

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 23rd January 2017 at 10am.

Present

County Borough Councillor G E Hopkins – In the Chair

County Borough Councillors:-

(Mrs)E.Hanagan, L Walker, M Davies and M Weaver.

Officers in Attendance:-

Mr C Jones – Director, Legal & Democratic Services

Ms A Batley – Service Director, Children's Services

Ms L Pearce – Head of Safeguarding & Support

Ms M Meredith – Residential Services Manager

Ms J Davies – Service Manager for Safeguarding & Support

Ms J Thomas - Service Improvement, Engagement & Complaints Manager

Ms E Phipps-Magill – NYAS Cymru

Mr M Free – Service Manager

Ms J Walker – Project Worker

Ms L Woolrich – Senior Practitioner, Social Worker

Ms S Longhurst – Team Development & Performance Manager

Ms H Williams – Cabinet Business Officer

Others in Attendance:-

Mr J Llewellyn-Thomas – Independent Consultant undertaking Regulation 32 Inspections

Mr C Dunn - Voices from Care, Blue Print Forum

Ms A Lewis - Voices from Care, Blue Print Forum

Young Person Representative - Voices from Care, Blue Print Forum

36 WELCOME

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome Mr C Jones to his first meeting of the Board.

37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors J Watts and G Davies (RCT)

38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Councillor Walker declared a personal interest in Item 4 of the agenda – Miskin Project Annual Report.

39 MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** to approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on the 7th November, 2016.

40 EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC

It was **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.

41 REGULATION 32 REPORTS

Mr J Llewellyn-Thomas provided the Board with an update on the Regulation 32 visits undertaken at the three children's homes – Beddau, Bryndar and Nant Gwyn for October/November 2016, along with the process behind the visits.

Mr Llewellyn-Thomas outlined a summary of the Inspection outcomes and received questions from Members of the Board.

The Chair thanked Mr Llewellyn-Thomas for his continuous hard work and attendance of the meeting and it was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

42 CHANGE TO THE AGENDA

The Chairman changed the running order of the meeting and brought forward agenda item 5 – Blue Print Forum Progress Report.

43 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed the three representatives of the Blue Print Forum and introductions were made.

44 BLUE PRNT FORUM PROGRESS REPORT

Voices from Care representatives along with a young person provided the group with a summary of the work undertaken by the Blueprint Forum during July to December, 2016.

Members were 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. A Lewis 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 Vice Chair of the Board questioned the young person on her personal experiences and what she had learned whilst participating in the programme. The young person explained that her ambition was to ensure all young people received a possible experience and had support given to them. She added that she felt her experience in care gave her a better understanding of the needs of others and enables them to relate to her.

Questions formulated around Voices from Care and their relationship with local universities. C Dunn explained that they currently have stronger links with some universities since undertaking workshops and courses in partnership with them but developing stronger educational links with more universities was a key initiative for the future.

Members were advised of the initiatives for the next 6 months:

- To build relationships with those who have Corporate Parenting responsibilities in RCT; particularly with departments and bodies that sit outside of social services. The aim of this is to offer insight, advice and guidance on how to support looked after children and care leavers.
- To continue to build the relationship between the Corporate Parenting Panel and The Blueprint Forum. With the aim of scoping a 'critical friend' affiliation between the panel and young people.
- Working with RCT's 16+ team to scope the development of a 'drop in service' for care leavers.
- The group will be publishing their second newsletter, with assistance from RCT's press and promotions team. Additionally the group are keen on improving the engagement of young people in the newsletters content.
- To draft a 'work plan' for Blueprint forum for the year 2017/18.
- The group will continue to work with RCT on the development of the two sides website.
- Continuing to build link to teams, project and schemes within RCT.
- To engage with more young people, particularly those aged 14-16.

Members were praised the successes outlined within the report and were pleased to see the exciting initiatives such as the second newsletter which gives the young people a creative voice.

C Dunn took the opportunity to extend an invite to the Corporate Parenting Board to a number of upcoming events. The Young Person made reference to the 'Proud To Be Me' event, taking place at Cardiff City Stadium on 24th February, 2017 which would bring looked after children, care leavers and professionals together to explore what it means to be looked after.

Following discussions, the Chairman thanked the three representatives from Voices from Care Blue Print Forum for attending the meeting and as always, extended an invite to future meetings. It was added that hearing the experiences of young people was beneficial for the Board and would be welcomed in the future.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- a) That the Cabinet Business Officer collates a list of names that plan to attend the 'Proud to Be Me' event and let C Dunn know in advance.

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46 MISKIN PROJECT ANNUAL REPORT

Ms L Woolrich, Ms J Walker and Ms S Longhurst provided the Board with information and case studies in respect of the Miskin Project.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

N.B:- Following this item, the Chair & Vice Chair left the meeting and Councillor L Walker was appointed as Chair.

47 RAPID INTERVENTION RESPONSE TEAM ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

The Service Manager presented the Board with the Rapid Intervention Response Team Annual Report 2015-16. It was explained that the service became operational in April 2013 and following Children's Services remodelling, had been placed within the responsibility of the Head of Early Intervention Services.

The service aims to provide an urgent intense family focused service to both children/young people on the cusp of becoming looked after and children who are in the LAC system who need to be returned home. The officer explained that the key difference between the 'RIRT' service and the Miskin Project, was the 'RIRT' aimed to change behaviour and parenting skills as oppose to addressing crisis.

The Board were advised that in its inaugural year, the Rapid Intervention Response Service overcame a number of initial challenges, establishing a sound base in terms of staff, expertise and organisational skills on which to develop and not least gaining acceptance from the wider workforce, which was overcome. During 2014 to 2015 the service continued to build its experience and consolidate increasing significantly the numbers of families it worked with and achieving positive outcomes with many families e.g. 47% families that received support now being closed to Children's Services.

The Chair queried the combined base for the services at Glyn Cornel and how the officer felt that was working. The officer explained that, overall, the move had run smoothly with the young people respecting the environment.

Members were pleased with the annual report and it was **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report.

48 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO) REPORT

The Service Manager for Safeguarding & Support provided the Corporate Parenting Board with information about the activity of the IRO Service.

Members were advised of the key themes outlined within the report:

- Maintained good performance in relation to reviews being held within timescale despite significant increase in numbers of CLA Reviews and consequent rise in IRO caseloads.
- Developments in organisation of Reviewing Service.
- The 2Sides website which was developed in consultation with children and young people and went live in April 2016.
- Increasing participation of children, young people and their families in the Reviewing process.
- Use of the resolution process and the IRO quality assurance role.
- Implications of the Social Service and Well-being Act 2014
- Strengthening links with Advocacy Providers and with CAF/CASS

It was explained that 920 review meetings were due between 1st April – 30th September 2016 in this 6 month period, which was an increase of 137 since the last reporting period.

Members were pleased with the reviewing process which promotes participation of the child and their family, commenting that despite the increase in case loads, performance and timescales had been positive overall.

Members also recognised the added pressure put on officers with the implementation of the new Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 but were pleased to see that this has not compromised the high standards of practice within the department.

The Chair raised concerns about the increase in numbers and what this meant for out of County children. The officer advised that last September, there were approximately 26% of children out of county, which is problematic but that visiting remained a key element of the review process.

Following discussions the Board **RESOLVED**:-

- a. To note the contents of the report.

49 SOCIAL SERVICES QUARTERLY COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS REPORT – QUARTER 2

Service Improvement, Engagement & Complaints Manager provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the operation and effectiveness of the statutory Social Services complaints procedure between 1st July 2016 - 30th September 2016.

The report contained information on the number of complaints received, the nature of the complaints and any lessons learnt as well as detailing councilor, A.M and M.P enquiries and the number of compliments received.

As an attachment to the Complaints Quarterly Report was a summary provided by the Welsh Government's Independent Complaints Secretariat of comparative figures from each Local Authority in Wales. The figures showed the number of complaints dealt with by each Local Authority at Stage 2 and those that progressed to Stage 3. Whilst the comparison does not indicate the total number of complaints received it provides an indication of how well Local Authorities effectively manage complaints at Stage 1 and 2 thus avoiding them escalating to Stage 3. The total number of complaints for 2011/12 relating to children's services was 77 with only 2 progressing to the next Stage both of which were resolved successfully.

The officer advised that, overall, the statutory Social Services complaints procedure between 1st July 2016 - 30th September 2016 was positive with the statistics remaining fairly low.

Members queried the issues with timescales highlighted within the report and it was explained that often, this is due to lack of communication internally which was being improved upon.

Members were pleased to see that there were no formal complaints received via corporate scheme and that the number of compliments remained steady at 19 compared to last year's 20.

Members were pleased with the contents contained within the report and it was **RESOLVED:**

- a) To note the contents of the report and the work undertaken by the complaints unit

50 NYAS QUARTERLY UPDATE

Ms E Phipps–Magill presented the Board with the quarterly narrative report on behalf of NYAS for the period 1st September – 30th November 2016 which was tabled at the meeting.

Members were advised that the highest number of advocacy referrals received this quarter, were requests for advocacy representation and support at meetings. It was proposed that an operational task group be set up in the future, involving NYAS and RCT to ensure all young people are provided with an offer of advocacy at key times.

It was explained that placement issues and contact with family members remained recurring themes in the quarter, with young people reporting an improvement in being made aware of and consulted with regard to their family contact arrangements.

Discussions ensued on the key recommendations highlighted within the report, with the Members pleased to note the increase of advocacy referrals for young people with disabilities/additional needs.

Members of the Board spoke positively of the report, commenting that it provided a positive indication that young people had a better understanding of their care plans.

One Member queried the work NYAS conducted within schools and it was explained that there are strict guidelines within the service, where the young person must be known.

Members **RESOLVED:-**

- a) To note the contents of the report.

The meeting terminated at 12pm

Councillor L Walker

Chair