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THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

14th January 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee will be held in virtually via Microsoft Teams - if you would like to attend this meeting live via Microsoft Teams please contact committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk on Thursday, 21st January, 2021 at 10.00 am.

Please note that a pre and post meeting will be held 30 minutes prior to the start and following the conclusion of the meeting for members of the committee.

Yours faithfully

Michelle Morris
Managing Director

AGENDA

Pages

1. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required

We welcome correspondence in the medium of Welsh or English. / Croesawn ohebiaith trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.

should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation will be provided if requested.

2. **APOLOGIES**

To receive.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATION**

To consider any declarations of interests and dispensations made.

4. **SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES** 5 - 10

To receive the Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 10th December, 2020.

(Please note the Minutes are submitted for points of accuracy only)

5. **CORPORATE PARENTING PROGRESS REPORT 2020-21** 11 - 58

To consider the report of the Service Manager, Children's Services.

6. **COMMUNITY MEALS** 59 - 84

To consider the report of the Head of Adult Services.

7. **USE OF CONSULTANTS** 85 - 90

To consider the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.

8. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 11TH MARCH 2021** 91 - 94

To receive the report.

To: Councillor S. Thomas (Chair)
Councillor K. Rowson (Vice-Chair)
Councillor D. Bevan
Councillor G. Collier
Councillor G. A. Davies
Councillor G. L. Davies

Councillor P. Edwards
Councillor K. Hayden
Councillor W. Hodgins
Councillor J. Holt
Councillor M. Moore
Councillor G. Paulsen
Councillor T. Sharrem
Councillor B. Summers
Councillor T. Smith

All other Members (for information)
Manager Director
Chief Officers

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 10TH DECEMBER, 2020

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S.C. THOMAS (CHAIR)

Councillors: K. Rowson
 D. Bevan
 G.A. Davies
 P. Edwards
 K. Hayden
 W. Hodgins
 J. Holt
 M. Moore
 G. Paulsen
 T. Smith
 B. Summers

Executive Member for Social Services

Councillor J. Mason

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
 Head of Children’s Services
 Head of Adult Services
 Service Manager, South East Wales Adoption Service
 Communications & Policy Officer
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	

No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>No apologies for absence were reported.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 5th November, 2020 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>INTEGRATED CARE FUND (ICF) UPDATE 2019/20</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Adult Services which was presented to provide an overview on the current allocation of funding for projects monitored by the Social Services Department and funded via the Welsh Government Integrated Care Fund (ICF) as at November 2020.</p> <p>The Head of Adult Services spoke to the report and advised Members that the Welsh Government had given a verbal update for a further extension of the fund for the transition year (2021/22), however, official confirmation of the exact allocation had not yet been received. The four key areas of the ICF were:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people with complex needs and long term conditions including dementia • People with Learning Disabilities • Children with Complex Needs due to disability or illness • Carers, including young carers <p>With regard to projects ranked as a high/critical priority, the Chair enquired if the Regional Partnership Board and Regional Partners had made concerted efforts to raise concerns with the Welsh Government on the detrimental impact removal of the funding would have on these projects.</p>	

The Head of Adult Services said that both the Director of Social Services and the Executive Member for Social Services as representatives on the Regional Partnership Board had, for the last two years, continually highlighted the concerns. Risk rating of the projects had provided a clear understanding of the impact moving forward and the final report on the risk rating and the financial pressures had been reported back to the Regional Partnership Board.

In response to a Member's question regarding how the impact of staff leaving could affect the running of the services, the Head of Adult Services said this had been a challenge all through the ICF projects, but with assurances from the Welsh Government for funding for the additional year, staff had not left in significant numbers but this was a high risk in relation to any grant funded programme.

In relation to posts a Member enquired about the differential between wte (whole time equivalent) posts and fte (full time equivalent) posts. The Head of Adult Services clarified the differential between the two; a number of posts were part time and some staff who had part time permanent posts within the Local Authority may be working full time by making up the hours using ICF funding.

A Member requested an update on the proposed extension to Augusta House, Ebbw Vale. The Head of Adult Services said initially there had been a delay due to the pandemic, but plans had been reviewed and gone back out to Planning. Exploratory work in relation to the groundworks were already underway.

In response to a Member's question regarding Blaenau Gwent's funding allocation for Adult Services and Children's Services, the Head of Adult Services explained that the allocation and bidding process can be complex as there were both revenue and capital funding streams within the investment plan of ICF. Since 2014 there had been bidding rounds every year, if a project that was suitable for ICF and aligned to the strategic priorities of the local authority, then a bid was submitted to the Regional Partnership Board. Some projects were regional so Blaenau Gwent's proportion of grant monies would be less, as it could be split five ways. In relation to Children's Services and the critical numbers of children they support, some of the grant monies

	<p>allocated could be contributed to support wider Gwent projects.</p> <p>The Director of Social Services explained that in 2014 when the Integrated Care Fund first started, it had been around older adults, funding for complex children came into being from 2016, historically a lot of the funding had gone to older people and adult services, only lately had the Authority been able to apply for children’s funding this could be part of the reason for the differential of the funding allocation.</p> <p>In relation to the recommendations, a Member enquired if neighbouring authorities had alternative approaches for consideration. The Head of Adult Services said that no alternative approaches had been raised by neighbouring authorities, if Blaenau Gwent wanted to do anything specifically different then that would be presented to the RPB for discussion.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the actions currently underway to evaluate the future impact of the cessation of the ICF funded posts and services be approved.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Social Services which presented the performance of the South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) and the National Adoption Service (NAS) for 2019/20.</p> <p>The Service Manager, South East Wales Adoption Service spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein. The key areas of the report covered:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children placed and waiting for adoption; • Demand for adoptive placements and adopter recruitment; • Life journey materials; and • Adoption Support. 	

The National Adoption Service (NAS) was formed in 2014 with the remit to improve recruitment, waiting times for children and improve options support.

Shortage of Adopters

In relation to recruitment of adopters a Member said that now a Recruitment Officer was in post, the Authority needed to be proactive in its attempts to recruit adopters, there needed to be some form of advertising to attract people to visit the website i.e. adverts on roundabouts etc. The Service Manager said that improvements to the website had been undertaken and the combination of social media and the website were attracting visits and also mentioned that a national campaign had taken place in October. The Head of Children's Services said SEWAS had a clear plan of attending events to raise awareness in the community throughout the year, unfortunately a lot of those events had been cancelled due to the pandemic.

The Chair proposed that to meet the needs of the service further advertising options for recruitment of adopters be explored.

The Committee AGREED this course of action.

A Member enquired what support was in place for adopters in relation to training. The Service Manager advised Members that there was a four day full training programme before the assessment started.

In relation to the shortage of adopters, a Member enquired if there was a national shortage or was the shortage just in South East Wales. The Service Manager said that some regions did better than others, but there were peaks and troughs. Some regions, after approving adopters, had delays matching adopters with children, this was not the case with SEWAS which was in part due to the quality of the assessments undertaken to get the right people, which helped to match them quickly.

The Chair and Scrutiny Members expressed their thanks to the staff and officers for all their hard work and diligence during the challenging year.

	<p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1, namely that to meet the needs of the service further advertising options for recruitment of adopters be explored.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 21ST JANUARY 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>After a brief discussion,</p> <p>the Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that three additional reports be prepared and included in the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. An update report on legal costs associated with the service, the report to include anonymised case studies; ii. Report on the use of consultants and with particular focus on costs and benefits associated within the service; and iii. An update report on vulnerable children during COVID-19 with focus on issues arising from school closures, to be presented to the meeting on 11th March, 2021. 	
	<p>As this was the last meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee for 2020, the Executive Member for Social Services took the opportunity to thank Members for the support given to Senior Management and staff that support the Scrutiny Committee in its work, especially in this challenging and difficult period and for the professional way Members approach the very important work of the Social Services Committee.</p>	

Agenda Item 5

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **21st January 2021**

Report Subject: **Corporate Parenting Progress Report 2020-21**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr J. Mason, Executive Member Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Ceri Bird – Service Manager, Children’s Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	07.01.21	06.01.21			21.01.21	24.02.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the progress made by Blaenau Gwent Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) throughout 2020 to improve outcomes and services for our Children Looked After (CLA).

2. Scope and Background

2.1 This report will focus on key achievements and progress made throughout 2020 to date on the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) Action Plan 2020/21.

2.2 Please note the action plan for this year was developed in February 2020, prior to the Covid 19 Pandemic which has determined how we have prioritised and delivered services for our Children Looked After in 2020. Much of the action plan has been delivered and there is still the last quarter of the year still to be added before the final action plan is completed, however there is an additional section in this year’s report detailing the exemplar practice and service delivery undertaken by officers in response to the pandemic to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our children looked after.

2.3 The Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2020/2021 was once again developed in line with the 7 Definitions of Well-being under Section 2 of Part 1 of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014, plus one additional outcome that was decided upon at a local level. For the purpose of the action plan the 7 Definitions of Well-being (plus the extra priority) have become key priorities under which fall measurable actions and outcomes thus ensuring we are addressing and monitoring all elements of our children looked after well-being:-

- All our Children Looked After enjoy good physical and mental health, and emotional wellbeing;
- All our Children Looked After are protected from abuse and neglect;
- All our Children Looked After are enabled to reach their full potential in education, training and recreation;

- Our Children Looked After have healthy domestic, family and personal relationships;
- Our Children Looked After secure their rights and entitlements;
- Our Children Looked After enjoy social and economic well-being;
- Our Children Looked After live in suitable accommodation;
- The Corporate Parenting Agenda is owned across the local authority and by partner agencies.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 It is recommended that Committee Members:-

Option 1 Acknowledge progress made throughout 2020, and feel confident that the Local Authority and its partners are doing well to improve outcomes for our children looked after as part of our corporate parenting responsibilities.

Option 2 Acknowledge progress made throughout 2020, and the exemplar practice delivered by officers throughout the Covid 19 pandemic to ensure all our children looked after are supported, and suggest activities or areas for development that the Local Authority might adopt to improve the outcomes of children looked after as part of our corporate parenting responsibilities.

4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

It is not anticipated there will be any financial costs associated in taking forward this Corporate Parenting Action Plan, the plan is about new ways of working together to deliver outcomes.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There are many risks if, as corporate parents we do not strive to support our children looked after adequately improve their outcomes. We must endeavour to support our individual children looked after to help them overcome the adversity they have already faced in life to enable them to become resilient adults.

5.3 ***Legal***

No legal implications.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

It is not anticipated that there will be any staffing / workforce development implications other than robust collaboration between departments.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 *Performance Information and Data*

Update on Progress made under the Action Plan

The full Corporate Parenting Board Action Plan 2020/21 is attached to this report as *Appendix 1* and more detailed commentary is included next to the relevant sections.

For the purpose of this year's report, each key priority will be addressed in turn and some key outcomes highlighted, providing a summary of what progress has been made, spotlighting some headline activities of interest to focus on.

6.2 **Key Priority 1 - All our Children Looked After enjoy good physical and mental health, and emotional well-being**

The CLA Health Team across Gwent has made great progress in adapting to the changes in line with Public Health and Government recommendations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of Microsoft Teams and What's app video call enabled the ongoing engagement with children and young people allowing the completion of their statutory health assessments and allowing them to take part in meetings. The Statutory Health Assessments were amended and updated alongside the other CLA Nursing Teams Assessments across Wales in June 2020.

MyST (My Support Team) has been in operation since June 2019, and continued their work at the same level as prior to Covid 19 and facilitated the step down of children looked after from residential care into foster care and prevented children from entering residential care.

6.3 **Key Priority 2 - All our Children Looked After are protected from abuse and neglect**

For 2019/20 and 20/21 the Board identified an action to identify our children looked after who were at risk of exploitation, where that was criminal exploitation or sexual exploitation. Once identified the board wanted to be assured that interventions were being delivered to reduce that risk.

An audit was concluded in October 2020 and findings were reported to the Corporate Parenting Board in December 2020 which showed that between January 2019 and September 2020 **14** children had been identified as being at risk of exploitation.

10 children were deemed at risk Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) = **9** children were female and **1** child was male.

3 children were believed to be at risk of 'Missing' = **1** was female and **2** were male.

1 child was deemed at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE).

The audit concluded that the social work teams involved had recognized exploitation risks and were effectively working with the children to help reduce these risks by holding regular risk assessment meetings to monitor and review the potential risks of exploitation. Additionally, Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings are held on a quarterly basis. The purpose of these meetings is to provide oversight of Child Exploitation (CE) cases, sharing of intelligence on linked cases and locations of concern; and provide oversight of case escalations. The meetings, also, consider operational and tactical issues in relation to sexual and criminal exploitation plus children missing from home.

6.4 **Key Priority 3 - All our Children Looked After are enabled to reach their full potential in education, training and recreation (ETE)**

This is such a large priority area Appendix 2, 3 and 4 contains a full breakdown of attainment, exclusions and destinations of our children looked after and care leavers. A new subgroup was formed in 2019 which had 4 key actions and is now led by the Education Directorate.

There are 4 Key Actions :-

Action 1 - Minimise the risk of Children Looked After becoming Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET).

Action 2– Improve communication with the Education Achievement Service (EAS) regarding CLA funding and cluster plans (CLA Pupil Deprivation Grant)

Action 3 – Promote “Children Looked After Friendly Schools”

Action 4 – Ensure we are ready for ALN Act to ensure our Children Looked After have the right support.

- At the end of academic year 2019-2020, **162** children of statutory school age were looked after by Blaenau Gwent local authority. The majority of children who are looked after by Blaenau Gwent continue to be educated within Blaenau Gwent and attend mainstream schools. A small proportion of our looked after children attend more specialist education settings.
- Just over half of our children looked after have additional learning needs and 20% have a statement of special educational needs.
- There has been a decrease in the incidents of exclusions issued in respect of children looked after as well as the number of individual children who have received fixed term exclusions and the total number of days lost to exclusions when compared with the previous year. However, it is important to note that for 2019-2020, the time period for exclusions covers September to March 2020 only.

- In response to COVID 19, the Welsh Government has cancelled all statutory data collections that would have been due to take place in Summer 2020 - the School Performance Information (Wales) Regulations 2011 has been amended to remove the duties on governing bodies to provide data to local authorities and Welsh Ministers, respectively, on teacher assessment outcomes and authorised or unauthorised absence for the pupils registered at schools in the 2019/20 school year. As such, no end of phase/key stage data in respect of our children looked after is included in this report.
- From 20th March 2020 schools were re-purposed in the emergency response to the COVID pandemic. Schools were closed for provision of statutory education and re-purposed as hubs to provide care for children of critical workers and vulnerable children. A joint approach was established between Education and Children's Services to ensure out looked after children could access this hub provision.
- On 20th April 2020, the Welsh Government published 'Stay Safe. Stay Learning: Continuity of learning policy statement'. To ensure that children looked after were able to keep learning, Children's Services identified those children looked after who had insufficient access to ICT equipment to enable them to engage in online learning. The parents and carers of all those children who were digitally excluded were provided with funding for a laptop and ensured that there was access to Wi-Fi. Designated laptop models were recommended and support was made available by the CLA Education Team and Children's Services to help set up the laptops.
- During academic year 2019-20, a total of **15** young people who were looked after by Blaenau Gwent completed their statutory school studies. All but 2 children were awarded recognised qualifications in Summer 2020. All 15 children are engaged in post 16 learning opportunities. Of the young people who were looked after and completed their statutory studies in summer 2020 half had additional learning needs and 2 had a statement of special educational needs. 13 of the 15 children attended mainstream school settings, 2 of which attended resource bases attached to mainstream schools for children with complex needs. The remaining 2 children attended Local Authority Special School settings.

6.5 **Key Priority 4 - Our Children Looked After have healthy domestic, family and personal relationships**

A Task and Finish Group was established to promote healthy and safe relationships and children's health and wellbeing from an early age and at all stages of their life early in 2020. The group has been established with a range of professionals from early year's, through school, college and into youth and adulthood but the group meetings were put on hold as other priorities superseded this to ensure existing service delivery continued throughout the pandemic. Despite this 14+ Team took the opportunity to

deliver a range of opportunities to consult and engage with our children to promote safe and healthy relationships via What's App and video calling. Work has also started on Beaufort Road Resource Centre to build a new facility that will offer additional facilities for our older children and care leavers. When the works are completed a timetable of support around personal relationships, friendships, self-esteem, confidence building, independence skills is planned

6.6 **Key Priority 5 Our Children Looked After secure their rights and entitlements**

Implementation of the new Care and Support Plan which is outcome focused and much more friendly to use and understand by our children looked after is now complete and about to be used and available on WCCIS. A Blaenau Gwent easy to read brochure detailing children's rights, entitlements and assistance available is almost complete this will include bespoke local information relevant to our care leavers.

6.7 **Key Priority 6 - Our Children Looked After enjoy social and economic wellbeing**

Regional Fostering Framework coordinators mapping exercise of all opportunities for leisure and community activities is now completed the next stage will be to work on a local exercise.

6.8 **Key Priority 7 - Our Children Looked After live in suitable accommodation**

This key priority continues to go from strength to strength delivering new outcomes and opportunities for our children each year; -

- A new Supported Lodgings advertising and promotion scheme has now been developed and is run by Llamau and funded by the Housing Support Grant. There have been 3 new supported lodging providers recruited by the Authority in a short time.
- There has been the creation of 10 young person flats in Tredegar that has housed 17 clients to date. Unfortunately, 1 bedroom flats are still in short supply across the Authority and desperately needed.
- Move on panel has been hugely successful since revised 18 months ago with a lot of young people accessing accommodation and doing well with the assistance from the Registered Social Landlord, Supporting People and Housing Options BG.

6.9 **Key Priority 8 - The Corporate Parenting Agenda is owned across the local authority and by partner agencies.**

The Corporate Parenting Board continues to have good commitment from Local Authority officers and partner agencies and once again this year Elected Member representation has been excellent and fruitful.

Also this is the seventh annual report on Corporate Parenting delivered to Scrutiny Committee.

6.10 **Exemplary Practice throughout COVID**

It should be recognised that in addition to statutory service delivery and the delivery of the actions in the 20/21 action plan, due to the COVID 19 pandemic there has been a significant amount of additional work undertaken by all officers and partners to improve outcomes and maintain safety of our children looked after, some examples although by no means exhaustive include: -

- Weekly welfare calls switching from telephone to video chat
- Delivery of support groups online
- Innovative wellbeing support packs to help with relaxation and anxiety
- Drop and go food parcels, grants / money, fuel tokens, isolation tips and tricks for home activities.
- Laptops for digitally excluded learners
- Bespoke closed access Facebook pages set up
- Virtual meetings to complete statutory health assessments
- Virtual direct work
- Online learning platforms
- Transition support
- Continuing to recognise CLA achievements
- ICT support for young people
- Weekly Safeguarding bulletins
- Access to education hub provision for all CLA
- New pathway of support for early Years CLA in childcare hubs
- Training needs of foster cares identified and support with IT skills
- Adopting new ways of support
- Mentors available for online learning
- Santa online on Facebook with personalised messages for our children

7. ***Expected outcome for the public***

Better services for Children Looked After.

8. ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The Blaenau Gwent Corporate Parenting Board is made up of elected members, Local Authority officers and representation from partner agencies to ensure that the best possible advice, care and safeguarding of our children is ensured across the 7 areas.

8.1 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

Research shows that children and young people who have experienced care or who are looked after have the poorest outcomes of all children and young people in the UK. The Corporate Parenting concept exists to try and improve outcomes for our children and young people for the long-term and improve the level of respect and support from people for the rights of care leavers and children looked after.

8.2 ***Preventative focus***

By adopting the 7 ways of working from the SS&WB act into a Corporate Parenting Action Plan we will ensure the needs of our children looked after are met on all levels to ensure problems do not escalate, become more acute, and more costly, to the detriment to the children, families, carers and the community in the future.

8.3 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The role of the Corporate Parent falls across all the different Departments of the Authority and external services, to ensure its legal responsibility for enabling children to lead happy and fulfilling lives is fulfilled. It is only by working collaboratively we can ensure this.

8.4 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The Corporate Parenting Action Plan is set across the 7 Definitions of Wellbeing under Section 2 of part 1 of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014/. This approach will ensure there is integration between all services in the vision to improve outcomes for Looked After children in Blaenau Gwent.

8.5 ***EqIA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

Not required.

9. **Monitoring Arrangements**

The Corporate Parenting Board has been re-established for over 3 years. The work undertaken and scrutinised by members of this board are already evidencing improvements in certain areas of looked after children's lives. The challenge for the group is to continually identify actions which will make a positive difference to the day-day lives and outcomes for our looked after children.

10. **Background Documents /Electronic Links**

Appendix 1 – Action Plan 2020/21

Appendix 2 – Children Looked After Education Outcomes

Appendix 3 – Children Looked After Education – Exclusions from School

Appendix 4 – Children Looked After School Leavers Destinations



Blaenau Gwent Corporate Parenting Board Action Plan 2020/21

This Plan has been developed in line with the Definitions of Well-Being under Section 2 of Part 1 of the Social Services and Well-Being Act 2014.

The plan outlines the additional measures Blaenau Gwent Corporate Parenting Board are taking to improve outcomes in addition to day to day activity of the individual Social Work and Childcare Teams.

Blaenau Gwent Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2020/21					
Priority 1 – All our Children Looked After enjoy good physical and mental health, and emotional wellbeing “ I am healthy, happy and active and get the right care and support from the start”					
Outcome (how do we want it to look in the future?)	Action (what are we going to do?)	How	2020/21 Evaluation Commentary	RP	BRAG
All our Children Looked After enjoy good physical and mental health, and emotional wellbeing	In Partnership with ABUHB monitor all health assessment requirements in relation to CEL 16 to ensure they are achieved.	Monitor how the assessments were carried out throughout COVID 19	<p>The CLA Health Team across Gwent has made great progress, in adapting to the changes in line with Public Health and Government recommendations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of Microsoft Teams and What’s app video call enabled the engagement with young people, complete their statutory health assessments and take part in meetings, which all contribute to meet the needs of the young people on our caseloads.</p> <p>The statutory health assessments were amended and updated along with other CLA Nursing Teams across Wales in June 2020.</p> <p>In addition to this the CLA Steering Group (NHS Wales Safeguarding Network Subgroup) published The NHS Wales Health Assessment Framework for Looked After Children which provides standards of good practice for Health Boards working with children who are currently Looked After by the local authority.</p> <p>The NHS Wales Video Consulting Service which is a video consultation service rolled out by Welsh Government to offer healthcare services in a safe and secure way to see patients via a video appointment, rather than seeing them in-person and is called ‘Attend Anywhere’.</p> <p>Full update at end of 2020/21</p>	CE	
	Develop support to improve outcomes for children and young people with complex needs through earlier intervention, community based support and placements closer to home.	Monitor development of MySt team and number of children from Blaenau Gwent that they are working with and those who are at risk of entering residential care.	MyST continued their work at the same level as prior to Covid and facilitated step down of children from residential in foster care and prevented children to escalate to residential	TE	

	To ensure good mental health and emotional well-being for children young people through effective partnership working with the social worker, foster carers, schools and other agencies	All Foster Carers to receive Attachment Training to enable them to support children who are experiencing attachment and trauma based problems	Training on hold until it can be held in real time	LM	
		Explore the option of Psychology input in Placement Team using ICF grant money for prevention.	In March 2020 Sarah Brown (Clinical Psychologist) started in post within the Blaenau Gwent Placement team, working one session (half a day) a week, with Paul Price (Systemic Psychotherapist) from Gwent Community Psychology within Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. Sarah and Paul offer consultation sessions to carers and foster carers. The sessions offer space to consider carer's relationships with the children, the impact of the work on their wellbeing, and think about what might help support them. The sessions are organised by the placement team, and are supported by professionals working with the carers or children, including link workers, social workers and support workers. This psychology provision is funded by the Integrated Care Fund (ICF) grant. This grant has been extended for another year until April 2022.	LM	
		Explore offering Circle of Security parenting for all Foster Carers	Training on hold until it can be held in real time	LM	
Priority 2 – All our Children Looked After are protected from abuse and neglect “I am safe and protected from abuse and neglect and informed about how to make any concerns known”					
Outcome (how do we want it to look in the future?)	Action (what are we going to do?)	How	2020 /2021 Evaluation Commentary	RP	BRAG
All our Children Looked After are protected from abuse and neglect	A designated officer from Locality teams to liaise with team managers and identify those children who are at risk of sexual exploitation and those displaying sexually harmful behaviour.	Report to CPB with numbers and detail showing what has been done to manage and reduce the risks to this cohort of children. Compare to previous work	Work completed and presented to CPB December 2020	LT	

	Identify and safely manage those CLA where exploitation of any sort is a feature of their risk management plan – report back to CPB	Safeguarding - Raise awareness of the issue of County Lines, Criminal Exploitation, Social media exploitation through briefing sessions with children, schools, community groups, practitioners and foster carers	Work completed and presented to CPB December 2020	LT	
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**Priority 3 – All our Children Looked After are enabled to reach their full potential in education, training and recreation
“I can learn and develop to my full potential and I do the things that matter to me”**

Outcome (how do we want it to look in the future?)	Action (what do we need to improve?)	How	2020 /2021 Evaluation Commentary	RP	BRAG
Our Children Looked After are enabled to reach their full potential in education, training and recreation	Support CLA in their learning during COVID 19 and recovery phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure CLA have necessary resources to engage in education • Provide educational support to carers/parents • Ensure school staff participate in the CLA review process and relevant staff contribute to planning meetings to support transition and school placement. 	<p>All CLA digitally excluded were provided with new laptops or Wi-Fi connections at the beginning of the pandemic by Children’s Services Team.</p> <p>Foster carers / Parents embraced the home learning period, and experienced good dialog with schools which has made relationships stronger.</p> <p>CLA education Coordinator has advised how the children stepped up to complete the work and how school staff and mentors adapted ways of working to support the children through the pandemic.</p>	CE	
	Consider the recommendations in the ‘An integrated approach to improving educational outcomes for Looked After Children in Wales’ report and how recommendations can be progressed at a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole school training information briefing on CLA learners to be disseminated to school staff • Promote ‘Trauma Informed Training’ to schools • CLA Education Coordinator to apply for 	<p>CLA friendly toolkit has now been completed and was presented to Corporate Parenting Board in December 2020 alongside the reports; -</p> <p>CLA attainment 2019-2020 CLA School Leavers destinations 2019-2020 CLA exclusion 2019-2020</p>	CE	

	local level	<p>funding to complete the diploma</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broaden the measures of what constitutes educational outcomes for CLA in the annual education report to Corporate Parenting. 			
	Support carers and families to access available funding (PDG Access Grant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all those eligible for PDG Access funding are aware of the process for accessing the grant and provide any support needed to access the funding. • Establish a process so that this grant funding can be allocated automatically 	Update required for end of year	CE	
	<p>Improve communication with the Education Achievement Service (EAS) regarding CLA funding and cluster plans (CLA PDG)</p> <p>Promote 'CLA Friendly Schools'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with schools (CLA Leads/Headteachers) in the development of their cluster bids. • Work with the EAS to ensure that appropriate monitoring and evaluation of cluster plans takes place. • Work with the EAS to ensure a joined up and coordinated training programme. • Establish transparent and equitable sharing of information with the EAS. • Ensure relevant information is shared with Monitoring Evaluation and Review Group / Wider Group and with regional SEWC. 	<p>Updated required for end of year</p> <p>CLA friendly school's toolkit is now complete</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	CE	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Task and Finish Group to implement the action plan Develop a framework for a 'CLA friendly school' Test framework on a pilot group of schools and produce evaluation Use the evaluation to contribute to the production of a 'CLA Friendly School' good practice guide Raise awareness of the 'CLA friendly school' framework Engage with all schools to participate in the 'CLA friendly school' framework Deliver training programme to support 'CLA Friendly School' 	<p>In place</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Ready to go</p> <p>In place</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ready to go</p> <p>Ongoing</p>		
	Our readiness for the ALN Act.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Education Directorate and Regional ALN Transformational Lead to ensure the following groups are ALN Act Ready at the appropriate time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CLA Team School CLA Leads Social Workers Foster Carers 	<p>Regional work has been ongoing for some time. An authority wide Task and Finish group has been established to ensure readiness at a local level and meetings are ongoing.</p>	GM	
	Monitor, review and expand the Corporate Traineeship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular meetings with Inspire to Work colleagues in Environment and the 	<p>The new Corporate Trainee Coordinator was appointed in August 2020 through funding from Legacy portion of Children and Communities Grant an I working on the corporate brochure.</p>	BM	

		<p>newly appointed Corporate Trainee Coordinator and devise a brochure of opportunities within BGCBC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 20/21 hold an interactive, vibrant “My Career Journey” event at the General Offices for our children looked after at Secondary School age 	This has had to be put on hold because of COVID 19		
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**Priority 4 – Our Children Looked After have healthy domestic, family and personal relationships
“I belong and I contribute to and enjoy safe and healthy relationships”**

Outcome (how do we want it to look in the future?)	Action (what are we going to do?)	How	2020 /2021 Evaluation Commentary	RP	BRAG
Our Children looked After children have healthy domestic, family and personal relationships	<p>Promote healthy and safe relationships and behaviours from a relevant age for all our Children and training for Foster Carers on Safe and Healthy relationships.</p> <p>14+ Team to deliver a range of opportunities to consult and engage with our children to promote safe and healthy relationships</p>	<p>Explore what work is done with our children around safe and healthy relationships before the age of 14. Look at what emotional and wellbeing support is offered to CLA throughout stages of their life in EY settings, schools, colleges, at home, in placement.</p> <p>14+ are in the process of developing a care leaver forum which will seek to address a range of topics concerning CLA and care leavers. Initially this will focus on CLA language,</p>	<p>Discussions with CLA Education Lead, Healthy Schools, Youth Service etc.to explore how healthy relationships are being included on school curriculum and what other provision is out there to support mental health and wellbeing of our children are ongoing but have been superseded in priority by COVID 19 essential actions</p> <p>We will be exploring Is there enough? Do we need to supplement this? Is it easily accessible? What are the access criteria? Are our children accessing it? How do we know?</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>CB</p> <p>AR/ BT</p>	

		<p>then moving to planning St David's expenditure for next financial year, then developing a PA service and entitlement leaflet.</p> <p>The new facility at Beaufort Road planned for Summer 2020 will have a timetable of group sessions for CLA and care leavers on topics such as personal relationships, friendships, self-esteem, confidence building, independence planning etc.</p>	Work has started on the new facility and is almost complete		
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Priority 5 – Our Children Looked After secure their rights and entitlements “ I know and understand what care, support and opportunities are available and use these to help manage, achieve and improve my wellbeing”					
Outcome (how do we want it to look in the future?)	Action (what are we going to do?)	How	2020/21 Evaluation Commentary	RP	BRAG
	Ensure our children have a voice in the way in which we deliver and shape services.	The Care and Support Plan for children looked after is currently in process of being changed into a more user and client friendly version based on outcomes and what matters to the individual. Aim to implement the new form in WCCIS in 2020 with awareness and training sessions being planned throughout the department.	Implementation of the new Care and Support Plan which is outcome focused and much more friendly to use and understand by our children looked after is complete; use in the system and also used during the CLA reviews which started to include more discussions re outcomes for CLA and being based on What matter conversations	LM	

	Ensure our children know their entitlements and can easily access them	Policy to be started and will be updated by Jan/Feb 2021 by 14+ team. When this has been completed, the Care Leavers Forum will help develop the leaflet outlining the entitlements.	This is ongoing and almost complete	BT	
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Priority 6 – Our Children Looked After enjoy social and economic wellbeing “I contribute towards my social life and can be with the people that I choose. I am supported to work and I get the help I need to grow up and be independent”					
Outcome (how do we want it to look in the future?)	Action (what are we going to do?)	How	2020 /2021 Evaluation Commentary	RP	BRAG
Our Children Looked After children enjoy social and economic wellbeing	Realise the importance of social and economic wellbeing by ensuring our children are engaged with hobbies and interest / activities from a young age by knowing and offering leisure and social opportunities to all our LAC at all ages	Regional Fostering Framework coordinators mapping exercise of all opportunities for leisure and community activities completed	This has now been completed	NC	
		Engage with Aneurin Leisure to explore what opportunities they can offer children looked after.	This has been put on hold as AL has been on furlough much through COVID 19 and will be rolled over to 21/22 action plan	CB/LM	
		Ensure opportunities for our children to have rich opportunities in their social life is explored. linking with “Voices From Care” and maximising all trips and activities offered through this organisation	This has been put on hold through COVID 19 pandemic as socialising has not been permitted	CB/LM	

Priority 7 – Our Children Looked After live in suitable accommodation “I live in a home that best supports me to achieve my wellbeing”					
Outcome (how do we want it to look in the future?)	Action (what are we going to do?)	How	2020/21 Evaluation Commentary	RP	BRA G

All our Children Looked After live in suitable accommodation	Improve and increase the accommodation options and quality available to LAC post 16 years	Deliver the key priorities identified in the Accommodation Action Plan 20/21 which include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating annual analysis of accommodation for care leavers • HSG is funding supported lodgings scheme • Creation of more 1 bedroom flats • Monitor success of Move On panel after its new update • Creating taster flats • Monitor placement moves • Housemate course, Cookery courses and independent living courses continue 	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete and supported lodgings advertising and promotion scheme now in place with Llamau funded by HSG grant. We have recently appointed 3 supported lodging providers</p> <p>Creation of 10 young person flats in (Ty Parc) Tredegar is going really well had 17 clients to date. Unfortunately, 1 bedroom flats are still in short supply across the Authority and desperately needed.</p> <p>Move on panel has been a massive success the last 12-18months with quite a lot of young people accessing secured accommodation and doing well in the accommodation with assistance from the RSL and Sian Staley.</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Will be possible with extension to Beaufort Road</p>	BT/M C/CB	
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Priority 8 – Leadership - The Corporate Parenting Agenda is owned across the local authority and by partner agencies					
Outcome (how do we want it to look in the future?)	Action (what are we going to do?)	How	2020/21 Evaluation Commentary	RP	BRA G
The Corporate Parenting Agenda is owned across	Ensure all agencies, members and employees of the local authority are clear of their corporate	Continue to coordinate and organise an annual Corporate Parenting awareness raising event for members, officers of authority.	Has not been possible in 2020 due to COVID 19	CB	

the local authority and by partner agencies

parenting responsibilities.

Develop processes that evidence inter departmental work;-
Corporate Traineeship Brochure
My Career Journey event

This has started with appointment of Corporate apprenticeship officer

BM



CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES – 2019-2020

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To report on the educational experiences of our children looked after during academic year 2019-2020 including the period of school repurposing between March and June 2020 and to provide an update on the support offered by the CLA education service.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of academic year 2019-2020, 162 children of statutory school age were looked after by Blaenau Gwent local authority. The majority of children who are looked after by Blaenau Gwent continue to be educated within Blaenau Gwent and attend mainstream schools. A small proportion of our looked after children attend more specialist education settings.

Just over half of our children looked after have additional learning needs and 20% have a statement of special educational needs.

A small proportion of our children looked after experienced a change of school during the course of the year however this is a decrease compared with the previous year. Consistency of schooling continues to be considered as part of the matching process when a looked after child moves placement and transport is provided where necessary to ensure stability of schooling. When a child does have to move school, processes are in place to ensure that delays in admissions are avoided, wherever possible.

There has been a decrease in the incidents of exclusions issued in respect of children looked after as well as the number of individual children who have received fixed term exclusions and the total number of days lost to exclusions when compared with the previous year, however, it is important to note that for 2019-2020, the time period for exclusions covers September to March 2020 only.

In response to COVID 19, the Welsh Government has cancelled all statutory data collections that would have been due to take place in Summer 2020 - the School Performance Information (Wales) Regulations 2011 has been amended to remove the duties on governing bodies to provide data to local authorities and Welsh Ministers, respectively, on teacher assessment outcomes and authorised or unauthorised absence for the pupils registered at schools in the 2019/20 school year. As such, no end of phase/key stage data in respect of our children looked after is included in this report.

From 20th March 2020 schools were re-purposed in the emergency response to the COVID pandemic. Schools were closed for provision of statutory education and re-purposed as hubs to provide care for children of critical workers and vulnerable children. A joint approach was established between Education and Children's Services to identify those children who needed to attend the hubs along with a process to agree placement.

On 20th April 2020, the Welsh Government published 'Stay Safe. Stay Learning: Continuity of learning policy statement'. To ensure that children looked after were able

to keep learning, Children's Services identified those children looked after who had insufficient access to ICT equipment to enable them to engage in online learning. The parents and carers of all those children who were digitally excluded were provided with funding for a laptop and ensured that there was access to Wi-Fi. Designated laptop models were recommended and support was made available by the CLA education team to help set up the laptops.

BACKGROUND

The CLA education service continues to sit within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team in Children's Services and is line managed by the Safeguarding in Education Manager. The team structure comprises of a coordinator and two education mentors, who work term-time only.

The CLA education service continues to work closely with schools; colleagues within children's services, education and foster carers as well as outside agencies to ensure that children looked after by Blaenau Gwent have access to a good quality appropriate education.

The CLA education mentors continue to support both the curriculum and pastoral needs of our children looked after. In addition to the support offered to those children looked after by and placed within Blaenau Gwent the team also monitors the education of those children looked after by Blaenau Gwent and placed outside the local authority area.

PRESENT POSITION

Overview of current CLA school aged population

Of the 162 children of statutory school age who remained looked after at the end of the school year 2019-2020 there were more children of secondary school age than primary. This is an increase when compared with the previous academic year when 153 children of statutory school age were looked after at the end of the year. The majority of Blaenau Gwent children looked after continue to be educated in the area.

Primary aged pupils	77
Secondary aged pupils	85

Educated in Blaenau Gwent	101
Educated outside Blaenau Gwent	61

The educational settings of all Blaenau Gwent CLA of statutory school age at the end of the academic year were

Setting Type	Number of CLA
Mainstream	135
Resource Base attached to mainstream school	7
Special School	10
Independent School	8
Tuition	1
Awaiting Placement	1

During 2019-20 a small proportion of our children looked after accessed more specialist education settings however the vast majority continued to attend mainstream school placements. During the year there has been an increase in the number of children looked after accessing special and independent school placements. There has been a decrease in the number of pupils accessing alternative provision and tuition.

The number of CLA attending resource bases attached to mainstream school settings remains in line with previous years. No Blaenau Gwent children looked after attended Pupil Referral Units.

Additional Learning Needs

During academic year 2019-2020, 52% of all statutory school aged children who were looked after by Blaenau Gwent had additional learning needs sufficient for intervention at School Action, School Action Plus or statement level. This figure is higher when compared with the previous academic year when the figure was 43%.

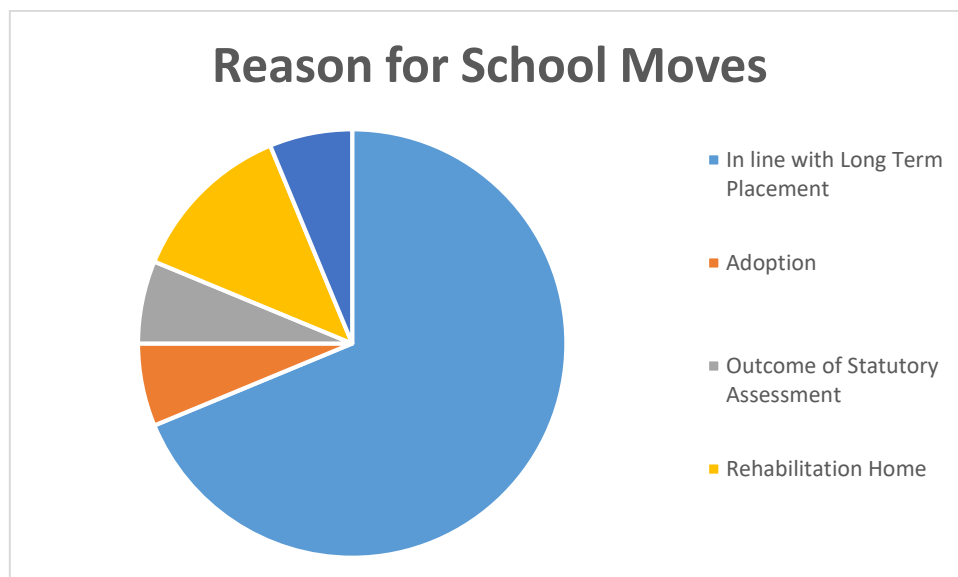
In total 20% of children looked after by Blaenau Gwent at the end of academic year 2019-2020 had a Statement of Special Educational Needs. This figure is slightly less when compared with the previous academic year.

Personal Education Plans

During academic year 2019-2020 95% of PEPs for newly accommodated children were updated within statutory timescales. One child did not have a PEP completed within 10 days of becoming looked after.

School moves

10% of Blaenau Gwent statutory school aged LAC experienced at least one or more non-transitional school moves during 2019-2020. This is a decrease when compared with the previous academic year when the figure was 12%.



A total of 16 school moves took place during the course of the year. Almost all moves were planned and in line with individual care plans. Of the planned moves, 1 child was required to change school due to a move to a residential care setting and another as a result of moving between residential care placements. 1 child experienced a change of school following the outcome of a statutory assessment of their educational needs which deemed them to require specialist education placement. 1 child moved school as a result of successfully transitioning out of residential care into a foster placement. 2 children were rehabilitated to the care of their parents and 1 child was placed for adoption. The remaining planned moves were in line with long term foster placements. There were three unplanned moves, two of whom returned to the previous, original school placement.

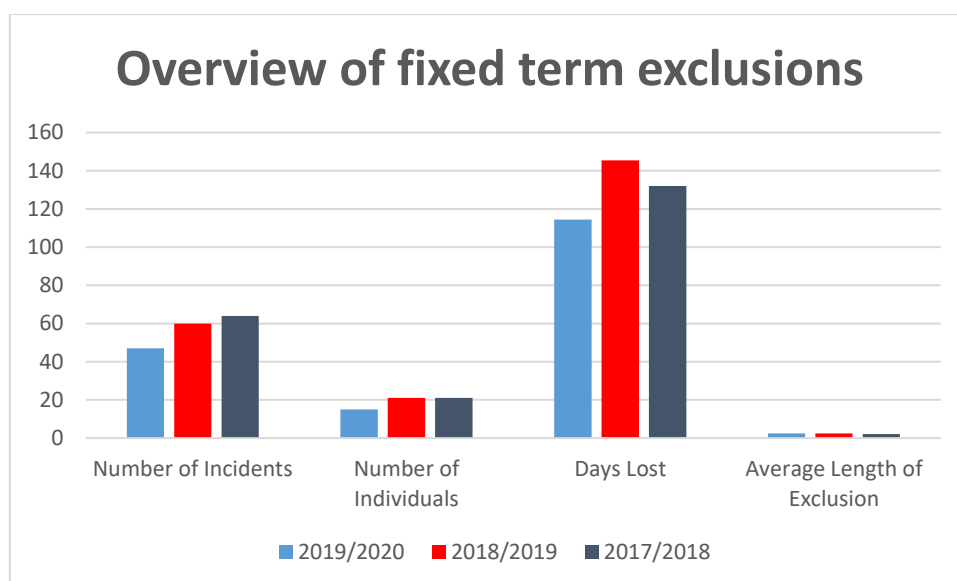
Exclusions

One child looked after was permanently excluded from school during academic year 2019-2020. The exclusion was later rescinded and the child is now on role at another

mainstream school locally where they have access to the school's own alternative provision.

During 2019-2020 there has been a decrease in the incidents of exclusions issued in respect of children looked after. The number of individual children looked after who have received fixed term exclusions and the total number of days lost to exclusions has also decreased when compared with the previous year.

47 fixed term exclusions were issued in respect of 15 individual Blaenau Gwent children looked after during academic year 2019-2020. A total of 114.5 school days were lost as a result. This is compared to a total of 60 fixed term exclusions issued in respect of 21 individuals and a total of 145.5 days lost for the previous academic year 2018-2019.



The average number of days spent out of school for an individual child looked after on fixed term exclusions during 2019-2020 was 2.4 days. This figure is in line with the previous academic year.

Representation from the CLA education team, social workers and foster carers at readmission meetings is good.

Celebration of achievement

The annual celebration award was held in December 2019. The many and varied achievements of children looked after were recognised and celebrated and all present enjoyed the showcase of our children's talents. Due to ongoing restrictions in relation to COVID-19 the annual celebration of achievement event planned for December 2020 will not take place in the usual format. Given the upheaval experienced by our learners in 2019-2020, it is a priority that our CLA will for their achievements through this unprecedented time and plans are in place to hold a virtual celebration of our children's achievements. The launch is scheduled for the January 2021.

Letterbox

Funding from Welsh Government for our children to participate in the Letterbox Club reading programme continued in 19-20. A total of 35 Blaenau Gwent children looked after received parcels.

CLA education team

CLA education mentors continue to support our children looked after in school and at home. Since the onset of COVID, CLA education team has provided a flexible service, responding quickly to support children and carers to move to online learning and to engage in professional dialogue. Detailed communication with residential homes took place to ensure that education provision was in place for our CLA, whether this was a school attached to the setting or a blended learning approach. Dialogue continues with all residential settings to ensure staff are equipped to support blended learning and to ensure that all children resident have sufficient access to ICT equipment. CLA education mentors support with additional packs of resources for staff to use with CLA learners.

CLA education mentors ensured that children and carers were able to access the many and varied online learning platforms as schools re-purposed. Good communication and coordination with schools ensured regular 'check-ins' with CLA learners, and ensured information was shared so that professionals were aware of any emerging issues and could take appropriate action. They maintained ongoing support to children and carers to access and complete a range of online and 'hand on' learning, delivering bespoke mentoring sessions differentiated to the needs of individual children and providing support and reassurance to carers. They continue to provide ongoing support to children and carers and support the blended learning approach as required when 'bubble' groups in schools have been affected by self-isolation periods. Virtual direct mentoring continues to be offered where children are self-isolating.

Case Study one - Continuation of mentoring support at the point of placement move

Learner 1 found the transition from being in school to learning online initially quite challenging. Close liaison between the CLA education mentor and designated member of staff at the school ensured that subject specific support was available promptly when needed. A key focus of the mentoring sessions was on developing organisation skills as well as building confidence to assist with independent engagement with the on-line learning tasks set by the school.

CLA education mentor provided a daily call home to support with logging onto Google Classrooms, developed a timetable and offered explanations in relation to specific pieces of work. A system was established to ensure that all completed work was submitted. Learner 1 returned when the school reopened in June and is now working towards GCSE qualifications.

Feedback from the young person - “This is great, thank you so much!”, “ok, sounds like a plan 😊 I know what I need to do today!” and “Yes, that sounds like an amazing idea, I definitely need to get back on track!”

Effective communication between the CLA education team and Placement team has enabled prompt support to be put in place in response to difficulties raised by carers/parents. This has also helped to identify those carers/parents who find the use of technology a challenge and appropriate support provided to help them navigate the use of ICT. The role of the CLA education mentors has extended to offer support to upskill foster carers so they can better support the on-line learning at home for children placed in their care.

Case study two – Support for foster carers to assist with learning at home

The CLA education service supported a foster carer who cares for 3 of our children, 2 of whom have additional learning needs and were placed early in spring 2020. The carer raised concern about the children’s ability to access the different online learning platforms, and also her own ability to appropriately support learning at home, recognising her own limitations in terms of IT skills.

Prior to Covid-19 one of the children had received weekly mentoring sessions in school. Due to the nature of the virtual sessions not only did this continue but was extended to the other 2 children in placement.

CLA education mentor made direct contact with each of the schools to ensure the provision of more suitable differentiated work, including a paper based pack of weekly resources to assist with engagement initially. Additional resources were provided by the CLA education mentor for the children including fun activities to engage them in working alongside the foster carer. Specific resources and guidance aimed at supporting children’s learning at home was provided to the foster carer and helped to develop their skills in supporting education at home.

With support, the children adapted very quickly to the new style of learning and were able to complete work with a level of independence. Virtual mentoring support is ongoing. There is a well-established routine in the placement and the foster carer is now confident in supporting the children with their homework tasks. All the children have returned to school and are engaged.

Feedback from foster carer “Thank for your support it’s a great help” and “The resources sent have helped me focus on the basics”

Case Study three – Supporting carers with engagement and transition

Learner 3 resides with grandparents who expressed concerns to their supervising social worker regarding the difficulty they were experiencing in getting Learner 3 to engage with school work on line. The CLA education mentor offered support virtually and weekly calls were put in place. Learner 3 and grandmother joined in the weekly CLA education sessions together. There were occasions where Learner 3 found it difficult to understand instructions for completing the tasks set by school. Carer’s confidence was much improved through the CLA mentoring sessions and

with support from their grandmother Learner 3 made good progress, resulting in the sessions being positive and productive. Through the joint mentoring sessions, Learner 3's grandmother was able to learn the maths techniques currently being used by the school and used these for Learner 3 to practice on a daily basis.

Learner 3 transitioned to secondary school in September 2020 and has settled in very well. Learner 3 is enjoying secondary school, has made new friends and is working well in all lessons. Learner 3 is now in receipt of weekly maths intervention offered via the school.

CLA education mentors facilitated virtual mentoring sessions focusing on transition. The sessions have been bespoke to each child's needs and enabled our CLA to be as well prepared as they could have been for transition to secondary school in September 2020. MS Teams was used to facilitate effective links between schools to plan transition. This has been even more useful when different local authorities are involved and has promoted and facilitated good levels of engagement. New schools have been well-informed of the child's needs

Case study four – Mentoring support to assist with transition to secondary school.

Learner 4 resides at home with birth mother. Weekly mentoring support sessions from the CLA education service started in September 2019 when Learner 4 was in their final year of primary school. In spring 2020 the focus of the sessions shifted to preparation for transition into secondary school in September 2020. Sessions moved from face to face in school to virtual sessions at home.

Learner 4 was very anxious about moving to secondary school. The ongoing restrictions re: COVID-19 heightened these anxieties. Learner 4 was unable to visit the secondary school site or meet face to face with new teachers. The CLA education mentor was able to pinpoint particular concerns that Learner 4 had regarding the transition which directed the focus of the sessions. Mother was very encouraging during the sessions which improved the quality and promoted Learner 4's engagement. Sessions focused on secondary school timetables, new subjects, virtual tours of the school including virtual meetings with staff

Throughout the course of the sessions there was regular dialogue between the CLA education mentor and staff from both schools so they were aware of any concerns and able to answer any questions that Learner 4 had in relation to the transition. During the course of the mentoring sessions Learner 4's approach to transition became far more positive.

Learner 4 successfully transitioned to secondary school in September 2020 and has settled in well. There are no longer concerns in terms of attendance. School report that Learner 4 is happy in school and working hard.

Feedback from young person – “the catch up mentoring sessions were helpful if I was struggling on a piece of work”

Feedback from parent – “Mentoring sessions have been great for [name removed] especially helping with transition. I was worried during the COVID school closures as [name removed] wouldn’t be able to visit the new school and attend taster days and the sessions were really beneficial in preparing [name removed] for the transition.

Catherine Edwards

Children Looked After Education Coordinator

December 2020

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CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER EDUCATION – EXCLUSIONS FROM SCHOOLS **2019-2020**

SUMMARY REPORT

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To report and monitor the frequency and length of fixed term exclusions for Blaenau Gwent children looked after during academic year 2019-2020 to the Corporate Parenting Board.

This report covers the period 1st September 2019 to 20th March 2020. From this date, schools were re-purposed in the emergency response to the COVID pandemic.

SUMMARY

During 2019-2020 there has been a decrease in the incidents of exclusions issued in respect of children looked after. The number of individual children looked after who have received fixed term exclusions and the total number of days lost to exclusions has also decreased when compared with the previous year.

The majority of exclusions were issued for persistent disruptive behaviour. The majority of exclusions continue to be issued in respect of secondary aged pupils. The number of exclusions being issued for primary aged children remains low. Incidents of exclusion in mainstream school settings continues to be higher than in special or independent school settings.

More exclusions were issued by schools in Blaenau Gwent. Exclusions issued by schools in Blaenau Gwent are on average longer in duration than those issued by schools outside Blaenau. Incidents of exclusion were more prevalent amongst females than male pupils.

There has been a further decrease in the number of exclusions being issued for Blaenau Gwent children looked after who have Statements of Special Educational Needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Blaenau Gwent Corporate Parenting Board notes the decrease in incidents and length of exclusions being issued in respect of Blaenau Gwent children looked after to fixed term exclusions during the year.

It is also recommended that the action plan for 2020-2021 is agreed with the aim of further reducing the incidents and duration of exclusions issued in respect of Blaenau Gwent children looked after.

DETAILED REPORT

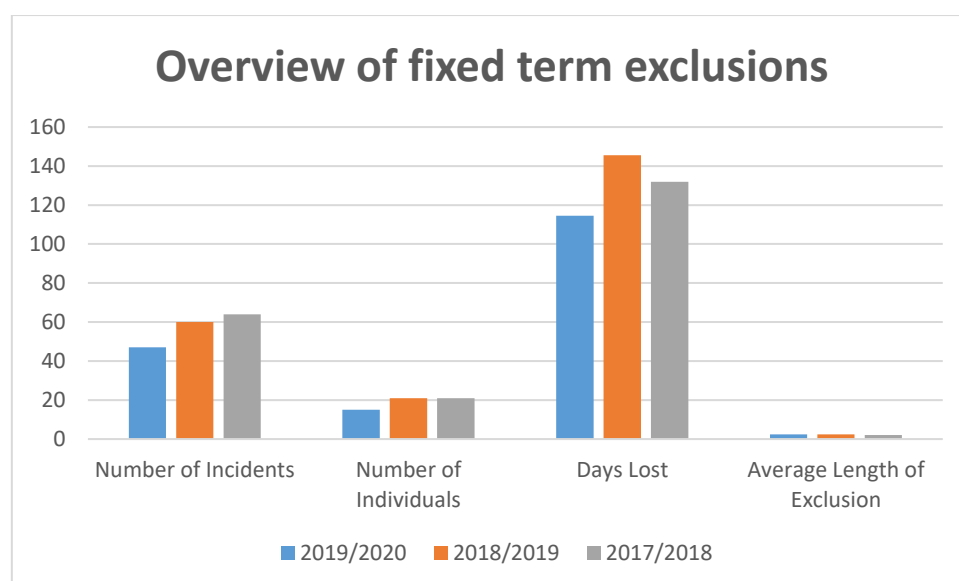
PRESENT POSITION

During academic year 2019-2020 children and young people were able to attend school for a total of 25 weeks rather than 39 due to school re-purposing as of Friday 20th March – which is relevant when drawing comparisons with the previous year's data.

Number and length of fixed term exclusions

47 fixed term exclusions were issued in respect of 15 individual Blaenau Gwent children looked after during academic year 2019-2020. A total of 114.5 school days were lost as a result. This is compared to a total of 60 fixed term exclusions issued in respect of 21 individuals and a total of 145.5 days lost for the previous academic year 2018-2019.

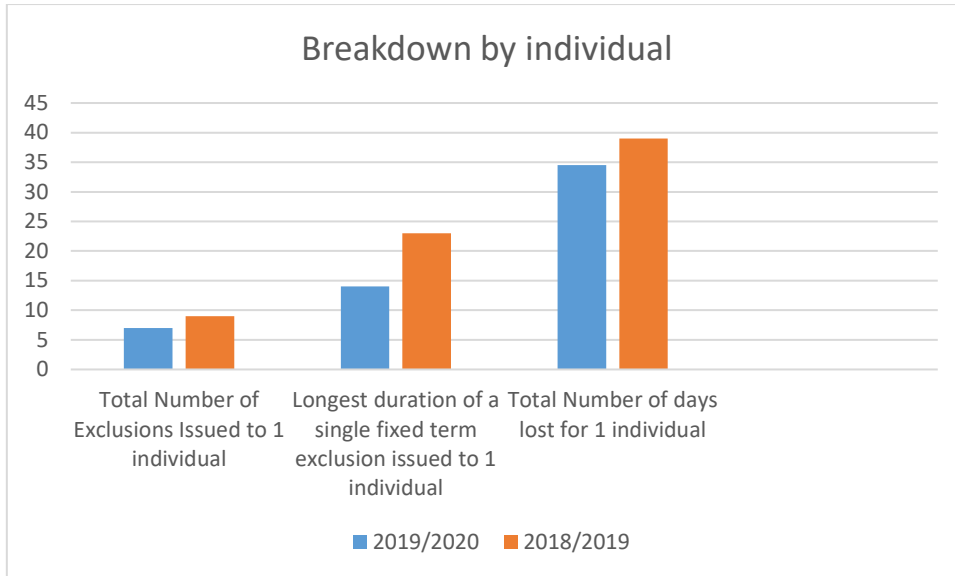
The average number of days spent out of school for an individual child looked after on fixed term exclusions during 2019-2020 was 2.4 days. This figure is in line with the previous academic year.



The highest number of fixed term exclusions issued in respect of one child was 7. This figure is a decrease when compared with the previous academic year when the highest number issued in respect of one child was 10 exclusions.

The longest duration of a single fixed term exclusion issued in respect of one child looked after during academic year 2019-2020 was 14 days. This figure is a decrease when compared with the previous year when the figure was 23.

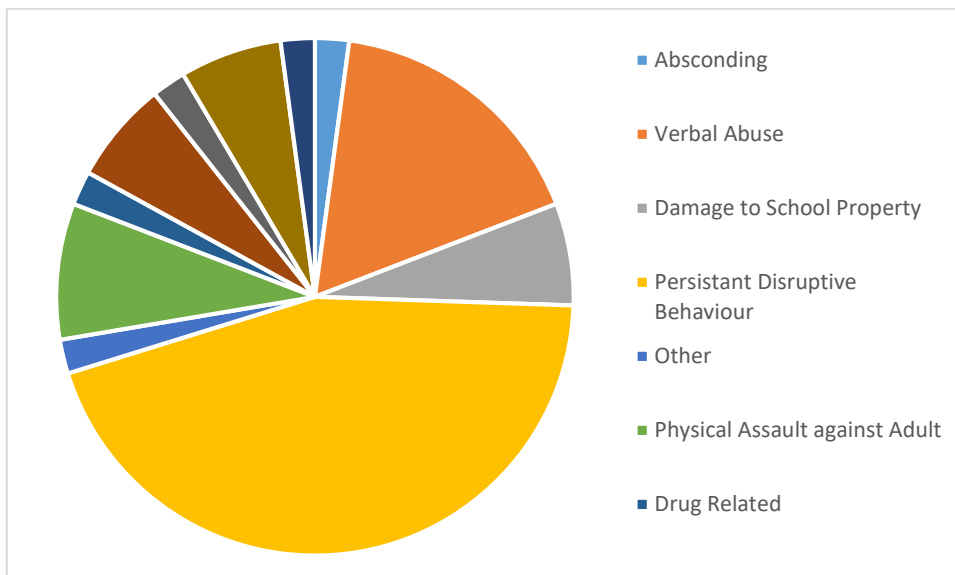
During academic year 2019-2020 the total number of days lost for one looked after child as a result of repeated exclusions was 34.5 days. This figure is a decrease when compared with the previous academic year when the figure was 39 days.



Of the 15 individual Blaenau Gwent looked after children who received fixed term exclusions from school, all but 2 (85%) received more than one fixed term exclusion during the year. This figure is higher when compared with the previous academic year when 76% of our children looked after received more than one fixed term exclusion.

Reasons for fixed term exclusions

The primary reasons for the majority of the exclusions issued during academic year 2019-2020 was persistent disruption behaviour.



Exclusions for primary and secondary aged looked after children

Of the 162 children of statutory school age who remained looked after at the end of the school year 2019-2020 there were more children of secondary school age than primary.

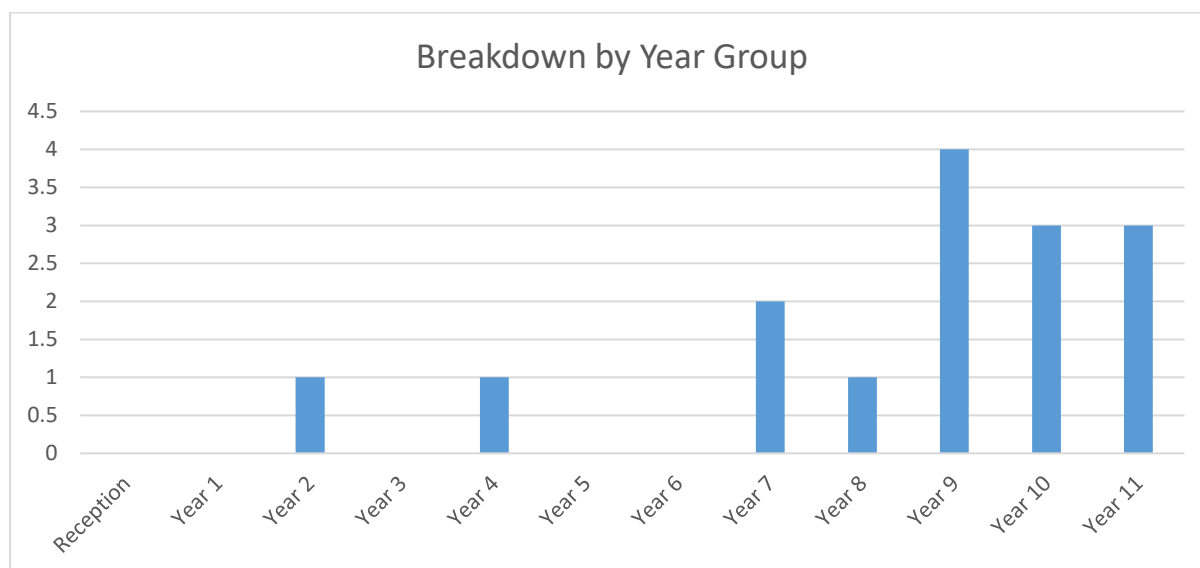
Primary aged pupils	77
Secondary aged pupils	85

87% of all fixed term exclusions (41 out of 47 incidents) for Blaenau Gwent children looked after were issued in respect of secondary school aged children during 2019-2020. Only 2 children of primary school age received fixed term exclusions during academic year 2019-2020. This figure remains in line when compared with the previous academic year.

Exclusion incidents by year group and gender

During 2019-20 - year 2 was the lowest age that a child looked after was excluded from school. There is no real pattern in primary schools given the very low numbers involved.

Of the 13 individuals of secondary school age who received fixed term exclusions during the year, 7 children were in key stage 3 (21 incidents) and 6 were in key stage 4 (20 incidents). Of the total exclusions issued 67% were in respect of females.



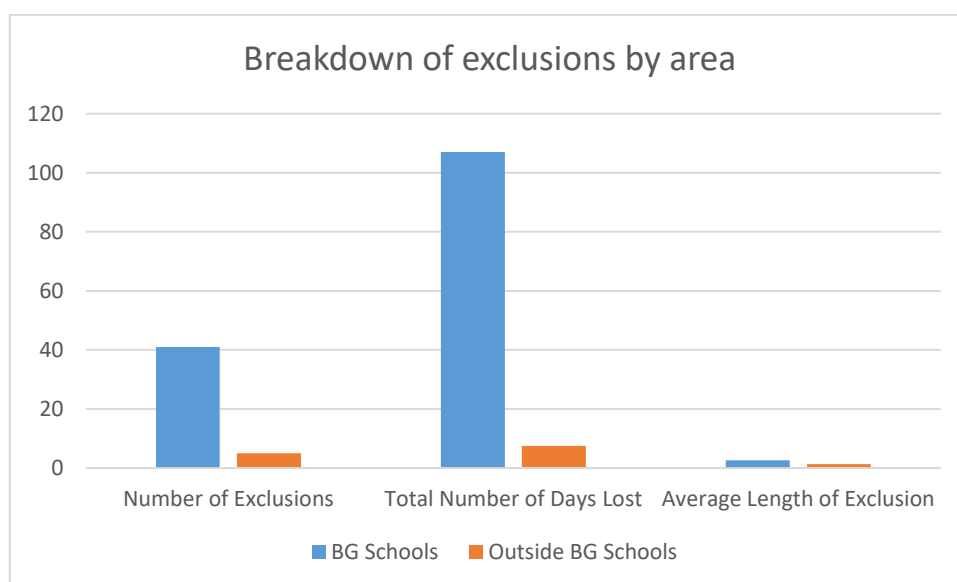
Exclusions for children attending Blaenau Gwent schools

Of the 162 children of statutory school age who remained looked after at the end of the school year 2019-2020 the majority continue to be educated in mainstream school settings and in Blaenau Gwent.

Educated in Blaenau Gwent	100
Educated outside Blaenau Gwent	62

During academic year 2019-2020 - 87% of the fixed term exclusions were issued in respect of our looked after children attending Blaenau Gwent schools (total 107 days lost) of this all but 2 fixed term exclusions were issued by mainstream schools.

19 of the 47 (40%) exclusions issued were in respect of 3 children. The average length of fixed term exclusions issued by schools in Blaenau Gwent was 2.7 days and 1.3 days for schools outside of Blaenau Gwent. This figure for Blaenau Gwent schools is considerably higher when compared with the previous academic year 2018-19 when exclusions issued by Blaenau Gwent schools were on average 1.35 days but a decrease when compared with the length of exclusion issued by schools outside the local authority area which were 2.4 days.



Breakdown of exclusions from mainstream secondary schools in Blaenau Gwent

School	Number of pupils excluded	Number of incidents	Total number of days lost	Average length of exclusion
Abertillery Learning Community	2	7	4.5	0.6
Brynmawr Foundation School	5	20	68	3.4
Ebbw Fawr Learning Community	1	2	2	1

Tredegar Comprehensive	1	6	13.5	2.3
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Breakdown of exclusions from special school settings in Blaenau Gwent

School	Number of Pupils excluded	Number of incidents	Total number of days lost	Average length of exclusion
The River Centre	1	2	4.5	2.3
Penycwm School	0	0	0	0

Of the 41 exclusions issued by Blaenau Gwent Schools, 20 (49%) were issued by one school in respect of 5 individuals.

Breakdown of exclusions issued by schools outside the local authority area in respect of Blaenau Gwent children looked after

Of the total number of fixed term exclusions issued, only 6 (13%) were issued by schools outside the Blaenau Gwent area.

Local Authority	School setting	Number of pupils excluded	Number of incidents	Total number of days lost	Average length of exclusion
Pembrokeshire	Mainstream	1	2	3.5	1.75
Monmouthshire	Mainstream	1	2	2	1
Carmarthenshire	SEBD Special	1	1	1	1
Caerphilly	Independent	1	1	1	1

Breakdown of exclusions by individual school settings

Almost all of the fixed term exclusions 96% (43 incidents) continue to be issued by mainstream schools. A total of 4 exclusions were issued by special school settings for children with social, emotional and behavioural needs.

Fixed term exclusions for looked after children with special educational needs

Of the total number of children looked after who received fixed term exclusions from school during academic year 2019-2020, 6 (40%) had statements of special educational needs. This is a further decrease when compared with the previous academic year when 8 (38%) of all children looked after who received fixed term exclusions from school had statements of SEN.

Of the children who were excluded who had statements of SEN the primary educational need for all of these pupils was social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

36% (17 out of 47 incidents) of the overall exclusions issued were in respect of children who had statements of special educational needs and the total number of days lost were 46.

Changes to education placements

4 of the children who received fixed term exclusions in 2019-2020 experienced changes to their education placement during the course of the year. This figure is in line with the previous academic year. 2 of the children experienced no further exclusions after changing education placement.

Number of Individuals	Change of education placement
2	Mainstream to Special School
2	Mainstream to Mainstream

Changes to care placements

5 of the children who received fixed term exclusions experienced changes to their care placements during the course of the year. Of this 3 had more than one change of placement. These 5 children were responsible for almost half (48%) of all fixed term exclusions issued.

Action Plan 2020-2021

Evaluation:

- Incidents of exclusions for a very small number of children are too high.
- This very small number of children are responsible for a significant proportion of the overall exclusions.
- One secondary school issued longer and more frequent exclusions.
- There is appropriate representation at reintegration meetings. Improved dialogue between schools and CLA education team regarding exclusions.
- There has been a significant focus on supporting transition of CLA. The significance of transition has reduced in 19-20.
- The proportion of exclusions from Blaenau Gwent schools issued in respect of children looked after continues to decrease in all but one of our schools when compared with the previous academic year
- There is a correlation between care placement instability and exclusions.

Actions:

- Share the exclusion report with schools and education directorate.
- Close tracking, monitoring and mentoring support of the two primary aged CLA who received exclusion during the course of the year.
- Ensure that the one secondary school is aware of the significantly higher level of exclusions issued.
- Continue to offer advice to the secondary school that has issued the higher proportion of exclusions including sharing of effective practice in other schools that have reduced exclusions.

Catherine Edwards

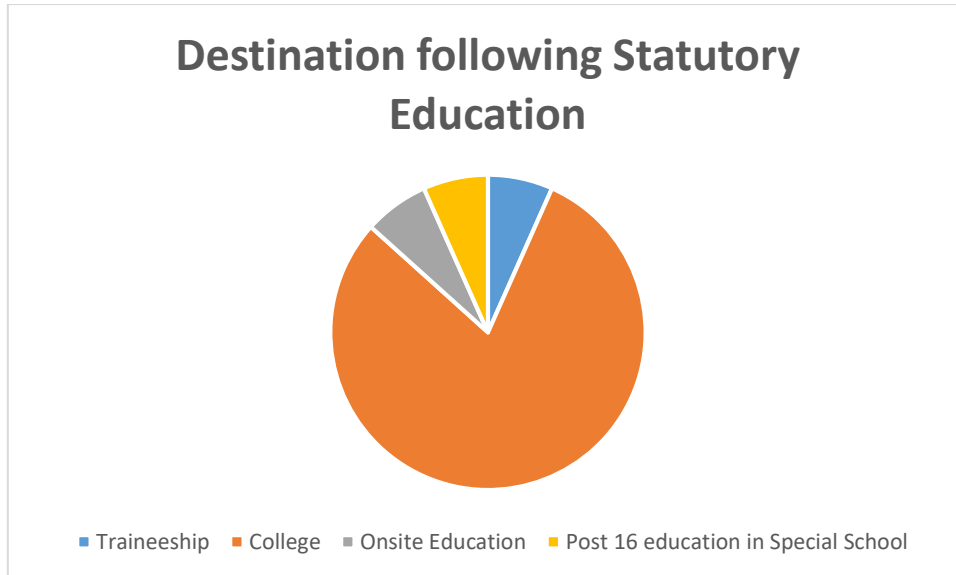
Children Looked After Education Coordinator

December 2020

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Report to Blaenau Gwent Corporate Parenting Board 14.12.2020 re: children looked after who left statutory education in summer 2020

During academic year 2019-20, a total of 15 young people who were looked after by Blaenau Gwent completed their statutory school studies. All but 2 children were awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2020. All 15 children are engaged in post 16 learning opportunities.



5 of the young people who were looked after and completed their statutory studies in summer 2020 had additional learning needs and 2 had a statement of special educational needs. 13 of the 15 children attended mainstream school settings, 2 of which attended resource bases attached to mainstream schools for children with complex needs. The remaining 2 children attended Local Authority Special School settings.

Learner 1

Learner 1 became looked after in April 2019, part way through their key stage 4 studies. Learner 1 is voluntarily accommodated. At the point that Learner 1 became looked after they were required to change school where they remained to complete their statutory studies. Learner 1 has experienced a number of changes of foster placement during the time that they have been looked after before moving to a supported living setting in April 2020.

Learner 1 does not appear on the SEN code of practice but did access an alternative off site provision organised by the school to support with engagement for part of their timetable. Learner 1 was not awarded any recognised qualifications in summer 2020. Since September 2020 Learner 1 has engaged in the Learning4Life engagement traineeship through Llamau.

Learner 2

Learner 2 became looked after in June 2017 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 2 remained in the same foster placement since becoming looked after until returning to the care of their birth mother in September 2020.

Learner 2 has a statement of special educational needs and associated difficulties in the areas of social, emotional and behavioural development as well as cognition and learning.

Learner 2 attended a resource base for children with complex needs attached to a local mainstream secondary school. Learner 2 did not experience any changes of school other than for the purpose of transition. Transport was provided to ensure consistency of schooling when Learner 2 became looked after.

Learner 2 was awarded a number of recognised qualifications in summer 2020 in line with their ability and expected outcomes. Since September 2020, Learner 2 has accessed a course in Independent Living Skills at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 3

Learner 3 became looked after in August 2009 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 3 experienced two changes of foster placement whilst being looked after before returning to the care of their parent under Placement with Parent Regulations in 2015.

Learner 3 does not have additional learning needs and did not experience any changes of school other than for the purpose of transition, remaining at the same school for the duration of their secondary schooling.

Non-attendance was an ongoing issue for Learner 3 towards the later part of their secondary schooling. Learner 3 was supported by the school to engage in an alternative off site provision and afforded a package of 1:1 support via a Teaching Assistant at school which was successful in re-engaging Learner 3 back into education. Learner 3 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2020 and since September 2020 has been undertaking a course in Beauty Therapy at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 4

Learner 4 became looked after in August 2007 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 4 has experienced two changes of foster placement since becoming looked after.

Learner 4 does not have additional learning needs and attended mainstream school provision for the duration of their schooling. Learner 4 did not experience any changes of school other than for the purpose of transition, remaining at the same school for the duration of their secondary schooling.

Learner 4 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2020 achieving a number of GCSE qualifications in line with their ability and expected outcomes. Since September 2020 Learner 4 has been undertaking a course in Health and Social Care at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 5

Learner 5 became looked after in August 2019, part way through their key stage 4 studies and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 5 has experienced two previous episodes in care, one of which was part way through their key stage 4 studies when Learner 5 resided in a foster placement. During the most recent care episode Learner 5 has resided at home under Placement with Parent Regulations.

Learner 5 does not have additional learning needs but did receive a number of fixed term exclusions whilst in school and was subject to a Pastoral Support Plan for the later part of their key stage 4 studies. Poor attendance at school was also an issue.

Learner 5 did not experience any changes of school other than for the purpose of transition, remaining at the same mainstream secondary school for the duration of their secondary schooling.

Learner 5 was awarded recognised qualification in summer 2020. Since September 2020 Learner 5 has undertaken a course in Childcare at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 6

Learner 6 became looked after in June 2019, part way through their key stage 4 studies and is voluntarily accommodated. Learner 6 has remained in the same foster placement since becoming a child looked after.

Learner 6 does not have additional learning needs and attended mainstream school. Learner 6 did not experience any changes of school other than for the purpose of transition, remaining at the same school since becoming looked after.

Learner 6 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2020, achieving a number of GCSE qualifications in line with their ability and expected outcomes. Since September 2020, Learner 6 has accessed a course in Equine Studies at Coleg Gwent

Learner 7

Learner 7 became looked after in June 2019, part way through their key stage 4 studies and is voluntarily accommodated. Learner 7 has experienced changes of care placements in both residential and secure settings during the time that they have been looked after.

Learner 7 has additional learning needs with associated difficulties in terms of social, emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties. Learner 7 accessed on site education via the secure care setting for part of their key stage 4 studies before joining the Local Authority Special School setting for children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties upon their exit out of secure and back into residential care. Non-attendance was an ongoing issue for the remainder of their time in school.

Learner 7 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2020. Upon their return to a secure care setting in June 2020, Learner 7 engaged in the onsite education available via the provision. Learner 7 is currently working towards further recognised qualifications.

Learner 8

Learner 8 became looked after in March 2017 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 8 experienced one change of placement in June 2018 upon return to the care of their parent under placement with Parent Regulations.

Learner 8 attended a mainstream school provision throughout their education and does not have any additional learning needs.

Learner 8 did not experience any changes of school other than for the purpose of transition and attended the same secondary school for the duration of their secondary education. Learner 8 was identified as a More Able and Talented Pupil. Learner 8 was awarded a number of recognised qualifications, achieving GCSEs in line with their ability and since September 2020 has been studying A Levels in Law, Psychology and Combined English at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 9

Learner 9 became looked after in October 2013 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 9 has experienced a number of changes of foster placement whilst being looked after before moving to a supported living setting in January 2020.

Learner 9 has experienced two changes of primary school before transition to the Local Authority Special School for children with Complex Needs.

Learner 9 has a statement of special educational needs with a diagnosis of Autism. Learner 9 did not achieve any recognised qualifications but instead worked toward a curriculum tailored to their individual needs. Learner 9 has remained as a year 12 pupil at the Local Authority's special school for children with complex needs.

Learner

Learner 10 became looked after in August 2010 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 10 has experienced one change of foster placement during the time that they have been looked after.

Learner 10 has no additional learning needs and has attended mainstream school provision. Learner 10 experienced no changes to their schooling other than for the purpose of transition and has remained at the same mainstream secondary school to complete their statutory studies.

Learner 10 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2020 in line with their ability and expected outcomes including a number of GCSE qualifications. Since September 2020 Learner 10 has been working towards a level 2 course in Childcare at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 11

Learner 11 has been looked after since August 2012 and is subject to a Care Order. Since becoming looked after Learner 11 has resided with grandparents.

Learner 11 has no additional learning needs and did not experience any changes to their school provision except for the purpose of transition. Learner 11 remained at the

same mainstream secondary school to complete their statutory studies. Learner 11 was identified as a More Able and Talented Pupil.

Learner 11 was awarded a number of recognised qualifications in summer 2020 in line with their ability and expected outcomes including a number of GCSE qualifications. Since September 2020 Learner 11 has been undertaking a Health and Social Care Course at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 12

Learner 12 has been looked after since May 2011 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 12 experienced two very short term foster placements shortly after becoming looked after before moving to his long term foster placement in March 2012 where Learner 12 continues to reside.

Learner 12 has no additional learning needs, attended mainstream education provision and did not experience any changes of school other than for the purpose of transition.

Learner 12 was awarded a number of recognised qualifications, achieving GCSEs in line with their ability and expected outcomes. Since September 2020 Learner 12 has been studying Public Services at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 13

Learner 13 became looked after in September 2019, part way through their key stage 4 studies and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 13 has remained in the same foster placement since becoming looked after and has continued to attend the same mainstream school setting.

Learner 13 has additional learning needs with a diagnosis of Global Development Delay.

Learner 13 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2020 and since September 2020 has been studying towards a level one electrical installation Course at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 14

Learner 14 became looked after in January 2016 and is subject to a Care Order.

Learner 14 does not have any additional learning needs and attends mainstream school. Learner 14 has experienced one change of foster placement since being looked after. Learner 14 moved foster placement in August 2018 to be alongside siblings. The change of foster placement did not result in a change of school and Learner 14 remained at the same secondary school provision for the duration of their secondary education.

Learner 14 was awarded a range of recognised qualification in summer 2020 in line with their ability and expected outcomes. Since September 2020 Learner 14 has been studying towards a level 3 course in Childcare at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 15

Learner 15 became looked after in March 2014 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 15 has experienced a number of changes of foster placement whilst they have been looked after. Learner 15 moved to residential care in January 2018 and at this point experienced a change of school.

Learner 15 has a statement of Special Educational Needs with presenting difficulties in the areas of social, emotional behavioural development and cognitive development.

Learner 15 attended mainstream education provision at primary level before moving to a resource base attached to a mainstream school upon transition to secondary school.

Learner 15 was awarded a number of recognised qualifications in line with their ability. Since September 2020 Learner 15 has been undertaking a course in the introduction into Further Education Independent Living Skills course at Gower College.

Key Messages

- A third of young people who completed their statutory studies in summer 2020 had additional learning needs. This did not however preclude them from achieving recognised qualifications
- Consistency of school placement was maintained for learners wherever possible
- A third of young people became looked after part way through their key stage 4 studies. 2 young people were required to change school at the point of becoming looked after.
- The impact upon learner outcomes is less when changes of care placement occur at either an earlier point in the young person's schooling and/ or allow the young person to continue to attend their original education provision
- Becoming looked after or experiencing a change of care placement in key stage 4 does not necessarily impact on learner outcomes.
- All young people are engaged with post 16 learning opportunities

Catherine Edwards

Children Looked After Education Coordinator

December 2020

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Agenda Item 6

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **21st December 2021**
Report Subject: **Community Meals**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**
Report Submitted by: **Alyson Hoskins, Head of Adult Services**

Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
10/12/20		06.01.21			21/01/21	24.02.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

To inform on the transition of the Community Meals (CM) service and progress made since transition from the Community Services Directorate to the Social Services Directorate.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The decision to transfer the service, along with its budget deficit of £25k, was agreed at CLT on 22nd October 2019.
- 2.2 The service was scheduled to transfer to the Community Options Division of Adult Services on 1st April 2020 with direct delivery of the service being managed by the Community Options Team Manager (COM). A Project Officer (PO) was appointed, on a fixed term basis, to support the COM in developing and supporting the implementation of strategies to create a sustainable service.
- 2.3 The COVID-19 outbreak resulted in transition being “informally” brought forward to the 23rd March to ensure customers’ needs were taken into consideration as part of Social Services emergency planning. Having to react to increased demand as well as challenges within the service, has meant the Department has not been able to focus on service development as planned.
- 2.4 As the Department needed to prepare for transition of CM prior to the 1st April 2020 a significant amount of work needed to be undertaken to create robust mechanisms for monitoring customer and capacity levels.
- 2.5 COVID-19 created additional operational pressure on the service resulting from social distancing rules and Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) requirements. However, the Department developed the appropriate risk assessments, ensured adequate stocks of PPE were available and additional staff were identified to provide cover where necessary.
- 2.6 A number of operational processes were identified as creating unnecessary pressure on the service. The COM and PO worked with staff to review these processes and ensure efficient and effective running of the service. These have

included processes to support leave requests, stock control, cash reconciliation and referrals for new customers.

- 2.7 Working with the service, has on times been challenging. To resolve issues, the Department had a formal meeting with staff in August 2020. The meeting facilitated an open discussion and has been further supported by the implementation of structured supervision sessions across the whole team.
- 2.8 It is important to note all staff are valued and committed to the service. Previous staffing/operational issues were a result of staff having gone through a number of changes and uncertainty of the future of the service. The Department has built positive relationships with the remaining staff and will ensure they are fully communicated, consulted and supported through any future changes to the service.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 The options for consideration are:
- 3.2 **Option One:** Members are asked to scrutinise the report and evaluate the recommendations for the long term forward planning of the service (section 6.4).
- 3.3 **Option Two:** Members are asked to scrutinise the report and propose an alternative approach in relation to the future planning of the service.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

- 4.1 The Blaenau Gwent Corporate Plan 2020/22 notes the Authority aims to intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater and asks residents to take more responsibility for managing their own health and wellbeing.
- 4.2 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 places a statutory duty on all local authorities to increase preventative services within the community to minimise the escalation of critical need.
- 4.3 The CM service supports both the objectives of the Corporate Plan and the Blaenau Gwent Well-being plan by enabling citizens to have a choice in accessing a service that allows them to stay independent and take responsibility for managing their own health and wellbeing thus reducing reliance on more traditional care.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget***

- 5.1.1 Having undertaken an analysis of the period 6 budget forecast (September 2020) for the service, the Department estimates a cost pressure of approximately £18K which is a reduction on the original deficit of £25k.

5.1.2 The Department will be prioritising a review of the budget to identify how it can be brought inline with actual expenditure.

5.2 **Risk**

5.2.1 The Department recognises the importance of CM and the negative impact its cessation has for both vulnerable citizens and other teams across the Directorate. For example, removal of the service leads to increased demand for domiciliary care as some citizens may not be able or have support to prepare meals.

5.2.2 These risks will be mitigated by the Department focussing on key areas to build a sustainable service as noted in section 6.4

5.3 **Legal**

CM is not a statutory requirement. However, the Department follows the key principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 which provides a legal framework for improving the well-being of people who need care and support and carers who need support.

5.4 **Human Resources**

5.4.1 A report presented to CLT on 6th November 2018 and Special Council on 12th December 2018 (**Appendix One**) recommended CM reduce from 8 to 5 Drivers each working 16 hours per week, 80 hours in total. However, negotiations at the time resulted in all 8 staying in post with 10 hour contracts.

5.4.2 As noted in section 2.3, transition of CM took place on the 23rd March 2020 and as this was the date the country went into full lockdown only 4 drivers remained in the workplace; three permanent and one fixed term. The remaining 4 Drivers due to being in COVID-19 vulnerable groups refrained from the workplace under the furlough scheme.

5.4.3 The fixed term post was terminated as of 31st July 2020 and backfilled via a redeployment arrangement and with the furlough scheme ending on the 31st October 2020, the Department entered into discussions with the remaining 7 Drivers and their Trade Union to discuss and agree a return to work for all staff on furlough in-line with social distancing guidelines.

5.4.4 The outcome of these discussions was the Department agreeing a mutual termination date of 11th November 2020 with the furloughed staff members. The hours of the 5 remaining posts have been increased to 16 per week. The COVID-19 social distancing rules had enabled the Department to test the feasibility of operating the service with the reduced drivers which supported this decision.

5.4.5 The service now employs 3 permanent Drivers. The 4th post is currently filled via a re-deployment arrangement with Community Options providing relief cover for the 5th post. This arrangement will be revised when Community Options reinstates full operations.

6. Supporting Evidence

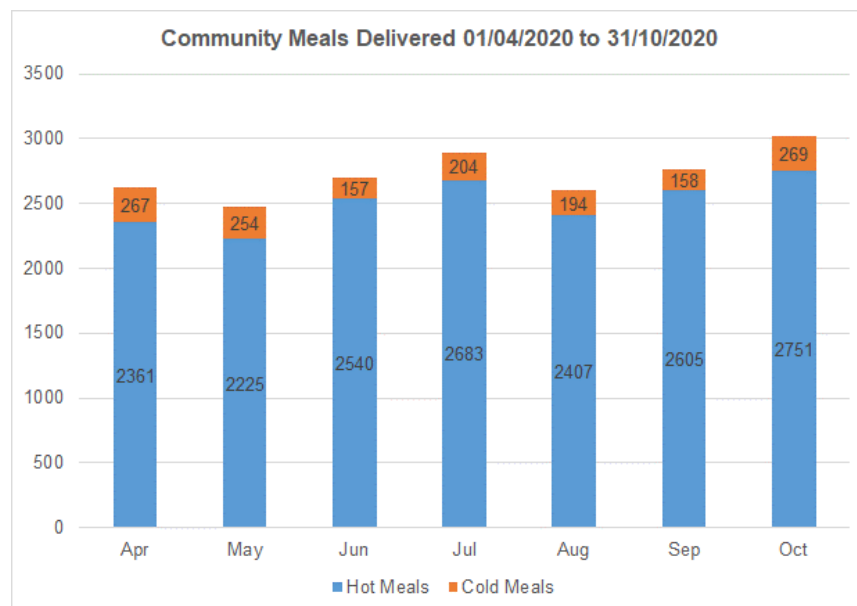
6.1 Performance Information and Data

6.1.1 In the period 1st April 2020 to 31st October 2020 the service delivered a total of 19,075 meals:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Total
Hot Meals	2361	2225	2540	2683	2407	2605	2751	17572
Cold Meals	267	254	157	204	194	158	269	1503
Total	2628	2479	2697	2887	2601	2763	3020	19075

Prior to transition CM was delivering between 88 and 94 hot meals per day. During the first quarter of 2020/21 the service was averaging a delivery of 128 hot meals per day which based on an average delivery of 94 meals is an increase of 36%.

6.1.2 As the graph below indicates, demand rose from April in-line with the COVID-19 pandemic and as expected dropped by just under 10% from July to August as restrictions were lifted. However, it did not drop to the levels seen pre-transition with the service still averaging the delivery of 120 hot meals per day throughout August. During the week commencing 26th October 2020 an average of 130 hot meals was delivered per day.



6.1.3 As of 10th August 2020 new referrals to the CM service were routed via the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) team. Between 10th August and 31st October the service received 29 referrals for 33 customers as highlighted below. Of those customers referred, 85% took up the service.

Route	Aug		Sep		Oct		Total Referrals	Total Individuals
	No. of Referrals	No. of Individuals	No. of Referrals	No. of Individuals	No. of Referrals	No. of Individuals		
Abertillery			4	4	7	8	11	12
Brynmawr	2	2	5	6	1	2	8	10
Ebbw Vale	2	2			2	3	4	5
Tredegar					6	6	6	6
Grand Total	4	4	9	10	16	19	29	33

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The continued provision of an accessible, affordable healthy meal service.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 looks to build and strengthen existing arrangements by involving service users, carers and other key partners where possible in helping to shape and influence future design of services. It is the Department's intention to involve both staff and customers in future service developments.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The Department is committed to the future of the CM service. The PO is currently implementing a project to move the service to digital cashless payments with a pilot planned for April 2021. The Department has also identified a number of key priorities for moving the service forward over the next 12 months:

6.4.1 ***Resilient Budget Monitoring:*** As noted in section 5.1, the budget deficit remains a priority for the Department. Some Areas to be explored to reduce this deficit are; re-mapping of routes, accessing capacity of vehicles, investigating opportunities / grants available for "going green" and staffing arrangements.

6.4.2 ***Development of a Marketing Strategy:*** With usual service promotion being impacted by the pandemic, the Department will develop a robust marketing strategy to further enhance service demand. This will enable a full understanding of customers' needs and build on existing trust to re-brand and promote the service. As well as developing the current more traditional method of promoting the service we will explore the benefits of digitally promoting the service

6.4.3 ***Learning from Other Local Authorities:*** Exploring how other local authorities are operating their CM services' will enable the Department to modernise the service. We will investigate other services that can be provided alongside traditional meals and will evaluate the impact of introducing an eligibility criteria and subsidising meals for most vulnerable citizens

6.4.4 ***Enhancing Links with Health & Social Care Colleagues:*** This will involve identifying and strengthening partnerships within both health and social care as well as the wider community in future service planning arrangements. There is also an opportunity to understand how the Community Options Service could assist in supporting and enhancing the service. One example could be the preparation of tea trays to be delivered alongside the traditional meal.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Investment in prevention and early intervention services reduces reliance on Social Services by supporting the future health and well-being of citizens. The CM service supports early intervention and prevention as it promotes independence by assisting citizens to stay within their own homes.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Being situated within Adult Services provides CM with opportunities to strengthen collaborative arrangements to further promote and build resilience within the service.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

As the Department have been focussing on stabilising the service and responding to additional demands resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, as noted in section 6.4.4, the Department will explore opportunities for integrating the service with other aspects of Community Options such as the Catering Enterprise.

6.8 ***EqIA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

Not applicable.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The PO has established a Project Board which meet on a monthly basis to discuss any operational, strategic or managerial implications for the service.

7.2 The Department will propose a number of key objectives for the service to be included in the relevant team and service business plans for 2021/22.

7.3 Where necessary key decisions and changes to the service will be ratified at the appropriate reporting level.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

- ***Appendix One: CM Original CLT Report (6th November 2018)***

Briefing note - CLT 28.10.2018

Community Meals

Background

The purpose of this briefing note is to provide CLT with additional information to support the business plan for Community Meals as discussed at CLT on 2nd October 2018.

Business Plan Amendments

Section 5 (5.3.8) now reads:

“The service will benefit from employing a Community Meals Manager to enable the service to move towards a model operating on a commercial basis. It will be necessary for this position to have substantial commercial experience to allow for the best opportunities in managing the service in a new way”.

This new position has been included to ensure suitable capacity and experience is available to enable the service to operate on a fully commercial basis.

The cost associated with employing this additional post will require an additional £45,409 to the staffing budget as set out in the Business Plan.

Financial Model

Amendments to the commercial model budget have been made to include a new service manager position, potential redundancy costs training requirements and depreciation of equipment.

A 2 year forecast cashflow has been developed to show the costs associated with developing a commercial service for Community Meals.

If Community Meals Service Ceased

Cost implications for Council

Upfront Costs:

Redundancy Costs - Community Meal Staff £18,781

Ongoing Cost Pressures for Council:

Management Costs £10,000

Premises Costs £5,004

Central Costs £19,959

Total Cost Pressures £34,963

Total Costs £53,744*

*Potential increased costs for Adult Services ... £28,391 per annum***

Risk Implications for Social Services

151 Community Meals records were considered to help achieve an understanding of the potential impact to Social Services if the Community Meals service was stopped.

- Out of the 151 records, 130 customers are known to Adult Services.
- 41 of which have been assessed as requiring home care
- Of the 41 individuals who require home care, 25 are currently receiving a home care, lunch time service.
- Therefore 16 people could be at risk if Community Meals service was ceased.

If the Community Meals service was ceased and those 16 individuals who have been identified as 'at risk' presented as requiring a lunch time service, the additional cost for those individuals to receive a lunch time call from Social Services would be approximately £28,391.48**.

*** Please Note that this figure is calculated using sample data from Community Meals. The cost has been calculated based on individuals requiring a 30 minute call from a provider in the private sector.*

Alternative Meal Provision:

To help mitigate the financial risk to the Social Services Directorate, alternative meal delivery opportunities have been considered.

The option identified as preferred is:

Where new customers have an assessed need for support with meal preparation the Social Service Directorate will sign post individuals to alternative meal providers. In circumstances when assessments highlight an individual to have significant needs, then domiciliary care provision will need to be provided.

Recommendations:

Social Services would require time and resource to fully assess the customers identified as 'at risk'. If a decision to remove the Community Meals Service was made the Social Services Directorate would benefit from a lead in period before ceasing the service to undertake a care management review of the existing customers. It is recommended that 3 months' notice period is provided.

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Community Meals

Service Review – Preferred Option 3: Remodel of Existing Service
on a Commercial Basis

Business Plan – September 2018

Strategic Transformation Team

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1. Introduction

1.1 The objective of this business plan is to demonstrate how the Council's Community Meals service can be remodelled to become a commercial service for the Council and reduce the financial burden on the Council in the future.

1.2 The business plan outlines how the Community Meals service can:

- Reduce operational costs
- Generate additional income
- Develop commercial opportunities

1.3 The business plan highlights the associated risks and potential impact of implementing the proposed changes necessary for achieving a commercial service.

1.4 Project Team

1.4.1 A project team was established to identify and analyse the opportunities and any potential issues associated with developing a Community Meals service based on a commercial model.

1.4.2 The Project Team consisted of:

Damien McCann – Director Social Services
Dave Watkins – Team Manager, Community Meals
Claire Edmunds – Team Leader, Community Meals
Matthew Perry – Service Manager, Community Services
Clive Rogers – Head of Service, Technical Services
Mike Price – Service Manager, Property Services
Mary Welch – Community Options Team Manager
Sarah Abraham – Organisational Development
Katrina Davies – Business Support
Sandra Jones - Accountancy
Dave Rees – Trade Union Representative

1.5 Consultation

1.5.1 In addition to the project team, a number of officers and service areas were consulted to assist with the development of the delivery model detailed in this business plan.

1.5.2 The following officers have been consulted:

Matthew Stent – Team Leader, Transport
Sean Scannell - Communications, Marketing and Customer Access Manager
Wayne Turner – Team Manager, Adult Services
Alyson Hoskins – Head of Service, Adult Services
Mark Morris – Service Manager, Provider Services, Adult Services
Debbie Morgan – Project Manager, Adult Services

2. Vision

2.1 “To provide a nutritional meal to any member of the Community of Blaenau Gwent.”

2.2 Corporate Objectives and Regulations

2.2.1 The Council’s Corporate Plan 2018-2022 details the Council’s priorities. A key priority is to be an efficient council. To achieve this priority, the Council has recognised that it will aim to:

2.2.2 Ensure effective forward financial planning arrangements are in place to support the Council’s financial resilience.

2.2.3 This business plan provides 3 years financial planning arrangements and highlights the associated risks.

2.2.4 In addition to the Corporate Plan, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places duties on the Council to improve social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being.

2.2.5 The detail presented below provides arrangements in line with the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.

3. The Community Meals Service

3.1 Existing Service

3.1.1 Currently the Council’s Community Meals service provides a choice of hot or frozen meals via a home meal delivery service on Mondays through to Friday.

3.1.2 Hot meals can be delivered every day and by any of the four vehicles.

3.1.3 Frozen meals can only be delivered by two out of the four vehicles and at present are only delivered on Thursdays and Fridays.

3.1.4 The service provides meals between 10:30am and 12:30pm.

3.1.5 Approximately 500 meals are provided each week.

3.1.6 At present the service operates a flexible service. Customers can order a meal in the morning for same day delivery and can cancel a meal by 9:30am for any meals ordered for that day and receive no charge.

3.1.7 The service allows for meals to be delivered direct to people’s homes, meals to be plated and time for general wellbeing checks.

4. Fleet

4.1 Existing Fleet Arrangements

- 4.1.1 Currently the service operates four adapted vehicles. All vehicles are built with electric ports to hold two electric hot boxes, which maintain cooked meals at the required temperatures. Two of the four vehicles also have freezer boxes used for delivery of frozen meals.
- 4.1.2 Each vehicle has a maximum capacity to hold 40 hot meals and 40 hot desserts. Frozen meal storage capacity in each of the two vehicles is a maximum of 36 meals and desserts, giving a total maximum capacity of 160 hot meals plus 72 frozen meals.
- 4.1.3 All four vehicles are currently managed under lease arrangements. The lease term will cease with effect from April 2019.
- 4.1.4 At present, drivers identify the preferred routes for delivery, based on customer and local area knowledge.

4.2 Fleet evaluation

- 4.2.1 At approximately £5,000 per vehicle the existing fleet costs have been regarded by the project team as minimal. The project team however agreed that the existing meal numbers of approximately 25 meals being delivered per vehicle was inefficient and that all vehicles should be utilised to operate at maximum capacity.
- 4.2.2 During the review of fleet arrangements, consideration was given toward the time constraints the service has to work within due to a lunch time, meal delivery service.

4.3 Future Fleet Arrangements

- 4.3.1 Due to both the current and future meal numbers (as per sections 4.1.2 and 6.2) the new service delivery model has been based on reducing the fleet numbers from four to three.
- 4.3.2 All vehicles are to be adapted to allow both frozen and hot meals to be delivered.
- 4.3.3 A desktop exercise has been undertaken to identify the potential impact of reducing the vehicles and increasing delivery numbers and times.

4.4 Considerations

- 4.4.1 New delivery routes have been optimised on the basis that all meals will be delivered direct to people's homes only. There has been no provision for time to be available for customers who require additional assistance e.g. plating of meals, etc.
- 4.4.2 There will also be a number of influencing factors, which could affect the delivery times including traffic diversions and road works in the local areas. These factors

have not been taken into account for the purposes of route optimisation.

4.4.3 Although work has been carried out to gain an understanding of the impact of reducing the number of vehicles, it is recommended that the service carry out a pilot of the proposed new routes to further achieve a greater in-depth understanding of the impact.

4.5 Associated risks and issues

4.5.1 Reducing the delivery fleet from four vehicles to three will require the existing delivery period to be extended.

4.5.2 Customers may not accept new delivery times. To mitigate this risk, clear instruction and information will need to be provided. Existing customers will need to be engaged with prior to any changes being implemented.

4.5.3 There is risk that unplanned maintenance of one vehicle is required, resulting in just two vehicles being available for delivering. A contingency plan with a lease company and Social Services will mitigate potential delays in delivery.

4.5.4 In poor weather conditions, the existing vehicles are not fit for purpose, particularly during snow conditions. To mitigate the risk to service it will need to advise upfront that during periods of poor weather, frozen meals only will be available to cover the periods of weather warnings.

4.5.5 Due to the maximum capacity three vehicles can hold, there is a risk that customer demand will exceed the service capacity. The service will have to identify a sustainable maximum customer demand and tipping point before the service considers the requirement for additional vehicles.

5. **Staffing and Structure**

5.1 Existing Staff Structure

5.1.1 Currently the Service Employs:

- 8 Drivers, each employed to work 10 hours per week
- 1 Dual role, employed for 20 hours per week to undertake a cooks role and 17 hours to undertake business support

5.1.2 The service operates two drivers per vehicle and utilises 4 vehicles each day.

5.1.3 Each Driver consistently work additional hours every day. Hours of work fluctuate daily and can also differ amongst individual staff and rounds.

5.1.4 During 2017/2018 staff collectively worked on average an additional 6 hours each day, taking each employee actual hours worked to 14 hours per week.

5.2 Staff Structure Evaluation

- 5.2.1 The project team have deemed two drivers per vehicle as inefficient and one that is not sustainable during the current financial situation.
- 5.2.2 The existing Driver contractual hours are insufficient resulting in the service being heavily reliant up on staff working additional hours daily.
- 5.2.3 This presents a risk to the service as the staff could, at any time, revert to working their contractual hours only.

5.3 Future Staff Structure

- 5.3.1 The future staff structure has been developed based on reducing driver positions to one per vehicle. This decision, along with the changes to fleet numbers, will require just three drivers in the future.
- 5.3.2 It is proposed that the drivers working hours are increased to reflect the consistent regular additional hours worked currently. Also to allow for the additional time required due to a reduced delivery fleet and increased delivery times.
- 5.3.3 The project team has reviewed the positions and have identified that the remaining roles and responsibilities would benefit from change also.
- 5.3.4 The current dual role covering a Cook role and Business Support should be split. The Cook role, moving forward, should include supervisory and operational management responsibilities which are currently limited and restricted to the existing Team Leader.
- 5.3.5 It is proposed that this role is employed on a 30 hour working week initially with the option of reviewing the contracted hours after 12 months, when it is anticipated that the service will be operating business as usual.
- 5.3.6 The Community Meals service will benefit from ongoing business support during year 1 of implementing the new delivery model. The service needs will be different. The service will require marketing and strategic business support compared to the existing administrative support.
- 5.3.7 It is proposed that Business Support is employed for 17 hours per week and the work carried out is in-line with the existing grade 3 Business Support Officer role. This role is to be employed for a 12 month fixed term contract to enable the Community Meals service to review its requirements for Business Support once the implementation plan is completed.
- 5.3.8 The service will benefit from employing a Community Meals Manager to enable the service to move towards a model operating on a commercial basis. It will be necessary for this position to have substantial commercial experience to allow for the best opportunities in managing the service in a new way.

5.4 Associated Risks and Issues

- 5.4.1 There is risk that the Cook and Driver leave will result in staff shortage which could impact up on operations of the service.
- 5.4.2 It will be the expectation that the Cook will undertake Driver duties in the first instance during any period of a Driver's leave.
- 5.4.3 It is proposed that the service appoint on a rolling basis a pool of relief Cook and Driver positions to mitigate any potential risk for disruption to service. It is recommended that CLT agree for the service to implement these positions.
- 5.4.1 It is also proposed that the service develop joint working arrangements with Adult Services to utilise Driver positions on an emergency basis.

6. Financial Position

- 6.1.1 All financial information detailed under this section has been established using a baseline for customer information.
- 6.1.2 Customer and meal data is based on actual demand as at May 2018. It should be noted that given the very nature of this service and the range of customers who purchase a meal, its demand fluctuates regularly.
- 6.1.3 Financial data is based on a mid-year budget forecast for 2018/2019.
- 6.1.4 The current year's financial position is detailed in the table below:

Current Year Position – 2018/2019			
		Forecast 18/19	Unit Cost
Fixed costs per unit		£	£
	Meals (Apetito)	40,000	1.60
Variable Cost per unit			
	Employees	89,875	3.60
	Transport	19,680	0.79
	Premises	4,458	0.18
	Central Costs	19,568	0.78
		133,581	5.34
	Total	173,581	6.94
	Income	102,500	4.10
	Shortfall	71,081	2.84
Number of meals (Week / Year)		100	25,000

- 6.1.5 The current years staffing budget is £89,875. Based on last year's additional hours paid across the service, an estimated £11,000 is expected to be paid bringing the total staff costs up to £100,875 during 2018/2019.
- 6.1.6 A revised staffing structure has been developed and is estimated to cost £84,328 for 2019/2020.
- 6.1.7 The current years' fleet budget is £19,680.
- 6.1.8 A revised fleet budget based on reducing the vehicles from four to three is £15,858.

6.2 Income Target

- 6.2.1 During 2014/2015 the Community Meals service income target was increased by 35%, taking the income target from £133,000 to £178,000 and has been subject to annual increases year on year.
- 6.2.2 Since applying the income target, the Community Meals service has not achieved the income target. There has been no review of the income target
- 6.2.3 Due to a virement in the Community Meals budget the current years' income target is £162,774.
- 6.2.4 To achieve this year's income target the service will need to sell 800 meals each week based on the current years cost per meal of £4.10.
- 6.2.5 Alternatively the service would have to increase the cost of the meal to £6.45 to achieve its income target during 2018/2019.

7. **Opportunities**

There are a number of opportunities that have been identified by the project team and should be developed further by the service.

7.1 Meal Choice / Offering

- 7.1.1 There is opportunity for the service to explore new menu items and introduce a new menu offering.
- 7.1.2 Items to be explored include luxury and gourmet menu items which are available from the existing meals provider but are not made available to customers at present. New items can be made available to customers at varying costs.
- 7.1.3 Another option which should be explored further is the offering of sandwiches. It is recommended that this option is piloted and sandwich orders are delivered at the same time as lunch time meals.
- 7.1.4 Food packages could be made available to customers and could include items such as fresh grocery items and a selection of frozen meals. These packages could be aimed at people being discharged from hospital, following a period of illness or during

period when family members are not available.

7.2 Pricing Strategy

7.2.1 The service does not currently follow a pricing strategy and could benefit from implementing one.

7.2.2 A pricing strategy will allow the service to calculate and analyse factors in setting a price that is suitable for the product and service and help maximise profitability.

7.3 Re – Branding

7.3.1 With the proposed changes detailed within this business plan, the service will benefit from re-branding to help promote a new and improved service and attract new customers.

7.3.2 The existing service name has been deemed as appropriate for the service's vision; however a redesign of promotional material will be beneficial.

7.4 Revised Customer Procedures

7.4.1 To allow the Community Meals service to increase efficiencies and work more effectively, it would benefit from introducing new ordering and billing procedures.

7.4.2 At present the service has manual procedures which require significant resource and time.

7.4.3 There is opportunity for the service to develop online ordering and payment systems which will offer signatures and updates to the customer following deliveries.

7.4.4 It is envisaged that the service will have to maintain some manual elements for those who do not have access to digital means, however all back operations should migrate toward digital working.

7.4.5 A new cancellation policy will allow the service to provide customer and service expectations for improved planning of work.

7.5 Joint Working Arrangements

7.5.1 Joint working arrangements with Health, Housing Associations and Social Care should be utilised.

7.5.2 Housing Associations at present do not promote the Council's Community Meals service but have advised that as part of their community work will be keen to understand the service offering and promote the service with their tenants.

7.5.3 A number of opportunities have identified by improving working practices between

the Community Meals Service and Adult Services, Social Services.

7.5.4 Joint working with Adult Services will increase social care knowledge and allow for more effective customer service from the Council.

7.5.5 Opportunities include:

Joint working arrangements with the new Home First Gwent Hospital discharge service. This opportunity could allow people who are being discharged from A&E/ MAU at Nevill Hall to be offered a meal service at home and reduce potential reliance of Social Care.

7.5.6 There is opportunity that Adult Services utilise the Council's Community Meals service as a default home meal delivery service. This opportunity will involve replacing signposting to Wiltshire Farm Foods and the domiciliary care service to any new customers who require help with meals.

7.5.7 There is opportunity for the Community Meals service to provide time focused work placements for adults receiving social care. This will add social value to the service and help the Council achieve its requirement to improve social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being.

8. Desired Future Service Operations – The commercial model

8.1 Business Objectives

8.1.1 It is important that the Council utilises service areas which present income generating opportunities.

8.1.2 The Community Meals Service is a service which is not statutory and therefore the Council does not have a duty to provide the service.

8.1.3 There is however a demand for the service in the local area and the existing provision is highly valued.

8.1.4 With this in mind there is opportunity for the Council to generate income to cover its costs and ensure the service is sustainable in the future to continue to meet the needs of its customers.

8.1.5 Blaenau Gwent Council is the only organisation that will delivery hot meals direct to people's homes 5 days per week in the local area.

8.2 Business Change

The existing service delivery model has been deemed as unsustainable and has therefore presented a need for a new delivery model. The changes necessary for the Community Meals service to be delivered on a commercial basis in the future are listed below:

- Reduced delivery vehicles

- Reduced staff numbers
- Increased staff hours
- New delivery times
- A meal delivery only service
- Digital ordering and payments as default
- New cancellation policy
- Increased offering
- Joint working arrangements

9. Assumptions /Considerations

- 9.1 Consideration has been given to a reduction in customer numbers as a result of changes to the service i.e. payments upfront, increased fees, change of delivery times etc. it is anticipated that a 20% reduction customer numbers could occur during the first year.
- 9.2 As a result of promotion, marketing, engagement, new menu items etc. being carried out during year three, it is expected that the service will not see a significant increase in customer numbers until year two of the new service.
- 9.3 A three hour delivery window has been considered as reasonable. Customer feedback confirmed earlier delivery times are preferred compared to later. New delivery times will therefore be between 10am and 1:30pm. Customers will be informed that meals will be delivered during this time frame and individual requests cannot be met.

10. Investment

- 10.1 To allow the Community Meals service to introduce new effective ways of working and implement changes to service delivery it will require some investment.
- 10.2 To introduce more efficient methods of ordering and payments the service will require digital devices for all drivers. The cost for this will be a one off payment of £40 plus an annual payment of £672. This investment will allow online and upfront ordering and payments as well as GPS auto route optimisation, full audit trail and electronic signatures.
- 10.3 To enable the service to increase its maximum capacity and provide an effective delivery provision it will need to invest in freezer storage for one vehicle to increase frozen food delivery capacity.
- 10.4 One vehicle will need to be fitted with an additional electric port which will cost approximately £150 and the service will need to purchase one additional freezer box at a cost of approximately £400. The total cost to increase capacity would therefore equate to approximately £550.
- 10.5 This investment will increase delivery capacity in three vehicles from 192 to 228 at any one time.

11. Financial Forecasting

Appendix 1 sets out the projected financial position for the next 3 years.

It should be noted that at the time of writing this report, it is unknown what the impact of pay modelling could have on the new staffing budget.

12. Legal Implications

Section 93 of the local government act 2003 gives local authorities the power the charge for services that they have a power but not a duty to provide.

13. Staffing Implications

With the desired future delivery model job roles within the service will be required to undergo significant change.

Roles will be subject to job evaluation and if any roles change by 50% or more they will be subject to redundancy.

The reduction of roles will also result in redundancies of staff.

All roles identified as becoming redundant will need to be reported to the redundancy panel for approval.

14. Council Risk

Where a Council is involved in business activity it becomes vulnerable. It will, by its very nature, present reputational risk.

15. Financial Risk

Whilst the aim of commercial activity is to increase income, success is not guaranteed and there is a risk that the business makes a loss. All financial forecasting is based on calculated assumptions and therefore provides associated risks for achieving the suggested targets.

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CASHFLOW - YEAR 1

	April 2019	May 2019	June 2019	July 2019	Aug 2019	Sept 2019	Oct 2019	Nov 2019	Dec 2019	Jan 2020	Feb 2020	Mar 2020	19/20 TOTAL	
Current Income (guaranteed)														
No. of Units Sold	Max 3800	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	24,000
Cost per Unit		5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	
Unit Sales		£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£11,000.00	£132,000.00
Costs														
Unit Purchase		-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£3,200.00	-£38,400.00
Promotion		-£1,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	-£1,000.00
Redundancy		-£18,781.11	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	-£18,781.11
Digital devices		-£40.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	-£40.00
Mobile Phone	*4	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£672.00
Wages	129,737	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£9,883.50	-£118,602.00
Vehicle Lease	*3	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£6,236.00
Vehicle MOT	*3	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£960.00
Vehicle Insurance	*3	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£4,000.00
Vehicle Maintenance	*3	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£2,400.00
Tyres	*3	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£800.00
Fuel Costs	*3	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£4,000.00
Premises		-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£5,004.00
Business Support		-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£927.92	-£11,135.00
Central Costs		-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£19,959.00
Training		-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£553.33
Depreciation Costs	2595	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£2,595.00
Total Costs		-£37,764.14	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£17,943.03	-£235,137.44
Net Expenditure		-£26,764.14	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£6,943.03	-£103,137.44
Net Cash Flow														
Opening Balance		-£40,000.00	-£66,764.14	-£73,707.17	-£80,650.19	-£87,593.22	-£94,536.25	-£101,479.28	-£108,422.30	-£115,365.33	-£122,308.36	-£129,251.39	-£136,194.42	
Closing Balance		-£66,764.14	-£73,707.17	-£80,650.19	-£87,593.22	-£94,536.25	-£101,479.28	-£108,422.30	-£115,365.33	-£122,308.36	-£129,251.39	-£136,194.42	-£143,137.44	-£143,137.44

CASHFLOW - YEAR 2

	Apr 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	Aug 2020	Sep 2020	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	20/21 Total
<u>Current Income (guaranteed)</u>													
No. of Units Sold	Max 3800	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	36000
Cost per Unit		6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	
Unit Sales		£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£216,000.00
<u>Costs</u>													
Unit Purchase		-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£4,992.00	-£59,904.00
Promotion		-£1,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	-£1,000.00
Redundancy		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Digital devices		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Mobile Phone	*4	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£56.00	-£672.00
Wages	129,737	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£9,923.03	-£119,076.41
Vehicle Lease	*3	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£519.67	-£6,236.00
Vehicle MOT	*3	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£80.00	-£960.00
Vehicle Insurance	*3	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£4,000.00
Vehicle Maintenance	*3	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£200.00	-£2,400.00
Tyres	*3	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£66.67	-£800.00
Fuel Costs	*3	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£333.33	-£4,000.00
Premises		-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£417.00	-£5,004.00
Business Support		£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Central Costs		-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£1,663.25	-£19,959.00
Training		-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£46.11	-£553.33
Depreciation Costs	2595	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£216.25	-£2,595.00
Total Costs		-£19,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£18,630.40	-£227,159.74
Net Expenditure		-£1,630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£630.40	-£11,159.74
<u>Net Cash Flow</u>													
Opening Balance		-£143,137.44	-£144,767.84	-£145,398.23	-£146,028.63	-£146,659.02	-£147,289.42	-£147,919.81	-£148,550.21	-£149,180.60	-£149,811.00	-£150,441.39	-£151,071.79
Closing Balance		-£144,767.84	-£145,398.23	-£146,028.63	-£146,659.02	-£147,289.42	-£147,919.81	-£148,550.21	-£149,180.60	-£149,811.00	-£150,441.39	-£151,071.79	-£151,702.18

Agenda Item 7

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **21st January 2021**

Report Subject: **Use of Consultants**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Damien McCann, Corporate Director of Social Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	07.01.21	06.01.21			21.01.21			

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with the information requested, relating to expenditure incurred during 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 on the use of consultants to support, supplement and complement the work of Officers across the Council.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Consultants are widely used across the whole public sector including Welsh Government for a number of different purposes. At Blaenau Gwent (BG) we use consultants in a number of ways:
- To provide assistance in specialist areas where there is no or limited expertise or experience within the Council e.g. treasury management, VAT, Legal
 - To provide independent advice and a different perspective (challenge)
 - To supplement resources where there is insufficient capacity to undertake a specific, identified task e.g. because the work has come into the Council unexpectedly, or where the work needs to be progressed within a specific / limited time period.
 - To provide training to BG staff to enhance their own expertise e.g. changes to legislation
- 2.2 The advantage of engaging Consultants is also that they are only needed for a shorter period of time enabling an organisation to pay for that skill on demand only when they need it. This is often an effective use of the Council's resource and avoids / replaces the need to employ additional staff, with specialist knowledge & skills, on a permanent basis.
- 2.3 During 2018/19 and 2019/20 the Council spent a total of £0.7m & £1.1m on Consultants across all services, the attached appendix identifies those Consultants, the costs and the reason for engagement relating to the Social Services portfolio.

3. Options for Recommendation

Option 1:

- 3.1 To note the use of consultants and accept the report.

Option 2:

- 3.2 To note and challenge the use of consultants.

4. Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan

Corporate Plan 2018-22, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

This proposal supports the amendments made to the Outcome Statements within the Corporate Plan in its review in July 2020.

Corporate Plan 2020/22 Outcome Statements:

- Protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities
- To enable people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their communities
- An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 *Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)*

- 5.1.1 The attachment at Appendix 1 details the cost of consultants commissioned by the Council for the period 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 for the Social Services Portfolio.

- 5.1.2 The costs incurred are summarised below:

Funding Stream	2018/2019	2019/2020
	£	£
Capital:		
Internal	0	0
External (Grant)	0	0
Total Capital	0	0
Revenue:		
Internal	57,837	27,537
External (Grant)	32,546	26,054
Total Revenue	90,383	53,591
Total Expenditure	90,383	59,591

- 5.1.3 The table above highlights that for Social Services portfolio 40% of the expenditure incurred on consultants over the 2 years have been funded externally either by grant or contributions from partner organisations.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The risks associated with not engaging specialist consultants when needed could result in negligence, poor project outcomes, insufficient resources, unable to draw down external funding, existing staff under excessive pressure and the Council being taken to court.

5.3 ***Legal***

No legal issues associated with this report.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

The HR impacts are included in the risks but will include excessive pressure on staff if consultants were not available. Specialist expertise missing in certain areas of the service which could also lead to legal liabilities for the Council or opportunities missed for progressing projects to support the local communities or economy.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Performance data is attached at Appendix 1.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

6.2.1 The use of Consultants is key in supporting the Council to deliver both capital and revenue projects, the outcome of which is new, improved, quality services and facilities for the residents of Blaenau Gwent.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

6.3.1 The procurement of consultants will comply with the Councils approved Standing Orders for Contracts.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

6.4.1 When considering future projects/schemes, professional fees/Consultancy costs are built into the outline project costs / Grant application.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

6.5.1 The use of Consultants supports the Council to deliver on specific projects and initiatives. In some instances, this may result in the Council missing out on where otherwise the Council may miss out on opportunities, funding or project delivery.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

N/A

6.7 ***Integration(across service areas)***

N/A

6.8 ***EqIA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***
Screening has been undertaken and no full assessment is required.
N/A

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Monitoring will form part of the Project Management arrangements.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 – Analysis of expenditure incurred on Consultancy Costs*

PORTFOLIO	SCHEME	CONSULTANT	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	YEAR		Funded By
				2018/2019 £	2019/2020 £	
REVENUE EXPENDITURE						
Social Services	Outcome Focussed Care and Support Planning	EDGE TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY LTD	Paying facilitator fees for training delivery via SCWWDP grant	1,165	-	External Grant
Social Services	Qualifying Social Work Awards	CHRIS WILLIAMSON CONSULTANCY SERVICES LTD	Mentoring SW student fees via SCWWDP grant / Provision of WDP training	1,215	-	External Grant
Social Services	WDP - PLOF SCOLA - Revenue	CHRIS WILLIAMSON CONSULTANCY SERVICES LTD	Paying facilitator fees for training delivery via SCWWDP grant	1,536	3,544	External Grant
Social Services	Health & Safety	CORTEEN TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY LTD	Paying facilitator fees for training delivery via SCWWDP grant	895	-	External Grant
Social Services	Looked After Children	CORTEEN TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY LTD	Paying facilitator fees for training delivery via SCWWDP grant	1,150	-	External Grant
Social Services	Outcome Focussed Care and Support Planning	CORTEEN TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY LTD	Paying facilitator fees for training delivery via SCWWDP grant	-	9,905	External Grant
Social Services	Post Qualifying Social Work Awards	CORTEEN TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY LTD	Paying facilitator fees for training delivery via SCWWDP grant	595	-	External Grant
Social Services	Social Care Management	CORTEEN TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY LTD	Paying facilitator fees for training delivery via SCWWDP grant	900	900	External Grant
Social Services	Support Frontline Social Care Workers	CORTEEN TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY LTD	Paying facilitator fees for training delivery via SCWWDP grant	11,640	2,590	External Grant
Social Services	Support Frontline Social Care Workers	EDGE TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY LTD	Paying facilitator fees for training delivery via SCWWDP grant	-	1,165	External Grant
Social Services	Health & Safety	HANDLING MOVEMENT & ERGONOMICS LTD	Paying facilitator fees for training delivery via SCWWDP grant	7,900	-	External Grant
Social Services	Workforce development	VAUGHAN TRAINING & CONSULTANCY LTD	Paying facilitator fees for training delivery via SCWWDP grant	5,550	7,950	External Grant
Social Services	Locality Team 4 (Brynmaur & Blaina)	DAVE BAMFORTH CONSULTANCY	Investigation of a complaint - Stage 2	-	1,302	Revenue Budget
Social Services	Children with Disabilities Team	DB INDEPENDENT	Investigation of a complaint - Stage 2	497	-	Revenue Budget
Social Services	Elderly - Adults A&CM CC Team (West)	DB INDEPENDENT	Investigation of a complaint - Stage 2	217	-	Revenue Budget
Social Services	Locality Team 1 (Tredegar)	DB INDEPENDENT	Investigation of a complaint - Stage 2	502	-	Revenue Budget
Social Services	Locality Team 2 (Ebbw Vale & Cwm)	DB INDEPENDENT	Investigation of a complaint - Stage 2	230	658	Revenue Budget
Social Services	Locality Team 1 (Tredegar)	DAVE BAMFORTH CONSULTANCY	Investigation of a complaint - Stage 2	1,752	-	Revenue Budget
Social Services	Elderly - Adults A&CM CC Team (West)	DAVE BAMFORTH CONSULTANCY	Investigation of a complaint - Stage 2	1,087	-	Revenue Budget
Social Services	Locality Team 2 (Ebbw Vale & Cwm)	DAVE BAMFORTH CONSULTANCY	Investigation of a complaint - Stage 2	3,353	1,127	Revenue Budget
Social Services	Independent Assessments - Fostering	EXISTENTIAL CONSULTANCY LIMITED	Independent Assessments	2,200	-	Revenue Budget
Social Services	Community Options - Team 4 - Bert Dennin	ELIZABETH MAJER	Review of provision for FEP process	4,729	-	Revenue Budget
Social Services	Social Services - Commissioning & Contra	LEONIE COWAN ASSOCIATES	Collaborative regional work for joint commissioning of Support at Home Service CCBC & BGCBC	3,050	-	Revenue Budget
Social Services	SEW Adoption Recruitment & Training	TRACEY PRALL	Dog Behaviour Risk Assessment	1,845	1,769	Revenue Budget
Social Services	Independent Assessments	V L MORGAN	Independent Assessments -SEWAS	7,808	9,699	Revenue Budget
Social Services	WG Grant Adoption	V L MORGAN	Independent Assessments -SEWAS	-	10,729	Revenue Budget
Social Services	Independent Assessments / Chairing	CHEKA SAFEGUARDING SERVICES LIMITED	Independent Chairs for Child Protection Conferences	30,567	2,253	Revenue Budget
TOTAL REVENUE EXPENDITURE - SOCIAL SERVICES				90,383	53,591	

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Agenda Item 8

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **21st January 2021**
Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme: 11th March 2021**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**
Report Submitted by: **Cllr Steve Thomas, Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
x	x	06.01.21			21.01.21			

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present to Members the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 11th March 2021 for discussion and agreement.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Scrutiny Work Programmes are key aspects of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and support the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the Forward Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's revised Corporate Plan, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 Effective work programmes are essential to ensure that the work of scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services.
 - 2.4 The Committee's Forward Work Programme was agreed in September 2020, recognising the fluidity of the document to enable the Committee to respond to urgent and emerging issues, and included timescales when reports will be considered by the Committee. The work programme is managed and implemented by the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer under the direction of the Chair and Committee.
 - 2.5 The forward work programme for the forthcoming meeting will be presented to Committee on a 6 weekly cycle in order that Members can consider the programme of work; request information is included within the reports, as appropriate and / or make amendments to the work programme.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:** The Scrutiny Committee consider the Forward Work Programme for the meeting 11th March 2021, and

- Make any amendments to the topics scheduled for the meetings;
- Suggest any additional invitees that the committee requires to fully consider the reports; and
- Request any additional information to be included with regards to the topics to be discussed.

3.2 **Option 2:** The Scrutiny Committee agree the Forward Programme for the meeting 11th March 2021, as presented.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme – Meeting on 11th March 2021

Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

Dates / Deadlines	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Executive / Council Meeting
Thursday 11th March 2021 Deadline: 23 rd February 2021	1. Living Independently in the 21 st Century Strategy	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the progress made against the priorities within the strategy	Alyson Hoskins	Executive information
	2. My Support Team	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the progress of the team in returning children from residential placements	Tanya Evans	Executive Information
	3. Vulnerable children during COVID-19	Monitoring An update report on vulnerable children during COVID-19, focussing on any issues arising from school closures.	Damien McCann / Tanya Evans	Executive Information
	4. Update on Legal costs associated with the Children's Services	Progress Update Members to receive a progress update in relation to legal costs within Children's Services (to include anonymised case studies).	Damien McCann / Tanya Evans	Executive

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