



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on Monday, 27 January 2020 at 10.00 am at the Committee Room 1, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

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

Councillor C Leyshon (Chair)

Councillor J Rosser Councillor R Yeo
Councillor E Griffiths Councillor S Rees

Officers in attendance

Mr G Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Ms A Browning, Head of Children's Looked After Service
Ms A Batley, Director of Children's Services
Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion
Ms J Thomas, Complaints & QA Manager, Social Services
Mrs C Tyler, Service Development Officer, Children's Services
Ms K Webster, Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist
Ms M Davies - TGP

Others in attendance

Ms S Burford - Central South Consortium

32 Announcement of the Chair

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome County Borough Councillor S. Rees to her first meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board and to inform Members that following changes made to the Leader's Scheme of Delegation, County Borough Councillor J. Rosser had been appointed as Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board.

33 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors S. Rees-Owen and J. James.

34 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, County Borough Councillor S. Rees declared a personal interest in Item 7 of the agenda 'I am a member of the North sitting panel'.

35 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18th November 2019 as an accurate reflection.

Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG)

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Regional Lead PDG LAC Central South Consortium, provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the Pupil Deprivation Grant for Children Looked After.

Members were informed that the grant continues to be managed centrally by the Central South Consortium (CSC) and that the Directors of Education from each local authority had agreed key priorities to enhance the educational opportunities for Children Looked After.

The Regional Lead provided the Board with information on the National Model and the outcomes and objectives of the PDG, explaining that the aim of the projects is to enhance curriculum opportunities to support social and emotional development, which impacts on the following areas:

- Raising attainment/achievement;
- Improve attendance; and
- Reduce exclusions

The Regional Lead spoke of the Central South Consortium's vision, which was for every CLA to have the right to provision and support to enable them to fulfil their potential. She went on to speak of the key priority, which was to reduce exclusions, which often lead to bigger problems in the future; and the need for teachers to understand the reasons behind the child's behaviour.

In respect of the developments, the Regional Lead advised of the various areas of training, which had been successful across clusters. These included, but were not limited to, play and lego therapy, trauma training, ELSA/Thrive training, relationship based training and training in relation to adverse childhood experiences and attachment issues.

Discussions ensued around CLA Friendly Schools, with the Regional Lead explaining the importance of all schools becoming CLA friendly in readiness for the potential of a vulnerable young person attending in the future. Members were pleased to hear of examples of schools, which had positively changed as a result of the PDG.

One Member questioned how many of the RCT schools had achieved the CLA Friendly Schools Quality Mark and felt it would be beneficial for all schools to achieve it. The Member was informed that, to date 14 RCT schools had achieved the Quality Mark, with 5 schools attaining gold and 9 schools attaining platinum awards. A further 12 schools within RCT would be undertaking the Quality Mark for the academic year 2019/20. Whilst the officers agreed with the Member that attaining the Quality Mark was a priority, they explained that it was self-selective and involved a complex and timely three staged process. However, Members were assured that a lot of schools were engaged in the initial training process, which resulted in positive learning outcomes.

The Group Director, Community and Children's Services was pleased to note that the ambitions for CLA were consistent across the Board and spoke of the need to raise the number of children attaining the level 2 plus within RCT.

The Chair thanked the Regional Lead for the informative presentation and it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the update.

37 **Pupil Development Grant (PDG) Looked After Children (LAC) Evaluation of the School Cluster Model during the financial year 2018/19**

The Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on the evaluation of the school cluster model for the Pupil Development Grant for Looked After Children (PDG LAC) funding during the financial year 2018/19 in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Following on from the previous item, the officer explained that the cluster plan grant allocation for RCT in 2018/19 was £366,686 and £357,893 in 2019/20 and that ensuring the money is spent correctly was key. Members were reminded that across the CSC region, schools are required to submit cluster bids to access PDG LAC and that the bids were assessed on whether they could enhance curriculum opportunities to support social and emotional development, which would subsequently have an impact on the agreed key priorities. Members were referred to Appendix 4, where an example of a cluster bid application was outlined.

Members learned that as part of the PDG LAC, the Consortium also has a bursary fund to ensure Local Authority Looked After Children in Education teams can respond to in year needs based on consultation with the CLA Education Team. Members were pleased to learn that RCT had focused on supporting engagement with appropriate educational opportunities and had allocated £42,592 to support the development of therapeutic approaches by providing additional training for the CLA education team.

(Note: At 11am, the meeting was adjourned in order for the Council to hold a minute silence for Holocaust Memorial Day, to reflect on the atrocities, which occurred 75 years ago. At 11:10am, the meeting reconvened)

Discussions ensued around the training opportunities provided by the CSC, with Members acknowledging that they were well received, with many of the courses full. Members commented on the importance of enhancing the team to support the emotional wellbeing of young people and were pleased to note that 236 of the delegates who attended the CSC training were from RCT schools / Local Authority based staff.

The officer took the opportunity to inform Members of the success of the roadshows, which allowed the various clusters from different local authorities to share good practice and their different experiences. Members were pleased to hear of the success stories, commenting that soft outcomes were hard to measure.

The Chair thanked the officer for the robust report and the Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report; and
2. To receive a further report to evaluate the PDG LAC cluster model for 2019/20.

38 **Implementation of the Bright Spots Survey findings**

The Service Development Manager for Children's Services updated 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.

Members learned that in 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 officer drew Members' attention to Section 3.1 of the report, where the following areas for improvement had been identified:

'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.'

Members were pleased to learn that the areas identified had been incorporated into improvement plans, all with the aim of improving the care experience and well-being of children looked after and care leavers.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and commented on the importance of involving young people in decisions and ensuring that their voices are heard.

One Member questioned how often the survey would be undertaken and it was explained that the Local Authority took part in the survey as a Welsh Government initiative but the results were highly valuable and as such, the survey would be undertaken every two years as part of the performance framework. Therefore, there would be an increase in comparative data in the future.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report; and
2. That the progress is reported back to the Corporate Parenting Board in the following year.

39 Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru

Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru presented the quarter 3 progress report for Member consideration.

Members were informed of the following:

- 54 young people were referred for advocacy support, presenting with 67 issues;

- 25 young people referred for Active Offer and 29 young people referred for Issue Based Advocacy;
- The young people referred for issue based advocacy received a face to face visit within five days of referral and the remaining young people were offered a visit within five working days but were unable to meet with the advocate because of various reasons including carers not responding to attempts by advocates to arrange a visit; and
- 72% of young people referred for Active Offer received a visit within five working days.

Members were pleased with the report and in particular, the increase in the number of young people, which had been referred for issue based advocacy and had received a face to face visit within five days of referral. Members acknowledged that young people do not always wish to meet with the advocate and as such, figures could vary.

Members noted that there had been a decrease in Active Offer referrals during the quarter, but recognised that there had been an increase in Issue Based referrals, which showed that young people value the service.

Discussions ensued around recording the feedback of young people, with the officer explaining that young people would prefer to utilise an app instead of paper forms and often, don't regard feedback as important once the issue has been dealt with.

The Service Director, Children's Services spoke of a regional app, which was in the process of being developed as a result of the Integrated Care Fund. Members were warmed to hear that the app was being developed by a care leaver, who was incorporating the feedback of Children Looked After into the app.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report.

40 Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Regional Adoption Annual Report

The Service Director, Children's Services provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on the progress of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative by considering the information provided in the Annual Report for the period 1st April 2018 to the 31st March 2019.

The Service Director was pleased to advise Members that during the above-mentioned period, collaborative work had been largely positive and that although the figures within the report were considered to be mixed, the service was moving in the right direction.

The Service Director informed Members of the following:

- There had been 259 enquiries from prospective adopters in total for the year 2018-19;
- That 46% of children were recorded as having life journey materials at the second adoption review;
- The number of children referred for adoption totalled 218, which marks a decrease on the previous year; and
- That 100 children had been placed for adoption during the year, a 16%

increase on the previous year.

Members were informed of the Welsh Government grant of £2.3M, which had been awarded to the VVC to improve the provision of adoption services in Wales. The Service Director advised that the grant would be allocated to initiatives such as improving life journey work and pre-settlement support to families.

Members noted that the report evidenced a 7% increase on the previous year for enquiries from prospective adopters, which evidenced positive progress following the successful recruitment of the Marketing and Recruitment Co-ordinator in August 2018.

Discussions ensued around the marketing, which one Member considered to be more focussed on the Vale of Glamorgan. The Service Director assured the Board that it would be developed as part of the new Co-ordinator's work.

One Member voiced her disappointment in respect of the percentage of children which were recorded as having life journey materials at the second adoption and welcomed funding to improve the figure. She also questioned if there was a process in place to ensure that 'Later Life' letters were of a consistent standard. The Service Director advised that four Life Journey Officers had been appointed in order to ensure it is a more timely and integral part of the work; and that a Senior Adoption Practitioner had been employed to drive the 'Later Life' letters forward.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report.

41 Cwm Taf Regional Statement of Intent for supporting Children and Young People and Families

The Service Director, Children's Services provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on the Cwm Taf Statement of Intent for Children and Young People: 'A Shared Regional Strategy for Supporting Children, Young People and Families'

Members were pleased to learn that since the Statement of Intent was approved, the Children and Young Persons Group has become well established. The Group meets regularly and has acknowledged the need to work more effectively together, to commission and deliver services and to ensure that the voice of children and their families are embedded within any processes or systems developed.

The Service Director went on to speak of the following regional priorities, which had been identified to better meet the needs of children and young people with complex needs:

- Regional Commissioning Opportunities
- Emotional Wellbeing

Members were pleased to note that the robust pathway to improve the mental health had been identified as an area for action, as it was chosen by the young people themselves.

Members learned that ICF revenue funding had been identified for 2019/20 and 2020/21 to support the development of third sector and community support for children and young people. Members were pleased that the Group would feed their funding recommendations into the Regional Partnership Board to further develop services to better understand the gaps and challenges.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the content of the report.

42 Urgent Business

With the agreement of the Chair, the Service Director, Children's Services updated the Corporate Parenting Board regarding the Cwm Taf Health Board concerns, which had previously been raised at the meeting held on 16th July 2019.

Members were reminded that following issues experienced in a neighbouring Local Authority, officers from RCT undertook research to establish whether there were any discrepancies in medical advice received from the Health Board. It was reported that in the previous year, there were four cases, which were fortunately disputed by RCT officers at an early stage.

The Service Director informed the Board that an Improvement Plan and Peer Support Group had been established to look further into the medical discrepancies and that the Group Director, Community and Children's Services for RCT had also written to the Safeguarding Board.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the update.

This meeting closed at 11.50 am

**Cllr C Leyshon
Chairman.**