

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 December, 2015

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

Councillor Kenneth Hughes (Portfolio Member for Education)
Mrs Gwen Carrington (Corporate Director of Community)
Mrs Delyth Molyneux (Head of Learning)
Llyr Bryn Roberts (Principal Officer – Corporate Parenting & Partnerships)
Gareth Llwyd (Service Manager – Safeguarding & Quality Assurance)
Dawn Owen (Child Placement Team Leader)
Alex Kaitell (Interim Principal Officer - Operations)
Heulwen Owen (LAC Education Liaison Officer)
Llinos Edwards (LAC Nurse)
Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Aled Morris Jones, Councillor Dylan Rees, Mr Douglas Watson, Mrs Sue Willis, Ms Anwen Huws, Debbie Reid, Mrs Rona Jones.

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2. MINUTES 7 SEPTEMBER, 2015 MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 7 September, 2015 were submitted and confirmed as correct.

Arising thereon – the Director of Community said that she was not at present able to confirm the timing of Suzanne Griffiths, Director of Operations' visit to North Wales so that an invitation to attend a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel can be issued simultaneously. **The Chair suggested that the matter be noted as one to be followed up.**

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The report of the Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) incorporating an analysis of Anglesey care placements including those within county, out of county and specialised out of county along with information regarding the number, status and resource implications of children placed in care on Anglesey by other local authorities was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) reported that the data shows that there are 101 children being looked after at the end of Quarter 2 2015/16, the majority in placements with Anglesey's own foster carers (24) closely followed by placements with independent fostering agencies (22) with most of those located in Conwy (11). Placements for children and young people are arranged out of county when the Authority in Anglesey itself is not able to meet the individual child's needs for example because they are acute or complex. In making those placements, the Authority seeks to ensure as far as possible that they are close to the child's own home and community. There is a total of 33 children and young people placed in care on Anglesey by other local authorities with the majority of those placements made by Gwynedd Council (13), and whilst the information to hand is not complete, the indications are that these placements do have a consequent impact on the resources of the host authority. The Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2016 places a responsibility on local authorities including education

and health to be involved in the planning of placements of children and young people from other authorities in their area. A Panel will be established that will lead to an increase in demand for all local agencies.

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

- That the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2016 will place extended responsibilities on the local authority in terms of engaging with the planning of care placements for children and young people by other local authorities in their area. It was further noted that this might prove particularly challenging where care placements made by the Authority are in England.
- That the pressure on resources is likely to be an issue in cases where children and young people from Anglesey are placed in care in England since they will be entitled to access the Welsh Curriculum meaning there is a duty upon the placing authority i.e. Anglesey to make provision to that effect.
- That the most significant increase in the looked after population pertains to Family and Friends placements. The Panel was informed that there is a responsibility on the local authority and it is seen as good practice that where appropriate, it should seek a placement for the child with family and friends on the basis that this maintains the family links and ensures the child remains within his/her locality, and also because these placements are more cost-effective. However these placements demand an enhanced level of skills of the children's social work team because staff have to support the family as well as the placement. The increase in these placements might suggest that the staff are confident in their skills to work with family and friends to provide appropriate support. The Child Placement Team Manager said that historically Anglesey has had a higher number of Friends and Family placements than mainstream placements and that staff have over time therefore developed the skills to manage those placements and have been in receipt of specialised training.
- That there is an upward trend nationally in the number of Looked After Children with Wales having experienced a 25% increase in the LAC population which in turn is reflected in local figures.
- That the Panel needs to be clear regarding the effect of children placed on Anglesey by other local authorities particularly the impact on local schools and the need consequently for this information to be transmitted to the Lifelong Learning Service. The Panel noted that this conversation needs to take place. The Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) confirmed that this is the next step in the analysis i.e. to seek to establish how many of the children placed on Anglesey require additional input in the form of a statement of special educational needs for example and the cost implications thereof.

It was agreed to note the information presented.

ACTION ENSUING: Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) to liaise with the Head of Learning and LAC Education Liaison Officer to seek to clarify the impact on educational resources in local schools of children placed on the Island by other local authorities.

3.2 The Interim Principal Officer (Operations) updated the Panel on the position with regard to the schedule for responding to the Lost After Care report. The Officer said that there has been a discussion with the After Care Personal Advisor with a view to matching what is being done currently with the recommendations of the report and establishing what remains to be done thereafter. An After Care project forms part of the Children's Services Transformation Programme which is looking at the delivery of Children's Services as a whole including what is required for the services to become more effective. There is a number of areas that need to be reviewed with regard to after care that require a corporate input for example improving training and employment opportunities for care leavers and facilitating apprenticeships, whilst others relate to finance and resources for example, payments to care leavers and allowances to enable them to set up home. Housing and accommodation are further key issues for young people leaving care.

It was agreed to note the information.

ACTION ENSUING: A full report to be presented to the Panel's next meeting.

4. IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN WALES – PROJECT INITIATION DOCUMENT (PID)

The Welsh Government's Project Initiation Document for improving outcomes for Children in Wales was presented for the Panel's information. The aim of the project is to develop a national approach to Looked After Children to help promote collaborative working across agencies to identify good practice and to make improvements where they are needed. The project will seek to identify ways to improve outcomes for looked after children and to de-escalate the patterns of intervention in the lives of children. The PID sets out the project scope and key objectives along with the project approach.

The Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) reported that Welsh Government Ministers have been concerned by the increase in the numbers of LAC since 2003 and the inconsistency between the numbers of children in care across neighbouring authorities and by the fact that similar increases in both the number and overall rate have not been experienced in England. Hence the development of a national approach that will focus on prevention and early intervention, promote collaborative working across agencies and share good practice. The Officer said that the development of a national approach will be informed by four work streams as set out in the document and that the project aims to report by March, 2016 in accordance with the outline timeline provided. Previous work undertaken by Cordis Bright on why local authorities with similar levels of need have different looked after children populations has identified four key factors in relation to leaderships and management; assessment and interventions; early intervention and prevention, workforce skills and the quality of service commissioning. The work will feed into the work being undertaken locally to reduce the number of looked after children.

The Panel noted the scarcity of references to education within the Project Initiation Document and to improving educational outcomes for looked after children. The Panel noted that raising the educational attainment of looked after children is a key aspect in seeking to improve the life chances of the LAC population and it would have expected it to form part of the project brief.

It was agreed to note the content of the report.

NO FURTHER ACTION ENSUING

5. THE REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER

The report of the Independent Reviewing Officer for Quarter 2 2015/16 was presented for the Panel's consideration. The report provides a profile of the LAC population on Anglesey during the quarter as well as issues arising with regard to care planning and review practices and how these might be addressed.

The Service Manager (Safeguarding & Quality Assurance) drew the Panel's attention to the following matters:

- That from 1st July to 30th September, 2015 the Authority looked after a total of 101 children and young people. Since the report was written that figure has since risen to 114 compared with 95 as reported to the previous meeting of the Panel in Quarter 1.
- The increase in the number of looked after population has implications for the caseload of the Independent Reviewing Officer and other key officers as well for the availability of suitable placements which in turn necessitates recourse to out of area placements.
- That there has been an increase of 25% nationally in the number of looked after children and an increase of 28% in Anglesey in the year to the end of September, 2015. National criteria suggest a caseload of 50/60 to each Independent Reviewing Officer whilst in Anglesey the IRO has a caseload of 114.
- There are implications for administrative and support staff in the form of added pressure to arrange review programmes and case conferences and to collate the necessary documentation in readiness for them. There are also significant implications for investment in Children's Services to be able to respond to the continuing increase in service demand.
- That a number of practice matters are raised by the IRO in relation to the respite arrangements and their monitoring through statutory visits along with the timely provision of documentation for the IRO ahead of LAC review meetings.

The Panel noted the issues raised by the Independent Reviewing Officer in relation to respite care arrangements and also the concern expressed with regard to the number of children placed out of county which continues to be high.

The Corporate Director of Community said that the provision of respite care forms part of the agreement with the fostering agency. It is also a key factor in the retention of the Authority's own Foster Carers. Discussions need to be held with the IRO regarding specific cases and their circumstances. The Officer said that despite capacity issues the report indicates that performance in terms of compliance is good and that feedback from reviews is also positive. However it needs to be borne in mind that the priority in terms of reviews is the child rather than the foster carers and that additional arrangements can be made for the needs of the latter as part of the planning process. The situation needs to be closely monitored from the perspective of capacity and the risk implications. Given that no growth bid was approved last year the only way to address capacity issues in the short-term is by buying in capacity as required. The Officer further informed the Panel that the Head of Children's Services has presented a report on the pressures on the service to the Senior Leadership Team, and it can be reported that it was recognised that capacity and quality issues need to be addressed as part of the Work programme in the next quarter. Whilst there is no quick fix to these matters, the more urgent issues have to be actioned.

The Interim Principal Officer (Operations) said whilst there is positive activity happening one of the challenges has been to look at ways of facilitating young people's route out of the care system in as safe, timely and efficient way as possible and subject to capacity, more work needs to be done on this particular aspect.

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

NO FURTHER ACTION ENSUING

6. SERVICE REPORTS

6.1 The report of the LAC Education Officer for Quarter 2 2015/16 was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The LAC Education Liaison Officer informed the Panel that the bulk of the report refers to the outcome of 2014/15 academic examinations and the attainment of children looked after by the Authority in those examinations. The Officer highlighted her concerns with regard to the number of children coming into care and the consequent pressure this places on staff and processes and also with regard to the high percentage of children moving from one school to another.

The Panel considered the information and noted the following points –

- That it would be helpful for the Panel to be provided with information about the performance of the LAC population compared with their peers.
- That whilst noting that in order for the Panel to be clear about performance there needs to be a process for reporting on the national ratio i.e. the number of children attaining the Core Performance Indicator, it was also recognised that reporting on the basis of percentages is likely to be disadvantageous to Anglesey because the cohort is small to begin with hence the practice of reporting in terms of "actuals".
- That whilst accepting the value of the report as a summary of academic performance the Panel noted that there needs to be a mechanism to enable it to track the current educational progress of the LAC population against targets, their attendance and stability at school and to obtain a more holistic understanding of the individual looked after child's achievement so that it can be assured that everything is being done to support Looked After Children to reach their potential.
- That the reporting process should also cover school and area profiles so that the Panel knows where its looked after children are receiving their education.

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

ACTION ENSUING: Head of Learning to arrange that the appropriate education officers and the LAC Education Liaison Officer discuss ways of providing the Panel with assurance for the summer term regarding the specific aspects of the education of Looked After Children including attendance, targets and progress.

6.2 The report of the LAC Nurse for Quarter 2 2015/16 was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The LAC Nurse reported on the performance in relation to the completion of health assessments and the review of looked after children. She drew attention to the pressures on services and social workers because of the increased number of children being accommodated.

The Panel noted the information provided and emphasised the importance of identifying any emerging trends and/or needs from the health assessments so that the Panel is aware of what has to be done in order to meet needs that may currently be unmet. The Panel further noted that greater focus must be placed in the provision of information on outcomes so that it can be better placed to influence provision for looked after children leading to improved outcomes.

The LAC Nurse said that each looked after child has a Health Plan and that she could extrapolate information from that source to provide the Panel with a greater insight into the health issues of the looked after population and how these are being addressed.

The Panel acknowledged the pressures on services and noted that whilst there is agreement within the SLT how this can be dealt with in the short term, a strategy needs to be formulated to address the issues long-term.

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

ACTION ENSUING: Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) and the LAC Nurse to discuss ways of providing the Panel with more child centred information about the health needs of the LAC population.

6.3 The report of the Child Placement Team for Quarter 2 2015/16 was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Panel noted that part of the Fostering Recruitment and Marketing Officer's time had been diverted to other duties and it sought assurance that this was not to the detriment of the fostering recruitment drive. The Panel was assured that the Officer's main focus remains the recruitment of foster carers but that her marketing and communication skills had been utilised for the specific purpose of the STARS awards event. The Panel also noted that there needs to be corporate ownership of foster carers so that the development and effectiveness of the service are not necessarily focussed solely in the role and activity of the one officer.

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

NO FURTHER ACTION ENSUING

6.4 The report of LAC Team Manager for Quarter 2 2015/16 was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Interim Principal Officer (Operations) referred to the operational challenges in the context of an increasing workload and staffing changes. She emphasised that the service is seeking to make improvements by doing things differently and by adopting different approaches as part of the broader Children's Services transformation programme.

The Panel noted the decline in the percentage of statutory visits recorded within timescale during the second quarter due to staff shortage and increased demand and sought clarification of the steps being taken to address this issue. The Corporate Director of Community said that statutory visits must be undertaken by a qualified social worker. A visit by a staff member known to the child would not necessarily comply with the PI. She suggested that the Panel not only needs to be assured that the visits have taken place but also that the visit was of substance and that it met the needs of the child. The Officer said that whilst the PI target can be met, the service needs to ensure at the same time that the child experiences the visit as a positive one, and therein lies the challenge for the service in seeking to ensure quality as well as statistical performance. She emphasised that as well as meeting the PI target it is important for the Panel to be assured that statutory visits to each looked after child is made by a person that is known by the child and who

has an understanding of his/her needs. The Authority will need to balance the needs of meeting the PI (statutory visits) and experience of the child being visited by a familiar face. It is important to make sure that each child has been seen even if this does not meet the PI threshold of being undertaken by a social worker.

The Panel noted that it would appreciate consistency in the presentation of information and statistics across the service reports to help it in interpreting the information provided.

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

ACTION ENSUING: Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) to review the presentational format of the service reports so that the information contained therein is presented in a consistent way.

6.5 It was agreed to defer consideration of Leaving Care activities due to the absence of the relevant officer.

7. ADVOCACY – TROS GYNNAL QUARTERLY REPORT

The report of the Tros Gynnal Advocacy Services regarding the number and nature of referrals in the second quarter along with a summary of the issues dealt with was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) said that Anglesey is making good use of the advocacy service which is positive and that the response to issues raised is timely.

It was resolved to accept the report and to note its contents.

NO FURTHER ACTION ENSUING

8. ANGLESEY STARS AWARDS

The report of the Fostering Recruitment and Marketing Officer in respect of the Anglesey STARS Awards held in the Carreg Bran Hotel on 16 October, 2015 to celebrate the achievement of Anglesey's Looked After Children was presented for the Panel's consideration. The report outlined the methodology and arrangements in advance of the event along with the response and findings.

The Panel noted that overall the evening was deemed to be a huge success and was enjoyed by all present especially the children as the feedback testifies. It was a fun-filled and at times emotionally charged evening reflecting the positive accomplishments of Anglesey's looked after children and young people.

The Chair on behalf of the Panel thanked all those involved with the Anglesey STARS Awards comprising Members, staff, carers and in particular the children.

It was agreed to accept the report and the recommendations therein for facilitating arrangements for the event in the future.

NO FURTHER ACTION ENSUING

9. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the Panel's next meeting would be held at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, 7th March, 2016.

**Dr Gwynne Jones
Chair**