



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

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

19 March 2024 at 10.30 am

Contact: Hannah Jones – Council Business Unit (07385 401954)

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

Note:

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

2. MINUTES

To approve, as an accurate record, the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board meeting held on 30th January 2024.

(Pages 5 - 12)

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

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

(Pages 13 - 18)

4. ALNET ACT AND ALN CODE FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

To receive an update on the implementation of the ALNET (Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal) Wales Act (2018) and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code 2021 for Children Looked After with an ALN in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

(Pages 19 - 30)

5. TROS GYNNAL PLANT CYMRU

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

(Pages 31 - 40)

6. QUALITY OF CARE REVIEW - FOSTER WALES RCT REPORT

To receive the Quality of Care Review – Foster Wales RCT report.

(Pages 41 - 68)

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

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

8. REGULATION 73 REPORTS

To receive an update on the Regulation 73 visits and the current position within RCT’s Residential Children’s Homes and Respite Service.

(Pages 69 - 134)

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

To receive an update in relation to the Children Looked After: Residential Care Strategy 2022 – 2027

(Pages 135 - 144)

10. URGENT BUSINESS

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

Circulation:

County Borough Councillors:

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

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL
CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on Tuesday, 30 January 2024
at 1.30 pm.

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

County Borough Councillors – The following Councillors were present:

Councillor R Lewis Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor S Hickman Councillor S Rees

Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion
Ms A Lloyd, Service Director, Children's Services
Ms C Miles, Childcare Solicitor
Ms J Thomas, Complaints & QA Manager, Social Services
Ms L Hawkins, Virtual School Head Teacher
Mr J Welch, Lead for Wellbeing
Mr L Lewis, Acting Head of the Youth Offending Service

28 Welcome and Apologies

The Vice-Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board and noted that apologies for absence had been received from the Chair of the Board, Councillor G Caple and the Director of Social Services.

29 Declaration of Interest

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

30 Minutes

To approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on the 2nd October 2023.

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

The Lead for Wellbeing and Vulnerable Groups – Central South Consortium and the Virtual School Head Teacher provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on the evaluation of the school cluster model for the Pupil Development Grant for Looked After Children (PDG LAC) funding during the financial year 2022/23 in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Members were provided with background in terms of the grant allocation process and it was advised that for 2022-23, the overall PDG LAC allocation for the consortium was allocated as follows:

- Salary for Regional Lead based in Central South Consortium;
- Support for CLA pupils placed outside of Wales;
- Local Authority delegated Bursary Grant;
- Training calendar provided to school staff; and
- School to school working through the cluster plans.

Officers informed the Board that Post 16 destinations for RCT CLA learners continued to be a priority for the Virtual School and the close links were maintained with the Care 2 Work Team, the Youth Engagement and Participation Service, colleges and training providers.

In terms of the PEP process, Members were informed that there had been an increase in numbers of pupils attending their PEP reviews. It was explained that the PEP process is person-centered and includes what is important to and for the child/young person, what is working/not working and aspirations for the future. Further work needed to be completed to ensure all younger pupils know what a PEP is and that all pupils are engaged in the PEP process. It was added that the main drawback of the evaluation was the lack of foster carer engagement, which needed to be improved for the future.

One Member sought clarification on the lack of foster carer engagement. The officer acknowledged the concerns and explained that the pandemic had had a negative impact but assured the Board that there had been improved engagement with foster carers following the period covered within the report. The officer stated that there was a need for the virtual school to be more involved with pioneering classes for foster carers; and as such, Members learned that the officers would be presenting in respect of the virtual school at the Fostering Wellbeing Programme Annual Conference in February to reach a wider audience. The officer also informed the Board of a CLA celebration event, which took place in November 2023 and spoke positive of the engagement with foster carers who had put forward their foster children for awards and attended to support them.

The Chair thanked the officers for the detailed presentation and was pleased to note that the Pupil Deprivation Grant for Looked After Children was being used to assist those most vulnerable in the County Borough with particular emphasis on wellbeing. The Chair welcomed the use of the funding by schools to broaden expertise and skills in the particular area and spoke positive of the post-16 emphasis.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the information contained within this report;
2. To comment on the information provided; and
3. To receive a further report to evaluate the PDG LAC cluster model for 2023/24.

Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on the progress made during the period July – September 2023.

Members were informed that, during the period, 61 young people accessed Issue Based Advocacy; and of the 61 presenting with 72 issues. 19 were care experienced, which was a vast increase in comparison to the previous quarter of 8 care experienced young people. Of the 19 young people, 9 were accessing Issue Based Advocacy for the first time. During the period, 11 young people had been referred for the Active Offer and all apart from 1 became eligible in the quarter or the previous quarter.

Members learned that, during the period, 23 Care Experienced young people became eligible for the Active Offer, 10 of those offers were rejected, 9 became eligible for the service in the quarter and 2 were not referred as it was felt they could not consent.

Members were pleased to note that 39% of eligible young people were referred for Active Offer compared to the 25% in the previous quarter.

It was advised that the most popular issues were placement and contact issues with most young people wanting to spend more time with family members or friends; and the most popular referral type was self-referral, which was often as a result of a successful active offer meeting.

Members were then provided with a case example, which highlighted the positive work of the advocacy service.

Prior to concluding, Tros Gynnal Plant Cymru provided the Board with an update on the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Independent Visitor Service for the period April – September 2023. There had been 3 children and young people referred into the service but there were no current matches within RCT at present. Members learned that the intention was to pool resources where possible to grow the service area and to continue to recruit volunteers before promoting the service, in order to avoid long waiting times for young people.

The Chair thanked Tros Gynnal Plant Cymru for the informative report and praised the use of accessible data and case studies to gain further insight into the valuable work of the advocacy service. In terms of trends, the Chair questioned if the previous quarters had demonstrated a similar increase in those accessing the service, to which Tros Gynnal Plant Cymru confirmed and advised that there would likely be another increase in quarter 3.

One Member was encouraged by the increase in user figures of the advocacy service and questioned if there was a reason behind the increase in younger children and increase in girls using the service. Tros Gynnal Plant Cymru advised that there was no explanation and that the data tends to change between quarters.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To acknowledge the work undertaken by TGP Cymru.

33 Vale, Valley & Cardiff Regional Adoption Annual Report 2022-23

The Service Director of Children's Services provided the Corporate Parenting Board with information in respect of the performance of the Regional Adoption

Collaboration (RAC) Board.

The Vale, Valleys, and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) as part of the National Adoption Service in Wales (NAS), provides a regional adoption service to the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Cardiff Council and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council. Members' attention was drawn to the VVC's seventh annual report, which covered the period 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2022.

Overall, the Service Director advised that the service performance had been positive with good governance arrangements in place. The Service Director was pleased to note that RCT had been a great supplier of adopters and was ahead of Cardiff; and that RCT was a leader in Welsh early permanence. The Service Director took the opportunity to commend the work by practitioners and most importantly, the adopters for coming forward.

The Service Director continued and drew the Board's attention to the 72% matched in region; and the 90% performance in life journey work, emphasising the importance of supporting adopters with the critical and attachment development work.

The Service Director spoke positive of the reduction in rate of service referrals for RCT, which was linked to the evidence-based family support work.

As an Adoption Panel Member, one Councillor was pleased to note the number of RCT residents coming forward to adopt and praised their quality and commitment to the children. The Member was also pleased to note that there had been no disruptions to the adoption process reported during the period and spoke of how upsetting it can be for both the adopter and the child involved. The Member also took the opportunity to praise the quality of the later life letters.

The Chair echoed earlier comments and was pleased to note the increase in the approved pool of adopters in the region. However, the Chair recognised the need to reduce the waiting list for referrals for those most in need and the need for more adopters for children with more complex needs. The Chair noted from the report, that the region had not experienced a marked reduction in referrals for adoption as apparent in other areas and sought an explanation. The Service Director advised that during the pandemic, there was a noticeable dip in adoption referrals and that in some areas, there had been a continued reduction. It was explained that it differs from area to area due to the distance travelled, in terms of family support proposals and the culture run practice in each area. The Service Director advised that an ambition in RCT was to give families more choice and if it is deemed not safe for a child to remain with their family, the next option was to look to relatives for placements, which was not the case in all regions.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and the Corporate Parenting Board

RESOLVED:

1. To note the information.

34 Participation Update for Care Experienced Children and Young People

The Participation Officer updated Members on the quarterly progress achieved in taking forward the implementation plan as part of the Participation Strategy 2023-

2026 and provided feedback on the participation activities Children's Services have held in the last quarter.

The officer drew Members' attention to section 3 of the report, which detailed several initiatives which all had the aim of encouraging the voice of the care experienced children and young people. One initiative was for the young people to better engage with the Board and learn of what it represents.

Members were also informed that a draft Corporate Parenting Board Pledge for RCT had been prepared, that builds on Welsh Government's 'Corporate Parenting Board Charter- A Promise from Wales'. The draft pledge would be presented to a future Cabinet meeting for approval, prior to sharing with the Corporate Parenting Board. This builds on the voice and participation work in RCT from September 2022 to the present for care experienced young people and how the Local Authority develops its key priorities to engage and support care experienced children and young people in RCT.

One Member praised the work of the service and was fully in support of the pledge.

The Chair echoed the Member's comments in terms of the pledge. In relation to the participation strategy, the Chair felt that any work undertaken with the aim of amplifying the views of the young people was a positive and a great way to shape services. The Chair spoke of the opportunities highlighted in relation to the Corporate Parenting Board and welcomed the opportunity to engage with young people to demonstrate the work of the Board and its ambitions.

The Chair informed the Board that he was fortunate to attend a Children Looked After celebration event in 2023 and commented that it was fantastic to celebrate the achievements of the inspirational young people.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

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

35 Cwm Taf Youth Justice Service

The Head of the Cwm Taf Youth Justice Service updated the Corporate Parenting Board regarding the 'All Wales Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Children and Young People 2022' and provided updated local information regarding care experienced children in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Referring to the increase in numbers of children in the youth justice system, one Member queried whether the mental health implications following the pandemic had played a part, to which the officer agreed. It was explained that since the pandemic, children with more complex needs were entering the system and that there was a push for more health provision in terms of both CAMHS and health visitors. Members were pleased to learn that an additional resource of a CAMHS worker had been appointed in-house for one day per week, which would assist practitioners with informing any intervention plans going forward.

The Chair acknowledged the after affects of the pandemic and sought further information in respect of first-time entrants to the system. The officer advised that it was a similar position across Wales and that following a recent piece of

work undertaken, which investigated first-time entrants, it was discovered that during past 12 months, the seriousness of the offences meant the service had not been diverting as well as they had previously. It was explained that children were going straight through to the statutory part of the service and becoming subject to referral orders. The officer assured the Board that further clarity would be provided at a future meeting following further analysis of the numbers.

The Chair acknowledged the over-representation of care experienced young people in the criminal justice system and emphasised the importance of challenging early criminalisation due to the detrimental impact it has on future prospects. The Chair welcomed further reports and the opportunity to invite partner agencies to a future meeting.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To acknowledge the publication of the report;
2. To receive further reports in due course in order to be updated on local/regional data and how progress and improvements made contributes to better outcomes for care experienced children; and
3. To invite to relevant partner agencies on their use of the All Wales protocol and any service developments planned or currently in place that promotes practice that reduces unnecessary criminalisation of care experienced children.

36 To consider passing the following under-mentioned Resolution:

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

37 Update in relation to the Children Looked After: Residential Care Strategy 2022-2027

The Service Director of Children's Services provided the Corporate Parenting Board with information about children in settings known as Operating without Registration (OWR), and Children's Services plans for supporting those children, and ending those arrangements.

Following consideration of the exempt report, the Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To acknowledge the information contained within the report; and
2. To receive subsequent reports until such time as there are no OWR situations for Rhondda Cynon Taf looked after young people.

38 Social Services Complaints and Compliments

The Service Improvement, Engagement & Complaints Manager provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the operation of effectiveness of the statutory Social Services complaints procedure between 1st April 2023 – 30th September 2023.

The report contained information on the number of complaints received, the nature of the complaints and any lessons learnt, as well as detailing Councillor, A.M and M.P enquiries and the number of complaints received.

During discussions, Members were in favour of receiving reports on a six monthly basis going forward.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the contents of the report and the work undertaken by the Complaints Unit.

This meeting closed at 3.00 pm

**R Lewis
Chair**

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh

This page is intentionally left blank



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

19th March 2024

EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION & TRAINING

Author: Emma Brabon - Employment, Education & Training Team

1. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an update in respect of the Council's dedicated programmes to support care experienced young people into employment, education and training.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board:

- 2.1 Note the content of the report.

3. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To inform Members of the various employment, education and training programmes available for care experienced young people in RCT.

4. **PROGRAMMES**

4.1 **Step in The Right Direction**

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

Breakdown of Outcomes April'23 – March'24

Trainees recruited – 9

Internal Placements:

- Social Care Day Services – Llwynypia Learning Curves
- Dare Valley Country Park
- Vision Products
- Social Care Day Services – Café 50
- ICT – Front Line Support
- Parks – Ynysangharad Park
- Social Care Services – Aberdare Learning Curve

External Placements:

- Childcare - Rachel's Playhouse, Aberdare

Trainees securing employment in RCT Council – **2**
(ICT Apprentice and YEPS Apprentice)

Trainees entering further education – **1**
(USW – BA (Hons) Youth and Community Work)

Trainees still currently on placement – **5**

Trainees left due to personal reasons – **1**

4.2 Care2Work

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

Breakdown of Outcomes from April'23 – March'24:

Referrals – **101**
Secured Employment – **8**
Entered further education – **8**
Achieved a qualification – **18**
Completed a Care2Work Course – **21**
Work experience and volunteering – **9**
Currently still working with Care2Work – **16**
Did not engage – **21**

New Initiatives:

From September'23 Care2Work have linked with the Virtual School to offer all Year 10 and 11 pupils EET support. Visits arranged with DP's each academic term.

In April'24 Care2Work are working in partnership with Virtual School, USW and Cardiff Met Universities to deliver a Raising Aspirations Course for Year 10, 11, 12 and 13 pupils.

Care2Work Courses:

- Post 16 options
- Employability Skills
- Introduction to Construction
- Introduction to Hospitality
- Introduction to Sports Leadership and Coaching
- Introduction to Social Care
- Raising Aspirations
- Steps to Success
- Summer Employability Programme

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

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

6. CONSULTATION

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

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

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

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

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

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

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

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 The report seeks to inform the Corporate Parenting board of the outcomes of both Step in the Right Direction and Care2Work CLA programmes from April'23 – to date.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

19th March 2024

Officer to contact: Emma Brabon - Employment, Education & Training Team
(emma.brabon@rctcbc.gov.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

19TH MARCH 2024

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

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

AUTHOR(S): Ceri Jones, Head of Inclusion Services
Linda Hawkins, Headteacher Virtual School for Children looked After

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update to the Corporate Parenting Board on the implications of the ALNET (Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal) Wales Act (2018) and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code 2021 for Children Looked After with an ALN and to update the Board on the implementation of the above in Year 3 of the National ALN Implementation timetable in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the content of the report.
- 2.2 Consider whether any further information is required on any aspect of the report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 This is an information report.

4. BACKGROUND/WIDER CONTEXT

- 4.1 Following the enactment of the ALNET Act (2018) and the implementation of the associated statutory ALN Code (2021) in September 2021, local authorities (LAs) in Wales are currently in Year 3 of a phased national ALN Implementation Plan to move from the outgoing Special Educational Needs (SEN) system to the new ALN system.

- 4.2 The overarching aim of the ALN Code is: *‘To support the creation of a fully inclusive system where all children and young people are given the opportunity to success and have access to an education that meets their needs and enables them to participate in, benefit from, and enjoy learning’ (ALN Code 2021, Section 3:1).*
- 4.3 The new ALN legislative framework ensures that all children and young people from age 0–25 with an identified ALN will have a statutory Individual Development Plan (IDP) which sets out the additional learning provision (ALP) they will receive to address their identified ALN.
- 4.4 On 20th March 2023, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language, issued a written statement reporting on the increasing pressures highlighted to the Welsh Government by a range of stakeholders, including ALNCos, local authorities, special schools, headteachers, and other education and third sector organisations and the need to have more time to embed effective change. Consequently, the Minister decided to extend the implementation of the ALN Act from three years to four years with a deadline of September 2025 to fully implement the new ALN system. This means that children who were due to move to the ALN system in Year 3 between September 2023 and August 2024 as shown in Table 1 below will now move to the ALN system between September 2023 and August 2025. This will not affect timescales for the flow-through to Post 16 provision from September 2023.

Table 1: Implementation Phases of the ALNET Transformation Programme 2021-2024

Implementation phases	Transfer to ALN system for learners currently at School Action/School Action Plus (mandated year groups)	Transfer to ALN system for learners with statements of SEN (mandated year groups)
Year 1 2021/2022	Nursery, Y1, Y3, Y5, Y7, Y10	N/A
Year 2 2022/2023	Nursery, Y2, Y4, Y6, Y8, Y10, Y11	Nursery, Reception, Y6, Y10, Y11
Year 3 2023/2024	Nursery, Y2, Y4, Y6, Y8, Y10	Y2, Y3, Y4, Y5, Y6, Y8, Y9, Y10

- 4.5 Key factors of the ALN legislation that relate specifically to Children and Young People (CYP) who are looked after with ALN as opposed to those who are not looked after are summarised as follows:
- CYP who have an identified additional learning need and are looked after by Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) will have a LA maintained IDP; this includes CYP who reside out of county within Wales.
 - For CYP looked after in the area of a LA in England, schools are not required to compile an IDP as they are bound by the Special Needs and Disability (SEND) legislation and the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process. In such cases, RCT works with the individual LAs to encourage them to use our processes. Most out of county schools in England that the Virtual School currently works with are accommodating to the Welsh IDP process.

- CYP who are looked after by other LAs but attend a school within RCT, the ALN/IDP/EHCP responsibilities lie with the home authority that hold the Corporate Parenting duties for those CYP.
 - The IDP for CYP who are looked after must be incorporated into their Personal Education Plan (PEP). This allows for the child's ALP and wider educational provision to complement one another. It also facilitates a holistic approach to planning the child's care as the PEP forms part of the child's care and support plan, including matters relating to health, emotional and behavioural development. As such, the statutory IDP template for children looked after varies slightly to the general IDP template to dovetail with the PEP and avoid duplication.
 - The definition of a CYP looked after under the ALN legislation is different to that in the Social Services and Wellbeing (SSWB) (Wales) Act 2014, in particular a young person above compulsory school age who is looked after for the purposes of Part 6 of that 2014 Act is not looked after for the purposes of the ALN Code and ALNET Act.
- 4.6 Regardless of whether a CYP who is looked after is educated within or outside of the LA that looks after the CYP the Code states that the school where the child is registered has a duty to take all reasonable steps to help the LA secure the Additional Learning Provision (ALP) specified in the IDP.
- 4.7 All IDPs are subject to review in line with the Code - this has to be undertaken at least annually. However, in the case of a CLA LA maintained IDP it is recommended that the IDP review is undertaken alongside the PEP review as they are intrinsically linked within the new Act. This then allows for any changes in placement to be reflected in the ALP. The Virtual School advises that schools hold an initial PCP meeting (to discuss ALN, IDP and ALP) at the same time as the PEP meeting and hold an interim IDP review six months later at the same time as the statutory timescale of the PEP.
- 4.8 Depending on the circumstances, where the LA is responsible for maintaining an IDP for a CYP ceasing to become looked after and the CYP is a registered pupil at a maintained school or enrolled as a student at a further education college, the Virtual School supports the setting to consider the ALP they can provide to meet CYP's additional learning need(s) and as such the responsibility for the IDP transfers to the school or college.

5. LOCAL CONTEXT AND UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 Although the Act and the Code set out the statutory responsibilities of LAs, schools and the Health Board in relation to the new ALN system, each LA has developed their own processes and procedures to ensure that they can fulfil their new statutory duties.
- 5.2 **IDP and PEP Processes and Systems:** To ensure that the LA adheres to its statutory duties in relation to determining whether a CYP looked after has ALN or to ensure that those who already have an identified ALN have access to appropriate ALP via their IDP, schools and the LA must implement the agreed

process of holding a Person-Centred meeting with all stakeholders to facilitate a joint PEP and IDP meeting to discuss the CYP's needs.

- 5.3 RCT schools continue to utilise the interactive, electronic PEP (Part 1) and IDP (Part 2) tool during the Person-Centred Meeting for looked after CYP. In readiness for the academic year 2023/24 the Virtual School team revised the PEP to reflect a more person-centred approach. For example, the PEP now includes content that reflects the 'About Me Profile' that is included in the IDP for children who are not looked after. The content of the 'About Me Profile' focus specifically on the CYP from the perspective of the child and includes questions such as 'What people like and admire about me', 'What is important to me' and 'How best to support me'. The PEP also includes aspirational learning targets which are specific, measurable and relevant to a CYP's areas of need. A further update includes guidance for both in-county and out of county schools to determine whether Part 2 of the PEP/IDP Capture Tool needs to be completed – i.e. when an ALN has been identified.
- 5.4 Although it is the responsibility of the school to facilitate a PCP meeting, the Virtual School Team supports schools in facilitating PCP Meetings for CLA pupils attending Learning Support Classes, Special Schools and PRUs wherever possible. In the case of CLA pupils attending mainstream settings, the Virtual School Team may attend PCP Meetings for pupils who have recently transitioned to a new school or are transitioning from Year 6 to Year 7. Where CLA pupils have recently been excluded, whose attendance is causing concern or have a newly emerging ALN a member of the Virtual School Team will prioritise their PCP meeting.
- 5.5 The LA has specific responsibilities in relation to the PEP and the IDP for CYP who are looked after. To enable the Virtual School to have oversight of the progress made by individual CLA learners an improved system has been implemented during academic year 2023/24 to track pupil progress within the revised electronic PEP. This is done via a Microsoft Form link that has been included in the 'targets' section which requires the Designated Person for CLA who is completing the PEP to RAG rate the Language, Literacy and Communication, Mathematics and Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing targets set for the individual pupil. This now ensures that the Virtual School Team has data in terms of educational progress for CLA pupils over time. The Virtual School Team meet half termly to review this data and pupils highlighted as red or consistently amber are discussed in terms of what type of support and intervention can be offered to the schools in supporting the identified pupils.
- 5.6 All IDPs for CLA pupils are drafted and quality assured by central Access and Inclusion officers. A rigorous Quality Assurance process which takes place before the draft IDP is shared with the learner, parent/carer and school to ensure the ALP included in the IDP is appropriate to meet the identified needs of the pupil. The Virtual School Headteacher quality assures every CLA IDP. All contributing parties to the PCP/IDP process have five working days to respond to the draft IDP – either agreeing to its content or suggesting amendments. Following this period of consultation and any subsequent amendments being completed/agreed the final IDP should be issued within 12 weeks of the date the pupil was identified as potentially having an ALN.

- 5.7 As at the 18th January 2024, there are 459 CLA pupils of statutory school age. Despite all of these pupils requiring a PEP, only a small number will have an identified ALN and require a LA maintained IDP. All CLA learners who have a newly identified ALN will automatically fall within the remit of the new ALN legislation. For those with an existing special educational need (SEN) under the outgoing SEN system, they require transfer to the new ALN system when they are issued with their first LA maintained IDP in line with the national ALN four year implementation timetable. Table 2 below reports the SEN status of the current CLA cohort who will transfer to the ALN system:

Table 2: SEN status of CLA Statutory Aged Pupils as at 18th January 2024

Please note that in terms of ALN reforms we have two groups of pupils mandatory and non-mandatory depending on which group they are categorised within would impact on when they are required to transfer.

SEN/ALN status	RCT CLA pupils attending RCT provision	RCT CLA pupils attending OOC provision	RCT CLA pupils not attending a provision
School Action	10	5	0
School Action Plus	21	5	0
Statemented	28	16	3
Transferring from school based IDP to LA following BLA	4	0	0
LA maintained IDP	55	20	0
No SEN/No status recorded	224	64	10

- 5.8 During financial year 2023/24 up to end of Quarter 3, Access and Inclusion have issued 43 IDP's for CLA pupils who have been newly identified as having an ALN (ie these pupils were not previously on the SEN system)
- 5.9 **Drop-In sessions for schools to facilitate discussions regarding individual CLA pupils and their ALN:** Drop-in sessions were offered to the Designated Person's for CLA in April and May 2023. There were eight delegates at the April session and eight at the May session. Most Designated Persons brought two ALN cases to discuss at the sessions. All delegates said they had received the support they needed in terms of ALN and CLA, five delegates said that they felt the session supported them in the role of Designated Person for CLA, all Designated Persons felt they were more informed as to how to complete Part 2 of the IDP, that they had a clearer understanding of the PEP and IDP being one document and how to manage the timescales for reviews and that they would prefer the personnel from the Virtual School to visit the school and meet the individual pupils that they needed to discuss in terms of ALN; they found it very difficult to explain who the pupil was they wanted to discuss as they were unable to share names due to the session being a group session. As a result the Virtual School Team decided to carry out visits to schools on request in order to discuss individual pupils with ALN and provide Designated Persons ALN updates via the termly CLA Forums. Drop-In sessions for CLA and ALN are currently aimed at the Pioneer Fostering Group. The first of these sessions took place on the 30th January and the next

will take place on the 24th April. The Virtual School Team acted on feedback from the Designated Persons and have supported individual pupils with ALN through school visits. Interventions, guidance and support have ensured that these pupils have re-engaged in their learning, gained the support they need to progress and have continued to attend school after previously being at risk of permanent exclusion. Below are some examples:

Pupil	ALN concerns	Virtual school support	Impact
Pupil A	Unable to attend school due to high anxiety.	Online tuition, learning resources, IDP outlining ALP to reintegrate back to school.	Pupil A will be sitting his GCSEs at XXXX this summer.
Pupil B	ADHD	Specialist CLA EP support, funding for 1:1, Helping Hands transition Project.	Improved self-regulation, significantly improved learning attitude, increased self-esteem and a positive transition to Year 7
Pupil C	Trauma and attachment	Work carried out with foster carers – strategies for managing behaviour at home which was becoming evident at school.	Improved engagement in class, is now reading at home and school, improved relationships at home and school.
Pupil D	ASD	Ongoing education meetings, laptop loan, tuition, referral to panel for more appropriate education setting.	Attending well, reduced number of incidents recorded on internal behaviour tracker.

5.10 Supporting schools to undertake the IDP review process: The Virtual School Team have attended a large number of IDP review meetings (6-monthly) and advice and guidance has been provided to schools on completing the interim IDP review template. Where the team have attended formal, annual IDP reviews (12-monthly) advice and guidance has been provided on reviewing the appropriateness and relevance of the ALP on the IDP. When discussing pupil targets for 'Language, Literacy and Communication', 'Maths and Numeracy' and 'Health and Wellbeing' advice has been given to ensure the targets are the 'next steps in learning' and are reflected in both IDP and PEP. The Virtual School support schools in reflecting 'pupil-voice' by ensuring either the pupils are attending their PCP meeting or school staff have met with the pupils prior to the PCP meeting to speak to the individual pupils about their hopes and wishes. Person-Centred tools have been used to ascertain pupils' hopes and wishes. The Virtual

School Team ensures that all relevant stakeholders have been invited to the review meeting.

- 5.11 **PEP training** for the new PEP took place at CLA Forum in October 2023 and February 2024. Feedback was positive, although most Designated Persons are hoping that there will be no further changes to the PEP in the near future. 25 delegates attended the forum in October and we received 18 completed evaluations; of the 18, 12 reported that the training on the new PEP had completely addressed its stated objectives and 6 reported the stated objectives were almost addressed. Responses to the question 'How will the training impact your working practices?' included 'it will help me to review our PEP processes', 'it will encourage us to collaborate with the Secondary Schools during the transition PEP' and 'it will mean I am completing the PEP effectively and accurately'. 14 delegates attended the forum in February and feedback on the PEP training included 'a simple way of recording pupil progress is welcomed', 'I liked the wordcloud – this will really reflect the pupil' and 'great to see the PEP has been simplified but still captures the information needed in terms of CLA education'.
- 5.12 The impact the Virtual School expects to see from the new PEP training is that schools are RAG rating (RED – not achieved, AMBER – partially achieved GREEN – fully achieved) the three Areas of Learning and Experience (AOLEs): Language, Literacy and Communication (LLC), Maths and Numeracy (MN) and Health and Wellbeing (HWB); in order for the team to identify schools and pupils who may need support with learning and teaching. With there being more opportunity for individual pupils to contribute to their PEP meeting, we are also expecting to see a more holistic, pupil led approach to the completion of PEPs.
- 5.13 **Out of County Monitoring Protocol:** Due to concerns that some of our most difficult to reach learners with the most complex and challenging needs reside in out of county placements, the Virtual School has developed and implemented an Out of County Monitoring Protocol. This ensures a consistent approach to monitoring the quality of educational provision and enables the Virtual School to track the progress of individual pupils. All education settings are now required to submit either a termly monitoring proforma which is reviewed by the Virtual Headteacher or to attend a meeting with a member of the Virtual School Team to review pupil progress. Should any concerns be identified then actions will be agreed and progress against those actions closely monitored. Following Estyn feedback in January 2023, the protocol now includes pupil voice thus ensuring that the Virtual School takes a person- centred approach to its monitoring of provision.
- 5.14 **Post 16 ALN Provision:** The new statutory ALN duties for young people with ALN in the 19-25 cohort were enacted in September 2023 for those young people who transferred to the new ALN system by 30th August in line with the national ALN implementation timetable. As indicated above, YP above statutory school age cease to be considered as CLA for the purposes of the ALNET Act and ALN Code and there is no longer an automatic responsibility for the LA to maintain IDPs for those YP wishing to access post 16 educational provision. However, the Virtual School recognises the need to support the transition of

CLA learners with ALN into post 16 education and is working alongside the post-16 ALN Project Lead to implement new processes in line with legislation.

- 5.15 In line with the new ALN Code, consent to having an IDP is sought for all CLA pupils with ALN at post 16 (as it is for CYP who are not looked after) via the revised PEP. To ensure that all CLA pupils at post 16 are offered the opportunity to state their consent for an IDP, the Virtual School Team has shared advice with the Designated Person for CLA in schools on how consent can be ascertained for pupils with ALN, including those with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and/or are Visually/Hearing impaired. In these cases, the question 'How did the pupil communicate to you that they no longer wished to have an IDP?' needs to be recorded on the last page of the PEP.
- 5.16 Successful transition to post 16 education and training takes careful planning and involves a number of partners, especially for looked after CYP. They may need extra support and encouragement to make a successful transition to the Sixth Form, Further Education colleges or other post 16 provisions. The Virtual School Team works closely with the Education, Employment and Training Team in particular with the 'Care2Work' programme which provides CYP looked after, young people with care and support needs and care leavers aged 16-25 with encouragement and support to identify and access a range of training and employment opportunities.
- 5.17 The Virtual School continues to work closely with the Designated Officers for CLA across all four campus' of Coleg Y Cymoedd. In line with the ALN Code the LA, schools and colleges must wherever possible ensure young people are able to attend their post 16 education and training locally. A specialist post 16 college placement may be considered when a learner's needs are so complex that appropriate local provision cannot be found. Historically, there has been a small number of young people with significant and complex ALN from RCT accessing highly specialist college provision. However, with increased awareness of the new statutory 19-25 age range within the Act, together with the uncertainty that the transfer of funding responsibility from WG to LAs may bring, it is possible there will be an increase in the number of young people and their families expressing a preference to attend an Independent Specialist Post 16 Institution (ISPI). Consequently, a key workstream in the Access and Inclusion's Post 16 ALN Steering Group's Action Plan is the development of a graduated response to support learners with ALN in their local college in terms of universal and additional learning provision and thresholds for implementing college based and LA funded IDPs. 32 CLA learners with ALN are currently accessing their local Further Education college since September 2023. The Virtual School Headteacher is a member of the Access and Inclusion Post 16 ALN Forum and as such will ensure that all CLA pupils needing a specialist college at post 16 will be discussed at this forum.
- 5.18 On a wider basis, there is further scope for the LA (Education and Social Care departments) and local FEIs and Health Boards to work in partnership to explore opportunities to improve the local offer for young people and thus reduce the need for them to leave their community and local services. This is a complex area and requires time and financial commitments of all partners.

6. NEXT STEPS

During this academic year the Virtual School continues to support pupils, parents/carers and education settings to navigate the new ALN legislation by:

- Monitoring the effectiveness of the revised PEP within the PCP tool in enabling the Virtual School to track pupil progress and provide challenge where there are concerns regarding under performance.
- Improving performance in line with the local Performance Indicator for issuing CLA LA maintained IDPs in line with designated timescales to ensure appropriate provision is in place to support the pupil's progress.
- Supporting schools to undertake the IDP review process and quality assure the PCP meetings to ensure all relevant stakeholders are invited and that pupil-voice is intrinsic to the process. Challenge and support schools to ensure PCP protocols are being organised correctly.
- Providing the RCT Pioneer Fostering Group information on the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) ACT and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code.
- Supporting CLA learners with ALN to transition to post 16 ALN provision.
- Supporting schools in delivering their statutory responsibilities in terms of Corporate Parenting.
- Supporting schools in making trauma informed decisions – in particular decisions around exclusions of CLA pupils.
- Supporting schools to include CLA in school policies and as a regular agenda item in staff meetings. This includes the development of CLA Friendly classrooms.
- Continuing to arrange alternative education for CLA pupils who are not engaging in formal education.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 This is an information report.

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 This is an information report.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 This is an information report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 The legal requirements for children who are looked after who have special educational needs or an additional learning need are set down within the Education Act 1996, the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal

(ALNET) Act (Wales) 2018 and the associated statutory Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code (Wales) 2021.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

12. CONCLUSION

12.1 From 1st September 2021, RCT has been under a statutory duty to implement the national 3-year ALN implementation programme. To date, RCTCBC's Access and Inclusion Service has successfully implemented Year 2 and mid-point of Year 3 of the implementation programme for children who are looked after with additional learning needs.

12.2 The Access and Inclusion Service is committed to working collaboratively with all relevant stakeholders and partners to continue to meet the LA's statutory duties as set out in the new ALN legislation in relation to CYP who are looked after. An evaluation of key actions undertaken to implement the third year of transition from the SEN system to the ALN system will inform both strategic and operational priorities for the fourth and final year of the National Implementation Timetable in academic year 2024/25.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

19TH MARCH 2024

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

**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**

Officer(s) to contact:

Ceri Jones, Head of Inclusion Services

Linda Hawkins, Headteacher Virtual School for Children looked After



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

19TH MARCH 2024

TROS GYNNAL PLANT (TGP) CYMRU UPDATE

1. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

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

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board:

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

3. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

4. **BACKGROUND**

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

5. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

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

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 There is no consultation required for this report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

7.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

8.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

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

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

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

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

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

10. CONCLUSION

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

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

Quarter Three October 2023 – December 2023



Activity Overview

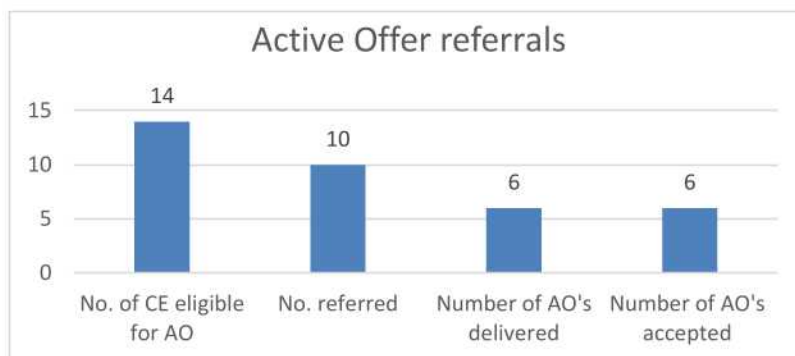
In quarter three, 54 young people accessed Issue Based Advocacy (IBA) and 39 young people were referred for the Active Offer (AO) across RCT.

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

In quarter three, 19 CE young people accessed IBA, the same number as in the previous quarter. Those 19 young people presented with 23 issues. One Care leaver also accessed IBA in quarter three, presenting with one issue. 10 care experienced young people were referred for the AO, one less than in quarter two. Two looked young people are recorded in AO figures, although they became eligible for the AO via the CP pathway.



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



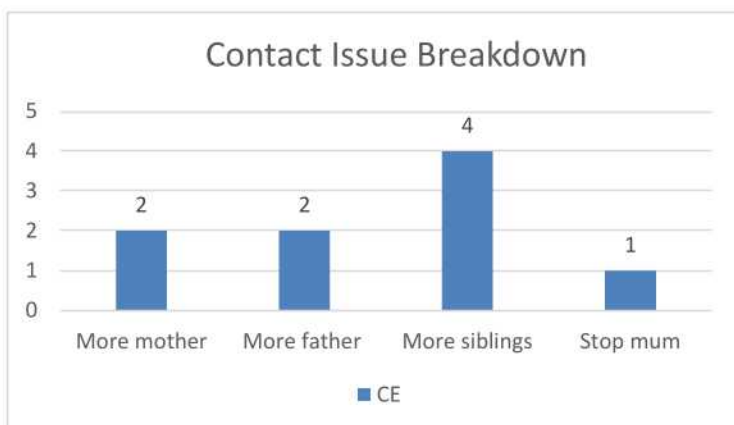
Nine of the CE young people referred for AO in quarter three became eligible for AO in the same quarter while one became eligible in quarter two.

Only one of the 14 young people who became eligible for AO via the CLA pathway were recorded as rejecting the opportunity to receive the AO in quarter three. There was no reason recorded.

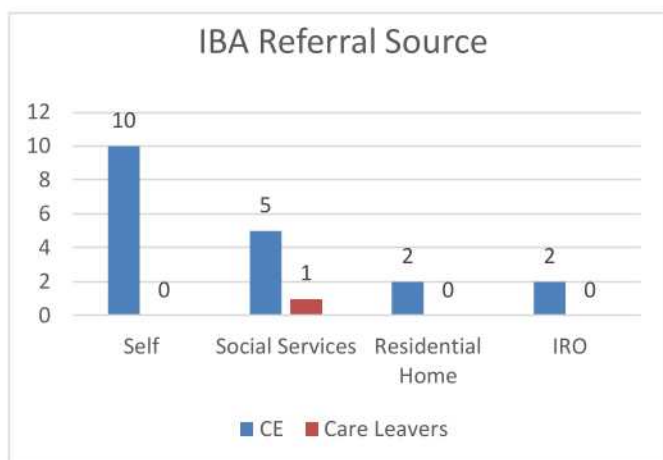
Five young people are recorded as accepting the opportunity to meet with an advocate and all five were referred for AO. Two young people were recorded as not being offered the opportunity to receive the AO as they had received advocacy support previously. They were however referred for AO during quarter three. We do not know if the six remaining eligible CE young people have been offered the opportunity to receive the AO by their social worker as this is not recorded on the spreadsheet provided by RCT, although we note it is likely this information will be available in the coming months. This means 63% of eligible C.E. young people were referred in quarter three, compared to 38% in the previous quarter.



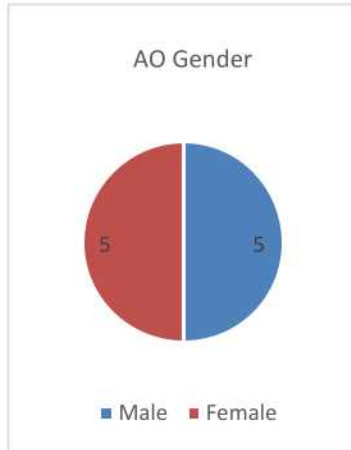
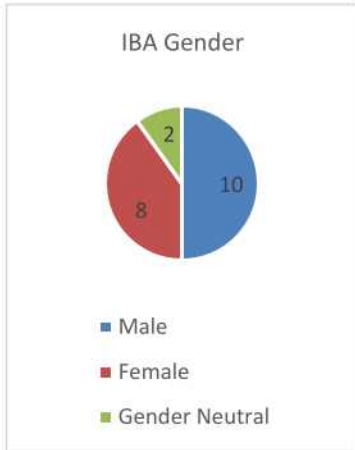
The most popular issues in need of advocacy support in quarter three, were placement followed by contact issues and school issues. We have plans to collect more detailed information in relation to placement issues in coming quarters.



Five young people presented with contact issues, and some of those five wanted to share feelings about more than one person. In quarter three, five young people shared their feelings about time spent with nine different individuals or group of individuals. The most popular issue was young people wanting to spend more time with their siblings.

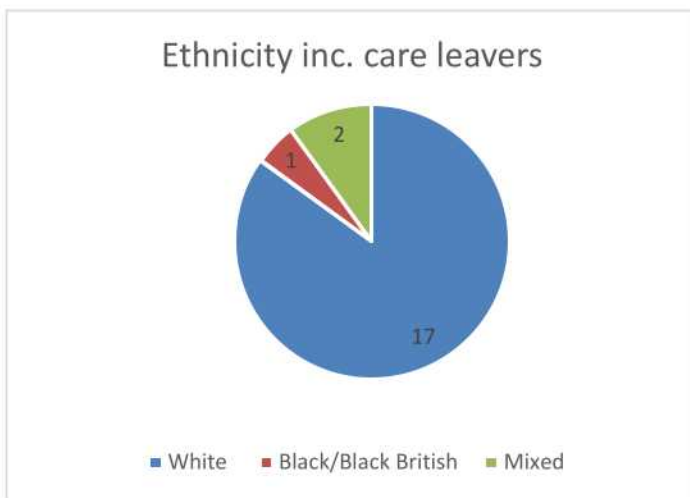


'Self-referral' and social services referrals continue to be the most popular route into the IBA service for care experienced young people. Self-referral is usually either the result of the young person accepting the AO and going on to received IBA, or the young person contacting their advocate directly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

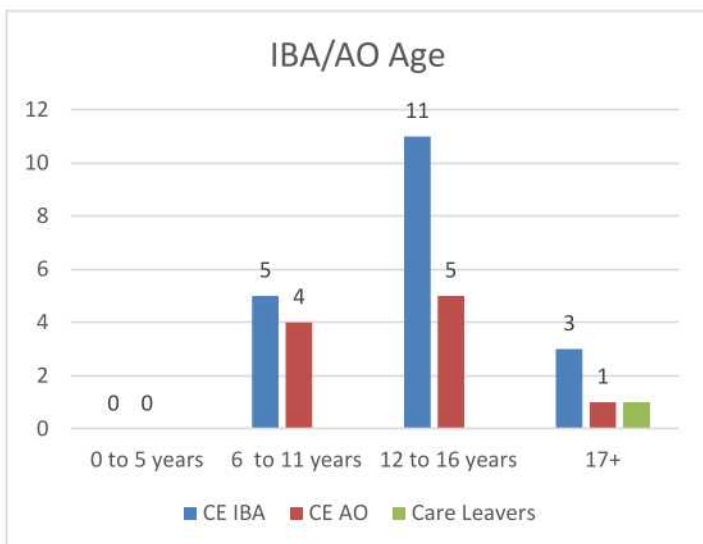


Males made up fifty percent of CE IBA referrals. Two gender neutral young people were also referred for IBA in quarter three.

AO referrals were again split evenly between males and females.



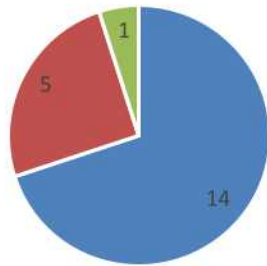
Most CE young people accessing advocacy services in quarter three described themselves as white.



Most young people accessing IBA in quarter three were aged between 12 and 16 years. We observed an increase in young people aged 17 and over accessing IBA in quarter three.

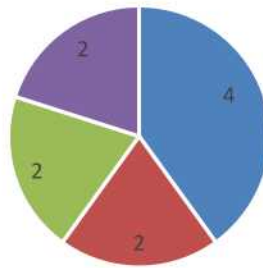
The majority of CE young people referred for AO were aged between 12 and 16 years, a change from the previous quarter when most young people were aged under 12.

IBA Legal Status



■ Care Order ■ S.76
■ Care Leaver

AO Legal Status

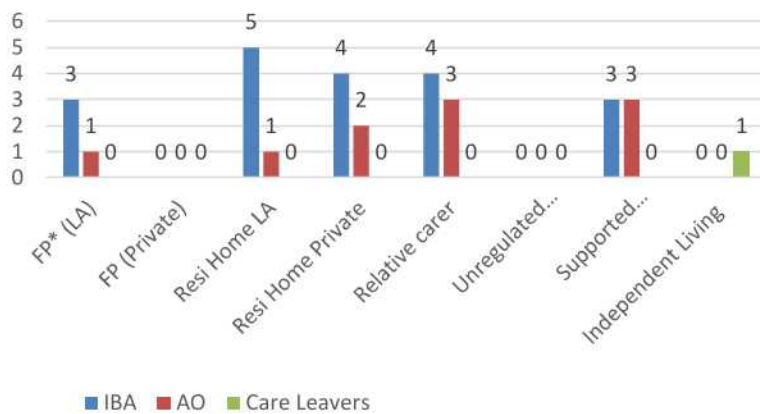


■ Care Order ■ S.76
■ UASC ■ SGO

Most CE young people accessing IBA in quarter three were again subject to full care orders. Three unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people accessed IBA In quarter three.

Two unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people were referred for AO in quarter three.

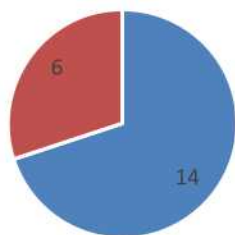
IBA/AO Type of Placement



■ IBA ■ AO ■ Care Leavers

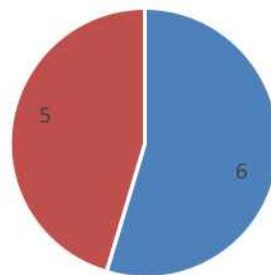
Most CE young people accessing advocacy services in quarter two were living with relatives or in residential care.

IBA Area inc. Care Leavers



■ RCTCBC ■ Out of county

AO Area



■ RCTCBC ■ Out of county

Advocates supported six CE young people living outside of RCT in quarter three. Other areas included Swansea, Bridgend, Carmarthenshire, and Gwynedd.

Three CE young person referred for AO lived outside of RCT, in Carmarthenshire and Swansea.

Other information

Four CE young people with additional needs were referred for IBA in quarter three. Two have diagnosis of ASD, one has a diagnosis ADHD along with Tourette's, while another young person was described as having severe mental health issues.

Visiting Advocacy

Residential Visiting Advocacy (RVA) continues in five Local Authority community homes across RCT. Face-to-face visits have continued monthly in Bryndar and Beddau. The remaining three homes, Carn Ingli, Nantygwyn and Ty Brynna have advised monthly visits are not appropriate and have requested the advocate visits every two months and stays connected via telephone contact instead. The RVA advocate is currently providing IBA to two young people living in RCT community homes.

A review of the RVA services was postponed previously to allow us to concentrate on recruitment and advocacy capacity. We had hoped to continue this piece of work during quarter three, but unfortunately, due to staff changes detailed in service information we have not been able to continue this work. We hope to restart this piece of work when the team is back at full capacity following recruitment in January and February 2024.

Service Information

The (C.E.) young people and Care Leavers advocacy quarterly progress report was shared at RCT Corporate Parenting Panel at the beginning of July.

The advocacy team manager was invited to the LAC Nurse team meeting in July but unfortunately the meeting was cancelled. Information about advocacy referral routes were shared with the team and we hope to be invited to attend a future meeting.

Following recruitment in quarter one, three new team members joined the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Advocacy Service in quarter two. These are, one full-time advocate, one senior advocate who will work 30 hours per week along with a new casual advocate. Unfortunately, we have experienced some sickness within the team in quarter two, with one full time advocate and the senior advocate having to take extended leave following medical procedures. Both team members are due to return within the next three to four weeks from which time, we are confident recent capacity issues will be addressed and allow us to respond effectively to the recent increase in advocacy referrals.

Conclusion and looking forward.

We are pleased to observe consistency in both IBA and AO referrals for CE young people in quarter three and note another increase in the percentage of eligible CE young people being referred for AO. We appreciate the detailed information regarding the AO take up we receive from the LA and will continue to keep in contact with RCT and share information with a view to understanding the take up of advocacy services in the area.

Case Example

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

Situation: Kadim is a 17-year-old asylum seeking young person who was referred by his social worker for the Active Offer. Kadim had recently arrived in the UK, after traveling from Sudan across several other countries in Africa and Europe. The referral stated there was a possibility Kadim would be the subject to an age assessment. Kadim lives in a specialist provision outside of RCT.

Action: The advocate contacted Kadim's placement to arrange a visit, and staff explained Kadim attends college but is home on Friday. They also advised an interpreter would not be needed for the initial meeting as Kadim had sufficient English language use and understanding. The advocate arranged to visit Kadim the following Friday to deliver the AO. Although Kadim understood and accepted the AO, the advocate felt an interpreter would be beneficial, and offered to arrange one for the next visit. Kadim agreed, and confirmed Friday at his placement was his preferred choice for future advocacy visits.

Kadim explained to the advocate that he was struggling to get his allowance and couldn't buy any clothes. The advocate contacted Kadim's social worker, and they were able to rectify this quite quickly. Kadim also wanted the advocate to support him with his upcoming CLA Review, mainly to find out why his monetary allowance from social services was less than some of the other young people living in his placement. Following the CLA Review, the advocate visited Kadim again and explained to him that different LA's allocate different amounts of money to people in his situation. Although Kadim was still unhappy about this, he was reassured that it was not his social worker who decided the amount of money allocated to him. Following advice from the CLA Review, the advocate also contacted Kadim's college to enquire about his course to see if he would be eligible for the equivalent of an EMA and shared the relevant information with his SW.

Outcome: Although Kadim was unhappy about receiving less money than some of his peers, he was reassured that his was not the decision of his social worker. Kadim is also feeling happier about his financial situation now that he knows he will be eligible for the equivalent of an EMA once attendance at college can be confirmed and knows that he can contact his advocate for support if any further issues arise.

This page is intentionally left blank



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

19TH MARCH 2024

QUALITY OF CARE REVIEW – FOSTER WALES RCT REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on monitoring carried out under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, and the Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018. Whilst there is no requirement to follow CiW's 'Guidance on Completing the Quality of Care Review' this approach has been chosen to assist in meeting statutory responsibilities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Corporate Parenting Board Members:

- 2.1 Note the contents of the report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The designated responsible individual Foster Wales RCT has a corresponding legal responsibility to establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and improving the quality of care and support provided by the service. This is known as the 'quality of care review'. The regulations require the review to take place as often as required, or at least every six months.

4. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This is an information report and therefore no Equality and Diversity Assessment is required.

5. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1 This is an information report and therefore no public consultation is required. Consultation with staff and children within the home is carried out as part of the monitoring visits.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

6.1 There are no financial implications.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

7.1 The report is compiled in accordance with the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, and the Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018.

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

8.1 The Regulation reports compliment the Council's Corporate Priorities to promote independence and positive lives for everyone by ensuring:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf children and young people will receive a great start in life.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 The attached report will demonstrate to the Corporate Parenting Board the approaches the Service has undertaken using the following methods:

- setting internal quality standards
- gathering information
- undertaking an analysis
- reporting and action planning

Quality of Care Review Report - Foster Wales RCT

Legal Context

The Quality of Care Review is a legal requirement for Foster Wales RCT and is written in accordance with:

- The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (the 2016 Act)
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018
- Whilst there is no requirement to follow CiW's '*Guidance on Completing the Quality of Care Review*' this approach has been chosen to assist in meeting statutory responsibilities

Designated Responsible Individual (RI)

The designated responsible individual Foster Wales RCT has a corresponding legal responsibility to establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and improving the quality of care and support provided by the service. This is known as the 'quality of care review'. The regulations require the review to take place as often as required, or at least every six months.

Aims & Objectives of the Review

CiW reports that '*An effective quality of care review seeks to determine the extent to which people who are in receipt of services have their rights met and can achieve their personal outcomes through the service provided*'. To achieve this objective this report will demonstrate the approaches the Service has undertaken by using the following methods:

- setting internal quality standards
- gathering information
- undertaking an analysis
- reporting and action planning

Responsible Individual & Report Author	Gemma Higgon-Young
Date Completed	11 March 2024
Date Report presented at Corporate Parenting Board	19 March 2024
Next QoC Review due	September 2024

Contents	Page
About the Service	3
Promises to Care Experience Young People	3
Overall strategic and day to day management	5
Overview of the quality of service provided across the service and outlines areas for improvement and development during the forthcoming year:	-
1. People feel their voices are heard, they have choice about their care and support and opportunities are made available to them.	6
2. People are happy and supported to maintain their ongoing health, development, and overall well-being. This includes intellectual, social, and behavioural development	11
3. People feel safe and protected from abuse and neglect	14
4. People live in accommodation that best supports their well-being and achievement of their personal outcomes.	20

About the Service

Foster Wales RCT is the Local Authority's Fostering Service (re-branded as a national brand in 2021) and provides a range of approved foster placements for children from the local community aged between 0 to 18 years of age. The service has 4 teams:

- Foster Wales's Regional Recruitment Team- Responsibility for recruitment of mainstream foster carers.
- Placements and Assessments Team - Responsibility for assessment of mainstream carers and placement finding.
- Kinship Assessment Team- Responsibility for initial viabilities and assessment of all kinship carers and undertaking SGO assessments.
- Fostering Support Team- Responsibility for fostering supervision and support for mainstream and kinship foster carers.

The service is located under the leadership of the Head of Service for Family Support and Accommodation, Claire Williams.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CiW) completed an Inspection in November 2023, the outcome was positive and reflected the current position of the service. The last inspection took place 7 years ago, on 18th January 2016. It was difficult to assess the actions completed following the 2016 inspection to date due to the impact of changes that have occurred in legislation, regulation, and guidance over the time period.

The 2023 inspection resulted in a list of improvements to the service such as:

- Service Manager to be appointed.
- The absence of a service manager has impacted on the provision of the service with no consistent oversight to review and develop service objectives.
- The delegation of tasks and responsibilities from managers to senior staff needs to be reviewed to enable managers to focus on the development of the service and to ensure it meets the requirements of the regulations.
- Recommendations of the review for future planning and developing the service were identified but it was unclear what action and progress had been made.

Further improvements noted by CiW are discussed later in this report. A number of improvement points have already been actioned and updated will be reported on in the next Quality of Care Report. The Inspectors are aiming to return in 12months time (from November) to review the improvements required.

On 4th December 2023, the designated Responsible Individual for Foster Wales RCT is the Service Manager, Gemma Higgon-Young was appointed. The RI has a dedicated Development Plan for the service in which the CiW areas for improvement have been incorporated.

Foster Wales RCT is a regulated service and has a legal obligation to ensure suitable arrangements are in place to establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing, and improving the quality of service to ensure the most vulnerable children in our communities are appropriately cared for.

The Service is currently operating temporarily from:
 YOS Unit 2
 Maritime Industrial Estate
 Pontypridd
 CF45 5NY

Hybrid working arrangements are place (in line with Council Policy 2022) and the Service has dedicated ‘office days’ on Tuesdays and Thursdays each week. The hybrid arrangements support the combination of face to face and remote working which reflects the needs of the service. As a service, we value the hybrid arrangements and the benefits that this brings to helping us meet the demands of working in Children’s Social Care while achieving a positive balance for staff.

Overall strategic and day to day management

Foster Wales RCT is the responsibility of the Service Manager for Fostering & Placements, Gemma Higgon-Young, and three Fostering Team Managers. In addition, a Regional Development Manager assists the service with the Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers.

All staff are suitably qualified for their roles and meet the Fitness to Practice requirements stipulated by CiW.

An effective reporting structure is in place to ensure clear accountability for the service operation and includes regular management meetings, team meetings and performance data feedback to the Corporate Parenting Board, Senior Management Team and Elected Members.

Service Established in 2000	2024
Number of Mainstream and Kinship	132 Mainstream 148 Kinship (as at 17.01.2024)
Total number of foster carers	280
Total number of Special Guardianship	243 children subject to SGOs

The Promises to Care-experienced Young People

- We will take time to listen to all care-experienced children and young people and ensure their views, wishes and feelings are heard and actively considered in all decisions made about them.
- We will treat all care-experienced young people with respect.
- We will involve all care-experienced children and young people in decisions that are made about them.
- We will keep all care-experienced children and young people informed about our involvement with them and explain our actions to them.
- We will use straightforward language when we communicate with all care-experienced children and young people.
- We will show compassion when considering the needs of all care-experienced children and young people.
- We will work with all care-experienced children and young people to help them achieve their goals.
- We will advise all care-experienced children and young people of the process to make a complaint should they feel we are not adhering to this charter.
- We will advise all care-experienced children and young people that they have a right to access independent advocacy to make sure their views, wishes and feelings are heard during decisions being made or when they are unhappy and want something stopped, started or changed.

The following 4 sections will provide an overview of the quality of service provided across the service and outlines areas for improvement and development during the forthcoming year.

1. People feel their voices are heard, they have choice about their care and support and opportunities are made available to them.

What we do well and the evidence for it, summary of arrangement in place and methods used to involve children and young people in their care and support. Summary of the views received from children who use the service, family members, and other professionals. Summary of how the rights of people who use the service are being met.

An audit of WCCIS Files was completed in preparation for the CiW inspection in October 2023. It was reported that:

Children/Young People can express their views through several different ways:

- In consultation with their Independent Reviewing Officer for their Child Looked After meetings
- In consultation with their Social Workers
- In consultation with independent advocacy TGP Cymru.
- In consultation with another professional such as Supervising Social Worker or Teacher.

Specifically for Foster Wales RCT, the Fostering Support Team undertake consultation with children/young people as part of the annual review process for foster carers. Supervising Social Workers in the team use a range of methods to gain children's views on where they live, and who they live with, and can include one to one consultation sessions, direct work, and observation. The views of other household members and the childcare social worker as also sought as part of the annual review process and feedback is provided to the foster carers to inform future planning and address any issues that may arise regarding the quality of care being provided.

Participation – Children and Young People

The purpose of the consultation and participation events are to find out:

- What is going well for you? (And for other young people that are care-experienced)
- What could be better? (Are there any changes that you would like made for your care and support and for other care-experienced young people?)
- How would you like to get involved with Children's Services to have your voice heard?

A series of 'Get Involved' feedback conversations with young people aged 11 to 15 and 16+ in Residential care, Foster Care, Kinship care and through the 16+ drop in to find out how they would like services to be developed and improved through on-going participation events from September 2022 to the present.

The Participation Officer reported from their findings that:

Positives (going well) for young people.

- Education, volunteering and learning opportunities.
- Seeing siblings.
- Youth club.
- Hobbies.
- Having a safe place.
- 'Safe adults to support young people' (Foster Care and Residential Care).
- 'Living with other young people' (Residential Care).
- 'Care2Work' has been amazing and so supportive' (16+ drop in West).
- 'The staff for 16+ are amazing'...and attending the 16+ drop in' (16+ Drop in West).

A draft Corporate Parenting Pledge has been drawn up with a focus on shared principles and promises that Corporate Parenting Board members need to fulfill when working with care-experienced children and young people.

A Celebration Event was held on 29th November 2023 for care experienced young people. 37 nominations were received from schools, Children's Services staff for young people's achievements in sport, education, the arts and personal achievements. Young people in Foster Care attended along with their foster carers and we had over 100 children and young people (including children in other CLA arrangements), carers and staff attend the event. This was a joint event with Education and Children's Services.

Children and Young People in Foster are participated in singing, guitar and keyboard performances. There were also young people who gave inspirational speeches about their achievements as part of Care2Work scheme.

The Participation Officer report 'A Foster carer told me that she found the event inspirational for her young people because it was good for them to listen to young people who have overcome challenges and doing well with their education, training or employment and for her son to listen to this information from young people themselves.'

It is anticipated that another celebration event will be held in July 2024 with our Education Service.

A Participation newsletter will be sent to children, young people, parent/carers and staff to provide an update on how we are hearing children and young people's voice and how young people can get involved in redeveloping our public facing information (website) to meet their care and support needs.

The Transformation Team in Children's Services are developing accessible public facing information for children, young people, carers and families. This includes revised content for children looked after and care leavers. This information will be piloted with young people from April/ May 2024.

Voices from Care Cymru have also been delivering their 'Sky's the Limit' workshops for young people aged 8- to 13-year-olds through accessible wellbeing events that include a

Christmas Party, two pantomime events at the New Theatre Cardiff and Park and Dare. They've also held a New Years Party for care experienced young people. Voices from Care Cymru have a 'Sing Proud Cymru' choir for children and young people in RCT that meet once a week during term time.

Parent's views are captured via the Child Looked After meetings.

Participation – Foster Carers

Foster carers coffee morning take place every quarter to support the emotional and social wellbeing of all our foster carers.

Following feedback from the Foster Carers coffee mornings, the RCT Virtual School for Children Looked After Session on Virtual Schools for Foster Carers arranged re ALN following feedback from foster carers.

Pioneer Foster Carers are proactive generating consultation and feedback from our foster carers. They are a proactive group of carers with a focus on supporting other carers with various needs. This is managed by the Fostering Support Team Manager and is reported to be well received by foster carers. The group has been recognised by AFKA and The Fostering Network as a champion LA for the pioneer scheme. The Pioneers have been asked to attend the Pioneer Steering Group with the Fostering Network.

Foster Care drop-in sessions (office based) began February 2024, and we anticipate to report on this area in the coming months.

We have one foster carer who currently cares for a Parent and Child (PAC). In February 2024, we established and linked with another LA and their PAC Foster Carer within the Cwm Taf Region (via regional partnership working) with the aim of peer support and sharing best practice advice and guidance.

What areas do we need to improve or want to develop further?

Consider areas for improvement identified through analysis of engagement, feedback, and monitoring and CIW reports.

Next Steps for Participation

The Participation Officer provided feedback from the Get involved survey:

What could be better to improve young people's care and support?

5 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.
- 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.
- to 25 years old
- Access to information about mental health and wellbeing services.
- *'Extend the 16+ drop in from one day per week to 2 or 3 days per week.'* (16+ Drop in West- collective voice).
- More in person meet up activities in the community.
- Housing and tenancy support.
- Benefits support.

The Transformation Team in Children's Services are developing accessible public facing information for children, young people, carers and families. This includes revised content for children looked after and care leavers. This information will be piloted with young people from April/May 2024.

Provide information leaflets to care experienced young people and carers/family in March 2024 to explain the purpose of participation events and engaging young people to share their voice for service developments. This may support consultation with a wider range of children and young people who are looked after.

The Graduate Officer for Participation has prepared a draft Corporate Parenting Board Pledge for RCT that builds on Welsh Government's 'Corporate Parenting Board Charter- A Promise from Wales'. The draft pledge will go to Cabinet in February 2023 prior to sharing with the Corporate Parenting Board.

Continue to work with Children's Services colleagues and ICT in developing the accessibility of the 'My Voice, My Review' through Widgeit software that includes text and symbols for easy reading. The Reviewing Team will also pilot this information with young people once the Widgeit software is ready to be used.

CiW reported (19.12.23)

Wellbeing

- development of further consultation forums and feedback from children about their fostering experiences would support a more consistent approach to inform service development and improvement.
- The service needs to ensure there is adequate oversight and monitoring of savings made by foster carers on behalf of children.
- Support Groups - some scheduling in advance would ensure foster carers are able to plan and this would support their attendance.

What specific action do we need to take to make improvements successful and how will this be measured?

The Service Development Plan has been updated from the outcome of the CiW inspection. This is a working document that is reviewed at various stages.

The Service Development Plan will be monitored and progressed by a series of actions including:

1:1 Supervision between Service Manager and Head of Service
1:1 Supervision between Team Manager and Service Manager
Team Managers Meeting (weekly)
Service Development Days
Service Development Meetings
Working Groups

Summary

There is a clear and embedded process for participation and information is recorded and feedback accordingly.

There are areas for improvement that we have included in our service development plan and anticipated that they will be actions over the course of the next 12 months. The Service Development Plan is monitored and reviewed regularly with relevant managers.

2. People are happy and supported to maintain their ongoing health, development, and overall well-being. This includes intellectual, social, and behavioural development

What we do well and what is the evidence for it? Include a summary of arrangements in place including methods for collecting views and a summary of views received from people who use the service and professionals.

Health, Education and leisure activities

The Annual Review contains details in respect of the child’s health, education, and leisure activities and related outcomes. The review focuses on how foster carers are meeting each of the child’s needs detailed in the Care and Support. At 3 yearly intervals (or sooner if the need is required) the annual reviews were presented at foster panel for further quality assurance.

Kinship Support

The support provided by the Kinship Connected Programme in RCT includes the following:

One to one support from project worker:

- Advocacy support in meetings
- Emotional support
- Supporting the carers to attend a peer support group.
- Liaising with local organisations that might be able to offer specialised support and training.
- Liaising with schools or other organisations
- Supporting kinship carers with the behaviour of the child/children in their care

Peer Support:

- Virtual Support Groups (monthly)
- Someone Like Me – a telephone peer support service run by trained volunteers who are or have been kinship carers themselves.
- Facebook group and WhatsApp group

Additionally, support is given to Kinship Carers for accessing grants from partner grant giving bodies and there is also an Independent Advice Service run by a specialist bi-lingual advisor for Wales. Advice can be accessed by kinship carers and professionals on issues such as, welfare benefits, housing, employment, legal options etc.

Celebration event for care-experienced young people 29.11.23

Foster Carer Learning and Development

Pre-approval training – Skills to Foster is a course that is attended by every applicant and is well received (evidenced via assessment feedback)

The Source is a platform that is accessed by foster carers to record their learning and development. There has been some resistance due the system not being easy to use and a number of foster carers not being confident in using such systems.

Multi Agency Permanence Support Service (MAPSS)

MAPSS is a specialist therapeutic intervention service for care experienced children and that is available to all foster carers. The service offers support for a range of emotional, behavioural and mental health challenges. Specifically for foster carers, there are several types of support available including consultation support, training and support for carer burnout.

Family Group Meetings (FGM)

FGMs are available to all fostering households. An awareness training session is planned for 7th March 2024 for all staff with the aim of understanding the trigger for referral and related process.

What areas do we need to improve or want to develop further? Consider areas for improvement identified through analysis of feedback, monitoring, CIW, any identified non-compliance, and outstanding actions.

We would like to extend our pre-approval training for Kinship and Special Guardian applicants.

We continue to support our foster carers with IT support to help them access online training and related accounts.

CiW

- The system to record foster carer's learning and development needs to be strengthened to provide an overview of what training has been undertaken and to ensure this complies with the service's policy and expectations of foster carers.
- Whilst the local authority gathers information in relation to the educational progress of all care experienced children; information to demonstrate the attendance, progress and academic attainment of children placed with foster carers is not readily available and gathered by the service to monitor and inform outcomes for children using the service.
- Action to collate information about training completed by foster carers has more recently been prioritised and the completion of learning and development records are in the process of being completed. These are areas identified as requiring improvement.

What specific action do we need to take to make the improvements/developments successful and how will this be measured? Include an action plan setting out the specific outcome-focussed actions needed to improve, timescales, lead officer and performance indicators to measure improvement.

Liaising with The Source and Training Department to strengthen our service's understanding of the learning platform.

Further development work required in relation to training completed by foster carers including liaising with Training Department.

Liaising with the Virtual School to assist in measuring outcomes for care experienced children in Foster Wales RCT fostering households.

Summary

There are defined improvements required CiW in respect of learning and development for foster carers as well as measuring outcomes for children.

A change in our approach to learning and development is required to meeting the expectations required, we have already begun to identify how our processes need to assist in the analysis and recording of learning and development.

Management Information is required for those children in fostering households to assist in the reporting on the outcomes of health, educational and leisure activities as required by CiW.

3. People feel safe and protected from abuse and neglect

What we do well and the evidence for it? Consider a summary of arrangements in place, views of the people who use the service, number of referrals etc.

The following sections relate to the performance data and activity of the fostering team with regards support and kinship assessment.

Compliance in relation to each child

All children placed with RCT Foster carers are placed by the Child Care social worker with the supervising social worker or the Fostering team's duty worker, thus ensuring that all relevant information required to enable the carer to offer suitable care is provided to the foster carer. Where the placement is made in an emergency the supervising social worker, or the fostering duty worker will follow up during the next working day. At the point of placement, the Placement Agreement is completed and signed, if the placement is an emergency and the full documentation is unavailable, this will be provided to the carers the next working day.

The following significant events can be captured via the Significant Events Form:

- All accidents, injuries and illnesses of children placed with foster parents
- Complaints in relation to children placed with foster carers and their outcomes.
- Any unauthorised absences from the foster home of a child accommodated there
- Use of any measures of control, restraint, or discipline in respect of children accommodated in a foster home
- Medication, Medical treatment, and First Aid administered to any child placed with foster parents
- Other Significant Events

All significant events are reported by the carers to their supervising social worker or duty worker as soon as practically possible following the event. The allocated supervising social worker takes responsibility for completing the Significant Incident Form. The form will be passed to the Team Manager for any further action that may be required.

This information is electronically stored on the child's file, the foster carer's file and the original is stored by the Manager. If the notification is significant, the Service Manager will be informed who will update the Head of Children's Services and the event be reported via the Portal to CiW.

11 Significant incident forms have been completed:

1. Young Person aged 17 - Police involvement, young person arrested due to young person being present during a drug deal 15.01.24
2. Young Person aged 15 Threat of allegations 22.11.23
3. Young Person aged 15 – Dishonesty and aggression to wards carer and other child 19.12.23
4. Young Person aged 17 – Displaying violence within the household 30.10.23
5. Child aged 10 - Accident resulting in minor injury 07.01.24
6. Young Person aged 14 – sharing inappropriate images and community issues. 24.10.23
7. Child – serious health issue and required biopsy on 10.10.23
8. Young Person aged ? – CCTV of young person enabling animals cruelty, police involvement 21.10.23
9. Young Person aged 8 – report of inappropriate sexual activity, however, further discussions reported lack of understanding of sexual language

10. Young Person aged 13 – Safeguarding concerns and Professional strategy meeting in relation to foster carer – Young Person accessing sexual videos online and concerns regarding carers relationship.

Any allegations or suspicions of abuse in respect of children placed with foster parents and the outcome of any investigations

It is reported that 9 referrals were received by the Safeguarding team during the quarter 3 of 2023.

The data in relation to the outcomes of the referrals is not available at the time of writing this report and will be reported on in the next QoC report for 2024.

Staff Recruitment records and conduct of required checks for new workers.

Within RCT CBC, the responsibility for completing checks on newly appointed staff lies with the Human Resources department. Managers within the fostering service are informed of any issues arising for consideration in relation to DBS checks and references. All new staff working within RCT’s Fostering Service are required to have:

- an up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service Check (renewed every 3 years)
- employment history that details the reason for any gaps in employment
- references from previous employers
- evidence of eligibility to work in the UK
- evidence of qualifications
- registration with Social Care Wales (where required)
- satisfactory Health assessment

Where applicable, the standard of any education provision provided by the fostering service.

The service does not provide specific education provision. All educational needs are met by the LA’s Educational Department and Children Looked After Virtual School.

Records of Assessments

50 Assessments were presented to foster panel from Aug 2023 to February 2024, comprising of:

Type of Assessment Presented to Foster Panel	Connected Persons (Kinship)	Mainstream
Form F Assessments	NA	4
Connected Persons Assessments	9	NA
Deferred Assessments	2	0
Enhanced Payment Assessment	1	NA
Annual Reviews	8	8
Termination of Approval	14	5
Regulation 26 extension	1	NA

In addition, 4 Regulation 26 placements were recorded for the same time period.

Following each assessment an evaluation form is sent out to carers/applicants for completion, the following themes have been identified from the returns:

- Professional working relationships
- Respectful
- Positive Experience
- Clear Information provided

The Foster Panel Chair has provided consistently good feedback during this period regarding the standard of the assessments provided to foster panel.

Records of Fostering Panel meetings

The panel consists of:

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Foster Carer
- Independent Social Worker
- 2 Experienced and qualified social workers
- Community Medical Advisor (available for advice),
- Legal Advisor (available for advice)
- Panel Advisor
- Agency Decision Maker

In this review period, the fostering panel continue to operate as a virtual panel. Attendance from members of the panel is strong which has enabled the panel to be quorate and proceed when scheduled.

14 foster panels have been held between Aug 2023 – Feb 2024. 3 foster panels were cancelled due to incomplete assessments due to outstanding checks.

Two members of Business Support staff provide direct support and coordination to the Foster Panel. They ensure to gather necessary data and facilitate timely foster panels.

Duty rosters of persons working for the fostering agency, as arranged, and worked

The Fostering Support Team and Kinship Assessment Team have established duty rotas in place. The teams are supported by a communication system called Cisco Jabber. Cisco Jabber delivers instant messaging, voice and video calls, voice messaging, desktop sharing, conferencing, and presence. There are mixed reviews in respect of how valuable the system is for our service.

All teams have a team specific email address and inbox that is monitored and actioned as required. This has proved to be effective especially when staff are absent from work for various reasons. The email inboxes have an automated response to assist those trying to communicate with the teams.

Minutes of Staff Meetings

All 3 teams hold regular team meetings, usually on a monthly to bi-monthly status, meeting minutes are stored electronically and are easily accessible for all Staff Members.

Team meetings provide opportunity to discuss updates, changes, research, regional and local services.

Team Managers and Service Manger meet on a weekly basis, one week the focus is on progressing the Service Development Plan and the next week focus is on operational matters. The Head of Service and Director are invited to team meetings, usually 2-3 times per year.

Service Development Meetings were held in September 2023 and January 2024. The meetings have a focus on development and future requirements of the service. Both meetings were well attended and positive feedback was received from staff. Themes and patterns are shared with staff during the day and via email.

Staff are invited to Children's Service wide meetings called 'Inform and Involve'. Staff within the service are encouraged to attend to keep up to date with wider service issues and developments.

What areas do we need to improve or want to develop further? Consider areas for improvement identified through analysis of feedback, monitoring, CIW and any identified non-compliance and outstanding actions

Service Manager has requested CiW Portal access in respect of uploading significant events forms to CiW as and when required.

CiW improvement areas (reported 19.11.23):

Leadership and Management

- Where allegations have been made about foster carers, the service does not consistently ensure their fostering approval is reviewed and returned to panel within reasonable timescales.
- Some delays in completing mainstream assessments within a six month timeframe has been due to the lack of staff to allocate work. This impacts on the service's capacity to increase the availability and choice of foster carers for children
- There have been occasions when exemptions have been requested to place children with foster carer's outside of their approval. However, this has not been consistently undertaken for all arrangements and consideration given to the impact on accommodation and the fostering household. The service needs to ensure full compliance with the regulations in relation to exemptions.
- High caseloads were sighted as having an impact on staff's ability to complete core and statutory responsibilities as support to foster carers is given priority
- The request for references for staff appointments made from within the local authority needs to be aligned to the fostering regulations.
- The service needs to make improvements to monitor and review the quality of care provided by foster carers
- An annual review of the quality of care was completed in March 2023. This is not within the six month review period as required by the regulation and has not been updated.
- Visits by supervising social workers are not made within timescales as set out in the foster carer's handbook and service delivery standards.

- Opportunities for foster panel members to attend training needs to be given further consideration and the function of the panel should be included in the service's quality of care review.
- Arrangements for the annual review of foster carer's approval has not taken place within required timescales.
- Newly approved foster carers have not been consistently reviewed following their first year of approval or following allegations and considered at panel.
- A significant number of annual reviews are out of timescale. The impact of this is there is no evaluation of the care provided by foster carers and there is a lack of independent scrutiny by the fostering panel of the quality of care provided to individual children. Steps have been made to address this deficit with the appointment of an agency social worker with responsibility to complete annual reviews. However, this is unlikely to be effective due to the substantial number of foster carers approved by the local authority provider and the considerable number out of timescale. A system needs to be developed to prioritise and take action to address this concern which is a serious shortfall in the service provision.
- Statement of Purpose needs updating to reflect the changes in the service and also meet regulation.
- Service Guide for Children needs updating and consideration should be given to a format that is accessible to all.
- Foster Carer Profile need to be reviewed
- Service needs to ensure children receive information about their fostering arrangement prior to or following their placement
- All documents need to be in Welsh
- Records of children placed with foster carers are maintained electronically. However, these were not always accurate and updated to ensure children have an exact history of their care should this be required in later life. Information about children's access to short break stays and the periods they were away from their main foster placement were not clearly recorded. The service's audit of information is also identified as in need of improvement.
- Some policies require updating in line with current guidance and some remain in draft form. The complaints procedure needs to be specific to the fostering service and not a corporate policy. This does not meet the requirements of the regulations to outline specific processes for those using the service and is identified as an area requiring improvement.

Environment

- The fostering service has transferred to another office location which is shared with other services operated by the local authority provider. This information needs to be updated on the service's statement of purpose.
- The delay in completing annual reviews of foster carer's approval does not ensure scrutiny of health and safety issues as part of the review process

Fostering Assessment Evaluation

We aim to encourage carers/applicants to complete the evaluation sheet at the end of their assessment period so that we can further improve the delivery of the assessments and related experiences. From 50 assessments that were undertaken only 6 evaluation forms were returned.

Cisco Jabber (telephone system) – we plan to consult in 2024 with our foster carers, applicants and staff members regarding Cisco Jabber’s efficacy in providing a robust duty service.

Further development of data reporting systems to assist in quality assurance is required.

Monitoring data during Team Managers Meeting to being in March 2024.

What specific action do we need to take to make the improvements/developments successful and how will this be measured? Include an action plan setting out the specific outcome-focussed actions needed to improve, timescales identified, lead officer and the performance indicators to measure improvement.

The service is developing new proformas to assist in achieving a more streamline service.

It is anticipated that over the next 12 months the service will aim to achieve to clear the outstanding annual reviews.

Quality assurance process to be created to support exemption requests.

Following CiW’s report, Annual Reviews following allegations are currently allocated to Independent Social Workers for completion. They are allocated following the outcome of the allegation. Improvements will be made to the WCCIS system to report related performance indicators related to allegations specifically.

Further develop systems and processes for monitoring and reviewing quality of service including the functioning of the Fostering Panel in line with The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018.

Further development of quality assurance systems to support the quality of service provided are taking place.

Continue to develop quality assurance and audit work including dip sampling and take forward lessons learned and actions.

A clear Service Development Plan is in place to support the operations and service delivery. The Plan is lead by the Service Manager and monitored by the Head of Service.

Summary

Foster Wales RCT has recognised that the systems that support our service function need to be updated and streamlined to provide an effective and efficient service.

Foster Wales RCT has taken on board all of the recommendations for service improvements reported by CiW and this has been embedded into the service plan. Actions have been delegated to appropriate staff within the service to assist in achieving the improvements required.

As an immediate action and temporary measure we have looked at the processes and have been dynamic in terms of improving our systems.

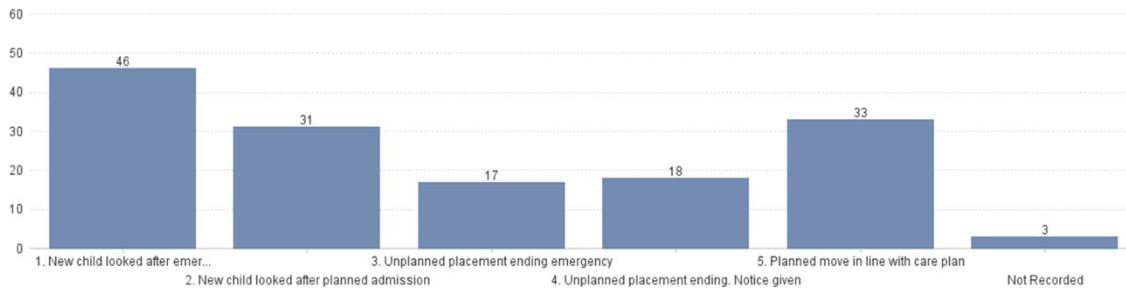
The aim is to meet the objectives of the Service Development Plan over the next 12 months.

4. People live in accommodation that best supports their well-being and achievement of their personal outcomes.

What we do well and the evidence for it? Consider a summary of arrangements in place including access to the local community; how privacy, dignity and confidentiality is maintained, and a summary of views obtained on any changes to the environment

Placement Data (relating to August to October 2023)

Type of Referral	Aug to Oct 2023	Difference from last quarter
Fostering	78	+26
Residential	14	-1
Total	92	+27



During this period there were 39 referrals requiring placements same day or next day within 24 hours. (40 since December 2022, 28 of since April 2023)

Review on new data capture linked to the Placement Referral form on WCCIS (been in effect for 6months):

- 21 children were placed with in-house fostering provision while 8 were placed with external fostering agencies.
- 5 children were placed with in-house residential provision while 8 were placed in external residential provisions.
- 5 young people were placed in 16+ supported living provisions, 2 of these were UASC young people.
- 2 parent and child placements with Family Assessment Centres.
- 3 young people were placed into OWRs during this period.

Patterns and Trends

We have continued to receive a very high level of emergency same day placement requests for all ages of children and young people.

Receiving direct work such as This is Me to add to search tenders continues to be an issue. However, this is also reflective of the number of requests for emergency placements.

There remains a lack of fostering placements available for young people particularly teenagers which means that we are then seeking residential placements as an alternative.

There is a limited amount of residential providers that provide and accept emergency placements, which is a contributory factor to children being placed in OWR placements.

The availability of foster carers who can meet the needs of children and young people open to DCT is problematic. This remains an issue when seeking placements for children complex health and behavioural needs.

Marketing and Recruitment:

RCT Performance Data – January

2023/24	Enquiries	Initial Visits	Assessments Allocated	Assessments ended pre panel	Approvals
Number	17	5	5	0	0
Conversion rate from Previous Stage	N/A	29.41%	100%	0	0
Conversion rate from Initial Enquiry	N/A	29.41%	29.5%	0	0
2022/23					
Number	5	1	2	2	0
Conversion rate from Previous Stage	N/A	20%	200%	100%	0
Conversion rate from Initial enquiry	N/A	20%	40%	40%	0
+/-					
	+12	+4	+2	-2	0

Recruitment Analysis

Enquiry and Initial Visit (IV) Info:

- 17 enquiries – 5 of which unable to contact (3 FB leads, numbers not valid, 2 unable to contact on info supplied)
- 3 requested for more info (not in a positions to move forward)

- 11 moved forward to IV stage - 5 completed in Jan (2 from Dec enquiry), 3 have delayed until Feb and 3 on hold due to change of circumstances.
- 3 enquiries from events (one request for more info, 2 moved to IV and now in full assessment stage).
- 1 transfer request still on going from December.

Events

- Role up play village Pontyclun
- Sobell sports centre (one enquiry which has moved to full assessment)

Care Friends Retention / Recruitment App

Launched Care Friends to RCT FCs in January 2024:

- Document leaflet has been uploaded to closed FB group.
- Emailed to Kinship & Mainstream carers
- Discussed in support group – all took details, some downloaded there and then.
- Frequently asking SSWs to help promote, and encouraging FCs to use

Foster Wales Regional Marketing Officer reported that January saw the launch of the new campaign 'What will you bring to the table?' complete with Foster Wales National assets to accompany the activity. For example, on 08th January 2024 the National Team launched a media campaign across TV in Wales (ITV and S4C) plus Video on Demand / catchup on ITVX, All4 and also on Sky AdSmart. The activity was further supported by radio with a campaign on Heart South Wales.

It is reported that there was an impressive amount of PR generated by the National activity and saw fostering talked about on National TV (BBC breakfast), local BBC and ITV news, in The Metro and across online platforms).

From a Foster Wales RCT perspective additional media spend and coverage on ITVX, GTFM, Bus Rears and paid socials. The new 3 x 30" TV adverts for the National campaign was shared across Foster Wales RCT social media channels and will share a regional CTM branded version was shared in February.

In January, the new campaign messaging was frequently and consistently shared and the Foster Wales RCT 'Meet the Team' event promotions correspond with the 'What will you bring to the table?' messaging. The aim of this campaign is longevity, with lots of planned and responsive marketing opportunities that will correspond with the 'table' ideas.

We had excellent levels of reach and engagement in January which would have been too a mixture of the impact of the National activity and the quality of our own content and the support we had from followers and the teams in sharing our posts.

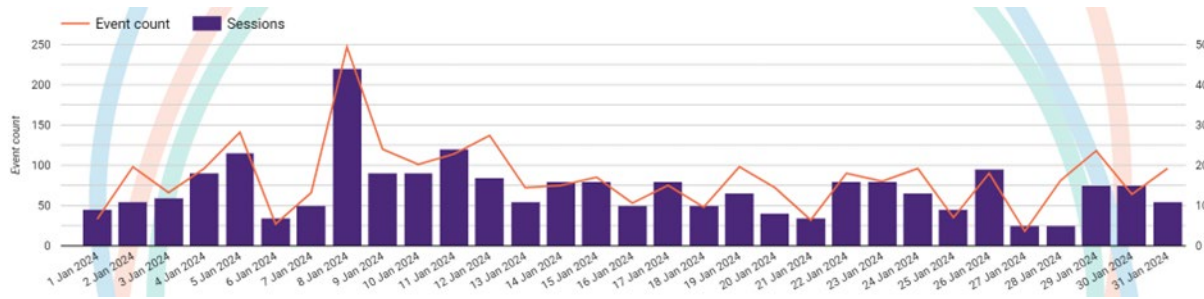
We saw a healthy number of visitors to our websites in January (311) – we may have expected more given the amount of activity we had in the month, but in fact our numbers were down on the previous two months (December at 529 and November at 767).

However, this is in part explained by the fact that we had not run any paid social or online advertising in the month – we had planned to but were doing well enough with our organic posts and the impact of the National media and PR – so we help spend back until February.

This raises an interesting observation which is that although our numbers for website visitors were lower, the KPI data suggests that we had succeeded in reaching people more likely to be interested in our content, as the conversion to enquiries and IVs was much improved in January.

Our organic (not paid for) posts on our facebook page were seen by nearly 6k people and we had 274 comments or reactions to our content – giving us a good engagement rate of over 10%. Our posts on Instagram reached 166 people. We have continued to see improvements in our reach and engagement which will be partly due to the fact that Lisa in her role as recruitment officer has been sharing a lot of our posts and linking in local community groups.

You can see in the chart below that we had a spike in visitors when the new campaign launched with a number of peak TV spots and impressive amounts of PR coverage.



Future Developments

- Improving service - Q&A online session with foster carer planned and invitations sent out for end of Feb to all those in full assessment stage.
- PHB presentations in Feb
- Online information session planning underway for 18th March.

Service Development of Special Guardianship

Special Guardianship continues to be a priority for the service, assessments are carried out by the appointed Social Workers. While further development work is identified for the support aspect of Special Guardianship.

As of 18.01.24 there are 243 Special Guardians, who are entitled to support and development opportunities as set out in the Special Guardian Regulations 2018.

The changes in Public Law Outline (PLO) have contributed to an increase in SGOs being made.

12 week timescale for PLO, that is in conflict with the 16-24 weeks CPA timescales, this places further pressure providing a robust and resilient assessment, resulting in a more labour intensive assessment period.

What areas do we need to improve or want to develop further? Consider areas for improvement identified through analysis of feedback, monitoring, CIW and any identified non-compliance and outstanding actions

Placements:

There remains a lack of fostering placements available for young people particularly teenagers which means that we are then seeking residential placements as an alternative.

There is a limited number of residential providers that provide and accept emergency placements, which is a contributory factor to children being placed in OWR placements.

The availability of foster carers who can meet the needs of children and young people open to DCT is problematic. This remains an issue when seeking placements for children complex health and behavioural needs.

Complex cases involve prolonged and intensive searches which directly impact on the wellbeing of the child.

Marketing and Recruitment:

The team has finalised the groundwork for annual planning, the chart below summarises what is going well, what we need to do more of, what needs to be improved and what we need to be aware of:

Drivers	Inhibitors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face and real life stories on social work well. • Using our pioneers • Promotion of retention events • Peer support groups for foster carers • Positive sentiment towards fostering team and SSWs <p><i>What are we doing capitalize on our areas of strength?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collating quotes of praise / thanks for SSWs to use in future campaign - Working closely with the team and pioneers - Increasing numbers of pop-up events to attend with team - Regular meetings with and feedback from FCs - Expressing gratitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff capacity and engagement with team - Staffing of events - Budget restraints - Size of service - Drop out rates of assessments <p><i>What are we doing to improve in the next quarter to address the inhibitors?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marketing team have supported and shared open job roles on their socials and on personal LinkedIn accounts - A new recruitment officer will be in post shortly which should be a huge help and mean we can attend more events - marketing will continue to send fortnightly updates to fostering team if this is useful – have been doing so since April - Smaller regional targeting will help inform what budgets would be ideal across the whole region – we should be able to complete this analysis once areas are activated in Q3 - Analysis of drop out rates and reviews with previous applicants is on-going
Opportunities	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Size of borough- bigger pool and variety of people - Opportunity to build relationship with local councilors - Targeting specific communities, not just our larger town centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Calon and Compass very active - Cost of living and competitive fees - Plummeting enquires and approvals - Conversion rate <p><i>What are we doing to improve in the next quarter to address these risks?</i></p>

- Use our pioneers to target their own local communities
- Joint events for retention and recruitment
- Using pioneers to aid conversion from IV to approval

What are we doing to maximise these opportunities in the next quarter

- *We have workflows on place to deliver on those areas highlighted in green above*

- *We will continue to share posts with a transfer to us / Eliminate Profit theme as we think these are cutting through to IFA carers*
- *We will show and share gratitude through our 'Families of Foster Children' campaigns in which we would hope would encourage people with their own families to enquire*
- *The drop out rates are being reviewed and analysed and results will be built into improvements once available*
- *A fees and allowances meeting will be held with the team and our foster carers in Q3 – it was scheduled for Q2 but has had to be re-arranged. A survey has been shared with our FCs.*

Special Guardianship (SG) action plan:

Appoint workers into post and set up support processes.

Develop a service wide understanding of SG to support future aims and objectives.

Embed the new proforma and guidance

Action transfers in and out of the LA.

What specific action do we need to take to make the improvements/developments successful and how will this be measured? Include an action plan setting out the specific outcome-focussed actions needed to improve, timescales identified, lead officer and the performance indicators to measure improvement.

Recruitment aims:

- To increase our overall foster care provision
- To increase the matching opportunities for children coming into foster care
- To increase specialised foster care – support care and parent and child
- To increase foster care provision for children with complex needs
- To increase our Pioneer Fostering membership to support other foster carers
- To increase community engagement
- To increase the brand recognition
- To raise the profile and support Fostering Friendly organisations and employers.

Placement Stability:

Foster Wales RCT has an aim to incorporate the AFKA Cymru Placement Stability Guide into our practice. The approach involves all those involved with the child, including professionals, parents and foster carers. It considers a holistic approach to supporting placements and consider matching as a long term matter for consideration and not a one off event.

The approach will need to be distributed to wider children's and other services including parents and carers. There are training opportunities to support the approach and clear research on the positive impact this approach can make on placement stability.

Service Development:

Special Guardianship is an area that is likely to grow in the future. It relates to the Children's Services target of achieving permanence for CLA and the proactive move towards reducing the number of care orders. We are currently in the process of recruiting a social worker (vacancy post) and support worker (new post) to assist in the support aspect of SG.

In almost 10 years, the need for our service by the community has grown and for at least 5 years we have not been in a position to provide the full quality service we know we are capable of. For example, an average case load for a Supervision Social Worker (across Wales) is identified as 12 cases (plus an assessment), our workers are currently carrying 25+ cases (per full time worker) and do not have capacity to provide placement stability support as it should be. It is well known that the service has been 'firefighting' for at least 4 years.

Summary

Foster Wales RCT is a large service supporting both foster carers and children. The service has spent the last several months focussing on the future and how we can offer further stability to the children's lives.

The recent recruitment campaign for foster carers has been a real success and generated plenty of enquiries leading to potential assessments. In recent months we have started to see the impact of the national brand and an upturn in recruitment KPIs we haven't experienced in many years. This is partly due to the significant national coverage received and grant funding through Foster Wales national stream for recruitment officer and marketing capacity. However, we must recognise that to meet the needs of Foster Wales RCT placement sufficiency further local investment is needed.

Special Guardianship (SG) contributes towards the Welsh Governments and LA's plan of reducing the number of children looked after and the service is committed to supporting SG.

Overall areas identified for improvement:

- Reduce reliance on IFA placements
- Minimise the children being placed into residential care
- Increase in-house Foster Carer placements
- Retention of foster carer rate is increased
- Bespoke SG support service.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank