

# CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

## Minutes of the meeting held on 9 December, 2019

- PRESENT:** Mrs Annwen Morgan (Chief Executive) (Chair)
- Councillor Llinos Medi (Leader & Portfolio Member for Social Services)  
Councillor Alun Mummery (Portfolio Member for Housing and Supporting Communities)  
Councillor Margaret M. Roberts (Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)  
Councillor Richard Griffiths (Corporate Scrutiny Committee)  
Barbara Jones (Anglesey Foster Carers' Association)  
Liz Fletcher (BCUHB)  
Fôn Roberts (Head of Children and Families' Services)  
Huw Owen (Independent Reviewing Officer)  
Dawn Owen (Independent Reviewing Officer)  
Llyr Bryn Roberts (Service Manager, Children's Services)  
Gwyneth Hughes (Education Senior Well-being Manager)  
Keith Walters (Child Placement Team Manager)  
Heulwen Owen (Looked After Children Education Liaison Officer)  
Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillor R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth), Llinos Edwards (Looked After Children Nurse)
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### 1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

### 2 MINUTES OF THE 9 SEPTEMBER, 2019 MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 9th September, 2019 were presented and were confirmed as correct.

### 3 MATTERS ARISING

The Children's Service Manager (Intensive Intervention) gave a presentation on matters arising from the discussion of the report of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) to the Panel's previous meeting as follows –

- **Care and Support Plans under Part 3 of the Social Services and Well-being Act**
  - That it is an expectation under the Act that the care plans for children who are looked after by the Authority are supported by up to date assessments for the purpose of statutory reviews. In their report to the previous meeting, the IROs highlighted that they had found that from an audit of 15 cases, the assessments were current for 9 children. The Service has carried out a review of the cases of all 157 children and young people in the Authority's care on 1 December, 2019. This work showed that the assessments for 58 of those children had been updated within the previous 12 months leaving 99 children whose assessments were not current.

Children's Services Social Workers have been advised to update those assessments by 24 January, 2020.

- That the Panel had sought clarification of whether the 15 cases audited by the IROs were held by temporary or by permanent staff. It can be confirmed that as at 20 November all the 157 children in the Authority's care had a qualified Social Worker allocated to their case; 87% of the cases had a permanent Social Worker whilst 13% had a temporary/agency Social Worker who have been engaged by the Authority to provide cover for maternity leave absences and for one vacant post.
- That as at 20 November, 2019, 154 of the children looked after by the Authority had a Care and Support Plan in place. It is an expectation that the plans are updated twice yearly for the purpose of LAC reviews which are held every six months.
- **Practice Issues/Developments**
  - If there has been a change in a looked after child's circumstances e.g. a change of placement, the Service does ensure that an assessment is carried out in order to enable the Independent Reviewing Officers to give their views on the suitability of the new placement and whether it meets the child's needs.
  - That following discussions with the Housing Service, a flat has been earmarked to help young care leavers develop independent living skills. Each care leaver will have use of the flat for periods of up to 28 days in preparation for leaving care.
  - The Service has appointed 2 new experienced Social Workers who will commence in post in the New Year, the one to fill an existing vacant post and the other who will work specifically with children 15 years of age and over and with care leavers. Additionally, other new posts in connection with Domestic Abuse and Developing Healthy Relationships have been established with the support of an ICF grant.
  - The first Cartrefi Clyd registration is making progress with hoped for completion in the New Year.

The Panel considered the update provided by the Service Manager and sought assurance in relation to the following matters –

- The Panel noted that 99 children do not have an assessment that is current. The Panel questioned whether a target date of 24 January, 2020 for updating all these assessments is a realistic timeframe; whether the Practice Leaders have had oversight of the management of these cases, and whether if the Service considers that the 99 cases can be addressed in the relatively short time to 24 January then what has caused the delay in updating those assessments.

The Panel was advised that whilst all the children in the Authority's care have been assessed, the assessment in some cases may have been undertaken over a year ago. The Service is evaluating its approach to assessments in terms of whether children need to be reassessed regularly on an annual basis even when they may be in a stable placement where their needs are being met and are constant, or whether a re-assessment would be more productive only when it has a clear purpose e.g. if/when there has been a change in the child's circumstances.

The IRO (DO) highlighted that the Children's Services policies specify an annual assessment which is the guidance which the Independent Reviewing Officers have regard to in conducting reviews. If the Service is minded to change this schedule then the policies need to be amended to reflect the changes made.

The Head of Children and Families' Services clarified that the Service will seek to come to a determination on the matter by March, 2020 after engaging with the children and young people for their views and reflecting on whether annual assessment is necessary and whether it is the best use of Social Worker time.

- The Panel sought clarification of whether the Care and Support Plans in place for the 154 children who had them, are current. The Children's Service Manager advised that although he did not have the information to hand at this meeting, the information would be provided to the next meeting. The Panel requested that it be updated on this point at the next meeting.

The IRO (HO) highlighted that some children change placements frequently whilst some children are difficult to place leading to placement breakdown and subsequent changes of placements. In such circumstances it is important that the child is re-assessed and Care and Support Plans updated accordingly for each review. The commitment to update assessments by 24 January is welcomed being mindful also of the need to provide support for staff in undertaking that process. The Officer advised that as reviews need to be informed by up to date information about the looked after child it might mean the Service having to consider which cases need to be prioritised in order to provide the information.

The Children's Services Manager clarified that an arrangement has been agreed and in place for some time whereby if an updated Care and Support Plan is not available for a review meeting, then the review should be postponed and re-arranged for a time when up to date information can be provided.

The IRO (HO) confirmed that a statutory review can be adjourned but must be completed within 20 working days of the original date – only a few such reviews have had to be postponed and the regulations have been complied with.

**It was agreed to note and accept the report with the following actions confirmed –**

- **The assessments for 99 children to be updated by 24 January, 2020 with staff to be supported in completing the task.**
- **Children and Families' Services to come to a determination on the frequency of assessments by March, 2020 and update policies and guidance accordingly.**
- **Children's Service Manager to update the Panel on the status of Looked After Children Care and Support Plans.**

#### **4 SERVICE REPORTS**

The following service updates were presented –

- **Education Report**

The report of the LAC Education Liaison Officer outlining trends, changes and issues in relation to the education of looked after children and young people over the course of the last 6 months was presented for the Panel's consideration. Data regarding the educational attainments of the Authority's looked after children and young people was provided separately.

The LAC Education Liaison Officer highlighted the following –

- That there had been a significant decrease in the number of looked after children changing schools with improved planning for those children whose change of schools was unavoidable.
- That the number of looked after children overall has also reduced.

- That the timeframe for completing Personal Education Plans has been extended from 20 days to half term in order to enable schools to better get to know the children who have started new schools or transitioned to secondary school and to complete plans accordingly. Extending the timeframe also enables the outcome of assessments which are carried out within the first 6 weeks of moving to the secondary to be incorporated in the Personal Education Plan allowing for more meaningful targets to be set.
- That the Service is extremely proud of the success of the Authority's looked after children and young people at the end of their key stages under challenging circumstances.
- Networking meetings continue to be held and provide an excellent opportunity to share good practice with schools.
- Through GwE advisors, extra Mathematics sessions for the Authority's looked after young people at KS4 will commence in January 2020 which is a positive development since over the years it has been difficult to arrange tutors for the children to provide extra lessons for them in core subjects.

The Panel considered the report and raised points as follows –

- Whilst emphasising that success should not be measured in numbers alone and that it is also about outcomes, quality and well-being, the Panel acknowledged the reduction both in the number of looked after children as well as in the number of looked after children who change schools. The Panel sought clarification of whether the trend is attributable to any particular intervention and if so whether any further improvement can be made.

The Panel was advised that the Authority has invested in the development of a number of early intervention and prevention strategies – Resilient Families, Families First, Team Around the Family - which are aimed at reducing the need for children to become looked after. The Authority also seeks to discharge care orders where assessment confirms that it is in the child's best interest and it is safe to do so. With regard to school stability, with the new Curriculum and emphasis on well-being, schools now have a better understanding of the needs of Looked After Children. The Learning and Children and Families' Services have a good working relationship and seek to achieve the best outcomes both for looked after children and for children who are vulnerable but not in care.

In addition, the Authority has been successful in obtaining ICF funding as part of a wider regional bid in relation to Mental Health initiatives for children generally. Three sub-regional projects are currently being scoped with Gwynedd and Anglesey Councils together completing a project scope for a potential Virtual School Heads project.

- The Panel in noting the data about the educational attainments of the Authority's looked after children suggested that it would be helpful if consideration could be given to presenting the data in a different way – the Panel noted further that reporting actual attainments in isolation without reference to past performance or predicted outcomes means that it is difficult for the Panel to assess progress, and identify trends.

The Panel was advised that there is scope for reconsidering the way educational attainments are reported; the Learning and the Children's Services perhaps could trial a different approach by the time of the Panel's June, 2020 meeting to include Performance Indicators that show whether the children's educational progress is on

target and whether additional support is required thereby helping the Panel to scrutinise and challenge performance more effectively.

- The Panel noted that children may be placed on Anglesey by other local authorities and sought clarification of the challenges this poses in terms of language and education provision.

The Panel was advised that when a child is placed on Anglesey the authority which made the placement as the responsible authority is statutorily required to notify this Authority and the Local Health Board about the placement. The LAC Education Liaison Officer confirmed that the situation has improved in terms of notifications and that a few schools have contacted her to ask for advice with regard to a child placed from another local authority area. Regardless of where a child has been resident prior to being placed, the Authority does receive information about the child's examination results although the information generally shared by placing authorities about the children they place on Anglesey is often not comprehensive enough, and sometimes a placing authority does not provide any notification at all.

**It was agreed to accept and to note the report with the following action confirmed**

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- **The Learning and the Children's and Families to jointly consider an alternative way of presenting information about the educational attainments of children who are looked after to enable the Panel to better scrutinise and track their progress.**
- **Health Report**

A statistical report by BCUHB for the period from April, 2018 to March, 2019 was presented for the Panel's consideration. The report provided data held by BCUHB for the period with regard to the looked after children placed by the six North Wales authorities and also children placed in the North Wales region from outside the Health Board's boundaries based on notifications received from local authorities and residential homes.

The Panel noted the following from the report presented –

- That during April, 2018 to March, 2019, there was a total of 185 looked after children under the remit of Anglesey, an increase of 12% on the previous year (165). Of those 185 there were 37 whose placements ceased during the same time frame.
- That during the period there have been a total of 42 children placed within Anglesey from outside North Wales, a reduction of 16% on the previous year (49). Of the 42 placed a total of 23 ceased their placement within the same time frame.
- As at 31 March, 2019 Anglesey had 11 children placed within various Clinical Commissioning Groups outside North Wales – a breakdown of the host authorities was provided in the report.
- As at 31 March, 2019, there were 19 looked after children placed on Anglesey from Clinical Commissioning Groups outside North Wales – a breakdown of the placing authorities was provided in the report.
- That there has been a significant improvement in the timeliness of notifications received during 2018/19 compared to the previous year. With regard to Anglesey, 86% of notifications were made within the 5 working days specified by the NHS Wales Notification Pathway for Looked After Children compared to 66% in 2017/18. Delays in notifications can result in the Welsh Government target date of 28 working days for completing an initial health assessment being compromised.

Liz Fletcher, BCUHB further informed the Panel that in the last few weeks the Health Board has with ICF funding, appointed an additional nurse to work with the LAC Nurse for Gwynedd and the LAC Nurse for Anglesey which will release more time for the LAC Nurse for Anglesey to undertake more work locally within the county. The Health Board does share information with regard to Child Health, and child health records are transferred between authorities which may provide an avenue for sharing information with the Learning Service about looked after children of school age who come into Anglesey.

The LAC Education Liaison Officer confirmed that she works closely with the LAC Nurse for Anglesey which was made easier by the fact that they were co-located in the same offices.

The Panel in discussing the importance of sharing information noted that the process for doing so needs to be placed on a formal footing and should not be overly dependent on individuals. Where there is a formal process, this should be implemented. The Panel further noted that although current arrangements between the LAC Nurse and the LAC Education Liaison Officer may be effective, the situation may change and the link for information sharing could be broken should the Health Board decide to relocate the post of the Anglesey LAC Nurse for example.

The Education Senior Well-being Manager said that the LEA has a statutory duty to manage the school admissions process; whilst schools do make inquiries about children seeking admission there may be room to tighten the process still further to ensure that needs are not missed – she confirmed that she would look at the process to establish if/where improvements can be made.

**It was agreed to note the report and to thank BCUHB for the information with the following action confirmed –**

**Officers to look at the process for sharing information/notifying and where there is a formal process, to consider how to ensure that it is implemented consistently.**

- **Child Placement Team Report**

The report of the Child Placement Team was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Child Placement Team Manager reported as follows –

- Although the total number of Looked After Children at 157 remains similar to the end of Quarter 2 last year (158) the nature of the placements has changed with children placed within the local authority pool of Foster Carers up 10 placements. Local Authority Foster Carers make up 30% of the Authority's placements to the end of September, 2019.
- The Authority has 8 more Foster Carers than for the same period last year as well as 2 ongoing Mainstream Fostering Form F assessments. Two further assessments are on hold due to personal family circumstances.
- Although there has been no confirmation of when the next fostering inspection will take place, the team is working very hard to make itself inspection ready which will remain a priority into 2020.
- The Foster Care Forum continues to meet and resolve issues as they arise.
- A post to support the Service's Connected Persons Foster Carers has been added to the structure and will support family members who are foster carers thereby reducing the dependency on a Social Worker to provide the support.

- Work at regional and national level continues to evolve with particular emphasis on recruiting new, and maintaining current Foster Carers. The Service will continue to participate in the ongoing work in relation to the National Fostering Framework.
- Recruitment and retention also remains high on the agenda of the Fostering Service in Anglesey with the main driver being the New Offer (a package of benefits for Ynys Môn Foster Carers) which has had a positive effect on recruitment and retention since its introduction.

The Panel considered the report and made the following points –

- The Panel noted and welcomed the increased interest in fostering; the Panel questioned what could be done to further build on the success of the New Offer initiative in order to maintain the momentum with regard to recruitment and retention.

The Panel was advised that the Service is considering a range of ideas to ensure Fostering maintains a high profile and remains in the news during the next year e.g. by using the Council's electric fleet cars to publicise Fostering, or a tree planting initiative involving looked after children with both linking into a Caring for the Future theme.

- The Panel noted that the report makes limited reference to the Adoption Service and questioned whether current reporting is sufficient in relation to adoption processes, arrangements and performance.

The Panel was advised that it has previously been provided with an annual report by the North Wales Adoption Service. As the Service has recently undergone a review and restructure it might be an opportune time to invite the Service to attend a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel. It was suggested and agreed that the invitation be issued for the Panel's June, 2020 meeting and that for the next meeting, the Children's Services Manager would provide an overview of adoption.

**It was agreed to accept and to note the report with the following actions confirmed –**

- **North Wales Adoption Service to be invited to the Panel's June, 2020 meeting.**
- **Children's Services Manager to provide the Panel at its next meeting in March, 2020 with an overview of Adoption.**

## **5 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE STAR AWARDS**

The LAC Education Liaison Officer provided the Panel with a Powerpoint presentation which showed some of the highlights and activities from the Fun Day/Star Awards for the Authority's looked after children and young people which was held at Bodedern Secondary School on 21 September, 2019.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chair gave her warmest thanks to all those who took part in the event and were involved in the arrangements.

## **6 NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel was scheduled for Tuesday, 17 March, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.

**Mrs Annwen Morgan  
(Chair)**