

<b>Meeting</b>	Care Scrutiny Committee
<b>Date</b>	31/01/19
<b>Title</b>	Young People Leaving the Council's Care
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Dilwyn Morgan
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## 1. Background

The Department was asked to provide information regarding young people leaving the local authority's care. Information was requested specifically regarding the Council's progress against the Children's Commissioner's report, Hidden Ambitions, The When I am Ready Scheme, links with the Corporate Parenting Panel, attainments of young people leaving care and Welsh language provision in out of county placements.

## 2. Young People Leaving Care

All open case of young people leaving care are held in the 16+Team. At the end of December 2018 there were 139 cases open to the team. 27 of these were 16 and 17 year olds receiving Care and Support, 28 young people aged 16 and 17 who were still looked after and 84 young people who were eligible for a leaving care service.

## 3. Hidden Ambitions

The Hidden Ambitions report was published by the Children's Commissioner in 2017 and it sets out the Commissioner's vision for the service that young people leaving care should be receiving from the local authority when they leave care. Please see below the Commissioner's main points from the report and what the Council is doing in response:

### **Support for Everyone -**

**Every young person should receive support until they are 25 years old** - The Council has extended support for care leavers until they are 25. Previously support ceased when they reached 21 years of age unless the young person was in higher education. Every young person who is eligible for a service has an allocated Personal Adviser.

**Local authorities and carers should put more focus on developing young people's independence skills** – training is provided alongside the fostering team to foster carers to support them in their role of preparing young people for independence. Additionally every young person has a pathway plan and is reviewed regularly. This gives an opportunity to focus on specific matters in relation to preparing the young person and develop their skills.

**Departments should work together** – the department has good working relationships with the housing department, the education department, housing benefit department and the youth service within the Council. Externally there are effective working arrangements with the Llandrillo Group and Department of Work and Pensions, including a contact person in each.

**Local authorities should consider establishing a forum or discussion group for young people leaving care** – A young people's forum has been established since April 2018. The forum is led by a worker within the 16+ team and assisted by a worker from the fostering team. In order to establish effective engagement arrangements the corporate communications team has also been involved with

the group. They have met 3 times and the forum recently participated in the public consultation on future budget cuts held by the council. Their views have clearly been fed into the overall findings of the exercise. The young people will be meeting with the Head of Service and Cabinet member during February and their views will be taken back to the Corporate Parenting Panel. One young person is also a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

## **Housing and Income**

**Using the Housing and Support Framework for young people leaving care** – It is intended to re-establish the Young People's Housing and Support group in 2019-20. The group has not met for a year and the action plan now needs updating. As part of the work programme the protocol with the housing department is being reviewed by the end of February and a meeting of the group will then be arranged.

**Clear information regarding finance and grants available when leaving care** – the department has a finance policy available for care leavers which outlines the financial support available to them. When a young person turns 18, or their circumstances change, the resources officer from the team can visit them to discuss, share information and explain the support available to them.

**What can be done to ensure Council tax is fair** – The local authority, like many other local authorities in Wales, has made young people leaving care exempt from paying Council Tax until they are 25 years of age.

**Training and employment opportunities** – The Commissioner is of the opinion that the local authority as a corporate parent and employer is in a position to offer young people leaving care with training opportunities. This has been discussed through a working group under the Corporate Parenting Panel and as part of the review of the council's apprenticeship scheme, care leavers will be included in the scheme.

In addition to the above the Commissioner wanted every local authority to write to care leavers to inform them of the offer open to them. Please see the attached letter.

## **4. When I Am Ready Scheme**

The Council was part of the pilot programme for the scheme from 2013-14 onwards. The scheme became statutory duty in April 2016. During the 3 year pilot programme 58% of those young people who were eligible took up the scheme. In 2018-19, 5 young people turning 18 have become part of the scheme. Overall there are currently 12 young people in a When I am Ready arrangement.

## **5. Attainments of Looked After Children**

GCSE results for looked after children over the last 5 years can be seen below:

Measure	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of care leavers 16+					
Gwynedd	12	9	16	16	9
% 16+ with at least 1 qualification					
Gwynedd	91%	67%	82%	94%	78%
% 16+ with at least A*-G GCSE					
Gwynedd	50%	67%	82%	53%	67%
% 16+ with at least 5 A8-G GCSE ( including Language and Mathematics)					
Gwynedd	25%	67%	62%	20%	22%

Of the 84 young people receiving an aftercare service, 29 are in employment or training, 26 are in further or Higher Education and 29 are neither in education, training or employment. 10 young people are currently at university.

#### **6. Out of county Welsh Provision**

The provision is dependent on where the out of county placement is located. For those children placed in residential provision, the majority are placed in the North West of England. Welsh Language provision is not usually available in these placements, and their placement has been decided according to their needs. However, as part of their educational provision, some Welsh Language provision is available, and there are examples of Skype being used to deliver this. The majority of out of county fostering placements are in North Wales (mostly on Anglesey, in Conwy or in Denbighshire). Welsh language education is available according to the education policy of those local education authorities.