

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

6 MARCH 2012

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – CHILDREN

SAFEGUARDING AND FAMILY SUPPORT: CONNECTING FAMILIES SERVICE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides the Corporate Parenting Committee with an overview of the Connecting Families Project.
- 1.2 It informs members of the initial operational functions and performance of the team and seeks views on any perceived gaps in the service.

2 Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives / Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 This initiative supports the vision set out in the Community Strategy, impacting specifically on the themes of Strong Communities, Young Voices, Healthy Living and New Opportunities.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Local Service Board (LSB) agreed in March 2010 to facilitate a project which considered different ways to work more effectively with families that have the most chronic and complex difficulties and who draw on a wide range of services. A project team was established to develop proposals and, in September 2010, the LSB agreed to move to the creation of a multi-agency team.
- 3.2 A service manager came into post in January 2011 to lead and progress the design and establishment of the multi-agency team.
- 3.3 One of the main functions and purpose of the team is to work with children who are looked after or on the brink of becoming looked after and to establish ways in which those children can safely remain in their parent's care.

4 Current Situation / Proposal

- 4.1 Connecting Families secured accommodation within Bridgend police station in June 2011.
- 4.2 During early summer 2011, significant multi-agency recruitment activity took place leading to new staff taking up their positions from July 2011 so that the service became operational from 1 August 2011.

- 4.3 The team has been fully staffed since 6 December 2011 (see Appendix 1).
- 4.4 The whole team has now been fully trained on the Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS) model of intervention (free training was accessed via our partnerships with existing and developing IFSS programmes). Integrated family support programmes will be a statutory part of each Local Authority's service provision from 2014 and is a model of intervention which was largely used to inform the development of Connecting Families. It aims to address the issue of high numbers of looked after children by offering intense packages of family support using well evidenced models of intervention.
- 4.5 To date, the team has received 59 referrals, (see Appendix 2 on statistics for more details). The team has worked with 99 children within those families and 27 of those children have been looked after, others will have been on the brink of becoming looked after prior to the intervention by the team, but this is more difficult to quantify.
- 4.6 Referrals have come from the full range of partner agencies (see Appendix 2).
- 4.7 The Connecting Families Service Manager is currently assisting Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan to establish their Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) in the role of critical friend.
- 4.8 The Service Manager for Connecting Families has recently been nominated to act as the project manager for the development of the Western Bay IFSS. This will ensure the additionality which has been established through Connecting Families is not lost as part of those developments.
- 4.9 At the outset of this project, no budget was identified for evaluation of the project and this has proved problematic although various possibilities are being explored. Discussions have been held with Cardiff University around providing an MA student to be involved in the evaluation. Welsh Government is assisting via links with their ESF evaluation and Action for Children has been engaged using the grant from the New Ideas Social Research fund to provide a plan for an evaluation focusing on a cost benefit methodology. There are also discussions on-going about the degree to which the Council may be able to access some assistance via IFSS developments. The information officer within the team is collating data on families and profiling them and is beginning some cost/benefit analysis.

5. Effect Upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There are no effects: Connecting families will provide a framework to enable the Council and its partners to deliver an IFSS seamlessly, having already established a similar service with a wider brief.

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.1 An equality impact assessment has been undertaken in respect of the project. This project has been assessed as relevant to the Authority's general and specific duties to promote equality and eliminate discrimination but that there will be no negative equality implications arising from the project.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The proposal will provide the best value for a wide range of council services as well as for partner agencies.
- 7.2 Rigorous cost/benefit analysis will be undertaken to ensure there is evidence to support the assumption of cost savings to agencies as a result of the new service.
- 7.3 Finance for the Connecting Families service has come from a variety of sources including a European Social Fund (ESF) grant, Substance Misuse Action Team (SMAT), safeguarding and family support, adult social care and a one-off payment from corporate reserves. Other non financial contributions were made as in kind contributions from partner agencies.

7.4 Connecting Families 3 Year Total Funding

	£
ESF	468,523
New Ideas Social Fund	10,000
BCBC Central Contingency	300,000
SMAT	31,298
BCBC - Safeguarding & Family Support	116,439
BCBC - Wellbeing	116,439
TOTAL	1,042,699

* SMAT funding currently only approved for 2 years.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 The Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee are requested to note the report and consider any issues arising from the information presented.

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Background Documents

- Appendix 1 – schedule of staff
Appendix 2 – statistics