

CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE - 26 JULY 2011

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, ON
TUESDAY 26 JULY 2011 AT 3.45PM

Present:

Councillor A E Davies - Cabinet Member - Children and Young People

Councillor M E J Nott - Leader
Councillor D Sage - Deputy Leader
Councillor H J David - Cabinet Member - Resources
Councillor L C Morgan - Cabinet Member - Wellbeing
Councillor P W White - Cabinet Member - Communities

Invitees:

Councillor K R T Deere
Councillor M Thomas
Councillor K S Hunt

Officers:

H Anthony - Corporate Director - Children
C Turner - Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support
S Hughes - Legal Officer
M Shepherd - Head of Healthy Living
S Pryce - Head of Regeneration
K Williams - Team Manager Adoption Service
P Williams - HR Business Partner
J Owen - Corporate Marketing Officer
M A Galvin - Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

96 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members:-

Councillor R D Jenkins - Holiday
Councillor K Watts - Family bereavement

97 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

98 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee dated 5 April 2011 be approved as a true and accurate record.

99 BRIDGEND FOSTER CARE : AN OVERVIEW OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairperson introduced the Corporate Marketing Officer to the meeting, who gave a powerpoint Presentation on the above topic.

The Corporate Marketing Officer opened by giving some background information, as well as an update upon the current situation and activity taking place in relation to promoting Foster Care initiatives.

She explained that it was of paramount importance to maintain the existing number of Bridgend Foster Carers, whilst at the same time, looking to explore positive avenues to attract an increase in enquiries for Foster Carers.

The Corporate Marketing Officer advised of the number of Looked After Children and Carers, emphasising that it was a goal of the Authority to reduce the number of Looked After Children (LAC) in Independent Foster Care, and this could only be achieved by employing more local authority Foster Carers.

She then advised of current activities that were being pursued in a bid to promote Bridgend Foster Carers.

These included:-

- Radio advertising
- Newspaper advertisements
- Web page advertisements
- Yellow.com advertisements
- Various sponsorship events, e.g. Race of Life
- Meet and greets
- School newsletters
- Via Communities First initiatives
- Internal communications
- SEWIC (A regional Campaign Forum)

The Corporate Marketing Officer confirmed that the marketing and communications campaign was accelerating, and this year compared to 2010, showed that it was likely that the Authority would achieve an increase in web hits and enquiries. Sources of enquiries had also expanded during the last few years she added.

Carer numbers were showing an increase also she advised, with in 2011 to date there being 99 carers and 194 placements. There were also currently 14 general and 16 relative carers waiting to be assessed.

In terms of general cover de-registrations, there was a reduction showing in these numbers over the last few years, and this was looking to be addressed. The Corporate Marketing Officer confirmed that there had been genuine reasons why three foster carers had unattached themselves from the service this year.

The Corporate Marketing Officer then went through initiatives being pursued to support Council Carers and results of a questionnaire conducted, which revealed that 100% of people who were involved in this had confirmed they would definitely recommend Bridgend Foster Care to others.

She then explained of the Bridgend Support Care Initiative, a new preventative scheme currently being promoted, as well as details regarding SEWIC, a regional recruitment campaign that involved 16 local authorities including BCBC.

The Corporate Marketing Officer then concluded her Presentation by advising of ideas that had been put forward in order to progress Bridgend Foster Caring promotions. She concluded with the following summary:

- Approvals for foster carers are up by 10% in comparison with last year;
- Website hits increased;
- Most successful Foster Care fortnight
- Increase in carers
- Decrease in de-registrations
- Retention positive
- Regional and local campaigns increasing
- Budget restraints needed to be negated

The Chairperson on behalf of Members, thanked the Corporate Marketing Officer for her overview, which had given a valuable insight for Members into Bridgend Foster Care.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee noted the Presentation and accompanying report.

100 SAFEGUARDING AND FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE 2010/11 - INTERIM HEAD OF SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support presented a report, which reminded Members that in 2010 the CSSIW introduced a new “Annual Reporting Framework” that required all authorities in Wales to produce an Annual Report on the effectiveness of the Social Care Services. The purpose of the Annual Reports was for Councils to assess their own performance in respect of its Social Services responsibilities and to focus upon strategic objectives and improvement priorities across Departments.

This was the second Annual Report following the new arrangements for evaluating Social Services in Wales the Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family advised.

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support then highlighted some key areas to note in the latest Annual report.

He advised that increased media and public attention following the tragic Baby O case and a number of other high profile child abuse cases, had led to an increase in the number of contacts and referrals made to the Safeguarding and Family Support Team. This resulted in the number of Looked After Children increasing by 14% i.e. to 326 from 2010 to 2011, and the number of children on the Child Protection Register increasing by 28% i.e. to 163. This had inevitably resulted in pressures upon staff and budgets.

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support also explained that staff had been actively looking to improve systems and processes, to address areas of weakness in Performance Indicators. This work he advised, had since reflected improvement in terms of performance, with improved timescales in care assessments and work completed to address a backlog of uncompleted assessments.

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support was pleased to advise the Cabinet Committee, that if the improvements made to date in these areas continued, BCBC would be one of the best performing authority's in Wales, as Care Assessments were showing current performance levels of over 80%, with Initial Assessments in the high 90%'s.

With the methods of assistance from marketing campaigns, recruitment and retention of social workers was also showing an improvement to that of previous, which decreased reliance upon agency workers who were expensive to recruit.

This meant that there were presently very few vacancies in the Safeguarding and Family Support Team he added.

There were currently no unallocated Child Protection cases and all Looked After Children were allocated to qualified professionals, or very experienced case workers who had held their respective cases for many years.

The Local Authority had received positive feedback from the CSSIW in terms of its Permanency Plan put in place for Looked After Children, and regulated services such as those at Cartrefle and Bakers Way had been the subject of inspections and these had received positive feedback from the CSSIW, with only suggestions of a number of good practice recommendations having been made by the regulators.

Improvements were also being shown in the area of adoptions and permanency inspections the Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support added.

In terms of the areas where further improvement could be made, he explained that one of these areas was statutory visits of Looked After Children, and reports being compiled quicker by Officers' following these visits. There were 333 Looked After Children at present which was a high number, and therefore system improvements were being examined in a bid to progress these more efficiently than previously.

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support, advised Members that various elements of social work had to comply with a significant number of procedures, driven by considerable paperwork and this was also putting pressure on Officers. He hoped however, that the "Monroe report" would improve current practices in place, as would the Council's Workwise Team who were looking at ways to streamline certain processes that presently in existence.

Members were pleased with the report overall, which showed continuous improvements being made in relation to the Safeguarding and Family Support Service through the Annual Report.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee considered and noted the Annual report.

101 PROGRESS REPORT ON THE WORK PLACEMENTS, TRAINEESHIP AND APPRENTICESHIPS SCHEMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER OR WERE FORMERLY LOOKED AFTER

The Corporate Director - Children submitted a report, which provided Members with an update on the Council's work placement, traineeship and apprenticeship schemes in respect of the above category of young people.

The report gave some background information, then explained that work experience placements continued to be available to young people, and provided a range of core work experience opportunities for those who fell not only into the NEET category, but also for those who have options to pursue in employment or training, and who required some experience in order to build confidence and add weight to further education or employment opportunities.

A wider range of providers were also being looked at presently in order to expand the range of meaningful and interesting work experience options for young people she explained.

The Team Manager Adoption Service then gave an update to Members on the individual schemes that were available for young people as expanded upon in the report, such as the Best Change Programme, Traineeship opportunities, Work Experience opportunities and Apprenticeships.

In terms of the latter, she explained that plans had been put in place to recruit five apprentices in the Parks and Ground Maintenance Department.

Unfortunately however, these positions had currently been put on hold, as the Department were currently reviewing its expenditure in accord with the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

Attached to the report were extracts of support from two young people who had previously participated in the Best Change Programme (at Sony's) and a Traineeship Placement at the Bridgend Youth Offending Service Team (YOS).

The Chairperson reminded Members that following the meeting, they would have an opportunity to meet young people subject of the report, as agreed at a previous meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting noted the report, and the progress made with regard to the creation of work placement opportunities within the local authority for young people who are, or who have been in the care of this Authority.

102 **LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - PERFORMANCE DATA UPDATE**

The Corporate Director - Children submitted a report, which included at Appendix 1, Performance Date information used both locally and nationally, in relation to adoptions, outcomes and placements within the Safeguarding and Family Support Service.

The Corporate Director - Children confirmed that the information was required by the Welsh Government, in order that evidence could be provided of local authorities performance in key areas such as those referred to above.

She advised that the PI's were regularly monitored to ensure compliance, track progress and identify any significant issues that may require remedial attention as a matter of priority. She added that the PI's were also shared within the Quarterly Business Review meetings and at the Continuous Improvement Board.

Paragraphs 4.2 - 4.4 of the report, expanded upon the progress being made within the Authority in relation to the various PI's shown in the report Appendix, and the general pattern was that most of the PI's were currently showing an improvement, some of which significantly so.

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

103 THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PROJECT

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support Services submitted a report, which provided information for Members on the progress of the Looked After Children Project.

He reminded Members that the Local Authority were still pursuing continuous improvement under its Supporting Vulnerable Children Programme within three key elements of the Looked After Children Project, which were:-

- (a) To reduce the number of Looked After Children;
- (b) To increase the recruitment of Foster Carers; and
- (c) To improve adoption outcomes

The report confirmed that nationally the trend of cases of Looked After Children was increasing and this was also the case in Bridgend. A table in Paragraph 4.1.4 of the report detailed information regarding this on an All Wales basis.

Paragraph 4.2.2 of the report, outlined information that showed the number of Looked After Children in Bridgend at the end of 2010/11 to be 326.

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support assured the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee, that steps would continue to be made to address the points made in the third paragraph above.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee noted the information provided within the report in relation to progress regarding the Looked After Children Project.

104 INFORMAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - JULY 2011 TO APRIL 2010

The Corporate Director - Children submitted a report that outlined for approval, the proposed Informal Forward Work Programme for the above period, attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support, advised that two Children and Young People's community homes were being altered, and would deliver new services in Porthcawl and Bridgend. He advised that both these Homes required new names, and that any suggestions should be forwarded to the Residential Care and Foster Care Home.

He asked the Cabinet Members if they would consider forming an informal judging Panel to pick names for the Homes from the suggestions received.

Cabinet Members agreed to form a Panel for this purpose.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee approved the Informal Forward Work Programme as outlined in the Appendix to the report.

The meeting closed at 4.45pm.