



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

Bydd cyfarfod rhithwir o'r **Bwrdd Rhianta Corfforaethol** yn cael ei gynnal
ar

18 Gorffennaf 2023 am 11.00 am

Swyddog cyswllt: Tracy Watson - Uwch Swyddog Democrataidd a Craffu (07747 485567)

MATERION I'W TRAFOD

1. DATGAN BUDDIANT

Derbyn datganiadau o fuddiannau personol gan Aelodau, yn unol â'r
Cod Ymddygiad.

Nodwch:

1. Mae gofyn i Aelodau ddatgan rhif a phwnc yr agendwm mae eu
buddiant yn ymwneud ag ef a mynegi natur y buddiant personol
hwnnw; a
2. Lle bo Aelodau'n ymneilltuo o'r cyfarfod o ganlyniad i ddatgelu
buddiant sy'n rhagfarnu, rhaid iddyn nhw roi gwybod i'r Cadeirydd
pan fyddan nhw'n gadael.

**2. YMWELIADAU AELODAU'R BWRDD RHIANTA CORFFORAETHOL
Â CHARFANAU RHENG FLAEN YN YSTOD BLWYDDYN 2022-23 Y
CYNGOR**

Derbyn adroddiad y Cadeirydd sy'n rhoi'r wybodaeth ddiweddaraf am
ymweliadau Aelodau'r Bwrdd Rhianta Corfforaethol â charfanau rheng
flaen yn ystod Blwyddyn 2022-23 y Cyngor.

(Tudalennau 3 - 4)

**3. ADRODDIAD BLYNYDDOL Y BWRDD RHIANTA CORFFORAETHOL
2022-23**

Derbyn adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaeth, Gwasanaethau
Democrataidd a Chyfathrebu, sy'n cyflwyno Adroddiad Blynyddol y
Bwrdd Rhianta Corfforaethol ar gyfer Blwyddyn y Cyngor 2022-23 i'r
Aelodau.

(Tudalennau 5 - 34)

4. Y DIWEDDARAF O RAN CYFRANOGIAD PLANT A PHOBL IFAINC Â PHROFIAD O FOD MEWN GOFAL (2022-2023)

Derbyn diweddariad mewn perthynas â'r cynnydd sydd wedi'i gyflawni wrth weithredu Strategaeth Gyfranogi 2023-2026 a rhoi adborth mewn perthynas â'r gweithgareddau cyfranogi sydd wedi'u cynnal gan y Gwasanaethau i Blant yn 2022-2023.

(Tudalennau 35 - 106)

5. DIWYGIADAU RADICAL: OS NAD NAWR, PRYD?

Derbyn gwybodaeth am adroddiad Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg Senedd Cymru yn dilyn ymchwiliad mewn perthynas ag ymrwymiad Llywodraeth Cymru i ystyried cyfleoedd radical i ddiwygio'r gwasanaethau presennol ar gyfer plant sy'n derbyn gofal ac yn gadael gofal yn rhan o'r Rhaglen Lywodraethu.

(Tudalennau 107 - 120)

6. TRAFOD CADARNHAU'R PENDERFYNIAD ISOD:

“Bod y cyfarfod hwn yn cadw aelodau o'r wasg ac aelodau o'r cyhoedd allan o ystafell y cyfarfod, dan Adran 100A(4) o Ddeddf Llywodraeth Leol 1972 (fel y'i diwygiwyd), yn ystod trafod yr eitem nesaf, ar y sail y byddai'n debygol o olygu datgelu gwybodaeth eithriedig yn ôl diffiniad paragraff 13 o Ran 4 o Atodlen 12A i'r Ddeddf.”

7. Y DIWEDDARAF MEWN PERTHYNAS Â STRATEGAETH GOFAL PRESWYL 2022 I 2027: PLANT SY'N DERBYN GOFAL

Derbyn adroddiad eithriedig Cyfarwyddwr y Gwasanaethau i Blant.

(Tudalennau 121 - 130)

Cylchrediad:

Y Cynghorwyr Bwrdeistref Sirol:

Y Cynghorydd G Caple (Cadeirydd)
Y Cynghorydd R Lewis (Is-gadeirydd)
Y Cynghorydd C Leyshon
Y Cynghorydd J Bonetto
Y Cynghorydd P Evans
Y Cynghorydd S Rees
Y Cynghorydd S Trask
Y Cynghorydd K Webb

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

18TH JULY 2023

REPORT OF THE CHAIR ON VISITS MADE TO FRONT LINE TEAMS BY MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD DURING THE 2022-23 MUNICIPAL YEAR.

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board undertake scheduled visits to front line staff working in Children's Services to better inform Members of the work undertaken by staff to safeguard the health and wellbeing of children in Rhondda Cynon Taf, particularly those who are in our corporate care, their various needs, and as a means of understanding the needs of those staff.

The visits are led by myself as Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care in my role as Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board, accompanied by the Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board, Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language. An invitation to the visits was also extended to all Members of the Corporate Parenting Board.

During the 2022-23 Municipal Year, front line visits were made to the following teams:

- Disabled Children's Team
- Families Plus Team
- IAA (Information, Advice & Assistance) & EAT (Engagement & Assessment Team)
- Miskin, Therapeutic Families Team & Integrated Family Support Team
- West Intensive Team
- Youth Offending Service Prevention Team

I firstly wish to extend my thanks to the management and staff at each of the visits for their valuable time and for their openness to discussion. It was a pleasure to undertake these visits, as first time Chair and Vice-Chair and it was evident that our staff at Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council are committed to ensuring the best possible outcomes for the children within our care and care leavers, despite uncertain and unprecedented times.

Themes identified throughout the visits:

- Despite the legacy of the Covid-19 Pandemic, morale was high, and the dedication and commitment of staff was impressive;
- Following the Covid-19 Pandemic, it was recognised that many case workloads had increased and become more complex;
- There was a need for future proposals for office accommodation to be addressed and communicated;
- The recruitment and retention of Social Workers is a UK wide issue which has meant shortages in key areas of the service. It was recognised that retention and recruitment was a problem in most service areas, except for the YOS Prevention Team; and



- Whilst in most service areas, integration with other agencies worked well, there were some areas that required improved arrangements.

CLLR G CAPLE
CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE
CHAIR OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

18TH JULY 2023

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – ANNUAL REPORT

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION

Author: Hannah Williams – Council Business Unit

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the Corporate Parenting Board Draft Annual Report for the 2022-2023 Municipal Year.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Board:

- 2.1 Provide comment as appropriate on the draft Annual Report (which is attached as Appendix 1 to the report) before its presentation to Cabinet;
- 2.2 Subject to 2.1, forward the final version of the report to the CIW for information.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Under the Leaders Scheme of Delegation (the 3A) the Corporate Parenting Board, comprising of a cross party membership was formed to take the lead in ensuring that the Council fulfils its responsibilities as corporate parent's to children who are looked after and formulate Council policy in respect of children who are looked after and children in need.
- 3.2 As part of the Board's Terms of reference, the Board must report its work to the Cabinet and it has been agreed that this will take the form of an Annual Report.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The first Annual Report for the Corporate Parenting Board was produced for the 2015/16 Municipal Year.
- 4.2 The contents of the report acted as a useful basis for a number of upcoming topics which the Members felt needed particular attention in the 2016/17 Municipal Year.
- 4.3 This is the eighth Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board, which provides a summary of the role and work of the Board undertaken in the 2022/23 Municipal Year. The report is attached as Appendix 1.

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 The report has been prepared in accordance with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's constitution.

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...'

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The Corporate Parenting Board Annual report outlines the work of the Board in the 2022/23 Municipal Year and features the priority areas the Board will consider in the future ensuring that the Council provides continuous improvement to the services that it delivers for its children and young people within the Looked After System.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF
CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD
ANNUAL REPORT
2022/2023



RHONDDA CYNON TAF



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FOREWORD



**Councillor Gareth Caple
Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care
Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board**

It is with great pleasure, that I present to you the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report which provides a summary of the role and work undertaken by the Board in the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

As the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care and the newly appointed Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board, I, firstly, wish to take the opportunity to thank my predecessor, Christina, who remains a valued member of the Board. I hope the Annual Report highlights that during the past year, the Corporate Parenting Board and myself as Chair, have continued to build upon the positive work already established over the years.

During the 2022/23 Municipal Year, Members and Officers have come together as critical friends on several occasions to consider a wide range of reports. We endeavour to create a safe environment which allows us to comfortably challenge information with the benefit of our care experienced children and young people within our care in mind.

Unfortunately, during the year, two meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board were postponed due to unforeseen circumstances, one being the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Despite having fewer meetings, the Board continued to receive its key updates and ensured that all business needs were met. It was particularly pleasing to note that so many services have recovered so well following the pandemic, but also that so many had developed and embraced new ways of working to the benefit of staff and the young people.

As always, it has been pleasing to receive first hand experiences from care experienced young people during the year, which has played an integral part in keeping us focussed on our priorities.

Moving forward, it is vital that we continue to improve as corporate parents and to prioritise the safe reduction in children looked after numbers, in order to deliver the best possible outcomes.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to all Members and Officers of the Corporate Parenting Board for their continuous work and I look forward to working with you during the next Municipal Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Kapte', with a horizontal line underneath.

WHAT IS THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD?

The concept of Corporate Parenting was introduced in 1998 by the then Secretary of State for Health, Frank Dobson, who outlined the duties of members towards Children who are Looked After: *“For children who are looked after, your council has a legal and moral duty to try to provide the kind of loyal support that any good parents would give to their children...you should do your utmost to make sure that those children in public care get a good start in life...”*

LEGISLATION

- Chapter 6 of the [WLGA’s Corporate Parenting Workbook](#) states:

You can make sure there is a dedicated group of Councillors who focus specially on these corporate parenting responsibilities. It might be called a Panel, or a Scrutiny subcommittee. Whatever it is called, it should:

- meet regularly and often enough to carry out the three central functions we identify here effectively
- bring all those who contribute to Corporate Parenting together and draw on their experience and wisdom
- talk with and listen to groups of our children, who are encouraged and helped to speak out - theirs are the most important voices
- interrogate all relevant performance and management information
- where possible, compare the Council’s performance with other similar authorities, and look at trends over time
- identify where things are not good enough, and ask for remedial action from officers, partner agencies, or the Council itself
- track that the action is taken and is effective, and escalate if not
- focus special attention on the most vulnerable children and young people, and seek to ensure their safety and well-being

- The goals set out in the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#): -

1. A more Equal Wales - A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic circumstances);
 2. A Healthier Wales - A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood; and
 3. A Wales of Cohesive Communities - Attractive, safe, viable and well-connected.
- **The Council's [Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' 2020-2024](#), which is guided by the Vision of making Rhondda Cynon Taf "the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy and prosperous.**
1. PRIORITY: Ensuring **PEOPLE:** are independent, healthy, and successful - *Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do.*

Useful links

[Children's Commissioner for Wales Annual Report](#)

[Welsh Government's Response to the Annual Report of the Commissioner](#)

MEET THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD



*Councillor G Caple
(Chair)*



*Councillor R Lewis
(Vice-Chair)*



Councillor C Leyshon



Councillor S Rees



Councillor J Bonetto



Councillor S Evans



Councillor S Trask



Councillor P Evans

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- To take the lead in ensuring that the Council fulfils its responsibilities as corporate parent to children who are looked after and formulate Council policy in respect of children who are looked after and children in need.
- To ensure that all Groups and divisions within the Council work together in order to promote best outcomes for children who are looked after and children in need.
- To promote effective relationships with key partner agencies in the best interests of children who are looked after and children in need.
- To monitor the implementation of the Action Plan arising from the Best Value Review of Services to children looked after, in addition to monitoring outcomes for children looked after and children in need.
- To consider the outcomes and promote positive learning practices following consideration of Child Practice Reviews.
- In accordance with HMIP to routinely review the offending rates of CLA by gender to ensure that the Corporate Parenting Board understand patterns of offending by girls and are able to take actions to address where necessary.
- To consider the impact of relevant other systems/agencies (e.g., health, courts, schools) and see how these could be improved.
- To seek the views of children looked after - the advocacy service will be asked to facilitate.
- To invite representatives from other agencies to attend as appropriate.
- To report directly to Cabinet through an Annual report of the Board.

Vision of the Corporate Parenting Board

The role of the corporate parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children. The local authority has a legal and moral duty to provide support to the children it is responsible for looking after.

All Elected Members must be confident that the children who are looked after within RCT:

- Are safe and healthy;
- Have good homes in a secure and caring environment;
- Are placed within the local authority area, close to their homes and communities, as far as is possible;
- Have good experiences of education and can fulfill their potential;
- Are not being drawn into antisocial behavior;
- Are developing socially and emotionally;
- Are provided with help to cope with the problems they have in growing up;
- Are prepared for their transition to adulthood;
- Have ambitions for themselves and are supported to access leisure and hobbies;
- Are helped to achieve to the maximum of their ability;
- Have high aspirations and can show pride in their achievements; and
- Are provided with support when they need it.

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

Children Looked After remains a key priority and the Council continues to strive for a safe reduction in Children Looked After numbers and to deliver the best possible outcomes for the children and young people.

As at the 31st March 2023, there were a total of 624 children and young people within the Local Authority's care. The demographic has been broken down and compared to that of the previous year in the tables below.

Children Looked After by Age Group

Age Band	Total as at 31/03/2022	Total as at 31/03/2023
0-3	99	70
4-7	111	115
8-11	166	156
12-14	130	132
15	49	52
16	46	55
17	54	44
Total	655	624

Figures show that the highest age band remains at 8 - 11 years.

Children Looked After by Gender

Gender	Total as at 31/ 03/ 2022	Total as at 31/03/23
Female	284	264
Male	371	357
Other	0	3
Total	<u>655</u>	<u>624</u>

Children Looked After by Placement Type

CLA Placement Type	Total as at 31/03/2022	Total as at 31/03/2023
Independent Sector Foster Placement	119	96
Third Sector Independent Foster Agency	0	6
RCT Foster Carers	153	147
RCT Relative Foster Carers	229	212
Other LA Foster Care	0	1
Parent & Child Foster Placement	0	2
Placed for Adoption	17	22
Placed with Parents	66	63
Education Placement	2	1
Other Lodgings	6	8
Independent Sector Residential Sector	52	54
RCT Residential Care	10	9
Secure	1	1
Other Placements	0	2
Total	<u>655</u>	<u>624</u>

It is recognised that each young person's needs are unique and that the most suitable placement type is unique to the individual bearing in mind their background, wishes and circumstances.

The data shows that most children and young people within Rhondda Cynon Taf are placed in foster placements, and in particular, with Relative Foster Carers.

Where safe and possible to do so, children and young people are placed with their parents.

It is noted that a key priority of the Regional Adoption Collaboration is to increase its supply of adopters.

UPDATES TO THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

REGULATION 73 REPORTS

Regular updates are presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in respect of the current position of the residential Children's Homes and respite service. The reports are exempt from the public to ensure that the Board receive a detailed overview of each home. The reports are inclusive of up-to-date case studies, which inform us of the everyday occurrences, challenges faced by our hardworking staff, any areas of concern and, of course, the wellbeing of the children who occupy the homes.

Each of the reports received during the Municipal Year, provided the Corporate Parenting Board with honest and reliable feedback from the young people who occupy the homes.

SOCIAL SERVICES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

The Corporate Parenting Board receives quarterly updates in respect of the operation and effectiveness of the statutory Social Services complaints and compliments procedure. At each meeting, Members monitor the number of complaints received, the nature of the complaints and any lessons learnt, along with noting those enquiries received from Elected Members, A.M's and M.P's.

The importance of feedback from those who use the services is invaluable to the Corporate Parenting Board. During the year, Members were provided with detailed and honest feedback in response to questions around the updates. It was pleasing to note that the service had continued to be used by Elected Members and A.M and M.P colleagues, which builds upon the already strong relationship with officers.

ADVOCACY

The Corporate Parenting Board receive quarterly updates from the Local Authority's advocacy services, Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru. The Board are provided with a detailed breakdown of issues by age, gender, referral source and type, along with information on the take up of the active offer. This information enables both 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.

[Further information on the services provided by Tros Gynnal Plant \(TGP\) Cymru can be found here.](#)

INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER UPDATES

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (referred to as the SSWB Act) and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015 and 16 (referred to as the CPPCR Regulations) provide legislation and guidance pertaining to the role and functions of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The Adoption and Children Act 2002 requires the Local Authority to appoint Independent Reviewing Officers to conduct reviews for Children who are Looked After and monitor the Local Authority's performance in relation to implementing the care plans for individual children. As such, reports are presented to the Board to monitor the activities of the IRO service.

MEMBER FRONTLINE VISITS

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board undertake scheduled visits to front line staff working in Children's Services. The visits are led by the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care and the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language in their roles as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board, respectively. An invitation to each visit is also extended to all Elected Members appointed to the Corporate Parenting Board.

The visits are intended to be informal and to better inform Members of the work undertaken by staff to safeguard the health and wellbeing of children in Rhondda Cynon Taf, particularly those who are in our corporate care and their various needs. The visits are an opportunity for Members to gain a better understanding of the needs and wellbeing of the staff, particularly at a time when the way of working may have changed following the pandemic. During the year, several visits were undertaken by Members and a report of the Chair detailing the key themes will be presented to the Board.

FOSTER WALES COLLABORATION UPDATE

The National Fostering Framework was established as part of a work programme, led by the Ministerial Advisory Group. The group aims to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people, and the people and families who care for them. The programme identified the need for a national framework for Local Authority fostering services. A collaboration of fostering professionals from across Wales who share a common purpose to meet the evolving needs of foster children and the people who foster them. The NFF became Foster Wales in July 2022 and the fostering service in tern became Foster Wales RCT.

Members were provided with an update in relation to the recruitment and retention of foster carers, with a particular focus on the regional front door for fostering recruitment and the changes to operational delivery within fostering recruitment.

[Further information on Foster Wales Rhondda Cynon Taf can be found here.](#)

CWM TAF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (YOS) is a statutory partnership legislated by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and provides services across two local authority areas, namely Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. The local authority YOS areas merged to form Cwm Taf YOS in August 2014.

The aim of the service is to prevent offending and re-offending of children and young adults who are either referred into the service or become subject to statutory interventions by the Law Courts. The statutory partners to the service are: South Wales Police; Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board; HM Prison and Probation Service; and the local authority areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. These partners provide financial and staffing contributions to the Youth Offending Service and external grant funding is provided by the Youth Justice Board (YJB), Welsh Government (WG) and the Police and Crime Commissioner's office (PCC).

During the period, the Corporate Parenting Board received an update on the work of the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (YOS) for 2022/23. The update included information on service delivery following the restructure of the service in August 2021, current priorities, challenges, risks and future service priorities.

Members discussed the importance of age-appropriate work within primary schools to teach children the consequences of anti-social behaviour to prevent the escalation of issues; and agreed that it would be beneficial to receive a future update on the progress.

ALL WALES PROTOCOL FOR REDUCING THE CRIMINALISATION OF CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 2022.

The Corporate Parenting Board were provided with the [All Wales Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Care Experienced Children and Young People 2022](#) for consideration.

The 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.

Members agreed to receive future updates in respect of local/regional data and how progress and improvements made contributes to better outcomes for care experienced children.

PUPIL DEPRIVATION GRANT FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER– EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL CLUSTER MODEL 2020-2022

The Corporate Parenting Board receive annual updates in relation to the ongoing cluster – based funding mechanism for distributing PDG LAC grant funding and the processes in place to evaluate its impact on the provision made for Children Looked After in schools across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Upon receiving the information, Members requested future reports in relation to the PDG and also the Virtual School Head appointment and its progress.

VIRTUAL SCHOOL MODEL

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 whose key role is to promote the educational achievement of 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](#). Based on the recommendations of the report, Welsh Government agreed to progress an integrated approach in Wales to improve the educational outcomes for CLA. As such, grant funding was provided up to 31st March 2023 to interested local authorities to develop a Virtual School. 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 Corporate Parenting Board received an update on 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; and requested future updates on progress.

UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS AND EDUCATION TRIBUNAL (ALNET) ACT 2018 AND ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS (ALN) CODE 2021 IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) Wales Act (2018) came into force in September 2021 in year one of a three-year phased implementation plan. The ALN Implementation timetable extends from September 2021 to August 2024 by which time the ALNET Act will be fully enacted having replaced the current outgoing Special Educational Needs (SEN) system. The Act is supported by the implementation of a new statutory ALN Code.

Under the new legislation all children and young people with ALN regardless of the severity or complexity of their learning difficulty or disability will be entitled to a statutory support plan called an 'Individual Development Plan' (IDP). Children and young people with an ALN will receive support called additional learning provision (ALP) which will be set out in their IDP.

The Corporate Parenting Board were provided with information on the implications of the ALNET Wales Act (2018) and ALN Code 2021 for Children Looked After with an ALN and an update on the implementation of the above in Year 2 of the National ALN Implementation timetable in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

The Board recognise the plethora of new statutory responsibilities for the Local Authority and that it is an area of pressure within the Education service, which requires additional funding and resource.

EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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.

The Corporate Parenting Board recognise the educational disadvantages often experienced by young people who are looked after, which can have an adverse effect on opportunities moving into higher education and into adulthood. As such, the Corporate Parenting Board request an annual 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.

During the period, the Board received a breakdown of outcomes from April 2022 – March 2023 in respect of the Step in the Right Direction and Care2Work programmes and spoke highly of the array of opportunities available for the young people.

PARTICIPATION UPDATE FOR CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE VOICES FROM CARE CYMRU RCT GROUP

Following the development of a Participation Strategy for 2023 and the implementation Plan to take forward actions and key milestones as part of a Children and Young People Steering group, the Corporate Parenting Board receive regular progress updates.

The Corporate Parenting Board note that during the year, progress had been made to engage with care experienced children and young people, through key staff from Children's Services, along with Voices from Care Cymru.

The Board look forward to the next steps of such an integral piece of work and are particularly interested on receiving feedback from the consultation with care experienced children and young people about the 'My Voice, My Review' and the 2 sides website.

As part of the participation updates, the Corporate Parenting Board have been fortunate enough to receive updates from a young person at the Voices From Care Cymru RCT Forum. The young person summarised the recent activities undertaken, highlighted the positive experiences they have had as part of the group and the impact on their life.

The RCT Forum provides looked after young people and care leavers in RCT with opportunities to have their voice heard and to enable their life experiences to contribute at a strategic, policy and legislative level both locally and nationally.

Receiving first-hand feedback on the effectiveness of the service is fundamental in helping the Corporate Parenting Board ensure that the provision and support provided by the Council are of benefit to those that require them.

The Corporate Parenting Board welcome young people to attend future meetings and wish to reiterate that their contribution is invaluable.

MISKIN SERVICES 2021-22

Miskin Services work co-productively with families and aim to deliver family focused evidence-based interventions, responsive to family need, supporting parents/carers/children (0-17 years of age) to improve parenting capacity and enable them to care for their children with the minimum statutory interventions.



Miskin Services are organised into four main areas (1) Miskin Teams (2) Integrated Family Support Team (IFST) (3) Therapeutic Families Team (TFT) (4) Glyncornel Centre. The Corporate Parenting Board receive annual updates in respect of the Miskin service, including a breakdown of information in relation to each of the above-mentioned categories.

During the period:

- 96% of children remained at home living with either parents or extended family members at the end of the Miskin Intervention where the aim was to prevent children from coming into care;
- 79% of children 11-17 years of age remained living in the same foster care or residential children's home placement at the end of the Miskin Intervention where the aim was to prevent the placement from breaking down;
- 90% of children supported by IFST, where children were deemed to be at risk as a consequence of parental behaviours including drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health, and domestic violence, either remained at home or returned home to family; and
- 62.12% of children supported by TFT during 2021-22 were closed to Children Services on 01/11/2022

VALE, VALLEYS & CARDIFF REGIONAL ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT

Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) provides a regional adoption service to the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Cardiff Council and Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council. VVC is one of the five regional Collaboratives which form part of the National Adoption Service in Wales (NAS). All adoption services are required to provide an annual review of their service as set out in Regulation 22 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007.

The Board considered VVC's seventh annual report, which covered the period 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2022. The report was extended to cover the first six months of the 2022 reporting year to incorporate the requirement to review the service under Regulation 39 of the Local Authority Adoption Services (Wales) Regulations 2019. It incorporated the reporting requirements set out in the governance arrangements for the region in one report.

The Corporate Parenting Board were pleased to note that VVC had approved a significant pool of adopters with the result that more children can be placed within the region but noted that there was a need to continue to recruit more adopters for more complex children. Adoption Support remained a large set of challenges for VVC and the need to reduce the waiting list for services and to ensure that the service is targeted to those most in need was a priority.

FOSTERING SERVICE QUALITY OF CARE ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

The Fostering Service Quality of Care Annual Report is 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.

The Rhondda Cynon Taf fostering service is currently Hybrid/agile working and is responsible for the recruitment, retention, preparation, assessment, supervision and support of mainstream and Kinship (family and friend) foster carers.

The Corporate Parenting Board monitored the progress in relation to the service and were provided with detailed plans and developments for the service going forward.

YOUNG CARERS ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

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.

The report provided the Corporate Parenting Board with a summary of the support provided to Young Carers, (aged 0-17) and Young Adult Carers (aged 18-25). It highlighted the key developments achieved during a year of recovery from the impact of Covid.

LOCAL AUTHORITY'S OFFER OF ACCOMMODATION AND HOUSING SUPPORT RELATED SERVICES TO CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that children in care and former children in care receive appropriate support in their transition into adulthood. Section 1.34 of the Welsh Government's Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness Guidance (March 2016) confirms Local Authorities have a range of duties to care leavers who represent a particularly vulnerable group and require Children's Services and Housing to work together to meet the needs of young people in care as they move to independent living.

During the Municipal year, the Corporate Parenting Board were provided with an update in respect of the plethora of housing projects and support assistance available to young people leaving care for the period 1st April 2022 to the 31st of October 2022.

The Corporate Parenting Board was assured that a considerable amount of work had been undertaken to address the immediate housing and support needs of young people leaving care but noted that further work was needed to explore long-term support and accommodation options.

INDEPENDENT SECTOR PLACEMENTS

The Corporate Parenting Board recognise the importance of effective placements and continual support for children and young people in RCT. Receiving an overview and update on RCT Children's services commissioning and monitoring of external placements for Children Looked After assured Members that children looked after, placed with external providers, receive quality placements that are adequately monitored on cost and quality through monitoring of placement commissioning.

CHARTER FOR PARENTS IN CARE AND LEAVING CARE

Under the Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-Being Act (Wales) 2014, the Council has a duty to continue to provide supportive services to looked after young people and care leavers, this includes supporting young people when they become a parent. Recent research has highlighted the experiences of care experienced young people and care leavers when they become parents and provided opportunities to improve services and approaches. This has given rise to the development of a charter by young people that outlines young people's expectations, in light of the learning from research, and the Council's duties.

The Corporate Parenting Board agreed that the Council sign up to the Charter and keep this area of business under review with a view to continuous improvement.

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER PREVENTION STRATEGY

Under the Social Services and Well-Being Act (Wales) 2014, the Council has a duty to provide preventative family support services that promote family resilience and prevent family breakdown. In January 2022, [Cabinet](#) endorsed the updated Looked After Prevention Strategy, and the funding proposal that accompanies it.

By implementing the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy, the Council is providing families with the strongest possible service model for reducing the risk of family breakdown and preventing avoidable entries to the looked after system.

The Corporate Parenting Board was provided with information on the four significant areas of improvement:

- Model of Practice
- Better Pre-Birth Services
- Developing Reunification
- Improve support for kinship carers and special guardians

It was noted that the aim was to increase the evidence-based family support and to work towards keeping families safely together, when appropriate.

The Corporate Parenting Board wish to receive further updates in terms of the implementation of the areas for improvement.

CHILD PRACTICE REVIEW

A Child Practice Review is conducted in line with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Children Board's duties under Working Together to Safeguard People Volume 3) which is issued under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

The process is focussed on positive outcomes for children and young people through learning lessons to improve multi agency safeguarding practice. It includes different types of reviews; concise and extended as well as multi agency practitioner forums.

The report was exempt from the public to ensure that the Board receive a detailed overview of the recommendations of 2 Concise Child Practice Reviews (CPR's) conducted by Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Children Board (CTMSB) and the measures Children Services had taken to embed and evaluate review learning in response.

THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – MOVING FORWARD

In the 2023/24 Municipal Year, key areas of focus of the Corporate Parenting Board will include:

REGULAR PERFORMANCE DATA

It is essential that the Corporate Parenting Board regularly receive the qualitative data and statutory updates. The monitoring of regular performance data allows the Corporate Parenting Board to effectively analyse key areas and determine ways to further improve and enhance the services the Council provides. The updates will include:

- Regulation 73 Reports
- Social Services Complaints & Compliments
- Advocacy Updates
- CIW Inspections reports of the Children's Homes
- Child Practice Reviews
- Performance (IRO)
- Accommodation
- Education
- Adoption
- Foster Care
- Education

The Corporate Parenting Board will receive annual updates from the following services to continue to monitor the progress, achievements, and future aspirations:

- Miskin Services
- Youth Offending Service
- Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Regional Adoption Service
- Fostering Services Quality of Care
- Registered Childcare Provision
- Young Carers
- RCT Forum

ELECTED MEMBER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

It is recognised that the role of the Corporate Parent is a collective duty of the Council as a whole and as such, refresher training is welcomed to Board Members and to all Elected Members of the Council to further enhance knowledge and to strengthen the Council's commitment to the children and young people within our care. This will be particularly beneficial for newly Elected Members.

UK GOVERNMENT AND WELSH GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The Corporate Parenting Board wish to be kept up to date with any key policy changes or ambitions of the Government in terms of Children Looked After.

PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

The Corporate Parenting Board acknowledge the need for better engagement with young people who are at the heart of its work. The Board wish to receive future updates in respect of the work to establish the Participation Strategy for our care experienced young people and the events and questionnaires which form part of it. As always, the Corporate Parenting Board welcome the attendance of looked after young people and care leavers at meetings and recognise that their voice must be at the centre of all discussions. The Board receive reports containing data and statistics, but the opportunity to hearing the first-hand experiences of the young person is invaluable.

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER AND YOUNG CARERS

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Corporate Parenting Board appreciate that issues with mental health and wellbeing are likely to have risen.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the Board were unable to receive the above-mentioned update during the 2022-2023 Municipal Year and therefore, wish to receive an update on the available support to young people during the next Municipal Year.

UPDATE IN RELATION TO THE CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER: RESIDENTIAL CARE STRATEGY 2022-2027

The increasing demand, juxtaposed with increasing scarcity of registered children's homes has led to a risk of the Council being unable to avoid reliance upon settings that are recorded as Operating Without Registration (OWR) by the Care Inspectorate for Wales (CIW). This happens where a placement is required but there is not one available due to scarcity of supply. Every effort is made to avoid reliance on OWR.

The Corporate Parenting Board wish to receive regular updates in relation to the Children Looked After Residential Care Strategy to monitor the Council's position.

SAFEGUARDING INFORMATION

During the 2022-2023 Municipal Year, the Corporate Parenting Board received an update in respect of two Child Practice Reviews. During the update, Members raised several questions in relation to safeguarding and resolved to receive further information multiagency training and the wider learning framework from a partner agency perspective.

VIRTUAL SCHOOL MODEL

In line with Welsh Government policy, an integral part of the Corporate Parenting Board's ambition is to improve the to improve the educational outcomes for Children Looked After.

The Corporate Parenting Board recognise the success of the Virtual School Model in England and wish to receive future updates on the implementation Plan and Pilot in RCT.

THE MAGU PROJECT

The Magu Project delivers an integrated care pathway for pregnant women and their families across early intervention and edge of care services, that focuses on building skills and resilience and reducing risk. A single agreed early intervention approach will deliver the opportunity to prevent children entering care at birth as well as provide consistency and continuity for families whose care requires step to statutory intervention.

The Magu Project has been developed in line with the Welsh Government Strategy of Keeping Families Together and reducing the number of Looked After Children in Wales. The term "Magu" translates from Welsh as "to bring up, rear, nurture, raise, gain" and it promotes the ongoing long-term nature of the support required to deliver better outcomes for children and their families.

Following the update in respect of the Charter for Parents in Care and Leaving Care, the Corporate Parenting Board were pleased to note that progress had been made by the Magu Team and wished to receive an update on its progress during the 2023-2024 Municipal Year.

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

2023-2024

A 2023-24 work programme for the Corporate Parenting Board is set out below. The work programme is a fluid document, which can be amended by Members at any given point to accommodate a change in priorities. The programme is based on factors highlighted within the Board's Annual Report and does not include the statutory updates presented to the Board.

REPORT
JUNE 2023
Corporate Parenting Board Work Programme 2023-2024
Proposal for an 'Inform' Session
CLA Prevention Strategy Update
CIW Inspection Report
JULY 2023
Frontline Visits Findings
Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2022-23
Participation Update & RCT Forum
Radical Reform
Foster Wales Collaboration Update
OCTOBER 2023
CLA Mental Health Support – Joint Report
Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service - All Wales Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Care Experienced Children and Young People 2022
Safeguarding Information
Magu – a new pre-birth service
IRO Update
NOVEMBER 2023
Miskin Annual Report and Therapeutic Families Team Annual Report 2022-23
Vale, Valley & Cardiff Regional Adoption annual report 2022-23

Participation Update & RCT Forum

Evaluation of the School Cluster Model for expenditure of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) Looked After Children (LAC) during the financial years 2022 - 2023

JANUARY 2024

RCT Children's services commissioning and monitoring of external placements for children looked after.

ALNET Act and ALN Code for Children Looked After

Fostering Quality of Care Annual Report

ND service developments

MARCH 2024

Employment, Education and Training Programmes for Children Looked After

Participation Update & RCT Forum

Virtual School Model pilot – Interim Evaluation of Year 2

Registered Childcare Provision Annual Update 2023-24

Young Carers Annual Report 2023-24

Draft Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2023-2024

CONCLUSION

I would like to thank you for taking the time to read the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report for the 2022-2023 Municipal Year.

The report highlights the breadth of work undertaken by the Board during the period and the areas we believe need monitoring in the coming year. To honour our commitments, we will agree a full and varied work programme for 2023-2024 Municipal Year, with the understanding that business may vary dependent on urgent or topical needs.

The Corporate Parenting Board and the Council are committed to its safeguarding duties and during the 2023-2024 Municipal Year, Members will work together with officers to challenge and improve our services for the best possible outcomes for the children and young people within our care.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

18TH JULY 2023

PARTICIPATION UPDATE 2022 TO 2023 FOR CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR G CAPLE

Author: Nicole Katchi, Graduate Officer- Participation (Children's Services)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the progress achieved in taking forward the Participation Strategy 2023-2026 and to provide feedback on the participation activities Children's Services have held during 2022-2023.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

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

3. BACKGROUND/ PROGRESS TO DATE

- 3.1 The Participation Strategy 2023-2026 (Appendix 1) has now been finalised and a steering group has been established to take forward the implementation plan. A key action in the strategy implementation plan is the establishment of a Task and Finish group to redevelop our public facing information for children, young people and families.
- 3.2 The 'Get Involved' survey for Children Looked After (ages 4 to 17) and Care leavers (ages 18 to 24) was launched in November 2022 until mid-February 2023. Appendix 2. There have been 66 responses. The survey asked care experienced children and young people about what is going well, what could be better and how they would like to get

involved with Children's Services and their preferred methods of communication.

- 3.3 Young people received survey feedback as part of a 'You said', 'We will', 'We did' mechanism in an arts and crafts workshop at Pontypridd Museum in February 2023. Survey infographic summaries which detail the findings and how Children's Services propose to respond have also been sent to all children looked after and care leavers. This is through Children's Services staff networks, social media, YEPS, 16+ Team, CLA Virtual School, Residential, Foster care and Kinship care. The survey feedback has also been used to inform the Participation Strategy Implementation Plan.
- 3.4 The Transform Team in Children's Services have worked with young people in Residential and Foster Care to develop videos about why staying local matters to young people in RCT. These videos were shown to the Deputy Minister for Social Services in March 2023 and shared with elected members of the council in a series of informative sessions.
- 3.5 In December 2022, some RCT care experienced young people contributed to a summit where recommendations for change were made to Government Ministers. This work has culminated in a Declaration signed by the First Minister and young ambassadors across Wales in May 2023, which ensures rights are observed and services across Wales work to remove barriers to improving outcomes for care experienced young people. A report has been produced by Welsh Government and we are awaiting further information (Appendix 3)

4. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO ECONOMIC DUTY

- 4.1 This is an information report. The implementation plan will be discussed with the Children and Young People Steering group and young people going forward.
- 4.2 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the future implementation process.

5. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 5.1 This is an information report.
- 5.2 Further consultation will however be undertaken as part of the work of the participation strategy.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

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

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

8.1 This links to the Children's Services Delivery Plan 2023 to 2024 that, 'Children's Voices Are Heard: To improve engagement with children and young people, to ensure co-production and that the voice of the child is heard in service development and delivery.'

8.2 It also links to the work of the Children's Commissioner for Wales that champion's the development of a Children's Rights Approach grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

9. NEXT STEPS

9.1 The Transforming Participation Steering Group to take forward the implementation plan and key milestones for evidencing children and young people's voice.

- Task and finish group established to develop our public facing information for children, young people and families.
- Working with Children's Services colleagues, young people and ICT in developing the accessibility of the 'My Voice, My Review', with the aim of encouraging care experienced young people to participate in 'what matters most' to them for their review meetings.

9.2 A **proposal** to facilitate an autumn workshop with care experienced young people to develop coproduction between the Corporate Parenting Board and young people in RCT. This links to the signing of the commitment by the First Minister for Wales and Young Ambassadors (May 2023) for developing 'The Vision' for what radically reformed services should look like and should deliver for care experienced children and young people (see appendices).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD
18TH JULY 2023

**PARTICIPATION UPDATE 2022 TO 2023 FOR CARE EXPERIENCED
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN
DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER,
COUNCILLOR G CAPLE**

**Officer to contact: Nicole Katchi, Graduate Officer- Participation
(Children's Services)**

Rhondda Cynon Taf Children's Services

Participation- End of Year
Summary report

2022-2023



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

10th July 2023

Participation Update for Care Experienced Children and Young People

**REPORT OF GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES, IN
DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR G
CAPLE**

Author: Nicole Katchi- Graduate Officer for Participation (Children's Services)

Contents

1. **Background to the Participation Strategy**
 - 1.1. VFCC Participation activities 2022- 2023
 2. **Children's Services, Participation event 1.9.2022**
 - 2.1 Summary of feedback from young people
 - 2.2 Children's Services Feedback event 3.2.2023
 - 2.3 Summary of feedback 3.2.2023
 3. **The 'Get Involved Survey'**
 - 3.1 The 'Get Involved' Survey results
 4. **Key themes/ recommendations from the survey**
 5. **Next steps**
- Appendix

1. Background to the Participation Strategy

The Graduate Officer for Participation joined Children’s Services on 7th June 2022. Meetings were held with the Children’s Services Senior Management Team (CSMT) in June and July 2022 to find out how the voices of children and young people were evidenced through participation and co-production. Refreshing and embedding staff knowledge about rights-based approaches was conducted through a Participation Workshop by Policy leads from the Children’s Commissioner for Wales in June 2022. The rights-based principles forms part of the draft Participation Strategy that was developed in October 2022.

1.1 Voices from Care Cymru (VFCC) Participation activities 2022-2023

From July 2022 to February 2023, Voices from Care Cymru held a range of Participation events for care experienced young people. This was through their ‘Sky’s the Limit’ project for 8- to 13-year-olds and ‘Local Group’ for 14–22-year-olds. This was in response to direct feedback from a Children’s Services Participation event on 1st September 2022. Care experienced young people told Children’s Services that they would like more well-being initiatives, opportunities for meet ups with other care experienced young people, arts and crafts and nature-based activities (see appendix for the local RCT events and National events).

2. Children’s Services Participation event on 1.9.22

On the 1st September 2022, care experienced young people from the ages of 10 to 16 years old attended a participation event with engagement activities. The aim was to find out what has helped young people to grow (positives), what could help them to grow (what could be better) and engagement activities to support outcomes through display work (see appendix). 9 young people attended the event.

2.1 Summary of feedback from young people

Positives of being care experienced	What could be better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safe adults.• Supportive foster carers/ key adults.• Being safe.• Stable environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental health support.• Listening to the voices of young people.• Bullying in schools.• Fun activities for care experienced young people to come together to meet.

2.2 Children's Services, Arts and crafts feedback event 3.2.2023

An arts and crafts feedback event was held at Pontypridd Museum and 6 young people attended along with their foster carers. This was part of a 'You said, we did' mechanism that will help inform future participation work with young people. Young people received feedback about the following:

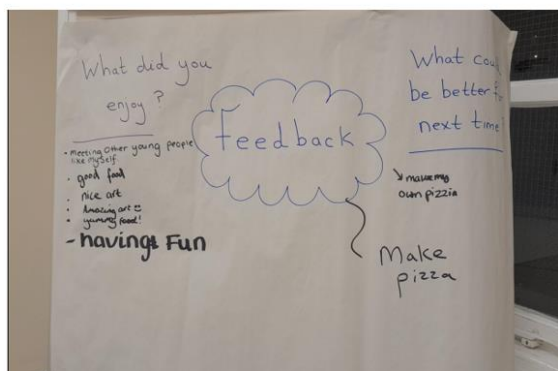
You said- 1.9.22	We did- 3.2.23
More well-being initiatives	A range of well-being initiatives through 'Sky's the Limit' for 8- to 13-year-olds and the 'Local Group' RCT for 14- 22-year-olds
Listening to the Voices of Young People	Voices from Care Cymru have developed a wide range of local and national events and use feedback to inform the next events. Children's Services also launched the 'Get Involved' survey for feedback from young people
Prevent bullying in schools	Discussed this information with the CLA Virtual Head Teacher and schools are working on their anti-bullying as part of the New Curriculum for Wales.

2.3 Summary of feedback from 3.2.2023

The feedback session on the 3.2.2023 received positive feedback. See the responses below:

Feedback

- What did you enjoy?
- What could be better next time?



'...a massive thank you for Friday.' (Foster carer)

Glows- positive

- Meeting other young people like myself.
- Good food.
- Nice art.
- Amazing art. 😊
- Yummy food.
- Having fun.

Grows- What could be better next time

- Make my own pizza
- Make pizza.

Foster carers comment verbally about her young person in year 6.

'The fact that my foster daughter is asking me to leave when she arrives here is a big thing. She doesn't normally enjoy social situations but really enjoys coming here. That is a compliment to you.'

3 The ‘Get Involved’ Survey

The ‘Get Involved’ survey was posted to **863** addresses of Children Looked After (561) and Care Leavers (302) from 4 to 24 years of age about their care experiences. The survey was also shared with Children’s Services staff. The survey was open from the beginning of November 2022 to Friday 17th February 2023. There were **66** responses with just under an **8%** response rate.

The survey asked the following:

- What is going well (positives).
- What could be better (improvements to be made)
- How young people would like to get involved with Children’s Services.

3.1 The ‘Get Involved’ Survey results

The survey analysis, staff summary and survey infographics for children and young people are included as follows:-

Appendix 1 - Get Involved survey results

Appendix 2 – Staff Summary of the ‘Get Involved’ survey

Appendix 3 – ‘Get Involved’ survey results and feedback

Survey infographics for children and young people have been shared through Children’s Services staff networks (03.05.23) and shared via social media, YEPS, 16+ Team, CLA Virtual School, Residential, Foster care and Kinship care.

Positives (going well) for young people

- Education and learning opportunities.
- Seeing siblings.
- Youth club.
- Hobbies.
- Having a safe place.
- Safe adults to support young people.



What could be better...

4 to 10 years old

- Make sure young people know who their Social Worker is and other trusted adults.
- More activities in the community.
- Some young people want to know about their children's rights.

11 to 15 years old

- Looking at a range of different ways to keep in touch with family.
- Living closer to family.
- Wellbeing- to feel better about yourself.

16 to 24 years old

- More activities to do in the community.
- Access to information about mental health and wellbeing.
- Accessible information about Housing and tenancy support.
- Benefits support.



4. Key Themes/ Recommendations from the survey

- **Make sure that all trusted adults explain who they are.** Consider leaving child friendly information such as 'All about me' profiles or a child friendly letter to the young person before meeting them or with a change of Social Worker/ key member of staff.
- **Access to information.** To develop information in a range of formats that can be easily accessed and shared. Young people **16+** have told us they want easy access to information for benefits, housing, tenancy support and funding entitlements.
- **Children and young people have told us how they want to get involved.** They would like more in person meet up events, activities with nature, sports, arts and crafts and music and drama.
- **To look at different ways to keep in touch with family.** Young people have told us they would like more contact with their families.
- **Mental Health and wellbeing support.** Young people would like further support with their mental health and wellbeing activities.

5. Next Steps

- Meet with the Transforming Participation Steering group every quarterly to develop the implementation plan and key milestones for evidencing children and young people's voice.
- A task and finish group for developing public facing information for children, young people and families meets every 4 to 6 weeks to also include redeveloping the 'Two sides' website for care experienced young people.
- **A proposal** to facilitate an autumn workshop with care experienced young people to develop coproduction between the Corporate Parenting Board, Voices from Care Cymru and care experienced young people in RCT. This links to the signing of 'The Commitment' by the First Minister for Wales and Young Ambassadors (May 2023) for developing 'The Vision' for what radically reformed services should look like and should deliver for care experienced children and young people. It commits the Welsh Government to deliver a wide range of changes to the current care system to enable a 'children's first approach' in everything we do (see point 4 in the appendix).

The declaration was developed by a team of Young Ambassadors from Voices from Care Cymru and Welsh Ministers following the first ever summit (December 2022) for children looked after and care leavers in Wales.



Appendices

Appendix 4 - Voices from Care Cymru ¼ report (February 2023).

Appendix 5 - Voices from Care Cymru Corporate Parenting Board report (January 2023).

Appendix 6 - Children's Services feedback event (February 2023).

Appendix 7 - Welsh Government Radical Reform Summit (May 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

DATE: 10th July 2023

**REPORT OF GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES, IN
DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR G CAPLE**

Officer to contact: Nicole Katchi

Gwasanaethau i Blant RhCT

Rydyn ni'n gwranddo. Rydyn ni'n rhoi cymorth. Rydyn ni'n amddiffyn.

RCT Children's Services

We listen. We support. We protect.

The 'Get Involved' survey for care experienced children and young people



Gwasanaethau i Blant RhCT

Rydyn ni'n gwrandao. Rydyn ni'n rhoi cymorth. Rydyn ni'n amddiffyn.

RCT Children's Services

We listen. We support. We protect.

- The '**Get Involved**' survey was posted to **863** addresses of Children Looked After (561) and Care Leavers (302) from 4 to 24 years of age about their care experiences.

We asked:

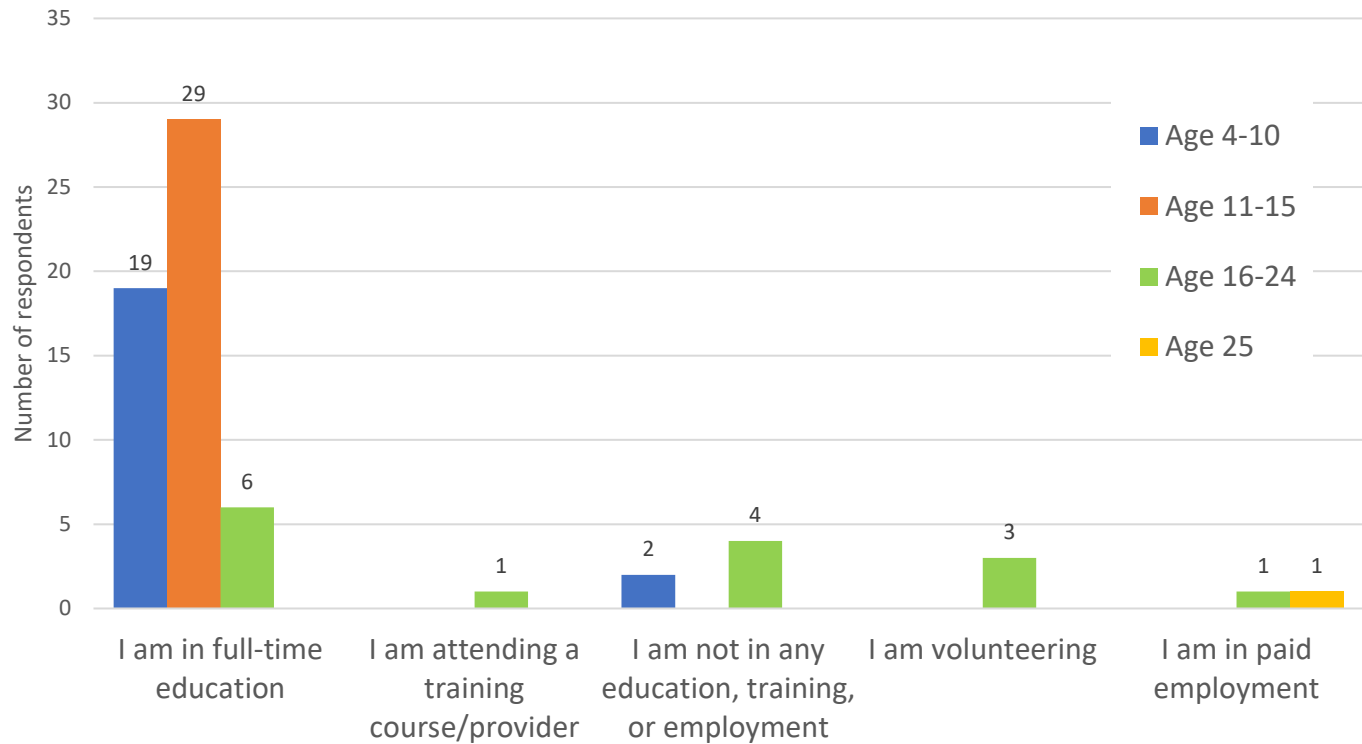
- What is going well?
- What could be better for all care experienced children and young people?
- How would you like to get involved with Children's Services?

- The survey was also shared with Children's Services staff.
- The survey was open from the beginning of November 2022 to Friday 17th February 2023. There were **66** responses with just under an **8%** response rate.



Age of respondents		
4-10 years	21 respondents	32%
11-15 years	29 respondents	44%
16-24 years	15 respondents	23%
25 years	1 respondents	1%
Total	66	

Which of the statements best describes you?



- The most respondents for the survey were 11–15-year-olds (**44%**).
- **82%** of young people were in full time education.



I have got a lovely safe stable home which is amazing

I live with very safe people, lots of security and I have privacy

My carers are nice and kind

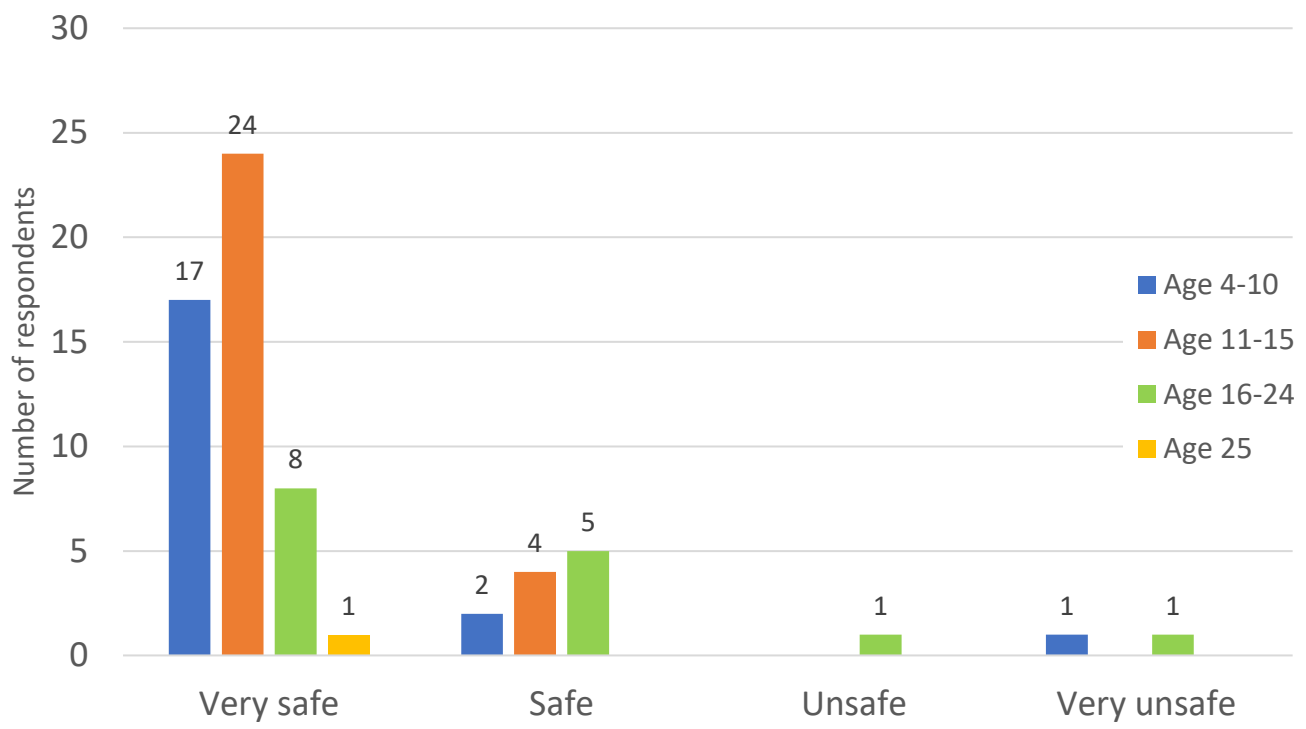
This is my home and my family

I feel safe because I live with a caring Foster family

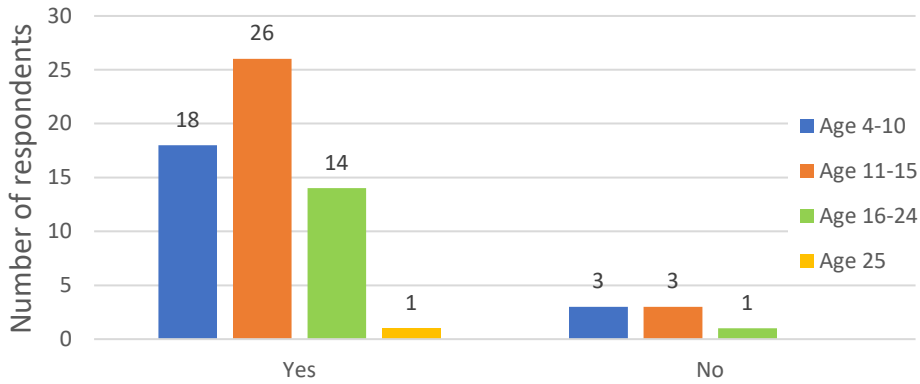
I feel safe because I'm treated well and I trust the people I live with and they support me

- More than a majority of young people said they felt **very safe**.

Do you feel safe where you currently live?



Do you have friends you trust to talk with?



Yes I would like to spend more time with my family.
Getting into the right routine.
I don't spend time with family because we don't get along.

Friendships

- 59 young people said they had friends they trust to talk with.
- 7 young people said they did not have friends they trust to talk with.

Family time

- 61 young people said they spent time with family.
- 5 Young people said they did not get to spend time with family.

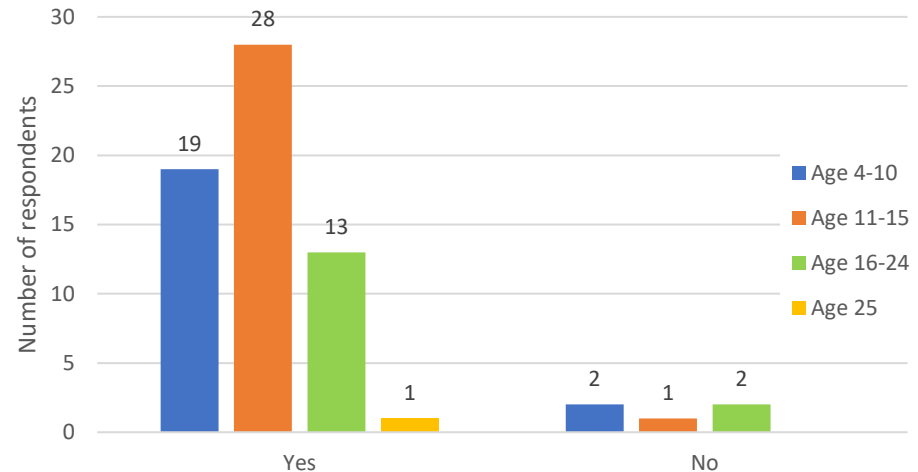
I feel very lonely at the moment and feel neglected by social services.

I can talk to my foster parents about anything.

I don't like to spend time with my real family because it makes me quite sad. I just don't like to but I have the opportunity to go.

My friends play games with me and go to the park.

Do you get to spend time with your family?



No, I did a brownie badge on my rights and I am the rights respecting representative in my school

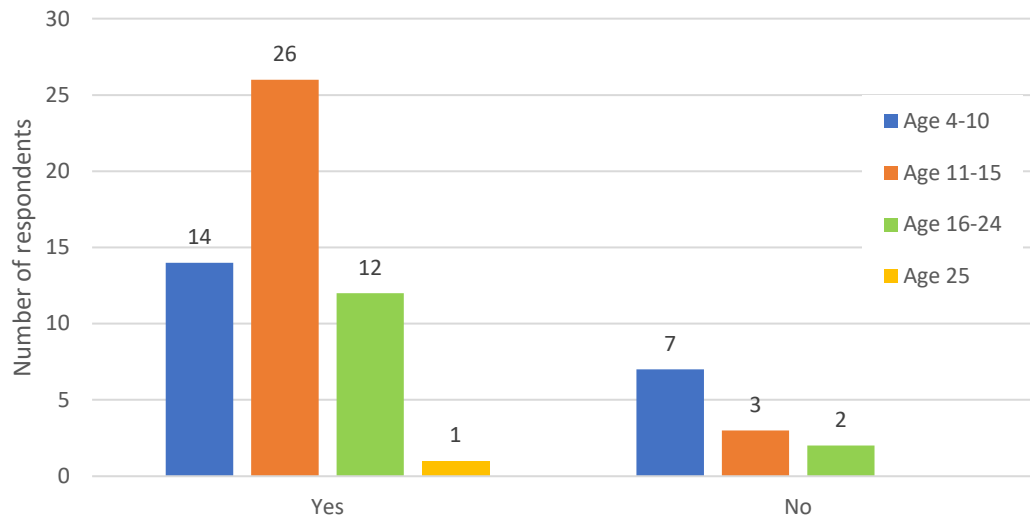
What are these rights?

All my rights as a care leaver

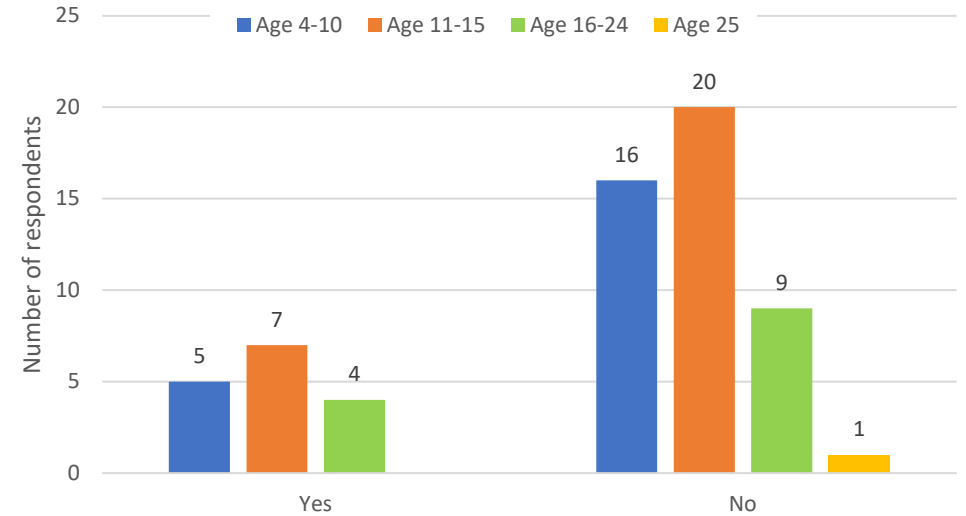
I don't know

I've read some articles but could know more

Young people have children's rights and human rights.
Do you know what rights you have?

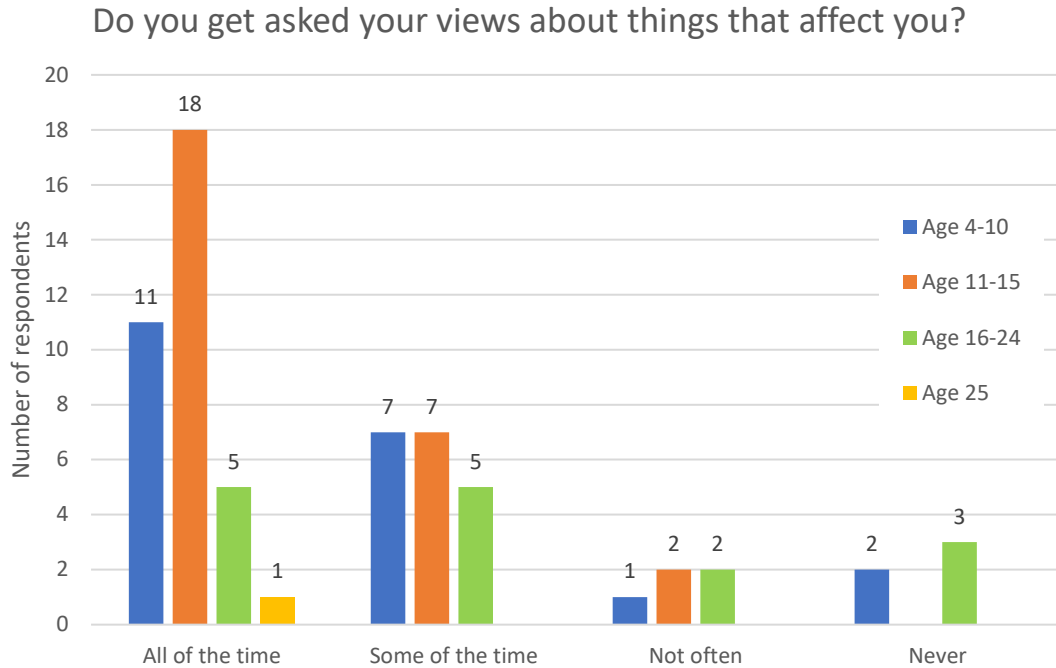


Would you like to know more about your children's rights?



- **Over a majority of young people said they know their children's rights/ human rights.**
- **15 young people said they wanted to know more about their rights.**
- **46 young people said 'no' to knowing more about their rights.**





If I'm sad or something I know I can talk to my parents and talk I don't like to talk much to over people maybe the teacher

I don't get my point of view heard with mum and nan but with my Foster family I get my view heard some of the time

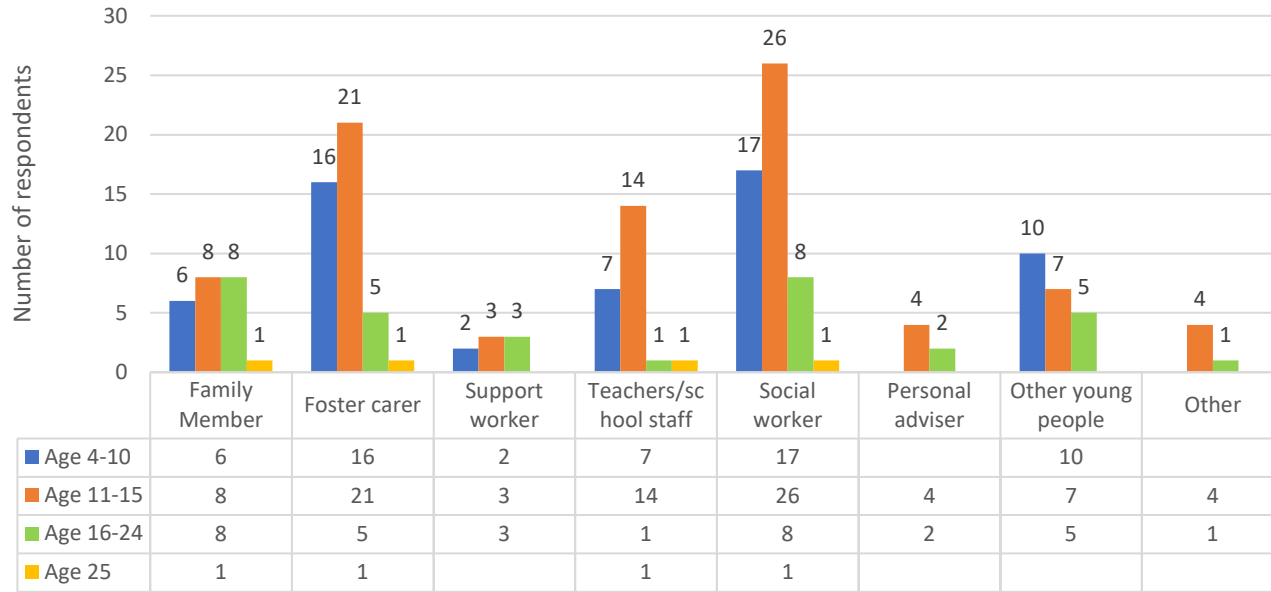
Me and my foster mam are very close. She is like my real mam

Yes by my carers but no from social workers

Senior staff, manager and key worker



Who ask your views about things that affect you?



Who asks about your view/opinions?

- Young people said their Social Worker, Teachers/school staff and foster carers (top three).



My education and learning opportunities

I feel safe and comfortable where I live. I am comfortable around the people who look after me. I've got people who care about me. I've got things in my future to look forward to

I get to see my brothers

My mam is always asking me stuff

What is positive (going well) for you?



I think its good I'm going to school, that I have friends and I am doing well

Where I live

My work and self-development

School, and I go to a club down the community centre by my house and it's called youth club

I'm in a happy safe place

I'm feeling happy

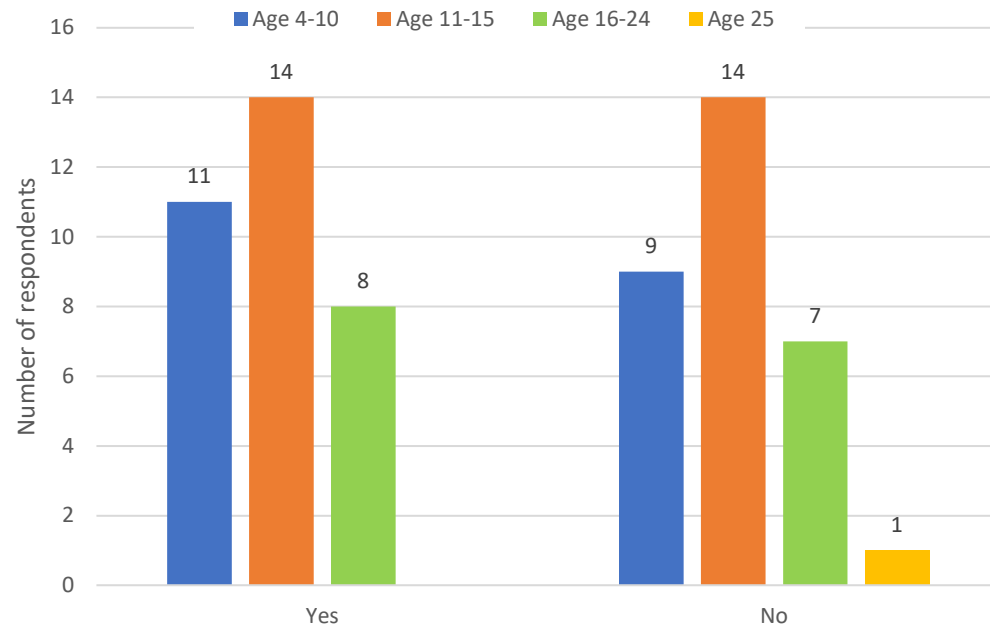
I have people who I can talk to I am now supported to present myself as a girl with confidence



Gaming events such as an esports team

Indoor activities

Would you like to attend activities with other care experienced young people?



Attending activities with other care experienced young people

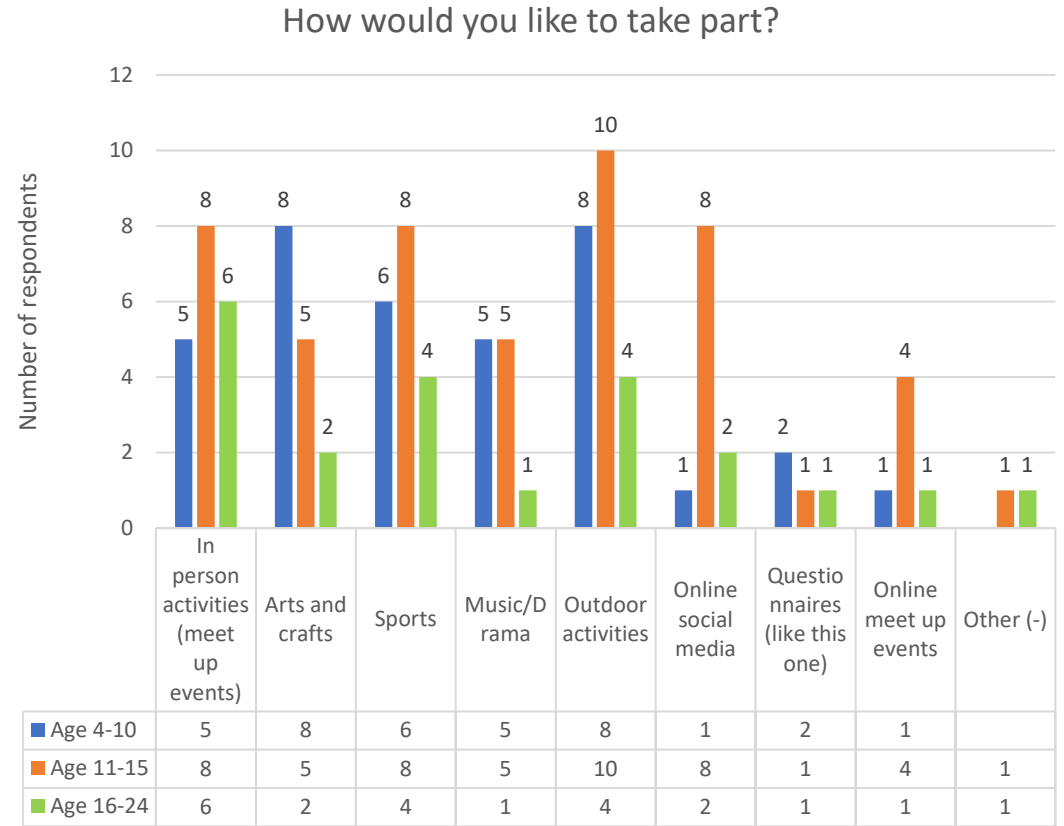
- 33 young people said **yes** (51%)
- 31 said **no** (49%).
- 2 young people **skipped** the question.

Think I would have benefited from this when I was younger

Parties

How would you like to take part? (Click all that apply)

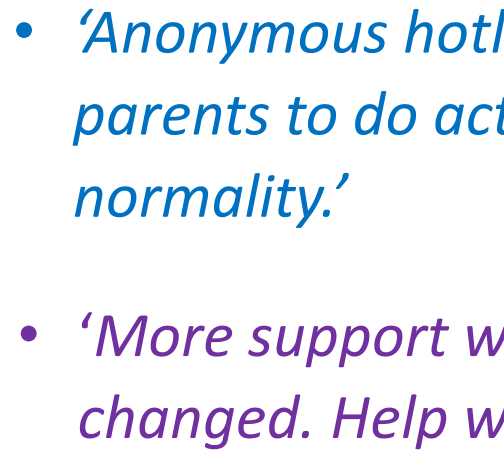
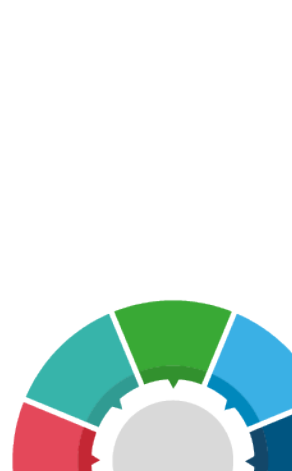
1. Outdoor activities= 22 clicks
2. In person activities= 19 clicks
3. Sports= 18 clicks
4. Arts and crafts= 15 clicks
5. Online social media- 11 clicks
6. Music and drama= 11 clicks
7. Online meet up events= 6 clicks
8. Questionnaires= 4 clicks
9. Other= 2 clicks



What could be better? ...

- *'Awareness of the benefits the support can have on you and your future. Regular check-ups if wanted tailored to the young person. Awareness of the options and choices of support available to them.'*
- *'Let other young people have their opinions more in things, let them decide with their current family's important choices not the birth parents.'*
- *'We just want to be made aware of the things happening to our birth families even if not all information can be shared.'*
- *'If they have a social worker that they don't like/isn't good with the young person, let them change social workers.'*



- 
- *'Anonymous hotline, readily available mental health support and places for parents to do activities with their children that are in care to promote a sense of normality.'*
 - *'More support with mental health. Housing issues need to be changed. Help with benefits.'*
 - *'To be put near their old friends, stay in the same school as before and having a good social worker.'*
 - *'Nobody should be signed off or have their account closed down through social services until the age of 25 regardless. They should know and have a list of any funding that they are entitled too. They should always have tenancy support available.'*
- 



Key ideas for what could be better...

- 16+ benefits support/ Housing support/ tenancy support until the age of 25.
- Regular check ups tailored to the young person.
- Take on board current family opinions and not always the birth parents.
- Accessible information about birth families.
- Anonymous hotline with mental health support.
- Activities for parents and their children in care to do things with a sense of normality.
- ‘Staying local’ matters.





5. Next Steps

- Meet with the Transforming Participation Steering group which will incorporate evidence of children's voice.
- Develop an infographic poster with the survey results for 'You said, we did' or 'We will'... and send them out to Children, Young People and Families (CYPF) for the end of March 2023.
- Update Children's Services staff and partners with the survey results.
- Meet with VFCC staff to develop the work programme for 2023 to 2024 based on what young people are asking for. With focus on wellbeing, peer representatives and outdoor activities.



tudalen wag



66 children and young people responded to the survey. A response rate of just under 8%.

'Get Involved' Survey findings

A summary of the results for Children Looked After and Care Leavers aged 4 to 24 years old

We asked the following:

1. What is going well...
2. What could be better...
3. How children and young people would like to get involved with Children's Services.

What is going well?

- Nearly all children and young people said they felt either **very safe** or **safe**.
- 59 young people (89%) said they had **friends** they trust to talk with.
- 61 young people (92%) said they spend **regular time with family**.
- 80% of children and young people said they know their children's rights/ human rights.
- Almost all young people said they get asked their view **'All of the time'** or **'Some of the time.'**
- Young people said their Social Worker, Teachers/school staff and foster carers (top three) ask them about their viewpoint.

Positives (going well) for young people

- Education and learning opportunities.
- Seeing siblings.
- Youth club.
- Hobbies.
- Having a safe place.
- Safe adults to support young people.





My education and learning opportunities

I feel safe and comfortable where I live. I am comfortable around the people who look after me. I've got people who care about me. I've got things in my future to look forward to

I get to see my brothers

My mam is always asking me stuff

What is positive (going well) for you?



I think its good I'm going to school, that I have friends and I am doing well

Where I live

My work and self-development

School, and I go to a club down the community centre by my house and it's called youth club

I'm in a happy safe place

I'm feeling happy

I have people who I can talk to I am now supported to present myself as a girl with confidence

What could be better...

4 to 10 years old

- Make sure young people know who their Social Worker is and other trusted adults.
- More activities in the community.
- Some young people want to know about their children's rights.

11 to 15 years old

- Looking at a range of different ways to keep in touch with family.
- Living closer to family.
- Wellbeing- to feel better about yourself.

16 to 24 years old

- Access to information about mental health and wellbeing services.
- More activities to do in the community.



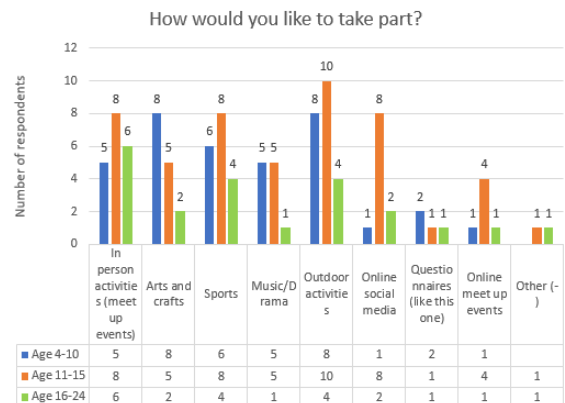
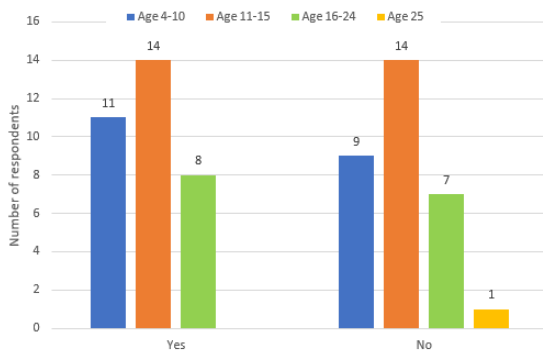
- Housing and tenancy support.
- Benefits support.

Getting involved with other care experienced young people

Gaming events such as an esports team

Indoor activities

Would you like to attend activities with other care experienced young people?



Think I would have benefited from this when I was younger

Parties

Attending activities with other care experienced young people

- 33 young people said **yes** (51%).
- 31 said **no** (49%).
- 2 young people **skipped** the question.

How would you like to take part? (Click all that apply)

1. Outdoor activities= 22 clicks
2. In person activities= 19 clicks
3. Sports= 18 clicks
4. Arts and crafts= 15 clicks
5. Online social media= 11 clicks
6. Music and drama= 11 clicks
7. Online meet up events= 6 clicks
8. Questionnaires= 4 clicks
9. Other= 2 clicks

Recommendations

- **Make sure that all trusted adults explain who they are.** Consider leaving child friendly information such as 'All about me' profiles or a child friendly letter to the young person before meeting them or with a change of Social Worker/ key member of staff.
- **Access to information.** To develop information in a range of formats that can be easily accessed and shared. Young people **16+** have told us they want easy access to information for benefits, housing, tenancy support and funding entitlements.
- **Children and young people have told us how they want to get involved.** They would like more in person meet up events, activities with nature, sports, arts and crafts and music and drama.
- **To look at different ways to keep in touch with family.** Young people have told us they would like more contact with their families.
- **Mental Health and wellbeing support.** Young people would like further support with their mental health and wellbeing activities.



The 'Get Involved' Survey

We asked you some questions about what is going well, what could be better and how you might like to get involved with care experienced young people.



YOU SAID

4 to 10 years old Survey Findings

What is going well...

- Nearly all of you said you felt very safe or safe where you live.
- Nearly all of you said you had friends you trust to talk with.
- Almost all of you said you know your children's rights.
- You get asked about your views most of the time or some of the time.
- Social workers, teachers and carers ask you the most about your thoughts and opinions.
- Fun activities, hobbies and safe adults.

What could be better...

- Make sure you know who your Social Worker and other trusted adults are.
- More activities to do in the community.
- Some young people want to know more about their children's rights.

YOU SAID



*Nearly all young people said **yes** to attending activities with other care experienced young people*

Tudalen 70

You said you would like to take part in:

- 1. Outdoor activities**
- 2. Arts and crafts**
- 3. Sports**
- 4. In person activities**
- 5. Music / drama.**

Thank you for answering the questions. We will make changes to help all young people.

WE WILL

1. Make sure you know who your Social Worker and other trusted adults are.
2. We will make sure that the adults supporting you know about your children's rights and where you can find information about this.
3. Support you to get involved with other care experienced young people through outdoor activities, arts and crafts, sports, in person activities and music and drama.

The 'Get Involved' Survey

We asked you some questions about what is going well, what could be better and how you might like to get involved with care experienced young people.



YOU SAID

11 to 15 years old Survey Findings

What is going well...

- Nearly all of said you felt very safe where you live.
- Almost all of you said you had friends you trust to talk with.
- Almost all of you said you know your children's/ human rights.
- You get asked about your views most of the time or some of the time.
- Social workers, teachers, carers and family ask you about your thoughts and opinions.
- Safe adults to talk to and feeling supported.
- Enjoying school and hobbies.

What could be better...

- Keeping in touch with your family.
- Living closer to family.
- Wellbeing- to feel better about yourself.

YOU SAID

Half of all 11-15 years old (14 young people) said **yes** to attending activities with other care experienced young people

Tudalen 72

You said you would like to take part in:

1. **Outdoor activities**
2. **In person meet up activities**
3. **Sports**
4. **Online social media**
5. **Arts and crafts/ music and drama**

Thank you for answering the questions. We will make changes to help all young people.

WE WILL

1. Make sure you know who your Social Worker and other trusted adults are.
2. Help the adults looking after you, listen to what you have to say.
3. Explore different ways to keep in touch with family.
4. Support you to get involved with other care experienced young people through outdoor activities, in person meet up activities, online social media, arts and crafts and music and drama.

The 'Get Involved' Survey

We asked you some questions about what is going well, what could be better and how you might like to get involved with care experienced young people.



YOU SAID

16 to 24 years old Survey Findings

What is going well...

- Nearly all of said you felt very safe (53%) or safe (33%) where you live.
- Nearly all of you said you had friends you trust to talk with.
- Almost all of you said you know your children's rights/ human rights.
- You get asked about your views most of the time or some of the time.
- Family members, Social Workers and other young people ask about your opinions.
- Family connections.
- Education and further education.

What could be better...

- More activities to do in the community.
- Access to information about Mental Health and Wellbeing.
- Access to Housing and Tenancy support.
- Benefits support.

YOU SAID



*53% (8) said
yes to attending
activities with
other care
experienced
young people*

Tudalen 74

*You said you would like to
take part in:*

- 1. In person activities (75%)**
- 2. Sports (50%)**
- 3. Outdoor activities (50%)**
- 4. Arts and crafts (25%)**
- 5. Online social media (25%)**

Thank you for answering the questions. We will make changes to help all young people.

WE WILL

1. Support you with information about benefits and housing.
2. Provide you with information to access mental health support.
3. Support you to get involved with other care experienced young people through in person activities, sports, outdoor activities, arts and crafts and online social media.



Update Report for the ¼ Contract Review Meeting

Name of Organisation: Voices from Care Cymru

Name of Project: RCT Local Group

Funder: RCT Local Authority

Team Member: Laura Harper

Date: 16th February 2023

The RCT Local Group project has engaged a variety of young people over the last quarter. This includes both a variety of ages, and a variety of young people attending internally (through Voices From Care Cymru membership/internal social media promotion) and externally (through public social media promotion/promotion via Nicole Katchi and externally). Nicole has been a great help to us over the last quarter and beyond with our promotion, we are very appreciative - thank you.

Pre-Christmas, one of our most notable events included the Building Strengths Workshop that took place in November and had a very positive turn out. This was a great opportunity for young people to engage with peers, spread positivity and make meaningful connections.

We also had the honour of holding the Care-Experienced Summit 2022 at the beginning of December. This was a special opportunity for our Young Ambassadors from RCT and beyond to come together with Mark Drakeford and the Ministers to share their views on their chosen topic (education, mental health + wellbeing, health + social care, or social justice) and initiate meaningful change. Annabel Lloyd kindly joined us at this event as a spectator.

We were also able to run and support a variety of Christmas events internally and externally which the RCT care community engaged with. From the Christmas Pantomime to the Christmas Quiz, to the Cardiff Christmas Dinner - there was lots of festive cheer!

A full list of activities can be seen on our Corporate Parenting report.

Following previous consultation work with Llamau and Missing People, there has been an online support toolkit for practitioners published - please see <https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/reducing-the-criminalisation-of-care-experienced-children-and-young-adults-in-wales-a-practical-toolkit-for-professionals>. 1 member of the RCT Local Group supported with this consultation work back in Summer 2022. This work has now been finalised and is public. We continue to maintain links with partner organisations and will welcome and support any upcoming projects that the RCT Local Group can help develop.

Current and upcoming exciting events for the RCT Local Group include the following. Future events are in the works; posters will be distributed bilingually in due course.

- Saturday 18th February: drumming and arts and crafts workshop to promote healthy relationships.
- Friday 24th February: Proud to Be Me 2023, a celebration of being care-experienced.
- Friday 24th March: meal to promote and celebrate group relationships and celebrate/reflect work done to date.
- Friday 21st April 2023: promoting wellbeing and feeling good through music and arts;
- Friday 19th May 2023: friendship and fun.
- Friday 19th June 2023: inspiration and influencing - creating feedback material for the local authority to link in and review important group topics.



RCT Corporate Parenting Summary Report

Name of Organisation: Voices From Care Cymru

Name of Project: RCT Local Group

Funder: RCT Local Authority

Team Member: Laura Harper

Date: 5th January 2023

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is:

- To demonstrate the work that Voices From Care Cymru (VFCC) is undertaking to support care-experienced young people in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).
- To assure that the voice of care-experienced children and young people in RCT are at the core of work surrounding policy changes, service development, and delivery.
- To highlight the range of resources made available by VFCC to consult and engage with care-experienced children and young people in RCT.

2. PROJECT SUMMARY

Connecting with Care-Experienced Young People:

This section will provide a summary of work conducted with the Local Groups between October 2022 and January 2023. Full details of these sessions can be seen in the section titled 'Engagement'.

Following the new model of work in agreement with RCT Local Authority, one of the main areas of work since the last quarter has been conducting outreach activities and detached opportunities to engage with the care community. The main themes of these engaging sessions were the Summit and Christmas. As mentioned in the last Corporate Parenting Report, VFCC is also working to a three-tiered approach to deliver the Local Groups and widen participation. Firstly, there has been consultation work arranged and delivered on a variety of topics

such as Building Strengths and the Young Person's Guarantee. Secondly, there has been targeted social change work in the form of the Summit. Thirdly, there have been feedback opportunities given at events to inform peer representative views of the group sessions.

RCT Local Group project has engaged with 18 care-experienced young people in the RCT area from October 2022 to January 2023. Of these young people that engaged in the sessions, 13 were under the age of 18, 3 were aged between 14 and 22, and 2 were over the age of 22. There was a mix of young people attending internally (through Voices membership) and externally (through public social media and Nicole Katchi, Graduate Officer for Participation).

Engagement:

Please see the following for a full range of our activities delivered through the Local Group project.

- 26th October 2022: 1-to-1 session with a group member to promote socialisation and reflect on group work and discuss opportunities for the next few months.
- 4th November 2022: Building Strengths Workshop with a variety of activities to encourage positivity, self-care, and empowerment. This session was run twice back-to-back, once with ages 8-14 where there were 10 attendees from RCT, and once with ages 14-22 where there were 3 attendees from RCT.
- 10th November 2022: The Local Groups were invited to a National Conversation in the VFCC office regarding the Young Person's Guarantee with Vaughan Gethin, MS. 2 members from RCT attended this event.
- 9th December 2022: VFCC received 20 tickets to the Cardiff Christmas pantomime 'Snow White'. Tickets were promoted to RCT members internally and externally. 9 members from RCT attended this occasion - 6 Sky's the Limit and 3 Local Group members.
- 16th December 2022 - CANCELLED: The Local Group members party was scheduled for this date initially, with a party planned in Cardiff for Local Group members from all 3 authorities to attend. Unfortunately, due to train strikes, this event had to be cancelled the week prior.
- 16th December 2022: The RCT Local Group members were invited to a Christmas film catch up to boost well-being and encourage participation. 1 member from RCT attended on this occasion.

- 19th December 2022 - POSTPONED: The Feedback Event for Participation was scheduled on this date with Nicole Katchi. The plan for the event was to invite the young people that attended the initial information gathering event back to give their feedback. Unfortunately, due to illness, this event was postponed and is being rearranged in the coming months.
- 20th December 2022: An online Christmas quiz was organised for Local Group members. The purpose of this event was to engage young people that wanted to do a quiz, but also to provide an online alternative for anybody that had been unable to attend Christmas activities due to illness or working. 1 Local Group member from RCT attended on this occasion.
- 22nd December 2022: A Christmas crafts session was run for young people to attend as an alternative to the Christmas party. There was music, food, gift bags and arts and crafts activities for Local Group members to engage with. 1 member of the RCT Local Group attended on this occasion.

Engagement in these events has been encouraged through the promotion of internal and public social media pages, with individual posters or posts uploaded for almost every event for members and partners to see. A group chat for VFCC members in RCT eligible for the Local Group has been created, and all opportunities are posted there, also. Any members from RCT outside the Local Group have had these events shared individually.

There were also a variety of activities available over the last quarter that young people from the Local Group were invited to attend. These were not specifically run by the Participation team within VFCC, but they were open to all members to attend.

These were:



Event Feedback:

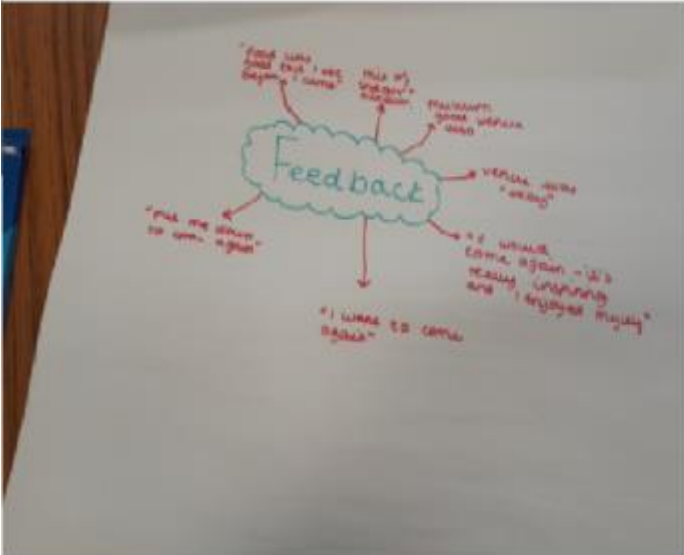
Event feedback has been very important to us at VFCC when conducting events across the board, but specifically in Local Groups. Most feedback has been verbal which would be difficult to transcribe for the purpose of the report. Recurring feedback points include the following:

- Young people enjoy a variety of activities.
- Young people are flexible on location.
- Young people needed locations of groups to be close to public transport.
- Young people were open to online sessions on occasion.

However, notable written feedback was given on the Building Strengths Workshop which is as follows:

(Slides taken from Nicole Katchi's reflective PowerPoint on the session)

Feedback from 14-22 year olds



Feedback for future participation includes:

- 'Mix of indoor and outdoor.'
- 'I would come again, it's really inspiring and I really enjoyed myself'
- 'I want to come again'
- 'Put me down to come again'
- 'Venue was ok'
- 'Museum good venue also'



Young People have asked for the following at future events:

- Cooking skills
- Sports activities- Dodgeball.
- Nature activities
- Drawing/Art activities

Feedback from the 8-13 year olds includes:

Positive

- 'I have met 6 new friends today'
- 'It's too good, you can't make it better'
- 'Amazing'
- 'Make new friends'
- 'Food was nice' 'Liked the doughnuts'
- 'I enjoyed the drawing and all about yourself'
- 'Enjoyed free time'
- 'Kind people'
- 'It's cool'
- 'Would come back 10/10'

What could be better?

- 'The positive things are boring'

In the RCT Local Groups, we have found the written feedback so important for reflection and promotion of voice and control for members. As such, the Local Group will be implementing written feedback more regularly moving forward. This will largely replace standard verbal feedback. As will be mentioned in the 'What's Next?' portion of this report, focusing on reflective feedback is a theme that will be looked at with the group in the near future.

RCT Questionnaire:

The VFCC RCT Local Group has continued to work closely with Nicole Katchi at RCT to participate in the questionnaire for care-experienced children and young people in the region. The purpose of the questionnaire is to get feedback about children's services and will help shape consultation work for the Local Group moving forward. 5 care-experienced young people from the group helped develop the questionnaire. The final version was launched to Local Group members via the group chat, and feedback from the young people was that most of them had completed it.

The results of the questionnaire will help shape the Local Group work moving forward, identifying key issues and themes that arise. The questionnaire will also help support the direction of the group, outlining where there may be a need for VFCC to focus their consultation work (i.e.: housing, education, healthcare, etc.).

Care-Experienced Summit:

On December 3rd and 4th 2022, VFCC ran a national Summit for care-experienced young people. In preparation for the event, each local authority in Wales, including RCT, was invited to put forward young people for a Young Ambassador role. The Young Ambassadors attended a plethora of meetings in advance of the Summit to share their views and updates on their chosen topic (education, mental health and wellbeing, health and social care, and social justice) to help shape a declaration for Ministers to sign. Over 40 young people across Wales represented their authority as Young Ambassadors, including representation for RCT.

On the day of the Summit, 40+ Young Ambassadors met with Welsh Ministers to share their ideas and discuss outcomes for children in care moving forward. The Welsh Ministers in attendance were Mark Drakeford, Jane Hutt, Jeremy Miles, Lynne Neagle and Julie Morgan.

This event is not stand-alone, there will be a follow up event in 2023 where further plans and ideas will be discussed.



3. WHAT'S NEXT?

We recognise that the Local Group must be representative of the whole care community in RCT to provide a holistic delivery. As such, it will be important that in the coming months all events are promoted internally as well as externally.

The planned events for the RCT Local Group for the next quarter (January - March) are as follows:

- Friday 27th January 2023. Theme = advocacy.
- Friday 24th February 2023. Theme = love. Self-love/healthy relationships.
- Friday 24th March 2023. Theme = feedback + moving forward.

There will also be wider events during the coming months led by various teams. Notable examples include Care Day 2023, the Peer Support Groups, and the brand-new Wellbeing Workshops and Homework Clubs. Again, information regarding these events will be distributed both internally to members and externally to service leads.

Furthermore, Laura Harper will work to create and continue strong links with relevant partner organisations and service leads. This includes, but is not limited to, TGP Cymru and the RCT Children's Services Teams.

tudalen wag

Participation Feedback event 3.2.23



The Graduate Officer for Participation and Voices From Care Cymru (VFCC) held a feedback event for care experienced young people.

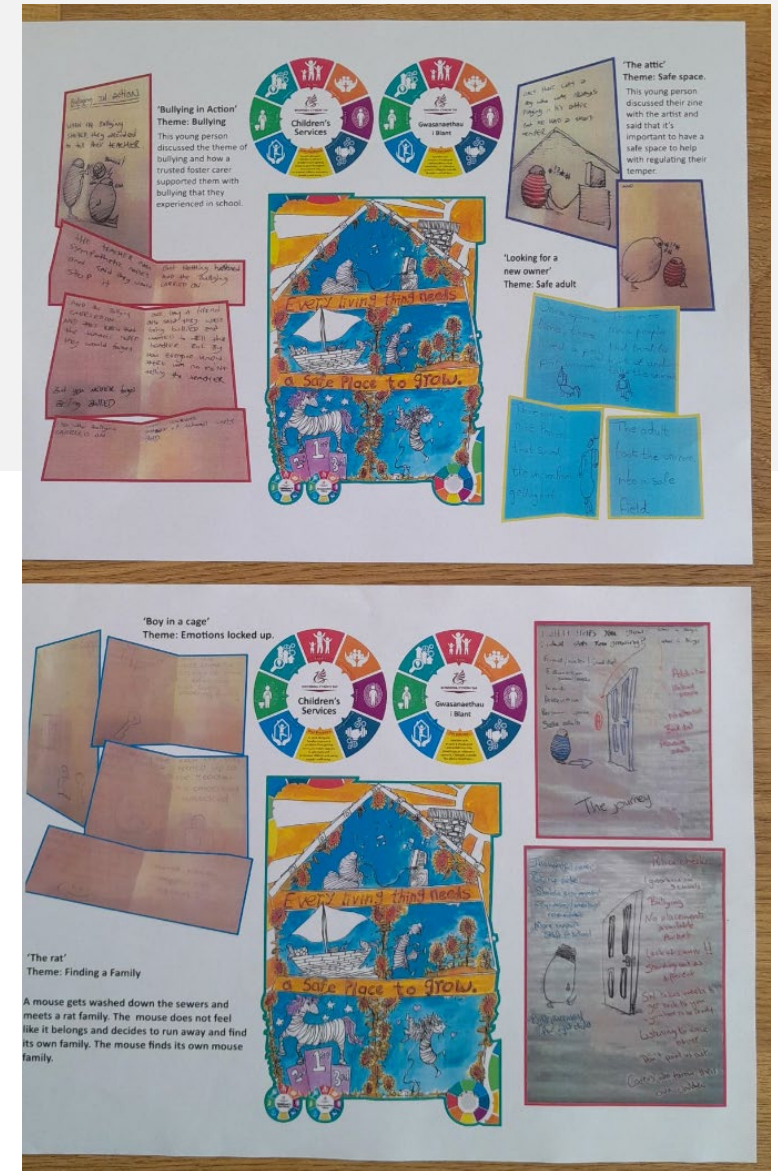
- We had 6 young people out of 9 attend the feedback event.
- 2 young people had moved back home with family.
- The purpose of the event was to give feedback through 'You said, we did' from the previous event on 1st September 2022.
- The CYP also enjoyed creating vision/dream boards.
- Young people discussed what they wanted to do when they are older and the steps they would need to take. This also included their hobbies.



Feedback event posters

Tudalen 86

- Young people received these posters as part of the original zines (short stories) they created about what everything living thing needs. Shelter, food, warmth, safe adults/friendships etc...



Gwasanaethau i Blant RhCT

Rydyn ni'n gwranddo. Rydyn ni'n rhoi cymorth. Rydyn ni'n amddiffyn.

RCT Children's Services

We listen. We support. We protect.

You said	We did
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More wellbeing and fun activities• Anti-bullying in Schools and for teachers to know more about issues care experienced ^{young} people might encounter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Voices from Care Cymru (VFCC) have put on a lot of fun activities (Local Group) and 'Sky's the Limit'.• We asked our CLA Head Teacher what we could do.• We also asked elected members to invite young people as Panel members to the Corporate Parenting Board.

Tudalen 87

You said

- Young people asked for teachers to have CLA/Care experienced training.
- More well-being initiatives.

We did

- Young people met the CLA Virtual Head Teacher at the event.
- Voices have put on and continue to develop well-being activities for young people.
- The Corporate Parenting Board have been asked to consider young people as active panel members.



We will do further....

- Link in with the CLA forum and discuss how we can support education with Care experienced awareness training for teachers.
- Find out how we can support the Corporate Parenting Board to bring in young people as active members.
- Feedback information from the 'Get Involved' survey from late March 2023.

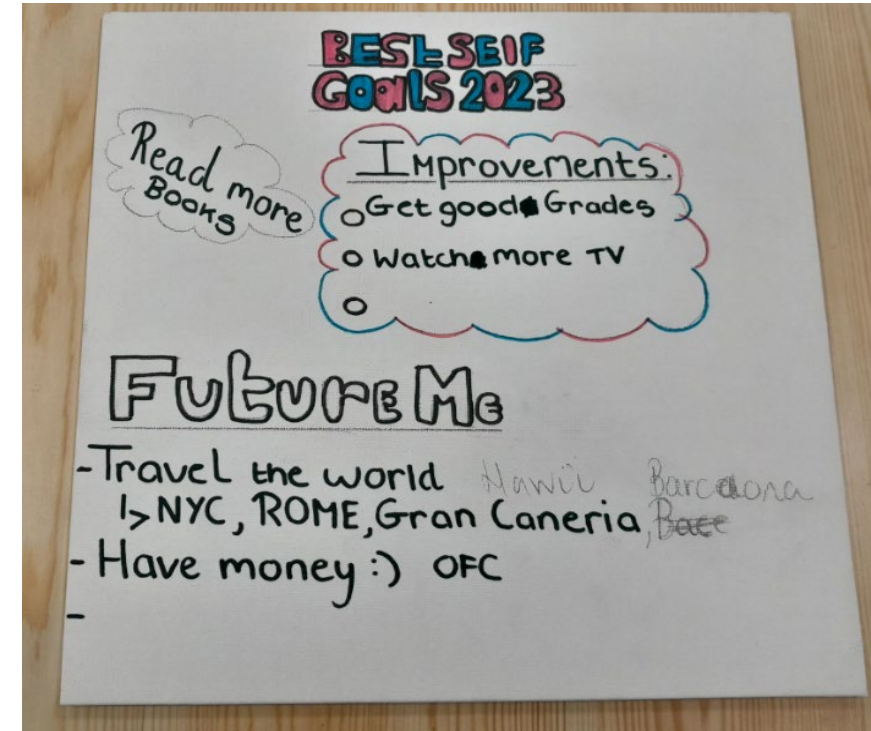
Photos from the event



Crafts to choose from for our vision boards.



This young person would like to be a marine biologist and is fascinated with sharks.



This young person discussed about how to keep building resilience to do well in GCSE examinations.

Photos continued...

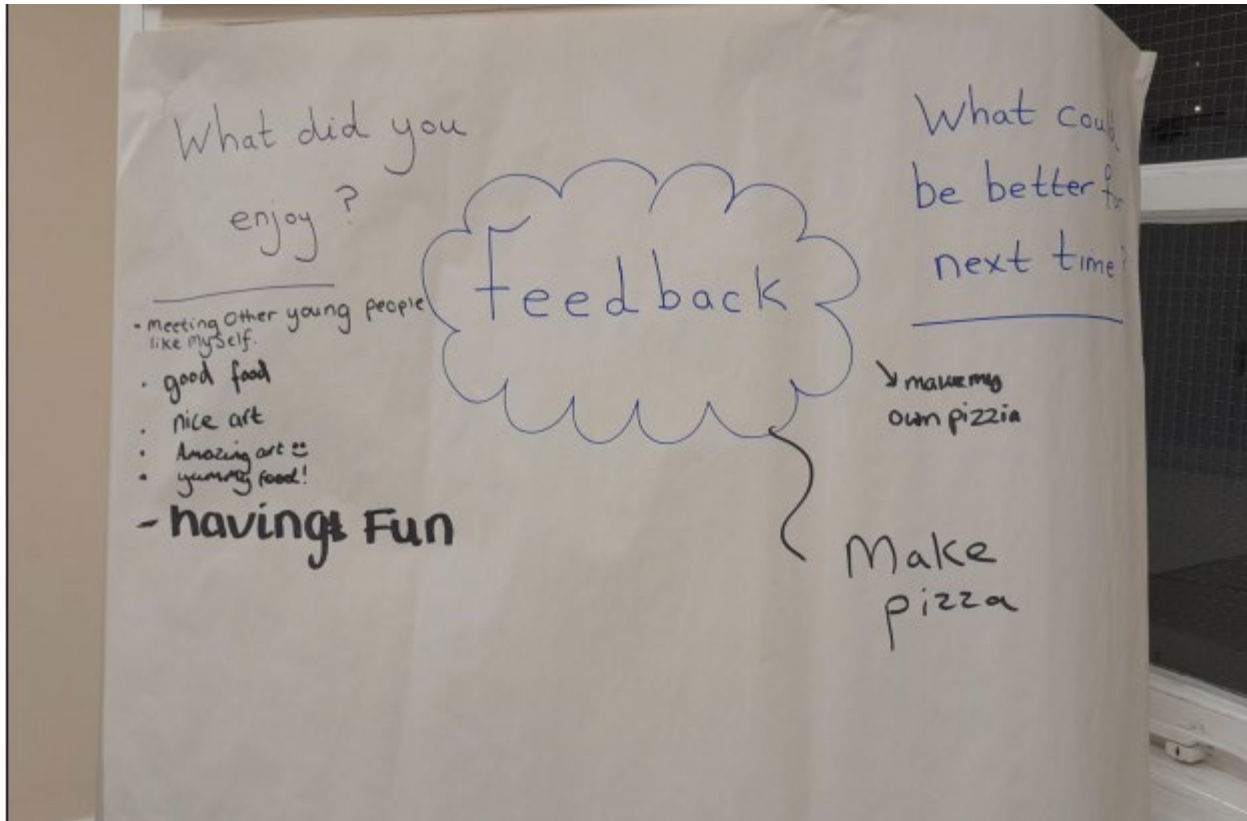


Tudalen 90



Feedback

- What did you enjoy?
- What could be better next time?



Tudalen 91

Glows- positive

- Meeting other young people like myself.
- Good food.
- Nice art.
- Amazing art. 😊
- Yummy food.
- Having fun.

Grows- What could be better next time

- Make my own pizza.
- Make pizza.

Foster carers comment verbally about young person in year 6.

'The fact that my foster daughter is asking me to leave when she arrives here is a big thing. She doesn't normally enjoy social situations but really enjoys coming here. That is a compliment to you.'

Further feedback after the event

Text message from a foster carer (to a work mobile phone) on 6.2.2023.

'...a massive thank you for Friday.'



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Radical Reform Summit

DECLARATION

Contents

- 1** Foreword
- 2** Background and Statements
- 4** The Vision
- 9** The Commitment

Foreword

In the 22 years since devolution, successive Welsh Governments have prioritised the rights and needs of children and young people and there have been some major achievements. In 2001, in response to the Waterhouse Report, the office of the Children's Commissioner was established; the first in the UK. In 2011 the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure was passed, partly enshrining The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Welsh law. In 2020 the Abolition of the Defence of Reasonable Punishment (Wales) Act was passed, giving children equal protection from violence under the law in our nation.

As a nation, Wales can be proud of these and other achievements but there is much more to do to allow our care community to aspire and to achieve their full potential.

Welsh Minsters and Young Ambassadors, who are here today to represent the national voice of our care experienced community of children and young people, met today to address this issue.

This Summit today has discussed steps necessary to promote the rights – based on the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child, (UNCRC) – and well-being of care experienced children and young people.



Background Statements

Welsh Government

In our Children and Young Peoples' Plan, this Welsh Government sets out our ambition:

'We want Wales to be a wonderful place to grow up, live and to work, now and in the future.'

The Plan goes on to say:

'We believe all our children and young people have the right to:

- have the best start in life
- take part in and enjoy learning and have the best education possible to expand their knowledge, develop their creativity and fulfil their potential
- enjoy healthy lifestyles and be protected from harm, abuse, neglect, and discrimination
- be able to play and have fun
- be listened to and treated with respect
- have a home and a community that is a nice place to grow up
- have enough financial and material support for that they need.'

The Plan goes on to set out some of the many actions that the Welsh Government will take, with others, to put that belief into practise and make those rights a reality.

We owe care experienced children and young people a particular duty of care to ensure that their rights are fully realised. This is a major area of concern for us.

We know that many children and young people have positive experiences in the care system and do well in life. They thrive and grow, cared for and supported, and go on to achieve their full potential. We have seen positive changes in recent years. For example, far more care experienced young people are now going to university than ever before. We are proud of young people's achievements and resilience, and we are grateful to all those who care for and support them. But far too many care experienced children and young people do not have their rights realised. Far too many care experienced young people experience homelessness. The percent of care experienced young people leave school with five good GCSE or more is still too low.

Care experienced children and young people are stigmatised, and often do not receive the support they need to overcome the trauma that they have experienced.

To us, the Government of Wales, this is unacceptable. In our Programme of Government – the document where we set out our promises to the people of Wales – there are a number of promises to care experienced children and young people and their families that we have begun to keep. For example, we have introduced a Basic Income Payment for care leavers to give them a better start into their independent lives and we have begun the process of stopping companies making big profits out of caring for children and young people. But we know this is not enough.

We have made a bigger promise in our Programme of Government. We have promised to:

'explore radical reform of current services for children looked after and care leavers.'

This Summit is a big step forward in exploring what radical reform of services could mean for care experienced children and young people.

Young Ambassadors

We, the Young Ambassadors, have been working with other care experienced children and young people to explore what radical reform means. We started with the dictionary. Radical has two meanings; through, complete, total, entire: and revolutionary, progressive, reforming. Reform means improve, make better, mend. These are great words.

We are glad that Welsh Government understands the need for radical reform. Some of us have been involved in consultations before, and we haven't always felt that we were listened to and our concerns we acted on. But we are proud of the work we have already been doing with

this Welsh Government – for example around developing the Basic Income Pilot – and we believe we are being listened to now. We have been working with other care experienced children and young people to understand their experiences of current services and what needs to change. We have come to this Summit with our ideas about what radically reformed services could look like and deliver for care experienced children and young people and their families. We have shared these ideas, to help create a vision of what radically reformed services will look like and deliver. A Vision that we and Welsh Government can agree.



The Vision

Welsh Government

We have listened to what the Young Ambassadors have told us about their experiences and the experiences of other care experienced children and young people.

We have heard their ideas about what radically reformed services should look like and should deliver for care experienced children and young people. Together we have developed this Vision, which we support.

Young Ambassadors

Welsh Ministers have listened to our experiences and our ideas for a Vision of what radically reformed services could look like and deliver.

We support the Vision set out below.

Here is some of what will be different:

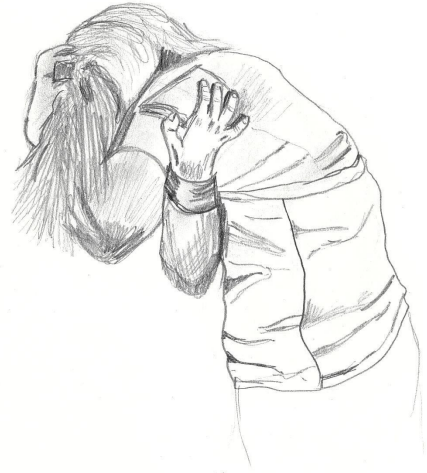
- All children and young people who are affected by the care system will be spoken with and listened to at every stage. People listening to them will understand that it can sometimes be hard to express your views or tell the whole truth. They will support children and young people, including little ones, to speak out. When children and young people's wishes about where and with whom they live can't be agreed to because they need to live somewhere else so that they can thrive, what is happening and why will be properly explained to them.
- No child or young person will be taken into care unless everything possible has been done to help their family look after them well, unless there is an emergency.
- Families whose children might be taken into care will all have an independent advocate to help and support them and make sure their voices are heard. Children and young people in the family will have their own independent advocates too (see below), to make sure their voices are heard.
- When a child or young person is taken into care, services will work with the family and the child or young person to do everything possible to help the family be able to come back together, if it is possible to help the family support the child or young person to thrive. Children and young people will be listened to if they say they don't want to go home, and their wishes and feelings will be considered. When children and young people do go home professionals will check in regularly to make sure everything is going well and help if needed.
- When children and young people are taken into care, they will be supported to stay in touch with their birth family if this is possible. Their views about contact with their birth family will be listened to and acted on if possible. No child or young person will be pressured into contact that they do not want.
- When children and young people are taken into care professionals will continue to work with the family. This is important because these families may have more children, and because when care experienced young people are old enough, they often want to be in touch with, and sometimes live with, their birth families.



- When care experienced people become parents they will be helped and supported to look after their babies and children. Babies and children will never be subject to child protection action just because their mother or father is care experienced.
- When children and young people are taken into care, they will all have a fully independent advocate to help them get their voices heard when decisions are being made about them and their care. They will be able to stay in touch with their advocate if they wish, so they do not have to keep explaining things over and over.
- When children and young people are taken into care, they will be able to stay close to their family and friends in their own communities and their own schools. They will only be sent far away if they are in danger or at risk.
- Everyone working to support care experienced children and young people will understand that being taken into care throws children and young people into trauma/crises. We as a nation need to understand how trauma affects us as individuals and as a community.
- There will be more foster carers, so children and young people who are taken into care can find the right people to take care of them straight away. Care experienced children and young people will not have to move time and time again, from home to home.
- When foster carers are recruited care will be taken to ensure that they have the right values and behaviours to support children and young people to grow and thrive.
- Foster carers will be trained to understand trauma and how it effects children and young people. They will get regular training and support.
- Foster carers will be trained to support all children and young people. They will understand the different needs of children and young people with protected characteristics and know how to support them.
- Foster carers will all be paid fairly. Kinship carers will not be paid less, and cares will not be paid more if the child or young person they are looking after is 'difficult.' Care experienced children and young people will not be labelled like that.

- There will be enough staff with the right values, skills, and experience to support care experienced children and young people. They will be provided with all the training and support they need and will show empathy and understanding at all times. Care experienced children and young people will be able to access support when they need it, not just between 9 and 4 on weekdays.
- If foster care is not right for a care experienced child or young person there will be a range of options available to them so they can live a life that suits their needs.
- Children and young people living in residential settings will have the same rights as children living in foster care.
- Care experienced young asylum seekers will be supported in ways that work for them. They will have more access to interpreters to help them express their needs and do practical things like making appointments with the health service. Online translation doesn't always work.
- Care experienced young asylum seekers will have the same right to an education as every other child and young person. They will be supported to learn English quickly and will be able to decide whether face to face or online learning works for them.
- They will be able to learn life skills to help them understand the community they are living in, and if, they are old enough, will be able to undertake work experience placements to help them find work when they are able to.
- Care experienced young asylum seekers will have the same support as that which is provided to other care experienced children and young people. They will be supported to develop lasting relationships with adults they can trust. They will have the same support wherever in Wales they are looked after. They will receive the same financial support as other care experienced children and young people.
- Professionals working with care experienced children and young people will communicate well with each other. For example, social workers will make sure schools know about changes for a child or young person. Children and young people will never have to explain these things themselves, and they won't have to keep telling their stories over and over again.





- Organisations that plan and provide care will not make lots of money and give that money to the people who own the organisations. All the money that is spent to provide care for children and young people will be used to provide that care and to make that care better. No child or young person will be left without a home that is right for them if their care home closes or changes because of this, and all the money saved by not paying profits will stay in the system to care for children and young people.
- If children and young people raise concerns about how they are being cared for they will be listened to and believed. There will be a proper investigation of their concerns. Children and young people will never be left in placements when they have said they feel unhappy or uncared for.
- Care experienced children and young people will be supported to take part in activities in their communities, including youth work opportunities. Youth workers will be trained to understand the challenges that care experienced young people may face and will know how to support them.
- Schools and colleges, and everyone who works in them, will really understand care experienced children and young people. They will know that they might need extra support sometimes to learn and be happy, and schools and colleges will make sure they get that support. They will understand that care experienced children and young people often experience discrimination because of stigma, and they will work hard to bring that stigma to an end.
- Care experienced children and young people will do as well at school and college as other children and young people, getting good qualifications and access to opportunities.
- Care experienced young people will be just as likely to go to university as any other young person.
- Care experienced young people will be just as likely to get an apprenticeship and a good job as any other young person.
- All care experienced young people will be supported by their corporate parents until they are 25. There will be support available to those young people who want it after that age.
- All care experienced young people will be able to stay with their foster carers until they are 25 if they choose, and there will be enough money for the foster carers to carry on supporting them. Young people who are living in residential care when they reach 18 will be supported to continue to live in the community near the Home if they want to and be able to stay in touch with staff and turn to them for support.
- Young people leaving care will begin to learn to live independently long before they have to do so. They will be supported to plan for the future they want, and that support will be there for them for as long as they need it. They will not be made to live independently until they are ready.

- No care experienced young person will ever be homeless when they leave care. They will be supported to find not just anywhere to live but a comfortable home where they can learn to be independent and happy. They will be supported to keep that home. They will never be evicted if they have nowhere to go. They will be supported until they can manage.
- Young people in care and young people leaving care will be no more likely than any other young person to get in trouble with the law. If they do end up in trouble with the law, they will be treated exactly the same as any other young person. If they end up in prison, they will continue to be supported so that when they leave, they can find a home and have a chance to start again.
- Care experienced children and young people will be able to get help to support their mental health whenever they need it, as soon as they need it.
- They will never lose support when they become 18 and move to adult services. Professionals will make sure that children and young people, and their carers know what support is available and how to get it.
- How well care experienced children and young people are cared for and supported will never depend on where they live.
- People who decide things about care experienced children and young people's lives will know them and understand them. They will meet them often and they will listen to them and act on what they say.

Welsh Government and Young Ambassadors

This is just the beginning of the Vision. This is a living, growing Vision. It will grow as we work with and listen to more care experienced children and young people and those who work with them and support them now. We will learn more. There will be more things that we can make better, and more ideas as to how to do that.

The principle behind everything that we have set out and will set out in the Vision as it grows, is that care experienced children and young people should have the same chances as every other child or young person to have their rights (as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and therefore in the Welsh Government's Children and Young People's Action Plan) realised.

The Commitment

Young Ambassadors and Welsh Government

We have learned from each other today. We know that there are good things being done to provide good services for care experienced children and young people and we can learn from and build on these. We know that the changes needed to deliver on the Vision, and grow it, are huge.

We know that not everything can change overnight, but we also know that things can change quickly when everyone works together.

We trust each other to play our part in making those changes. Below we set out our commitments to the next steps.

Welsh Government

These are our commitments:

1. Delivering the Vision will be one of our main priorities – one of the things that is most important to us – in the next four years.

2. We will work closely with everyone who currently delivers services for care experienced children and young people to work out how we will deliver the Vision.

3. We will help them do it and we will make sure they do it.

4. We will make sure that delivering the Vision is placed at the heart of all actions to deliver the Children and Young People’s Plan.

5. We will make sure that all Welsh Government Ministers who are not here today meet with care experienced children and young people to help them understand how their portfolios can support Welsh Government to deliver the Vision.

6. We will put in place systems to make sure we keep checking on whether the Vision is being delivered and how.

7. We will make sure that there are enough staff, with the right values, training and skills, to support the delivery of the Vision. We will make sure that they are fairly paid and supported so that they will stay in their jobs.

8. Where we need to, we will change the law, so that organisations supporting care experienced children and young people will have to provide the right services and support. If they do not, we will support care experienced children and young people to use the law to make sure that they do.

9. We will make sure that every child or young person who is care experienced has their rights realised and duly acted upon wherever they live in Wales.

10. We will work closely with care experienced children and young people, and those organisations which support them to have their voices heard and to ensure that Vision is being delivered. We will listen to them and act on what they tell us. We will work with them to grow the Vision and to make sure that we truly deliver radical reform to improve the outcomes and eradicate all stigma associated with our care community in Wales.

11. We will meet again with care experienced children and young people in 12 months at a Follow Up Summit to review the progress on delivering this very exciting Vision.

Young Ambassadors

We speak here for the care experienced community. It may not be us as individuals, but there will be many, many others who will commit with us to taking this journey with Welsh Government to ensure that the rights of care experienced children and young people are fully

realised in our nation, and that the experiences of the next generation of care experienced children and young people are better than many of ours. We are proud of what we have already done and are looking forward to helping deliver big changes – radical reform.

These are our commitments:

1. We will continue to work with Welsh Government to grow the Vision, working with care experienced children and young people and those who work to support them.

2. We will meet with those Ministers who were unable to be present at the Summit to support them in developing an understanding of how their portfolios can contribute to delivering the Vision.

3. We will work with Welsh Government to share the Vision with all those responsible for delivering services to care experienced children and young people and to help them understand the Vision. This will enable them to work to deliver services that we can all be proud of, ensuring children and young people in their care are not part of a system that does not appear to care, building services that help us develop long-lasting, loving relationships. We will work with our collective corporate parents and with our corporate grandparents, our Ministers, our Government.

4. We will continue to work with care experienced children and young people throughout our nation to ensure that their experiences and ideas are fed into the growth of the Vision and all subsequent work to ensure that the Vision is co-delivered with children and young people remaining at the heart of the journey.

5. We will meet with Welsh Ministers in 12 months at a Follow up Summit to review progress on delivering our Vision.

We will work with Welsh Government on the basis of trust and mutual respect enshrined in the UNCRC, setting out the key principles of a children’s rights approach that will be central to this incredibly important and historic journey. Some of us are concerned that we might do this work and change may still not happen. But we believe in the good intentions of Welsh Government and the commitment and dedication of our First Minister, Mark Drakeford. We thank him for his strong commitment to improving our lives and our futures, and those of future generations. Because of his commitment, and that of other Ministers across Welsh Government, we believe that, this time, radical reform can truly be delivered.

Signed on behalf of the Welsh Government:

Signed on behalf of the care experienced Young Ambassadors:

Young Ambassador

Young Ambassador

Young Ambassador

Young Ambassador

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

18TH JULY 2023

RADICAL REFORM: IF NOT NOW, THEN WHEN?

REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR G CAPLE

Author: Annabel Lloyd

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides information to Corporate Parenting Board about the report by the Welsh Parliament's Children, Young People and Education Committee following inquiry linked to the Welsh Government's commitment to explore radical reform of current services for children looked after and care leavers as part of the Programme for Government.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board:

- 2.1 Note the information.
- 2.2 Receive an updated report when Government's decisions about the recommendations are known.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Children's Services are providing information about a report that is closely linked to Corporate Parenting Board's responsibilities and will likely influence next steps in policy development and delivery of services.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The report notes the inquiry's methods as having:

- Launched a consultation (which received 47 responses + 7 additional pieces of evidence).
- Spoken to as many care experienced young people and birth parents as we could, and to professionals who work with them.
- Heard from 13 panels of witnesses during Committee meetings

4.2 The table below summarises the key points in the report. The report itself can be found at: [If not now, then when? Radical reform for care experienced children and young people \(senedd.wales\)](#)

Issue	High Level Summary	Recommendation
Workload	Children's services social workers' caseloads (the number of children and families they work with at the same time) are much too high.	Legislate to place a duty on local authorities to calculate maximum safe caseloads for children's services social workers
Discrimination, stigma and corporate parenting	Time and time again, children and young people with care experience said that they are treated differently, in a negative way, to other children.	Make 'care experience' a protected characteristic under section 4 of the Equality Act 2010.
Support for Mental Health	There was a lot of evidence telling us concerns about the mental health of care experienced children and young people.	As part of umbrella reforms to corporate parenting, provide a statutory entitlement to trauma-informed therapeutic care for all care experienced children.
Data collection	Senedd researchers looked at the information available about the care system, care experienced children, and social services. They found that there are big gaps in data in Wales.	Place formal data collecting duties on all relevant public bodies, third sector and independent providers to collect comprehensive data on at least an annual basis relating to the care system, and at least quarterly relating to the social care workforce.
The challenges facing care experienced	A very high number of care experienced young people have one or more of their own children taken into care.	The statutory right to intensive, wrap-around edge-of-care support for all care experienced birth parents to reduce the risk of children being removed from their care, including

birth parents		specialist parental advocacy to navigate the social care and family courts systems.
Common reasons why children are being taken into care	<p>Research shows that domestic violence, substance misuse, mental health and learning disabilities are all part of the complex picture of why children in Wales are going into care.</p> <p>During evidence gathering, poverty was the most common reason given for children being removed from their parents.</p>	<p>Extend across the country and on a universal basis successful edge of care services, such as Barnardo's Baby & Me, which have been shown to increase the chance of children being able to stay with their birth parents.</p> <p>Subject to a successful full evaluation, roll out the problem-solving court model (The Family Drug and Alcohol Court model, or 'FDAC') across Wales.</p>
Being heard and advocacy for birth parents in the child protection system	<p>One of the main messages from the birth parents spoken to was that they are not listened to and that they are not involved in decision making throughout the child protection system. Many said that care proceedings confused them.</p> <p>The inquiry committee (the committee) heard a number of stories about birth parents having to attend court proceedings remotely from the hospital just hours after giving birth, and often struggling to get support for their own wellbeing</p>	<p>The statutory right to an 'active offer' of an independent support worker when the child is placed on the child protection register or made subject to pre-proceedings to support them to access early intervention services and navigate the social care and family court system. If a child is ultimately removed from their birth parents, the support should continue beyond the child's removal to signpost the birth parents to services that can help them come to terms with their loss.</p>
Residential parenting assessment	<p>The committee was shocked by the experiences of many of the birth parents spoken to who had been placed in a residential family assessment centre. The</p>	<p>That Welsh Government should commission an independent review into the efficacy and availability of parenting assessment</p>

placements and parent and child foster placements	committee is not convinced that these assessments need to be carried out in a way which takes away so much of birth parents' privacy. Based on what was heard, the committee is not surprised that some parents say these placements are deeply traumatising.	placements. The review should consider the ethics, utility and value for money of both residential placements, and parent and child foster placements, and identify what changes can be made to improve the process for families, and any barriers that need to be overcome to take those steps. The independent review should report no later than December 2023.
Being heard and the 'active offer' of advocacy	Many young people said that young people in care are not listened to, or given an opportunity to be involved in decisions about their lives.	<p>Give children in care and care leavers a statutory right to long-term advocacy support via an assigned advocate on an 'opt-out' basis.</p> <p>That the Welsh Government make residential visiting advocacy a condition of registration for residential care homes for children in Wales.</p> <p>The Welsh Government should also work with UK governments to ensure that every child domiciled outside Wales but placed in a Welsh residential care home is offered an individual advocate too.</p>
Foster Care	As of 31 March 2022, 69.4% of children in care were in foster care. However, the committee heard that there are not enough good quality foster placements,	Mandate all foster carers to register directly with Social Care Wales, in line with other roles that have significant daily contact with

	<p>and that local authorities are struggling to find suitable placements to meet the needs of children and young people.</p> <p>The idea behind the online database of fostering placements provided by the '4Cs' is thought to be a really good one. However, the database is clearly not working as effectively as it could.</p>	<p>children, and create a national register of all fostering placements and approved foster carers across both the local authority and independent sectors.</p> <p>That the Welsh Government carry out a review of the 4Cs' database with the input of front line practitioners as soon as possible and alongside the establishment of a national register for foster carers.</p>
Schools	<p>Education services are a corporate parent, and have a responsibility to promote educational achievement of children in care, to safeguard them and to promote their well-being</p>	<p>That the Welsh Government consults with Estyn and other key stakeholders to examine the most recent attainment results relating to care experienced children, find out how well schools are following the Welsh Government's guidance, and how the Welsh Government and others will improve the school experiences of care experienced children.</p>
Kinship Care	<p>The committee understands the calls from some for kinship carers to be given the same levels of support - financial or otherwise - as foster carers.</p>	<p>That the Welsh Government consults care experienced children and young people, kinship carers, third sector organisations, local governments and others to better understand the extent to which kinship care is being increasingly used as an alternative to placing children in foster or residential care, the experiences of children in kinship care, and the support needs of kinship carers. As part of</p>

		that work, the Welsh Government should explore the potential of amending by regulations the criteria that kinship carers are required to meet to be entitled to the same financial support as foster carers.
Unregistered and unregulated placements	<p>The committee is very worried by the evidence received about the use of unregistered accommodation, the use of some types of unregulated accommodation, the rise in deprivation of liberty orders, and the rates of children in care who go missing.</p> <p>The children and young people who are affected by these issues are likely to be some of the most vulnerable children in the country. Many will have experienced very high levels of trauma, neglect, and abuse.</p>	<p>That the Welsh Government and the Association of Directors of Social Services must jointly publish no later than December 2023 an action plan setting out how they will prevent the use of illegal, unregistered accommodation in Wales.</p> <p>That the Welsh Government should carry out and publish an analysis of the use of unregulated accommodation across Wales for children in care and care leavers up to the age of 21. The analysis should identify the numbers of children and young people in unregulated accommodation, and clearly break that down between accommodation that it considers to provide quality accommodation and support, and accommodation that does not. Once complete, the Welsh Government should set out its policy position in relation to unregulated accommodation.</p> <p>That the Welsh Government should carry out an immediate analysis of the use of</p>

		Deprivation of Liberty Orders across Wales for the past 24 months, broken down by local authority which has responsibility for the child, age of the child and the length of the order, and which should be published no later than December 2023. The Welsh Government and the Association of Directors of Social Services should jointly publish no later than December 2023 an action plan setting out how they will reduce the use of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards.
Running Away	The Committee heard that some care experienced children and young people feel that they have no choice but to use unhealthy, unsafe or dangerous behaviour to be listened to. Running away may be a call for help, a last resort, or something else entirely. But it is also dangerous, placing the child at risk of significant harm or exploitation.	That the Welsh Government should respond to the concerns raised by NYAS Cymru in oral evidence on 15 February 2023, and by the Children's Society in their written response to our consultation, in relation to incidents of children missing from care. It should set out clearly its expectations of local authorities, the police, and other statutory partners in their response to incidents of missing children, and its views on their calls for statutory return home interviews.
Reforms to the on-going support young people receive when	The committee heard that some young people have positive experiences of leaving care. They had learnt some life skills, and had been able to go to university or do apprenticeships. However, most of the things we heard show that young people in care in Wales	Extend the threshold for statutory support provided to all care leavers by the local authority from 21 to 25, as is currently provided to care leavers in education or training.

<p>they leave care</p>	<p>face a cliff edge of support when they turn 18. The committee heard that, in reality, the level of support they receive after turning 18, and certainly after turning 21, is very low, or completely non-existent, and that many young people feel that they have nobody to turn to. They also heard that some very vulnerable young people are housed in accommodation without support, some turn to alcohol or drugs, or even become involved in unlawful activities. They heard many times that care leavers should be supported for longer after they turn 18. Some said that all care leavers should be supported until they are 25. Others said that it should depend on the person.</p> <p>The committee heard calls for When I am Ready to be changed to help more young people stay in foster carers. They also heard that the age limit for leaving foster care under the scheme should be raised to 25 for all young people, not just those in education or training.</p> <p>The committee believes that all children in care should be entitled to the same fundamental levels of support, including children in residential care. However, they acknowledge that extending When I am Ready to children in residential care will probably be complicated, and might have unintended consequences.</p>	<p>Amend the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, fostering regulations and codes of practice and guidance relating to When I am Ready to extend the age limit for all young people who wish to participate in the scheme to 25, and to remove the financial and operational barriers that foster carers face when providing When I am Ready services.</p> <p>That the Welsh Government should carry out a review alongside care experienced young people and other key stakeholders to ascertain how When I am Ready can be extended to young people in residential care, the barriers to that extension and what actions can be taken to overcome those barriers. The review should report no later than December 2023.</p>
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<p>Housing and homelessness</p>	<p>The committee heard from lots of young people that finding safe, appropriate accommodation is a really big problem when they leave care. Some young people are put in accommodation which made them feel unsafe, such as emergency hostels, B&Bs and other accommodation with no on-site support. Professionals said that there is a big shortage of good quality housing and some even called it a “major crisis”.</p> <p>Young people said that they struggle to get hold of their YPA, or that they don’t offer them the support they need. One young person said she had been put on an ‘unallocated list’, and had to call the main office to ask for any YPA support on a duty rota basis. Some of the professionals spoken to had similar views. They also said that the law isn’t clear enough about what exactly YPAs are responsible for.</p>	<p>As part of umbrella reforms to corporate parenting, give care leavers priority in housing allocations and give care experienced people up to the age of 25 “priority need” status when homeless.</p> <p>That the Welsh Government carry out a review of Young Person’s Advisors in Wales, considering the concerns set out in the main report about YPAs and pathway plans, and the likely impacts of the reforms in the report for YPAs.</p> <p>As part of umbrella reforms to corporate parenting, place duties on the newly formed Commission for Tertiary Education to promote tertiary education to care experienced people.</p>
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5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out in relation to this specific report, as it is for information only.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Likewise, a Welsh Language Impact Assessment has not been carried out.

7 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 Professionals, young people and parents with experience of the services took part in the inquiry itself.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 The work outlined in this report is delivered within children's services budgeted resources.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

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

- 10.1 The implementation of any future reforms will make a positive contribution towards the Council's Corporate Plan Vision of '*a County Borough that has high aspirations, is confident and promotes opportunity for all*'; as it will deliver against the specific priorities of '*People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone and Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work*'.

- 10.2 It will also help the Council to meet three of the seven wellbeing goals that The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' puts in place as follows:

- A more equal Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities

- 10.3 The proposed changes are also consistent with the sustainable approach promoted by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act through the five ways of working:
- 10.4 Long-term – the recommendations seek to make a long-term difference to children’s lives, the way we work with families and the Council’s resources.
- Prevention – the recommendations are fundamentally focused upon strengthening the support provided to children and families to keep them together.
 - Integration – the recommendations will require improved integration of social care and mental health service delivery to children.
 - Collaboration – the recommendations will require collaboration with statutory and non-statutory service providers, and families.
 - Involvement – Implementing the recommendations will require the involvement of children, families and staff.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 Corporate Parenting Board have been informed about the recommendations arising from the inquiry into radical reform of children’s services
- 11.2 When government announces its response and intentions in relation to the recommendations, children’s services will update Corporate Parenting Board alongside any next steps that are required in this local authority.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

18TH JULY 2023

RADICAL REFORM: If Not Now, Then When?

**REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN
DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER,
COUNCILLOR G CAPLE**

Officer to contact: Annabel Lloyd

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