

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015 - 2016

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

8TH FEBRUARY 2016

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

Agenda Item No: 4

**Elected Members' Visits to Front-Line
Teams in Children's Services
2015.2016**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the reports of visits to front-line teams by Members of the Corporate parenting Board.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That members note the content of the report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Board has established a systematic process for ensuring that the Director of Social Services, the Service Director and members, undertake regular visits to front-line teams in children's services and report on their findings to the Corporate Parenting Board. This is consistent both with recommendation 41 of the Victoria Climbié Report and with a previous CSSIW safeguarding inspection report recommendation.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 A number of visits have taken place since the previous report to members on 7th December 2015. These visits were undertaken as relatively open meetings to enable informal dialogue with staff. It is noted that this list is not an exhaustive account of meetings with front line staff but that it does set out those undertaken under the auspices of the policy.

Teams visited date	Visited by
Rhondda Office (Berw Road, Tonypanyd) 16 th December, 2015.	Councillor Hopkins, Councillor Walker Councillor Leyshon (<i>apologies</i>)
Cynon Office (Ty Trevithick) – 20 th January, 2016.	Councillor Hopkins, Councillor Norris Councillor Weaver (<i>apologies</i>)
Future Front Line Visits Scheduled:	
<i>Taff Office (Courthouse Street) – 17th February, 2016 .</i>	<i>Councillor Hopkins, Councillor Hanagan Councillor Davies</i>
<i>Safeguarding Team, Ty Catrin 17th February 2016.</i>	<i>Councillor Hopkins</i>
<i>Disabled Children's Team on 16th March 2016</i>	<i>Councillor Hopkins</i>

The full reports of these visits are attached at Appendix I.

As can be seen from the list and from the reports themselves, the visits took place in a number of settings across the three principal areas of the borough and included good staff representation.

Report of Visit to Front-Line Service

Place of visit: Rhondda ACP (Tonypandy)	Date: 16TH DECEMBER 2015
Comments:	
<p>I was accompanied on the visit to Children's Services Rhondda Office, Tonypandy by Cllr Lyndon Walker (Corporate Parenting Board Member) and was received by the Service Manager and her senior staff team.</p> <p>The visit took the form of a discussion with senior staff which lasted approximately an hour, followed by a conducted tour of the building by the Service Manager, where it was possible to hold further discussions with staff in the Assessment and Care Planning teams.</p> <p>Overall Impression</p> <p>The staff appear conscientious and dedicated to the important role they are playing in keeping children in RCT safe. Staff were comfortable and open to the discussion about their services.</p> <p>The deficiencies of the building are known, including the availability of car parking for staff.</p> <p>On arrival the visitor would find a reception and waiting area which feels tired and dated, in contrast to other facilities throughout the county borough which appear more open and welcoming and in better state of repair.</p> <p>Remodelling of Children's Services</p> <p>Staff were seized of the need to remodel Children's Services in light of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. Planning was underway to deliver the range of training packages expected under the Act and guidance. There was an awareness of the challenges posed to the service by the Act, but managers felt the teams were ready to embrace the changes.</p> <p>Early and rapid intervention services were highly valued by the teams.</p> <p>Due to the high levels of cases which were associated with issues of domestic violence, it was felt some more could be done to support work around DV in the Rhondda.</p> <p>There was some concern that the innovation of the MASH had led to some early repetition of work and higher referral rate. Also it was felt that some of the local intelligence formerly available to initial assessment had been lost as such function transferred to the MASH.</p> <p>Information Technology</p>	

Staff were keen to see developments in technology assisting their productivity and effectiveness as teams.

The situation continues that there is a very low ratio of laptop computers to staff. It was felt that “down time”, for example waiting in court or at other locations away from the office could be productively used were the technology and hardware to be more widely available.

Moreover, staff felt that home working could be re-examined as a further way, together with availability of technology, of increasing productivity.

Follow up action required or taken

I agreed that these matters would be brought to the attention of the Corporate Parenting Board for their information and action.

Name: CLLRGERAINT HOPKINS

Signature:

**Position: CABINET MEMBER FOR
CHILDREN’S SERVICES**

Date:

Report of Visit to Front-Line Service

Place of visit: CYNON ACP (TY TREVITHICK)	Date: 20TH JANUARY 2016
Comments:	
<p>I was accompanied on the visit to Children's Services Cynon Office at Ty Trevithick by Cllr Mark Norris (Corporate Parenting Board Member) and was received by the Service Manager and her senior staff team.</p> <p>The visit was the first by Board Members since the Cynon Area Office moved from Ty Caradog to Ty Trevithick. The visit took the form of an initial discussion with senior staff which lasted approximately an hour, followed by a conducted tour of the new offices by the Service Manager, where it was possible to hold further discussions with staff in the Assessment and Care Planning teams.</p> <p>Overall Impression</p> <p>The new situation at Ty Trevithick is a considerable improvement on the former office situation at Ty Caradog, and this is evident from the enthusiasm of all the staff we spoke to on the subject.</p> <p>The building is light and welcoming, with much more space for staff, both at their desks and in the communal areas. Car parking is much more readily available in the dedicated office car park.</p> <p>The open plan arrangement of the office does have some disadvantages for staff when conducting confidential conversations concerning cases, but offers a much better environment overall, and staff report feeling much more part of a wider team than in their previous situation.</p> <p>The move to digitisation and the de-cluttering of offices from the claustrophobic presence of filing cabinets, etc. has led to a more ordered and organised presentation of the office space.</p> <p>The staff appear conscientious and dedicated to the important role they are playing in keeping children in RCT safe. Staff were comfortable and open to the discussion about their services.</p> <p>Remodelling of Children's Services</p> <p>Staff were seized of the need to remodel Children's Services in light of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. Planning was underway to deliver the range of training packages expected under the Act and guidance. There was an awareness of the challenges posed to the service by the Act, but managers felt the teams were ready to embrace the changes.</p>	

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Managers reported frequent issues with organising Strategy Meetings with the police and MASH. Meetings, which are conducted by conference call, were not often held on time due to the need to gather the necessary participants at both ends. Much time they felt was wasted whilst waiting for participants to assemble.

Information Technology

Indeed, the method of communication between the office and MASH could be reviewed. The room typically used for conference calls for Strategy Meetings is some distance from the ACP offices, and as such, whilst waiting for agency representatives to assemble, staff are not able to get on with any other tasks. The greater availability of laptops and mobile technology could assist (see below).

Staff were keen to see developments in technology assisting their productivity and effectiveness as teams.

The situation continues, as in the Rhondda Office, that there is a very low ratio of laptop computers to staff. It was felt that “down time”, for example waiting in court or at other locations away from the office could be productively used were the technology and hardware to be more widely available.

Moreover, staff felt that home working could be re-examined as a further way, together with availability of technology, of increasing productivity.

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I agreed that these matters would be brought to the attention of the Corporate Parenting Board for their information and action.

Name: CLLR GERAINT HOPKINS

Signature:

**Position: CABINET MEMBER FOR
CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Date: