

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

9 MARCH 2010

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - CHILDREN

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SESSION

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To gain approval to formally develop a meaningful opportunity for Members to engage with young people who are, or who have been, looked after.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

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

- 2.2 Corporate parenting supports the following corporate priorities:

- Children Today, Adults Tomorrow
- Supporting our Disadvantaged Communities
- Creating Learning Communities;

and is connected to the following community strategy themes:

- Young Voices
- Healthy Living
- New Opportunities.

3. Background

- 3.1 It is the legal duty of all Councils to make sure that every child and young person in their care is provided with the opportunities that are or should be available to all children and young people to help them to reach their full potential. Councils have a legal duty to act as a 'corporate parent' for each and every child and young person that is looked after, whether this is as a result of a voluntary agreement with their parents or through a care order agreed by the court. All children and young people in this country have rights that state that they must be treated fairly and with respect and care. Their rights are set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which underpins all policy in Wales for children and young people.

- 3.2 To assist Members to fulfil their duties, it is important that children and young people who are or have been in the care of Bridgend County Borough Council have an opportunity to meet with Members and have a dialogue about their experiences, wishes and feelings so that the Members have a greater understanding about the needs of our looked after children.

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 It is acknowledged that meeting with Members and senior officers is a daunting prospect for young people and whilst they might initially agree to attend such a meeting, on the day they may change their mind. Therefore, once a group of young people has been established, they will need assistance to maintain regular input into such a group and to have some advance information about what the Members would want to discuss with them so that they are supported to prepare for the meeting.
- 4.2 In discussion with the young people, it has become clear that they would prefer to meet in a less formal setting than in the Council Chamber or committee rooms. It is therefore suggested that the event would be held in the Aftercare offices on an afternoon. Further preparatory work ahead of these sessions would be undertaken with the group of young people to help them plan for the meeting and to establish how they want to express themselves and identify their most important issues.
- 4.3 Thus, in relation to young people engaging with members of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee, it is proposed that a consultation event will be held twice a year. It is envisaged that this will be in April/May and in October, with invitations extended to all members of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee and to include the Chief Executive, the Corporate Director for Children and the Head of Service for Safeguarding and Family Support. This would provide an opportunity for young people, Members and senior officers to have a dialogue and for youngsters to talk about things that are important to them.
- 4.4 In addition, the Principal Officer for Corporate Parenting plans, with others, to establish a regular meeting forum with children and young people who are, or who have formerly been looked after, with the aim of enabling them to contribute to the development of services and initiatives that most appropriately meet their needs.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal Implications.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the proposed arrangements for young people's sessions with Members.

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Corporate Director - Children
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Background documents

Corporate Parenting Policy Statement – 14th July 2009

Corporate Parenting: Roles and Responsibilities of Members, Officers and Partners – 14th July 2009