

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 November, 2013

PRESENT:	Mr Richard Parry Jones (Chief Executive) (Chair) Councillor Kenneth Hughes (Portfolio Member for Social Services & Housing) Councillor Ann Griffith (Corporate Scrutiny Committee) Mr David Lydford (Fostering Care Association) Sue Willis (BCUHB) Karen Windall (BCUHB) Alison Jones (NYAS) Anwen Huws (Head of Children's Services) Natalie Woodworth (Principal Officer – Operations) Deiniol Williams (LAC Team Manager) Deborah Stammers (Child Placement Team Manager) Sean McClearn (After Care Co-ordinator) Llio Johnson (Gwynedd & Anglesey Partnership Unit) Heulwen Owen (LAC Education Liaison Officer) Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)
APOLOGIES:	Councillor Dylan Rees, Mrs Gwen Carrington, Dr Gwynne Jones

The Chair welcomed all those present to this meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 22 July, 2013 were presented and confirmed as correct.

Arising thereon –

- The Head of Children's Services confirmed that she had raised the matter of the County Council's formally acknowledging the success of a young person in care on the acceptance of his artwork by the Foundling Museum with the Chief Executive's Personal Assistant but had hitherto not had a response. The Officer said that she would inquire after the matter.
- The Principal Officer – Operations said that she was not at this point in time in a position to report on developments with regard to conducting an audit of the Services' approach and management of children in the LAC system for 12 months or over.
- The Head of Children's Services informed Members that with regard to the introduction of the revised Public Law Outline process it would be more advantageous for the Panel to receive a report at its next meeting at the end of a full quarter's operation.
- The LAC Education Liaison Officer confirmed that she would incorporate information about LAC school attendance in her next update to the Panel.
- In relation to providing clarification of the position as regards the introduction of a new time schedule for the completion of health assessments and whether there might be a resulting impact on performance, Sue Willis, BCUHB explained that there has been agreement across the six North Wales counties to regularise the arrangements for completing health assessments to the effect that all six counties will as from this financial year count from the date rather than the month of the previous assessment and that this was the change in scheduling to which the LAC Nurse was referring.
- The Head of Children's Services said that she had broached the matter of free gym membership for the looked after population with the Director of Community following the report

at the previous meeting that the Leisure Service was only able to offer subsidised but not free membership. The Officer explained that a favourable resolution of the matter had not been reached due to the financial constraints on the Leisure Service and its need consequently to be able to optimise the income from the provision it offers.

In response to Councillor Ann Griffith's query whether this position could be challenged, the Chair said that the question of providing discretionary concessions can arise in relation to several categories of service users who might be regarded as special cases. The most appropriate channel for questioning whether this can be achieved for the looked after population is the consultation process on the 2014/15 Budget formulation when the Authority's priorities for the new financial year will be subject to detailed scrutiny and discussion before they are then determined and set.

Alison Jones, NYAS informed the Panel that following consultation work, the Young People's Forum in another North Wales Authority had succeeded in obtaining free passes for a six month trial period for its LAC children and their carers.

- In response to a point made about the need to act on decisions made by the Panel, the Head of Children's Services said that she would follow up the reasons for any inaction that might pertain to the Children's Services team and would also ensure that the minutes of the Panel's meetings are included as a standing item on the agenda of the Children's Services Operational Team meetings.
- The Chair referred to the fact that Dr Janet Horn had now retired from her role as medical advisor for looked after children and subsequently as a Member of the Corporate Parenting Panel. He said that it was appropriate and timely to record the Panel's appreciation of Dr Horn's contribution to the Panel's work and processes during her membership thereof.

ACTIONS ARISING:

- **Head of Children's Services to make inquiries with the Office of the Chief Executive about the acknowledgement of the achievement of the young looked after person in having his artwork accepted by the Foundling Museum.**
- **Principal Officer – Operations to initiate arrangements for conducting an audit of the Services' approach and management of children in the LAC system for 12 months or over as per the Panel's agreement at its 22 July meeting.**
- **LAC Education Liaison Officer to report on LAC school attendance in the next education update to the Panel.**
- **Principal Officer – Operations to update the Children's Services Operational Team on any matters arising from the Corporate Parenting Panel requiring action by the Team.**
- **Chair of the Panel to write to Dr Janet Horn in acknowledgement of her service and contribution as member of the Corporate Parenting Panel.**

3 SERVICE REPORTS

3.1 The report of the Independent Reviewing Officer which outlined matters affecting the looked after population of Anglesey in terms of the operation of the processes relating to care planning and placements was presented for the Panel's consideration.

In the absence of the Independent Reviewing Officer, the Head of Children's Services highlighted the main points to note from the report around the following issues –

- A current downward trend in the looked after population
- LAC reviews and related considerations including the key messages from young people from reviews.
- Risks and concerns around appropriate input by CAMHS; the timely completion of adoption medicals and the need for the IRO to be notified of changes in a looked after child/young person's education provision whether that be a move to another school or the provision of an alternative form of education.
- Achievements and instances of good practice.
- Planned actions to address matters requiring attention.

- Update on the missing from placement situation.

The Panel considered the information presented and drew attention to the following as matters requiring clarification and further investigation –

- The need to be assured that CAMHS are able to provide the necessary support and input for looked after children with complex needs at a time of instability and insecurity in their lives and in order to avoid placement breakdown. Whilst the pressures on the CAMHS was acknowledged, the Chair said he would raise the issue with the Chair and Acting Chief Executive of the BCUHB during their visit to Anglesey shortly given how essential access to this support service is for children who have experienced multiple harm and insecurity. The Head of Children's Services informed the Panel that there is on-going dialogue with CAMHS on the feasibility of the service being able to offer a baseline mental health assessment for all looked after children. Sue Willis pointed out that the emotional health of looked after children is every relevant agency's business and that there are levels of assessment that can be undertaken by practitioners other than health thus leaving the CAMHS to do only what the CAMHS can do.
- Delays in the completion of adoption medicals which then have repercussions for the decision making process regarding a child's future plan. It was felt that such delays were unfair on other agencies in their efforts to move matters forward in the best interests of the child/young person.
- Children and young people missing from placements particularly in the context of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. The Panel discussed the arrangements for addressing missing children cases and was updated by the Head of Children's Services in her capacity as Chair of the Missing Children and Child Sexual Exploitation Task Group (Gwynedd and Ynys Môn) on the work of the group in its initial two meetings. The Officer also emphasised that Anglesey has supplemented the All Wales Protocol for dealing with missing children in care by ensuring that case files on missing children remain open and are monitored by the IRO.
- Mr David Lydford referred to the discussion and criteria around making laptops available to certain looked after young people and he requested that Foster Carers are involved in this process before any determination is made.

Agreed to accept the report and to note the position.

ACTION ARISING: LAC Team to include Foster Carers via Mr David Lydford of the Foster Carers Association in the discussion and dialogue in relation to providing laptops for looked after children/young people.

3.2 The report of the LAC Team Manager providing statistical analysis of the looked after population of Anglesey in relation to their age profile, legal status, type of placement made and the underlying reasons was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The LAC Team Manager drew the Panel's attention to a significant improvement in LAC statutory visits during the second quarter reporting period.

The Panel discussed the increase in the number of children being cared for out of county and the impact of this upward trend on social workers' workload in terms of maintaining contact and scheduling visits. The issue of other local authorities arranging placements on Anglesey without notifying the host authority was also raised. Dr. Karen Windall and the Principal Officer – Operations referred to the dialogue that is occurring in respect of this matter including at the Local Safeguarding Board level. The Head of Children's Services informed the Panel that she had requested the Principal Officer – Operations to arrange for the Principal Administrative Officer to correspond with authorities in all other parts of the UK to remind them of the need to provide notification of placements made with another authority, and that she believed that this practice should be carried out annually. Sue Willis, BCUHB confirmed that the Health Board undertakes that exercise with all local authorities.

Agreed to accept the report and to note the position.

ACTION ARISING: Children's Services Principal Administrative Officer to write to all local authorities annually as a reminder to them of the need to notify the Authority in Anglesey of any care placement made on the Island.

3.3 The report of the LAC Education Liaison Officer outlining matters relating to the educational attainment of looked after children and young people was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The LAC Education Liaison Officer informed the Panel that the open afternoon at Bangor University for children between 12 and 16 years of age and their foster carers arranged as part of the National Week for Care Leavers had been postponed due to insufficient interest and that arrangements had been made instead for the contact officer at the University to attend a Children in Care Team meeting. The matter of the movement of children from one school to another or from school to an alternative form of education provision without the LAC Education Liaison Officer's knowledge was also raised by the Chair who confirmed that the Director of Lifelong Learning had undertaken to ensure prior consultation with the LAC Education Officer and IRO in such cases.

Agreed to accept the report and to note the position.

NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING

3.4 The report of the LAC Nurse outlining matters affecting the health and wellbeing of the looked after population on Anglesey was presented for the Panel's consideration.

In the absence of the LAC Nurse, Sue Willis, BCUHB highlighted the main points of the report with reference to the completion of health assessments within timescales and she gave an account of the reasons why 8 were out of date. She referred to the launch of new health assessment forms and to the provision of administrative support for the LAC Nurse which will release time for her to work more closely with care leavers and the after-care team.

Agreed to accept the report and to note the position.

NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING

3.5 The report of the Leaving Care Co-ordinator outlining issues affecting Looked After young people who are preparing to leave the care system or who are in receipt of aftercare support. was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Leaving Care Co-ordinator provided the Panel with a general analysis of the profile, circumstances and needs of the young people being Looked After by the Authority at this point in time and he drew particular attention to developments around the implementation of the new Welfare Reform Bill and Universal Credit which are likely to impact on the young people with whom the Authority is working.

The Panel considered the report and discussed the level of support available to young care leavers by agencies such as Careers Wales in assisting them to gain access to quality training/learning opportunities and apprenticeships thus ensuring they have a good start in life. The Panel believed it was important that this element of the leaving care provision is monitored as it deemed this to be a critical period in the young people's development in setting a pattern for their lives and that it needed to be assured that agencies are working together to manage the transition from being a young person in care to independent living and adulthood. The Leaving Care Co-ordinator said that although the Care Leaving Team within the Authority in Anglesey is small it means that the officers are known and familiar to other agencies and have a good working relationship with them. However he would have liked to have seen the idea of apprenticeships within the County Council i.e. "the family business" for young people looked after by the Authority which was mooted some time ago, being realised. The Officer drew the Panel's attention to the fact that a meeting had been held with Mr Huw Thomas, Group Partnership Manager for the Wales Department of Work and Pensions as part of an initiative to offer better working relationships with local authorities in their work with care leavers. Anglesey is the first Authority to initiate this process.

The Panel considered the role of the Authority in its capacity both as a corporate parent and as a major employer in terms of the potential for providing opportunities for care leavers through the creation of internal apprenticeships. The Head of Children's Services reminded the Panel that the Corporate Parenting Strategy presented to the Panel at its previous meeting will be the subject of

consultation with LAC children and young people in order to establish whether the aspirations and desires encapsulated in the Strategy coincide with those of the looked after population itself. Whilst there has always been a corporate goodwill in respect of promoting the interests of looked after children and young people the presumption has been that the financial support will be provided by the Social Services. The Officer said that the role of corporate parent needs to be revisited in the context of the whole Council and consideration given to how individual services set their budgets to allow for corporate parenting responsibilities.

Agreed to accept the report and to note the position.

NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING

3.6 The report of the Child Placement Team outlining issues in relation to the fostering service and the recruitment of foster carers was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Child Placement Team Manager highlighted the changes made to fostering procedures in order to accelerate and streamline the process of assessment and approval with the introduction of a triple track process meaning that from now on the three elements of checks, training and assessment will run parallel to one another. In response to a comment made by the Portfolio Member for Social Services regarding the frequency of training sessions, the Officers said that whilst resources do not allow for further training sessions to be held, the triple tack process should ensure that momentum is retained and that the assessment process is not delayed because of the non occurrence of training.

Agreed to accept the report and to note the position.

NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING

3.7 The report of the Principal Officer for Corporate Parenting incorporating the inspection report of CSSIW on the Ynys Môn Fostering Service was presented and was noted by the Panel.

4 PROPOSAL FOR CONDUCTING VISITS BY ELECTED MEMBERS AND SENIOR MANAGERS TO CHILDREN'S TEAMS/SERVICES

A report setting out a draft proposal for conducting visits by Elected Members and Senior Managers to Children's teams and services was presented for the Panel's consideration. The proposal entailed arrangements for conducting visits at three levels, the personnel involved, the purpose of the visits and the reporting arrangements in the context of the recommendations made by Lord Laming in relation to increasing the accountability of senior officers and elected members for front line services.

The Head of Children's Services said that a proposal for conducting visits by elected members and senior managers to Children's Teams and Services had been presented to the Panel previously but had not been implemented due to the imminence of the Local Authority election. The proposal as presented above has been amended to reflect the current position.

Agreed to support the draft proposal as presented.

5 PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE IT SUPPORT TO ELIGIBLE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Matter deferred to the next meeting.

6 INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY SERVICE – NYAS

A report by the Service Manager of NYAS providing information on the number of referrals received in the second quarter and their profile along with the primary issues raised by those seeking advocacy support was presented for the Panel's consideration.

Agreed to accept the report and to note the position.

NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business arising.

8 NEXT MEETING

Noted as Monday, 10th February, 2014 at 3:30 p.m.

Mr R.P.Jones (Chair)

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