



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/20

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

9th October 2019

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR,
COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Agenda Item No:

**Progress Update:
Implementation of the Bright
Spots Survey Findings.**

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 In September 2018 a report outlining the results of the Bright Spots Survey conducted with children looked after was presented to Members for scrutiny. The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress achieved in taking forward the key commitments made to children and young people to address the findings of the Bright Spots Survey.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the information contained within the report.
- 2.2 Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.

3. BACKGROUND

During 2018 RCT Children Services supported children who were looked after to complete the Your Life, Your Care Survey. The survey had been developed through the Bright Spots Programme to measure the well-being of children looked after. The aim, to improve the care experience and well-being of children looked after and care leavers by highlighting the “Bright Spots” of practice that contribute to children flourishing in care. The findings identified what was working well and where improvements could be made.

3.1 The areas identified in the survey where improvements could be made are noted below.

Social workers need to:

- Ensure that children and young people understand who they are.
- Work with children and young people to involve them in decisions.
- Explain to every child why they are in care and regularly review this with them to establish if they would like more information.
- Continue to communicate with schools to identify and help children who feel bullied at school and those who feel that they do not have a good friend.
- Give carers further training in therapeutic parenting.
- Consider not just organised activities but contact with nature when reviewing opportunities to have fun/hobbies
- Regularly review contact plans taking into account children and young people’s wishes and feelings
- Be aware of gender difference and give opportunities to young people (11-18 years) to build self-esteem and a positive self-image.

A number of the areas for improvement raised by the survey had previously been identified and incorporated into plans that were already being implemented. It was therefore agreed that the areas of improvements as outlined in the survey would be actioned as follows:

3.2 The Children Looked After Quality Assurance Work Plan 2019-2020

Objective 5 - to monitor and drive service change and improvement, includes the following actions:

- To drive forward the implementation of Life Story Work across RCT Children's Services for the whole looked after population.
- To enhance the therapeutic skills and knowledge of foster carers in relation to attachment theory and therapeutic parenting. This is linked to the work currently being undertaken as part of the Regional Fostering and Wellbeing Project.

- 3.3 The Children Looked After Friendly School Quality Mark** – good practice guidance for school, to be launched in RCT in October 2018.
- 3.4 Revised and updated RCT Education Anti-bullying Policy** for Schools to be circulated in September 2018.
- 3.5 Quality Assurance Framework** – ensuring practice standards that evidence social workers include the voice of the child, young person and carer in their assessment and decision making and also that children and young people know who their social worker is and the role they play.

4. PROGRESS

4.1 To drive forward the implementation of Life Story Work across RCT Children's Services for the whole looked after population.

A Children's Services multi-disciplinary task group has developed guidance that outlines the expectations of Social Workers, Foster Carers, Residential and Contact Centre Workers in supporting Life Journey Work. It includes guidance on completing direct work sessions with children and young people, with suggestions for activities, sample tool kits and guidance on completing life journey letters.

An electronic Life Journey FlipBook store is being developed to support the collation of key Life Journey Work documents. Documents to be stored digitally will include letters, photographs, pictures, records of creative pieces of direct work e.g. family trees and reports.

A three month pilot project with a cohort of approximately 30 children looked after is scheduled to start in November to test the guidance, supporting tools and the electronic store.

4.2 To enhance the therapeutic skills and knowledge of foster carers in relation to attachment theory and therapeutic parenting.

RCT Fostering Support Team have been using the fostering wellbeing programme to inform foster carer training for over a year. The program is based on the social pedagogy model and the educational progress of children is key. We now have pioneer foster cares in place who are able to work closely with the CLA Education Team and schools to support foster carers in their role. The pioneer foster carers also provide support to other carers on a weekly basis from the RCT office.

Over the past two years RCT have also provided Master Classes where foster carers work alongside other professionals and young people to gain more experience/understanding of caring and work to improve outcomes.

RCT also has a rolling therapeutic training programme for all foster carers called "Confidence in Care ". This programme has been researched by the Welsh Government, it takes a hands on approach and is aimed at both mainstream and kinship foster carers.

As part of the National Fostering Framework we also have a new training and support package launching in November 2019. This will provide a development route for foster carers to increase their knowledge and skills.

4.3 **The Children Looked After Friendly School Quality Mark** - is achieved by evidencing a high standard of practice for CLA pupils. The Mark is based on a set of indicators that cover the 3 themes for making a school CLA Friendly:

- Whole school systems & practice
- Preventative approaches & building resilience
- Responsive strategies to support CLA presenting with more challenges

A framework for excellence was developed so that schools could evidence their practice throughout an academic year. The Quality Mark Framework was launched in October 2018. The results are as follows:

For the Academic Year 2017/18 (Pilot programme)

1 GOLD (YG Rhydywaun)

5 PLATINUM (Pontypridd High, Tonyrefail CS, Maerdy Primary, Dolau Primary & Maesgwyn School)

For the Academic Year 2018/19

4 GOLD (Aberdare Park Primary, Coedpenmaen Primary , Pontrhondda Primary & Tai Centre)

4 PLATINUM (St John Baptist High, Trerobart Primary, Cwmclydach Primary & Gwauncelyn Primary)

During the current academic year, the CLA Education Team are scrutinizing the CLA School Self Evaluations & Cluster Strategic Plans. It is hoped that by the end of September 2019 a number of schools will have been identified who wish to work towards getting the Quality Mark. The aim is for every cluster to have at least 1 primary and 1 Secondary school with Quality Mark this year.

4.4 **Revised and updated RCT Education Anti-bullying Policy**

The revised Anti-bullying Policy has been circulated to schools within RCT. Bullying within the school environment is addressed at Exclusion Support and Challenge visits which are undertaken with schools where there are concerns in relation to their exclusion rates.

During late 2018 and early 2019 the Welsh Government consulted on draft anti-bullying guidance and a toolkit, which had been developed to prevent

and challenge bullying in schools. The final guidance document is awaited.

4.5 **Quality Assurance Framework**

4.5.1 RCT Children's Services has developed and is now implementing a Quality Assurance Framework that covers the full range of services for children and young people across early help, targeted support, protection and specialist provision.

The Framework is underpinned by a set of overarching values which are at the heart of everything we do and which underpin what we want to achieve in our practice. We are:

- Child Centred
- Participative
- Outcomes Based and Qualitative
- Positive
- Reflective

For children and young people this means that:

- We recognise that every child, young person and carer has capabilities and strengths which can help them achieve their personal well-being outcomes. Our staff will help to identify these through "What Matters" conversation.
- Wherever possible we will work together with children and young people to **co-produce** solutions and strategies that make a difference.
- Our services are designed in a way that meets their individual needs, in ways that are best for them.
- Agreeing how we have been able to help children and young people and identifying what else we can do.

Heads of Service have developed action plans to implement the Quality Assurance Framework in their service areas.

4.5.2 **Mind of My Own App**

Mind of My Own is an app-led suite of products and services that modernises the processes and systems used to gather the views of children and young people using children's services. It helps young people create a structured statement of their views in relation to events and situations they encounter. At the same time it helps practitioners capture and evidence their views, ensuring that the voice of children and young people is heard and considered.

Events and situations that Mind of My Own can be used in, either by young people on their own or co-using with a worker or carer, include:

- Statutory visits
- CLA Reviews
- Foster Care Reviews
- S47 assessments
- Child Protection Conferences
- Pathway Planning
- Requesting a change to care
- Raising a problem
- Making a complaint (fits into existing complaints processes)
- Feeding back on the experience of a meeting

We are currently pursuing ICF funding on a regional basis to take forward the Mind of My Own App in RCT Children's Services.

4.5.3 **The Orb**

The Orb is a software information platform for organising and improving interactive access to chosen online content of all types for children looked after. Content could for example include profile information of Children's Services practitioners. We are currently investigating the potential of utilising the Orb within RCT Children's Services.

5. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 This is an information report, therefore, no Equality and Diversity Assessment is required.

6. **CONSULTATION**

6.1 This is an information report; therefore, no consultation is required.

7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

7.1 Funding opportunities are being explored to meet the cost of the hardware, software and licences to implement programmes – Mind of My Own and Life Journey Work.

8. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

8.1 The legal requirements for Children Looked After are set down within the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

9. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP

9.1 This consultation links to the corporate priority of promoting independence and positive lives for everyone by ensuring that the Council listens to the people it provides for.

9.2 It also contributes to the following well-being goals:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales.
- A healthier Wales.
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A globally responsible Wales

10. CONCLUSION

During the last twelve months work has been undertaken to take forward the commitments made to children and young people to address the findings of the Bright Spots Survey. The next step is to incorporate the developments into everyday practice with children and families ensuring that we are inclusive in our approach and that their voices are heard.