

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 24 JANUARY 2018 AT 14:00

Present

Councillor PJ White – Chairperson

N Clarke
D Patel
RE Young

HJ David
CE Smith

DK Edwards
CA Webster

J Gebbie
HM Williams

Apologies for Absence

Officers:

Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Julie Ellams	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Gary Jones	Head of Democratic Services
Laura Kinsey	Head of Children's Social Care
Darren Mepham	Chief Executive

160. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

161. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

162. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting 18 October 2017 be approved as a true and accurate record.

163. CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTORATE WALES - SELF ASSESSMENT JANUARY 2018 - CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

The Head of Children's Social Care presented a report informing the Cabinet Committee of the self-assessment that all authorities were being asked to undertake in relation to looked after children and the care leavers profile, placement sufficiency and stability and the impact of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and regulatory requirements on out of authority placements. The completed assessment had to be returned to the Care Inspectorate Wales by 26th January 2018.

The Head of Children's Social Care outlined the data/key findings contained in the assessment. She explained that they had been unable to work on the assessment before 1st January 2018 because figures as at 1st January 2018 had been requested. The assessment was not yet complete but she had captured some of the headlines and her observations on the findings. She explained that the aims of the self-assessment were to capture the complexity of the profile of looked after children and care leavers across Wales and to encourage authorities to evaluate the effectiveness of its

arrangements and to identify any issues impacting on looked after children and care leavers.

The Head of Children's Social Care outlined the seven themes of the self- assessment which were profile, placement stability and sufficiency, care and support, placement panels and notification arrangements, early intervention, safeguarding and the workforce.

With regards to the profile, the Head of Children's Social Care reported that BCBC had the fourth highest number of looked after children at the end of March 2017. All authorities had seen an increase in the number of looked after children and this appeared to be a theme across Wales.

The Head of Children's Social Care explained that there had been a reduction in the number of children placed with independent foster carers from 22% at the end of last year to 18.3% in January 2018. She added that 69.7% of children had been placed inside the local authority, an improvement of previous years although the number of children who had 3 or more moves in the last 12 months remained a challenge.

The Head of Children's Social Care reported that following preventative work with partner agencies and in particular the police, there appeared to be a downward trend reducing risks to looked after children. Also 20% of looked after children were receiving therapeutic services.

The Head of Children's Social Care explained that the next steps included a qualitative analysis of the data, and incorporating that information in the self-assessment to be submitted to CIW by 26th January 2018. There would then be a performance challenge meeting with CIW possibly in March when the information provided would be interrogated. Field work inspections would then be undertaken in six authorities but BCBC had not received notification that it was one of the six. The findings and analysis would then be used to inform a national overview report, a CIW annual analysis of local authority social services performance and CIW inspections of Local Authority Social Services and regulated services.

A Member asked for clarification regarding the 5% of looked after children with disabilities. She asked how many of the 5% were included in the 2.1% in supported living or residential schools. The Head of Children's Services did not have the information to hand but agreed to find the details and send to the Member.

A Member asked what steps were being taken to improve staff morale. He was advised that this issue would be addressed in the next item.

A Member asked why only a relatively low number of children (54%) remained with the same social worker after six months even though this would be a very traumatic experience for them. The Head of Children's Social Care explained that the other 46% could be for various reasons such as a child being assessed and moved to a different team for longer term care possibly in a hub where close contact could be made with the family. As children became older they were transferred to the care leaver team and in some cases the social worker left the authority or moved to another area so the case would have to be transferred. Every effort was made to provide stability for the child.

The Leader welcomed the positive results and in particular, the reduction in the number of children being placed out of county and the reduction in the number of placements in the independent sector. He noted that the complexity of cases appeared to be increasing and asked if this was happening in Bridgend and if there was any way of measuring this. The Head of Children's Services explained that there had been a lot of

interest nationally in some of the challenges with looked after children and finding suitable placements for them. It continued to be a challenge in Bridgend and was one of the reasons why children had to be placed out of county because of the lack of specialist provision in house to meet those children's needs. There was a small cohort of children with complex issues and finding suitable placements continued to be an issue.

A Member asked what trends and data would be pursued going forward. The Head of Children's Services explained that there were a number of sections under each theme that they would be required to look at. Staff would flag themes and hotspots and look at comparatives from previous years and report their findings to a future meeting.

A Member asked if there was an underlying trend to the 11.5% of children with 3 or more moves in the last 12 months and if best practice guidance had been sought. The Head of Children's Services explained that this figure was closely monitored. There appeared to be two types of children affected, very young children removed at birth possibly going to a placement that doesn't work and then on to a more suitable placement and teenagers with more complex issues. Data was interrogated every quarter and there appeared to be an improvement in figures. A Member suggested that it would be useful to have a separate set of statistics for teenagers.

A Member asked in how many cases there had been early intervention and how many were related to child sex exploitation and trafficking. This information was not available at the meeting but would be brought to a future meeting.

A Member noted that 96% of children had a care plan prior to becoming looked after and asked why they became looked after children. The Head of Children's Services explained that they had asked the same question and IPC had been instructed to undertake a review in Bridgend to see what did and didn't work and the findings would be reported to a future meeting.

A Member asked for the contact rates for personal advisors with care leavers. She was advised that it varied depending on age and that some of the older care leavers were particularly difficult to engage with.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing added that the exercise had been very demanding and it wasn't always clear what information was being requested resulting in conversations back and forth to get clarity. There was more information not yet available. A report had been presented to scrutiny the previous week which covered the strategy around fostering and some of the issues raised today.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee noted the information provided in the report.

164. CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTORATE WALES - INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2017 - ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing presented a report on the updated Action Plan following the inspection of Children's Services in January/February 2017. She explained that the inspection undertaken in Children's Services in Bridgend focused on how children and families were empowered to access help and care and support services and the quality of outcomes achieved for children in need of help, care and support and/or protection including looked after children. The inspections were carried out on the weeks commencing 30 January 2017 and 13 February 2017.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing outlined the inspection, the sample of cases taken and the individual and group interviews with managers,

Members, partners and service providers. The CIW reported their findings on their website, to the Minister for Health and Social Services and presented a report and action plan to Scrutiny Committee 2 in July 2017. A commitment was also made to bring the report to Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing reported that Inspectors had found that the authority had worked hard in the context of the Social Services and Well-being Wales Act 2014, to reshape its services. The inspection found that the workforce were committed to achieving good outcomes for children and families but staff morale was variable across the service and needed to be nurtured at a time of significant change. Bridgend should continue to focus on how they could retain staff for longer and have more timely recruitment of experienced staff. These and other points were addressed within the action plan.

A Member asked what steps had been taken to improve staff morale, were exit interviews carried out and what did these identify. The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing explained that a piece of work had been undertaken on recruitment and retention and supporting social workers. There was regular communication with staff and access to senior managers, a supportive training programme, mentoring schemes for social workers and managers and a new supervision policy to ensure consistency in approach. Caseloads were also carefully monitored to avoid staff being overwhelmed by work. Exit interviews were undertaken and positive feedback had been received about the support given. Most staff left for promotion or to work closer to home.

The Leader thanked the Corporate Director and said that he was encouraged by progress made. There were some outstanding actions and a number related to the development of the multi- agency safeguarding hub. The leader asked for an update on the development of the hub. The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing explained that the only matter delaying progress was accommodation. The team were working already "virtually". The favoured accommodation had been found and agreed. The District Valuer has visited the property and reported back and paperwork was due to be signed off by Corporate Management the following day. She anticipated that the MASH would be in situ by 1st April 2018.

A Member asked what an acceptable caseload level was and what the split was between tier 1 and 2 social workers. He was concerned that the authority was top heavy with tier 1 social workers who were more experienced and expected to manage their caseload and to mentor new staff. The Head of Children's Social Care explained that there was no set formula for caseloads but the average in Bridgend was around 18 depending on the complexity of each case. The profile of the workforce changed across the teams. In the safeguarding teams, there were quite a few newly qualified social workers and a lot of work had been undertaken to attract more experienced practitioners into Bridgend. A "grow your own" scheme had been established a few years ago. There had been an improvement in retention rates but there was still more work to be done. The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing explained that it was important to make sure the right managers were available to support staff. She explained that 21 new social workers had started across the service. To date, only 1 had left and she was looking forward to a feedback session with them the following week.

A Member asked what collaborative work was being done with the health authority regarding early help provision in schools and was there also financial collaboration. The Interim Corporate Director, Education and Family Support asked if this was in relation to CAMHS. The Member explained that she was trying to find the level of collaboration between BCBC and who was paying for it. The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing explained that the main connection was with health visitors in relation to

safeguarding and there was no financial contribution for this because that was not what was required at that stage. The Group Manager, Integrated Working and Family Support explained that in terms of early help services, there was a variety of resources such as Flying Start where salary contributions were made to the salary costs of health visitors or midwives. The joint working with health was a positive arrangement.

The Chief Executive asked if enough was being done in relation to an outcomes focus. It would be easy to get pulled in to the process of meeting the recommendations and overlooking the outcomes eg sometimes the Inspectorate do not make it clear what outcome will arise from a recommendation. He explained that it was important to understand that something was happening as a consequence of an action being completed.. The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing explained that the inspection had been undertaken at the same time as systems were being bedded in. The transformation journey was changing practice and shifting cultures. They had “paused” that journey to meet the requirements of the inspection. IPC were invited in to do further review and a report would be submitted on that shortly. The quality assurance process was also being established.

The Leader suggested that a further report be submitted in six months to ensure progress continued to be made.

RESOLVED: 1) That the Cabinet Committee received and approved the updated Action Plan.
2) That a further report be submitted in six months.

165. URGENT ITEMS

None

166. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business as it contains exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 and 13 of Part 4 and Paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007.

Following the application of the public interest test in consideration of this item, it was resolved that pursuant to the Act referred to above, to consider the item in private, with the public being excluded from the meeting as it would involve the disclosure of exempt information of the nature as stated above.

167. APPROVAL OF EXEMPT MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the exempt minutes of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting 18 October 2017 be approved as a true and accurate record.

The meeting closed at 15:20