

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

13 JULY 2010

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - CHILDREN

SMOKING POLICY IN RESPECT OF ADOPTERS AND FOSTER CARERS

1. Purpose of Report.

The purpose of this report is to seek the Committee's consideration and recommendation of approval of a proposed smoking policy and accompanying procedural guidance for potential adopters and foster carers within Bridgend County Borough Council. The proposed Policy will inform staff and the public of the Council's position on smoking for those people who wish to offer placements to Bridgend's children and young people.

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

This policy links with the theme "Young Voices" as part of the community strategy.

3. Background.

- 3.1 There is considerable evidence demonstrating the negative impact on children of living in a home where adults smoke. The British Medical Journal suggests that the only way of reducing children's exposure to passive smoking is to maintain smoke free homes. There are particularly high health risks for very young children who are exposed to passive smoking.
- 3.2 Bridgend County Borough Council needs to consider therefore if it wishes to move to a position where children are only placed in smoke free homes. This issue is controversial and requires that the rights of adopters and foster carers to smoke are balanced against the rights of children to be healthy. Every Local Authority as a corporate parent has a responsibility towards looked after children but this has to be balanced against the rights of adopters and foster carers to do as they wish in their own homes.

4. Current situation / proposal.

The Committee, within its terms of reference, is to ensure that appropriate policies, opportunities and procedures are in place. It is proposed that the Committee considers the proposed Policy and recommends its approval to Cabinet.

- 4.1 There is currently no formal policy or procedure in place specific to Bridgend County Borough Council other than a general policy in respect of the workplace (BCBC Smoke-free Policy June 2007). The South Wales Adoption Agency Consortium (SWAAC), of which Bridgend is a member, collaborates with other local authorities across South East Wales in respect of adoption and foster care services and has

developed a policy (appendix 1) and procedure (appendix 2) which it is recommended that Bridgend should adopt.

4.2 This policy states that adopters and foster carers will be advised at an early stage in the recruitment process of the existence of the policy and procedure particularly in relation to the following:-

- Other than in exceptional circumstances, children under the age of 5 years will not be placed with adopters or foster carers who smoke or where there is a smoker living in the home.
- The Council will encourage all adopters and foster carers to seek support to help them stop smoking.
- The Council will signpost to the full range of smoking cessation techniques and will record this.
- Disabled children, who are house bound, or children with certain conditions will also not be placed with smoking carers.
- In the case where potential or actual adopters or foster carers have ceased smoking, the applicant will have to maintain that smoke free status for 12 months before they can be considered to adopt or foster these groups of children (although the assessment can begin once they are 6 months smoke free).
- The British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) fully endorse Local Authorities amending their policies with regard to smoking and wishes to aim for a future where all foster carers and adopters are non smokers (BAAF practice note 51 ' *Reducing the Risks of Environmental Tobacco Smoke for Looked after Children and their Carers*'

5. Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules.

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

6. Legal Implications.

6.1 There are no Legal Implications

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 There are no financial implications of implementing this policy and procedure

8. Recommendation.

8.1 That the Committee considers the proposed Policy and recommends its approval to Cabinet.

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Background documents

BCBC Smoke-free Policy June 2007