

Corporate Parenting Panel

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September, 2014

- PRESENT:** Mr Richard Parry Jones (Chief Executive) (Chair)
- Councillor Ieuan Williams (Council Leader & Portfolio Member for Education)
Councillor Kenneth Hughes (Portfolio Member for Housing and Social Services)
Councillor Ann Griffith (Corporate Scrutiny Committee)
Councillor Dylan Rees (Partnership & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)
Sue Willis (Continuing Care Service Manager - BCUHB)
Alison Jones (NYAS)
Mrs Gwen Carrington (Director of Community)
Dr Gwynne Jones (Director of Lifelong Learning)
Anwen Huws (Head of Children's Services)
Mrs Delyth Molyneux (Head of Learning)
Mr Llyr Bryn Roberts (Principal Officer – Corporate Parenting and Partnerships)
Mrs Rona Jones (Independent Reviewing Officer)
Deborah Stammers (Child Placement Team Leader)
Natalie Woodworth (Principal Officer – Operations)
Heulwen Owen (LAC Education Liaison Officer)
Llinos Edwards (LAC Nurse)
Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)
- APOLOGIES:** Mr Douglas Watson (Chair Anglesey Foster Carers' Association)

The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting and he extended a particular welcome to Mr Llyr Bryn Roberts to his first meeting of the Panel as the newly appointed Principal Officer – Corporate Parenting and Partnerships.

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 2 June, 2014 were presented and confirmed as correct.

Arising thereon –

- The Director of Community confirmed that discussions with regard to the provision of free gym membership are ongoing with the Principal Leisure Officer with input now provided also by the Principal Officer for Corporate Parenting and Partnerships. The Authority has been in contact with Gwynedd and Conwy Councils, and Conwy Council as an authority with experience of developing effective working practices in this respect has indicated that its officers are willing to visit Anglesey to lend the Authority their expertise.
- With reference to the timely provision of education psychology reports in adoption cases so as not to delay Court proceedings, the Head of Learning said that a situation exists whereby the Education Psychology Service is not fully staffed hence the issue with regard to the availability of staff to undertake the assessments. Arrangements have been made to prioritise cases involving certain groups. Steps have also been taken to try to strengthen capacity by the appointment of three trainee assistant educational psychologist two of whom are about to embark on a course of training as Educational Psychologists which is of 3 years duration. The Panel noted, and was satisfied that the Education Psychology Service is aware of the problem and is taking action to address the situation.
- With reference to Lost After Care, the Head of Children's Services said that she would inquire further regarding the After Care Service's provision of a full Service Action Plan.

3 MATTERS ARISING – ALL WALES PROTOCOL FOR MISSING CHILDREN

The All Wales Protocol for Missing Children encompassing children who run away or go missing from care was presented for the Panel's information. The Protocol provides guidance for practitioners and relevant agencies regarding the steps to be taken when a looked after child has been defined as missing from care. The Protocol also refers practitioners to separate guidance in cases where they encounter a child who is being, or is at risk of being sexually exploited and in cases where a child is being trafficked.

The Independent Reviewing Officer reported on the position with regard to the Isle of Anglesey County Council and she confirmed that the Authority does have in place a protocol to deal with incidents where a child or young person goes missing from care. She confirmed that the general approach is in line with the processes and procedures contained within the All Wales Protocol and she went on to explain the process whereby the Authority seeks to safeguard the looked after population, and the actions to be taken in the eventuality that those children and young persons identified as high risk within that population might go missing. The Officer also updated the Panel on the situation with regard to one young person who is currently missing from care regarding which the Panel has been briefed on a quarterly basis.

The Panel considered the information and highlighted the following matters regarding which they sought assurance –

- In the context of national events, and in relation to the exploitation of children and young people who go missing from care, that professional practitioners in all the relevant services are aware of the All Wales Protocol and the related expectations; that they are confident in its use and know what to do in the different circumstances wherein a child or young person can go missing.

The Service Officers explained the level of understanding of the Protocol and procedures from the perspective of the Children's Services, the Education Services the Health Service and the Fostering Service respectively and they elaborated on arrangements for ongoing training where those are being made. The Head of Children's Services referred to developments in relation to establishing a North Wales framework to facilitate multi-agency working to address issues around children who go missing from care meaning there is an enhanced awareness of the risks regarding missing children and young people along with the need for joint planning in order to address the matter. The Authority in Anglesey has undertaken a great deal of work jointly with Barnardo's Cymru on the Seraf Service (a support programme for children and young people who are at risk of or have been abused through sexual exploitation) and staff have been trained to identify children and young people at risk of exploitation and to use the Seraf risk assessment tool. Agencies are now much more aware that children and young people who go missing from care are vulnerable rather than problematic individuals. The Principal Officer (Operations) confirmed that Barnardo's Cymru has been working with the Authority on a practical and operational level. She informed the Panel that the Authority in conjunction with Barnardo's Cymru has developed a child trafficking handbook and the processes for dealing with it which is being ratified by the Welsh Government prior to its circulation to all other local authorities in Wales.

The Head of Learning said that whilst Education Service practitioners are not as practiced in the application of the Protocol as Social Workers, joint-working arrangements between education and other services have been extended and tightened and the Service's Inclusion Officer works closely with schools to raise awareness of the relevant protocols. The Child Placement Team Manager confirmed that the Protocol forms part of the documentation provided to the Authority's foster carers upon their registration. The LAC Nurse said that LAC and school nurses have received training by Barnardo's Cymru. When undertaking health assessments LAC Nurses have a list of questions they can ask in clinics about exploitation and other such matters with reference to missing children, and they participate in the Môn/Gwynedd task groups which are part of the framework to promote multi-agency working in this field.

The Panel noted and accepted the professional feedback with regard to practitioner and professional awareness of the All Wales Protocol and its implementation.

The Continuing Care Service Manager said that the Wrexham asylum seekers centre may be in a position to obtain intelligence regarding children and young persons who go missing, and she

suggested that the LAC Nurse should seek a dialogue with the centre with a view to possibly gaining information about the one young person who is currently missing from care.

- In the context of national events, that the Panel should have oversight of the number of occasions on which a young child or person has absconded from care and should be regularly monitoring the situation.
- With reference to elected Members' specific corporate parenting responsibilities, that they be provided with training on this subject matter. The Head of Children's Services said that part of the Principal Officer – Corporate Parenting and Partnerships' duties and planned work programme will be to review the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy which includes the provision of training for elected members.
- The Social Services' relationship with the UK Border Agency and whether the Agency approaches missing children more as possible illegal immigrants than as potential victims of trafficking. The Chair said that Anglesey has a lead role in North Wales on issues of people trafficking and slavery and has a dedicated officer to that end. The Authority has had a dialogue with the UK Border Agency and with the Police Service on strategy and a Government Minister has visited Holyhead Port. Therefore there is now a much more prominent multi-agency approach to child trafficking issues and a much greater awareness of its occurrence and the risks associated with it.
- **It was agreed to note the All-Wales Protocol for Missing Children along with the Anglesey approach to the same.**

ACTIONS ARISING:

- **Principal Officer – Operations to provide the Panel at its next meeting with information regarding the joint working initiative with Barnardo's Cymru regarding children and young people at risk of exploitation/trafficking.**
- **Principal Officer – Operations to provide the Panel with a copy of the handbook developed jointly with Barnardo's Cymru to provide guidance regarding child trafficking and the processes for dealing with it.**
- **Principal Officer – Operations to provide the Panel with data regarding the number of occasions on which a child/young person has absconded from care in Anglesey.**
- **LAC Nurse to contact Wrexham Asylum Centre for possible intelligence regarding the one young person currently missing from care.**
- **Head of Children's Services to provide the Panel at its next meeting with a summary report of lessons to be learnt from the Rotherham Child Abuse case in terms of clarifying expectations and accountabilities in relation to safeguarding children and young people from exploitation.**

4 REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER

The report of the Independent Reviewing Officer providing a statistical analysis of the looked after population on Anglesey during Quarter 1 2014/15 was presented for the Panel's consideration. The report included information in relation to the Looked After Population profile and trends; legal status and type of placement; the number of reviews undertaken within the statutory timescale and the reasons for any non-compliance; good practice issues in care planning and practice issues that need attention; developmental work and risks and areas of concern with proposed actions to resolve them.

The Independent Reviewing Officer highlighted the following points –

- That overall, there has been a gradual decrease in the looked after population since Quarter 1 2012/13.
- The performance Indicators for LAC reviews within timescale continue to be high although two reviews were conducted outside the timescale due to unforeseen circumstances.
- A consultation event undertaken by NYAS found that many looked after children and young people found their reviews to be boring and saw them as something that is imposed on them rather than being helpful to them. Experience indicates that reviews conducted in a more intimate

environment with fewer officials present are more productive in terms of the looked after child/young person's participation and in their deriving benefit from it.

- The decline in parental involvement in LAC reviews as a matter of concern.
- A proposal that the Authority hold an annual event to celebrate the achievements of the children and young people who are looked after which would recognise success in different categories for different age groups.

The Panel considered the information and discussed the decline in parental attendance at LAC reviews and what steps might be taken to encourage parents to be present in review meetings as regards reducing the formality and bureaucracy around these meetings. It was agreed that consideration needs to be given to how best to achieve a balance between meeting performance targets in terms of the number of reviews held within timescale and ensuring that the reviews themselves are meaningful to the looked after child/young person.

The Panel was agreed that it was important for it to maintain a link with the Authority's looked after population and that an awards event presents an opportunity for Panel Members to meet with those children and young persons for whom the Authority has a duty of care.

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

ACTION ARISING: Director of Community in consultation with the Portfolio Member for Housing and Social Services to explore the feasibility of instituting an annual awards event to recognise the achievements of children and young people who are looked after by the Authority.

5 SERVICE REPORTS

5.1 The report of the LAC Team Manager was presented and noted.

NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING

5.2 The report of the LAC Education Liaison Officer in respect of the educational aspects of the provision for Looked After Children and Young People was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Panel considered the report and sought clarification of the Authority's performance with reference to the educational attainments of its looked after population. Reference was made to draft information on this matter which suggests that there is room for improvement.

The Director of Lifelong Learning explained that the draft data relates to Summer 2013 examinations specifically and that it would be advisable to establish firstly whether the performance data for Summer 2014 examination underlines a pattern of underachievement or whether it indicates that the results for 2013 were an aberration due to the size of the cohort and the performance in one Key Stage. He emphasised that there is a need to establish a procedure whereby the Panel can be assured that the education provision actively supports looked after children and young people to fulfil their potential.

The Head of Children's Services said that there are one or two areas in relation to the educational progress of the looked after population that the Panel might wish to examine as risk areas. She suggested that it was important for the Panel to focus on areas of risk and to consider formulating a risk register to highlight exception areas with regard to corporate parenting performance.

It was agreed to accept the report of the LAC Education Liaison Officer and to note its contents.

NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING

5.3 The report of the LAC Nurse in relation to the health aspects of the provision for Looked After Children and Young People was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The LAC Nurse sought approval to provide performance statistics on an annual rather than quarterly basis. She confirmed that no issues had arisen during the quarter apart from a reduction

in her office time due to a requirement to support the LAC nurse post in Gwynedd whilst the post holder is covering maternity absence.

The Panel acceded to the request by the LAC Nurse to report on performance annually rather than quarterly conditional upon any issues of concern being reported to the Panel in the interim.

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

NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING

5.4 The report of the Child Placement Team Leader incorporating the draft CSSIW Fostering Post Inspection Action Plan was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Child Placement Team Leader highlighted the output of the work of the Fostering Recruitment and Marketing Officer as seen in a 325% increase in the number of fostering enquiries in Q1 2014/15 (34) compared to the corresponding period in 2013/14.

The Panel considered the report and referred to issues with the potential to impact on the retention of the Authority's foster carers. The Panel noted that some of the Authority's most experienced foster carers had voiced frustration that their financial needs and aspirations for progression and development in their fostering career are not being met. The Panel recognised the risk that they may choose to transfer to the independent fostering sector and was concerned by the implications of such a withdrawal for the quality of the Authority's fostering service and for the Recruitment Strategy. Whilst the Panel emphasised that discussions regarding the fostering payments and fees package need to coincide with the Council's budget consultation and formulation process, it also acknowledged that the financial dimension is only part of the discussion about the support elements that contribute to, and reflect the status and recognition accorded to the Authority's Foster Carers.

The Officers reported on steps being taken to address the situation through the Foster Care Forum and its three working groups which are focussing on foster carers' dissatisfaction with the status quo including by reviewing payments and introducing a Foster Carers' Charter and Handbook. Whilst acknowledging that the Authority has to be as competitive as it can in comparison with the independent sector, they emphasised that the discussion must extend beyond the remuneration element alone, and must encompass those other qualitative aspects of the support package for foster carers which draw potential carers to the service in the first place and these include a sense of contribution to community, contribution to the wellbeing of local children, and fostering through the medium of both Welsh and English. These elements must feed into the Recruitment Strategy. In addition, the original Invest to save initiative will be revisited to seek to assess the progress on the delivery of the savings which it was anticipated the bid would generate from the non-standard placement budget.

The Panel noted that the work of the Task Group in respect of identifying and evaluating different options with regard to a payments and fees package for foster carers is ongoing as well as the Service's work in relation to considering a further Invest to Save proposal. It was suggested that due to the Budget setting timeline, the matter might be considered on the basis of a single issue group and any new proposals presented thereafter to the Executive.

It was agreed to accept the report of the Child Placement Team Leader and to note its contents along with the draft CSSIW Post Fostering Inspection Action Plan.

ACTIONS ARISING:

- **Child Placement Team Leader to present a summary review of the Fostering Service's processes and procedures and risk areas to the Panel.**
- **Child Placement Team Leader to endeavour to complete as far as possible, the Task Group options for a payments and fees package for Foster Carers in line with Council's corporate budget setting schedule.**

5.5 The report of the Leaving Care Co-Ordinator was presented and noted.

The Panel was informed that further work needs to be undertaken with regard to performance in relation to after-care provision and practice especially in relation to care leavers identified as vulnerable, and that there will be discussions involving the Portfolio Member, Head of Children's Services and Principal Corporate Parenting Officer in the period leading to the Panel's next

meeting in December, with a more substantive report to be presented to that meeting. The Director of Community said that information could be circulated in the interim.

The Panel suggested that a statistical analysis of the number of care leavers involved, their needs and how these are being met would be helpful.

ACTION ARISING: Leaving Care Co-Ordinator to provide a fuller report to the Panel's next meeting to include analysis of the leaving care population, their needs and the service's plans for meeting those needs.

6 NYAS INDEPENDENT ADVOCAY SERVICE

The report of the NYAS Senior Advocate in respect of referrals and the provision of an advocacy service in Quarter 1 2014/15 was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Senior Advocate informed the Panel that she wished to bring to its attention, a marked decrease in referrals for advocacy from Social Workers from 18 in the previous quarter to 2 in the Quarter 1 2014/15 reporting period.

The Panel sought to clarify the reasons for the decline in advocacy referrals and queried whether financial considerations are a factor or whether the looked after population is being provided with advocacy by other means.

The Panel was informed that professional advocacy forms one element of the provision for looked after children and young people and that sometimes those children and young people are more comfortable with a person that is familiar to them e.g. Social Worker acting as advocate on their behalf. Whilst there is a need to continue to raise awareness of advocacy in ways that are user friendly e.g. by use of social media, the data needs to be examined in the context of historical figures for the uptake of advocacy in order to establish whether there are advocacy needs that are not being met. The Principal Officer (Operations) said that the current figures should not necessarily be viewed as negative, and that she was confident that social workers are aware of advocacy as a service; the decrease might be for other reasons e.g. looked after children and young people are more confident in expressing themselves or their advocacy needs are being met in ways other than by the professional service.

It was agreed to accept the report of the NYAS Senior Advocate and to note its contents.

NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING

7 ADVOCACY DEVELOPMENTS

An update briefing report by the Head of Children's Services summarising recent developments with regard to commissioning and providing statutory advocacy services was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Head of Children's Services referred to activity within the Welsh Government context and to recommendations for local authority commissioners of advocacy services made by the Ministerial Group on Advocacy as well as to recommendations arising from the work of the Children's Commissioner in Wales under the July, 2014 report, Missing Voices, Right to be Heard which followed up the previous work undertaken in this area under the Missing Voices report and the subsequent review, Missing Voices, Missing Progress. The Authority's response to the recommendations of the Missing Voices Right to be Heard report was outlined in Appendix 1 to the report. The Officer said that the Authority is currently part of a North West Wales Partnership commissioning issue based advocacy arrangement, and that it intends to re-commission this service on a North Wales basis on the expiry of the current contract at the end of March, 2015. This proposal was scrutinised by the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on 24th July, 2104. She emphasised that whilst committed to ensuring the provision of advocacy services for children and young people, the Authority is also keen to develop service user participation, and she explained the intentions of the service in this respect within the development of a Service's Participation Framework.

The NYAS Senior Advocate raised issues in relation to the tender for the contract for the provision of a North Wales advocacy service which the Panel noted.

It was agreed to accept the report of the Head of Children's Services and to note its contents.

NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING

8 PALLIAL RELATED MATTERS

The report of the Director of Community outlining proposals with regard to arrangements for the provision on a North Wales basis, of appropriate support and its likely term of duration for individuals who have reported allegations within Operation Pallial was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Panel considered the report and was agreed in emphasising the need to provide support for the individuals concerned as a matter of immediacy.

It was agreed –

- **To support the approach adopted by the Isle of Anglesey and region in response to the identified needs of adults, formerly children in care to the local authority as set out in the report.**
- **That the Panel is satisfied that appropriate and sustainable arrangements are in place to support the advocacy needs and access to services for children in care.**
- **That the Panel supports the intention to take steps to ensure the continuation of resources to support this specific work programme within the financial planning process.**

ACTION ARISING: Director of Community to update the Panel on Pallial related matters as a standing item on the agenda.

9 EXCLUSION OF 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 Schedule 12A to the said Act and in the Public Interest Test as presented.

10 SPECIFIC CASE REVIEW

The report of the Head of Children's Services with regard to a specific case review was presented for the Panel's consideration.

The Head of Children's Services explained the circumstances of the case and highlighted key areas of process, procedure and communication wherein she had identified lessons could be learned in order to improve practice in future both on a service and corporate level involving professional practitioners within the Authority and relevant agencies outside.

The Panel gave careful consideration to the information and Members were given the opportunity to ask questions on matters regarding which they sought further explanation and/or clarification. The Panel noted, and accepted the analysis and evaluation of the case along with the recommendations arising from the review and the proposed next steps.

It was agreed to accept the report and the recommendations contained therein.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was considered.

12 NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Monday, 8th December, 2014 and it was agreed that it should commence at 2:00 p.m.

**Mr R.P.Jones (Chief Executive)
Chair**