Estyn

Raising the attainment, achievement and aspiration of children who are looked after - a best practice report

July 2016

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- ⅄ primary schools
- ⅄ secondary schools
- ⅄ all-age schools
- ⅄ special schools
- ⅄ pupil referral units
- ⅄ independent schools
- ⅄ further education
- ⅄ independent specialist colleges
- ⅄ adult community learning
- ⅄ local authority education services for children and young people
- ⅄ teacher education and training
- ⅄ Welsh for adults
- ⅄ work-based learning
- ⅄ learning in the justice sector

Estyn also:

- ⅄ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others
- ⅄ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence

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Introduction

This report is published in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Government in the Minster's annual remit letter to Estyn 2015-2016 about the attainments, achievements and aspirations of children who are looked after in Wales.

This report focuses on the good practice that exists in schools, local authorities and the regional consortia. The report includes case studies of best practice. It is intended for the Welsh Government, governors, headteachers, senior leaders and staff in schools, local authorities and the regional consortia.

The report is based on the evidence in appendix 1.

Background

The Children Act 1989 defines a child in need as a child that "is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving, or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by a local authority" (Great Britain, 1989, 17.10).

Looked after child is the term used to describe any child who is in the care of the local authority or who is provided with accommodation by the local authority social services department for a continuous period of more than 24 hours. This covers children in respect of whom a compulsory care order or other court order has been made. It also refers to children accommodated voluntarily, including under an agreed series of short-term placements which may be called short breaks, family link placements or respite care. Children who are looked after are therefore also classed as children in need.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to promote educational achievement of children who are looked after. In addition, councillors must act as good corporate parents to children who are looked after or who recently left care. Local authorities must identify a looked after children in education (LACE) co-ordinator to oversee the education plan and address the educational needs of these children and care leavers in the local authority area. LACE co-ordinators ensure that a personal education plan (PEP) is developed within 20 days of a child who is looked after entering care or joining a new school. All governing bodies must designate a member of staff as having lead responsibility for promoting educational achievement of children who are looked after in their school.

Until April 2015, the looked after children (LAC) component of the pupil deprivation grant (PDG/LAC) was allocated to schools. The local authority had a central role in ensuring that the funds were used in line with the terms and conditions of the grant. Since April 2015, the four regional education consortia have been responsible for determining how the PDG/LAC of almost £4 million is to be used.

In addition to this thematic report, the Welsh Government has commissioned a number of recent research projects in relation to children who are looked after.

- 'Voices from Care Cymru' is a national charity that promotes the views of children who are looked after in Wales. It conducted focus group sessions with children who are looked after across Wales to ascertain their views on their experiences of care and education, (Voices from Care, 2015).
- The Fostering Network is also a national charity and represents fostering services in the UK. It consulted to find out what foster carers in Wales say is needed to enable children who are looked after to progress in education, (The Fostering Network, 2015).
- The Welsh Government's Social Research and Information Division, in conjunction with Cardiff University conducted a qualitative research study with children who are looked after, in order to provide insight into their experience of education and their opinions on what could be done to improve it, (Welsh Government, 2015a).

The research projects identified contributed to shaping the Welsh Government's 'Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales strategy' and the accompanying action plan which were published in January 2016.

In line with the Welsh Government's strategy, the term "children who are looked after" will be used in this report.

What do we know about children who are looked after?

The numbers, achievements and characteristics of children who are looked after are monitored by a number of different surveys in Wales. This report utilises information from two key publications (Welsh Government, 2016b and 2016c). The small numbers of children who are looked after mean that figures are subject to fluctuation year on year and should be treated with caution.

The number of children who are looked after in Wales has remained relatively constant for the past four years. In 2015, there were 5,617 children who are looked after. The number of children who are looked after per local authority ranges from 78 in Ceredigion to 650 in Cardiff, (Welsh Government, 2015b). Around one fifth of children who are looked after have a statement of special educational needs. A higher proportion of children who are looked after are eligible for free school meals than average. (Welsh Government, 2016c).

The 2015 Children in Need Census found that around 460 children who are looked after had mental health problems and over four-fifths of these were in the 10 to 17 age group. The census also found that 305 children who are looked after experienced substance misuse problems with three-quarters of these children in the 10 to 17 age group. Just under a third of children who are looked after with a mental health problem also have a parent with a mental health problem, (Welsh Government, 2016c).

The number of care placements for children who are looked after has remained relatively constant over the period 2011-2015. Many children who are looked after have one care placement in a year, and around a fifth have two. However, around 10% of children who are looked after have three or more care placements, (Welsh Government, 2015b). Around half of all children leaving care in 2014-2015 returned to the care of their parent/s, relative or other person with parental responsibility; this includes persons with a special guardianship order (SGO). Just under a fifth were adopted from care, (Welsh Government, 2015b).

Despite an improvement over the past four years, 45% of children who are looked after were not engaged in education, training or employment (NEET) or not in touch with their local authority on their 19th birthday, (Welsh Government, 2015b). This compares with around 4.9% of all other children that leave schools at the end of Year 13, (Careers Wales, 2015).

Attainment of looked after children

Around 64% of children who are looked after achieved the Foundation Phase Indicator (FPI) in 2015. This proportion is 11 percentage points higher than when the FPI first replaced the key stage 1 core subject indicator in 2012, (Welsh Government, 2016c).

At key stage 2, there has been a 16 percentage point improvement, with around two-thirds of children who are looked after attaining the core subject indicator compared to just under half in 2011, (Welsh Government, 2016c).

In 2015, 48% of children who are looked after attained the core subject indicator at key stage 3. This figure represents a 25 percentage point improvement on 2011, (Welsh Government, 2016c).

In 2011, under a quarter of children who are looked after, at key stage 4, attained the level 2 threshold. This improved to just less than half in 2015. However, despite this improvement, less than a fifth of children who are looked after leave statutory schooling with the level 2 threshold that includes GCSE passes in English or Welsh and mathematics, (Welsh Government, 2016c).

With the exception of the gap in the level 2 inclusive threshold, which is the same as it was in 2011, the gap in performance of children who are looked after relative to all children has reduced. However, there remain notable differences. These range from a 23 percentage points gap in the Foundation Phase indicator and the level 1 threshold to a 40 percentage points gap between children who are looked after and all pupils who attain the level 2 inclusive threshold, (Welsh Government, 2016c).

The greatest reduction in the gap occurs at the level 1 threshold where the pace of improvement of children who are looked after exceeds that of all other children, albeit from a lower base. However, it is still the case that around 71% of pupils who are looked after attain the level 1 threshold, compared with 94% of all other pupils, (Welsh Government, 2016c).

The gap in attainment, across the key stages, between boys and girls who are looked after has decreased markedly in 2015 to a similar level to that of all pupils. This

decrease is somewhat due to an increase in the attainment levels of boys who are looked after, at the same time as a decrease in the attainment levels of girls who are looked after, (Welsh Government, 2016c).

Chart 1: Percentage of Children in Need achieving key performance measures across the key stages, compared to all pupils, Wales, 2012 to 2015

All pupils   Children looked after
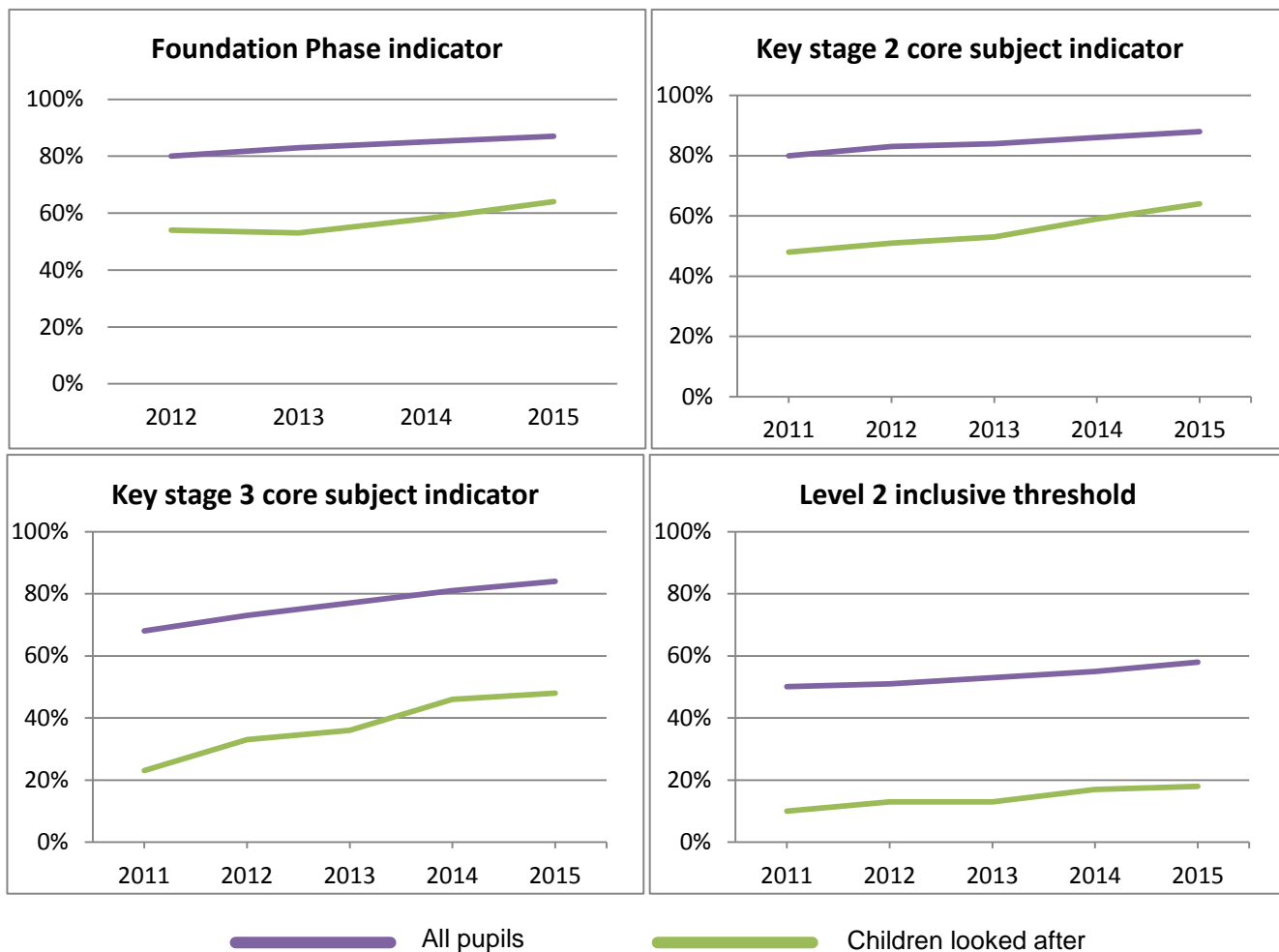
See Glossary for full indicator definitions.

Source: Welsh Government 2016c, 2016d

A further breakdown and analysis of the attainment of children in need who are not looked after, compared to children that are looked after, can be found in Appendix 2.

Main findings

1   The schools that are most effective in supporting children who are looked after have the following features:

- a clear vision and strategy for supporting children who are looked after
- high aspirations for children who are looked after
- a member of the school senior management team who has responsibility for delivering the school's strategy for children who are looked after
- a clear understanding of the academic, social and emotional needs of children who are looked after
- comprehensive tracking systems that are used routinely by staff and analysed by the designated teacher
- staff that are aware of the children who are looked after, their needs and what strategies are available to support them
- strong support for children who are looked after to develop their literacy and numeracy skills
- strong pastoral systems that are tailored well to the emotional needs of children who are looked after
- support to build resilience, self-esteem and confidence that is planned and well matched to the needs of children, for example through nurture groups
- a named individual who provides support such as learning coach
- provision of access for children who are looked after to after-school clubs and other extra-curricular activities such as trips or work experience
- a committed designated governor with a strong understanding of the needs of children who are looked
- targeted work with carers to develop their skills and understanding better to support the children they look after
- a clear focus on developing the life skills of children who are looked after and planning for their transition and leaving care
- regular evaluation of their approaches, including seeking feedback from children who are looked after, further to improve outcomes and provision for this group

2   In many of the schools visited, headteachers and senior leaders provide a clear vision for their work with children who are looked after and create a supportive ethos. They recognise that these children may need additional support and guidance to succeed and they ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms for this to happen. In these schools, the senior management team takes responsibility for improving the work of the school with children who are looked after.

3   A strong feature of many of the schools visited is the comprehensive range of approaches taken to support children who are looked after. In these schools, leaders and managers adapt effective whole-school systems to meet the needs of children who are looked after.

4   Many schools recognise that children who are looked after are often in need of additional emotional and academic support and are flexible in providing this additional support, particularly at times of personal difficulty. Many schools have a particular focus on providing additional support for literacy and numeracy.

5   Form tutor discussions, as a planned mentoring activity for children who are looked after, happen in a minority of schools. In a few schools, there are formal mentoring sessions for these pupils with members of the senior management team and mentors that are external to the school. These schools are effective in raising the aspirations and ambitions of children who are looked after.

6   All of the schools have tracking systems that are helpful in monitoring the progress of children who are looked after. These tracking systems are particularly effective when all staff understand and regularly update individual tracking information.

7   In many schools, there are very strong pastoral support systems. These include key members of staff for each child who is looked after. A very few schools allocate learning coaches to pupils for the duration of their time at the school. Very often, these members of staff are the first people children who are looked after will turn to when they need advice, support or comfort.

8   A minority of schools have established nurture groups to support children who are looked after. Through work in small, structured teaching groups, nurture groups allow pupils to build trusting relationships with teaching staff and develop the social skills and behaviours that they need to learn effectively in larger classes. Where nurture groups exist, pupils who are looked after respond positively and improve how they engage with staff and other pupils.

9   A minority of schools have established after-school clubs specifically for children who are looked after. In the clubs, pupils may have access to additional support in literacy and numeracy or use a range of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment. In the best examples, extra-curricular activities also help children who are looked after to develop their independence and prepare for leaving care. However, opportunities for pupils to engage in after-school clubs are too limited across Wales.

10   Many schools hold annual training for staff on vulnerable groups of learners. However, schools do not use training sessions well enough to raise staff awareness of the typical childhood experiences of children who are looked after and how these experiences may impact on their behaviour and attitude to learning.

11   In around half of schools, headteachers provide clear reports to governors on the impact of their work with children who are looked after. A minority of schools benefit from the personal commitment, wider experience and knowledge that the designated governor for children who are looked after brings to their role. However, the effectiveness of governing bodies in providing suitable and appropriate challenge to headteachers varies too much across Wales.

12   In many schools, children who are looked after have a wide range of opportunities to express their views about their school. The majority of schools use feedback from learners well, along with a range of information, to evaluate their work with children who are looked after. A minority of schools have regular pupil-teacher consultation events and a very few schools explicitly seek the views of children who are looked after to inform the school's development plan.

13   Nearly all schools build effective relationships with foster carers. A very few schools have appointed family engagement officers that provide direct support to foster carers.   The majority of local authorities provide comprehensive training for their carers to enrich their knowledge and understanding of the social and emotional vulnerabilities of children who are looked after.

14   All schools were using the PDG/LAC grant specifically and appropriately to address the emotional and academic needs of children who are looked after.   However, many schools are unaware of the priorities in their regional consortium's spending plans for the PDG/LAC grant. The Welsh Government, regional consortia and local authorities have not ensured that these plans meet the complex needs of children who are looked after well enough.

15   The local authorities and regional consortia that are most effective in raising the attainment, achievement and aspiration of children who are looked after have the following characteristics:

- senior managers and elected members who understand the particular needs of children who are looked after in their area, their own responsibilities and the local strategy to support this group
- a LACE co-ordinator who provides strong leadership to schools and facilitates joint working between schools, the education department and social services
- a pro-active approach to seeking out and sharing best practice in relation to how schools support children who are looked after
- robust tracking systems, which are used well to support close scrutiny of the effectiveness of the local authority's work with schools to improve the attainment, achievement and ambition of children who are looked after
- comprehensive training for school staff and carers to help them understand and support the social and emotional needs of children who are looked after
- a shared understanding of and match between regional, local and school priorities for children who are looked after
- high-quality personal educations plans that are jointly developed and focus on clear outcomes, including goals for personal development and independence
- regular evaluation of their approaches, including seeking feedback from children who are looked after, carers and schools, further to improve outcomes and provision for this group

16   Most local authorities' policies for children who are looked after link well with other corporate policies, such as encouraging all children who are looked after to remain in education, employment or training when they leave school. However, in a very few cases, local authorities do not have a policy for children who are looked after or set appropriate targets for their attainment.

17   In all of the local authorities visited, there is effective communication through annual reporting to scrutiny committees and other stakeholders. In the majority of the local authorities visited, elected members have received training in aspects of provision for children who are looked after. However, as corporate parents, their effectiveness in raising the attainment and achievement of children who are looked after is too variable across Wales. In a very few local authorities, the strategy for children who are looked after is not up-to-date and the role of the corporate parenting panel is unclear.

18   In most cases, local authorities' strategies focus strongly on improving how different services and schools work together to support children who are looked after. Looked after children's education (LACE) co-ordinators are an effective link between education and children's services. LACE co-ordinators are integral to the success of local authorities in raising the attainment of children who are looked after and the quality of the leadership and the work of the LACE co-ordinator is strong in nearly all local authorities visited. Nearly all LACE co-ordinators work well with different partners to ensure that personal education plans are produced within 20 days. However, the quality of personal education plans varies too much and a minority do not focus well enough on outcomes or include targets for personal development and independence.

19   Most LACE co-ordinators have a good understanding of where best practice exists in their local area and provide helpful advice to schools. However, overall, local authorities are not pro-active enough in evaluating what they do or seeking out and sharing best practice with schools. In addition, most local authorities do not focus their support and training for schools well enough on how schools can better understand and support the social and emotional needs of children who are looked after.

Recommendations

Schools should:

R1 Build on best practice in line with the features of effective schools identified in this report

Local authorities should:

R2 Build on best practice in line with the features of effective local authorities identified in this report

The regional consortia should:

R3 Improve how they plan for the PDG/LAC to make sure that schools are clear on the priorities for the use of the grant and that their plans take enough account of the complex needs of children who are looked after

The Welsh Government should:

R4 Consider broadening performance measures to include progress that is relative to the child's starting point and extends beyond statutory school age

R5 Make sure that the regional consortia's spending plans are appropriate to local need and based on a sound analysis of the needs of children who are looked after

Good practice in schools

Strategy

20   In many of the schools visited, headteachers and senior leaders provide a clear vision and strategy for supporting children who are looked after. They have high aspirations for these children. They recognise that children who are looked after may need additional support and guidance to succeed and ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms for this to happen. They strive to create an inclusive school ethos, where diversity is embraced.

21   A strong feature of many of the schools visited is the comprehensive range of approaches taken to support children who are looked after. In these schools, leaders and managers adapt effective whole-school systems to meet the needs of children who are looked after.

22   Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy is a school that was recently judged to have outstanding support for children who are looked after.

Case study 1: Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy – outstanding support for children who are looked after

Context

Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy is a naturally bilingual community comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-18. There are 670 pupils on roll, including 150 students in the sixth form. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 8.2% and is significantly lower than the average in Wales. For nearly all pupils, Welsh is the main language of teaching and they study Welsh as a first language. Currently, a very few children are looked after.

Strategy

Over the last five years, the school has made the progress and achievement of children who are looked after a high priority. The progress and wellbeing of children who are looked after are reviewed weekly by the senior management team. A member of the senior management team acts as the designated teacher and is responsible for children who are looked after during their time at the school.

Action

Pupils' progress, achievement and attendance are tracked carefully as part of the school's 'closing the gap' strategies.

All staff are aware of the corporate care that the school has for children who are looked after and respond to priorities to close the gap as part of the school improvement plan.

Children who are looked after are supported well by the pastoral and learning support on a daily basis. This ensures that pupils are ready for learning and that any additional support that they need is made available to them.

In addition, they receive support through literacy and numeracy interventions. They are also able to access musical instrument schemes, extended work experiences and trips and visits to broaden their horizons. Finally, they have specialist support including from the school counsellor.

Support varies according to pupils' needs, aspirations and talents. The support extends throughout their time at the school, including in the sixth form.

Detailed planning occurs for individuals and is reviewed regularly with pupils and their carers.

Pupils and their carers appreciate the early support and feedback that are given to them in terms of pupils' successes and challenges. There is a strong partnership between the school, foster carers and social workers.

The governing body and link governor for children who are looked after understand their role well and provide effective support and challenge to the school.

Outcomes

- Over the last five years, the achievement of children who are looked after at the school has compared well with that of their peers, and nearly all pupils have succeeded in attaining the core subject indicator in key stage 3 and key stage 4 and the level 2 threshold that includes Welsh or English and mathematics at key stage 4.
- All children who are looked after have transferred from key stage 4 to the sixth form, college or employment.
- The attendance of children who are looked after is generally better than all other pupils.

23   Many of the schools visited have high, yet realistic, expectations about the progress that pupils can make at school. They ensure that these expectations are matched by systems that support children who are looked after, both academically and pastorally. Generally, these schools recognise that children who are looked after will require additional support.

24   A minority of schools visited do not have a documented strategy or policy for children who are looked after. A significant minority are not aware of the local authority's strategy and only a few schools are aware of the regional consortium's plan for the use of the PDG. Schools cannot therefore be sure that their work aligns well enough with regional priorities.

25   In a few schools, there are clear links between the school's analysis of data relating to children who are looked after and whole-school areas for improvement. These schools reflect on their approaches and have a good understanding of which

strategies and approaches work for children who are looked after. They strive to improve the learning experiences and outcomes for children who are looked after. However, only a very few schools make clear references to children who are looked after in their school improvement plan. These references tend to focus on attainment of children who are looked after. Overall, little attention is given to achievements, other than attendance and exclusions, or to raising the aspirations of children who are looked after.

26   The majority of schools have a clear understanding that children who are looked after are likely to have barriers to learning. These barriers may include emotional and psychological difficulties, security and attachment issues. However, not all schools are clear on how to address these issues.

27   A minority of schools map the range of provision of children who are looked after very clearly. These schools have coherent planning systems in place and this includes making sure that all staff, including senior leaders and managers, are aware of their duties towards children who are looked after.

28   Despite the clear strengths in the strategic approaches taken by schools, there are shortcomings. For example, the wider needs of children who are looked after, such as those outlined in the background section of this report, are not understood well enough by schools. As a result, there are gaps in the knowledge and understanding that schools have on the range of issues affecting children who are looked after.

Curriculum and enrichment

29   In all schools visited, children who are looked after have full access to the curriculum and enrichment activities available to all learners. Many schools recognise that these pupils are often in need of additional curriculum and emotional support to enable them to reach their potential.

30   At Cwrt Sart Comprehensive in Neath Port Talbot, children who are looked after, and who have particular needs, have a bespoke curriculum in addition to the core curriculum entitlement. These pupils benefit from accessing lessons at study and learning support centres. Where appropriate, pupils have reduced timetables. In such cases, they receive curriculum and pastoral support from teaching and support staff.

31   Tonyrefail Comprehensive School identified that children who are looked after, due to a number of factors, were not making enough progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills.

Case study 2: Tonyrefail Comprehensive School – additional support for children who are looked after to improve their confidence and successes in literacy and numeracy

Context

Tonyrefail Comprehensive School is a secondary school for pupils aged 11-18 and has 931 pupils on roll. Around a quarter of pupils are eligible to free school meals. This is slightly higher than the national average. Across the school, there are 14 children who are looked after.

Strategy

The school identified the need to improve children's confidence in school and their achievements in literacy and numeracy.

Action

The school identified that, due to their life experiences, including changes of school and poor attendance, children who are looked after struggled with many aspects of literacy and numeracy. This was a significant barrier to them progressing in school. The school also recognised that many children who are looked after had difficulties in understanding and managing their feelings and emotions.

The school appointed a member of staff specifically to support children who are looked after and developed a resource room. Pupils are able to access this provision to receive additional academic and pastoral support from staff.

Pupils undertake initial assessments and these are used to determine appropriate interventions. Pupils have bespoke support and intervention timetables. As a result, they receive one-to-one, small group, and in-class support to develop further their understanding and apply their literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects. The school uses a number of intervention programmes that are well matched to pupils' needs.

Members of the local authority's education and lifelong learning scrutiny committee visit the school to evaluate the provision. In addition, pupils who are looked after and foster carers are involved in consultations and evaluations of the provision. Foster carers give positive feedback. Their comments include:

"I think that the school has provided us with a very useful resource in aiding our child's education and skills development…"

"…We were provided with excellent information regarding what PDG was being used for and how it is of benefit to our children…"

Outcomes

- At key stage 3, all pupils improved their reading skills. Over a four-month period, the majority of pupils improved their reading age by over a year and a minority of pupils improved their reading ages by over two years.

- At key stage 3, all pupils made good progress in English and mathematics, with the majority of pupils progressing to the next level.
- Pupils at key stage 4 are on course to achieve their predicted grades at GCSE in English and mathematics. All pupils have already achieved pass grades in their BTEC courses.
- Overall attendance rates for individual children who are looked after have improved and now compare favourably with the attendance of other pupils in the school. In 2014-2015, all children who are looked after had attendance rates in excess of 95% and a third had 100% attendance. This compares with 92.4% attendance of all other pupils at the school.

32 In the schools visited, many children who are looked after benefit from individualised learning programmes at key stage 4. These programmes may include education both on and off the school site. Pupils have opportunities to follow vocational courses at local further education colleges. When these complementary curriculum experiences are well planned and based on individual aspiration and ability, pupils engage well with them, experience success, and improve their self-esteem.

33 There are appropriate enrichment opportunities available to children who are looked after in many schools. In these schools, pupils engage positively in school-run clubs, for example in sports, creative arts, the Duke of Edinburgh Award and design technology activities. Where appropriate, in order to help raise their aspirations, older pupils have opportunities to visit universities.

34 A particular strength of the curriculum at Amberleigh Residential Therapeutic School is the provision of their waking-hours curriculum. School and care staff make sure that planned interventions and experiences are tailored to the individual needs of pupils. In addition to work in the school, residential care staff deliver an independence programme that helps pupils to develop domestic and housekeeping skills. This helps pupils to make the transition from school to supported living.

Case study 3: Amberleigh Residential Therapeutic School – the waking-hours curriculum helps pupils to develop independent living skills to support their transition from school to supported living

Context

Amberleigh Residential Therapeutic School is an independent school registered to provide education for up to 12 children aged 11 to 18. All pupils are male and in the care of their local authority. All have special educational needs, in particular social, emotional and behavioural and other additional learning needs.

The school aims to provide a range of experiences that develop the skills pupils need for learning, life and work, with a strong emphasis on the development of well-rounded individuals who are confident and responsible.

Strategy

The school aimed to develop individuals for successful entry into adult life through a waking hours curriculum that bridges school and residential care.

Action

In April 2013, a new curriculum was introduced. This provided pupils with greater choice of subjects and courses. The school continues to develop the curriculum offer to pupils. For example, through citizenship studies, pupils organise activities and raise funds for local and national charities. They also complete voluntary work. Participation in these activities adds to pupils' understanding of the value of community involvement.

Residential care staff deliver an independent programme that helps pupils with domestic and housekeeping skills. Additionally, the school makes good use of in-house therapists and a consultant speech and language therapist to enhance the curriculum through individual and group activities. These activities support pupils' development of social and communication skills, decision-making, relationship-building and personal health.

Teachers, therapists and residential care staff meet regularly to discuss pupils' progress in personal, communication and social skills development. Where appropriate, pupils access vocational courses in colleges, attend work experience programmes and take part in voluntary work in the local community.

All pupils have opportunities to develop essential knowledge and skills to assist their transition from school to supported living. These include personal safety, social and cultural awareness, nutrition, cooking and personal budgeting.

Outcomes

- Pupils have increased levels of independence and are developing skills needed for life and work and for the transition from school to supported living.
- Forty per cent of pupils who have left Amberleigh have moved into independent or supported living.
- Forty per cent of pupils returned to foster care or the care of their parents.
- Twenty per cent of pupils remained in care of children's homes.
- Pupils' personal, social and communication skills have improved.
- Positive reports on pupils are provided by college and work placements. This demonstrates the commitment of the pupils to succeed. It builds their confidence in interacting within the wider community.

35 A minority of schools have established after-school clubs specifically for children who are looked after. Many of these clubs give pupils access to additional support in literacy and numeracy. In addition, they are able to use a range of ICT equipment that is not available in their foster care placement. Often, there are also opportunities to develop practical skills in cooking and discuss issues or concerns with staff. However, opportunities for pupils to engage in after-school clubs are too limited across Wales. In a minority of schools, transport difficulties can prevent engagement.

36   Maerdy Community Primary School in Rhondda Cynon Taff has used its pupil deprivation grant for children who are looked after (PDG/LAC) to provide an after-school club specifically for children who are looked after.

Case study 4: Maerdy Community Primary School – after school provision to develop pupils' skills

Context

Maerdy Community Primary School caters for children aged three to eleven and includes a local authority specialist class for pupils with special educational needs. There are currently 244 children in full-time education. Forty two per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The area is recognised as one of the most deprived in Wales and there are high levels of unemployment.

Strategy

Over recent years, the school has seen a rise in the number of children who are looked after by the local authority or who are in the care of grandparents.

The school's culture ensures that pupils are listened to and that adults at school are approachable.

The school recognises that the needs of children who are looked after are often complex. In nearly all cases, the children are in need of emotional support, as evidenced by observation of their behaviour in and out of classes, their ability to socialise with others and through the school's wellbeing assessment. This assessment provides information on the child's emotional wellbeing at home and school and also charts the child's social links and interactions within their class.

The school supports pupils well. Emotional literacy support assistants (ELSA) work with children who are looked after who are presenting with emotional difficulties in school. However, wellbeing assessments indicated that children who are looked after were still not as happy as other children in school.

Action

The school decided to make sure that all children who are looked after had a significant adult they could go to in school. This could be a meet and greet in the morning or going to a drop in session during playtime, lunchtime or after school. The school carefully matched the personalities and interests of these children with the most suitable adults. These adults were almost always support staff.

The school also decided to run an after school club for children who were looked after. This is funded by the PDG/LAC. The principle of the club was that children who are looked after would be invited to stay after school for an hour four times a week. The sessions always start with some form of snack, which pupils help to prepare. Children are also encouraged to discuss how their day has gone. For one day a week, older children are teamed with younger children to help them develop their ability to care and nurture others. They listen to the younger children read or

play a game with them. All children are expected to do a literacy or numeracy activity during the session. Generally, these activities involve guided reading or using a computer mathematics programme.

The school evaluated the impact of the provision at the end of the first year. The emotional wellbeing was improving and links with carers were developing well. However, the impact of the club on standards in literacy and numeracy was limited. As a result, the literacy and numeracy element to the sessions was removed and the school now provides separate after-school sessions to develop these skills.

The focus of the after-school club is now on developing pupils social skills. There are clear structures and well-planned activities. At the start of each club session, pupils listen to the views of other pupils. They are supported to reflect on their day in school and to articulate this to other pupils. Pupils listen attentively and learn to take turns and share the attention of adults. Cooking sessions are based on the theme of healthy eating. During games activities, pupils further develop their social and communication skills.

Older pupils are still encouraged to support younger pupils. Carers and grandparents are invited to join sessions, with the expectation that one or two might want to become a full-time volunteer for the group. Carers are also now encouraged to arrive early to pick up the pupils and to use the specially designated hub for parents and carers so that they can chat about their difficulties and strengths while having a cup of tea.

Outcomes

- Almost all pupils continue to attend the club week after week and questionnaires show that they enjoy the activities.
- Most wellbeing questionnaires have shown an improvement in wellbeing since club began.
- Half of the children are on track to achieve or exceed the expected outcomes for their age in literacy and numeracy. The school has identified around quarter of pupils as more able and talented in English and mathematics.
- A quarter of the children who are looked after were admitted to school less than a term ago. On arrival at the school, they were not working at the expected level for their age. These pupils have already shown marked progress in their attitudes to learning and are expected to achieve the expected level for their age before end of the key stage.
- Many of the children who live with their grandparents are on track to achieve the expected outcome for their age.
- A very few pupils have severe communication difficulties but are making progress.
- Anti-social behaviours previously present have been significantly reduced.
- The attendance of children who are looked after is higher than for the rest of the school.

37   In many schools, there are very strong pastoral support systems. Where children who are looked after have someone to talk to, they associate this with contributing to improving their self-esteem and educational outcomes, (Voices from Care, 2015). This level of support allows children who are looked after to build a relationship with an adult who is interested in them as a person and not just their ability to perform educationally. Very often, these members of staff are the first people children who are looked after turn to when they need advice, support or comfort.

Tracking

38   All schools have tracking systems that are generally effective in monitoring the progress of children who are looked after. Most schools have a good understanding of the performance of these pupils across the school and on an individual basis. These tracking systems are particularly effective when all staff understand and update individual tracking information regularly.

39   In a minority of schools, the senior leader with responsibility for children who are looked after, (the designated teacher), has an excellent understanding of the school's data tracking systems. They are able to interpret the data and use this well to set high expectations for staff and pupils. They recognise the need to evaluate the impact that interventions have on pupils and have a clear vision for improvement.

40   Most of the schools visited formally review tracking data, at a whole school, group and individual level, on at least a termly basis. In addition, they use assessment information to test the accuracy of their tracking data and make amendments to individual pupils' targets. They use a traffic light or similar system to highlight pupils' current performance against expected progress. In a few schools, this progress information is mapped alongside targets in pupils' personal education plans (PEPs) or individual education plans (IEPs). However, many schools are generally not as aware as they need to be of pupils' social and emotional needs. Assessment of these needs, and therefore formal tracking of them, is generally weak. In addition, the tracking of pupil progress on specific interventions is not captured well enough in whole-school tracking systems.

41   Many schools track the attainment, attendance and exclusions of children who are looked after well. They use data effectively to refine and improve the curriculum on offer. Most schools, particularly secondary schools, have a range of provision, for example support centres, nurture groups and provision away from the school site, to prevent pupils, including children who are looked after, from becoming disengaged and at risk of exclusion. As a result, in these schools, the exclusion rates of children who are looked after compares favourably to that of other pupils. A minority of schools have undertaken an analysis of the attendance of children who are looked after. Nearly all of these schools are able to demonstrate that children who are looked after have higher attendance levels than their peers. However, a few schools do not track the attendance and behaviour of children who are looked after closely enough.

42   In many schools, pupils are aware of their individual targets for improvement across all subjects. These targets generally align well with the schools' high expectations and are accompanied by clear guidance on what pupils need to do to achieve them.

In a few schools, pupils' targets consist of the current level of working, an expected target and a challenge target. Challenge targets indicate the expected outcomes the schools aim for with additional support. A very few schools have aligned individual targets in PEPs and IEPs. As a result, there is a clear focus on priorities and duplication of targets is avoided. However, targets in PEPs or IEPs do not generally align as strongly as they could.

Mentoring and support for emotional wellbeing

43   Every school visited recognises the value of mentoring to children who are looked after. Many schools have an approach to mentoring that ranges from tutorials with form teachers to timetabled discussions with members of school senior management.

44   Form tutor discussions, as a planned activity, happen in a minority of schools. These discussions may occur during form tutor time where the teacher meets with the form group and has focused discussions on pupils' learning experiences, their aspirations and what they and the school need to do to realise the pupils' ambitions. In a few schools, these sessions are timetabled outside the form tutor registration period. Generally, form tutors know how well pupils are doing in school and have access to performance data. As a result, they are able to tailor their discussions with pupils about the progress they are making in all subjects.

45   In around half of schools, daily meet and greet sessions are used to very good effect. On arrival at school, pupils have tea and toast with an allocated member of staff. Staff use this opportunity to focus on what went well in school the day before and to respond to any issues that may have arisen at home. This is a common feature in the schools that run nurture groups. A minority of schools have trained emotional literacy support assistants (ELSAs). These staff support pupils in understanding and regulating their own emotions while also respecting the feelings of those around them.

46   Nurture groups have been established in a minority of schools. Where nurture groups exist, pupils engage more positively with staff and other pupils over time. In these schools, staff recognise the importance of understanding the emotional needs of pupils.

47   Many schools are particularly flexible in adapting the curriculum and support for children who are looked after at times of personal difficulty. For example, the pastoral curriculum in the study support centre in Cwrt Sart Community Comprehensive School focuses on building and establishing relationships with pupils. The school works well with pupils to identify and address anger management issues, and helps pupils to respond appropriately. The school helps to build pupil confidence to re-engage in mainstream lessons. Staff in the study support centre are highly effective in working with mainstream staff and provide them with relevant information on pupils.

48   Rumney Primary School in Cardiff uses a system that identifies friendship groups in class and school. Staff use this information sensitively to support the development of friendships in classes and the school. This has resulted in pupils, including children who are looked after, being matched to other pupils to develop friendships. As a result, pupils settle into school quicker and are less anxious.

49   A minority of schools use a range of assessment tools to gauge pupils' social and emotional skills and their readiness to learn. The results of initial assessments are used sensitively to identify needs and to provide mentoring support.

50   Children who are looked after have a number of professionals involved in their life, all of whom are responsible for a different aspect of the child's life. A very few schools allocate learning coaches[1] to children who are looked after for the duration of their time at the school. Learning coaches and pupils get to know one another very well. These adults generally become a focal point for the pupil, their foster carer and social worker. They act as advocates for pupils and provide invaluable support, advice and guidance on a comprehensive range of issues that affect the pupil. In these schools, all pupils who are looked after have weekly timetabled sessions with their learning coach.

51   Learning coaches monitor the progress of children who are looked after well and seek their views in relation to their school work, school in general and any other issues that may be affecting them. These sessions may include discussions around contact with parents and anxieties that pupils have around the security of their current foster care placement.

52   The consistency provided by the learning coach or other significant adult, such as a form teacher, or member of support staff should not be underestimated. As noted by Voices from Care (2015)

> young people… who received support with their education; be that
> from someone in an educational setting or outside, felt happier,
> more confident and believed they had greater success… (p. 5)

53   In a few schools, there are formal mentoring sessions for pupils with members of the senior management team. Generally, these are where older pupils following public examinations have been identified as needing additional encouragement and support. Senior staff meet with pupils, for example on a fortnightly basis, to discuss their current academic performance. They advise pupils on aspects of their work, organisation and planning skills that need to be improved. This approach helps pupils develop their resilience and sense of responsibility. These schools have very high expectations for all pupils, including those who are looked after.

54   Brynteg Comprehensive School in Bridgend has a comprehensive range of provision for children who are looked after. In this case study, the school demonstrates how it has used its tracking system to identify pupils who are in need of additional support.

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[1] In this report, the term learning coach is applied to staff who have a specific role in supporting children who are looked after.

Case study 5: Brynteg Comprehensive School – the effective use of tracking to monitor progress and improve outcomes

Context

Brynteg Comprehensive School is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive and is one of the largest secondary schools in Wales with 1,603 pupils on roll with 434 in the sixth form. Currently there are 30 children who are looked after. The majority of these are in key stage 3, with just over a quarter in key stage 4 and a few in the sixth form. Half of the children who are looked after are on the special educational needs register.

Strategy

The school identified the need for systematic use of tracking, at a whole-school level, to identify and provide support to pupils to improve their outcomes.

Action

The school has designed a tracking system that is used effectively by teachers to determine the progress made by pupils, including children who are looked after.

Children who are looked after are identified clearly on all mark sheets. This feature allows teachers and managers to track the progress of each pupil easily.

The school uses actual and predicted performance data to track pupil progress. Subject teachers continually assess pupil progress and the school formally evaluates progress on four occasions throughout the year. A colour-code system is used to analyse the data. This system allows the schools to implement appropriate support packages for all children, including those who are looked after. Examples of support for children who are looked after include:

Transition:
- A cluster learning support officer works with other schools to identify vulnerable groups, including children who are looked after. They make referrals to nurture provision and liaise closely with the other staff to ensure that individual learning needs are met.
- The 'Helping Hands' programme further enhances the transition process. This supports pupils in coping with the demands of the transition process. The programme uses older pupils who are looked after as peer mentors, thus building relationships and giving responsibility to these individuals.

Mentoring:
- Form tutor mentoring is a formal meeting between pupils and their form tutors, which happens three times a year. Staff discuss with pupils the progress they are making, set targets for improvement and highlight any additional support needs.
- For pupils in Year 11, the school has developed an 'infinity mentoring' programme. This targets pupils who may achieve grade Cs with additional support. Many of the children who are looked after access this mentoring. Members of the leadership team, as well as volunteer staff, are assigned up to

two pupils. They meet with pupils twice a month and use the school tracking system, as well as discussions with individual teachers, to mentor pupils.

- In addition, the school works with the local authority LACE co-ordinator to provide external mentors for all Year 11 pupils who are looked after. The mentor regularly meets pupils and plans individualised programmes and support. These include revision packages, bespoke packages of timetabled lessons as an alternative form of curriculum, confidence-building strategies, careers pathways and attendance at child protection and review meetings. The support that these mentors provide focuses on both the wellbeing and academic outcomes of pupils.

Support:
- The school assigns a dedicated learning coach to all children who are looked after. The learning coach meets with pupils once a week to monitor their social and emotional progress as well as their academic progress. The senior support officer provides exceptional leadership to the team of learning coaches.
- The nurture provision (Ty Seren) develops pupils' self-esteem and social relationships well. Staff who run the provision have a good understanding of the psychology of attachment and its impact on the behaviour and emotional needs of pupils.
- The carers of children who are looked after are involved in the discussions, ensuring effective partnership working towards high-level outcomes.

Outcomes

Children who are looked after perform well in many areas:

- Outcomes in the level 1 and level 2 thresholds at key stage 4 are very good.
- All children who are looked after achieve at least three Essential Skills Wales qualifications at level 2.
- At key stage 3, all pupils are achieving level 5+ in all of the core subjects.
- In national tests, children who are looked after perform as well as their peers. Eighty-eight per cent made expected or better progress.
- Overall attendance is above 95%.
- The behaviour of children who are looked after is very good. There have been no permanent exclusions in the last three years. The fixed-term exclusion rate of children who are looked after is low.
- The nurture group takes a graduated and progressive approach to developing independence. Many children who are looked after access nurture provision on entry and are integrated gradually into the school's mainstream both socially and emotionally.

55   In general, special schools have stronger links with a range of external agencies than mainstream schools. This is to be expected, considering the complex needs of the pupils that attend special schools. As a result, all children, including children who are looked after, have good access to specialist services. In many cases, these services are provided on-site, which helps to minimise the need for pupils miss school to attend appointments.

56   Many schools engage well with a range of multi-agency partners to help them to support children who are looked after. 'Team around the family' or child meetings are used to good effect in identifying particular needs and allocating responsibilities to partners.

57   The majority of schools link with third sector organisations to provide a range of additional services. As a result, these schools provide a broader range of experiences for children who are looked after, including sports activities and access to specialist services such as drug and alcohol support.

58   All maintained secondary schools in Wales provide access to counselling for pupils, and children who are looked after are no exception. In addition to providing counselling, a few schools employ therapists to work with children who are looked after on issues that are specific to them. However, a few schools find it difficult to link with and access specialist mental health services when needed.

Transition and education placement

59   A few schools visited work well together to enhance the planning of transition for children who are looked after from primary to secondary school. For example, in Bridgend, Penybont Primary School works well with its local secondary school, Brynteg Comprehensive, to ensure that the secondary school has a good understanding of the needs of the child. Dedicated transition officers sensitively plan transition visits for children who are looked after. In addition to the transition activities for all pupils, the school arranges one-to-one visits, where the pupil is able to meet key staff and familiarise themselves with the layout of the school. These approaches assist greatly in removing the fear of moving to a new school.

60   Nearly all schools are involved in discussions around future educational placements of pupils who are looked after in their school. However, the level of involvement and knowledge that schools have of pupils prior to their joining the school is too variable. In Ysgol Y Gogarth, in Conwy, the headteacher sits on the local authority moderation panel. This ensures that there is a smooth transition from one school to another and that the receiving school has relevant information before a child moves into the local authority from another area. As a result, the school is able to plan the pupil's transition more effectively. This moderation panel recognises the possibly negative impact that multiple school moves have on pupils. In one recent example, the school has worked well with the local authority to maintain a pupil's current placement and avoid disruption to their education.

Professional development for staff

61   In the special schools visited, both maintained and independent, there is comprehensive ongoing professional development for staff on meeting the needs of children who are looked after. Many schools hold annual training updates for staff on vulnerable groups of learners. Such sessions are used to outline the performance of groups of learners and to remind staff of their responsibilities for vulnerable groups, including children who are looked after. However, schools do not always use training sessions well enough to raise staff awareness of the life experiences, or backgrounds of children who are looked after.

62   In around half of schools, staff trained for specific roles have a clear understanding of the typical needs of children who are looked after. This includes learning coaches, specialist support staff, ELSAs and nurture group practitioners. The training that these members of staff attend, generally provided by outside organisations, includes topics such as attachment, aspects of child development, emotional health and coaching. A very few schools have delivered training for all staff on bereavement, trauma and loss.

63   All of the young people interviewed as part of the Voices from Care survey (2015) noted that:

> "…teachers at school did not understand what it was like to be looked after and how being looked after has a direct effect on their education. Many felt that there was little understanding on how and why looked after children or young people's experiences trigger negative behaviour... (p. 2), [it] would be a good idea to have teachers who receive training around the issues and experiences of looked after children…" (p. 11)

64   The role of local authorities and the LACE co-ordinators in providing professional development opportunities for school staff varies considerably across Wales. This ranges from local authorities who clearly communicate the training they provide to a few local authorities who only respond to individual requests from schools. In a few authorities, there are clear induction programmes for designated teachers. At Ferndale Community School in Rhondda Cynon Taf, there is an ongoing professional development programme for staff working with children who are looked after. Staff have been trained well at different levels in issues such as domestic abuse, self-harm and sexualised behaviour.

65   In many schools, designated teachers for children who are looked after attend meetings with the local authority LACE co-ordinator. However, the frequency of these meetings across Wales is inconsistent and the meetings do not generally focus enough on the professional development needs of designated teachers or other school staff. This is a significant weakness as it means that not all staff in schools have a clear enough understanding of the needs of children who are looked after.

66   In a very few schools, the designated teacher for children who are looked after does not have a specific job description. As a result, they are unclear about the expectations of the role.

67   There are effective links between schools and children's services staff. Both work well together to identify and review the educational needs of children who are looked after and agree individual pupils' targets for improvement in relation to school work. However, the role that staff from children's services have with schools, prior to pupils starting at a school, is too variable across the schools visited and generally limited to information sharing. The role that children's services play in supporting the professional development of school staff, particularly in relation to the needs and vulnerabilities of children who are looked after, is underdeveloped.

Learner voice

68   In many schools, children who are looked after have a wide range of opportunities to express their views about school. These typically include being members of the school council or other representative groups. At Bishop Gore Comprehensive in Swansea, there is a pupil governing body. This includes a pupil support sub-committee, which focuses on a wide range of pastoral issues, including the needs of vulnerable groups.

69   A minority of schools have timetabled pupil-teacher consultation events. These are used well and give pupils the opportunity to discuss their progress with their form or class teacher.

70   Nearly all schools use the PEP review meetings to gauge the views of children who are looked after and many schools feel that these provide an appropriate opportunity for pupils to express their views on education and set targets for the future. .

71   Following feedback from young people, the City of Cardiff Council recognised that the format of PEPs was not particularly engaging or child-friendly. The local authority refreshed their documents and produced separate PEPs, one for primary-aged pupils and one for secondary-aged pupils. (See Appendix 4.)

72   In a very few schools, the views of children who are looked after are explicitly sought to inform the school's development plan.

73   However, arrangements to listen to the voice of children who are looked after vary across Wales. There are excellent practices in a minority of authorities where children who are looked after make presentations to elected members, produce training videos for them and meet them at venues across the authority to share their thoughts and feelings. A majority of local authorities hold annual celebratory events that champion the achievements of their children who are looked after.

74   Many local authorities commission a third sector organisation to provide advocacy services for their children who are looked after. In a few local authorities, all secondary-aged children who are looked after take part in an annual Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) survey.

75   On an individual basis, children who are looked after are able to express their views through formal meetings and discussion. However, capturing the views of children who are looked after, as a distinct group, is not well developed.

76   For the past eight years, the City and County of Swansea has supported children who are looked after to express the views that matter to them.

Case study 6: City and County of Swansea – making the views of children who are looked after matter

Context

The City and County of Swansea has a significant looked after population, with over 500 young people in care. Many of these pupils are of statutory school age. The voice of the young person has been a major factor in shaping the Corporate Parenting Strategy in line with duties under the United Nation Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC).

Strategy

The local authority has developed a range of participation activities and events effectively to support children who are looked after to have a voice and to influence county policies.

Consultation events over recent years highlighted the need for a range of young people to be supported in having an effective voice in the county. As a result, a participation group for children who are looked after was established in 2008.

This group has been renamed #Iamme by the young people, to emphasise their needs and voices as individuals with a right to be heard. The aim of this group is to ensure that the voices of children who are looked after are heard at the highest level within the City and County of Swansea and that policies developed by the council reflect this.

Members of the #Iamme group come from a wide diversity of backgrounds, placements and learning provisions and include learners from mainstream and special schools, pupil referral units, education other than at school and residential placements.

Action

The #Iamme group meets weekly after school and during each school holiday. Activities have included residential events in the community working on the current initiative together with Corporate Parenting Forum members and professionals as invited. Local authority officers support the young people in all these events.

The group has been actively involved in many participation events within the local area and nationally. Highlights include:

- Work with Voices from Care in the consultation with the Welsh Government on 'Raising ambitions, achievements and educational attainment of looked after children in schools'
- Work in Cascade research with Cardiff University on the impact of being looked after in education, to inform the new Welsh Government's education strategy for looked after learners
- Work as young commissioners with independent fostering and residential care agencies; this was developed further in Swansea where the group produced their

own DVD, linking with the BBC, to highlight the importance of commissioning the most appropriate care placements to best meet need; a presentation was made to full council by the group
- Participation in discussions with Assembly Members at the Senedd, to share their views as looked after learners
- The hosting of an annual awards event since 2009, where over 250 looked after learners have been recognised annually for their achievements in education and other areas

Most recently, #Iamme produced a film in which they share their experiences and views on their placements, education, their ambitions for the future together with issues they faced being in care. At the premiere of the film, members of #Iamme provided the invited audience with performances of song, poetry and dance, all of which emphasised the issues they experience, their ambitions and aspirations for the future.

Outcomes

- There has been greatly increased self-confidence, enabling effective discussion with a range of professionals, with learners leading workshops and chairing their own review meetings.
- Events and the film have inspired other children who are looked after.
- Professionals have developed a greater understanding of the children and the issues they face.
- There has been increased take up of opportunities to achieve in and outside school, encouraging ambition.
- Children who are looked after contribute their views in the development of the new Personal Education Plan format.
- Holding events in schools and universities has raised the aspirations of children who are looked after.
- These opportunities have enabled a range of learners of all abilities to have their views heard.

Partnerships with parents and carers

77   Nearly all schools build effective relationships with foster carers. Those schools that are successful in working with foster carers take time to build relationships. There are clear communications between the school and the foster carers and they keep in touch on a regular basis. In a minority of schools, foster carers are allocated a learning coach. Over time, the learning coach knows the pupil well and becomes a significant adult for the pupil and the foster carer. As a result, they are able to have a meaningful conversation with the foster carer and respond promptly to any queries.

78   A very few schools have appointed family engagement officers. Their role is to liaise with families and provide direct pro-active support to foster carers. This may include arranging visits to the school and facilitating bespoke training, for example in understanding the behaviour of their child.

79   A very few schools invite foster carers to informal 'getting to know you' sessions. Foster carers are introduced to relevant school staff and are given a tour of the school, including visiting nurture groups or other areas of the school that provide an enhanced level of support. Schools use these opportunities well to inform foster carers about the curriculum and arrangements for care, support and guidance.

80   A minority of schools formally record the views of foster carers and, in a very few schools, foster carers have contributed to formal evaluations of transition arrangements for pupils and aspects of specialist support that the pupils receive, such as nurture groups. However, schools do not always use this feedback well enough to refine their approaches, either at the school or in sharing its practice with others.

81   Colcot Primary School in the Vale of Glamorgan has strengthened the links that it has with foster carers. Foster carers visit lessons and take part in learning activities with their children. As a result, they have a better understanding of the work that children are doing in school and how to support them at home.

Case study 7: Colcot Primary School – targeted work with foster carers

Context

Colcot Primary School in Barry has 320 full-time equivalent pupils on roll. Forty-eight per cent are eligible for free school meals. This is significantly higher than the national average. Currently, around 3% of the school population are looked after. Many are cared for by relatives or family friends.

The school does not view being a carer as a barrier and there are many opportunities for meaningful engagement. The school has a strong inclusive family and community ethos.

Strategy

The school aimed to develop positive relationships between the school and foster carers.

Actions

The school's work is based on psychological principles that help to develop the thinking skills and belief systems of carers and parents.

There are well-established links with both Communities and Families First teams. The school encourages parents and carers to join the 'putting families first team' and participate in a varied programme.

The school targets carers to attend family sessions at school. Activities range from developing parenting skills to carers working in the classroom with the pupils better to understand what they are learning and support them in these activities. These provide valuable opportunities for carers to be involved in the education of the child and feel part of the school.

The school celebrates the successes of the different projects with the carers.

Outcomes

- Children respond well to having their carers in school. These experiences improve their self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Carers and parents are included in the learning of the children they look after. As a result, they feel fully included in school life and have a better understanding of what their children learn at school.
- The confidence of carers to engage with the school and the relationship they have with staff have improved. As a result, carers are active members of the parents and teachers association (PTA) and access initiatives such as the credit union and food co-operative.
- Carers are more confident to contribute in multi-agency meetings. This has led to a better and more open conversation around the child's education and care. As a result, carers feel more involved in reviewing progress and setting targets in children's PEPs.
- Carers are more secure in caring for the children because of the support they receive from the school. They report that the children are happier at home.

The role of governors

82   Governing bodies and designated governors for children who are looked after have a key role to provide suitable challenge to headteachers. However, their effectiveness in this role varies considerably across Wales.

83   In around half of schools, governors are provided with clear reports from headteachers. These reports focus well on the standards achieved by pupils and include information on attendance and behaviour for children who are looked after. For example, the headteacher's report at Amberleigh Residential Therapeutic School is accompanied by updates from therapy and care staff. These reports are used well by the directors of the company to gain a better understanding of the needs of the pupils, the provision offered and the actions that need to be taken.

84   In a minority of schools, reports provided by the headteacher to the governing body do not provide a detailed enough picture of the attainments and achievements of children who are looked after. As a result, governors do not challenge robustly enough. In a few schools, governors are unclear about their responsibilities for children who are looked after and the designated governor does not report to the full governing body.

85   A minority of schools benefit from the personal commitment, wider experience and knowledge that governors bring to their role. Examples of this in the schools visited include governors who are also a member of the council's education scrutiny committee, an experienced foster carer and a member of the corporate parenting panel. In these schools, the designated children who are looked after governor and other members of the governing body are acutely aware of their responsibilities. They are effective in acting as critical friends to the senior leadership team.

86   In just over half of the schools visited, governors do not have a good enough understanding of the issues that affect children who are looked after. Training for governors in relation to vulnerable learners is generally limited to child protection and safeguarding.

Pupil Deprivation Grant for looked after children (PDG/LAC)

87   Nearly all schools visited as part of this report have used the PDG/LAC well to support children who are looked after.

88   Until April 2015, the component of the pupil deprivation grant for looked after children (PDG/LAC) was allocated to schools. The local authority had a central role in ensuring that the funds were used in line with the terms and conditions of the grant.

89   Many schools were clear on how the grant was to be used. Their local authorities had provided a useful summary for them. All schools were able to demonstrate how they had used the grant specifically to benefit children who were looked after.

90   There are many examples where schools have used the PDG/LAC to meet the academic and emotional needs of children who are looked after better. This was often done through additional support staff, extra tuition, and access to enrichment activities, specialist equipment and other resources. These schools used the grant well and the majority supplemented the PDG/LAC with other grants or the core budget of the school. In nearly all cases this allowed greater access to the curriculum, including enrichment activities, and in many cases led to improved outcomes for children who are looked after.

91   A few schools have used PDG/LAC funding to provide specific equipment and resources for pupils. One school bought a sewing machine for use by a pupil who was following a GCSE course in textiles. Other schools purchased computer equipment where this was not available or through the foster care placement. These schools plan well for the use of the grant and can demonstrate the impact on pupils' standards.

92   In a few schools, the grant has been used to pay for private tuition for pupils, particularly older pupils studying for external examinations. In addition, the grant has been used to part-fund residential and cultural activities including school trips abroad. These approaches help to ensure that children who are looked after are included in experiences available to other pupils.

93   A very few schools use the PDG/LAC to develop whole-school training for staff. This includes training in attachment, mindfulness and effective coaching models.

94   Brynteg Comprehensive School in Bridgend has used the PDG/LAC grant very effectively. The school uses meetings with other professionals and foster carers to identify how the grant can be best used to support children who are looked after.

Case study 8: Brynteg Comprehensive School – using the pupil deprivation grant for looked after children[2]

Context

Brynteg is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive and is one of the largest secondary schools in Wales with 1,603 pupils on roll, with 434 in the sixth form. Currently there are 30 children who are looked after in the school. The majority of these are in key stage 3, with just over a quarter in key stage 4 and the remainder in the sixth form. Half of the children who are looked after are on the special educational needs register.

The school has high expectations for all its pupils. The social, emotional and physical wellbeing of all pupils is at the heart of the school. It understands that only when pupils are secure in their environment will they learn and flourish.

Strategy

The school aims to use the PDG/LAC to secure better outcomes for pupils.

Actions

The school has used the PDG/LAC to provide additional support and resources for pupils, to widen their cultural experiences and to develop whole-school approaches to working with foster carers. Decisions on how to use the pupil deprivation grant on an individual basis are made in conjunction with pupils, their foster carers and any requests from professional partners. Careful consideration is given as to how the grant will improve pupils' social, emotional or physical wellbeing and ensure that they keep healthy and safe and participate as fully as possible in school life.

Providing additional support:

- Many pupils have received laptops, allowing them to access on-line curriculum materials to complement the work they do in school. In addition, pupils are able to develop their research skills and apply this to homework or coursework projects.
- Extra tuition, particularly in English and mathematics, has developed pupils' understanding in these subjects.
- The school supports pupils' literacy and numeracy skills by funding boot camps, which give targeted support to individuals. They also provide extra-curricular revision packages in mathematics and English. Children who are looked after attend these activities during registration, after school and during school holidays. The PDG/LAC has been used to fund transport to enable the pupils to stay after school and to be taken home safely.
- The majority of pupils also benefited from the purchase of revision materials, subject guides and equipment for subject areas such as art and physical

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[2] This case study highlights the use of the pupil deprivation grant prior to the grant being administered by the regional consortium.

education.

- A sewing machine and materials have been purchased. These enabled pupils to complete their textiles coursework. As a result, they were not disadvantaged by the lack of access to appropriate equipment at home.

Widening the cultural experience of children who are looked after:

- The school uses the PDG/LAC to fund educational visits, including overseas learning experiences.
- There are a considerable opportunities for out-of-school learning at the school. A range of clubs, sporting opportunities, visits, special events, links with the community and other extra-curricular activities are available to children who are looked after. Many children are involved in at least one club. The school sets targets in pupils' PEPs to access out-of-school learning.

Working with foster carers:

- The 'Helping Hands' programme was established to support parents or carers of the most vulnerable pupils to develop their skills in areas that will be useful to the pupils' needs.
- The Reading Café provides a space where carers can work alongside their children and support them in guided group reading. This helps to build relationships while improving literacy and numeracy skills.
- Links have also been developed with the local library, which supports this group of learners. This is also part of a wider school 'Parent Partnership Programme', which engages parents and carers in school life, giving them an understanding of the approaches used to teach literacy and numeracy.

Outcomes

- Due to the support and the wide range of opportunities provided, children who are looked after have equal access to learning experiences. These experiences equip the pupils with valuable social and life skills.
- Pupils enjoy school and have opportunities to participate fully in school life. At 95%, the attendance of children who are looked after is higher than the average for all other pupils.
- There have been no permanent exclusions of children who are looked after in the last three years and the number of fixed-term exclusions is very low.
- Through cultural experiences, pupils gain a better understanding of different communities and they develop their wider knowledge and understanding.
- Over time, pupils become more confident. Their sense of worth and self-esteem grow.
- At key stage 3, many pupils achieved the expected level for their age in the core subjects. All pupils at GCSE achieved the level 1 and level 2 indicators.
- The purchase of additional resources, as well as a bespoke timetable, supported one pupil to achieve an A grade for the practical element of their GCSE design technology course.
- At the end of Year 7, an achievement evening is held, where a number of awards are given. These celebrate the successes of children who are looked after.

- Over the last four years, children who are looked after have had their achievements recognised. They have received various awards, including the Spirit of Brynteg award, a sponsored citizenship award and school council, skills and Spelling Bee Champions awards.

95 In Greenfield Special School in Merthyr Tydfil, the LACE co-ordinator was effective in monitoring the resources and provision provided by the PDG/LAC funding last year. Pupils' social workers and foster carers also contributed to reviewing the impact of the use of the PDG/LAC. However, the involvement of foster carers in planning for the use of the grant is not a common feature across schools in Wales.

96 Very few independent special schools receive the pupil deprivation grant. Most local authorities consider that the funding provided for placements covers all aspects of provision for the pupils. Where PDG/LAC funding has been made available, a minority of schools have used this to provide increased access to community and cultural activities such as theatre trips.

97 Since April 2015, regional education consortia are responsible for the PDG/LAC funding. Consortia were required to produce spending plans that clearly outlined how the grant would be used within the consortia and the expected benefits for children who are looked after. Each of the consortia produced a spending plan that outlines its broad principles. All have improving outcomes in literacy and numeracy for children who are looked after as their top priorities. Additional priorities include early intervention, tracking individual pupil progress and support for school staff through increased training opportunities.

98 There is considerable variation in the level of detail in consortia plans. The rationale for priorities is not always clear. Actions that need to be taken are sometimes vague and often relate to processes rather than the expected benefits or outcomes for children who are looked after. Costings against priority areas are not provided in half of the spending plans. In addition, there is a lack of clarity about how monies are delegated to schools or how schools can access the grant to support the specific needs of individual pupils. This uncertainty puts additional pressures on schools, particularly where they are maintaining a level of service that was previously funded through the PDG/LAC.

99 The regional consortia were not well placed to determine how to use the PDG/LAC. They lacked expertise in this area, failed to consult widely enough with expert practitioners to gain a broader insight into the challenges, and did not use all available data to inform their plans. In addition, the timescale they were given to produce meaningful spending plans was too short.

100 Regional consortia do not have a good enough understanding of where there is good or effective practice either within their own local authorities or further afield. As a result, they exclude practices that are effective and are unsure whether the approaches included in their plans will be successful.

101 As a result, many schools are unaware of the region's strategy and what this means for them. This has created a degree of uncertainty and many schools are unsure whether they will be able to maintain the enhanced level of curriculum and support that they provide for children who are looked after.

Good practice in local authorities

Local authority policy

102 The quality of local authority policies for work with children who are looked after is too variable. In all local authorities visited, the roles and responsibilities of schools to perform their statutory duty for children who are looked after are set out clearly in their policy. This includes the creation of PEPs, and the appointment of a designated teacher and governor for children who are looked after. In the best cases, policies have been written following consultation with schools, carers and children who are looked after. These policies provide a clear direction for schools to ensure that raising the achievement of the children is at the forefront of their work. For example, in Conwy there is a requirement that every school includes raising the attainment of children who are looked after in their school development plan and that challenge advisers challenge schools to set appropriate educational targets for their children. The policy also ensures that the authority will transport children who are looked after to their original school if this is in the best interest of the child.

103 Most local authority policies share common priorities, such as encouraging all children who are looked after to remain in education, employment or training, and making sure that there are well-developed systems for tracking the timeliness and quality of PEPs. However, in a very few cases, there is no policy for children who are looked after and the local authority does not set appropriate targets for the attainment and achievements of these children. In a very few authorities, not all children who are looked after have a PEP. Across Wales, PEPs do not always follow the same format and not all PEPs focus well enough on past, present and future educational attainment. The tracking of non-academic achievements is generally not in place.

104 An example of child-friendly PEPs can be found in Appendix 3.

105 In order to re-engage children who are looked after in learning, the City of Cardiff Council has established a traineeship programme. Traineeships are available in local authority departments. Trainees are supported throughout the programme by a co-ordinator. The Families First initiative has funded a tutor to work with trainees to develop other aspects of their employability skills, for example writing curriculum vitae (CVs).

Case study 9: City of Cardiff Council – children who are looked after traineeship programme

Context

The City of Cardiff Council has embraced the legal duties regarding the education, training and employment outcomes for children who are looked after.

Cardiff has over 600 children who are looked after. Approximately two-thirds are of statutory school age.

In 2014, the local authority launched a traineeship programme for children who are

looked after. It provides care leavers with opportunities to secure work placements in local authority departments. This initiative has received full Council backing and is included in the first corporate objective of the Council.

Traineeships provide an opportunity to develop new work-based skills and personal development skills. In addition, they focus on basic numeracy and literacy skills.

Strategy

To improve outcomes for young care leavers and those young people who are looked after by the local authority by providing them with work experience and training that will improve their long-term employment outcomes.

Actions

In March 2015, a dedicated looked after children and care leavers traineeship co-ordinator was appointed. Their role is to liaise with managers in the local authority to secure traineeship opportunities. To date, 38 traineeship opportunities are available. In addition, the co-ordinator liaises with referring agencies, plans interviews for prospective trainees and provides ongoing support to the trainees. This support includes arranging bus passes, transporting young people to interviews and accompanying them to placements to help them to settle quickly.

The co-ordinator has created a referral process and works with referring staff from social services, the youth offending team and the careers service.

The local authority uses internal communications systems well to promote the scheme to staff, for example through the Children's Services Newsletter, an article in the Capital Times, the intranet and in wage slips. In addition, promotional materials, including a traineeship booklet, have also been produced.

A small number of places have been secured on the corporate apprenticeship scheme for trainees that successfully complete the children who are looked after traineeship programme.

The local authority has strengthened its links with Cardiff and the Vale College to provide traineeship experiences and guaranteed interviews in a few vocational areas.

Outcomes

- Fifty-nine referrals for young people have been received.
- Thirty-five per cent progressed to being interviewed by team managers at the council.
- Most of the young people interviewed were successful and were appointed to traineeships.
- Nearly all of the trainees were supported by the training co-ordinator during their placement.
- Most trainees progressed into either employment, including apprenticeships or further education.
- A fifth of trainees attained external qualifications, ranging from Entry level to level 2, in improving own learning, communication in the workplace and improved confidence and personal development.

Local authority strategy

106 In all of the local authorities visited, there is a clear strategy for supporting and raising the achievement of children who are looked after. Relevant information is shared through corporate parenting panels, which meet regularly. There is effective communication through annual reporting to scrutiny committees and other stakeholders. Elected members or senior officers, such as directors of education or children's services, chair corporate parenting panels and have responsibility for overseeing the corporate parenting strategy.

107 The vision and aims of raising the attainment of children who are looked after are common for all agencies and shared common responsibilities are evident. Responsibilities include the tracking, monitoring and reviewing of outcomes of children who are looked after. They also include developing targeted provision and support for children, and training social services staff, foster carers and schools.

108 In most of the local authorities visited, data that includes the outcomes for children who are looked after is sufficiently articulated within the authority strategy. However, in a few cases the use of specific data has not been considered thoroughly enough in formulating the strategy.

109 In many local authorities, the voice of the children who are looked after has not been sought and is therefore not sufficiently communicated as part of the strategy.

110 In Pembrokeshire and in Conwy Councils, the directors of education are the headteachers of virtual schools. The virtual schools, led by the directors, monitor closely all outcomes for children who are looked after. These authorities are able to demonstrate the impact on a range of outcomes for this group of children.

Case study 10: Pembrokeshire County Council – the impact of the virtual school model

Context

ERW allocates PDG/LAC according to pupil level annual schools census (PLASC), which counts the number of children who are looked after in Pembrokeshire schools, including children from other counties placed in Pembrokeshire. Pembrokeshire County Council currently has 115 children who are looked after and many of these are of school age.

Pembrokeshire County Council is now tracking the progress of children who are looked after through a virtual school. The aim of the virtual school is to promote engagement in learning and positive wellbeing for these children.

Strategy

The virtual school's objective is to increase pupil engagement in learning through collaborative working partnerships. These partnerships include links with schools, professionals within Pembrokeshire and other local authorities, ERW and the Welsh Government.

The key contacts in the virtual school are:

- the Director of Children and Schools
- the Looked After Children Service Manager in Social Care
- the Senior Educational Psychologist
- the Lead Challenge Adviser
- the Looked After Children Advisory Teacher

These key professionals meet half-termly to monitor attendance and progress. A bespoke database for children who are looked after has been created. This allows the local authority to track the attendance and assessment data of children who are looked after.

Issues that have arisen from the pupils' PEPs are also discussed and the group of key professionals identifies interventions to improve outcomes.

A financial bursary is available to those pupils who need bespoke packages or to schools who need training or support for particular issues.

Virtual school staff lead in foster carer and school governor training. The virtual school also monitors ERW's Attachment Aware School training programme, which aims to build capacity and encourage schools to become self-improving in strengthening outcomes for their learners.

Action

There is daily discussion between education staff and a wide range of professionals involved in the education and care of children who are looked after. This includes advisory teachers, educational psychologists, learning coaches and the social workers in the child care assessment, children in need and corporate parenting teams.

PEPs are recorded on both the social care and education data systems. Data is regularly shared at the corporate parenting board and overview and scrutiny committee. As a result, elected members are well informed on the status and progress of children who are looked after.

Social care staff and virtual school pupils have recently been involved in the Welsh Government's consultation on its draft strategy for raising the educational achievements of children who are looked after in Wales.

Outcomes

For the most recent data in 2014, Pembrokeshire County Council has shown an improvement against Welsh Government performance indicators for children who are looked after.

- The percentage of children looked after who have experienced one or more changes of school while being looked after has reduced from 22.1% to 14.67%

and continues to fall.
- The key stage 4 average points score has increased from 226 to 402 for children who are looked after.
- Both primary and secondary attendance figures have improved from 94.2% to 95.5% and 89.2% to 93.7% respectively.
- The proportion of PEPs completed within 20 days has risen to 92%.
- The percentage of pupils achieving the core subject indicator at key stage 2 increased from 22% to 60%.
- The percentage of pupils achieving the core subject indicator at key stage 3 increased from 28.6% to 57%.
- There have continued to be no permanent exclusions.
- The length of fixed-term exclusions has fallen from an average of 6.6 days to 2.2 days.

111 In most cases, local authority strategies are strongly focused on an integrated multi-agency working approach. LACE co-ordinators are a key link between education and children's services and, in a few cases, are located with children's services colleagues. In addition, housing, youth justice and third sector agencies play an important role in the work of the corporate parenting panels.

112 Positive working relationships between council committees and relevant panels have succeeded in raising the profile of the corporate parent.

113 In the Conwy virtual school, individual case studies are discussed at panel meetings. These meetings ensure that partner organisations continually evaluate their services for children who are looked after. The local authority is reflective and continues to make improvements to their services for children who are looked after.

114 Most local authorities have prioritised building the capacity of schools to cater for children who are looked after through, for example, training for designated school staff in attachment disorder. As a result, many schools have become more effective in their provision and support. However, training does not always extend to all school staff.

115 Building capacity in schools to cater for children with significant emotional needs has resulted in a few local authorities being able to reduce the number of out of county placements through the creation of care packages involving local provision and expertise.

116 In a very few authorities, there are effective service level agreements with educational psychology services to support the development of the emotional and mental health of children who are looked after through group interventions in schools.

117 In a very few local authorities, the strategy for children who are looked after is unclear. In these authorities, there is no coherent plan for training elected members on issues that affect children who are looked after. As a result, elected members' knowledge and understanding of their role as corporate parents in raising of the attainment and achievement of children who are looked after, across Wales, are too variable.

The role of elected members

118   In the majority of the local authorities visited, elected members have received worthwhile training in important aspects of provision for children who are looked after. This training includes person-centred planning, target-setting, child sexual exploitation and the difficulties experienced by care leavers. Regular reports and presentations to the corporate parenting panels and scrutiny committees result in well-informed elected members who have a good understanding of issues relating to the children in their care.

119   Torfaen County Borough Council (2013) has produced a useful guide for elected members. A guide for Elected Members in Torfaen outlines clearly the role of elected members in acting as corporate parents. In addition to outlining information on services for children who are looked after in Torfaen, the handbook reminds elected members to ask the following questions: What if this was my child? Would it be good enough for them? Would this be good enough for me?

120   In Conwy, elected members commissioned a DVD that captured the views of children who are looked after. The DVD, 'Looked After Ambition', highlights factors that support school-leavers in Conwy's care to achieve positive outcomes. In addition, the local authority has recently funded a follow-up project, 'Loud Voices in Conwy', to evaluate the impact of 'Looked After Ambition' and to plan for improvement.

121   All local authorities are required to report to children's services scrutiny committees and to the Welsh Government on a range of performance indicators relating to children who are looked after. These include attendance, exclusion, whether the local authority provides a PEP within 20 days and the percentage of children who achieve the core subject indicator at key stages 2-4. Local authorities are required to report on the average external qualification point score at key stage 4 for children in any local authority-maintained setting. However, this excludes those children that who looked after who receive their education in settings that are not maintained by the local authority. There is no requirement to report on the attainment of children who are looked after against the level 1 or level 2 thresholds. In addition, local authorities are not required to report on the attainments of children who are looked after at key stage 5. As a result, the current reporting regime, particularly at key stage 4 and beyond, is limited.

122   All local authorities share performance information on pupil outcomes with their scrutiny committees. However, the size and diversity of the cohort make annual comparisons difficult. As a result, many local authorities report individual progress over time to elected members.

123   In a few authorities, there are inconsistencies in how performance indicators are reported to the scrutiny committee. For example, information is provided on children who are looked after that the local authority is not responsible for. In addition, there is variation in the way that local authorities report on children who are looked after in out of county placements. As a result, this causes confusion and misunderstanding and elected members are not provided with accurate information.

Management information systems

124 All local authorities use management information systems to capture the attainment of children who are looked after and nearly all capture data on attendance, exclusions and movements of pupils between schools. A few local authorities use Fischer Family Trust[3] (FFT) data effectively to evaluate the attainment of their children who are looked after over time. However, only a few routinely analyse outcomes of PEP targets and number of schools moves to determine where improvements need to be made.

125 The City of Cardiff Council identified that its management information system was limited when it came to tracking the progress that children who are looked after make in their education. As a result, it has implemented a virtual tracker that allows it to capture and analyse the performance information of all children for whom they are the corporate parent.

Case study 11: City of Cardiff Council – how the virtual tracking system monitors the attainments and achievements of children who are looked after

Context

Cardiff has 650 children who are looked after. Approximately two-thirds are of statutory school age. The children who are looked after are educated in Cardiff schools, educated in schools outside of Cardiff or placed in Cardiff by other authorities and educated in Cardiff schools.

Strategy

Despite having a system for tracking the progress of children, the system did not include valuable information from children's services, from schools or from other services within the education directorate.

Action

The authority worked with a range of partners from within the authority, schools and the regional education consortium to establish:

- a common understanding of the term 'looked after'
- from what point the authority needed to track pupils and when they ceased tracking
- what data was needed to track the progress of children efficiently and effectively
- who held the information needed, and how easily could it be accessed
- the allocation of resources to develop the system

The tracker is now in place and tracks a pupil from the time they become looked after until their status changes.

The tracking system creates an individualised summary report for all children who are looked after.

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[3] A range of pupil, school and local authority data on the educational performance of children

Professionals use the information contained in the tracking system at monthly multi-agency meetings to monitor the progress of individual pupils and to ensure that more timely and appropriate intervention is made where necessary.

The authority has recognised the need to refine the tracking system even further. It intends to include:

- an assessment of the pupils' social and emotional needs
- termly teacher assessment information

Outcomes

- Cardiff has a better understanding of the progress of the children who are looked after and is able to share the information it has with schools and authorities that place pupils in Cardiff.
- Individual reports are available and include information on school and placement history, key stage assessment results, current attendance and any exclusions. As a result, colleagues have access to up-to-date information on children. They are therefore better informed on the progress that children make.
- Tracking has allowed the authority to identify additional curriculum and support needs.
- The tracking system has allowed the authority to strengthen accountability of services. It regularly reviews the impact of additional support on pupils.
- Tracking now extends to when a child leaves care.

Placement decisions

126 The majority of local authorities hold joint placement panels with health and children's services to plan and review provision for pupils who are in need of costly specialist placements or resources. This enables resources to be directed at supporting the emotional health needs of children who are looked after, for example by funding an educational social worker or a psychologist to work solely with these pupils within the authority.

127 Most local authorities hold regular pre-placement panel meetings to come to a corporate decision on the best placement for their children who are looked after. All local authorities believe that the stability of care placements is paramount and that maintaining good school placements is vital to the wellbeing of the child. Many have a policy of prioritising the continuation of the school placement even after breakdown of family care in order to maintain friendships and educational stability. In these cases, appropriate risk assessments and the voice of the child are taken into consideration.

128 Torfaen Council has a long-standing partnership with the third sector. This has proved to be beneficial in reducing the number of children who are looked after who are in out-of-county residential care placements.

Case study 12: Torfaen County Borough Council – working with the third sector

Context

Over a number of years, Torfaen Council and the local health board have funded Action for Children to work with children who are looked after who show complex, challenging and risk-taking behaviour. These young people require considerable resources to manage and maintain them in their community. They will have experienced multiple placement breakdowns and are likely to have been admitted to residential provision and often excluded from education. As a result, they may require more specialist provision.

Torfaen has 290 children who are looked after and 86% of these are of statutory school age.

The Multi-Disciplinary Intervention Service Torfaen (MIST) is a Tier 3 mental health team hosted by Action for Children.

Strategy

The local authority aims to bring young people in out of county residential care back to kinship or foster care placements in their home communities.

Action

The MIST team includes professionals from different disciplines. The manager is a mental health nurse with a background in therapeutic communities, youth offending and psychotherapy. In addition, the clinical lead is a consultant clinical psychologist with a background in child and adolescent mental health (CAMHS).

Referrals for MIST support go to a multi-agency steering group. An education officer from the local authority is a member of the panel. The group discusses the new and existing referrals and allocates resources based on the needs of the young people. The young person's educational needs are an integral part of the planning.

The work of the MIST involves therapeutic placements, keyworkers and placement support.

MIST has five therapeutic foster care placements. The service works therapeutically with the young people, using a variety of individual psychological therapies and activity-based inputs such as drama, music and art. It also provides practical support, befriending and learning support. The team works closely with all other professionals involved in each young person's care and education. Advice and support are provided to the school, in order that it has better understanding of the young person's emotional needs.

Each young person is assigned a keyworker. The keyworker liaises with the home in devising an individualised programme of therapeutic interventions.

MIST also supports a number of young people who are in local authority foster care placements and attend mainstream schools. The team provides consultations and advice when issues arise that threaten placement stability. The service offers outreach work to young people and their placement provider when needed. It provides training, consultation, talks and representation on complex needs panels.

Outcomes

- Over a four-year period, the number of children who are looked after that have moved from local foster homes to out-of-county residential care has fallen from 14 to low single figures.
- Torfaen still has low numbers of pupils requiring out-of-county residential placements.

The role of the looked after children's education (LACE) co-ordinator

129 All local authorities view the role of the LACE co-ordinator as integral to the success of its strategy for children who are looked after, particularly in raising their attainment. The quality of the leadership and work of the LACE co-ordinator is strong in nearly all of the local authorities visited. Where local authorities adopt a virtual school approach, the LACE co-ordinator plays a central role in the analysis of performance of children who are looked after. Nearly all LACE co-ordinators produce reports for corporate parenting panels and play a strategic and operational role in making and reviewing policy.

130 LACE co-ordinators are an essential link between education and children's social services. They have a valuable role in providing schools with information on pupils before they are placed at the school. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of the information that schools receive from different local authorities. As a result, schools are not always fully prepared to meet the educational, emotional or other needs of children who are looked after. LACE co-ordinators also broker additional educational support for pupils, including extra tuition and resources, to assist pupils with their studies. For example, in a very few schools, the LACE co-ordinator has provided external mentors to raise the aspirations of Year 11 pupils.

131 Many LACE co-ordinators provide quality training for school staff, governors, foster carers and social workers. A best practice example is the Conwy LACE co-ordinator who uses a case study approach in virtual school meetings to reflect on individual children. This approach includes a critical learning points section where agencies state what could have been done better.

132 In most local authorities, LACE co-ordinators monitor and assure the quality of PEPs and use information from PEPs to inform elected members of achievements of children who are looked after. Although they comply with the 20 day rule, there is too much focus on compliance and there are many inconsistencies in the quality and appropriateness of the PEP targets.

133 Across local authorities, the LACE co-ordinator promotes effective and purposeful communication between schools, local authority education departments, children's

services and other relevant agencies. However, in a few cases, LACE co-ordinators are not provided with timely enough information on the outcomes of complex placement decisions. As a result, this can result in delays in securing specialist provision and additional resources to support children who are looked after.

134 In all local authorities visited, the LACE co-ordinator establishes good relationships with young people, social workers, foster carers, independent reviewing officers, schools and colleges. The dedication and enthusiasm of the LACE co-ordinator often underpin successful initiatives that support children who are looked after. For example, work with the South West Wales Reaching Wider Team at Swansea University has provided invaluable opportunities for children who are looked after to experience university life for a day. This partnership aims to increase participation in higher education by people from under-represented groups and communities in South West Wales. There is a specific focus on working with children who are looked after, care leavers or pupils from Communities First areas.

135 The link between the LACE co-ordinator and school improvement services is underdeveloped and there is limited working with challenge advisers in around half of the local authorities visited.

Work with parents and carers

136 The quality and usefulness of the work with parents and carers vary considerably between local authorities. A few local authorities organise conferences for foster carers, which champion their work and enable them to meet other carers. The majority of local authorities provide comprehensive training for their carers to enrich their knowledge and understanding of the social and emotional vulnerabilities of children who are looked after. This training focuses well on understanding trauma, bereavement and loss, attachment and mental health issues. The training also provides carers with strategies and partnerships they can use to support the children they care for to overcome disadvantage. Many local authorities also provide training to support the wellbeing of foster carers, such as stress management and managing allegations, as well as essential awareness training in substance and alcohol misuse, safeguarding and internet safety.

137 In nearly all cases, training for carers is provided via social services. There is very little provision of training for carers on improving educational outcomes for children who are looked after, although in a few cases the LACE co-ordinator provides valuable educational support to foster carers. The training and support for carers of children with complex needs remain underdeveloped in many authorities.

138 Foster carers in Pembrokeshire benefit from training in range of topics. This includes advising foster carers of approaches taken by schools to improve literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, the foster carers have a better understanding of the approaches used in schools and are better placed to support the children at home.

139 More recently, training has focused on raising carers' awareness about how children's brains develop and how this development can be affected when a child suffers trauma. As a result, foster carers have a better understanding of their children.

Evaluating interventions and sharing best practice

140 The majority of schools have effective systems in place to evaluate interventions for children who are looked after. In most cases, schools show improved performance for both attainments and achievements of children who are looked after, thereby demonstrating the impact of their work at a whole school and individual level. A few schools are able to track the performance of children who are looked after over a number of years and have a detailed understanding of the impact of interventions for different year groups. This tracking includes pupil performance against individual targets for attendance and behaviour and participation in enrichment activities. However, only a minority of schools use PEPs well enough to outline clearly what programme of support is most appropriate for pupils and evaluate this in subsequent meetings.

141 Greenfield Special School in Merthyr Tydfil has a track-record of evaluating its interventions for children who are looked after. These evaluations have an appropriate focus on pupil progress. Staff regularly use case studies to demonstrate the impact that interventions have on individual pupils, for example in relation to their ability to manage their anger and physical aggression at home, and their understanding of the changes to their body during adolescence.

142 The role that local authorities have had in evaluating the impact of interventions for children who are looked after is inconsistent. This applies to strategies funded via the PDG/LAC and approaches taken by independent special schools where pupils are children who are looked after by local authorities.

143 A key role for the LACE co-ordinator is to recognise, share and celebrate best practice. In a majority of authorities, the LACE co-ordinator identifies best practice in document reviews and when visiting providers. They ensure that these examples are shared in relevant meetings with both officers and elected members.

144 There are many examples of best practice in the schools visited. However, most schools do not actively seek best practice from others.

145 Mechanisms to facilitate the identification and sharing of best practice, both in local authorities and regional consortia, are not well developed. As a result, schools are not as aware as they need to be of relevant research on strategies and approaches that are successful in engaging with children who are looked after and supporting their attainments, achievements and ambitions.

146 Most local authorities are developing a better understanding of where good practice exists in their schools. Best practice is also identified through feedback from schools and other agencies to the local authority. However, most local authorities do not hold an overall map of best practice, and arrangements to evaluate enriching interventions are underdeveloped. The sharing of best practice of particular schools that provide extremely well for children who are looked after with other schools in the local authorities is undeveloped.

Appendix 1: Evidence base

The findings and recommendations in this report draw on visits to 16 schools, six local authorities and the four regional consortia. Two focus groups were held with the children who are looked after education co-ordinators (LACE) from the ERW[4] and Central South[5] regional education consortia. In addition, Voices from Care shared the initial findings of their report on the views of children who are looked after on their experiences of care and education.

The sample takes account of socio-economic background, geographical location, size of school and linguistic contexts. In these visits, inspectors:

- met with members of school staff responsible for children who are looked after
- met with relevant elected members and senior local authority officers
- met with senior officers from the regional consortia
- reviewed school, local authority and consortia documentation

Additional evidence was drawn from inspection outcomes and from the sources referenced in Appendix 2.

The following local authorities provided documents to the inspection team, which were used to inform the planning of the remit.

Blaenau Gwent	Bridgend	Caerphilly	Cardiff
Carmarthenshire	Ceredigion	Conwy	Denbighshire
Gwynedd	Merthyr Tydfil	Monmouthshire	Pembrokeshire
Powys	Rhondda Cynon Taf	Torfaen	Wrexham
Vale of Glamorgan			

Additional evidence was drawn from:

- Estyn inspection reports from schools and local authorities
- Recent publications, commissioned by the Welsh Government to inform the looked after children's strategy for Wales
- National statistics (See below)

The data used in this report comes from two key national statistics data collections performed by the Welsh Government. As they are based on slightly differing criteria, figures available from both will vary from each other. For example, the SSDA903 return from local authorities counts 5,617 looked after children in 2015, whereas the Children in Need Census counts 5,500 in 2015. It is clear throughout the document

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[4] The ERW education consortium is made up of the following local authorities: Carmarthenshire, Powys, Ceredigion, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot.

[5] The Central South education consortia is made up of the following local authorities: Rhondda Cynon Taff, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan.

which data collection the numbers are taken from. More information on the differences between them can be found in the quality notes published alongside each respective statistical release (see references).

The Children in Need Census counts the number of children in need who were looked after at 31 March and they have to have been in need for at least three months on the day of the census. For the SSDA903, a child could come into care on 30 March and they would be counted if they were still in care the next day. The data published from the SSDA903 excludes children who were in respite care at 31 March, whereas these children are included in the figure from the CIN Census (as long as they have been in need for three months).

Schools visited

Amberleigh Residential Therapeutic School, Welshpool
Bishop Gore School, Swansea
Brynteg Comprehensive School, Bridgend
Colcot Primary, Vale of Glamorgan
Cwrt Sart Community Comprehensive School, Neath Port Talbot
Ferndale Community School, Rhondda Cynon Taff
Greenfield Special School, Merthyr Tydfil
Maerdy County Primary, Rhondda Cynon Taff
Penybont Primary School, Bridgend
Risca Community Comprehensive School, Caerphilly
Rumney Primary School, Cardiff
Tonyrefail Comprehensive, Rhondda Cynon Taf
Woodlands Children's Development Centre, Wrexham
Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy, Conwy
Ysgol y Castell, Carmarthenshire
Ysgol y Gogarth, Conwy

Local authorities visited

Carmarthenshire County Council
City of Cardiff Council
City and County of Swansea
Conwy County Council
Pembrokeshire County Council
Torfaen County Borough Council

Regional Consortia visited:

Central South – the regional consortium comprising of: Rhondda Cynon Taf, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan
EAS – the regional consortium comprising of: Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen
ERW – the regional consortium comprising of: Carmarthenshire, Powys, Ceredigion, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot
GWE – the regional consortium comprising of: Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Wrexham and Anglesey

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Appendix 2: Academic achievement of looked after children

Academic achievement of looked after children at Foundation Phase, key stage 2, key stage 3 and key stage 4, by local authority (a), 2013-2015

Local authority	Number of looked after children at the end of Foundation Phase, 2013-2015	Percentage of LAC achieving the Foundation Phase indicator (b) - three year average	Number of looked after children at the end of key stage 2, 2013-2015	Percentage of LAC achieving the core subject indicator (c) at KS2 - three year average	Number of looked after children at the end of key stage 3, 2013-2015	Percentage of LAC achieving the core subject indicator (c) at KS3 - three year average	Number of looked after children at the end of key stage 4, 2013-2015	Percentage of LAC achieving the level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and mathematics (d) - three year average
GwE/North Wales	**130**	**55%**	**130**	**60%**	**140**	**53%**	**170**	**19%**
Isle of Anglesey	10	56%	10	44%	15	46%	20	22%
Gwynedd	25	58%	20	83%	25	71%	30	39%
Conwy	15	31%	30	53%	30	76%	45	12%
Denbighshire	30	68%	25	74%	25	42%	30	14%
Flintshire	25	40%	25	44%	20	55%	20	19%
Wrexham	35	64%	20	59%	25	23%	30	11%
ERW/South West and Mid Wales	**200**	**54%**	**230**	**58%**	**305**	**48%**	**305**	**18%**
Powys	20	53%	25	65%	25	38%	25	28%
Ceredigion	5	67%	15	50%	20	68%	15	12%
Pembrokeshire	10	55%	25	54%	30	45%	35	12%
Carmarthenshire	35	35%	55	63%	80	49%	85	14%
Swansea	70	63%	45	65%	70	51%	70	24%
Neath Port Talbot	55	56%	70	50%	85	42%	75	19%
Central South/ Central South Wales	**200**	**59%**	**235**	**59%**	**275**	**39%**	**320**	**16%**
Bridgend	45	49%	55	61%	70	42%	75	14%
Vale of Glamorgan	25	76%	25	50%	20	57%	25	26%
Rhondda Cynon Taf	65	55%	80	58%	100	34%	95	15%
Merthyr Tydfil	15	64%	20	56%	15	21%	25	16%
Cardiff	50	65%	60	62%	70	40%	95	14%
EAS/South East Wales	**160**	**67%**	**180**	**62%**	**200**	**37%**	**200**	**15%**
Caerphilly	45	61%	55	55%	70	29%	65	8%
Blaenau Gwent	10	58%	25	54%	20	40%	15	31%
Torfaen	55	73%	50	70%	40	42%	50	17%
Monmouthshire	15	85%	15	63%	20	44%	20	33%
Newport	30	63%	35	70%	55	42%	50	12%
Wales	**690**	**59%**	**775**	**60%**	**920**	**44%**	**1000**	**17%**

Pupil numbers have been rounded to the nearest 5

(a) The local authority in which the child attends school. This may differ from the local authority looking after the child.

(b) The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) represents the percentage of pupils achieving at least the expected outcome (outcome 5) in LCE or LCW, PSD and MDT in combination.

(c) The core subject indicator (CSI) represents the percentage of pupils achieving at least the expected level on the National Curriculum scale in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh first language.

(d) Five GCSEs at grade A*-C or equivalent including a GCSE grade A* - C in English or Welsh first language and mathematics.

Welsh Government 2016c, 2016d, 2016e

Academic achievement of looked after children, by key stage and regional consortia (2013-2015)

Even though this information is drawn from the three-year moving average, the number of children who are looked after in just over a quarter of local authorities is too low to draw a meaningful comparison. However, where comparisons can be made, these demonstrate marked differences in the attainments of pupils across the key stages.

There is a 61 percentage point difference between the 31% of looked after children achieving the Foundation Phase indicator in Conwy and the 85% figure in Monmouthshire.

Just under 44% of pupils in Flintshire and Anglesey achieve the core subject indicator at key stage 2, compared to 83% in Gwynedd.

At key stage 3, just over a fifth of pupils achieve the core subject indicator in Merthyr Tydfil, compared to 76% in Conwy.

Only 8% of looked after children achieve the level 2 inclusive in Caerphilly, compared to 39% in Gwynedd.

In the regional consortia, the gap in the performance of looked after children reduces through the key stages, except in the lower base in the Foundation Phase in GwE and ERW. In the EAS consortium, 67% of looked after children achieve the Foundation Phase indicator; this is 13% points greater than that of the worst performing consortium, GwE.

GwE is the best performing consortium at key stage 3 and at key stage 4 for the level 2 inclusive.

At key stage 2, the percentage of looked after children attaining the core subject indicator in the consortia ranges from 58% in ERW to 62% in EAS. Only 37% achieve the core subject indicator at key stage 3 in EAS, compared to 53% in GwE. At key stage 4, 19% of looked after children achieve the level 2 inclusive in GwE, compared to 15% in EAS.

Academic achievement of looked after children, by key stage and regional consortia, 2013-2015 (three year average)
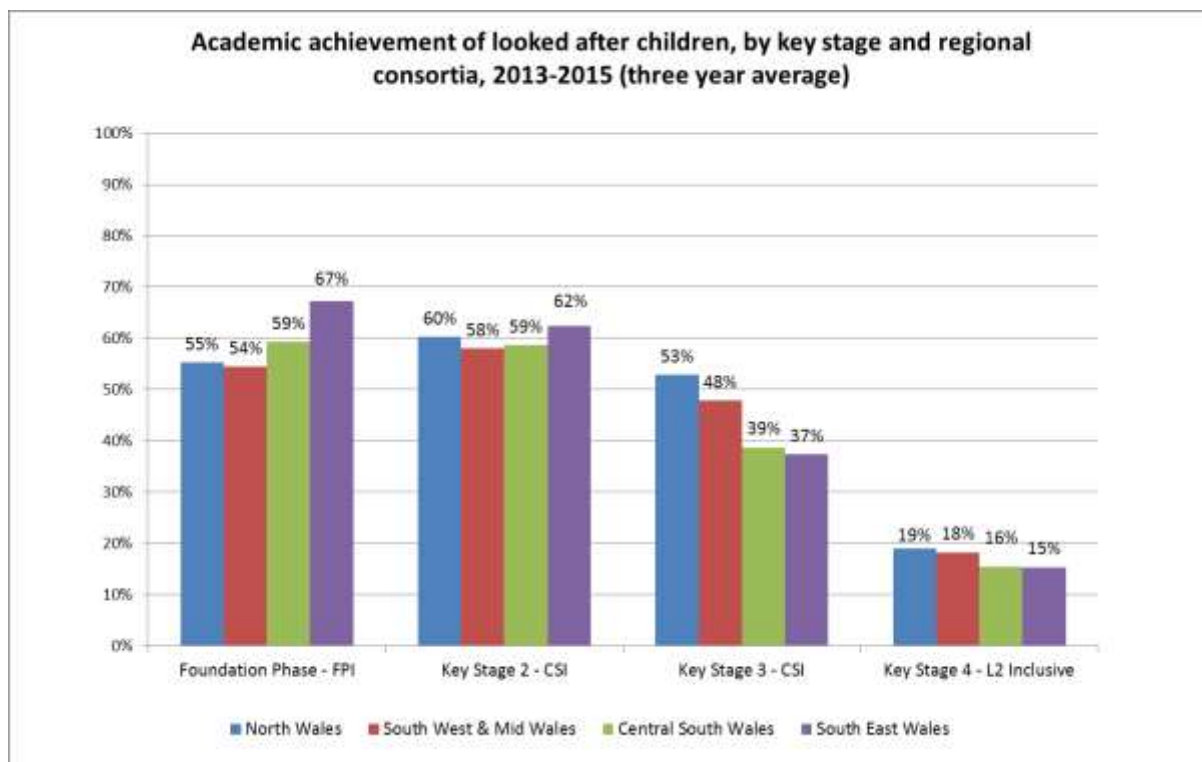
Welsh Government, 2016c, 2016d, 2016e

The attainment of children who are looked after, children in need (not looked after) and all pupils in Wales (2011-2015)

Over the period 2011-2015, the performance of both children in need that are not looked after and those that are looked after has improved, (Welsh Government, 2016c).

Children who are looked after generally perform better than children in need who are not looked after from the Foundation Phase through to key stage 4, (Welsh Government, 2016c).

In 2015, of the performance measures shown in this report, the smallest gap in performance between those looked after and those not is at the level 2 inclusive threshold (five A*-C GCSEs or equivalent including a GCSE in English or Welsh first language and mathematics), at three percentage points, and the largest gap is in the Foundation Phase indicator, where there is a 10 percentage point difference, (Welsh Government, 2016c).

Performance of Children in Need compared to all pupils in Wales, 2011 to 2015

Performance measure	2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
	Cohort	Achieved	Cohort	Achieved	Cohort	Achieved	Cohort	Achieved	Cohort	Achieved
Foundation Phase indicator										*Percentage*
Children in Need - Looked after	..	..	195	53%	220	55%	225	57%	245	65%
Children in Need - Not looked after	..	..	665	41%	690	46%	650	53%	735	50%
All pupils	..	..	32,630	81%	33,115	83%	33,875	86%	35,435	87%
Key stage 2 core subject indicator										*Percentage*
Children in Need - Looked after	235	48%	275	51%	225	54%	285	59%	265	64%
Children in Need - Not looked after	665	40%	650	41%	665	46%	665	48%	660	52%
All pupils	32,290	80%	31,710	83%	30,805	85%	31,560	86%	32,025	88%
Key stage 3 core subject indicator										*Percentage*
Children in Need - Looked after	350	23%	315	34%	335	36%	295	46%	285	49%
Children in Need - Not looked after	740	21%	690	24%	665	30%	690	38%	620	41%
All pupils	35,645	68%	34,205	73%	33,140	77%	32,080	81%	31,470	84%
Key stage 4 level 1 threshold										*Percentage*
Children in Need - Looked after	295	63%	300	71%	360	76%	340	77%	300	76%
Children in Need - Not looked after	515	50%	510	57%	580	56%	530	64%	525	68%
All pupils	34,285	92%	33,695	94%	35,085	95%	33,625	96%	32,470	96%
Key stage 4 level 2 threshold										*Percentage*
Children in Need - Looked after	295	27%	300	33%	360	44%	340	51%	300	51%
Children in Need - Not looked after	515	20%	510	29%	580	30%	530	39%	525	43%
All pupils	34,285	69%	33,695	74%	35,085	79%	33,625	84%	32,470	86%
Key stage 4 level 2 Inclusive threshold										*Percentage*
Children in Need - Looked after	295	11%	300	15%	360	14%	340	18%	300	19%
Children in Need - Not looked after	515	11%	510	14%	580	13%	530	14%	525	17%
All pupils	34,285	51%	33,695	52%	35,085	53%	33,625	56%	32,470	59%
Key stage 4 core subject indicator										*Percentage*
Children in Need - Looked after	295	11%	300	14%	360	12%	340	17%	300	17%
Children in Need - Not looked after	515	11%	510	13%	580	12%	530	13%	525	15%
All pupils	34,285	49%	33,695	50%	35,085	50%	33,625	54%	32,470	56%
Key stage 4 average wider points score										*Average points*
Children in Need - Looked after	295	249	300	289	360	330	340	360	300	344
Children in Need - Not looked after	515	193	510	236	580	247	530	275	525	302
All pupils	34,285	432	33,695	476	35,085	512	33,625	538	32,470	545
Key stage 4 average capped points score										*Average points*
Children in Need - Looked after	295	203	300	223	360	247	340	261	300	254
Children in Need - Not looked after	515	164	510	189	580	192	530	213	525	229
All pupils	34,285	317	33,695	329	35,085	337	33,625	347	32,470	350

.. Data not available

Pupil numbers rounded to the nearest 5

Pupils matched between datasets so Wales totals may differ slightly from published figures.

Welsh Government 2016c, 2016d, 2016e

Appendix 3: Examples of personal education plans (PEPs)

PERSONAL EDUCATION PLAN
– PRIMARY SCHOOL

CARDIFF
CAERDYDD

My name is

I am also known as

My date of birth is

My age is

My school is called

I am in Year

My Class Teacher is called

This is my first Personal Education Plan

YES   NO

Important people to me:

The language I speak at home is:

The language I speak at school is:

Clubs and groups I am a member of:

Page 1

57

About Me, School and How I Feel!

I like coming to school because...

My friends are:

On the playground I like to...

In school I don't like...

Outside of school, I like to...

If I need help in school, I speak to...

If I need help with homework I ask...

At home I read with...

Things I don't do but would like to do:

My dreams for the future are....

How I feel about my lessons:
(Rating my lessons out of 10)

0   5   10

Page 2

In school I feel: 😊 ☐ 😐 ☐ ☹ ☐

At home I feel: 😊 ☐ 😐 ☐ ☹ ☐

My teacher says I am good at...

My teacher says I need to get better at...

My last parent's evening was attended by:

My attendance last half-term was

😊 ☐ 😐 ☐ ☹ ☐

My attendance figure was: ☐

Page 3

My last targets were:

I achieved...

My new targets are...

The people who will help me are...

Page 4

For my teacher to fill in

Data collection/attainment

	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Chronological age when tested					
Reading age					
Reading Standardised score					
Non verbal standardised score					

Functional literacy level (9yrs, 6mths) achieved   YES ☐   NO ☐

Reading at chronological age   YES ☐   NO ☐

Foundation Phase (Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2)

Subject	Comment
Personal & social development, well-being and cultural diversity	
Mathematical development	
Language, Literacy & Communication Skills	
Welsh Language development	
Knowledge & understanding of the world	
Physical development	
Creative development	

School Action ☐   School Action Plus ☐   Statemented ☐

Additional Needs

Date Instigated [   ]   Statutory Return Date* [   ]

Date completed [   ]

*In accordance with section 4.12 of the National Assembly for Wales Circular 2/2001 and Guidance: "The PEP should be agreed as soon as possible and, at the latest, within 20 school days" and also "the PEP should be prepared in time for the first review (the 28 day review)."

Page 5

Interventions

- [ ] Language Links
- [ ] Speech Links
- [ ] Spirals
- [ ] E.L.S.A.
- [ ] PSP
- [ ] NIPPERS
- [ ] CATCH UP - numeracy
- [ ] CATCH UP - reading
- [ ] Rapid Readers

- [ ] Rainbow Readers
- [ ] Handwriting Motorway
- [ ] Talking Teddy
- [ ] Direct Phonics
- [ ] S.A.I.L.
- [ ] S.T.A.R.S.
- [ ] Behaviour Support
- [ ] Other (specify below)

Key Stage 2

Subject	N.C. Level	Comments
English		
Maths		
Science		
Cymraeg		

NEW PEP [ ]   UPDATED PEP [ ]   REVIEW PEP [ ]   NEW SCHOOL PEP [ ]

Date of my last PEP: (_____)   Date of my next PEP: (_____)

Who has helped with or seen this plan?

Person	Name	Signature	Date
Me			
Designated Teacher			
Social Worker			
Parent			
Foster carer			
Education Liaison Worker			
Independent Reviewing Officer			
Other Person			

Notes
1) A copy of this Plan must be sent to: Education Liaison Worker, LAC Education Liaison Team, Room 116 County Hall, Cardiff CF10 4UW.
2) The social worker must arrange circulation to all relevant parties.
3) A copy should be kept on the pupil's school file.

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PERSONAL EDUCATION PLAN
– SECONDARY SCHOOL

CARDIFF
CAERDYDD

My name is

I am also known as

My date of birth is   My age is

My school is called

My alternative education takes place at

I am in Year

My form teacher is called

This is my first Personal Education Plan

Yes   No

Important people to me:

The language I speak at home is:

The language I speak at school is:

I am a member of the School Council   Eco Council

Sustrans   Other

Page 1

About me, school and how I feel

I like school because...

My friends are:

At break time I...

Outside school I...

If I need help in school I speak to...

If I need help with homework I ask...

Things I don't do but would like to do...

My plans for the future are....

Page 2

My learning targets are...

My personal goals for this year are...

My last parent's evening was attended by:

The things I am proud of...

The things people like/admire about me...

How I think I do in my subjects/courses...

Subject/Course	(least) 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	(best) 10

I would like help with...

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For the school to fill in...

	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
Chronological age when tested						
Reading age						
Reading standardised score						
WNT Procedural						
WNT Reading						
WNT Reasoning						

Has functional literacy level (9 years, 6 months) achieved   Yes ☐   No ☐

Reading at chronological age   Yes ☐   No ☐

Key stage level and grades expected

	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4 Predicted / Actual grades
English			
Welsh			
Maths			
Science			
I.C.T			
Other subjects:			

School Attendance

Attendance ☐ %   Number of authorised absences ☐   Unauthorised absences ☐   Number of late marks ☐

Number of Exclusions Total Days ☐

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Factors that have affected academic progress:

Details of any current educational support/ interventions provided:

(eg. Talkabout, ELSA, literacy/numeracy

Details of any further educational support needed:

School Action ☐   School Action Plus ☐   Statemented ☐

Details of alternative provisions:

Which provision is attended? _____

What skills are developed? _____

How many sessions are attended each week? _____

What qualifications/accreditations will be achieved? _____

Details of alternative provisions:

Which provision is attended? _____

What skills are developed? _____

How many sessions are attended each week? _____

What qualifications/accreditations will be achieved? _____

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New PEP ☐ Updated PEP ☐ Review PEP ☐

Date of my next PEP: ⬭

Who has helped with / or seen this plan?

Person	Name	Signature	Date
Me			
Designated Teacher			
Social Worker			
Parent			
Foster Carer			
Education Liaison Worker			
Independent Reviewing Officer			
Other person			

How will the SEGLAC PDG be spent on this child?

Notes

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Appendix 4: Glossary

Children in Need	The term children in need has a specific meaning defined by the Children Act 1989 (S17.10), which placed a statutory duty on local authorities to "safeguard" and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need. The Act defines a child in need as a child that is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving, or maintaining, a reasonable standards of health or development without the provision of services by a local authority.
Central South	The Central South education consortium is made up of the following local authorities: Rhondda Cynon Taff, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Bridgend and Vale of Glamorgan.
EAS	The Education Achievement Service (EAS) is made up of the following local authorities: Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen.
ERW	The Education through Regional Working (ERW) education consortium is made up of the following local authorities: Carmarthenshire, Powys, Ceredigion, Swansea, Pembrokeshire and Neath Port Talbot.
GwE	Gwasanaeth Effeithiolrwydd (GwE) is the bilingual education consortium made up of the following local authorities: Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Wrexham and Anglesey.
Looked After	This is the term used to describe any child who is in the care of the local authority or who is provided with accommodation by the local authority social services department for a continuous period of more than 24 hours. This covers children in respect of who a compulsory care order or other care order has been made. It also refers to children accommodated voluntarily, including, under an agreed series of short-term placements which may be called short breaks, family link placements or respite care.
Corporate Parent	The collective responsibility across services and across local authorities, to safeguard and promote the life chances of children who are looked after
Core Subject Indicator (CSI)	Achieving a specified level in the core National Curriculum subjects of English or Welsh (first language), mathematics and science in combination
Designated governor/teacher	The governor/teacher with responsibility for children that are looked after in schools

Disability of LAC	Disability information was recorded using categories corresponding to the Disability Discrimination Act guidance. Although the DDA has been replaced by the Equality Act 2010, the guidance has not been changed. The categories of disability are: mobility, manual dexterity, physical co-ordination, continence, ability to lift, carry or move everyday objects, speech, hearing and eye sight, memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand, perception or the risk of physical danger.
LAC	Looked after child/children
LACE	Looked after Children's Education Co-ordinator; a local authority officer that has responsibility for children who are looked after
LACYP	Looked after child/children and young people
Learning Coach	For the purpose of this report the term learning coach is given to support staff who have a specific focus on supporting children who are looked after.
Level 2 threshold	A volume of qualifications equivalent to five GCSEs at grade C or above
Level 2 inclusive threshold	A volume of qualifications equivalent to five GCSEs at grade C or above including English or Welsh first language and mathematics
Parenting Capacity	Information is recorded on five parenting factors that might affect their ability to parent (parental substance/alcohol misuse, domestic abuse, parental mental ill health, parental physical ill health, parental learning disabilities). These factors may have been present when a child is referred or may have arisen since referral.
Person Centred Planning	Person Centred Planning (PCP) is an approach where the child plays an active role in reviewing and planning aspects of their life. They do this with the support of a "key or lead worker". Other professionals involved in the child's life will also contribute and commit to the learners future targets.

The person centred planning approach is one that is being advocated by the Welsh Government in the statutory reform of additional learning needs. |

Personal Education Plan (PEP)	Children in care who are three or over should have a personal education plan (PEP) until they have finished statutory education. The first PEP should take place within 20 school days of a child coming into care. After this, PEPs should be reviewed every six months. A personal education plan (PEP) is used to share information and plan for the child's education. It should also be used to review progress and determine strategies to support the child.
Pupil Deprivation Grant	The pupil deprivation grant is a Welsh Government grant. It is intended to be used to improve the outcomes for learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and Looked After Children (LAC). It is to be used to overcome the additional barriers that prevent learners from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving their full potential. Since April 2015 the PDG/LAC component has been allocated to the regional education consortia. The funding they receive amounts to £1,150 for each.
Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC)	All maintained schools in Wales are required to provide the Welsh Government with pupil and school level data. This enables the Welsh Government to target funding to help develop and monitor policy. Analysis of the data from PLASC, in conjunction with pupils' key stage and examination results, provides schools, local authorities and central agencies with a range of information and supports the drive to raise school standards.
Secure accommodation	Secure accommodation refers to establishments where children are placed for their welfare and/or protection. These include: young offenders institutes for children aged 15 to 17-year-olds, secure training centres for children up to 17 and secure children's homes for children aged 12-14.
Special educational needs	A child has a special educational need (SEN) if he or she has a learning difficulty, which requires special educational provision to be made for him or her. A learning difficulty means that the child has significantly greater difficulty in learning than most children of the same age or that the child has a disability that needs different educational facilities from those that the school generally provides for children.

Special Guardianship Order (SGO)	Special guardianship orders (SGO) were introduced by the Adoption and Children Act 2002. A special guardianship order gives the special guardian parental responsibility for the child. Unlike adoption, under a SGO the parents remain the child's parents and retain parental responsibility, though their ability to exercise their parental responsibility is extremely limited.
Team around the family / child	This is where professionals from different agencies work with families and their children that are in need of support. This can range from advice on parenting, support for emotional health and working with parents on any school related concerns.

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