

# **BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE**

**20 JANUARY 2014**

### **REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – CHILDREN**

#### **DRAFT STRATEGY TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN BRIDGEND**

#### **1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Corporate Parenting Committee on the development of the Council's refreshed "Strategy to reduce the number of Looked After Children and Young People in Bridgend.

#### **2 Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities**

- 2.1 This report links to the following Community strategy priorities:

- Working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement.
- Working with children and families to tackle problems early.
- Working together to help vulnerable people to stay independent.
- Working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles.

#### **3 Background**

- 3.1 Members will be aware that throughout the last decade, there has been a significant increase in the overall number of Looked After Children in Bridgend. This has resulted in major pressures upon Safeguarding and Family Support Services and associated budgets. It also suggests that a significant number of children and young people in Bridgend are not experiencing childhoods conducive to wellbeing or achieving their full potential. Consequently, in order to direct a strategic response to the growing numbers of Looked After Children, the Council intends to publish a strategy to reduce the number of Looked After Children. This draft strategy can be found at Appendix 1.

#### **4 Current Situation/proposal**

- 4.1 Previously Committee has received comprehensive reports on statistical data and analysis of looked after children and young people in Bridgend, together with details of associated costs. Members were informed that the information contained within these reports would

inform a refreshed strategy for reducing the numbers of looked after children and young people in Bridgend. Members requested that the draft strategy be presented to Committee in order for Committee to comment and provide feedback.

Attached at Appendix 1, is the first draft of the Council's strategy to reduce looked after children, together with a proposed action plan to be further developed. This strategy recognises that to be effective in reducing numbers of looked after children will require a strategy that is continually reviewed, sound leadership, rigorous approaches to prevention and early intervention, targeted interventions to children and families with complex needs, (particularly where there are children on the edge of care), clearly defined approaches to social work practice, a strong collaborative working approach to working with children and families and a proactive use of relevant data, information and intelligence in respect of looked after children. All of these components are detailed in the draft strategy.

The attached draft strategy to reduce looked after children, has recently been presented to the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the People's Partnership Board. Members of both meetings welcomed the strategy but endorsed the importance of it being managed as a bespoke project. Consequently, the Corporate Director has submitted a bid for additional funding to resource a project manager to oversee the delivery of the strategy.

## **5 Effect upon Policy Frameworks and Procedure Rules**

- 5.1 This has been considered but as there are no new or changed services policy / functions in this report, it is therefore not applicable at this time.

## **6 Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 This has been considered but as the report is for information purposes, an assessment is not deemed necessary at this stage.

## **7 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 The increase in the number of children and young people becoming LAC has seen an inevitable correlation in an increase in associated council budgets. Appendix 2 provides financial information relevant to the aspects within this report.

## **8 Recommendations**

- 8.1 Corporate Parenting Committee is recommended to note and consider the content of this report and associated appendices.

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Background papers

Appendix One – Draft Strategy to reduce the number of Looked After Children and Young People in Bridgend

Appendix Two - Financial Information Relating to LAC Expenditure Within The Context of The Overall Safeguarding And Family Support Budget.