

# CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

## Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March, 2016

- PRESENT:** Dr Gwynne Jones (Chief Executive) (Chair)
- Councillor Kenneth Hughes (Portfolio Member for Education)  
Councillor Aled M. Jones (Portfolio Member for Housing and Social Services)  
Councillor Ann Griffith (Corporate Scrutiny Committee)  
Councillor Dylan Rees (Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)  
Mr Douglas Watson (Chair Anglesey Foster Carers' Association)  
Mrs Sue Willis (Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board)  
Dr Caroline Turner (Assistant Chief Executive & Designated Statutory Director of Social Services)  
Ms Anwen Huws (Head of Children's Services)  
Llyr Bryn Roberts (Principal Officer – Corporate Parenting & Partnerships)  
Gareth Llwyd (Service Manager – Safeguarding & Quality Assurance)  
Dawn Owen (Child Placement Team Leader)  
Llio Johnson (Senior Partnership Manager)  
Heulwen Owen (LAC Education Liaison Officer)  
Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)
- APOLOGIES:** Mrs Delyth Molyneux, Mrs Rona Jones, Llinos Edwards, Sean McClearn, Debbie Read, Karen Roberts.
- ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Ieuan Williams (Leader of the Council)

---

### 1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

### 2. MINUTES OF THE 7 DECEMBER, 2015 MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2015 were presented and confirmed as correct.

### 3. MATTERS ARISING

- With regard to progress in responding to the Lost After Care agenda, the Head of Children's Services reported that a Task Group has been established to review the arrangements for young people leaving care in preparation for establishing the *When I am Ready* scheme which gives young people the right to stay with their foster families beyond the age of 18. The work is ongoing and is currently focussed on implementing the scheme in April, 2016 in line with Welsh Government requirements. Although the scheme was intended as cost neutral, there are financial implications to its implementation which the Authority has met through investment to ensure the scheme is delivered according to the requirements. The service is now seeking to engage with young people who have been in care to obtain their views on their experiences of care with a view to bringing together improvement options for implementing and completing those changes by September this year including what the Council is doing corporately to meet the recommendations of the Lost After Care report.

#### **The Panel accepted and noted the update.**

- With regard to gathering information on the impact on educational resources of children placed on Anglesey by other authorities, the Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) reported that the Service is in regular discussions with the Education Service on this matter. The report to the Panel's previous meeting in December showed that there was a total of 33 children and young people placed in care on Anglesey by other local authorities and work is ongoing to try

to establish the impact on educational resources of these placements with the aim of presenting a fuller report to the Panel's scheduled meeting in June.

**The Panel noted the update and noted also that it would be provided with a more detailed report at the next meeting.** The Panel also sought assurance that there is communication between local authorities with regard to these placements. The Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) confirmed that it is a requirement that when one local authority places a child it is looking after within the area of another local authority it notifies the authority of the placement. The service also co-operates with Health Officers regarding the health aspects of children placed within Anglesey and seeks to cross reference all the information with the information currently held on the Register.

- The LAC Education Liaison Officer confirmed that she was liaising with the ALN Education Officer with regard to providing the Panel with assurance regarding aspects of the education of looked after children and young people in relation to attendance, targets and progress and that her current report to the Panel does begin the process of providing that information.
- The Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) confirmed that in accordance with the Panel's request at its previous meeting the health report relating to looked after children does expand on the health issues arising from the initial looked after health assessments and the review thereof or referrals made.
- The Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) confirmed that the format of reports presented to the Panel is being reviewed.

#### **4 LIFE IN RESIDENTIAL CARE: EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF WELSH LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Correspondence from the Children's Commissioner for Wales to all Wales Heads of Children's Services giving notification of her intention to report on the experiences of looked after children and young people in residential care homes was presented for the Panel's information.

The Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) reported that the Commissioner's letter sets out the aims for the project. Anglesey currently has four young persons in placements within residential units who will be able to make a contribution to the project. However, the project will not cover respite placements; placements in the secure estate or boarding school placements (education arrangements rather than social care placements). It is hoped the Authority can use the project findings to inform its work in trying to meet the challenge of fulfilling children and young people's needs in the context of a rural environment and a shortage of suitable residential units especially in terms of meeting language needs.

The Head of Children's Services said that despite the overall increase in the number of looked after children the Authority has only a few children and young people in residential care placements with the majority being in placements within a family setting be that with friends or family or with foster carers. However, those children/young people in a residential placement are vulnerable and the Authority is working to strengthen the monitoring of these placements. Arrangements have been negotiated with the Contracts Service for the Contracts Officer to spend a designated period of time on Children's Services including statutory monitoring visits to these placements as well as non-standard fostering placements. The work will involve monitoring the provider as regards the provision made with a view that in the next quarter the four individuals who are the subject of these placements will be visited to provide assurance that the provision is being delivered in accordance with the contract and the individual plan.

The Panel noted the information and sought clarification regarding the status of looked after children in private residential placements in relation to the Children's Commissioner's proposed project.

The Head of Children's Services explained that the Authority has a wider safeguarding responsibility in respect of any establishment within its area and it forms part of the Contracts Monitoring Officer's brief to monitor the provision made even though the Authority may not have children in placements within those establishments. The Officer said that she understood from the Commissioner's correspondence that a broad sample of homes is to be visited in order to capture as wide a range of provision as possible; for its own part, the Authority is moving to monitor those provisions that it does not make use of.

The Panel further sought clarification of the status and timeline of the fieldwork to be undertaken in relation to the project and it was agreed that this matter be followed up so that the Authority is appropriately informed about visits by fieldwork officers that may take place.

**It was agreed to note the correspondence from the Children's Commissioner for Wales.**

**ACTION ENSUING: Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) to clarify the status and timeline of the project's fieldwork with the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales.**

## **5 RAISING THE AMBITIONS AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF CHILDREN WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER IN WALES**

The Welsh Government's Strategy document, "Raising the Ambitions and Educational Attainment of Children who are Looked After in Wales" and accompanying Action Plan for 2015/16 were presented for the Panel's information. The strategy, presented jointly by the Welsh Government's Department for Education and Public Services and the Health and Social Services Group seeks to ensure that all those whose work, responsibilities and lives bring them into contact with children who are looked after work together with the Welsh Government to raise the educational ambitions and aspirations of children in care and focusses on the actions required of all key partners to drive better educational outcomes and offer a range of options that best suit the ambitions, abilities and circumstances of each child who is looked after.

The Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) reported that following discussions with the Head of Learning, the intention is to initially formulate an action plan based on the Welsh Government's Strategy to reflect the agreed educational priorities for the children in the Authority's care and to present it to the Panel.

The Panel noted that the Strategy document puts forward 37 separate actions several of which are assigned to local authorities and it sought assurance that at a time of reducing resources the Authority will be able to fulfil those actions in order to deliver the intended benefits to the children it looks after. The Panel also noted that a number of the actions relate to "potential" and it sought clarification of the Authority's arrangements in terms of supporting the children in its care to reach their individual potential.

The Chair said that the Welsh Government is identified as having the lead co-ordinating responsibility for many of the substantive items in the Action Plan and that of those falling to the local authority much of the work involves refining arrangements already in place. It was proposed and agreed that officers from the Lifelong Learning Service and Children's Services meet to agree on a plan of action for addressing the issues in the Strategy that pertain to the local authority and report back to the Panel subsequently.

With regard to ensuring that looked after children and young people reach their potential, the Head of Children's Services said that the Authority reports annually on a number of indicators. Whilst the small cohort involved has been an issue in terms of distorting performance figures, there have been discussions about tracking the progress of individual looked after children to establish whether their looked after status does affect them educationally and what difference the Authority can make to improve the educational outcomes for them. The Officer said that the lead service with regard to the Strategy document is the Lifelong Learning Service although Children's Services do have a contributory role in responding to the recommendations therein.

The Panel noted that the Authority needs to be able to build a picture of each looked after child's potential and to develop a system for tracking the performance of each individual through key stages so that it can be assured that it is doing all it can to ensure the child is then making progress against his/her known potential.

**It was agreed to note the Welsh Government Strategy document and the contents therein.**

**ACTION ENSUING: Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) to co-ordinate discussions between the relevant officers within the Lifelong Learning Service and Children's Services with a view to reporting back to the Panel on an agreed plan for addressing the local authority related actions in the Strategy document.**

## 6 REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER

The report of the Independent Reviewing Officer for Quarter 3 2015/16 was presented for the Panel's consideration. The report provided an overview of the latest position with regard to the Looked After population and trends on Anglesey; the number of LAC reviews undertaken within statutory timescales and key messages therefrom; practice issues including examples of good practice along with areas of concern and how to address them.

The Service Manager (Safeguarding & Quality Assurance) referred to the main points highlighted by the IRO's report as follows –

- That as of 1 October, 2015 to 31 January, 2016 the Isle of Anglesey County Council looked after a total of 114 children (which has since risen to 116) which is a rise on the previously reported figure of 101. This upward trend in the Council's LAC population since 21 March 2013 is demonstrated in the graph at A (ii) and has placed pressure on the Child Placement Team to identify appropriate accommodation for the children and young people.
- The highest number of children and young people accommodated continues to be due to Child Protection concerns; this is also an area on an upward trajectory since Quarter 4, 2014/15 with the numbers involved rising from 78 to 94 currently. The reasons for this trend remain unclear but there is an issue regarding the availability of appropriate and adequate support/preventative services for children and families.
- The graph at paragraph E (i) of the report confirms the pattern in placing children and young people with the independent sector and with foster carers.
- That a total of 97 LAC reviews were completed during the quarter with 93.88% having being completed within the statutory timescale which is an encouraging performance in light of the increase in the number of children being accommodated.
- There remain issues in respect of LAC reviews in terms of the timely provision of supporting paperwork and the messages from children and young people from their reviews continue to be mixed particularly around the usefulness of the consultation paper they are asked to complete. There is a need to raise the profile of LAC reviews in terms of their purpose and importance and to ensure they remain focussed on the child and his/her needs.

The Panel considered the report and noted that the Independent Reviewing Officer highlights several areas of concern and whilst most of those relate to aspects of procedure and process the Panel noted in particular that the IRO draws attention to a lack of resources which she believes permeates all aspects of Children's Services and is reflected in the number of children being accommodated and in increased caseloads for social workers. The Panel sought clarification whether there is a basis to the concerns raised and what actions are being taken to address them.

The Portfolio Member for Housing and Social Services reported that the Executive has recognised the increased pressures on Children's Services and has allocated an additional £500k to the Service as part of the 2016/17 Budget proposals in order to enable the service to meet the additional demand.

The Head of Children's Services confirmed that the Senior Leadership Team has been briefed on a regular basis regarding the key issues affecting Children's Services both in the short-term and the medium to long term. In the short-term, the service has been affected by staff absences at a time of increased demand leading to a consequent upsurge in caseloads. Those absences have been covered by experienced agency staff. These costs alongside the increased costs of children looked after have been met by an investment of £460k by the Executive in the current year and the service is now up to capacity as regards social workers. An additional £500k is to be made available for Children's Services in 2016/17 to invest in social worker posts and a development programme to ensure that the outcomes for children looked after are improving. Whilst the period has been challenging for the Service the corporate response to address the issues and the risks involved has been timely. As regards dealing with the underlying reasons for the continuing increase in demand, the Welsh Government's Minister for Health and Social Services has highlighted the high number of children in care nationally in Wales compared to that in England and has challenged local authorities to work to reduce that number. Within this context the Authority needs to understand what is happening locally and work is being done to try to project what are the

demands and the costs from a zero based budget. The Cordis Bright report stated that one factor in the rate of children becoming looked after is the approach and strategy adopted by authorities and their partners and by their attitudes to risk. Key partners do at times press for children to be taken into care when that is not necessarily the most appropriate solution.

The Panel noted the explanation given and sought specific assurance regarding –

- The availability and provision of support and preventative services on the Island to address the needs of children who are vulnerable in way that does not necessitate their being taken into care.
- That the needs of the young person noted in the report as having been placed by the Court in a secure unit have been sufficiently considered and are being addressed in the best way possible.

The Head of Children's Services said with regard to the specific case referred to that she had instigated a case review in order to understand whether early intervention by the Authority and its key partners could have brought about a different outcome for the individual and the family concerned. The Officer said that in order to avoid escalation to the highest point of intervention then intervention at the lowest point is required and that one factor is how the Authority uses and co-ordinates the range of grant funding available to it and to key partners to better support families. The Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) is working on a business case for an Acute Intervention Team including family conference models to try to establish whether the service can intervene in a different way to try to prevent a child becoming looked after and remaining in care.

The Senior Partnership Manager reported to the Panel on the situation with regard to grant funding specifically in relation to providing support for families.

**It was agreed to accept the report of the Independent Reviewing Officer and to note its content.**

**NO FURTHER ACTION ENSUING**

## **7 ISLE OF ANGLESEY FOSTERING SERVICE: REPORT FOR REGULATION 42 – REVIEW OF THE QUALITY OF CARE**

The Quality of Care review report completed in compliance with the requirements of Regulation 42 of the Fostering Service (Wales) Regulations 2013 was presented for the Panel's consideration. The report provided information about the Fostering Service and specifically the monitoring of matters set out in Schedule 7 of the regulations.

The Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) informed the Panel that the annual inspection of the Fostering Service by CSSIW was carried out in the week commencing 18 January, 2016. The draft report has been received recently and confirms that no non-compliance notices have been issued as a result of the inspection.

The Panel noted that although it was informative about the service and the provision, the report lacked analytical depth and was of the view that there was scope for it to be more evaluative and challenging as regards what the information says about the quality of the service.

The Head of Children's Service said that the report has been prepared for a specific regulatory process but accepted the point about making it more evaluative and providing greater analysis of what the evidence says about the quality of the service. She referred to the developments with regard to better engaging with children and young people who are looked after as positive and that further, the service is working on a Participation Strategy and on establishing a LAC Forum to hear the views of looked after children and young people.

Mr Douglas Watson, Chair of the Anglesey Foster Carers Association reported from the perspective of the foster carers and confirmed that there had been a number of positive developments over the past two years to facilitate the role of foster carers and to make them feel more valued.

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

**ACTION ENSUING: Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) to consider ways of including in the Review of Quality of Care report more in-depth analysis of the quality of care whilst still meeting the regulatory guidelines for the presentation of the report.**

## 8 SERVICE REPORTS

- The report of the LAC Education Liaison Officer with regard to performance trends in relation to the education of the looked after population was presented for the Panel's consideration **and was noted by the Panel**. The LAC Education Liaison Officer elaborated on the key considerations and successes during the period as well as actions proposed to carry identified issues forward. She referred to a visit to the National Assembly by five looked after children to participate in an event about the experiences of being in care and it was agreed that the Panel thank the children involved for their participation.

The Panel discussed ways of tracking the progress of individual looked after children in a uniform and consistent way and sharing good practice among the Island's schools. The Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) suggested that it would be helpful for the Panel in monitoring the educational outcomes for looked after children to be provided with evidence of how the Authority has made a difference in this respect through the input of the LAC Education Liaison Officer especially as regards children in out of county placements.

**ACTION ENSUING: the Chair on behalf of the Panel to write to the 5 looked after children in acknowledgement of their visit to the National Assembly in Cardiff.**

- The report of the LAC Nurse with regard to the health aspects of the LAC population was presented for the Panel's consideration and **was noted by the Panel**. The report provided an analysis of the health issues that required addressing from the initial health assessments of individual looked after children and the health issues reviewed and/or referrals made.

Sue Willis, BCUHB said that she would endeavour to ensure that for future meetings the outcomes from referrals are also reported upon.

The Head of Children's Services highlighted the following:

- With reference to CAMHS, that there is a significant gap between the emphasis on the desirability of early intervention by CAMHS and the actual thresholds for access to the CAMHS service. She suggested that a baseline for emotional and mental health needs should be established as part of the initial health assessment.
- That the opportunity to co-operate with the LAC Nurse in relation to the Public Health Wales publication on pregnancy rates within the looked after population to provide an Anglesey perspective would be welcomed especially as the outcomes for care leavers with regard to forming healthy relationships have been a concern for some time.

**ACTION ENSUING: Principal Officer (Corporate Parenting and Partnerships) to liaise with the LAC Nurse to address the two points highlighted.**

- The report of the Child Placement Team Manager was presented and **was noted by the Panel**. The report updated the Panel on the position with regard to the demand for placements, the assessment of potential foster carers and training provided as well as issues arising.

The Panel sought clarification of the Authority's programme for returning looked after children to their families.

The Head of Children's Services said that whilst the service does plan and seek to discharge care orders where that is appropriate and in the best interests of the child, more can be done to facilitate the re-unification of children at an earlier stage and to look at de-planning and de-

escalating in a better way. Further consideration needs to be given to how the service plans for children and how parents are included in this work in a meaningful way and are supported in playing an improved part in their children's lives where that is deemed to be the best course for the children involved.

The Panel discussed, and noted that a great deal of work has been undertaken via a number of different work streams to improve the support provided to foster carers and that retention of current foster carers is a key part of the recruitment strategy

**NO FURTHER ACTION ENSUING**

**9 ADVOCACY – TROS GYNNAL QUARTERLY REPORT**

The report of the Tros Gynnal Advocacy Service in relation to the referrals made to the service by Anglesey's looked after population in the third quarter of 2015/16 was presented for the Panel's consideration and **was noted by the Panel**. The report provided a statistical breakdown of the referrals received and the types of issues raised.

**NO FURTHER ACTION ENSUING**

**10 NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the Panel's next meeting is to be held at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, 6 June, 2016.

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