

RHONDDA CYNON TAF
CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD
ANNUAL REPORT
2024/2025



RHONDDA CYNON TAF



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FOREWORD



**Councillor Gareth Caple
Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care
Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board**

As Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board, I have pleasure in presenting to you this year's Annual Report for the 2024/25 Municipal Year. This report aims to deliver a comprehensive overview of the Corporate Parenting Board's role, and the extensive efforts accomplished throughout what has been another fruitful year.

The Corporate Parenting Board serves as a supportive environment where Members and officers can collaboratively engage as constructive peers to review a diverse array of reports and subjects. When appropriate, the Board aims to critically assess the information presented, keeping the interests of our care-experienced children and young people at the forefront of our discussions.

Through the implementation of a comprehensive work program, the Corporate Parenting Board has successfully addressed all planned business requirements while maintaining a level of flexibility to accommodate any emerging issues.

The Corporate Parenting Board takes great pride in our essential role in advancing the Council's primary objectives, particularly in achieving optimal outcomes for the children in our care. It is imperative that we maintain a forward-thinking approach and consistently strive for improvement as corporate parents to enhance the lives of the young people we serve.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all Members and Officers of the Corporate Parenting Board for their continued dedication and contributions. I eagerly anticipate collaborating with you in the upcoming Municipal Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Caple', with a horizontal line underneath.

WHAT IS THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD?

“Corporate parenting is the collective responsibility of partners when a child enters care. This includes local authorities, elected members, employees and partner agencies. Every member and employee of the council has the statutory responsibility to act for that child.

However, it is not limited to local authorities and the public sector. Our goal is for corporate parenting to be a collective responsibility for our most vulnerable children. The private and the third sectors can also play a pivotal role in ensuring a care experienced child can flourish.

Being a corporate parent is about wanting the best for a child.

In short, it’s about treating a care experienced child with the love and support that you would treat your own”. **Welsh Government**

LEGISLATION

Rhondda Cynon Taf takes into account the overarching duties laid out in Part 2, General Functions of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Specifically, that a person exercising functions in relation to an individual for example a looked after child must have regard to the characteristics, culture and beliefs of the individual (including, for example, language. www.law.gov.wales/social-services-and-well-being-wales-act-2014-further-legislation-codes-and-guidance-made-under-act

▪ Chapter 6 of the [WLGA’s Corporate Parenting Workbook](#) states:

You can make sure there is a dedicated group of Councillors who focus specially on these corporate parenting responsibilities. It might be called a Panel, or a Scrutiny subcommittee. Whatever it is called, it should:

- meet regularly and often enough to carry out the three central functions we identify here effectively
- bring all those who contribute to Corporate Parenting together and draw on their experience and wisdom
- talk with and listen to groups of our children, who are encouraged and helped to speak out - theirs are the most important voices
- interrogate all relevant performance and management information
- where possible, compare the Council’s performance with other similar authorities, and look at trends over time

- identify where things are not good enough, and ask for remedial action from officers, partner agencies, or the Council itself
 - track that the action is taken and is effective, and escalate if not
 - focus special attention on the most vulnerable children and young people, and seek to ensure their safety and well-being
- **The goals set out in the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#):**
 1. A more Equal Wales - A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic circumstances);
 2. A Healthier Wales - A society in which people’s physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood; and
 3. A Wales of Cohesive Communities - Attractive, safe, viable and well-connected.
 - **The Council’s [Corporate Plan ‘Working with our Communities’ 2024-2030](#), which is guided by the Vision for a Rhondda Cynon Taf where “All people, communities, and businesses can grow and live in a healthy, green, safe, vibrant, and inclusive County Borough where they can achieve their full potential in all aspects of their lives and work, both now and in the future.”**

PRIORITY: PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES - Children and young people have the best start in life and can learn and grow

Some of the **OUTCOMES** we expect to see by 2030:

- Families will have greater resilience – Fewer children will be ‘looked after’ in our care and will have improved life chances.
- Children in our care will be looked after close to their home and stay connected to families, friends and communities.

Useful links

[Children's Commissioner for Wales Annual Report](#)

[Welsh Government's Response to the Annual Report of the Commissioner](#)

[Corporate Parenting Charter: A Promise from Wales](#)

[Radical Reform Summit](#)

MEET THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD



Councillor G Caple
(Chair)



Councillor R Lewis
(Vice-Chair)



Councillor C Leyshon



Councillor S Rees



Councillor J Bonetto



Councillor S Hickman



Councillor W Jones



Councillor P Evans
(until 9.4.25)



Councillor D Grehan
(from 9.4.25)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- In conjunction with the relevant scrutiny Committee ensuring that the Council fulfils its responsibilities as corporate parent to children who are looked after and formulate Council policy in respect of children who are looked after and children in need.*
- To ensure that all Groups and divisions within the Council work together in order to promote best outcomes for children who are looked after and children in need.
- To promote effective relationships with key partner agencies in the best interests of children who are looked after and children in need.
- To monitor the implementation of the Action Plan arising from the Best Value Review of Services to children looked after, in addition to monitoring outcomes for children looked after and children in need.
- To consider the outcomes and promote positive learning practices following consideration of Child Practice Reviews.
- In accordance with HMIP to routinely review the offending rates of CLA by gender to ensure that the Corporate Parenting Board understand patterns of offending by girls and can take actions to address where necessary.
- To consider the impact of relevant other systems/agencies (e.g., health, courts, schools) and see how these could be improved.
- To seek the views of children looked after - the advocacy service will be asked to facilitate.
- To invite representatives from other agencies to attend as appropriate.
- To monitor the implementation of the Pledge to looked after young people.
- To report directly to Cabinet through an Annual report of the Board.
- Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru is also invited to attend the meetings. This enables both TGP Cymru and Children Services to discuss issues that affect service delivery in the community on a strategic level and to work in partnership to provide improved and better outcomes.

* Amended May 2025

VISION OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

The role of the corporate parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children. The local authority has a legal and moral duty to provide support to the children it is responsible for looking after.

Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs that councils do and when a child can't safely stay at home, it is up to the Local Authority to step in and give them the care, support and stability that they deserve.

All Elected Members must be confident that the children who are looked after within RCT:

- Are safe and healthy;
- Have good homes in a secure and caring environment;
- Are placed within the local authority area, close to their homes and communities, as far as is possible;
- Have good experiences of education and can fulfill their potential;
- Are not being drawn into antisocial behavior;
- Are developing socially and emotionally;
- Are provided with help to cope with the problems they have in growing up;
- Are prepared for their transition to adulthood;
- Have ambitions for themselves and are supported to access leisure and hobbies;
- Are helped to achieve to the maximum of their ability;
- Have high aspirations and can show pride in their achievements; and
- Are provided with support when they need it.

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

Children Looked After remains a key priority and the Council continues to strive for a safe reduction in Children Looked After numbers and to deliver the best possible outcomes for the children and young people.

As at the 31st March 2025, there were a total of 611 children and young people within the Local Authority's care. The demographic has been broken down and compared to that of the previous year in the tables below.

Children Looked After by Gender

Gender	Total as at 31/03/2024	Total as at 31/03/2025
Female	274	270
Male	361	340
Other	2	1
Total	<u>637</u>	<u>611</u>

Children Looked After by Age Group

Age Band	Total as at 31/03/2024	Total as at 31/03/2025
0-3	70	73
4-7	110	100
8-11	144	130
12-14	137	139
15	58	42
16	55	63
17	63	64
Total	<u>637</u>	<u>611</u>

Children Looked After by Placement Type

CLA Placement Type	Total as at 31/03/2024	Total as at 31/03/2025
Independent Sector Foster Placement	99	84
Third Sector Independent Foster Agency	11	14
RCT Foster Carers	163	172
RCT Relative Foster Carers	198	185
Other LA Foster Care	1	4
Parent & Child Foster Placement	3	1
Placed for Adoption	10	7
Placed with Parents	60	39
Education Placement	1	0
Other Lodgings	19	19
Independent Sector Residential Sector	49	63
RCT Residential Care	20	18
Secure	0	0
Prison/YOI	1	1
Other Placements	2	4
Total	<u>637</u>	<u>611</u>

UPDATES TO THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

REGULATION 73 REPORTS

Regular updates are presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in respect of the current position of the residential Children's Homes and respite service. The reports are exempt from the public to ensure that the Board receive a detailed overview of each home. The reports are inclusive of up-to-date case studies, which inform us of the everyday occurrences, challenges faced by our hardworking staff, any areas of concern and, of course, the wellbeing of the children who occupy the homes.

Each of the reports received during the Municipal Year provided the Corporate Parenting Board with honest and reliable feedback from the young people who occupy the homes.

SOCIAL SERVICES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

The Corporate Parenting Board receive updates in respect of the operation and effectiveness of the statutory Social Services complaints and compliments procedure. At each meeting, Members monitor the number of complaints received, the nature of the complaints and any lessons learnt, along with noting those enquiries received from Elected Members, A.M's and M.P's.

The importance of feedback from those who use the services is invaluable to the Corporate Parenting Board. During the year, Members were provided with detailed and honest feedback in response to questions around the updates. It was pleasing to note that the service had continued to be used by Elected Members and A.M and M.P colleagues, which builds upon the already strong relationship with officers.

Members agreed to receive future updates on a six-monthly basis.

ADVOCACY

The Corporate Parenting Board receive quarterly updates from the Local Authority's advocacy services, Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru. The Board are provided with a detailed breakdown of issues by age, gender, referral source and type, along with information on the take up of the active offer. This information enables both TGP Cymru and Children Services to discuss issues that affect service delivery in the community on a strategic level and to work in partnership to provide improved and better outcomes.

[Further information on the services provided by Tros Gynnal Plant \(TGP\) Cymru can be found here.](#)

MEMBER FRONTLINE VISITS

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board undertake scheduled visits to front line staff working in Children's Services. The visits are led by the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care and the Cabinet Member for Education, Inclusion and Welsh Language in their roles as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board, respectively; and all Members of the Board are invited to attend one visit each.

The visits are intended to be informal and to better inform Members of the work undertaken by staff to safeguard the health and wellbeing of children in Rhondda Cynon Taf, particularly those who are in our corporate care and their various needs. The visits are an opportunity for Members to gain a better understanding of the needs and wellbeing of the staff, particularly at a time when the way of working may have changed following the pandemic. During the year, several visits were undertaken by Members with the Chair due to present his report at the July meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board, which will detail the key themes.

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR RHONDDA CYNON TAF

There is a strong commitment in Rhondda Cynon Taf to support and promote the wellbeing of care-experienced children and young people and develop the visibility of the Corporate Parenting Board for care experienced young people

The Corporate Parenting Board received a report which sought involvement and feedback on the draft implementation plan that links to the Corporate Parenting Board Pledge for RCT, with the implementation plan putting forward proposals for Members input and feedback into the 7 key priority areas.

Consultation with key stakeholders and in particular, care-experienced children and young people has been key in developing the draft Corporate Parenting Board Pledge for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Members acknowledged that it was important to give young people a voice, and the CPB would allow that, suggesting that in the future young people could be invited to come along and speak to CPB, to give their views, particularly from the care sector.

THERAPEUTIC SUPPORT

The Therapeutic Support Panel was established in February 2022 in response to a need to manage referrals to the newly commissioned Multi Agency Placement Support Service (MAPSS). In order to effectively meet this goal a panel of multi-agency professionals were put together.

The Corporate Parenting Board were provided with an update on the work of the Therapeutic Support Panel over the course of 2023/24 and the implementation of a therapeutic model for Children's Services.

One of the key learning points from last year was the need to develop a therapeutic model for Children's Services and to map across where the specialist role of the therapeutic support panel services sit in the continuum of intervention. This had been achieved and was now to be embedded in Children's Services to form a key element of the Model of Practice.

Members were provided with detailed and honest feedback in response to questions in relation to referrals, and prevention in relation to breakdown of adoption. Members observed that it was encouraging and important in terms of the tracking.

PROGRESS UPDATE: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD PLEDGE FOR RCT

Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) Members were provided with a report, that proposes to further strengthen the Council's Pledge to care experience young people and on the progress achieved to date in taking forward the Pledge's 7 key priorities.

Members were informed that in Wales, the Welsh Government (WG) had tasked councils to strengthen their CPB's pledge to care experienced young people, with RCT Council recognising the importance of diversity and equality and is committed to reducing the impact of discrimination. A small working group of Council Officers had met to discuss the information contained within the report and agree proposed next steps. Members were informed that there are legal issues relating to protected characteristics that cannot come into play where something is not protected in law, so the Council was not looking to 'treat care experience as if it were a protected characteristic', but would advocate undertaking the actions, which were listed, linked to implementation of the CPB Pledge to begin to address the disadvantages care experienced young people may face.

Members were informed of the intention to complete some short videos for the website, to help to communicate what the role of CPB was, which would lead into some consultation work

Members were provided with detailed and honest feedback in response to questions in relation to employment training for children with disabilities and around protected characteristics. Members provided feedback with regards to next steps, acknowledging it was important to stick to the objectives and the priorities of the pledge and to see how Welsh Government would take this forward.

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER PREVENTION STRATEGY

Under the Social Services and Well-Being Act (Wales) 2014, the Council has a duty to provide preventative family support services that promote family resilience and prevent family breakdown. In January 2022, [Cabinet](#) endorsed the updated Looked After Prevention Strategy, and the funding proposal that accompanies it.

The Corporate Parenting Board was provided with a progress update on the four significant areas of improvement:

- Model of Practice
- Better Pre-Birth Services
- Developing Reunification
- Improve support for kinship carers and special guardians

The Corporate Parenting Board acknowledged that the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy was being implemented, with some positive results noted. The strategy itself was due to expire in 2024, and in 2025 independent review will be invited to evaluate the past 3 years and set the next phase of work in this area.

Members acknowledged it was important that services for children transform, to reflect changes in society and liked the use of the model that utilises the acronym of RCT to highlight the three key pillars of practice e.g., Relationships, Collaboration and being Trauma Informed and the shift of culture from keeping children safe to keeping families together unless it was unsafe for a child.

Members wish to receive further updates to continue to monitor the progress in the medium to long-term.

INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER UPDATES

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (referred to as the SSWB Act) and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015 and 16 (referred to as the CPPCR Regulations) provide legislation and guidance pertaining to the role and functions of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The Adoption and Children Act 2002 requires the Local Authority to appoint Independent Reviewing Officers to conduct reviews for Children who are Looked After and monitor the Local Authority's performance in relation to implementing the care plans for individual children. As such, regular reports are presented to the Board to monitor the activities of the IRO service.

Members noted that the information and data provided, was greatly valued, which allowed for the identification and monitoring of key trends. It was pleasing to hear, from CPB's perspective, that things were relatively stable, whilst acknowledging the

difficulty seen over the last few years and, noting that Officers had identified key pressure areas.

FOSTER WALES COLLABORATION UPDATE

As part of the Foster Wales collaborative all 22 local authorities have committed to bringing in an initial set of national commitments one of these is to adopt a Foster Carers charter, where the corporate parents, fostering services and foster carers together commit to areas which will improve the experiences of the whole fostering family including the looked after child or young person.

An update was provided to Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) Members about the recruitment and retention of foster carers, with a particular focus on adopting the Foster Carers Charter and the impacts of the Eliminate Profit Policy.

Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) Members were grateful the information provided, recognising that if Foster Carers/Foster Families felt adequately supported, the outcomes would be all the better for the young people in their care.

PUPIL DEVELOPMENT GRANT (PDG) CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER (CLA) EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL CLUSTER MODEL DURING THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/2024

The Corporate Parenting Board receive annual updates in relation to the ongoing cluster – based funding mechanism for distributing PDG LAC grant funding and the processes in place to evaluate its impact on the provision made for Children Looked After in schools across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Members were pleased to note that the Pupil Deprivation Grant for Looked After Children was being used to assist those most vulnerable in the County Borough with particular emphasis on wellbeing.

Members agreed that future reports relating to PDG CLA could be brought further in line with the financial year.

CTMUHB CAMHS UPDATE AND FUTURE PLANS

The Corporate Parenting Board received a presentation on the CTMUHB CAMHS on what the service had done since 2010, learning from recent concerns and future plans in line with the HIW/CIW/Estyn report.

Members were provided with detailed and honest feedback in response to questions around the increase call on services and how the future was planned for and, how a pro-active model of care, rather than a reactive model of care, could be found.

The Corporate Parenting Board acknowledged that future reports from CAHMS could focus on the written offer to care experienced people, their carers and care leavers and publishing information about how they could access support.

Members felt it would be helpful to invite the Neurodiversity Improvement Plan Coordinator to present their work, given that the representation of adopted children and care experienced young people in that cohort was sometimes explicable high.

Members agreed to receive regular reports and updates from CAMHS.

MAGU SERVICE

The Magu Project has been developed in line with the Welsh Government Strategy of Keeping Families Together and reducing the number of Looked After Children in Wales. The term “Magu” translates from Welsh as “to bring up, rear, nurture, raise, gain” and it promotes the ongoing long-term nature of the support required to deliver better outcomes for children and their families. The Magu Project delivers an integrated care pathway for pregnant women and their families across early intervention and edge of care services, that focuses on building skills and resilience and reducing risk

Magu celebrated their first year in practice in June 2024. This enabled comprehensive baseline data to be collated from which to measure future progress but already it was pleasing to noted that were some very promising indicators to suggest Magu is making a difference.

The Corporate Parenting Board were provided with an update on the progress of the Magu service since its implementation in May 2023 and agreed that this was an excellent initiative, which had shown positive results early on. It was hoped in the long term this would take pressure off some of the key services as a local authority.

VALE, VALLEYS & CARDIFF REGIONAL ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT

Vale, Valleys, and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) as part of the National Adoption Service in Wales (NAS), provides a regional adoption service to the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Cardiff Council and Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council. All adoption services are required to

provide an annual review of their service as set out in Regulation 22 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007.

The Board considered VVC's eighth annual report, which covered the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The requirement to review the service under Regulation 39 of the Local Authority Adoption Services (Wales) Regulations 2019 on a six-monthly basis is incorporated into this report. It also includes the reporting requirements set out in the governance arrangements for the region. The report provides a record of the performance, activity and the quality of the service provided during the reporting period.

CWM TAF YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE

Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (YOS) was formed in 2014 following the amalgamation of YOS's in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT). Between 2017 and March 2023, the YOS's governance arrangements were provided by the Offender Management Board (OMB), a strategic partnership group focused on both children and adults involved in the criminal justice system. In March 2023 a consultation event resulted in an agreement that the Cwm Taf YOS would be rebranded as a YJS, and a dedicated YJS management board was re-established.

The YJS provides a statutory duty to young people between 10 and 18yrs who are charged with criminal offences. The YJS also offers and delivers targeted prevention services for those children aged between 8 and 17 years old.

The YJS is a multi-agency team made up of social workers, youth justice workers, health workers, substance misuse workers, police officers, a probation officer and victim workers. The service also has a parenting officer and workers who help children and young people to access education, training and employment. The YJS recruits and trains community volunteers and uses sessional workers to engage with children during evenings and weekends.

During the period, the Corporate Parenting Board received an update on the work of the service for 2024/25 and information regarding the [All Wales Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Care Experienced Children and Young People 2022](#) for consideration.

The protocol is intended to assist professionals who encounter care experienced children and young adults while carrying out their work, and in sharing a common framework of principles and expectations informed by an approach that actively promotes children's rights and which safeguards and promotes their wellbeing.

Between 29th April and 3rd May 2024, the Cwm Taf YJS was inspected by HMIP and the [HMIP Inspection report](#) was published on 20th August 2024. The YJS achieved an overall rating of 'Good.' The Cwm Taf YJS Management Board, which oversees the work of the YJS was pleased to receive the rating, which reflected positively on the practice and services provided by the Cwm Taf YJS.

Members welcomed the opportunity to receive local/regional data and how progress and improvements made contributes to better outcomes for care experienced children.

The Corporate Parenting Board welcomed further reports and the opportunity to invite partner agencies to a future meeting.

EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Supporting children who are looked after to achieve the best possible outcomes 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.

The Corporate Parenting Board recognise the educational disadvantages often experienced by young people who are looked after, which can have an adverse effect on opportunities moving into higher education and into adulthood. As such, the Corporate Parenting Board request an annual update in respect of the Council's dedicated programmes to support Children Looked After, Care Leavers and those with care and support needs into employment, education and training.

During the period, the Corporate Parenting Board received a breakdown of outcomes from April 2024 – March 2025 in respect of the Step in the Right Direction, Care2Work programmes and Care2Work courses that had been delivered, and acknowledged the good work being done, whilst being mindful of the reduction in funding.

UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS AND EDUCATION TRIBUNAL (ALNET) ACT 2018 AND ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS (ALN) CODE 2021 IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Following the enactment of the ALNET Act (2018) and the implementation of the ALN Code (2021) Wales in September 2021 local authorities (LAs) in Wales are currently coming to the end of the extended national implementation period whereby the new ALN legislative framework will be fully implemented by 1st September 2025. By this time all children and young people with an identified SEN / or ALN will fall under the new ALN legislation.

The new ALN legislation provides a fully statutory framework under which LAs must operate. This replaces the previous SEN system which consisted of both statutory and non-statutory responsibilities and provides equity for all children and young people

with ALN to have a statutory Individual Development Plan (IDP), regardless of the severity and complexity of their identified ALN.

The Corporate Parenting Board were provided with an update with Members raising questions on the results in respect of targeting of supported pupils with their interests. The Chair welcomed the comprehensive report.

QUALITY OF CARE REVIEW FOSTER WALES RCT

The Quality of Care Review is a legal requirement for Foster Wales RCT and is written in accordance with:

- The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (the 2016 Act)
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018
- Whilst there is no requirement to follow CiW's 'Guidance on Completing the Quality of Care Review' this approach has been chosen to assist in meeting statutory responsibilities

Foster Wales RCT is the Local Authority's Fostering Service and provides a range of approved foster placements for children from the local community aged between 0 to 18 years of age. The service has 4 teams:

- Regional Recruitment Team: Recruit mainstream foster carers.
- Placements and Assessments Team: Assess mainstream carers and find placements.
- Kinship Assessment Team: Assess all kinship carers and undertake SGO assessments. - Fostering Support Team: Supervise and support mainstream and kinship foster carers.
- Fostering Support Team- Responsibility for fostering supervision and support for mainstream and kinship foster carers.

The Corporate Parenting Board welcomed the comprehensive report, and it was recognised that Fostering was very important and that the campaign was proving fruitful, with the support given to carers and children, second to none.

YOUNG CARERS ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

The support service for young carers (aged 5-17) continues to be provided on a commissioned basis by Action for Children. Specific support is available via an externally funded post for Young Adult Carers (aged 18-25). Sibling carer support (children whose sibling has additional needs) is now provided entirely by Action for Children on a commissioned basis.

The report provided the Corporate Parenting Board with a summary of the support provided to Young Carers, (aged 0-17) and Young Adult Carers (aged 18-25). It highlighted the key developments achieved during the year.

Over the 2024-25 financial year, 90 young carer groups and 30 sibling carer group sessions have been provided across the borough. These group sessions were accessed 468 times by young carers and 279 times by sibling carers. Through the project, 24 free trips to young carers and 20 free trips to our sibling young carers, have been offered. The service has provided 12 family session activities where 35 young carers, parents and siblings attended, and 59 sibling carers, parents and siblings have attended. 4 residential /overnight stays, which were accessed by 45 young carers and 25 sibling carers, have been provided.

Members acknowledged the fantastic work of young carers, which often went unseen, so it was pleasing to see there was an array of support available. Members asked that subsequent reports should include an update on the number of schools in the county borough that were working towards their young carers award.

THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – MOVING FORWARD

In the 2025/26 Municipal Year, key areas of focus of the Corporate Parenting Board will include:

REGULAR PERFORMANCE DATA

It is essential that the Corporate Parenting Board regularly receive the qualitative data and statutory updates. The monitoring of regular performance data allows the Corporate Parenting Board to effectively analyse key areas and determine ways to further improve and enhance the services the Council provides. The updates will include:

- Regulation 73 Reports
- Social Services Complaints & Compliments
- Advocacy Updates
- CIW Inspections reports of the Children's Homes
- Child Practice Reviews
- Performance (IRO)
- Accommodation
- Education
- Adoption
- Foster Care
- Education and Training
- Participation

The Corporate Parenting Board will receive annual updates from the following services to continue to monitor the progress, achievements, and future aspirations:

- Miskin Services
- Youth Justice Service
- Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Regional Adoption Service
- Fostering Services Quality of Care
- Independent Reviewing Officers
- Registered Childcare Provision
- Young Carers

UK GOVERNMENT AND WELSH GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The Corporate Parenting Board wish to be kept up to date with any key policy changes or ambitions of the Government in terms of Children Looked After.

UPDATE IN RELATION TO THE CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER: RESIDENTIAL CARE STRATEGY 2022-2027

The increasing demand, juxtaposed with increasing scarcity of registered children's homes has led to a risk of the Council being unable to avoid reliance upon settings that are recorded as Operating Without Registration (OWR) by the Care Inspectorate for Wales (CIW). This happens where a placement is required but there is not one available due to scarcity of supply. Every effort is made to avoid reliance on OWR.

During 2024 - 2025 Corporate Parenting Board continued to receive regular updates in relation to the Children Looked After Residential Care Strategy to monitor the Council's position. As such, Members were regularly provided with assurance about the range of measures that are in place to support young people and manage risk. The exempt reports include information on the reasons for the OWR, plans for ending the OWR, age of the child and the wellbeing of the child.

Members wish to continue to receive such updates until such time where there are no children in OWR.

SAFEGUARDING 'INFORM' SESSION

During the 2022-2023 Municipal Year, the Corporate Parenting Board received an update in respect of two Child Practice Reviews. During the update, Members raised several questions in relation to safeguarding and resolved to receive further information multiagency training and the wider learning framework from a partner agency perspective. At the beginning of the 2023-2024 Municipal Year, Members received a report which set out a proposal for a dedicated 'Inform' session with Corporate Parenting Board, to include presentations from practitioners and managers about their work with children and families.

At a meeting on 12th February 2025, the Corporate Parenting Board welcomed the opportunity to increase their understanding about Children's Services decision making and risk management processes and the opportunity for greater insight into the volume and demand facing Children's Services staff, hearing a week in the life of some frontline teams. Such was the success of the 'Inform' session, the Corporate Parenting Board requested a follow-on session to be arranged in Autumn 2025.

CTMUHB CAMHS UPDATE AND FUTURE PLANS

The emotional well-being and mental health needs for young people with care and support needs remains a concern and priority for the Corporate Parenting Board.

During the year, the Corporate Parenting Board received a presentation, and it was recognised that services to improve young people's mental health needs were developing, but that demand continued to exceed the services that were available.

The Corporate Parenting Board proposed agreed that again, an invitation would be extended to Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and representatives from CAMHS and the Neuro-divergence Improvement Programme.

PROGRESS UPDATE: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD PLEDGE FOR RCT

At its meeting on [29th April 2024](#), the Cabinet approved the Corporate Parenting Pledge for Rhondda Cynon Taf and agreed to sign 'the pledge' and adopt the [Welsh Government's Corporate Parenting Charter: "A Promise from Wales."](#) As part of its resolution, the Cabinet agreed to delegate responsibility to the Corporate Parenting Board with leading and monitoring success and commitment to the Corporate Parenting Charter.

At its meeting on the [30th September 2024](#), the Corporate Parenting Board received an update on the progress achieved to date in taking forward the Pledge's 7 key priorities.

By receiving regular reports, the Corporate Parenting Board will hold the Cabinet to account to ensure the Council deliver on the Pledge key priorities.

As part of the work, the Members are in support of promoting the visibility of the Corporate Parenting Board to children, young people and their carers through ideas such as pen pictures and through an animation to explain the work of the Board.

The Corporate Parenting Board look forward to hearing the voices of children and young people in Foster Care, Residential and 16+ through informal sessions to strengthen its relationship with the young people in question.

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD WORK PROGRAMME 2025-2026

A 2025-26 work programme for the Corporate Parenting Board is set out below. The work programme is a fluid document, which can be amended by Members at any given point to accommodate a change in priorities. The programme is based on factors highlighted within the Board's Annual Report and does not include the statutory updates presented to the Board.

JULY
Corporate Parenting Board Work Programme 2025-2026
Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2024-2025
Frontline Visits 2024-25
OCTOBER
Therapeutic Support
RCT Residential Transformation Strategy
Children Looked After Prevention Strategy
Independent Reviewing Service Monitoring Report to the Group Director Community and Children's Services
Foster Wales Collaboration Update
Pupil Development Grant (PDG) Looked After Children (LAC) Evaluation of the School Cluster Model during the financial year 2024/25
Progress Update (Implementation of the Corporate Pledge for RCT)
JANUARY
Magu Update
CLA Mental Health support/CTMUHB CAMHS Update
Vale, Valley & Cardiff Regional Adoption Annual Report 2024-25
VS/EPS collaboration in supporting trauma informed practice in RCT schools
APRIL
Cwm Taf Youth Justice Service
Employment, Education and Training
Quality of Care Review – Foster Wales RCT Report
Young Carers Annual Report 2025-26
Progress Update (Implementation of the Corporate Pledge for RCT)

CONCLUSION

I would like to express my gratitude for taking the time to read the Corporate Parenting Board's Annual Report for the 2024-25 Municipal Year.

This report highlights the extensive work undertaken by the Board throughout the year and outlines key areas of focus for the upcoming year. To uphold our commitments, we will establish a comprehensive and diverse work program for the 2025-26 Municipal Year, with the understanding that priorities may shift in response to urgent or emerging needs.

Moving forward the Corporate Parenting Board, working with partners shall actively work to meet the diverse needs and promote the life chances of looked after children in the care of RCT Council and those young people who are care leavers, actively listening to the voice of Children Looked after, to allow them to achieve the same opportunities and outcomes as all children.

The Advisory Panel shall ensure their agenda focuses on what Children Looked After identify as relevant for their growth and development and the Panel shall monitor services that shall be delivered across all statutory and voluntary sector organisations whilst actively working with young people to implement and monitor the Council's Corporate Parenting Pledge to looked after young people.

Both the Corporate Parenting Board and the Council remain dedicated to our safeguarding responsibilities, and our Members will continue to collaborate with officers to challenge and enhance our services, ensuring the best possible outcomes for the children and young people in our care.