

# CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

## Minutes of the meeting held on 10 July, 2017

**PRESENT:** Dr Gwynne Jones (Chief Executive) (Chair)

Councillor Llinos Medi Huws (Leader and Portfolio Member for Housing and Social Services)  
Councillor R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Youth, Libraries and Culture)  
Councillor Richard Griffiths (Corporate Scrutiny Committee)  
Councillor Margaret M. Roberts (Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)  
Liz Fletcher (Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board)  
Dr Caroline Turner Assistant Chief Executive and Designated Statutory Director of Social Services)  
Llyr Bryn Roberts (Interim Head of Children's Services)  
Delyth Molyneux (Head of Learning)  
Fôn Roberts (Interim Children's Services Manager)  
Alex Kaitell (Interim Principal Operations Officer)  
Dawn Owen (Child Placement Team Manager)  
Huw Owen (LAC Team Manager)  
Heulwen Owen (LAC Education Liaison Officer)  
Llinos Edwards (LAC Nurse – BCUHB)  
Llinos Williams (Community Housing Service Manager)  
Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)

**APOLOGIES:** Douglas Watson (Chair Anglesey Foster Carers' Association)

**ALSO PRESENT:** Dr Trish Girling (Clinical Psychologist - CAMHS) (for item 3), Gwenllian Parry (CAHMS) (for item 3), Alison Jones (Team Manager – Tros Gynnal) (for item 7) Margaret Peters (Integration and Engagement Manager)

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The Chair welcomed all those present to this meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel and he extended a particular welcome to new Members of the Panel and to all those who were present for the first time.

### **1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Councillor Richard Griffiths declared a personal but not prejudicial interest with regard to item 5 on the agenda.

### **2 MINUTES OF THE 5TH DECEMBER, 2016 MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2017 were presented and confirmed as correct.

### **3 MATTERS ARISING**

- **When I am Ready**

The Children's Placement Team Manager presented a report which updated the Panel on the implementation of the *When I am Ready* (WIR) scheme in Anglesey. The scheme allows a young person who is already in an approved and registered foster care placement to continue living in that stable and nurturing family environment after he/she turns 18 years of age.

The Children's Placement Team Manager described the situation in Anglesey as regards the number of young people eligible for a WIR arrangement and the number that had actually entered into an arrangement since the scheme became operational. From those eligible only one such arrangement has been made making it difficult to evaluate the benefits of the scheme in a local context. Generally, none of the arrangements made have developed into a long-term arrangement with most ending within the first few months. It is understood that this is the pattern regionally as well with young people preferring to live independently or problems emerging once the young person reaches 18 years of age particularly in relation to issues such as house rules etc.

The Committee noted the information presented and the position with regard to the implementation of the scheme in Anglesey. The Panel concluded that it was difficult to come to a meaningful evaluation of the scheme at this point based on the small numbers involved.

**It was agreed to note the information presented.**

#### **NO FURTHER ACTION ENSUING**

- **Leaving Care Services**

The Interim Principal Operations Manager presented a report which provided the Panel with an overview of the legislative responsibilities and key policy influences with regard to children and young people leaving care. The report set out what services are currently being provided for young care leavers by the Authority in Anglesey and it highlighted aspects of provision which needed to be strengthened and developed further to enable the Authority to meet the ambition commitments for care leavers made by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

The Interim Principal Operations Manager referred to the key messages as regards how the Authority is continuing to meet its statutory responsibilities towards children and young people leaving care; how it is responding to changes in what is expected of a local authority in relation to care leavers as defined by the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, and how it is working to strengthen partnership collaboration in prevention and intervention to target support to where it is needed. The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 along with the Care Planning Regulations have strengthened local authorities' duties to children who are looked after and care leavers with a view to ensuring that the rights of these young people to be able to leave care with the necessary skills to live independently and to succeed in their transition into adulthood are adequately addressed. These duties are set out in the report.

The Officer referred to the national and local contexts. Various national studies have shown that children in care are over-represented in some of the more vulnerable groups within society and that they often do not have the same advantages and experiences as their peers in respect of education, employment, health, housing, and ongoing support. Within Wales, the number of looked after children has increased by 5% over the past five years, but has remained relatively stable over the last three years. The number of children looked after in Anglesey has risen from 78 in Quarter 1 of 2014/15 to 141 in Quarter 4 2016/17. The Children's Commissioner for Wales has set out priorities for young people leaving care

which are supported by Welsh Government and the WLGA. The Commissioner visited Anglesey earlier in the year and met with key officers involved in supporting young people leaving care.

In respect of Anglesey, services for children looked after and those who have left care are in the main provided by the Children's Services Operational Team with support being given by the Placement and Support Service and the Quality Assurance Unit. The composition of the statutory case holding teams within the operational service and the responsibilities of the operational teams are outlined in the report. The current situation with regard to looked after children and care leavers' access to services and the opportunities available to them in relation to health and leisure, education, training and employment, accommodation and financial support are also described in the report. Safeguarding and risk management are key issues for the social work teams and are clearly understood by staff. Preparing children and young people for life after care is also important and the service has a project plan aimed at reviewing how services are delivered to young people leaving care.

The Officer concluded by confirming that whilst the service works hard to ensure that it is responsive to the needs of young people leaving care, it cannot do this alone. There is a need to continue the work of the last year to ensure that all the Council's departments are engaged with corporate parenting and are able to evidence how they fulfil these responsibilities. The Authority has a Council wide approach to ensuring that safeguarding duties are shared across departments and it is considered that a similar, more integrated approach to young people leaving care would be both helpful and beneficial.

The Panel considered the report and the information presented therein and it sought clarification of the position with regard to engaging the wider local authority in contributing to the development of provision for looked after children and young people leaving care. The Panel noted that it is imperative that looked after children and care leavers themselves are also encouraged and are enabled to contribute to how policy and practices are developed and shaped, and whilst the Panel recognised that young people leaving care cannot be compelled to participate nor to take up offers of support, it emphasised that the Authority needs to be able to show that it has in place arrangements to actively seek the views of children and young people about their care.

The Interim Principal Operations Manager said that regular leaving care project meetings have been held which have been well attended by other services and departments. Progress on leisure initiatives has been made; likewise, the service is developing its links with colleagues in Learning and Development to ensure that young people leaving care have access to the same opportunities afforded to their peers in schools across the Island. The service will continue to support and encourage young people to access further education opportunities including attending university. With regard to participation, the Panel is being asked to support an annual participation exercise to hear the opinions of young people who have left the Authority's care.

The Interim Children's Services Manager said that as the number of children looked after increases, so will the pressure on leaving care services. Further work needs to be done especially with regard to the provision of suitable accommodation options e.g. the development of supported lodgings. It is important therefore that the Authority develops its plans for leaving care provision and that it does so in an integrated and holistic way that includes other services and departments. The Officer suggested that it may be an opportune time to review how well the Corporate Parenting Panel itself is working and whether its format needs to be changed to ensure that it remains effective in influencing decisions regarding practice, policy and provision for children and young people in care and care leavers.

The Panel was in agreement that a review would be helpful to ensure that the Panel's activities do not become too narrowly focused on and confined to receiving and noting data and that it is able to show that its discussions are being translated into actions that lead to the delivery of better outcomes for children in the Authority's care.

**It was agreed to accept and to support the recommendations of the report viz.**

- **That the Panel noted the contents of the report.**
- **That the Panel receives an updated report within 12 months on progress with regard to Leaving Care Support Services by the local authority.**
- **That the Panel promotes children leaving care and their needs to all other departments and partner agencies.**
- **That the Panel promotes targeted intervention for care leavers with regard to apprenticeships, training, and further education.**
- **That the Panel notes the impact of legislative changes on care leavers which increase local authorities' responsibilities, including financial, to young people.**
- **That the Panel supports the service in its intention to explore and develop a cohort of supported lodgings accommodation for 16-18 year olds including care leavers.**
- **That the Panel supports the service in its work with foster carers to widen the independent living training for children in care.**
- **That the Panel receives and reviews the financial policy for care leavers at a future meeting.**
- **That the Panel undertakes an annual participation exercise to hear the views/experiences of young people who have left the Authority's care.**

**ACTION ENSUING: Interim Head of Children's Services to present a report to the Panel's next meeting on options for reviewing the Corporate Parenting Panel's function, remit and reporting arrangements.**

- **The Emotional Health Pathway for Looked After Children**

Dr Trish Girling, CAMHS and Llinos Edwards, LAC Nurse presented a joint report on the current situation with regard to the provision for meeting the emotional health needs of Children Looked After (CLA) in North Wales.

Dr Trish Girling informed the Panel that the new Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 highlights the need for the emotional health needs of Children Looked After (CLA) to be prioritised. This is not currently reflected in the referral criteria for the North Wales Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Although assessments can be provided for CLA, specific attachment focused work which could reduce vulnerability to diagnosable mental health conditions developing, is no longer provided and CLA would need to meet the same criteria as other young people in order for direct therapeutic input to be offered. Dr Girling proceeded to elaborate on the current position in terms of what is working and not working and she drew attention to identified gaps and shortfall in provision with different agencies being unclear as to their roles and how to access appropriate support. She said that the first step required is an established pathway for meeting the needs of CLA; this will provide clarity for all other health and statutory professionals regarding their roles and where to seek help appropriately. The following is recommended as a course of action –

- i) A pathway has been developed for North West Wales which it is recommended is piloted for 6 months (in Gwynedd and Anglesey) and its effectiveness

monitored. (The Emotional Health Pathway was attached to the report for the Panel's information)

- ii) The Pathway is presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel and thereafter the information will be cascaded by the LAC Nurses and CAMHS Clinical Psychologists to local team leads in health and statutory agencies including (but not exclusively) CAMHS, Social Services, Joint Commissioning Panel, Health Visitors, School Nurses, School Counsellors and Paediatricians.
- iii) That the CORAM BAAF carers form is the most appropriate means of proactively identifying CLA who are presenting with emotional health difficulties. Where this highlights emotional health needs, it is recommended that the LAC Nurse completes a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire with the young person and their carers.
- iv) It is recommended that whenever there is an unidentified unmet emotional health need, this is recorded. These can be audited by CAMHS and can inform any future service change.

Dr Trish Girling explained that the major change which the pathway introduces is a best practice recommendation that Social Services should not agree to any other therapies without a CAMHS consultation in order to ensure that children are receiving evidenced based care that is appropriate to their needs. Any therapies that may require additional costs to Health have to be discussed in the Joint Commissioning Panel before commencing and any therapeutic needs that cannot be appropriately met should be highlighted to managers as an unmet need. The best practice recommendation would also apply in situations where recommendations are made by the Family Courts.

The Panel noted the information and was agreed in recommending that CAFCASS as an interested party providing advice to the Family Courts on how the best interests of children involved in court proceedings can be served, be advised of the proposals and what they entail.

**It was agreed to accept and to note the information presented including the proposal for trialling the Emotional Health Pathway for Children looked after in Gwynedd and Anglesey.**

**ACTION ENSUING: BCUHB to advise CAFCASS about the Emotional Health Pathway for children looked after and what it entails.**

- **Foster Carers**

The Child Placement Team Leader provided the Panel with information about the number of Foster Carers leaving the service and the reasons why they had resigned or had their registration terminated. The information included a case by case analysis of the carers who had left the Fostering Service during 2015/16 and 2016/17.

The Officer reported that the majority of resignations had occurred because the Regulation 38 emergency placement with friends and family had ended naturally; the instances where a registration had been terminated due to issues arising were few. The pattern of resignations does not indicate any emerging tendency that requires attention.

**The Panel noted the information presented** and noted also that it showed that the turnover of foster carers for the two years in question was in the main due to natural reasons e.g. placements with family and friends ending naturally.

**NO FURTHER ACTION ENSUING**

#### **4. AWARD OF FUNDING – ST. DAVID’S DAY FUND FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED CARE 2017-19**

A grant award letter from Welsh Government dated 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2017 in relation to the St. David’s Day Fund for young people who have experienced care was presented for the Panel’s information. The letter included at Schedule 1, the purpose of the grant which would cover two years from 2017 to 2019 as well as the full guidance for the Fund. The Fund totalling £1m nationally is to support young people who are or have been in local authority care to access opportunities that will lead them towards independent and successful lives.

The Assistant Chief Executive and Designated Director of Social Services informed the Panel that Welsh Government will provide each local authority with a grant apportioned according to Local Government Finance’s Children in Social Services formula. The additional funding for Anglesey is £19,369 per annum for two years and discussions will be held to determine how best to utilise the grant in accordance with the guidance received. The Officer said that the Authority was in receipt of a further letter from Welsh Government regarding a grant for 2017/18 only which amounted to nearly £200k and which comprised of £19k for Personal Advisors; £12k for work experience/traineeships; £97k for expanding Edge of Care Services and £66.5k for Carers’ respite care. From 2018/19 onwards this funding will be incorporated within the Revenue Support Grant meaning that this additional funding will be available to the Authority on a continuing basis. In addition, extra funding to the amount of £150k is being made available to the region for the Reflect project and £400k to the National Fostering Framework, details of which are to be confirmed.

The Assistant Chief Executive and Designated Director of Social Services said that the grants reflect some of the priorities for children leaving care which the Children’s Commissioner for Wales articulated during her visit to Anglesey in the spring particularly in relation to ensuring equal access to employment opportunities and suitable accommodation for young people who are leaving care.

**The Panel welcomed and noted the information.**

**NO FURTHER ACTION ENSUING**

#### **5. LEAVING CARE – HOUSING AND CHILDREN’S SERVICES JOINT PROTOCOL**

The Interim Principal Operations Officer presented the Panel with a report which incorporated the Leaving Care and Housing Protocol 2017. The Protocol is the Authority’s response to fulfilling its corporate parenting responsibility to ensure that young people eligible for housing support can access good quality accommodation and tenancy support services. Through working collaboratively, the Protocol seeks to ensure that young people have a choice of suitable accommodation that is safe, affordable and close to their connections and communities.

The Interim Principal Operations Manager reported that care leavers as a group feature highly in homelessness figures across the United Kingdom. Not having good quality housing can often lead to other opportunities being significantly reduced, for example in relation to employment and education, it can affect physical and mental wellbeing and can increase the risk of criminal and anti-social behaviour. The Leaving Care and Housing Protocol 2017 updates the current protocol; it will enable the Authority to respond to its corporate parenting duties by ensuring that young people have a variety of choices and are active in identifying where they want to live, the type of accommodation they require and the support they need to assist them in their transition into adulthood.

The Community Housing Service Manager gave the Panel a presentation on how the Protocol would operate in practice. She said that averting homelessness is one of the main objectives of the Protocol hence the emphasis on early notification and forward planning. The Officer also showed the Panel two short video films, the one on the experiences of young people who had found themselves homeless after being in care and the other on the work of the Nightstop Ynys Môn project which helps homeless young people find a safe place to stay one night at a time. The project works through community hosting whereby volunteer hosts offer young people from 16 to 25 years of age a bed, shower and meal as well as a sympathetic ear if the young person so wishes. There are currently five such hosts on Anglesey who are able to offer young people up to 3 nights stay when no other option is available. Nightstop is a national scheme and is run on Anglesey by Digartref Ynys Môn.

The Panel welcomed the updated Protocol as providing a framework for strengthening collaborative working between Housing and Social Services with a view to better meeting the accommodation needs of care leavers as they prepare for independent living. The Panel also noted the Nightstop Project with interest; it suggested that the project needs to be more widely publicised both among elected members and among communities on Anglesey in order to encourage more people to act as hosts so that the scheme can be extended.

It was suggested that information about Nightstop Anglesey could be disseminated in the following ways –

- Through the Teulu Môn service which provides information, advice and assistance relating to children and their families.
- In a forthcoming training session for Elected Members on corporate parenting and
- In a subsequent monthly briefing session held for Elected Members
- Through Town and Community Councils

**It was agreed to accept and to support the recommendations of the report viz.**

- **That the Panel notes the content of the report and supports the Protocol**
- **That the Panel receives a further report on the effectiveness of the Joint Protocol within 12 months**
- **That the Panel supports enabling the service to act as guarantor for young people in private tenancies.**

**ACTION ENSUING: Officers to take steps to raise awareness of Nightstop Ynys Môn by the means outlined.**

## **6. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER**

The Independent Reviewing Officer presented the Panel with her report for Quarter 4 2016/17.

The IRO highlighted the following considerations –

- The continuing upward trend in the number of children who are experiencing care, which at this point in time stands at 143. There has been an 81% increase in the overall looked after population since Quarter 1 2014/15. Most of these children and young people are subject to interim or full care orders meaning they require protection. The age group that appears to be the most dominant is that from 5 to 11 years old with a total of 45 closely followed by the 11-15 age category with 43.

There are messages here for the Placement and Recruitment Strategy.

- The children and young people in the care of the Authority in Anglesey continue to be looked after in a variety of settings. The majority of the increase has been met by procuring external placements. The need to meet the needs of young people within residential homes continues with 11 children and young people currently being looked after out of county due to lack of appropriate facilities on the Island.
- Safeguarding remains the main reason why children and young people are accommodated by the Isle of Anglesey County Council.
- Once a child becomes looked after, statutory visits should be undertaken every 6 weeks for the first 12 months and every 3 months thereafter. For Quarter 4, 77.39% of statutory visits were undertaken within timescale - up from 74.01% in the previous quarter. However, the data does suggest the need for corrective action and steps are being taken to address the issue with Social Workers and Managers.
- The number of LAC reviews undertaken within timescale for the quarter was 95.31 which is an improvement on the previous quarter's figure of 92.94. The number of LAC reviews undertaken out of county was 46. Overall a total of 128 LAC reviews were completed in Quarter 4 which represents a significant increase on the figures for each of the previous quarters. The demands this places on the Business Support staff, practitioners and the IRO is being met in part by additional IRO capacity procured through external parties. From 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2017, the service will have an additional IRO which will allow the unit to develop its approach by providing capacity to develop the relationship with the children and young people who are looked after by the Authority and also the way reviews are conducted.
- Some practice issues remain particularly with regard to the availability and quality of documentation for LAC reviews. These are detailed in the Analysis and Commentary section of the report along with the actions being taken to mitigate and address the matters identified.

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

- The Panel noted that the number of children coming into the Authority's care continues to rise. The Panel sought clarification of the reasons underlying this trend and the avenues available to the Authority to manage the situation and to ensure that its looked after population is receiving the best and most appropriate care. The Panel was informed that the increase in the number of children coming into care is a national phenomenon and that the number locally is influenced by national issues e.g. the introduction of the Public Law Outline. The introduction of a new electronic recording system in August will improve information gathering thereby helping the Authority to project numbers more accurately which in turn will help the service appreciate what is needed in terms of the recruitment of foster carers. It is also a consideration and is confirmed by CSSIW that the Authority's base figures in this respect have been historically too low and that they are now closer to where they are expected to be.
- The Panel noted that performance in relation to conducting statutory visits and LAC reviews could be improved. With regard to statutory visits, the Panel sought clarification whether such visits had not been taking place or whether it was a matter of the visits having been made, but not formally recorded as such. The Panel was informed that the service is in the process of restructuring which involves creating smaller teams of social work practitioners; the social work supervision policy is also being reviewed and strengthened. This should improve understanding of each individual case and lead to more specific direction and guidance. The service is also seeking to evaluate cases to establish which ones can be safely and appropriately closed thus easing the pressure on social workers and releasing capacity to focus on improving performance in the areas highlighted by the IRO.



However, the data shows that the rising number of looked after children presents a challenge in respect of ensuring that they are all seen and the visits recorded. **The Panel noted that it would wish see the prioritisation of Statutory Visits within current resources.**

**It was agreed to accept the IRO's report for Quarter 4 2016/17 and to note the issues arising and the steps being taken to address them.**

**ACTION ENSUING: The Panel to be provided at its next meeting with an analysis of statutory visits to the Authority's looked after children and young people to provide assurance that such visits have taken place even if they haven't been formally recorded.**

## **7. TROS GYNNAL ANNUAL REPORT**

Alison Jones, Tros Gynnal Team Manager provided the Panel with an overview of the work of the Tros Gynnal Advocacy Service across North Wales for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

The Team Manager summarised the main points as follows –

- Advocacy support in 2016/17 was provided for 354 children and young people who presented with 425 issues. The service is currently working across North Wales with 647 children and young people presenting with 872 issues.
- During 2016/17 there has been a 17% increase (in addition to last year's 50% increase) in referrals across the six North Wales authorities. This equates to a total increase of 67% over the two years the service has been in operation and is significantly above the agreed performance indicator of 20%.
- Although Anglesey no longer has a residential provision, Tros Gynnal does see looked after children and young people from Anglesey in residential units out of county.
- In respect of the independent visiting service, Anglesey has no current referrals and has made no such referrals during the past two years.
- In 2015/16, there were 52 referrals from Anglesey involving 135 issues; in 2016/17 the number of referrals for Anglesey was 96 presenting with 43 issues which is higher than for any other authority in North Wales.
- Performance in terms of the responsiveness of the service and the outcomes achieved for the children and young people taking up the service has exceeded agreed KPIs as set out in the report. There were no complaints regarding the service during the period and the verbal feedback from children, professionals and parents, examples of which are provided in the report reflect high levels of satisfaction with the service.
- The service continues to develop and to integrate innovation into its practices. It has increased its social media presence and has sought to expand awareness of the provision it makes. In the last six months, the service has been running an active pilot offer which involves an initial meeting with an advocate who explains the advocacy process and what it entails. The offer was piloted in Flintshire but resulted in 6 referrals only.
- Future service development and improvement will be underpinned through continued awareness raising, training and promotion of provision within Social Services teams as this will ensure an ongoing understanding of the service and associated eligibility criteria which should result in increased

referral rates.

- The National Approach to Statutory Advocacy is the development and implementation of a national framework which will provide consistency in advocacy provision across the whole of Wales. It is hoped that North Wales will amend the current contract and implement the approach from 1 June, 2017. An element of the National Approach is the active offer of advocacy which will enable eligible children and young people across North Wales to receive an active offer of advocacy.

The Panel noted that the number of referrals to the service from Anglesey is high compared to that of other authorities in North Wales. The Panel also noted that Anglesey by contrast had made no use of the independent visiting service in the last two years. The Panel was informed that a high number of referrals should be regarded in a positive light as it shows that looked after children and young people and professionals alike are aware of the availability of the service and know how to access it. The issues raised are not complaints, but are matters which arise in looked after children and young people's lives which they wish to talk about with an independent advocate.

**It was agreed to accept the report and that the Panel notes the performance of the service in respect of Anglesey**

**ACTION ENSUING: Children's Services Management to discuss with Children's Social Work Practitioners why Anglesey has made no referrals to the independent visitor service.**

## **8. SERVICE REPORTS**

The following Service reports were presented for the Panel's consideration –

- The report of the Child Placement Team Manager which provided an update on the Quarter 4 2016/17 position with regard to child placement and fostering issues.

**The Panel noted the information presented and no further action was ensuing.**

- The report of the LAC Education Liaison Officer which provided an update on the Quarter 4 2016/17 position with regard to performance in respect of meeting the education needs of the looked after population in Anglesey and the preparation of personal education plans.

**The Panel noted the information presented and no further action was ensuing.**

- The report of the LAC Nurse which provided an update on the Quarter 4 2016/17 position with regard to performance in meeting the health needs of looked after children and young people including the completion of health assessments.

**The Panel noted the information presented and no further action was ensuing.**

- The report of the LAC Interim Team Manager which provided an update on the Quarter 4 2016/17 position with regard to issues affecting children and young people looked after by the Authority.

**The Panel noted the information presented and no further action was ensuing.**

9. **NEXT MEETING**

The Panel noted that the next meeting would be held at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2017.

**Dr Gwynne Jones**  
**Chair**

DRAFT