

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

7TH NOVEMBER 2016

REPORT OF THE CHAIR ON VISITS MADE TO FRONT LINE TEAMS BY MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board undertake scheduled visits to front line staff working in Children's Services in order to better inform members of the work undertaken by staff to safeguard the health and wellbeing of children in Rhondda Cynon Taf, particularly those who are in our corporate care, their various needs, and as a means of understanding the needs of those staff.

The visits are led by myself as Cabinet Member for Children's Services in my role as Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board, accompanied by other members of the Board arranged in rotation.

Since February 2016, I have made five front line visits to the following teams:

- **Taff Area Assessment and Care Planning (ACP)** teams, based at Courthouse Street, Pontypridd on 17th February 2016. (The last visit before the staff moved to Ty Trevithick);
- The **Safeguarding Team**, based at Ty Catrin, Pontypridd on 17th February 2016;
- The **Disabled Children's Team**, based at Ty Trevithick on 16th March 2016;
- The **West Intensive Team**, Tonypany on 13th September 2016, accompanied by Councillor M. Davies; and
- the **Glyncornel Centre**, Llwynypia on 18th October 2016, accompanied by Cllrs Hanagan and Walker.

I am grateful to the management and staff in each case for giving their valuable time and for their openness to discussion during each of these visits. In all locations, staff appeared well-motivated and clearly dedicated to their work for children in the County Borough.

We acknowledge the significant demand our staff face in working through a large number of cases, very often of course in challenging circumstances. We discussed on every occasion the work being done to make the Council ready for its new obligations and change of culture in light of the Social Services and Well Being Act, which has been in force in Wales since April. We further thank the staff for their cooperation and understanding during the remodelling of Children's Services.

In general, the move of Children's Services staff to Ty Trevithick has been positive, with many areas of service, such as those to disabled children, the assessment of children in the East, sharing offices with colleagues from education. This has the potential to improve cross-departmental working, which I hope would bring better outcomes for children.

I remain concerned that the most recent move of the Fostering Service to Ty Trevithick from Ty Pennant still requires some further work to ensure that the service can operate efficiently.

The Safeguarding Team at Ty Catrin has worked well to develop further our partnership working across the Cwm Taf region, particularly with the work of the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children Board. I had an interesting discussion with the Independent Reviewing Officers on their role in monitoring the quality of our work with children, particularly in light of the review of the role being conducted at an all-Wales level.

CLLrs Hanagan, Walker and myself were impressed with the work at Glynconel through the Miskin project and Rapid Intervention Teams to help children and families who are at risk, helping to keep families safely together.

Issues for the Board's Consideration

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. I have reported to the Board previously the feedback from staff on the importance of ICT, and the Board will be aware of discussions ongoing within the department to improve technology and access.

I suggest that the Board receive at its next meeting an assessment of the ICT requirements of the department and a report on progress made against that assessment.

At Tonypandy, staff parking remains an issue, but it is difficult to see how the matter could be improved easily. Further to my last report to the Board on Tonypandy, I am of the view that the appearance and decor of the entrance and reception area remains poor, and does not present well as a key public interface of the Council in the Rhondda. Nor does it appear to me to be particularly child-friendly.

I suggest the Board receives a presentation at a future meeting on the work of the Miskin Project and Rapid Intervention Teams to better inform our discussions around early intervention.

Finally, I should like to thank those Members of the Board who were able to take part in the visits, and encourage us to continue to conduct the visits as a means of furthering our understanding of the services to children in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

CLLR GERAINT HOPKINS

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EQUALITIES AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE

AND

CHAIR OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD