

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 15 March, 2022

- 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 Margaret Roberts (Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)
Barbara Jones (Anglesey Foster Carers' Association)
Janw Hughes Evans (BCUHB Child and Adolescent Health)
Dylan Williams, Deputy Chief Executive
Fôn Roberts (Director of Social Services),
Rhys Hughes (Director of Education, Skills and Young People)
Ned Michael (Head of Housing Services)
Huw Owen (Independent Reviewing & Safeguarding Officer)
Clare Owen (Independent Reviewing & Safeguarding Officer)
Gwyneth Hughes (Senior Well-Being Manager)
Heulwen Owen (LAC Education Liaison Officer)
Eirian Huws (Leaving Care Personal Advisor)
Sioned Warren (Voices from Care Cymru)
Rebecca Owen (Team Manager TGP Cymru)
Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)
- APOLOGIES:** Llyr Bryn Roberts (Service Manager – Intensive Intervention), Saul Ainsworth (Interim Service Manager – Safeguarding), Nia Hardaker (Independent Reviewing Officer), Dawn Owen (Independent Reviewing Officer), Ffion Roberts (Looked After Children's Nurse)
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The Chair welcomed all those present to this meeting of the Panel saying that it was her final meeting as Chief Executive and Chair of the Panel before her retirement. She extended a particular welcome to this meeting to her successor as Chief Executive, Mr Dylan Williams the current Deputy Chief Executive and she also gave warmest thanks to all the Panel's members for their support and co-operation during her tenure as Chair. She emphasised the importance of the Panel and the responsibilities that go with the role of being a corporate parent.

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 December, 2021 were presented and were confirmed as correct.

Arising thereon – the Director of Social Services confirmed that the revised Part 6 Care and Support Plan and Pathway templates are now in use and that they will be reviewed for their effectiveness and practicality in six months' time in consultation with those young people and staff who have been through the pathway planning process.

3 MATTERS ARISING

The Voices from Care Cymru Summary report covering the period from September to December 2021 was presented for the Panel's consideration. The report provided an update on the progress made by Voices from Care Cymru with the Participation Group as part of the joint project with Ynys Môn Children and Families' Services to develop a monthly participation group to help support Ynys Môn to develop its LAC and Care Leavers Strategy and to provide a platform that supports relationship building between care experienced young people and their corporate parents in Ynys Môn.

Sioned Warren, Development Officer updated the Panel confirming that over the last 3 months, the project engaged with a total of 2 care experienced young people throughout the Ynys Môn area through a total of 3 sessions. Of the young people engaged in the session, one was under 16 years of age and one was over 16 years old. These two young people have expressed an interest in maintaining their engagement with the local group. She referred to the Ynys Môn forum's principal areas of focus over the period covered by the report and the efforts made to promote the group and encourage engagement which have been impacted by the global pandemic. Despite this, some key themes have been established around understanding the role of the Corporate Parenting Panel, facing stigma in schools and sibling relationships. In meetings attended by the Development Officer, Education Liaison Officer and the Well-being Lead for Ynys Môn it was also agreed to explore opportunities to consult with schools across the Island.

The Development Officer in recognising that the local group needs to represent the whole care community in Ynys Môn to ensure a holistic approach to delivery and connections, said that work is being done with current members to explore how membership can be widened through various mechanisms and innovative approaches by using the lessons learned from the pandemic and engagement activities with young people. The Authority's support in disseminating information to reach all ages of the care community to highlight the existence of the group and to act as a communication vessel would be welcomed. It would also be beneficial for the Authority to share themes they wish to consult on to support the group's function of influencing and developing local change.

The Panel thanked Sioned Warren for the update and made comments as follows –

- Expressed disappointment that a greater number of children and young people had not been persuaded to join the forum to share views about what matters to them. The Panel noted that a way had to be found to reach all the children and young people looked after by the Authority and that it is essential that the Panel is able to hear their voices and understand their views and wishes if services are to meet their needs.
- Acknowledged that the stigma of being part of a group specifically for looked after children and young people and therefore seen as "different" might be a barrier to participation. The Panel was advised that alternative approaches are being considered to encourage participation and engagement with the children and young people including through mainstream activities and contact with organisations such as the Urdd Youth Organisation. It was noted that meaningful participation requires a flexible approach and involves adapting methods to find out what works best.
- Suggested that Voices from Care liaise with the Anglesey Foster Care Association through the Association's representative on the Panel, Barbara Jones as another way of raising awareness of the forum and sharing information about its purpose in providing children and young people who are looked after with an opportunity to express their views and influence strategy.
- Recognised that methods/channels of communication need to be strengthened to ensure that information about the forum is reaching the right people.

It was agreed to accept the report, to note progress to date and to recommend the following actions to move matters forward –

- The Ynys Môn Voices from Care Cymru Development Officer to discuss with Barbara Jones the possibility of raising awareness of the forum and garnering interest among children and young people through the Anglesey Fostering Association.
- The relevant officers in Education and Children and Families' Services to discuss ways of improving communication to ensure that information about the forum is disseminated widely among the care community.
- The Development Officer to provide a further update on progress to the Panel's next meeting.

4 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS' REPORT

The report of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) in accordance with their statutory duty to monitor the activity of the local authority acting as a good corporate parent was presented for the Panel's consideration. The report measured ongoing progress against the recommendations made by the IROs to the Corporate Parenting Panel in March, 2018 with regard to –

- Quality of assessments of Looked After Children
- Care and Support Plans
- Review and monitoring arrangements
- Quality and consistency of record keeping
- Permanency planning

Mr Huw Owen, Independent Reviewing Officer provided an overview of the report's contents and key messages and highlighted areas of ongoing improvements and good practice as well as areas for further development. The Service's response to the issues raised was also outlined and assurance provided. Reference was made to the conduct of reviews and confirmation given that 32 of the 34 reviews held between 1 September, 2021 and 14 January, 2022 were within timescales with valid reasons for why the other two reviews were outside timescale. The importance of continuity of social workers for looked after children was emphasised with the workforce situation being assessed as generally stable at the point of the report.

The Director of Social Services welcomed the report as containing no surprises; the Service is aware that further work is needed in some areas and that these are being addressed. He was confident that matters are moving in the right direction and made specific reference to workforce stability highlighting that social worker turnover has reduced from 32% in 2019 to 8% in 2021.

The Panel discussed the following –

- Whether the areas reviewed by the IROs should be Ragged for progress in order to highlight those areas where improvement needs to be focused. The Director of Social Services confirmed that an additional section could be included to show the current status of action/implementation. However, it was also recognised that the data on its own does not always tell the whole story and that it needs to be supported by narrative that includes an analysis of performance within context that also identifies relevant factors and risks. Ensuring the accuracy of the assigned Rag status therefore can be a challenge when there are different factors at play when measuring progress.
- The evolving maturity of IRO reporting. The Panel acknowledged the challenge provided by the IROs including feedback to the Panel about strengths and weaknesses which enables the Panel to take assurance from aspects of service that are assessed as performing well and to be clear about areas that require service

improvement. The Panel noted that IRO reporting now also provides an account of the Service response to IRO recommendations including actions being implemented.

It was agreed to accept the report, to note the key matters and to note also the progress made against the IRO's recommendations.

5 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ADVOCACY SERVICE

The report of TGP Cymru setting out how the North Wales Advocacy Service was utilised by looked after children and young people in Anglesey during the year April, 2020 to March, 2021 was presented for the Panel's consideration.

Rebecca Owen, Team Manager referred to the headline data as follows –

- Decrease of 34% in the number of children accessing Issue Based Advocacy (IBA) from 151 in 2019/20 to 99 in 2020/21.
- Decrease of 12% in the number of issues dealt with from 241 in 2019/20 to 211 in 2020/21.
- 80 of the 100 children and young people who entered the LAC and CP arenas on Anglesey in 2020/21 were eligible for the Active Offer of Advocacy. A total of 29 Active offer referrals were received during the year in comparison with last year's 47. This equated to 64% of eligible children and young people on Anglesey declining the offer of an advocacy meeting during the year.
- 20 children and young people accepted the Active Offer during the year compared with 35 the previous year.
- No care leavers were supported on Anglesey in comparison with 5 the previous year.
- 8 were supported to make complaints in comparison with 2 the previous year
- Of the 211 issues presented, 127 (40% overall) were to support children and young people at meetings.
- All but one Active Offer referrals were seen within the required timescale. Twelve young people who were closed during the year completed a review and evaluation form. All stated that the advocate did what they agreed they would and that they would access the service again; 90% stated that they felt their views and wishes had been fully considered and 90% said that they would access the service again.

The Panel thanked TGP Cymru for the information and Rebecca Owen for presenting the report. The Panel took assurance from the data provided that an independent advocacy provision is available to the Authority's looked after children and young people and that they are accessing the service when they feel the need to.

The Director of Social Services agreed that advocacy plays an important part in terms of adding value, bringing issues to the Service's attention and helping the Service learn from advocacy cases. In noting that no care leavers had accessed the service in the year in question he suggested that TGP Cymru's Team Manager meets with the After Care Service Team to ensure the Team is aware of and understands the role of the advocacy service.

It was agreed to accept the report, to note its contents and to recommend the following action –

- **TGP Cymru's Team Manager to meet with the After Care Service to raise awareness of the role of advocacy in connection with Leaving Care**

6 CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY

The Director of Social Services gave a power point presentation which provided an introduction to the Corporate Parenting Strategy and context. The presentation highlighted the Authority's strategic commitments as corporate parent; the roles of elected members, officers and partners and identified five key priorities in moving forward.

The Director of Social Services advised the Panel on the proposed timeline for issuing the Strategy and confirmed that the first draft of the Strategy had been prepared with the support of Voices from Care Cymru. The intention is to present the initial draft to the June, 2022 meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel for consultation (after the May local government election) with the final draft to follow at the Panel's September, 2022 meeting.

The Panel emphasised the importance of corporate parenting as a duty that all the Council's staff and elected members should be aware of and understand, and a role which it had sought to promote as a panel of this Administration. Reference was made to the profile of the children and young people in the Authority's care and the Director of Social Services clarified the context and the factors that have impacted on this figure over the past few years highlighting also that the Service works hard to help children and young people leave care safely and appropriately and that this process can be challenging.

It was agreed to endorse the timeline for the publication of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

7 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.

8 LEAVING CARE SERVICE

Eirian Huws, Leaving Care Personal Advisor gave a visual presentation from the Christmas Workshop, 2021 which brought staff, elected members and children and young people in care together giving them an opportunity to talk about matters of importance to them in a fun and informal environment. Activities included dressing the Christmas trees through which the participants could also convey messages if they found that preferable to talking. Refreshments and decorations were financed from the St David's Day fund and proceeds from the sale of the decorated Christmas trees were donated to a dementia charity chosen by the children and young people themselves. Feedback from the event was positive and further such events on different themes are planned for the future.

The Panel thanked Eirian Huws for the presentation and everyone who had been involved in organising the Christmas workshop. The Panel acknowledged the value of events such as this in facilitating engagement in a relaxed and comfortable way which is less likely to be achieved in a formal panel setting.

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10 EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS OF LOOKEAD AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The report of the Senior Well-being Manager (Schools) which provided statistical information about the educational progress of the children and young people in the Authority's care was presented for the Panel's consideration. Analysis focused on whether performance was on track or better, or whether it was a cause for concern; attendance at school, the number of children receiving out of county provision and the number of children with additional learning needs.

Mr Gwyn Jones from the Gwynedd and Ynys Môn ALN and Inclusion Service gave a presentation on the electronic format of the Personal Education Plan highlighting its functionality and features including access to up to date information at any time which can be used to track progress.

The Panel was informed that the resource is appreciated by education practitioners and schools and that interest in the programme has been shown more widely.

The Panel was appreciative of the information provided and noted that for the future it would be helpful if the information captured by the electronic programme can be translated into reports for the Panel to help it gain a better and fuller understanding of looked after children and young people's educational progress, limitations, and barriers to achievement.

It was agreed to note the report and the information provided.

In concluding the business of the meeting, the Chair thanked the Panel and wished it well in its work for the future. The Panel thanked Mrs Annwen Morgan for her guidance and commitment in the role of Chair.

Mrs Annwen Morgan
Chair