

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

26 MAY 2009

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - CHILDREN

REVISED COMPREHENSIVE PLACEMENT STRATEGY FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN THE SAFEGUARDING AND FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE. APRIL 2009 TO MARCH 2012

1. Purpose of Report.

For the Committee to approve the revised comprehensive placement strategy for April 2009 to March 2012.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority.

This report links to the corporate theme of "children today, adults tomorrow".

3. Background.

The looked after children (LAC) population in Bridgend increased steadily from March 31st 2002 to March 31st 2008, from 175 children to 277 in 2008, with a peak of 299 in June 2007. An intensive focus on LAC through the Supporting Vulnerable Children Programme has resulted in a reduction of LAC to 264 in March 2009. The high cost of looked after services, particularly out of authority placements, has created significant budgetary pressures and denied the Safeguarding and Family Support Service the opportunity to make as much investment in family support services as has been required. A number of strategies and policies have been or are being developed to ensure that early interventions are in place to prevent children coming into care and ensure that the children we are looking after are supported into long-term secure family environments where possible.

4. Current situation / proposal.

* The revised placement strategy (Appendix 1) sets out the means by which the Safeguarding and Family Support Service will seek to provide the range and quality of placements needed to meet the anticipated needs of children and young people who will be looked after over the next three years and beyond. It should be read in
* conjunction with the Permanence Policy (Appendix 2) which outlines how Bridgend County Borough Council will support children to develop secure attachments.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

None.

6. Legal Implications.

None.

7. Financial Implications.

The Revised Placement Strategy puts forward a process of reducing looked after children numbers by seeking alternative and more permanent placements for children. If successful the outcome of this would be to reduce children placed in Independent Foster Agency placements which are at a much higher cost than the alternative permanent placements. There are financial consequences of permanency including payment of allowances and contribution to legal fees. There is budget provision in 2009/10 to meet these costs. However, it should be noted that the IFA expenditure continues to be a budget pressure and will need to be monitored closely in 2009/10 as it is unlikely that the current budget provision will be sufficient.. Over the longer-term this placement strategy should result in positive financial consequences to the authority.

8. Recommendation.

For the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee to approve the revised comprehensive placement strategy for 2009 – 2012.

Hilary Anthony
Corporate Director – Children
30th April 2009

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Background documents

There are no background documents.