RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2017- 2018

DATE: July 2018

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Agenda Item No:
Outcomes of Children Looked After (CLA) in RCT during the academic year 2016/2017

Author:

Hayley Jeans: Head of the Educational Psychology Service

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members with an update on the educational outcomes of Children Looked After (CLA) in Rhondda Cynon Taf during the academic year 2016/ 2017.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

2.1 Note the information contained within this report.

2.2 Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.

2.3 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained in the report.

2.4 Consider whether they wish to receive a further data report on 2017/18 outcomes in June 2019.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Children Looked After Team within the Access and Inclusion Service works in collaboration with schools, foster carers, Children's Services and other external agencies to promote the educational outcomes, life chances and social inclusion of children who are looked after.

3.2 Children who are looked after can be extremely vulnerable as many will have experienced neglect, abuse and multiple breakdowns within their families, foster care and/or educational placements. Children and young people who are looked after frequently experience multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). The Welsh Adverse Childhood Experiences Study clearly highlights the impact that these experiences have on the health and wellbeing of children and the potential longer term impact if appropriate support is not provided to mitigate against these

experiences. Children who experience stressful or traumatic childhoods are more likely to adopt health harming behaviours during adolescence which can lead to mental health difficulties and physical illnesses later on in life. Adverse childhood experiences are not just a concern for health outcomes but can also enhance the likelihood of individuals performing poorly in school and not progressing into further education.

3.3 The adverse childhood experiences of many of our children who are looked after can have a direct and immediate impact on their development. Research clearly highlights the impact that toxic stress caused by trauma in early life can have on brain development which can fundamentally alter nervous, hormonal and immunological system development. This can result in individuals whose systems are 'locked' into a higher state of alertness and arousal, permanently prepared to respond to perceived threat.. Such emotional and physiological changes can adversely impact on the health and wellbeing as individuals remain in a heightened emotional state of anxiety as the body prepares for a potential fight, flight or freeze response. This state of anxiety can result in children and young people being unable to fully engage and participate in learning, which can impact on educational attainment and progress. Children raised in environments where neglect, violence, and abuse are common are also more likely to develop social emotional and behavioural difficulties and to commit violent acts or be the victim of such acts in adulthood.

3.4 In view of these risk factors and the poor educational outcome data for this vulnerable group, the need for early intervention and access to timely and effective support is critical.

3.5 The Children Looked After Team within the Access & Inclusion Service endeavours to reduce the risk of poor educational outcomes through individual, group, whole school and strategic approaches. The team consists of a range of professionals including a Looked After Children Co-ordinator, a specialist advisory teacher, educational support worker, administrative support and 1.6 Educational Psychologists and is line managed by the Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist. The support given by this team includes:

- Consultation, advice and guidance for children/young people, schools, foster carers and external partners on suitable interventions to bring about change
- Direct and indirect delivery of interventions and programmes aimed at overcoming barriers to learning and the development of key skills
- In-depth and detailed assessment of need and psychological reports as to inform specialist interventions, placements, legal proceedings and panels (e.g. Foster Panel; Special Educational Needs (SEN) Panel Specialist Placement Panel; Court proceedings)
- Effective communication and partnership working with school staff, foster carers and external agencies, both within and outside of the LA
- Recording, monitoring and evaluation of outcome data
- Therapeutic support and interventions, for vulnerable groups, including post adoption support for young people and their families and to support educational placement
- Systemic work and training with governing bodies, schools, carers and agencies to enhance strategic developments and the support provided for children and young people who are looked after

- Preparation, monitoring and recording of Personal Education Plans (PEP).

3.6 Every child who is looked after has a PEP and its timely completion is the focus of a local performance indicator. The PEP is an important educational document as it helps professionals to gain a clear understanding of the teaching and learning provision necessary to meet the needs of a child who is looked after. It is a statutory requirement for all children who are looked after between the ages of 5-16 years, and sometimes beyond, to have a PEP, as it is intended to be an overarching education plan, and an integral part of a child's care and support plan. Local guidance has been developed and training provided to improve the effective completion of PEPs by relevant professionals within Rhondda Cynon Taf. The CLA Coordinator works with partners from Central South Consortia, to ensure that RCT processes are consistent with those in neighbouring local authorities.

3.7 In addition to the support provided by the Children Looked After Team, schools are also able to access generic support from various Access and Inclusion Services, including the Learner Support Service and the Educational Psychology Service. Schools are also able to utilise delegated additional needs funding £3.1M to support the inclusion of children and young people who are looked after and have significant special educational needs (SEN).

3.8 The local authority has a clear strategy for supporting and raising the achievement of children who are looked after and outcome data is reviewed to inform service self-evaluation and service improvement planning. This strategy is outlined in the CLA Friendly Schools resource (appended). Improving the outcomes of children who are looked after continues to be a strategic priority within the local authority.

3.9 Relevant information relating to children and young people who are looked after is shared with the Corporate Parenting Board. The joint action plan devised by Education and Children's Services as a result of two Scrutiny Committee Working Groups has been successfully implemented. The Principal and Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist meet regularly with the head of Children's Services and senior managers within this team, in order to review, evaluate performance of the CLA team and plan and prioritise future delivery models.

3.10 Outcome data for children and young people across a range of measures are routinely shared with schools across Central South Consortium. These data sets are also shared with Challenge Advisers and senior officers within the LA, so as to inform support and challenge visits in schools.

3.11 Welsh Government provides additional resources for schools in order to narrow the attainment gap between learners who are eligible for free school meals and those who are not. There is a separate element for children and young people who are looked after. The Pupil Deprivation Grant for Looked After Children (PDGLAC) is administered by Central South Consortium (CSC) and resources are directly delegated to school cluster to ensure timely interventions and support. Information outlining how this money was spent is appended to this report.

3.12 Pro-active attempts are taken to ensure that the voices of children who are looked after are heard. As a result Children's services commissioned a survey of children looked after (Bright Spots) to explore the experiences and views of children 4 – 16 who were fostered. This process has been supported by the CLA team who encouraged participation and are responding to the feedback. We will now plan a way forward with our partners in Social Services to address areas of concern.

3.12 The CLA Friendly Schools resource was launched in September 2017 as a tool to support improved outcomes for this vulnerable group of learners. This resource has been used as a framework for schools to prioritise areas they need to further develop and to identify how best to utilise the PDGLAC funding in a targeted and sustainable way. Along with the LACE team in Merthyr the CLA team are also piloting a CLA friendly school quality mark with7 schools and this will be launched for all schools to engage with in September 2018. See Appendix A, B & C.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Both local and national data will be presented in this report but it should be noted that there are different reporting mechanisms for these data sets. National data considers all looked after children regardless of where they are placed in their respective care placements. The local data reports relate to children and young people who are looked after and educated in Rhondda Cynon Taf only. The scope for making direct comparisons between local and national data sets are therefore restricted.

NATIONAL DATA

4.2 National data detailed on the Welsh Government Stats Wales website, suggests that on the 31st of March 2017, there were 690 looked after children and young people within Rhondda Cynon Taf. Both Table 1 and Graph 1 provides an overview of the national context and suggests that Rhondda Cynon Taf had the second highest total number of children and young people who were looked after and the second highest number of statutory school aged children within Wales.

Table 1: Children looked after at 31st March 2017 by local authority

	All Welsh local authorities	Isle of Anglesey	Gwynedd	Conwy	Denbighshire	Flintshire	Wrexham	Powys	Ceredigion	Pembrokeshire	Carmarthenshire	Swansea	Neath Port Talbot	Bridgend	Vale of Glamorgan	Cardiff	Rhondda Cynon Taf	Merthyr Tydfil	Caerphilly	Blaenau Gwent	Torfaen	Monmouthshire	Newport
		North Wales Education Consortia						South West and Mid Wales Education Consortia					Central South Education Consortia					South East Wales Education Consortia					
Total Looked After Children	5955	140	220	175	165	210	210	155	75	125	205	480	345	390	225	720	690	145	330	210	315	135	280
Number of CLA of statutory school age	4525	105	160	130	120	165	175	120	60	105	170	380	275	290	170	535	485	120	260	155	240	100	215

Graph 1: Children looked after at 31st March 2017 by local authority

Total Children Looked After by Local Authority as at March 2017
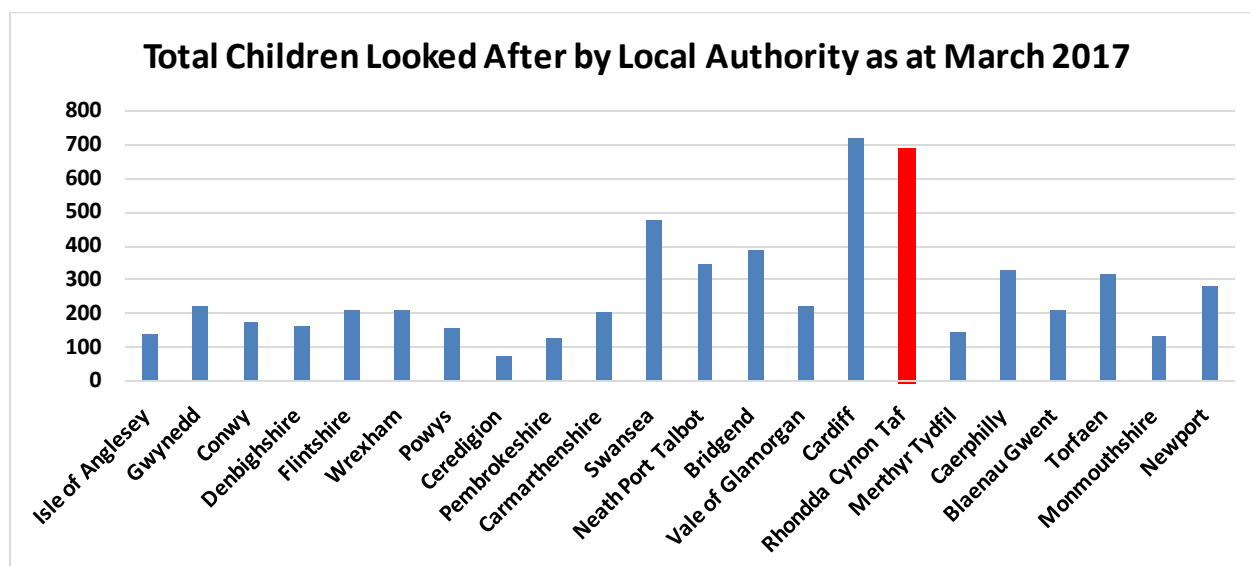
4.3 Table 2 and Graph 2 highlights the growth in the number of children and young people who are looked after per 10,000 population (aged 18 and under) within Rhondda Cynon Taf. Numbers have increased by 10.62% from 2015/16 to 2016/17.

Table 2: Rate of children looked after at 31st March 2017 per 10,000 population aged under 18 by local authority and year

Local Authority	2015-16	2016-17	% Difference
Isle of Anglesey	80	104	29.82%
Gwynedd	88	93	5.45%
Conwy	78	82	5.72%
Denbighshire	90	84	-6.72%
Flintshire	65	66	1.85%
Wrexham	66	72	8.41%
Powys	59	63	7.25%
Ceredigion	62	60	-2.65%
Pembrokeshire	52	52	0.88%
Carmarthenshire	58	56	-4.24%
Swansea	108	102	-5.91%
Neath Port Talbot	135	124	-8.06%
Bridgend	131	134	2.44%
Vale of Glamorgan	72	84	16.47%
Cardiff	88	97	10.73%
Rhondda Cynon Taf	125	138	10.62%
Merthyr Tydfil	113	115	1.85%

Caerphilly	72	85	18.74%
Blaenau Gwent	139	154	10.70%
Torfaen	142	166	17.14%
Monmouthshire	73	75	3.18%
Newport	88	83	-5.47%

Graph 2: Rate of Children Looked After as at 31st March 2017 per 10,000 population
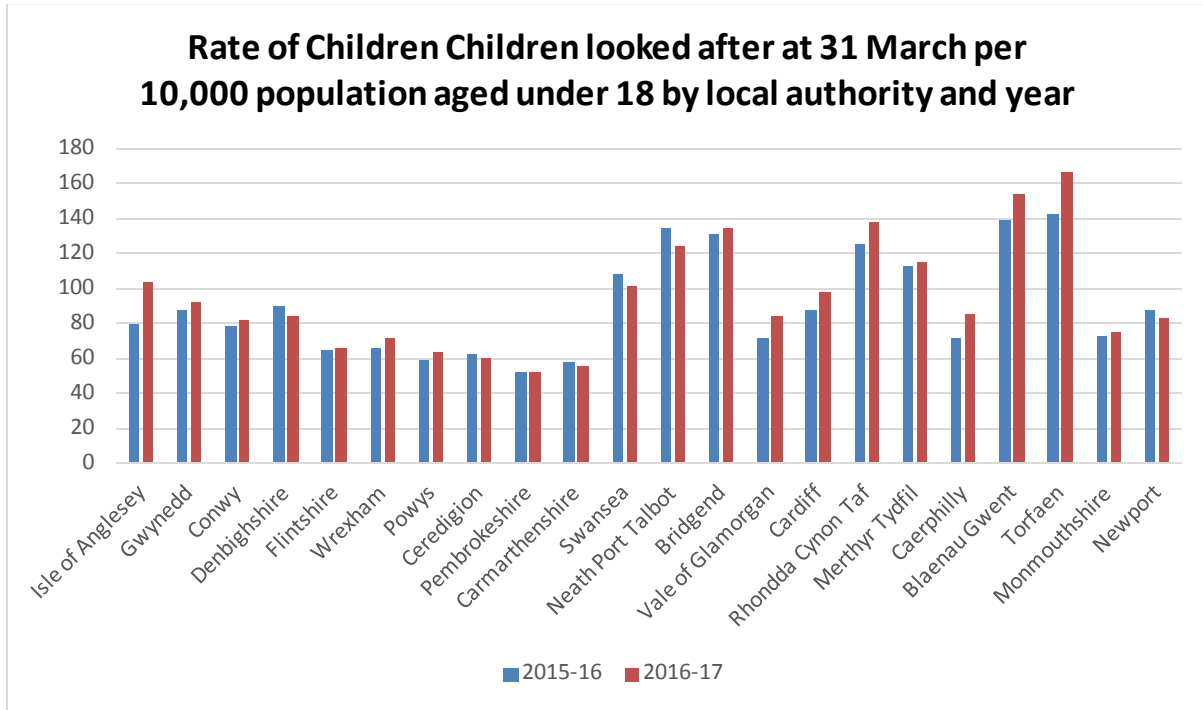
4.4 Table 3 highlights that the majority of children who were looked after in Rhondda Cynon Taf on the 31st of March 2017 were placed in foster care placements (81.2%). Encouragingly, a total of 25 children were placed for adoption (3.6%).

Table 3: Number of children looked after at 31st March 2017 by local authority and placement type

	Placed for adoption	Foster placements	Local authority homes	Private or voluntary registered homes	Placed with own parents or other person with parental responsibility	Living independently	Absent or other	Total looked after children
All Welsh local authorities	240	4435	240	40	710	130	155	5955
Isle of Anglesey	*	100	10	*	20	*	*	140
Gwynedd	5	145	15	*	40	*	10	220
Conwy	*	125	5	*	35	*	5	175
Denbighshire	5	110	*	*	35	*	*	165

Local authority								Total
Flintshire	*	145	10	*	35	*	20	210
Wrexham	*	135	10	5	45	5	*	210
Powys	5	120	15	*	10	*	*	155
Ceredigion	5	55	*	*	10	*	*	75
Pembrokeshire	5	90	*	*	20	*	5	125
Carmarthenshire	5	170	5	*	15	5	*	205
Swansea	25	380	*	*	35	*	30	480
Neath Port Talbot	20	285	5	5	25	*	*	345
Bridgend	25	300	15	*	45	*	*	390
Vale of Glamorgan	5	165	*	*	40	*	15	225
Cardiff	20	490	50	*	95	55	5	720
Rhondda Cynon Taf	25	560	40	*	50	15	*	690
Merthyr Tydfil	5	115	*	*	15	*	5	145
Caerphilly	5	255	20	5	35	*	*	330
Blaenau Gwent	15	140	*	*	30	5	15	210
Torfaen	10	240	*	*	45	5	10	315
Monmouthshire	5	90	10	5	20	*	*	135
Newport	25	205	20	*	10	10	10	280

* no pupils were recorded or numbers were too low to report on.

4.5 Table 4 suggests that the percentage of children looked after by Rhondda Cynon Taf who experienced 3 or more placements during the year equated to 8%.Which is at the lower end of the range when looking at the national picture.

Table 4: Children looked after at 31st March 2017 by local authority, number of placements during year and measure

	Number of children	Percentage of children
	Children with 3 or more placements during year (1)	Children with 3 or more placements during year (1)
All Welsh local authorities	625	10
Isle of Anglesey	5	5
Gwynedd	20	9
Conwy	25	14
Denbighshire	25	16
Flintshire	25	11
Wrexham	30	14
Powys	20	14
Ceredigion	5	7
Pembrokeshire	20	15

Carmarthenshire	20	10
Swansea	30	7
Neath Port Talbot	20	5
Bridgend	55	14
Vale of Glamorgan	20	10
Cardiff	80	11
Rhondda Cynon Taf	55	8
Merthyr Tydfil	15	12
Caerphilly	50	15
Blaenau Gwent	30	14
Torfaen	30	10
Monmouthshire	10	6
Newport	30	11

5. LOCAL DATA

5.1 Within Rhondda Cynon Taf, data for children who are looked after is routinely gathered, monitored and evaluated. There are a number of local performance indicators which are reported corporately. Please note that local data relates to children and young people who are looked after and educated within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

5.2 It should be noted that the data detailed in Table 5 for key reporting periods relates to the previous academic year e.g. 2016/17 datasets relates to 2015/16 outcomes. The data presented suggests that 50% of children who were looked after achieved expected outcomes in the Foundation Phase for the 2017/18 reporting period. This is a 10% drop from the previous year.

Performance within Key Stage 2 highlights that 68.2% achieved expected outcomes which is comparable to last year's performance. There has been a steady increase in the number of learners achieving Core Subject Indicators during Key Stage 3, with the exception of a slight dip in performance during the 2015/16 reporting period. An increase of 19.56% achieving expected Key Stage 3 outcomes in 2016/17 is evident and an increase of 10.94% from 2016/17 to 2017/18.

Table 5: Local Performance Indicators

Performance measures	2012/13*	2013/14*	2014/15*	2015/16*	2016/17*	2017/18*
Percentage of children who are looked after who achieved Foundation Phase Indicator	New performance indicator				60	50
Percentage of children who are looked after who achieved Core Subject Indicator at Key Stage 2	40.74	55.56	55.17	66.7	66.7	68.2

Percentage of children who are looked after achieving Core Subject Indicator at Key Stage 3	20.00	27.78	40.74	38.50	58.06	69
Percentage of children who are looked after achieving Level 1 Threshold	New performance indicator			35	64.00	71.7
Percentage of children who are looked after achieving Level 2 Threshold	New performance indicator				52.00	58.9
Percentage of children who are looked after local authority care and in any local authority maintained learning setting, who attain at the age of 16 during the school year and leave full time education, training or work based learning without an approved external qualification	2.86	3.23	0	0	0	0
Percentage of children who are looked after achieving Level 2+ Threshold	New performance indicator					5.1

* Please note data relates to previous academic year

5.3 Table 5 shows an increase of 7% in the numbers of young people achieving Level 1 threshold (80 plus points). There was an increase of 6.9 % in respect of the number of young people looked after achieving Level 2 threshold (200 plus points).

Following the recommendations made by the Review of Qualifications in Wales KS4 performance measures in Wales changed. These changes were implemented from summer 2016.

In the short term these changes affect our ability to track performance over time. For example, this may lead to behavioural change in pupils and schools in terms of qualifications chosen, which cannot be modelled.

It is also worth noting that 22.5% of pupils in this cohort attended a special school for children with severe learning difficulties and a further 6.5% of pupils were attending a Pupil Referral Unit for Children experiencing significant levels of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

However 19 out of 39 pupils achieved 1 or more GCSE grades A – C.

Numbers of GCSE A - C	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Numbers of pupils	8	3	2		3		1		1		1

With 32 out of 39 achieving 1 or more GCSE grade A – G.

Numbers of GCSE A - G	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Numbers of pupils	2	3	1	1	1	5	2	4	8	3	2

Only 3 pupils attending mainstream school did not achieve success at GCSE.

5.1% of pupils achieved Level 2 + (Level 2 + is 200 Points including M&E A* - C)

5.4 Table 5 also suggests that despite a cohort of Key Stage 4 pupils with a range of complex needs, no young person who was looked after left full time education, training or work based learning without an approved external qualification in the 2017/18 reporting period (academic year 2016/17). This has been the trend for the last four consecutive years.

5.5 Table 6 highlights the range of specialist placements accessed by children who are looked after, both within and outside of the county. Of this cohort 79.95% (359 learners) were educated within a mainstream setting, both in and out of county. A total of 90 learners (20%) accessed more specialist placements due to severe and persistent special educational needs. This inevitability impacts on the capacity of some of our more vulnerable learners to achieve expected outcomes at critical stages in their school careers.

Table 6: The number of statutory school aged RCT children who are looked after according to type of school placement as at 31ˢᵗ March 2018

School Placement/ Type	RCT children who are looked after educated Out of County	RCT children who are looked after educated in RCT	Total
Mainstream	90	269	359
Learning Support Class ASDCommunication Disorders	1	8	9
Learning Support Class/Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)	0	12	12
Awaiting placement	1	1	2
Special School	12	38	50
Education Otherwise Than In School/Tuition Service	0	17	17
Total	**104**	**345**	**449**

5.6 There are currently 84 pupils (18.71%) educated both within and out of county with a statement of special educational needs (Table 7), which is once again a disproportionately high level. This data, coupled with the high number of learners also requiring school based intervention at either school action or school action plus suggests that 63.47% of the cohort placed both in and out of county have SEN of some description.

Table 7: SEN of children who are looked after of statutory school age as at 31st March 2018

Code of Practice	RCT children who are looked after educated out of county	RCT children who are looked after educated in RCT	Total	%
Early Years/School Action	14	75	89	19.82
Early Years/School Action Plus	20	88	108	24.05
Statement of Special Educational Needs	14	70	84	18.71
No Special Educational Needs	56	108	164	36.53
Undergoing Statutory Assessment	0	4	4	0.89
Total	**104**	**345**	**449**	

5.7 The attendance rates achieved for children who are looked after within Rhondda Cynon Taf are detailed in Table 8. The data for children and young people who are looked after was better that the general attendance of the wider local population for both Primary and Secondary cohorts.

Table 8: Primary and secondary school attendance for children who are looked after 2016/ 2017

School	Total percentage of attendance children who are looked after	Total percentage of attendance all RCT	RCT attendance target (excluding Special)
Primary	96.40	94.67	95.40
Secondary	93.80	93.58	94.30

5.8 Table 9 identifies how exclusion rates show improved trends for children who are looked after. The rate of children and young people being excluded per 1000 pupils has decreased from 76.40 in 2011/12 to 44.49 in 2016/17. There was a slight increase of 5.23% from 2015/2016 but this was reflected in higher levels of exclusion across the local authority. However the number of days lost due to exclusions were drastically reduced by 130 days.

Table 9: The percentage of children who are looked after pupils being excluded per 1000 pupils

Academic Year	Male	Female	Total	Excluded cohort	Days Lost	per 1000 pupils
2012/13	61	13	74	940		78.72
2013/14			52	840		61.9
2014/15	15	26	41	895	256	45.81
2015/16	10	22	32	815	220	39.26
2016/17	24	18	42	944	90	44.49

5.9 Table10 identifies that 60.6 % of pupils went onto attend a college course. 15.15% remaining in special school placements with 6% staying on in 6th form. 6% of CLA leavers went onto work and 3% went on to a training course or volunteering, one leaver went in to prison and one had no identifiable destination.

Table 10: Destinations for Year 11 CLA pupils 2016/17

Destination of RCT placed pupils Year 11	
Number of CLA pupils leaving	33
College	20
Neet	1
Prison	1
School	2
Special school	5
Training	1
Volunteering	1
Work	2
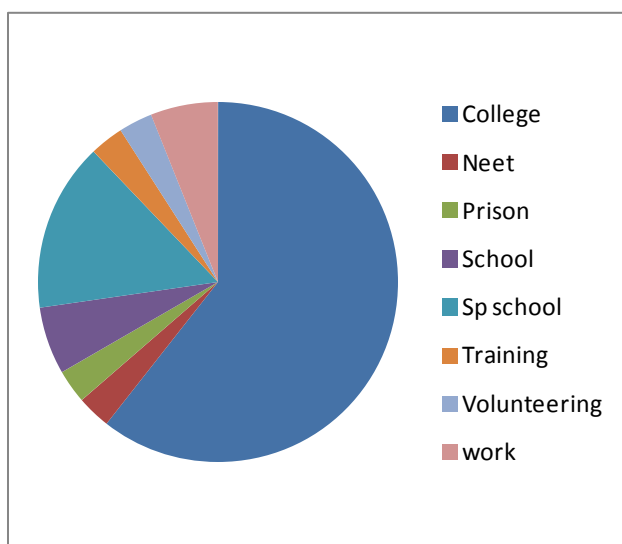
6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf has a significant looked after population. It is evident from the data provided that the risk factors which can adversely impact on educational outcomes remains prevalent and can be a significant and long term barrier to

achievement. Nevertheless through effective early intervention these risks can be minimised but often cannot be entirely eradicated.

6.2 The outcome data for this group of highly vulnerable learners suggests that whilst there is evidence of progress in very many areas, there is still scope for further improvement particularly in relation to educational attainment in Key Stage 4. All data sets have to be viewed within the context of the high levels of SEN evident within this cohort of learners.

6.3 The data for children who are looked after children will continue to be robustly scrutinised and evaluated in order to inform key areas for further strategic development and improvement.

6.4 Continued focus on narrowing the attainment gap between children and young people who are looked after and their peer group is essential if they are to achieve academic and personal success. Prompt and timely access to high quality services will be key in identifying any underlying needs and intervention strategies to bring about positive change. Ongoing focus on up skilling designated teachers through continued training, support and guidance will also be necessary so that schools and Governing Bodies are better equipped to help learners to achieve success. Support and challenge for schools will continue to be provided where there are concerns relating to outcomes and continued opportunities for sharing good practice and training will be provided to ensure that schools, carers and external agencies are well supported;

The Local Authority will also continue to seek further improvements in the performance indicators and to target those which suggest a lack of progress overtime.

This page intentionally blank