

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015 - 2016

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

7th DECEMBER 2015

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

Agenda Item No:6

**Directors' and Elected Members'
Visits to Front-Line Teams in
Children's Services 2014- 2015**

Author: Ann Batley, Service Director for Children's Services
Community and Children's Services
Tel No. 01443 495101

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the reports of visits to front-line teams by the Group Director, Community and Children's Services, the Service Director, Children and Families and by Elected Members.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That members note the content of the report.
- 2.2 That the Corporate Parenting Board identify the Elected Members who will undertake quarterly visits to front-line teams over the next twelve months.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Board has established a systematic process for ensuring that the Director of Social Services, the Service Director and members, undertake regular visits to front-line teams in children's services and report on their findings to the Corporate Parenting Board. This is consistent both with recommendation 41 of the Victoria Climbié Report and with a previous CSSIW safeguarding inspection report recommendation.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 A number of visits have taken place since the previous report to members on 22nd September 2014 . These visits were undertaken as relatively open meetings to enable informal dialogue with staff. It is noted that this list is not an exhaustive account of meetings with front line staff but that it does set out those undertaken under the auspices of the policy.

Teams visited date	Visited by
Children's Services, Cynon District Office, Ty Caradog - 01.12.2014	Councillor Hopkins, Councillor Leyshon Councillor Walker
Children's Services - Rhondda District Office 26.01.2015	Councillor Hopkins Councillor Margaret Davies
Children's Services - Taf District Office - 28.05.2015	Councillor Hopkins Councillor Turner
Children's Services Remodelling Staff Consultation Event - Rhondda Sports Centre - 05.02.2015	Andrew Gwynn, Service Director Ann Batley, Head of Service Liz Pearce, Head of Service Julie Clark , Head of Service
Children's Services Remodelling Staff Consultation Event - Hawthorn Sports Centre - 10.06.215	Andrew Gwynn, Service Director Ann Batley, Head of Service Liz Pearce, Head of Service Julie Clark , Head of Service
Children's Services Remodelling Staff Consultation Event - Rhondda Sports Centre & Hawthorn Sports Centre - 21.10.2015	Ann Batley, Service Director Liz Pearce, Head of Service Julie Clark, Head of Service
Future Front Line Visits Scheduled:	
<i>Bryndar Children's Residential Home - 10th December</i>	<i>Councillor Weaver</i>
<i>Rhondda Office (Berw Road, Tonypany) 16th December .</i>	<i>Councillor Hopkins, Councillor Leyshon Councillor Walker</i>
<i>Cynon Office (Ty Trevithick) – 20th January, 2016 .</i>	<i>Councillor Hopkins, Councillor Norris Councillor Weaver</i>
<i>Taff Office (Courthouse Street) – 17th February, 2016 .</i>	<i>Councillor Hopkins, Councillor Hanagan Councillor Davies</i>
<i>Disabled Children's Team on 16th March 2016</i>	<i>Councillor Hopkins</i>

The full reports of these visits are attached at Appendix I.

As can be seen from the list and from the reports themselves, the visits took place in a number of settings across the three principal areas of the borough and included good staff representation.

Report of Visit to Front-Line Service

Place of visit: Ty Caradog	Date: 1st December 2014
Comments:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The visit was conducted by the Cabinet Member for Children's Social Services and Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board (Cllr G. Hopkins) and two Members of the Board, Cllrs C. Leyshon and L.G. Walker. 2. Members of the Board were received by the Service Manager (Cynon ACP), Jayne Preston. 3. The visit consisted of a private meeting with the Service Manager, followed by a tour of the building with an opportunity to meet a range of staff, and concluded with a further private conversation with the Service Manager. <p><u>Overall Impression</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Staff are committed, knowledgeable and passionate about their work, whilst managing high caseload levels. Whilst demand is high, the level of caseload is further affected by colleagues' absences due to sickness or maternity leave. Staff members were welcoming and responded well to questions. The premises and office environment, however did not give a good first impression. <p><u>Premises</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. The building appears tired in need of some repair. The public areas and various meeting spaces do not in our view present a suitable, professional environment for meetings, conversations, conferences and contact between the Service and clients. 6. Offices appear cramped, with too much of the filing system (filing cabinets, etc.) taking up a large amount of office and meeting space. A solution to this ought to be found. 7. We are concerned that due to the layout of the building, supervised contact and work with families takes place in communal spaces from which the "back room" offices of the teams are accessible. 8. The Genesis nursery has moved from Ty Caradog, releasing a lot of space, however a large number of items of play equipment, etc. which belong to the nursery remain in the centre. A decision needs to be taken about what is to happen to this equipment. 9. Despite this, several staff wanted to say to us that they enjoyed working in the building, that it had "character" and that it was good that 	

the office was located in that part of the Cynon Valley, that it was convenient for clients and staff.

10. We were informed that whilst "on paper" the Cynon teams appear almost fully staffed, there was an issue with staff sickness, particularly with one or two on long-term absence, and this was affecting adversely the caseload of other members of staff.
11. Anecdotally, the staff we spoke to were managing between 20 and 30 cases at any one time.
12. The staff we spoke to were pleased that they had responded well to the challenge of the PLO, but told us that it had been a huge effort and in doing so had put additional stresses on their workload.

Looking ahead

13. Staff were reporting positive outcomes from the early intervention work, such as Rapid Intervention, TAF, Solutions and IFST. They said that these were invaluable in ensuring that children do not have to be brought into care, and also that those in care could return to their families sooner.
14. We asked the staff what their perceptions were of the new MASH arrangements due to be implemented next year. Opinion was divided between those who welcomed the move, and those who thought it may bring new problems. There was recognition that multi-agency arrangements had worked well elsewhere and could do so in Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr. However some felt that the new MASH will not have the local knowledge and "community memory" currently present in the teams, which could lead to a significant rise in referrals and need for assessment.

Follow up action required or taken

It was agreed that all these thoughts be brought to the attention of the Corporate Parenting Board and relevant senior officers.

Name: GERAINT HOPKINS


Position: Cabinet Member for Children's Social Services and Equalities; and Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board

Signature: 

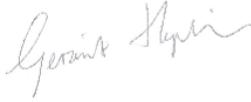
Date:

4/12/2014


Report of Visit to Front-Line Service

Present: Councillor Hopkins, Councillor M Davies	
Place of visit: Rhondda Office	Date: 26 th January 2015
Comments: (Positive Messages or concerns)	
<p>There was an initial meeting with the manager, Tracey Prosser, followed by a tour of the front line teams.</p> <p>There is a clear issue with parking at the site which might be looked into.</p> <p>Numbers of LAC children has peaked, it seemed, but a good general appreciation of the need to improve early intervention to help more families stay together.</p> <p>The work on the P.L.O had brought good results, although it had required a huge effect.</p> <p>This office seemed to be the most organised administratively of the three we visited, with filing and other systems appearing to be more organised and less cluttered.</p>	
<u>Follow up action required or taken</u>	
<p><u>Name:</u> Councillor Geraint Hopkins</p> <p><u>Position:</u> Cabinet Member for Children's Social Services, Equalities and the Welsh Language</p>	<p><u>Signature:</u></p>  <p><u>Date:</u> 14.10.2015</p>


Report of Visit to Front-Line Service

Present: Councillor Hopkins, Councillor Turner	
Place of visit: Taf Office, Courthouse Street	Date: 28 th May 2015
Comments: (Positive Messages or concerns)	
<p>The visit took the form of an initial 30 minute meeting with Head of Assessment Planning, Julie Clarke, followed by a tour of the front line teams.</p> <p>There was a good general understanding of the need for change in light of the new Act, and of financial concerns.</p> <p>The workload of staff was high, but most seemed positive and proud of their work.</p> <p>There were mixed feelings in the run up to the new MASH, but most were hopeful for its success.</p>	
<u>Follow up action required or taken</u>	
Report to CPB	
<u>Name:</u> Councillor Geraint Hopkins	<u>Signature:</u> 
<u>Position:</u> Cabinet Member for Children's Social Services, Equalities and the Welsh Language	<u>Date:</u> 14.10.2015


Report of Visit to Front-Line Service

Present: Andrew Gwynn Service Director, Ann Batley Head of Service, Julie Clark Head of Service , Liz Pearce Head of Service	
Place of Visit: Children Services Remodelling Staff Consultation Event - Rhondda Sports Centre	Date: 5th February 2015
Comments: (Positive Messages or concerns)	
<p>All staff were invited to the event to discuss the Children Services remodelling and specifically the new framework for service delivery.</p> <p>Over 200 staff attended the three sessions that were organized for the day. There was a short presentation, a question and answer session and then an opportunity for staff to break into smaller groups to discuss what they had been told. They were also able to discuss other issues they had with individual senior staff</p> <p>All questions and discussions were recorded and replies to all queries were provided on the Staff Web Site after the event.</p>	
<u>Follow up action required or taken</u>	
<u>Name:</u> Ann Batley	<u>Signature:</u> 
<u>Position:</u> Service Director Children's Services	<u>Date:</u> 30th November 2015

Report of Visit to Front-Line Service

Present: Andrew Gwynn, Service Director, Ann Batley, Head of Service, Julie Clark, Head of Service, Liz Pearce, Head of Service, Gio Isingrini, Group Director, Councillor Geraint Hopkins.	
Place of visit: Children Services Remodelling Staff Consultation Event at Hawthorn Sports Centre	Date: 10th June 2015
Comments: (Positive Messages or concerns)	
<p>All staff were invited to the event to discuss the Children Services remodelling and specifically the new functions within each service area.</p> <p>Over 200 staff attended the two sessions. There was a short presentation, a question and answer session and then an opportunity for staff to break into smaller groups to discuss what they had been told. They were also able to discuss other issues they had with individual senior staff.</p> <p>All questions and discussions were recorded and replies to all queries were provided on the Staff Web Site after the event.</p>	
<u>Follow up action required or taken</u>	
<u>Name:</u> Ann Batley <u>Position:</u> Service Director Children's Services	<u>Signature:</u>  <u>Date:</u> 30th November 2015

Report of Visit to Front-Line Service

Present: Ann Batley, Service Director Children's Services , Julie Clark Head of Service , Liz Pearce, Head of Service	
Place of visit: Children Services Remodelling Staff Consultation Event at Rhondda Sports Centre and Hawthorn Sports Centre	Date: 21st October 2015
Comments: (Positive Messages or concerns)	
<p>All staff were invited to the event to discuss the Children Services remodelling and specifically the new staffing structure.</p> <p>Over 200 staff attended the two sessions. There was a short presentation, a question and answer session and then an opportunity for staff to discuss other issues they had with individual senior staff.</p> <p>All questions and discussions were recorded and replies to all queries were provided on the Staff Web Site after the event.</p>	
<u>Follow up action required or taken</u>	
<u>Name:</u> Ann Batley <u>Position:</u> Service Director Children's Services	<u>Signature:</u>  <u>Date:</u> 30th November 2015