

Subject to approval at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board

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 6th November, 2017.

Present

County Borough Councillor G E Hopkins – In the Chair

County Borough Councillors:-

C Leyshon, J Rosser, R Yeo, M Weaver

Officers in Attendance:-

Mr C Jones – Director, Legal and Democratic Services

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

Ms A Batley – Service Director, Children's Services

Ms G Davies - Service Director, Access, Engagement & Inclusion

Ms J Thomas - Service Improvement, Engagement & Complaints Manager

Ms S Edwards – Service Manager

Mr C Mann – Reviewing Team Manager

Ms J Davies – Service Manager, Safeguarding and Support

Ms H Williams – Senior Executive & Regulatory Business Officer

Others in Attendance:-

Ms J Matthews – Fostering Network

Mr C Turner – Fostering Network

Mr C Dunn – Voices from Care

Ms A Lewis – Voices from Care

Young Person Representative – Voices from Care

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22. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome Members to the meeting and apologies were received from Councillor J James, Councillor S Rees-Owen and Ms E Phipps-Magil.

Introductions were made around the table.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, there were no declarations of interest declared pertaining to the agenda.

24. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

It was **RESOLVED**:

- a) To approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on the 25th September, 2017.

The Chair referred Members to Minute No. 16, where the resolution to 'report information in respect of Independent Placement Providers for Children Looked After' was outlined. The Chair advised that a report would be included in January's Board meeting to discuss the options available in moving forward.

25. CHANGE TO THE AGENDA

The Chairman changed the running order of the agenda in order for representation from the Fostering Network to speak first.

26. FOSTERING WELLBEING PROGRAMME

Representatives from the Fostering Network, Mr C Turner and Ms J Matthews provided the Board with information in respect of the pilot Fostering Wellbeing Programme which was being delivered in partnership with the Cwm Taf Social Services and Wellbeing Board.

The representatives explained that the Cwm Taf region was fortunate enough to be selected for the two year programme, adapted from England, which would improve outcomes for children in the local area.

It was explained that there would be three phases of five master classes built on easily understood language, starting in November 2017. The classes would involve multidisciplinary teams working together to meet the needs of the children.

Members of the Board were assured that the work of the Wellbeing Programme would complement the work already conducted by Cwm Taf, underpinning the principles of Social Wellbeing.

The Deputy Cabinet Member, Children & Young People raised concerns about attendance at the meetings, commenting that schedules may not allow for those

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involved to attend the five dates. The Cabinet Member was told that the three 'waves' of sessions meant that those involved should have the opportunity to attend at least one, and that twilight sessions would be available for those who need a catch up.

The Chair queried the sustainability of the programme and the intention after the two year programme is complete. The officers explained that an independent evaluation conducted by Cardiff University in respect of wellbeing and its impact on education would tie in with the programme and the feedback could be evidenced to Welsh Government for long term funding.

The officers went onto explain that, irrespective of funding, the principles learned from the two year programme would be adapted and embedded into every day working.

The Group Director, Community and Children's Services praised the efforts put into the Programme by the officers and assured them that support and guidance would be available from the Board should they need any.

An invitation was extended to Board Members to join or observe the master classes should they wish to do so.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED:**

- a) To note the contents of the report
- b) That dates of the master classes would be provided to Elected Members

27. BLUEPRINT FORUM

Mr C Dunn, Voices from Care, noted that there were new Members present on the Board since the last visit, and presented a short introduction on Voices from Care and the services they provide.

The Young Person representative took the opportunity to discuss some of the activities and achievements of the Blueprint Forum over the previous few months:-

- **Arts Consultation with Jessica Jenkins, Youth Arts Coordinator, RCT** – The young people learned of different creative opportunities available to them locally.
- **Cwm Taf Health Board Workshop** – An opportunity for young people to provide feedback on the services provided by the NHS – what was being conducted well and what could be improved?
- **Bristol Zoo** – A social opportunity for the young people
- **Erasmus Residential** – Trips to Llangranog and Glan Llyn, where the young people attended two National Conferences on Corporate Parenting to discuss their views and ideas
- **Choir** – This had been developed, not only for the young people, but for their carers etc to come together, in the hope of performing at Cardiff's Festival of Voice in the future

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- **Alfie's Army** – Four young people took part in the BBC production Alfie's Army where they successfully completed Cardiff's Half Marathon
- **Street Football Wales Women's Cup** – Girls from the Blueprint Forum took part in their first football cup with others, and successfully went on to play in the Homeless World Cup.

The Board were pleased to hear of the tremendous successes of the Blueprint Forum.

The Chair queried the feedback of the young people from the Cwm Taf Health Board Workshop and it was explained that the two areas which they felt could be improved upon were aftercare support services for young people and mental health services.

One Member queried whether there were groups available in RCT which offer support to young people with mental health issues. The Service Director, Access, Engagement & Inclusion advised the representatives of a website service known as 'WICID' which provides support, information and guidance to young people aged 11-25 year old.

The representatives were also made aware of a Children & Young People Mental Health Sub Group chaired by the Service Director, Children & Young People. Members agreed that signposting of services was highly important and that it would be beneficial for the Sub Group to meet with Voices from Care to hear of their feedback in respect of mental health services available in the area.

The Reviewing Team Manager questioned how RCT compared to other Local Authorities in terms of numbers participating in the Blueprint Forum. Ms A Lewis explained that although not many young people have signed up from the local area, this could be due to a number of factors, such as their personal preference not to join.

The issue of signposting was again highlighted, with officers expressing the need for positive stories and outcomes to be advertised to Social Workers and teachers in order to raise awareness of the opportunities available. The Deputy Cabinet Member, Children & Young People added that Head Teachers should be encouraged to delegate the position of key support of CLA to teachers, to allow for consistency at meetings.

Moving forward, representatives from Voices from Care discussed how they envision building upon their relationship with the Local Authority. Conversations ensued around interactive videos where Members of the Board would see more of the young people.

The Group Director, Community & Children's Services added that he would like to be more involved in the work of Voices from Care and questioned whether the young people felt this would be beneficial. Representatives advised that they would take this back to the young people to determine the best avenue for regular conversation.

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It was **RESOLVED**:

- a) To note the content of the report
- b) That the Service Director, Access, Engagement & Inclusion would provide the representatives from Voices from Care with contact details for the Council's Youth Engagement Officer

28. CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17

The Chair provided the Board with an opportunity to comment on the draft Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report for 2016-17 which was displayed before Members.

Members agreed that the report entailed an appropriate amount of information in respect of the work conducted in 2016-17 and that the report outlined aims for the current Municipal Year.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- a) To approve the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2016-17 for its submission to Cabinet.

29. OUTCOMES OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER (CLA) IN RCT DURING THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2015/16.

The Service Director, Access, Engagement & Inclusion provided the Board with an update on the educational outcomes of Children Looked After (CLA) in RCT during the academic year 2015/2016.

The officer advised that the report included both Local and National data; however the two were not directly comparable as the National data measured children both in and outside of RCT.

Members were referred to table 2 of the report where the Children Looked After per 10,000 population were outlined. Members were pleased to see that Rhondda Cynon Taf remained consistent in 2014-15 and 2015-16 with only a 0.81% increase. The Chair queried why there was such a drastic increase in other Local Authorities such as Blaenau Gwent, with the officer explaining that there is no direct reason for this as Children Looked After numbers are dependent on several factors.

Members were referred to table 4 of the report where the percentage of children with three or more placements during the year was outlined. Members were pleased to see that RCT equated to 6% which was the lowest level for Wales.

The officer referred to section 4.6 of the report where it was evidenced that only 14% of the 381 children in care who were of the statutory school age experienced one or more change of school that was not down to transition. The officer added that it was

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important to note that a change in school placement can sometimes be a positive change for the young person.

The officer went on to compare the Key Stage 2, 3 and 4 examination results of 2015/16 to those achieved in 2014/15. Members were pleased to see that Key Stage 2 and 3 results were either in line or above the all Wales average with a significant increase shown in the Core Subject Indicator at Key Stage 3.

Lastly, Members were referred to table 7 of the report, where attendance data was indicated. The officer explained that there had been an encouraging rate of 97.31% attendance for CLA in primary schools and 94.25% for those attending secondary schools. It was also pleasing to note that exclusion rates had been reduced since published data in 2014/15.

The Chair thanked the officer for the comprehensive report, commenting that overall the report showed progress and highlighted areas which would continue to be monitored such as Key Stage 4.

Discussions ensued around the need to drive forward the preventative agenda, in line with the Future Generations Act in order to prevent aspects of the young person's life spiralling out of control and affecting other areas such as education.

A debate arose in respect of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and what action could be taken to improve it. The Group Director, Community & Children's Services commented that it was vital for each service area to take preventative measures to fully support the CLA at an early stage.

The Young Person added that services might improve if young people had more involvement.

Following lengthy discussions, the Board **RESOLVED:**

a) To note the information contained within the report.

30. VALE, VALLEYS AND CARDIFF REGIONAL ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17

The Service Director, Children's Services referred Members to the Regional Adoption Annual Report 2016-17 and explained that this would be presented to a meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee on 8th November, 2017.

The Group Director, Community & Children's Services, commented that the report was robust and that the four Local Authorities were working together in order to improve the delivery plan.

Members of the Board agreed that there were a number of issues outlined within the report, including the decrease in recruitment of adopters at a time when the need was increasing. The Board felt it was necessary to await the feedback of the Scrutiny Committee.

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It was **RESOLVED**:

- a) To note the contents of the report.

31. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO) REPORT

The Service Manager, Safeguarding and Support provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on the work of the IRO Service.

It was explained that the reviews were high in conjunction with the numbers of Children Looked After, but that IROs had been working above statutory duty and remaining flexible with reviews to meet the needs of the children.

The Service Manager explained that older young people can be the most challenging in terms of the support available. For example, the IRO might review placements which may not necessarily meet all their needs due to the lack of availability.

Members of the Board were advised of the IRO Service's next steps in order to improve the service delivered to young people:-

- Work would continue to be undertaken with the Social Worker and the involvement of the young person to improve care plans
- Strengthening the link between the IRO and the young person outside of meetings to make them aware that support is available
- Work to ensure the same IRO is present for all meetings with the young person.

The Board were pleased with the comprehensive report with the Chair praising the steps being put in place to ensure a consistent approach is taken with the young people.

N.B:- Following the presentation of this report, Councillors J Rosser and M Weaver left the meeting.

32. SOCIAL SERVICES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

The Service Improvement, Engagement & Complaints Manager provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the operation of effectiveness of the statutory Social Services complaints procedure between 1st April 2017 – 30th June 2017.

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

The officer advised that there had been an increase in informal complaints in the first quarter compared to the previous and that this was most likely due to the

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unreasonable and/or persistent complainers. Members of the Board were advised that work was being undertaken in order to identify these people earlier.

It was explained that there had been a drop in the number of AM and MP complaints and that training would be conducted in January 2018 for newly Elected Members which in turn, should increase their number of complaints carried through the appropriate channel.

The officer added that complaints received regarding frontline services such as the Cwm Taf MASH remained low.

The Chair praised the Service Manager and staff at the Complaints Unit for their tolerance when dealing with difficult complaints and was pleased to hear that the majority were dealt with at the informal stage.

The Board **RESOLVED:**

- a) To note the contents of the report.

33. NYAS

The Board **RESOLVED:**

- a) To note the contents of the report.

34. 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.

35. CSSIW INSPECTION REPORT

The Residential Services Manager provided the Board with an update on the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales unannounced inspections which took place at Beddau, Bryndar and Nantgwyn children's homes between June and August 2017.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- a) To note the content of the report

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36. REGULATION 32 REPORTS

The Residential Services Manager provided the Board with an update on the Regulation 32 visits undertaken at the three children's homes – Beddau, Bryndar and Nantgwyn.

The officer outlined a summary of the inspection outcomes and it was **RESOLVED:**

- a) To note the contents of the report

The meeting terminated at 11:50am

**Councillor G Hopkins
Chair**