



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**20<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2019**

#### **CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER (CLA) EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES**

#### **REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES & GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

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#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of the report is to provide Elected Members with an update on the educational outcomes of Children Looked After (CLA) in Rhondda Cynon Taf following on from results in Summer 2018.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Consider the updated information contained within this report

#### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

To raise Members' awareness and to ensure that the Corporate Parenting Board are kept informed and up to date with progress and achievements by Children Looked After in schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Children who are looked after (CLA) by the local authority start with the disadvantage of difficult early life experiences due to neglect and/or abuse. The impact of this trauma is pervasive and can have significant impact on all areas of development. Children with attachment difficulties often have additional learning challenges particularly in social and emotional development. The Local Authority (LA) has a key role to ensure that children in their care have equal opportunity to access and engage with good quality supportive education and develop key skills to support their relationships, attainments and positive progression into adulthood.

- 4.2 Continued focus on narrowing the attainment gap between children and young people looked after and their peer group is essential if they are to achieve academic and personal success. Support and challenge to schools and training for teachers and governors is key.
- 4.3 Improving the outcomes of children who are looked after continues to be a strategic priority within the local authority. There is a clear strategy for supporting and raising the achievement of children who are looked after and outcome data is reviewed to inform service self-evaluation and service improvement planning. The expectations of good practice are outlined in the CLA Friendly Schools resource.
- 4.4 The Children Looked After Team within the Access and Inclusion Service works in collaboration with schools, foster carers, Children's Services and other external agencies to promote the educational outcomes, life chances and social inclusion of children who are looked after.
- 4.5 The Children Looked After Team (Education) consists of a Looked After Children Co-ordinator, a specialist advisory teacher, educational support worker, administrative support and 1.6 Specialist Educational Psychologists and is line managed by the Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist. The support given by this team includes:
- Consultation, advice and guidance for children/young people, schools, foster carers and external partners on suitable interventions to bring about change
  - Direct and indirect delivery of interventions and programmes aimed at overcoming barriers to learning and the development of key skills
  - In-depth and detailed assessment of need and psychological reports as to inform specialist interventions, placements, legal proceedings and panels (e.g. Foster Panel; Special Educational Needs (SEN) Panel Specialist Placement Panel; Court proceedings)
  - Effective communication and partnership working with school staff, foster carers and external agencies, both within and outside of the LA, through person centred reviews
  - Recording, monitoring and evaluation of outcome data
  - Therapeutic support and interventions, for vulnerable groups, to support educational placement
  - Systemic work and training with governing bodies, schools, carers and agencies to enhance strategic developments and the support provided for children and young people who are looked after
  - Preparation, monitoring and recording of Personal Education Plans (PEP).
- 4.6 Between September 2018 and the end of January 2019, 86 requests for CLA Education Team involvement have been made with a response to

the referrer provided within 2 weeks to arrange a first contact. Time scales of the completion of work will vary and depend on the focus of involvement and agreed input. 46 requests for involvement came from Social Workers (including Independent Reviewing Officers and Disabled Children's Team), 21 from schools and 4 from Educational Psychology Service. The remaining requests came from the 'other' category, including other local authorities, Local Authority panel tasks, residential care managers. In the academic year 2017/18 114 referrals were recorded and received a response. All were responded to within 20 working days.

- 4.7 All children looked after should have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is part of the child's care plan. The PEP should:
- ensure access to services and support;
  - contribute to stability;
  - minimise disruption and broken schooling;
  - signal particular educational needs;
  - establish clear goals; and
  - act as a record of progress and achievement.

Local guidance has been developed and training provided to improve the effective completion of PEPs by relevant professionals within Rhondda Cynon Taf. The CLA Coordinator works with partners from the Central South Consortium and across Wales, to ensure that RCT processes are consistent with those in neighbouring local authorities and nationally. The PEP co-ordination process is being considered at a national level and the implementation of the new Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act (Wales) 2018 could have future implications for how this is managed. An all Wales PEP template is being discussed as a possible development.

- 4.8 The Principal and Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist meet regularly with the Head of Children's Services and senior managers, in order to review and evaluate the performance of the CLA Education Team and plan and prioritise future delivery models.
- 4.9 Schools are also able to access support for all CLA pupils through referrals to the Learner Support Service and the Educational Psychology Service. Schools can utilise delegated additional needs funding £3.1M (2017/18) to support the inclusion of children and young people who are looked after and have significant special educational needs (SEN).
- 4.10 Welsh Government provides additional resources for schools in order to narrow the attainment gap between learners who are eligible for free school meals and those who are not. There is a separate element for children and young people who are looked after. The Pupil Deprivation Grant for Looked After Children (PDGLAC) is administered by Central South Consortium (CSC) and resources are directly delegated to school clusters to ensure timely interventions and support. A recent report to

Corporate Parenting Board (January 2019) outlines the level of funding available and how it is used to support CLA pupils in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

- 4.11 The CLA Friendly Schools guidance resource continues to be used as a framework for schools to prioritise areas they need to further develop and to identify how best to utilise the PDG LAC funding in a targeted and sustainable way.
- 4.12 Following the successful launch of the above resource Rhondda Cynon Taf developed a CLA Friendly Schools Quality Mark in collaboration with Merthyr Tydfil Local Authority and Cardiff University. This was successfully piloted in 2017 and has been operational since September 2018. The Quality Mark has two levels, which include gold and platinum awards. To date 6 schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf have achieved the Quality Mark with 1 school attaining the gold award and 5 schools attaining the platinum award. A further 22 schools are currently working towards completing the Quality Mark.
- 4.13 The CLA Quality Mark supports the underpinning principles and key priorities identified for the effective use of PDG LAC funding and support for CLA pupils. It provides documented evidenced based good practice for schools to target funding bids and to prioritise the development of better practice within their settings. It consists of three levels of training for schools to support the sharing of best practice from school to school and within clusters. The CLA Quality Mark is being developed as an effective approach across the Central South Consortium.

## **5. CURRENT POSITION**

- 5.1 National data considers all looked after children regardless of where they are placed in their respective care placements. The local data reports relate to children and young people who are looked after and educated in Rhondda Cynon Taf only. The scope for making direct comparisons between local and national data sets is therefore restricted.

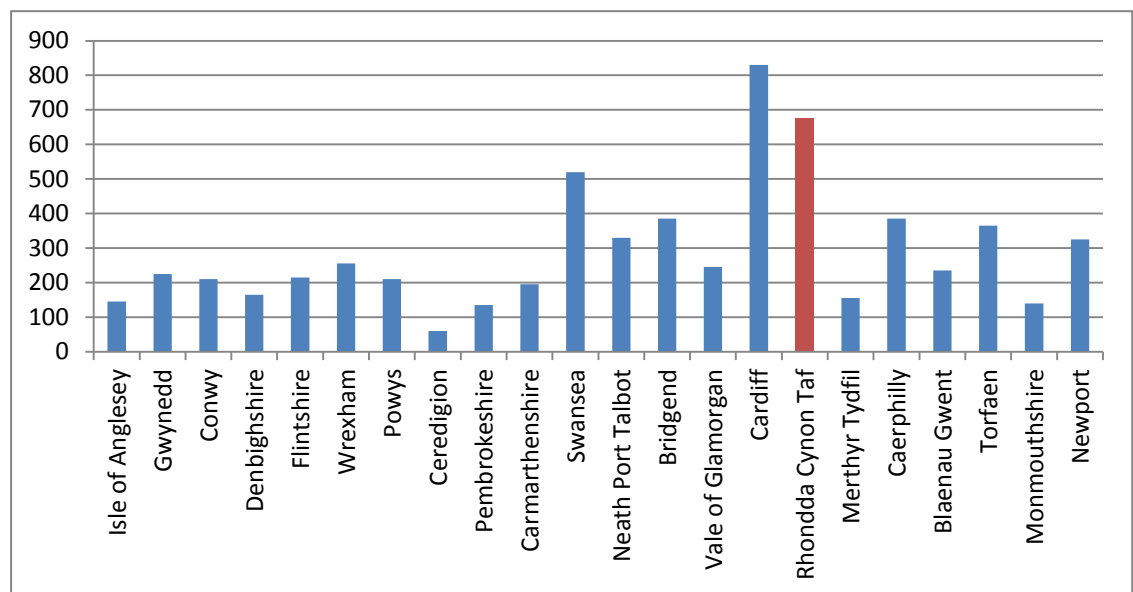
### **5.2 National Data**

National data detailed on the Welsh Government Statistics Wales website records that 5,955 children in Wales were looked after on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 - a decrease of 452 (7%) on the previous year and a rate of 102 per 10,000 population aged under 18. Of the above cohort, there were 675 looked after children and young people within Rhondda Cynon Taf. Table 1 provides an overview of the national context and suggests that Rhondda Cynon Taf had the second highest total number of children and young people who were looked after and the second highest number of school aged children (5–15) within Wales. As evidenced in Table 1 there was a decrease from March 2017 to March 2018 in the number of overall CLA children in RCT from 690 to 675.

	All Welsh local authorities																						
	Isle of Anglesey	Gwynedd	Conwy	Denbighshire	Flintshire	Wrexham	Powys	Ceredigion	Pembrokeshire	Carmarthenshire	Swansea	Neath Port Talbot	Bridgend	Vale of Glamorgan	Cardiff	Rhondda Cynon Taf	Merthyr Tydfil	Caerphilly	Blaenau Gwent	Torfaen	Monmouthshire	Newport	
	North Wales Education Consortia						South West and Mid Wales Education Consortia						Central South Education Consortia			South East Wales Education Consortia							
Total Looked After Children	5955	145	225	210	165	215	255	210	60	135	195	520	300	385	245	830	675	155	385	235	365	140	325
Number of CLA of 5 – 15 years	3855	95	145	125	100	140	155	130	35	70	110	320	215	230	145	480	410	95	215	145	230	90	190

**Table 1: Children looked after at 31st March 2018 by local authority**

Graph 1 provides an overview of the national picture with regards to numbers of CLA in Wales.



**Graph1: Children looked after as at 31<sup>st</sup> March by Local Authority**

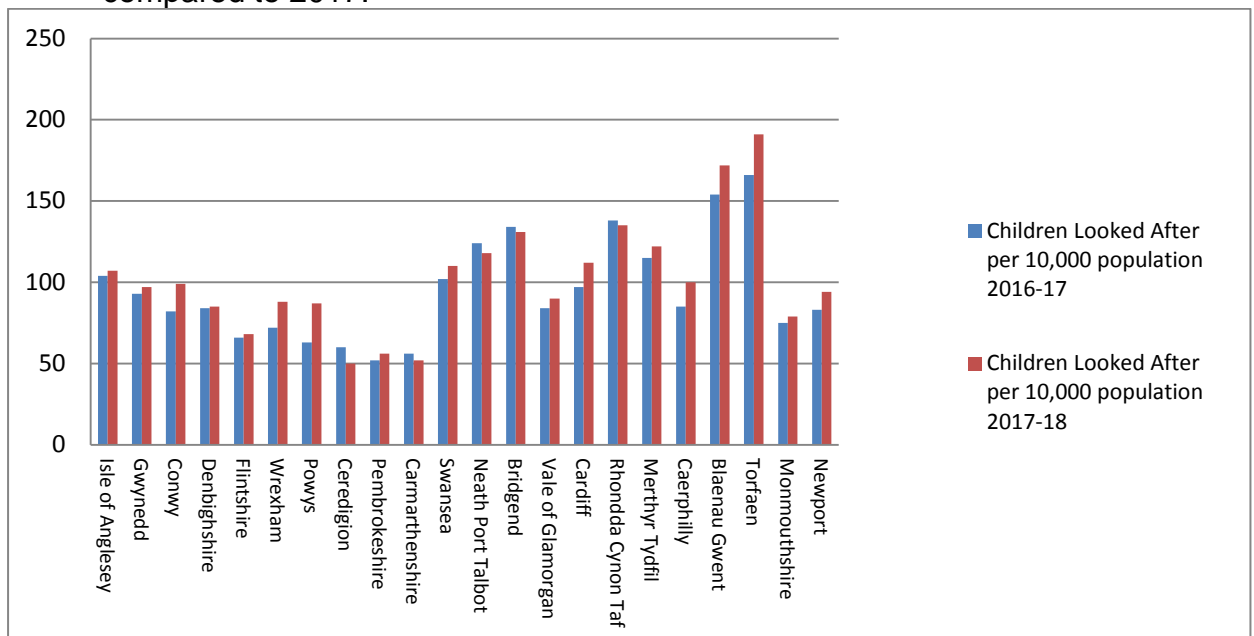
Table 2 outlines the number of CLA per 10,000 in each local authority on 31<sup>st</sup> March each year. The figure for 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 indicates RCT had the third highest rate of CLA per 10,000.

Local Authority	2016	2017	2018
All Wales	90	95	102
Isle of Anglesey	80	104	107
Gwynedd	88	93	97
Conwy	78	82	99
Denbighshire	89	81	85

Flintshire	65	66	68
Wrexham	67	72	88
Powys	60	62	87
Ceredigion	63	61	50
Pembrokeshire	52	52	56
Carmarthenshire	58	56	52
Swansea	108	102	110
Neath Port Talbot	135	124	118
Bridgend	131	134	131
Vale of Glamorgan	72	84	90
Cardiff	88	97	112
Rhondda Cynon Taf	125	138	135
Merthyr Tydfil	113	114	122
Caerphilly	72	86	100
Blaenau Gwent	139	154	172
Torfaen	142	166	191
Monmouthshire	73	75	79
Newport	88	83	94

**Table 2: Rate of children looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18 by local authority over the last three years as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018**

As highlighted in graph 2 there was a similar number of CLA pupils in Rhondda Cynon Taf per 10,000 population aged under 18 in 2018 when compared to 2017.



**Graph 2: Rate of CLA at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 per 10,000 population aged under 18 by LA and placement type**

5.3 Table 3 highlights the numbers of children in each type of care placement.

The majority of children and young people (80 %) in Rhondda Cynon Taf are placed in foster placements (including kinship carers). Working with foster carers to support CLA engagement with school is an area that the CLA education team are supporting through ELSA training and training in relationship based play. Meetings are scheduled with the three local authority residential care homes on a regular basis and relevant training opportunities offered.

	Placed for adoption	Foster placements	Local authority homes	Private or voluntary registered homes	Placed with own parents or other person with parental responsibility	Living independently	Absent or other	Total looked after children (
All Wales	240	4715	260	45	850	130	160	6405
Isle of Anglesey	5	100	10	*	25	*	5	145
Gwynedd	*	145	10	*	55	10	*	225
Conwy	5	155	10	*	25	10	5	210
Denbighshire	10	110	*	*	35	*	5	165
Flintshire	*	140	10	*	45	*	15	215
Wrexham	*	175	10	*	55	5	5	255
Powys	5	165	20	*	15	*	*	210
Ceredigion	*	50	*	*	10	*	*	60
Pembrokeshire	10	90	10	*	25	*	*	135
Carmarthenshire	15	155	5	*	15	*	*	195
Swansea	20	420	*	*	35	15	30	520
Neath Port Talbot	10	270	5	*	30	*	5	330
Bridgend	20	290	20	*	50	*	*	385
Vale of Glamorgan	*	175	*	*	45	*	10	245
Cardiff	30	570	50	10	120	45	5	830
Rhondda Cynon Taf	35	540	40	*	50	5	*	675
Merthyr Tydfil	*	120	*	*	25	5	10	155
Caerphilly	5	290	20	15	50	*	*	385
Blaenau Gwent	20	150	*	*	40	5	15	235
Torfaen	15	270	*	*	65	*	15	365
Monmouthshire	*	100	10	5	25	*	*	140
Newport	20	245	20	*	20	*	15	325

**Table 3: Total looked after children on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 by placement type**

#### 5.4 Key data sets used for monitoring progress of CLA pupils

The progress of CLA pupils is monitored and reviewed using three key sets of data:-

- Attainment levels
- Rate of exclusion
- Attendance levels

#### 5.5 Attainment

Data is gathered in relation to the percentage of CLA pupils who achieved the core subject indicator (CSI) in Rhondda Cynon Taf and comparison Central South Consortium performance. Data has been collated and provided by the Central South Consortium.

Table 4a reports data in relation to all CLA pupils who were recorded in January PLASC 2018 who attended education settings in Rhondda Cynon Taf at the time of assessment. Data includes all CLA pupils being educated in Rhondda Cynon Taf and not just those looked after by Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The data in Table 4a highlights that in academic year 2017/18, 71.4% of children who were looked after achieved expected outcomes in the Foundation Phase, which is a significant increase from the previous year. Outcomes were maintained for pupils at both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, continuing a longer term upward trend. Data shows 23.5% of KS4 pupils achieved L2+, a significant improvement from the previous year. As the cohort of students in each key stage group is relatively small any variations can have a greater impact on the overall percentage figures.

Indicator	15/16 Academic (16/17 Financial)	16/17 Academic (17/18 Financial)	17/18 Academic (18/19 Financial)
FPI %	80.0	53.1	71.4
KS2 CSI%	61.3	71.0	69.0
KS3 CSI %	62.5	71.1	71.0
KS4 L2+ %	15.2	5.3	23.5

**Table 4a: Children Looked After Performance Indicators: RCT**

5.6 As evidenced in Table 4b the percentage of CLA pupils being educated in Rhondda Cynon Taf schools who achieved expected outcomes was above the average percentage for the consortium in 2017/18, with the percentage of KS4 CLA pupils being educated in Rhondda Cynon Taf schools who achieved Level 2+ equivalent to the consortium wide percentage average. Despite Core Subject Indicator performance for KS2 and KS3 CLA pupils educated in Rhondda Cynon Taf falling below



that of the consortium average, it is important to note that significant improvements have been made in these Key Stages since academic year 2015/16.

Indicator	15/16 Academic (16/17 Financial)	16/17 Academic (17/18 Financial)	17/18 Academic (18/19 Financial)
FPI %	71.4	62.3	68.9
KS2 CSI%	70.0	75.0	72.7
KS3 CSI %	63.9	65.8	75.7
KS4 L2+ %	18.3	5.5	23.5

**Table 4b: Children Looked After Performance Indicators: CSC**

5.7 Table 5a highlights the range of specialist placements accessed by children who are looked after, both within and outside of the county. Of this cohort 79.95% (359 learners) were educated within a mainstream setting, both in and out of county. A total of 90 learners (20%) accessed more specialist placements due to severe and persistent special educational needs. This inevitability impacts on the capacity of some of our more vulnerable learners to achieve expected outcomes at critical stages in their school careers.

School Placement/ Type	RCT children who are looked after educated Out of County	RCT children who are looked after educated in RCT	Total
Mainstream	90	269	359
Learning Support Class ASDCommunication Disorders	1	8	9
Learning Support Class/Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)	0	12	12
Awaiting placement	1	1	2
Special School	12	38	50
Education Otherwise Than In School/Tuition Service	0	17	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>449</b>

**Table 5a: The number of school aged RCT children who are looked after according to type of school placement as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018**

5.8 There are currently 84 pupils (18.71%) educated both within and out of county with a statement of special educational needs (Table 5b), which is once again a disproportionately high level. This data, coupled with the high number of learners also requiring school based intervention at either school action or school action plus suggests that 63.47% of the

cohort placed both in and out of county have SEN of some description.

Code of Practice	RCT children who are looked after educated out of county	RCT children who are looked after educated in RCT	Total	%
Early Years/School Action	14	75	89	19.82
Early Years/School Action Plus	20	88	108	24.05
Statement of Special Educational Needs	14	70	84	18.71
No Special Educational Needs	56	108	164	36.53
Undergoing Statutory Assessment	0	4	4	0.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>449</b>	

**Table 5b: SEN of children who are looked after of school age as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018**

5.9 Table 6 reports that there were no CLA pupils leaving full time education as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in 2017/18, continuing a trend that has been evident since 2015/16.

Academic Year	Target	Actual	Difference comparing target to actual
2013/14	4.30	3.23	-1.07
2014/15	3.00	2.22	-0.78
2015/16	6.50	0.00	-6.50
2016/17	7.60	0.00	-7.60
2017/18	0.0	0.00	0.00

**Table 6: % pupils in LAC care and in any LA maintained learning setting, who attain age of 16 during the school year and leave full time education, training or work based learning without an approved external qualification.**

#### 5.10 Exclusions

Table 7 reports the number of CLA pupils who have been excluded over the last 4 years. It is encouraging to note that there has been a decrease in the number of pupils excluded and in the rate of exclusions per 1000 pupils for this cohort in 2017/18 compared to 2016/17. However, due to the small cohort of CLA pupils, data fluctuates from one academic year to another.

Academic Year	Male	Female	Total	Excluded cohort	Days Lost	per 1000 pupils
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2014/15	15	26	41	895	256	45.81
2015/16	10	22	32	815	220	39.26
2016/17	24	18	42	944	214.5	44.49
2017/18	24	12	36	1022	212	35.23

**Table 7: Exclusion Rate of Children Looked After in Rhondda Cynon Taf**

### 5.11 Attendance

Table 8 identifies attendance rates for CLA pupils and for the general population as a whole by primary and secondary schools. Table 8 highlights that the attendance levels of children and young people who are looked after in Rhondda Cynon Taf is similar to those identified within CSC as a whole and better when compared to the general population of pupils.

RCT School Phase	CLA 2016/17	CLA 2017/18	All Pupils 2016/17	All Pupils 2017/18
Primary	96.5	96.3	94.7	94.2
Secondary	93.7	94.0	93.6	93.0

CSC School Phase	CLA 2016/17	CLA 2017/18	All Pupils 2016/17	All Pupils 2017/18
Primary	96.4	96.3	94.9	94.6
Secondary	95.1	95.2	94.1	93.7

**Table 8: Attendance Levels of Children who are Looked After from data held by CSC to enable comparison with CSC LAs as a whole.**

## 6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

An Equality Impact Assessment is not required as the contents of this report are for information purposes only.

## 7. CONSULTATIONS

No consultation exercises have been undertaken.

## 8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

## 9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

## **10. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN/CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP**

Supporting children who are looked after to achieve the best possible educational outcomes through the effective use of person centred and collaborative early intervention approaches supports the Council's Corporate Priorities to build a strong economy and to promote independence and positive lives for everyone and ensures that the Sustainable Development principle and the Wellbeing Goals of the Wellbeing for Future Generations Act (Wales) underpin the vision and working practices of the service.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf has a significant looked after population. Data provided indicates that the risk factors which can adversely impact on educational outcomes remain prevalent and can be a significant and long term barrier to achievement. With a targeted strategy and strong communication, working alongside other key services, early interventions and support can be effective in minimising some of these risks and improve outcomes.
- 11.2 The outcome data for this vulnerable group of learners suggests that whilst there is evidence of progress, there is still more to be done, especially in supporting more vulnerable learners to access mainstream education where possible, to reduce exclusions and to continue improvements particularly in relation to educational attainment in Key Stage 4. All data sets have to be viewed within the context of the high levels of SEN evident within this cohort of learners.
- 11.3 The CLA Education Team continues to work collaboratively with schools, children's services and carers. Requests for involvement have increased and a larger group of children and young people are benefitting from this support. The CLA Education Team continues to develop a strategic approach and support for schools to develop a CLA friendly approach through training and guidance.
- 11.4 The data for children who are looked after will continue to be robustly scrutinised and evaluated in order to inform key areas for further strategic development and improvement. In collaboration with the Data Team, Access & Inclusion are developing a virtual school data set that will run reports on targeted populations at any point in time. This data is being cross referenced to the social services data base to ensure validity. There is a focus on transition support and interventions for pupils at year 10 and 11 who struggle to engage with a Key Stage 4 curriculum.
- 11.5 Continued focus on narrowing the attainment gap between children and young people who are looked after and their peer group is essential if

they are to achieve academic and personal success. Prompt and timely access to high quality services will be key in identifying any underlying needs and intervention strategies to bring about positive change. Support through the CLA Friendly Schools Quality Mark will ensure the upskilling of all teaching staff through continued training, support and guidance. Support and challenge for schools will continue to be provided where there are concerns relating to outcomes and continued opportunities for sharing good practice and training will be provided to ensure that schools, carers and external agencies are well supported.