

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2015 AT 10.00 AM**

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

M Gregory  
PJ White

MEJ Nott OBE  
HM Williams

CE Smith

HJ Townsend

Councillor E Dodd  
Councillor E P Foley  
Councillor E Venables  
Councillor K Watts  
Councillor D B F White

Officers:

Deborah McMillan	Corporate Director - Education & Transformation
Satwant Pryce	Head of Regeneration and Planning
Nicola Echanis	Head of Strategy Partnerships & Commissioning
Mark Lewis	Group Manager Integrated Family Support
Natalie Silcox	Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services
Sarah Daniel	Democratic Services Officer - Committees

113. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following officers/ Members for the reasons so stated:

Councillor R Jenkins – Family Commitment

114. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

115. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee dated 12 October 2015 be approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting

116. REQUEST TO PROVIDE PARENT AND CHILD PLACEMENT VIA THE IN HOUSE FOSTERING SERVICE

The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services submitted a report to Committee with a proposal to establish and provide an in house parent and child fostering service and also to update the Committee on the current arrangements for commissioning the placements from external providers and outlined the potential benefits of taking a new approach which included reduced costs.

The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services explained that BCBC was currently unable to provide an in-house service offering parent and child fostering placements. She explained that if required, parent and child (typically mother and baby only) placements were provided by commissioning the placements through a range of independent fostering agencies (IFA's) via the children commissioning support resource (CCSR). She added that the cost of commissioning the external parent and child placements was significant, totalling an expenditure of £248,256.06 in 2014/2015.

The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services informed Members that it was determined via the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4C's) that there was a gap in provision for parent and child placements across Wales and in response a number of the larger independent fostering agencies (IFA's) established such a provision, within the framework parameters. Currently, the standard level 1 parent and child placement costs were £1,364.70 per week and a level 2 placement costs were £1,650 per week. Placements were initially set up for a 12-16 week assessment period but could last the length of care proceedings, namely 26 weeks. She added that the Local Authority commissioned 12 parent and child placements in 2014/2015, 11 at level 1 and 1 at level 2, resulting in a cumulative spend of £247,656.25. The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services further added that as at 18th September 2015, there were 13 active mother and baby placements that had, in the financial year, cost the Local Authority £266,587.03 and as at the 31st October 2015 we have 8 referrals (a further 3 at the time of Committee) for potential parent and child placements for unborn babies.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing concluded that she was positive that BCBC could provide a better in house service which would also include a provision for the fathers which was currently not on offer through the IFAs

A Member welcomed the report and stated that there would be a lot of positives to come from it, he added that it was good that BCBC would be able to keep more children in the Borough and was pleased to hear that the standards would not be lowered.

A Member asked how the cost savings were so high which equated to an almost 50% saving, he was concerned that BCBC would have to lower the standard of service in order to achieve such a high level of savings. The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services stated that there would be no difference in the level of service offered with the in house provision and that the costs were currently high because there was a niche in the market so the IFAs were making a large profit. She added that many different local authorities had made provisions for their own in house services and were seeing vast savings.

A Member noted from the report that an IFA Parent and Child placement would end after a 12 week assessment but that the Authority had been faced with significant delays with courts directing that the parent and child placement should continue until the Final Hearing at 26 weeks. He asked Officers if they had any knowledge when this would resolve as it was having a financial impact on the Authority. The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services stated that the Authority could not remove the child too early and that children were assessed if they were at risk of harm. She added that they go through a Legal surgery process for each child and if they removed a child too early they would be seen to be predetermining the decisions of the Courts

The Leader stated that he was pleased to see the improvement of service for clients and welcomed the report. He added that the savings would be very beneficial to the Authority and questioned why this could not have been put in place sooner and asked what stage in commissioning the service the Authority were at. The Group Manager

Childrens Regulated Services replied that it had not been an easy scheme to set up and the Authority had to set up to very specific regulations and ensure that specific training was available to foster carers. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing added that a tight project plan would be put in place to drive the project forward to be operational within a 6-9month time-frame, she added that a number of foster carers had already expressed an interest to the Authority in being a part of the service.

A Member asked how the foster carers would monitor the parent of the child that they have in their care. The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services stated that all homes were checked by the Health and Safety team and that the mother and child would be in the same bedroom together with an understanding that the foster carer could enter at any time.

A Member asked if the Authority would speak to the existing foster carers at the IFAs to see if they would be interested in coming over to the Authority. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing stated that the Authority would be offering competitive allowances and an excellent bespoke training package. She added that there would also be a marketing campaign launched to attract potential foster carers.

The Deputy Leader welcomed the report and asked if it was possible to now get the process started as soon as was practicably possible, including the amendment and approval to the Statement of Purpose to avoid any delays in the project.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee:

1. Took note of the information contained within the report and agreed to bring forward proposals to make changes to the existing Bridgend Foster Care Statement of Purpose to include the ability to offer parent and child foster placements in house.
2. Agreed that a Parent and Child fostering service be added to the Statement of Purpose for Bridgend Foster Care.

117. CHILDRENS COMMISSIONING CONSORTIUM CYMRU (4CS) FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services provided Committee with an update on the work being undertaken by the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs) and their forward work programme

The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services explained that the 4Cs was originally formed by the 10 South East Wales Improvement Collaboration authorities, 4Cs was renamed and expanded in 2012 to include five Mid and West Wales authorities. She explained that the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4C's) was a partnership of authorities across Wales who worked together to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people to achieve value for money through working together collaboratively. She further added that a Board that included Heads of Childrens Services governs the 4Cs work programme.

The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services informed the Committee that as well as significant cost savings, benefits included improved management information, consistent and secure collaborative tools and processes across authorities to facilitate individual placement matching, contract award and contract monitoring, collaborative risk management, and quality assurance of providers; sustained reduction in prices; and an environment of partnership with the independent sector to commission new sustainable care models.

The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services stated that Participation and Co-Production with young people with care experience was well embedded in all 4Cs developmental work. She

added that Participation in the 4Cs Consortium presented collaborative opportunities for children's social care within an acknowledged environment in which development and delivery of social care services was both complex and challenging. She added that over 91% of young people who responded to the 2014 Framework 360 Outcomes Survey felt their outcomes were being met by their placement most or all of the time.

The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services stated that significant progress had been made by the (4Cs) to improve the way local authorities commission looked after children (LAC) placement services. She informed Members that in 2012 4C's launched the first collaborative social care Frameworks in Wales for Fostering and Residential LAC placement services, BCBC staff were involved in the original, scoping, tendering and interview process. The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services stated that year on year significant cost savings had been achieved as a result of the collaborative approach taken by 4Cs to placement commissioning. She explained that £79 million per annum was spent on independent sector LAC placements by 4Cs authorities. Over the life of the current Placement Frameworks projected savings are £6.18m in actual cost avoidance, with potential cost avoidance being estimated at £10.68m

A member stated that they were pleased to see that the Authority had improved a service that would now be far more efficient. He asked for further clarification on how year on year cost savings were being achieved. The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services confirmed that collaborative working had allowed stronger negotiations for placements. She added that bespoke packages were put together to enable service users to move out of residential care and receive in house provisions.

The Cabinet Member Childrens Social Services and Equalities stated it was pleasing to see that an Independent assessment for providers was in place therefore it was satisfying to know that children would be provided with a good quality placement. The Deputy Leader also added that he was reassured that the standard of placements would not be lowered and noted the quality assurance.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee took note of the information contained within the report.

118. WHEN I AM READY

The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services provided the Committee with information about the "When I am Ready Scheme"

She explained that the scheme which comes into force on the 1 April 2016 having been developed by Welsh Government in partnership with Local Government and key third sector partners to enable eligible care leavers to continue to live with their foster carers once they attain 18 years of age. The Social Services and Wellbeing Act (SSWBA) uses the term post 18 living arrangement to describe a situation where a care leaver who has turned 18 years of age continues to live with his or her foster parent in an arrangement facilitated by the Local Authority.

The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services stated that 'When I Am Ready' would be different to supported lodgings, which were governed by a separate statutory framework. She added that supported lodgings were primarily a housing scheme for vulnerable young people, and did not operate on the familial model promoted by 'When I Am Ready'. She further added that supported lodgings placements were financed primarily by supporting people grant monies. The tax and benefit rules were also different especially in relation to qualifying care relief for the providers.

The Group Manager Children's Regulated Services informed members that the main aim for 'When I am Ready' were:

- To provide stability and continuity for young people leaving foster care as they prepared for independent living
- To improve the life chances of Looked After Children
- To provide Looked After Children with increased opportunities to exercise choice and control over their lives

The Group Manager Children's Regulated Services further informed the Committee that a 'When I am Ready' agreement may be made where:

- The young person was a Looked After Child immediately prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and is living with foster carers in a placement arranged by the Local Authority (this includes in house, relative or Independent provider foster placements); and
- The young person is deemed, under current legislation, to be an eligible child within the meaning of the Children Act 1989 immediately before they reached 18 years of age (from 1st April 2016 the term 'eligible child' will be replaced with the term category 1 young person under the SSWBA); and
- The young person and the foster carers both wish to enter into a 'When I Am Ready' agreement and the arrangement has been set out in the young person's pathway plan; and
- The Local Authority is satisfied that such an arrangement is consistent with the young person's wellbeing; and
- A proportion of the allowance paid to the 'When I Am Ready' carer will be paid by the Local Authority.

The Cabinet Member for Childrens Social Services and Equalities asked Officers if there was any indication what the financial implications would be prior to the Government information that was set to be made available in January 2016 regarding the allowance rates payable and whether it was a budgetary pressure for the Authority or not. The Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing stated that the Authority was still not clear as WG were yet to clarify the position and that the finance department were aware of the impending pressures. She added that the costs associated with 'When I Am Ready' would be offset by the Universal Benefit.

A Member asked how a child would be eligible for 'When I Am Ready' and if they contributed towards the costs of the scheme if they were in employment. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing advised that the young person was not in education or training a proportion of their benefits would be used towards the cost of the placement. The same would also apply if they were in employment.

The Deputy Leader asked what the differences were between supported living and 'When I Am Ready'. The Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services advised Members that with the Supported Living provision the young person would not know the adult that they would live with. With 'When I Am Ready' the young person would stay with the family that they had previously been placed with

The Leader stated that he was concerned at the lack of financial information from WG and asked Officers if they were confident that we would have further information in January. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing stated that she hoped it would be January that they would have further information although it was not certain to be the case. She added that they would need cabinet approval for any further changes so that they would be ready to launch in April 2016.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee noted the information contained within the report

119. UPDATE OF THE REVIEW AND RESTRUCTURE OF SAFEGUARDING AND FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing provided an update of the review and restructure of Safeguarding and family Support Services that commenced in November 2014 to the Committee.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing explained that in November and December 2014 employees were consulted on proposals to re-structure the former Safeguarding and Family Support Service. During the period of consultation, extensive feedback was received from individual employees and teams. She added that consideration of the feedback from the consultation exercise consequently resulted in revisions being made to the proposed structure which was subject to a further consultation exercise in February and March 2015

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed Committee that the implementation of the new structure commenced in April 2015 and was completed in July 2015. She added that staff from the previous five safeguarding teams were co-located within one of three newly formed safeguarding hubs- East, North and West of the county. Each hub has a team manager who leads a team comprising of a deputy manager, senior practitioner, social workers, social work assistants and contact workers

She advised the Committee that a working group on recruitment and retention were tasked with focussing on:

- Implementing the new staff structure;
- Improving the learning and development arrangements;
- Developing more attractive recruitment materials;
- Marketing and promoting BCBC as an employer of choice;
- Creating capacity by developing a flexible bank of qualified, experienced social workers who would be able to support the service if and when required.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing advised that Investigating why people leave and obtaining accurate information could be difficult. Therefore, in order to focus on the retention of the current workforce, a staff survey was undertaken in July/August 2015, the outcomes of which were being considered in addition to the routine exit interviews. The survey was issued specifically to qualified social workers, senior practitioners, deputy team managers and team managers in the front line Safeguarding teams, and was undertaken over a four week period to gain a better understanding of employees' views. The response rate was 69%, with 45 responses from a potential of 65.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed members that it was recognised that a high number of newly qualified Social Workers had been recruited which meant that the overall number of Social Workers with less than two years' experience continued to present a real challenge for the service. She added that it also placed a pressure on managerial capacity to provide adequate support, which was essential to enable newly qualified Social Workers to become experienced and confident practitioners who would want to continue to work in BCBC. She advised that additional measures had been put in place to support the newly qualified Social Workers so that they were better equipped to undertake the role and feel more confident and resilient; these included:

- The First Year in Practice programme has been updated and is being implemented on a mandatory basis;

- Consultant Social Workers based in the hubs providing direct support to staff through case mentoring, direct observation of practice and reflection and peer supervision.

The Cabinet Member Children's Social Services and Equalities asked Officers how the senior social worker vacancies were advertised and how competitive the salary was in comparison to neighbouring authorities. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing stated that they had worked closely with HR to create the job advert and comprehensive training induction when Social Workers join the Authority. She stated that vacancies were advertised as a rolling advert on the BCBC website. She added that recent Job Evaluations had made it difficult to be competitive with the salary, however Bridgend has a system in place whereby after 2 years of working for the Authority the Social Workers undergo assessments and if they prove their competency they are able to progress to a senior social worker and therefore move up the salary grading system. Other Local Authority's the Social Worker would start at a higher salary but were unable to progress higher. She advised that it was also difficult to retain Social Workers in Bridgend as it was easy for them to move to another local authority in South Wales due to its convenient location and proximity to the M4.

The Cabinet Member Children's Social Services and Equalities informed members that she had spoken with Social Workers at the Authority and after a lot of transition they were now more settled and happier in their roles. She added that the integrated hubs were working well and also that managers were more involved with the team and received regular updates from them. She stated that the Head of Safeguarding and Assessment was settling in well into her role and that 2016 was looking positive. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing added that currently there were 6 agency workers at Bridgend which was hoped would be reduced in 2016 but in comparison with other local authorities this was relatively low.

A member asked if professional development was a motivator in social workers and also if distance learning was available to them to enhance their development. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing advised that the National Framework has an expectation that Social Workers would meet the minimum requirements during their first year in practice which included demonstrating that they had completed 90 hours of training per year. She explained that Social Workers had to register and pay a registration fee each year to the Care Council for Wales for them to be able to practice in Wales. She added that Social Workers were supported by the Authority and they try to ensure that they are matched to training that was relevant to their role. She also advised that they provided quality practice placements for Social Workers at studying at University. The Cabinet Member for Children's Social Services and Equalities informed members that she had recently spoken with a student Social Worker who was studying at Bridgend College who had come to the Authority to on a practice placement and told her that they would be very keen to work for the Authority after they had qualified as they felt the quality of the practice placement they were given was very good.

The Deputy Leader asked if there was a timescale for developing MASH and when it was likely to be taken forward as there were a high number of referrals coming through from South Wales Police that hadn't gone through basic screening first. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation stated that the issue was well recognised and was in issue for SWP to deal with in their internal processes, she added that they had applied for funding to be able to look at these issues. She added that the police do need to let the Authority know of any incidents and it was for the Authority to determine if intervention was required from Social Services. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation advised Members that the Strategic Group and Programme Board were looking to progress with the proposals within the next 6 months which required restructuring of teams, processes and ICT and agreed that it needed to be in place as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet noted the content of the report

120. UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION STRATEGY

The Group Manager Integrated Working and Family Support submitted a report to Cabinet Committee on the progress of the implementation of the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy. He advised members that there was a significant re-structure of Early Intervention and Family Support Services that encompassed a wide range of services that had previously existed under separate management arrangements, with separate referral systems. This had resulted in a move from an individual service based model (Youth Service, Educational Welfare) to a locality/hub based model.

The Group Manager Integrated Working and Family Support explained that BCBC now has three locality Early Help Hubs (North, West and East of the County Borough) made up of a range of roles that included

- Family Support Workers
- Education Welfare Officers
- Family Engagement Officers
- Lead Workers
- Counsellors
- Young Carers Co-ordinator

The Group Manager Integrated Working and Family Support added that the restructure of all of the services Early Intervention and Family Support generated a budget saving of £730k as part of the 2015/16 MTFs, the financial savings were predominately generated from streamlining management and back office functions. He advised members that the re-structured services had been operational since April 2015. However, some of the new processes, that included a simplified referral arrangement (one front door) and the re-direction of inappropriate contacts from the Safeguarding Assessment Team commenced in June 2015. He added that another positive outcome linked with the re-structure was the number of Safeguarding Cases that had been 'stepped down' into Early Help Services.

The Group Manager Integrated Working and Family Support advised Cabinet Committee that work was underway to bring together the Authority's Early Intervention and Prevention and Looked After Children Placement and Permanency Strategies with a joint action plan, in order to ensure service priorities were agreed and that accountability was attributed correctly.

The Cabinet Member Adult Social Care and Health and Wellbeing asked if there had been any indication from WG regarding further grant funding beyond 2016. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation stated that this had been a concern but there had been direction from politicians that the support would continue for at least a further year. She added WG were looking to combine two grants; Families First and Flying Start.

The Deputy Leader stated that no Authority would want to give up control over their funding as this does not give them flexibility and creates more conditions. He added that all parties recognised the full value of the grant schemes and the successful delivery of results.

A Member asked if there was a risk of duplication with the various schemes including Integrated Family Support and Joint Assessment Family Framework. The Group Manager Integrated Family Support advised that by co-locating the services and having



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a single point of contact for the service this had allowed better co-ordination of the schemes and avoided the duplication of service.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet Committee noted the report.

121. URGENT ITEMS

None

The meeting closed at 12.04 pm