

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

12th DECEMBER 2007

REPORT OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITY

CORPORATE PARENTING: MAKING IT HAPPEN

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with information on the Council's corporate responsibilities towards its looked after children and young people and to ask Committee to consider the involvement of other Committees, officers and organisations as appropriate.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

- 2.1 Looked after children and young people are "Children Today, Adults Tomorrow". They are among some of the most vulnerable and seriously disadvantaged members of our society and the role of Bridgend Council is to ensure that these children get the best possible start in life. Education can greatly enhance these children's life chances, thus there is also a connection to the theme of "Creating Learning Communities".

3. Background

- 3.1 As early as 1999, the Welsh Office stated its expectation of the local authority as a corporate parent and addressed Councillors in respect of their roles and responsibilities as corporate parents. ("Building for the Future", WO. 1999).

- 3.2 In 2005, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association published a guide for Councillors stating that "The council as a whole is the "corporate parent"..." and describing corporate parenting as:-

"Once a child becomes looked after, all Members and officers across the Council, as their corporate parent, need to be concerned about that child as if they were their own. This concern should encompass their education, their health and welfare, what they do in their leisure time and holidays, how they celebrate their culture and how they receive praise and encouragement for their achievements". (If this were my child....., WAG/WLGA 2005).

- 3.3 In Bridgend County Borough Council, Members have always taken an interest in their corporate parenting role. Attached at Appendix 1, is a copy of a progress report to the Committee and includes a draft Corporate Parenting Policy that was endorsed on the 4th December 2006. The draft Policy now needs updating to include the proposals made in this report before consultation with all stakeholders. More recently, the Social Services and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook a survey which considered how approaches to Corporate Parenting could be improved. This is attached at Appendix 2. The outcome of the survey will contribute significantly to the completion and implementation of the Corporate Parenting Policy.

4. Current Situation / Proposal

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Corporate Parenting agenda be progressed by becoming part of the Social Services and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme with the Committee involving other Committees, officers and representatives of Health and Voluntary Sector representatives as appropriate. The Committee would scrutinise, review and seek to improve outcomes for the children and young people regarding their education, health and social development, in line with the 7 core aims on which the Children and Young People's Plan will be based. For Members' information, the Welsh Assembly Government adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as the basis for all work with Children and Young People in Wales. The Convention has been translated into the 7 Core Aims:

- A Flying Start in Life
- A Comprehensive Range of Education, Training and Learning Opportunities
- The Best Possible Health, Free from Abuse, Victimisation and Exploitation
- Play, Leisure, Sporting and Cultural Activities
- Treated with Respect and have their Race and Cultural Identity Recognised
- A Safe Home and Community
- Children and Young People not Disadvantaged by Poverty

- 4.2 The role undertaken by the Committee would consider a range of issues that relate to corporate parenting and contribute to the completion of a comprehensive Corporate Parenting Policy. The areas for consideration are outlined below and it is proposed to place them within an annual work programme to ensure that the Council fulfils its corporate parenting role as stated in the guidance.

- Further development of schemes that offer work experience to looked after young people within all Directorates.
- Where Councillors are school governors, use their role to enquire as to provision for looked after children in their school.

- In general, elected Members could find out how schools in their ward are supporting looked after children to take up opportunities available to their peers.
- Elected Members on the Fostering Panel should ensure, as far as possible, that children maintain their links with their communities and schools when considering the child's proposed placement and report to the Committee the barriers to achieving this.
- Identify a Member as a children's champion.
- Regulation 32 visits to children's homes could be reported to the Committee.
- Rota visits by Members to all children's establishments to report on the quality of care.
- Officers should provide detailed statistical information to the Committee on the profile of all our looked after population.
- The Committee would provide a vehicle for detailed work on cross council developments and specific issues of concern for looked after children and care leavers.
- Opportunities to be provided for looked after children to meet Members, managed by Children's Services, so that their views can be heard and their successes celebrated.
- Other developments could be training for Members on their roles and responsibilities and on the needs of looked after children.
- A Corporate Parenting pack for members and officers.
- A Corporate Parenting statement, to include partner agencies.
- Information and communications on parenting to all staff.
- Anonymised case scenarios to be presented to the Committee.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

- 5.1 The role of the corporate parent is compatible with the Council's priority themes and corporate plan.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 states that it shall be the duty of the Local Authority looking after any child to safeguard and promote the child's welfare and in particular to promote the child's educational achievement.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no direct financial implications.

8. Recommendation

8.1 That Committee includes Corporate Parenting as an item in its forward work programme with a view to considering a range of related issues and contributing to the production of a corporate parenting policy.

Lindsay Harper
Assistant Director, Children's Services

Tel 01656 642314

Email: lindsay.harper@bridgend.gov.uk

Background Documents

None.