

# Corporate Parenting

Annual Update

April 2018

Bethan T James

## Contents

1. Corporate Parenting
2. National Data
3. Carmarthenshire looked after children and Care Leavers
4. Educational Attainment
5. Accommodation and Housing
6. Post 16 Employment, Education and Training
7. The views of young people
8. The views of staff
9. Summary
10. Corporate Parenting Priorities 2018-2021

## 1. Corporate Parenting

Carmarthenshire County Council has a Corporate Parenting responsibility for every child who is *looked after* by the Council and for our young people who have experienced care until they are 25 years old. As Corporate Parents the council has the highest of aspirations for the children and young people we care for. We recognise that they are amongst the most vulnerable children in our society and therefore require us to work together to ensure that they become capable future citizens.

Our aspirations for looked after children and care leavers are outlined in our Corporate Parenting Strategy, *'If this were my child'*. The delivery of the strategy is overseen by a Corporate Parenting Panel consisting of:

- Cllr Glynog Davies- Chair/ Lead for Corporate Parenting
- Cllr Amanda Fox
- Cllr Bill Thomas
- Cllr Edward G Thomas
- Cllr Gareth John
- Cllr Gwyneth Thomas
- Cllr Jeanette Gilasbey
- Cllr Kim Broom
- Cllr Mansel Charles
- Cllr Rob Evans
- Gareth Morgans – Director
- Stefan Smith – Head of Service
- Jonathan Morgan
- Richard Stradling
- Bethan T James- Service Manager

Service Managers, Health Colleagues, Young People and other professionals attend panel when discussing or presenting specific items.

The agenda ensures that members have oversight of housing, education, care and social inclusion issues and are able to make judgements as to how well the authority is meeting the needs of this vulnerable group of children and young people.

The Carmarthenshire Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines the authority's key aspirations for looked after children and care leavers and clearly sets out the actions intended to achieve this. It provides a framework for all Carmarthenshire County Council Officers, Managers and Councillors in order to support them in making a real difference to the lives of looked after children and young people in leaving care services.

The Corporate Parenting Team under the service management of Bethan T James supports the Council in meeting its Corporate Parenting duties, providing training, oversight and advice to all departments.

Every child needs a good parent who looks out for them, speaks out on their behalf, is aspirational for them and is responsive to their needs. For children in care in Carmarthenshire we believe this is a statutory role *for all departments* across the Council. Welsh Government guidance on how authorities can be effective corporate parents for care experienced young people is available on their website in the following publications, 'If this were my child: a Councillors Guide' and 'Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after'.

The Children's Commissioner has also published guidance on improving long term outcomes for care experienced young people in the document 'Hidden Ambitions' and Estyn have published a range of strategies for schools.

Improving educational outcomes for looked after children is one of Welsh Government's priorities. In November 2017 Huw Irranca-Davies, Minister for Children and Social Care, stated:

'It is clear there is consensus among Members from all parties that looked-after children should have the same start in life and opportunities as all children. We clearly state this as our vision and our commitment to looked-after children in the programme for government 'Taking Wales Forward' and the national strategy 'Prosperity for All'.

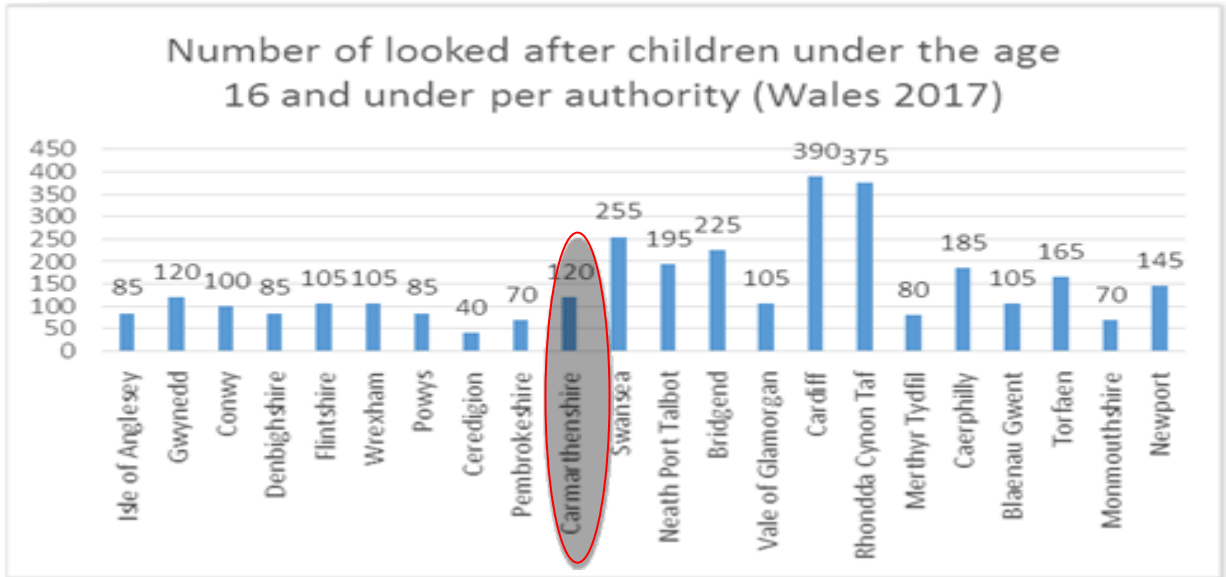
Welsh Government have also established a Task and Finish Group to oversee the development of revised corporate parenting guidance to update "If this were my child". The intention is for revised guidance to clarify and expand the duties of corporate parents. Guidance is being developed by the charity "Voices from Care" and is intended for issue early next year (2019).

The current Carmarthenshire Corporate Parenting Strategy is due for review this year (2018). In line with proposed development within Welsh Government and best practice examples from Who Cares Scotland Carmarthenshire County Council will be embedding a *Covenant* for care experienced children and young people. Councillors, Directors, Heads of Services and Partner agencies will be asked to make an active offer or promise and this will be captured within the new strategy and monitored by the corporate parenting panel.

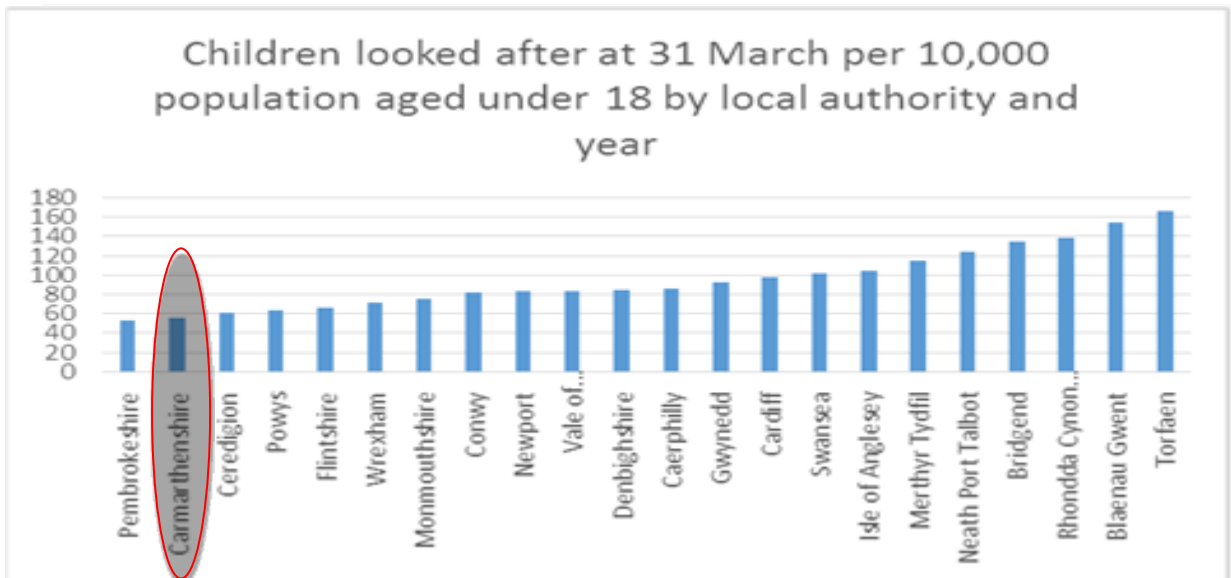
## 2. National Data

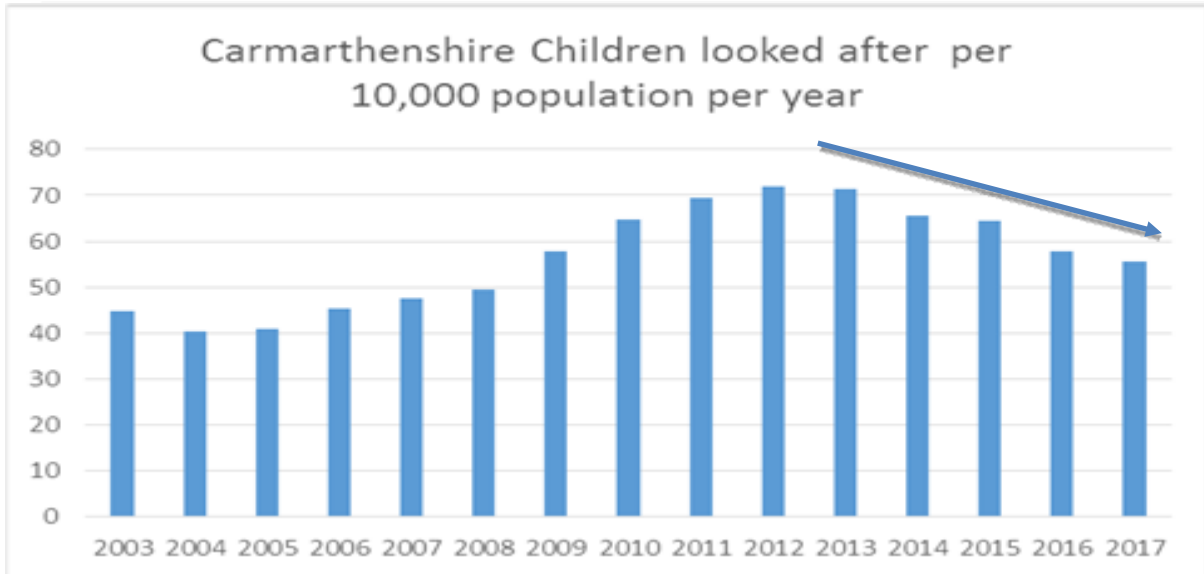
National statistical data indicates that Carmarthenshire averaged 120 looked after children during 2017 who were under the age of 16. This is a relative low percentage of the childhood population when compared to other authorities in Wales and has been on a downward trend since 2012 when Carmarthenshire numbers were at their highest.

Across Wales the number of children subject to care proceedings has increased over recent years with the majority entering care due to abuse or neglect. National data also indicates that, compared with their peers, looked after children generally have poorer outcomes in relation to their education and mental health with many experiencing isolation and continued vulnerability whilst in care.



In Carmarthenshire we have the second lowest number of looked after children per 10,000 population with 55.54 children per 10,000 population being in the care of the local authority.

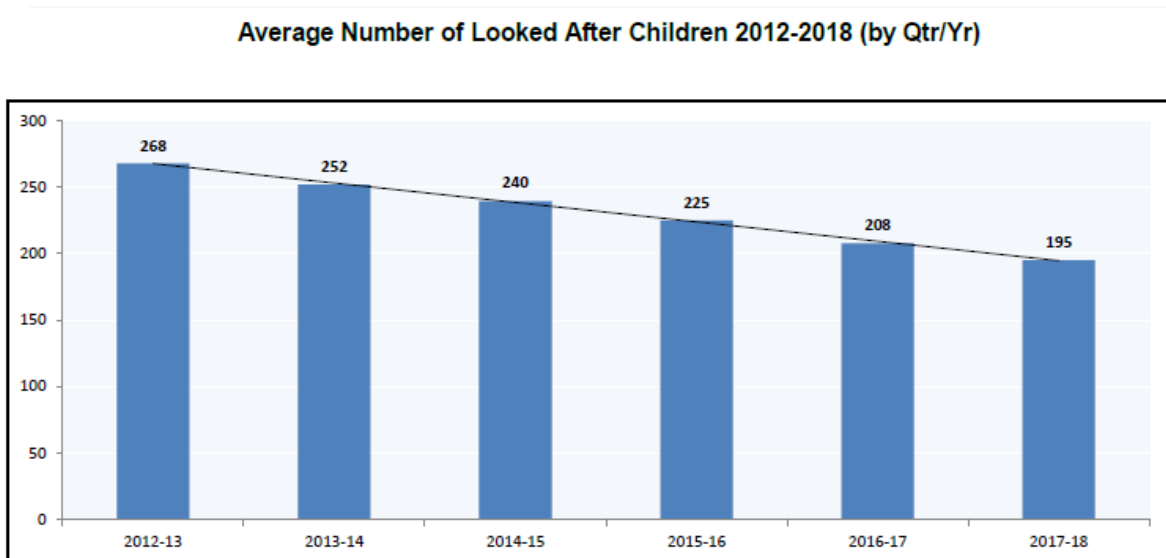




Currently the number of children looked after by Carmarthenshire has continued to fall since 2012: with 55.54 children in care per 10,000 of the population in 2017 compared to 72.04 in 2012 and 44.67 in 2003.

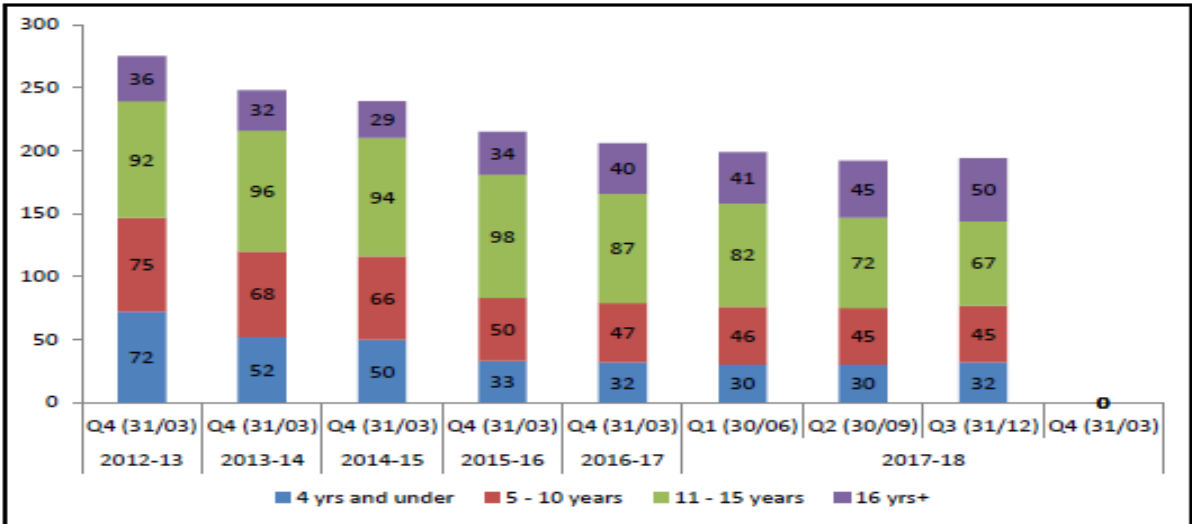
### 3. Carmarthenshire Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Carmarthenshire currently has 195 looked after children under the age of 18, with the number decreasing year on year from 268 in 2012/13.



Of the 195 looked after children 50 are over 16 years of age, 67 are ages 11 to 15, 45 are age 5 to 10 and 32 are under 4 years of age. You will note from the data that the number of children under the age of 4 years of age in care has significantly reduced since 2012. It is felt that this is due to the continued investment in early access to prevention services, family support, team around the family and the Flying Start and Families First initiatives.

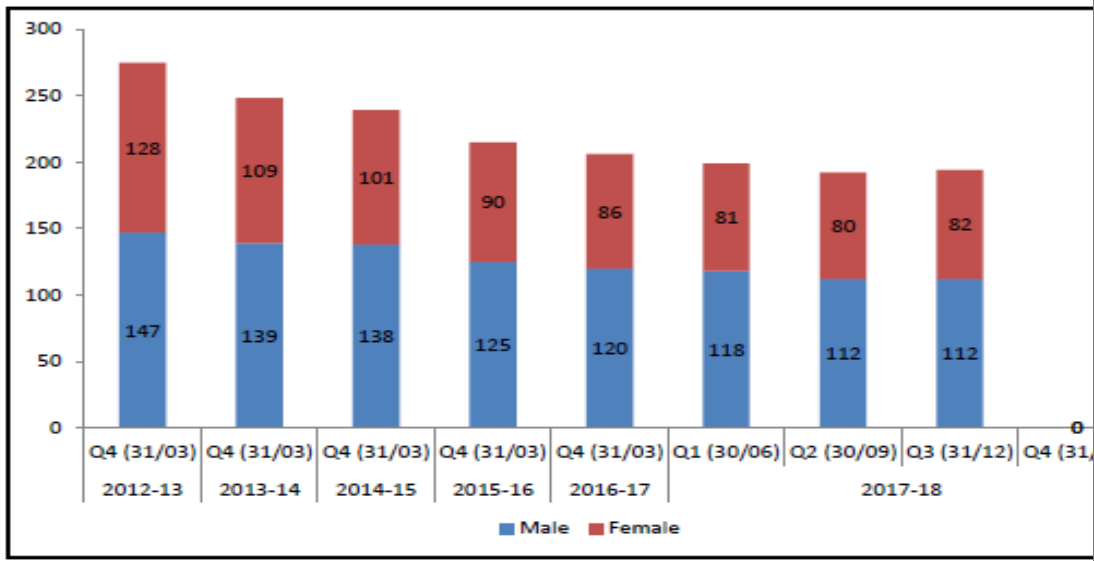
**Total No. of Looked after Children by Age Group 2012-2018**



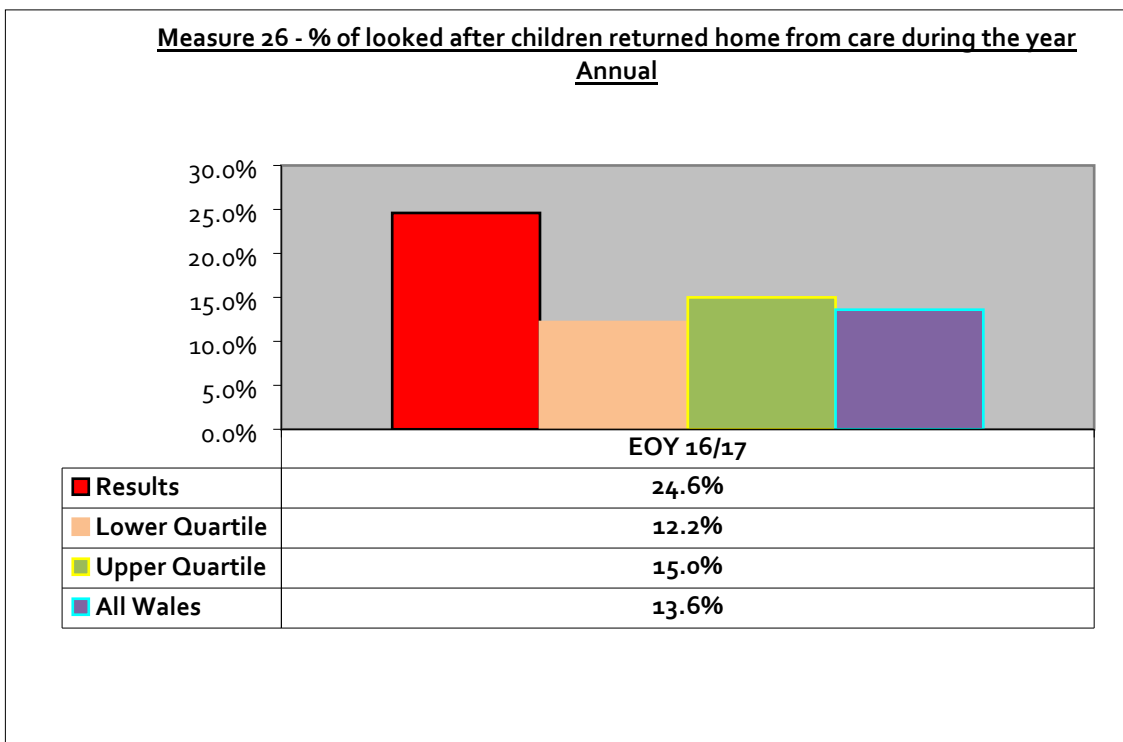
As of December 2017 there were 112 males and 82 females in the care of the local authority. Carmarthenshire is typical of the pattern across Wales of more males being in care than females. This gender distribution has been relatively stable across Wales since 2003 with numbers of girls slightly increasing year on year since 2013.

Within Wales more males are born than females but generally there has been little research into why more males than females enter the care system.

### Total No. of Looked after Children by Gender 2012-2018

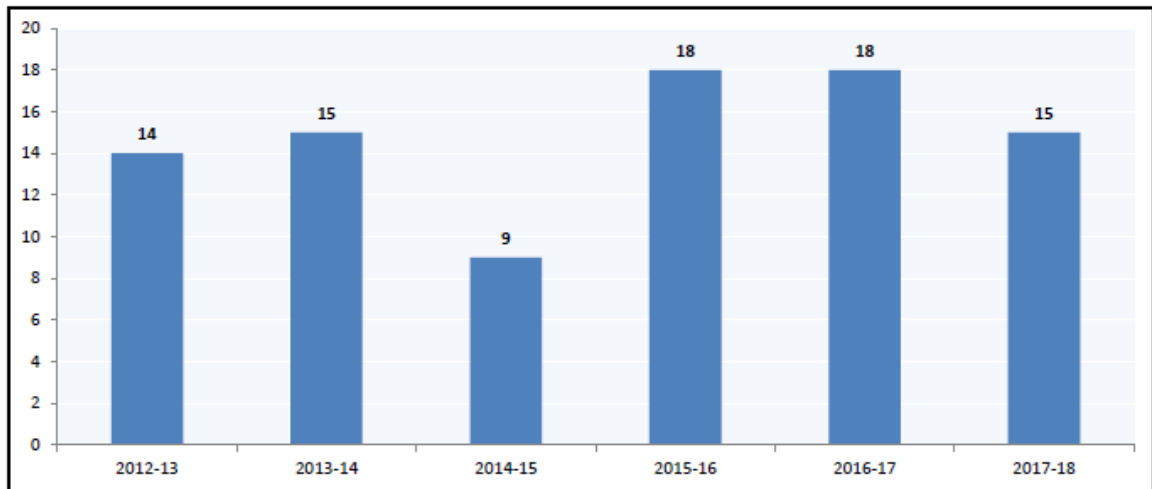


In line with the Social Services and Wellbeing Act Wales (2014) Children’s Services endeavour for children to be returned home from care whenever it is safe to do so. In 2016/17 24.6% of looked after children returned home with support in Carmarthenshire. This was 11% more than the all Wales average.



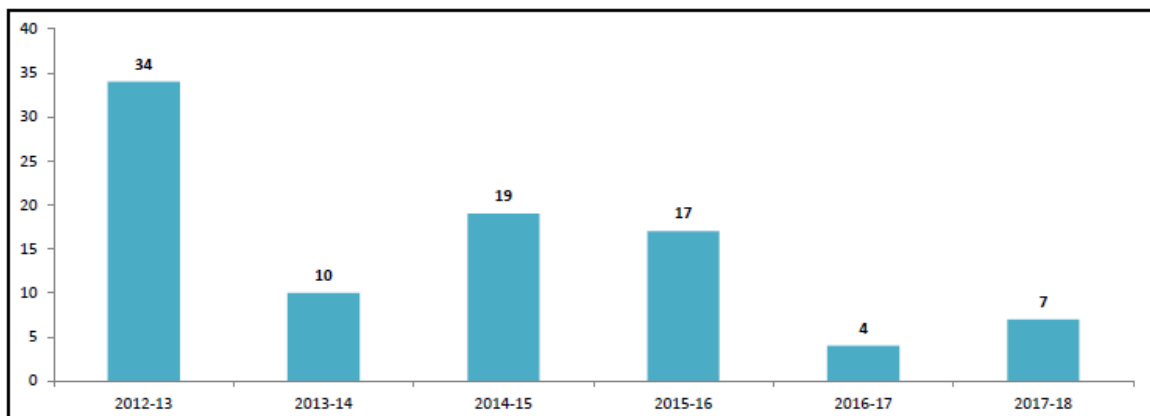
When there is no prospect of a safe return home for a child then the three options for children are long term foster care, special guardianship or adoption. Foster carers or family/kinship carers can apply for a special guardianship order when they feel they can offer a lifelong home to a child. In 2017/18 15 looked after children achieved stability through special guardianship orders.

**Total Number of Special Guardianship Orders (2012-2018)**



Younger children under the age of 7 will usually be prioritised for adoptive parents. It is best practice to look for ‘forever families’ through adoption for children where there is no possibility of a return home to parents or wider family members. Last year 7 looked after children were placed for adoption.

**Total Number of Looked After Children Placed for Adoption (in the year) 2012-2018**

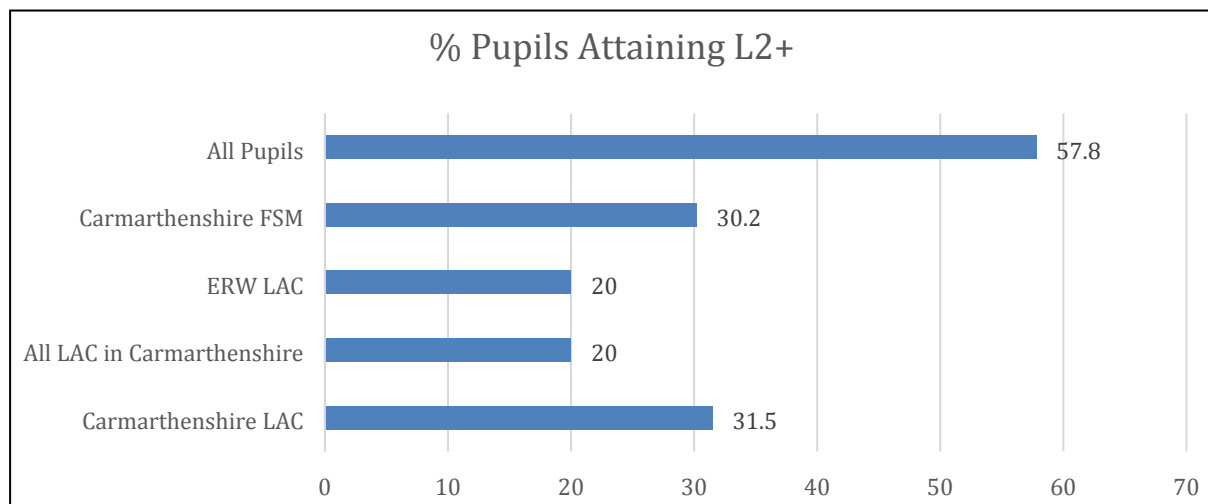




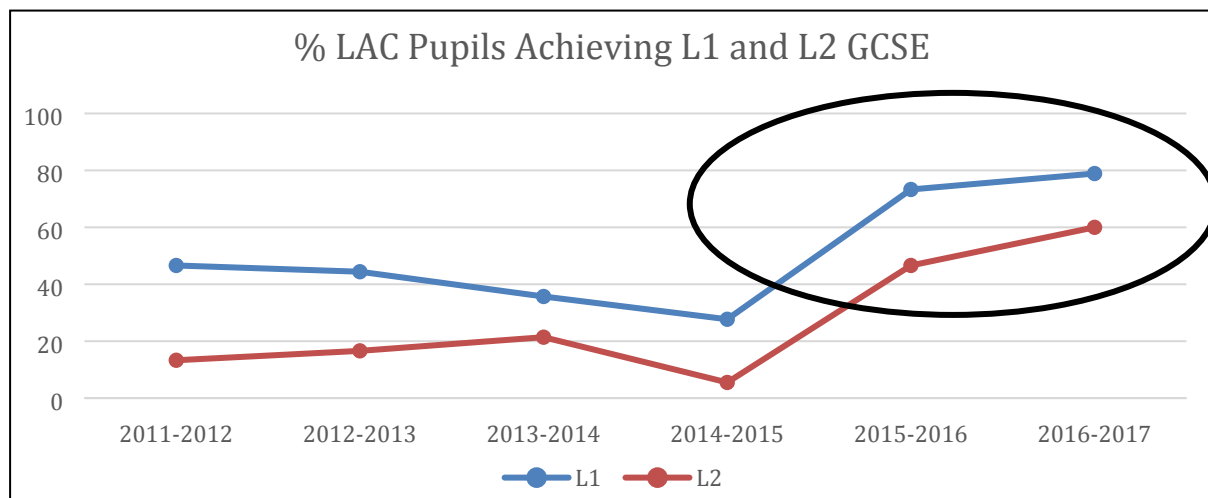
#### 4. Educational Attainment

The educational attainment of looked after children in Carmarthenshire has been consistently above the all Wales average for a number of years. In 2017 less than 20% of year 11 pupils that were looked after in Wales left statutory schooling with the level 2 inclusive (Estyn 2017) compared to 54.6% of all pupils in Wales.

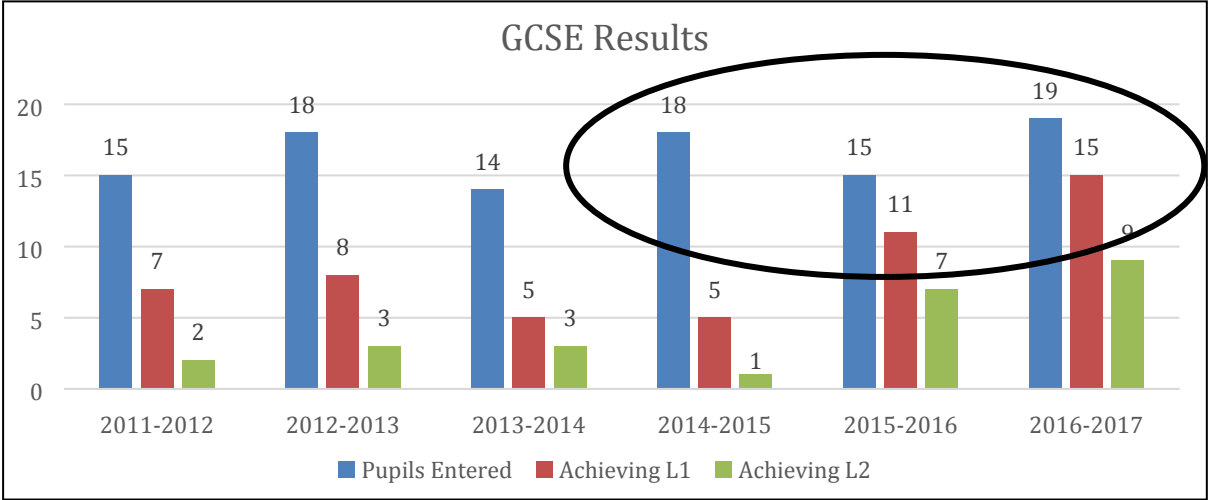
However, in Carmarthenshire 31.5% of looked after pupils attained the level 2 inclusive. While we need to improve on this in Carmarthenshire when 57.8% of all pupils achieved level 2, we are pleased that we have exceeded the all Wales average as well as the average of 20% across the ERW consortia.



The local authority has, over the years, explored multiple ways to support and improve the educational attainment of looked after children. Currently pupils are offered a range of educational resources, additional tuition, enrichment activities and mentoring. In the last 3-4 years Carmarthenshire has utilised its pupil development grant for looked after children to support and train school staff. This appears to have had the most significant impact when compared to other initiatives.

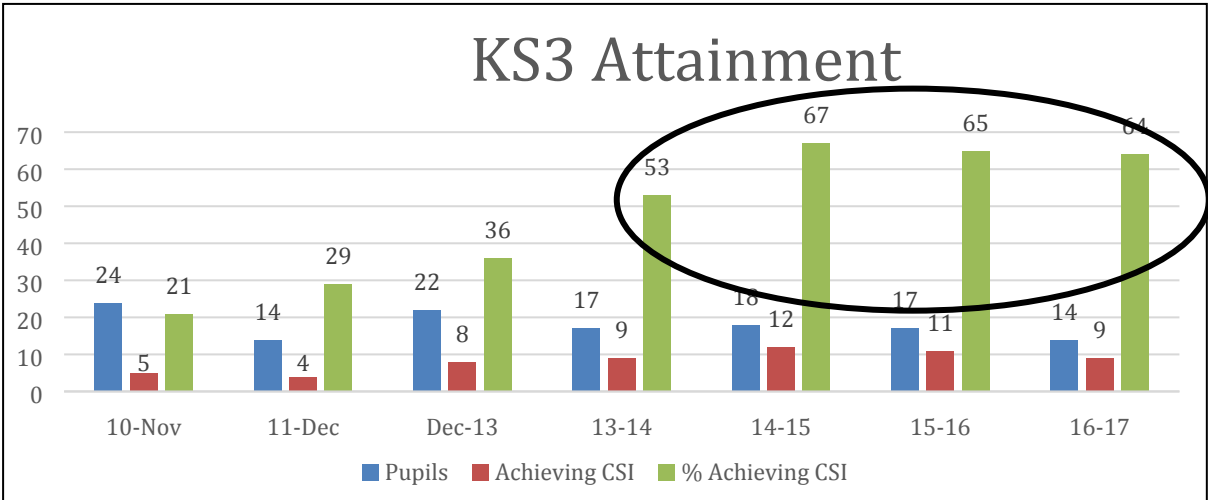


Currently 73 schools in Carmarthenshire have looked after pupils. Staff within all 73 schools have accessed training in understanding the impact of trauma, abuse and neglect on learning. 54 schools have accessed whole school training. A total of 1,689 school staff have accessed a range of related training in applying attachment aware principles within the classroom including emotion coaching, relational play, mindfulness and lego therapy.

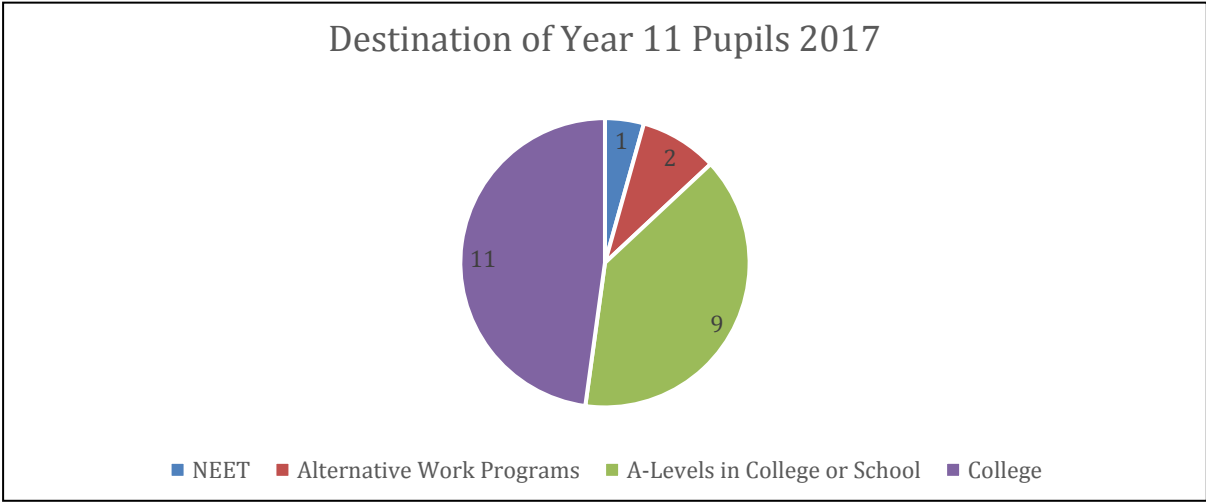


In addition to receiving training 289 staff have received 1:1 support in the classroom to implement positive interventions for children who are experiencing behaviours that challenge. This level of intensive support has been warmly received by schools and initial data monitoring appears to demonstrate that it is having a significant impact on improving outcomes for looked after children.

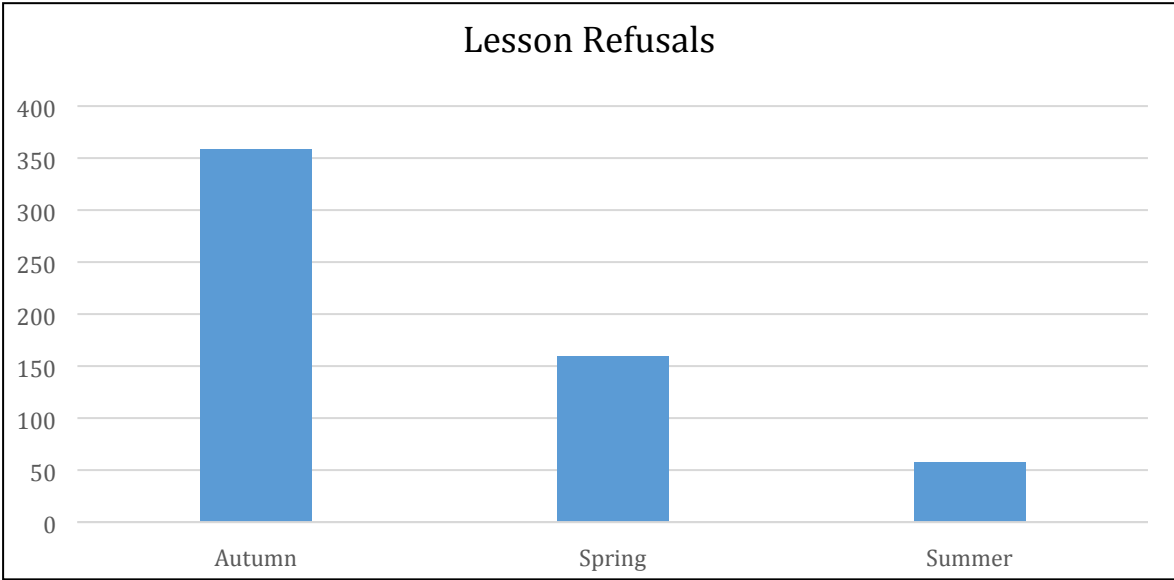
At Key Stage three 88.4% of pupils in Carmarthenshire attained the core subject indicators compared to 87.4% across Wales. The all Wales average was 46% of looked after children achieving the core subject indicators in 2016/17 and in Carmarthenshire 64% of our looked after children attained this, well exceeding the all Wales average.

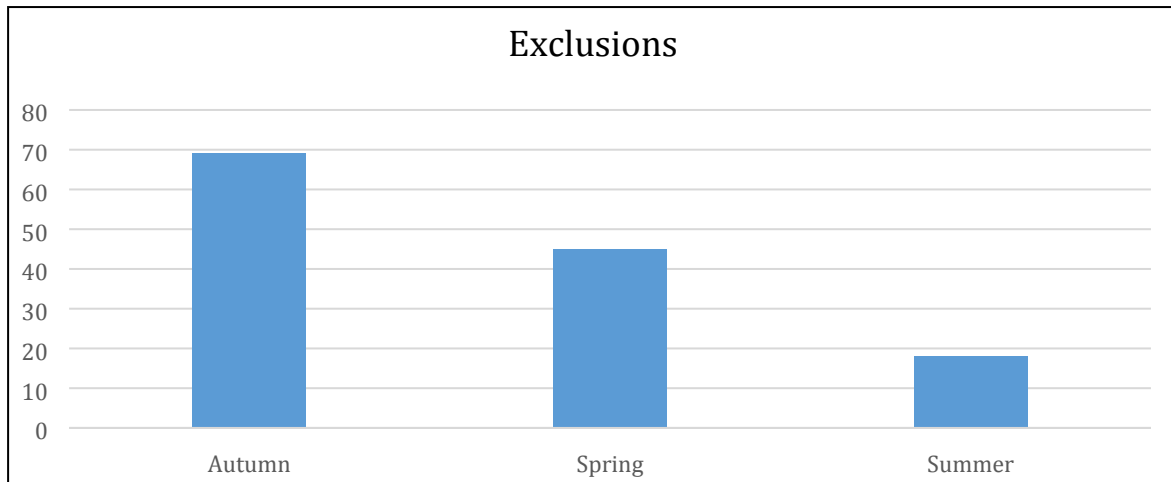


Across Wales 45% of children who are looked after were not engaged in education, training or employment (NEET) on their 19th birthday (Estyn 2017). Only 1 year 11 looked after pupil in Carmarthenshire was NEET in September 2017



Intensive support and training has been provided to the **Carmarthenshire Teaching and Learning Centre** where 38% of pupils are looked after. This intervention has reduced the number of pupils refusing lessons and reduced the number of incidences requiring exclusion.





A further example of the impact of intensive training and support from Corporate Parenting Services is at **Rhydygors SEBD Residential School**. The desired outcome was a reduction in significant behavioural incidences and a reduction in the need for physical restraint. Evidence supported that implementing emotion coaching and attachment informed, relational models had a significantly positive impact on reducing the need for physical interventions as well as reducing negative behavioural incidences.

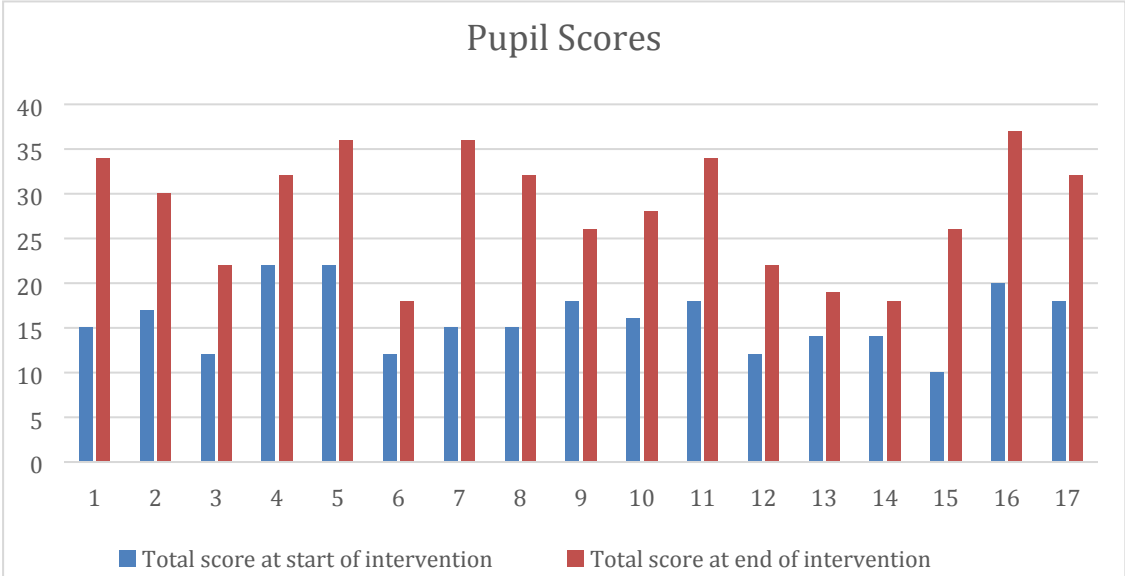
	<b>Physical Interventions</b>	<b>Significant Behavioural Incidences</b>
2016/17	33	680
2017/18	15	180
<b>Decrease of</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>73.50%</b>

The Corporate Parenting Team also wanted to consider the wellbeing of looked after pupils and developed a distance travelled self-assessment for looked after pupils where they were asked the following 6 questions before the team started supporting the school and afterwards.

Pupils were asked to grade themselves 0-5 on the following questions prior to school receiving support and training:

- Question 1 - Do you feel listened to at school?
- Question 2 - Do you feel safe at school?
- Question 3 - Can you talk to the adults at school?
- Question 4 - Are you able to concentrate at school?
- Question 5 - Do you feel happy at school?
- Question 6 - Do you get on with friends at school?

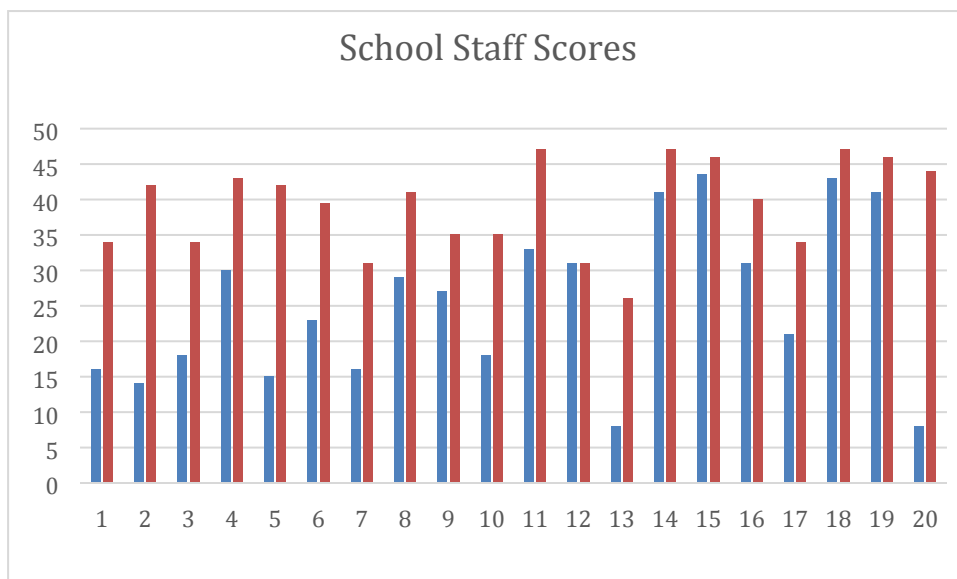
Following support and training pupils were asked to grade themselves on a scale of 0-5 on the same questions. These were then collated across a series of schools and compared. Red scores indicate that looked after pupils felt safer and happier at school following local authority intervention and support.



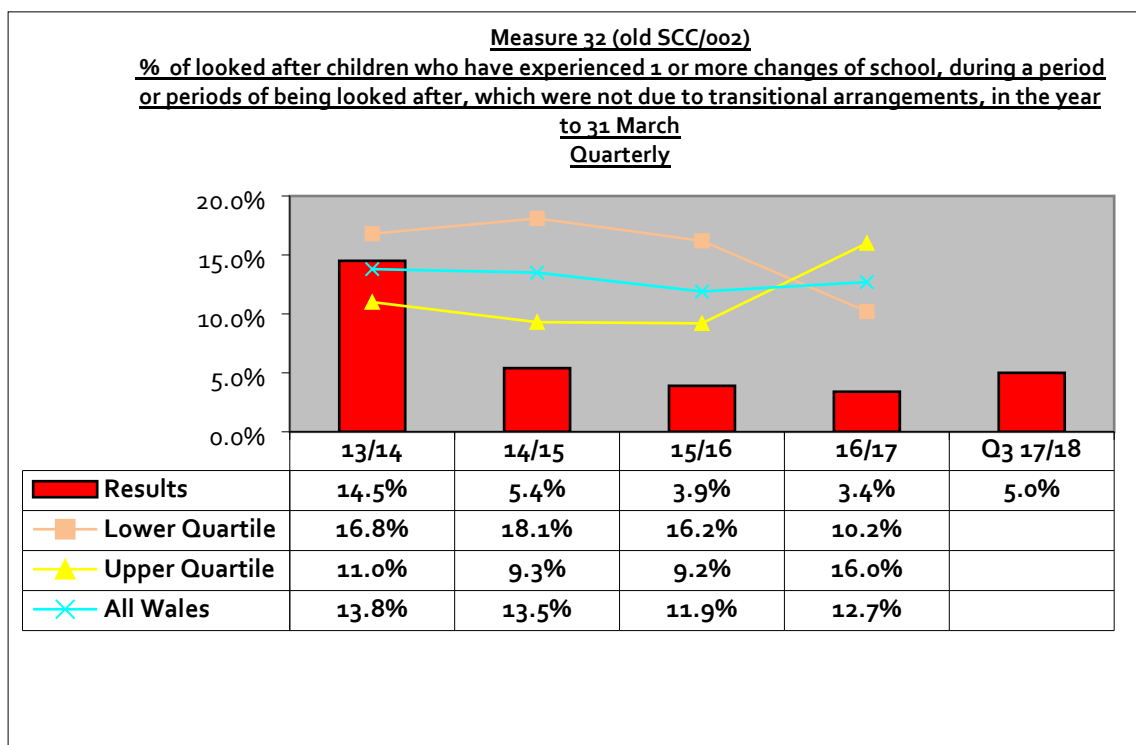
The local authority also wanted to know whether the support and training provided from the corporate parenting team contributed to staff wellbeing and enabled staff to feel more able to manage behaviours that could be challenging. Staff were asked the following questions prior to support and training and when it had finished:

- Question 1 - How do you rate your current understanding of looked after children's emotional and behavioural needs?
- Question2 - How confident do you feel in responding to looked after children's emotional and behavioural challenges?
- Question3 - How would you rate your understanding of the impact of trauma and neglect on learning?
- Question4 - How would you rate your understanding of the impact of attachment aware principles on learning?

The results were collated across schools and the red scores indicate that staff felt more confident in identifying behaviours related to trauma, abuse and neglect and more able to respond positively to emotional and behavioural challenges from pupils.

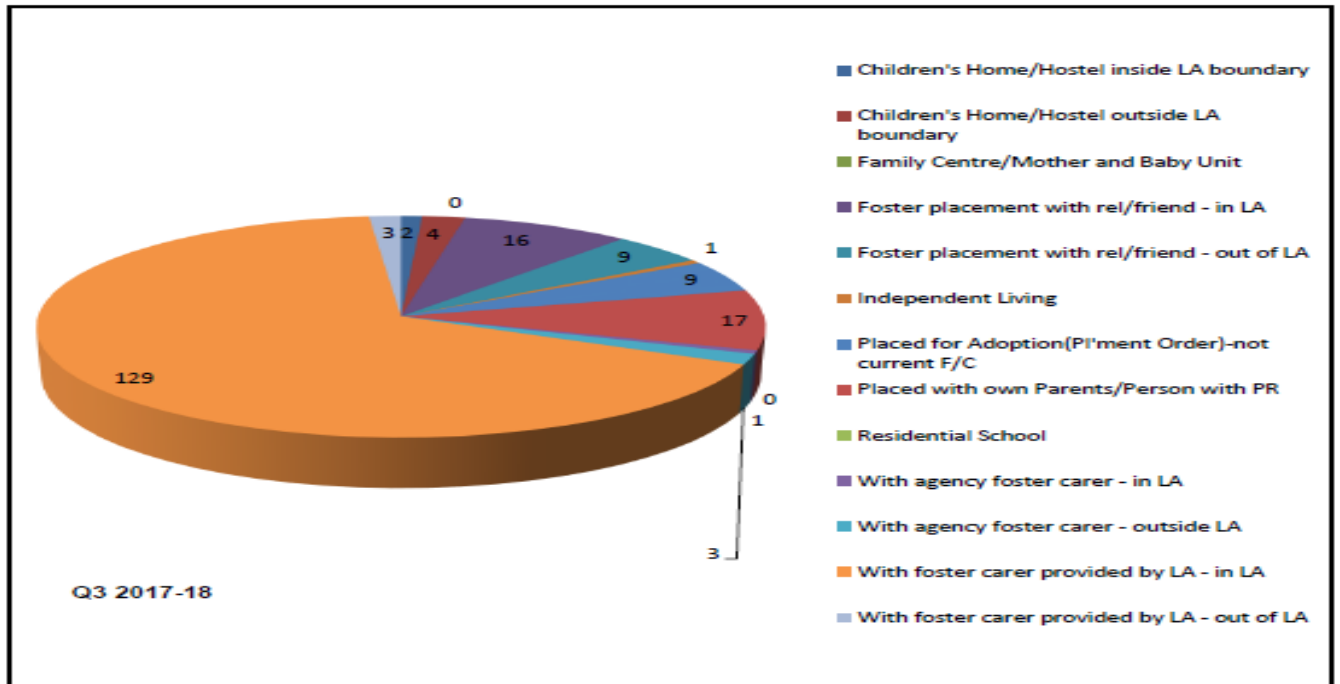


Many looked after children across Wales experience high levels of school moves and disruptions to learning. Within Carmarthenshire pupils are supported to maintain school placements. This results in a commitment to transport costs to and from school if necessary but also contributes to improved attainment. School moves for looked after children in Carmarthenshire continue to be significantly below the all Wales Average.

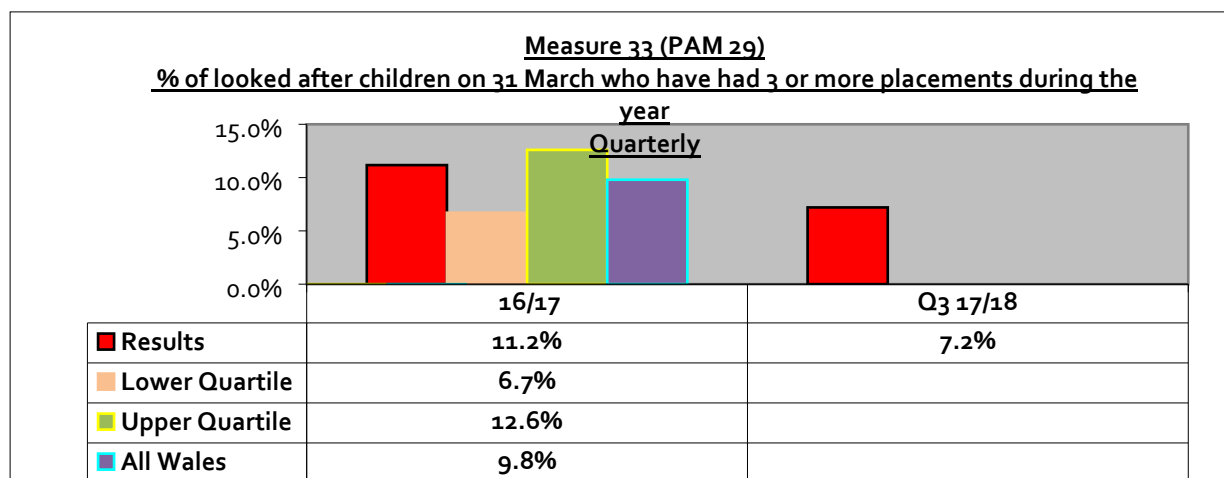


## 5. Accommodation and Housing

In 2017/18 most looked after children under the age of 18 resided with foster carers. At the end of December 2017 131 children lived with foster carers provided by the local authority and 42 children resided with their own parents, family or parental friends. 4 children were in specialist residential homes and 17 children were living with foster carers provided by independent agencies.

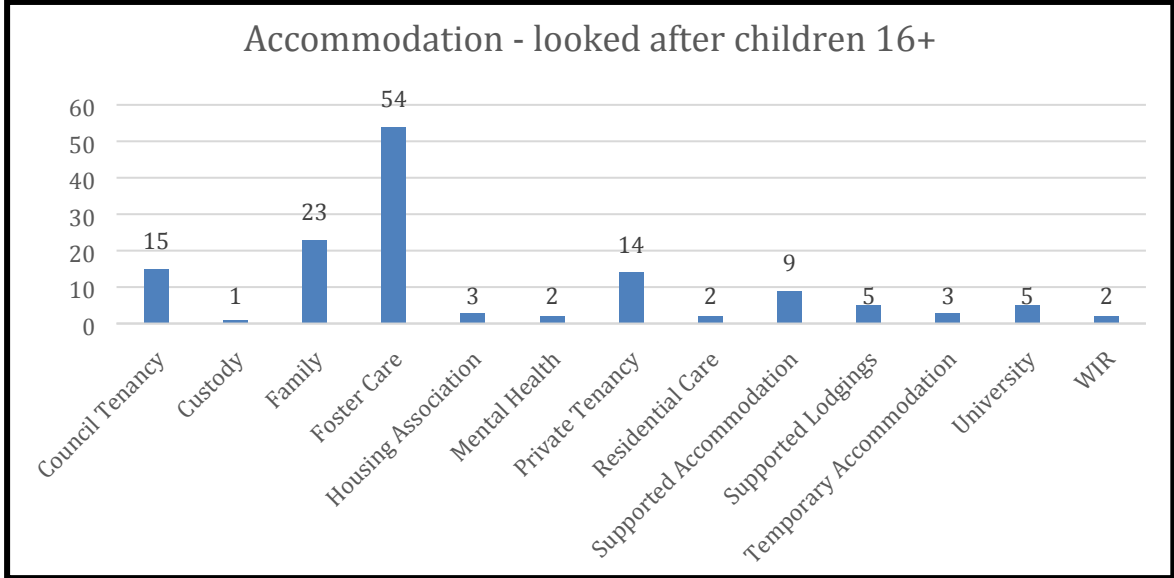


There is some strain on the fostering service to provide foster placement stability for some, more challenging, teenage children. Last year the % of our children experiencing 3 or more placement moves was higher than the all Wales average. Children's Services have put in a range of measures to address this and initial data indicates that this is improving.

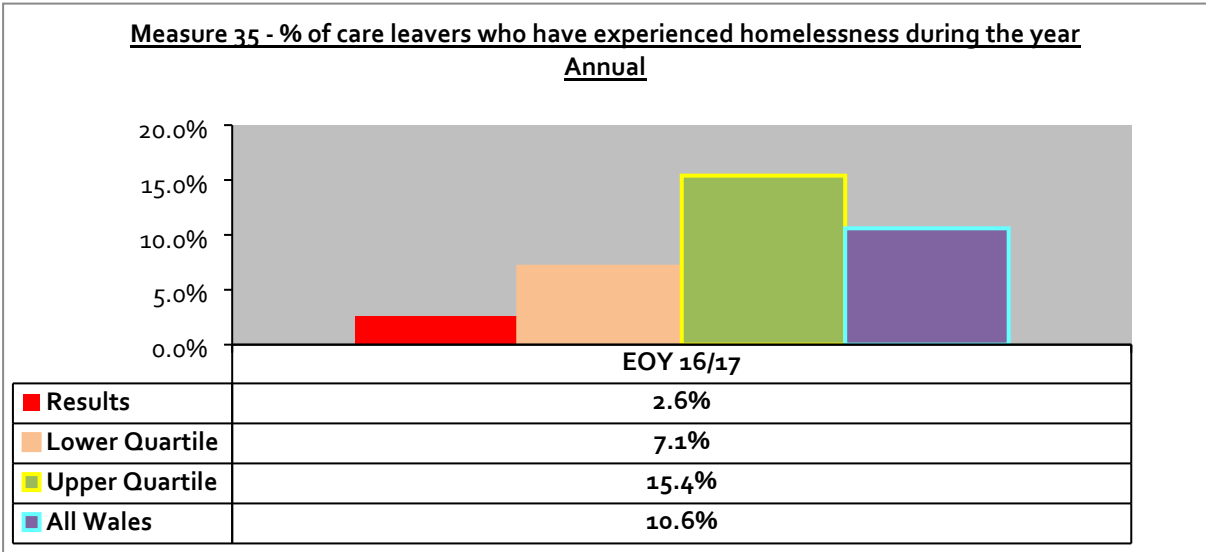


The local authority has a responsibility to continue to provide support for care experienced young people up to the age of 25. Under the Welsh Government’s ‘When I am Ready’ (WIR) initiative young people can remain with foster carers over the age of 18. Currently 56 young people over the age of 16 reside with foster carers and 28 of these are over the age of 18.

Of the 140 young people over the age of 16 supported by the local authority as corporate parents 15 have council tenancies, 14 have private tenancies, 12 are in some form of supported accommodation and 3 are in temporary accommodation.



The number of care leavers experiencing homelessness in Carmarthenshire in 2017 was 2.6%. While this is significantly below the all Wales average of 10.6% as corporate parents we work very hard to ensure that all care experienced young people are in appropriate accommodation and our aim is for no child that we have corporate parenting responsibility for is homeless.





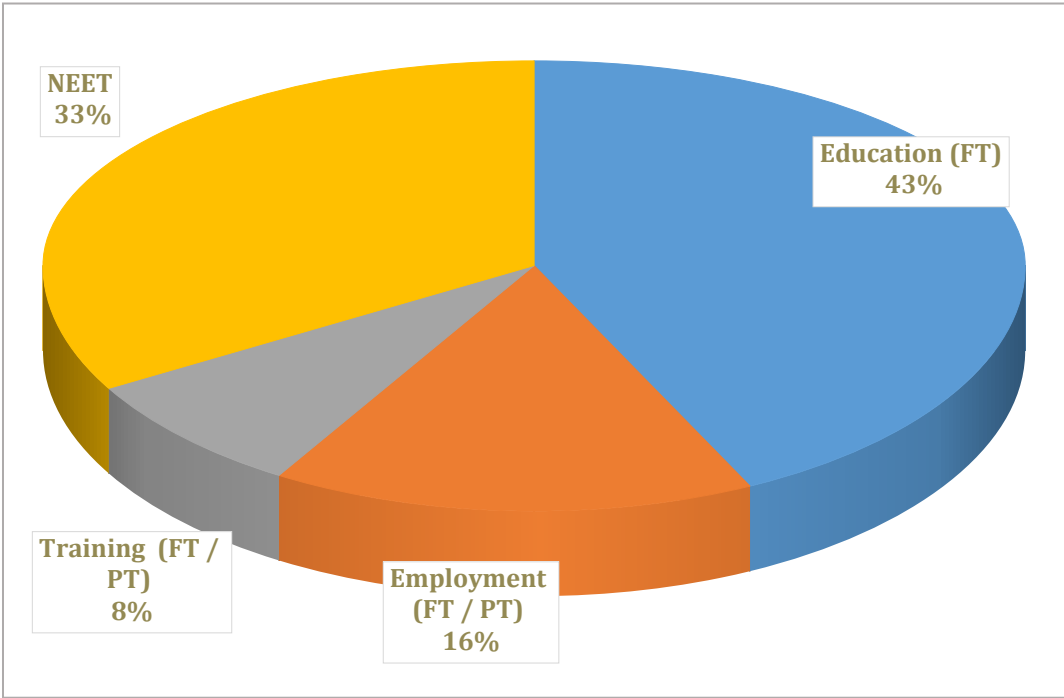
The Children’s Commissioner has proposed that local authorities adopt the St Basils Accommodation Framework for Care Leavers which ensures that all care experienced young people have appropriate accommodation and support options. The local authority will be developing and embedding this as part of their corporate parenting strategy moving forward.

**6- Post 16 Employment, Education and Training**

Across Wales 55% of children who are looked after were engaged in education, training or employment on their 19th birthday (Estyn 2017). All Wales data indicates that for children who have not experienced care 89.6% of 16-18 year olds are engaged in education, employment and training and 81.5% of 19-24 year olds.

In Carmarthenshire 72.2% of care leavers 16-18 years of age were engaged in education, employment or training and 64.2% of 19-25 year olds. Again these results are above the all Wales comparisons but through improving our corporate parenting commitment across all Departments within the Council and partners should help us further increase this level of engagement.

In December 2017 Carmarthenshire Care Leavers (16-25) were engaged in the following activities:



Currently 5 care experienced young people are in University and the local authority offers traineeships, paid work placements and volunteering experiences for care leavers who are at risk of NEET or just trying to identify their preferred area of work.

As part of the corporate parenting strategy for 2018-2021 each Department in the council will be asked to make an active commitment of supporting care leavers to gain work experience or employment within the council.

## **7- The views of Young People**

**When consulted with looked after children and care experienced young people told us...**

- The majority of foster carers are caring and supportive.
- Some children experienced too many placement moves and found it hard to settle.
- Many were anxious about leaving care and what learning and employment opportunities would be available to them.
- Most support staff (Advisers and Social Workers) are engaging and responsive.
- Young people feel that they have all they need for education and learning.
- Young people are anxious about being parents and living independently.
- More housing and support options in their own communities would be welcome.
- There is sometimes a lack of mental health support available.
- Sometimes it is too difficult to find out what is available and who can help.
- Some staff, carers, schools are not aspirational enough for them.
- They would like easier access to information, communication and support via social media that is more responsive to their needs.
- Their entitlements are not always clear.
- When things don't work out they need to be given a second chance – both in housing, education and work. Sometimes this doesn't happen.

## **8. The views of staff supporting care experienced young people**

- Staff feel stretched. Post 16 caseloads are increasing and some young people are complex and need a high level of support.
- Housing and supported accommodation options for vulnerable young people are not always in the best locations and often require young people to move away from their communities.
- Young people who are not engaged in education and employment need wider access to leisure and volunteering opportunities.
- An increasing number of young people cannot engage in education or employment due to mental health issues and options for social inclusion of these young people is often limited.
- Staff do not have the access to the same technology as young people and could communicate more easily if they did.

- The process of recording and accountability is still over bureaucratic and a reduction in bureaucracy would increase staff capacity for direct work with young people.
- Many young people are doing exceptionally well, yet the tendency is still for some staff to focus on the negatives.

## 9- Summary

In summary the main points of this annual update are:

- A Welsh Government Task and Finish Group are looking at the role of Corporate Parents.
- Carmarthenshire Corporate Parenting Strategy is due for updating and renewal this year.
- Carmarthenshire has the second lowest number of looked after children per 10,000 population in Wales.
- In relation to educational attainment looked after children in Carmarthenshire achieve consistently better than the all Wales average and better than free school meal pupils (peers).
- School placement moves for looked after children are consistently low.
- Care experienced young people not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) is low compared to all Wales data.
- Training and support for schools in relation to Attachment Informed Practice appears to be having a positive impact on behaviour and learning.
- A small % of care leavers experience homelessness.
- The number of looked after children experiencing foster placement moves is decreasing but remains too high.
- Accommodation and support options for care leavers needs to be reviewed.
- Young people need wider access to traineeships, volunteering opportunities and work placements.
- Young people still need more access for leisure and social inclusion activities.
- Care experienced young people want a service that is more aspirational for them, more transparent in its active offer and utilises digital technology and social media more responsively.

## 10-Corporate Parenting Priorities 2018-2021

- Carmarthenshire will contribute to the Welsh Government Corporate Parenting Review.
- Carmarthenshire's Corporate Parenting Strategy review will focus on developing a covenant for looked after children and care experienced young people that is user friendly and transparent.
- Each Department will be required to be explicit in their offer of support to care experienced young people and looked after children.

- Departments will be asked to continue to commit to offering work placement, traineeships and volunteering opportunities.
- Housing and accommodation support for young people will be reviewed and the St Basil's Accommodation Framework for Care Leavers will be implemented.
- The local authority will continue to develop and support schools to meet the needs of looked after children through Attachment Informed Practice.
- The local authority will work with staff and care experienced young people to reduce bureaucracy and develop digital methods of information sharing, planning and recording that is appropriate for young people and fit for purpose.



**EICH CYNGOR arleinamdani**  
[www.sirgar.llyw.cymru](http://www.sirgar.llyw.cymru)

**YOUR COUNCIL doitonline**  
[www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales](http://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales)

