

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 7th December 2015 at 10am.

Present

County Borough Councillor G E Hopkins – In the Chair

County Borough Councillors:-

(Mrs) E Hanagan, C Leyshon, M Norris and M Weaver.

Officers in Attendance:-

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

Mr P Lucas – Director, Legal & Democratic Services

Ms A Batley – Interim Service Director, Children’s Services

Ms G Davies – Acting Service Director, Access, Engagement & Inclusion.

Ms M Meredith – Residential Services Manager

Ms J Thomas – Complaints Manager

Ms L Pearce – Head of Safeguarding & Standards

Mr C Mann – Team Manager, Reviewing Team

E Phipps-Magill – NYAS.

Mr C Dunn – Voices from Care, Development Co-ordinator

Ms T R Wyatt – Blue Print Forum Representative

21 WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS.

The Chairman welcomed and thanked the representatives from the Blue Print forum for attending the meeting and for the benefit of the representatives, introductions were made

22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors (Mrs) M E Davies and L Walker.

23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of personal interests made in matters pertaining to the agenda.

24 MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on the 26th October, 2015.

25 'VOICES FROM CARE' – BLUE PRINT FORUM.

The Voices from Care Development Co-ordinator along with Ms T Wyatt a young person representative, provided the group with a summary of the work undertaken by the Blueprint forum during April to September of this year. Members were advised of the involvement with the Children's Commissioner for Wales in respect of the 'My Planner App'. Ms Wyatt explained the benefits of the App to the Board, which contained information for Looked After Children and care leavers on rights and entitlements, financial help and independent living skills to help young people leaving care make the transition to independent living.

Officers discussed the different variety of information methods that the Council use to interact with LAC and after care leavers and Ms Wyatt queried whether the Council still used the DVD as an information sharing tool, for new residents into residential homes. Members were told of the benefits that this DVD brought to young people, providing them with the basic structure of a residential home setting and the care available from a young person's perspective. The Residential Services Manager confirmed that the DVD was still available and advised that it had also been presented to the Welsh Government as a form of best practice, and discussions ensued as to whether the DVD needed to be updated.

The Voices from Care Development Co-ordinator highlighted to the group the work the forum had been involved in with in respect of 'Voices from Care's 5 nations Project' which aims to promote the voices of Looked After Children and care leavers from across Wales, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland, with the work assisting in the development of the 5 Nations strategy over the next 3 years. Mr Dunn commented on the opportunity to improve outcomes and share best practices through the strategy and Ms Wyatt spoke of her experience once leaving care and the feeling of 'abandonment', with the reduced support compared to when in a residential setting. Ms Waytt spoke of the advances made in Scotland and the Children & Young People Bill being considered with the potential for raising the age to 24 for care leavers. Ms Wyatt also explained to the group both the negative and positive discrimination experienced as a care leaver and spoke of the need to change terminology so that those in and out of care were treated equally.

The Acting Service Director, Access, Engagement and Inclusion spoke of the potential to use part of the Schools Pupil Deprivation Grant to explore how the Authority could better assist

Looked After Children, commenting on the lack of understanding on the emotional needs of the young person.

The Chairman queried how the Blue Print forum is accessed and promoted and officers explained that children within care, including foster care are signposted to the Forum, although it was commented that some young people, especially in foster care, feel like attending such a forum differentiates them from being a 'normal child'. The Co-ordinator advised that the Forum were looking to develop a younger age group and commented that this would mean different issues with different ages. The Co-coordinator also added that currently the forum were without a venue for its meetings.

Ms Phipps-Magill commented on good practices witnessed from other local authorities in engaging children with such groups and spoke of the key role of the IRO during LAC reviews to promote the forum and support networks available for the young people to access. Members also commented on utilising the new website developed by the Council and the potential for promotion of the Forum through this medium.

Following the discussions the Chairman thanked both Mr Dunn and Ms Wyatt from Voices From Care Blue Print Forum for attending the meeting and extended an invite to future meetings. Members were advised that Ms Wyatt was moving to England so this was her last meeting with the Board. On behalf of the Board the Chairman passed on the groups best wishes to Ms Wyatt for the future.

Members **RESOLVED**

- a) To note the contents of the report
- b) That the Residential DVD be reviewed to see if it requires updating
- c) That officers meet to discuss how work can be taken forward using the pupil deprivation grant
- d) That Ms Phipps-Magill circulates examples of good practices of engagement.
- e) That Officers liaise with the Blue Print Development Co-ordinator in respect of adding documents and links from the Blue Print Forum to the Council website.

(At this juncture of the meeting Councillor T Leyshon made the following declaration of Interest in relation to this item – "I work for Bernardo's".)

26 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO) REPORT.

The Head of Safeguarding along with the Reviewing Team Manager provided Members of the Board with information about the activity of the IRO Services for the period 1st April to 30th September 2015.

Members were advised of the key themes highlighted within the report which included:-

- Maintained good performance in relation to reviews being held within timescale
- Progress of the LAC website in consultation with children and young people
- Use of the resolution process, alongside caseload size and the IRO quality assurance role

- Implications of the Social Service & Wellbeing Act 2014.

The Chairman commented on the positive results noted in respect of the Adoption figures and he stressed the need to ensure that the positive performance in respect of adoption figures are monitored and maintained through the new collaborative Consortium arrangements.

Officers discussed the Welsh Government review being undertaken on IRO's to ensure independency and Members commented on the need for the Council to ensure that they contribute to the review.

Members spoke of the consultation documents and the open offer of advocacy as recommended by the Children's Commissioner and officers advised that they were seeking clarity into the 'open offer', as this provision was already in place during IRO reviews. Members questioned whether this was offered to after care leavers and commented on the need for suitable pathway plans to be made available.

It was confirmed that the LAC website went live on the 2nd December, and screens were amended following the comments received from Members of the Board. Members discussed how the BluePrint forum could assist further by providing feedback on the website to officers.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED**:-

- a) To note the contents of the Report
- b) That officers liaise with Mr C Dunn, Voices from Care Development Co-ordinator in respect of the Council's LAC website.

27 SAFEGUARDING ACTION PLAN REPORT

Through her report, the Head of Safeguarding & Standards advised the Board of the completion of the current Children's Services Safeguarding Action Plan and the key achievements achieved through the plan and how the actions would be taken forward. Members were reminded that the plan had been developed as a management tool to enable managers across the service to sustain the process of improvement and review progress regularly.

Members queried whether the recommendations made during Child Practice Reviews were incorporated within the Plan and the Head of Safeguarding and Standards advised that as these are included in Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board action plans and progress monitored by the Board.

Members **RESOLVED** to note the report.

28 DIRECTORS' AND ELECTED MEMBERS' VISITS TO FRONTLINE TEAMS IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES 2014-2015.

The interim Service Director, Children's Services presented the report on frontline teams to the Board which reported on the visits undertaken by the Group Director, Community & Children's Services, the interim Service Director, Children and Families and by the Members of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Members were reminded about the establishment of the process surrounding the visit with Members noting that the practice was consistent both with recommendation 41 of the Victoria Climbié Report and with a previous CSSIW safeguarding inspection report recommendation.

The Chairman commented on the visits undertaken, adding that the visits allowed Members a real insight into the work of the teams and the varying pressures. The Board discussed both the positive and negative aspects of digitalisation of records as a way forward for the service.

As a new member to the Board, Cllr Weaver advised the Board of her first visit to one of the Council's residential homes and spoke positively on the high standards of provision available to the residents.

The Chairman took the opportunity to remind members of the visits scheduled for the remainder of the Municipal Year with the first visit taking place on the 16th December, 2015 at the Rhondda Office. The Head of Safeguarding commented on the office move to Ty Catrin and queried whether Members would like to also include this visit within their schedule. Officers advised that the launch of the LAC website would be on the 22nd December at the Ty Catrin office and Members agreed to undertake a visit during the launch.

The Board **RESOLVED** to:-

- a. Note the contents of the report.
- b. Undertake a visit of the Ty Catrin Office whilst attending the official launch of the LAC website on the 22nd December, 2015.

29 NYAS – CHILDREN SERVICES QUARTERLY NARRATIVE REPORT.

Ms E Phipps –Magill presented the Board with 2 quarterly narrative reports on behalf of NYAS for the periods 1st March – 31st May and 1st June – 31st August. The officer discussed both reports, highlighting the recommendations and performance accountability within each.

Members were advised that the highest referral issue presented to NYAS was in respect of Contact, closely followed by placement issues and the officer spoke of taking forward key priorities areas and the work being undertaken with the Council in respect of the independent Visitor Centre.

Members commented on the feedback contained within the report and the officer advised that a number of different methods were used to gauge the feedback from the young people. Members continued to query the outcomes framework for each child and the officer agreed that impact and softer outcomes would be reflected within future reports.

Discussions ensued on the key recommendations highlighted within the report, with Members commenting on the need for the equality of provision in respect of young people with disabilities or special educational needs participating with their own care planning process. Officers confirmed that the recommendations had been acknowledged by the Authority and officers were looking as to how they could take them forward in the future. Discussions continued in respect of practices from other local authorities and the NYAS officer agreed to circulate best practices from other Local Authorities.

It was **RESOLVED** to Note the Contents of the Report.

30 CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN RECOMMENDATIONS.

The Chairman advised the Board that the reports of the scrutiny Committees 'Looked after Children' scrutiny working groups had been presented to Cabinet on the 24th November, 2015 were the recommendations had been agreed in principle. The Board were further advised that the Chairman along with the Cabinet Member for Education & Skills would be attending the meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee on the 21st December to provide a detailed Cabinet response to the recommendations, including an Action plan.

The Board commented on the detailed work of the scrutiny committees and **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report.

31. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Before the Board went into a closed session, the Chairman brought forward the agenda item in relation to Any Other Business.

Ms T Wyatt took the opportunity to question the position of personal advisers within RCT, advising of recent changes with the Council providing the service when it was previously Barnardos. Ms Wyatt explained the benefits the service provided, especially in relation to young care leavers and the Interim Service Director advised that the service would be continued, although officers were currently looking at how the service could be developed by the Authority. The Interim Director confirmed that accommodation was an initial problem for the service.

32 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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.

33 REGULATION 32 REPORTS – RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN’S HOMES

The Board were provided with an update on the Regulation 32 visits undertaken at the four children’s homes – Beddau, Treherbert, Bryndar and Nant Gwyn for September 2015.

The Residential Service Manager outlined a summary of the Inspection outcomes and it was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

G E Hopkins

Chairman

The meeting terminated at 11.55am

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