

CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING - WEDNESDAY, 4 MARCH 2020

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 4 MARCH 2020 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor PJ White – Chairperson

NA Burnett
T Giffard
HM Williams

N Clarke
CA Green

HJ David
D Patel

DK Edwards
CE Smith

Apologies for Absence

MC Clarke, J Gebbie, RM James, DBF White and RE Young

Officers:

Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Julie Ellams	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Laura Kinsey	Head of Children's Social Care
Mark Lewis	Group Manager - Integrated Working
Iain McMillan	Group Manager - Case Management & Transition
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive
David Wright	Family Support Services Manager

208. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

209. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of 4th September 2019 be approved as a true and accurate record.

210. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN REDUCTION STRATEGY & EARLY HELP & SAFEGUARDING BOARD STRATEGY

The Head of Children's Social Care presented a report updating the Committee on the work of the Welsh Government National Technical Group which was presented to Corporate Parenting on 29th May 2019, and set out the actions that the Local Authority had undertaken since that date in respect of its implementation of its Looked after Children (LAC) reduction strategy.

The Head of Children's Social Care provided a background to progress made and the drafting of a new action plan which would refocus on the crosscutting directorate activity. She outlined the LAC Reduction Expectation Strategy, the launch of the Permanency Monitoring Group and the Joint Action Plan shortly to be presented to the Early Help and Safeguarding board.

The Leader stated that he was reassured that progress was being made however there had been a small rise in the number of LAC in the last 12 months and he asked if it could be the start of a trend. He also asked what the impact was of the Reunification Support Worker posts in the Fostering Service and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) reunification toolkit. The Head of Children's

Social Care explained that there had been an issue with a small number of complex needs children however there was no sharp increase and this was not the direction of travel. She acknowledged that there had been an impact on numbers from large sibling groups. With regard to the Reunification Support Worker posts, two people were in post and trained and a cohort of cases had been identified for them to work with. The other 2 posts had been re-advertised and they were confident they would be appointing shortly. The key to the NSPCC toolkit was assessment and the process in place was appropriate.

A member asked if there was any improvement in foster care recruitment under Cwm Taf. She was advised that recruitment was moving in the right direction. The Group Manager Integrated Working and Family Support explained that working with Cwm Taf was hugely positive. The Youth Justice Service (which was under special measures) now had a dedicated health worker and could draw down on significant additional money linked to the ICF. The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing added that Cwm Taf had been very positive from a children's services perspective in terms of strong links and established governance processes in terms of joint working.

A member asked if the authority was engaging with the academic world. She added that Cardiff University had a great deal of knowledge in this area that they could share. The Corporate Director- Education and Family Support replied that he was not aware of any work on a local level however there had been connections with the universities through advisory groups and work streams. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing explained that there had recently been discussions regarding the best way to capitalise on this knowledge. She added that Welsh Government had recently visited all 22 authorities to discuss looked after children. They then submitted an information report into the MAG group with a number of recommendations and suggestions for further research and identifying best practice. The Family Support Services Manager referred to work with South Wales Police to intervene earlier as a result of research and also work with the University of South Wales in regard to families who had already had children removed. The Leader stated that the Wales Centre for Public Policy were based at Cardiff University and that they had offered to provide research if required.

A member asked if any hotspots had been identified within the borough which could be targeted. The Head of Children's Social Care replied that there were no specific hotspots with LAC spread across the three teams in the borough. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing explained that there appeared to be themes rather than geographical hotspots and that a summary document would be presented to the next meeting for further discussion. There would also be a breakdown of LAC in Bridgend including case studies.

A member asked about LAC moving to Guardianship Orders and asked about the criteria for this, how long it would take and why it had not been considered before. The Group Manager – Case Management and Transition explained the process and added that there were a number of reasons why such an order might not be appropriate.

The Leader referred to out of county and out of country placements and asked if there was a way of ensuring a child remained in such a placement if it was the best place for that child. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing explained that it would be helpful to look at the LAC population in various groups such as age groups, reasons and categories. The Head of Children's Social Care reported that 87 children had been placed outside the local authority but within Wales, 7 children were in England but more than half of those were with relatives and in the right place.

The Group Manager – Case Management and Transition provided further information regarding arrangements between guardians, parents and children, support plans and

CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING - WEDNESDAY, 4 MARCH 2020

kinship carers. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support added that Kinship carers were registered foster carers with an allocated social worker. They underwent an annual review for core competencies and this was a robust process.

A member asked if the authority had benefited from the introduction of the National Adoption Service. The Head of Children's Social Care explained that the regional approach was beneficial with children being placed more quickly. There was still a shortage of adopters but it was an improving picture.

The Corporate Director for Social Services and Wellbeing concluded that further information would be submitted to a future meeting including an update on the Baby in Mind service. 87% of babies who had been supported during 2018-19 by the Baby in Mind team had been prevented from becoming looked after. The Group Manager, Integrated Working and Family Support explained that the authority was a finalist for an accolade for this work.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help thanked the team and the officers for their "one council" approach.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help and the Corporate Director for Social Services and Wellbeing updated the Committee following their attendance at the Social Services Policy Group Conference. They explained that with the continuing rise in profile, they should revisit their role to better improve outcomes long term. Consideration could be given to:

- a better term than "Looked After Children"
- engaging more with children who had experienced care
- inviting representatives from Health and the Police
- considering alternative settings
- inviting LAC who went on to University
- inviting foster families
- presentations to Full Council
- providing an environment where parties could talk informally
- welcoming real life experiences
- inviting Head teacher representatives, third sector representatives and the advocacy service
- looking at influencing the School Admissions Policy and Apprenticeship schemes

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing agreed to look into these and other suggestions and to report back.

211. URGENT ITEMS

None

212. THANKS TO CORPORATE DIRECTOR - SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

The Leader advised the Committee that this was the Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing's last meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting and that she was due to leave shortly. He thanked her for the experience, advice and guidance she had given and together with the Chairperson, Members and Officers, he thanked her for her support and for keeping the authority safe.

CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING - WEDNESDAY, 4 MARCH 2020

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing thanked officers and the Committee for their warm wishes and replied that it had been a privilege and that she had loved her job. She always felt supported and she appreciated the respectful and challenging relationship with Members.

The meeting closed at 11:40