



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on Wednesday, 20 March 2019 at 2.00 pm at the Block F, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park. Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

### **County Borough Councillors - Corporate Parenting Board Members in attendance:-**

Councillor C Leyshon (Chair)

Councillor G Hopkins Councillor S. Rees-Owen

### **Officers in attendance**

Mr G Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services  
Ms A Batley, Director of Children's Services  
Ms A Browning, Head of Children's Looked After Service  
Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion  
Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services  
Ms C Miles, Childcare Solicitor  
Ms J Thomas, Complaints & QA Manager, Social Services  
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services  
Mr. M. Phillips, Revenues Services Manager  
Ms J Davis, Service Manager for Safeguarding and Support  
Ms T Prosser, Head of Service  
Ms R Spry, Young Carer's Assessment & Development Worker

### **Others in attendance**

#### **42 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors J. Rosser, R. Yeo and L. Jones.

#### **43 Declaration of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

#### **44 Minutes**

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED** to approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting held on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

#### **45 Council Tax Discretionary Relief for Care Leavers**

The Service Director, Performance & Improvement and the Head of Service, Revenues and Benefits provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on the use of the Council's Discretionary Council Tax Relief Scheme for Care Leavers during 2018/19 and information on the recent Welsh Government announcement in relation to Council Tax support for Care Leavers from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.

Officers advised that in December 2017, the Council successfully committed to

extending its Corporate Parenting Responsibility to Care Leavers where they had a responsibility to pay council tax in order to assist those young people's transition into independent living. Members learned that the young people who would benefit from the scheme had been identified and were provided with an application form for officers to determine whether they were eligible for any additional support. Members were encouraged to learn that of the 165 young people in the Council's care, 25% had been identified as being eligible to a range of reliefs, so that no young person was liable to pay council tax during 2018/19.

The officers continued by speaking of the new Welsh Government regulations that will ensure all Care Leavers across Wales receive the same level of support in relation to council tax from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.

Members were pleased that RCT had taken initiative as Corporate Parents in 2017 prior to Welsh Government's announcement to offer the additional support and it was **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the update.

#### **46 Young Carers Annual Report**

The Young Carers Assessment & Development Worker provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on the RCT Young Carers Service and the Annual Report for the 2017-18 Municipal Year. Members learned that although there were currently 298 young carers known to the service, the relatively small team of three staff had successfully worked to stretch resources as far as possible. Speaking of resources, the officer advised that the demand for sibling support was currently higher than the service could respond to and therefore, negotiations were taking place with Action for Children to provide support for siblings as part of their contract with RCT.

Members were pleased to learn that 2018 had seen a 30% increase in referrals from schools and college campuses during the first three quarters which indicated the success of the rollout of the Schools Award, which had been highlighted as good practice among Local Authorities and had received positive feedback from Estyn.

The officer continued by advising the Corporate Parenting Board of an extra residential trip for young carers, which had been funded by additional support from Welsh Government. Members were pleased to learn that the young carers had provided positive feedback in respect of the trip, commenting that it was considered the greatest benefit for them. The officer advised that the money has also been used to support whole family activities, and allowed for short breaks and time outs for young carers and parent carers alike.

Members praised the report, commenting that the positive progress outlined for 2017-18 would be further built upon in 2018-19, which was evident from the key actions and exciting opportunities detailed before them.

One Member questioned whether the needs of the parent are also assessed by the Team and it was confirmed that discussions take place early on in the process, whereby parents can be referred to adult services or provided with more information on the services available to support them.

Members **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the report.

## 47 Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Report

The Service Manager for Safeguarding provided the Corporate Parenting Board with information in respect of the activity of the IRO service. The Service Manager explained that since the last reporting period, the average number of children looked after by RCT was 682, an increase in 6 with a continuing pattern of more boys than girls, and the majority being under the age of 12.

Members were pleased to learn that a key priority of the service was the continuing emphasis on the child being at the centre of the Reviewing process and that part of this process was to ensure that each child has the same reviewing officer throughout to ensure they fully understand the decisions made. It was explained that as a commitment to this priority, each of the IRO's were now chairing both the CLA reviews and Child Protection Conferences, which not only results in better planning but provides consistency for the child and is in line with good practice defined in the Social Services Wellbeing Act.

The officer advised Members that following the presentation received by the Board in November 2018, the Two Sides website development was ongoing and in consultation with young people from the RCT Forum, Voices from Care, the YEP's Service and Care Leavers. Members were pleased to learn that a variety of young people were being consulted on in terms of the content of the website, to ensure its accessibility.

The Service Manager went on to advise that 1,298 CLA review meetings had been held during the 9 month period which was a decrease of 40 in comparison to the previous 9 months; IROs chaired 21 combined CLA Reviews; and 43 Integrated Family Support Service Reviews.

One Member questioned the IRO's role of quality monitoring during the meeting reviews and the officer advised that should any issues come to the IRO's attention, they would be raised with the Social Worker immediately, rather than wait for the review to take place where there was potential for family members to be present. The officer added that in line with the Care Standards, IRO's ensure that the child's human rights are not breached.

Discussions ensued around Out of County Placements, which had risen from 23.5% to 27.1% within this period. Members acknowledged that although RCT may have the infrastructure to build locally, it has the potential to increase challenges.

Members praised the IRO Teams for their continuous work in such a challenging service area, and it was **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the content of the report.

## 48 NYAS

The Service Director, Children's Services advised Members that following a retendering of advocacy process with Merthyr and Bridgend, Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru would be the new advocacy service in place of NYAS from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019, and as part of their contract, would be attending future meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board.

In respect of the Quarter 3 NYAS update report before Members, the Service

Director advised that numbers were lower than previous quarters but that it was likely due to the procurement process.

The Chair thanked the Service Director for the short update and noted the importance of the advocacy service. It was **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the update provided.

#### **49 Children Looked After: Educational Outcomes**

The Head of Access & Inclusion provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update in respect of the educational outcomes of Children Looked After in RCT following on from the Summer 2018 results.

The officer advised that the report included both Local and National data; however, the two were not directly comparable as the National data measured children both in and outside of RCT.

Members were referred to Table 2 of the report where the Children Looked After per 10,000 population was outlined. Members noted that Rhondda Cynon Taf had the third highest rate of Children Looked After per 10,000, which remained consistent to the figures shown for 2015-16 and 2016-17.

Members acknowledged the importance of each child within the Looked After system receiving a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and were pleased to learn that local guidance had been developed, along with training provided to professionals to ensure the effective completion of PEPs. The officer stated that each PEP should:

- Ensure access to services and support;
- contribute to stability;
- minimise disruption and broken schooling;
- signal particular educational needs;
- establish clear goals; and
- Should act as a record of progress and achievement.

The officer added that the PEP co-ordination process was being considered at a national level and the implementation of the new Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act (Wales) 2018 could have future implications for how it is managed; and that an all Wales PEP template was being discussed as a possible development.

The officer went on to explain that at a previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board, the Group Director had requested that all Wales comparative data be included within the report, however as it was not available, Central South Consortium comparison data had been included at Table 4b for Member's information. Members were pleased to note that there had been an encouraging rate of 23.5% of KS4 pupils who achieved L2+, which was the equivalent to the consortium wide percentage average and a significant improvement from the 5.3% achieved in the previous year.

The officer referred Members to section 5.9 of the report and was pleased to announce that 2017/18 data indicated that there were no Children Looked After pupils leaving full time education as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) for the third year running.

Members were encouraged to note that attendance levels of CLA pupils in RCT was similar to those identified on a consortium wide basis. Members queried the exclusion rates of Children Looked After and the officer confirmed that although there had been a decrease in the number of pupils excluded compared to 2016/17 data, there was only a small cohort of CLA pupils and as a result, data fluctuates from one academic year to another.

Members were pleased with the information detailed before them but commented that there was a lack of sensitivity within the data, which makes it difficult to benchmark the progress of the CLA. The Chair, Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee advised that following consideration of the report by Scrutiny members, it was agreed for future updates to include case studies in order for Members to form a better understanding of the progress of the young people, to which the Chair agreed with. The officer advised the Board that Estyn were working on a revised framework in order to guide local authorities in benchmarking progress.

The Chair thanked the officer for the comprehensive report and it was **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the update.

**50 To consider passing the following under-mentioned Resolution:**

It was **RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act.

**51 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.

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.

Following consideration, Members **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the update.

**52 Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Reports**

The Residential Services Manager provided the Board with an update on the outcome of the recent Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspections carried out on Beddau Community Home and Bryndar Community Home.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the content of the report.

**53 Regulation 73 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** to acknowledge the content of the report.

**This meeting closed at 3.40 pm**

**Cllr C Leyshon  
Chair.**