

Appendix A
Annual Report of the Gwynedd Corporate Parenting Panel
2013-14

Introduction

The report is divided into four parts relating to the role and responsibilities of the Council, the contribution of Council departments, the contribution of partners and a discussion of what has been achieved and what actions need to be taken in the future.

1.0 Role and Responsibilities of the Council

The Corporate Parenting Panel has been established in Gwynedd, as in every other county in Wales, as a body to oversee the welfare and interests of children in care. The Welsh Government's expectation is that members of staff in every county have positive attitudes to their corporate parenting role. In 2009 the Government in conjunction with the Welsh Local Government Association, released a document entitled 'If this were my child ...' which highlights the role and responsibility of members as corporate parents.

The role of the corporate parent includes the expectation that the parent will strive to ensure that children in care receive appropriate care, that the accommodation where they live that is of a suitable standard, they have good health care and that they make good educational progress. This is all to happen without the corporate parent ever meeting with the individual child in care. It is important that the children themselves feel that they have the support of members and staff of the Council and the Council's partners in a very challenging time in their lives.

To sustain this role, the Council has established the Corporate Parenting Panel consisting of the Lead Member for Children and Young People, the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members for Care and Education, the Young People's Champion and a member chosen by the Scrutiny Committees. The Panel also includes the Chief Executive, Corporate Director and the Lead Officer for Children and Young People, the Corporate Director and Statutory Director of Social Service, the Head of Children and Family Support and the Head of Education. Through the Panel the Council - that is, all elected members, delegate their responsibility in the area to the Lead Member for Children and Young People. The Panel has the right to ask for issues of concern to be scrutinized by the Services Scrutiny Committee on its behalf.

1.1 Member Training

A training session took place on January 8, 2014 for Council members. It was an opportunity for members to receive information about their role and consider different scenarios regarding the needs of children in care in the county. There were 24 members present. Feedback from members suggests that a more practical session for their role as members and as school governors would be useful. The next training session will be held on the 14th of January, 2015.

1.3 A Strategy for the Panel for 2014-17

The Panel has identified the need to act more strategically in the future. As a result, a developmental program has been designed to assist the Panel map out its future direction, ensuring that it will hear the voice of children and respond to the challenge of ensuring appropriate standards of provision by Council departments and external partners. The program needs to include opportunities for children and young people in care and who have been in care, the opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions based on their experiences. Some work on this has already been achieved. Development sessions and self-evaluation of the Panel have been held as well as two sessions with children, young people and carers but there is much to do. A draft strategy will be produced for discussion at the Panel meeting in October 2014.

2.0 Voice of Children in Care

2.1 'Speak-Out' Sessions

Speak-out sessions with children in care were held during the year with an opportunity for young people to meet with council members and staff. The group has started looking at the outline 'pledge' of service delivery standards by the Council and the LacPac, a comprehensive package of information for children in care.

The Post 16 Team of the Child and Family Support Service has started a discussion group for young people in care between 16 and 25 years old with the aim of developing a method of collecting the views and on the needs of the older group and on the quality of service they are receiving.

3.0 Support from the Council

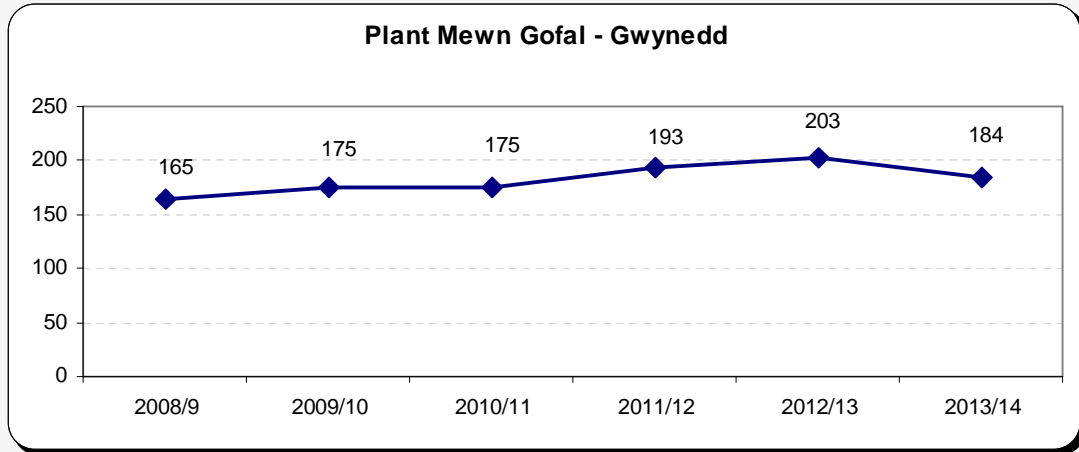
3.1 Child and Families Service

Recent data on the numbers of children in care in Gwynedd

Children in care	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Number of children in care at the end of the year	184	203	195
Number of children who came into care during the year	46	56 (B.33/ G.23)	54
Number of children leaving care during the year	65	49	36
Number of children who have been adopted during the year	11	9	3

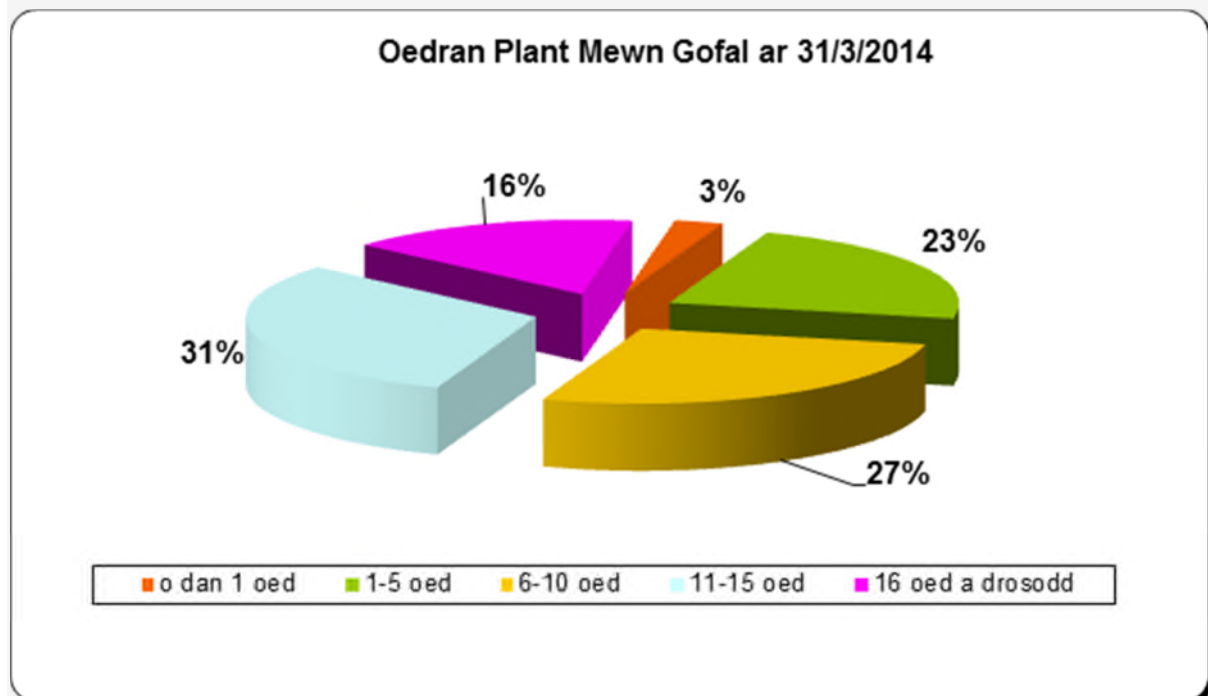
The Trend of the Number of Children in Care in Gwynedd

Children in Care – Gwynedd



There was a reduction of 10% of children in care during the year. It is not clear why the number of children in care has decreased at this time. The number of referrals was similar to last year.

Age Range Children in Care, Gwynedd 31/3/14

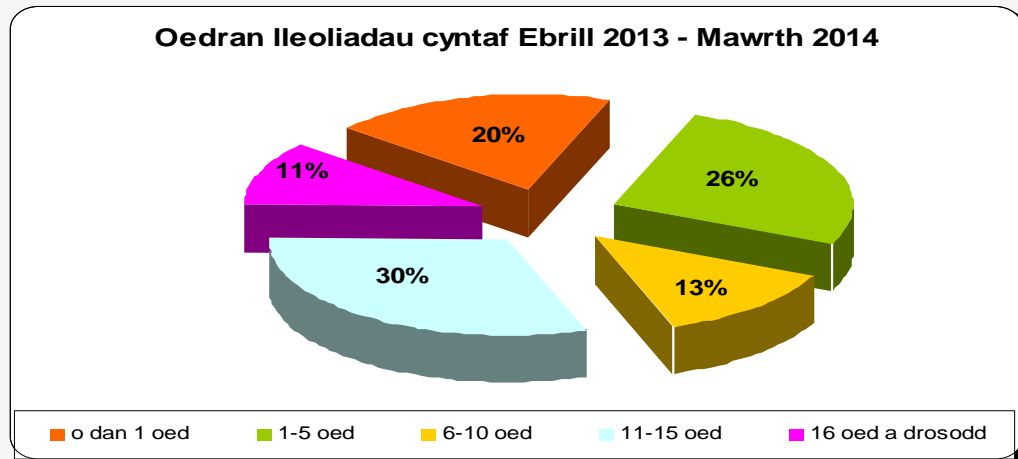


Eleven children were adopted during the year, taking an average of 24 months between the placement and the date of the adoption order. When adopted, a child is

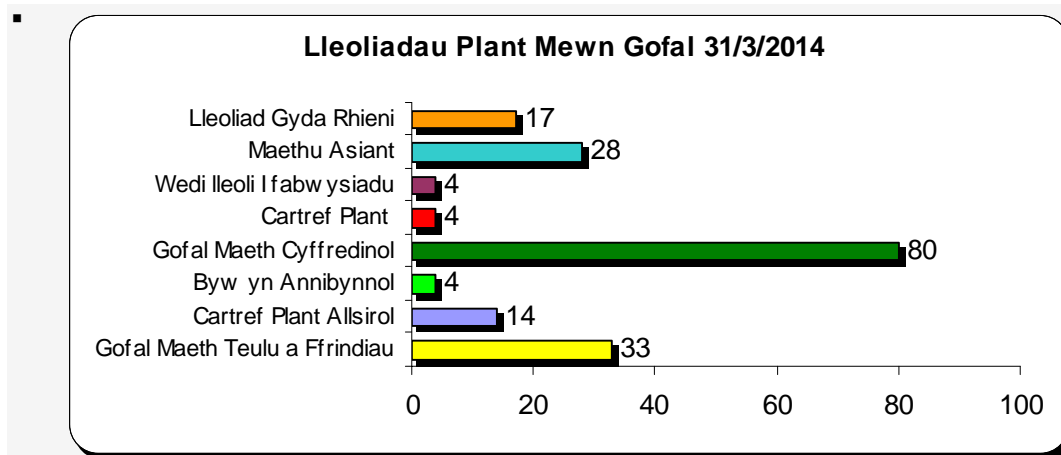
no longer in the care of the Council.

Children in Care Placements

Age at First Placement April 2013- March 2014



Placement of Children in Care 31/03/14



- Placements with Parents
- Agency Fostering
- Placed for Adoption
- Children's home
- General Foster Care
- Living Independently
- Out of County Children's Home
- Family & Friends Foster Care

Geographical Locations

At the end of the year there were 49 (27%) of children in care are located outside Gwynedd. 53% of these in Anglesey and Conwy. Residential settings represent 28%

of these locations and 69% of them are in England. There are a variety of reasons for residential placements; there are two placements in secure units (there is no secure unit in North Wales), and the remaining provisions are for specialized placements according to personal needs.

Very Young Children in Care

The latest data shows a continuous increase in the number of children under age 5 who come into care. This puts additional pressure on the service because there are not enough adoptive parents available at the moment. Many of these children are the children of adults who were in care themselves and it is proving very difficult to break this cycle.

Work and Training Scheme for Young People - "Moving Forward"

The scheme has been established between Coleg Menai, Careers Wales and Gwynedd Council to assist young people in care or who are about to leave care. There are 7 young people who are part of the initial group and a member of staff from Careers Wales will prepare them for work.

The Service has arranged a placement for 4 individuals in departments across the Council including within the Children's Service itself. The intention is to expand the level experience within the Council of providing placements for children in care and as a result receive more offers of work placements.

Enhanced Placement Scheme - "When I'm Ready"

Seven young people who have left care have joined the "When I'm Ready" pilot scheme, in which Gwynedd is involved, so that they can continue to live with their foster carers after their eighteenth birthday.

Reorganization of the Children and Families Services

Following a detailed 'end to end' assessment, the Children and Family Service has embarked on developing a new model for working with children and their families on the 'edge of care'. The intention is to create an Edge of Care Team to work with families where there is a likelihood that a child will come into care unless additional support is available, and to reduce the numbers coming into care. The future of the Drws y Nant, the residential home in Caernarfon, which is run by Action for Children, will be re-assessed. As part of the reorganization a Safeguarding and Quality Unit has been created, containing the Independent Reviewing Officers who report to the Independent Review Panel every 6 months on the standard of care of children in care.

2.2 Department of Education

The 17 (76% of the children) who sat external qualifications attend schools within the County, with the remainder attending schools in Denbigh, Anglesey, Conwy and Ceredigion.

Educational Results - educational score points

The scores include results from the following qualifications, GCSE, BTEC, ESKW, Onat, NVQ etc. Each qualification has a score equivalent which is calculated by

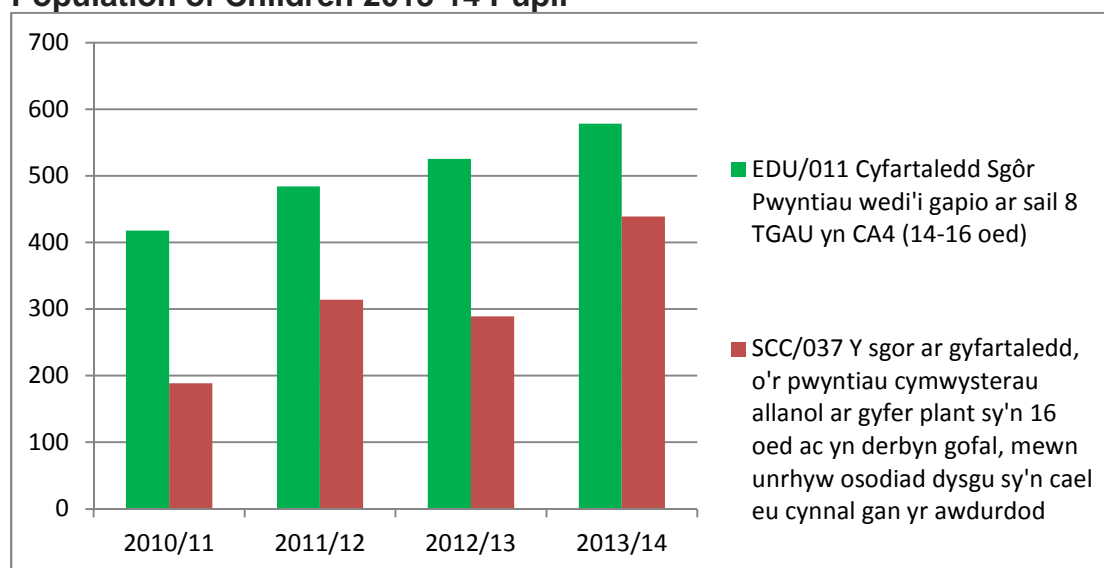
Cynnal. There were 17 children in care who were eligible for this measure in 2013/14 (have been in care for 12 months on 31/08/2013 and sat GCSE examinations in the summer of 2013).

The results reflect a wide range of ability, a number of various qualifications and a limited number of children in care who are with the age range of between 15 and 16 years old at the time.

The average score points of children in care in Gwynedd this year is 439 compared to 289 last year. This is a significant increase on last year but the figure can vary each year according to the nature of the individuals that make up the group. This compares with an average score of 525 points overall for Gwynedd's general population of children last year. Gwynedd was the highest overall point score (EDU/011) of all counties in Wales in 2013, and the score point for children in care (SCC/037) Gwynedd was the fifth in Wales.

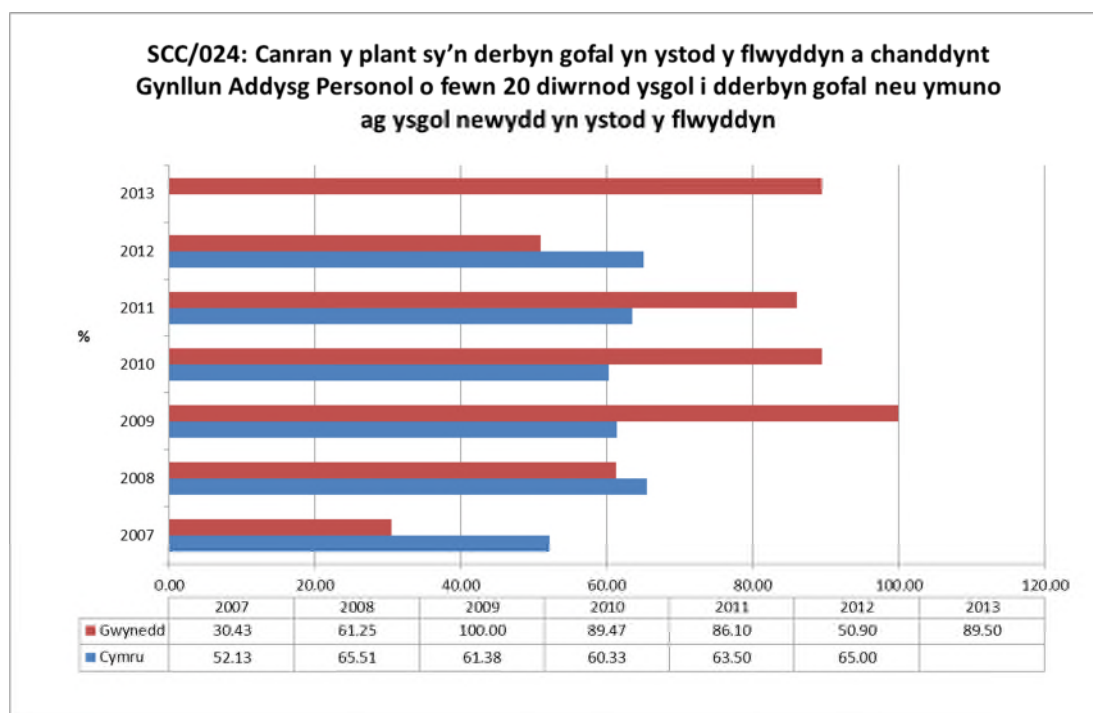
It is important to note there has been a substantial difference between the score point results for children in care and the general population pupils and action is needed to reduce the difference.

The comparison between Score Points for Children in Care and the General Population of Children 2013-14 Pupil



- EDU/11 The average point score capped at 8 GCSEs in KS4 (14-16years old)
- SCC/037 The average external qualifications point score for 16 year old looked after children, in any local authority maintained learning setting

Personal Education Plan Performance



SCC/024: The percentage of children looked after during the year with a Personal Education Plan within 20 school days of entering care or joining a new school in the year

Schools are required to prepare a Personal Education Plan for each child in care within 20 days (4 weeks) for arrival at their school. There has been an improvement in the performance of providing PEPs this year with 91.6% of plans being prepared within 20 days by the third quarter. The Education Department has been working with schools in the Authority to ensure compliance and that will continue in the future.

The Panel has asked departments within the Council to look at ways to be able to share information more effectively on the movements of children in care within the educational system so as to ensure better support them.

Child Care in Health Care 3.0

The issue of the deficiencies of the delivery of children in care's health care remains a concern for the Panel again this year. A report was received by the Panel by the Health Board's Continuing Care Service Manager on the steps the Board is taking to provide services for children in care. It noted that the performance of health assessments completed in time for children in care has decreased to 48% in Gwynedd. The other health boards are required to provide for children in out of county placements outside north Wales. Discussions have taken place with the Service to deal with this but the lack of staffing capacity following the Looked After Children Nurse's maternity period means that even less provision than has been available of late.

Due to this situation, the Panel has asked the Chairman to communicate with the Board of Health to voice dissatisfaction with these arrangements and to prioritize support for children in care in the county.

Conclusion

As noted in the report, the Corporate Parenting Panel has identified the need to be more strategic in its approach in the future. Some work has been accomplished on this but there is considerable work that still needs to be done.

In order to move closer to best practice it is necessary for the Panel, Council departments and partners to ensure that children in care receive:

- * Appropriate health care which compares well with peers across Wales.
- * Increased educational support so that the educational score points moves closer to the county's overall average score points.
- * Work experience within Council departments and partners and perhaps temporary jobs in order to expand their work experience.

By adopting a public declaration of the promise of support for children in care and effective collaboration within the Council and with external partners the Panel will be able to use the strategy to influence effectively for the benefit of children in care.