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Ask for / Gofynnwch am: Mr Mark Galvin

Our ref / Ein cyf:
Your ref / Eich cyf:

Date / Dyddiad: 23 December 2014

Dear Councillor,

CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

A meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting will be held in Committee Room 2/3, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend on **Monday, 5 January 2015 at 10.00 am.**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
To receive apologies for absence (to include reasons, where appropriate) from Members/Officers.
2. Declarations of Interest
To receive declarations of personal and prejudicial interest (if any) from Members/Officers in accordance with the provisions of the Members' Code of Conduct adopted by Council from 1 September 2008
3. Approval of Minutes 3 - 10
To receive for approval the minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting dated 6 October 2014
4. Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 11 - 18
5. Outcome of CSSIW'S Inspection of BCBC's Safeguarding and Care Planning of LAC and Care Leavers who exhibit vulnerable/risky behaviour 19 - 58
6. Looked After Children (LAC) Annual Awards to celebrate the achievements of LAC 59 - 62
7. Review of an Adoption Allowance Policy 63 - 74
8. Informal Forward Work Programme - January 2015 - August 2015 75 - 78

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Yours faithfully

P A Jolley

Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Regulatory Services

Distribution:

Councillors:

HJ David
M Gregory
LC Morgan

Councillors

MEJ Nott OBE
D Sage
CE Smith

Councillors

PJ White

Invitees

E Dodd
R D Jenkins

J E Lewis
H J Townsend

D B F White

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, ON
MONDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2014 AT 10.00AM

Present:

Councillor H J David - Chairperson
(and Cabinet Member - Children and Young People)

Councillor M E J Nott OBE - Leader
Councillor D Sage - Deputy Leader
Councillor P J White - Cabinet Member - Communities
Councillor M Gregory - Cabinet Member - Resources

Invitees:

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

Officers:

S Pryce - Head of Regeneration and Development
C Turner - Head of Safeguarding and Family Support
N Echanis - Head of Strategy, Partnerships and Commissioning
E Roberts - Vice Chairperson ABMU
D Roberts- Walters - Community Leader Children's Services (ABMU)
T Spriggs - Head of Nursing and Community Services (ABMU)
M A Galvin - Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

76 INTRODUCTIONS

In view of there being in attendance at the meeting representatives of the ABMU, the Chairperson asked all those present to introduce themselves. He welcomed colleagues from the ABMU to the meeting.

77 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members/Officers

Councillor L C Morgan - Unwell
M Shephard - Other Council Business
D McMillan - Other Council Business

78 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

79 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee dated 7 July 2014, be approved as a true and accurate record.

79 EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION STRATEGY

The Head of Strategy, Partnerships and Commissioning submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to update the Cabinet Committee on the progress made to develop a Strategy to define the activity around early intervention and prevention services in Bridgend, now known as 'Early help in Bridgend'.

She advised by way of background information, that historically investment in prevention and early intervention initiatives in Bridgend had been somewhat un-co-ordinated. In light of this in recent years there had been some significant investment and commitment to prevention and early intervention within Bridgend, i.e. Connecting Families, the Intensive Family Support Service, Rapid Response Team, and Families First. The local authority had also increased its focus on developing integrated approaches to supporting families and supporting social workers and other practitioners. It was acknowledged that there needed to be a Strategy in place to ensure that the range of prevention and early intervention initiatives in place are joined-up, coherent and have a common purpose, and that children's needs do not escalate. The Council therefore intended to publish its "Early help in Bridgend Strategy". This Strategy defined the Council's whole systems approach to preventing the needs of children and their families becoming more acute.

Attached at Appendix 1 to the report, was the Council's "Early help in Bridgend Strategy". This recognised that in order to be effective in developing services that co-ordinate effectively and provide a wraparound service for children and families, a strategy was required that is continually reviewed, has sound leadership and rigorous approaches to prevention and early intervention. The strategy described 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 children and families at all levels of need.

Key elements of this Strategy were that Children's Services are driving a 'whole system' approach to supporting children and keeping families together. Together with the Placements and Permanency Strategy, these would form a multi-agency response to driving improved outcomes for children she explained.

The Strategy contained an action plan for the future rather than an attempt to cover every detail of current services and support.

The Head of Strategy Partnerships and Commissioning then referred to the attached Appendix 1, and elaborated upon the key components of this for the benefit of Members.

There were some financial savings identified in the MTFs, which would be achieved by streamlining the management of the current education support service portfolio.

The Deputy Leader welcomed the report, but added that whilst re-locating staff to the three Hubs within certain geographical areas of the County Borough, care should be taken to ensure that there are no gaps created in terms of existing services currently being provided by more holistic methods. He looked forward to receiving further information on the Strategy and its outcomes via the Action Plan.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support confirmed that five Safeguarding Teams covered all areas of the County Borough all of which were formerly based in Sunnyside Officers. These would now in the future be covering bespoke localities.

The Team covering the west had now moved to Pyle Life Centre, whilst Y Dderwen College, Ynysawdre accommodated the north Safeguarding Team. There would then be further teams covering the areas of Ogmere and Maesteg. The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support added currently colleagues for the Health Service were based in the west of the County Borough, which assisted in joint working arrangements. This arrangement regarded co-location of staff from the ABMU and Children's Directorate which would look to be extended to other areas of the County Borough. Finally, the Civic Offices would accommodate the teams for Bridgend and Pencoed, to include a further supporting HUB.

The Head of Strategy, Partnerships and Commissioning added that the next stage in proceedings, was to re-locate other support staff to these Hubs over and above safeguarding staff in order to achieve a broader base of support to clients.

She further added that options were presently being explored, to develop a MASH model of service delivery.

The purpose of this was to 'better manage the front door', i.e. where clients first seek to obtain services and to refer them at the outset to the appropriate agency for guidance and/or support, even though the intention of the Strategy was to provide an overall multi-agency service, with the help of partners including the Local Service Board. This approach had proved a success with regard to the Connecting Families initiative.

A Member pointed out that the likes of schools, including pastors, head teachers and governors, could give support to the joint working arrangements being proposed above, and outlined in more detail in the report, and Officers agreed to this suggestion.

In terms of the provision of Hubs discussed earlier in the meeting, the Head of Strategy, Partnerships and Commissioning confirmed that extra resources would be committed to the areas where there were most cases of people seeking avenues of support.

The Chairperson closed the debate on this item, by stating that the Strategy needed to involve the likes of partners, such as the Health Service and Flying Start and other key associated agencies, as this was critical for it to progress and ultimately succeed. He added that it was also important for the Cabinet Committee to receive progress reports on the Strategy, as appropriate.

The Head of Strategy, Partnerships and Commissioning advised that the Strategy would be re-launched in the new financial year, and that a progress report could be submitted before the Committee in the new year.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee both noted and considered the content of the report and associated Appendices.

80 **HEALTH PROVISION FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (ABMU)**

The Corporate Director - Children submitted a report, which confirmed that at a previous Committee Members requested that ABMU provide Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee with information in relation to the role of ABMU's Looked After Children's Health Team and the impact this is having on promoting the health outcomes of all Looked After Children and Young People in Bridgend.

The Head of Nursing and Community Services, Bridgend Locality ABMU, by way of background information, confirmed that the Looked After Children's Health team worked alongside partner agencies to improve the health and social outcomes of all Looked After Children (LAC). The attached report found at Appendix 1, described the health services provided by ABMU to LAC, and gave a number of case examples that demonstrated the positive impact of health staff working in close partnership with social care to promote the health needs and good outcomes for LAC.

The Community Leader Children's Services ABMU confirmed that the attached report advised that LAC are more likely to have experienced inequalities in health compared to their non LAC peers and this will often present problems with delayed development, poor health, poor nutrition, poor hygiene and complex emotional difficulties.

The report at Appendix 1 described the work of the LAC Health Team who treat the health needs of LAC as a top priority. The report also described the services that ABMU provide for LAC, and detailed how health staff work alongside foster carers and other care staff to improve the health needs of LAC and to ensure that the health needs of LAC are always considered as paramount.

The Vice-Chairperson of the ABMU explained that it had been well documented that LAC and young people are amongst the most socially excluded groups in society. They are known to be vulnerable and have greater health needs than their peers. Their health and wellbeing is often impaired by abuse and neglect at home which all too often results in them having a high level of physical, social and emotional needs.

Since 2010, the LAC population in Bridgend had risen from 289 to 412 this represented an increase of 30%. This has resulted in major pressures upon the service and associated budgets. It also suggested that a significant number of young people in Bridgend are not experiencing childhoods conducive to wellbeing or achieving their full potential.

The Community Leader Children's Services ABMU, continued by stating that some authorities across the UK seem to have been more successful in managing these pressures, despite similarly challenging socio-economic circumstances. Since April 2001, and over the subsequent 12 years, the population of looked after children in Bridgend has increased by over 140% to 2013.

She continued by advising that between 2007-08 and 2011-12, the overall population of LAC in Wales had increased by 24%. Over the same period, Bridgend's LAC population had increased by 40%. At present, children under the age of 2 made up 30% of the total number of LAC in Bridgend. Since 2009, the number of children under 2 becoming LAC had increased year on year. There had also been a rise in the number of babies born to teenage mothers becoming LAC and children under 2, and young people aged 14 to 16 formed the main proportion of children becoming LAC, accounting for almost 50% between 2008 and 2013 (Table 1) on page 33 of Appendix 1 referred.

If the current trend continued, it was forecast that the LAC population of Bridgend will increase by 14% over the next 7 years and will rise from 387 in March 2013 to 440 by March 2020. Between 2014 and 2020, in order to maintain the LAC population at current levels an extra 14% of children would need to leave care each year. In order to reduce the LAC population to below current levels, over the next seven years, significant and greater impetus will need to be directed to children aged under 2 and young people aged between 14 and 16.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that as of last week the number of LAC in Bridgend had reduced to 404 from 413.

The Community Leader Children's Services ABMU, proceeded by stating that the main reason for a child or young person to become looked after was abuse and neglect.

To improve health outcomes for LAC and young people, their health needs should be holistically assessed when they become looked after she added, and any needs highlighted and addressed as a matter of urgency. In essence, the LAC nurse takes responsibility for the health needs; makes the relevant referrals e.g. dental health; GP and CAMHS, and liaise with appropriate multi-agency partners. This was achieved by close working between the professional and the foster parent/placement lead.

She continued by advising that the Welsh Assembly Government guidance refers to the role of the Clinical Nurse Specialist for LAC (CNS for LAC) as a key professional in managing the extensive notification process when children move placements within and outside the local authority boundaries.

The CNS for LAC had responsibility for the completion of the initial health assessments for all looked after children and co-ordinating the completion of review assessments, with onward referral to medical practitioners as needed. She explained that the use of the BAAF (British Adoption And Fostering) multi-agency forms are considered gold standard evidence based documentation which enable professionals to undertake holistic assessments. This form was used across the ABMUHB footprint and was generated by Health and contributed to by BCBC Social Services colleagues.

Page 35 of Appendix 1 then gave details of the current staffing compliment in the current ABMU HB Bridgend LAC Health Team, that were multi-skilled in the required fields.

The Community Leader Children's Services ABMU, added that the LAC's health team worked in partnership with the designated community paediatrician offering a nurse led coordinated health service for LAC and young people. The team worked collaboratively with other agencies and professionals, to improve the health of the LAC population and seek out health services that address health and wellbeing and promote high quality care, including working alongside foster carers and supporting them to improve the health needs of LAC and young people, which was paramount to achieving positive outcomes for the LAC population.

Page 36 of Appendix 1 then explained the methods by which this was achieved.

The Community Leader Children's Services ABMU advised that the challenge of measuring outcomes were currently restricted to the number of health assessments that are conducted, and in updating information about doctor and dentist registration within agreed timescales. Specific means to measured outcomes were currently being developed and would included outcomes in relation to the health of looked after children and young people. These assessments were supported by six monthly follow-ups. Page 37 overleaf at Appendix 1 then outlined case studies that provided a flavour of some of the health issues the team were faced with and the outcomes achieved.

In order to meet the current challenges, Officers explained that the Bridgend Locality Team have reviewed the LAC Health team provision required to sustain the increasing numbers being referred to the service and highlighted that more staff were needed to fulfil obligations under the "Towards a stable Life and Brighter Future" (WAG, 2007) guidance. The recruitment of more specialist staff had therefore brought Bridgend in line other LAC services.

Since January 2014 the team had been instrumental in making changes to the way in which the LAC process were managed in a bid to use resources as efficiently as possible as were evidenced in part of Appendix 1.

In terms of the vision for next year, the Community Leader Children's Services ABMU, confirmed that this was to provide a first class nurse led service for LAC and young people. This would include a more comprehensive service to children and young people, that will be achieved by utilising resources in a more effective way along the lines suggested in pages 38/39 of the Appendix.

To conclude the report the Community Leader Children's Services ABMU, then outlined the ongoing challenges, which were as follows:-

- Increasing numbers of LAC children with limited increase in resources and increasing expectations and demands on existing staff;
- Increasing numbers of placement changes, particularly those placed out of the Bridgend area;
- Risk of placement breakdown;
- Inequity of service throughout Wales and the UK; and
- Meeting mental health and emotional needs of LAC children and young people

The Leader welcomed the report, which he considered to be both comprehensive and informative. He particularly referred to page 38 of the report and the visions for the next 12 months. To that end, he looked forward to receiving quarterly updates on the continued promotion of health outcomes for LAC and young People in Bridgend via the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee.

He noted from the second paragraph on page 33 of the report, that even though other local authorities had seen in recent years a significant increase in numbers of LAC, this increase over the last 12/13 years in Bridgend had gone up by over 140%. He asked what evidence there was if any, to suggest why some authorities were not having such an increase, and/or if so, why were they managing to issues associated with such an increase possibly more effectively than Bridgend County Borough Council.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that the above findings, associated statistics and other data shown in the report, had been derived from commissioned research carried out about 18 months involving 22 local authorities including Bridgend. One of the main findings that came out of this, was that authorities that had in place a Permanency and Placement Strategy were more successful in managing the pressures associated with LAC. Bridgend had since introduced its own such Strategy in an effort to improve the present situation within the County Borough.

A Member referred to page 38/39 of the report and once more to the visions for the next year, one of which was setting-up a robust system to collate and measure outcomes for LAC and young people. He asked if this would be achieved through increased collaboration with key stakeholders.

The Head of Nursing and Community Services (ABMU) stated that this would be the case so as to find meaningful outcomes, and the best needs of the child, on a case by case basis, and looking at methods put in place in certain neighbouring authorities who were dealing with the pressures of LAC more effectively, such as the neighbouring authorities of Cardiff City Council and the Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support, advised that Bridgend were making some progress, by learning how better to understand the profile of LAC; analysing reasons why they become looked after in the first instance, as well as also looking at key matters such as robust intervention and prevention processes and effective permanency plans and exit pathways, at such a time when they ceased to be looked after. The continued monitoring of individual care plans was also important, he added. This obviously applied to both young people coming into the Bridgend County Borough under care arrangement, and to those who were placed out of County.

The Vice-Chairperson ABMU, in response to a question, advised that it was very important to ensure that young people entering or leaving care were educated regarding sexual health, including taking proper precautions to avoid unwanted pregnancies, as trends showed that the children of these young people often ended up then in care themselves.

He added that equally important was early recognition of young people with mental health problems, and learning lessons from previous cases of serious issues such as self-harming, homicides and suicides. Unfortunate cases such as the white van incident in Cardiff had been analysed to see what mistakes had been made, that then resulted in the tragedy that arose from these.

A Member noted from the report, the importance of ensuring that each child has a health assessment within agreed timescales. She asked if this was a statutory process, and if so, how soon was the initial assessment done, and was this assessment then followed up, and if so, in what sort of time period after the initial assessment had been undertaken.

The Community Leader Children's Services (ABMU), advised that an initial assessment was carried out by a Health Advisor within two days of the child coming into the system, followed up by a six monthly assessment, then a further assessment 12 months after that. Further meetings would take place with the child though, over and above this, even as much as daily if and when these were considered to be required.

The Chairperson concluded debate on this item, by thanking the representatives from the ABMU for attending the meeting, and giving an input into the report, as well as to responding to questions raised by Members.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee noted the contents of the report and the feedback and observations given to lead Officers' within both the Children's Directorate and ABMU in relation to the same

81 INFORMAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - OCTOBER 2014 - JANUARY 2015

The Corporate Director - Children submitted a report that sought approval for the proposed Informal Forward Work Programme (IFWP) for the above period, Appendix 1 to the report referred.

The Chairperson on behalf of Committee advised that Items 2 and 3 on the IFWP, having not been considered by today's Committee as had been proposed, should roll over to a future meeting.

Also to be added to the IFWP for consideration at a future meeting(s) he suggested, should be updates on the two items discussed earlier on the agenda, as follows:-

- (i) Update on Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy;
- (ii) Update on Health Provision for Looked After Children (ABMU)

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee agreed to approve the Informal Forward Work Programme appended to the Officer's report, subject to the following further items being deferred/added to the agenda for future meetings:

- 1) Inspection of Safeguarding and Care Planning of Looked After Children and Care Leavers, who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviours;
- 2) LAC Awards;
- 3) Update on Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy; and
- 4) Update on Health Provision for Looked After Children (ABMU)

The meeting closed at 12.06pm

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

5 JANUARY 2015

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, WELLBEING

SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING (WALES) ACT 2014

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- To provide Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee with a brief overview of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. During the Cabinet Meeting, Members will receive a presentation to accompany this report.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priorities

2.1 The report links to the following improvement priorities in the corporate plan "*Working Together to improve Lives*".

- Working together to help vulnerable people to stay independent.
- Working with children and families to tackle problems early.
- Working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles.
- Working together to make the best use of our resources.

3. Background

Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

3.1 The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, received Royal Assent on the 1st May 2014; the Bill for this Act was introduced by Welsh Government in January 2013. There is ongoing consultation period in relation to codes and regulations that will be put in place to implement the provisions in the act. The consultation period is due to end on 2 February 2015. The Government intends to implement the act in April 2016.

3.2 The purpose of the Act is to specify the core legislative framework for social services and social care in Wales. In doing so will give effect to the policy stated in the White Paper *Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action*. It is intended that the Act will help local authorities and other partners address the challenges of changing societal expectations, demographic change and a difficult resource environment. The Act introduces a common set of processes for people; it also strengthens collaboration and the integration of services, and provides for an increased focus on prevention and early intervention.

- 3.3 The primary policy objectives in relation to the Act are to improve the well-being outcomes for people who need care and support and carers who need support.
- 3.4 The implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act will:
- Strengthen powers for the safeguarding of children and adults, so that vulnerable people at risk can be protected more effectively;
 - Ensure people are assessed on what they need, rather than just on what services are available locally;
 - Ensure that co-production is at the heart of public service thinking; design and delivery, as well as a duty to promote social enterprise and user led co-operatives;
 - Introduce portable assessments, which means if people move from one part of Wales to another they will not need to worry about whether they will receive services in their new area;
 - Facilitate an increased take up of direct payments to meet people's care and support needs; meaning that people will have more control over how these needs are met;
 - Introduce a National Outcomes Framework to set out very clearly what children and adults can expect from social services, to measure achievements and see where improvements are needed;
 - Introduce equivalent rights for carers so that people who care for someone such as an older or disabled relative or friend would get similar rights to the people they care for;
 - Establish a National Adoption Service to improve the outcomes of children in need of a permanent family.
- 3.5 The Act provides a coherent legal framework for adult safeguarding; protecting adults from abuse and neglect. This has been a priority for local authority and partner organisations for many years; however there has never been a legal framework for adults at risk. The Act aims to provide clarity with regard to this issue and will provide local authorities with further duties to ensure enquiries and investigations can be undertaken when it suspect an adult is at risk. Duties are also placed on Local Authority Partners to co-operate and provide information in relation to safeguarding. In addition there are provisions within the Act to enable local authorities to make enquiries about people who they may reasonably suspect are at risk of abuse and neglect and for the first time enables local authorities to apply to the court for an "adult protection and support order". This will confer a power of entry for the first time to practitioners, to facilitate speaking to adults who are suspected to be at risk. Furthermore, the Act establishes a national independent safeguarding board as well as the establishment of regional safeguarding board for children and adults.
- 3.6 The Act also clarifies the requirement on Welsh Ministers to specify the competencies which a person must be able to demonstrate before a local authority can appoint them as a Director of Social Services. The Director of Social Services will be responsible for the exercise of the local authority social services functions, which will include the new functions under the Act.

- 3.7 The Welsh Government originally planned to include reforms to the inspection and regulation of social services in the Act but subsequently decided to make these the subject of a separate White Paper “*The Future of Regulation and Inspection of Care and Support in Wales*”, and a Bill is being drafted and will be introduced into the National Assembly for Wales in early 2015.
- 3.8 Consultation on subordinate legislation associated with the implementation of the Act (*including regulations, priority codes and guidance*) is currently taking place during 2014-15 with a view to the greater part of the Act being implemented by April 2016.
- 3.9 Through the new Act the Welsh Government’s stated aim is to transform health and social care outcomes for citizens of Wales by ensuring that people themselves are at the centre of decisions about their health, care and well-being, so that they remain in control and are able at all times to maintain their well-being. This means building on the strengths people have, and their networks and community contacts, in order to promote independence.
- 3.10 The national vision requires local authorities to make significant changes in how they both respond to people and in the services that they commission. There is a requirement to work with people to promote their independence by giving them a stronger voice and control, with an emphasis on improving people’s wellbeing.
- 3.11 At a local level, it will be necessary to develop a common understanding and application of the assessment of need, and well-being and develop a shared ability to identify and assess the impact of those factors which promote individuals independence and well-being.
- 3.12 The act places a duty of local authorities to enhance the well-being of people in their local area.
- 3.12 The definition in the guidance adheres to the World Health Organisation’s definition of well-being:
- “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”**
- It also includes people’s ability to lead a socially and economically productive life. There is also a requirement to evidence working with people, to deliver the outcomes they want; this is seen as key to promoting well-being and reducing inappropriate admissions to care.
- 3.13 An integrated system of access to high quality information and universal community support, proportionate early intervention and enablement are viewed as some of the ways of achieving this, as well as managed support for more vulnerable citizens. The national guidance sets out its aims and requirements for Health and Social Services.
- 3.14 In June 2014, the Deputy Minister for Social Services announced that she has agreed a working document that details the progress of the National

Outcomes Framework for all people who need care and support and carers who need support.

“The national outcomes framework for people who need and support and carers who need support will provide greater transparency on whether social care services are improving well-being outcomes, using consistent and comparable outcome indicators.”

Gwenda Robert Deputy Minister for Social Services keynote speech to the annual National Social Services Conference in Llandudno 20.06.14.

- 3.15 The date of publication of the outcomes framework is to be agreed at a later time; however, it is anticipated that the new National Outcome Framework, against which the implementation of the Act will need to be measured, will focus on moving from targets to outcomes for individuals, as well as for organisations. In addition a new National Eligibility Criteria for social care will be published and will replace the current criteria based on definitions of low, moderate, significant and critical levels. The new model will base decisions on a discussion about “what matters” - what the person wants to be able to do in life and whether they will require managed care and support for this to be achieved.

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 gives effect to the policy stated in the **White Paper “Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action”**. It provides a legal framework for the policy aims of the Welsh Government in relation to social services, bring together local authorities’ duties and functions.

- 4.2 The 2014 Act has two key policy objectives:
- To improve the well-being outcomes for people who need care and support and
 - To reform social services law.

It seeks to:

- Transform the way that social services are delivered, primarily through promoting people’s independence and giving them a stronger voice and control;
 - Promote partnership working in social care;
 - Enhance the preventative role of social care and health setting out overarching well-being duties to reduce or delay the need for care and support.
- 4.3 This can be seen as part of the wider well-being agenda, in particular the opportunity to explore and support people to achieve individual well-being, either prior to, or instead of, becoming eligible for social care services. Local authorities are charged with providing or arranging preventative services, developing new models of practical responses, based on social enterprise co-operative models as well as user led and with the third sector.

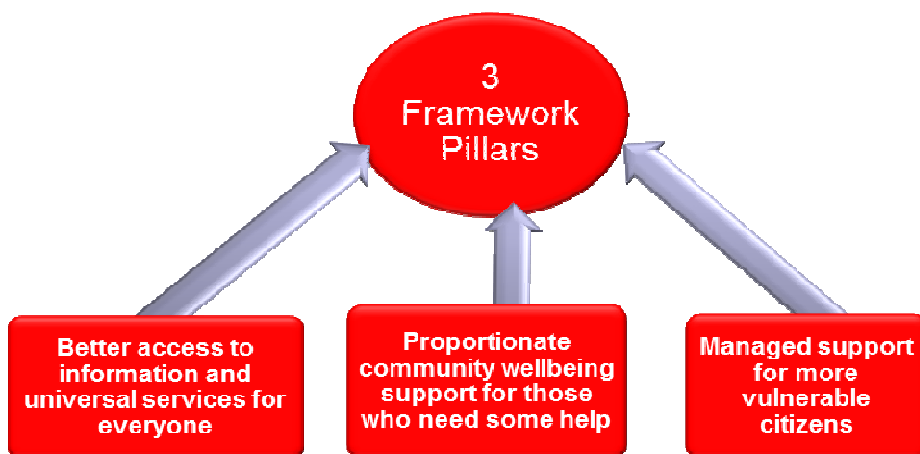
4.4 The Act also strengthens local authorities' duties so that:

- When assessing an individual, the local authority must consider not only the individual's needs and the outcome/s the person wishes to achieve but also the strengths and capacity of the individual, their family and others who may support them;
- Irrespective of whether the individual has an eligible need, they will have access to information, advice and (where necessary) assistance as well as a range of preventative options and other opportunities in the community;
- Better access to good information, advice and assistance to engage the citizen, with links to the resources available in the community to enable people to exercise their voice, choice and control and make informed decisions;
- A wide spectrum of proportionate community-based support which citizens who have needs can access without having to rely on a complex assessment and care package;
- More targeted help to assess individuals and families with significant and enduring needs, and to organise and secure the care and support they require.

New Assessment Framework

4.5 The Act will introduce a new national framework; this will be in three framework pillars, details of which are shown below:

The three pillars of the new assessment framework:



4.6 The assessment of needs informs the eligibility for services within a new national eligibility framework which will be set out in secondary legislation to be made under the Act.

4.7 Proposals from the report prepared by the Welsh Government's Eligibility Technical Group suggest that the criteria will be that an individual would become eligible for social care and support when an assessment establishes that *"they can, and can only, overcome barriers to achieving their well-being outcomes by the local authority preparing a care and support plan and ensuring it is delivered"*.

- 4.8 The proposed access criteria if adopted, is a step change from the current unified assessment access criteria, and would suggest that the local authority would potentially only provide care and support to people with substantial and critical needs in the future; and that this would also depend on an individual's capacity to overcome barriers, risks, and use of their own resources to manage their needs.
- 4.9 Specifically for children, the Act places a duty on local authorities to assess the needs of a child for care and support. This is particularly required in cases when it appears that a child may need care and support in addition to, or instead of, the care and support that is being provided by the child's family.

In these situations, the local authority must assess –

- Whether the child needs care and support in addition to, or instead of, the care and support that is being provided by his/her family,

and

- If so, what those needs are and how they will be met

- 4.10 In carrying out a 'needs assessment' the local authority will have to assess the following:

- a) The developmental needs of the child;
- b) What the child wishes to achieve;
- c) The extent to which those wishes are appropriate having regard to the child's age, understanding and balancing this against the needs of the child;
- d) What those who share parental responsibility wish achieve for the child;
- e) The extent to which those wishes are appropriate having regard to their understanding and balancing this against the welfare needs of the child.

The local authority will have a duty to assess whether and to what extent the provision of care and support, preventative services or information and advice, assistance could contribute to the achievement of those outcomes to meet the identifies in the assessment.

- 4.11 The Act states that if the local authority is satisfied that a child has needs for care and support, the authority must then determine whether any of the needs meet an eligibility criteria. If the needs do not meet the eligibility criteria, the local authority has to determine whether it is nevertheless necessary to meet the needs in order to protect the child from abuse or neglect. The act states that: "the local authority must meet a child's needs for care and support if it is satisfied that it is necessary to meet the needs in order to protect the child from abuse or neglect or other harm or risk of such harm".

- 4.12 The Act also places a duty on the local authority to meet the needs of a carer who is a child. It also may require the local authority to make direct payments towards the costs of meeting a child's needs for care and support. (Direct payments)
- 4.13 Part 6 of the Act deals with a local authority's duty in relation to Looked After Children (LAC) and details the range of accommodation that must be made available to LAC, ideally within the local area. It specifies the situations when the local authority must provide accommodation and sets out the arrangements for reviewing care and support plans.
- 4.14 Part 7 of the Act deals with matter concerning the safeguarding of both adults and children and details new duties for relevant partners (i.e. LA's, Police, providers of Probation services, Local Health Boards, NHS Trusts and YOS) to report children that are considered to be at risk. It specifies that there should be clear points of contact between the relevant partners within each Safeguarding Boarding.

In relation to adults – a duty is introduced where a relevant partner must report to a Local Authority if it has reasonable cause to suspect that an adult is at risk and mirrors the proposals in relation to those set out for children. There will be the introduction of Adult Protection and Support Orders to enable professionals to be able to gain access to premises to make an assessment and determine whether an adult, alleged to be at risk, is making decisions freely and whether any action is required.

There will be new structures for Safeguarding Boards which will be provided with regulations and guidance. It also specifies that there will be a new 'National Independent Safeguarding Board' to oversee the effectiveness of Regional Safeguarding Boards, give advice and support the Boards to secure improvement and increase consistency in Wales.

- 4.15 Chapter 3 of the Act specifies that regulations may be required to ensure that local authorities arrange for advocacy services are made available to people with needs for care and support and is specific about which people will be entitled to advocacy.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There is no impact on the Policy Framework and Procedure rules, at this time.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be developed as part of this programme of change and will assess the relevance of this work to the authority'
- 6.2 There are actions that have already been identified as follows:
- Development of a communication strategy in order that partner organisations and citizens understand and have shared understanding and expectations of community health and social care services.

- Consideration to be given to the equal treatment of English and Welsh languages for service users and staff;
- The establishment of Stakeholder Advisory Groups to support the implementation of new ways of working;
- A concerted effort to change the culture and raise the awareness of staff to the expectations of the Act and new assessment framework and the proposed changes to service delivery and methods of working;
- The production of high quality advice and information.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There may be financial implications arising from delivering on the local authority's duties and responsibilities associated with the implementation of the Act, however, until further guidance is received, this is difficult to cost. There may also be financial implications for other directorates providing key services such as education, housing, community safety and leisure. Work has commenced on mapping Local Area Co-ordination and preventative (Tier 0) services and a further analysis of the service and financial implications for the local authority of the implementation of the Act will need to be undertaken.

8. Recommendations

8.1 That Cabinet note the content of this report and will consider further updates throughout 2015-16.

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Corporate Director – Wellbeing

Contact Officer

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Background Documents

Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2013.

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

5 JANUARY 2015

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – CHILDREN

OUTCOME OF CSSIW'S INSPECTION OF BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S SAFEGUARDING AND CARE PLANNING OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS, WHO EXHIBIT VULNERABLE OR RISKY BEHAVIOURS.

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee of the outcome of a recent Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) inspection into Bridgend's Safeguarding and Care Planning arrangements for Looked After Children and Care Leavers who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviours.

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 During the week beginning 10th of January 2014, CSSIW carried out a comprehensive inspection of the Safeguarding and Care Planning arrangements in Bridgend for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviours. The inspection was carried out as part of CSSIW's national thematic inspection programme. Between January and May 2014, all 22 local authorities in Wales were subjected to the same inspection. Findings of individual local authority inspections will form a CSSIW national overview report to be published later this year, at which point it will be brought to the attention of Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee.

- 3.2 The aim of the inspection in Bridgend was to assess the quality of care planning and to ascertain whether it effectively:

- Supports and protects looked after children and care leavers;
- identifies and manages the vulnerabilities and risky behaviours of looked after children and care leavers;
- promotes rights based practice and voice of the child;
- promotes improved outcomes for looked after children and care leavers;
- promotes compliance with policy and guidance.

- 3.3 The inspection focussed primarily on work undertaken with looked after children over eleven years of age and care leavers who were identified as being vulnerable and/or involved in risky behaviours, against defined criteria. As well as inspecting cases in respect of the assessment, care planning and review systems, the inspection also considered the extent to which the corporate parenting, management and partnership arrangements acted to promote improved outcome for children and care leavers. It also considered how organisational structures including, workforce, resources, advocacy and quality assurance mechanisms impacted on the quality of care planning. The inspection considered the above areas against five questions as follows:-

Question 1

Did the authority effectively discharge its corporate parenting roles and responsibilities promoting the stability, welfare and safety of looked after children and care leavers?

Question 2

Were care and pathway plans informed by relevant assessments, including explicit risk assessments, which supported a comprehensive response to the needs and experiences of children and young people?

Question 3

Were operational systems and procedures in place that ensured responsive co-ordinated action was taken to mitigate risk and achieve safe continuity of care?

Question 4

Did Independent Reviews and quality assurance arrangements promote safe care and best outcomes for young people?

Question 5

Did care and pathway planning effectively capture and promote the rights and voice of the child?

4 Current situation

- 4.1 On the 28th August, the Statutory Director for Social Service in Bridgend received CSSIW's report which is attached to this report at Appendix 1. The report details a significant number of positives which are balanced with a similar number of areas for improvements. To address the areas noted for improvement, a post inspection action plan has been developed. (This can be found at Appendix 2) Members will note that most of the areas noted for improvement, as detailed in the action plan are green and plans are in place to address any outstanding areas for improvement. The action plan will be monitored by the senior management team with regular progress reports being presented to the Head of Service and the CSSIW.
- 4.2 The report acknowledged that Children's Services were recognised as a corporate priority with corporate parenting arrangements well embedded through its Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee which has a strong focus on the wellbeing and progress of looked after children. However the report also states that Members needed to assure themselves that strategic aims are being effectively owned and translated into action across the local authority and partner agencies.

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 Implementation of the action plan will be met from within existing resources.

8 Recommendations

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

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Arolygiaeth Gofal a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol Cymru
Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

National Inspection Safeguarding and Care Planning of looked after children and care leavers, who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviours

Inspection of Bridgend County Borough Council

1.0. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of inspection findings in respect of:
Safeguarding and care planning of looked after children and care leavers who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviour, within Bridgend County Borough Council.
- 1.2. The inspection was carried out as part of Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) national thematic inspection programme. The methodology for the review included three and a half days fieldwork in each local authority across Wales, between January and May 2014.
- 1.3. The aim of the national inspection was to assess the quality of care planning across Wales and whether it effectively:
 - Supports and protects looked after children and care leavers;
 - Identifies and manages the vulnerabilities and risky behaviour of looked after children and care leavers;
 - Promotes rights based practice and the voice of the child;
 - Promotes improved outcomes for looked after children and care leavers;
 - Promotes compliance with policy and guidance
- 1.4. Findings from the individual local authority inspections will inform a CSSIW national overview report to be published later this year.

2. THE INSPECTION

- 2.1 The inspection focused on the work undertaken with looked after children over eleven years of age and care leavers who were identified as being vulnerable and/or involved in risky behaviours, against defined criteria.
- 2.2 It is important to recognise that given this focus the case sample reviewed in each local authority encompassed some of the most challenging and complex case management issues and represented only a small cohort of each authority's wider looked after children and care leaving population.
- 2.3 As well as inspecting cases in respect of the assessment, care planning and review systems the inspection also considered the extent to which the corporate parenting, management and partnership arrangements acted to promote improved outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. Also how organisational structures including, workforce, resources, advocacy and quality assurance mechanisms impacted on the quality of care planning.

The inspection considered these areas against the following five questions.

A summary of our findings is presented below

QUESTION 1

Did the authority effectively discharge its corporate parenting roles and responsibilities promoting the stability, welfare and safety of looked after children and care leavers?

POSITIVES

- Children's services were recognised as a corporate priority. The authority had articulated its commitment to looked after children and care leavers in a corporate parenting policy statement and there was a strong emphasis on collaborative working. The corporate parenting arrangements were well embedded through a Corporate Parenting cabinet committee, attended by all cabinet members with good cross directorate senior officer representation. The committee had a strong focus on the well being and progress of looked after children.
- Officers and members, including the children and young people 's overview and scrutiny committee, had undertaken considerable work to interrogate the on-going rise in the looked after children population. The authority was investing in both early intervention strategies and mechanisms to reduce the need for children to become looked after and secure permanency for those children already looked after. Members and officers were cognisant of the complexity of the agendas and of the need to promote good outcomes for looked after children whilst managing the recognised resource pressures.
- The authority's performance information systems were well developed providing officers, members and partners with an overview of the looked after children and care leaving population. Systems also monitored compliance against issues such as young people not in education and employment (NEET). Senior officers were well informed about individual looked after children's vulnerability. Mechanisms such as the placement panel and out of authority panel supported officers and partner oversight of placement demand.
- Although the authority had undergone a number of changes at corporate director level the overall structural arrangement locating children's social services and education within a directorate for Children's Services were well established. The interface between the children's directorate and that of the Wellbeing directorate had been strengthened through the development of a strategic Improvement board.
- Work had been undertaken across social services, education and with schools to ensure a greater shared focus on looked after children. There were good working relationships between the Just Ask Plus team and that of the youth service. Some schools were recognised as less receptive to the admission of

looked after children and the authority had developed support initiatives such as the 'buddy systems' between schools.

- The Safeguarding Children Board (SCB) had moved to a regional footprint of the Western Bay Safeguarding Children Board (WBSCB). Although still relatively new the board had undertaken work to develop shared information and quality assurance systems. The board was live to the need for effective oversight of safeguarding practice in relation to looked after children and had recently completed a review of its arrangements for managing 'risky behaviors'.
- Children's services workforce was recognised as a priority, which was being taken forward through a subgroup of the Strategic Improvement Board. The authority reported that all but a small number of looked after children were allocated to a social workers Front line teams remained highly dependent on newly qualified or relatively inexperienced social work staff. The authority had recently restructured to increase the number of fieldwork teams to improve workflow and reduce caseloads.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Elected members had recognised the significance of both their safeguarding and corporate parenting role and the need to provide greater challenge to ensure that they are achieving best outcomes for looked after children and care leavers, including the most vulnerable and challenging. Members needed to assure themselves that strategic aims are being effectively owned and translated into action across the local authority and partner agencies
- The authority's systems did not routinely capture a profile of the looked after children and care-leaving populations assessed needs or detailed thematic information regarding vulnerability and risk. This information is essential if the authority is to evaluate the effectiveness of its placement and permanency strategies and predict future resource needs. The reports reviewed in relation to looked after children often relied on extensive use of data and lacked a clear analysis in respect of the issues identified, action needed and how progress would be evaluated.
- Children's services had developed multi agency panel arrangements, including an out of authority panel, to co-ordinate access to placements and promote effective permanency and care planning. These arrangements were viewed as a useful approach but staff expressed frustration that these mechanisms had different information requirements.
- Despite their multi agency nature, the panels had little ability to accelerate access to services In some case the oversight of the panel was viewed as delaying decision making while not ensuring effective contingency planning that, for example, prevented the need for emergency placement or ensured timely transition planning for young people leaving out of authority placements.

The panel arrangements would benefit from being refreshed to ensure timely oversight of issues and escalation of cases. The information presented to the panels could contribute to a more detailed profile of presenting need

- Children's social services were working with both the Well Being directorate and Housing Directorate to strengthen young people's access to services. Although some progress had been made for example to improve the interface between children's services and adult mental health, more work was needed to agree service thresholds. The interface between children's social services and housing had been significantly strengthened, for example, through the inclusion of housing staff as part of the 'Just Ask Plus' service. Despite some positive developments the availability of appropriate 'move on housing and accommodation for looked after young people and care leavers was identified as a gap by staff and service users. Given the known age profile of the looked after children population this is an area that will require ongoing cross directorate focus.
- Despite some good operational engagement the authority's relationship with health services appeared overly dependent on children's social services providing funding and resources to assess and meet the therapeutic needs of looked after children and care leavers.

QUESTION 2

Were care and pathway plans informed by relevant assessments, including explicit risk assessments, which supported a comprehensive response to the needs and experiences of children and young people?

POSITIVES

- Referral and information sharing processes between professionals were well embedded. Operational relationships between teams including the Youth Offending Service and partner agencies support communication. Social workers and their managers had a good understanding of the young people they worked with including knowledge of presenting vulnerabilities and risky behaviours.
- The authority had expanded the multi agency nature of its specialist post 16 support and the 'Just Ask Plus' service included a drop in center that provided access to employment, health and, substance misuse advice. Case responsibility for looked after children transferred to this service when the young person reached 16years old. As with any transfer arrangement the authority needs to ensure that young people are engaged in the process and that the timing of any change is sensitive to the young persons needs.
- Care leavers were generally positive about the support they received from their personal advisors, although they did not always understanding the difference in

5

roles and planning mechanisms. Care leavers found the practical focus of pathway plans helpful but experienced decision making in relation to financial and resource issues as slow and inconsistent.

- The work of the looked after children educational support service (LACES) was valued including the ability to directly negotiate and resolve issues within schools. Personal Education Plans were seen on file although the timeliness and quality of these were variable. Educational attainment was valued and promoted, for example, through university-mentoring schemes but not seen as the only measure of achievement. School stability was a priority and considerable efforts were made to maintain school placements despite placement disruption. However, this should be balanced with the young persons need to make community links.
- The young people interviewed valued the support they received from the looked after nurse and could describe interventions provided by the service including advice re diet, healthy eating and sexual health. The looked after children's nurse also provided training for foster carers in relation to these issues. Although health assessments for looked after children were generally compliant the updated information was not always well reflected in the care plan.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- From the cases seen it was identified that the care plans of young people who remain looked after for longer periods were not routinely informed by a relevant shared written assessment. Where assessments were undertaken some good information gathering was evident but the quality of the analysis remained variable. It was however positive that the authority had recently refreshed the use of progress and action records.
- There was an insufficient range of placements available including those accessed through external providers. The authority had been proactive in working to increase the number of foster carers able to meet the complex needs of young people but this remained an on-going challenge.
- Although staff recognised and were active in relation to identifying risk, such issues often appeared to be managed as separate episodes, risk assessments and risk assessment tools were available and used but the resulting actions were not clearly recorded or shared. In some cases changes in staff and placements resulted in a loss of continuity and it was difficult to know if issues had been effectively concluded.
- There was recognition of a long standing disconnect between the access threshold applied by the CAMHS service and the presenting emotional resilience needs of looked after children and care leavers. Although some CAMHS advice was available through a weekly surgery and also the Just Ask Plus service there was a considerable waiting list for CAMHS intervention. Staff

highlighted that the lack of such support services for young people and their carers adversely impacted on the sustainability of placements.

- The quality of care plans seen were variable. Most included broad overarching statements but did not articulate the objectives and how the desired outcomes for the young person were to be achieved. There was a lack of clarity about the responsibility for updating the care plan.
- Issues were raised regarding the quality and impact of therapeutic interventions provided by some out of authority placements and the need for greater quality assurance mechanisms.

QUESTION 3

Were operational systems and procedures in place that ensured responsive coordinated action was taken to mitigate risk and achieve safe continuity of care?

POSITIVES

- Staff had access to key policies and there were well-developed information systems in place to support oversight of compliance in respect of statutory child protection procedures.
- Child protection processes were being used appropriately to manage risk for this group of young people.
- The authority and the Safeguarding Children Board had acted to heighten awareness of the vulnerabilities of looked after children and care leavers, including children missing from placement. Training in respect of a sexual exploitation risk assessment framework (seraf) had been incorporated into core child protection training. The chair of the WBSCB had written to all partner agencies in respect of individual agency compliance regarding child sexual exploitation. The intention being that the analysis of responses would be used to inform the boards future work plan.
- There appeared to be an effective working relationship with the police. Staff described a proactive response to children missing from placement, the police Misper coordinator carried out return to placement interviews and provided feedback. The police had provided advice to establishments, in relation to child sexual exploitation.
- Staff stated that they were confident of their role and responsibilities in relation to child protection and safeguarding including where the risks resulted from the young persons own behaviour.
- The frequency of supervision was formally monitored through performance

7

management systems. However some staff reported that time constraints impacted on their ability to discuss cases fully and the quality of the supervision seen was variable.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Although statutory child protection procedures and thresholds were generally well understood the management pathway for looked after young people and care leavers exhibiting 'risky' behaviours needed greater clarity.
- The assessment and management of risk particularly when involving more than one agency needed to be more effectively recorded and shared. The progress made in mitigating risk was not always evaluated or recorded. It was not apparent the extent to which young people were directly involved in the process.
- Managers were described as approachable and staff reported that there was oversight of cases within the service. However, contingency planning, including in relation to risk management, was not well evidenced.
- The authority had recently restructured services and the support for looked after children, prior to attaining 16 years of age, was now provided by five safeguarding teams. Social workers reported that although this had reduced case loads, the generic nature of their work meant that child protection and court work had to take priority. Some staff stated that they did not have capacity to undertake direct planned work.
- Despite a strong commitment to training, staff reported that case pressures did not always enable them to attend training. The level of caseload protection provided for social workers in the first year of practice was also said to be dependant on work load pressures.

QUESTION 4

Did Independent Reviews and quality assurance arrangements promote safe care and best outcomes for young people?

POSITIVES

- The authority's independent reviewing arrangements were compliant with guidance. Reviews were generally timely and convened as needed to reflect the presenting circumstances of the young person.
- Young people told us that they were encouraged to attend their reviews and there was evidence that advocates were available and had supported or represented young person's views at reviews.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Looked after children reviews generally appeared overly focused on the immediate needs of the young people and gave insufficient weight to securing better outcomes over the longer term.
- The IROs were not confident that the significance of their role was understood or that they were routinely made aware of changes or events that potentially impacted on the relevance of the care plan.
- Although some staff experienced reviews as providing challenge, this was not evident on case files and IROs felt unable to exert necessary influence. Lack of progress against the care plan, even in the most complex cases, needs to be effectively challenged. Any blockages to care plan objectives particularly in relation to placement stability and also leaving care arrangements should be pro actively monitored and escalated if they cannot be resolved within appropriate timescales.
- IROs did not routinely meet with young people prior to reviews and evidence from files identified that review minutes were subject to significantly delayed.
- The authority's understanding and oversight of its lac population would benefit from better coordinated of its quality assurance systems. An IRO monitoring form had recently been reintroduced but this again mainly reflected compliance issues. The authority were in the process of addressing these issues.

QUESTION 5

Did care and pathway planning effectively capture and promote the rights and voice of the child?

POSITIVES

- The authority had independent advocacy arrangements in place and had given significant priority to the development of this service. There was evidence that advocacy was discussed at looked after children reviews. All young people seen during the inspection were aware of the service and those who had used it were positive about the outcomes.
- Some young people said that they liked their placement and felt it was well planned and well matched, and that their carers listened to them.
- Care leavers were positive about the 'drop in' center provided through the 'Just Ask Plus' service and experienced this as a positive listening service. Personal advisors were viewed as strong advocates for young people.
- Despite some mixed views children and young people generally experienced professionals as persistent in their efforts to engage them and to try to ensure their

voices were heard.

- The authority had developed work placement traineeships and apprenticeship schemes for looked after young people and care leavers. These schemes sought to improve opportunities for employment and financial independence. Further support for young people in relation to work readiness was also available through the 'Just Ask Plus' service.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Some young people said they liked their social worker and there was a view that they 'did their best'. Generally however, looked after children identified that they didn't see their social worker enough, found them hard to contact and slow to return calls. Care leavers were able to compare this level of service with what they felt was the good communication and responsiveness they currently experienced from their personal advisors.
- Looked after children and care leavers said that they felt they had little choice or ability to exert influence around placements or accommodation. Although these views need to be balanced against the authority's child protection responsibilities to take protective action.
- Young people highlighted the significant impact changes of social workers and placement had on their ability to form trusting relationships.
- While young people were able to participate in sporting and leisure activities this often depended on the support provided by the carers and continuity of placement. Young people raised issues regarding speed of consent and inconsistent funding decisions.
- Young people had mixed views regarding whether they would like opportunities to meet together. Care leavers believed that their insight into being 'looked after' could be better utilised by the authority to support others.

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Action plan arising out of the CSSIW inspection of Safeguarding and Care planning of looked after children and care leavers, who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviours.

Forward

In February 2014, CSSIW undertook the above inspection in Bridgend. The aim of the national inspection was to assess the quality of care planning across Wales and whether it effectively:

- Supports and protects looked after children and care leavers;
- Identifies and manages the vulnerabilities and risky behaviour of looked after children and care leavers;
- Promotes rights based practice and the voice of the child;
- Promotes improved outcomes for looked after children and care leavers;
- Promotes compliance with policy and guidance

The inspection focused on the work undertaken with looked after children over eleven years of age and care leavers who were identified as being vulnerable and/or involved in risky behaviours, against defined criteria.

The inspection considered the above areas against the following five questions.

QUESTION 1

Did the authority effectively discharge its corporate parenting roles and responsibilities promoting the stability, welfare and safety of looked after children and care leavers?

QUESTION 2

Were care and pathway plans informed by relevant assessments, including explicit risk assessments, which supported a comprehensive response to the needs and experiences of children and young people?

QUESTION 3

Were operational systems and procedures in place that ensured responsive coordinated action was taken to mitigate risk and achieve safe continuity of care?

QUESTION 4

Did Independent Reviews and quality assurance arrangements promote safe care and best outcomes for young people?

QUESTION 5

Did care and pathway planning effectively capture and promote the rights and voice of the child?

At the conclusion of the inspection, CSSIW inspectors noted a significant number of positives referenced to the above five questions. However, they also note some areas for improvement. This action plan has therefore been devised to address areas that inspectors assessed required improvement.

QUESTION 1

Did the authority effectively discharge its corporate parenting roles and responsibilities promoting the stability, welfare and safety of looked after children and care leavers?

Areas for improvement	Proposed Action	Responsible Person	RAG status
<p>1. Elected members had recognised the significance of both their safeguarding and corporate parenting role and the need to provide greater challenge to ensure that they are achieving best outcomes for looked after children and care leavers, including the most vulnerable and challenging.</p> <p>Members needed to assure themselves that strategic aims are being effectively owned and translated into action across the local authority and partner agencies</p>	<p>Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee will routinely gather evidence from senior officers that seek to assure Cabinet that strategic aims are being effectively owned and translated into action across the local authority and partner agencies. CP Committee will agree a formal work programme for its meetings that specifies the reports it requires to provide assurance around specified activity</p>	<p>Lead Member for Children/Head of Safeguarding and Family Support.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>2. The authority's systems did not routinely capture a profile of the looked after children and care-leaving populations assessed needs or detailed thematic information regarding</p>	<p>The local authority will appoint a senior lead officer (Principal Officer) to lead on the authorities "Placement and Permanency Strategy" and to ensure a strategic overview of the authorities LAC profile The principal officer will also ensure available data is translated into action</p>	<p>Head of Service</p>	<p>Green</p>

<p>vulnerability and risk. This information is essential if the authority is to evaluate the effectiveness of its placement and permanency strategies and predict future resource needs. The reports reviewed in relation to looked after children often relied on extensive use of data and lacked a clear analysis in respect of the issues identified, action needed and how progress would be evaluated.</p>	<p>plans to inform strategic developments to meet the changing profile of LAC population. Regular reports on themes trends and issues will be presented Corporate parenting Committee at relevant periods throughout the year.</p> <p>An inter-agency LAC Board will be established, chaired by the Directors to ensure inter-agency buy-in to progressing the placements and permanency strategy.</p>	<p>Corporate Director - Children</p>	<p>Green - Completed</p>
<p>3. Children's services had developed multi agency panel arrangements, including an out of authority panel, to co-ordinate access to placements and promote effective permanency and care planning. These arrangements were viewed as a useful approach but staff expressed frustration that these mechanisms had different information</p>	<p>All relevant staff will receive team based training/briefings to ensure staff are clear about the terms of reference of both the weekly "accommodation and permanency panels" and the monthly out of authority panels. Such panels will inevitably require different information to ensure appropriate decisions are made that focus on positive outcomes for children.</p>	<p>Senior Management Team Team Managers</p>	<p>Green - Completed</p>

requirements.			
<p>4. Despite their multi agency nature, the panels had little ability to accelerate access to services. In some cases the oversight of the panel was viewed as delaying decision making while not ensuring effective contingency planning that, for example, prevented the need for emergency placement or ensured timely transition planning for young people leaving out of authority placements. The panel arrangements would benefit from being refreshed to ensure timely oversight of issues and escalation of cases.</p>	<p>Panel arrangements will be reviewed to ensure the role and functioning of both panels are fit for purpose. Outside of the panel processes, staff will be reminded about how they can escalate issues to senior management when urgent decisions are required about LAC placements or resource issues.</p> <p>Within Connecting Families, a new initiative will be developed to provide intensive family support to families where their child is at a significant risk of entering the care system. This project will be known as the "Edge of Care" project.</p>	<p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Consultant Social Worker within Connecting Families.</p>	<p>Green – Completed</p> <p>Green - Completed</p>
<p>5. Children's social services were working with both the Well Being directorate and Housing Directorate to</p>	<p>An accommodation needs analysis for care leavers will be undertaken in partnership with the authorities housing department to ensure a strategic response is in</p>	<p>Group Manager – Disability, Transition and Leaving Care Group Manager-Regulated Services</p>	<p>Green - Ongoing</p>

<p>strengthen young people's access to services. Although some progress had been made for example to improve the interface between children's services and adult mental health, more work was needed to agree service thresholds. The interface between children's social services and housing had been significantly strengthened, for example, through the inclusion of housing staff as part of the 'Just Ask Plus' service. Despite some positive developments the availability of appropriate 'move on' housing and accommodation for looked after young people and care leavers was identified as a gap by staff and service users. Given the known age profile of the looked after children population this is an area that will require ongoing</p>	<p>place to meet the needs of young people leaving care.</p> <p>Managers of the Just Ask Plus Service, Bridgend Foster Care and the Placement Team managers will in future attend the Supporting People Board meetings held monthly.</p> <p>The Supported Lodgings scheme will be reviewed, standards raised and the overall carer cohort positively increased to meet the increasing demand for young people's placement being supported during their transition into independent living.</p> <p>A range of commissioning projects have been in touch with the Group Manager Regulated Services and also the Group Manager for case management, disabilities and transition to look at specific cases and to identify future needs of young people.</p> <p>The Group Manager for Regulated Services will meet with the housing department and agree some initial proposals and ideas to scope for future joint projects.</p> <p>An initial paper will be produced that will be shared with the Supported People board in BCBC.</p> <p>The role and function of the transition panel will be reviewed and awareness raising</p>		
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cross directorate focus.	activity will ensue.		
<p>6. Despite some good operational engagement the authority's relationship with health services appeared overly dependent on children's social services providing funding and resources to assess and meet the therapeutic needs of looked after children and care leavers.</p>	<p>An integrated Health and Social care Board will be established co-chaired by the ABMU Director and the LA Director – Children. This will aim to improve joint working arrangements between the council and ABMU at both a strategic and operational level. Its Purpose will be::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To oversee the programme of work relating to the integration of health and social care in the Bridgend Locality as relating to children's services. • To ensure quality outcomes for the citizens of Bridgend • To ensure appropriate links are made with the Western Bay Board and Changing for Better workstreams • To agree the budget process and approve any related business plans showing savings/cost avoidance for both organisations and to evaluate and make recommendations on joint/pooled budgets • To discuss and remove blockages to progress • To receive reports for decisions and by 	<p>HOS will attend along with Group Manager</p>	<p>Green – Board established and meeting regularly</p>

	exception agreed plans	against project	
<p>7. From the cases seen it was identified that the care plans of young people who remain looked after for longer periods were not routinely informed by a relevant shared written assessment. Where assessments were undertaken some good information gathering was evident but the quality of the analysis remained variable. It was however positive that the authority had recently refreshed the use of progress and action records.</p>	<p>When undertaking statutory reviews of LAC, IRO's will continue to scrutinise the quality and progress of the care plan. Where it is felt that care plans are not sufficiently informed by thorough assessment, appropriate recommendations will be made by IRO's and timescales set to track progress being made .If sufficient progress is not being achieved, IRO's will escalate their concerns to senior management and if appropriate may consider invoking the IRO protocol.</p> <p>Team based training will be provided in respect of providing analysis of assessments and report writing. IRO's will also contribute to training and development sessions for social workers and other agencies.</p>	<p>IRO's IRO Manager, Team managers and social workers.</p>	<p>Green - ongoing</p>
<p>8. There was an insufficient range of placements available including those accessed through external providers. The authority had been proactive in working to increase the</p>	<p>Bridgend Foster Care (BFC) will continue to recruit and approve carers for a range of different ages and needs, specifically; difficult to place teenagers and children with disabilities. BCBC will also seek to appoint foster carers for large sibling groups. The Local Authority will constantly refresh its</p>	<p>Group Manager – Regulated Services</p>	

<p>number of foster carers able to meet the complex needs of young people but this remained an on-going challenge.</p>	<p>established marketing strategy. Under the direction of a bespoke marketing officer who will lead on an advertising and recruitment campaigns Throughout the year the profile of LAC will be regularly reviewed to ensure any gaps in provision are identified and campaigns set up for specific recruitment to address changing needs.</p> <p>There remains “difficult to place young people” due to the complexities of their needs and sometimes the location of a placement required. The Local Authority will continue to be a member of the Childrens Commissioning Consortium Cymru (CCCC) and use the resource database for all placements</p>		
<p>9. Although staff recognised and were active in relation to identifying risk, such issues often appeared to be managed as separate episodes, risk assessments and risk assessment tools were available and used but the resulting actions were not clearly recorded or shared. In some cases changes in staff and</p>	<p>Team based training</p>	<p>Training Managers. Team Managers</p>	<p>Green - Ongoing</p>

placements resulted in a loss of continuity and it was difficult to know if issues had been effectively concluded.			
10. There was recognition of a long standing disconnect between the access threshold applied by the CAMHS service and the presenting emotional resilience needs of looked after children and care leavers. Although some CAMHS advice was available through a weekly surgery and also the Just Ask Plus service there was a considerable waiting list for CAMHS intervention. Staff highlighted that the lack of such support services for young people and their carers adversely impacted on the sustainability of placements.	See action 16 below.	Head of service	Amber
11. The quality of care plans seen	Team based training will be provided to	Training Manager/Team	Green - Ongoing

<p>were variable. Most included broad overarching statements but did not articulate the objectives and how the desired outcomes for the young person were to be achieved. There was a lack of clarity about the responsibility for updating the care plan.</p>	<p>address this area and IRO's will continue to provide advice and support to social workers to improve consistency of quality of care plans linked to clear objectives for the child/young person.</p> <p>IRO team manager will attend team meetings to clarify the responsibility for updating care plans.</p>	<p>managers</p>	
<p>12. Issues were raised regarding the quality and impact of therapeutic interventions provided by some out of authority placements and the need for greater quality assurance mechanisms.</p>	<p>The LA will insist on regular reports in respect of therapies being provided to LAC children and the impact these are having. These will be reviewed by IRO's who will escalate any concerns about perceived inappropriate or ineffective therapies being provided to individual children.</p>	<p>IRO's Out-of Authority Panel Social Workers</p>	<p>Green - ongoing</p>

QUESTION 2

Were care and pathway plans informed by relevant assessments, including explicit risk assessments, which supported a comprehensive response to the needs and experiences of children and young people?

Areas for improvement	Proposed Action	Responsible Person	Action status
<p>13. From the cases seen it was identified that the care plans of young people who remain looked after for longer periods were</p>	<p>As part of the IRO's responsibility, expectations will be placed upon them to review care plans to ensure they are routinely informed by a relevant shared written assessment that are informed by</p>	<p>IRO's</p>	<p>Green - Ongoing</p>

<p>not routinely informed by a relevant shared written assessment. Where assessments were undertaken some good information gathering was evident but the quality of the analysis remained variable. It was however positive that the authority had recently refreshed the use of progress and action records.</p>	<p>appropriate evidenced analysis.</p>		
<p>14. There was an insufficient range of placements available including those accessed through external providers. The authority had been proactive in working to increase the number of foster carers able to meet the complex needs of young people but this remained an</p>	<p>Whilst significant progress has been made in increasing the number of in-house foster placement within the Bridgend locality, this will remain a key priority for the Children's Directorate. This will involve targeted marketing and foster care recruitment campaigns.</p>	<p>Group Manager – Regulated Service/fostering services Team manager.</p>	<p>Green – ongoing.</p>

on-going challenge.			
<p>15. Although staff recognised and were active in relation to identifying risk, such issues often appeared to be managed as separate episodes, risk assessments and risk assessment tools were available and used but the resulting actions were not clearly recorded or shared. In some cases changes in staff and placements resulted in a loss of continuity and it was difficult to know if issues had been effectively concluded.</p>	<p>Team based training will ensure to address these points and social workers will be expected to maintain up-to-date chronologies of significant episodes. IRO's will be expected to ensure that contemporary assessments are undertaken within the historical nature of the case.</p>	<p>Training manager Team manager</p>	<p>Green - Ongoing</p>
<p>16. There was recognition of a long standing disconnect between the access threshold applied by the CAMHS service and</p>	<p>To address these issues an ABMU Children and Young People's Mental Health Planning Board will be established. This Board will work with its partners, to ensure that children and young people living in the ABMU</p>	<p>Board Members including representation by the Head of Service (BCBC)</p>	<p>Amber - ongoing</p>

<p>the presenting emotional resilience needs of looked after children and care leavers. Although some CAMHS advice was available through a weekly surgery and also the Just Ask Plus service there was a considerable waiting list for CAMHS intervention. Staff highlighted that the lack of such support services for young people and their carers adversely impacted on the sustainability of placements.</p>	<p>area will have access to a range of high quality, safe, effective and efficient services that will address their physical, emotional, social and educational needs.</p> <p>The C&YP Mental Health Planning Group will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Oversee implementation of key actions related to the core business of adult mental health services and the needs of all children, young people and their families across the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg region; 2. Advise the local <i>Together for Mental Health</i> Partnership Board on progress, emerging issues and future priorities via regular reports; 3. Develop, agree and implement specifications for the services provided for the ABMU population by Cwm Taf and other service providers; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that local 		
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	<p>implementation of <i>Together for Mental Health</i> is based on a human rights approach, advancing equality and tackling inequalities, and supports children and young people and their families;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider and influence All Wales work on provision of complex care for Children and Young People's with Mental Health problems. • Oversee Transition and Intelligence Network of Children receiving treatment out of County. Important to note that these children still remain our responsibility <p>.</p> <p>It will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring appropriate engagement of stakeholders including the wider public, service users, families and carers; • Overseeing work of any 		
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	<p>sub-groups and task and finish groups established to delivery for the Planning Group;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring appropriate links and reporting to other planning groups across the Region and partners as required; • Reviewing the annual progress report on implementation of the Delivery Plan priorities in the area; • Preparing and providing an annual C&YP progress report for the National Mental Health Partnership Board and other relevant forums; • Agreeing priorities in relation to subsequent Delivery Plans provided to drive implementation for the 10-year course of the Strategy; • Sharing learning and good practice on improving mental wellbeing and supporting 		
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	<p>those with mental illness;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve multi agency links with the three Local Authorities. • Improve links with HMP Parc, Bridgend. • All members acting as advocates for the broader aims and aspirations of the strategy and its local implementation. 		
<p>17. The qualities of care plans seen were variable. Most included broad overarching statements but did not articulate the objectives and how the desired outcomes for the young person were to be achieved. There was a lack of clarity about the responsibility for updating the care plan.</p>	<p>Team based training will ensue to address these points and social workers will be expected to ensure care plans are outcome focused and regularly reviewed. IRO's and team managers will be expected to ensure that care plans are outcome focussed and regularly updated</p>	<p>IRO's Team Managers</p>	<p>Green - ongoing</p>

QUESTION 3

Were operational systems and procedures in place that ensured responsive coordinated action was taken to mitigate risk and achieve safe continuity of care?

Areas for improvement	Proposed Action	Responsible Person	Action status
<p>18. Although statutory child protection procedures and thresholds were generally well understood the management pathway for looked after young people and care leavers exhibiting 'risky' behaviours needed greater clarity.</p>	<p>Team based training will ensue to ensure that all social workers are clear about the management pathway for looked after young people and care leavers exhibiting 'risky' behaviours and the processes and procedure that should be followed. This will include the management of child at risk of sexual exploitation, missing person's protocol, mental health and substance misuse.</p>	<p>Team managers/training department.</p>	<p>Green - Ongoing</p>
<p>19. The assessment and management of risk particularly when involving more than one agency needed to be more effectively recorded and shared. The progress made in mitigating risk was not always evaluated or recorded. It was not apparent the</p>	<p>Team managers will ensure that social workers ensure that their reports detail the contribution made by other agencies and ensure that assessments of risk are informed by multi-agency perspectives. Social workers will also be reminded of the importance of thorough recordings. This will be backed up with a rolling programme of team based training.</p>	<p>Team managers and social workers.</p>	<p>Green - ongoing</p>

<p>extent to which young people were directly involved in the process.</p>			
<p>20. The authority had recently restructured services and the support for looked after children, prior to attaining 16 years of age, was now provided by five safeguarding teams. Social workers reported that although this had reduced case loads, the generic nature of their work meant that child protection and court work had to take priority. Some staff stated that they did not have capacity to undertake direct planned work.</p>	<p>Inherent within the proposed Children's Directorate restructure, the Council intends to deliver a Whole Systems Approach to supporting children and families in need, at the right time, in the right place and at a level appropriate to needs. This will enable the council to deliver services within the communities where families live by decentralising a number of social work practitioners, co-locating them within one of our three safeguarding hubs within the East, North, and West of the County. It is proposed that each of the three hubs will have a Hub Safeguarding Team Manager who will be supported to lead a team comprising of senior practitioners, social workers, social work assistants and supervised contact workers. Safeguarding teams will be co-located with the council's prevention and early help teams. It is envisaged that many CIN cases will be transferred to the</p>	<p>Director/HOS/SMT</p>	<p>Amber</p>

	early help teams, thereby reducing social workers case load to allow more time for direct work.		
21. Despite a strong commitment to training, staff reported that case pressures did not always enable them to attend training. The level of caseload protection provided for social workers in the first year of practice was also said to be dependent on work load pressures.	Managers will routinely discuss training requirements with social workers and make appropriate arrangements for social workers to attend and benefit from agreed training requirements. Managers will also monitor caseloads and match case complexity with social workers competence and confidence.	Team Managers	Green - ongoing

QUESTION 4

Did Independent Reviews and quality assurance arrangements promote safe care and best outcomes for young people?

Areas for improvement	Proposed Action	Responsible Person	RAG Status
22. Although some staff experienced reviews as providing challenge, this was not evident on case files and IROs felt unable to exert necessary influence. Lack of progress	IRO will record their advice and views on case files and discuss any blocks to monitoring progress of care plans with the team managers and the IRO manager. If necessary, IRO's will be encouraged to invoke the IRO protocol when it is considered necessary to do so.	IRO's IRO managers and team managers.	Green - ongoing

<p>against the care plan, even in the most complex cases, needs to be effectively challenged. Any blockages to care plan objectives particularly in relation to placement stability and also leaving care arrangements should be pro-actively monitored and escalated if they cannot be resolved within appropriate timescales.</p>			
<p>23. IROs did not routinely meet with young people prior to reviews and evidence from files identified that review minutes were subject to significantly delayed.</p>	<p>IRO manager will introduce monitoring form to elicit quality information about children and young people's participation within the reviewing process.</p> <p>IRO manager work with IRO's to introduce improved systems and processes to monitor the timeliness of minutes being completed.</p> <p>The LA will consider innovative methods to communicate with children and young people, though, for example, the development of an</p>	<p>IRO Service</p>	<p>In progress</p>

	IRO service micro site specifically for LAC and children on CPR.		
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QUESTION 5

Did care and pathway planning effectively capture and promote the rights and voice of the child?

Areas for improvement	Proposed Action	Responsible Person	RAG status
<p>24. Some young people said they liked their social worker and there was a view that they 'did their best'. Generally however, looked after children identified that they didn't see their social worker enough, found them hard to contact and slow to return calls. Care leavers were able to compare this level of service with what they felt was the good communication and responsiveness they currently experienced from their personal advisors.</p>	<p>Team managers will remind social workers of the importance of informing young people of the various methods of communication between social workers and young people, including text, phone and email and ensure that timely responses are made to young people upon receipt of any kind of contact/request.</p>	<p>Team managers/social workers.</p>	<p>Green - ongoing</p>

<p>25. Young people highlighted the significant impact changes of social workers and placement had on their ability to form trusting relationships.</p>	<p>Team managers will ensure that changes of social workers are kept to a minimum and ensure that it is only in exceptional circumstances that young people will have a new social worker such as when social workers leave or changes are required to cover long term sickness.</p>	<p>Team managers</p>	<p>Green- ongoing</p>
<p>26. Looked after children and care leavers said that they felt they had little choice or ability to exert influence around placements or accommodation. Although these views need to be balanced against the authority's child protection responsibilities to take protective action.</p>	<p>As far as possible children and young people will be routinely consulted about planned changes of social workers with their views, wishes and feelings being recorded on the case file. All children and young people will be offered an independent advocate to assist them in getting their voice heard and appropriate professional representation</p>	<p>Social Workers/IRO's</p>	<p>Green - ongoing</p>
<p>27. Young people raised issues regarding speed of consent and inconsistent funding decisions.</p>	<p>A new "delegated authority policy" will be launched and widely disseminated to children, young people and their carers.</p>	<p>Group Manager – Regulated Services. Team Managers</p>	<p>Green - Completed</p>
<p>28. While young people were able to participate in sporting and</p>	<p>Young people wishes and feelings concerning their engagement in sporting and leisure</p>	<p>IRO's, Social Workers</p>	<p>Green - ongoing</p>

<p>leisure activities this often depended on the support provided by the carers and continuity of placement.</p>	<p>activities and their ability to access these will be discussed within LAC and pathway reviews.</p>		
<p>29. Young people had mixed views regarding whether they would like opportunities to meet together. Care leavers believed that their insight into being 'looked after could be better utilised by the authority to support others.</p>	<p>Through the youth service aspects of the Just@plus service the views of care leavers will be canvassed to consider the proposition of setting up a care leavers support group which could be used as a platform to seek young people participation and engagement in relevant consultation exercises.</p>	<p>Team manager – Jusk@plus. Leaving Care Social workers.</p>	<p>Red – outstanding action</p>

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

5 JANUARY 2015

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – CHILDREN

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

ANNUAL AWARDS TO CELEBRATE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee of the historical arrangements that have been in place within the Council to celebrate the achievements of Bridgend's Looked After Children (LAC) and to seek Cabinet's views on the future arrangements for celebrating the achievements of Looked After Children.

2 Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 This report links to the following Corporate 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 Promoting the health, education and general well-being of Looked After Children is a statutory duty placed on the local authority under the Children's Act 1989. Their educational achievements are always recognised at school through assemblies and award evenings. For the past five years, an annual event has been held to celebrate the achievements of all LAC children in Bridgend. This event, attended by senior officers, Members, celebrities, dignitaries, LAC and their carers has been held at the Grand Pavilion Theatre in Porthcawl, during the school Easter holidays. During the event, individual children receive a certificate and a gift in recognition of a particular achievement they have accomplished during the past 12 months.
- 3.2 The Council believe it is important to formally recognise the achievements of Looked After Children as many have experienced troubled and difficult early childhood experiences which for some has had a negative impact on their self-esteem and confidence. Receiving an achievement award, therefore goes some way to boosting self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.

4 Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 Substantial feedback following the last two celebration events has posed the question as to whether the current arrangements for celebrating the achievements of LAC are the most appropriate means for doing so. For example, this year's event, though attended by over 100 people, highlighted an issue around poor attendance of many children who were due to receive an award. Questions were also raised about the duration of the event which saw many young children becoming restless, tired and agitated by the end of the event. (The event ran for approximately 5 hours) Approximately 25% of the children and young people who were invited to attend the LAC awards did not turn up to the event. Many of these were teenagers who chose not to attend. Others did not attend as the event was held during the school holiday and one can only assume that they were actually away on holiday with their carers.
- 4.2 The annual event requires investment of significant officer time to arrange (estimated to be over 100 hours) and requires significant financial support to cover the costs of catering, theatre hire and gifts for the children. Consequently it is necessary to consider whether the financial and officer time investment is still the best way for the Authority to recognise LAC achievements. Consequently, Members are being asked to consider whether the annual award event should continue in its current form or whether alternative ways of celebrating the achievements of LAC are to be explored
- 4.3 One option for Members to consider is a proposal to reduce the time and scale of the event by holding the annual event in the Council Chambers instead of the Grand Pavilion in Porthcawl. LAC will be invited to this event along with a number of dignitaries such as the Children's Commissioner for Wales and local politicians. Members of the Council Corporate Parenting, the Mayor and the Leader could host the event. Members of the Councils Corporate Management team would also be invited along with the Statutory Director of Social Service who would assist the Mayor and the Leader in with the distribution of certificates to all LAC in attendance at the event.

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 and discussion purposes, an assessment is not deemed necessary at this stage.

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1 For the past two years, the Council has invested approximately £7,500 to cover associated cost of arranging and hosting the annual event to celebrate the achievements of LAC. In addition, approximately 100 hours of senior officers' time is invested into arranging and managing the event each year. Should Cabinet agree that the option detailed in paragraph 4.3 above will be an appropriate means of

celebrating the achievements of Looked After Children in the future, this would result in a saving of approximately £6,500. for the local authority. Such savings will be realised as a result of not having to hire The Grand Pavilion or pay for external caterers to provide food and beverages at the event.

8 Recommendations

- 8.1 Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee are asked consider the option being put forward in paragraph 4.3 above as a way to celebrate the achievements of Bridgend's LAC in the future.

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

5 JANUARY 2015

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - CHILDREN

REVIEW OF AN ADOPTION ALLOWANCE POLICY

1. Purpose of Report.

To provide Members with an opportunity to consider and agree the attached Adoption Allowance Policy, developed following an internal audit of the Adoption Service. This report should be considered as a follow up on the report provided in September 2013 which provided an update on the position in respect of recurring adoption allowances paid to “eligible applicants” by Bridgend Adoption Service.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority.

2.1 The report links to the following corporate priorities:

- Working together to raise ambitions and to drive up educational achievements
- 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 In 2006 Cabinet were informed of the implications of the Adoption Support Services (Local Authorities) (Wales) Regulations 2005 (made under the Adoption and Children Act 2002) in relation to the Authority’s Adoption Allowances Scheme. The report presented to Cabinet in April 2006 highlighted that the Regulations introduced a number of adoption support measures, to encourage more people to come forward to adopt and to help adoptive placements to succeed. The report outlined the changes to the provisions of the Adoption Allowances Regulations 1991 and outlined the circumstances and the means by which future financial support should be paid.

3.2 In June 2013 the Adoption Service was routinely audited. The then Group Manager and Team Manager proposed the audit team specifically looked at adoption allowances, as this was an area needing considerable review. The resulting audit report, signed off in August 2013 identified areas for improvement and proposed that a revised adoption allowance policy be developed which reflected various provisions held within legislation which over time had become relaxed.

3.3. The report presented to Corporate Parenting Committee on 17 September 2013 detailed the responsibilities on the council to provide an adoption allowance to eligible children and adoptive families. The report also outlined expenditure between 2007 and 2013 and evidenced that the allowances had remained relatively static with total spend of £155,000 in 2013. This stable picture was despite a general increase in numbers of children adopted year on year and the annual increase in the adoption allowance base rates, which are in-line with basic fostering rates. The report recommended that Council note the intention of the Adoption Service to undertake a review of the adoption allowances, a key aspect of this being the development and use of a revised Adoption Allowance Policy and accompanying procedures.

4. Current situation / proposal.

4.1 The review of the Adoption Allowance Policy is complete and reflects both the recommendations from the audit report and the cabinet report of 17 September 2013. There are 5 key changes outlined within the revised policy, these include;

- i. Exploring and considering sources of money which the adoptive parents have, such as any capital of the adopters or income of the child which will be considered in the calculation of any awards. Where it is identified that a 'discretionary/exceptional circumstances payments' is needed, this is made from appropriate budgets.
- ii. To ensure the fair application of the policy, clear documented procedures have been developed which include a formal notification being issued to the claimant outlining their financial support and setting out any requirements of the adopters such as notifying the agency of any changes in their personal circumstances
- iii. A process introduced to formalise awards, which includes a notification process and mechanisms for dealing with disputes.
- iv. A timeframe introduced for dealing with requests for adoption allowances to ensure applications are progressed in a timely manner.
- v. A review process introduced to ensure that adoption allowances are formally reviewed annually to ensure statutory requirements are fulfilled

4.2 Of particular note in the Adoption Allowance Policy is clarity around the use of 'discretionary/exceptional circumstances payments'. Whilst there may need to be a provision for such payments to adoptive families to enable the placement to continue, the legislation for such payments would not be the Adoption Agencies (Wales) Regulations 2005 but instead the provisions of a 'child in need' under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Therefore, an assessment of the 'child's needs' will be undertaken prior to such financial payments being provided.

4.3 In order to enable the enactment of the policy, a range of tools and new procedures for the adoption staff to follow have been created. These documents have not yet been needed since the audit as there have been no new applications for an adoption allowance. However, recently this has changed and the forms will be

piloted and revised as needed. All new and existing allowances will thereafter use the new procedures as set out within the attached policy.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

5.1 There is no impact.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 The implementation of the proposed documentation and review process will have no adverse impact on those who are deemed eligible under the Adoption Support Services (Local Authorities) (Wales) Regulations 2005 (made under the Adoption and Children Act 2002) or those eligible for exceptional circumstances payments under the 'Children in Need' Provisions of Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Indeed, the impact is likely to ensure greater equality of approach.

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 The Council's annual budget for adoption allowances is currently £140k. We are projecting a full year spend for 2014/15 of £129k. This is not likely to alter for 2015/16 as a number of allowances currently being paid are likely to end imminently and this will offset any increase in payments as a result of new applications under the new policy.

8. Recommendation.

8.1 It is recommended that Cabinet notes and agrees the Adoption Allowance Policy which can be found at Appendix 1. Cabinet Committee are also asked to note the plans for the implementation of a process to review adoption and other permanence allowances to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Adoption Support Services (Local Authorities) (Wales) Regulations 2005 and Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

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Background documents

Financial Support for Adoption Cabinet Report, April 2006

Corporate Parenting Report on Adoption Allowances, September 2013

Adoption Policy 2014

Cabinet Report – Development of a National Adoption Service – 17th September 2013

Bridgend County Borough Council Adoption Service

Adoption Allowance Policy Appendix 1



1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Adoption Support Services (Local Authorities) (Wales) Regulations 2005 continue the principle from the Adoption Allowance Regulations 1991 that financial circumstances should not prevent the adoption of a child, where it is in the child's best interest.
- 1.2 New applications for financial support can only be awarded for children under the age of 18 at the time of the application.

2. Situations when financial support can be paid

- 2.1 Financial Support may be payable to prospective adoptive parents at any time following the match or placement of a child with the prospective adoptive parents, or at any time after the making of an Adoption Order, in the following circumstances:-
 - a Where the child has not been placed with the adoptive parent for adoption, and financial support is necessary to ensure that the adoptive parent can look after the child if so placed;
 - b Where the child has been placed with the adoptive parent for adoption, and financial support is necessary to ensure that the adoptive parent can continue to look after the child;
 - c Where the child has been adopted, and financial support is necessary to ensure that the adoptive parent can continue to look after the child;
 - d Where the local authority is satisfied that the child has established a strong and important relationship with the adoptive parent before the adoption order is made;
 - e Where it is desirable that the child be placed with the same adoptive parent as a brother or sister (whether of the full blood or half-blood), or with a child with whom the child has previously shared a home;
 - f Where the child needs special care which requires a greater expenditure of resources by reason of illness, disability, emotional or behavioural difficulties or the continuing consequences of past abuse or neglect;

- g where on account of the age, sex or ethnic origin of the child it is necessary for the local authority to make special arrangements to facilitate the placement of the child for adoption.

2.3 In determining the amount of financial support payable in a particular case, the Local Authority must take into account certain factors when determining the amount of support available. Financial support is means tested however the local authority has to disregard the means of adopters when considering financial support in respect of expenditure incurred by adopters which relate to introductions to children, initial set up costs and legal costs:-

- a Any recommendations made by the Adoption Panel. This is in relation to any child where a recommendation that the child should be placed for adoption prior to the implementation of the Adoption Agencies (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2012.
- b The financial resources of the adopters, including Child Tax Credit and other benefits.
- c The amount required by the adopters to meet their reasonable outgoings and commitments;
- d The financial needs and resources of the child;
- e The expenditure incurred by the adopters relating to introductions and initial costs incurred;
- f Legal costs related to the adoption, including court fees when applying for the Adoption Order;
- g Any equipment, boarding school costs or other costs arising from the child's special needs, such as illness or disability;
- h The costs of damage, wear and tear in the home resulting from the child's behavioural difficulties;
- i The costs of ongoing contact visits between the child and members of their birth family;
- j The costs of respite care.

3. How Financial Support will be paid

3.1 Financial support will usually be paid as a single payment or via weekly payments, except for:-

- a Ongoing costs arising from a child's special needs;

- b Ongoing costs of contact visits;
- c Ongoing planned respite care;
- d Some payments to foster carers adopting a child who has previously been fostered with them. Any such payments will be informed by and in-line with any existing or revised policies and procedures governing the local authority foster placements.

3.2 Adoption payments can be paid to foster carers adopting children living with them:

- a From the time the placement becomes an adoptive placement;
- b Up to two years following an Adoption Order;
- c From two years following an Adoption Order, if necessary to:
 - i) Ensure adopters can continue to look after the child;
 - ii) Facilitate placement of a sibling of a child already adopted by the foster carer/s.
 - iii) To meet the child's ongoing special needs.

4. Financial Assessments

4.1 The 2005 Regulations extend the financial support available to adoptive parents, but continue the requirement to carry out financial assessments, taking account of all benefits and tax credits available to the adopter(s), especially when regular payments are being considered.

4.2 Single lump sum payments to meet a specified need may not have to be subject to a financial assessment if they are small scale and this is agreed by a Group Manager. Payments will be made on a Child In Need Basis and will be subject to an assessment of that need. Receipts will be required.

4.3 If regular financial support is being considered, the adoptive parent/s will be required to give details, with supporting evidence, of their income and housing costs, in order that a full financial assessment can be carried out. Additional financial information can be provided for inclusion in the Financial Assessment, for example where it is considered that a family's commitment to the adopted child could be jeopardised to the disadvantage of other children in the household, if it was not included in the Financial Assessment.

4.4 The Financial Assessment measure's the applicant/s weekly income and expenditure against the equivalent amount of Income Support that the applicant/s would be entitled to, plus a 25% enhancement to ensure there is provision for reasonable outgoings and commitments. The maximum allowance payable is equivalent to the Level 1 fostering allowance less child

benefit and tax credits, although the assessment may determine a weekly payment less than this.

- 4.5 Adoptive families will be required to claim all benefits and tax credits due to them, e.g. Disability Living Allowance, Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits.
- 4.6 A letter outlining the outcome of the calculation for the financial support, and conditions governing payment will be given to the adopter(s), who will be required to confirm agreement before an allowance can be paid. If dissatisfied with the calculation, the adopter(s) have the right to request a review. This request should be made in the first instance to the team Manager of the Adoption Service. The representation will be considered and the course of action notified to the adopter(s) within 14 working days.
- 4.7 The adoptive parent(s) can, if dissatisfied with the outcome of their representation to the Adoption Manager, make a formal complaint through the council's complaints procedure. Complaints will be addressed by the Group Manager with Responsibility for Regulated Services.
- 4.8 Assessments should be completed within six weeks.

5. Payment conditions

- 5.1 Formal agreement by the Adopter(s) will be needed prior to adoption allowance payments commencing.
- 5.2 Adoption allowance payments will be payable from the date of a new adoptive placement or a date determined by the Adoption Manager.
- 5.3 Adoption allowance payments will be paid fortnightly, directly into a bank account specified by the adopters.
- 5.4 Adoption Allowance payments will be reviewed annually. Any payments being made for older children will only be paid until their eighteenth birthday.
- 5.5 Financial support will cease immediately when:-
 - a The child ceases to have a home with either of the adoptive parents;
 - b The child is no longer financially dependent on the adopter(s) and either qualifies for benefit income in their own right or commences employment;
 - c The child attains the age of eighteen;
 - d The child marries or dies;
 - e The family no longer qualify due to changes in their income or financial circumstances.

- 5.6 If an overpayment has been made recovery procedures will be instigated.
- 5.7 If possible adoptive parent(s) should inform the Adoption Team Manager in writing, at least 28 days before the child no longer becomes eligible for financial support.
- 5.8 Adoption payments may be suspended, if the adoptive parent(s) fail to supply documentation needed in relation to their financial circumstances as required under the scheme, for the purposes of an annual review. One letter will be sent advising of an impending review and one reminder letter sent which will indicate the date any allowances are to be suspended.

6. Calculation of family requirements

6.1 Personal Allowances

A Personal Allowance equivalent to the current Income Support rate, will be allowed for the family, except the child/children for whom the financial support is to be paid.

6.2 Premiums

The following Income Support Premiums will be used in the assessment for non-pensioners:-

- a Family Premium when there is a child in the family.
- b Family Premium (Lone Parent) for a single parent family.
- c Disabled Child Premium where a dependent child in the family receives Disability Living Allowance (care or mobility component, middle or higher rate).
- d Severe Disability Premium where an adult family member receives Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance at the middle or higher rate.
- e Carer Premium if a family member is entitled to Invalid Care Allowance.
- f Pension Credit figures will be used when the applicant is a pensioner.

6.3 The Personal Allowance and premiums will be increased by 25% for the purpose of calculating adoption financial support.

6.4 Housing Costs

The following will be taken into consideration:-

- a The amount of mortgage payment being paid at the date of the Financial Assessment will be allowed. If a family moves or applies for an increased mortgage at a future date, a re-assessment that results in increased financial support due to this could be approved if the move was to a home more appropriate to the needs of the child.
- b Rent or Council Tax that is not covered by Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit.

6.5 Other expenses

- a Consideration will be given to making an allowance for expenses such as child care costs directly related to the adopted child. This will be linked directly to the assessment of need undertaken as part of the provision of adoption support.
- b Where the applicant has more than one car loan an allowance can be made for the second loan where this is needed for the care and transporting of the child.
- c Allowances cannot usually be made for any other loans or debts unless they have been agreed as essential to meet the needs of the child.
- d An allowance can be made for formal maintenance payments for children outside the adoptive family where the parent is legally required to make these payments

This is not an exhaustive list and consideration will be given to making other allowances in exceptional circumstances.

7. Calculation of income

7.1 Most income will be taken into account in full including the following

- a Net earnings plus bonuses
- b Occupational Pensions;
- c All State Benefits and Tax Credits, [except those shown in 7.2 (below) which are disregarded];
- d Annuity income/investment received;
- e Trust income;
- f Rent from boarders or non-dependent relatives living in the home.

7.2 The following income will be disregarded in this section of the assessment, but will have been considered when examining the family's requirements:-

- a Attendance Allowance/Disability Living Allowance, (care component and mobility); PIP;
- b Invalid Care Allowance;
- c Housing Benefit;
- d Income Support in respect of specified expenses to maintain the home;

7.3 Capital resources will not be taken into account for the Financial Assessment. However, interest earned from capital resources will be included in the income.

8. Financial Support payable

8.1 Having established the family's requirements and income, the income will be deducted from the requirements. If there is a surplus, no financial support will be payable. If there is a shortfall then this is the amount that will be paid unless it exceeds the Bridgend Adoption Allowance rate (the Adoption Allowance Rate will be the same as the local authority Level 1 fostering rate- with the adoption allowance being paid minus Child Benefit, which can be claimed separately).

8.2 Information about the Financial Support will be given to the adopter(s) in writing. This will show how the Financial Support has been calculated, the amount to be paid, the date on which the first or, where applicable, the only payment, will be made and the frequency of payments, if relevant. Any conditions attached to the Financial Support, the arrangements and procedures for review, variation and termination of the Financial Support will also be provided, as well as the Complaints Procedure.

9. Review

9.1 The Financial Support will be reviewed on an annual basis, usually on the anniversary date of the first Financial Assessment.

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**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE**

5 JANUARY 2015

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF SAFEGUARDING & FAMILY SUPPORT

**INFORMAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – JANUARY 2015 to AUGUST
2015**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek approval for the proposed Informal Forward Work programme covering the period from January 2015 to August 2015.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The report links to the following Corporate 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 The Cabinet Committee manages its business through the Formal and Informal Forward Work Programmes agreed regularly throughout the year.

4. Current Situation

- 4.1 Appendix 1 details the reports which are being proposed for inclusion in future Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committees.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

- 5.1 None.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no equality implications.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 None.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the Informal Forward Work Programme appended to the report and consider whether it wishes to propose any other items for inclusion.

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Background Documents

None.

CABINET COMMITTEE –CORPORATE PARENTING INFORMAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Item	Title of Report	Corporate Consultees	Date of Meeting	Contact Officer
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
1.	Inspection of: Safeguarding and Care Planning of Looked After Children and Care Leavers, who exhibit 'vulnerable or risky behaviours. Inspection 10 – 13 February 2014		January 2015	Colin Turner Head of Safeguarding & Family Support Telephone: 01656 642314 Email: colin.turner@bridgend.gov.uk
2.	LAC Awards		January 2015	Colin Turner Head of Safeguarding & Family Support Telephone: 01656 642314 Email: colin.turner@bridgend.gov.uk
3.	Informal Forward Work Programme		January 2015	Colin Turner Head of Safeguarding & Family Support Telephone: 01656 642314 Email: colin.turner@bridgend.gov.uk
4.	Adoption Allowance Policy		January 2015	Colin Turner Head of Safeguarding & Family Support Telephone: 01656 642314 Email: colin.turner@bridgend.gov.uk
5.	Update of progress made to increase the number of in-house foster carers and placements within Bridgend		April 2015	Colin Turner Head of Safeguarding & Family Support Telephone: 01656 642314 Email: colin.turner@bridgend.gov.uk
6.	Overview of current regulated residential child care provision in Bridgend		April 2015	Colin Turner Head of Safeguarding & Family Support Telephone: 01656 642314 Email: colin.turner@bridgend.gov.uk

Item	Title of Report	Corporate Consultees	Date of Meeting	Contact Officer
7.	Connecting Families "Edge of Care Project"		April 2015	Colin Turner Head of Safeguarding & Family Support Telephone: 01656 642314 Email: colin.turner@bridgend.gov.uk
8.	Update on the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy		July/August 2015	Colin Turner Head of Safeguarding & Family Support Telephone: 01656 642314 Email: colin.turner@bridgend.gov.uk
9.	IRO – Annual Report 2014/15		July/August 2015	Colin Turner Head of Safeguarding & Family Support Telephone: 01656 642314 Email: colin.turner@bridgend.gov.uk
10.	Residential Services Statements of Purpose		July/August 2015	Colin Turner Head of Safeguarding & Family Support Telephone: 01656 642314 Email: colin.turner@bridgend.gov.uk