

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**CWM TAF YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE (YJS)**

**30<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2024**

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

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Corporate Parenting Board regarding the 'All Wales Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Children and Young People 2022' presented to Board in January this year, and provide updated local information regarding care experienced children in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Appendix 1.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the publication of this report.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 Consider an 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.

**3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

- 3.1 This protocol, published in May last year, is intended to assist professionals who come into contact with care experienced children and young adults while carrying out their work, and to share a common framework of principles and expectations informed by an approach that actively promotes children's rights and which safeguards and promotes their well-being.
- 3.2 The work began in January 2021, when a task and finish group set up for reducing the criminalisation of care experienced children and young people in Wales (as part of a wider ministerial Advisory Group for improving outcomes for children) requested knowledge and data on the current number of Children Looked After (CLA) within the Youth Justice system. A snapshot for the Wales Youth Justice caseload was

taken on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021, and Task and Finish Group members interrogated the findings and reported back to the Advisory group.

- 3.3 To provide further local context, the number of out of court disposals are increasing, therefore diverting children and young people from formal sanctions, and a criminal record. This is a positive trend which aligns with policy direction and the drive to reduce the criminalisation of children and young people wherever appropriate. The approach aligns with the 'Child First' vision set out in the Youth Justice Board's Strategic Plan 2021 – 24.
- 3.4 Cwm Taf YJS has been proactive in developing a child first approach which treats children as children and seeks to ensure that they are not unnecessarily criminalised as a result of their vulnerability or the challenges they face. The YOS has a Child First 'champion' within the team who has led on the implementation of a Child First Strategy for the service with accompanied guidance for all staff.
- 3.5 Following the completion of the initial work outlined above, a report suggested improvements for subsequent data collections to strengthen the depth of data available and information provided. Data collection from Youth Justice Services has taken place on a frequent basis and a further data lift took place during 2023, with another anticipated in due course. As a result of a number of collaborative events held with various stakeholders, including children and young people, a Toolkit and other training and resources for professionals has been produced (refer to link below). Appendix 2
- 3.6 A short video presentation that explains the tool kit more fully can be found on this site: <https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/reducing-the-criminalisation-of-care-experienced-children-and-young-adults-in-wales-a-practical-toolkit-for-professionals#section-4>

#### **4. DATA FOR RCT CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER**

- 4.1 The initial exercise carried out for the Youth Justice Board last year, looked at children across Wales receiving an Out of Court Disposal or a Community Order from court. 15% of the total were children looked after (CLA). A snapshot between April 2021 – March 2022, showed 13% of 'children looked after' were subject to an Out of Court Disposal and 27% for the smaller cohort received a court order.
- 4.2 The figures of Children Looked After known to our service and produced on a quarterly basis, tends to vary between 10% and 15%

#### **RCT children with interventions starting April 22 to March 23:**

- 4.3 More recently, further work has been undertaken whereby a total of 317 Prevention Interventions (including, Anti-social behaviour contracts and voluntary Interventions) started in the period April 2022 to March 2023. Of those, 29 were CLA (9.1%).
- 4.4 The number receiving Out of Court Disposals, Street Disposals and Outcome 22 disposals was 246, with 19 of the total being CLA (8%).

- 4.5 As expected, there was a much smaller cohort from court, and of 32 children receiving a community order, 7 were CLA which equates to (22%).
- 4.6 Overall, a total of 594 children started an intervention with the YJS in the period and of these 55 were CLA (9.2%).
- 4.7 Figures for the RCT area before and since the launch of the protocol shows the following, with little if no clear difference to the numbers coming through, although there may be other factors contributing to this, such as a general rise in numbers coming to the attention of our service presenting with complex needs.

**May 21 to April 22**

YJS Interventions	587
Total children	419
Of those children, CLA	46 (10.9%)

**May 22 to April 23**

YJS Interventions	586
Total children	428
Of those children, CLA	46 (10.7%)

- 4.8 The YJS will undertake further evaluation on this at the end of March 2024. The effectiveness of the protocol therefore is difficult to gauge at this stage in its development. However, it's use has been brought to the attention of the YJS Management Board, subsequently prompting discussions amongst partners regarding current practice that contributes to higher CLA numbers in the system and the need to embed a trauma informed approach across the partnership in the longer term.

**5. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**

- 5.1 This protocol has been shared again with the Youth Justice Services Management Board in September this year in order to keep the wider partnership informed of its impact and the work taking place to help reduce the numbers of children entering the youth justice system. It will be important that future training regarding the protocol and use of the accompanying toolkit should be delivered on a multi-agency basis to ensure that whenever possible the protocol is implemented and has a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people.
- 5.2 Cwm Taf YJS is sensitive to the challenges we face regarding the over representation of CLA children in the criminal justice system and to be proactive in ensuring that our work alongside Children's Services, placement providers, educational settings, health services, the Police and other criminal justice partners, challenges unnecessary criminalisation.
- 5.3 The YJS will continue to monitor and analyse data on an annual basis, (recognizing that trends and challenges will change overtime) and continue to embed a trauma informed approach to practice with a strong focus on the child's life journey, identity

and experience, whilst continually monitoring disproportionality within the service. This work is outlined in the current Cwm Taf YJS 'Child First' action plan which sets out how we will achieve this, and on a broader note, develop practice for any child where national or local research indicates they may receive a disproportionate outcome, e.g. children who have experienced ACES, have 'Additional Learning Needs', who are Looked After, Care experienced, females and Black and Ethnic Minority Children.