

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 1/2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND,
ON WEDNESDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2012 AT 2.00PM

Present:-

Councillor H J David - Chairperson

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

Invitees:-

Councillor E Dodd
Councillor R D Jenkins
Councillor H Townsend
Councillor D B F White

Officers:-

H Anthony - Corporate Director - Children
C Turner - Head of Safeguarding and Family Support
W Wilcox - Principal Officer Disability Services and Transition
L Wilkinson - Principal Officer Accommodation and Regulatory Services
C Lane - Principal Officer Commissioning
A Rees - Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from P Williams - HR Business Partner.

The Chairperson stated that he would discuss the non-attendance of invited officers who had not submitted apologies with the Chief Executive.

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D B F White - Agenda Item 4(a) - BCBC Short Break Statement -
Councillor D B F White declared a personal interest as a Governor of Heronsbridge School which had responsibility for the residential side of short breaks and the School was currently looking at extending the service.

12 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee held on the 23 July 2012, be approved as a true and accurate record.

13 BCBC SHORT BREAKS STATEMENT

The Principal Officer Disability Services and Transition reported on the development and implementation of the Bridgend Short Break Statement, which was a requirement of the Break for Carers of Disabled Children (Wales) Regulations 2012 which came into force on 28 June 2012. The Regulations state that a local authority must prepare a 'Short Break Services Statement' setting out details of the range of services the local authority provides; any eligibility criteria for assessment for services and how the services are designed to meet the needs of carers in its area. The Regulations required the Council to publish its Short Breaks Services Statement which includes publishing a copy on its website by 27 September 2012. In order to meet this requirement, the Corporate Director Children had exercised her delegated power under Section B2, Paragraph 4.13 of the scheme of delegation of functions.

The Principal Officer Disability Services and Transition highlighted the requirements of the Statement and the definition of a short break which was to find:-

- Daytime care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere;
- Overnight care in the homes of disabled children or elsewhere;
- Educational or leisure activities for disabled children outside their homes, or
- Services to enable and assist the carers in the evenings, at week-ends and during the school holidays.

Short Breaks provides support for carers of disabled children so that families can spend time with or without their disabled child doing ordinary family things. The breaks are also about disabled children and young people spending time away from their families, to try new activities and develop friendships. Short breaks can include day, evening, overnight, week-end or holiday activities; these vary from a few hours to a few days and take place in a child or young persons home, or the home of an approved carer, or a residential or community setting i.e. after school club or specialist holiday play scheme.

An assessment was required to determine both eligibility and the type of support most appropriate.

The Principal Officer Disability Services and Transition informed the Committee that she had presented the statement at an information event for parents and carers of disabled children and young people held on 9 October 2012. There was a requirement in the Regulations to review the Statement annually and to update it accordingly and the review of the 2012 Statement was to commence with a task group of carers and parents on 6 November 2012 with the aim of improving the participation of parents/carers and disabled children and young people. She stated that there was a need to consider the reimbursement of travelling expenses for stakeholders attending review meetings. The Principal Officer Disability Services and Transition highlighted the cost of publishing the Statement which had been kept to a minimum. Recent research had seen an increase in requests for specialist short break services through direct payments to enable family days out to take place.

The Principal Officer Disability Services and Transition indicated that there had been far greater funding for the Short Break Statement in England than in Wales,

although the Council had been successful with its Statement in a short space of time.

The Committee questioned the effect of Welfare Reform and the assessment of children's disabilities on short breaks. The Principal Officer Disability Services and Transition informed the Committee that Welfare Reform is a concern as many families may have to through an appeals mechanism, however it would not affect service provision. She also stated that children would still be assessed and services provided based on their needs. Work would be undertaken with the Citizens Advice Bureau and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board on the need for robust financial advice to be made available to parents and carers.

The Statement also included quotations in a bubble format with the views of children and their parents and carers on the Short Break Service. Leaflets had also been produced which gave examples of Short Break Services in Bridgend.

The Committee requested a copy of the leaflets for families and children and a copy of the Statement.

The Chairperson in his role as Cabinet Member - Children and Young People had attended a recent parent/carer information event at which saw the launch of a DVD highlighting the services at Baker's Way. He also commended the leaflets produced by the Service which had been written with children in mind.

The Committee referred to the best practice guidance issued by the Welsh Government and asked whether improvements to the general access to local swimming pools had been considered. The Principal Officer Disability Services and Transition informed the Committee that discussions had taken place with the Group Manager Sports and Physical Activity on the provision of facilities such as hoists at swimming pools to enable more children with disabilities to use them.

The Committee questioned the process for reviewing the Statement. The Principal Officer Disability Services and Transition informed the Committee that the Statement was available publicly on the Council's website and there was potential to hold an annual event to review the Statement.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the Statement of Short Breaks Services be endorsed and the Committee receive a report to review the Statement in twelve months which would include feedback from parents and carers with there being the potential to invite Members of the Committee to an event to review the Statement.
 - (2) That a report be presented to the next meeting of the Committee on an overview of Disability Services.
 - (3) The Committee congratulated Wendy Wilcox on her permanent appointment to the post of Principal Officer Disability Services and Transition.

14 CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICE INSPECTORATE WALES'S INSPECTION (CSSIW) REPORT ON ARRANGEMENTS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Corporate Director - Children reported on the CSSIW inspection of the Council's arrangement for Looked After Children and Young People which was carried out during April 2012. The inspection, carried out by two inspectors, considered the performance indicators for 2012/11, caseload information for the period April 2011 to March 2012, data on supervision, a number of Committee reports, protocols and information on Looked After Children services. The inspectors adopted a methodology that involved reading a range of case files relating to young people who had become looked after, and a number of cases related to children and young people who were being supported by the local authority to live at home under care or a special guardianship orders. Interviews had been undertaken with senior officers, the chairs of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny and Corporate Parenting Committees. Team managers, social workers, and senior representatives of statutory and third sector agencies were also interviewed and inspectors also undertook a group interview with two safeguarding teams and observed a meeting of this Committee on 6 March 2012. In addition, a number of service users and their families were interviewed by the inspectors. The CSSIW report had been published on their website and the report provided an overview of the inspector's conclusions and a summary of their key findings. It highlighted strengths and areas for improvement in terms of arrangements for Looked After Children and Young People. Given the positive comment in the body of the report, the Corporate Director - Children commented that she was disappointed with the number of the areas identified for improvement, however the CSSIW had recognised that real improvement had been made in the Service.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support stated that an action plan had been drawn up to address the areas identified for improvement in the CSSIW inspection report and that two actions were applicable to the Committee, namely that Members should have the opportunity to meet with Children Services staff individually on a systematic basis and to consider how corporate influence could further improve the opportunities to Looked After Children and Young People. The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support expressed concern that the comment made in the inspection report that children's services staff were prevented from communicating with Members directly and it could not be evidenced where this had come from, although this could have been confused by the referrals protocol in place. He commented that significant progress had been made in addressing the areas identified for improvement which had been written into the Directorate Business Plan and Service and Team plans.

The Chairperson and Cabinet Member - Children and Young People congratulated the staff on the progress made in the Service and there was a need to be mindful of the distinction between Members and Managers and that Members could not get involved in staffing matters. He commented that he was happy to have an engagement with staff on HR issues and he congratulated the staff on the outcome of the inspection.

Members of the Committee commended the staff for the positivity which had been reflected in the inspection, against a background of pressures placed on social work staff.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that it also be noted that Members were happy to have engagement and interaction with Children Services staff.

15 EMERGING FINDINGS FROM THE REGIONAL ADVOCACY COMMISSIONING PROJECT STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN RELATION TO THE AUTHORITY'S STATUTORY DUTIES

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support reported that the Council had a statutory duty for the provision of independent advocacy services for Looked After Children and Young People which had arisen from the Waterhouse Report. The statutory requirement upon local authorities to commission and make available independent professional advocacy for looked after children, children in need and care leavers was established by statute. He stated that the Council had commissioned advocacy services which were delivered by Tros Gynnal to provide an independent professional advocacy service for looked after children aged 10 to 18. Tros Gynnal received funding of £51,570 per annum. He stated that in January 2012, the Council agreed to act as the lead commissioner and project manager to a regional multi-agency collaborative commissioning project which he chaired. He introduced Claire Lane, Principal Officer Commissioning who project managed the Regional Advocacy Commissioning Project.

The Principal Officer Commissioning outlined the scope of the project and the partners comprising the regional collaboration. She stated that the audit of need to inform the Commissioning plan was near completion and following the analysis of data, consultation with front line social work practitioners, advocates and children and young people, a number of key findings were emerging. In particular, there was an inconsistency in the extent to which local authorities and health board partners were meeting their statutory duties.

Some aspects of the service had ceased following the end of funding in 2012 and the introduction of Families First funding, with no alternative funding identified.

The Principal Officer Commissioning outlined the groups of children and young people, involved with Social Services for whom the Authority has a statutory duty to commission and make available independent professional advocacy or independent visitor services and the current arrangements to meet those duties. She highlighted the percentage of children and young people who had received advocacy services in the three years 2009-2012 and also indicative costs of the targeted growth in advocacy services: in year one - £44k, year two £89k and year three £98k. It was anticipated that detailed costings and projections would be available within the next eight weeks.

The Committee considered the importance of ensuring the advocacy service was properly resourced.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report be noted and the Committee considered the service needed to be properly resourced to meet the identified gaps within this round of budget setting.

16 THE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PROJECT

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support presented a progress report on the Looked After Children Project which detailed current trends in relation to looked after children. He stated that as a Corporate Parent, local authorities were

required to ensure the safety and wellbeing of looked after children and also to ensure they were given the same opportunities as their peers. He stated that there were over 5,700 children in the care of Welsh local authorities at the end of March 2012 and since 2005, the majority of local authorities in England and Wales had experienced a year on year increase in the number of children who had become looked after.

The Principal Officer Accommodation and Regulated Services illustrated to the Committee the breakdown of Bridgend's Looked After Children population by age at the 21 September 2012 which totalled 363 children.

The Principal Officer Accommodation and Regulated Services outlined the initiatives which had been developed as part of the Looked After Project. The aim of the Project is to reduce the number of Looked After Children to be achieved through various activities and work schemes. A revision of the Threshold to Care Panel (now known as the "Accommodation and Permanence Panel") would be undertaken to ensure that there were robust arrangements in place when making decisions to accommodate a child and ensure that appropriate care planning is in place; to reduce the number of emergency placements so that when children are brought into care in a planned, supported way and children/young people who are in an out of county placement are monitored and reviewed to ensure that the placements remain appropriate. The Principal Officer for Accommodation and Regulated Services had been in post to manage the Project and ensure that all related project documents are regularly reviewed and updated and work streams progressed to ensure that the aims of the project are achieved. Training has been refreshed for social workers to ensure outcome focused care planning was promoted and all Looked After Cases had been reviewed to establish those which can be considered for alternative care orders. An additional full time social worker had been appointed to specifically pursue plans for children to cease to be looked after and adoption targets had been met and exceeded with new targets set for this year. Foster carer marketing and recruiting was ongoing, though targets were still to be achieved. The review of in-house residential child care services had been undertaken leading to the redesign of residential care provision. Changes as a result of a Workwise review would be implemented in 2013.

The Committee referred to the table showing the comparison of spend on Looked After Children across Wales and commented that the Looked After Children Project was working in Bridgend as other local authorities had seen their costs increasing at a higher level than Bridgend which across the whole of Wales was 7.9% from 2009/10 to 2012/11, whereas in Bridgend it increased by 4.1% for the same period. The Corporate Director - Children commented that the Council did have a high level of spend on Looked After Children Services, but the statistics suggested that the Authority was now making better use of its resources. She stated that it was important to consider whether the comparison spend on Looked After Children across Wales was the budgeted figure as opposed to the outturn figure. The Principal Officer Accommodation and Regulated Services informed the Committee that the Authority recently had seen a large number of sibling groups coming into the Council's care and the numbers of Looked After Children had risen above the Welsh average.

The Committee requested clarification of the placement types on the 363 Looked After Children which was illustrated in the report under Table 6. The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support informed the Committee that the placement types referred to the different categories which were reported on an all Wales basis. He gave an explanation of the case where a child was missing from

placement but the whereabouts were known and detailed the circumstances of the other placement which had been the subject of legal proceedings which resulted in the judgement being vehemently challenged.

The Committee referred to the breakdown of Bridgend's Looked After Children population by age at the 21 September 2012 and asked whether the Council had responsibility for young people up to the age of 25. The Principal Officer Accommodation and Regulated Services informed the Committee that the Council supported young people up to the age of 25 if they were not in education or training (NEET). The Committee questioned the increase in the number of Looked After Children in Bridgend compared with Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Councils which had seen an increase in 34.5% and 13.2% respectively compared to an increase in Bridgend which was 13.7% between 2009 and 2011. The Principal Officer Accommodation and Regulated Services informed the Committee that Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Councils were still experiencing high increases in Looked After Children. The Committee questioned whether the increase in Looked After Children was due to the impact of high profile media cases. The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support confirmed that there was a definite increase in the numbers of Looked After Children due to high profile media cases and agencies such as the NSPCC and Childline had also seen their case load increasing. The Corporate Director - Children confirmed that all safeguarding authorities had seen an increase in their work following high profile media cases.

The Cabinet Member - Wellbeing referred to the fourteen cases of out of authority residential care and asked whether this was due to the very specialist needs of the individuals. The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support confirmed that it was due to the very specialist needs of the individuals and that he chaired the Out of County Group which paid great attention to care plans. He stated that decisions on out of county placements were not taken lightly and always taken in the interests of the children concerned.

RESOLVED: That the progress of the Looked After Children project and the relevant information contained therein be noted.

17 THE RESIDENTIAL CARE REDESIGN PROJECT

The Principal Officer Accommodation and Regulated Services reported on an update on the progress of the implementation of the Residential Redesign Project. Following an extensive consultation with residential staff and children and young people a decision was taken by this Committee and Cabinet in January 2011 to retain Cartrefle and Pant Morfa as residential care provision for Looked After Children in Bridgend, but redesigned as specialised units. It was also agreed to rename Cartrefle as "Sunnybank" to develop into a residential unit which accommodated children and young people with multiple and complex needs. It was agreed that Pant Morfa, subsequently named "Newbridge House" be developed into a residential unit that supported young people through the transition to independence. It was further agreed that Maesteg children's home be decommissioned.

The Principal Officer Accommodation and Regulated Services reported that a Project Team was set up to steer and implement the changes of the proposed redesign of residential care provision. The newly redesigned residential care units became fully operational on 11 January 2012 and all staff affected by the changes had been transferred into new positions within the new units with the exception of one member of staff who accepted redundancy. All children and young people

who were previously accommodated in the original homes had successfully moved on to suitable alternative accommodation and are making steady progress. New Statements of Purpose had been written for the redesigned service and approved by the CSSIW. Four children had been admitted to the Complex Needs Unit at Sunnybank and plans for their ongoing care are progressing for their rehabilitation home to their families or alternative care settings. Four young people accommodated in the transition unit at Newbridge House had moved onto alternative accommodation in line with their care plan and since implementing the residential redesign, seven young people had been admitted to the new homes and all making steady progress.

The Principal Officer Accommodation and Regulated Services informed the Committee that Maesteg Community Home which had been decommissioned had recently been sold and extensive refurbishment work was undertaken to modernise both Sunnybank and Newbridge House.

The Principal Officer Accommodation and Regulated Services also reported that the CSSIW following an unannounced inspection of Newbridge House had been very complementary of the service and inspectors had found that young people were cared for by a committed and competent staff team who demonstrated a great knowledge of the individual needs of the young people. Inspectors commended the staff team for managing one particularly difficult situation when a young person had threatened self harm. An end of project report and an evaluation of the new services had been completed and a formal launch of the new redesigned services was currently being planned.

Following a question from the Committee, the Head of Safeguarding and Family Support informed of the protocol which existed with the Police in the event of young persons being absent without authority from residential accommodation.

The Principal Officer Accommodation and Regulated Services informed the Committee of the being undertaken by staff and agencies to tackle substance misuse issues.

RESOLVED: (1) That the update on progress of the implementation of the Residential Redesign Project be noted and it be agreed to formally close the Residential Redesign Project.

(2) The Committee congratulated the officers on the successful implementation of the Residential Redesign Project.

18 INFORMAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - OCTOBER 2012 - JANUARY 2013

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support presented a report which sought approval of the proposed Informal Forward Work Programme (IFWP) covering the period from October 2012 - January 2013. He stated that the topics detailed had previously been accepted for inclusion in the Informal Forward Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That the Informal Forward Work Programme be approved and that a further report on the update on the inspection of the Looked After Children Project and a review of the BCBC Short Breaks Statement be reported to Committee in October 2013.

19 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation)(Wales) Order 2007, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item as it contained exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 13 and 18 of Paragraph 14 of Part 4 and Paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Act:-

Following the application of the public interest test it was resolved that pursuant to the Act referred to above, to consider the confidential minutes of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee of the 23 July 2012 in private with the public being excluded as it was considered that in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

Minute No.

Summary of Item:

20	Confidential minutes of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee of the 23 July 2012.
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