

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 8th February, 2016 at 10am.

Present

County Borough Councillor G E Hopkins – In the Chair

County Borough Councillors:-

M E Davies, C Leyshon, M Norris, L Walker and M Weaver.

Officers in Attendance:-

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

Mr C Mann – Team Manager, Reviewing Team

E Phipps-Magill – NYAS.

Ms C Brown - Reviewing Officer

Mrs E Wilkins – Cabinet Business Officer

Young People Representatives

Mr R R

Miss A W

CSSIW

Mr D Marshall

34 WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS.

The Chairman welcomed and thanked the young people representatives for attending the meeting and also welcomed Mr D Marshall who had taken forward the position of Area Manager for RCT with the CSSIW. For the benefit of the representatives and Mr Marshall, introductions were made.

35 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors (Mrs) E Hanagan and Officers Mr G Isingrini and Mr P Lucas

36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

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

37 MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on the 7th December, 2015.

38 DEVELOPMENT OF LAC WEBSITE - YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONTRIBUTION.

With the assistance of the young people representatives the Team Manager (Reviewing Team) presented the Looked After Children Website to Members, which had recently been developed. The Board were advised that although there were items on the website that needed to be further developed, and pages needed to be further enhanced to allow the young people to achieve more from the website it was added that the development of a website alone was a huge step forward in this area, where previously there had been nothing.

From listening to the Team Manager and the young people representatives the following comments on the website were made:-

- Front page is eye catching and colourful although the mobile phone layout which was developed by the young people needs to be at the top of the page rather than the bottom.
- Pages need to be less 'wordy' – appreciate that they contain lots of important and necessary information but often the amount of detail can lose a person's focus. 'Short, Sharp and Snappy' messages or pieces of information would work better.
- Some of the pages look boring with words on a white background – needs to be more eye catching – colour / visuals / Emoji's (smiley faces)
- Could the mobile phone app layout be reproduced to the left hand side of each of the pages as a navigation tool?
- Consultation form is very basic.
- Nothing on the website to encourage young person's to revisit website after completing the review form – links to wicked website / blue print forum.

Following the discussions on the website the Board **Resolved** :-

- a) That the Group Director, Community & Children's Services review the resources available with the project to ensure the success of the website, for the benefit of Looked After Children.

The Chairman thanked the Team Manager and the young people representatives for their attendance at the meeting.

(At this juncture at the meeting the team manager, the reviewing officer and the young people representatives left the meeting)

39 ELECTED MEMBERS' VISITS TO FRONTLINE TEAMS IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES 2015-2016.

The Chairman presented the report which highlighted the feedback from Members following the visits undertaken by Members of the Board during December 2015 and January 2016 to two frontline offices.

Both reports highlighted the dedication and hard work of the staff met, the office accommodation settings along with staff's views to the remodelling of Children Services. The Chairman commented on the positive move to Ty Trevithick from Caradog.

Within both reports and further emphasised at the meeting the issue of Information Technology was raised. The Chairman reflected on the staff's comments in respect of lost 'down time' when the potential access to portable IT equipment – Laptops / Tablets could assist in this area, with both productivity and effectiveness as a team, as well as home working. The issue surrounding the increase of Domestic Violence and the impact on the team's workload was also highlighted.

The interim Service Director, Children's Services addressed the Members concerns advising that work was already being undertaken into the provision of agile working and IT equipment and advised that in respect of agile working a 'balance' was needed to ensure that the teams did not work in pure isolation if this was taken forward. The issue of mobile phones was also being reviewed as currently these were no longer part of a renewal contract.

The Chairman commented on the positive step in the overall development of IT from the Swift system to the CISS system, which was intended to be an All Wales compact system, which would improve efficiencies.

The issue of Domestic Violence highlighted within the report was also picked up by officers and the Acting Service Director Access, Engagement & Inclusion commented on the continual need to strengthen work in this areas within schools and spoke of the work already being undertaken in this area in both primary and secondary schools including work with the Well Being plan, but welcomed a further strengthening of partnership working with Community & Children's Services in this area.

The Interim Director also advised that the issues raised in respect of MASH and the delays with strategy meetings was also being taken forward.

The Board **RESOLVED:-**

- a. To note the contents of the report.
- b. That a further update on IT be presented to a future meeting of the Board.
- c. That Councillor Leyshon attend the safeguarding frontline visit on the 17th February at the Taff Office and that Cllr Weaver attend the frontline visit at Ty Trevithick on the 16th March.

40 SOCIAL SERVICES QUARTERLY COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS REPORT.

The Complaints and QA manager presented her report to the Board which provided an overview of the operation and effectiveness of the statutory social services complaints procedure between 1st July 2015 - 30th September, 2015.

Members were advised that the report contained information on the number of complaints received, the nature of the complaints and the lessons learnt, as well as detailing Councillor, AM and MP enquiries and the number of compliments received. It was advised that the report also provided a summary of the Welsh Governments Independent complaints secretariat of comparative figures from each Local Authority in Wales.

The officer took the opportunity to comment on the lack of detail within the Social Services And Wellbeing Act in respect of dealing with complaints and advised that the Welsh Government were reviewing this area. Reference was also made to the Welsh Government Benchmarking exercise also being undertaken in this area and the officer advised that RCT were in a very good position in comparison to other Authorities, with complaints being resolved at stage 1.

Members spoke on the 'process delays' with the system, with the officer advising that often the complaints have been resolved but have not been 'closed down' on the system.

The Chairman reflected on the training provided to members in respect of reporting complaints and compliments and spoke of Members hesitation to use the process, as they do not have a 'complaint' but a general query instead. The Chairman commented on the benefits of changing the title of the process and queried whether this could be done through the current Children Services Remodelling exercise. Members commented on the potential of re-titling the service to a 'Service Improvement Unit'.

Members queried whether direction was needed for AM/MPs with their concerns / queries and the Complaints and QA Manager advised of the different process followed for AM / MPs. The Officer commented on the current guide that was available for staff and proposed that this could be amended for the assistance of Members.

It was **RESOLVED** :-

- a. To Note the Contents of the Report.
- b. That the current staff guide be amended for Members
- c. That consideration be given to the re-titling of the Complaints and compliments service.

41 RESPONSE FROM CABINET TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TWO SCRUTINY WORKING GROUPS IN RELATION TO LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN.

The Chairman reminded the Board of the work undertaken by the two scrutiny working groups back in 2015 in respect of Looked After Children and referred the Board to the report before them which provided an action plan which addressed each of the scrutiny recommendations, and the actions needed.

The Interim Service Director commented on the plan, advising that the plan allowed for a 'golden thread' and made reporting back and monitoring of the actions a much easier process. Members commented positively on the actions highlighted to address the recommendations of the Scrutiny working groups.

The Chairman commented on the Welsh National steering group that he attends, looking strategically at LAC and best practice initiatives to safely reduce LAC in Wales.

The Board **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report.

42. CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Interim Service Director, Children's Services provided the Board with information regarding the Authority's use of non social work qualified staff and its effect in relation to the Welsh Government Performance Indicators.

The Board were advised that the CSSIW had previously raised the issue about the Council's use of 'unqualified workers' in comparison to the use of 'unqualified workers' by other Local Authorities. It was added that the CSSIW had not suggested that this was inappropriate but had highlighted that the Councils position differs from others in Wales.

The Interim Service Director reported to Members on the effect of the service using non social work qualified staff on a number of Welsh Government Performance Indicators. Her detailed report explained the use of non social work qualified, but nonetheless appropriately qualified and experienced staff in undertaking the required duties. The Officer also reported on the introduction of Assessor Care Manager (ACM) posts and their duties with details of the job description and person specification attached as an appendix to the report. Data on the allocation of cases over the last 5 years and performance trends were also provided. Members were advised that the service allocates cases to appropriately qualified staff and is focussing on improving early intervention and prevention services to reduce crisis interventions, and the Officer commented on the positive signs that the service are reducing LAC numbers

Members were advised that case allocations were monitored regularly through monthly supervision and in respect of child protection cases through the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board via the annual report process. It was re-emphasised that in RCT LAC are allocated to appropriately qualified and experienced workers and those that are not qualified social workers are allocated to those LAC who are in long term stable placements and where the risk has been assessed as being very low.

The Service Director, concluded that whilst the focus is on reducing the numbers of individuals requiring crisis intervention, the reliance on the role of the ACM will, for the foreseeable future, remain in its present state, which is greatly valued within the service. With the officer adding that the use of ACM staff will continue to be monitored in the light of service remodelling and the performance indicators set by the Welsh Government and the new requirements within the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for the report and commented that it was very useful for the Board to have clarification on the term 'unqualified' and the working within Children's Services.

Members commented positively on the roles of the 'unqualified' workers, who they felt were an integral part of the service and offered a consistent role within the social worker teams. Members commented on the ambiguity of using the term 'unqualified' and spoke of the qualification, skills and key experiences that such workers held.

Mr Marshall, CSSIW also commented on the report and referred to the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014 and the direction of travel with the Act and the long term goals that need to be achieved in this area.

The Board **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report.

43 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.

44 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 October – December 2015.

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

45 TREHERBERT REGULATION 32 REPORTS

The board were provided with information on the concerns raised in the Regulation 32 visit to Treherbert Community Home.

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

46 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

(a) **SANTA APPEAL**

The Chairman took the opportunity to advise the Board of the success of the December Santa Appeal, and commented that the appeal had received over and above the amount of gifts received in previous years and thanked all those who took part for their generosity.

(b) **ADVOCACY**

The Board received a verbal update from Ms Phipps-Magill (NYAS) in respect of the advocacy service available to young people and commented on the positive performance in this area, and the improving trends in performance.

The Board were informed that the awareness of the service was being raised and advised of the referrals to the service which were being made through IRO's and of the 'training principles' of advocacy which had been undertaken with social workers. Information regarding the national approach to advocacy was also mentioned and Members were advised of the two models of approach in respect of support for the 'Active Offer' which were currently before the Minister.

Ms Phipps-Magill also advised of the Independent Visitor Service provided by NYAS and spoke of the recruitment exercise being undertaken.

The referrals of advocacy for LAC were still currently low in comparison and Ms Phipps-Magill commented on the need to share and embed information in this area

Members queried who the advocacy offer was available to and were advised that the offer was open to any young person within the service. Ms Phipps-Magill was also queried on how the service could be further promoted and the Board were advised of the difficulties with promotion as Nyas did not have access to the Register and spoke that the key to promotion was closer working links with social workers.

Before concluding, the Chairman queried the young people's understanding of advocacy and Members were advised of the information available on the LAC website which promoted links to NYAS. Members commented on the potential of using the Dewis Hub in future as a further way of promotion.

The Chairman thanked the officer for the update and the Board **RESOLVED** to note the update.

G E Hopkins

Chairman

The meeting terminated at 12.05pm

