

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 June, 2016

- PRESENT:**
- Dr Gwynne Jones (Chief Executive)
 - Councillor Kenneth Hughes (Portfolio Member for Education)
 - Councillor Aled M Jones (Portfolio Member for Housing and Social Services)
 - Councillor Dylan Rees (Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)
 - Mrs Sue Willis (Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board)
 - Dr Caroline Turner (Assistant Chief Executive & Designated Statutory Director of Social Services)
 - Ms Anwen Huws (Head of Children's Services)
 - Llyr Bryn Roberts (Principal Officer – Corporate Parenting & Partnerships)
 - Gareth Llwyd (Service Manager – Safeguarding & Quality Assurance)
 - Dawn Owen (Child Placement Team Leader)
 - Steve Pimblett (Interim LAC Team Manager)
 - Bethan Morris Jones (Senior Manager for School Standards)
 - Llinos Edwards (LAC Nurse)
 - Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)
- APOLOGIES:**
- Councillor Ieuan Williams (Leader of the Council), Mr Douglas Watson (Chair, Anglesey Foster Carers' Association), Mrs Rona Jones (Independent Reviewing Officer), Heulwen Owen (LAC Education Liaison Officer), Alex Kaitell (Interim Principal Officer Operations)
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1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2. MINUTES OF THE 7TH MARCH, 2016 MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 7th March, 2016 were presented and confirmed as correct.

3. MATTERS ARISING

- **Impact on Education Resources of Children placed on Anglesey by other Local Authorities**

The Senior Manager for School Standards tabled a report which provided an analysis of the impact on educational resources of meeting the needs of the 27 children who have been placed in care on Anglesey by other local authorities.

The Officer highlighted the following points:

- That of the cohort of 27 children, 20 are on the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) register; of these 7 are pupils who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs and 7 are subject to School Plus provision.
- Whilst placing authorities do not contribute to the additional learning needs capitation allowance they do fund the classroom assistants and/or lessons provided by specialist teachers and any resources required for children with a SEN Statement. However, the cost of administrating the Statement as well as the time spent by the ALN Co-ordinator in providing support and monitoring the provision is borne by Anglesey's Education Authority.

- The greatest cost falling on Anglesey's Education Authority comes as a result of those children placed in care on Anglesey who are School Plus pupils. The individual school and thereby Anglesey's Education Authority is responsible for the entire cost of the support and provision for these pupils along with the administrative costs and a percentage of the ALN Co-ordinator's time.
- No funding is provided by the placing authority in respect of the capitation allowance in relation to mainstream education.
- Based on the information available, the total financial impact from an educational perspective of the children currently placed in care on Anglesey by other local authorities is £188,263.

The Senior Manager for School Standards advised that the figures presented are in certain respects a general approximation of the costs incurred particularly with regard to the costs of administering Statements which are difficult to quantify with accuracy.

The Panel considered the information presented and noted the following points –

- The Panel recognised that the data provided is a best estimate of what it costs the Authority to provide educational support for the children placed in its care by other authorities given that there are no formulaic means of determining those costs.
- That the Panel would find it helpful to be able to obtain a more holistic picture of the effects children placed in its care by other authorities have on education apart from the cost impact, and conversely the school effect on children who are looked after who by virtue of their status, are vulnerable.
- The Panel noted that it may be challenging for primary schools in circumstances where a school has to provide and tailor appropriate support for one looked child from another area within the school, and that the challenge for secondary schools on the other hand relates more to identifying looked after children from other local authority areas who come into the system so as to be able to secure the appropriate provision for them.
- The Panel noted that although placing authorities are obligated to notify the host authority of any care placement made within its area and to share information about the child who is the subject of the placement, this does not always happen. It was recognised that it is sometimes difficult to obtain notification about such placements and consequently to identify the children so placed and therefore meet their needs.
- The Panel also recognised that the Authority in Anglesey itself makes out of area placements where the need arises which may balance out the children placed by other authorities within Anglesey. The Panel was informed that Anglesey does seek to meet the school transport costs of looked after children in an attempt to provide them with stability as regards their school placement.
- The Panel noted that it would like to re-visit the information presented when the LAC Education Liaison Officer is present and able to provide further clarification as to what the figures signify and what messages if any, the Panel is able to draw from them.

It was agreed to note the information and that the Panel re-visits the report for further discussion at its next meeting.

NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING

- **Life in Residential Care: Exploring the Experiences of Welsh Looked After Children and Young People**

The Head of Children's Services reported that the Children's Commissioner for Wales had decided that consistent with her remit derived from the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children's Commissioner for Wales Act and Regulations 2001, she would report on the experiences of looked after children and young people in residential care homes from the perspective of how effective they are in safeguarding and promoting the rights and well-being of children and young people. The Officer confirmed that interviews with children and young people residing in residential care homes had taken place during the fourth quarter of 2015/16; she had been part of a specialist workshop to consider the initial outcomes from this phase of the work with children and young people. The Commissioner proposes to report on the findings of the project later in 2016.

It was agreed to note the information.

NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING

- **Raising the Ambitions and Educational Attainment of Children who are Looked After in Wales**

The Senior Manager for School Standards tabled a report which provided a summary of how the Education Authority as the lead service with regard to the Welsh Government Strategy for raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales is addressing the local authority related actions within the report with a view to achieving completion by Autumn, 2016.

The Officer said that in order to fulfil the requirements of the new Strategy, it is essential that the Authority and its schools will have achieved the following:

- Ensured that each school has mapped and reviewed its current provision for looked after children so that there is consistency across the Authority's schools.
- Strengthened the systems for monitoring progress and pastoral care as well as the well-being of looked after children within schools.
- Reviewed training for all school staff.
- Ensured that there is regular reporting of the attainments of looked after children and that schools have in place procedures for monitoring and improving their performance.
- Reported on looked after children's school attendance and made the School Welfare Officers aware of those children.
- Strengthened admission procedures for looked after children.

Work on the second, third and fourth areas above has already commenced in meetings with designated Looked After Children staff in the secondary sector. A presentation on the Strategy is to be made to the next meeting of Head teachers and a report back on the above tasks will be made via the Inclusion Group.

The Officer said that as regards joint working with Children's Services on the Strategy, two initial meetings have been held to discuss the establishment of a task group, and in the second meeting consideration was given also to the role specification of the LAC Education Liaison Officer in light of the new Strategy.

The Panel noted the information and requested that it be provided with a further update at its next meeting in September, 2016.

ACTION ARISING: The Panel to be provided with a further update report at its meeting in September, 2016

- **Health Matters**

The LAC Nurse presented a report which outlined from a BCUHB perspective the range of sexual health service provision currently available to look after children and care leavers on Anglesey along with the current figures in relation to local pregnancy rates.

The LAC Nurse reported that from the information available it can be concluded that the provision of services to young people is fairly good but that more can be done in terms of working together to support the Looked After Population with identity and relationships issues in a constructive way thereby further reducing the conception rates. Project Juicy, Youth Justice, Identity and the NSPCC provide sessions on relationships which could be incorporated within a work plan. There is no statutory requirement for Social Services to report on pregnancies in the Looked After population, but recording this data locally could be done if it was felt there was a need to do so.

The Panel considered the report presented and raised the following points:

- The Panel noted that there is work to be done as regards translating the range of information and advice services available into concrete results in terms of reducing the pregnancy rate among young girls.
- The Panel noted that in light of the extent of the information available, the main challenge lies in changing the mind set of looked after young people so that they do not view pregnancy as a positive life choice because of what they perceive to be a lack of other choices available to them.
- The Panel noted that the Authority needs to adopt a different approach and to try to adapt the general provision available to individual circumstances and to address issues of poor self-esteem and emotional needs among the looked after and care leavers population which often lead to pregnancy in this group.
- The Panel noted that there may also be benefit in establishing a peer mentoring scheme involving a young person who has had experience of the care system to assist looked after young people in better understanding their situation and to help them develop the confidence to make better choices.
- The Panel noted that schools and foster carers have a role to play as well as professional practitioners who are involved in the lives of looked after children and young people as regards providing them with support and guidance in forming healthy relationships during and after their time in care.

It was agreed to note the information presented.

ACTION ARISING: LAC Nurse in consultation with the Education Service, Foster Care Service and the Care Leaving Service to formulate an action plan on the steps that can be taken to address pregnancy/relationship matters among looked after young people and care leavers in an integrated way.

4. CSSIW INSPECTION OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

- The report of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales following its announced inspection of the Ynys Môn Fostering Service in January, 2016 was presented for the Panel's information.

The Panel was informed that the inspection focused on the quality of life of the young people who use the service and did not identify any areas of non-compliance with the requirements of the Fostering Service (Wales) Regulations 2013. The inspector concludes that the service is providing a good quality of life for the children who use the service. Areas where practice could be further developed to assist in improving the standard of the service provided were identified and are set out in the report.

- The Service Action Plan setting out the timeline and responsible officers for addressing the five identified areas of practice where improvements could be made was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Head of Children's Services said that the CSSIW Inspection report had been considered by the Children's Services Senior Management Team and has been combined with elements of another review in an updated Action Plan which covers how the proposed actions will be achieved and monitored. This will form part of the Service Improvement Plan. The Officer said that the report above along with the Annual Report of the Fostering Service will be presented to the panel responsible for overseeing how the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 is introduced and how the Children Service Improvement Plan is implemented. Should there be any slippage on the Inspection Review Action Plan then those will be reported back to the Corporate Parenting Panel on an exception basis highlighting any related escalation of risk. A more detailed progress report will also be presented to the Panel ahead of the next annual inspection of the Fostering Service in January, 2017 (unless a change in regulations means that an annual inspection will not be held).

The Panel welcomed the positive inspection report and acknowledged the good work within the Fostering Service to which it is testimony.

It was agreed to accept and note the CSSIW Inspection report on the Fostering Service and the accompanying Service Action Plan.

ACTIONS ARISING:

- **Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) to keep the Panel informed of any escalated risks consequent upon any slippage that might occur on implementing the Action Plan.**
- **Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) to provide the Panel with a progress report within six months prior to the next annual inspection of the Fostering Service in January, 2017.**

5. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER

The report of the Independent Reviewing Officer for Quarter 4 2015/16 was presented for the Panel's consideration. The report provided a statistical analysis of the age, legal status and reasons for placing Anglesey's looked after population as well as highlighting issues of practice and areas of risk and concern.

The Service Manager (Safeguarding & Quality Assurance) reported on the following main points:

- From 1 December, 2015 to March, 2016, the Council accommodated a total of 112 children which is a slight reduction on the 114 reported at the end of the third quarter of 2015/16. The trend has been in an upwards direction since Quarter 1 2013/14 and although the reasons behind this trend remain unclear, an increase in complex cases and large sibling groups may be contributory factors.
- The principal reason why children and young people come into the care of the Council are because of child protection issues – 94 of the 112 children and young people looked after by the Council come within this category.
- The number of children and young people placed with the Authority's own foster carers currently stands at 28 and exceeds the number of children placed with private foster carers out of county.
- Overall the percentage of 92.71 LAC reviews undertaken during Quarter 4 is slightly less than for the previous quarter but can be viewed as a positive performance in light of the overall number of children being looked after and given the number of children in out of county placements. Performance was assisted due to the additional support provided.
- There remain certain issues with regard to the conduct of LAC reviews in relation to the availability of appropriate review documentation for review meetings and the availability also of appropriate venues. The key messages from looked after children and young people from reviews continue to be mixed.
- Risks identified by the Independent Reviewing Officer include the timeliness of reports for review meetings, consistency of attendance at reviews by key personnel, workforce instability and knock on effects, ensuring an appropriate language response to service users and improving inter-service communication.

The Head of Children's Services said that the service has been through a challenging period of late in terms of staff turnover and sickness absences set against increased demand and expectations. These have been reported to the Council's Senior Leadership Team. However, she could assure the Panel that the Council had engaged experienced agency staff who, along with Children's services social workers and management, remain committed to meeting the needs of children and young people in the Authority's care in the best way possible including their language preferences. Whilst communication and information sharing can always be improved, the Head of Service has not been informed by the IRO that information sharing is so poor to the extent it poses a risk in terms of the care of the children whom the Authority looks after. The Head of Service also said that she was not aware that the issues have been raised as issues by partner organisations. The Officer said that as regards ensuring the statutory requirements in relation to LAC reviews are met, it is the intention to recruit an additional Independent Reviewing Officer to provide support for the current team. In the meantime, independent officers will be engaged on a sessional basis. The Service Manager (Safeguarding & Quality Assurance) has also been authorised to adapt his work programme to allow him to chair review meetings if required. The Officer assured the Panel that close attention is being paid to ensure the timeliness of reviews and to thus improve performance against the PI and ensure a robust review of a child's care and support plan.

The Panel considered the IRO's report and the service response and made the following points:

- The Panel noted that it would have been helpful if the Independent Reviewing Officer was present at the meeting to clarify the concerns raised and also to provide possible solutions to the Panel as the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- The Panel noted that it would also be helpful in terms of obtaining assurance for it to be provided with information about the language preferences of the children and young people looked after by the Authority as well as their parents and foster parents and how these are being met.
- The Panel noted that the process by which cases are assigned to social workers should also be a consideration and that assignment on a best match basis can help ensure specific preferences are met.
- The Panel sought clarification of the influencing factors in relation to a child being taken into care in terms of family links and also the extent of their access to other services outside of Social Services. The Head of Children's Services said that an analysis of the background of looked after children shows that many have experienced family issues and a range of social problems which have affected their development and their safety. The Service is currently in the process of formulating a strategy by which the number of children in care can be safely reduced and integral to this is the introduction of the family conference group whereby families are brought together to try to resolve issues; what is important is ensuring this intervention happens before problems become entrenched. The Panel was also informed that quarterly statistics are able to show from which areas children are taken into care thus helping the service build a demographic profile of the Authority's looked after population. The Head of Learning and the ICT Business Transformation Manager are contributing towards the work of creating a more comprehensive database from which information can be drawn in future.

It was agreed to note the report of the Independent Reviewing Officer.

ACTIONS ARISING:

- **The Panel to be provided with data regarding the language preferences of the looked after population on Anglesey, their parents and foster parents.**
- **Designated Statutory Director of Social Services and Head of Children's Service to consider how within the context of the IRO's independence, Management can for verification purposes, have prior briefing on the substantive issues raised in the Officer's report.**
- **The Panel to be kept informed of progress on the development of the LAC information database.**

6. CHILDREN'S SERVICES REPORT

The Children's Services report covering the Education, Health and Fostering Service provision for Looked After Children and Young People was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Panel considered the information presented and made the following points:

- The Panel noted that due to the increase in the number of looked after children, the LAC Education Liaison officer was unable to meet with schools, collect information and complete the Personal Education Plans within the specified 20 day timeframe. The Panel also noted that it understood that the responsibility for completing these plans will transfer to schools and that it needs to be assured that schools, given the expectations on them with regard to performance, have the time and resources to also meet this requirement.
- The Panel noted the concern expressed by the LAC Education Liaison Officer and the LAC Nurse regarding the strain on placements and the delays in the progression of care plans due to the reduced availability of social workers because of absence. The Panel was assured that the LAC Social Work team has been strengthened recently by the engagement of agency staff and that there has been a renewed effort to recruit to the team on a permanent basis.
- The Panel noted and welcomed the dialogue with an Officer from CAHMS with regard to looking at a potential pathway for looked after children in relation to assessment and referral. The Panel whilst recognising that as with many other services, CAHMS is working under pressure, also noted that ensuring access to therapeutic services for those looked after children with mental health needs remains problematic with the responsibility for arranging and funding provision often

falling to Children's Services instead. The Panel was informed that the matter could be raised with the Community Health Council and also that BCUHB does report quarterly on waiting times for therapeutic services although this is on a general basis and is not specific to the looked after population. The BCUHB's representative said that she would discuss ways of taking the matter forwards with the Children's Services.

- The Panel noted with regard to child placements, that the number of placement breakdowns for 2015/16 was significantly lower than that for 2014/15 indicating the service is succeeding in managing placements so as provide more stability for looked after children.
- The Panel was informed and it noted, that the financial data shows that over expenditure has occurred in relation to the internal fostering service rather than independent providers indicating that the invest to save initiative although not as yet delivering savings, has led to cost avoidance. The Panel was also informed that budgets have been realigned to create an additional post within the team to support recruitment and assessment. The organisation of the Star Awards night took up some of the Marketing and Recruitment Officer's time and the Service will be looking to share the organising responsibilities corporately when those awards are next held in 2017.
- The Panel noted that of the ten families referred for viability assessments, five withdrew before the process started or once the process started. Consideration might be given to how more effective work could be done with families prior to a referral being made for a full viability assessment. The Panel was informed that the influence of the Judiciary is often a factor in this respect, and that schedules are often imposed and assessments made by Order.

It was agreed to note and to accept the report.

ACTION ARISING: LAC Education Liaison Officer to provide the Panel with an action plan to demonstrate how the performance against the need to provide each looked after child with a Personal Education Plan is improved.

7. ADVOCACY – TROS GYNNAL QUARTERLY REPORT

The report of the Tros Gynnal Advocacy Service in relation to the referrals made to the service by Anglesey's looked after population in the fourth quarter of 2015/16 was presented for the Panel's consideration and **was noted by the Panel**. The report provided a statistical breakdown of the referrals received and the types of issues raised.

The Panel was informed and noted that the number of the referrals deriving from Anglesey indicate that awareness and take-up of the advocacy service are good.

NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING

8. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel would be held at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, 7th September, 2016.

**Dr Gwynne Jones
Chair**