

RHONDDA CYNON TAF
CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD
ANNUAL REPORT
2022/2023



RHONDDA CYNON TAF



CONTENTS

Chair Foreword	3 - 4
About the Corporate Parenting Board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant Legislation • Meet the Corporate Parenting Board • Terms of Reference • The Vision of the Corporate Parenting Board 	5 - 9
Children Looked After within RCT	10 - 11
Reports considered by the Corporate Parenting Board ~ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation 73 Reports • Complaints & Compliments • Advocacy • Independent Reviewing Officer Updates • Member Frontline Visits • Fostering Wales Collaboration • Cwm Taf Youth Offending service • All Wales Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Care Experienced Children and Young People 2022 • Pupil Deprivation Grant for Children Looked After 2022-2022 • Virtual School Model • 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 • Employment Education and Training for Children Looked After • Participation Update for Care Experienced Young Children & Voices From Care Cymru RCT Group • Miskin Services 2021-2022 • Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Regional Adoption Annual Report • Fostering Service Quality of Care Annual Report • Young Carers Annual Report 2022-2023 • Local Authority's Offer of Accommodation and Housing Support related Services to Care Experienced Young People • Independent Sector Placements • Charter for Parents in Care and Leaving Care • Children Looked After Prevention Strategy • Child Practice Review 	12 – 22
Corporate Parenting Board – Moving Forward	23 – 25
Corporate Parenting Board Work Programme 2023/24	26 - 27
Conclusion	28

FOREWORD



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHAT IS THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD?

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

LEGISLATION

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

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

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

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

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

Useful links

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

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

MEET THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD



*Councillor G Caple
(Chair)*



*Councillor R Lewis
(Vice-Chair)*



Councillor C Leyshon



Councillor S Rees



Councillor J Bonetto



Councillor S Evans



Councillor S Trask



Councillor P Evans

TERMS OF REFERENCE

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

Vision of the Corporate Parenting Board

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

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

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

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

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

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

Children Looked After by Age Group

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

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

Children Looked After by Gender

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

Children Looked After by Placement Type

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

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

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

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

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

UPDATES TO THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

REGULATION 73 REPORTS

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

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

SOCIAL SERVICES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

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

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

ADVOCACY

The Corporate Parenting Board receive quarterly updates from the Local Authority's advocacy services, Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru. The Board are provided with a detailed breakdown of issues by age, gender, referral source and type, along with information on the take up of the active offer. This information enables both TGP Cymru and Children Services to discuss issues that affect service delivery in the community on a strategic level and to work in partnership to provide improved and better outcomes.

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

INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER UPDATES

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

MEMBER FRONTLINE VISITS

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

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

FOSTER WALES COLLABORATION UPDATE

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

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

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

CWM TAF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VIRTUAL SCHOOL MODEL

The Virtual School Model is well established in England and, under the Children’s and Families Act 2014, local authorities have a statutory duty to appoint a Virtual School Head whose key role is to promote the educational achievement of CLA. In May 2020, Sir Alisdair Macdonald, Raising Attainment Advocate, published a research paper commissioned by Welsh Government - [An integrated approach to improving educational outcomes for looked after children in Wales](#). Based on the recommendations of the report, Welsh Government agreed to progress an integrated approach in Wales to improve the educational outcomes for CLA. As such, grant funding was provided up to 31st March 2023 to interested local authorities to develop a Virtual School. In response to the offer of grant funding, RCT submitted a successful expression of interest to Welsh Government, together with a Virtual School Implementation plan that is underpinned by a set of key principles.

The Corporate Parenting Board received an update on progress made during year 1 of the Virtual School for CLA Pilot, specifically looking at the steps taken to address and complete actions that form the Virtual School Implementation Plan; and requested future updates on progress.

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

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

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

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

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

EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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

The Corporate Parenting Board recognise the educational disadvantages often experienced by young people who are looked after, which can have an adverse effect on opportunities moving into higher education and into adulthood. As such, the Corporate Parenting Board request an annual update in respect of the Council's dedicated programmes to support Children Looked After, Care Leavers and those with care and support needs into employment, education and training.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MISKIN SERVICES 2021-22

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



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

During the period:

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

VALE, VALLEYS & CARDIFF REGIONAL ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT

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

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

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

FOSTERING SERVICE QUALITY OF CARE ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

The Fostering Service Quality of Care Annual Report is compiled as required under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. Regulation 52 of the Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018 also requires the Local Authority Manager to put suitable arrangements in place to establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and improving the quality of service.

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

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

YOUNG CARERS ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The support service for young carers (aged 5-17) continues to be provided on a commissioned basis by Action for Children. Specific support is available via an externally funded post for Young Adult Carers (aged 18-25). Sibling carers (children whose sibling has additional needs) is now provided on a commissioned basis by Action for Children.

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

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

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

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

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

INDEPENDENT SECTOR PLACEMENTS

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

CHARTER FOR PARENTS IN CARE AND LEAVING CARE

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

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

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER PREVENTION STRATEGY

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHILD PRACTICE REVIEW

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

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

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

THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – MOVING FORWARD

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

REGULAR PERFORMANCE DATA

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

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

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

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

ELECTED MEMBER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

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

UK GOVERNMENT AND WELSH GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

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

PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SAFEGUARDING INFORMATION

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

VIRTUAL SCHOOL MODEL

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

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

THE MAGU PROJECT

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

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

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

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

2023-2024

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

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

Participation Update & RCT Forum

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

JANUARY 2024

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

ALNET Act and ALN Code for Children Looked After

Fostering Quality of Care Annual Report

ND service developments

MARCH 2024

Employment, Education and Training Programmes for Children Looked After

Participation Update & RCT Forum

Virtual School Model pilot – Interim Evaluation of Year 2

Registered Childcare Provision Annual Update 2023-24

Young Carers Annual Report 2023-24

Draft Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2023-2024

CONCLUSION

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

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

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