

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

REPORT AUTHOR: Stephen Adams, LAC/YJS Education Coordinator,
Powys County Council.

SUBJECT: Looked After Children (LAC) Education Report
Nov 2015.

REPORT FOR: Information/Discussion

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report is aimed to assist Members in understanding the educational outcomes of our Looked After Children (LAC). As part of Members' corporate parenting responsibilities, this information is vital, along with our continued support and ambition for our looked after children and young people, to achieve their best. Enclosed within the report is Key Stage 4 results and CSI data for Key Stage 2 and 3.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 Members are asked to receive and consider the following report. It is structured in response to questions identified by Gwenda Thomas, Deputy Minister, in her letter to Members and Directors of Children's Services (28/09/08) as part of the corporate parenting responsibilities.

3. Introduction

Academic Year Sept 2014 – July 2015

- 3.1 As at 01/09/14 there were 144 LAC for whom Powys was the Corporate Parent. Of these, 126 were in compulsory (4-16yrs) or post compulsory (16-19yrs) education or training. The remainder were below school age.
- 3.2 For the purpose of this report, more detailed data related to school attainment for Powys LAC in Year 11 (15-16yrs, end of Key Stage 4) is included and forms the core of this report. This data is a statutory national measure of children's educational performance (i.e. attainment) but does not necessarily reflect overall achievement. In addition, national data related to attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (11yrs) and end of Key Stage 3 (14yrs) is included. The remainder of the report covers key questions related to attendance, exclusions, Out of County School placements, SEN (Special Educational Needs), involvement with

YJS (Youth Justice Service) and post 16 progression for all Powys school age LAC (i.e. Key Stages 1,2, 3 and 4).

- 3.3 Two crucial issues should be considered alongside this report. Firstly, cohort size; Powys has relatively low numbers of LAC compared to the overall school population in each school year. Consequently, data sets are not statistically significant and conclusions drawn should therefore be treated with caution but nonetheless are uniquely relevant to Powys.

Secondly, because of these relatively small numbers, one year `snapshots` can be misleading and can be unduly influenced by individual performance. Trends over an extended timescale can give a clearer picture of progress or decline and for sustainable progress to be evident, a smooth upward trajectory is ideal, rather than a `spikey` uneven profile. Hence graphs and bar charts are included where possible to aid longitudinal judgement.

4. Context

- 4.1 Historically LAC in the UK significantly underperform in school. This is particularly pronounced utilising the standard Core Subject Indicators (C.S.I.s) in English, Welsh, Maths and Science as measures of attainment. However, over the past seven years (2007-2014), this trend has slowed at the end of K.S.4 both within Powys, in Wales and the UK as a whole; nevertheless, the gap between LAC and non LAC remains considerable.

LAC school performance remains stubbornly below the expected norm when compared to age equivalent mainstream school performance. Numerous studies have identified the influence of macro factors linked to poverty as causal elements in inhibiting educational performance. These factors are not just economic poverty, early neglect, lack of structured parental input or stimulation but also poverty of emotional input, aspirational poverty, and intellectual and cultural poverty. More recent research (Welsh Government – GSR - 2015) points strongly to a link between continuity and consistency of care and schooling, as opposed to one off specific compensatory inputs, as a major factor in LAC educational attainment.

In Powys, in terms of LAC attainment at the end of K.S.4 (GCSE or equivalent), the Authority has been in the top quartile for our LAC population for the last seven years and continues to be in 2014/15. This has been achieved through a combination of:-

- a) Continuing improved awareness by numerous stakeholders involved with LAC education (carers, social workers, school staff) of the consequences of neglect and trauma and how this may effect LAC cognition and behaviour.

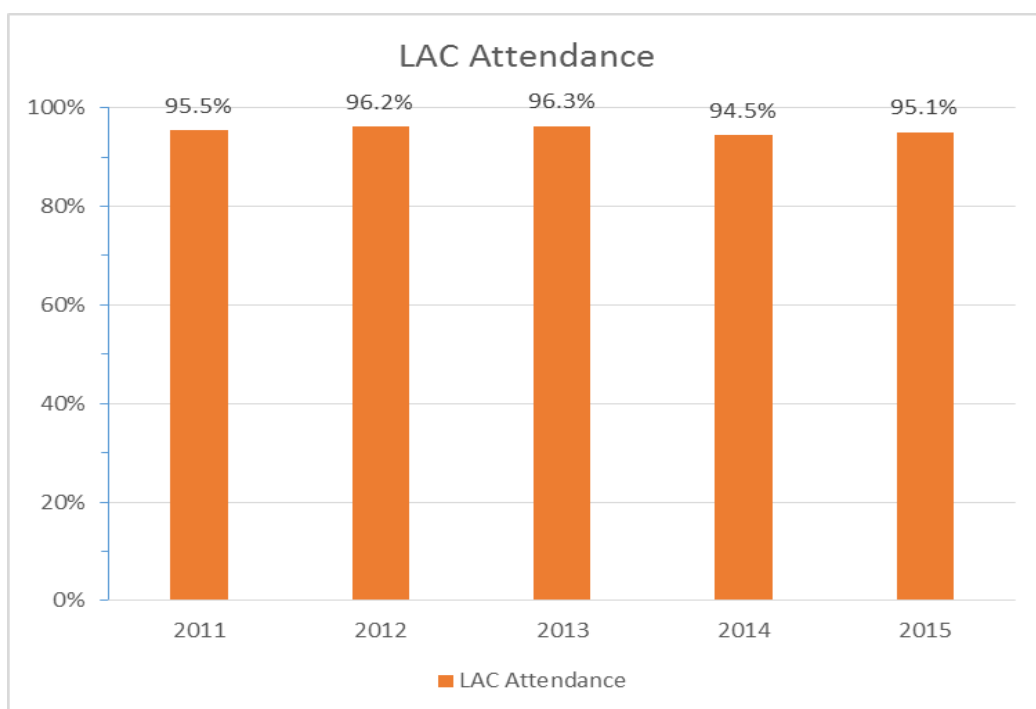
- b) Closer monitoring and the targeting of resources towards LAC educational support, and
- c) Utilising strong action planning through the `PEP` process.

PEPs (Personal Education Plans) are a statutory entitlement for school age LAC nationally. In Powys, much of our current progress can be traced to a clear, realistic PEP for all students, agreed and supported by carers, social workers and schools and initiated and monitored by LAC Education Coordinators, who set targets and support and monitor outcomes.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that Powys normally has a relatively small cohort of LAC in each school year group, which can make the data appear volatile year on year, and means judgements based on such a small sample, should be made, as indicated above, using a degree of caution.

5. School Attendance - % attendance for Powys LAC in Schools.

5.1	<u>Age Group</u>	<u>% Attendance 2014/15</u>
	Primary	95.6% (95.6% in 2013/14) (All Wales LAC - 95.1%)
	Secondary	93.5% (93.4% in 2013/14) (All Wales LAC - 90.6%)
	Overall Average	95.1% (94.5% in 2013/14)

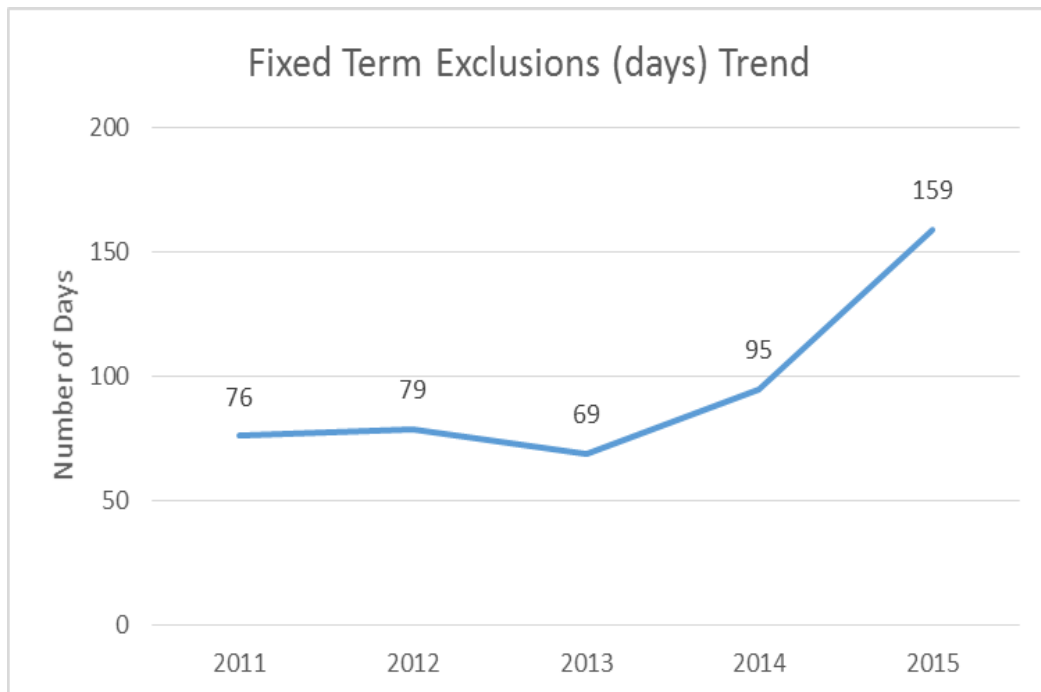


5.2 The overall average attendance figure of 95.1% places Powys in the top quartile for Wales in 2014/15. It indicates a levelling out of a consistently above average attendance for Powys LAC and is above the

All Powys attendance rate of 94.4% for all school pupils in 2013/14. These figures include LAC in Out of County (OOC) schools and is a reflection of integrated support by carers and other Children's Services professionals.

6. **School Exclusions - How many Looked After Children are excluded from school?**

6.1	<u>Days</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Permanent	0	0	0
Fixed Term	159	13	7
<u>Total</u>	159	(95 in 2013/14)	



6.2 A total of 20 LAC were excluded on a fixed term basis during 2014/15. There were no permanent exclusions. Two were primary fixed term exclusions and eighteen secondary fixed term exclusions. Fifteen children were excluded for 3 days or more and five for 1 - 2 days. It should be noted that of the students who were excluded from school, five of these (4 male/1 female) accounted for 112 of the 159 exclusion days.

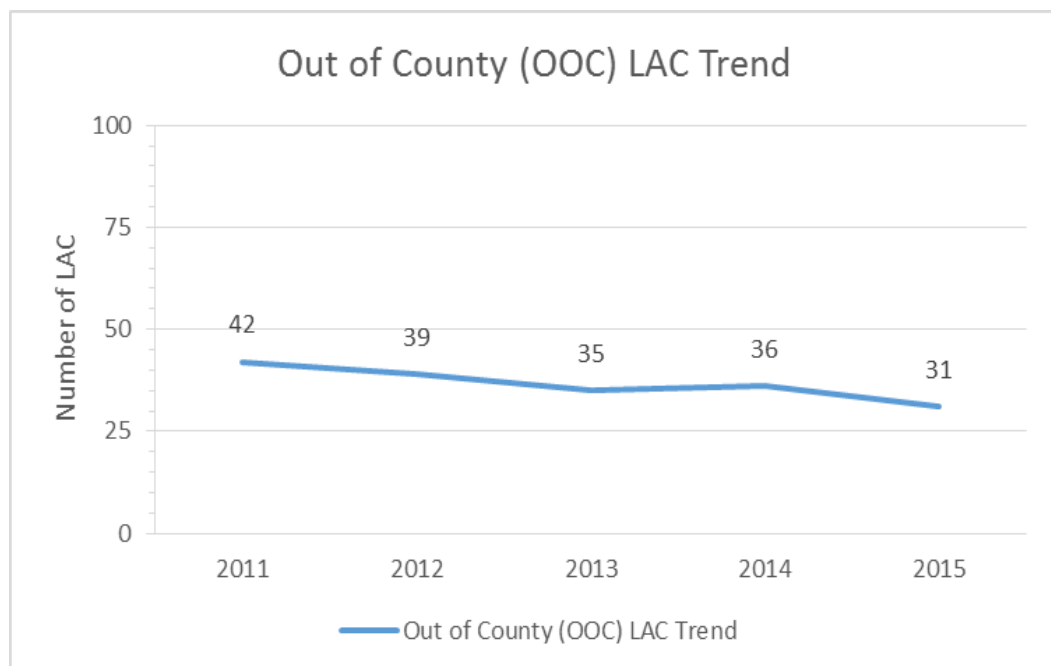
6.3 This figure is disappointing. It is an increase of nearly 60% on 2013/14 and is specifically indicative of the behavioural issues and difficulties some of our looked after children experience, associated with identity, attachment, emotional stability, organisation and self control. The major increase in this area was in secondary school exclusions and in some secondary schools this was particularly pronounced. The evidence

suggests that some Powys High Schools exclude LAC too easily and appear to not have the specific strategies in place to manage the behaviours associated with this group. The LAC Education Coordinators liaise with School `Challenge Advisors` in relation to specific school policies and performance and it is clear that a training/education issue exists in some schools. It is hoped this will be addressed through the new `Thrive` programme and ERW's `AAS` (Attachment Aware Schools) Project in 2016.

7. Out of County Looked After Children – How many Looked After Children are attending schools in other Local Authorities?

7.1 During the academic year 2014/15 a total of 31 (22%) of Powys LAC were in schools in another County (OOC). This is a reduction of 2% from 13/14 but is still a relatively high percentage of our LAC population. In year 11 four LAC were in Out of County schools (25%). Education in Out of County schools is usually a direct result of a care move to an IFA (Independent Foster Carer) or residential accommodation. This can often lead to greater complexity in terms of admissions, coordination, monitoring, time and cost and can lead to greater vulnerability for the child. For this reason, Powys OOC LAC are monitored closely, via the Pep process, regarding school transition and support.

7.2	<u>Total</u>	OOC / LAC	31 (22%)
		YR.11. LAC	4 (25% of Yr.11 cohort)



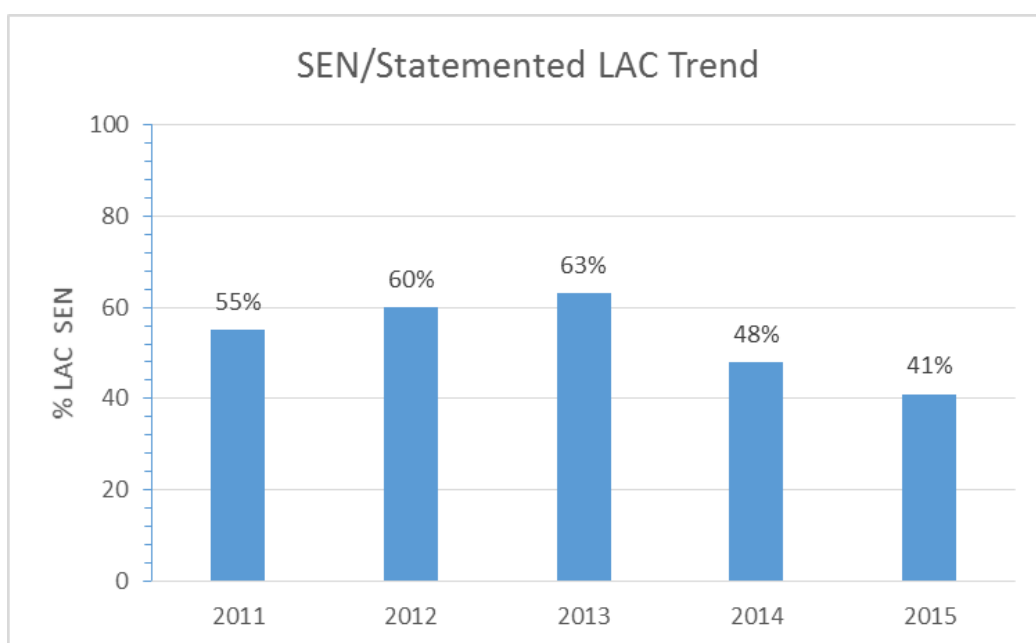
8. YJS (Youth Justice Service) Involvement - How many Looked After Children are known to YJS?

8.1 Powys LAC are characterised by very low involvement with the YJS. Of the Year 9, 10 and 11 cohorts, only four pupils were involved with YJS in 2014/15. This places Powys in the top quartile for Wales.

9. SEN Code/Statement of SEN - How many Looked After Children have a SEN Statement or are recorded on the SEN Code of Practice?

9.1 A high percentage of Powys School age LAC – 41% - are on the SEN Code of Practice or Statemented (significant learning difficulties requiring specialist support) relative to the general school population, (All Wales average – 3.1%).

	<u>Statemented</u>	<u>SEN Code Of Practice</u>
All Powys LAC (School Age)	23 (16%)	36 (25%)
	Total 59 (41% of school age LAC)	
Year 11	6 (37%)	4 (25%)
	Total 10 (62%)	



9.3 These figures, at first glance, are extremely high, and although perhaps surprising at first, are indicative of the type of challenges that children coming into care, and schools responding to such issues have to deal with. Clearly many Powys LAC initially present as requiring learning support within the school setting and potentially lack some of the pre-requisites to achieve in standard assessments in school. If subsequent

care and schooling is not sensitive, consistent and continuous, then ultimate potential attainment can be impaired.

Those with a full Statement have guaranteed long term learning support; those on the SEN register have semi - tailored provision which can be time limited. Given this background, the 2014/15 LAC cohort which contained 50% of children identified as having a learning need, have achieved significantly above expectation at the end of KS 2, KS 3 and KS 4, relative to their mainstream peers.

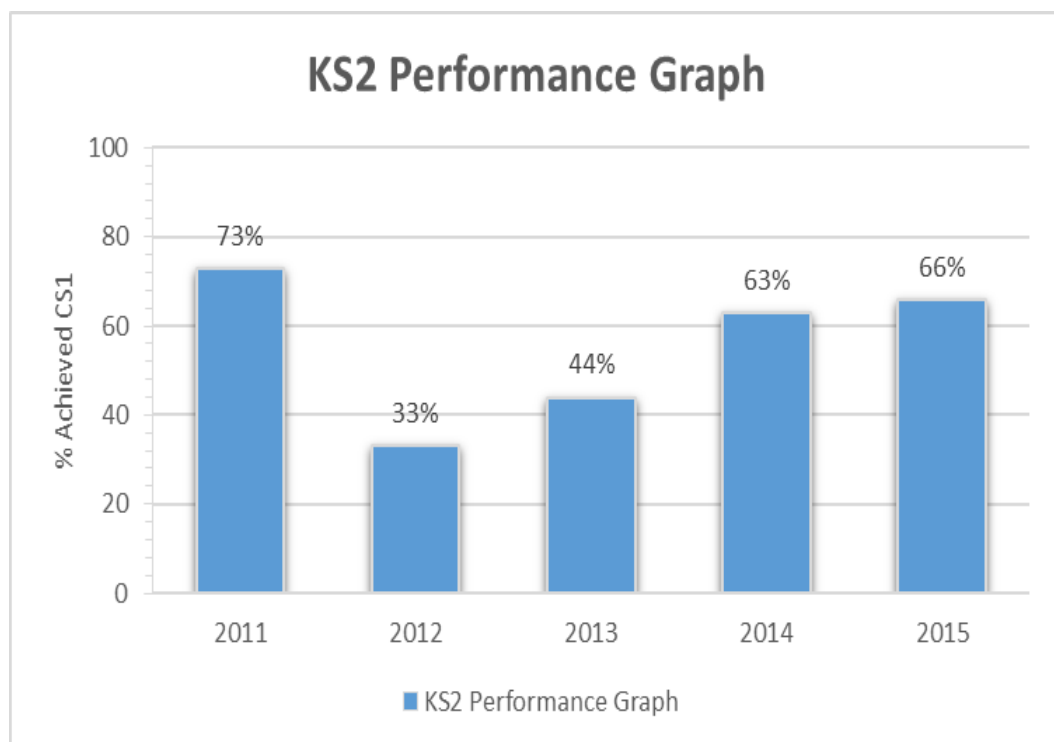
10 Looked After Children Education Performance - How well are our children doing in examinations and teacher assessments ?

10.1 2014/15

Key Stage 2 (End of Primary Yr 6) - Achieved C.S.I. - 6 (66%) (Wales 51.6%)

- Not achieved C.S.I – 3 (34%, all SEN)

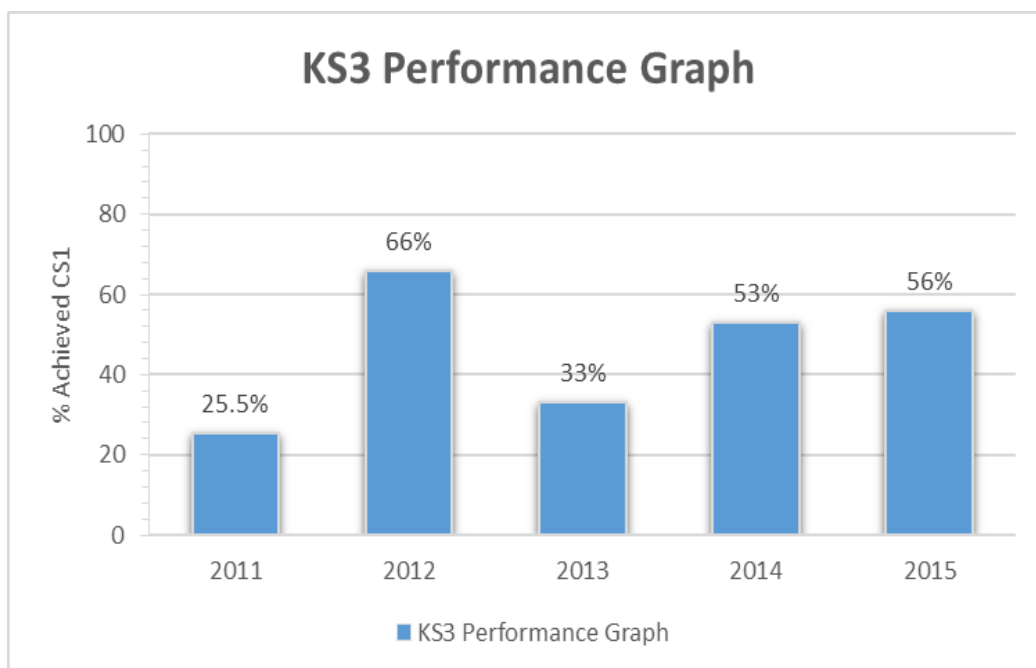
Total - 9 (100%)



Key Stage 3 (Mid- Secondary Yr 9) - Achieved C.S.I. - 4 (57%) (Wales 37.2%)

- Not achieved C.S.I. - 3 (43%, all SEN)

Total - 7 (100%)

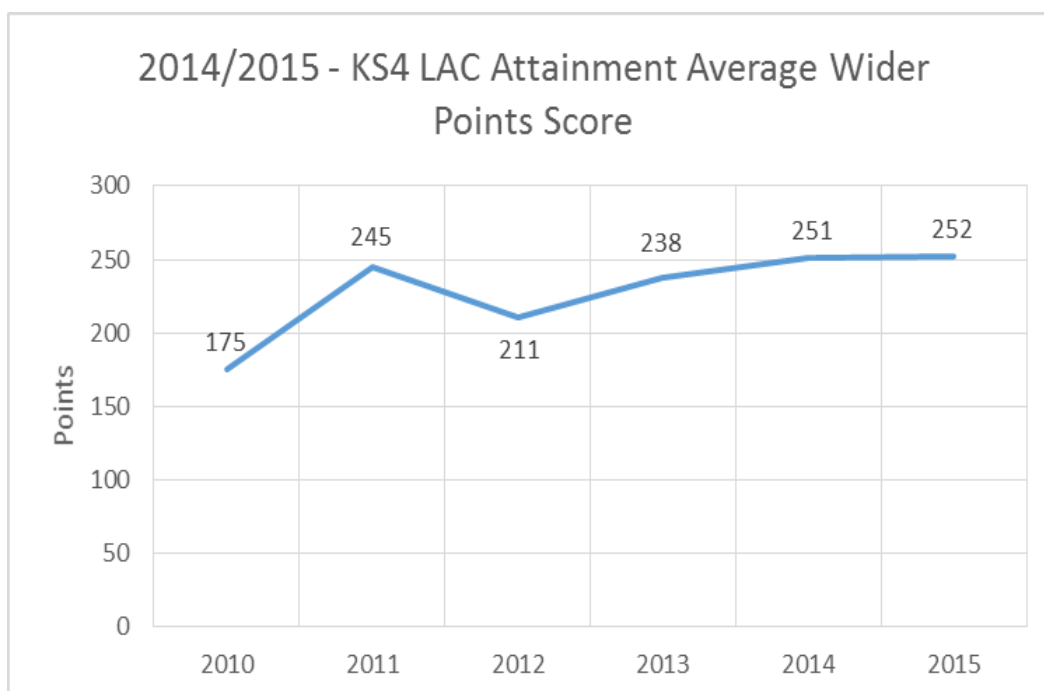


10.2 The above figures are indicative of the unique nature of relatively small cohorts. Nevertheless, overall it is pleasing that Powys LAC continue to out-perform All Wales LAC at the end of both KS2 and KS3. For 2014/15 the two subgroups of KS2 and KS3 Powys LAC above indicate differing outcomes at the end of the two Key Stages. A higher percentage of those at the end of KS2, demonstrate strong potential to be successful in the core areas of English, Maths and Science later in their education. In contrast, a lower percentage of those at the end of KS3 show the same potential. However, it should be noted that both groups, at the end of KS2, contain(ed) a high percentage of pupils with a statement in a Special school or were on the SEN code of practice.

11. Key Stage 4

- 11.1 Of the sixteen pupils reaching the end of KS4 in 2014/15, only fourteen were eligible for assessment at the end of this Key Stage (Yr.11, age 15-16yrs). Two pupils were not entered for any external assessments (they were in a Special School) and thus negatively influence the overall average scores. Six (37%) of the cohort had a full statement of SEN; one was in a residential care home, three in a special school with severe learning needs and two were in mainstream school with support.
- 11.2 Two pupils (14%) achieved the benchmark 5 GCSE A* - C equivalent. 82% achieved 5 GCSE A* – G equivalent passes. 86% passed one

GCSE or equivalent.



- 11.3 An average points score of 252 is an increase on 2013/14 (251 points) and includes two students (14%) who were not entered for exams as they attended special schools. Of the fourteen pupils who were entered for assessment an average wider points score of 289 was achieved. Two pupils achieved in excess of 500 points, seven in excess of 250 points and ten in excess of 200 points. A score of 252 places Powys in the upper middle quartile for Wales in terms of LAC educational attainment, and a score of 289 would place the Authority in the top quartile for 14/15.

12. Progression Post -16

- 12.1 Of the sixteen pupils completing statutory schooling at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2014/15, all sixteen had progressed into further education, 6th Form, training or employment by Oct 2015. Five have gone on to 6th Form, seven to Further Education College and four into training. This is a 100% successful progression rate and places Powys in the upper top quartile for Wales.

13. Pupil Feedback – What mechanisms exist for hearing the views of Looked After Children and providing feedback?

- 13.1 Pupil feedback on the educational experience for Powys Looked After Children (LAC) is recorded on Peps via a student feedback form (confidential). An annual LAC Awards Event celebrates pupils achievement/attainment. In addition children's views are sought via the

review and care planning process and all looked after children have access to an independent advocacy service which is again confidential.

14. Factors impeding progress

- Care placement moves.
- School moves as a consequence of care moves.
During 14/15 all school moves (with one exception) were associated with a care move. The exception was a positive move, with a return of a child to a mainstream school from a Special school within Powys.
- Early deprivation/neglect/relationship trauma, which can influence cognitive capacity/potential and subsequent adult/peer attachments.
- Low expectation/aspiration (from pupil/school staff/social worker/carers/parents).

15. Factors enhancing progress

- Continuity/Quality of care placement.
- Continuity and consistency of schooling.
- The Pep process, including focussed monitoring by LAC Education Coordinators and challenge of schools/carers/pupils where appropriate.
- Targeted interventions including the use of such strategies as `Letterbox Club` - enhancing Literacy/Numeracy, extra bespoke tuition, supply of book tokens to encourage reading at home and supply of specialist equipment to aid learning.
- Improved Multi Agency working –e.g. attending LAC reviews in order that all stakeholders have an understanding of the educational issues facing LAC and schools.
- Foster Carer training.
- PDGLAC Grant (Pupil Deprivation Grant for LAC) from Welsh Government - funding for tuition/resources/materials which has helped to reduce emotional/intellectual poverty and increase literacy/numeracy levels for Powys LAC.

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
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To receive the above report	As part of the corporate parenting responsibilities to scrutinise the educational progress of our looked after children
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Relevant Policy (ies):			
Within Policy:	Y	Within Budget:	Y

Relevant Local Member(s):	
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Steve Adams /Jane McDonnell
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	

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