

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1/2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND,
ON TUESDAY 17 JANUARY 2012 AT 4.12PM

Present:-

Councillor A E Davies - Chairperson

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 J White - Cabinet Member - Communities

Invitees:-

Councillor K R T Deere
Councillor K S Hunt
Councillor R D Jenkins
Councillor K J Watts

Officers:-

H Anthony - Corporate Director - Children
C Turner - Head of Safeguarding and Family Support
A Lloyd - Independent Reviewing Service Manager
L Wilkinson - Principal Officer Accommodation and Regulated Services
P Williams - Human Resources Business Partner
A Rees - Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

119 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Member and Officer:-

Councillor M Thomas - Other Council Business
M Shepherd, Head of Healthy Living - Other Council Business

120 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

121 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee held on the 15 November 2011, be approved as a true and accurate record subject to the name of Councillor R D Jenkins being recorded in the list of apologies for absence in minute number 113.

122 STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE FOR FOSTERING, ADOPTION AND CHILDREN'S HOMES

The Head of Safeguarding and Family support presented a report the purpose of which was to seek approval of the revised and new statements of purpose for the following service areas in line with regulatory requirements:-

Adoption Services
Fostering Services
Baker's Way Short Break Service
Complex Needs Unit
Transition Unit

He stated that the applicable regulations required that all 'Statements of Purpose' are approved and subsequently kept under review by the registered provider and was undertaken on an annual basis. Best practice indicates that this should be a function for elected Members as part of their corporate parenting role. In addition the CSSIW inspection reports in relation to the regulated services reiterated that this action must be completed.

Each Statement of Purpose includes an outline of the nature and scope of the service provided and gives detail about the processes adopted in order to carry out its functions. The main areas covered include access to services, information on staffing ratios qualifications and credentials and management structure and policies and procedures in relation to a range of service provision and complaints.

The Principal Officer Accommodation and Regulated Services updated the Committee on the redesign of residential services where Maesteg Community Home would be decommissioned and new services developed on the existing site of Pant Morfa Community Home and Cartrefle Community Home. The new services were comprised of a complex needs service for 11 to 15 year olds and a transition service for 16 to 17 year olds. She stated that the new services would shortly be up and running with the complex needs service operating from the existing Pant Morfa site in Porthcawl providing placements for up to four young people on a short to medium term depending upon their needs up to a period of 12 months. She stated that the Transition Unit would operate from the existing Cartrefle site in Bridgend and will provide placements for up to 4 young people on the main unit and in addition, placements for two young people would be provided in bedsit. Placements would be short to medium term up to a period of 12 months and will provide an innovative service to young people who require and intensively managed transition into independent living. She informed the Committee that a naming competition had been held with the young people to name the Complex Needs Unit and the Transition Unit and it was proposed to name the Complex Needs Unit, Sunnybank and the Transition Unit as Newbridge House.

Members of the Committee questioned whether there was flexibility for them to undertake Rota Visits to the Complex Needs Unit and the Transition Unit which had to be cancelled due to the refurbishment works being carried out. The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support stated that he would speak to the Officer responsible for the Rota Visits to ensure that Members who wished to visit the establishments were accommodated. The Principal Officer Accommodation and Regulated Services informed the Committee that Members would receive an invite to the official openings of the Complex Needs Unit and the Transition Unit.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) The Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee approved the revised individual 'Statement of Purpose' for the named service areas referred to.
 - (2) The Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee approved the naming of Sunnybank for the Complex Needs Unit and the name of Newbridge House for the Transition Unit.

123 WORK PLACEMENTS, TRAINEESHIP AND APPRENTICESHIP SCHEMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER OR WERE FORMERLY LOOKED AFTER

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support introduced a report the purpose of which was to provide a progress update on the Council's work placement, traineeship and apprenticeship schemes. He informed the Committee that the Council continued to invest in and engage with employers on nurturing employment opportunities for young people who were Looked After Children or were formally Looked After.

The Human Resources Business Partner reported that the work experience placements previously secured continued to be available to young people and providing a range of core work experience opportunities for young people who fall into the Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) category. Placements are also available to those who may have options ahead of them such as employment or training, but who need some experience in order to build confidence and add weight to further education or employment applications. He stated that the number of young people eligible for the various schemes fluctuated from month to month and year on year and as at the 12 December 2011 there were 155 young people open to the service.

The Committee was informed of the progress of the traineeship opportunity whereby the successful applicant had commenced her placement on 10 January 2011 in the Restorative Justice Anti-Bullying Initiative, located within the Bridgend Youth Offending Service and which would be continuing until the 31 March 2012. This had been a significant opportunity for the young person and had remained conscientious and diligent throughout in undertaking her day to day duties and maximising the opportunities being afforded her. An additional traineeship opportunity was made available to another young person at the beginning of November 2011, linked to the Restorative Justice Anti-Bullying Initiative and is being funded up to the end of March 2012. The successful young person had already made the most of the opportunity being made available to her and alongside her responsibilities as a mother to a young child. In the initial week of the traineeship, the young person followed through a basic skills test and achieved 100% in mathematics and 90% in English. In relation to both the traineeships, the After Care Service is hoping to explore ongoing funding opportunities in order to continue with the respective programmes for the two young people in question, adding to their personal development, wellbeing, transition to adulthood and promoting their sense of becoming valued members of society.

The Human Resources Business Partner also reported on an update on the work experience placements which remain available for eligible young people open to the After Care Service. The take up of this initiative remained consistent and again three young people had benefitted for opportunities during the last period, with two young people having work experience placement as a cleaning operative and in building maintenance a third young person had continued with a voluntary work placement within the Parks Division which had been very successful to date and at his own request had increased the number of days spent on voluntary placement. Discussions were taking place about a further increase in the number of days spent on placement, with the young person in question then being given the opportunity of applying for full-time/paid seasonal employment.

The Human Resources Business Partner informed the Committee that efforts to identify suitable young people for the various schemes continue to be highly time consuming and had featured only the young people currently open to the After Care Service. Whilst this had proved successful in the main, two new areas had been explored, one more successfully than the other. There was now close working with Business Support colleagues which had resulted in better data capture, reducing staff time in collating and sorting manually lists of young people. Secondly it was recognised that there would be advantages in identifying young people earlier (when still in the latter stages of being looked after) who may be eligible to work experience, traineeship and apprenticeship opportunities. However, there had been limited time and resources available to the service and what has been available has been utilised to provide opportunities for existing young care leavers. However, it was planned to involve more fully the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) to identify earlier potentially eligible young care leavers for the various schemes. In addition to those developments, two further opportunities appeared promising, namely one young person had been linked with the Coastal Project to increase access to training and, secondly the Bridge Mentoring Plus Scheme had recently advised that they were now able to offer 20 day supported work experience placements for young people in the County Borough.

The Human Resources Business Partner reported that due to budgetary constraints, there had been no further developments regarding apprenticeships being made available to young people leaving the care of the Council. He reported that it was hoped to advertise three apprenticeships in Highways and two apprenticeships in the Building Maintenance and part of his responsibility is to keep one position for a young person leaving the care of the Council.

He also reported that discussions were being held with Bridgend College to offer motor vehicle apprenticeships. He stated that the new employment routes initiative which had replaced the former Future Jobs Fund is a partnership with Manpower and Job Centre Plus to engage people into education, training and employment.

In response to a question from the Committee the Human Resources Business Partner stated that he would look into the possibility of a young person leaving care having a work placement/experience in partnership arrangements as Council had with Town and Community Councils.

In a further question from the Committee, the Human Resources Business Partner informed that the funding for traineeships is £210 weekly and was met by the Youth Service and After Care budgets and is a declarable benefit.

The Cabinet Member - Resources commented that apprenticeships are an important vehicle for the organisation to fill gaps in skills shortages and an ageing employee profile. He hoped that opportunities for care leavers could be explored in business support activities.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee noted the report and the progress that has been made with the creation of placement opportunities within the Local Authority for young people who are or who have been in the care of this Authority.

124 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support presented a report in line with the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Guidance Wales (WAG 2006) which gave IRO's the duty to 'monitor' the responsible authority's performance in relation to looked after children and young people. IROs also had the duty to prevent drift and delay for looked after children and young people. Within the guidance, IROs are expected to improve care planning and decision making and make an important contribution to the consistency of the responsible authority's approach.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support introduced Annabel Lloyd, Independent Reviewing Service Manager who gave a presentation to the Committee on the Independent Reviewing Service. She stated that the service in Bridgend is made up of six full time equivalent IROs with more than 170 years total experience as social workers. Most IROs had been team managers and within the team there is experience of working in different Welsh and English local authorities and both independent and voluntary sectors. IROs Chair Child Protection Conferences under the All Wales Child Protection Procedures and the Looked After Children Reviews under the IRO Guidance (Wales). She highlighted the structure of the team. She also highlighted the number of Looked After Children cases in comparison to the previous two quarters, the legal status of emergency LAC admissions and planned admissions. The Committee also received information on an analysis of children who became looked after by age, by gender and the period of time for children being looked after.

The Independent Reviewing Service Manager informed the Committee that there was an increasing trend of children becoming looked after with 343 children being looked after by the end of September 2011, with 112 in the 11 - 15 year old cohort, which would be used to inform planning for the future. The data also highlighted positive performance in looked after children and young people having a permanent plan in place at their second review with the Council regularly achieving a 100% result in its key performance indicator.

The Independent Reviewing Service Manager also informed the Committee that the service is satisfied that there are a significant number of examples of sound care planning leading to positive outcomes being achieved for looked after children and young people and the service had received compliments for its performance. During October 2011 an improvement had been noticed in the stability of the workforce and management structure which is conducive to improving the quality of care planning. It was noticeable to the Independent Reviewing Service that work was underway to influence practitioners to improve practice where it had been identified that this was required. The Independent Reviewing Service aimed to have a greater impact in terms of improving the quality of the experience of being looked after and the outcomes for looked after children. As part of continuous improvement, the service needed to have a robust care plan for looked after children on assisting workers in improving their preparation for a LAC Review. It also needed to involve young people in the review of the LAC Review Consultation documents and strengthen the relationship between assessment and care planning and increasing the IRO involvement in Panels that make decisions about resources for young people. The service needed to continue challenging poor practice and praise positive practice. The service also needed to focus on contributing to the LAC Achievement Awards to celebrate the achievements of looked after young people and make use of the local resolution process in accordance with legislation to prevent drift and delay in

cases where this occurs. The service also needed to increase the level of its involvement in quality assurance and learning activity.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support proposed that an analysis of the needs and circumstances of young people who had become looked after during this past year by way of informing and predicting future service provision and to have a more in-depth understanding of the reasons for the increasing trend. He also proposed that close working with the leaving care team be undertaken in order to gather better information about the needs of the current 11-15 year old LAC cohort so that looked after exit strategies can be established, via sound care planning where this is appropriate and need anticipated where this is evidenced.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee noted the report and the two proposals in that the Head of Service commissioned an analysis of the needs and circumstances of young people who had become looked after during this past year by way of improving and predicting future service provisions and to have a more in-depth understanding of the reasons for the increasing trend and that close working with the leaving care team be undertaken in order to gather better information about the needs of the current 11-15 year old LAC cohort so that looked after exit strategies can be established, via sound care planning where this is appropriate and need anticipated where this is evidenced.

125 LOST AFTER CARE REPORT

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support introduced a report which explained how 'My Planner' would be implemented to enhance work with care leavers known to Bridgend. The Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services at the Welsh Government had written to local authorities highlighting that the Lost After Care report had been published and recommended that the accompanying plan had been adopted. He stated that the report itself was co-ordinated by the Children's Commissioner's Office and had been endorsed by the Children's Commissioner for Wales. It had been informed by contributions from looked after young people, their social workers and other key professionals including young peoples' carers, elected Members, Welsh Government, heads of service and the Fostering Network.

The Independent Reviewing Service Manager reported that 'Lost After Care' illustrated the experiences of older looked after young people and the difficulties they face when they start planning their move into independent living. The report also highlighted the disparity in services and information provided to this vulnerable group of young people. Of particular resonance to the Safeguarding and Family Support Service was the importance that young people place on time spent with their social workers in order to resolve issues and to make plans for the future. The service was equally struck by the experience of poverty that care leavers described in this and other studies and the report would be used to enhance the quality of care planning long before leaving care.

The 'My Planner' document arose out of the study and is a paper tool aimed at increasing young people's understanding of their rights and entitlements. The 'Lost After Care' report suggests a number of service improvements to facilitate

a better co-ordinated response in identifying and responding to the rights and entitlements of young people moving on to independent living.

The Committee was informed that the practice in Bridgend is compliant with Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 Guidance Wales and there are currently 126 young people open to the Leaving Care Team. Each young person known to the Leaving Care Team has a personal adviser and the team works with a range of statutory, independent and third sector services in aiming to achieve best outcomes for care leavers. Pathway plans are informed by a need assessment that is carried out in partnership with the young person and reviewed by an Independent Reviewing Officer at statutory intervals.

The Committee was also informed that the 'My Planner' is being disseminated to all young people who are known to the Leaving Care Team and were shared with young people who become known to the team as part of the needs assessment. This allows workers to use My Planner as a feature of their work aimed at informing young people about their rights and entitlements.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support reported on the 29 priorities for improvement which were recommended by 'Lost After Care'. The first six priorities related to actions required by the Welsh Government and CSSIW and he highlighted the priorities that concerned Members and Officers of the Council. Where further work is required on the recommendations of 'Lost After Care' a meeting will take place in early 2012 in order to fully populate the table and ensure that practice within Bridgend is either compliant with or better than the priorities identified.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support undertook to provide copies of the 'My Planner' to Members when it had been received.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee noted the report and the progress that has been made.

126 INFORMAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - OCTOBER 2011 TO APRIL 2012

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support presented a report which sought approval of the proposed Informal Forward Work Programme (IFWP) for the period October 2011 To April 2012. He informed the Committee that three additional items were proposed for the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee to consider on the 6 March 2012. He stated that the topics detailed in the Appendix to the report had previously been accepted for inclusion in the Informal Forward Work Programme between October 2011 and April 2012.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee approved the proposed Informal Forward Work Programme subject to a progress report on the Connecting Families Project being reported to the March meeting of the Committee and the report on the Looked After Children - Performance Data Update be deferred for a period of nine months.

The meeting closed at 5.30pm.

