

REPORT TO THE COUNCIL

DATE	2 MARCH 2017
CABINET MEMBER	COUNCILLOR MAIR ROWLANDS
REPORT TITLE	ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GWYNEDD CORPORATE PARENT PANEL 2016-17
AUTHOR	ALED GIBBARD SENIOR OPERATIONAL MANAGER – CARE RESOURCES

Annual Report of the Gwynedd Corporate Parent Panel

2016-17

Introduction

This report is submitted to highlight the Council's role and responsibilities to act as corporate parents for looked after children, to share information about the panel's work over the last year and to outline the panel's intentions for the future. The report contains up-to-date information about the numbers and the trends related to the field of looked after children.

1.0 The Council's Role and Responsibilities

The Corporate Parent Panel was established in Gwynedd and in every other county in Wales as a way of maintaining an overview of the well-being and interests of looked after children. Welsh Government expects members and staff of every local authority to take a positive approach towards the corporate parenting role. In 2009, Welsh Government published a document with the Welsh Local Government Association called 'If this were my child...' which highlights the role and responsibility of members as corporate parents.

The corporate parent role involves the expectation that the parent will:

- Know their children - their needs, talents, dreams, and will promote their interests
- Be ambitious about their future and will expect the best from them and on their behalf
- Take an interest and be proud of their successes and celebrate them with them.
- Listen to their opinion and ensure that the opinion influences our practice and developments in services and policies.
- Ensure that they are part of planning their own lives
- Acknowledge, support and respect their identity in every way.
- Promote and support high academic achievement
- Support resilience in their health and emotional well-being
- Support their journey from children to adults and promote their economic potential and prepare them to be responsible residents.

- Ensure that the children and young people feel that they receive support from the Council and its partners through very challenging periods of their lives.

In order to maintain this role, the Council has established the Corporate Parent Panel which includes the Lead Member for Children and Young People, the Council Leader, relevant Cabinet Members, foster parents, the Young People Champion and a member selected from the Scrutiny Committees. The Panel also includes the Chief Executive, the Corporate Director and Statutory Director of Social Services, the Head of Children and Supporting Families Department and the Head of Education Department. The Council, namely all the elected members, delegate their responsibilities in the field to the Lead Member for Children and Young People, through the Panel. The Panel has a right to request that matters which are a cause for concern be scrutinized on its behalf by the Services Scrutiny Committee.

In practice, and from day to day, the work to ensure that the Council achieves its responsibilities and its statutory duty towards looked after children lies with the Head of Children and Supporting Families Department via the social work teams. The Head of Department is accountable to the Statutory Director of Social Services.

The 'corporate parenting' term is used to describe the joint responsibility the Council and its partners hold to ensure effective, safe and suitable care for looked after children and young people, as well as those who have left care. As looked after children are at greater risk of being socially isolated than their peers who are not in care, it is essential that the Council, as corporate parent, ensures that their experiences whilst in care are positive and supported. It is the Corporate Parent Panel's role to ensure that everything that is noted here is delivered.

For a little over a year, the responsibility of leading and running the corporate parenting panel has been transferred from the Corporate Support Department to the Children and Supporting Families Department.

1.1 Training for Members

Corporate parenting training is provided every year to members and a date has already been set for the new Council during 2016/17. However, during 2015-16, rather than hold a traditional training event, it was decided to hold an independently facilitated workshop, on 1 July 2016 for panel members, a representation of foster parents, the panel officials, representatives from health and from different departments within the Council to prepare for the new corporate parenting strategy, as the previous one will come to an end in 2017. A number of matters were discussed during the workshop including the virtues of good parents; what exactly is the understanding of the corporate parent role at the moment; how panel members can be empowered with the relevant information in order to ask the right questions; how the relationship with foster parents can be improved and how the panel's work should develop in the next phase.

1.3 The Panel's Strategy for 2017-20

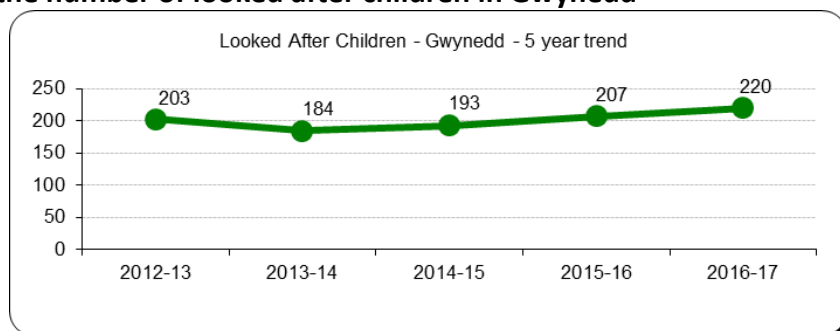
The Panel's strategy for 2013-17 has been in place, and there is a need to prepare and approve a new strategy for the next period, namely 2017-20. The Panel has identified the need to be much more active in its role of securing the best opportunities for children and young people and to delve deeper into some matters, for example, education, health, emotional well-being, stability etc. The new strategy looks to establish small working groups from amongst the panel members to look at specific matters in terms of the standard and quality of the services and to focus on the opinion of parents, carers and children and young people on the support and the service they receive. The new strategy is currently in draft form and it is intended to submit it in its final version to the Panel in April 2017 in order for it to be adopted as the operational strategy for the future. The aim of operating under a different procedure is for us to place the child at the centre of all of the panel's activities, and from this will come a greater understanding of the corporate parent role and a better understanding of the experiences of children and young people. It will be possible to identify any obstacles they encounter in all elements of life and act to remove these obstacles to the best of our ability with support from our partners.

2.0 The Current Situation

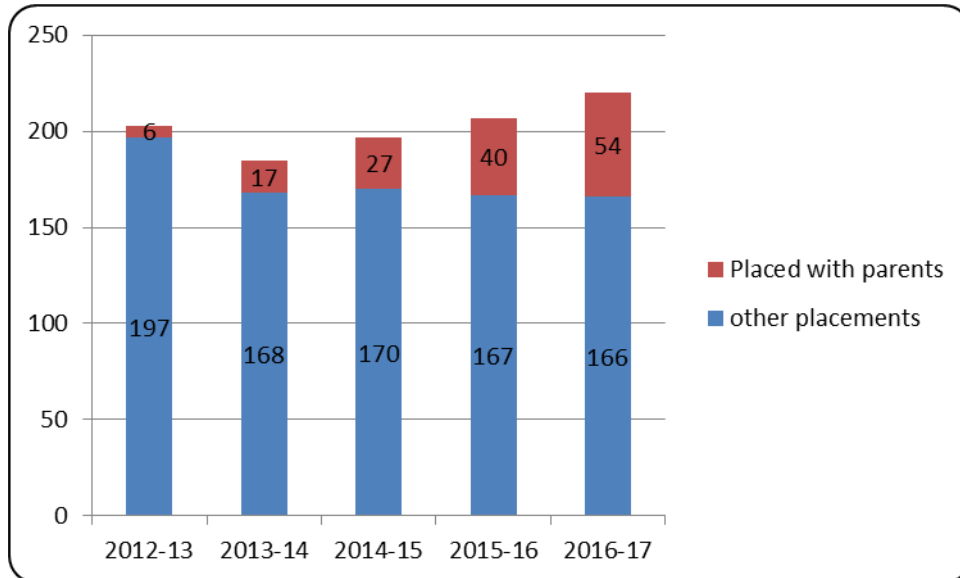
The following information is submitted based on the figures for the end of quarter 3 this year, namely the end of December 2016, and include comparative figures for the two previous years.

Looked After Children	2016/17 (to the end of Q3)	2015/16	2014/15
Number of looked after children at the end of the quarter	220	207	194
Number of children entering care during the year	53	68	64
Number of children leaving care during the year			
Number of children adopted during the year			

The trend for the number of looked after children in Gwynedd

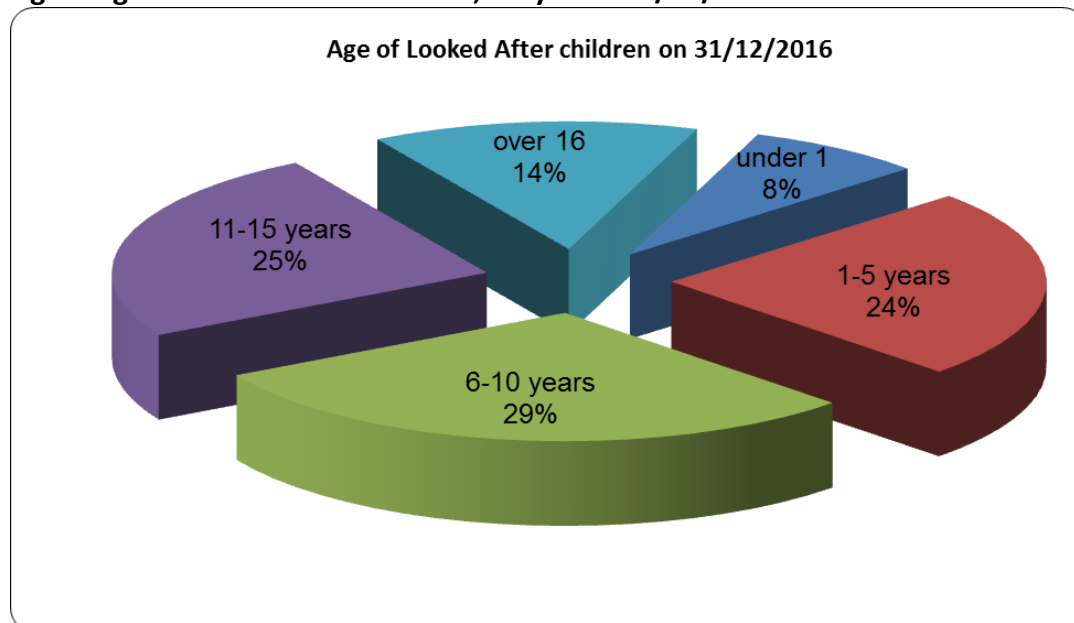


The five year trend shows an 8.3% increase in the number of looked after children during this time. Looking at the analysis of the type of placements during this time, it can be seen that the increase is as a result of more looked after children being placed with their parents. The other types of placements have either remained consistent or seen a decline.



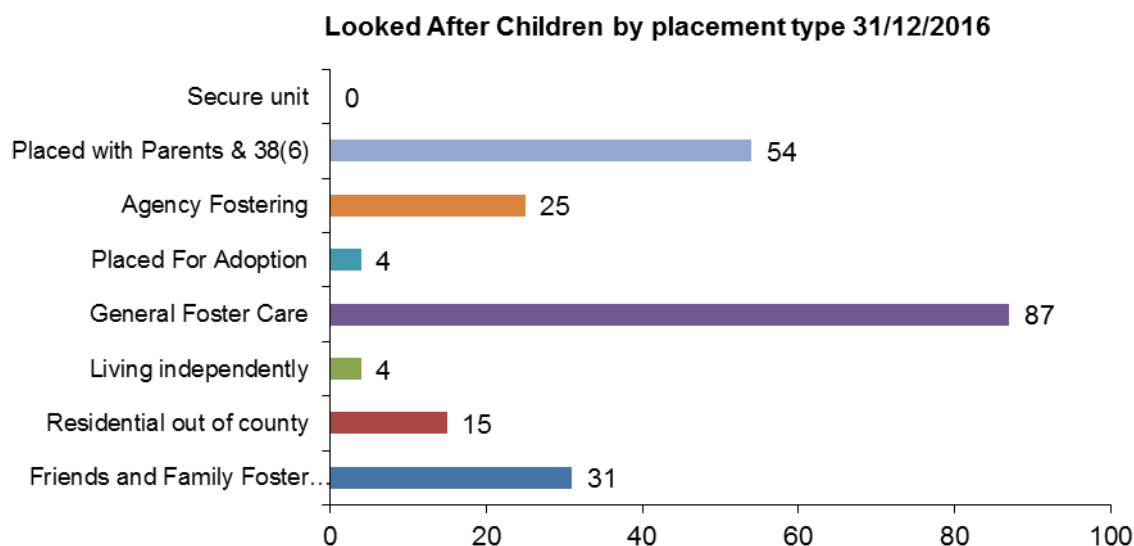
The substantial increase can therefore be attributed to the number of children who are placed with their parents under the Children Act 1989. The criteria for significant harm have been proven in those cases, and therefore the children have become the subject of temporary Care Orders, where they are expected to be assessed further to bring court proceedings to a conclusion within 26 weeks. The courts place an emphasis on keeping children within their birth families while these assessments take place.

Age range of Looked after Children, Gwynedd 31/12/16



Looked After Children Placements

Of the total number of looked after children 143 (65%) are in foster placements, 15 (6.8%) in residential placements and 54 (24.5%) are placed with their parents. Four children were in adoptive placements at the end of the quarter and four young people living independently with support.



Geographical Locations

At the end of quarter 3, 60 (27%) of the looked after children were placed outside Gwynedd. 44% of these were in Anglesey and Conwy, and 70% of children outside Gwynedd were placed in north Wales. There are 11 children in placements outside Wales, eight of them in residential placements. There are various reasons for the residential placements.

Very young children entering Care

The latest data shows a continuation in the number of children aged under 5 years old who are coming into care. Up to the end of quarter 3, 62% of the new looked after children placements have been for children under 5 years old. Over a five year period, children aged under 5 years old represent 48% of the all new placements.

The foster placement extension scheme - "When I am Ready"

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 places a new responsibility on local authorities towards young people in foster care who wish to continue living with their foster carers beyond their 18th birthday. The aim of the scheme is to offer stability and continuation to young people so that they do not move out of care before they are ready to do so. Gwynedd has participated in a pilot programme for the scheme since 2013 and since April 2016 it has been a statutory responsibility for all local authorities in Wales.

During 2016-17, 10 young people have participated in the scheme and at the end of quarter 3, six young people were still part of a 'When I am Ready' arrangement. Since the scheme

began in 2013, 58% of the young people who were eligible for the arrangement have chosen to be part of it. Gwynedd's statistics show that the duration of these arrangements varies, with 10% of young people staying in such an arrangement for less than 6 months, 40% staying for between 6 and 12 months and 50% 12-15 months. The arrangement may continue until the young person's 21st birthday.

Edge of Care Team

The Edge of Care Team became operational in January 2015. Since April 2016 it has worked with 96 children (46 families). 41 children (24 families) were still receiving support at the end of quarter 3. Their intervention came to an end with 55 children (32 families) between April and December 2016.

The purpose of the intervention in 54 of the cases was to keep the child at home. From these families, 19 children (7 families) have become looked after. In one case the purpose was to return home from a placement, and this was achieved. At the end of the intervention 36 children (17 families) were living at home, with a reduction in the family's needs.

2.2 The Education Department -

In the 2015-2016 academic year, 16 of Gwynedd's pupils were looked after children in their last year of statutory education namely year 11 and were pupils who had been in care for over 12 months on 31/08/2015.

The legal status of the **16** pupils was as follows:-

- **15** on a Full Care Plan (Section 31 Children Act 1989)
- **1** was under a voluntary placement (Section 20 Children Act 1989)

8 pupils received education in Gwynedd, at mainstream schools.

3 pupils were living out-of-county and receiving their education out-of-county.

2 pupils were living in Gwynedd and receiving their KS4 education as part of the Gwynedd Council Education Department's Home Schooling scheme.

3 pupils were living out-of-county and receiving their education out-of-county in a special establishment.

The pupils were given an opportunity to sit a wide variety of suitable external examinations such as GCSE, BTEC, OCR, OCR National, Essential Skills, Key Skills and Welsh Baccaulaureate.

Below is a summary of qualifications gained by the 16 pupils who were eligible to sit external examinations this year. (Pupils within Gwynedd and out-of-county pupils).

The individuals' target grades are also noted, per school.

Performance Data

Measure	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
The number of children leaving care 16+						
Gwynedd	15	22	16	12	9	16
% of 16+ who achieved at least 1 qualification						
Gwynedd	40%	91%	94%	91%	67%	82%
% of 16+ who achieved at least 5 GCSE Grade A*-G						
Gwynedd	33%	45.5%	62.5%	50%	67%	82%
% of 16+ who achieved at least 5 GCSE Grade A*-C (including Language and Mathematics)						
Gwynedd	13%	18%	31%	25%	67%	62%

Summary:

Percentage of pupils who achieved 5 A* - C = 62% - Level 2 threshold.

Percentage of pupils who achieved 5 A* - G = 82% - Level 1 threshold.

Percentage of pupils who achieved at least 1 GCSE Grade A*-C = 50%.

Percentage of pupils who achieved at least 1 GCSE Grade A*-G = 82%.

Post-16 provision

Of the **16** children,

- **9** have gone on to colleges to follow courses suitable for their abilities and requirements.
- **2** have continued at school/college to follow an AS/A Level course in year 12.
- **3** remain in special education.
- **2** receive further service from Careers Wales/Post 16 TRAC.

3.0 Healthcare of Looked after Children

Historically, there have been concerns about the health service's ability to ensure that looked after children's health assessments are undertaken on time. There is a national performance indicator for this activity, and the performance in Gwynedd has been a cause for concern for a number of years. The Panel has been proactive and has called relevant officers from the Health Board more than once to explain the problems and to seek to resolve the matter, and the matter has also been escalated to the Chief Executive of the Health Board. Many discussions have taken place between the Health Board's executive officers and the officers of the Children and Supporting Families Department and there has been some progress meaning that there has been an improvement in the number of looked after children who receive a

health assessment within the time frame. At the end of quarter 3, 2016, the performance did reach the target, namely 65% within the time frame. 82 initial health assessments and reviews were required within the quarter, and 50 of them were undertaken on time. There has been an improvement in the process of sharing information about children between the Children's Service and the Health Board. However, the panel is very eager to receive information about the health patterns of looked after children in Gwynedd, for example, whether there are any specific conditions, whether there are any problems with access to some disciplines within health, whether there are any matters the panel needs to look at in greater detail etc. It is hoped, by implementing the new strategy, the panel will be nearer to getting the answers for these specific matters and other matters and we will have a full picture of health needs with qualitative information rather than merely having quantitative data to drive the panel's programme.

To summarize

As noted in the report, the Corporate Parent Panel has identified the need to be more strategic and active as it looks towards the future. Some work has already been carried out but there is still substantial work to be done.

By adopting a public statement that pledges support for looked after children and effective collaboration within the Council and with external partners, the Panel will be able to use the strategy to have a positive influence for the benefit of looked after children.