

## **Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council**

### **Children who are looked after: Pupil Development Grant (PDG): “A working model”**

We have benefitted massively from the really helpful leadership approach and support from colleagues across both ERW and Neath Port Talbot (NPT). In the first instance the planning to shape our ERW strategic plan was formed by the six Looked After Children Education (LACE) Coordinators, and then strengthened and further endorsed by a meeting with the ERW Managing Director.

We agreed to contribute towards a ‘regional attachment aware project’ (including the appointment of a training coordinator which has created a consistent and cohesive starting point for each authority). This project continues to focus our schools on the importance of ‘attachment awareness’ for all staff (teaching and non-teaching alike) and how the development of specific approaches and strategies, may contribute towards ‘whole school development’ within each individual schools’ journey of improvement. I am proud that we now have 20 NPT schools who have joined the project, and many more wishing to sign up (future grant fund permitting) as the message of the projects ‘worth’, continues to spread.

We also decided in order to best meet local need, the remainder of the fund should be distributed proportionately across the 6 local authorities – each planning within the agreed ERW activity criteria. This has enabled us to meet the training and development needs of our individual authorities, and individual support needs of our pupils (looked after and formerly looked after).

In NPT our partnership with our Education Psychology Service has developed. We used funds to employ the equivalent of one full time Education Psychologist, allowing us to tap into the skills and interests of the current staff resource. This led to the development our ‘Wellbeing Initiative’, which includes ‘trauma and attachment’ training, the continuation of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs,) and the development of Video Interaction Guidance (VIG). Each of these contributes towards supporting schools and carers to better support individual children, and thus contribute towards stability at school and at home. In addition, staff are delivering the ‘Family Links’ parenting programme (based on the principles of nurture) – this was offered to both foster carers and carers of those on Special Guardianship Order. I am proud that we now have 24 schools who have received training, 38 more ELSAs and 5 families who have received VIG.

The training and development package continues to grow and develop, and now includes a variety of practical approaches and strategies. We have introduced the 'Observing Children with Attachment Difficulties in the Classroom – observation checklist' resource to each school's SEN/ALNCo. Schools are now in a better position to identify different attachment styles, and to form appropriate action plans to best support their individual pupils. One member of staff from each school has been trained to use 'relationship based play' (based on the principles of Theraplay) in order to safely form relationship bonds between pupil and staff. Members of the LACES team have become local authority leads to continue to develop and advise regarding the observation checklist, Emotion Coaching, PACE, transition and relationship based play. We are continually seeking feedback from our schools to inform how we continue to support them and find out where to focus future development.

In order to best support individual pupils (looked after and previously looked after) within our NPT schools, we chose to develop the capacity of the LACES team to include an additional teacher and 3 Teaching Assistants. The whole team continue to support and coach schools staff with their use of appropriate strategies and approaches (the attachment checklist, PACE, Emotion Coaching, Relationship Based Play etc). Staff members have also provided specific whole school training sessions and workshops. We have developed a transition support package – our TA is working, with pupils who schools are able to identify early (that change is coming) and support will be required. This package we are able to adapt to support pupils at any age facing a move of school/provision. We are using the National Literacy and Numeracy scores to identify pupils with scores of 85 and below (and 115 and above), and are seeking to work in partnership with schools and carers to provide appropriate interventions and support materials. Last academic year the LACES team TAs supported 58 pupils for specific intervention. We have also recognised the value of extra curricular activity for our pupils, and offer after school activity clubs (in partnership with a local Boxing Club) and a weekend of outdoor adventurous activity. We also continue to support and advise our Children's Services colleagues at relevant meetings, reviews and panels and provide literacy and numeracy support workshops for foster carers.

It is recognised that each region and local authority is very different and, there is variety of approach to the spend of the children who are looked after element of the PDG across Wales. The NPT model is working well (and continuing to grow and develop), and one that young people (looked after and formerly looked after) and our schools and carers, are really benefitting from.