

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, ON
WEDNESDAY, 16 JANUARY 2013 AT 10.00AM

Present:-

Councillor H J David - Chairperson

Councillor L C Morgan - Cabinet Member - Wellbeing
Councillor P J White - Cabinet Member - Communities

Invitees:-

Councillor E M Dodd
Councillor R D Jenkins
Councillor D B F White

Officers:-

C Turner - Head of Safeguarding and Family Support
S Pryce - Head of Regeneration and Development
J Cullen - Service Manager Assessment and Transition
N Echanis - Service Manager - Integrated Working and Family Support
K Williams - Team Manager Adoption
M A Galvin - Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members/Officers

Councillor M E J Nott - Holiday
Councillor D Sage - Family hospital appointment
Councillor M Gregory - Other Council business
Councillor D Hughes - Work commitments
Councillor H Townsend - Recuperating
H Anthony - Other Council business
W Willcox - Hospital appointment

22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- (1) Councillor D B F White declared a personal interest as a Governor of Heronsbridge School which had responsibility for the residential side of short breaks and the School was currently looking at extending the service.
- (2) Councillor D B F White also declared a personal interest in the items of Integrated Family Support Service (Western Bay) and Post 16 Service Developments (Just @sk Plus) as due to his role within Swansea City Council his family has/will have use of those services.

23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee held on the 24 October 2012, be approved as a true and accurate record.

24 BCBC SHORT BREAKS STATEMENT

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support introduced the report which provided the Committee with an overview of Bridgend County Borough Council's services for disabled children and young people, including those Looked After.

The Service Manager Assessment and Transition advised that the report before Members concentrated upon key services that the Council provided for disabled children and their families, including Looked After Children.

The report confirmed that the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children (Wales) Regulations came into force in June of last year, and the Regulations stated that a local authority must prepare a 'short break services Statement' that set out the following:-

- (a) The range of services the local authority provides.
- (b) Any eligibility criteria for assessment for services.
- (c) How the services are designed to meet the needs of carers in its area.

The Service Manager Assessment and Transition explained that a Short Breaks Statement had been established and published on the Bridgend County Borough Council website on 27 September 2012, which would be reviewed annually and updated accordingly.

Services within the Statement and how these can be accessed were explained by the Service Manager Assessment and Transition, and included:-

- The Disabled Children's Team
- Bakers Way Residential Short Breaks Service
- Family Link Short Break Service
- The Complex Needs Playscheme
- Trinity Care and Support
- Direct Payments

The report in Paragraph 7, then gave a brief synopsis of each of these services.

The report then outlined data in relation to the numbers of children who used some of the above services and facilities, including the average frequency of visits/hours per month.

Following the Service Manager Assessment and Transition presenting the report, Members were shown a DVD of the services provided at Bakers Way and the Family Link Short Break Service.

The Service Manager Assessment and Transition advised Members that services and facilities that comprised the Short Breaks Statement were extremely important, as they sometimes avoided young people having to be placed into Out of County Placement, the cost for which was considerable.

The Chairperson agreed that services such as those mentioned above were essential for young people and disabled children and their families and that every effort should be made to continue these services despite the on-going financial restraints the Local Authority were facing.

A Member asked if a situation had ever arisen, whereby any parents had become concerned over the close relationship that may have developed between a Carer and their child due to the time they spend together and the bond that may develop in view of this.

The Service Manager Assessment and Transition advised that no incidents of this had ever arisen, as parents were very receptive to the role of the Carer and the help and support this gave to them, particularly in cases where their child may be very challenging due to behavioural difficulties.

The Service Manager Assessment and Transition added that all Short Break Carers were trained and subject to vigorous testing regimes and that parents if they so wished could meet with carers before matching their children with them.

A Member emphasised the importance of the Short Break Services and the continued financing of these, as was alluded to earlier, facilities such as these did go toward avoiding children being placed into long term care. He asked Officers if there were any cases of children awaiting access to these services, or were they readily available to all.

The Service Manager Assessment and Transition advised that there were children waiting to access these services, but this delay was not very long, given that some children only required a few hours a month, as opposed to others who required more lengthy use of the services. It was a case of staff having to manage the different needs and demands of users. There was also a variety of different facilities within what was available that suited the varying needs of all the young people who used them.

A Member asked if Carers cared for more than one young person at the same time, or were the services designed specifically for one on one.

The Service Manager Assessment and Transition stated that there were some Family Link Carers who looked after more than one child, but not at the same time, particularly in cases of young people with more complex physical and medical needs. She added that the overriding aim of services such as that provided at Bakers Way, were to meet children's emotional, social, behavioural, health and developmental needs, in a way that protected their dignity and encouraged their independence.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee noted the report.

25 INTEGRATED FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE (WESTERN BAY)

The Corporate Director - Children submitted a report which informed the Cabinet Committee of the progress that had been made in establishing an Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) across the Western Bay region, as well as the report of accompanying Appendices informing Members of the on-going development of the service.

The Group Manager Integrated Working and Family Support, gave a resume of the new initiative which was aimed at helping families and children affected by substance misuse and domestic violence.

She confirmed that BCBC were leading on the service and would develop this in partnership with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and Swansea City

Council, as well as the local authorities of Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ABMU).

The aim of the new service, that was being funded by the Welsh Government, was to safely reduce the number of children in care, help keep children with their families and reduce their reliance on public services. The overriding intention was to transform the way in which key organisations such as the local authority worked with families with complex needs.

The Group Manager Integrated Working and Family Support confirmed that the aims of the service were as follows:-

- To strengthen the safeguarding and welfare of children through restorative action to better support parents;
- To improve the quality of service experienced by parents and children when they engaged with professionals;
- To be a resource to existing services;
- To deliver intensive, evidence based interventions (EBI's)
- Provide training and consultation to children and adults on (EBI's)

Attached to the report were a number of Appendices, namely the Western Bay IFSS - Proposal, Values, Vision and Evaluation Document (Appendix 1) the Western Bay IFSS Team Structure (Appendix 2) and the Draft Western Bay Performance and Monitoring Framework (Appendix 3).

A date for the IFSS to become fully operative, had been set for 1 February 2013, when direct work with families was expected to commence.

The Group Manager Integrated Working and Family Support referred Members to paragraph 4.12 of the report, and a date of 22 February 2013, which would see the launch of the IFSS to which Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee Members would be invited.

A Member asked if changes with regard to the Welfare Reform proposals would impact upon IFSS in any way.

The Group Manager Integrated Working and Family Support explained that staff were having some training to assist in their knowledge for the changes associated with the Welfare Reform and the challenges this would introduce, though this would not impact directly upon IFSS.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support supplemented this by advising that there could be some effect on families if they have any significant change in circumstances, though these will be in the minority.

He added that there was a possibility that any cut in benefits to families of young people who are suffering from an addiction, for example substance misuse, may result in a knock-on effect of crime should money available to them be reduced sufficiently for them to be unable to feed their habit.

A Member asked Officers if they could expand upon the Lead Trainer resource referred to in paragraph 4.10 of the report, and on the grant underspend mentioned in the paragraph headed financial implications (paragraph 7.1).

The Group Manager Integrated Working and Family Support explained that all practitioners were trained under the IFSS Module. Up to March of this year, the Welsh Government had been responsible for the training, however, local authorities had since been directed to take over the training for which they would be funded, i.e. to support the implementation and delivery of this resource regionally with partners. The extra funding she added would support the provision of two further training practitioners.

Paragraph 7.1 of the report referred to an under-spend in 2012/13 of grant funding, in view of the fact that the resource became available in April, at a time when no IFSS staff were in post. The system of transferring this form of grant funding into areas of IFSS were being presently looked at in this and other partner authorities, so as to fully utilise this allocation of grant in the future.

A Member of the Committee asked if the ABMU were a proactive key partner in the delivery of this service.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that the ABMU had a statutory requirement to fulfil in order to fully develop the service, and that Members of their staff in the form of health professionals would make up the IFSS together with key officers in various other roles from the three partnership authorities.

He added that the new service would be supported by a Statutory Board on which there was representation from the ABMU, and one of the roles of this Board would be to produce an Annual Report to ensure that money being committed to the IFSS was being well spent on families and the improvement of services.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support further added that staff would not just provide a specific role within IFSS, but would also be trained in certain specialist areas through forms of mentoring etc.

A Member advised that the IFSS was a classic example of key health partners working together collaboratively with the aim of improving service provision. This initiative worked excellently in Torbay where health partners and Social Care Workers worked together in the form of a type of Trust.

A Member asked if all areas of cost analysis had been examined prior to the introduction of the service.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support confirmed that this had been considered, and that finance would be made available to continue with the funding of the programme. Specialist staff committed to support the service were highly valued in different areas of work and would be taken over by partners of the service as agency staff due to the levels of their expertise.

A Member asked what extent of problem there were due to staff from the different organisations that comprised the IFSS working on database systems that may not be compatible.

The Group Manager Integrated Working and Family Support advised that there were problems of partner employees accessing information from various systems, used by the other partner organisations and for employees that worked more independently rather than from the main offices though these problems were being

looked at. Training would be undertaken also for staff in order that they can become accustomed to working with the new forms of software/ICT packages.

High level or more important data would in the foreseeable future be processed through the Council's Draig system until such time as the programme progresses more long term.

The Chairperson concluded the debate on the item by thanking Officers for the progress that was being made in relation to this service.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee – Corporate Parenting noted the progress made in the establishment of the regional IFSS.

26 POST 16 SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS (JUST @SK PLUS)

The Head of Service, Safeguarding and Family Support presented a report, that updated Cabinet regarding progress on the new “Just @sk Plus” service which relates to the on-going development of a universal integrated post 16 service for all vulnerable young people in need of support within Bridgend County Borough, including for those who have left or are leaving care.

The Group Manager Assessment and Transition advised that the above service was introduced last April, following the amalgamation of the Youth Service and After Care Team. The new service reconfigured existing services and the development of a specialist team to target services for all young people aged 16 – 25 living within Bridgend County Borough. The service was based at the former Just @sk Offices in Bridgend Town Centre.

Paragraph 4.2 of the report outlined the main aims of the new service model, and the Group Manager Assessment and Transition added that existing services provided by the former Just @sk Youth Service continued to be provided within the new expanded services.

The Group Manager Assessment and Transition explained that funding was also agreed through the Medium Term Financial Strategy for a new post to support the service with the post holder being appointed in June 2012.

The Group Manager Assessment and Transition advised that there were increased demands being placed upon the service that largely had arisen from various statutory obligations and legislation.

The report then outlined in paragraphs 4.8 – 4.11 further plans for the service as it grows and develops.

A Member asked if the service that was based in Bridgend could be extended to other areas of the County Borough in time.

The Group Manager Assessment and Transition advised that the service had been located in the Bridgend Town Centre as this was the most easily accessible location throughout the County Borough. There were though challenges associated with the service to overcome in the future that included a more suitable offices to cater for staff and clients as the service developed and projects increased, and re-location to a larger office was under consideration.

She added that Outreach work with young people was still continuing, including home visits, though the present location of the service was deemed appropriate, particularly in view of looking to engage new recruits to the service and the assistance it provided for the more vulnerable younger generation.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support explained that the main rationale for providing the service was to enable young people to receive support and guidance at one location, rather than having to be referred to different places to receive information on key issues such as housing provision, counselling, sexual health and drug problems.

A Member noted that the lease at the Derwen Road office (former After Care Service) ended in December 2012, and this meant that there would no longer be access to the resources at these premises. He asked how matters were progressing regarding the provision of accommodation solutions both short and long term, in order to ensure that services could continue to be provided.

The Group Manager Assessment and Transition advised that there was a Project Board in place that was looking at ways to solve problems regarding suitable accommodation alternatives, though nothing had been firmly proposed at present. If an alternative office to Derwen Road could not be provided, then leasing options may have to be pursued for which there would be resource implications.

The Chairperson advised that aside of the central facility in Bridgend, advice on the services provided as part of the Just @sk Plus Service were available on-line, over the telephone and via Outreach Services.

The Head of Regeneration and Development took on board the point that the Just @sk Plus office was situate in Bridgend, though she advised that if a particular service was proving of value to clients and had a reputation as such then people would travel to receive the service.

The Chairperson noted from paragraph 4.9 of the report that a Housing Officer will be based at the Just @sk Plus office in Bridgend, to provide housing advice and support for those young with accommodation difficulties. He asked Officers when it was envisaged this Officer would be in place.

The Head of Regeneration and Development advised that there was on-going a reorganisation of the Homelessness Section of Housing Services, in order to introduce more specialised posts and staff to make more accurate decisions and share sound advice with regard to issues such as undertaking future joint assessments and other housing related matters. The reorganisation proposals were currently out to consultation. If appointments to posts were made internally within the Council, then it was likely that the restructure would be implemented by next April. If however, there was a need to make an external appointment, particularly to the most senior post within the Section, she added that it was likely that the reorganisation of the Section would not be concluded until early summer. She was also awaiting the outcome of a Workwise Project presently being carried out in the Section.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet Committee considered the report and noted the progress being made with regard to the current development of the Just @sk Plus service.

27 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN – PERFORMANCE DATA UPDATE

The Team Manager Adoption Service introduced a report, outlining an update on Performance Data in respect of Looked After Children (LAC).

The report advised that the Safeguarding and Family Support Service was required to provide data to the Welsh Government to evidence its performance against a number of key performance indicator's (P.Is.)

The Team Manager Adoption Service confirmed that within the service, a number of these P.I.s were monitored on a monthly basis to ensure compliance, track progress and identify any significant issues that required attention. They were also reported on routinely within the Corporate Performance Assessment process.

The Team Manager Adoption Service explained that the P.I.s were measured against the Authority's last year performance and against other authorities. There was a growing concern being experienced by most local authorities regarding the increasing number of LAC population, which continued to rise on a national level.

She explained that at the end of last year, i.e. March 2012 there were over 5,700 children in the care of local authorities in Wales.

The Team Manager Adoption Service referred Members to the Table in Paragraph 4.5 on page 3 of the report, which outlined the percentage of children looked after who have had had three or more placements during the year. She confirmed that as of yesterday there were 379 LAC in Bridgend, who were ranked as 8th highest out of all Welsh Local Authorities.

Over the last few years, there had been a steady increase in the number of LAC (on average 6 to 7%), and within Bridgend the increase was 35 children in 2010/11 and 20 in 2011/12.

In paragraph 4.8 on page 4 of the report, a further table showed the percentage of reviews undertaken in line with the statutory timetable, where it confirmed that Bridgend currently were the 12th highest out of all Welsh Local Authorities.

The Team Manager Adoption Service confirmed that of the 25 key P.I.s listed in Appendix 1, performance had improved or been maintained in 18 fields compared with 17 in the previous report. In the remaining 7 fields, there was some deterioration on performance in 6 fields compared with 7 in the previous year.

In conclusion, the Team Manager Adoption Service advised that activity to further improve performance continued to be a priority.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support ensured Members that every effort was being made where it was possible, to endeavour to reduce the number of Out of County placements and to reduce numbers in LAC, through a number of different preventative measures.

He added that the Out of County placements had reduced in number over the last two years, though cases of young people with for example a profound disability or high risk offenders did require to receive Out of County specialist placement care, as the Authority was not able to provide this within the County Borough.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support further added that a Panel that examined Out of County placements meets monthly to continue to look at all options that were available to best support the interests of young people with specialist needs.

He added that Bridgend compared favourably with certain other Welsh local authorities, who had less facilities that provided in-house residential care. The issue of LAC children was something that continued to be to a degree out of local authorities control and the future predicted increase of these cases would come in the face of reduced budgets, putting a significant amount of financial strain on them. He was comforted by the fact that his team of Social Workers were at full strength with no current vacancies, and this assisted in managing workloads well and in a proactive way.

He concluded by advising that Members of his staff committed a lot of valuable time and effort in producing this P.I. information in readiness for inspections which were naturally rigorous.

A Member commented that P.I. targets were sometimes set too high, and this could often result in a drain on resources.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that the Workwise Project Team had reviewed work processes within his team with a view to streamlining these, and this had helped some elements of work, however, the need to satisfy National P.I.s and statutory timescales within which certain elements of working required processing remained a priority and this did place continued pressure upon staff.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee noted the report on the performance of the Safeguarding and Family Support Service in meeting the needs of children and young people within its care.

28 INFORMAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - JANUARY 2013 – APRIL 2013

The Corporate Director – Children submitted a report that sought approval for the recommended IFWP covering the above mentioned period

Following a discussion between Members and Officers, it was agreed to accept the items as outlined on the IFWP for consideration at future meetings.

It was however suggested that the following item be added to the agenda for the April meeting:-

(a) Approval of Statements of Purpose for all regulated services.

It was further requested that the under-mentioned items be considered at meetings after April the dates for which were yet to be scheduled:-

- Outcome of Inspection of Fostering Services;
- Housing accommodation outcomes for people leaving care;
- Physical and Mental Health support for children in the Bridgend County Borough.

RESOLVED: That the Informal Forward Work Programme be approved subject to the further added items being considered at future meetings:-

- (1) Approval of Statements of Purposes for all Regulatory Services;
- (2) Outcome of the inspection of Fostering Services;
- (3) Housing options for People Leaving Care;
- (4) Physical and Mental Health Support for BCB Children.

The meeting closed at 12.07pm.