



Subject to approval at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2018.

**Present**

County Borough Councillor G E Hopkins – In the Chair

**County Borough Councillors:-**

C Leyshon, J Rosser, R Yeo, M Weaver, S Rees-Owen

**Officers in Attendance:-**

Mr C Jones – Director, Legal and Democratic Services

Mr G Isingrini – Group Director, Community & Children's Services

Ms A Batley – Service Director, Children's Services

Ms G Davies - Service Director, Access, Engagement & Inclusion

Ms J Thomas - Service Improvement, Engagement & Complaints Manager

Ms J Davies – Service Manager, Safeguarding and Support

Ms T Prosser – Service Manager

Mr J McCabe - 16+ Team Manager

Ms M Meredith – Residential Services Manager

Ms H Williams – Senior Executive & Regulatory Business Officer

**Others in Attendance:-**

Mr D Melding AM, South Wales Region

Ms K Benjamin – Regional Manager, 4C's

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**37. WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome Members to the meeting and apologies were received from Councillor J James, Councillor J Rosser, C Mann and Ms E Phipps-Magil.

**38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, there were no declarations of interest declared pertaining to the agenda.

**39. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

It was **RESOLVED**:

- a) To approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on the 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2017.

**40. MR DAVID MELDING AM – CHAIR MINISTERIAL ADVISORY GROUP**

The Chair introduced Mr David Melding AM, Chair of the Ministerial Advisory Group for Improving Outcomes for Children to the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Mr Melding AM explained that Welsh Government first decided to form the Group following Mark Drakeford's desire to monitor the Children Looked After and Care Leavers system. As a Conservative Member, Mr Melding AM evidenced that the issue of children within the care system was non-political, but rather a concern which was shared by all Corporate Parents.

The Ministerial Advisory Group's main focus was the well-being of Children Looked After and to ensure care leavers have the best possible start in life. The Group focussed on issues regarding system numbers, processes and ways to improve the service with preventative methods. It was reported that a detailed and robust work programme had been developed to ensure targets and timescales were met. Mr Melding AM stressed the importance of the targets and indicators which kept the momentum of the workflow and presented a challenge to the Group. It was added that the targets were, however, reasonable as he understood the complexity of individual cases.

Members of the Board were pleased to hear that the work of the Ministerial Advisory Group linked to the priorities outlined within the Well-being of Future Generations Act, namely long term planning and effective partnership work. They were reminded of an event which would take place on the 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2018 to promote the importance of corporate parenting and for attendees consider how awareness of corporate parenting can be extended across public services and how existing guidance could be improved.

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Mr Melding AM provided the Board with an insight into the topics being extensively discussed by the Ministerial Advisory Group:

- Emotional Therapy Support
- The influence of Poverty Levels in Wales
- Foster Carers and the need for a vision to view it as a high standard
- Education Attainment and the need to support foster carers in helping the children with basic skills

Mr Melding AM took the opportunity to discuss the work of RCT and praised the Corporate Parenting Board for developing best practice in the following areas:

- Partnership work with other organisations and in particular the open invitation to Chris Dunn from Voices from Care and the young person representatives & the invitation to Mr Melding AM to attend the Board to encourage a closer working relationship
- The culture of transparent and robust reporting on a variety of issues
- The review into Independent Sector reporting and the improving of connections
- The close monitoring of placements

The Assembly Member concluded by advising the Board that Welsh Government had invested a further £10M in the previous year to support care leavers as an early preventative method. He was encouraged by the work of the Board and commented that the Ministerial Advisory Group were keen to support Local Authorities to ensure all agencies were working together.

The Vice Chair and Deputy Cabinet Member for Children & Young People advised Mr Melding AM that, like the Group, the Board had a membership which was non-political, consisting of Scrutiny Chairs which provided robust discussions for the benefit of the children and care leavers within the Authority's care. The Member advised of the valuable internal placements visits carried out throughout the year by the Board and the need to gain a better understanding of the Non Residential sector. Finally, the Member referred to the newly implemented Resilient Families Programme within RCT which linked to the work of the Ministerial Advisory Group, in that its focus was to interject at an early stage with family members as well as the children to make a larger impact later on in life.

The Chair, Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee introduced herself to Mr Melding AM and explained that due to the honesty of the officers within RCT, the Members knew how to improve when the number of Children Looked After was increasing. The Member also advised that a Joint Working Group in respect of early intervention was being convened with the Children & Young People and Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committees. Mr Melding AM agreed, adding that a good relationship between officers and Members provides confidence, clarity and an opportunity to challenge.

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From an officer perspective, the Service Director, Access, Engagement & Inclusion advised that a report in respect of the Educational Outcomes of Children Looked After was provided annually which outlined the complexity of the children's needs. It was explained that a team of dedicated psychologists were able to support these children but a key issue was access to mental health services. The officer added that the department had worked closely with schools to strategically develop action plans to improve outcomes for children, referencing the 'Pupil Deprivation Grant'. Mr Melding AM agreed that education was a key factor in improving outcomes for children and that mental health was a huge priority for improvement. The Member referred to the ACE Model and the importance of preventing them in the community. The Chair, Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee advised that a report in respect of the CAMHS would be discussed at a meeting in February.

The Group Director, Children & Young People and Service Director, Children's Services both stressed the need for a better understanding into why the individual children were placed in care as numbers would not decrease if the children need to be there. The Group Director added that there was a need for multi-agencies to challenge one another for better outcomes.

Mr Melding AM thanked the Board for their comments made, explaining that these would be fed back to the Ministerial Advisory Group. The Member reiterated that while the hypothesis was that numbers of children within the system should reduce following the strengthening of the system, it was widely understood that certain needs were complex and could not fall into a specific category.

The Chair thanked Mr Melding AM for the comprehensive presentation, commenting that the insight into the broad responsibilities of the Ministerial Advisory Group had been useful. As well as emphasis made to the fostering service, the Member touched upon the adoption service and the need for recruiting.

#### **41. INDEPENDENT RESIDENTIAL SECTOR MONITORING**

Ms Karen Benjamin, Regional Manager at the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4C's) provided the Board with a presentation containing the information they had previously requested in respect of the commissioning of external placements (Appendix 1 of the minutes).

Members of the Board learned that the 4C's managed the All Wales Framework for the provision of Foster Care Services and the All Wales Framework for the provision of Residential Care Services to Children and Young People, with 15 South & Mid Wales Local Authorities part of the process.

The Manager advised Members of the robust quality assurance checks which took place on an ongoing, monthly, quarterly and annual basis to ensure a high standard of service was maintained. The Members were also given a clear understanding of the different quality checks conducted by the Local Authority and the 4C's.

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Members of the Board were pleased to see that although the quality assurance was of a high level, methods were in place to ensure improvements were continued to be made. These included:

- Action Plans for Improvement
- Sharing Best Practice
- Sharing Research
- Recommending Peer Support
- Care Setting Visits
- Promoting Inclusion in Multi Agency Development Links

It was advised that the high turnover of staff tended to impact the quality but that there were opportunities for staff to develop and progress.

The Service Director, Safeguarding & Support went on to provide the Board with information in respect of RCT Placements with Non-Framework Providers. The Service Director stressed that these placements were only used if Framework Placements were unavailable and that there was a strong relationship with the providers due to the frequency they were used.

Board Members were pleased to hear that the built in checks were consistent and that the workers had a wealth of knowledge with a clear understanding of the outcomes needed for the children.

The officer advised the Board that a new Senior Practitioner would be coming into pose whose specific duty would be to develop the quality assurance of the placements.

The Chair thanked both officers for their detailed presentation and queried how the Board could have a regular insight into the concerns raised from the Independent Residential Sector, to be consistent with the monitoring of the Residential Sector. The Board agreed that although the relevant Cabinet Member was regularly made aware of any issues, it would be important for a report to be fed back to the Board, containing further context into the amount of Framework/Non Framework Providers. There would also be an opportunity for this to be reported to Scrutiny should they wish to do so.

Following further discussions, it was **RESOLVED:**

- a) That a report be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board on a quarterly basis outlining the complaints and compliments received in respect of the Independent Residential Sector.

#### **42. THE USE OF MIDWAY TRANSITIONAL CARE AS A NON FRAMEWORK PROVIDER**

The 16+ Team Manager took the opportunity to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with some background around Midway Transitional Care Ltd, a Welsh

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company operating from Monmouthshire. It was explained that they were a non-framework and non registered support provider who were currently working with CSIW towards registration.

The officer acknowledged that young people have a range of additional needs, some of which include mental health issues and risky behaviours. Therefore, many establishments were struggling to meet the needs and provide the ongoing support that these young people require. It was added that over 18's preferred an independent setting with Members agreeing that it was necessary to listen to their opinions.

It was explained that Midway provide properties with specific care packages, depending on the assessed needs of the individual; and Members were assured that officers had conducted many visits to ensure high standards were met. The Board Members were referred to section 4.2 of the report where a positive case study was outlined.

The officer took the opportunity to advise Members of the Care Leavers' recommendations to improve the service:

- Developing an in-house service
- Expansion of the supported lodgings and training flats

The Chair thanked the officer for the report, agreeing that the current two training flats were an excellent provision and that it would need to be looked at in the future.

One Member queried where the flats were situated and it was advised that one was in Aberdare and the other was in Rhydyfelin.

The Group Director took the opportunity to thank the officer for such a comprehensive report.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- a) To note the information contained within this report and the actions being taken to monitor the use of Midway Transitional Care placements.

**43. CHILDREN WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER WEBSITE – MONITORING AND ADVANCEMENTS**

The Service Manager, Safeguarding & Support advised the Board that further developments were being undertaken to improve the Children Looked After Website and with the Chair's permission, it was **RESOLVED**:

- a) To defer the report to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board in order for Members to comment on the most up to date version of the website.

**44. BRIGHT SPOTS PROJECT UPDATE**

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The Service Director, Children's Services advised the Corporate Parenting Board of a joint project between Voice and the Hadley Centre for Adoption and Bristol University called Bright Spots Project. The project would aim to give Local Authorities a better understanding of the practices which contribute to a positive care experience.

The Board were please to learn that 410 surveys had been sent out to schools, parents and children, including some of those in out of County placements. It was advised that once responses had been collated, a report would be brought back to the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Deputy Cabinet Member for Children & Young People praised the project, stressing the importance of the voice of those using the service.

The Board **RESOLVED:**

a) To note the information contained within the report.

#### **45. SOCIAL SERVICES QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS**

The Service Improvement, Engagement & Complaints Manager provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the operation of effectiveness of the statutory Social Services complaints procedure between 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017.

The report contained information on the number of complaints received, the nature of the complaints and any lessons learnt, as well as detailing Councillor, A.M and M.P enquiries and the number of complaints received.

The officer advised that there had been an increase in informal complaints but that this was comparable with other Local Authorities with a rise in the number of children coming forward. Members of the Board were pleased to hear that in terms of the Active Offer, RCT were leading the way.

Members raised concerns about the 16 complaints which were dealt with outside of the timescales and were advised that although some were not completed within statutory time; from a complainant's point of view, many were completed within reasonable time due to the ongoing amount of meetings organised etc.

Members queried the 22 staffing issues of the quarter and it was explained that a singular reason could not be given for the high number but that often; there were high expectations of the staff with many of the adults mistaking that the worker was there to support solely their needs and not those of the child.

The Chair added that with the rise of Children Looked After numbers would likely see the rise in complaints.

The Board **RESOLVED:**

a) To note the contents of the report.



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**46. NYAS**

The Board **RESOLVED**:

- a) To note the contents of the report.

**47. CWM TAF MASH UPDATE**

The Chair advised that a visit to the Cwm Taf MASH had been arranged to take place for Elected Members following the meeting.

The Board **RESOLVED**:

- a) To note the contents of the report.

**48. EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) for the next item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 13 of Part 4 of schedule 12A of the Act, namely information relating to a particular individual. Transparency in the conduct and capabilities of individuals will be discussed and considered. Consequently, it is considered, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing information by virtue of which the meeting is likely not to be open to the public during its consideration.

**49. REGULATION 32 REPORTS**

The Residential Services Manager provided the Board with an update on the Regulation 32 visits undertaken at the three children's homes – Beddau, Bryndar and Nantgwyn.

The officer outlined a summary of the inspection outcomes and it was **RESOLVED**:

- a) To note the contents of the report

**N.B. The Complaints Manager took the opportunity to extend an invitation to those in attendance to the Children Looked After Award Ceremony which would take place on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2018 at the Municipal Building, Pontypridd.**

The meeting terminated at 11:50am

Councillor G Hopkins  
Chair