

Committee: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **13th January 2020**
Report Subject: **Corporate Parenting Progress Report**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr J. Mason, Executive Member Social Services**
Report Submitted by: **Tanya Evans, Head of Children's Services**
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Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
12.12.19					13.01.20			

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 2019 to improve outcomes and services for our Children Looked After (CLA).

**Looked After Children (LAC) is a reference no longer used.
In 2019 this reference has now changed to Children Looked After (CLA).*

2. Scope and Background

2.1 This report will focus on key achievements and progress made throughout 2019 to date on the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) Action Plan 2019 /2020. Please note there is still another quarter until end of the plan.

2.2 The Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2019/2020 has again been 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 enabled to reach their full potential in education, training and recreation;
- Our Children Looked After have healthy domestic, family and personal relationships;
- Our Children Looked After secure their rights and entitlements;
- Our Children Looked After enjoy social and economic well-being;
- Our Children Looked After live in suitable accommodation;

- The Corporate Parenting Agenda is owned across the local authority and by partner agencies.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 Option 1 Members acknowledge progress made throughout 2019 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 Members acknowledge progress made throughout 2019 and suggest areas for development that the Local Authority could be doing 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**

Corporate Parenting Action Plan supports the following priorities for Social Services under the Corporate Plan.

- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater;
- To work with our partners including Aneurin Bevan University 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 from harm.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

It is not anticipated there will be any additional financial costs associated in taking forward this Corporate Parenting Action Plan. Existing staffing with more innovative, energised and joined up ways of working is being explored rather than new projects having to be funded.

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 and make improvements to improve outcomes. We must endeavour to support our individual children looked after across the 7 areas of well-being to help them overcome the troubles they have already faced in life and become resilient adults.

If we do not support the children looked after adequately they may present risky and vulnerable behaviours later on.

The Social Services Senior Management Team and Social Services staff are committed to working with partners to address and reduce these risks and pursue excellent practice using the Corporate Parenting Board as the vehicle to reduce these risks.

5.3 **Legal**

No legal implications.

5.4 **Human Resources**

It is not anticipated that there will be any staffing / workforce development implications as a result of taking forward this work 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 2019/20 is attached to this report as *Appendix 1*.

This section of the report will address each key priority in turn and pick out some key achievements, providing a summary of what progress has been made, spotlighting some key headline activities of interest and focus to provide additional information on. The full detail will be in attached Appendices and action plan.

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

All children looked after are offered a Health Assessment within 28 days of becoming looked after. Children under 5 are seen by their named Health Visitor whilst those over 5 are seen by the Specialist nurse for Children Looked After. Health assessments may be undertaken at home or in a local clinic. During 2019 progress has been made in securing a regular clinic at Blaina ICC that has enabled children and young people to be seen during the school day.

The assessment waiting list did fall behind in 2017 and 2018 due to a gap in recruitment of the Specialist nurse but are all nearly back up to date. Statistics at the end of November 2019 are as follows:

0 (under 5's) initial health assessments outstanding
4 (under 5's) review health assessments outstanding
0 (5-18 yrs) initial health assessments outstanding
13 (5-18 yrs) review health assessments outstanding
11 (5-18 yrs) Out of County health assessments outstanding

Our children will now also benefit from the Single Point of Access for Children's Emotional wellbeing, School Nurse Drop In Clinics at Secondary Schools to support with emotional wellbeing, the Paediatric Weight Management Service and the Community Outreach Dental health Practitioner; all these services were launched this year.

The MyST (My Support Team) has been in operation since June 2019. The new team has successfully moved 2 children out of residential care into foster placements by providing intensive support to the child, foster carers and their support networks. They are also working with 2 children intensively to prevent their needs escalating to the point where they need residential care.

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

In 2016/2017 the key priority under this category was the identification of children at risk of sexual exploitation and those displaying sexually harmful behaviour and to audit what was being done to manage and reduce the risk to this cohort of children and young people. The Board decided they would relook at this in 2019/20 and compare with the work carried out in 2016/17. This priority is due to commence in January 2020 by the Safeguarding Manager.

For 2019/20 the Board identified a priority would be to look at localised community behaviour based safeguarding risks which might pose an issue to our Children Looked After and as a result will develop a programme to raise awareness of the issues such as County Lines, Criminal Exploitation, and Social Media Exploitation before these issues escalate. Briefing sessions with children looked after, schools, community groups, practitioners and foster carers are currently being planned by the Safeguarding Manager for 2020 roll out.

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

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

There are 4 Key Actions :-

Action 1 - Minimise the risk of Children Looked After becoming NEET.

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

Action 3 – Promote “Children Looked After Friendly Schools”

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

Things that have gone well 2019/20: We report on the previous year's academic year due to the different timescales and the academic year covering September 2018 – July 2019.

- During 2018-2019 there has been a decrease in the incidents of exclusions issued in respect of children looked after. The majority of exclusions continue to be issued in respect of secondary aged pupils. There has been a decrease in the number of exclusions being issued for primary aged children.
- There has been a decrease in the number of exclusions being issued for Blaenau Gwent children looked after who have Statements of Special Educational Needs.
- During academic year 2018-2019, 100% of personal education plans for children becoming looked after within the year were updated within statutory timescales.
- The achievements and academic progress of our looked after children continue to be monitored by the Children Looked After education service and recorded throughout each stage of their schooling.
- There has been a slight decrease in the number of Children looked after experiencing a change of school during the year. When a child does have to move school, processes are in place to ensure that delays in admissions are avoided wherever possible.
- Outcomes for our children looked after at the end of key stage 2 were considerably higher when compared with the previous year but lower at the end of key stage 3. A total of 16 children looked after completed their statutory studies in 2018-2019. 9 children looked after achieved recognised qualifications.
- Of the 7 children who left school without recognised qualifications as of September 2019 2 have remained on as year 12 pupils in post 16 special school settings, 2 have continued their placement with a work based learning provider. 1 learner commenced a college placement and 1 has sourced work. Only one of the young people is NEET.
- Our annual celebration of achievement event was held in November 2019. A significant number of our children looked after, 73 in total, were recognised for their achievements both within school and in terms of their participation in extra-curricular activities, including sporting achievements and amateur dramatics.
- During academic year 2018-19, a total of 16 young people who were looked after by Blaenau Gwent completed their statutory school studies. 9 of the 16 young people achieved recognised qualifications.

- Three quarters of the young people who were looked after and completed their statutory studies in summer 2019 had additional learning needs and more than half (56%) had a statement of special educational needs.
- The newly refocused Monitoring, Evaluation and Review Education Group enables clear sharing of relevant information to inform the wider inclusion agenda in Education and into schools.
- The Blaenau Gwent Corporate Traineeship was established in 2017 and to date it has taken 10 young people since it started. To date there are currently 2 young people engaged, one in Housing Solutions Administration Team and one in Carpentry with Tai Calon. One young lady is due to start after Christmas and she is considering what options are available at the moment. In 2020 we hope to review the traineeships and analyse what has been successful and what hasn't. We also hope to write into our plan that we will work with registered social landlords (RSL's) so that the community benefits policy that covers work placements, job experience and help with apprenticeship fees are considered for our children looked after when they are awarded contracts. We also hope to develop a Corporate Traineeship glossy menu of opportunities available within the Authority that will appeal to our Children Looked After
- The Children Looked After Education Coordinator and the 14 Plus Team Manager now attend the Vulnerable Learners sub group to represent CLA in this arena.

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

A Task and Finish Group has been established to promote healthy and safe relationships and children's health and wellbeing from an early age and at all stages of their life. The group has been established with a range of professionals from the early years ages, through school, college and into youth and adulthood. We will look at what is currently available, if there are any gaps and if our children are accessing this support, a mapping exercise will take place on 23rd January 2020. The mapping and networking with Health Visiting, other early years professionals, Healthy Schools programme, Youth Service, colleges etc. will to explore how healthy relationships are being promoted at every opportunity and what other provision is out there to support mental health and wellbeing of our children. Is there enough? Do we need to supplement this? Is it easily accessible? What are the access criteria? Are our children accessing it? How do we know?

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

Ensuring the voice of the child is central to the way in which we deliver our services is extremely important. Over the past few years The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) was commissioned to undertake surveys with our children and care leavers so we could learn from their experiences in care to

shape our service delivery accordingly. Some of the service changes as a result of these surveys have included the restructure of the child care teams to reduce the changes of social workers a child has; the development of child friendly plans; the development of a delegated decision making tool which clearly outlines who can make decisions in relation to the various aspects of the child's life. The aim of this was to reduce delay in decisions being made and where appropriate foster carers taking responsibility for the majority of the decision making for day to day care.

More work is required to ensure we always listen to the voice of the child and they are aware of their rights. A key action under this outcome is the introduction of the National Approach to Advocacy. We ensure every child who comes into the care system has a face to face meeting with an independent advocate who can explain the various ways in which they can access advocacy to ensure their voice is heard. Blaenau Gwent is one of 4 Gwent authorities to develop a regionally commissioned advocacy service from June 2017. The NYAS survey was completed in April 2018 and its recommendations are being taken forward in an action plan by the 14 plus team throughout 2019/20. It is planned to regularly carry out this work and ensure the Childs Voice is at the centre of our planning in Blaenau Gwent. The CLA care plan is currently in process of being changed into a more user and client friendly version. Aim to implement the new form in WCCIS from April 2020.

The development of a child / young person friendly leaflet / policy on what CLA / Carer leavers can access is to be redesigned in Jan/Feb 2020 by 14+ team. When this has been completed, the Care Leavers Forum will help develop the leaflet outlining the entitlements.

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

This priority is covered jointly in Priority 3. The actions under this outcome relate to tracking our Children Looked After when they leave statutory school age to ensure they receive as much support as possible to remain engaged with education training and employment as there is a wealth of evidence to demonstrate the benefits of this as opposed to being dependant on benefits.

The actions around scoping hobbies and interests of our Children Looked After to encourage them to join groups and clubs and develop a sense of belonging and purpose has yet to start due to so much activity on other aspects of the plan. We know what we want to do and where we want to go and this will be taken forward in 2020.

Opportunities for our children to enjoy social activities have progressed in 2019. Our Children Looked After have enjoyed trips to the beach, trampolining, visited Big Pit and been away for the night. This has all been planned by the 14 plus team who continue to make a difference to our children's lives.

The team have encouraged our children to join in with the organisation Voices from Care and access the trips, events and activities provided through them has started in 2019. Please see the video clips which will be shown at the end of this report.

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

This is a large priority area and needed focused work to drive forward, there is a separate subgroup that did meet monthly but now only needs to meet 6 monthly due to the energy and direction embedded and being progressed.

A SWOT analysis and mapping exercise of current accommodation options is undertaken each March to review progress, current picture and change in care leavers accommodation opportunities and the gaps identified as a result of this set the basis for the action plan for the forthcoming year.

The subgroup work to the Barnardo's Model of the 5 steps of excellence local authorities should take to put young people in control of their housing which are :-

- Know the accommodation issue for care leavers within Blaenau Gwent;
- Involve young people in planning their accommodation;
- Train young people on tenancies and the housing market and develop their confidence and skills;
- Reduce the Housing Crisis in Blaenau Gwent by having emergency options;
- Develop a wide range of accommodation options.

The group made progress throughout 2018 but 2019 has seen very successful changes to the sector.

Things that have gone well in 2019:-

1. The new "Move on" Panel established is very successful, all children have been placed in appropriate accommodation this year. There is good identification of need and a new banding system resulting in successful matches with accommodation.
2. A housing complex in Tredegar has been restructured and 10 flats are now ring fenced for young people. A gym has been developed within it which promotes the young person's wellbeing, the bedrooms have all been updated and refreshed and appropriate accessories like games consoles have been introduced.
3. The template for Annual Analysis of Accommodation for care leavers has been updated.
4. The Youth and Temporary Accommodation Officer has provided invaluable communication link between the 14 plus team and Housing Solutions Team, working with young people aged 16, 17 and CLA to look at bespoke housing options – this is proving to be extremely beneficial to outcomes.

5. The Supporting People Team is funding the Housing First Support Model for young people. Housing First is an alternative to temporary accommodation and supported housing.
6. The accredited course “Housemate” on Independent living continues to be delivered and organised by Shelter Cymru’s Education Service. “Housemate” informs and educates young people to avoid future housing problems and homelessness. The course was undertaken by 15 looked after children aged 14-16 at the Ebbw Vale Institute, Ebbw Vale. The course will run on an annual basis each year to start preparing the children for independent living.
7. A cohort of our care leavers will not have Christmas Lunch with family or friends this year, so again this year they will prepare and cook their own Christmas Lunch together (this year at Waunlwyd OAP Hall) with staff from 14 plus team. They will set out a room as dining room, play Christmas themed games, receive Christmas Eve boxes, presents and new pyjamas as they would if they were with their family.

6.8 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 this year Elected Member representation has been excellent.

A member briefing was held on 22nd August 2017 primarily to update new Members on their Corporate Parent responsibilities and also refresh existing and new members of the Social Services Improvement Agency (SSIA) document “The Corporate Parenting “. This will be revisited in 2020 along with a new approach to educating officers within the Authority on their corporate parenting responsibilities.

Also this is the sixth annual report on corporate parenting delivered to Scrutiny Committee.

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. Attendance and contributions of all members of the board is monitored to ensure involvement.

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. Better outcomes for our children looked after in Blaenau Gwent will lead to better outcomes for our community in the long term.

8.2 ***Preventative focus***

The Corporate Parenting Action Plan was developed in line with the Definitions of Wellbeing under Section 2 of part 1 of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014. The plan outlines the additional measures the Corporate Parenting Board is taking to improve outcomes for looked after children in addition to the day to day activity of the individual Children's Services Teams. 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. The Corporate Parenting Board and associated subgroups is the vehicle to do 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 ***EqlA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

Not required.

9. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 9.1 The Corporate Parenting Board has been re-established for over 2 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 – Action Plan

Appendix 2 – Educational Outcomes

Appendix 3 – School Leavers

Appendix 4 – Exclusions