

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE - CORPORATE PARENTING

19 OCTOBER 2016

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

INFORMATION ABOUT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL FOSTERING FRAMEWORK

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Corporate Parenting Committee with information about the work done to date on establishing a National Fostering Framework.
- 1.2 This report should be read in conjunction with the National Fostering Framework briefing paper attached as **Appendix 1**. This paper provides additional information and was prepared by the project manager of the National Fostering Framework for the intention of enabling the strategic steering group to agree and support specific work streams and projects going forward. It has been revised to include BCBC specific data.

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

- 2.1 The report links to all of the corporate priorities:
 - Helping people to be more self-reliant;
 - Smarter use of resources;
 - Supporting a successful economy.

3. Background

- 3.1 A Reference Group was set up in 2015, with all the key stakeholders represented. It quickly produced a 'First Thoughts' paper which outlined the case for change, identified how we could achieve better partnership across the different sectors and presented some initial ideas about what could be delivered most effectively at national, regional and local levels. A wide-ranging consultation programme followed which provided opportunities to engage with young people, foster carers in local authorities and the independent sector, staff in local authorities and our public service colleagues. The Local Authority foster carers were contacted through the Fostering Network, all BCBC approved foster carers are registered with the Fostering Network in recognition of their status. Voices from Care were responsible for organizing feedback and events for looked after children, all looked after children have the opportunity to become involved with Voices from Care.
- 3.2 The outcomes of the work programme for 2015-16, including the messages from the consultation exercises, were brought together in the Phase One Report (**Appendix 2**).

3.3 The case for change was almost universally acknowledged and there was a strong consensus about creating a National Fostering Framework. Outlined below are the likely component parts:

- Increased co-ordination of strategies and plans. Working more closely with independent and third sector providers for identified services;
- More sector led improvements, policies could be regional or national; cares could move between Local Authorities if they move without a full re assessment or transfer protocols;
- A means of measuring, monitoring and improving performance and resource management, giving transparency to Local Authority services in comparison with independent providers;
- Greater accountability of all fostering services national data will be provided to ADSS;
- Search for economies of scale where appropriate. Harmonised payments and financial policies will be explored.

3.4 The agreement of the establishment of the National Fostering Framework reflected both the scale of people's concerns and also the need to support effective change, tackling some major challenges which can only be addressed at a strategic level. Views and opinions emerged from the strategic steering group and the consultations that took place about what such a 'National Fostering Framework' and its components should look like. The creation of a National Framework was seen as a means of ensuring that known concerns are addressed and to introduce greater consistency without sacrificing the acknowledged strengths and diversity of local accountability within the current system.

3.5 Above all, the steering group acknowledged that a National Fostering Framework is a means to an end and that the aim of such needs to be:

- improvement in permanence planning for children and quality of placement provision;
- a more cogent, compelling and strategic intent in relation to fostering services;
- increased collaboration and co-operation by all key stakeholders;
- greater transparency about performance of fostering services and efficient use of resources;
- economies of scale, where appropriate, but with a respect for localism;
- more shared services in planning and commissioning;
- consistent use of 'Best Practice' models for recruiting and supporting foster carers; and
- closer links to research and evaluation.

4. Current situation.

4.1 A Strategic Steering Group has been established, with representation from Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru, the Fostering Network, Association for Fostering and Adoption (AFA) Cymru, Voices from Care, a designated Doctor for Looked After Children, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Education, the Childrens Commissioning Support Resource (4C's) and Cascade. This group provides strategic oversight and direction. BCBC is represented by Councillor Huw David. Implementation of all of the recommendations endorsed by

the steering group is anticipated to take place over two to three-years through a workstreams programme.

4.2 The work programme for 2016-17 includes:

- Develop an agreed framework for allocating responsibilities at a national, regional and local authority levels and begin work on putting the appropriate structures in place;
- Develop a National Performance and Resource Framework to provide greater transparency about the performance of each local authority's fostering service and the efficient use of resources;
- Establishing a Welsh identity for local authority Foster Care, a national approach to marketing and use of social media for recruitment and retention;
- Achieve greater consistency in the use of Kinship Foster Care;
- Developing national arrangements for commissioning all placements, regardless of sector and building on the work of the 4Cs; and
- Benchmarking best practice in Corporate Parenting across Councils and other public services to improve outcomes for children and increase the resilience of foster placements.

4.3 A variety of methods is being used to take forward these proposals such as: working groups, workshops, national conferences, production of videos of young people talking of their experience of foster care.

4.4 Development of a national performance framework would provide us with opportunities to:

- have a consistent approach for collating a set of performance and resource management information;
- have access to performance and resource management information for benchmarking and improving fostering services;
- have a set of performance and resource management information that supports the evidence requirements for CSSIW inspections of Fostering Services;
- manage fostering services within a clear financial framework;
- understand what works best in the marketing and recruitment of foster carers;
- demonstrate improvements and raise standards nationally and locally.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 This report is concerned with performance information rather than policy or decision making therefore an equality impact assessment is not applicable.

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 There are no specific financial implications arising directly out of this report.

8. Recommendation.

- 8.1 That the Corporate Parenting Committee notes the information contained within the briefing note and the phase one report.

Directorate Chief Officer's Name: Susan Cooper

Directorate Chief Officer's Job Title: Director of Social Services & Wellbeing

Date: October 2016

Contact Officer: Natalie Silcox

Telephone: (01656) 372316

e-mail: Natalie.silcox@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address Children's Directorate, Civic Offices, CF31 4WB

Background documents

Appendices

- A. National Fostering Framework Briefing paper
- B. National Fostering Framework Phase One report