

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21ST NOVEMBER 2017

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – ANNUAL REPORT

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, CABINET AND PUBLIC RELATIONS IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO, COUNCILLOR G HOPKINS.

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Cabinet with the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board for the 2016/17 Municipal Year (which is attached as Appendix 1 to the report).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet Members:

- 2.1 Note the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Under the Leaders Scheme of Delegation (the 3A) the Corporate Parenting Board, comprising of a cross party membership was formed to take the lead in ensuring that the Council fulfils its responsibilities as corporate parent's to children who are looked after and formulate Council policy in respect of children who are looked after and children in need.
- 3.2 As part of the Board's Terms of reference, the Board must report its work to the Cabinet and it has been agreed that this will take the form of an Annual Report.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The first Annual Report for the Corporate Parenting Board was produced for the 2015/16 Municipal Year.

4.2 The contents of the report acted as a useful basis for a number of upcoming topics which the Members felt needed particular attention in the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

4.3 This is the second Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board, which provides a summary of the role and work of the Board undertaken in the 2016/17 Municipal Year. The report is attached as Appendix 1.

4.4 The Annual Report was approved by the Corporate Parenting Board at their meeting which took place on Tuesday 6th November, 2017.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 The report was considered at the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board on the 6th November, 2017.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

7.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

8.1 The report has been prepared in accordance with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's constitution.

9. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

9.1 The work of the Corporate Parenting Board links directly to the Council's Corporate Plan priority – 'Rhondda Cynon Taf's Children will receive a great start in life...'

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 The Corporate Parenting Board Annual report outlines the work of the Board in the 2016/17 Municipal Year and features the priority areas the Board will consider in the future ensuring that the Council provides continuous improvement to the services that it delivers for its children and young people within the Looked After System.

Other Information

Relevant Scrutiny Committee – Children & Young People

RHONDDA CYNON TAF CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17



“If this were my child...”

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FOREWORD



Chair – Councillor Geraint Hopkins

Welcome to the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

The report captures, I think, the breadth of the work of the Board, which has remained committed to improving the services that we deliver for our children and young people within the Looked After System.

The Corporate Parenting Board is the principal place within the Council where Elected Members, Officers and representatives of children come together as critical friends, to question and to analyse; and to support and inform one another as we strive to achieve the best we can for some of the most vulnerable children in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

In coming together, we remain acutely aware of the high numbers of children in our care. As corporate parents we must at all times remember that these children are, hopefully, only temporarily but in many cases for the whole of their childhood - our responsibility. We remind ourselves of that most important question: “What if this were your child?”

We remain committed to that wider objective of trying to maintain children and young people safely in their homes, but where necessary, when these children are placed under our corporate care, we take the lead in ensuring the best outcomes for them in terms of personal development and education.

Once again, I would like to extend my gratitude to my fellow Board Members for their active and valuable contribution when discussing some challenging issues over the past year, and of course, to the officers, who have continued to provide us with support.

I would also like to thank the NYAS and their representative Emma Phipps-Magill for attending the meetings and providing us with not only matters for our attention, but with third party insight which has been highly appreciated.

As always, my biggest thanks go to the truly inspirational young people who have given up their time to attend the Board and speak to us, through the Blue Print Forum. There is nothing more valuable than hearing the voices and opinions of those in question. It has not only been fulfilling to hear the great success stories but it has given us a greater insight into their needs, allowing us to make the necessary improvements.

I will conclude by echoing our continued aspiration which is to see the day that every child is treated with love and respect and where no child is taken into care but until then, we will, of course, continue our commitment as Corporate Parents to ensuring that the children and young people of Rhondda Cynon Taf are given the care and support they deserve.

Geraint Hyskin

WHAT IS THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD?

The concept of Corporate Parenting was introduced in 1998 by the then Secretary of State for Health, Frank Dobson, who outlined the duties of members towards Children who are Looked After:

“For children who are looked after, your council has a legal and moral duty to try to provide the kind of loyal support that any good parents would give to their children...you should do your utmost to make sure that those children in public care get a good start in life...”

The role of the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) is to ensure the Council is fulfilling its corporate duties towards Children Looked After (CLA).

When a child or young person enters the care system, naturally, their world is turned upside down. It is the duty of the Corporate Parent to provide every young person who enters the care system with support to ensure they have the best outcomes and opportunities and that no door is closed for them.

Every child should be happy, healthy and safe; they should be provided with support for them to thrive and achieve their goals; and they should be open to developing emotionally and socially.

We have equally high aspirations for the children who are in our care.

Good corporate parenting will:-

- Result in better outcomes and life experiences for children looked after
- Compensate for any disadvantage they experience
- Improve the Council’s performance
- Produce lower costs to the Council in caring for children

RHONDDA CYNON TAF'S CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD.

The Corporate Parenting Board is a cross party Board comprising of 7 Members as listed below and has been in existence since 2007

- County Borough Councillors: G. Hopkins (Chair), E Hanagan (Vice Chair), C Leyshon, M Davies, M Weaver and L Walker.
- NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service) is also invited to attend the meetings. This enables both NYAS and Children Services to discuss issues that affect service delivery in the community on a strategic level and to work in partnership to provide improved and better outcomes.

Terms of Reference:

- To take the lead in ensuring that the Council fulfils its responsibilities as corporate parent to Children who are Looked After and formulate Council policy in respect of Children who are Looked After and children in need.
- To ensure that all Groups and divisions within the Council work together in order to promote best outcomes for Children who are Looked After and children in need.
- To promote effective relationships with key partner agencies in the best interests of Children who are Looked After and children in need.
- To monitor the implementation of the Action Plan arising from the Best Value Review of Services to Children who are Looked After, in addition to monitoring outcomes for Children who are Looked After and children in need.
- To consider the outcomes and promote positive learning practices following consideration of Child Practice Reviews
- In accordance with HMIP to routinely review the offending rates of Children who are Looked After by gender to ensure that the Corporate Parenting Board understand patterns of offending by girls and are able to take actions to address where necessary.
- To consider the impact of relevant other systems/agencies (e.g. health, courts, schools) and see how these could be improved.
- To seek the views of Children who are Looked After – the advocacy service will be asked to facilitate.
- To invite representatives from other agencies to attend as appropriate.
- To report directly to Cabinet on a regular basis (frequency to be agreed).

THE OFFICERS WHO SUPPORT THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD ARE:-

- Group Director, Community & Children's Services
- Director, Legal & Democratic Services
- Service Director, Children's Services
- Service Director, Access, Engagement & Inclusion
- Head of Safeguarding and Support
- Complaints & QA Manager
- Cabinet Business Officer
- Other officers depending on the meeting business.

VISION

The role of the corporate parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children. The local authority has a legal and moral duty to provide such loyal support to the children it is responsible for looking after.

All Elected Members must be confident that the children who are looked after within RCT:

- Are safe.
- Have good homes in a secure and caring environment.
- Are placed within the local authority area, close to their homes and communities, as far as is possible.
- Have decent schooling.
- Are not being drawn into antisocial behavior.
- Are healthy.
- Are developing socially and emotionally.
- Are provided with help to cope with the problems they have in growing up.
- Are prepared for their transition to adulthood.
- Have ambitions for themselves.
- Are helped to achieve to the maximum of their ability.
- Have high aspirations and are able to show pride in their achievements
- Are provided with support to cope with their failures.

“As Councillors, you have a major role to play in ensuring that those children who are cared for by your council have the best care that they can possibly receive...the duty on you is to do all you can to ensure these children can be the best they can be.” *Keith Towler, Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2009*

CHILDREN WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER WITHIN RCT

The Council's corporate priorities include the promotion of independence and positive lives for everyone by ensuring:

- Health and social care services will be personalised and integrated with more people supported to live longer in their own homes.
- Rhondda Cynon Taf's children and young people will receive a great start in life

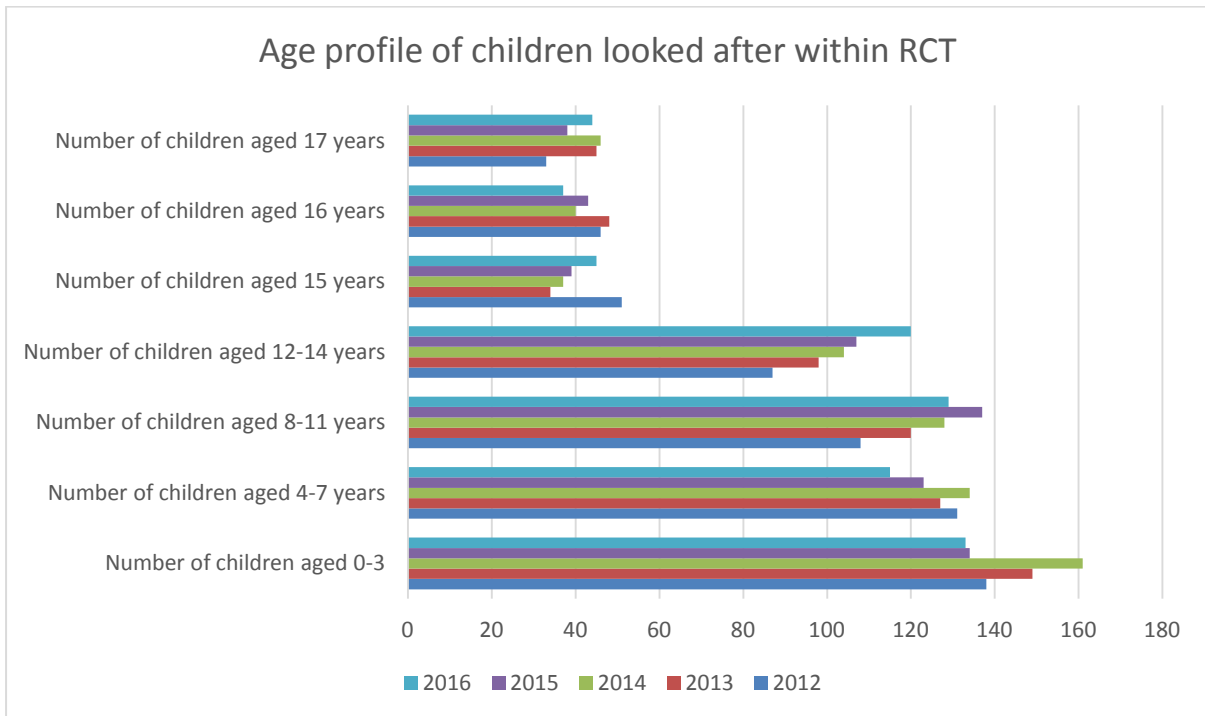
In March 2016, statistics showed that Rhondda Cynon Taf had the second highest number of Children who are Looked After placements in Wales with 623 children or young people in corporate care.¹ This was an improvement from 2013/14 statistics which showed that Rhondda Cynon Taf had the highest number of Children who are Looked After placements in Wales, with 650 in care.²

The rate at which children became looked after over the last few years, other than in 2014/2015, has risen year on year with the highest annual increases occurring in 2010/11 when the increase was recorded as 15%. The rise of children who are becoming looked after remains a key priority within the Council. Research has shown that there are a number of reasons as to why children become look after, including the complex demographic, socio economic profile and the deprivation levels of an area. As Rhondda Cynon Taf has some of the most deprived communities in Wales, it is, therefore, impossible to determine an 'appropriate' number for the rate of children becoming looked after. RCT Council will continue to strive for a safe reduction in Children Looked After numbers and to deliver the best possible outcomes for the children and young people of our County.

In September 2016, the number of children becoming looked after was 685, a 77 increase when compared to the same period in 2015.

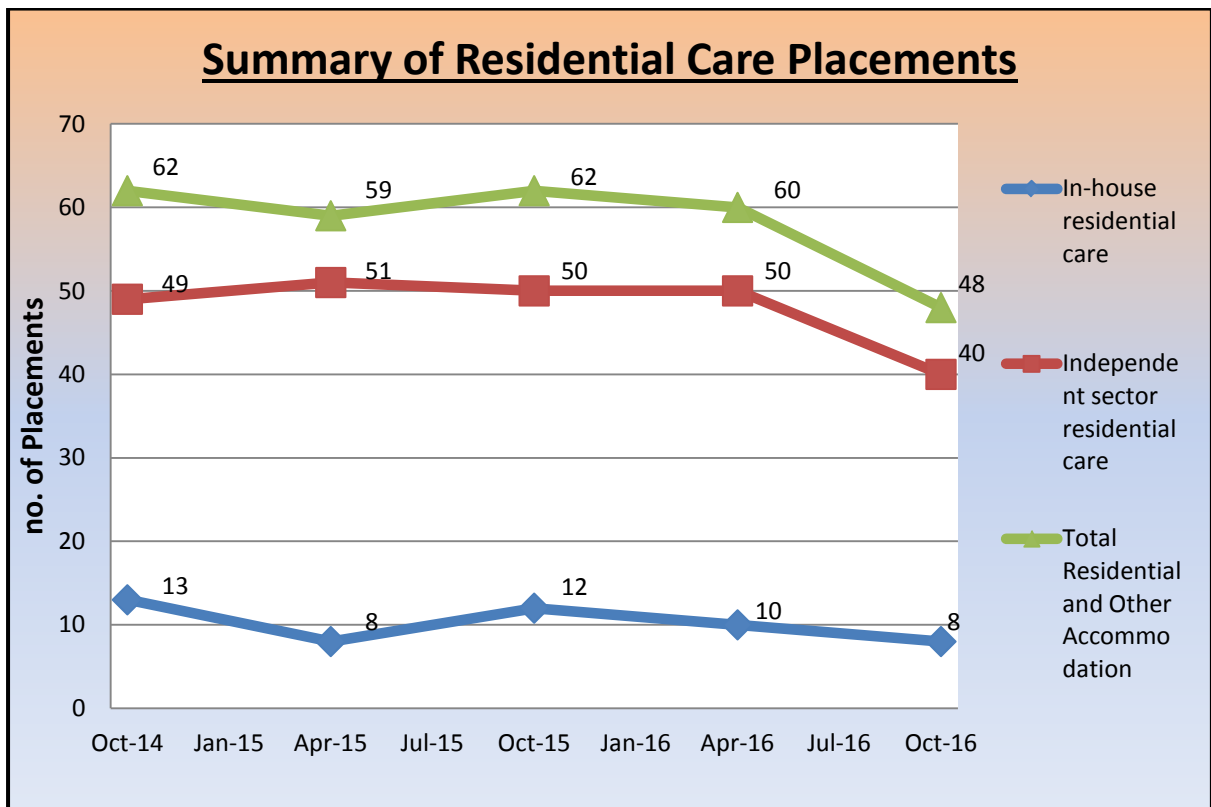
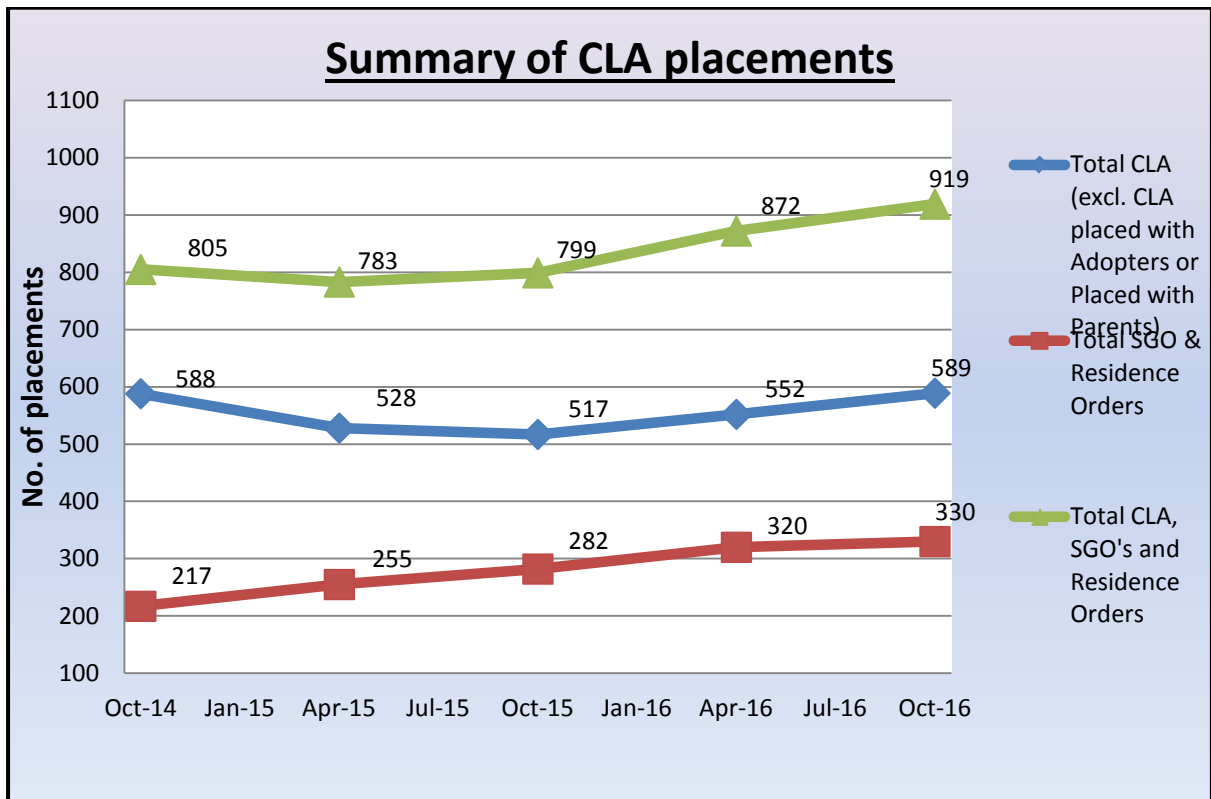
¹ Statswales, 161008, Adoptions, Outcomes & Placements for children looked after by local authorities in Wales 2015-16 Revised

² Statswales – First Release, 240914, Adoptions, outcomes and placements for children looked after by local authorities in Wales 2013-14

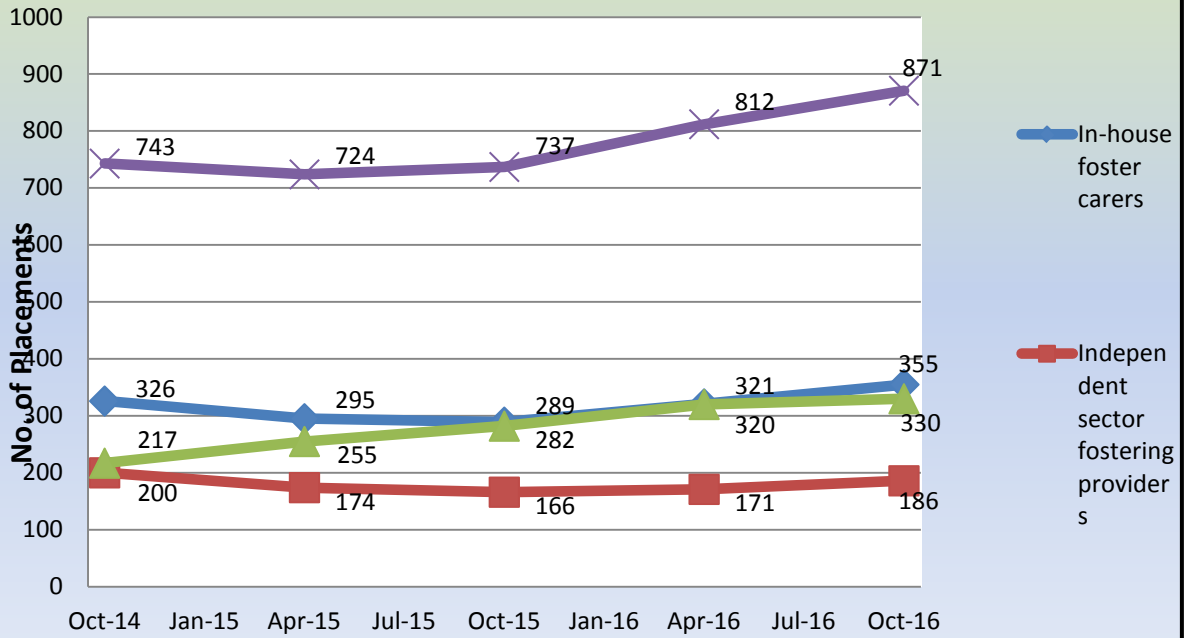


- 50% of children who became looked after between April 2016 and September 2016 were aged between 0-4 at the point of admission, this compares to 45% in this age group for 2015 admissions. This is significant in terms of long term commitments.
- 73% of children and young people who became looked after were placed with RCT Foster Carers, 30% of them with Kinship Carers (relatives). This compares to 72% of children and young people placed with RCT Foster Carers in the same period of 2015 and was achieved despite a 57% increase in the number of admissions into the looked after system.
- The percentage of children placed with relative carers at point of admission increased from 21% in 2015 to 30% in 2016.
- 32% of the children and young people who became looked after during this period have now ceased to be looked after. 30% have returned home to their parents or other family members.
- 32% more children remain in care longer than 12 weeks when compared with previous years (the average length of time that children are looked after remained at 125 weeks in 2014/2015 and 2015/2016).

OCTOBER 2014 – OCTOBER 2016 CHANGES



Summary of Family Placements



WORK OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Voices from Care – Blue Print Forum

The primary focus of the Blue Print Forum is to provide looked after young people and care leavers in RCT the opportunities to have their voice heard and to enable their life experiences to contribute at a strategic, policy and legislative level both locally and nationally.

In 2016/17, the Board were fortunate enough to receive a visit from two representatives and a young person from the Blue Print Forum, who provided a summary of their work undertaken in previous months.

JULY – DECEMBER 2016 FIGURES

Number of Young People engaging with Blueprint;	12
Age range:	14-22
Foster Care:	4
Residential Care:	1
After Care:	7
Young People from RCT Linking in with VFC National Projects	17

The Board were pleased to see that the number of participants engaging with the Blue Print Forum remained consistent to the figures presented in 2015/2016 and that the age range of the participants had increased to 14-22, from the previous year's 15-22.

It was also pleasing to note that there had been an increase from 2015/16 in respect of the young people from RCT linking in with VFC projects, which had risen to 17 from 10.

The Board Members were pleased to hear of the exciting activities undertaken by the Blue Print Forum, on both a local and national level. The representatives spoke of the first newsletter which had been published and circulated to looked after children of RCT. This provided the young people with a platform to confidently express their opinions and views to others alike.

Members were also advised of a 3 day summer school at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, which gave the young people an opportunity to experience student living and develop their creative skills. It was explained that whilst this was a fun experience for the young people, they developed skills in cooking and budgeting which would benefit them in the future.

The Board Members acknowledged the importance of the Blue Print Forum and the voice it gives to the young people, but also the enjoyable learning experiences that come with it.

Receiving direct information from the young people at the Forum is fundamental for the Board and is, arguably, more insightful than any report or website as it provides true experiences with ideas on how to improve the service, from those who use it.

The Board Members agree that it is important for the young people of the Blue Print Forum to attend a meeting in 2017/18 to share their progress and more of their exciting initiatives. Receiving personal experiences of the Council's services from a young person who has utilised the system assists the Corporate Parenting Board in establishing where the Council needs to focus priorities for the benefit of the children in the looked after system and for care leavers to ensure that they receive the support and same start in life as everyone else.



FRONTLINE VISITS

The Corporate Parenting Board has established a systematic process for ensuring that the Members of the Board undertake regular visits to the frontline teams in children's services and report their findings to the Corporate Parenting Board. This practice is consistent both with recommendation 41 of the Victoria Climbié report and with a previous CSSIW safeguarding inspection report recommendation.

Members undertook the following visits as outlined below throughout the Municipal Year:-

Team	Location	Date	Attendees
West Intensive Intervention Team	Tonypandy Office	13 th September, 2016	Cllr Hopkins Cllr Davies
East Intensive Intervention Team	Ty Trevithick office	16 th November, 2016	Cllr Hopkins Cllr Weaver
Glyncornel	Glyncornel	18 th October, 2016.	Cllr Hopkins Cllr Hanagan Cllr Walker
West & East Enquiry & Assessment Teams	Tonypandy office	4 th January, 2017.	Cllr Hopkins Cllr Davies
East – DCT & Early Years	Ty Trevithick	15 th February, 2017	Cllr Hopkins Cllr Leyshon
Ty Catrin	Ty Catrin	7 th March, 2017	Cllr Hopkins Cllr Hanagan Cllr Leyshon

Board Members were grateful to the management and staff for giving their valuable time and for their openness to discussion during each of these visits. It is important for both Elected Members and the staff to feel comfortable to have informal discussions on ways to better improve the service.

It was pleasing to see that in all locations, staff appeared well-motivated and dedicated to their work for children in the County Borough. The Board Members acknowledged the significant demand our staff face in working through a large number of challenging cases. It was noted that the staff were cooperative and understanding of the change in culture, in respect of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act.

With new legislation and the remodeling of Children's Services, Board Members were insistent on monitoring the move of staff to Ty Trevithick. The Chair was pleased to report back that the move was considered successful amongst staff and that the combination of staff from Children's Services and those from Education had the potential to improve cross-departmental working, which would deliver better outcomes for the children using the services.

The Chair, Vice Chair and Councillor Walker were pleased with their visit to the Glynornel office, and heard of the work of the Miskin project and Rapid Intervention Teams who help children and families who are at risk, helping to keep families safely together. As a result, staff were asked to provide the rest of the Board with a presentation of their successes at the following meeting. This was instrumental for the Board as they were provided with case studies which gave an insight into the hard work conducted by staff in the service areas. This also gave staff the opportunity to voice any concerns they had with regard to the integration of Miskin and RIRT; however, the Board were pleased to hear that the process was running smoothly.

A continued concern for the Board Members was the use of ICT. In all cases, staff remained convinced that their work could be improved by better access to ICT, including hardware such as laptops and mobile telephones, and, in the movement increasingly to agile working, the confidence of accessibility and connectivity in all parts of the County Borough. The Members were assured that departmental discussions were underway and that a report would be presented to the Board at a future meeting to update on the progress achieved.

Another concern noted by the Chair was the visual appearance of the Tonypandy Office, which needed updating. Upon revisiting the office in 2017, the Chair was pleased to note that the comments had been taken on board and the appearance had been drastically changed.

In 2017/18, Board Members feel that it would be beneficial for staff and Members alike if the visits are continued to further our understanding of the services to children in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Members have witnessed firsthand how their comments have made a difference to the offices and feel it can only be beneficial to continue this process in the future.

RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOME VISITS AND REGULATION 32 REPORTS

As well as undertaking frontline visits to the staff teams, as part of the Corporate Parenting Board remit, reports are presented to the Board on the current position of the residential Children's Homes and respite service, to allow Members to gauge a fuller picture of the service provision. These exempt reports provided Members with important information surrounding the occupancy figures of the homes, any areas of concern and the general well being of the children within the residential service.

Once again, it was pleasing to read the positive reports provided to the Board regarding the residential homes, and where issues were identified, Members have witnessed the swift resolutions through the responsible and professional management at the homes.

Whilst the reports were detailed and informative, Members thought it would be useful to gain an insight into the process behind the reports. Following their request, author, Mr John Llewellyn-Thomas came to a meeting to present his recent reports. The Board would like to thank Mr Llewellyn-Thomas for his time and for providing clarity and peace of mind that the visits were conducted professionally and were of no disruption to the children.

In previous years, Members of the Corporate Parenting Board made the decision not to visit the, then, four residential children's homes. All Members agreed that the corporate care homes should make the children feel as homely and as comfortable as they would at their own homes, and that visits from strangers would not be appropriate.

However, following the closure of Treherbert Home, the Board strongly felt that a visit to each of the homes was necessary, but at a time when the children were away so it absolutely would not have any effect on them.

The Board's feedback was positive, with all Members gaining a better understanding of future Regulation 32 reports.

REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

WORK & TRAINING PROGRAMMES

The Board received updates on two of the Council's training programmes which helped young people between the ages 16 and 21 in their transition from care to employment; Step in the Right Direction and Care2Work.

The Board were delighted to hear from two young people who were able to provide first hand details of their experiences on the programmes. Both representatives spoke positively on their experiences, advising the board that they were both in the process of undertaking a qualification in Business Administration and were in full time employment within the Council. The young people stressed that not only did the programme teach them interview etiquette and provide them with new working skills, but it gave them the confidence to enter the world of work and communicate with new people on a daily basis.

The Board would like to thank the speakers for their insightful presentation and to wish them and all programme users the best in their future endeavours.

IRO REPORTS

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 requires the Local Authority to appoint Independent Reviewing Officers to conduct reviews for Children who are Looked After and monitor the Local Authority's performance in relation to implementing the care plans for individual children. Specific guidance is entitled "Independent Reviewing Officer Guidance Wales 2004".

Regular reports are therefore presented to the Board to monitor the activities of the IRO service.

YOUNG CARER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016

Members of the Board felt it was important to consider the Young Carer's Annual Report as not only would it highlight areas of improvement for the users of the service, but it would give them the opportunity to compare it to the work conducted in the previous Municipal Year.

Members of the Board were pleased to note the positive work being undertaken within the young carers service:-

- 98% of Young Carer's Assessments were completed and services provided which was an improvement from the 96% returned in 2015-16
- Of the 82 Young Carers assessed in 2015-2016, 45 were referred onto the Young Carers project (Action for Children) and 34 are actively engaged. 37 Young Carers received individual or family support from the service and were then signposted to other appropriate services. Again, this was an improvement in comparison to 2014-15, where 42 of the young carers assessed in were referred onto the Young Carers project and 27 received individual or family support from the service and were then signposted to other appropriate services.
- 240 young carers are currently known to the service and receive information and support. This was slightly less than the 257 young carers identified in 2015-16.
- Due to the focus on raising awareness in schools through the establishment of a Carers Measure Education Co-ordinator and the Schools Award pilot programme, referrals from education increased from 5% in 2013-14 to 15% in 2015-16.
- 96 referrals for young adult carers have been received by the service in 2015-16. 30 new referrals were received for Young Adult Carers, a 50% increase on last year.
- In terms of young carers "having a voice" and making decisions, 9 young carers were trained to become Young Commissioners and were instrumental in re-commissioning the young carers project; young adult carers regularly meet as part of CASE to lead the work of the Young Adult Carer aspect of the service; the Schools Award was developed as a direct result of young carers highlighting the need for schools to improve the support they provide young carers.

The Board were pleased with the improvements outlined within the 2015-16 Annual Report and were delighted to learn that the young carers had had significant involvement in consultations relating to the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act, where their views were fed into the development of the new Information, Advice and Assistance Service.

The Board acknowledged the difficulty of identifying young carers at schools and praised the ongoing work undertaken to recognise them. The Members are keen to continue the proactive and positive approach in identifying more individuals at schools.

A CWM TAF PARTNERSHIP STATEMENT OF STRATEGIC INTENT: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER.

Members of the Board were provided with an update on the 'Cwm Taf Partnership Statement of Strategic Intent: Children and Young People who are Looked After.' Members learned that the Statement would be included as part of a larger Joint Children's Services Commissioning Strategy that covered all partner agencies including the Local Health Boards, police, voluntary and third sector, which would be implemented in April 2018 onwards.

Members of the Board agreed with the Partnership Board that it was vital for work to be undertaken with young people developing the statement and that this should be progressed immediately, to ensure their experience of being in care would be improved upon.

The Members were given the opportunity to view a short film created by a citizen panel of Children Looked After, expressing their views on the current system and the need for:

- Quality life story/Journey work
- Opportunity to speak with others who were looked after.
- Experiencing better preparation prior to being placed in care or moving between placements.

It was explained that further training and information would be given to children during the transition to new foster care homes, such as virtual profiles and photographs, with emphasis being placed on Life Story Work.

Members were pleased with the report and felt strongly that the messages from the young people should be taken on board with changes underway to improve the system. As always, hearing the voice of the young people under corporate care was significant to the Board as it provided them with first hand information on ways in which the care system could be improved.

The Board are keen to be provided with an update in the future as to how the above views are being progressed.

AUDIT OF CHILD PROTECTION CASES HELD BY ASSESSOR CARE MANAGERS (ACM'S) DURING 2015/16

The Corporate Parenting Board were presented with the findings from an internal audit undertaken by Children's Services regarding Child Protection Cases held by Assessor Care Managers (ACM's) during 2015/2016.

Members were pleased that the outcome of the assessment was positive with figures demonstrating that the total number of children registered on the Child Protection Register remained lower than those of 2015.

The Board were pleased to find that there was no evidence that children and young people in these circumstances received a lower standard of safeguarding and endorsed that:-

- The audit would continue to be undertaken on an annual basis until no Child Protection cases are held by ACM's and to ensure that the ACM's are monitored as specified in their job description.
- The conversion of ACM posts to Social Work posts continued to be prioritised.
- Team Managers/Senior Practitioners need to attend Case Conferences with ACM's.

The result of the audit was presented to both the Cwm Taf SCB Monitoring Sub Group and the Children's Services Management Team.

REGISTERED CHILDCARE PROVISION QUALITY UPDATE

Across the EYFSS there are a number of childcare provisions that are registered with CSSIW: those that are registered and operated by the Council and those that are registered by third party organisations and commissioned to deliver childcare provision on behalf of the Council. How each of these childcare provisions is quality assured and monitored differs based on the service that each setting provides.

Across the EYFSS, there are 7 CSSIW registered childcare settings:

- Aman Flying Start Childcare
- Four Seasons Activity Centre
- Penrhys Flying Start Childcare
- Pontypridd Day Nursery and Flying Start Childcare
- Tonyrefail Flying Start Childcare
- Tylorstown Flying Start Childcare
- Ynyscynon Day Nursery and Flying Start Childcare

The Board were pleased to receive details on the inspection feedback and the action plan to improve each individual service in the future.

The Board praised the review, agreeing that the monitoring of the services by the Council's Early Years & Family Support Service team was vital in improving Council Services for the users.

The Board were pleased to see that the feedback had been taken on Board to ensure improvements were made in line with statutory guidance such as the promotion of the Welsh Language within the setting.

In 2017/18, the Board would welcome a further update on the feedback provided from the review, as it gives Members a detailed insight into each of the CSSIW registered childcare settings and the methods which are put in place to improve them.

THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD MOVING FORWARD

The role of Corporate Parenting is to continue to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children.

Despite times of austerity, Rhondda Cynon Taf remains committed to providing safeguarding and the best possible care to those children and young people under our care.

Although 2016/17 has seen a rise in the number of children who are looked after within the local authority, this Annual Report has outlined many areas which have continued to be monitored and improved over the past year. However, the focus of the Corporate Parenting Board will always be to continue improving the Council's services for Children Looked After and to focus further on the early intervention agenda.

In moving forward, the Board will remain focussed on its goals and usual reports, but will pay particular emphasis to the following:-

TRAINING

With the addition of newly Elected Members following the 2017 Local Elections, the Board placed emphasis on the importance of training. All Board Members felt it would be useful for any new Members to receive training in respect of the duties placed upon them as a Corporate Parent, to enlighten all Members on areas such as:

- Corporate Parenting and the role and responsibilities of a Corporate Parent and Board Member
- The needs of children looked after and care leavers

It is intended that such training would provide the Board with an opportunity to review the work previously conducted and establish whether it needed to be altered or improved upon to reflect new duties and legislation.

Members established that an important element of learning for both formerly and newly Elected Members would be receiving visits through the year from the young people at the Blue Print Forum. As mentioned previously in this report, the visits would enlighten Members on the opinions of the young people in order to improve the service.

RECEIVING REGULAR PERFORMANCE DATA

The Board were pleased with the reports which were presented to them in 2016/17, and welcomed their detailed contents in respect of various areas of the service which allowed them to effectively analyse and determine ways of improvement.

Moving forward, the Board would like to continue to receive the same level of qualitative information and statistics but placed emphasis on the need for the views of the children involved and the staff on the frontline to also be included for Members consideration to assist in improving the depth of their knowledge.

Examples of these include:-

- CCSIW Inspection Reports in relation to the three Children's Homes
- RIRT Annual Report
- Youth Offending Service Updates
- Registered Childcare Provision Update
- Young Carers Annual Report
- Blue Print Forum Updates
- Frontline Visits

CWM TAF MASH

MASH is the single point of access for all safeguarding concerns relating to Vulnerable Adults, Children and Young People. It brings together expert professionals from services that have contact with children, young people and families making the best possible use of their combined knowledge to keep children safe from risk of harm.

MASH is designed to provide the highest level of knowledge and analysis of all known information across the safeguarding partnership to ensure all safeguarding activity and intervention is timely and necessary; as a result the MASH will support:

- early identification and analysis of risk
- the identification of victims and emerging harm
- the early identification of repeat low level referrals

In the 2015/16 Annual Report, Board Members welcomed any updates in respect of the MASH since its launch in May 2015, acknowledging that it needed sufficient time to produce its ways of working and data.

Although as a Board we are aware of the continual work of MASH through other reporting avenues, we now feel that it is an appropriate time for an update report in respect of the success and progress of the MASH and analysis of data would be beneficial for Board Members to consider and this will be undertaken in the Municipal Year.

SCRUTINY MONITORING

The relationship between the Corporate Parenting Board and Scrutiny is invaluable and the Board would like to ensure this good working relationship remains in order to ensure positive performance in the service area.

It is essential for the Board to ensure that any actions proposed by Scrutiny, would be delivered in a timely manner. It is also important that there is no duplication of work undertaken by Scrutiny and the Corporate Parenting Board and to assist in preventing any overlap it is useful that the membership comprises of the chair of the Children & Young People's Scrutiny Committee who updates on any work being taken forward by the Committee.

AGILE WORKING

We are living in an age, where the development of digital skills through our communities can provide us with a multitude of benefits. The Council's focus on delivering sustainable outcomes with the resources it has available to it and in doing so, supports the Council's priorities of:

- Economy - Building a strong economy;
- People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone;
- Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work.

Following the frontline visits and the Board's concerns around the use of ICT, it was felt that an update should be provided in the future to inform the Members on any progress made in respect of agile working.

CONCLUSION

2016/17 has been a successful year in terms of the Corporate Parenting Board's previous ambitions. The Board has considered a vast range of reports which have considered different aspects of the Childrens Service area.

The production of a work programme, although fluid, has helped the Board to determine upcoming business and will be a continued help in the future.

Moving forward in 2017/18, in light of the Local Elections, the Board hopes that all Members, whether they are familiar faces or new to their role, feel comfortable enough to discuss and challenge the reports presented to us, to provide better outcomes for the young people and children of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Members of the Board will continue to ensure that the children who are looked after within RCT are achieving the best possible outcomes in terms of education, health, support and care.

