

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 14<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2009

### REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - CHILDREN

#### CORPORATE PARENTING: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS, OFFICERS AND PARTNERS

##### 1. Purpose of Report.

To describe the roles and responsibilities of members, officers and partners in relation to corporate parenting and propose that the forward work programme is reviewed regularly to ensure that it encompasses all relevant issues in relation to looked after children.

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

Looked after children are a key responsibility for the Council as corporate parents and connect with the theme 'Children Today Adults Tomorrow'.

##### 3. Background.

"As the corporate parent of children in care the State has a special responsibility for their well-being. Like any good parent, it should put its own children first. That means being a powerful advocate for them to receive the best of everything and helping children to make a success of their lives". (DfES 2006)

Translating theory into practice is a challenge for all councils and their partners but the impetus for a focus on corporate parenting is the recognition that the outcomes for looked after children continue to be poor, with worse educational achievements, more likelihood of being convicted of an offence and more likelihood of becoming homeless than their peers.

While all members and officers share corporate parenting responsibility, they have differing roles.

All councillors and managers should:

- be aware of the corporate parenting role and the shared responsibility for ensuring that the needs of looked after children and care leavers are met;
- have some knowledge of the needs of the children Bridgend looks after;
- understand the impact of all council decisions on looked after children;
- receive information about the quality of care and the quality of services that children are experiencing;
- consider whether this would be good enough for their child;
- ensure that action is taken to address shortcomings in the service and to constantly improve the outcomes for looked after children.

Councillors can have a number of different roles such as school governor, member of the police authority, sit on partnerships such as Community Safety, Health,

Social Care and Well-being, Planning, etc. Councillors should be considering the welfare of looked after children and care leavers throughout their various activities. For example, a school governor could champion a looked after child coming into the school, challenging prejudices that attainment targets will not be met or that they will inevitably have behavioural problems. It should be acknowledged that, for members undertaking a number of roles, there will sometimes be tensions for those members in terms of conflicting priorities, for example, where budget constraints impact on our ability to develop and improve services.

### Councillors and managers with targeted responsibilities

These may be councillors who undertake visits to children's homes, managers of children's services or members of the corporate parenting cabinet committee. Their role is more extensive and they need to make sure they know:

- government expectations regarding the service to looked after children and care leavers;
- have access to performance information on the service and know how to understand and evaluate this information;
- consider how they are going to hear and respond to the views of looked after children, their parents and carers;
- take action, with officers and partner agencies, to improve the service.

### Councillors and managers who have a key role in corporate parenting

The Corporate Director - Wellbeing as the Director of Social Services, the Head of Safeguarding and Family Support, the lead director and the lead member for children and young people (also Chair of the Corporate Parenting Committee) will need to do all of the above and also work closely to:

- provide leadership across the authority in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of looked after children;
- ensure governance arrangements are in place to implement any decisions made regarding looked after children across the authority and partner agencies;
- undertake an analysis of Bridgend's care population and services required to meet these needs;
- ensure that the strategic plans of Bridgend County meet the needs of looked after children and care leavers;
- keep up-to-date with new initiatives and research findings to inform the direction of services.

### Partners and partnerships

Responsibility for looked after children extends beyond local authority services. The Local Health Board and NHS trust (soon to be merged), should actively promote the health of looked after children; the Community Safety Partnership should consider whether looked after children are being adequately supported to avoid offending behaviour.

The Children Act 2004 recognises that meeting the needs of looked after children requires partnership arrangements between different agencies and organisations. Agencies have a duty under the Act to promote the wellbeing of all children and young people and to safeguard them. Resources can be pooled and services commissioned and delivered jointly. Thus, while the main responsibility for looked

after children rests with the local authority, differing levels of responsibility are carried by partners, who are unlikely to be able to meet their objectives and targets without offering services for looked after children. It is essential to understand our partners' key priorities and where looked after children feature within them.

#### **4. Current situation / proposal.**

In order to ensure that all partners and officers understand their responsibilities, a range of activity is needed, for example:

- presentations to councillors and managers;
- provision of a good quality range of information about our looked after children and services provided for them, to enable progress and achievement to be monitored;
- a framework for children's participation and involvement with clear feedback arrangements that includes specific focus on vulnerable groups, such as children who are looked after.

The Forward Work Programme includes some of these activities and it is proposed that the programme is regularly reviewed in the context of members', managers' and partners' roles and responsibilities as set out in this report.

#### **5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.**

No specific impact.

#### **6. Legal Implications.**

None.

#### **7. Financial Implications.**

None.

#### **8. Recommendation.**

For the Committee to note the roles and responsibilities of members and officers as set out in this report and to approve the proposal that the forward work programme is reviewed regularly to ensure that it reflects all the responsibilities the Council has towards our looked after children.

**Hilary Anthony**  
**Corporate Director – Children**  
**19<sup>th</sup> June 2009**

**Contact Officer:** Lindsay Harper  
Head of Safeguarding and Family Support

**Telephone:** (01656) 642314

**E-mail:** lindsay.harper@bridgend.gov.uk

**Postal Address** Sunnyside, Bridgend, CF31 4AR

**Background documents**

Care Matters (DfES 2006a, 2007)