

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 31ST MARCH 2009

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – CHILDREN

PERMANENCE POLICY

1. Purpose of Report.

* To seek approval to the adoption of the attached Permanence Policy, to be implemented by the Safeguarding and Family Support Service.

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

The Permanence Policy links with the theme of “Children Today, Adults Tomorrow”.

3. Background.

3.1 The Council, through the Children’s Directorate, aims to promote permanent care arrangements for all children, whether children in need or children, who become looked after. Permanence should enable children to live in families that offer continuity of relationships with nurturing parents or carers. This may mean sustaining permanence with birth families, or finding suitable alternative carers to offer permanent arrangements if it is not possible to sustain a child with, or restore a child to, their parent(s). Meeting a child’s need for permanence will underpin all assessment and care planning activity for children in need.

3.2 It is a Welsh Assembly Government requirement that all Looked After Children have a plan for permanence by the time they have been looked after for four months (performance indicator SCC/001B). Whenever the local authority looks after a child, for whatever reason, the first consideration has to be whether the child can return or be rehabilitated home to their birth parent(s). Alongside this consideration, other options are available that can provide the child with legal security, in the care of someone other than a parent. At one time, this was considered to mean adoption as this was the only legal course of action that transferred parental responsibility from birth parents to adoptive parents. Now, other options are available that, while not as final as adoption, offer this legal security to children. These options include residence orders, special guardianship orders, long term foster care and care orders.

3.3 Permanence is not just about legal security; every child is entitled to receive safe care, emotional warmth and, where appropriate, safe contact with their birth family as part of understanding their identity. Thus, by the time their case is reviewed within four months of becoming looked after, the child’s care plan must contain a

plan for permanence. It is possible to create plans that contain more than one option: rehabilitation home, for example, as the primary aim, but where this fails, adoption could be the alternative plan. Where a child is in foster care, the carer, under certain conditions, can apply to become a special guardian. These are some examples of the pathways to permanence.

4. Current situation / proposal.

That through the Safeguarding and Family Support Service, the Council provide permanence to looked after children as outlined in this policy.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules.

None.

6. Legal Implications.

None.

7. Financial Implications.

Where certain conditions are met, the local authority pays allowances to carers to support them to care for the child. These include residence, adoption and special guardianship as well as fostering, whether mainstream or through relatives or friends. This policy does not have any additional financial implications outside existing budgets.

8. Recommendation.

That Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee approve the Permanence Policy in relation to looked after children.

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Corporate Director - Children
6th March 2009

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Background documents

Permanence Policy