



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board meeting held on Monday, 19 November 2018 at 10.00 am at the Block F, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

County Borough Councillors - Corporate Parenting Board Members in attendance:-

Councillor C Leyshon (Chair)

Councillor J Rosser Councillor R Yeo
Councillor L Jones

Officers in attendance

Mr G Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Mr C Jones, Director, Legal & Democratic Services
Ms A Batley, Service Director, Children's Services
Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion
Ms J Thomas, Complaints & QA Manager, Social Services
Ms C Miles, Childcare Solicitor
Ms E Phipps-Magill (NYAS)
Ms E Jones (NYAS)
Ms K Edmonds-Daniel (RCT Forum)
Ms T. Evans (RCT Forum)

21 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors G. Hopkins, J. James and S. Rees-Owen.

22 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

23 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board meeting held on the 24th September, 2018.

24 Children Looked After: Website Advancements

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Reviewing Team Manager provided the Corporate Parenting Board with information on the RCT 2Sides website. The officer explained that the 2Sides website had been commissioned by RCT Children's Services with the support of the Corporate Parenting board, as a resource intended to provide Children Looked After and young people with necessary information.

It was explained that on 28th August, 2018, the Reviewing Team, alongside Voices from Care arranged a consultation day with a small group of Children Looked After to revisit the 2Sides website with the vision to improve its content, concept and appearance. During the consultation, the group felt that although the original concept of the website was positive, it lacked various opportunities, wasn't well publicised and was considered to be dated. The young people felt that in order to increase its use, it would need to be more interactive and modern in appearance, with less text.

Another improvement mentioned by the consultation group was to include hyperlinks to and from the Wicid website. The officer provided the Board with a short demonstration of the Wicid website, which is a central source of information for young people, regardless of whether they are looked after. As well as upcoming local events and cultural activities, the website seeks to promote mental health awareness and information on budgeting, housing and education. The officer spoke of the challenge of producing completely new content for the 2Sides website, and explained that the use of a hyperlink to and from 2Sides and Wicid would be beneficial to users of both websites.

It was explained that a group of young people would meet again in 2019, to work on simplifying the content and appearance of 2Sides, with the intention of making it more accessible to younger children and as a hub of information. The officer added that there was potential for Children Looked After to develop their own animation to for the website to show others that support is available.

The Group Director, Community & Children's Services praised the work undertaken to improve the 2Sides website, recognising the value of the website but the challenge of putting the resources into its development.

Members recognised that many Local Authorities do not provide the provision and that RCT would continue to learn and progress the 2Sides website. One Member commented on the need to link 2Sides to third party websites in order to direct young people to the information they need, whether that be general or specific to Children Looked After.

Referring to the Children Looked After animation; representatives from NYAS advised that they could send over current videos used for different age demographics which could also be included on the website.

The Chair thanked the officer for the exciting update and asked that a further update is provided to the Board in the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

- a) To note the update;
- b) To receive a further update in the 2019/20 Municipal Year

25 **Blueprint Forum**

Ms K. Edmonds-Daniel, Voices from Care, introduced herself to the Board and advised Members that the Blueprint Forum had recently changed its name to RCT Forum with the permission of the young people. As a result of the change, the RCT Forum were working on rebranding themselves and widening their approach through outreach work.

Ms Edmonds-Daniel highlighted some of the work undertaken by the RCT Forum during the months April, 2018 – September, 2018, which included both local and National activities:

- **NSPCC** – The Forum had partnered with the NSPCC to focus on how positive mental health can be achieved;
- **NYAS Peer Advocacy Training** – Members of the Forum had undertaken a two day accredited course, focussing on becoming effective representatives for care experienced young people;
- **Two Sides Website** – Participants had worked closely with the RCT IRO team to consult with care experienced young people to develop the RCT Two Sides website content

Ms T. Evans introduced herself to the Board, and informed Members that she was once a young person from Voices from Care, and had since been successfully appointed as a Trainee Support Officer within the organisation. Ms Evans spoke of her placement duties which included various administration tasks and a number of projects which she felt passionate about. One particular project which Ms Evans had been involved in since its inception was the Young Person Group, which had been launched to identify young people needing support in school and to provide peer support to those transitioning at the age of sixteen.

One Member praised the achievements of the RCT Forum and questioned whether events such as the Hay Literary Festival held in May, 2018 were well attended as it can provide both a fun and educational opportunity for young people. Ms K. Edmonds-Daniel advised that the numbers of participants present at each activity varies but usually consists of 5 – 10 young people at the local events and approximately 15 at the Regional events.

The Chair thanked the representatives from the RCT Forum for sharing the ongoing successes with the Board and providing a firsthand detailed account of their experiences. The Member praised the continued success of Ms T. Evans and welcomed her to attend future meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED**:

- a) To note the content of the report;
- b) That the Service Director, Children's Services send the RCT Forum contact details of officers from the 16+ Team and IRO Team.

26 **NYAS**

Ms E. Phipps-Magill, NYAS, introduced the Corporate Parenting Board to her colleague Ms. E. Jones who would be representing NYAS at future meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Ms E. Jones provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update of progress made by the NYAS for the Quarter 2 period. It was explained that 128 new referrals were received in the period which included 82 Active Offers of Advocacy referrals and 46 issue based advocacy support.

It was advised that the majority of the referrals were from young people, which was positive and evidenced the success of the Active Offer. Much like previous quarters, the age demographic of young people using the service ranged

between 12 – 16 years, with the most common advocacy issues concerning placements and contacts.

Referring to the Eligibility Criteria table outlined within the report, the officer advised that there was a need to raise awareness of the service for care leavers who had a distinctively lower number of users.

Members were pleased to hear that regular managerial meetings had been diarised for officers from RCT and NYAS and were positively strengthening links to provide support for young people.

Members were pleased to hear that the response rate of the Active Offer was high, indicating the success of advocacy awareness.

Discussions ensued around the positive work of the Unity Project who were establishing links with the Council's Resilient Families team and Voices from Care. Members agreed that it would be beneficial for representatives of Unity Project to attend a future meeting of the Board.

The Group Director, Community & Children's Services queried whether there was data which evidenced the positive outcomes of advocacy for young people, with Members noting the need to track both the soft and hard outcomes. Representatives from NYAS explained that it was difficult to formally evidence data, as often young people don't fill out feedback forms but that it would be possible to compile evidence for specific outcomes until Welsh Government publish their outcomes framework.

Following discussion, the Chair took the opportunity to thank Ms E. Phipps-Magill for her attendance and positive input at meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED** to:

- a) Note the content of the report;
- b) Invite representatives from the Unity Project to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

27 Independent Sector Monitoring

The Service Director, Children's Services provided the Corporate Parenting Board with information regarding the commissioning and monitoring of external placements for Children Looked After in RCT, which had been previously requested by Members.

The officer reminded Members that the process for identifying placements for children and young people involves RCT placement officers initially reviewing internal resources available. Where a suitable match fails to be identified, officers search external placements available on the Children's Commissioning Support Resource (CCSR), an online secure portal developed by the Welsh Government.

The officer explained that as of the 18th October, 2018, RCT had placed 163 children and young people within the external independent fostering sector and 30 children and young people within the external residential care sector. Members acknowledged that the number may differ slightly to that in the report due to the ever-changing number of Children Looked After within RCT.

The officer reminded Members that RCT is a member of the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4C's) and commission placements with external providers through the All Wales Framework and that there are also 49 non-framework providers currently operating or looking to develop provision in Wales. Members were assured that although Non-Framework providers don't undergo the quality assurance checks of the 4C's, they are continually monitored through the review process and must also be CIW registered.

The Group Director, Community & Children's Services commented that numbers had been stabilised and that the annual report evidenced improvements since the 2016-17 report.

The Chair thanked the officer for the update and stated the importance of the Board enhancing their understanding of the Non-Framework providers and the reviewing process.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED** to note the content of the report.

28 Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Regional Adoption Annual Report

The Service Director, Children's Services provided the Corporate Parenting Board with the Regional Adoption Annual Report 2017-18 and explained that it had been presented to a meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee on 7th November, 2018, who were pleased that previous recommendations had been implemented with more resources.

Members were advised that due to accommodation issues, the team who were based at Ty Pennant were now based in Barry but were minimising their travelling through agile working.

Members were referred to section 4.2 of the report where they learned that 86 children had been placed for adoption during the year which was a 6% increase on the previous year. The officer explained that 51 children out of the 86 were placed within the region and that 23% of the placements made were for children in sibling groups which indicated an increasing trend.

The officer spoke of the provision of Life Journey Material for children, advising Members that during the year, 68% of children had the materials put in place by the second Adoption Review. The officer assured Members that, as evidenced within the table on page 54 of the report, the above figure does not mean that the material isn't provided, but that it doesn't always meet the deadline of the second review.

Discussions ensued around the decrease in recruitment of adopters which Members recognised as a National issue. The officer advised that the VVC had appointed someone to specifically work on the marketing aspect of increasing the number of adopters in the region.

The Chair thanked the officer for the update and acknowledged the need for more adopters at a time where the numbers of Children Looked After are rising.

It was added that the appointment of the marketing officer was crucial in this process and that an update would be welcomed in the future.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED** to note the content of the report.

29 Children Looked After: Educational Outcomes

The Head of Inclusion Services provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on the educational outcomes of Children Looked After in Rhondda Cynon Taf during the academic year 2016/2017.

The officer advised that the report included both Local and National data; however the two were not directly comparable due to varied reporting mechanisms.

Members were referred to table 2 of the report where the Children Looked After per 10,000 population was outlined. Members noted that there had been a 10.62% increase in respect of RCT data since 2015-16 but acknowledged that RCT is the second largest Local Authority and that the increase was fairly consistent across Wales.

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 8% which is at the lower end of the range when looking at the national picture.

The officer went on to discuss the provisional examination results achieved in 2017/18, advising Members that they could not be directly compared to the 2016/17 tables in the report. The officer explained that there had been improvements but there was a need to continue to monitor the progress of Key Stage 4.

Members were pleased to learn that the provisional results indicated that RCT had achieved a higher attendance rate than the National average, with an increase in the primary school attendance rate in comparison to the previous year and a slight dip in secondary school attendance.

The officer advised that the provisional 2017/18 data indicated that there had been a decrease in the exclusion rate of pupils within RCT but that the actual number had increased along with National figures.

Members spoke of the Children Looked After Friendly School Resource, an informative and easily understandable tool for schools, which was funded by the Pupil Deprivation Grant. The officer advised that 22 schools were currently enrolled on the programme with the intention of the Resource contributing to future improvements. The Chair queried whether a school needed to have a minimum number of Children Looked After to participate to which the officer advised there was no specific number.

The Group Director, Community & Children's Services was pleased to see that the report outlined a stability of placements within RCT. The officer questioned whether RCT educational attainment data could be compared to other Local Authorities, to which the officer explained that data was limited but there was a potential to compare across the Consortium.

The Chair thanked the officer for the detailed report and the Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED**:

- a) To note the content of the report;
- b) That the officer bring back a report in March, 2019 detailing the final 2017/18 Educational Outcomes for Children Looked After

30 To consider passing the following under-mentioned Resolution:

It was **RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act.

31 Social Services Quarterly 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 July, 2018 – 30th September, 2018.

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.

Members were pleased that the number of compliments received during the quarter outweighed the number of complaints and following consideration, Members **RESOLVED** to note the content of the report.

32 Regulation 32 reports

In the absence of the Residential Services Manager, the Service Director, Children's Services 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** to note the content of the report.

(Note: The Service Director, Children's Services advised Members that following recent changes to Welsh Government Regulations, future children's home visits would be conducted internally with quarterly updates presented to the Corporate Parenting Board. Recognising the value of the independent reviews undertaken by Mr J. Llewellyn-Thomas, and the constructive criticism and challenge that comes with them, the officer assured Members that Mr J. Llewellyn-Thomas would seek to undertake annual inspections of the three children's homes. Members thanked Mr. J. Llewellyn-Thomas for his invaluable work)

This meeting closed at 11.50 am

**Cllr C Leyshon
Chairman.**