

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 7 December, 2021

PRESENT: Mrs Annwen Morgan (Chief Executive) (Chair)

Councillor Llinos Medi (Leader & Portfolio Member for Social Services)
Councillor R. Meirion Jones (Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth)
Councillor Richard Griffiths (Corporate Scrutiny Committee)
Barbara Jones (Anglesey Foster Carers' Association)
Liz Fletcher (Assistant Area Director West – Children, BCUHB) (from item 7 onwards)
Fôn Roberts (Director of Social Services),
Rhys Hughes (Director of Education, Skills and Young People)
Ned Michael (Head of Housing Services)
Saul Ainsworth (Interim Service Manager – Safeguarding)
Huw Owen (Independent Reviewing & Safeguarding Officer)
Dawn Owen (Independent Reviewing & Safeguarding Officer)
Clare Owen (Independent Reviewing & Safeguarding Officer)
Gwyneth Hughes (Senior Well-Being Manager)
Heulwen Owen (LAC Education Liaison Officer)
Ffion Roberts (Looked After Children's Nurse)
Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Margaret M. Roberts, Llyr Bryn Roberts (Service Manager – Intensive Intervention), Nia Hardaker (Independent Reviewing Officer), Sioned Warren (Voices from Care Cymru)

The Chair welcomed all those present and everyone introduced themselves.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 7th September, 2021 were presented and were confirmed as correct.

3 MATTERS ARISING

The report of the Interim Service Manager (Safeguarding) regarding access to social and leisure activities for the children and young people in the Authority's care was presented for the Panel's consideration. The report arose from discussions at the Panel's June, 2021 meeting on a report on the services available to support the emotional well-being of looked after children during and after a pandemic.

The Director of Social Services reported that the vast majority of the feedback from social workers who were contacted to provide information about the activities children and young people are involved in and whether there were any barriers to participation is that pleasingly, access to activities appears to be nearing pre-pandemic times, albeit with some increased Covid secure arrangements in place. It was also reassuring to receive feedback on the wide variety of activities children and young people are involved in

details of which are provided in the report. In addition, Ynys Môn foster carers continue to have free access to the Island's leisure centres with some children and young people making the most of the opportunities which that brings. Since the summer of 2020, Welsh Government has provided Summer of Fun funding for a summer care scheme provision for vulnerable children including children and young people cared for by the Authority for six weeks over the school holidays. The aim has been to provide children with intellectual and physical stimulation, introduce them to new activities and games, develop their skills and provide a safe space for them to enjoy the summer holidays. For the summer of 2021, eight hubs were created across the Island which included sessions run by a range of organisations as listed in the report. Additional Welsh Government funding will be provided this year from the Winter of Fun Wellbeing Fund and will be used to provide similar opportunities for vulnerable children and young people across the Island.

The Director of Social Services said that the report provides assurance about the availability of leisure activities and opportunities for play and recreation for the Authority's looked after children and young people; and although the pandemic and the restrictions it has brought have at times proved challenging, with some young people finding it more difficult than others to re-engage with activities as restrictions have eased, he was confident that all the children and young people in the Authority's care have now either resumed pre-pandemic activities or had taken up new activities to the benefit of their emotional and mental well-being. Social worker contact with foster carers and the children and young people cared for has been maintained throughout the pandemic period and support provided, for example by the distribution of activity packs. Participation and engagement are aspects which the Independent Reviewing Officers also look at as part of their review of planning and provision for looked after children.

The Interim Services Manager (Safeguarding) said that the geographical positioning of the Island lends itself to greater access to some leisure activities, particularly those connected with the outdoors on land or sea and that that was evident in the feedback received. The level of commitment and resourcefulness shown by carers in supporting leisure activities for the children in their care has been admirable and is deserving of thanks.

The Panel welcomed the report recognising the importance of social and leisure activities to the well-being of the children and young people in the Authority's care and members sought further assurance with regard to the following points –

- Looking ahead, and mindful of the continuing uncertainty about the Covid-19 situation and how it will unfold in the coming months and beyond, the prospects for future leisure activity provision for looked after children and young people and whether that is dependent on external sources of funding.

The Director of Social Services advised that approximately 400 sessions covering a variety of activities were held during the summer with the help of grant funding without which the level and range of activity would not have been possible. The funding was spent in its entirety and the uptake on some of the sessions was very good taking into account factors such as the weather. Welsh Government's Summer of Fun funding has now been available for the past two years and it has made a difference in terms of enabling the Authority to provide opportunities and experiences for looked after children and young people they may not otherwise have been able to access.

- Whether every looked after child and/or young person has been offered something in the way of activity and/or opportunity.

The Director of Social Services advised that whilst it does not follow that every looked after child or young person either needs or wants "something," the offer has been made and is available to everyone. Some looked after children and

people engage in activities through or with their foster carers and the Foster Carers Forum is proactive in making such arrangements for children in foster care. Others access mainstream leisure and social activities. The Service has put in place a robust communication process to make sure that information about opportunities and activities are shared with children, young people and their carers.

- Whether the Panel can be sure that the type of activities arranged are what children and young people want and the extent of their input into shaping activity/leisure provision. The Panel in expressing some concern that the leisure /recreational provision created was grant dependent which it saw as a risk in the event that grant funding is withdrawn, sought clarification about how the provision can be put on a more sustainable footing in future if it is seen to be having the desired effect in terms of contributing to the resilience and well-being of the Authority's looked after children and young people.

The Director of Social Services advised that the Service is able to obtain the views of the children and young people in a number of ways including through the reviews conducted by the Independent Reviewing Officers and the contact they have with the children in between meetings; through social workers and carers and through Voices from Care Cymru which is working on a project to improve looked after children's participation and engagement. A discussion may be needed in instances where an activity/hobby/pursuit has cost implications but in general the Service is able to meet the wishes of the children cared for through the allocated budget and will also utilise other avenues of funding where appropriate e.g. the St David's Day fund and/or work co-operatively with foster carers and/or family to ensure that looked after children are given the same opportunities as their peers.

It was agreed to accept and to note the report for information purposes.

No further recommendation was made.

4 VOICES FROM CARE CYMRU PARTICIPATION GROUP

In the absence of Sioned Warren, Voices from Care Cymru, who was to have provided an update on the progress of the participation group to this meeting, the Chair suggested that the item be deferred to the Panel's next meeting to allow Voices from Care Cymru to provide the update and respond to the points of action agreed and to also afford the Panel the opportunity to receive assurance on the matters raised.

Following further discussion when it was highlighted that that would mean leaving the matter for another three months and after confirmation that no report had been provided in advance of this meeting, the Director of Social Services proposed that the issue be raised with Sioned Warren in a meeting which the Service had arranged with Voices from Care for later in the week with a view to a report being made available for circulation to the Panel's members for their comment and/or questions in the interim period and for the Service to respond to within an agreed timescale.

It was agreed to proceed in accordance with the arrangement put forward by the Director of Social Services as outlined.

5 REVISED TEMPLATES – PART 6 CARE AND SUPPORT PLAN AND PATHWAY PLAN

The report of the Interim Service Manager (Safeguarding) incorporating revised templates for the Part 6 Care and Support Plan and Pathway Plan was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Director of Social Services reported that the Panel has been aware for some time about the concerns regarding the templates within WCCIS which are considered unwieldy by practitioners and more importantly, difficult to navigate for children, young people and their families. The Panel was advised at its June meeting that work would be undertaken to review the templates and given the particularly negative feedback in respect of the Part 6 Care and Support Plan and the Pathway Plan, that a review of those two documents would be prioritised. The revised templates as attached to the report are adaptations of the original templates formulated by Welsh Government and have been drafted, consulted upon, and amended during the course of the last few weeks and subsequently endorsed by the Service. The Part 6 Care and Support Plan is reduced from 43 to 15 pages and the Pathway Plan is reduced from 25 to 9 pages whilst maintaining the requirements of Welsh Government. This has been achieved by eradicating duplication and generally tidying up the order of the templates.

The Director of Social Services further clarified that as the documents are a source of performance data, the Service needs to be sure that the revised versions still meet the needs in terms of data provision before they are integrated within WCCIS. That work will be done in the next few weeks with a view to implementing the new templates by the end of January, 2022. As well as reducing the plans in length and volume the Service considers that there is also scope for making the documents more user friendly in terms of style and language so they are easy to use and understand.

The Panel welcomed any intention to look at the templates from a style perspective believing that they should be written in language that is accessible and which the user is comfortable with; it was also the Panel's view that the documents should not be too "bureaucratic" or simply a tick box exercise but need to be "live" documents capable of being easily updated as circumstances, views and wishes change. To this end it was suggested that a digital format would better lend itself to updating.

The Director of Social Services advised that the Service has developed an "app" to better enable children and young people to record their thoughts which could be fed into the templates; the Interim Service Manager (Safeguarding) in acknowledging that the documents can seem static emphasised that they are not the only way of capturing children and young people's views. The Service has had to manage the changes to the templates in the context of the legal requirements. The Pathway Plan has been done in co-production with a young person and has now been trialled with five young care leavers who have been positive about it. The Service recognises that although the revised templates are an improvement on what has gone before, they are not perfect.

It was agreed to endorse the revised Part 6 Care and Support Plan and Pathway Plan templates for implementation at the end of January, 2022.

No further recommendation was made.

6 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was resolved under Section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion on the following item on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 and 13 [information relating to a particular individual/information likely to reveal the identity of an individual] of Schedule 12A to the said Act.

7 EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR LOOKEAD AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Senior Well-being Manager provided the Panel with a verbal update.

The Director of Education, Skills and Young People in providing the context to the update advised the Panel that educational arrangements have changed in the wake of the pandemic as have the arrangements for reporting on performance. In 2020 centre assessed grades were produced and in 2021 performance was based on centre determined grades. No examinations were held in those two years and grades have been based on a combination of school and teacher judgements and tests in the year. No performance data has been issued during the period of the pandemic and no comparative data is available for that period. Discussions on how to move forward in 2022 are taking place at national level with the objective being to return to a system similar to that in place previously but with no certainty that that will be the case. As the process for reporting to Scrutiny on pupil attainments has also changed it is challenging to be able to provide information on how pupils have improved.

The Portfolio Member for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth said that the Authority mindful of pupils' need for certainty has been pressing the WJEC for an indication of the assessment arrangements that will be in place for 2022 whilst also recognising the challenge posed by circumstances that can change rapidly as the pandemic situation itself changes and evolves.

The Senior Well-being Manager provided the Panel with the following information -

- Of the 155 children currently in the care of the Authority, 120 are of school age (3 – 16 years of age) and 24 are 16 – 17 years of age. Some of the young people are in post 16 education and others are receiving support and are looking for work.
- A proportion of the Authority's looked after children are in Anglesey secondary schools whilst others attend out of county secondary provision; similarly with primary aged children.
- The data provided by schools with regard to the progress of looked after pupils shows that 83.5% were on a track with their targets, 4.6% were performing below their targets and 1.5% were performing above target; 95.5% of LAC pupils have good attendance levels.
- Some of the Authority's looked after young people were due to complete their university degrees in the summer of 2021.

Whilst thanking the Learning Service for the information and recognising that providing meaningful data in the circumstances is difficult, the Panel indicated that in order for it and the Council to be able to meet their responsibilities as corporate parents, the Panel needs to have sight of data that will give it assurance that each child in the Authority's care is making progress in accordance with expectation and is fulfilling their potential. To that end it requested that for the next meeting, it be provided with a written report setting out the targets for each looked after child, their actual performance against target, their age and school year. The Panel also noted and was encouraged by the number of looked after children now receiving their education on the Island but wanted to know the reasons why others were in out of county provision.

The Senior Well-being Manager in recognising the importance of the performance data for self-assessment and assurance purposes confirmed that the electronic Personal Education Plan is now complete and is being populated with information provided by schools. Further training on the use of the PEP is scheduled for next week.

It was agreed –

- **To note the information presented verbally.**

- To ask the Learning Service to provide the Panel at its next meeting with a report detailing the targets for each looked after child, their actual performance against target, their age and school year. The report to also address the reasons why a small number of looked after children are in out of county educational provision.

8 NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

The arrangements for the next scheduled meeting of the Panel at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday 15 March, 2021 were noted.

Mrs Annwen Morgan
Chair

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