

DRAFT AGENDA

ID	2310
Committee	Pwyllgor Craffu Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Date	20/01/2022
Attendees	<p>Cynghorwyr Stephen Thomas (Cadeirydd)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Keri Rowson (Is-gadeirydd)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Derrick Bevan (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Garth Collier (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Gareth A. Davies (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Gareth L. Davies (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Phil Edwards (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Keith Hayden (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Wayne Hodgins (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Julie Holt (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Amanda Moore (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Greg Paulsen (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Tim Sharrem (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Bob Summers (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Tommy Smith (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Damien McCann (Swyddog)</p> <p>Tanya Evans (Swyddog)</p> <p>Gemma Wasley (Swyddog)</p> <p>Alyson Hoskins (Swyddog)</p> <p>Liz Thomas (Swyddog)</p> <p>Leeann Turner (Secretary)</p> <p>Gwasanaethau Democrataidd (Monitor)</p> <p>Pob Cynghorydd (Monitor)</p> <p>Sean Scannell (Notify)</p> <p>Louise Bishop (Notify)</p> <p>Richard Crook (Notify)</p> <p>Rhian Hayden (Notify)</p> <p>Michelle Morris (Notify)</p> <p>Steve Berry (Swyddog)</p> <p>Andrea Jones (Swyddog)</p> <p>Emma Bennett (Notify)</p>

Item ID	5771
Item Title	Cyfieithu ar y Pryd
Summary	Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o hysbysiad ymlaen llaw os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais.

Item ID	5772
Item Title	Ymddiheuriadau
Summary	Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

Item ID	5773
Item Title	Datganiadau Buddiant a Goddefebau
Summary	Ystyried unrhyw ddatganiadau buddiant a goddefebau a wnaed.

Item ID	5774
Item Title	Cofnodion Pwyllgor Craffu Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Summary	Derbyn cofnodion y cyfarfrod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol a gynhaliwyd ar 18 Tachwedd 2021. (Dylid nodi y cyflwynir y Cofnodion er pwyntiau cywirdeb yn unig).

Item ID	5832
Item Title	Dalen Weithredu – 18 Tachwedd 2021
Summary	Derbyn y ddalen weithredu.

Item ID	5833
Item Title	Adroddiad Cynnydd Rhianta Corfforaethol 2021-22
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Rheolwr Gwasanaeth Gwasanaethau Plant.

Item ID	5834
Item Title	Adroddiad Blynyddol y Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol 2021/2022 (Chwarteri 1 a 2)
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol.

Item ID	5835
Item Title	Cyfraddau Swyddi Gwag Gweithwyr Cymdeithasol mewn Gwasanaethau Plant, Tâl a Chymhellion
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Plant.

Item ID	5836
Item Title	Blaenraglen Gwaith: 3 Mawrth 2022
Summary	Derbyn yr adroddiad.

Item ID	5775
Item Title	
Comment	Derbyn ac ystyried yr adroddiad(au) dilynol sydd ym marn y swyddog priodol yn eitem(au) eithriedig, gan roi ystyriaeth i'r prawf budd cyhoeddus ac y dylai'r wasg a'r cyhoedd gael eu heithrio o'r cyfarfod (mae'r rheswm am y penderfyniad aam yr eithriad ar gael ar restr a gedwir gan y swyddog priodol).

Item ID	5837
Item Title	Datblygu cynllun cydweithio rhwng Caerffili/Blaenau Gwent mewn darparu Gwasanaethau Cyfreithiol ar gyfer Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol Plant
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Plant.

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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 – 18TH NOVEMBER, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S.C. THOMAS (CHAIR)

Councillors: D. Bevan
 G.A. Davies
 P. Edwards
 K. Hayden
 S. Healy (substitute for Cllr Rowson)
 W. Hodgins
 J. Holt
 M. Moore
 G. Paulsen
 T. Smith
 B. Summers

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
 Head of Adult Services
 Communications & Policy Officer
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ALSO: Sue Radford, Service Manager,
 South East Wales Adoption Service

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>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier, K. Rowson and T. Sharrem.</p> <p>Head of Children's Services</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor Wayne Hodgins declared an interest in the meeting as some of his clients may also be service users of the Social Services Directorate.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 7th October, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET - 7TH OCTOBER, 2021</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 7th October, 2021 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP UPDATE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Social Services which was presented to update Members on the work and decisions taken over the last 6 months by the Regional Partnership Board, developed under statutory guidance Part 9 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWB Act) since the last report presented to Social Services Scrutiny Committee on the 22nd April 2021.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Social Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein and explained that the Regional Partnership Board was an advisory body and was expected to provide direction to any areas of integrated working across health and social care.</p>	

In response to a Member's question regarding the development of a children's residential home at Windmill Farm in Newport the Corporate Director of Social Services confirmed that funding for the children's residential home would be provided by the Integrated Care Fund capital together with the ICF revenue funding stream to deliver the proposed integrated model across Gwent. The Member commented that it was pleasing to note that the long term objective was to get care closer to home.

A Member enquired regarding blockages in hospitals and raised concerns that people had passed away as they had been unable to access the required treatment and care. The Director of Social Services said that in relation to health and the ambulance service they now had an additional 40 military staff which covered the area across South Wales, to drive the ambulances, which freed up additional paramedics. This had been implemented approximately 3-4 weeks ago and would hopefully have an impact on being able to attend more incidents. Over the past 8-9 weeks they had been looking at measures to improve the situation and had been working with WAST regarding social workers in their call centre to give advice on whether a person needed to go into hospital or be supported at home with domiciliary care provision.

The Head of Adult Services reassured Members what they were doing from a social care perspective to ensure they could discharge as many patients as safely as possible out of hospital. They met regularly with senior managers in the Health Board and held discussions to escalate any patient that had been prevented from being discharged from hospital to look at solutions to discharge them. They had increased capacity to carry out assessments by offering additional overtime, weekend and evening work to social care and social services staff.

A Member raised concerns regarding staff shortages at the Grange Hospital. The Director of Social Services advised Members that he had requested a Members Briefing Session with the Health Board which would give Members an opportunity to ask appropriate questions. The Health Board had agreed to hold a session during February 2022 after winter pressures had eased.

With regard to recruitment of Social Care workers, a Member enquired if the Council's pay structure was comparable to other authorities. The Director of Social Services said that across the board the pay structure was similar, however, some posts were slightly different in the delivery of services across the Gwent region. Recruitment was a national issue with staff in social care being paid the real living wage of £9.50 an hour to look after the most vulnerable people in the community. People could earn more money working in the retail or hospitality sectors with less responsibility.

The Chair agreed with the Director's comments and felt that more should be done for low paid Social Care workers.

A Member commented that staff had worked extremely hard throughout the pandemic and the Authority needed to be mindful of their well-being in the long term. He felt that in these unprecedented times the Authority needed to do everything it could to alleviate staff shortages and was pleased to note that the Directorate was looking at developing a number of initiatives to try to alleviate some of the pressures in the system.

The Head of Adult Services reassured Members that in relation to staff well-being and overtime, there were a number of part time workers who had been willing to pick up full time contracts for the winter period, particularly over the Christmas period, and had been guaranteed full time work until March 2022. This helped with sustainability of staff and also offered incentive to those staff who wanted to pick up extra work.

In relation to staff shortages a Member requested clarity on the Welsh Government guidance for self-isolation. The Director of Social Services explained that many staff, particularly on the frontline, work with vulnerable people and would not be allowed to undertake that work if they had Covid-19 symptom's or were living with someone who had symptoms. They could be redirected to work within the office, but this was not always possible and in some circumstances staff had to remain off work until the 10 day isolation period had passed.

	<p>The Head of Adult Services advised Members that new Welsh Government guidance relating specifically to NHS, Health and Social Care staff, and in particular Care Homes, would be forwarded to Members for their information.</p> <p>The Chair referred to paragraphs 2.20 and 2.21 of the report regarding looking at a set of short term interventions to alleviate immediate pressures and longer term re-design how the system can work more effectively to reduce cyclical pressures. The Director of Social Services reassured Members that both issues would be high on the agenda for the next meeting of the Regional Partnership Board where they would consider options. The difficulty would be how to increase salaries and he felt this needed to be done on a national basis, if it was done on a local or regional basis this could have a huge impact on other local authorities.</p> <p>In relation to recruitment a Member said that in recent months there had been a number of advertisements and job opportunities and enquired if there was an increase in the number of people taking up Social Care as a form of employment. The Director of Social Services said that unfortunately there was little increase. He explained that the Local Authority, the Health Board and private sectors were all recruiting from the same group of people who could choose the best paying employer and this was the reason for the issue to be addressed nationally.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Committee scrutinised the report and the decisions of the Regional Partnership Board be supported.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children’s Services which was presented to report on the performance of the South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) and the National Adoption Service (NAS) for 2020/21.</p> <p>The Service Manager, South East Wales Adoption Service spoke to the report and highlighted the three main areas contained within the report:-</p>	

- Recruitment
- Placing Children
- Adoption Support

In response to a Member's question regarding Life Journey Work, the Service Manager (SEWAS) explained that every child who was adopted had Life Journey Work, it comes in various forms and goes with them so their adopters would have an understanding of the history of the child, in a child centred way, and it contained all the information about the child's birth family.

With regard to recruitment for placements a Member enquired if the format for advertising could be widened, such as localised engagement i.e. a roadshow, when COVID restrictions allow. The Service Manager said that other regions had invested £6,000 in billboard advertising locally and had gained little response from that investment. A Marketing Officer was now in post and looked closely at where to invest money to get the best response and that was through social media platforms. She advised Members that recruitment for this year had doubled and they were above target for their recruitment goals.

The Member felt that with the Blaenau Gwent demographics people liked face to face interaction to ask poignant questions. The Service Manager advised that they also hold information events for the public to attend.

The Director of Social Services added that they had moved to a more digital platform for advertising with some success. With the pandemic restrictions they had been unable to hold some public events such as roadshows at supermarkets and when COVID restrictions ease they could consider revisiting this locally as it may work better for Blaenau Gwent than other areas across Gwent.

A Member said it was pleasing to note that recruitment had doubled this year and enquired if any marketing data was available for Members to compare what type of advertising had the most impact. The Service Manager confirmed that information was available and would forward it to Members for their information.

	<p>The Chair said that potentially they could also look to do some advertising in the locality hubs where people visited regularly.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the information be accepted as reported.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 20TH JANUARY, 2022</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Chair informed Members of some changes to the Forward Work Programme for the next meeting in January 2022 for the Committee to consider.</p> <p>The Future Model of Assistive Technology/Telecare Provision report be moved to the next cycle, the Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy and the Integrated Care Funding report be moved to the scrutiny meeting in March and the Proposals for delivery of Legal Services for Children’s Services be added to the next meeting in January 2022.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 20th January, 2022 be amended and the following reports be presented:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals for delivery of Legal Services for Children’s Services • Corporate Parenting Progress Report • Director of Social Services Quarter 1 & 2 update • Social Workers Pay and Incentives 	

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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Action Sheet

Social Services Scrutiny Committee – 18th November 2021

Item	Action to be Taken	By Whom	Action Taken
6	<u>Regional Partnership Update</u> Link to COVID legislation in relation to care workers to be circulated to Members.	Alyson Hoskins	https://gov.wales/health-and-social-care-testing-flow-charts-covid-19
7	<u>National Adoption Service Annual Report</u> Information to be provided comparing the impact of different types of advertising.	Sue Radford	See attached information

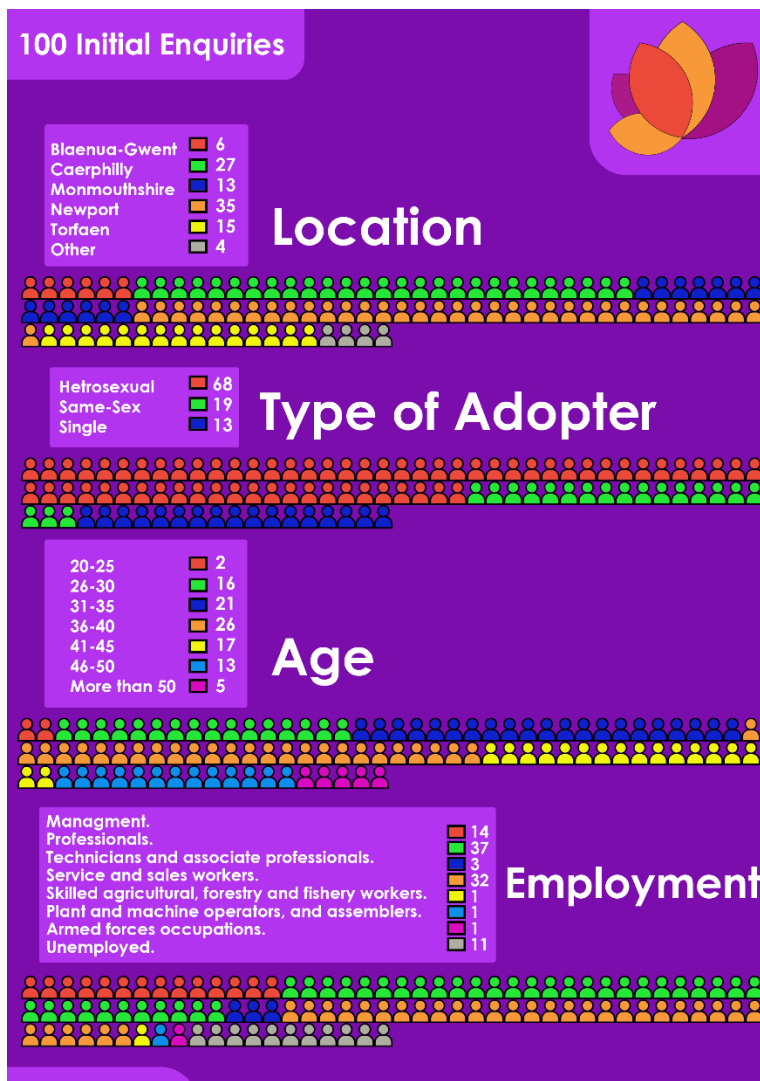
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Action – Social Services Scrutiny Committee – 18th November 2021

This small report aims to outline what marketing South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) is using to reach our audiences and why it has helped us increase our enquiry rate.

Understanding our Audiences

To understand why we spend the way we do we need to understand our audience. Using data pulled from enquiries from April 1st 2019 to December 31st 2019 (most up to date at the time of the project) we analysed key information about our adopters, this includes location of home, age, profession and type of enquirer. Our aim was to allow us to understand the type of people that were already enquiring so we can create a key demographic and focus on content/adverts that apply to them. The results were then broken down into an easy to understand information graphic called “100 initial enquiries” (see below)



This data helped us create a target audience for the people most likely to adopt. People age between 28-44 years old made up 74% of people enquiring. People that

would be classed as “professionals” made up over 54% of enquiries. 62% of enquiries come from just two local authorities (Caerphilly and Newport). This data has shaped the way we advertise

How we reach our audience?

We have a few different paths a potential adopter may find out about us. This includes

- Digital adverts
- Social Media channels
- Internet search
- Location authority channels
- NAS website
- Word of mouth
- Online news articles

Since starting my role in as Marketing & Recruitment office in November 2019 it has been important for SEWAS to “catch up” with the modern world of marketing. Most of our audience comes from millennial and younger Gen X who are far more likely spend their time online. We have utilised social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram to allow us to reach this audience in a fun and friendly way and promoting our website that acts as an informational hub for anyone wanting to find out more about adopting. Also increasing our online presence using google and other search engines so we are more likely to be at the top of search results. Advertising this way is enabling us to reach our targets

There has been an increase in enquiry rates since we first used digital ad, social media and a website collectively. A good way to visualise this is looking at Q1/Q2 for the last 4 years. Please see graph below.

Dates	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
April	16	4	6	18
May	15	18	14	28
June	8	8	7	19
July	18	19	21	20
August	9	21	9	18
September	23	21	30	32
Total	89	91	87	135

We ran two types of Google adverts in this time. The first being “Search ad” which looks at key words from people’s searches, and find ones that are adopted related. This advert reaches less people then others used but has a higher success rate because it’s targeted to people interested in adoption. This resulted in 23,459 impressions (An impressions is when an advert appears to someone. This can be multiple times to same person if the algorithm believes they are interested in the topic) and 2,024 people clicking through to our website on this ad. The other advert

is an “images ad” that will appear on the side of web pages, we started running this mid-August. This has impressions 833,903 and 1983 clicks through to the website in the 6 weeks it run in Q2. We have also run a Facebook image advert from July to September. This had 372,760 impressions and 1671 clicks through to the website.

SEWAS spent £2,469 on advertising in Q1/Q2 which steered 5,678 people to our website. This equates to a spend of **£18.29** per adoption enquiry

Another positive for digital adverts as touched on above is that people can click on the ad to immediately find out more from our website. This isn't possible for more traditional advertising such newspapers, roundabout ads, and billboards.

Other positives of using digital advertising are:

- Ability to track data in real time and exactly how many people view our ad.
- We can turn the advert on and off at any time if it's not appropriate to advertise.
- Able to continue through the pandemic and any other major event.
- Can't be damaged or vandalised.
- Let's us target areas, ages and genders if needed.
- Cost effective compared more traditional adverts.

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Agenda Item 6

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **20th January 2022**
Report Subject: **Corporate Parenting Progress Report 2021-22**
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)
Y		10.01.22			20.01.22	02.03.22		

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 2021 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 2021 to date on the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) Action Plan 2020/21.

Great progress has been made on actions contained within the plan but there is still the last quarter of the year still to be added before the final action plan is completed in March 2022.

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 looked after children’s 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 encouraged 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 2021 and feel confident that the Local Authority and its partners are doing well to improve outcomes for our looked after children as part of our corporate parenting responsibilities.

Option 2 Acknowledge progress made throughout 2021 and the exemplar practice delivered by officers throughout the Covid 19 pandemic to ensure all our children looked after are supported and to 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 2021/22 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, I will address each key priority in turn and pick out some key outcomes, 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 calls 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. Since September 2021 assessments have been face to face contact in full PPE with weekly clinics at Blaina ICC resuming from 27.09.21.

A new action for 2021 was for the Placement Team to receive Attachment training, which will then be delivered via a variety of methods to foster carers to enable them to support children who are experiencing attachment and trauma based problems. The training has been received by the team and will be rolled out in the New Year to foster carers.

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

For 21/22 a priority was agreed to support those children where exploitation is a feature using the newly adopted Child Exploitation Measurement Tool (CEMT). The CEMT tool kit has been adopted across Gwent and has been built onto WCCIS. Officers have ensured all relevant professionals will be invited to Child Exploitation meetings and are currently finalising the prompt indicators. All team training has been completed and will be delivered wider in the departmental Monday training sessions periodically for new staff. Review of the effectiveness of the new tool will be carried out later in the year 2022.

6.4 **Key Priority 3 - All our Children Looked After are enabled to reach their full potential in education, training and employment (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 3-4 key actions and is now led by the Education Directorate.

There are 3 Key Actions for 21/22: -

Action 1 – Support our Children Looked After in their learning throughout the Covid 19 pandemic and into the recovery phase.

Action 2 – Promote “Children Looked After Friendly Schools”

Action 3 – Ensure we are ready for ALN Act launch September 2021 to ensure our Children Looked After have the right support.

- At the end of academic year 2020-2021, 154 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 children looked after attend more specialist education settings.
- Almost half (49%) 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 is slightly less when compared with the previous academic year when the figure was 52%.
- In total, 21% of children looked after by Blaenau Gwent at the end of academic year 2020-2021 had a Statement of Special Educational Needs. This figure is a slight increase when compared with the previous academic year.
- A total of 5 children looked after (3%) experienced at least one or more non-transitional school moves during 2020-2021. This is a decrease when compared with the previous academic year when the figure was 16 children (10%). Consistency of schooling continues to be considered as part of the matching process when a child looked after 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.
- No child looked after by Blaenau Gwent was permanently excluded from school during academic year 2020-2021. Incidents of exclusions issued in respect of children looked after has remained in line with the previous year. The number of individual children looked after who have received fixed term exclusions during the year has increased however the total number of days lost to exclusions has decreased when compared with the previous year.
- The academic progress and attainment of our children looked after continues to be monitored by the CLA education team. In 2020-2021 end of Key Stage 4 assessment arrangements were changed due to COVID and centre determined grades were awarded to learners.
- In 2020-2021, 19 children looked after completed their statutory studies. All but one of the children in this cohort achieved recognised qualifications. The one learner who did not achieve recognised qualifications has since completed and submitted work with outcomes expected in Spring 2022.
- 9 of our children looked after who completed their statutory studies in 2020-2021 had additional learning needs and 4 had a statement of special educational needs.

- 14 of the 19 children attended mainstream school settings. One child attended an independent school setting outside the Local Authority area, three attended local authority maintained special school settings for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and one child was educated at a school based alternative setting.
- Almost all learners are engaged in post 16 educational and/ or training opportunities.
- This year, after being cancelled last year, the Annual Achievement Award for Children Looked After was incorporated with the Winter Wonderland Event held on 1st December 2021. The annual event recognises the many educational successes of our CLA through the continued period of Covid disruption.
- A significant number of our children looked after, 113 in total, were recognised for their achievements both within school and in terms of their participation in extra-curricular activities. Schools both within the local authority and neighbouring authorities nominate our children looked after with further nominations being made by independent and special school settings.
- The ALN Act launch date has been delayed till January 2022 but the Department is almost ready for the Go Live date.
- The Authorities Corporate Training Scheme for care leavers goes from strength to strength. The officer responsible for the scheme is employed through the Aspire programme funded from the CCG Legacy funding until March 2022. The brochure has been redeveloped and the programmes on offer broadened to capture all young people. The programme supports all care leavers up to age 25 years. A brochure of external opportunities will also be completed in 21/22. Young people are supported to find a placement externally if there is nothing suitable available internally.

7 young people are engaged at the moment.

- 2 young people that are over 19 years of age are on placement.
- 1 trainee is with Catering and Hospitality
- 1 trainee is with Child care
- 1 trainee is with Adult care
- 1 trainee is with Grounds Maintenance.
- A 21-year-old university student on the corporate traineeship had help with their CV and is now working with an external provider for past 5 months.

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 was initially established with a range of professionals from early year's, school, college and youth service 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 have developed a Care Leaver forum which will seek to address a range of topics concerning our CLA and care leavers. Initially this has focused on CLA friendly language and will now move to planning St David's expenditure for next financial year, then developing a PA service and entitlement leaflet.
- The Beaufort Road upgrade is now complete and the kitchen has been used throughout the summer and the garden used for growing and BBQ's. Crisis facilities are available in the bathroom and kitchen. A Harvest festival was held using the food the children had grown from the planters.
- New equipment (lively colour chairs, bikes and play equipment, books and games) was purchased for the rooms and outdoors. Further work is needed outdoors for a trampoline and a shed for storage.
- Formal approval was given and the Contact Team are now called "Family Time Team". Ongoing work continues to change the language in the forms used within statutory services for children looked after.

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 and will be signed off in January 2022.

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.

The take up of social events and activities has taken a downward spiral through the pandemic, there seems little appetite from our children looked after but we do aim to prioritise this in the next action plan 22/23.

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; -

- The Accommodation Audit is updated each January and care leavers identified for the ensuing year. Meetings are then held with RSL's to inform them where accommodation will be required that 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 along with this another is on hold and waiting to be approved. Recruitment is still happening and regular meetings with Llamau happening. HSG has dedicated a floating support service within Llamau who have recruited a male and female support worker.
- The Creation of more 1 bedroom flats for care leavers in the Authority continues to be a problem with few RSL's interested in developing this type of accommodation. Meetings with Housing and various RSL's have been held to take this forward and now additional funding has been made available in the housing strategy.
- 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.
- The Implementation of "Foster Wales" campaign at local/regional level in order to recruit more foster carers for the local authority went live in July 2021. Since then we had one successful campaign which led to an increase in fostering enquiries in Blaenau Gwent. We have had ongoing enquiries and assessments due to be presented to the Panel for new approvals. Since April 2021 we have had 4 new generic fostering households approved by the panel and available to accept placements. The website is <https://fosterwales.blaenau->

gwent.gov.uk. Blaenau Gwent core offer for foster carers is now in line with regional and national offer.

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 eighth 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 21/22 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 the safety of our children looked after, some examples although by no means exhaustive include; -

- Children's Christmas appeal gets larger each year with 400 children supported this year some of whom are looked after
- 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.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1
- Appendix 2
- Appendix 3
- Appendix 4

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Blaenau Gwent Corporate Parenting Board Action Plan 2021/22

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 2021/22					
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	2021/22 Evaluation Commentary – from previous quarter	RP	BRAG
All our Children Looked After enjoy good physical and mental health, and emotional wellbeing	In Partnership with ABUHB monitor all statutory health assessments are undertaken for our children looked after	Monitor how the assessments were carried out throughout COVID 19 with particular attention to the emotional wellbeing of our children	As current in November assessments are face to face contact in full PPE. Still behind on statutory requirements which has been escalated to senior managers and discussed in monthly meetings. Weekly clinics at Blaina ICC resumed from 27.09.21. Still waiting on room availability at Ysbyty Tri Cwm. School nursing services have offered support, however due to a number of staff leaving this has not happened.	CE	
	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	The Placement Team to receive Attachment training, which then will be delivered via a variety of methods to foster carers to enable them to support children who are experiencing attachment and trauma based problems	Training for staff was delivered between October and November 2021 and all team attended. It is planned that alongside individual 1 to 1 sessions delivered to foster carers, a new Circle of Security group will be organised and delivered in the New Year.	LM	
		Foster carers to have access to regular psychology consultations and formulations in order to manage complex behaviours, prevent placement breakdown and celebrate success and progress of children in placement	Currently in the process of recruiting psychologist, however Paul Price from Community Psychology continues to deliver consultations for foster carers until new psychologist will be in post.	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	2021/2022 Evaluation Commentary	RP	BRAG
All our Children Looked After are protected from abuse and neglect	Listen to the voice of our children looked after to establish what they are concerned about from a safeguarding point of view	Develop a questionnaire with the LA safeguarding leads and then work with NYAS to support our children looked after to engage in completing it	NYAS happy to assist with this piece of work. Meeting re-arranged, questionnaire to be delivered next month.	LT	
	A designated officer to attend Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings for oversight of child exploitation within Blaenau Gwent.	Report to CPB with numbers of CLA children discussed at MACE meetings and on any activity identified through MACE to reduce risk	Report to be brought next meeting 2022	LT/SD	
	Support those CLA where exploitation is a feature using the newly adopted Child Exploitation Measurement tool (CEMT)	CEMT forms to be built into WCCIS Develop consistent invite list to ensure all relevant agencies are invited to Child Exploitation meetings Develop ‘one page’ prompt to highlight indicators of exploitation Develop training social workers for the CEMT Disseminate training in the use of CEMT, to include CS staff,	the CEMT tool kit has been adopted across Gwent and has been built onto Wccis. LT has updated the list to ensure relevant agencies are invited to Child Exploitation meetings. BT to finalise the prompt indicators. All team training has been completed and will be on Monday training sessions periodically for new staff. Review of the effectiveness will be carried out later in the year. Done Done Done	BT	

		education and Business Support. Review effectiveness of the new CEMT	Done Review after 3 months			
	Provide regular information on safeguarding amongst designated safeguarding staff in education.	Provide a monthly safeguarding bulletin to education staff, to include messages from Gwent Safeguarding and police partners to highlight current issues.	In progress	SD		

**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	2021/22 Evaluation Commentary	RP	BRAG
Our Children Looked After are enabled to reach their full potential in education, training and recreation	Monitor, evaluate and review Corporate Traineeship for CLA and recommend actions to increase uptake by our CLA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular meetings with Environment and Regen to promote the use of the traineeship scheme for our care leavers Environment and the newly appointed Corporate Trainee Coordinator Devise a brochure of opportunities within BGCB 	<p>TL team have supported Dawn Thomas with the Aspire programme engaging with teams. Legacy report has been written for panel and funding agreed till March 2022. DT has completed 1-1 face to face contact with young people. DT and BT meet monthly. DT has redeveloped and broadened the programme to capture all young people. 2 young people over 19years of age are on placement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 1 trainee with Catering and hospitality ➤ 1 with child care ➤ 1 Adult care ➤ 1 grass cutting. ➤ A 21-year-old university student on the corporate traineeship had help with their CV and is now working with an external provider for past 5 months. <p>The programme supports all care leavers up to age 25 years. A brochure of external opportunities to be completed. Young people are supported to find a placement externally if there is nothing available internally.</p>	DT/TL DT/ TL	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My Career journey event for children looked after – alternative date to be looked at for 21 /22 - an interactive, vibrant event 	No update yet		
	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. 	The mentor team have worked hard with the young people and helped source electronic devices if required. All transition meetings post 16 have been completed and were successful. All young people are aware and supported for post 16.	LMM	
	Promote 'CLA Friendly Schools'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot CLA friendly audit tool 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' 	Update at Decembers meeting	LMM	

	Ensure our readiness for the ALN Act September 2021.	<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: • CLA Team • School CLA Leads • Social Workers • Foster Carers 	ALN Act – LM-M noted this has been delayed till January 2022. Preparations are almost completed and LM-M will share when ready. Currently working with schools and senior leaders to ensure they are clear and ready. All paperwork completed which is a regional approach. Inclusion Team update – advert out last week for GM post, ALN officer Alex Palmer in post full time and ALC/CLA post advert closed Friday. Building capacity within the team going forward. ALN casework post will change to ALN officer which will need CLT approval.	LMM	
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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	2021/2022 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</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>Map what work is done with our children in schools and child care settings around safe and healthy relationships before the age of 14.</p> <p>Following the mapping exercise identify gaps and how these can be filled.</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, then moving to planning St David’s expenditure for next financial year,</p>	<p>No capacity to take this forward at the moment – what is happening at schools Healthy School coordinator?</p> <p>Hannah Watts and Claire Skelly have linked in with Lissa Friel regarding planning work for the forum and consultations with young people are ongoing.</p>	<p>CB/SD/CE</p> <p>BT</p>	

		<p>then developing a PA service and entitlement leaflet.</p> <p>The new facility at Beaufort Road planned for Summer 2021 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>	<p>Beaufort Road update: kitchen has been used throughout the summer and the garden used for BBQ's. Crisis facilities available to use the bathroom and kitchen. Harvest festival to be arranged using food from planters.</p>		
	<p>Promote a positive environment at Family Resource Centre for children looked after to have quality time with their birth families</p>	<p>The external and internal space for family time will be improved</p> <p>Change of language from "contact" into "family time"</p> <p>Brochure to be developed introducing the Family Time team to parents and families attending the centre</p>	<p>New equipment (lively colour chairs, bikes and play equipment, books and games) was purchased for the rooms and outdoors. Further work is needed outdoors for a trampoline and a shed for storage.</p> <p>Formal approval given and the team is now "Family Time Team". ongoing work to change the language in the forms used within statutory services for children looked after.</p> <p>Brochure was developed and is now available to parents attending the centre for family time.</p>	LM	

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	2021/22 Evaluation Commentary	RP	BRAG
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Our Children Looked After secure their rights and entitlements	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. Care Leavers Forum will help develop the leaflet outlining the entitlements for all CLA	Financial leaflet on hold, BT and TE met to establish the support available for young people which is to be consistent with other local authorities. A report will go to CLT end of September. BG leaving Care Grant of £1200 is used to furnish a flat including white goods. There are a number of discrepancies with other LA's grants being £1,400 - £2,300, therefore BG will propose £2000. Finished and updated policy for care leavers – bring to December meeting .	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	2021 /2022 Evaluation Commentary	RP	BRAG
Our Children Looked After children enjoy social and economic wellbeing	Ensure that all of our children looked after are supported to engage with Hobbies/ Interests Work (when appropriate)	Support all of our care leavers to attend the events put on by Voices from Care Independent Reviewing Officers to ensure Hobbies Interest and work are discussed at every childs CLA review and make recommendations to ensure they are supported The youth service to provide regular information on activities and event to be included in the foster carers newsletter	No appetite to take up events at moment	BT CH JS	

**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	2021/22 Evaluation Commentary	RP	BRAG
<p>All our Children Looked After live in suitable accommodation</p>	<p>Increase the quality and number of accommodation options available for our children looked after and care leavers</p>	<p>Deliver the priorities identified in the Accommodation Action Plan 21/22 which include:-</p> <p>Updating annual analysis of accommodation required for care leavers</p> <p>Further increase the number of supported lodging placements funded via the HSG</p> <p>Creation of more 1 bedroom flats for care leavers in the Ebbw Vale and Ebbw Fach valleys</p> <p>Discussions on going with housing strategy regarding wrap around support (from increased HSG)</p>	<p>CB to take this forward</p> <p>MC update: 2 active, 2 passed assessment, 1 on hold and 1 completed. Still recruiting and having regular meetings going forward</p> <p>Meeting with housing to take this forward, additional funding has been available in the housing strategy</p> <p>HSG – dedicated floating support service within Llamu. Recruited a male and female support worker. Ongoing – launch across Wales. LM to feedback at next meeting.</p> <p>Looked to recruit Llamau floating support for young people ?</p>	<p>CB/B T</p>	
	<p>Implementation of Foster Wales campaign at local/regional level in order to recruit more foster carers for the local authority</p>	<p>Develop Blaenau Gwent local website, case studies and individual core offer in order to attract interested people</p> <p>Active participation in national, regional and local recruitment campaigns throughout the year</p> <p>Assessment, approval and</p>	<p>Website was developed at https://fosterwales.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk. Blaenau Gwent core offer for foster carers is now in line with regional and national offer.</p> <p>Official launch of Foster Wales was in July 2021. Since then we had one successful campaign which led to an increase in fostering enquiries in Blaenau Gwent.</p>	<p>LM</p>	

		ongoing development of new foster carers who will deliver high quality services and consistency to placements of children looked after	We have ongoing enquiries and assessments due to be presented to the Panel for new approvals. Since April 2021 we have had 4 new generic fostering households approved by the panel and available to accept placements.		
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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	2021/22 Evaluation Commentary	RP	BRAG
The Corporate Parenting Agenda is owned across the local authority and by partner agencies	Ensure all agencies, members and employees of the local authority are clear of their corporate parenting responsibilities	<p>Ensure there is good member and partner agency attendance at CPB meetings</p> <p>Deliver an annual corporate parenting briefing to members</p> <p>Report the progress made in relation to this action plan to the corporate leadership team and scrutiny committee annually</p> <p>Continue to lobby WG to strengthen legislation around corporate parenting responsibilities for all partners</p>	<p>Good attendance at CPB meetings</p> <p>Annual Report due in January 2022</p> <p>Continue to do</p> <p>Process legislation and good practice. PA service available for 21 – 25 year olds.</p>	TE	

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES – 2020-2021

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To report on the educational experiences of our children looked after during academic year 2020-2021 and to provide an update on the support offered by the CLA education service.

INTRODUCTION

During this period, there has been continued disruption to school operations: local Blaenau Gwent school closures at the end of the autumn term followed by a further national period of school closure in the spring term. Schools were re-purposed again as hubs, for most of the spring term 2021. Remote learning took place during periods of school closures. From March 2021 there was a gradual return of learners, with schools reopening to all learners at the start of the summer term.

In response to COVID 19, 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 2020-21 school year. As such, no end of phase/key stage data or attendance in respect of our children looked after is included in this report.

SUMMARY

At the end of academic year 2020-2021, 154 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 children looked after attend more specialist education settings.

Personal education plans for all newly accommodated children continued to be updated in line with statutory timescales.

Just under half of our children looked after have additional learning needs and 21% 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. This is a further decrease when compared with the previous year. Consistency of schooling continues to be considered as part of the matching process when a child looked after 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.

During 2020-2021, incidents of exclusions issued in respect of children looked after have remained in line with the previous year. The number of individual children looked after who have received fixed term exclusions during the year has increased, however the total number of days lost to exclusions has decreased when compared with the previous year.

Almost all learners achieved recognised qualifications at the end of their statutory school studies in 2020-2021 with the majority engaged in post 16 educational and/ or training opportunities.

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 154 children of statutory school age who remained looked after at the end of the school year 2020-2021 there were more children of secondary school age than primary. The overall figure is a decrease when compared with the previous academic year when 162 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	64
Secondary aged pupils	90

Educated in Blaenau Gwent	115
Educated outside Blaenau Gwent	39

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	127
Resource base attached to mainstream school	4
Pupil Referral Unit	1
Special School	9
Independent	9
Alternative	4

During 2020-2021 a small proportion of our children looked after accessed more specialist education settings however the vast majority continued to attend mainstream school placements. The number of children looked after accessing special and independent school placements remains in line with the previous year. The number of children looked after attending resource bases attached to mainstream school settings has reduced when compared with the previous year.

Additional Learning Needs

During academic year 2020-2021, almost half 49% 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 is slightly less when compared with the previous academic year when the figure was 52%.

In total, 21% of children looked after by Blaenau Gwent at the end of academic year 2020-2021 had a Statement of Special Educational Needs. This figure is a slight increase when compared with the previous academic year.

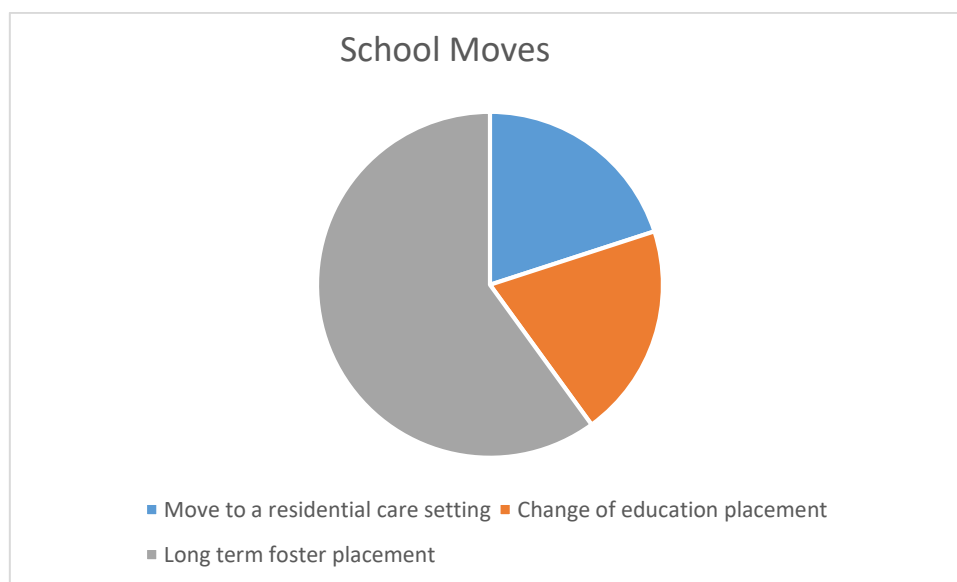
Personal Education Plans

The Social Services & Well Being Act notes the duty on the Local Authority to ensure that a personal education plan is in place for each child who is looked after. 'Except where a child enters care in an emergency, the PEP must be initiated as part of the Part 6 care and support plan before the young person becomes looked after. In an emergency placement, the PEP should be initiated within ten working days.

During academic year 2020-2021 all PEPs for newly accommodated children were updated within statutory timescales.

School moves

A total of 5 children looked after (3%) experienced at least one or more non-transitional school moves during 2020-2021. This is a decrease when compared with the previous academic year when the figure was 16 children (10%).



A total of 5 school moves took place during the course of the year. All moves were planned and in line with individual children's care plans. One child was required to change school due to a move to a residential care setting. One child experienced a change of school following the request for a change of education placement which was agreed by the Local Authority's Additional Learning Needs Panel. The remaining planned moves were in line with children moving to long term foster placements.

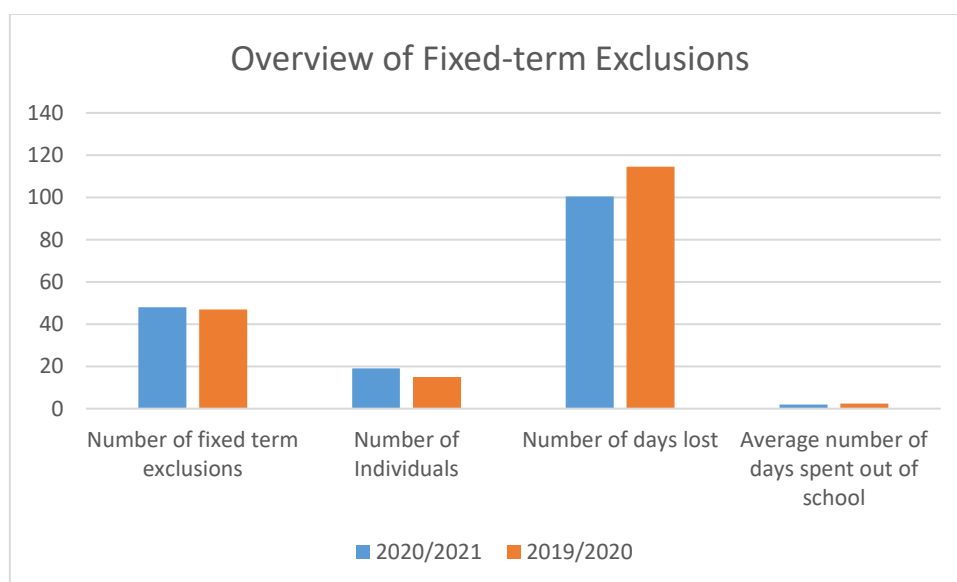
Exclusions

No child looked after by Blaenau Gwent was permanently excluded from school during academic year 2020-2021.

Incidents of exclusions issued in respect of children looked after has remained in line with the previous year. The number of individual children looked after who have received fixed term exclusions during the year has increased however the total number of days lost to exclusions has decreased when compared with the previous year.

48 fixed term exclusions were issued in respect of 19 individual Blaenau Gwent children looked after during academic year 2019-2020. A total of 100.5 school days were lost as a result. This is compared to a total of 47 fixed term exclusions issued in respect of 15 individuals and a total of 114.5 days lost for the previous academic year 2019-2020.

The average number of days spent out of school for an individual child looked after on fixed term exclusions during 2020-2021 was 2 days. This figure is a decrease when compared with the previous academic year (2.4 days lost).



Academic attainments

The academic progress and attainment of our children looked after continues to be monitored by the CLA education team. In 2020-2021 end of Key Stage 4 assessment arrangements were changed due to COVID and centre determined grades were awarded to learners.

In 2020-2021, 19 children looked after completed their statutory studies. All but one of the children in this cohort achieved recognised qualifications. The one learner who did not achieve recognised qualifications has since completed and submitted work with outcomes expected in Spring 2022.

9 of our children looked after who completed their statutory studies in 2020-2021 had additional learning needs and 4 had a statement of special educational needs.

14 of the 19 children attended mainstream school settings. One child attended an independent school setting outside the Local Authority area, three attended local authority maintained special school settings for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and one child was educated at a school based alternative setting.

Celebration of Achievement

The annual celebration awards were not held last year due to the COVID restrictions in place. Children's achievements were recognised individually and a collective message prepared for all children, to recognise their achievements.

This year, the awards are incorporated with the Winter Wonderland Event held on 1st December 2021. The event recognises the many educational successes of our CLA through the continued period of Covid disruption.

A significant number of our children looked after, 113 in total, are being recognised for their achievements both within school and in terms of their participation in extra-curricular activities. Schools both within the local authority and neighbouring authorities nominate our children looked after with further nominations being made by independent and special school settings.

The event recognises those children of primary and secondary school age as well as those young people who have completed their statutory studies and moved onto post 16 education and training opportunities. A specific focus is given to those young people who have successfully completed college and university courses and those who have now moved on to further and higher courses.

Letterbox

The Welsh Government has continued to provide funding for a set number of children to participate in the Letterbox Club each year. The Letterbox Club encourages reading for pleasure and learning at home. It helps to improve the educational outlook for children who are looked-after.

Parcels have continued to be distributed to our children on a monthly basis between October and May with an additional festive parcel provided in December. A total of 30 Blaenau Gwent children looked after between the ages of 5 to 13 have received parcels throughout the year.

CLA education team

The CLA education team continues to provide a flexible service, responding quickly to support our Children looked after and their carers. Detailed communication with carers and residential settings helps to ensure that they are equipped to best support the educational needs of our children looked after. CLA education mentors continue to support our children looked after in school and at home, delivering bespoke mentoring sessions differentiated to the needs of individual children and providing support and reassurance to carers.

All Blaenau Gwent Children looked after continue to be allocated to an education mentor. Where possible and deemed to be necessary our children looked after are offered direct mentoring support. The take up of mentoring support continues to be good. CLA education mentors continue to provide ongoing support to children to access the blended learning approach as required where children are self-isolating.

Case study one – supporting transition from primary to secondary school

Learner one resides at home under placement with parent regulations. Learner one attended a local mainstream primary school before transitioning to a secondary school in the local area. Learner one has additional learning needs with their primary need being in relation to their social, emotional and behavioural needs and received a level of in class and pastoral support whilst at primary school.

The CLA education mentor supported in coordinating an enhanced transition between the primary and secondary school. In addition to supporting with the development of reading and numeracy skills weekly direct mentoring sessions for focused on ensuring the learner understood the daily routine and expectations of secondary school. Time was spent between the CLA education mentor and the learner researching the new school, familiarising the learner with the new school setting and getting to know key members of staff.

The designated lead for CLA learners at the secondary school was introduced to the learner early on in the school year and was invited to join a mentoring session during the summer term. The CLA education mentor accompanied the learner and parent on visits to the secondary school, helping them prepare questions to ask.

The knowledge gained as part of the mentoring sessions was used to share key information with the receiving school about how best to support the learner upon transition. The CLA education mentor supported the learner to complete a piece of work 'all about me' which included detail of hobbies, favourite subjects and areas of learning that the learner found more challenging allowing the receiving school to target support appropriately.

The CLA education mentor also supported the parent to apply for a bus pass and to access the school's online portal to purchase uniform and resources. Weekly mentoring sessions have continued to take place in school and regular contact is maintained with the parent, helping to ensure continued support at home in relation to schooling.

Feedback from parent *'The service you provide is A1 you always on hand to help with anything!'*

Effective communication between the CLA education team, Placement team and carers has enabled prompt support to be put in place in response to difficulties raised by carers/parents ensuring that they can better support the learning at home for children placed in their care.

Case study two – supporting access and engagement with remote learning

Learner two resides with a long term foster carer locally. Learner two has additional learning needs in the areas of cognition and social, emotional and behavioural needs. Learner two attended a resource base for children with complex needs before transitioning to a resource base at a local secondary school. When in school learner two, experienced difficulty in complying with the expectations in relation to COVID. In line with the move to remote learning during the autumn term learner two was expected to access remote learning sessions directed by staff from school followed by independent follow up work. It became apparent that the foster carer found it extremely difficult to navigate the various online learning platforms being used by the school. The learner's reluctant to engage with school work at home coupled with the foster carer's limitations in being able to support put pressure on relationships within the home.

The CLA education mentor linked with school staff daily and supported the learner and their carer to log on to live lessons and to complete the daily tasks set by school. The mentoring sessions were used to discuss the work that needed to be completed and the CLA education mentor acted as the link between home and school resulting

in the learner engaging in the work set. The support continued daily until the school reopened and face to face lessons resumed. Learner two received certificates for engagement online and 'learner of the week' for her work completed in science. Weekly mentoring sessions now take place both in school and at home.

Feedback from school *'We have felt supported by the service. You have worked with the school, the learner and carer. You have helped address the issues by working on choices such as around lunch options to remove this as a barrier. You have also supported school in sharing plans in the hope that the learner fully understands them. In addition home learning, despite huge effort from [school] would have been poorly attended without the support you provided'*.

Case study 3 – supporting access and engagement with remote learning

Learner three returned to a foster placement in locally, after exiting a residential care placement out of county.

The CLA education team supported with the application to a secondary school in Blaenau Gwent and ensured that pre-admission meeting was held to plan for the learner's start at their new school.

In order to ensure that the learner could work towards a full cohort of GCSE qualifications the learner was required to access some subjects and catch up work via a distanced learning programme.

The learner initially experienced difficulty with the level of organisation required to access the online material. The CLA education mentor offered daily support to the learner, breaking down tasks into manageable chunks, ensuring that the learner knew what was required and that completed work was submitted. A bespoke timetable was created each day, dependent on work uploaded by school staff for completion. Check ins via email and Teams were offered throughout the day to support with completion of any activities that the learner found challenging and to offer wellbeing/emotional support. Telephone calls were also made to the foster carer to offer guidance so they too could offer support to the learner. The learner achieved 8 GCSE's in summer 2021 and is now accessing a Level 3 course at college.

Feedback from the young person's social worker *"Just wanted to share that [young person's name] has just been telling me how grateful she is for [CLA education mentor's name] support with home learning, she said that if it wasn't for [CLA education mentor's name] she wouldn't be doing it and she is finding it invaluable."*

Feedback from the young person to CLA education mentor *"Thank you for all your help, I couldn't have made it the end of year 11 without you. It was tough but with all your help I got everything done!"*

Catherine Edwards

Children Looked After Education Coordinator

December 2021

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER - EXCLUSIONS FROM SCHOOLS 2020-2021

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 2020-2021 to the Corporate Parenting Board.

During this period, there has been continued disruption to school operations: local Blaenau Gwent school closures at the end of the Autumn term followed by a further national period of school closure in the spring term. Schools were re-purposed again as hubs, for most of the Spring term 2021. Remote learning took place during periods of school closures. From March 2021 there was a gradual return of learners, with schools reopening to all learners at the start of the Summer term.

SUMMARY

During 2020-2021, incidents of exclusions issued in respect of children looked after have remained in line with the previous year. The number of individual children looked after who have received fixed term exclusions during the year has increased however the total number of days lost to exclusions has decreased when compared with the previous year.

The majority of exclusions continue to be 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 and on average, continue to be longer in duration than those issued by schools outside Blaenau.

There has been an increase in the number of exclusions being issued for Blaenau Gwent children looked after who have Statements of Special Educational Needs when compared with the previous year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

It is also recommended that the action plan for 2021-2022 is agreed with the aim of reducing the incidents and duration of exclusions issued in respect of Blaenau Gwent children looked after.

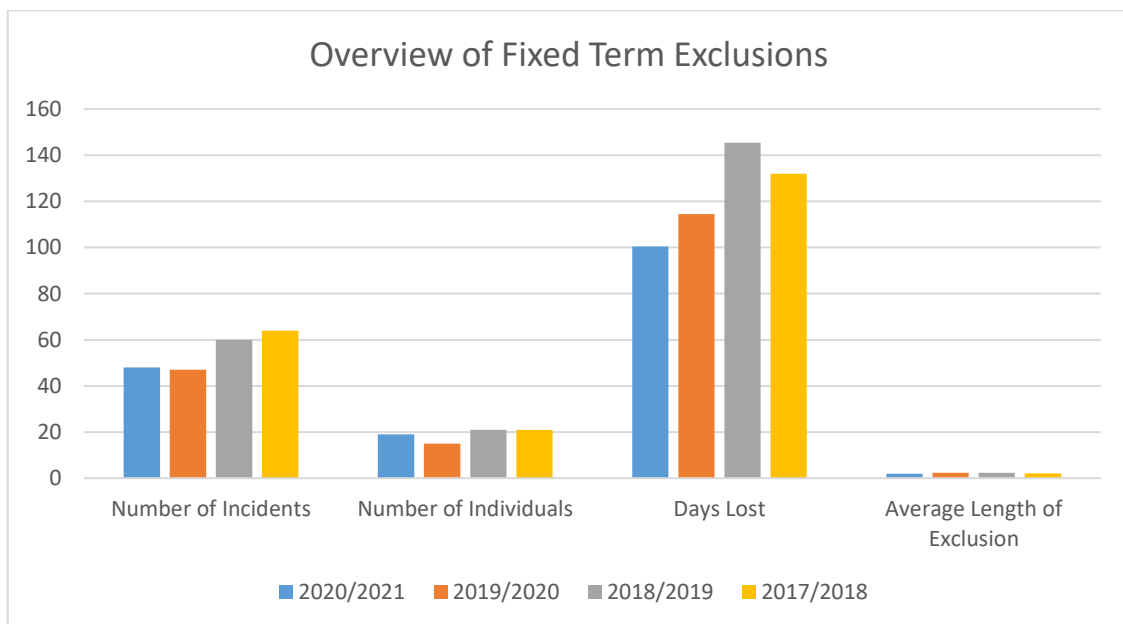
DETAILED REPORT

PRESENT POSITION

Number and length of fixed term exclusions

48 fixed term exclusions were issued in respect of 19 individual Blaenau Gwent children looked after during academic year 2020-2021. These 19 individual children account for 12% of the looked after population. A total of 100.5 school days were lost as a result. This is compared to a total of 47 fixed term exclusions issued in respect of 15 individuals and a total of 114.5 days lost for the previous academic year 2019-2020.

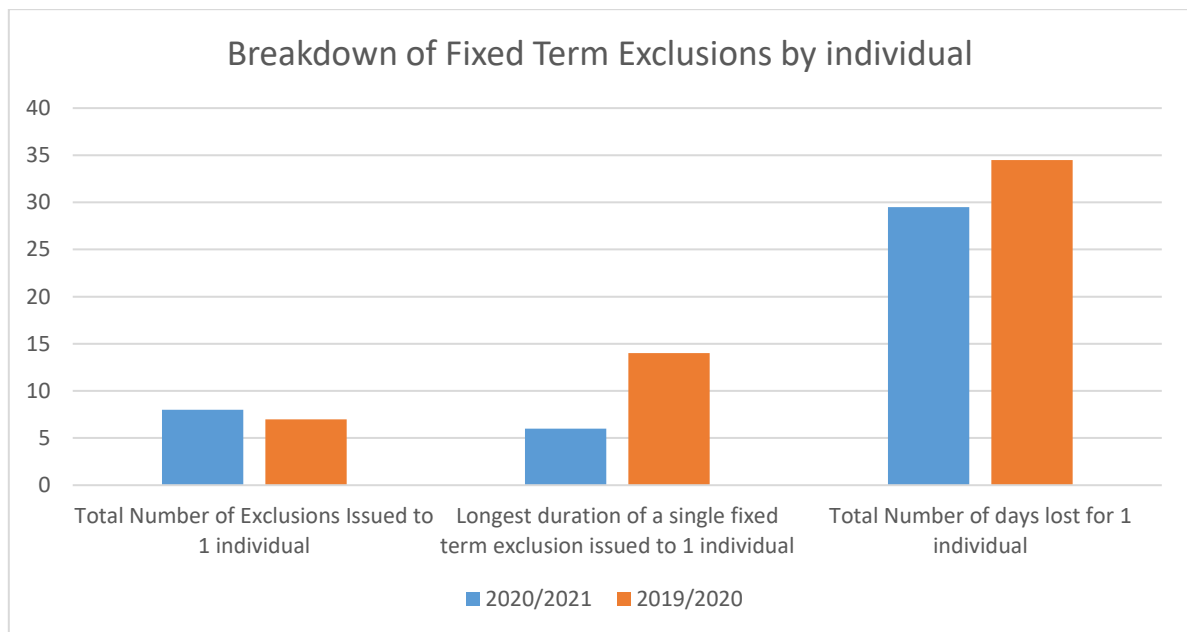
The average number of days spent out of school for an individual child looked after on fixed term exclusions during 2020-2021 was 2 days. This figure was 2.4 days for the previous academic year.



The highest number of fixed term exclusions issued in respect of one child was 8. This figure is an increase when compared with the previous academic year when the highest number issued in respect of one child was 7 exclusions.

The longest duration of a single fixed term exclusion issued in respect of one child looked after during academic year 2020-2021 was 6 days. This figure is a decrease when compared with the previous year when the figure was 14.

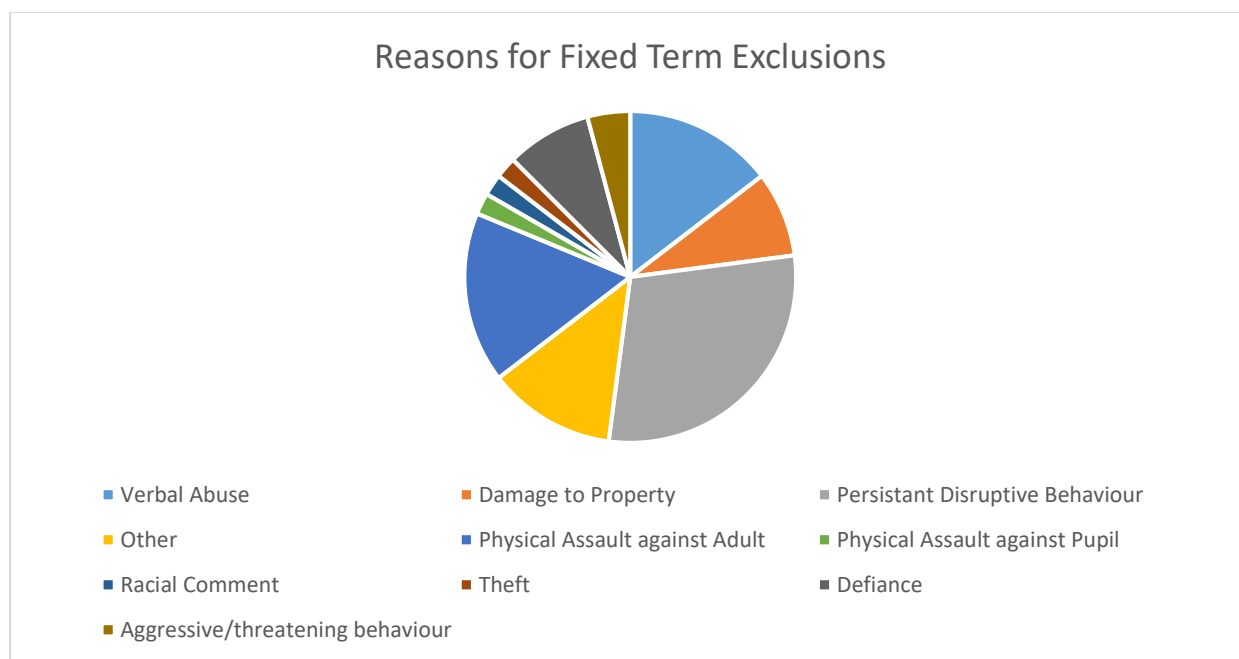
During academic year 2020-2021 the total number of days lost for one looked after child as a result of repeated exclusions was 29.5 days. This figure is a decrease when compared with the previous academic year when the figure was 34.5 days.



Of the 19 individual Blaenau Gwent children looked after who received fixed term exclusions from school, 68% received more than one fixed term exclusion during the year. This figure is lower when compared with the previous academic year when 85% of our children looked after received more than one fixed term exclusion.

Reasons for fixed term exclusions

The primary reason for the majority of the exclusions issued during academic year 2020-2021 was persistent disruptive behaviour.



Exclusions for primary and secondary aged looked after children

Of the 154 children of statutory school age who remained looked after at the end of the school year 2020-2021 there were more children of secondary school age than primary. In previous years, the numbers have been broadly equal across to the two stages. The larger proportion of secondary learners in 2020-2021 is a significant because the majority of exclusions issued are in respect of secondary aged learners.

Primary aged pupils	64
Secondary aged pupils	90

Almost all fixed term exclusions for Blaenau Gwent children looked after were issued in respect of secondary school aged children during 2020-2021 (45 out of 48 incidents/ 94%). 3 children of primary school age received fixed term exclusions during the course of the year. This figure is higher when compared with the previous academic year, when 2 children looked after of primary age were excluded. However, the number of days lost to primary aged CLA was considerably less (total of 3 incidents

and 6.5 days lost in 2020-2021) when compared with the previous year (total of 6 incidents and 16.5 days lost).

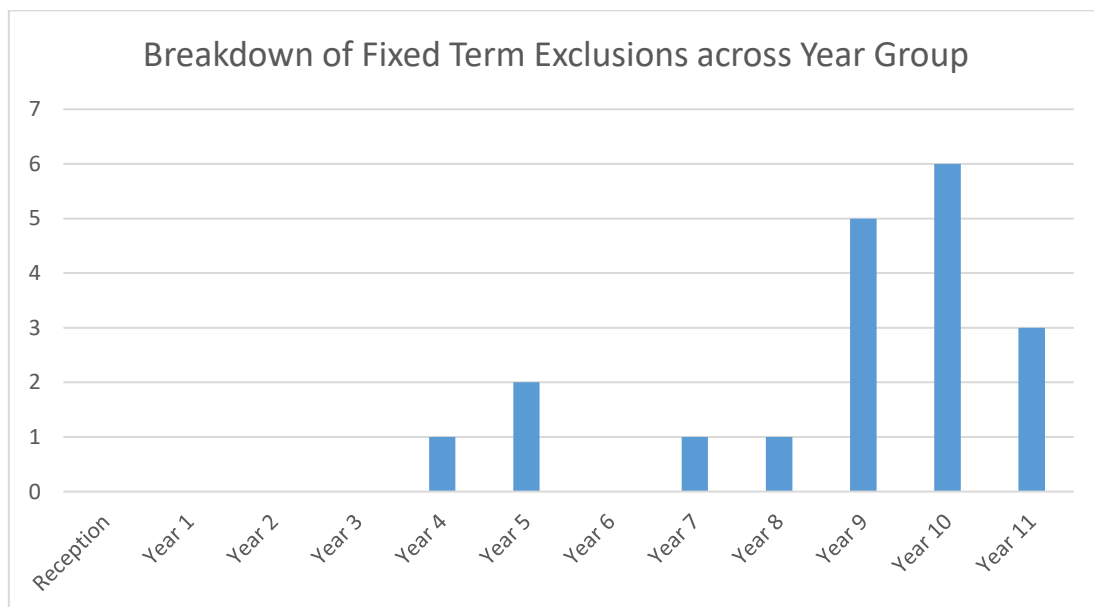
All primary aged pupils who received fixed term exclusions during the course of the year had additional learning needs. One child attends specialist SEBD school setting. One is awaiting a change of placement to a more specialist setting and is currently undergoing statutory assessment. One child has since been issued with a statement of special educational needs details support needs in a mainstream setting. All 3 children experienced a change of placement during the course of the year.

Exclusion incidents by age and gender

During 2020-2021, year 4 (age 8-9) 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 16 individuals of secondary school age who received fixed term exclusions during the year, 5 children were in key stage 3 (17 incidents) and 11 were in key stage 4 (28 incidents).

There was an almost even split between the total number of exclusions issued in respect of girls (10) and boys (9). The average length of exclusion was longer for boys (6 days) than girls (4.7 days).



Exclusions for children attending Blaenau Gwent schools

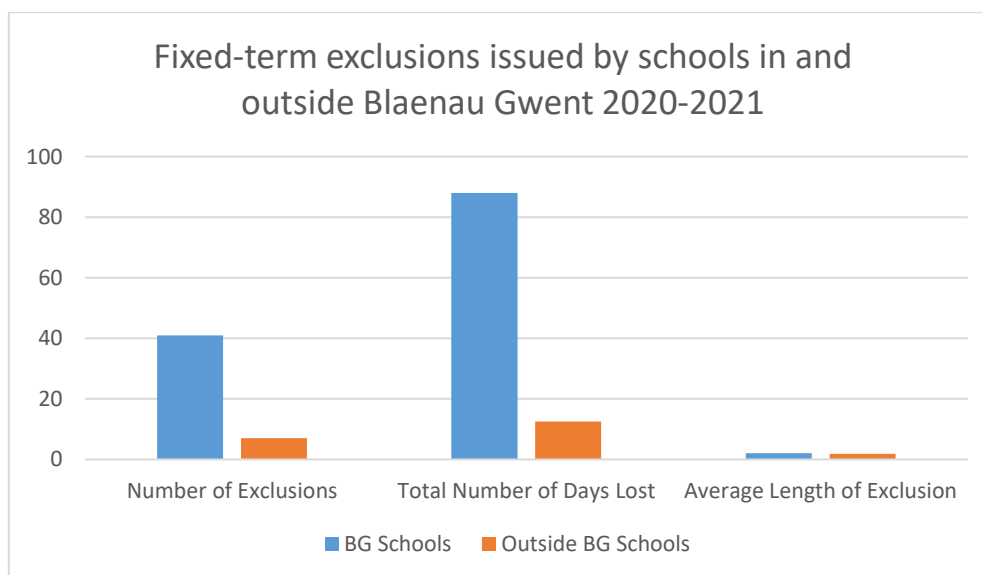
Of the 154 children of statutory school age who remained looked after at the end of the school year 2020-2021 the majority continue to be educated in mainstream school settings in Blaenau Gwent.

Educated in Blaenau Gwent	115
Educated outside Blaenau Gwent	39

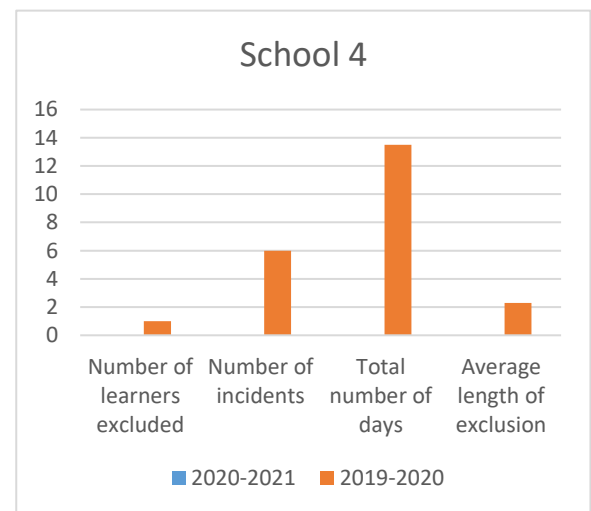
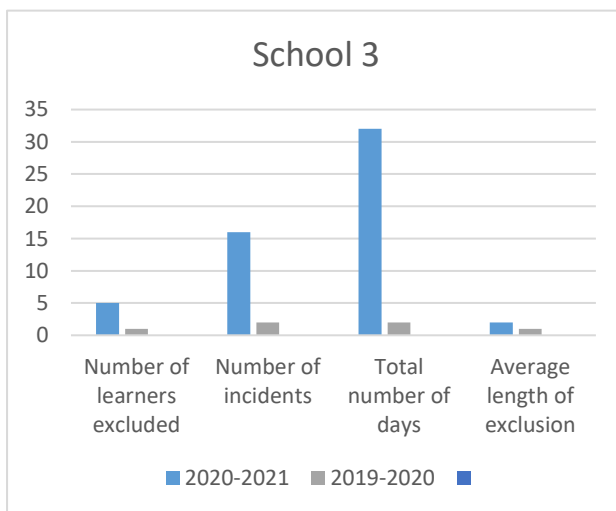
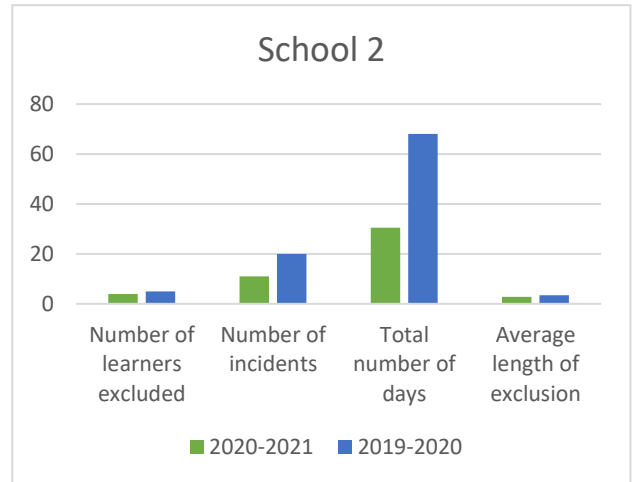
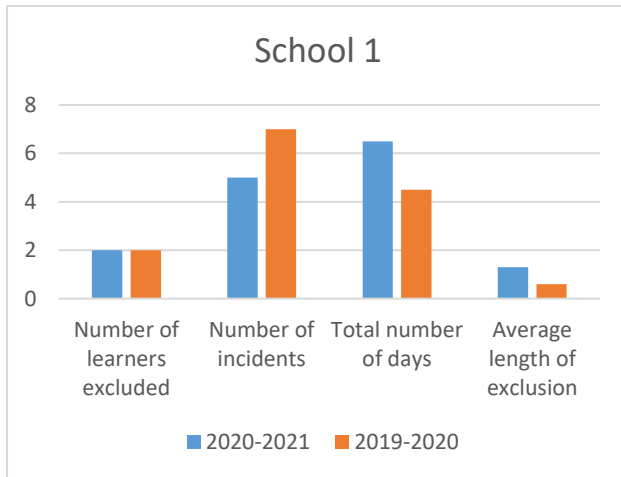
During academic year 2020-2021, 85% of the fixed term exclusions were issued in respect of our children looked after attending Blaenau Gwent schools (total 88 days lost).

The average length of fixed term exclusions issued by schools in Blaenau Gwent was 2 days and 1.8 days for schools outside of Blaenau Gwent.

This figure for Blaenau Gwent schools is lower when compared with the previous academic year 2019-2020 when exclusions issued by Blaenau Gwent schools were on average 2.7 days but an increase when compared with the length of exclusion issued by schools outside the local authority area which was 1.3 days.



Breakdown of exclusions from mainstream secondary schools in Blaenau Gwent



School	Year	Number of learners excluded	Number of incidents	Total number of days	Average length of exclusion
1	2020-2021	2	5	6.5	1.3
	2019-2020	2	7	4.5	0.6
2	2020-2021	4	11	30.5	2.8
	2019-2020	5	20	68	3.4
3	2020-2021	5	16	32	2
	2019-2020	1	2	2	1
4	2020-2021	0	0	0	0
	2019-2020	1	6	13.5	2.3

One school has issued no exclusions in respect of Blaenau Gwent CLA. There has been a significant reduction in the incident of exclusions issued by the highest excluding school last year.

Breakdown of exclusions from special school settings in Blaenau Gwent

Number of learners excluded	Number of incidents	Total number of days	Average length of exclusion
3	7	14.5	2.1

The figures for 2020-2021 are an increase when compared with the previous year. In 2019-2020 one CLA received one fixed term exclusion for a total of 4.5 days.

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 7 were issued by schools outside the Blaenau Gwent area.

Local Authority	School setting	Number of learners excluded	Number of incidents	Total number of days lost	Average length of exclusions
LA 1	SEBD	1	1	3.5	3.5
LA 2	PRU	1	2	1.5	0.75
LA 3	Independent SEBD	2	4	7.5	1.9

Breakdown of exclusions by individual school settings

The majority of fixed term exclusions 71% (34 incidents) were issued by mainstream schools. A total of 14 exclusions were issued by special school settings or Pupil Referral Units for children with social, emotional and behavioural needs.

Fixed term exclusions for children looked after with special educational needs

Of the total number of children looked after who received fixed term exclusions from school during academic year 2020-2021, 9 (47%) had statements of special educational needs. This is an increase when compared with the previous academic year, when 6 (40%) 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 almost all of these pupils was social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. More than half (52%, 25 out of 48 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 55.5. This is higher when compared with the previous year when 36% 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

Three of the children who received fixed term exclusions in 2020-2021 experienced a change to their education placement during the course of the year. This figure is a decrease when compared with the previous academic year, when 4 children experienced a change of school.

Two learners moved from one mainstream school setting to another, one did so as a result of moving out of residential care into a foster placement, the other as a result of a change of foster placement. One learner moved from a mainstream school placement to a specialist SEBD setting.

Number of Individuals	Change of education placement
1	Mainstream to Special School for SEBD
2	Mainstream to Mainstream

Changes to care placements

7 of the children who received fixed term exclusions experienced changes to their care placements during the course of the year. This figure is less when compared with last year when 5 children who were excluded from school experienced changes of care placement.

Of the 7 children in 2020-2021, 4 had more than one change of placement during the course of the year. These 7 children were responsible for a third of the total days lost to fixed term exclusions issued during the year.

Action Plan 2021-2022

Evaluation:

- There is a more even distribution across those CLA who have experienced exclusions than in previous years. Of the total exclusions 56% were issued in respect of 9 individuals.
- There are a small but significant number of exclusions for primary aged CLA. Of the primary aged CLA experiencing exclusions in 2019-2020 one received no further exclusions and the other has received one, compared to 4 the previous year.
- There has been appropriate action planning for those primary aged CLA who have received exclusions.
- Schools in Blaenau Gwent are overall issuing shorter exclusions when compared with the previous year.
- The majority of secondary schools have reduced the incidents of exclusions
- There is a reduced correlation between care placement instability and exclusions. In 2020-2021 the children who experienced changes to placement were responsible for less of the overall exclusions. In 2019-2020 it was almost half.

Actions:

- Share the exclusion report with schools and education directorate.
- Close tracking, monitoring and mentoring support of those primary aged CLA who received exclusion during the course of the year.
- Offer advice to the secondary school that has issued the higher proportion of exclusions.

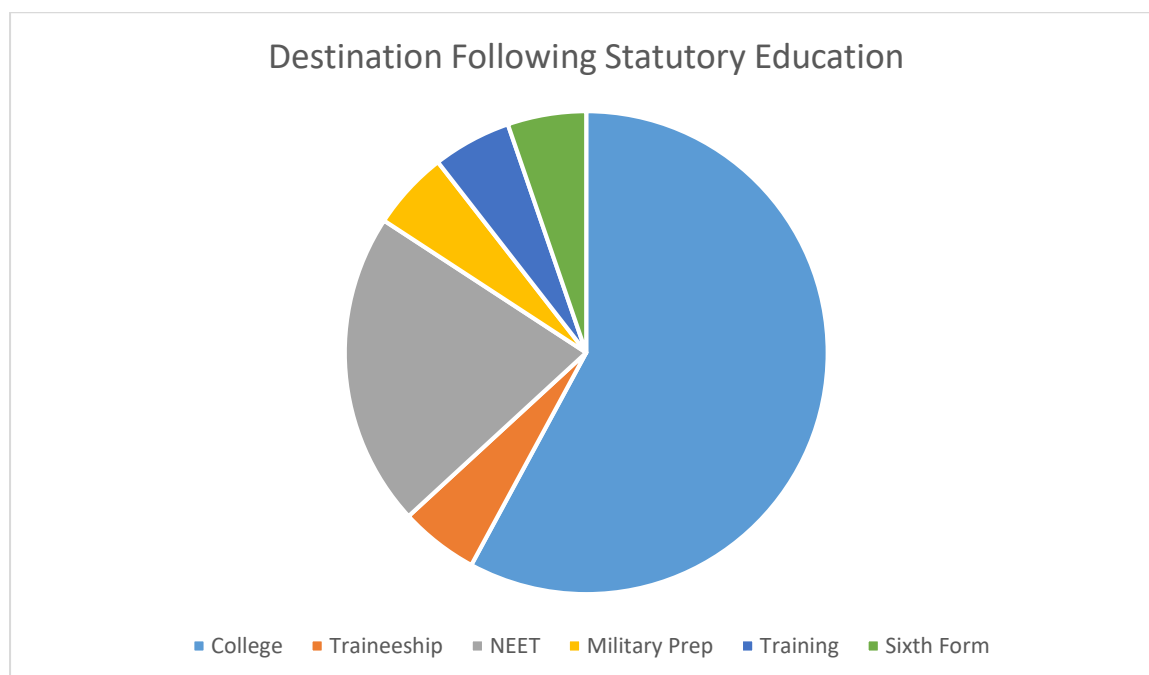
Catherine Edwards

Children Looked After Education Coordinator

December 2021

Blaenau Gwent Children Looked After who left statutory education in summer 2021

During academic year 2020-21, a total of 19 young people who were looked after by Blaenau Gwent completed their statutory school studies. All but one young person was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2021. Over three quarters of our young people are engaged in post 16 learning opportunities.



Nine of our children looked after in this cohort had additional learning needs and 4 had a statement of special educational needs. 14 of the 19 young people attended mainstream school settings. One young person attended an independent school setting outside the Local Authority area, three attended local authority maintained special school settings for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and one young person was educated at a school based alternative setting.

Learner 1

Learner 1 became looked after in October 2008 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 1 was initially placed with a local authority foster carer before moving to a long term foster placement in June 2015 where they remain.

Learner 1 experienced a change of school at primary before transition to mainstream secondary school where they remained for the duration of their secondary schooling. Learner 1 has additional learning needs and associated difficulties in the areas of social, emotional and behavioural development.

Learner 1 was awarded a number of recognised qualifications in summer 2021, achieving a number of GCSE results in line with their ability and expected outcomes. Learner 1 was recognised by their school as part of the annual celebration of success event in 2021 for their efforts and achievements in school.

Learner 1 was offered an enhanced transition during their final year in school to support with moving to college. A Learning and Skills Plan was put in place. Learner 1 undertook additional visits and attended taster days. Intensive pastoral support from the Inspire Team at college is provided. Since September 2021, learner 1 has accessed the Personal and Social Development Course at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 2

Learner 2 became looked after in September 2017 and is subject to a Care Order. At the point of becoming looked after learner 2 was placed in a foster placement locally before returning to the care of their birth parent in September 2018 where they remain under Placement with Parent Regulations.

Learner 2 had a Statement of Special Educational Needs and associated difficulties in the areas of social, emotional and behavioural development and mental health difficulties. As a result, learner 2 accessed a specialist education provision locally for a period of their secondary schooling before returning to their previous mainstream school setting whilst in year 10. Learner 2 was supported by the school and CAMHS and offered a bespoke timetable which was successful in re-engaging the learner back into education.

Learner 2 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2021, including GCSEs. Learner 2 was offered an enhanced transition during their final year in school to support with moving to college. A Learning and Skills Plan was put in place. Pastoral support from the Inspire Team at college is provided. Since September 2021, learner 2 has been undertaking a course in Electrical Installation at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 3

Learner 3 became looked after in August 2015 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 3 has experienced changes of foster placement before moving to a residential care setting in June 2018. As a result, learner 3 was required to move school whilst in year 9 at secondary school.

Learner 3 returned to their long term foster carer after leaving residential care in June 2020. Learner 3 was supported to then return to the mainstream school setting they had attended prior to moving into residential care. Multi-agency planning meetings took place to ensure that GCSE option choices could be matched. Additional support was offered by the CLA education mentor and staff at the new school to ensure catch up support was available. Learner 3 does not have any additional learning needs.

Learner 3 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2021 achieving a number of GCSE qualifications in line with their ability and expected outcomes. An enhanced transition plan was put in place to support the move to college. Since September 2021, learner 3 has been undertaking a level 3 Childcare course at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 4

Learner 4 became looked after in September 2016 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 4 has remained in the same care placement with kinship carers 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.

Learner 4 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2021 achieving a number of GCSE qualifications in line with their ability and expected outcomes. An enhanced transition plan was offered with support from the Inspire Team at college. In September 2021, learner 4 started a level 3 Health and Social Care Course at Coleg Gwent before moving onto a business support apprenticeship where they remain.

Learner 5

Learner 5 became looked after in October 2012 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 5 has experienced a number of changes of care placements during the time that they have been looked after. Learner 5 moved from a foster placement to a residential care setting in August 2018 which also required the learner to move school.

Learner 5 had a Statement of Special Educational Needs and experienced a further change of school when they moved to attend a special school for children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties towards the latter part of their secondary schooling whilst in year 10.

Learner 5 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2021, in line with their ability and expected outcomes. In line with a planned return to the Blaenau Gwent area and move to a supported living placement in summer 2021, an enhanced transition programme was offered to support with a move to college which included additional visits and taster days. Pastoral support from the Inspire Team at Coleg Gwent was also made available to the learner. Learner 5 however remains NEET at this time.

Learner 6

Learner 6 became looked after in February 2011 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 6 has experienced a number of changes of foster placement during the time that they have been looked after, including 2 in the final year of their schooling. Transport was provided to ensure consistency of schooling at this time, resulting in learner 6 remaining at the same secondary school to complete their statutory school studies.

Learner 6 has no additional learning needs and was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2021 in line with their ability and expected outcomes including a number of GCSE qualifications.

In September 2021, learner 6 commenced a level 3 course in Public Services at a College in South Wales. An enhanced transition plan was offered during the final year of school to support the move to college.

In line with a move to a supported living placement in Blaenau Gwent mid-way through the autumn term 2021, enhanced transition support was revisited and support offered by the Inspire Team at college. Learner 6 moved to undertake the Public Services course at Coleg Gwent where they remain.

Learner 7

Learner 7 became looked after in June 2020, part way through their key stage 4 studies. Learner 7 is voluntarily accommodated and remained in the same foster placement since becoming looked after. Learner 7 moved to a supported living placement following the completion of their statutory schooling in summer 2021.

Learner 7 has additional learning needs and moved to attend a special school for children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties part way through year 7, before becoming looked after.

Learner 7 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2021, achieving a number of GCSE qualifications in line with their ability and expected outcomes.

Despite repeated attempts to engage learner 7 in post 16 learning opportunities, including an enhanced transition plan to support with the move to college, learner 6 remains NEET at this time.

Learner 8

Learner 8 became looked after in April 2015 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 8 has remained in the same foster placement since becoming looked after.

Learner 8 does not have additional learning needs and attended mainstream school for the duration of their schooling. Learner 8 did not experience any changes of school other than for the purpose of transition.

Learner 8 was identified as a More Able and Talented Pupil. Learner 8 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2021, achieving a number of GCSE qualifications in line with their ability and expected outcomes. Learner 8 was recognised by their school as part of the annual celebration of success event in 2021 for their efforts and achievements in science and maths as well as for their representation on the school's pupil leadership team. Learner 8 received the Head Teacher's Award for 2020-2021. In September 2021, learner 8 commenced A Levels in Physics, Mathematics, Sociology and Criminology at a college in a neighbouring authority whilst also working part time.

Learner 9

Learner 9 became looked after in August 2012 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 9 has experienced a number of changes of foster placement during the time that they have been looked after. Following the breakdown of their long term foster placement, learner 9 was required to move school when in year 9.

Learner 9 does not have additional learning needs however challenges in relation to their emotional wellbeing and physical health impacted on attendance at school.

Learner 9 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2021, achieving a number of GCSE qualifications in line with their ability and expected outcomes. Learner 9 was offered an enhanced transition during their final year in school to support with moving to college. Pastoral support from the Inspire Team at college is in

place. Since September 2021, learner 9 has accessed a level 2 course in Creative Studies at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 10

Learner 10 became looked after in May 2013 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 10 has remained in the same foster placement since becoming looked after.

Learner 10 does not have additional learning needs and attended mainstream school setting. Learner 10 did not experience any changes of school other than for the purpose of transition.

Learner 10 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2021, achieving a number of GCSE qualifications in line with their ability and expected outcomes. An enhanced transition programme was put in place to support with the move to college, including additional visits, taster days, travel practice and intensive pastoral support from the Inspire Team at college. Since September 2021, Learner 10 has accessed a course in Personal and Social Development at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 11

Learner 11 became looked after in October 2018 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 11 has experienced a number of changes of care placements during the time that they have been looked after. As a result, learner 11 experienced two changes of school during their secondary education. Learner 11 returned to reside with birth parent under Placement with Parent Regulations in April 2021.

Learner 11 did not have any additional learning needs and attended mainstream school. Non-attendance was an ongoing issue for learner 11 towards the latter part of their secondary schooling. A number of fixed term exclusions were issued by schools. As a result, learner 3 was supported to engage in the school's own alternative setting.

Learner 11 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2021 including GCSEs. Despite repeated attempts to engage learner 11 in post 16 learning opportunities, they remain NEET at this time.

Learner 12

Learner 12 became looked after in September 2016 and has remained in the same foster placement since becoming looked after.

Learner 12 has no additional learning needs and attended mainstream school. Learner 12 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 12 was awarded a number of recognised qualifications in summer 2021 achieving a number of GCSE qualifications, in line with their ability and expected outcomes. Since September 2021, learner 12 has been working towards A Levels in ICT, Mathematics and Computer Science at college.

Learner 13

Learner 13 became looked after in August 2019 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 13 has experienced two previous episodes in care. During the most recent care episode learner 13 has resided at home under Placement with Parent Regulations.

Learner 13 did not experience any changes of school other than for the purpose of transition, remaining at the same school since becoming looked after. Learner 13 does not have additional learning needs but did receive a number of fixed term exclusions whilst at school and was subject to a Pastoral Support Plan. Poor attendance at school was also an issue. Learner 13 was supported whilst at school to access Military Preparation College for 1 day per week for the latter part of their statutory studies. In summer 2021, learner 13 was recognised for their outstanding efforts whilst attending the course.

Learner 13 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2021, including GCSEs. Since September 2021, learner 13 has undertaken a full time course at the Motivational Preparation College for training (Military Preparation) and intends to pursue a course in Carpentry at Coleg Gwent from September 2021.

Learner 14

Learner 14 became looked after in June 2013 and has remained in the same foster placement since becoming looked after. Learner 14 is subject to a Care Order.

Learner 14 has a Statement of Special Educational Needs and associated difficulties in the areas of social, emotional and behavioural development. Learner 14

experienced a change of school from mainstream to a specialist SEBD school whilst in year 7.

Learner 14 was awarded a number of recognised qualifications in summer 2021, achieving a number of GCSE results in line with their ability and expected outcomes. Since September 2021, learner 14 has been undertaking a level 1 Course in Public Services at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 15

Learner 15 has been looked after since December 2008 and is subject to a Care Order. Since becoming looked after learner 15 has resided with kinship carers.

Learner 15 does not have any additional learning needs and attended mainstream school. Learner 15 did not experience any changes of school other than for the purpose of transition.

Learner 15 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2021, achieving a number of GCSE results, in line with their ability and expected outcomes. Over the course of summer 2021, learner 15 engaged with the Local Authority's Corporate Traineeship Scheme. Learner 15 is now attending the Learning for Life programme with Llamau with the intention of returning to the Corporate Traineeship Scheme in the future.

Learner 16

Learner 16 became looked after in December 2015 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 16 has remained in the same foster placement throughout the time that they have been looked after.

Learner 16 attended mainstream school throughout their education and does not have any additional learning needs. Learner 16 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 16 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2021, achieving a number of GCSE qualifications in line with their ability and expected outcomes. Since September 2021, learner 16 has been undertaking a level 3 course in Public Services at Coleg Gwent.

Learner 17

Learner 17 became looked after in October 2015 and is subject to a Care Order. Learner 17 has remained in the same foster placement since becoming looked after.

Learner 17 attended mainstream school throughout their education and does not have any additional learning needs. Learner 17 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 17 was awarded a range of recognised qualifications in summer 2021 achieving a number of GCSE qualifications, in line with their ability and expected outcomes. Since September 2021, learner 17 has stayed on at school to attend sixth form and is working towards A Levels in Mathematics, English, Medical Science and Psychology.

Learner 18

Learner 18 became looked after in August 2010 and is subject to a Care Order.

Learner 18 has experienced a number of changes to care placement whilst being looked after before moving to a residential care setting in March 2017.

Learner 18 has additional learning needs and a statement of Special Educational Needs. In line with a move to an alternative residential setting in February 2020, learner 18 attended an independent special school setting for children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.

An enhanced transition plan was put in place during their final year in school to support with moving to college. A Learning and Skills Plan was put in place. Learner 18 undertook additional visits and attended taster days. Intensive pastoral support from the wellbeing team at college is provided. Since September 2021, learner 18 has attended the Independent Living Skills Course at college in the area where they reside.

Learner 19

Learner 19 became looked after in May 2021, nearing the end of their final year of statutory schooling. Learner 19 is subject to a Care Order. Learner 19 has remained in the same care placement with kinship carers since becoming looked after.

Learner 19 does not have any additional learning needs and attended mainstream school. Learner 19 did not experience any changes of school other than for the purpose of transition.

Learner 19 was awarded recognised qualifications in summer 2021, including a number of GCSE qualifications, in line with their ability and expected outcomes. In September 2021, Learner 19 started a level 1 course in Childcare at Coleg Gwent. Towards the latter part of the autumn term 2021, learner 19 made the decision to leave the course. Learner 19 remains NEET at this time.

Key messages

- Almost half of the young people who completed their statutory studies in summer 2021 had additional learning needs. This did not however preclude them from achieving recognised qualifications.
- The majority of learners attended mainstream schools.
- Consistency of school placement was maintained for learners wherever possible
- Experiencing a change of care placement or school move does not necessarily impact on learner outcomes.
-
- Enhanced transition planning is offered to all learners to assist with moving to college.
- The uptake of pastoral support at college is good
- Engagement in post 16 learning, employment or training opportunities is very good. All but one of the young people who were engaged at the start of the academic year remain so at this time.

Cath Edwards

CLA education coordinator

December 2021

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Agenda Item 7

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **20th January 2022**
Report Subject: **Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2021/2022 (Quarters 1 and 2).**
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)
07.12.2021	16.12.2021	10.01.22			20.01.2022	02.03.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to highlight key points from quarters 1 and 2 of the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2021/2022 (Appendix 1).

2. Scope and Background

2.1 The performance of the department is monitored throughout the financial year from April to March, with quarterly reports presented to Social Services Committee. At the end of the year a comprehensive self-evaluation of performance is undertaken to inform the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services.

2.2 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 places a statutory duty on all local authorities to produce an annual report on the discharge of its social services functions.

3. Options for Recommendation

Option 1

Members are asked to consider the detail contained in the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2021/2022 (quarters 1 and 2) and contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate comments and or recommendations for amendment to the report before consideration at Executive Committee and approval at Council.

Option 2

Accept the report as provided.

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

It is a statutory responsibility of the Director of Social Services to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Social Services and produce an Annual Report. The

Annual Report contributes and forms part of the Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF).

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

The Director's Annual Report identifies the pressures and budgetary implications for 2021/2022

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Social Services maintain a directorate risk register which is aligned to both service level and corporate risk. The risk register is reviewed as part of the business planning process and included within the performance reporting of the director of Social Services.

5.3 **Legal**

There are no legal implications with this report

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no staffing implications related in this report

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Detail is provided within the Director's Annual Report 2021/2022 (quarters 1 and 2).

Headline updates:

Children's

During quarter 1 2021/22 the Information Advice and Assistance (IAA) saw a significant increase in the numbers of referrals received across all partners. Analysis of the data over the past two years has been undertaken to understand the increase in the numbers pre and post pandemic. This information has been included within a report identifying the impact that this increase is having on the service. The overarching message was that the number of referrals during the height of the Pandemic was higher than the referral rates in the previous year.

The formal consultation with Blaenau Gwent foster carers has been finalised and the outcome shared internally with senior management team, the Placement Team and with foster carers. The response rate was just under 17% with a higher response from the kinship foster carers. The consultation showed that the highest satisfaction rate was achieved, with support from the link worker and Placement Team (10 out of 10 from generic foster carers) and a significant increase of satisfaction with training and learning opportunities available (8.85/9.35 out of 10). An Action Plan has been developed and will be implemented until the next formal consultation due in March 2022.

The numbers of Children Looked After (CLA) continue to slowly but steadily decrease. Welsh Government has recognised the need to safely reduce the number of children coming into care and identified this as a priority area. In light of this, Integrated Care Fund (ICF) grant money was allocated to each local authority in

Wales, via the Regional Partnership Boards in April 2019, to invest in and develop services to safely reduce the numbers of children coming into care.

Adults

There continues to be ongoing strengthening links between the Community Resource Team (Gwent Frailty) and IAA team. This includes close working with GP colleagues to support pressures across the Health and Social Care sectors. Close work is also ongoing with other professionals such as Welsh Ambulance Service Trust, Primary and Secondary care colleagues to deliver proportionate assessments at the front door.

We have continued to develop a Hospital Hub at Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan to expedite safe discharge from hospital sites. Working with Gwent Local Authorities to support unnecessary hospital admissions to the acute sites by enhancing the support provided by the Gwent Home First Service. The hospital hub is focussing on a model of 'Discharge to Recover and Assess' whereby a patient undertakes an assessment at home as opposed to being assessed in hospital when it is deemed inappropriate.

A three-year Strategic Plan was published for The South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board (SEWSCB) and the Gwent-wide Adult Safeguarding Board (GwASB) have published a three-year Strategic Plan covering the period 2020/21 and 2022/23. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has caused significant disruption to all services and communities across the region. Despite this, Gwent Safeguarding Board and Blaenau Gwent Safeguarding team have worked diligently to ensure that essential services have remained operational to provide support to the most vulnerable adults. We continue to plan for the implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) legislation as a replacement for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and are delivering training as part of the Regional consortium in addition to increasing capacity at a local level.

Consultation has taken place with staff regarding the reconfiguration of preventative services including the Support Worker roles within IAA and Community Resource Team and the Community Connector roles. It is anticipated the new structure will be in place by April 2022. The new structure will be resilient and sustainable and not be reliant on grant funding. Within the new structure, a Senior Practitioner and Senior Therapist will be co-located within the IAA Team to be at the 'front door'.

6.2 *Expected outcome for the public*

The key theme of the Social Services and Well-being Act is to promote the well-being of people who need care and support. Within the annual report it is highlighted where the Directorate has worked closely with the public to improve service delivery and user outcomes. Reporting provides the public with the opportunity to view progress of the Directorate and ensure accountability.

6.3 *Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)*

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 looks to build and strengthen on existing arrangements by involving service users, carers and other key partners where possible in helping shape and influence future design of services.

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

The Annual report enables the department to plan for the future as spend, risk and performance is continuously reported on and provides a baseline of where the department is currently and where it needs to be in the future.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

The work undertaken by the department looks to promote a preventative approach to practice through early identification and intervention. Having an active rather than re active approach to service planning can also help with planning resources and not spending as much on services in the future.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

Social Services work collaboratively across boundaries to benefit citizens requiring health and social care services across Gwent.

6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**

The purpose of the SSWBA is to foster integration between Health and Social Services. The report enables the department to plan for the future as spend, risk and performance is continuously reported on and provides a baseline of where it needs to be in the future to support a sustainable and viable service.

6.8 **Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions**

The workforce who deliver the functions of the SSWBA have adopted the agile working policy of the council which will have a positive impact on car emissions as staff are now able to work from home to undertake paperwork and do not have to travel to the office.

6.9a **Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment** *(complete an impact assessment to consider how the decision might help to reduce the inequalities of outcome associated with socio-economic disadvantage).*

All service provision and functions that sit under social services are subject to socio economic disadvantages for example, low income, material and area deprivation. All programmes work towards addressing these disadvantages.

6.9b **Equality Impact Assessment** *(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)*

The overarching vision is to support the needs of the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities through a range of early intervention, prevention and support mechanisms. With the aim of building resilient individuals, resilient families and resilient communities.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Annual Report for 2021/2022 (quarters 1 and 2) will be monitored via quarterly monitoring reports to the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.

Background Documents /Electronic Links Appendix 1 – Report of the
Director of Social Services

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Social Services

Annual Report of the Director of Social Services Quarter 1 and 2 (April 2021 to September 2021)



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Introduction

Welcome to the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Social Services Report of the Director of Social Services. The Report covers the period April to September 2021. The Report is used to highlight the key areas of progress and improvements that the service has experienced and is developed in line with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, referred to as 'the Act' throughout this document.

The Act aims to provide the most radical change to the way in which Social Services is provided since 1948. It focuses on improving the well-being of people who come to Social Services for support. It is person centred and focuses on prevention and reducing the need for care and support. It recognises that responsibility lies not only within Social Services Departments, but also within the wider Local Authority and with partners (particularly Health and the Third Sector). The Act shares similar principles with a number of key national/regional strategies that are being implemented throughout the Council, in particular the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Director of Social Services has a statutory requirement to publish an annual report in relation to the delivery of its functions, to evaluate its performance and also include lessons learned. This Report provides a mid-year review of the activity undertaken to date. A key aspect of the report is showing how the six Quality Standards have been implemented in relation to well-being outcomes.

Director's Overview

The previous 18 months has been the most significantly challenging in our life time. We have not witnessed a public health crisis of this scale and ferocity in over a 100years. The consequences of the global health pandemic mean we need to innovate and evolve the way we work and deliver services.

Although there has been a lot of emphasis on recovery, the virus is very much still prevalent within our community and community transmission continues to rise at the end of Quarter 2, although hospitals have been less impacted than in previous waves there continues to be significant pressure in the community managing the delivery of services within the continuing pandemic.

The situation we face has been exacerbated by workforce shortages which is impacting on our ability to function. It is widely accepted that key areas of social service functions are facing systemic challenges in a system that is facing unprecedented levels of complexity and demand. This, combined with fundamental workforce shortages, has exposed an already fragile situation.

Sustainability of the domiciliary care sector is of great concern to us, and the need to address the ability to recruit and retain this much needed workforce has never been more urgent. Especially given the competitive nature of the labour market at present, particularly our experiences of competing with the hospitality and retail sector. Some of this is related to the impact of immigration controls across sectors post Brexit. It is within these capacity constraints, that we are reliant on the willingness of the existing workforce to provide additional capacity over the coming winter months to best mitigate this situation. We know that our existing workforce are exhausted, reflected in the growing number of staff taking early retirement; we are minded that the wellbeing of our workforce is paramount and continue to explore mechanisms of support across the system.

We are experiencing increased complexity and frailty in older people from reduced prevention, medical care, increased waiting lists and a greater level of community isolation. We are aware this is a national problem and requires a national solution, however the shortage of staff in a number of sectors is impacting on pressures within hospitals, together with the pent up demand suppressed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Children Services we are also having difficulty in recruiting and retaining social workers in sufficient numbers across the sector, particularly in frontline children services. A growing mental health crisis in young people and in family instability post pandemic is also impacting on increased demand. We again are reliant on the willingness of the existing workforce to provide additional capacity to support this demand whilst we look at ways to increase our capacity but again this is a national problem.

On a positive note, we had a Care Inspector Wales assurance check between the 17th and 21st May 2021 and a letter of their findings on the 11th June 2021, there was positive feedback about how we had continued to keep people who need care and support and carers who need

support, safe and promoted their well-being during the pandemic. They were also very positive about our Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy and our continued downward trend of the number of children who were looked after by the authority.

It is important to note that the vast majority of our services did not stop and continued to be delivered throughout the pandemic, where we had to stop services these were within buildings and for safety and social distancing reasons, however as restrictions have eased then we have cautiously and safely re-introduced these through robust risk assessments which protect both users and staff. We may not be able to provide the same services we did pre-pandemic due to our responsibility to keep people safe and to mitigate the risk of further spread of the virus, but it is important we continue to look at new ways of delivery where we can meet identified needs.

Finally, I have to say a heartfelt 'thank you' to all frontline staff, managers and senior managers who have worked tirelessly over the last 18 months, many of whom are exhausted but continue to deliver services to our community. The last 6 months have brought some new and existing pressures to deal with, but as always they tackle these problems put in front of them and continue to deliver to the best of their ability, once again 'Thanks You!'



Damien McCann
Director Social Services



Cllr John Mason
**Executive Member Social
Services**

Local Political Leadership, Governance and Accountability

The structure of the Social Services Directorate provides clear levels of management and accountability. As a whole, the Council has a clear governance and accountability framework in place which all directorates are signed up to. This framework identifies how reporting and monitoring works throughout the Council to create a 'golden thread'. This framework is complied with by Social Services who also have additional monitoring requirements as part of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

The Social Services Directorate is subject to audit, inspection and review by the Care Inspectorate for Wales (CIW). On a quarterly basis the Director of Social Services and/or Heads of Adult and Children's Services meet with CIW to discuss achievements, performance and key challenges. The Directorate has one Executive Member who has portfolio responsibility for Social Services as a whole. The Directorate is scrutinised by the Social Services Scrutiny Committee. There is also a Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee which is a joint committee between the Social Services and Education and Learning Scrutiny Committees. Regular liaison meetings are held with the Directorate, the Executive Member and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

Blaenau Gwent continues to work with a wide range of partners where partnership opportunities provide better outcomes for local residents than the Council could achieve if working on its own. Social Services work in partnership with a variety of stakeholders including staff, residents and businesses. Some Social Services collaboration includes:

- Joint Partnership and Workforce Development Service with Caerphilly;
- South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS);
- South East Wales Emergency Duty Team;
- South East Wales Adult Placement Scheme;
- Gwent Frailty Programme Integrated Health and Social Care Teams;
- South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board (SEWSCB);
- Gwent Wide Adult Safeguarding Board (GWASB);
- Gwent Mental Health & Learning Disabilities Partnership Team;
- South East Wales Improvement Collaboration -4C's (SEWIC);
- Gwent Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) Team;
- Greater Gwent Regional Partnership Board;
- Gwent Regional Collaborative (RCC) - Supporting People;
- Gwent wide agreement with National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) to provide children's advocacy services; and
- Greater Gwent Workforce Development Board.

How People Are Shaping Our Services

The Social Services Directorate is committed to providing high quality services to its citizens and uses various engagement methodologies in order to understand if the service is making the intended outcomes or if amendments to service delivery need to be considered.

Throughout April to September 2021 a variety of engagement events have taken place from the following Teams:

- Flying Start
- Placement Team
- Fostering Team
- Supporting Change Team
- Families First

The Social Services Department is committed to providing high quality services to its users; however, despite best intentions, it is recognised that sometimes things can go wrong and the Social Services complaints procedure provides people with the opportunity to voice their concerns when they are dissatisfied with a service. The service uses learning from these complaints to improve services moving forward. The service also welcomes positive feedback and compliments and also uses this information to further improve services.

From 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021 four complaints were received:

- 2 x Children's Services - stage 1
- 1 x Children's Services - stage 2 (currently being investigated)
- 1 x Adult Services - stage 1

The numbers are very low in comparison with other local authorities. The Service proactively works with the complainant at an early stage to seek an immediate resolution to prevent the complaint from escalating and, as such, do not go through the complaints process. Social Services has received in excess of 30 initial complaints up to quarter 2 but with only 4 progressing to full investigation under the Social Services Regulations.

Departmental Priorities 2021/22

Departmental Priorities

- To improve accessibility, provision of information and advice to enable people to support their own well-being.
- To work with people to make sure they have a say in achieving what matters to them.
- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater.
- To work with our partners including Aneurin Bevan Health Board and neighbouring authorities to deliver integrated responsive care and support.
- To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering health and social care involving key partners and our communities.
- To put effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm.
- To develop a partnership approach to reducing and alleviating the impacts of poverty.
- To ensure effective forward financial planning arrangements are in place to support the Council's financial resilience.
- Ensure long-term sustainability is at the forefront of our thinking and decision-making, enabling us to work better with people, communities and each other, looking to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

Children's Services Priorities

- Page 86
- Enhance screening and IAA provision (Front door) – Children.
 - Support and encourage a cultural change across Children's Services by ensuring that community members have a say in what matters to them.
 - Implementation of the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy.
 - Implement the Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy 2017-2020.
 - Improve outcomes for Children Looked After.
 - To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality placements.
 - All teams to ensure the children and young people of Blaenau Gwent are safeguarded.
 - Manage the Children's Services budget to ensure expenditure comes within budget.
 - Children's Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles.
 - Ensure that all children in Blaenau Gwent have the best start in life (Early years)

Adult Services Priorities

- Enhance screening and IAA Adult Services support at our front door - in line with recommendations within the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014.
- Support and encourage a cultural change across Adult Services by ensuring that citizens have a say in what matters to them.
- Ensure that preventative support is available to citizens - promoting personal independence and reducing dependencies.
- Ensure that we provide / commission modern, high quality care and support provision that meet both current and future well-being needs of our citizens.
- To develop alternative models of support that promotes independence and supports well-being outcomes.
- Ensure that vulnerable adults are safeguarded.
- Develop and maximise opportunities for partnership working across Welsh Government Flexibilities Grants and Welfare Reform related programmes.
- Manage the Adult Services core budget and grant programmes to ensure that expenditure comes within budget.
- Adult Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles.
- Support our local environment; the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and our duty as a Council and as an Adult Services Department

Quality Standard 1 - Local Authorities must work with people who need care and support and carers who need support to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve.

Children's Services Self-Assessment – During quarter 1 2021/22 the Information Advice and Assistance (IAA) saw a significant increase in the numbers of referrals received across all partners. Analysis of the data over the past two years has been undertaken to understand the increase in the numbers pre and post pandemic. This information has been included within a report identifying the impact that this increase is having on the service. The overarching message was that the number of referrals during the height of the Pandemic was higher than the referral rates the previous year. The total number and average monthly referrals has increased by 7.7%. Despite this overarching message, the report did not include detail of outcomes achieved. Therefore, a more detailed report is in the process of being written and will be completed by the end of November 2021 to consider how best to respond to this demand in the longer term.

Funding for additional resources in the IAA Team has been agreed until March 2022 from the Social Services Sustainability Fund. The long term plan is to make these additional posts permanent using the monies saved by reducing the numbers of children looked after. The rise in workload is presenting a challenge along with securing longer term funding for the additional resources in the team.

Children's Services has received feedback from the CIW who undertook an assurance check in May 2021. The following comments were made in relation to the outcomes culture in Blaenau Gwent and how the voice of the child is heard: *'Senior managers with staff and partners have worked hard to embed strength based outcomes focused practice. The authority's commitment to strength based outcome focused practice was evident in the files reviewed and staff spoke of how this underpinned their work in both adult and children's services. The authority recognises the importance of gaining people's views to inform practice development and support service improvement. We saw evidence of mentoring groups and peer supervision to share and reflect on case issues and identify potential responses to learning. Evidence showed people's views were sought and their voices heard. Information gathering to represent people's circumstances was also informed by intelligence from a number of relevant partner agencies, notably during early stages of intervention.'*

The mentors programme continues with regular 6 weekly meetings where live cases are discussed and feed-back from families and children is included. In addition, the service as a whole continues to deliver interventions based on an outcomes/strengths based approach which has the voices of children and families at the centre of care planning. To ensure this approach is cemented in practice, each team holds group supervisions to hold reflective discussions on cases. The mentor groups still continue to meet monthly to share good practice across the service.

Assessment and care planning activity continues to promote the active voice, choice and control philosophy of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Outcomes focused and strengths based approaches to practice continue to be modelled, and NYAS remains an active partner in ensuring that children and their families engage in a meaningful way.

Quality Standard 1 - Local Authorities must work with people who need care and support and carers who need support to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve.

Adult Services Self-Assessment –

In order to raise awareness of advocacy and increase demand into the service via the Gwent Access to Advocacy (GATA) helpline an awareness campaign was undertaken. However, the Covid-19 pandemic halted progress and made it difficult to establish the true need and demand for advocacy across Gwent. Advocacy providers and the GATA helpline have highlighted that referrals are now returning to pre-covid levels with a marked increase in parent advocacy relating to child protection cases. Data is still being collated, but an overall picture of advocacy provision within Gwent is now being developed. This will help to measure the success of the GATA pilot and inform an options paper for future advocacy commissioning, scheduled in early 2022.

In 2023 the Community Health Council will be replaced by a new 'Citizen Voice Body' which should provide the opportunity to co-ordinate the provision of advocacy support across the health board in order to strengthen the citizen's voice in relation to health and social care.

Quality Standard 2 - Local Authorities must work with people who need care and support and carers who need support and relevant partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being.

Children's Services Self-Assessment – The formal consultation with Blaenau Gwent foster carers has been finalised and the outcome shared internally with senior management team, the Placement Team and with foster carers. The response rate was just under 17% with a higher response from the kinship foster carers. The consultation showed that the highest satisfaction rate was achieved, with support from the link worker and Placement Team (10 out of 10 from generic foster carers) and a significant increase of satisfaction with training and learning opportunities available (8.85/9.35 out of 10). An Action Plan has been developed and will be implemented until the next formal consultation due in March 2022.

Further work has been undertaken to progress the evaluation of the disability service, planned for May 2022. A longitudinal study by Worcester University is also planned to follow up the journey through transition from 14 to 24 years old. Both pieces of research will have involvement and contribution of children, young adults and families.

Families First hold mandatory reflective practice sessions on a monthly basis. These sessions are facilitated by the Team Manager and Clinical Psychologist on an alternative basis whereby members of the Team are given the opportunity to bring cases to discuss, share ideas, reflect on what is working/isn't working/what is important to the family, and how best to support the family to achieve their identified outcomes. Families First paperwork is also being reviewed to become more strength based.

Supervision is used to help support workers reflect on their practice, to reinforce an outcomes based approach when discussing families, including the 'what matters question'. This is then reinforced during monthly reflective practice sessions.

Quality Standard 2 - Local Authorities must work with people who need care and support and carers who need support and relevant partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being.

Adult Services Self-Assessment – There continues to be ongoing strengthening links between the Community Resource Team (Gwent Frailty) and IAA team. This includes close working with GP colleagues to support pressures across the Health and Social Care sectors. Close work is also ongoing with other professionals such as WAST, Primary and Secondary care colleagues to deliver proportionate assessments at the front door. We have continued to develop a Hospital Hub at Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan to expedite safe discharge from hospital sites. Working with Gwent Local Authorities to support unnecessary hospital admissions to the acute sites by enhancing the support provided by the Gwent Home First Service. The hospital hub is focussing on a model of 'Discharge to Recover and Assess' whereby a patient undertakes an assessment at home as opposed to being assessed in hospital when it is deemed appropriate.

Integral to promoting independence and reducing dependency on traditional care agencies, is the further enhancement of the Care Management, IAA, Community Resource Team and preventative works streams. In order to meet anticipated health and social care demands over the winter period there has been an increase in the capacity of a number of projects including:

- Commissioning additional third sector support from the Age Cymru Hospital Discharge Team;
- Recruiting additional health care support workers to increase the assessments of those receiving double handed care packages with the aim of reducing these to single handed care with new state of the art equipment / beds etc.;
- Increased capacity of Pharmacy support to enable citizens to be independent with medication.
- Increased availability of Community Meals service to include a potential offer of tea parcels.
- Reviewing all current care packages as part of contingency planning;
- Increasing the capacity of the emergency care @ home / DASH service to respond to urgent care packages, including where there has been a rapid deterioration on a person's condition due to declining health, carer stress etc.;
- Scoping the potential to implement a night time response service in partnership with out of hours GP service, WAST, ABUHB and assistive technology providers; and
- Reviewing the dementia reablement service due to low numbers of referrals.

One Domiciliary Supported Living Service Provider has been placed under Provider Performance protocols and an Action Plan implemented; actions; monitoring; performance meetings and visits continuing to take place.

Meetings are held daily with ABUHB to discuss the escalating crisis across hospital sites. Where possible, to avoid lengthy in patient stays, owing to availability in care homes, assessments at hospital are being prioritised for social work assessments and the availability of domiciliary care packages.

Quality Standard 3 - Local Authorities must take appropriate steps to protect and safeguard people who need care and support and carers who need support from abuse and neglect or any other kinds of harm.

Children's Services Self-Assessment – The numbers of Children Looked After (CLA) continue to slowly but steadily decrease. Welsh Government has recognised the need to safely reduce the number of children coming into care and identified this as a priority area. In light of this, Integrated Care Fund (ICF) grant money was allocated to each local authority in Wales, via the Regional Partnership Boards in April 2019, to invest in and develop services to safely reduce the numbers of children coming into care.

It is important to recognise that the success of the CLA reduction strategy is dependent on a whole service approach. The robust preventative interventions delivered by Families First and Flying Start prevent needs from escalating into statutory services. The Information Advice and Assistance Team provides robust screening and initial assessment of all referrals ensuring the appropriate action is taken to meet needs. All of the Social Work Teams work exceptionally hard to keep families together and work with families using a strengths based approach. One of the key elements of the strategy is to promote workforce stability. However, operational teams are facing staffing shortages. It is accepted that this is a Wales wide position and there is no simple solution. The senior leadership team is addressing how best to respond to the staffing short-fall from multiple standpoints; a separate strategy has been devised to consider short, medium and longer-term solutions (and considering the opportunity to collaborate on a regional basis).

The new Corporate Parenting action plan for 2021/22 has been finalised and updates given in September 2021. The Corporate Parenting Board meets quarterly and each January the Social Services Scrutiny Committee receive a detailed report on progress of the Board, including an action plan and separate report for Education.

As part of the continuous improvement plan, work has been ongoing regarding the pathway for Part 5 investigations. In line with the All Wales Safeguarding Procedures, strategy discussions, in connection with a potential person in a position of trust, will be held by the safeguarding manager. The safeguarding manager will then assess if threshold has been met to proceed to a full strategy meeting. The chairing of these meetings will continue to be the responsibility of the service manager. The new pathway will be in place by 1st November 2021

Quality Standard 3 - Local Authorities must take appropriate steps to protect and safeguard people who need care and support and carers who need support from abuse and neglect or any other kinds of harm.

Adult Services Self-Assessment –

Members from the Safeguarding Team are being based within the IAA each week in order to further enhance the service at the front door.

A three-year Strategic Plan was published for The South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board (SEWSCB) and the Gwent-wide Adult Safeguarding Board (GwASB) have published a three-year Strategic Plan covering the period 2020/21 and 2022/23. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has caused significant disruption to all services and communities across the region. Despite this, Gwent Safeguarding Board and Blaenau Gwent Safeguarding team have worked diligently to ensure that essential services have remained operational to provide support to the most vulnerable adults.

We continue to plan for the implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) legislation as a replacement for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and are delivering training as part of the Regional consortium in addition to increasing capacity at a local level.

There has been since the end of quarter 1 a shortage of staff in particular within the domiciliary care sector, due to increased wages and competition from sectors such as retail and hospitality together with pent up demand suppressed during the COVID-19 pandemic which has created problems for service delivery. In order to manage the expected increases in demand over the winter period, a risk management tool is to be implemented to prioritise assessments and care packages. This will be undertaken in partnership with ABUHB and CIW.

Quality Standard 4 - Local Authorities must work with people who need care and support and carers who need support to learn, develop and participate in society.

Children's Services Self-Assessment – A Full review of all Legacy commissioned projects is underway. Financial management procedures are being used as the basis for the review, focusing on outcomes. No underspend has been identified at this point of the year which requires realigning, however, there has been notification from Welsh Government (WG) that the Children and Communities Grant (CCG) are to receive additional funds as part of the COVID recovery, therefore this process will be fully adopted to ensure the intended flexibility of the grant is honoured. The CCG board will agree services to be provided post April 2022 following the CCG Board in September 2021.

Findings from the Community Impact Assessment (CIA) have been reviewed in order to identify the needs and demands falling out of it and how they link to the community element of the CCG.

A significant proportion of the preventative services delivered in Children's Services are dependent on grant funding which is allocated on an annual basis. If this funding was removed it would be a significant risk to the department.

Funding assisted places continues to be the priority of the Child Development Fund this is to enable children in need to experience learning from an early age. Take up of the offer is very positive.

Quality Standard 4 - Local Authorities must work with people who need care and support and carers who need support to learn, develop and participate in society.

Adult Services Self-Assessment – Consultation has taken place with staff regarding the reconfiguration of preventative services including the Support Worker roles within IAA and CRT and the Community Connector roles. It is anticipated the new structure will be in place by April 2022. The new structure will be resilient and sustainable and not be reliant on grant funding. Within the new structure, a Senior Practitioner and Senior Therapist will be co-located within the IAA Team to be at the 'front door'.

Capacity at Augusta House has been safely increased to support up to four guests. Work is continuing to develop new Augusta Promoting Independence Pods at the site. This project has been delayed due to complications with planning approval and increasing development costs, but the project has now secured additional funding from Welsh Government and should be open by Spring 2022. As part of these plans, the respite offer to young adults, as part of the transition planning from Children's to Adult Services will be increased.

The development of the enhanced Day Activities / Community Options Team has progressed well despite the ongoing COVID 19 pressures. Both the Lake View and Bert Denning buildings have safely re-opened but with limited sessional access which will hopefully increase during quarter 3. The outreach service is growing well and is successfully supporting citizens to meet their outcomes both in their own home or in wider community settings.

Quality Standard 5 - Local Authorities must support local people who need care and support and carers who need support to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships.

Children's Services Self-Assessment – As at 30th September 2021 Blaenau Gwent had 6 children placed outside Wales. This is an increase of 2 children (those children being made subjects of interim care orders and placed in the care of a parent). The remaining cohort of children placed outside Wales remains unchanged with 2 children placed with relatives in long-standing kinship placements and 2 in residential provision. Out of the 6 children living outside of Wales this is the long term plan for 2 of them as they are living with extended family members. The 2 new admissions to the care system have been placed with their parent as a result of a crossover between private and public law and it is envisaged that they will need to be looked after for a very short period of time. Therefore, in real terms, we only have 2 children looked after living outside of Wales.

The information above highlights that, as a Local Authority, Blaenau-Gwent bases care planning and placement decisions on the provision that best meets the child's identity and support needs with priority given to promoting a child's upbringing within their family of origin if it is safe to do so. The two young people placed in residential provision outside Wales are involved in focused planning to support a return to Wales in the future (if that is what matters to them) at an appropriate time for them.

In July 2021 Foster Wales was launched at the ADSS Summer Festival supported by the deputy minister Julie Morgan. This is a collaboration across all of the 22 local authorities in Wales working together to increase the number of local authority foster carers with the intention of ensuring all children who need to become looked after can remain within their local communities in high quality foster placements. This will allow children to remain in their schools and have easy access to spend good quality time with their families.

Quality Standard 5 - Local Authorities must support local people who need care and support and carers who need support to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships.

Adult Services Self-Assessment – Work is currently ongoing with Age Cymru to consider options for remodelling the service to increase capacity to deliver a 7-day emergency response team, working alongside the Domiciliary Care Brokerage service. This will then assist in responding to the current pressures in the domiciliary care sector by providing low level support to domiciliary care agencies and the in house emergency care @ home team (DASH). The service will also support hospital discharges and provide low level prevention support post discharge, to help alleviate the current demands facing hospitals and support people to return home with the support they require.

A submission to Welsh Government is being prepared for the anticipated Covid Recovery Grant and Winter pressures funding. The WG Carers Grant has also been utilised and provides additional support for unpaid carers through the offer of additional Community Options Outreach sessions and sessions with the Shared Lives Service.

The service is carefully monitoring the core budget and, in particular, the new ways of supporting people owing to COVID restrictions and having to offer alternative models of day support, increased staffing levels and increased infection control processes. The use of agency staff is also being monitored due to high levels of staff absences.

The Carers Lead Officer and GP Engagement Support Officers continue to support unpaid carers; providing information, advice, assistance and on referral carers assessments. They maintain a presence in GP Surgeries and in Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan and carers are also supported with one to one sessions and appointments. Data shows:

- 55 Carers supported with information only
- 29 Carers supported with advice and assistance
- 84 Referrals received from GP Surgeries
- 128 x 1:1 - Carers support sessions/appointments
- 30 x MDT meetings attended

A number of additional models of support for unpaid carers has been identified including increased support via the Community Options Outreach Team and Shared Lives Service. A number of enhanced support opportunities are also being developed, via the COVID recovery grant, to support unpaid carers including:

- Increasing the capacity of the Carers Engagement team from November 2021;
- Increased third sector support for carers;
- Blocked booking of respite beds to support carers;
- Increased availability of respite at Augusta House; and
- Carers 'wellbeing sessions' and peer support events.

Quality Standard 6 - Local Authorities must work with and support people who need care and support and carers who need to support to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs.

Children's Services Self-Assessment – The accommodation subgroup now meets every six months as all actions are on track. The team has met with Tai Calon to plan accommodation for care leavers every January. There is still a shortage of 1 bedroom flats. This has been considered for a number of years but there is no appetite from the Registered Social Landlord's (RSL's) to develop this provision as it limits tenancing options.

The team manager for the 14+ team is a regular attendee on the Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) and Accommodation task group. Actions from these groups are regularly monitored and reviewed. The CLA education coordinator has successfully completed the Trauma Informed Diploma to inform and improve practice for our CLA. A number of schools across Gwent have also completed this programme.

The Placement Team and Locality Teams undertake parallel planning to prevent drift and ensure children are moved onto their long-term provision as quickly as possible. Placement stability meetings take place for unstable placements and the learning from those meetings informs service and practice development.

Quality Standard 6 - Local Authorities must work with and support people who need care and support and carers who need to support to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs.

Adult Services Self-Assessment – The Service has recently recruited a Housing Support Worker who will be based within the IAA Team providing support to people with housing needs. The Community Resource Team continues to operate a home visiting service so that patients are supported to undertake preventative assessments to avoid the need for health or social care services. A pilot is being scoped, with colleagues from Public Health Wales (PHW) and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB), on delivering early public health information to patients who are at high risk of requiring a hospital admission over the winter period. This will enable some people to stay well during winter and is based on a model of preventative support that has been successfully used in New Zealand to maximise independence in the older population.

The service is continuing to look at funding options in order to increase capacity and enhance Technology Enabled Care (TEC) provision via the Gwent TEC group. A SMART flat is in development, within a sheltered housing scheme, to demonstrate the range of TEC available to support people to continue to live independently within the community.

An increase of £828,401 has been received in our HSG allocation for 2021/22. These monies can now be used to commission services, as evidenced in the Commissioning Plan/Spend Plan, to meet the housing support needs of the citizens of Blaenau Gwent. The following services have been commissioned:

- Increase in the capacity of the current generic floating support service to meet both the current and future demand;
- Increase in the in-house housing first provision to support individuals with complex needs. Currently, the team are working with 5 individuals, and the introduction of the 9 units at Cosy Place, Brynmawr will enhance the scheme and allow the scheme to be delivered effectively;
- A Crisis Worker supporting people affected by domestic abuse has been recruited. The support worker will be able to provide timely support to people in a crisis and will also assist in reducing the current demand on the domestic abuse floating support service;
- There is a high demand for the mental health floating support service. The current service has been enhanced by commissioning a Senior Support Worker, a dedicated Benefits Support Worker and an Asset Coach providing strengths based housing related support which is person led; and
- An Assertive Outreach Service is now available offering support to people with substance misuse issues residing in temporary accommodation and HSG accommodation based schemes.

The service is in the process of commissioning the following service provisions:

- A young person's floating support service
- A Housing Support Worker co-located within Adult Social Services Information, Advice and Assistance Team

The Greenacre Site development has been further delayed until Winter 2021. Pre tenancy support is currently being delivered to the tenants who will be moving into the new supported living bungalow on site.

Regular contact is being maintained with all care homes throughout Blaenau Gwent. Information in relation to staff vaccinations and testing is continuing to be collated and provided to ABUHB for analysis. Information on occupancy and bed vacancies is gathered and shared weekly on a regional basis, this includes updates on Homes which may be closed because of a COVID incident. The service is working in partnership with ABUHB to develop an Infection Control Support Team (IPAC) to support care settings with appropriate advice and guidance to prevent outbreaks.

Work is being undertaken with commissioned providers to review when care homes are requiring the support of the WAST within care settings and to seek alternative and safe support to avoid conveyancing residents to hospitals.

Departmental Priorities Quarter 1 and 2 – How We Have Performed

Priority Title	Self-Assessment
To improve accessibility, provision of information and advice to enable people to support their own well-being.	Children's Services - Amber Adult Services - Green
To work with people to make sure they have a say in achieving what matters to them.	Children's Services – Amber Adult Services - Green
To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater.	Children's Services – Green Adult Services – Green
To work with our partners including Aneurin Bevan Health Board and neighbouring authorities to deliver integrated responsive care and support.	Children's Services – Green Adult Services – Green
To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering health and social care involving key partners and our communities.	Children's Services – Green Adult Services – Green
To put effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm.	Children's Services – Amber Adult Services – Green
To develop a partnership approach to reducing and alleviating the impacts of poverty.	Children's Services - Green Adult Services – Green
To ensure effective forward financial planning arrangements are in place to support the Council's financial resilience.	Children's Services - Green Adult Services – Green
Ensure long-term sustainability is at the forefront of our thinking and decision-making, enabling us to work better with people, communities and each other, looking to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.	Children's Services - Green Adult Services - Green

Children's Services Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator Description	Outturn 2018/19	Outturn 2019/20	Outturn 2020/21	Annual Trend	Performance 2021/22		
					Q1	Q2	Quarterly Trend
Number of children on Child Protection Register	56	61	52	↓	61	68	↑
Rate of Children on the Child Protection Register per 10,000 population	41	45	38	↓	45	50	↑
The percentage of re-registrations of children on local authority Child Protection Registers (CPR)	1.87%	6.1%	5.2%	↓	4.5%	7.5%	↑
The average length of time for all children who were on the CPR during the year	277	295	219	↓	237	252	↑
Number of children looked after	222	208	200	↓	195	190	↓
Rate of Looked After Children per 10,000 population	163	153	147	↓	143	140	↓
The percentage of looked after children who have had three or more placements during the year	8.11%	10.1%	9%	↓	9.2%	6.3%	↓
Proportion of children's services cases supported by preventative services	61.3%	54.6%	59.3%	↓	56.3%	55.2%	↑
Percentage of referrals signposted to preventative services (children)	N/A*	8.4%*	10.1%	↑	9.3%	7.7%	↑

- Reporting started in 2019/20 and routinely from quarter 2

Adult Services Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator Description	Outturn 2018/19	Outturn 2019/20	Outturn 2020/21	Annual Trend	Performance 2021/22		
					Q1	Q2	Quarterly Trend
Rate of delayed transfer for social care reasons per 1,000 population aged 75 and over	1.16	0.98	N/A*	-	-	-	-
Rate of older people in residential & nursing home care per 1,000 population aged 65 or over	14.11 (196)	14.64 (204)	11.70 (166)	↓	11.91 (169)	12.40 (176)	↑
The number of adults (aged 18+) receiving a service in the community who receive a direct payment	127	120	111	↓	112	117	↑
Percentage of referrals signposted to preventative services (adults)	7.1%	17.9%	17.6%	↔	10.7%	13.2%	↑
Proportion of adult services cases supported by preventative services (New)	29.6%	33.8%	31.9%	↓	37.0%	34.9%	↓
Percentage of adult protection enquiries completed within statutory timescales**	93.3%	95.3%	62.1%	↓	60.7%	47.5%	↓
Percentage of proportionate assessments that led to a more comprehensive assessment for care and support - adults	64.3%	14.4%	44.5%	↓	42.7%	45.6%	↓

* DToC figures are no longer reported by Social Services. March 2020 was the last time the figures were reported

** Percentage of adult protection enquiries completed within statutory timescales – Change in Process from Oct 20 and new forms developed to capture more realistic data.

Case Studies

14+ Team and Supporting Change Team

Miss B

Miss B lived at home with both parents until they separated in her early teenage years. The family then came to an arrangement for Miss B to live with mum on weekdays and with dad on weekends. The separation between parents was not amicable and Miss B struggled with witnessing arguments. Mum would often support financially and emotionally but there was no help from dad and this caused significant tensions between family members. The family had a care and support plan put in place as there was a significant risk of family breakdown due to parents struggling to manage the young person's behaviour.

The Supporting Change Team completed work around relationship building and understanding what matters to the family. This led to the development of a family plan of direct work while utilising tools to assess the parent's motivation to change in addition to completing direct work with the young person around wishes and feelings, emotional literacy, consequences and expectations.

Miss B remains at home with mum and their relationship has improved. Tensions in the family have reduced and the parents now have a better understanding of Miss B's emotional needs and can better respond to these.

Miss V

Miss V was presenting as both verbally and physically aggressive towards her mother and younger brother. She was struggling to manage her feelings, particularly anger and also had several instances where she had been involved with the police. Mother and step father found it difficult to manage this behaviour. The family were supported to prevent the risk of a family breakdown as well as Miss V receiving educational support. Intensive support sessions were completed with Miss V, mother, step-father and grandmother. These sessions explored escalation, de-escalating strategies, PACE, managing emotions, fight/flight responses, upstairs and downstairs brain. Referrals have been made to New Pathways and NYAS following disclosures and education issues.

Following this support, the family are now able to manage Miss V's behaviours more effectively as there is a better understanding of her emotions.

Provider Services

Miss R

Miss R is a 31-year-old who has both physical and mental learning difficulties and epilepsy, requiring full support to manage her personal care needs. She is unable to communicate verbally but can communicate if unhappy or in pain. Miss R lives at home with her mother and father with mother being the main carer. Miss R uses a wheelchair, mobilised by others, and likes to spend most of her time out and on the floor.

The COVID 19 pandemic resulted in a lockdown of Provider Services. Miss R used to attend using the sensory room every day and the hydrotherapy pool once a week. These provided her with physical relaxation, exercise and mental stimulation as Miss R is able to mobilise her body more fully and independently. Throughout the lockdowns Miss R struggled with stimulation which impacted negatively on her overall mental well-being. However, since services have started to open back up Miss R is again able to access the hydro pool once a week and has stimulation with being around others and being in a different environment. Miss R continues to live at home with her parents who are able to have a break from their caring role whilst Miss R utilises the services at the Bert Denning Centre.

Mr T

Mr T is a 51-year-old who has a diagnosis of cerebral palsy, epilepsy, is registered blind, has a mild form of asthma, eczema, anaemia, high blood pressure, a hernia, limited communication and has learning difficulties. Mr T lives at home with his mother and step-father.

Mr T's diagnosis of cerebral palsy and his age means that an exercise plan in the hydro pool is important to limit the tightening and shortening of his muscles, to maintain mobility and enable strengthening and relaxation of the muscles. Mr T's posture has deteriorated and the exercise plan also prevents his posture from deteriorating further.

Prior to the COVID 19 Pandemic, Mr T accessed the Bert Denning centre four days a week and once a week had access to the hydrotherapy pool. A referral was made to the Critical Care and Support Team for Mr T to continue to use the hydrotherapy pool twice a week to maintain his mobility and posture as well as having contact with others and enjoyment at the centre.

Managing Our Business - Workforce

This year remains an extraordinarily challenging period for the Social Care Sector. The workforce continues to deliver through resolve, dedication and commitment. Workforce Development, as a support service, strives to deliver whatever it can to enable the sector to fulfil that challenge skilfully and confidently. Blaenau Gwent has been actively maintaining delivery, within safe COVID 19 related guidance, including:

- Induction, registration and qualification of the registered workforce;
- Continued professional development for social workers;
- Preparation for the registration of the Adult Care Home workforce;
- Heightened focus on the Mental Capacity Act in practice whilst waiting for the Liberty Protection Safeguards codes of practice; and
- Facilitating an all-Wales response to training/refreshers for Appointed Officers (APSO).

Alongside continued sponsorship for managers to complete national programmes, Blaenau Gwent has also delivered local programmes:

- Managing an agile workforce;
- Supporting the workforce to access and use digital alternatives and new processes;
- Regulation and legal updates;
- Current essential skills such as management of the wellbeing of others and self; and
- Generic management skills.

The level of direct entry social work students requiring placements is lower than the authority commits to support. Blaenau Gwent has partnerships with four providers of the social work degree programme, and they continue to show a pattern of reduced attraction and recruitment. There are currently six unoccupied direct entry first year placements across Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly. In response the joint workforce development approach Blaenau Gwent continues to invest heavily in its Social Work Strategy and the internal sponsorship of employees to qualify as social workers. It remains the highest investor in Wales to maximise the Open University route to qualification.

Heightened focus and support have been awarded to newly qualified social workers, particularly those that qualified during 2020 and 2021. Workforce Development is engaged in numerous retention initiatives during this challenging period of sector retention and recruitment. A full programme of events has returned using a full range of learning options.

Activity to support the workforce respond to the digital transformation has included:

- Linking with Digital Communities Wales to provide both digital resources and learning opportunities;
- Supporting management to provide resources and the environment to enable staff to access digital learning; and
- Playing a leading role in an all-Wales local authority project securing a fit for purpose learner experience platform, with combined learning management, that will provide equal access to local authority employees and non-employees who provide a service to the community.

Benefits continue to be realised for and by the workforce through the scale of opportunity possible due to the joint workforce development service model hosted by Blaenau Gwent in partnership with Caerphilly.

Budget 2021/22 - Quarter 1 & 2 (April 2021 to September 2021)

Budget Area		Budget	Forecast	Variance	
		£	£	£	%
1	Commissioning & Social Work	3,727,710	3,546,738	180,972	4.85
2	Children Looked After	7,428,140	6,876,898	551,242	7.42
3	Family Support Services	188,600	199,603	(11,003)	-(5.83)
4	Youth Justice	232,920	228,118	4,802	2.06
5	Other Children's and Family Services	2,340,130	2,297,228	42,902	1.83
6	Older People Aged 65 and Over	6,672,430	6,260,780	411,650	6.17
7	Adults under 65 with Physical Disabilities	41,800	23,577	18,223	43.60
8	Adults under 65 with Learning Disabilities	3,306,890	3,165,832	141,058	4.27
9	Adults under 65 with Mental Health Needs	531,730	522,314	9,416	1.77
10	Other Adult Services	392,250	391,155	1,095	0.28
11	Community Care	15,373,320	15,291,024	82,296	0.54
12	Support Service & Management Costs	881,130	812,132	68,998	7.83
13	Corporate Recharges	5,212,400	5,210,027	2,373	0.05
Grand Total		46,329,450	44,825,426	1,504,024	

Social Services Corporate Risks

Risk Description	Quarter 2 Update (July – September 2021)	Status
<p>CRR 4 - Safeguarding - Failure to ensure adequate safeguarding arrangements are in place for vulnerable people in Blaenau Gwent</p>	<p><u>Quarter 1 Progress (April – June 2021)</u> Safeguarding referrals have continued to increase in the first quarter following the return to face to face teaching after the February half term in quarter 4 in 2020/2021. There has also been an increase in the number of referrals in adults safeguarding compared to this time last year. There were more cases of abuse within the persons own home than previous quarters which may be a result of the pandemic and lockdowns. We are currently working on a safeguarding training programme which can be implemented in quarter 2 of the business plan together with the updated Corporate Safeguarding policy. High referral rates from the police and police force policy is such that any call outs undertaken where children are present at the address will result in a safeguarding referral being made. We are currently working with the Police to try and address whether this is necessary. Training for staff on Domestic Abuse is 70% complete and the remaining 30% will need to be trained face to face due to difficulties with online training (e.g. without access to ICT) this has proved difficult due to COVID 19 restrictions.</p> <p><u>Quarter 2 Progress (July – September 2021)</u> Referrals have increased with the easing of lockdown but it remains to be seen whether these will materialise into cases where further action is needed. A programme has been put together for Safeguarding training which was to be implemented in Q2, this is delayed as queries have been raised by CLT around delivery and cost. Safeguarding Policy has been updated but as linked to the training programme has not been progressed via the political process to date. Q2 has seen increased pressures within health and social services relating to employees taking annual leave after a difficult period during the pandemic, increase in numbers of staff self-isolating, staff off sick and difficulties recruiting and retaining staff, particularly in the domiciliary care and residential sector. This will be the subject of a separate risk on the Corporate Risk Register but it is highly likely that these pressures could have a direct effect on safeguarding arrangements and this risk will need to be kept under close review as we move into Q3.</p>	<p>High</p>

Risk Description	Quarter 2 Update (July – September 2021)	Status
<p>CRR20 - There is a risk that increasingly complex needs and demand for services provided by Social Services and Education, in particular for Looked After Children, will put further significant pressure on the Council's budget.</p>	<p><u>Quarter 1 Progress (April – June 2021)</u></p> <p>There continues to be an increase in referrals in the first quarter following the return to face to face teaching after the February half term in quarter 4 in 2020/2021. We have started to implement the revised Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy 2020 to 2025 following its agreement by Executive. We are also working with Education to implement the new ALN reforms. The numbers of children looked after continues to fall during the first quarter of 2021/22, with the number now standing at 195 from 200 at the end of quarter 4. This remains a high risk given the gradual reduction of COVID-19 restrictions and the possibility of more children at risk coming to light over the coming months.</p> <p><u>Quarter 2 Progress (July – September 2021)</u></p> <p>Number of children looked after continues to reduce (187 as at 21/09/21) however there is a risk that the rise in referrals may result in more children coming into care. In adult services, cases are more complex and needs of the older population are at a higher level than anticipated as early intervention and preventative work has not been possible due to the pandemic. Discussions are ongoing in respect of a future collaboration with Caerphilly for the provision of legal services in respect of children's services in particular. It is anticipated that this will reduce the budget for legal services which is high in particular in respect of children's services due to currently being outsourced due to a lack of capacity within the Council's legal services.</p>	<p>High</p>

Risk Description	Quarter 2 Update (July – September 2021)	Status
<p>New Corporate Risk (links to SS10/12) - There is a risk that identified staffing pressures in social services will result in an inability to deliver services particularly in provider services and domiciliary care.</p>	<p>This risk is to reflect the acute pressures in the Health and Social Care System due to a “perfect storm” of multiple contributing factors. Increases in hospital numbers for heart attacks and strokes, increases in mental health issues and an increase in the deconditioning and frailty of our older population due to the period of inactivity as a result of the pandemic. This is alongside a workforce who are exhausted, staff who have COVID-19 due to opening up or been ‘pinged’ and self-isolating, Staff who are exhausted and are off sick which when coupled with the fact we are unable to recruit particularly to the domiciliary care sector and residential sector nor retain existing staff (many leaving for easier jobs in the hospitality or retail sectors and more money) and shortages of staff in hospitals and within the community e.g. nurses, occupational therapists, district nurses, rapid nurses. The Council is struggling to deliver existing packages because of shortages of staff and will struggle to deliver new package to new people coming into the system. Although BG has not currently had any hours returned to us, we are aware many of our neighbouring authorities have and it would seem to only be a matter of time before this occurs. The Gwent Strategic Co-ordination Group (GSCG) chaired by Chief Superintendent Tom Harding has been convened as a result of the blue light services concerns about the problems they were experiencing (i.e. the hour’s ambulances were stuck outside hospitals and therefore unable to answer calls and police having to transport people to hospital). A Tactical Co-ordination Group (TCG) Chaired by Chief Executive Paul Matthews (Monmouthshire CBC) has been convened by the GSCG. The remit is to pull together representatives from all parts of the system and determine a set of interventions that will help (in the short term) to alleviate pressure and commence a more detailed piece of work to look at all system components and re-imagine / re-design how we can work more effectively so that this situation does not continue to re-present on a cyclical basis.</p>	<p>Critical</p>

Glossary

ABUHB – Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

ACRF – Annual Council Reporting Framework

ADSS - Association of Directors of Social Services

BG – Blaenau Gwent

CCG – Children & Communities Grant

CIW – Care Inspectorate for Wales

CLA – Children looked After

CRT – Community Resource Team

DoLS – Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

GATA – Gwent Access to Advocacy

GP – General Practitioner

GWASB – Gwent Wide Adult Safeguarding Board

HSG – Housing Support Grant

IAA – Information, Advice and Assistance

ICF – Integrated Care Fund

LA – Local Authority

LPS - Liberty Protection Safeguards

NYAS – National Youth Advocacy Service

PHW – Public Health Wales

Quarter 1 – April to June

Quarter 2 – July to September

Quarter 3 – October to December

Quarter 4 – January to March

RCC – Regional Collaborative Committee

RISCA - Regulation and Inspection Social Care Act

SEWAS – South East Wales Adoption Service

SEWIC – South East Wales Improvement Collaboration

SEWSCB – South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board

SGO - Special Guardianship Order

SLA – Service Level Agreement

SPACE - Single Point of Access for Children’s Emotional Well-being and Mental Health

SLT – Senior Leadership Team

TESSA - therapeutic educational support services in adoption

The ‘Act’ or SSWB Act – Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

WAST – Welsh Ambulance Service Trust

WG – Welsh Government

Contact Details

If you require any further information or have any feedback you wish to share, please:

Write to us:

Director of Social Services
Annual Council Reporting Framework
Social Services Department
Anvil Court
Church Street
Abertillery
NP13 1DB

Call us:

(01495) 311 556

Email us:

info@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Visit our Website:

www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

Agenda Item 8

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Social Service Scrutiny committee**
Date of meeting: **20th January 2022**
Report Subject: **Social Worker vacancy rates in Children's Services, Pay and Incentives**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**
Report Submitted by: **Tanya Evans, Head 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)
7.12.21	09.12.21	10.01.22			20.1.22			

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report will provide information on the following:

- The social work staffing pressures being experienced in children's social services;
- What is being done to manage these pressures;
- Comparisons of social work pay scales across Wales in particular Gwent;
- Additional incentives offered to Blaenau Gwent social workers.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 Within children's services there are areas of our statutory services that can only be undertaken by a qualified Social Workers. These areas of work include: -

- Case holding children whose names are on the child protection register (CPR);
- Case holding with children who are looked after;
- Court work;
- Assessment of foster carers.

2.1.2 To give an indication of the level of statutory work required by qualified social workers as at the 30th November we have 76 children on the child protection register, 191 children looked after and approximately 30 cases in the court arena.

2.1.3 At this time the staffing pressures are within the 4 locality teams which provide services to the different areas of Blaenau Gwent. These 4 teams carry out the bulk of the work with children on the CPR, court work and children looked after.

2.1.4 As at the 30.11.21 there is a 41% gap in the qualified social work capacity available in the locality teams. This is due to a combination of social work

posts that we have been unable to recruit to, plus staff on maternity and sick leave.

- 2.1.5 It is important to understand the wider context in being unable to fill social work vacancies. For the last three years, across Wales, there has been a decline in the numbers of students applying directly to the universities to study social work. This has resulted in fewer newly qualified social workers coming into the job market. Whilst the authority has offered to host more than its agreed number of Social work student placements the numbers of students studying are not there to fill them.
- 2.1.6 Childrens services have implemented a 2-year staff vacancy action plan. This comprises of short, medium and longer term actions. The short term actions deal with workload management to ensure we continue to meet our statutory requirements. The medium and longer term actions focus on maintaining our current workforce and growing our own social workers by encouraging and developing non-qualified support worker staff to take up secondment opportunities to become qualified social workers.
- 2.1.7 The authority has a reputation amongst students for providing the best possible support. The investment and commitment to seconded staff has led to the recruitment of 8 newly qualified social workers over the last 2 years, 5 from the 2019-20 academic year and 3 from 2020-21.
- 2.1.8 In addition to increasing secondment opportunities we are exploring recruiting social workers from overseas. Blaenau Gwent successfully did this in the 1990s and many of those staff are still working for the local authority.
- 2.1.9 Due to the national shortage of social work staff it is critical that we do all we can to ensure that Blaenau Gwent is seen as an attractive local authority to work for, not only in terms of financial rewards but the levels of support that are offered to staff when undertaking such a pressurised area of work.
- 2.1.10 Appendix 1 is the advert which is currently used to attract social workers which outlines the additional benefits of working for Blaenau Gwent.
- 2.1.11 Section 6 provides performance information on the comparison of social worker pay scales across Gwent and other part of Wales and the outcome of a recent staff questionnaire.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 Option 1

Members are asked to scrutinise the report on social worker vacancy rates in children's services, pay and incentives and contribute to the continuous assessment of the effectiveness of the directorate.

3.2 Option 2

Accept the report as provided

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

4.1 Childrens Services response to vacancy rates in children's services links to the following key priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater;
- To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering health and social care involving key partners and our communities;
- To put effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Legal***

There are no legal implications within the report as children services have prioritised the delivery of our statutory functions.

5.2 ***Human Resources***

The Organisational development team have been integral to many of the actions in the staff vacancy plan.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Work has been undertaken to benchmark how Blaenau Gwent compares to other local authorities in relation to social worker pay. Appendix 2 shows where Blaenau Gwent sits in comparison to our neighbouring authorities in Gwent. In the absence of a national pay scheme for social work compared to nursing for example, local authorities have it within their gift to set social work salaries. The absence of a national pay scheme can, and has, at points led authorities to battle against each other by increasing social work salaries and providing golden handshakes to new starters. In Gwent the Heads of Service have guarded against getting into those battles as we understand the need to maintain a stable workforce across the region. Appendix 2 shows there is little significant difference in social worker start and finishing salaries across the region.

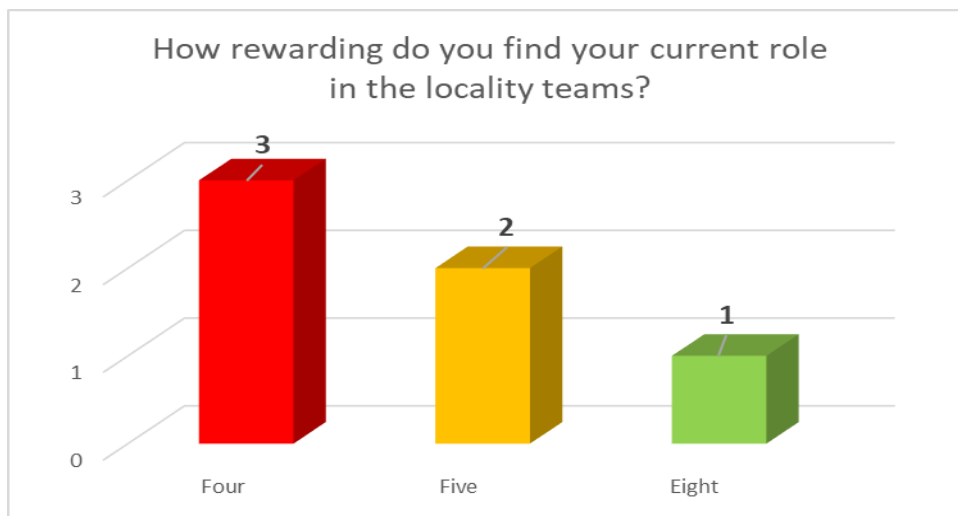
6.1.2 This is similar picture when we look at the wider picture across Wales. Appendix 3 shows this comparison.

6.1.3 Although financial reward is important to staff, it is not the only factor staff consider when deciding which authority to work for. Staff tell us they want job satisfaction, to feel valued in what they do and most importantly feel safe and supported when making what can sometimes be life changing decision for children.

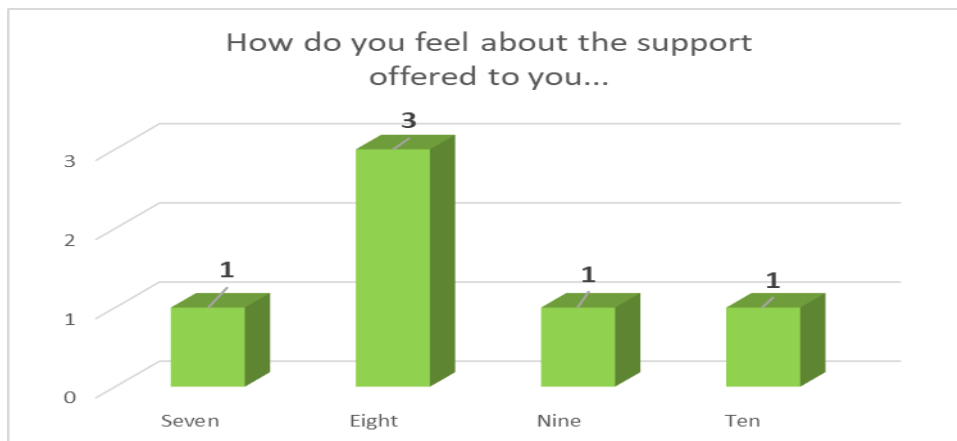
6.1.4 As a senior leadership team we constantly look at ways of ensuring we hear the views of our staff and use these views to improve service delivery.

6.1.5 A recent survey was undertaken with the staff from the locality teams asking them to identify strengths weaknesses, opportunities and threat to the service area. These views have been considered and actions taken forward as a result. The survey also asked 2 questions figure 1 and 2 outline these. Staff were asked to score from 1-10 how they felt in response to these 2 questions. It is clear that staff are not finding the work they are doing very rewarding at this time. However, what they are saying is that they feel very supported which is evidenced by the higher scores. This survey will be repeated in the Autumn of 2022. At this time many of the actions in the staff vacancy action plan should have been achieved. I would then hope to see an improvement in staff finding the work they do rewarding.

6.1.6 **Figure 1**



6.1.7 **Figure 2**



6.1.8 ***Expected outcome for the public***

Reducing the social worker vacancy rate will improve the level of interventions that can be offered by the teams as well as reducing the changes in social workers. This will in turn improve the working relationships that can be built with the public

- 6.2 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***
There is ongoing involvement with the staff on the actions being taken to address the vacancy rate. There is also ongoing consultation with children families and foster carers about the services and interventions offered by the department
- 6.3 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
A 2-year plan has been put in place to address the social work vacancy rates. This will be kept under review on a monthly basis and extended as necessary. Two areas of the plan which will support addressing this issue in the longer term is the continued secondments of staff onto the degree in social work course and recruitment of overseas social workers
- 6.4 ***Preventative focus***
A full workforce will enable the department to continue with it prevention focus on ensuring families stay together and risk is managed with confidence.
- 6.5 ***Collaboration / partnership working***
The shortage of social worker is a national problem. As a result information and practice is shared across Wales between heads of service and welch Government
- 6.6 ***Integration (across service areas)***
Organisational development are well sited on the social work vacancy issues and have been very supportive in taking forward the action plan
- 6.6 ***Equality Impact Assessment***
There is not a requirement for this report to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment.
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
- 7.1 This staff vacancy action plan is monitored on a monthly basis as part of the children's services management meetings

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1
- Appendix 2
- Appendix 3

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SOCIAL WORKER



Location - Agile Worker

Directorate - Social Services

Salary - Grade 8 (£33,782 - £37,890 per annum)

Blaenau-Gwent Council is committed to its vision to be 'a better place to live and work.' Collectively, we recognise that we have a commitment to ensuring the wellbeing of future generations; we want our children and their families to have opportunities to enjoy an exciting and aspirational future.

We are therefore seeking creative and motivated social workers to join our Social Services' department.

We have permanent and fixed term positions available in our Children and Adults Services. We welcome applications from student social workers (pending qualification), newly qualified social workers and experienced social workers.

All successful appointees will benefit from a range of support:

- ✓ regular individual and group supervision (at least once per month and more frequently if needed)
- ✓ coaching, mentoring and peer support facilitated by our workforce development team
- ✓ training and development opportunities;
- ✓ a competitive salary;
- ✓ a staff rewards scheme (including car loans, car leasing scheme, Cycle to work, lifestyle savings, etc)
- ✓ local government pension scheme;
- ✓ 25 days' annual leave (rising to 30 after 5 years' continuous service) plus statutory holidays and the option to 'purchase' additional annual leave if required;
- ✓ flexible working arrangements and agile working, geared at the promotion of work-life balance.

Our staff benefit from the opportunity to attend weekly, bite-sized training sessions with internal and external facilitators. The range of topics is varied. Our workforce development team also co-ordinates a varied package of more intensive training, developed following regular consultation with staff. We run quarterly Policy and Performance workshops, bringing the division together as a whole to aid networking, shared understanding and service development.

It's a challenging, but exciting time to be working in social care. We would love you to come and join us.

If you require further information, please contact:

- Sarah Thomas-Britton on (01495) 355794 for Children's Services
- Alison Minett on (01495) 356080 for Adult Services

If you would like to apply for a post, please follow the link below:
https://blaenau-gwent.3dmarcomms.com/vacancies/1122/social_worker/agile_worker/

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Appendix

Social Worker Pay scale comparison across Gwent

Local Authority	SW starting Salary	SW finishing Salary	Notes
Blaenau Gwent	33,783	37,890	
Torfaen	32,234	37,890	
Newport	34,728	38,890	
Monmouthshire	34,728	38,890	
Caerphilly	32,782	34,728	£3,383 Market Supplement per annum for applicable posts in locality teams

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Appendix 3

Social Worker Pay scale comparison across Wales

Local Authority	SW starting Salary	SW finishing Salary	Notes
Blaenau Gwent	33,783	37,890	
Bridgend	33,782	35,745	
Cardiff	29,577	33,782	£5,000 Market Supplement Per Annum - Childrens Case Management Teams
Carmarthenshire	33,234	38,605	
Ceredigion	32,234	33,782	
Conwy	33,782	36,922	
Denbighshire	29,577	32,324	
Merthyr Tydfil	34,728	38,890	
Neath Port Talbot	33,782	37,890	
RCT	33,782	37,890	£2,000 Market Supplement Per Annum for applicable posts
Swansea	33,782	37,890	
VOG	30,451	33,782	£5,000 Market Supplement for childrens services

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Agenda Item 9

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: **20th January 2022**
Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme: 3rd March 2022**
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	10.01.22			20.01.22			

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present to Members the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 3rd March 2022 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 June 2021, 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 3rd March 2022, 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 3rd March 2022, as presented.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme – Meeting on 3rd March 2022

Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

Date	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Executive / Council Meeting
Thursday 3rd March 2022	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 – 27.04.21
	Implementation of Liberty Protection Safeguard legislation	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the progress of implementation of the new legislative frame work from April 22	Alyson Hoskins	Executive – 27.04.21
	Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy Monitoring	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of progress in relation to the strategy 2020-25.	Tanya Evans	Executive – 27.04.21
	Integrated Care Fund (ICF) update	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the progress made in relation to ongoing sustainability of grant funded(ICF) services	Alyson Hoskins	Executive – 27.04.21
	Population Needs Assessment	Members to consider the Population Needs Assessment.	Damien McCann	Council March 2022

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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