

# CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

## Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March, 2018

- PRESENT:** Dr Gwynne Jones (Chief Executive) (Chair)
- Councillor Margaret M. Roberts (Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)  
Dr Caroline Turner (Assistant Chief Executive and Statutory Director of Social Services)  
Fôn Roberts (Head of Children's Services)  
Gwyneth M. Hughes (Senior Manager School Standards and Inclusion)  
Huw Owen (Independent Reviewing Officer)  
Heulwen Owen (LAC Education Liaison Officer)  
Llyr ap Rhisiart (Early Intervention & Prevention Manager) (for item 5)  
Ffion Rhisiart (Practice Leader) (for item 9)  
Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillor Llinos Medi Huws (Leader & Portfolio Member for Social Services), R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education), Councillor Alun Mummery (Portfolio Member for Housing and Supporting Communities) Liz Fletcher (BCUHB), Douglas Watson (Anglesey Foster Carers' Association), Llyr Bryn Roberts (IoACC) Llinos Edwards (IoACC), Rona Jones (IoACC)
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### 1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

### 2 MINUTES OF THE 11 DECEMBER, 2017 MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 11th December, 2017 were presented and were confirmed as correct.

### 3 MATTERS ARISING

- The Head of Children's Services confirmed that with regard to the presentation made on the recruitment and retention of foster carers, the service intends to build more detail into the presentation after the Fostering Fortnight in May. The presentation on the work of the Resilient Families team will be made to the Children's Panel on 20 March, 2018.
- The Chair confirmed that he would be writing to the Authority's children in care in acknowledgement of their examination successes.
- The Head of Children's Services said that he had been in contact with the new Manager of the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) who confirmed that he would be happy to attend the Corporate Parenting Panel once a year to update the Panel on mental health service provision.

**ACTION ARISING: Head of Children's Service to confirm CAMHS attendance at the Panel's next meeting on 11 June, 2018.**

#### **4 EVALUATION OF CORPORATE PARENTING BY IOACC - INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS' REPORT**

The report of the Independent Reviewing Officers was presented for the Panel. The report provided an analysis of the quality of the Authority's actions in relation to its corporate parenting duties and care planning for Looked-After Children with the focus of the report being on care planning and reviewing within Children's Services.

Huw Owen, Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) said that the report is based on a number of practice evaluations which were carried out in Quarter 3 2017/18 and reported /worked on in Quarter 4. These include the following –

- Thematic analysis of practice as reflected by child protection plans, care and support plans and preparation for reviews/conferences as at September, 2017;
- Combined quarterly overview and oversight feedback by the independent safeguarding officers provided to the Quarter 3 Quality of Practice Report;
- Lessons learnt from specific management reviews undertaken in the period.

The IRO said that the findings from the analysis of the evidence as referred to above are summarised below –

- Poor planning pre-review. Looked-After Children Care Plans/Care and Support Plans are not consistently available for reviews. The unavailability of relevant documentation can have an impact on successfully progressing a plan for the child and can affect preparation for children and their families as well as the effectiveness of the review process.
- Inconsistency of practice. Too much dependency is placed on individual social workers. Improved quality control by Practice Leaders is required in order to ensure consistent practice.
- The performance data shows there is compliance with timescales as regards the timeliness of reviews. However, the quality of the preparation for reviews and conferences remains poor.
- Examples were found where the recommendations of previous reviews had not been carried out. Actions not implemented or not completed can lead to delay and drift for the child.
- There is a need to ensure compliance with Placement with Parents regulations in all cases. The IRO notes and welcomes the Placements with Parents audit that has been undertaken to monitor compliance and inform service improvements.
- Good practice was identified in terms of the work being undertaken to revoke care orders in a number of cases – some of which have been recognised as cases for revocation for some time.
- There was considerable drift in a case which was not attributable solely to Children's Services. Partner agencies contributed to the delay by "batting back" referrals or taking a long time to respond. Practice needs to be improved as regards proactively assessing care and support needs and making timely decisions for permanency.

The IRO referred to the recommendations made to the service as at section 4 of the report to address the shortfalls identified and reported upon. Five improvement objectives have been identified as set out in the report and recommendations for action noted against each. These are in the process of being implemented. With regard to recommendation 2, the IROs were concerned that a number of children on the Child Protection Register did not have a care plan – all cases have since been reviewed. During the last quarter, the IROs have been working with Practice Leaders to translate the recommendations into an improvement plan. There is a need to

change some processes and practices in order to make the review process more robust and child friendly.

The IRO further referred to a new draft social work report pro-forma for Looked-After Children's reviews which was attached as an appendix to the report. The new template seeks to capture important issues in the period since the previous review by adding a "chronology of significant events" to the report along with a section that allows for brief analysis of the events, progress by the child and any ensuing changes to the care plan. Being able to refer to a chronology of events will help make the review process more thorough. Consultation on the new draft report will take place with a Practice Leader and Social Worker with a broader discussion to take place thereafter.

The IRO concluded by saying that since the end of Quarter 3 there have been positive indications of improving practice including ensuring that every looked after child has a care plan.

The Head of Children's Services said that at the beginning of Quarter 3 there were a few outstanding care plans; those have since been completed. The service is looking at how care plans are formed and whether it would be more appropriate for that to be done in a meeting or outside of a meeting. The service is also discussing the recommendation that an up to date assessment of each child's need should include a pen picture of each child on file. With regard to the new draft social work report for LAC reviews, while it is acknowledged that the report has to contain the relevant information and must be more than a tick-box exercise, the service is keen to avoid adding to social workers' workload; the information requested by the report may already be available on system and could be extrapolated electronically.

The Panel considered the information and made the following points -

- The Panel noted and agreed that the social work report in relation to LAC reviews should provide an appropriate level of information including a chronology of incidents/events since the last review. The Panel also noted that if the information is already being collected and obtainable by other means e.g. electronically via the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) then this should be explored. The Panel noted that producing the information should not become another task for social workers.
- The Panel noted a discrepancy between the figures quoted for September, 2017 in relation to the availability pre-review, of review arrangement reports/ documentation and the equivalent percentage figures. The Panel requested clarification of the data for the next meeting.
- The Panel was agreed that the next report to the Panel by the Quality and Safeguarding Unit should focus on progress against the improvement plan.

**It was agreed to accept the report and to note its contents.**

#### **ADDITIONAL ACTIONS:**

- **IRO to clarify the figures/percentages in the report for the next meeting.**
- **Head of Children's Services to report to the next meeting of the Panel on progress against the improvement objectives set out by the Quality and Safeguarding Unit report.**
- **Head of Children's Service to investigate whether the information required by the new draft social work report for LAC reviews is already being collected and is available.**

## 5 MISSING CHILDREN DATA

The Service Manager (Early Intervention and Prevention) gave the Panel a presentation on protecting children who are missing from home from exploitation.

The Officer highlighted the following with regard to children who go missing –

- Children who go missing can be exploited sexually or criminally; a recurrent pattern of going missing from home could be an indication of children being exploited.
- According to the legal definition, a child is considered to be missing from home when he/she cannot be accounted for in a period of six hours or at any time after midnight. An absence is considered to be an “unauthorised absence” if a child has been away from placement for a maximum of six hours or until midnight on the first day of absence. Some children do test the boundaries and will not be reported to the Police; the responsibility for managing this lies with the staff of the care home or foster carer. However, a quicker response may be required for some children, depending on their risk assessment. Children in this category must be the subject of continuous risk assessment whilst they are absent.
- Last year there were 148 incidents of children reported missing in Anglesey. The vast majority of the children involved in these incidents were vulnerable and were either children in care or were known to children’s social services. Not all of these incidents involved children and young people in the care of or known to the Isle of Anglesey County Council - 27 were in relation to children in the care of Gwynedd Council who are in placements on Anglesey; and 44 to children in the care of other authorities in placements on Anglesey.
- When children go missing from home/placement, the practice requirements mean that a return to home interview has to be held within three days; A SERAF (Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework) assessment must be conducted; a referral to the ONYX team (North Wales Police) is made and a multi-agency strategy meeting takes place.
- In terms of addressing the issue of children who go missing, a recommendation has been made by the CSE Regional Panel that a specific team of social workers be created to undertake the return to home interviews with each council across the North Wales region contributing £20k towards the cost of the regional team. The discussions with regard to setting up this service are ongoing. (This would take the place of the service once provided by Barnado’s with the support of and funded by the Police which has come to an end). Consideration is also being given to the possibility of agreeing a joint strategy at a more local level with Gwynedd Council.
- The Service is taking steps to improve its ability to collect information and to monitor performance in conducting return to home interviews within the timescale. It is not an especially complex process and it is expected that the service will be able to show improvement in practice in the next 12 months and also to be able to make the connection with exploitation as the two areas are closely linked.

The Head of Children’s Services said that the process for dealing with children who go missing from care is not especially difficult but is made more complicated by children who go missing while under the care of other authorities in placements on Anglesey but not necessarily reported to the Authority in Anglesey.

The Panel noted with regard to the proposed establishment of a regional team to conduct the return to home interviews that there may be alternative, more-cost effective models for ensuring that the interviews are undertaken within timescales which meet the needs of Anglesey more closely. The Authority could be using the £20k contribution towards a regional team to establish its own service which would be available to children in the care of the service in Anglesey only. The Panel noted that the priority is for it to be assured that the return to home interviews do take place in

accordance with requirements and that if necessary, alternative local arrangements are made in the short-term pending confirmation of the establishment of a regional service, to ensure that happens.

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

**ADDITIONAL ACTION: Head of Children's Services in consultation with the Chief Executive and Statutory Director of Social Services to consider making alternative arrangements to ensure missing children return to home interviews are conducted, pending confirmation of the establishment of a regional service.**

## **6 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**It was agreed under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion on item 7 below on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the said Act and in the attached Public Interest Test.**

## **7 STARS AWARDS**

The report of the Participation Officer in relation to the organisation of the second Star Awards event held in November, 2017 was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Looked After Children Education Liaison Officer reported that the first Stars Awards to formally celebrate the achievements of the children and young people looked after by the Isle of Anglesey County Council were held in October, 2015. The lessons learnt from the event and resulting recommendations were put into practice when arranging the celebrations for 2017 (the awards being held biannually). As part of this, the 2017 Stars Awards were made open to children under 5 years old and they were organised and planned in partnership with a group of Anglesey's Looked-After Children.

The Officer referred to the organisation timeline leading up to the 2017 Stars awards event. Children and young people looked after by the Authority were actively involved in the arrangements including choice of venue, theme, entertainment and menu.

Over 120 people in total attended the STARS awards in November, 2017 which were spread over two events – one ceremony for primary school aged children and a second ceremony for older children, young people and care leavers - including 56 looked after children and young people. All nominated children and young people regardless of attendance, received an award. The evening was deemed to be a huge success and was enjoyed by all who attended especially the children and young people. It was a fun-filled and emotionally charged event, reflecting the positive accomplishments of Anglesey's looked after children and young people.

The Looked-After Children Education Liaison Officer showed the Panel a brief video film of the 2017 Stars awards event including contributions by some of the participants.

The key message from such an event is the importance of recognising and celebrating the achievements of the looked after children and young people of Anglesey many of whom will have been through difficult times. The awards show that with courage, determination and support it is possible to achieve. The awards also demonstrate the Authority's pride as a corporate parent; they promote a feeling of being valued for both looked after children and their carers, boost the young people's self-esteem and encourage them to continue to achieve and develop.

The Officer said that following on from the 2017 event, recommendations have been made to facilitate the future organisation of the awards and these will be considered in preparing for the next Stars Awards in 2019.

The Panel expressed its appreciation of the work which had gone into arranging the 2017 Stars Awards and the enthusiasm with which the Authority's looked after children and young people had contributed to the staging of the event. The Panel was agreed that the 2017 event had built upon the success of the initial awards in 2015. The Panel was also agreed that the video clip should be shown to all the Council's Elected Members (e.g. at the close of a Full Council meeting), so that they as corporate parents can share in the achievements of the children and young people whom they collectively, as a Council are responsible for looking after.

**It was agreed to accept the report and to support the recommendations with regard to facilitating the organisation of the 2019 Stars awards.**

**ADDITIONAL ACTION: Head of Children's Services in consultation with the Head of Democratic Services to arrange for the video clip of the 2017 Stars Awards to be shown to the Council's Elected Members as corporate parents.**

## **8 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**It was agreed under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion on item 7 below on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the said Act and in the attached Public Interest Test.**

## **9 CASE STUDY**

Ffion Rhisiart, Practice Leader presented the Panel with an outline of a specific case where a young person in the Authority's care had overcome significant challenges to make progress towards creating a brighter future.

The Practice Leader gave a profile of the young person who was the subject of the case study and described the issues which had led to the young person being placed in care. She said that the service had sought to work alongside the young person and in particular to listen carefully to what the young person considered was important in order to be able to move forward. The service arranged for education within the care placement and also provided appropriate therapy.

The Practice Leader said that the example shows how the Authority succeeded in keeping a vulnerable young person safe within the community without having to make out of county arrangements. It also shows that with the right kind of approach and support, good outcomes can be achieved for children and young people in spite of difficult circumstances.

The Panel thanked the Practice Leader for the information. The Panel noted the following –

- The importance in terms of securing better outcomes for looked after children and young people of having access to the right placement with the appropriate support.
- The value of a residential placement in the short-term.
- The importance of input by CAMHS as part of the support provision.

The Panel was agreed that the information should be shared with the Council's Elected Members in their role as corporate parents as an example of how the Authority has had a positive influence on the life of a young person in its care.

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

**ADDITIONAL ACTION: Head of Children's Services in consultation with the Head of Democratic Services to arrange for the case study to be presented to the Council's Elected Members as corporate parents.**

#### **10 NEXT MEETING**

The Panel noted that the next meeting of the Panel would be held at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, 11 June, 2018.

**Dr Gwynne Jones  
Chair**

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