Leavers and those with care and support.
- 10.2 The report seeks to inform the Corporate Parenting board of the outcomes of each of the programmes from April 2022 – March 2023.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

30th March 2023

Officer to contact: Emma Brabon - Employment, Education & Training (01443 570034)



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

30TH MARCH 2023

VIRTUAL SCHOOL MODEL PILOT – YEAR 1 PROGRESS

AN OVERVIEW OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL WALES MODEL AND UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF THE PILOT OF YEAR 1 OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER (CLA) IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND WELSH LANGUAGE (COUNCILLOR R LEWIS)

AUTHOR(S): Ceri Jones, Head of Inclusion Services and
Linda Hawkins, Virtual School Headteacher

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update to the Corporate Parenting Board on the progress made during year 1 of the Virtual School (for CLA) Pilot – specifically looking at the steps taken to address and complete actions that form the Virtual School Implementation Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the content of the report.
2.2 Agree to receive a further progress report on the Pilot at a later date.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 This is an information report.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In July 2021, Cabinet agreed to a proposal to progress with a strategy to pilot a Virtual School Model to improve the educational outcomes of children who are looked after.

- 4.2 The Virtual School Model is well established in England and, under the Children's and Families Act 2014, local authorities have a statutory duty to appoint a Virtual School Head (VSH) whose key role is to promote the educational achievement of CLA.
- 4.3 Following a scoping exercise to explore an integrated approach to improve educational outcomes for CLA, in May 2020 Sir Alisdair Macdonald, Raising Attainment Advocate, published a research paper commissioned by Welsh Government - *An integrated approach to improving educational outcomes for looked after children in Wales*.
- 4.4 The paper sets out five recommendations, including one to develop a Welsh Virtual School model, which Sir Macdonald describes as an 'organisational tool' that provides effective co-ordination of support for CLA at both a strategic and operational level in England.
- 4.5 Based on the recommendations in the above report, Welsh Government has been persuaded that progressing an integrated approach in Wales similar to the Virtual Schools Model in England and Scotland is key to improving educational outcomes for CLA. As such, they have provided grant funding up to 31st March 2023 to interested local authorities to develop a Virtual School.
- 4.6 In response to the offer of grant funding, RCT submitted a successful expression of interest to Welsh Government, together with a Virtual School Implementation plan that is underpinned by a set of key principles. The implementation plan forms the basis for the initial development of the Virtual School during year 1 of the pilot and progress against actions in the plan will be reported below.

5. CURRENT CONTEXT & UPDATE ON PROGRESS

- 5.1 National data detailed on the Welsh Government Statistics Wales website records that 7,080 children were looked after in Wales on 31st March 2022.
- 5.2 On 17th March 2023 there were 632 looked after children and young people within RCT, 470 of which are of statutory school age.
- 5.3 On 17th March 2023, of the 470 school aged CLA learners, 422 are educated within the local authority and 210 out of county.
- 5.4 In the academic year 2022-2023, 39 CLA learners in RCT have a local authority maintained Individual Development Plan

Implementation Plan Activities for 2022-2023

- 5.5 The Virtual School Implementation Plan submitted to Welsh Government contains 12 planned activities or priority actions for implementation during financial/academic year 2022/23. The following section provides an update on progress in relation to the activities.

5.6 **Activity 1: Virtual School Head to take up post in September.**

- 5.7 A key part of the Virtual Schools Model is the role of the Virtual School Head. As recommended by Sir Alisdair Macdonald in his report, *‘Welsh Government should consider requiring all local authorities in Wales to appoint a Virtual School Head (VSH) and establish Virtual Schools, for the purpose of discharging the LAs’ duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children. The VSH should work directly to a Senior Officer in the LA and be in a position to influence both education and social care strategy’*

(An integrated approach to improving educational outcomes for looked after children in Wales, Sir Alasdair Macdonald, 2020.)

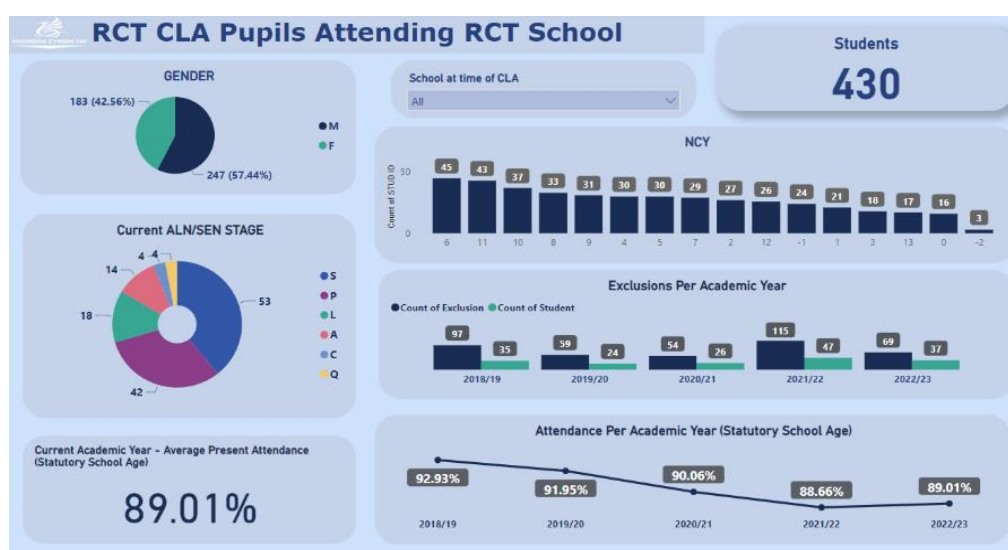
- 5.8 In their Virtual Schools Wales expression of interest document to local authorities, Welsh Government provide a detailed overview of the role of the VSH and the expectations in terms of necessary and desirable qualifications and experience, reflecting Sir Macdonald’s research evidence that *‘peer reviews showed that the power and influence of the VSH depended considerably on the extent to which they were accepted as peers by other school heads. It seems that those appointed from a strong educational background are best placed to undertake these responsibilities’*.
- 5.9 A VSH was appointed by Access and Inclusion in readiness to take up position in September 2022. This appointment is a 1-year secondment in the first instance, with the likelihood of continuing into a second year based on a full evaluation of the year 1 Virtual School Model pilot in summer term 2022.
- 5.10 In line with the requirement of Welsh Government relating to necessary and desirable qualifications and experience, the RCT VSH has extensive experience of teaching CLA learners with and without Additional Learning Needs (ALN), has experience of senior leadership roles within schools and has vast knowledge of current government policy relating to children looked after and education. The VSH has also had experience of being the Designated Person for CLA in school, the Designated Safeguarding Lead and has had training in Trauma Informed approaches.
- 5.11 In December 2022, the VSH together with the Virtual School Team officially launched the Virtual School Model pilot with an engagement event attended by a range of agencies, including education and social care colleagues and external 3rd sector agencies. The launch provided a platform for the Virtual School to share its mission ‘Every Child Deserves a Champion’ and its strategic vision and objectives with a range of partners.
- 5.12 Since September, the VSH has been instrumental in strengthening working relationships with other education services, such as Access and Inclusion Services and the Attendance and Wellbeing Service. For example, the VSH works closely with the Additional Learning Provision Coordinators in quality assuring Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and is a member of the newly formed ALN Post 16 Steering Group. Strategic partnerships are developing with the Heads of Service within Children’s Services, Social Workers and

Independent Reviewing Officers. In addition, joint working with 3rd sector organisations is being developed by the VSH, for example with ‘Voices from Care Cymru’ who are speaking at the first CLA Forum in March 2023 and with ‘CLASS Cymru’, who have invited the VSH to be a part of its Network supporting care experienced young people to apply to University.

5.13 Progress in other areas that reflect the main duties of the VSH as outlined by Welsh Government will be reflected in the progress updates relating to the further implementation plan activities below.

5.14 **Activity 2: Review of data processes and data analysis and implementation of new data systems.**

5.15 The Virtual School has been working in collaboration with the Data team within the Education Directorate to create a data system that enables the Virtual School to have continuous access to ‘live’ data for CLA pupils in RCT schools, to enable the VSH to review and address the needs of CLA learners swiftly and ensure early intervention. As a result, three different ‘dashboards’ have been created: RCT CLA pupils Attending RCT School; RCT CLA Pupils Attending Out of County School; Other CLA Attending RCT School’. Through the dashboards, live data can be obtained on pupil attendance, exclusions, schools exclusion figures (so timely support can be offered to schools with high exclusion figures), and the number of CLA pupils on reduced timetables. The dashboards provide a visual display of data in pie charts and bar and line graphs and allow the VSH to drill down into different data sets in terms of gender, ALN, year group and school.



5.16 Work is currently underway to further develop the dashboard to include academic outcomes and softer outcomes for mental health and wellbeing.

5.17 In addition, the VSH and the Data team have created a Virtual School involvement on the Capita data management system, ensuring that there is a central location for all Virtual School training, support, meetings, etc. to be

stored. This will facilitate cross agency working and provide a transparent system of information sharing.

5.18 Activity 3: Pupil voice/parent/carers engagement activities.

5.19 As a result of strengthened collaboration between the Virtual School and the Participation Team, the VSH was provided with an opportunity to attend a pupil participation event in January 2023. This enabled the VSH to obtain 'pupil voice' to shape the future strategic work of the Virtual School in terms of what care experienced children and young people want from their education. Actions to address this work will be included in the Implementation Plan 2023-2024.

5.20 Voices from Care Cymru have invited the VSH to the 'Local Group' event for RCT on 24th March 2023 for care experienced young people aged 14-22 years old. This will be a chance for young people to discuss with the VSH what support is needed in terms of emotional wellbeing for them to do well at school. Again, information obtained from pupils will help inform future strategic work of the Virtual School in terms of their training offer to schools.

5.21 In the summer term the Virtual School and the Participation Team will organise a joint celebration event for children, young people and their carers to take part in celebrating each other and rewarding effort and success.

5.22 As part of the core activity of the Virtual School Management Committee (see below) a care experienced child/young person will be invited to attend Management Committee meetings (on a rota system) and where appropriate their views will help inform and shape decisions made by the committee.

5.23 Key processes and protocols recently implemented by the Virtual School take a person-centred approach with a focus upon capturing pupil voice and also the views of parents/carers and those involved in the care of the child/young person. For example, as part of the new Out of County Monitoring Protocol pupils' views will be collected in relation to their education. This will be done ideally face to face or online, dependant on the preference of the pupil. This work will be supported by the use of Person-Centred Planning Tools. In addition, the new Personal Education Plan (PEP) has been developed as a person-centred tool that must be co-constructed by all people who are involved in the care of the child or young person, including the Social Worker. Questions within the PEP include 'What is important to me', 'What is important for me', 'What's working/not working'. The child/young person's goals and aspirations are also reflected in the PEP, along with who will help them achieve.

5.24 Activity 4: Establishment of multi-agency Virtual School Management Committee.

5.25 In line with the findings of Sir Alasdair MacDonald regarding the effectiveness of the Virtual School having a Management Committee just as mainstream

schools have governing bodies to provide an additional level of local scrutiny, support, and accountability, the RCT Virtual School is currently in the process of establishing its own Management Committee. The Management Committee will provide support and challenge in collaboration with senior management in both the Education and Children's Services directorates to ensure agreed Virtual School priorities and the Virtual School Development Plan remains on track.

- 5.26 The Management Committee will take a similar model to that of the Management Committees aligned to Pupil Referral Units. The Management Committee will have multi-agency representation from the four compulsory stakeholders' groups: school, local authority, parent/carer and community. It is anticipated that representations from primary, secondary, special, Welsh medium and faith schools will be included.
- 5.27 The first meeting of the Management Committee will take place during summer term 2022.
- 5.28 **Activity 5: Learning visits to established Virtual Schools in England.**
- 5.29 The VSH has become a member of the National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH) and in September 2022 embarked on their 'New to Role' Programme. The programme includes relevant topics for the Virtual School Wales model, including 'Transitions' and 'Courageous Leadership'. Through this course the VSH has had the opportunity to network and form links with several Virtual Schools in England. In March 2023, the VSH attended the NAVSH Annual Conference which provided face to face dialogue with other VSHs in England.
- 5.30 Since September 2022, several other local authorities in Wales are also developing a Virtual School Model. To support the development of Virtual Schools Wales networking, the VSH collaborated with the VSH in Powys to facilitate a Virtual School information session for all interested local authorities in Wales. The session was highly attended and, as a result, a second session is planned for 25th April 2023 in order to share ideas on tracking the progress and outcomes of CLA learners in terms of the new Curriculum in Wales.
- 5.31 **Activity 6: Establishment of Designated CLA persons' forum.**
- 5.32 In September 2022, the role of the Designated Person (DP) for CLA in schools became a statutory requirement. The DP has responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of children who are looked after in school. This duty applies regardless of whether or not there are looked after children on the school roll, as schools need to be sufficiently prepared to respond quickly to the needs of CLA who they may receive at very short notice. Supporting the DP to undertake their role effectively is a key responsibility of the Virtual School.

- 5.33 The first Designated CLA Persons' Forum took the form of the Virtual School Launch in December. The Launch provided a platform to introduce the Virtual School Team to the DPs for CLA in schools. Updates on recent developments as a result of the introduction of the Virtual School Model were provided to the DPs, including the new streamlined communication system via the new Virtual School Inbox.
- 5.34 The second forum took place in March and included a presentation from the Education, Employment and Training Team regarding the work of their CLA Team: Care 2 Work. The Virtual School team shared the Quality Assurance process for the PEPs to provide Designated Persons with expectations in terms of the PEPs.
- 5.35 The final Forum for this academic Year will be on 6th June and will include an address from a Care Experienced Adult who now works with CLA young people at Park Prison and a presentation from the University of South Wales and Cardiff University about supporting care experienced young people to access university.
- 5.36 In addition to the forums, enhanced support for the DPs includes: a revised training offer (the DPs training needs were audited during the Launch), including Trauma Informed Practices, CLA Experienced Guest Speakers, CLA Governor Training, termly PEP training, termly 'drop-ins' for bespoke support.
- 5.37 **Activity 7: Implement and review Out of County (OOC) monitoring protocol.**
- 5.38 The VSH has created a new OOC monitoring protocol to ensure the local authority is fulfilling its statutory duties as a Corporate Parent in relation to educational provision made for CLA who attend schools outside of RCT. These pupils are our 'hardest to reach' cohort and as such a robust system of monitoring a range of data such as attendance, exclusions, education progress/attainment, engagement and wellbeing is essential for CLA pupils with complex needs.
- 5.39 The protocol includes a cycle of information gathering, tracking and support. It includes a 'Welcome and Expectations' document for schools to complete when they receive an RCT pupil, a termly questionnaire, which includes tools to capture pupil voice, certificates to celebrate achievement (can be learning or otherwise), and a system to identify pupils in the most need of support. The protocol will identify OOC placements that require enhanced challenge where concerns have been highlighted.
- 5.40 **Activity 8: Review current statutory processes for CLA with an ALN to include Quality Assurance of Individual Development Plans and Person-Centred Practice.**
- 5.41 The implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (ALNET) Act 2018 and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code 2021 necessitates new duties for schools in terms of CLA pupils. Point 3.119 of the

Act recognises the fact that a significant proportion of CLA children and young people are likely to have an Additional Learning Need (ALN), and Section 14 of the Code provides for the Individual Development Plan (IDP) to be included in the Personal Education Plan (PEP) of a child who is looked after.

- 5.42 The Virtual School has worked in collaboration with colleagues in Access and Inclusion to ensure that robust processes are in place to work with schools to ensure that the local authority and schools are compliant with new statutory ALN processes. This includes support to facilitate person-centred meetings, and a rigorous Quality Assurance process to ensure that pupils' IDPs contain appropriate Additional Learning Provision to address their identified needs and that their IDPs are issued within the new statutory timescale of 12 weeks.
- 5.43 Local performance indicators are now in place to monitor compliance with the above statutory timescale. Current data shows that since April 2022, 89.7% of the 39 CLA IDPs have been issued within the designated 12-week timeframe. The VSH will continue to monitor compliance and take appropriate action as necessary.
- 5.44 **Activity 9: Review impact of current CPD/training programme for schools/foster carers/social services/Education services re: CLA and undertake audit of future training needs.**
- 5.45 Since auditing the training needs of schools at the Launch, the Virtual School has developed a GOOGLE evaluation form in order to evaluate all training provided by the Virtual School (for all stakeholders). As part of this evaluation the question 'what further training do you require in terms of CLA and Education?' is included. In addition, the evaluation form includes data that will enable the Virtual School to measure impact in relation to effectiveness of the course, training methods, delivery, and content. This will ensure that the Virtual School regularly audits and reviews future training needs and can engage in a cycle of self-improvement.
- 5.46 **Activity 10: Review of multi-agency transition protocol for post-16/19 CLA.**
- 5.47 The VSH is a member of the newly formed Post-16 steering group. In light of the new ALN legislation with its enhanced age range of 0-25 it is anticipated that a higher number of CLA with ALN will seek to access Further Education. Many of these pupils will access their local Further Education College, but there will be exceptional cases whereby a pupil will require placement in a specialist college. The VSH will play a key role in liaising with multiple agencies in relation to post-16/19 education for CLA with ALN as the post-19 ALN legislation becomes enacted during the national ALN implementation timetable.
- 5.48 Initial scoping has identified gaps in the support for CLA young people in terms of post-16 support. In response, the Virtual School is planning a joint project with the EET team to provide early intervention in terms of Careers

education, support and guidance. This project will start in September 2023 and will target year 11 CLA.

- 5.49 The VSH is taking part in an enhanced transition project with a secondary school in Aberdare that has one of the highest numbers of CLA pupils on roll in collaboration with the Access and Inclusion Further Education ALN Lead and the Social Worker. The VSH has also consulted with the Greenlight Project and the Gatsby Benchmarks to ensure cohesion in terms of delivering a comprehensive transition offer to care experienced young people. This work is in its early stages and it is too early to measure impact at this point.
- 5.50 The VSH has very recently become a member of the CLASS (Care Leavers and Student Support) Network in order to track care experienced young people who go to Higher Education and ensure that there is timely, appropriate support available to them.
- 5.51 **Activity 11: VSH to collaborate with regional PDGLAC Co-ordinator to ensure effective use of grant funding.**
- 5.52 The VSH has attended LACES meetings chaired by the regional PDG/LAC Co-ordinator. The Virtual School Education Co-ordinator has also attended. The group has evaluated the cluster bids submitted by schools for the PDG/LAC funding and processes have been identified to improve the specificity of the bids. The evaluation template for the grant will also be improved to ensure schools are fully accountable for expenditure of the grant.
- 5.53 **Review current RCT CLA Education Team structure and make recommendations for change.**
- 5.54 As we progress through the year 1 and year 2 pilot, the VSH in collaboration with other colleagues in Access and Inclusion and informed by good practice shared by other Virtual Schools via the National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH), is now undertaking a scoping exercise of the current roles and responsibilities of the Virtual School team. This will inform future development of the school structure.

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 There are a number of current priorities that will embed deeper into the ethos and remit of the Virtual School moving into the second year of the Pilot. There are also several ideas for excellent practice that have evolved from the priorities of year one and will be developed further over the next year. Through robust self-evaluation of the current Implementation Plan and responses from other stakeholders, the VSH will draw up a School Improvement Plan for 2023-2024, outlining key priorities for the Virtual School. These include:
- Building upon positive links made with other service areas within both Education, Children's Services and other 3rd sector agencies in order to continue to champion care experienced children and young people.

- To implement a new protocol for measuring the learning progress of care experienced children and young people over time.
- To enhance pupil and parent/carer engagement.
- To establish an effective Management Committee.
- To continue to support DPs in schools through continued high-quality training through forums and bespoke training.
- To complete one year of full Out of County Monitoring to ensure robust cohesion between RCT and schools in other local authorities that have RCT pupils on roll and evaluate whether this has an impact on pupil attendance and learning and softer outcomes.
- To monitor the effectiveness of the new PCP tool.
- To ensure CLA local authority maintained IDPs are issued in a timely manner to ensure the appropriate provision is in place to support the pupil's progress.
- To demonstrate impact of the use of new data systems in terms of challenging schools in relation to attendance, exclusions, learning outcomes, softer outcomes, e.g. wellbeing and mental health for their CLA learners.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

7.1 This is an information report.

8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This is an information report.

9. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

9.1 This is an information report.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

10.1 This is an information report.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

11.1 The legal requirements for children who are looked after who have special educational needs or an additional learning need are set down within the Education Act 1996, the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act (Wales) 2018 and the associated statutory Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code (Wales) 2021.

12. LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT 2015

12.1 There are links to RCTCBC's Education and Inclusion Services Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2025 and its mission: '*To deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all*', most notably:

- Strategic Priority 2: Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all.
- Strategic Priority 3: Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families

12.2 The information in the report contributes to the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan, 'Making a Difference'.

12.3 The implementation of the new Welsh Government ALN legislation and the processes and systems developed at a local council level will ensure that some of RCTCBC's most vulnerable learners will have the best chance of achieving positive outcomes.

12.4 The above also contributes in particular to the following wellbeing goals:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities.

12.5 Organising services so that they are focussed on early intervention and prevention is a key statutory requirement of the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act 2015¹ and a key element of RCTCBC's Corporate Plan.

13. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

13.1 The Virtual School Model is a universal provision that will support the Council in improving the outcomes and wellbeing of all CLA learners in Rhondda Cynon Taf and as such is a strategic provision relevant to all wards.

14. CONCLUSION

14.1 The Virtual School Model pilot is currently in its early stages. As can be seen from the above information, good progress has been made in relation to the 12 planned activities outlined within the Virtual School Implementation Plan. A full evaluation of the Implementation Plan and its impact thus far on improving educational provision for RCT's CLA learners will take place at the end of the

¹ [Wellbeing and Future Generations Act 2015](#)

academic year. This will ensure that appropriate areas for development and priorities are also identified for year 2 of the pilot.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

30TH MARCH 2023

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN
DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH
PARTICIPATION AND WELSH LANGUAGE (COUNCILLOR R LEWIS)**

**Item: AN OVERVIEW OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL WALES MODEL AND UPDATE
ON THE PROGRESS OF THE PILOT OF YEAR 1 OF THE VIRTUAL
SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER (CLA) IN RHONDDA CYNON
TAF**

Background Papers

Officer(s) to contact: Ceri Jones, Head of Inclusion Services and
Linda Hawkins, Virtual School Headteacher

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

30th MARCH 2023

REPORT OF DIRECTOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES: YOUNG CARERS AND YOUNG ADULT CARERS REPORT

Author(s): Cathrine Silver, Interim Service Manager – Carers, Direct Payments, and Service User Engagement

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Corporate Parenting Board members with an update on the work with young carers in RCT during 2022/2023.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members:

Acknowledge the information contained within the report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 This is an information report.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The support service for young carers (aged 5-17) continues to be provided on a commissioned basis by Action for Children. Specific support is available via an externally funded post for Young Adult Carers (aged 18-25). Sibling carers (children whose sibling has additional needs) is now provided on a commissioned basis by Action for Children.
- 4.2 The assessment function for young carers remains within the Information, Assistance and Advice Service for Children's Services.
- 4.3 The all-age carers hub in Gelliwastad Road, Pontypridd, is now operational, with the Carers Support Project, the Young Carers and Sibling Support Services and the Young Adult Carers Project Worker all co-located.

4.4 The full report for RCT Young Carers and Young Adult Carers 2022/2023 (to date) is attached in Appendix A. Members may wish to note the below key details:

- The contract for the support element for Young Carers has successfully been retendered, with Action for Children winning the contract and continuing to offer Young Carer Support within RCT.
- Full levels of service delivery have resumed following the pandemic.
- There has consistently been double the number of referrals for Young Carer assessments compared to the preceding reporting period.
- Subsequently there has been an increased demand on services for Young Carers.
- Due to the success of the Siblings Pilot Project, the need for separate sibling support is now recognised and additional capacity to deliver this support has been made available as part of the new Young Carers contract.
- The Young Adult Carers Services has undergone a process of change and now delivers a slightly different model of support, which is outcome focussed and person centred.
- The grant funding for the Young Adult Worker post awarded for 2023/24 is subject to a deficit in terms of meeting salary costs, (no uplift was provided)
- Despite the success of the Young Carers ID Card, no further funding will be made available by WG, however RCT will continue to deliver a card scheme for young carers.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This is an information report.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 This is an information report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

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

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 came into force in April 2016 and is intended to transform the way services are delivered. It repeals the majority of community care legislation including the Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010.
- 8.2 The National Strategy for Unpaid Carers 2021 will become increasingly important for developing strategies and delivering support to carers of all ages going forward.

9. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

- 9.1 The business covered in this report 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

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Young carers and Young Adult Carers are now receiving a fully restored carer support service.
- 10.2 Work to improve the carer offer for under 25's will continue.
- 10.3 The National Strategy for Unpaid Carers 2021 will inform regional and local carers strategies and priorities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

30th MARCH 2023

Annual Report
2022/23

RCT Young Carers



Cathrine Silver

Interim Service Manager – Carers, Direct
Payments & Service User Engagement

Annual Report 2022/23

OVERVIEW

This year has seen carer support return to the level of service delivery offered prior to the Covid Pandemic. Although this has been a largely positive process, it has not been without challenges. Our Young Carers have overcome some of their individual barriers and readjusted to life after the pandemic, while we have attempted to revert to face-to-face contacts and events taking place outside the home.

This report provides a summary of the support provided to Young Carers, (aged 0-17) and Young Adult Carers (aged 18-25). It also highlights some of the key developments achieved during a year of recovery from the impact of Covid.

BACKGROUND

RCT Young Carers Service sits within the wider all-age Carers Support Project and the Service Manager for Carers has responsibility for all carer issues, including Young Carers, Sibling Carers, Young Adult Carers and Adult Carers.

STRUCTURE OF SUPPORT FOR CARERS UNDER 25

- The service has a dedicated Young Carer Assessor who sits within the wider Information, Advice and Assistance function of Children's Services. This ensures that statutory obligations are met in terms of assessment and monitoring of young carers.
- The remainder of the Young Carer Support service is commissioned which facilitates a greater level of integration with the third sector. In January 2023, Action for Children successfully bid for the contract, and as a result continue to offer our Young Carer provision within RCT. Moving forward, as part of the new contract, Action for Children will also deliver the Sibling Carer Support as well as offering an increased level of involvement with the Schools Award.
- The support for Young Adult Carers (aged 18-25) continues to be provided by a dedicated part-time worker partially funded via the Families First grant. The funding has been confirmed for 2022/23, however there has not been any uplift included.
- Occasionally, support is offered from CSP staff to support projects or events as necessary.

TYPES OF SUPPORT OFFERED

- Assessment
- Information Advice and Assistance
- 1:1 sessions
- Groups
- Trips
- Events
- Training

YOUNG CARERS (YCs)

All referrals for Young Carer support (including siblings) goes through the IAA team for recording and allocation. The worker contacts the family or young person if they are 16+ and begins the engagement process.

Face to face assessment visits have now resumed, as well as 1-1 support sessions, (where necessary). The Young Carer is central to the development of their support plan, which when agreed, the YC Worker implements by referring to relevant agencies.

If the Young Carer declines support from the YC project, 1-1 sessions are delivered by the YC worker. Where they choose ongoing support via the YC project, they are supported to access the initial sessions, then transferred to Action for Children, (AFC). Reviews are arranged for all Young Carers at least every 6 months (sooner if the case is complex). During reviews, feedback is sought from the AFC, RFS, school etc.

Where agreed, details of Young Carers are sent to each school's Carers Champion to ensure appropriate support is offered in their school placement.

ASSESSMENTS

Although most activities and events are delivered by Action for Children, assessments remain a statutory function and the worker continues to be managed within the Children's Services Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) team.

The table below summarises the numbers of referrals for Young Carer Support:

Referrals Received by IAA

	22/23	21/22
Q1 Apr-Jun	41	10
Q2 Jul-Sep	30	16
Q3 Oct-Dec	22	28
Q4 to date	17	4
TOTAL to date	110	54

As can be seen from the table, referrals have increased and are double the number received in the previous reporting period (during the pandemic).

Referrals continue to come from a variety of sources, but as the table shows there are some opportunities to increase referrals from certain agencies. During 23/24 work will take place to generally raise awareness, and revisit referring agencies.

Source of Referrals

	22/23	21/22
<i>Children's Services</i>	21	10
<i>Resilient families</i>	27	9
<i>Family</i>	19	9
<i>School</i>	12	9
<i>Disabled Children's Team</i>	15	6
<i>Health</i>	2	3

College	6	3
YEPS service	1	3
Adult Services	2	3
CSP/Young Carers Project	2	2
Miskin	0	1

To date 125 assessments and 274 reviews have been completed. As the table below shows, some referrals are not progressing, therefore as part of the awareness raising planned for 2023/24, criteria, expectations and support opportunities will also be revisited with agencies.

Outcome of referrals

	22/23
Referred to Sibs	32
Referred to AFC	29
Inappropriate Ref	16
Not wanted	15
No Support Required	10
ID Card Only	4
1:1 Support	4

As well as the assessment, reviews, and direct support, the YC worker is responsible for the delivery of the Young Carers ID Card.

YOUNG CARERS ID CARD

The card is a tool to help young carers access information, help and support and to have a greater of their rights. The scheme continues to grow in RCT, with a steady rate of referrals.

ID Card Referrals received

	22/23
Q1 Apr-Jun	18
Q2 Jul-Sep	5
Q3 Oct-Dec	23
Q4 to date	19
TOTAL	65

(Total ID card applications to date = 134)

During 2022/23 the work was funded by Welsh Government, and we received a total of £6818. In RCT the money has been used to develop new approaches and new ways of working. Resources such as information booklets and guidance for teachers, school governors, pharmacists and GPs have been developed and distributed along with the actual cards themselves.

In RCT part of the money was also used to pay for additional hours for a member of the CSP team to promote the card and link in with as many businesses as possible.

In October 2022 there was a workshop involving the Sibling Carers and a poster promoting the card was developed (See Appendix 1). The session involved young carers sharing their experiences and stories in a creative, supportive environment.

These posters and the information booklets have now been sent to the following across RCT:

- Every comprehensive school and primary school in RCT
- Every GP surgery
- Every library

Positively, several GP surgeries have got in touch regarding staff members becoming trusted referrers and displaying the posters on their call systems. Sessions have also been delivered within schools at both secondary and primary ages, explaining how staff can become a trusted referrer.

The additional hours also enabled the worker to contact local businesses to explore the opportunity of young carers receiving a range of discounts with their card. To date the following businesses are supporting the card.

- Barry Sidings Café
- Gravity Bike Park,
- Dare Valley Country Park
- The Play Yard
- Fuse Play Centre
- New Faze Fabrics
- Penrhys Driving Range
- Lido Café

Talks are ongoing with RCT services such as theatres, the Lido and Rhondda Heritage Park to explore discounts, however nothing has been arranged to date. There have also been discussions with Pontypridd's business and development project lead and their equivalent in both Aberdare and Treorchy. Both are key figures in the town centres with connections with lots of local businesses, so hopefully this will shortly produce some opportunities for our YCs.

YOUNG CARER SUPPORT (AFC)

The table below provides a breakdown of the support offered by AFC.

<i>Young Carer Support Offered</i>							22-23	
Month	Caseload	Referrals	Groups	Attendees	Events	Attendees	1:1	
April	97	1	6	39	5	35	2	
May	96	2	9	55	5	47	1	
June	92	6	9	47	3	115	1	
Q1		9	24	141	13	197	4	
July	95	4	9	56	1	7	3	
August	95	1	0	0	8	98	3	

Sept	99	4	9	53	0	0	3
Q2		9	18	109	9	105	9
Oct	87	7	9	66	2	10	0
Nov	89	1	9	61	2	43	6
Dec	87	1	0	0	2	44	0
Q3		9	18	127	6	97	6
Jan	86	3	3	13	1	7	7
Feb	78	2	7	49	2	15	5
March							
Q4		5	10	62	3	22	12
Total		32	70	439	31	421	31

Following a successful retender, the Young Carer Support Service continues to be provided by Action for Children. This year has seen the service return to expected delivery models, and positively, all elements of support have been offered this year.

Group sessions have been back up and running after the Covid restrictions. Some venues in Taff have changed to meet the needs of the young carers and are now run from 3 different sites. The Rhondda group has moved to the Salvation Army building in Penygraig, while the Cynon groups still take place at the YMCA in Mountain Ash.

Something that was hugely missed by Young Carers were the trips to provide short breaks from caring. This year we were lucky enough to offer a family trip to West Midlands Safari Park where Young Carers and their families were given the opportunity to enjoy a free day out together. In total, 105 people attended, all giving really positive feedback about the event and the difference it made.

In addition to the family trips, our young carers have had the opportunity to visit the following places:

- Cinema trips
- Ninja Warrior
- Aqua Park
- Drayton Manor
- Vertigo
- Ponty Park
- Meals
- London
- Aberdare Park
- Barry's Sidings activity
- St Fagan's
- Cinema
- Aqua Park
- Play Barn YC
- Play Barn Families x7
- Drayton Manor
- TGI's and Cardiff

- Cinema
- Santa's Toy Mine
- Winter Wonderland
- Bristol Cribbs Causeway Shopping trip

ALL WALES CARERS FESTIVAL 2022

The project took 15 young people along to the first All Wales Young Carers Festival which was held at the Builth Wells Showground for a 3-night break. Young Carers could take part in many different activities from graffiti workshops, song writing workshops, arts and crafts, circus skills along with much more. Every evening they also had a chance to take part in silent discos or hang out in the chill-out tent.

CHOIR

The YC choir has had some great opportunities. They took part in live auditions for Britain's Got Talent (four yes's at the audition). They sang at the AFC annual Stephenson Awards, held at Glazier Hall in London. This gave them the opportunity to enjoy an overnight stay in London, and to visit some of the sights.

YC ACHIEVEMENTS

- Four Young Carers took part in developing our Action for Children Young Carers Sidekick service. This is an online advice service for young carers to access support without leaving their homes, seven days a week.
- Two Young Carers took part in interviews for a new Head of Service role in Children's Services.

Please see Appendix 2 for case studies of YC who have benefited from support.

ONLINE SUPPORT

AFC have expanded their social media provision and have made a new Young Sibling Carers Facebook page. This, along with the Young Carers page, is a place where general information along with updates on groups, trips, and forthcoming activities can be shared.

YOUTH FORUM

YC representatives will be attending the County Youth Forum, to help shape services for young people moving forward.

SIBLING CARERS

Following a pilot programme, where the unique needs of Sibling Carers were identified and supported (see Appendix 3), Sibling Carers continued to receive a limited service via the Carers Support Project.

The unique needs of Sibling Carers are now fully recognised within RCT, and support programmes have been established. This good practice has now been transferred to Action for Children and they are responsible for delivering Sibling Support as part of the new contract.

The table below shows the support offered by CSP and then by AFC for the first two months of 2023:

Sibling Support Offered 22-23					
Month	C/load	Refs	Events	No of Sibs	
April	86		8	1	166
May	86		0	4	52
June	86		0	4	48
Q1			8	9	266
July	84		2	1	5
August	85		1	5	45
Sept	93		8	1	8
Q2			11	7	58
Oct	97		4	4	36
Nov	100		3	3	32
Dec	101		0	2	45
Q3			7	9	113
Jan	101		0	2	17
Feb	95		2	1	12
March					
Q4			2	3	29
Total			28	28	465

For the period Sibling support was offered through the CSP, activities included:

- Taste of Adventure zoom projects
 - Virtual escape room
 - Boxing & mindfulness
 - Cookery
 - Photography
- Zip World
- Kidscape Zap Bullying Workshop
- Pottery Project
- Sibs Fest
- Project S

- Pottery Session
- Speed Boat Trip
- Mountain View Ranch
- Drayton manor
- Parent/child White Water Rafting Sessions
- Project S Bowling Trip
- 6 Week Zoom Project
- Poster Design
- Gingerbread House Competition
- Circus make and take session

Sibs Fest was a highlight and involved a mini festival for Sibling Carers. It was an opportunity to recognise and celebrate a group of young carers who have different needs to other Young Carers yet are rarely recognised for the role they play.

The event was held at Barry Sidings and consisted of a fire breathing performance, stilt walker, drumming workshop, sports tasters, fairground prize stalls, circus skills, live music from a DJ and GTFM and information stalls for families. In total, 166 people attended, and engaged with the activities and the information available.

The event was hugely successful, and feedback was extremely positive.

YOUNG ADULT CARERS SERVICE

The table below provides an overview of the support offered to YACs:

YAC Support Offered 22-23

Month	C/load	Refs	Ass	Rev	Events	No
April	60	6	9	0	1	10
May	66	6	6	0	3	20
June	70	1	12	1	3	20
Q1		13	27	1	7	50
July	71	4	9	1	3	9
August	72	2	2	2	3	24
Sept	73	4	2	0	4	3
Q2		10	13	3	10	36
Oct	75	6	2	3	1	11
Nov	81	2	5	9	2	20
Dec	83	4	2	1	4	33
Q3		12	9	13	7	64
Jan	85	0	1	0	1	6
Feb	71	3	6	1	2	10
March						
Q4		3	7	1	3	16
Total		38	56	18	27	166

The Young Adult Carer, (YAC) Service has a part-time worker who works specifically with the 18-25 age group. The current aim of the service is to support YACs with personal growth through educational workshops and some social events. It also provides a break from the caring role and a chance to learn new skills.

When the worker initially started (February 2022) there were a number of YACs open to CSP, however they were not fully engaging with the service and all it had to offer. Since then, there has been a process of review and revisiting expectations, and now all the YACS signed up to the service fully understand what we offer and engage at one of the levels highlighted below.

In addition to the changes to the membership of the group, following feedback from the worker regarding engagement and complexity of cases, the service has shifted slightly; a pilot involving a new more bespoke and needs-led approach was trialled. Assessments became more collaborative; plans were outcome focussed and person centred. The assessment tool has been revised and is now more relative to the age group (previously the same form was used for all carers aged 11-25).

Initial feedback from YACs and the worker has been positive, and moving forward, this will be the model used for YAC support. New YACs referred into the service will be screened for their level of need, and categorised as Red, Amber, or Green. The support offered will correspond to this initial screen and consist of the following:

- **Green** – receiving Information and Advice, (Carers News)
- **Amber** – Accessing YAC events and low-level assistance, (signposting etc)
- **Red** – requiring individual support, via an outcome focused support plan.

At the time of the report, all YACs recorded by the project had been categorised as Red, Amber and Green. With a caseload of 71, there are currently 15 Reds, 32 Ambers and 24 Greens. One of the most positive aspects of the shift towards offering bespoke support, has been enabling YACs to achieve the outcomes that matter to them. An example of this is demonstrated in the case studies of KN and LH. (Please see Appendix 4 for case studies).

The YAC Worker also supports the Caring and Supporting Each other (CASE) group. This group was set up as a charitable community interest group by the YACs. The group meets quarterly to discuss ideas for ongoing support, encouraging YACs to become actively involved in shaping the service, choosing events and topics to be covered over the next few months. The CASE group has started to raise funds, and this is an area of development moving forward.

The YAC Worker has also been working with other professionals to develop extended support networks. Joint events and projects are starting to develop, especially with Coleg Morgnwg and the YEPs Service.

It is important to note, that although funding has been confirmed for next year, it does not include any uplift. This means the salary for the worker has not been covered, and there are not any resources for engagement/support work attached to the funding. Attempts will be made to source additional funding to ensure continuity of service.

SCHOOLS AWARD

The RCT Young Carers Schools & College Award was developed in 2015, following feedback received from Young Carers. They highlighted changes they would like to see within schools and colleges, including processes to ensure their own needs were highlighted to staff. They felt that if they felt supported and guided in school/college, and if they were acknowledged for the vital role they play, the more likely they were to achieve.

Our Young Carers told us that they believed if schools/colleges improved their understanding and developed a more supportive approach towards young carers, this would result in more Young Carers identifying themselves and increase the likelihood of them speaking to someone about their situation.

Since 2016, in partnership with secondary schools and colleges as well as identifying a 'Carer Champion' in each school, an award process has been established, whereby schools can be recognised for the support they put in place for Young Carers. Now schools are able to achieve certificates at Bronze, Silver and Gold levels, when they achieve certain criteria.

The types of support schools and college have in place can vary from standard practices including a Young Carers notice board displaying information regarding help and support services, as well as TV's / web pages displaying information pertinent to Young Carers. Some schools offer peer-support sessions, assemblies to year groups about Young Carers and other schools provide more intensive interventions including 'Crisis Support Plans,' or tailored monitoring systems where staff on a need-to-know basis, can monitor the welfare and educational attainment of the Young Carers.

The support offered to secondary schools in RCT from CSP is the provision of a 'link' person to liaise with each school-based Carers Champion. This includes:

- Regular contact with the Carers Champion and raising awareness of Young Carers.
- Assisting with promoting awareness days including 'Young Carers Action Day'.
- Attending schools to deliver 'awareness assemblies.'
- Attending schools to deliver talks in PCSE sessions.
- Facilitating Young Carers 'drop in' sessions.
- Supporting with staff training events.
- Providing carer related information and advice.

The table below lists the schools that have already achieved, or are working towards the awards:

Bronze		Silver		Gold	
Working Towards	Achieved	Working Towards	Achieved	Working Towards	Achieved
Ysgol Nant Gwyn		Ysgol Garth Olwg	St John the Baptist		Coleg Y Cymoedd x3
Mountain Ash		Y Pant	Aberdare Community School		
Cardinal Newman		Ysgol Llanhari	Gyfun Tonyrefail Community School	Tonyrefail	
Pontypridd High					

In addition to the Secondary Schools and College Young Carers Award there is also a unit of work available to the primary schools, which usually targets Year 5 and 6 age groups. The Young Carers Primary Schools Award consists of six sessions of work, one of which includes a role play assembly of 'a day in the life of a young carer.' At the time of writing, there are three primary schools in RCT engaging in the sessions.

It cannot be ignored that the pandemic caused a significant delay in the progress and momentum of this award. However, work is now underway to strengthen existing relationships and to make connections via the YEPS Service. Hopefully the YEPS team will offer a different perspective to the support offered within schools, especially for those YCs who struggle in their educational journey and relationships with teaching staff.

If possible, we would hope to reinstate the annual 'Awards Ceremony' where recognition was given to Young Carers, Sibling Carers and YACs and there was an opportunity to celebrate their achievements. At this event, schools and colleges were also recognised for their accomplishments. If possible, we would like to work strategically to give the award more status across RCT, and something schools would strive to achieve as part of the excellence standards or positive achievement awards.

CARERS HUB

We are very fortunate within RCT to have a building we can use as a Carer's Hub. The Hub is accessed by carers of all ages and provides office space for all staff within carer support.

Action for Children their own room within the office, and since moving there, there have been positive improvements in communication and team relationships.

The Hub is used for the majority of carer sessions, including short breaks peer support, training and also for some of the 1:1 sessions.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - YCID Poster



RCT Young Carers ID
Card Poster English.pr

Appendix 2 - Young Carers Case Studies



Young Carers Annual
Report 22-23 AFC Cas

Appendix 3 - Siblings Pilot Study



Sibling Carers Pilot
Report CS.docx

Appendix 4 - Young Adult Carers Case Studies



Appendix 4 YAC Case
Studies Annual Repor

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ARE YOU UNDER 18?

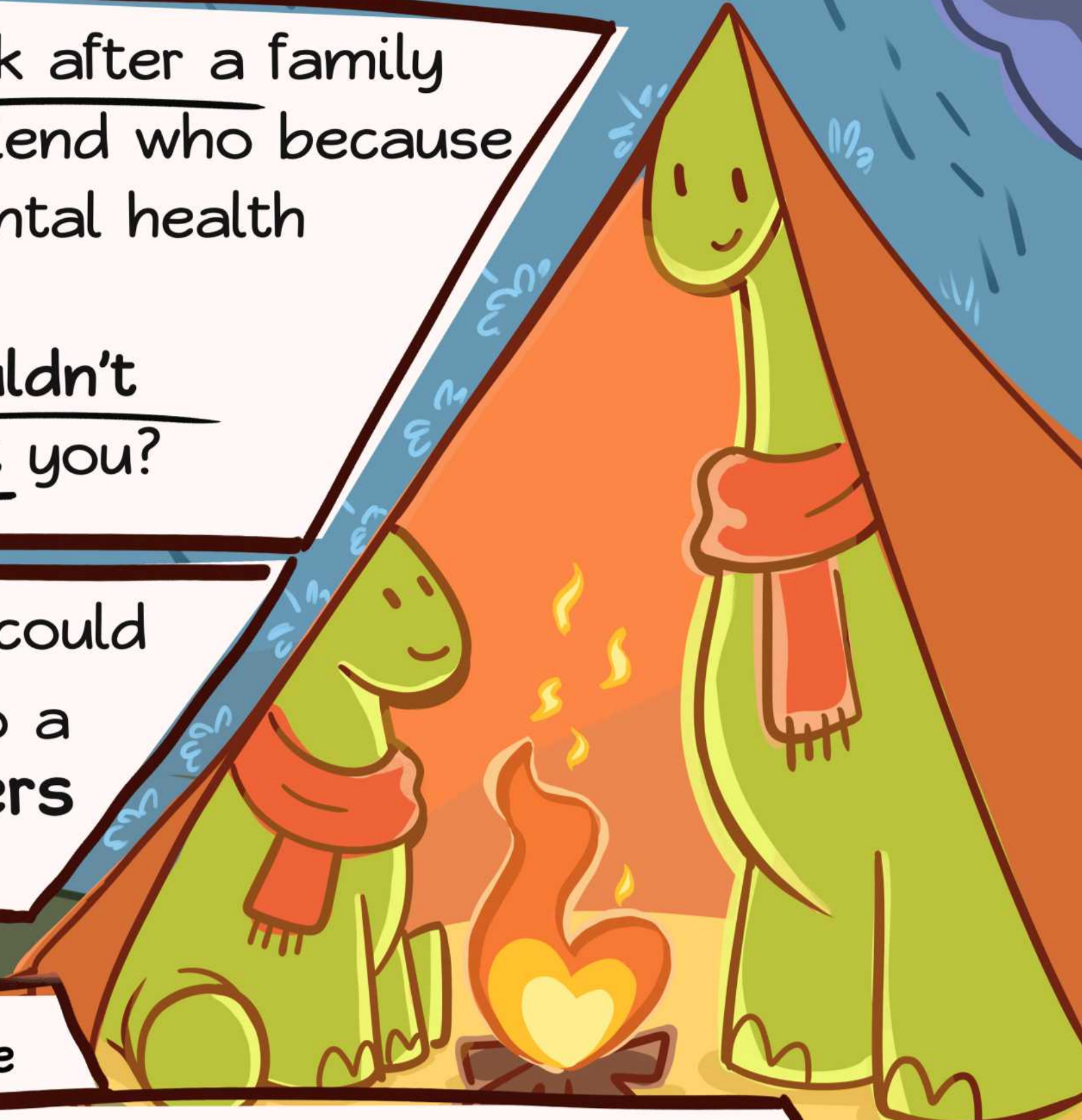
Do you look after a family member or friend who because of illness, mental health condition or addiction couldn't cope without you?

If yes, you could be entitled to a **Young carers ID card.**

To find out more

contact the Young carers assessment worker on **01443 425006**

youngcarerssupportteam@rctcbc.gov.uk,
or speak to a member of staff at your school.



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RCT Young Carers Case Study

Case Study	
Personal Details	Name: NM Age: 13
Personal History	NM was caring for her father who has mobility issues and COPD. Her mother was originally the main carer, until she became ill with meningitis, then suffered multiple strokes and lost her ability to communicate. Although her mother is still in hospital, NM is now a carer for both her parents.
Support Received	Overview of support received. 1 to 1 support, group work, activities, wellbeing workshop, trips. Since her mother has been in hospital, we have also been supporting dad with referrals for extra support, signposting him to citizens advice, helping him sort things at home and chats when he is struggling to process his new role as a carer.
Outcomes Achieved during support	NM benefits from social interaction, shared experience, and emotional support from staff.
Future Plans	Future plans are to continue to support the family as their roles at home change. NM's life will become very different when her mother returns home from hospital. Also, her caring role for her father has now increased, due to the fact her mother is no longer able to provide any. Feedback from NM's father was "you have not only been so supportive to NM but also to myself, my experience with the project is excellent".

Case Study Questions	
Personal Details	Name: L, A and E Age: 15, 14, 12
Personal History	General background information about situation prior to receiving support. For the purpose of this case study, a family of young carers who started with the project on October 2019 has been chosen. The children's home life consisted of them being carers for their dad who had a stroke and was left unable to walk. He struggled to use his left side which required practical support and the children also give him a lot of emotional support. The children often struggled to maintain friendships in school and used each other as their main friendship group.
Support Received	Overview of support received. When the children were referred into Young Carers they engaged straight away. They very rarely missed a session and appeared keen to make new friends. Over their time with the project, the children have attended various residentials, activities and accessed 1:1 support. As a family they struggled financially, (UC was only form of income until AFC advised family of appropriate benefits for disability). Various grants were also applied for on behalf of the family including a Well-being Grant and a Covid Emergency Grant. As dad was a vulnerable person, practical support was offered during The Pandemic. We have also supplied the family with essential Christmas hampers and gifts. .
Outcomes Achieved during support	Please provide an overview of the outcomes the service user achieved whilst receiving support The children have all benefited from the social interaction within the group and have attended activities and residentials which they would probably have not had the opportunity without YC support. They have made many friends through the project and have continued these friendships outside of the service. The children's self-confidence has risen through attending the project which shows in their ability to talk openly with staff and peers about what's worrying or making them happy. They are much better at talking to the teachers in school and now have started to attend YEP's activities in after school clubs. Dad is able to balance his finances better as he is now on the right benefit and his health although will never get back to how he was is continuing to stay stable.
Future Plans	The children will continue to work with the YEPS service within school and dad will contact Rachel Spry if he thinks the children need to be re-referred into the project.

SIBLING CARERS PILOT PROGRAMME

Welsh Government Grant Report

The Definition of a Sibling Carer

Sibling Carers are those who help to care for a sibling with additional needs, or who are impacted socially/economically by growing up with a sibling, who has additional needs.

The Background

Through our ongoing work with Young Carers in RCT, it became increasingly apparent that there were many children, who although were not Young Carers, were impacted negatively by the additional needs of their sibling. As a result of this identification of need, Sibling Carers received a limited level of support service, via the Carers Support Project (CSP). It is important to note, this support was limited due to a lack of dedicated funding for Sibling Carers, in relation to both staff and resources. It was felt that an opportunity to deliver a pilot programme, exploring the demand and needs of Sibling Carers, would benefit service delivery moving forward.

The Grant

Funding was secured from the Carers Respite Grant during 2021/2022 (October 21), to carry out a pilot model of service delivery for Sibling Carers, that would look at resilience and wellbeing of the Sibling Carer known to CSP.

The Stats

At the time of the pilot, there were 79 young people registered to receive Sibling Carer support.

There have been 39 sibling referrals made in the year 21/22, with 18 of these being made since October when WG funding was awarded. (Last year 20/21, there were 22 siblings referred in total so there has been a definite increase this year).

The Pathway & Specific Programme

Once a young person is assessed by the Young Carers Assessment Worker, and identified as a Sibling Carer, they are offered the opportunity to engage in a 6-week programme, focusing on the social and emotional aspects of being a Sibling Carer.

The key themes of the programme are:

- Raising self-esteem,
- Exploring the feelings (positive and negative) associated with being a sibling carer, coping strategies (to support them in their role as a sibling carer)
- Opportunity to spend time with other young people who understand and are experiencing similar things.

Additional Support Provided

In addition to the specific themes of the 6-week programme, Sibling Carers have been offered the following:

ASD Workshops - a large proportion of the sibling carers registered with the service have brothers/sisters with ASD, so this workshop gave them an opportunity to gain more knowledge of ASD, and to understand why their siblings present certain

behaviours, thus empowering them and increasing their understanding of their sibling's additional needs.

ZAP Workshops - Research has shown that young carers (including sibling carers), are more likely to be bullied* *[Carers Trust, Protecting Young Carers from Bullying](#) RCT Carers Support Project made links with the bullying charity Kidscape, who offered a ZAP workshop to Sibling Carers with the idea that this workshop would help Sibling Carers raise self-esteem, identify bullying and bullying roles, increase assertiveness, identify the impact of positive body language and explore cyber bullying.

Parent/child Activities - an important area of need identified as part of our sibling support, is the lack of opportunity for Sibling Carers to spend quality time with a parent/carer. As part of the WG grant, and with additional funds from a Winter of Well-being Grant, Sibling Carers and their parents were given the opportunity to do a joint cooking workshop and attend Zip World Towers.

Respite - as an escape for Sibling Carers, and a chance to have new experiences, shared with like-minded individuals the programme offered a bushcraft session, ice skating at Winter Wonderland, a cookery workshop, boxing, Mindfulness sessions, a Virtual Escape Room, and a Photography session.

Therapeutic Activities - there was a four-week pottery project called 'expression through art', which gave Sibling Carers an opportunity to express feelings and emotions by creating a piece of artwork with clay.

As a contingency during the pandemic and the difficulties of delivering face to face activities, Sibling Carers have also been given the opportunity to have packs delivered to their home. This included craft packs, outdoor/indoor play packs and cooking packs.

'Sibs Grant' - The 'Sibs Grant' was another support element made possible by the Welsh Government grant during the pilot, and has provided sibling carers an opportunity to apply for something up to the value of £50 which benefits one of the following things:

- Health and wellbeing (e.g., fitness equipment/clothing, membership, beauty treatments),
- Education (e.g., books, stationary, membership schemes),
- Family relationships (e.g., family activities),
- Social isolation (e.g., club membership, transport),
- Respite from caring role (e.g., activity vouchers).

(46 Sibling Carers accessed this element of the funding)

Sibs Fest

The culmination of the grant will be seen during the Easter holidays, as RCT Carers Support Project are hosting an event specifically aimed at celebrating Sibling Carers.

Sibling carers often describe themselves as feeling invisible, and that they don't like making a fuss as they feel that those close to them have enough to deal with without

them and their problems. 'Sibs Fest' is aimed at putting sibling carers in the spotlight, making them mini-VIPs for the day. A mini festival taking place at Dare Valley Country Park, Sibling Carers and their families can take part in a number of things from circus workshops, live music, sports taster sessions, live fire breathing shows and fairground stalls. but also have access to information and advice from a range of organisations such as Papyrus, Kidscape, Meic, Challenging behaviour support, Resilient families service and much more. Through advertising this event, there has been an increased interest in the Sibling support service, with schools and agencies making enquiries about how to refer to the service for support.

With the remaining funding from the grant, there was a trip organised during the Easter holidays.

The Future

The Welsh Government Grant has been instrumental in allowing us to increase the support we offer Sibling Carers in RCT. Support prior to the grant being awarded was quite limited, and the offer to Sibling Carers had been basic in its provision. This, as mentioned above, was owing to a lack of resources and staffing dedicated specifically to Sibling Carers.

Sibling Carers are often placed in the same category as Young Carers, however, we feel that this often does them a disservice, as their needs are very different. The main concerns, now the grant has come to an end, is that support will return to the limited level offered prior to the grant award.

What this pilot has shown is that with a small increased grant, (a total of £15,000 combining WG and YEPS funding) has enabled additional dedicated staffing hours and our Sibling Carers were offered a broader, more holistic, and targeted support. Not only were we able to offer support that was a better fit for their needs, but we were also able to increase the number of Sibling Carers we worked with.

Owing to the feedback from parents, and the increased working with partner agencies, there has been an increased interest regarding the Sibling Support Service, with referrals increasing since October 2021 (when the grant was awarded). Providing a targeted support Service, ensures these young people are provided with the support needed in order for them to feel listened to, valued and for them to thrive as young people. It would be a fantastic opportunity if we could continue to support Sibling Carers in RCT and continue with the momentum this grant has started.

Feedback/Evaluation

Feedback from parents:

"Thank you so much Axx really enjoyed the experience, and we were blown away by the cooking bundle! Such a positive experience, we are very lucky"

"Thank you he really enjoyed it, he loved the boxing"

“BXXX (sibling carer) really has a problem with talking about Jxxx (sibling with additional needs) behaviour. I think he feels that he is going to get Jxxx in trouble or something. So it was so good for him to hear others talking about their siblings. He kept saying to me ‘that’s just like Jxxx’. I think it really helped him so thank you”.

“We had lots of fun. Thank you again so much.”

“Thank you very much for the opportunity to do the zip wire, we both really enjoyed”

“Thank you so much for this day, it was amazing, we are going to go back and do the roller coaster so our other son can join us, thank you xxx”

Feedback from young people:

“The cooking zoom was lovely, thank you for the opportunity to do it”.

“This is the first time I have ever been to the fair as my brother doesn’t like the noise and lights” (sibling carer aged 15)

“We loved it, such an amazing experience to share thank you so much and getting over the grief of my gran passing away the scream while sliding down a mountain was the perfect release”

Feedback from ‘Sibs Grants’ (and uses)

“I would like it (the grant) to pay for a family activity, giving me a chance to make memories with everyone outside the house. I would like it for cantref farm park as I love animals and so do all my family it will be a great shared enjoyment. It would give me a chance to be a child and not just a sibling carer and to spend time with all my family at one time”

“I would like to go for afternoon tea with my mam. We would like to have the traditional afternoon tea. It would be really lovely to spend time on my own with my mam because she spends a lot of time looking after my sister”

“Items for my bedroom, cushions, photo frames, throw for bed etc. “X’s home has been adapted for her brother and she has moved into a different bedroom. FXXX is asking for items for her bedroom to decorate it and make it her own.

“I would like a pair of football boots from sports direct. I want to play football on the grass with my daddy while my mammy looks after my brother. I play for a local team and I can practise with daddy on the field by our house so we are not too far away in-case mammy needs us”

The following case studies are an example of the difference carer support is making to some of our current Young Adult Carers. Both cases were initially categorised as 'Red'

KN was a young person referred from her college earlier in the year. The referral outlined the need for support in terms of her confidence and opportunities to build social skills and friendship opportunities. At the time of referral, KN lacked such confidence, she couldn't even fully make eye contact; She was not attending her college course, described herself as lonely and without a friendship group. When KN established a trusting relationship with her worker, she disclosed a complex, chaotic family history, and mental health struggles including self-harm. She admitted she was feeling extreme loneliness, struggling with her own identity, her faith, and her place in her family unit.

On her first 1:1 session, KN spoke at length about her goals. They almost seemed unrealistic to her at that time, but with encouragement, she agreed to set them as outcomes she would like to achieve. With more encouragement KN agreed to attend YAC events and started to access YAC support. Through close collaboration with the college well-being officer, further support was offered that enabled KN to realise she was working towards the wrong type of qualification, and she changed courses.

As her confidence grew, she attended more YAC events and met her 'soul mate and best friend'. This was a catalyst for KN; She continued to access YAC events for friendship, support and guidance and she engaged with the YAC worker for further one to one support. At this point she started to become a little more resilient and her confidence was growing. Moving forward, KN attended all events offered to where she gained life experience and confidence, within a safe nurturing environment. KN began to appreciate herself, she was open about her self-harm, and sought support for both this and her suicide ideation. supported her with this. She decided to be an advocate for other YAC's and put herself forward for the YAC elections. She attended a First Aid course to aid her CV in motivation to find employment and it wasn't long before she was offered full time employment. KN and is now working as a kitchen hand, on a ship based in Southampton. She is thriving, facilitating sessions with local schoolchildren as she makes advances in terms of her self-development.

LH was another YAC referred by her college. During her assessment, she stated her ideal goal would be anything to do with 'Slam Poetry'. LH engaged with one or two events but struggled with the time commitment as she was working and had a demanding caring role. Contact with the YAC worker continued and through some joint work with RCT Arts, an opportunity came up for LH to perform at a local festival. The preparation for the event involved a lot of involvement with the YAC worker. LH needed support with her confidence and reassurance regarding her material. On the day of the festival, LH along with other talented RCT performers, had the opportunity to perform and was actually headlining a festival celebrating International Youth Day. She stole the show with her self-penned poetry about being a Young Adult Carer, performed it through the medium of Welsh and English, and her recital was flawless.

This was a flagship event and LH will be invited back annually to perform. In addition, LH was paid for performing and as a consequence of this, she has had opportunities for further paid performances, paid employment, and made many contacts within the industry. Hopefully this opportunity has been the catalyst for her to make this dream a reality.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

30th MARCH 2023

TROS GYNNAL PLANT (TGP) CYMRU UPDATE

1. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Board with an update of progress made by Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the work undertaken by TGP Cymru, the content of which is attached at Appendix 1.

3. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is important for Members to note the progress, themes and issues highlighted by the TGP Cymru, in order to work in partnership to ensure the best possible outcomes are reached for those in our care system.

4. **BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 As part of the Board's Terms of reference, TGP Cymru are invited to attend meetings to enable both the TGP Cymru and Children Services to discuss issues that affect service delivery in the community on a strategic level and to work in partnership to provide improved and better outcomes.

5. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 There is no consultation required for this report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

7.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

8.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

9. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

9.1 The work of the Corporate Parenting Board links directly to the Council's Corporate Plan priority – 'Rhondda Cynon Taf's Children will receive a great start in life...'

9.2 The work of TGP Cymru links to the Future Generations Well-Being Goal of a more equal Wales, by ensuring that children and young people are supported when decisions are being made about them. This ensures that young people have access to a range of information in order to fulfil their potential.

9.3 In addition to the duty to listen to young people and involve them in decisions, the Part 10 Code of Practice (Advocacy) of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 sets out the duties to consider the provision of independent professional advocacy in certain circumstances for:

- Children who are looked after (who should benefit from an active offer of professional independent advocacy) or have previously been looked after
- Children who are subject to an assessment of need or a care and support plan or child protection enquiries

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 TGP Cymru are invited to attend meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board, to provide a broader understanding and contribution into the services available to young people and vulnerable adults.

**Cwm Taf Morgannwg Independent Advocacy Service
RCT Care Experienced Young People and Care Leavers
Report**

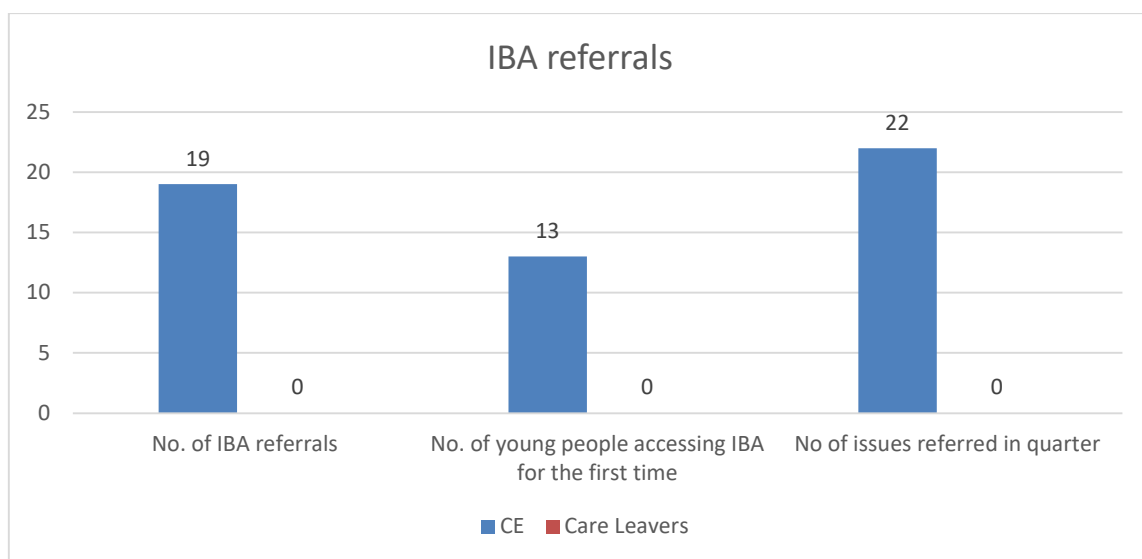
Quarter Three October 2022 – December 2022



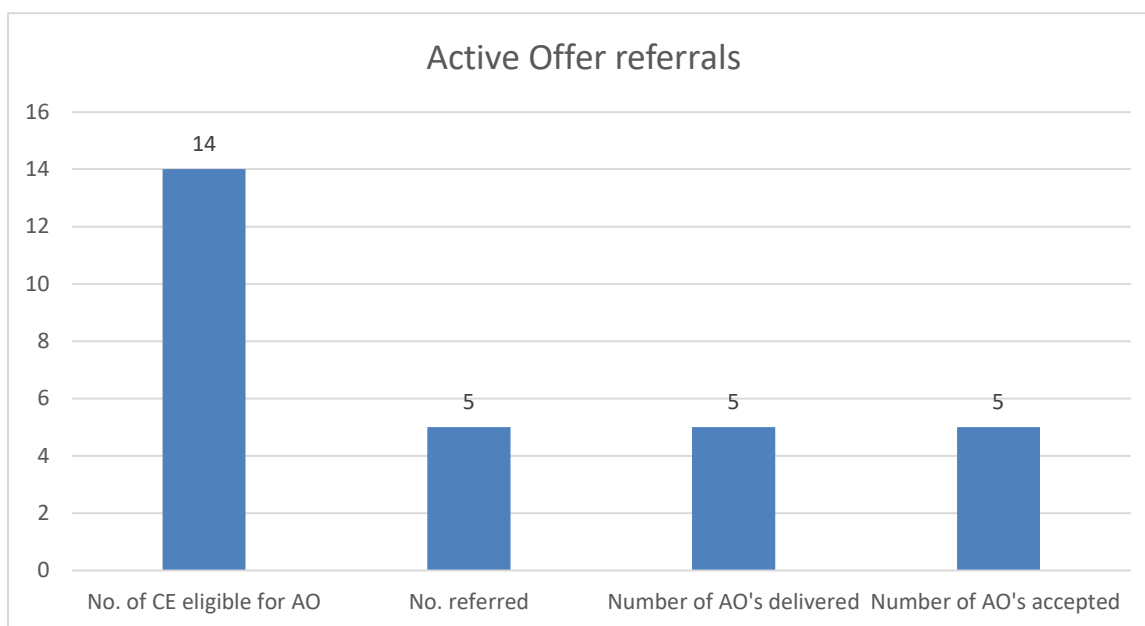
In quarter three, 35 young people accessed Issue Based Advocacy (IBA) and 20 young people were referred for the Active Offer (AO) across RCT.

This report provides information on the service delivered to care experienced (CE) young people and care leavers only.

In quarter three, 19 CE young people accessed IBA, presenting with 22 issues. Five care experienced young people were referred for the AO. No care leavers were referred for advocacy services.



In quarter three, 15 of the 19 CE young people accessing IBA were doing so for the first time.



According to information provided by RCT, 14 CE young people became eligible for the AO in quarter three, compared to 22 in quarter two. Five AOs were delivered by advocates and five young people accepted the AO and went on to receive IBA.

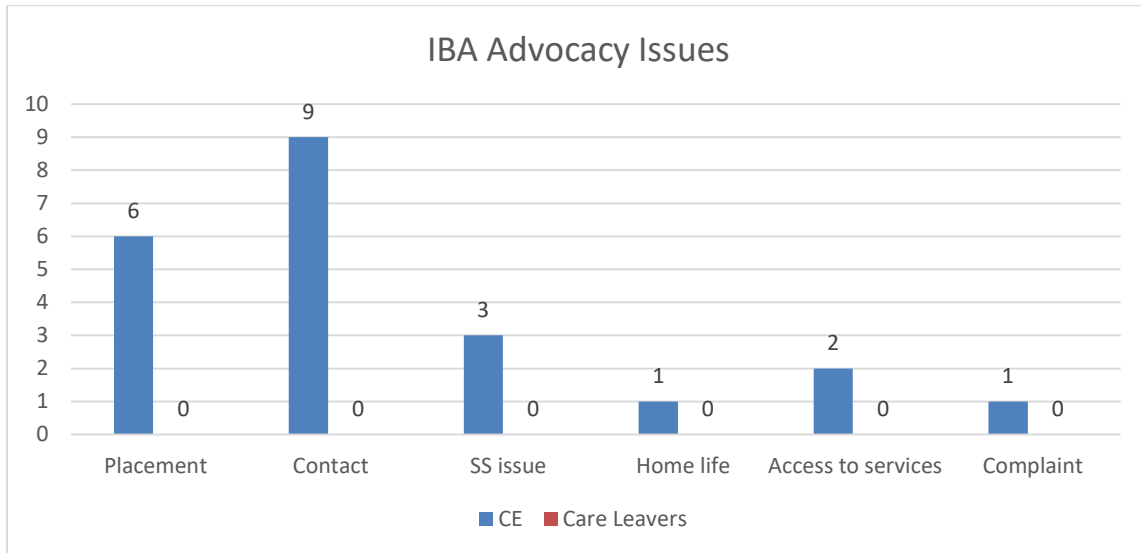
Of the five young people referred for AO via the CLA pathway in quarter three, three also became eligible in quarter three. The remaining two young people became eligible in quarter two.

Three of the 14 young people who became eligible for AO via the CLA pathway were referred for AO in quarter three, and all three accepted the AO and went on to receive IBA. This means 21% of those eligible in quarter three were referred for AO, compared to 23% in the previous quarter.

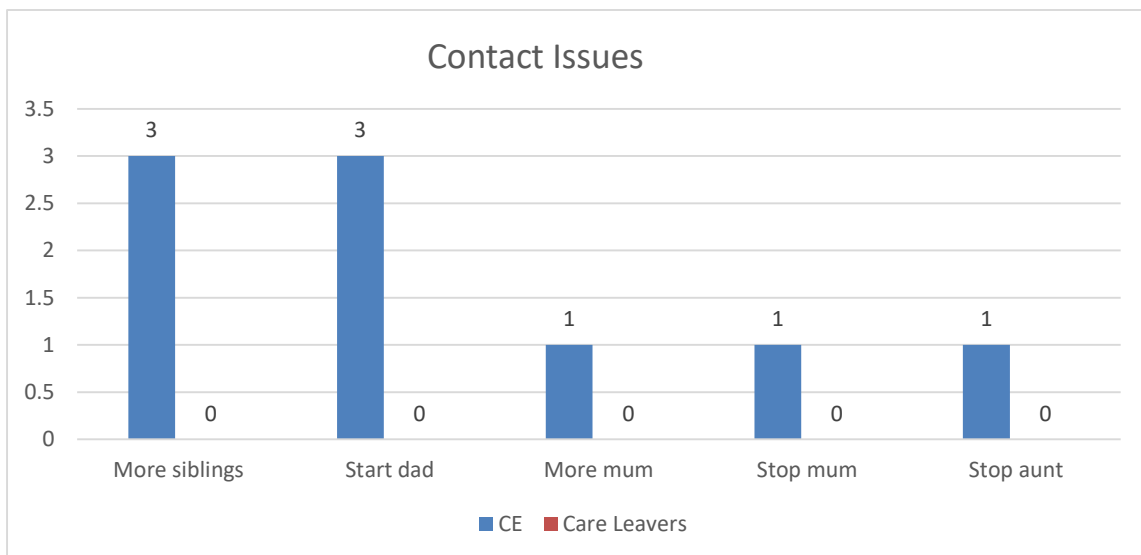
The picture is actually slightly more complicated however, as five of those who became eligible via the CLA pathway in quarter three, have since been referred for AO via the CP pathway in quarter four and three young people were already engaging in advocacy after receiving the AO via the CP pathway in previous quarters.

This means, that as of the 22nd of February 2023, 79% of CE young people who became eligible via the CLA pathway in quarter three, were either referred for AO in quarter three, referred for AO at a later date via the CP pathway, or were already engaged in advocacy services when they became eligible.

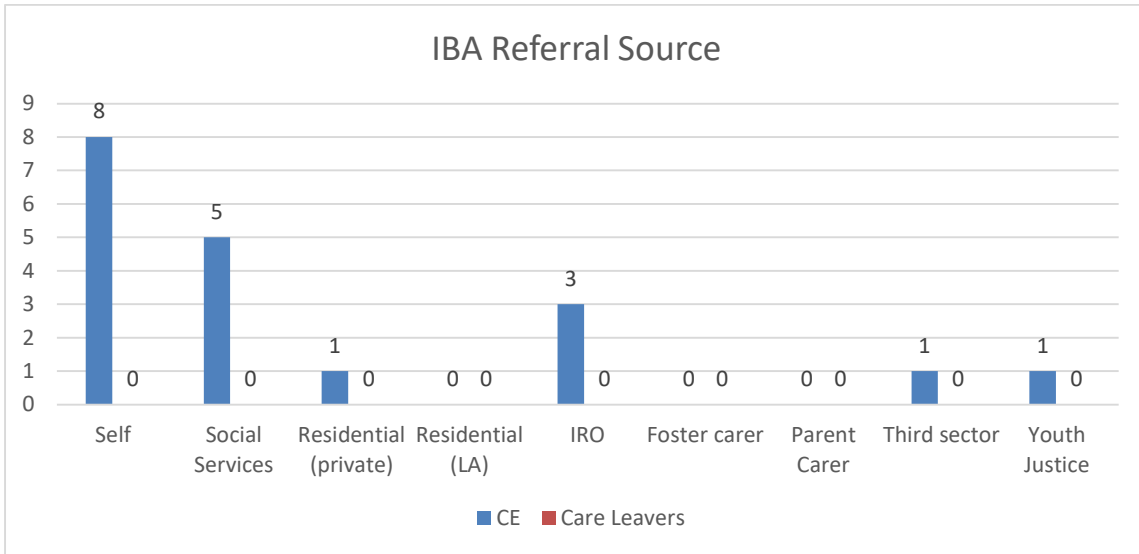
Two young people were not offered the AO meeting by their social worker because their parents did not want them to know children’s services were involved, and the remaining young person was offered the opportunity to meet with an advocate but declined as he felt he had enough people in his life he was able to speak to.



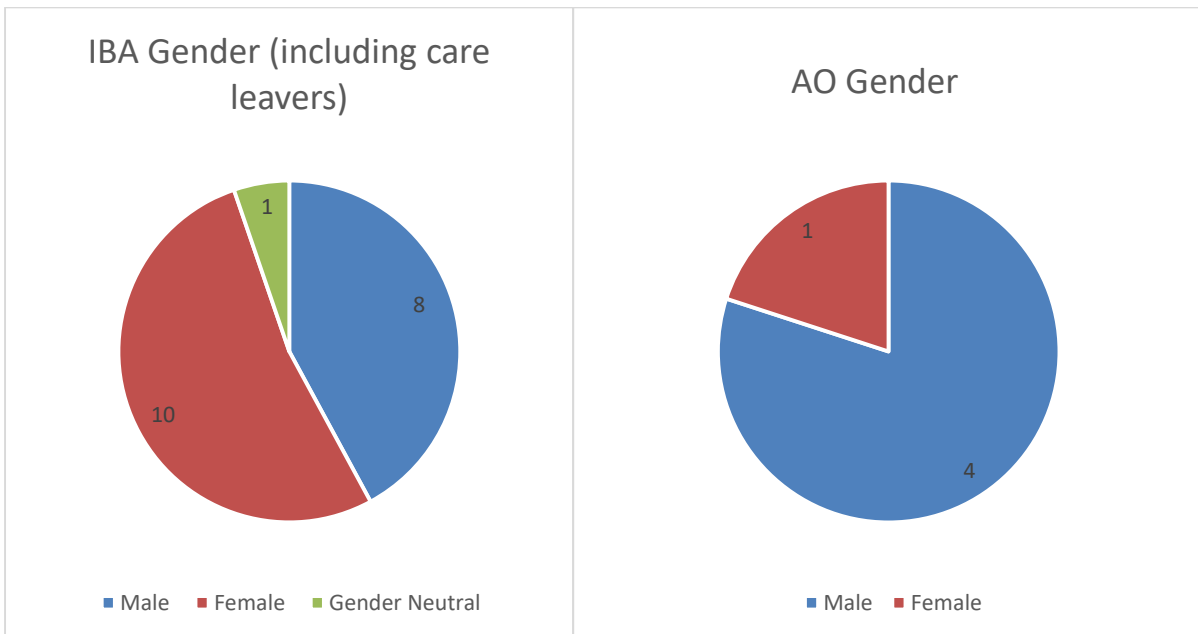
The most popular issues in need of advocacy support in quarter three, were contact followed by placement. Contact and placement were also the most popular issues in the previous quarter. Following recent changes in how we record attendance at meetings, we have also decided to amend our recording system in an attempt to capture more detail about who young people want to spend time with.



Of the nine CE young people accessing IBA support for a contact issue, seven were requesting that time spent with parents or siblings increased or started. Two young people shared they no longer wanted to spend time with their mum and aunt.

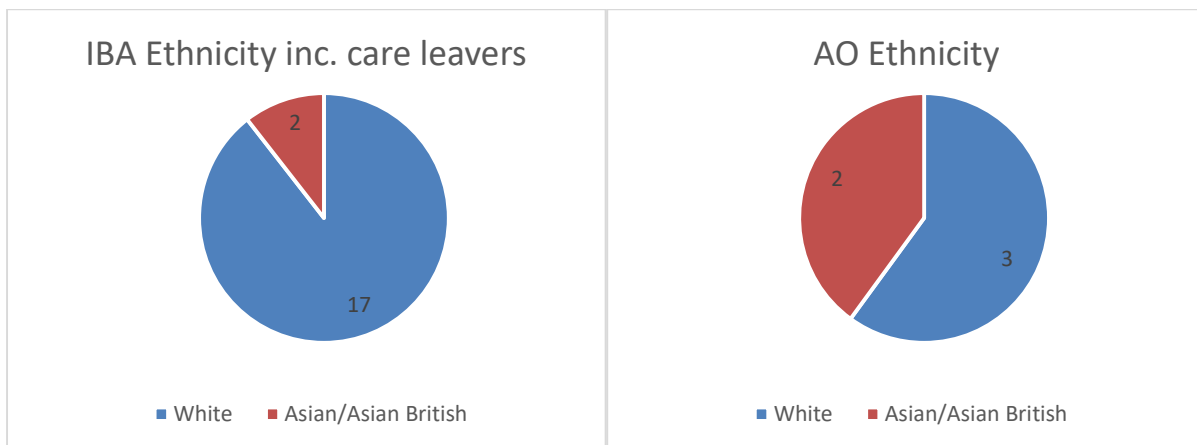


‘Self-referral’ and social services referrals are the most popular route into the IBA service for care experienced young people. Self-referral is usually either the result of the young person accepting the AO and going on to received IBA, or the young person contacting their advocate directly with a new issue.



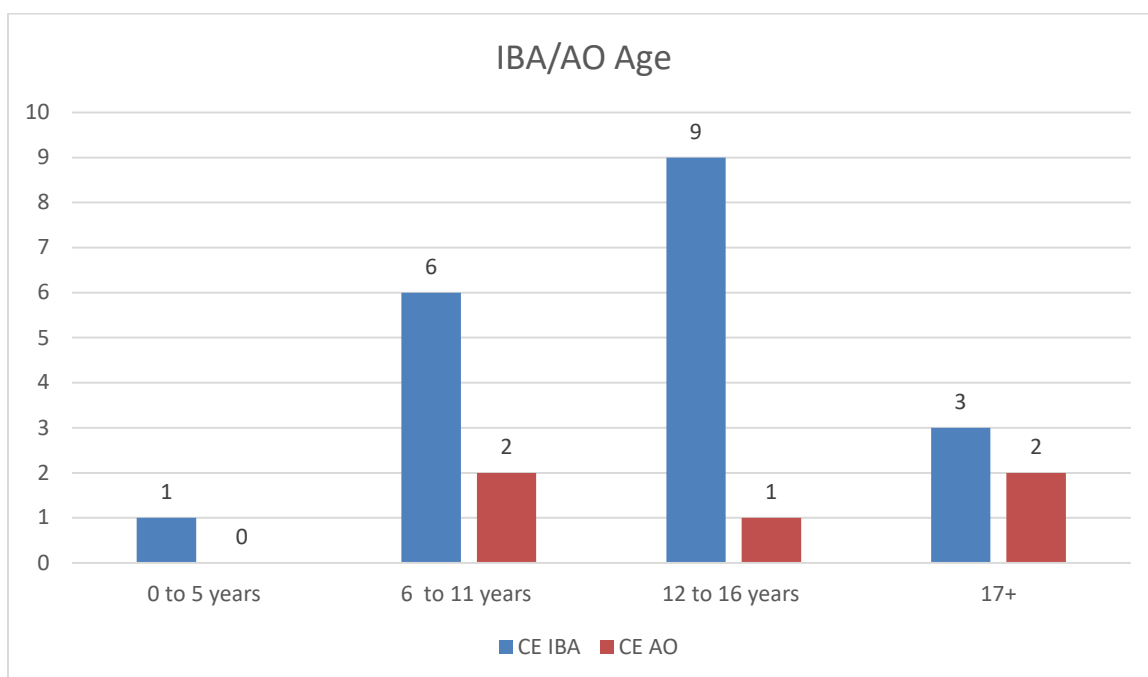
Of those CE young people accessing IBA In quarter three, 10 were females, compared to eight males and one gender neutral young person. This is a more even split when compared to the previous quarter.

CE young people referred for AO were split less evenly than in the previous quarter with four males and one female referred.



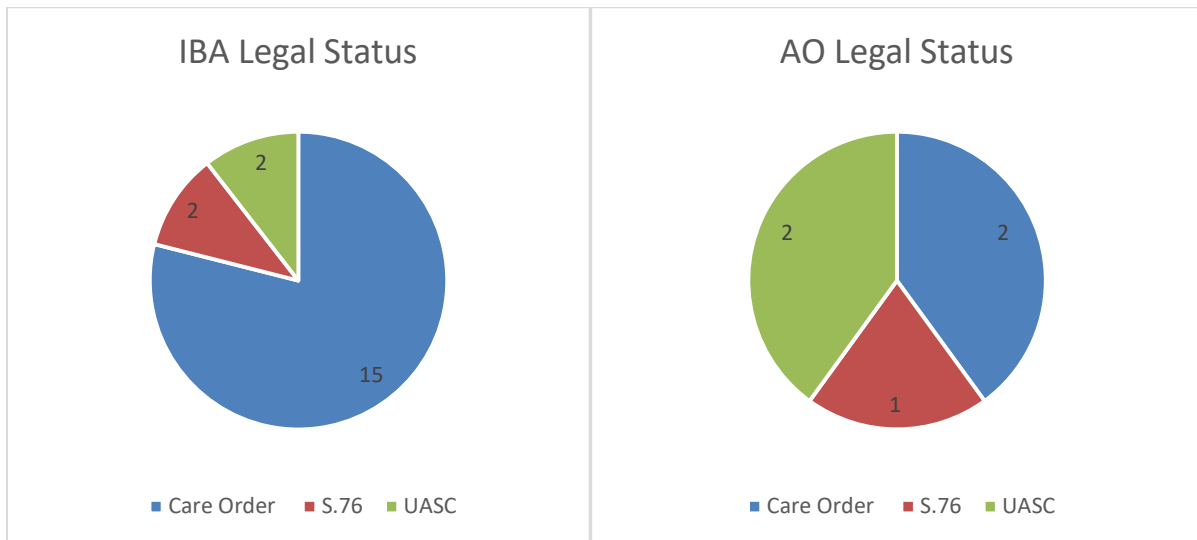
All but two of the CE young people IBA in quarter three were white.

Three of the five young people referred for AO described themselves as white.

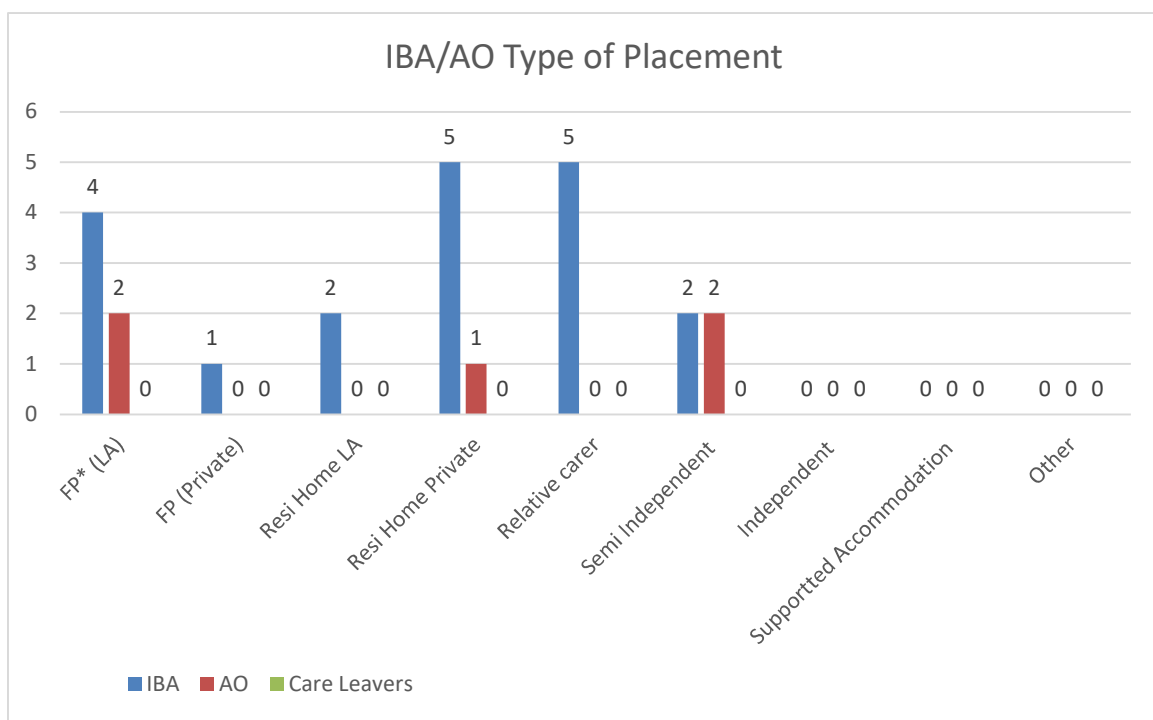


Most CE young people accessing the IBA service in quarter three were again aged between 12 and 16 years, followed by those aged between six and 11.

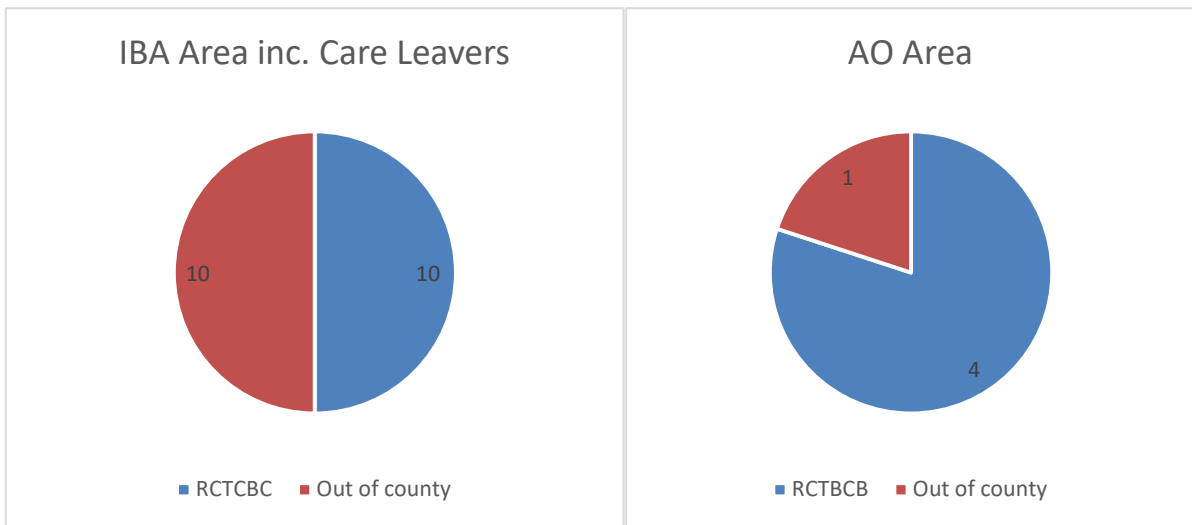
The five CE young people referred for AO were split evenly between the 6-11 and 17+ age categories with the addition of one young person aged between 12 and 16.



Most CE young people accessing IBA and AO in quarter three were again subject to full care orders. Two unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) also accessed IBA after accepting the AO.



Most CE young people accessing advocacy services in quarter three were living in residential care followed by those living with relative carers and in foster placements.



Advocates supported 10 CE young people living outside of RCT in quarter three, the same number as in quarter two. Other areas included Swansea, Newport, Carmarthenshire, Gwent and Cardiff.

One young person referred for AO lived in Cardiff, while the remaining four were all resident in RCT.

Other information

We have received referrals for two unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people who are being supported to access Kurdish Sorani interpretation to communicate with their advocate.

One young person with additional learning needs was referred for IBA in quarter three, along with one young person suffering with an anxiety disorder.

Visiting Advocacy

Visiting Advocacy continues in five Local Authority community homes across RCT. Face-to-face visits have continued monthly in Bryndar and Beddau. The remaining three homes, Carn Ingli, Nantygwyn and Ty Brynna have advised monthly visits are not appropriate and have requested the advocate visits every two months and stays connected via telephone contact instead. We are planning a review of visiting advocacy the coming months and will be contacting all community homes to assess future need and look at what has and hasn't been working well over recent quarters.

Service Information

The Advocacy team manager met with Julie Evans in October to discuss advocacy referral rates and AO take-up and plan the advocacy manager's attendance at a team meeting for RCT Children Services team managers. This took place in December and team managers from across RCT children's services were able to ask the advocacy manager questions relating to barriers to referral and clarify referral pathways. During this meeting, it was made clear that advocacy referrals can be made by phone, and sibling referrals can be made on one referral form, providing all relevant information for each sibling is present. Information was shared with the RCT team managers following this meeting and we are confident this will result in a better understanding of referral pathways and processes in the future.

Conclusion and looking forward.

Referrals for CE young people and care leavers have remained consistent when compared to the previous quarter, and we pleased that 15 CE young people accessed advocacy services for the first time during this period. We will continue to keep in contact with RCT and share information with a view to understanding the take up of advocacy services in the area.

Case Example

Please find below an example of advocacy work undertaken during the quarter from within RCT. The names have been changed to protect the young person's identity.

Situation: Jamie is thirteen years old and has lived with his foster carers Mike and Shelly for five years. He describes himself as very happy and has an excellent relationship with both of his carers. Part of Mike's work includes repairing and servicing motorbikes, and he owns a Harley Davidson bike. Jamie has enjoyed spending time with Mike while working on the bikes and learning about repairs, and through this, has developed a keen interest in motorbikes himself. Jamie would very much like to be able to go for a ride on the back of Mike's motorbike, ideally to Brecon to get an ice cream. Jamie told his advocate he is unhappy because he's been told the LA won't allow this as they feel it is risky.

Action: The advocate initially spoke to Jamie over the phone and asked him where and when he would like to meet. Jamie requested to meet in the 'comfy' room at his school. Jamie also asked if his foster carer could come along to the first meeting. The advocate then contacted the school and made the necessary arrangements. The advocate, Jamie and Shelly met at school, and discussed Jamie's issue. Jamie explained that it was his understanding the team manager had made the decision about riding on the bike, and he was keen to meet with her as he said he didn't understand the reason he wasn't allowed, and wanted the chance to explain in person, why he felt the decision was unfair, and made him feel different to other children who didn't live with foster families. Jamie and the advocate sent an email to the team

manager, explaining Jamie's request, and asked if she had any availability to meet with Jamie at school over the next few weeks.

Outcome: Unfortunately, the team manager declined the invitation to meet with Jamie, as she said the decision had already been made. The advocate made another appointment with Jamie, to update him, and ask how he would like to proceed. Jamie was very sad he wasn't able to talk to the team manager about the decision not to allow him to ride on the back of his carers' motorbike. He is currently deciding whether or not he would like to pursue a complaint about the decision and has asked the advocate to tell him more about the complaint's procedure.

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