

# CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

## Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December, 2018

- PRESENT:** Dr Caroline Turner, (Assistant Chief Executive/ Statutory Director of Social Services) (In the Chair)
- Councillor Alun Mummery (Portfolio Member for Housing and Supporting Communities)  
Councillor Richard Griffiths (Corporate Scrutiny Committee)  
Councillor Margaret M. Roberts (Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)  
Barbara Jones (Anglesey Foster Carers' Association)  
Liz Fletcher (BCUHB)  
Fôn Roberts (Head of Children and Families' Services)  
Huw Owen (Independent Reviewing Officer)  
Llyr Bryn Roberts (Service Manager, Intensive Intervention)  
Keith Walters (Practice Leader – Child Placement Team)  
Dawn Owen (Child Placement Team)  
Heulwen Owen (Looked After Children Education Liaison Officer)  
Llinos Edwards (Looked After Children Nurse)  
Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)
- APOLOGIES:** Dr Gwynne Jones (Chief Executive and Chair), Councillor Llinos Medi Huws (Portfolio Member for Social Services), Councillor R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth) Gwyneth Hughes (Senior Manager – School Standards and Inclusion)
- ALSO PRESENT:** Hywel Meredith (Chair – Anglesey Fostering Panel) (as an observer)
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### 1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

### 2 MINUTES OF THE 10 SEPTEMBER, 2018 MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 10th September, 2018, were presented and were confirmed as correct.

### 3 MATTERS ARISING

- **Fostering Recruitment and Strategy**

With regard to recruiting Foster Carers, the Head of Children and Families' Services informed the Panel that a new package of benefits for the Authority's Foster Carers was recently approved by the Council's Executive. The package includes an increased fostering allowance, a discount of 10% on the Council Tax; free Isle of Anglesey Leisure Services membership card and a free Council car parking ticket. The Officer said that the enhanced package has been introduced both in recognition of the work being undertaken by the Authority's current foster carers and in an endeavour to recruit more foster carers

including those who are already fostering for private agencies and individuals who are new to fostering who may be considering making the commitment. Recruiting more foster carers means that the Council can offer more placements to meet the increased demand for placements for looked after children. Although the Council recognises that financial gain is not the primary motivation for foster carers, it is considered that providing a more competitive package of allowances and benefits will help the Authority's recruitment efforts.

- **CIW Follow-Up Inspection Report**

The Chair informed the Panel that Care Inspectorate Wales had today published the findings of its follow-up review of Children and Families' Services which took place in October. This follows its critical inspection of the Service in November, 2016 in response to which the Service developed a comprehensive Service Improvement Plan which it has since been implementing. CIW's follow-up review report confirms that significant improvements have been made in a number of key areas and notes that staff morale is high and that there is passion and commitment at all levels to deliver excellent services for children. The Officer said that further work needs to be done as the report acknowledges; the Service is committed to ensuring that the areas of development which the review highlights will be addressed fully.

The Head of Children and Families' Services said that thanks are due to everyone involved with the Service including its staff, foster carers, the Authority's looked after children and young people and the Service's partners for supporting the Service in making the improvements recognised by CIW.

**ACTION AGREED: Committee Officer to share the link to CIW's Findings web page with the Panel's members** <https://careinspectorate.wales/181210-significant-improvement-found-angleseys-childrens-services-report>

#### **4 FOSTERING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGY**

The Head of Children and Families' Services reported that the Service was keen to obtain the Executive's approval for the new Fostering Care package referred to above prior to reviewing and updating its Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy. Now the package has been approved, the Service will be focusing attention on the Strategy with a view to bringing a draft version to the Panel at its next meeting in March, 2019.

The Officer said that in the meantime the Service would still be recruiting and that the drive to recruit will continue whilst the strategy is being updated. Information about the new Fostering package will also be circulated and publicised.

**It was agreed to note the position and to note also that the Panel will be presented with a draft version of the Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy in March, 2019.**

**ACTION AGREED: Practice Leader – Child Placement Team to bring a draft version of the Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy to the Panel in March, 2019**

#### **5 PROJECT BRIEF FROM VOICES FROM CARE TO CO-PRODUCE AN YNYS MÔN LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS STRATEGY**

The Service Manager (Intensive Intervention) reported on an initiative with Voices from Care Cymru – one of the leading voluntary agencies in Wales for working with looked after children – in order to develop a participation group for care experienced children and young people to help co-produce an Ynys Môn Looked After Children and Care Leavers' Strategy.

The Officer said that the project will involve Voices from Care Cymru establishing a monthly participation group for care experienced children and young people aged between 11 and 25. The participation group would support Ynys Môn to develop its LAC and Care Leavers Strategy and provide a platform that supports relationship building between care experienced young people and their corporate parents in Ynys Môn. The group would develop its own identity and co-produce a range of promotional and marketing material and would also develop a series of resources, including a corporate parenting charter and launch event, unique to Ynys Môn. As an organisation, Voices from Care Cymru will offer advice and support as a critical friend on participation and corporate parenting.

From the Council's perspective its involvement would take the form of supporting the distribution of information about the group and its work; a member of staff to support sessions; care experienced young people would engage with the Corporate Parenting Panel and bodies in Ynys Môn leading to the co-production of a work plan with Voices from Care and young people. It is envisaged the project would run for a minimum of one year at a cost of £16,500 p.a.

The Service Manager (Intensive Intervention) referred to examples of previous work undertaken by Voices from Care Cymru with other local authorities e.g. a series of workshops in Rhondda Cynon Taf Council to produce a Corporate Parenting Charter for Elected Members. He highlighted that finding ways of engaging effectively with the children and young people the Authority looks after and increasing their participation in the processes that contribute to shaping their care e.g. in the review process or in feeding back their experiences to the Corporate Parenting Panel is one of the improvement objectives in the Service Improvement Plan. The Authority needs to show that it listens routinely to the children and young people in its care and that their views influence how policy and practices are developed leading to a cycle of continuous improvement. The project therefore in proposing to form a participation group for looked after children and care leavers seeks to put in place a mechanism to enable them to put their views across which will remain after the project has completed and to ensure also that the input they have is meaningful by helping to co-develop and co-produce the Authority's Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy.

The Head of Children and Families' Services said that there has been a constant drive to improve this aspect of the Service's work with the aim in the long-term being to embed participation in the Independent Reviewing Officer role.

The Panel in considering the proposal was agreed on the following points –

- That the project must be undertaken on a bilingual basis.
- That the Service's partners (internal and external) - Health, Education, Housing and North Wales Police be approached to ascertain their willingness to contribute to the one-off cost of the project.
- That enquiries be made with the Section 151 Officer to see whether the project meets the criteria for funding from the Isle of Anglesey Charitable Trust and/or the Anglesey Further Education Trust (David Hughes Charitable Estate).
- That the participation group's engagement with their corporate parents should take place in a less formal setting than a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel. Consideration should be given to how this would be best effected with the suggestion being that the Panel's members meet with the group at a venue/setting in which the children and young people feel comfortable.

**It was agreed that the Panel was supportive of the project and its aims and objectives.**

### **ACTIONS AGREED: Service Manager (Intensive Intervention) to –**

- **Confirm with Voices from Care Cymru that it is able to meet the Authority's bilingual requirements in undertaking the project.**
- **Approach the Service's internal and external partners to ascertain whether they are able to contribute financially to the cost of the project.**
- **Make enquiries with the Council's Section 151 Officer to ascertain whether the project is eligible for funding from the Isle of Anglesey Charitable Trust and/or the Anglesey Further Education Trust (David Hughes Charitable Estate).**

## **6 SERVICE REPORT- HEALTH**

The report of the LAC Nurse on the number of LAC health assessments and Review Health Assessments undertaken during Quarters 1 and 2 2018/19 was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The LAC Nurse reported on the main points as follows –

- That 21 Anglesey initial LAC health assessments were due within this period. The community paediatricians saw 19, one young person left care and one young person declined to be seen. The time schedules for the completion of initial health assessments continue to be an issue.
- That 71 Anglesey review health assessments were due; 67 were carried out with 52 being undertaken by BCUHB health professionals based on Anglesey namely 10 by a school nurse and 14 by a health visitor, 27 by the LAC Nurse and 1 by a paediatrician.
- As the number of looked after children continues to rise, this places pressure on all the services involved. Many of the county's looked after children continue to have changes in named social workers although this is being addressed by the Service.
- A restructure of the Fostering Team has led to the loss of experienced social workers with a possible impact on the opportunity to recruit, assess, support and sustain current local authority foster carers.
- Children and young people with mild to moderate learning difficulties are finding it difficult to access services if they do not have a low enough IQ.
- The launch of the pathway for the mental health of Looked After Children remains outstanding and recently the CAMHS consultations have been limited due to staffing issues. It is suggested that annual CAMHS representation on the Corporate Parenting Panel is paramount. Difficulties can arise when looked after children move areas with BCUHB working on the basis of three areas within the region meaning that the CAMHS Pathway may be implemented differently in one of the other areas.

The Panel in considering the report made the following points –

- The Panel noted and was advised that the review of Fostering and Support Services followed the restructuring of what were the former teams within Children's Services and was planned to take place after the other teams had been reviewed. There is now an expectation that the Fostering Team works in a different way so that assessments are carried out sooner to enable foster carers to be approved more quickly thereby increasing the placements available locally for the Authority's looked after children. Restructuring can be difficult for the teams experiencing it at the time, but is intended to create more streamlined and efficient processes and produce improved outcomes in the long-term.

The Head of Children and Families' Services highlighted that Social Workers are not the sole source of support for foster carers and that the Independent Reviewing Officers, the LAC Nurse and/or the LAC Education Liaison Officer are available to provide support or answer questions should foster carers require it. Foster carers can also obtain support and guidance from having a conversation with other foster carers.

Support should not therefore be thought of exclusively in terms of Social Workers as there are other forms of support available.

The Chair said that gradually over a period of time Children and Families' Services have been able to appoint Social Workers on a permanent basis thereby reducing the Service's reliance on agency staff and creating greater stability and consistency. There will always be an element of staff turnover as individuals develop their careers and move on. Whilst the number of children and young people needing to be looked after has steadily increased over the past few years to 161 currently, historically those numbers on Anglesey have been very low. Some historic cases where the Authority might not have responded appropriately are being reviewed by a Legacy Team created for this purpose and the increase in the number of looked after children is partly the outcome of the team's work.

- The Panel noted with regard to the health issues of looked after children and young people that in only one case out of the 67 individuals assessed were mental health concerns identified. The Panel sought clarification of whether the single case was representative or whether there are likely to be more individuals who require support.

The LAC Nurse said that in the past a high number of assessments were taking place when in reality all the looked after child might have required was stability and the time to settle in a placement before being assessed, given that being moved from the home setting and taken into foster care would in any case be an upheaval for them. The use of a Carer's Report as part of the CAMHS Pathway now enables the looked after child/young person to be assessed holistically taking all aspects of the individual's well-being into consideration and it can be used in the CAMHS consultation to agree a way forward be that through further assessment or through the school or foster carers simply changing their approach. A full assessment by CAMHS is not always required. The one case where mental health concerns were identified is not therefore considered to be unreasonably low as the data is for one quarters 1 and 2 only and not all looked after children have mental health issues.

**It was agreed to accept the report and to note the position regarding LAC health assessments for Quarters 1 and 2 208/19.**

**ACTION AGREED: Head of Children and Families' Services to liaise with CAMHS to agree the most opportune time for a CAMHS Practitioner to make an annual visit to the Corporate Parenting Panel**

## **7 SERVICE REPORT – CHILD PLACEMENT**

The report of the Child Placement Team for Quarter 1 and 2 2018/19 was presented for the Panel's consideration. The report provided statistical information about the following –

- The number of placements by type
- The number and type of referrals received
- The number of assessments of mainstream foster carers
- The number of referrals for viability assessments of family members as alternative carers and Regulation 26 assessment of families and progress thereon
- Training courses provided for the Authority's foster carers
- The staffing position
- Update on regional working
- Matters that need to be addressed specifically the need to recruit a full time social worker to the team to replace a permanent member of staff who will be leaving in December and to continue to prioritise the retention of foster carers.

In considering the information presented, the Panel made the following points –

- The Panel noted that a number of the Authority's looked after children are placed with family and friends on Anglesey (26.16%) as well as with the Authority's own Foster Carers (19.12%) and private Foster Carers in Anglesey (18.11%) which reflects the Service's objective of providing care for looked after children as locally as possible and reflects also an availability of placements on the Island even if the Authority is seeking to improve the range of placements still further in order to meet demand.
- The Panel noted that there is a significant amount of work involved in undertaking viability assessments of friends and family when the outcome in terms of the numbers approved is not always equal to the input.

The Panel was advised that if a child is not able to be with his/her parents, then the next best option is that the child should be cared for by the extended family and this is the pathway the Authority seeks to take. However, the requirements of the assessment process especially as regards timescale does put pressure on the Fostering Team.

- The Panel noted that there has been no information from CIW about when the next fostering inspection will take place and that the Service has not been inspected in the previous 2 to 3 years. However, the Panel noted further that a neighbouring authority has recently had its first fostering inspection under the new inspection framework.

**It was agreed to accept the report and to note the position of the Child Placement Team for Quarters 1 and 2 2018/19.**

**NO ADDITIONAL ACTION WAS PROPOSED**

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

**It was resolved under Section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion on the following item on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the said Act and in the Public Interest Test presented.**

## **9 SERVICE REPORT – EDUCATION**

The report of the Looked After Children Education Liaison Officer incorporating performance information for the 6 months from April to October, 2018 was presented for the Panel's consideration. The report also incorporated information about the individual educational attainments of the children and young people currently being looked after by the Authority.

The LAC Education Liaison Officer reported on the main points as follows –

- That 18 Personal Education Plans were due for completion in September, 2018; whilst 15 were received on time 3 were late because of various reasons - staff illness, 2 were out of county placements and 1 was a residential home placement. However, the plans were received in October.
- As expected, a number of the Authority's looked after children moved schools in September; whilst most of the changes were transitional, five were due to other reasons – transfer to a long-term placement, transfer to a specialist residential home, change of school because of learning needs, change of school after the child had moved through a successful arrangement.
- A delay in making educational arrangements for one of the Authority's looked after children due to lack of timely action necessitated a complaint to the Anglesey and Gwynedd Inclusion Group. The child is now in receipt of education.

- The previous network meeting was postponed for the first time in 3 years because insufficient numbers were able to attend. This was disappointing and is a concern as Head Teachers may not be aware of the resources available for the vulnerable children within their schools. The matter is to be discussed further with Education Officers.
- The alternative education package – “Pecyn 25” (25 hours per week) - is full and reflects the demand that exists for KS4 young people who cannot attend mainstream education because of various problems. One looked after young person is unable to obtain a placement within the Package because of specific issues.
- The Authority’s looked after children have achieved excellent examination results this year with two going forward to University education.

The Head of Children and Families’ Services said that last year the performance Indicator for the number of children who had experienced one or more changes of school during a period of being looked after which were not due to transition was ragged as Red, so 5 is not a number to be overly concerned about. The Authority does seek to maintain the school placements of the children it looks after in the locality even if that means providing the necessary transport which can be expensive. However, sometimes it is in the child/young person’s interests to change school especially if that means the child’s needs are being met in a more appropriate way.

The Panel noted from the educational achievements of the children and young people being looked after by the Authority that they are on the whole fulfilling their potential and meeting the Authority’s expectations of them in terms of educational attainment.

**It was agreed to accept the report and to note the position with regard to the education of looked after children and young people.**

**NO ADDITIONAL ACTION WAS PROPOSED**

## **10 NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel would be held at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, 18 March, 2019.

**Dr Caroline Turner  
Chair**