

CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING - THURSDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2020

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING HELD IN REMOTELY VIA SKYPE FOR BUSINESS ON THURSDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2020 AT 14:00

Present

Councillor – Chairperson

NA Burnett	N Clarke	HJ David	DK Edwards
J Gebbie	T Giffard	CA Green	RM James
D Patel	CE Smith	HM Williams	RE Young

Officers:

Nicola Echanis	Head of Education & Family Support
Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Laura Kinsey	Head of Children's Social Care
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Michael Pitman	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive

213. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

214. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting dated 4 March 2020, be approved as a true and accurate record.

215. SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN DURING COVID 19

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing presented a report, the purpose of which, was to provide Members with an overview of the support and continuity planning for our most vulnerable children during Covid-19.

She commenced her report, by paying tribute to the vulnerable children and their families in the Bridgend County Borough, for the way they had positively reacted in what had been to date a very pressurised and at times distressing and difficult year for them due to the pandemic.

The report she felt, reflected a comprehensive assessment of how the Authority worked as a 'One Council' when it adapted very quickly last March to the threat of the virus. In accordance with Welsh Government guidance Social Services and its partners continued the safeguarding of the most vulnerable and their families, through largely new digital methods, as face to face contact was in most cases not possible due to Covid-19.

Though most staff supporting clients had to work from home like the majority of other Council staff, the MASH team continued to operate on a reduced team from the office in Ravenscourt, Bridgend.

Paragraph 3.3 of the report, provided in table format data on Children's Social Care activities during the period from April to September 2020. The data shown in this part of the report, gave a positive picture in terms of the high levels of performance that were

CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING - THURSDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2020

maintained in lockdown, in respect of assessments, visits to children (mostly remotely) and holding of Child Protection Conferences within the required statutory timescales.

As alluded to above, the Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that the MASH team together with general enquiries staff to answer queries and calls, were office based. There were also remote meetings with children and their families etc, which although serving their purpose, were more challenging than face to face interactions as would be the case in normal pre-Covid circumstances.

Paragraph 3.6 of the report outlined the support avenues in place for vulnerable learners via Education and Family Support Teams and Children's Social Care, for Members information.

The most recent version of the full Safeguarding Service Plan was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

In light of the Welsh Government Announcement that a "Circuit Breaker Lockdown" or "Fire Break" would come into force between 6pm, Friday 23rd October 2020 until Monday 9th November 2020, the decision was made to review and update the Children's Services Service Plan in line with the Guidance that had been issued. An addendum outlining temporary changes in approaches was implemented for this specific period and could be found as an Appendix (to the report).

In addition to the statutory services/functions covered in the Service Plan, the Council also responded to the need to provide support to our most vulnerable children and young people during the school holidays and established bespoke provision to achieve this.

The Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate was able to make good use of Welsh Government funding to provide activities and support during the summer period, explained the Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing. 20 days of activities were provided, supporting 39 young people who were registered or classed as vulnerable, and with 259 sessions provided to young people over the four week period.

Additionally, she advised that a programme was supported for young people with additional needs who would normally have accessed the Discovery Days respite programme during the summer period.

The Chairperson commended the report and she was aware of the casework Officers had been undertaking, since lockdown commenced and the enquiries and referrals Members had also dealt with, particularly with regards to concerns over potential lack of contact between statutory support agencies and LAC. The report however, set out how these concerns could now be allayed and that support has been maintained for our most vulnerable in society, though in a different way to that previously, in light of coronavirus.

A Member asked how Covid-19 and its restrictions had affected LAC's etc everyday life activities, ie the extent of interruptions to their normal routine as part of everyday life.

The Head of Children's Services advised, that Foster families and Residential Care support avenues had continued as before Covid and apart from the social distancing restrictions and any interruptions to education, normal routines had applied. There were some restrictions however, that everyone else had also had to face, such as visits to the dentist and GP where PPE equipment had had to be worn for any invasive treatment/procedures.

The Head of Children's Services added that she was pleased to inform the Committee that statutory reviews for LAC had also been maintained since the end of March and within the relevant timescales also.

RESOLVED: That Members noted the report.

216. CARE INSPECTORATE WALES (CIW - FORMERLY CSSIW) INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES

The Head of Children's Social Care presented a report, in order to share with Cabinet Committee, reports and associated Action Plans following the CIW inspections regarding Maple Tree House (September 2019, February 2020 and August 2020) and Harwood House (July 2019).

By way of some background information, she advised Members that Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) were responsible for inspecting all regulated care and support services, including Children's Homes, in Wales. Inspections consist of four key stages: 1) inspection planning and preparation, 2) the inspection visit, 3) feedback, and 4) reporting. During the process, inspectors would make judgements as to how well the service is performing under four core themes: 1) well-being; 2) care and support; 3) environment; and 4) leadership and management.

In the case of children's homes, CIW would make annual inspections as part of their rolling programme. There were two main types of inspections, namely Full and Focused and an explanation as to what was entailed in respect of each of these, was contained in paragraph 3.2 of the report.

Paragraph(s) 4 of the report, then gave a summary of the findings of the CIW inspections of each of the premises in question, with the Full Inspection Reports attached as Appendices to the covering report.

The Head of Children's Social Care referred Members to paragraph 4.6 of the report, where the CIW acknowledged that certain improvements listed here, had been made at Maple Tree House, following a further CIW inspection of this Home.

She then referred to the section of the report headed recommendations and next steps.

Action Plans had been developed in response to the recommendations made by CIW in respect of the Homes and these were attached at Appendices 5 and 6 of the report. These were monitored by the Group Manager - Placements and Provider Services Team, during supervision with the Residential Manager(s) and the Responsible Individual through their routine visits. As shown in the report, there were no outstanding actions for Harwood House and there was a comprehensive action plan and support package driving forward the changes and improvements required at Maple Tree House.

The Head of Children's Social Care advised that since the report before Members had been written, a further unannounced inspection had been made by CIW at Maple House and the Inspector had informed Social Services that massive progress had been made there since the original inspection was undertaken. The Improvement and Enforcement Panel since this had taken place, had also met and decided to lift restrictions they had previously put in place at Maple House (due to the improvements that had been achieved). The Panel had decided to take no further action due to previous non-compliance issues now having been met. The CIW Inspector had since submitted a written report, following this latest inspection, acknowledging the positive changes that had been put in place confirming that improvements in all areas of the home had been made, aside of in a small number of areas which was work in progress.

Members welcomed this update and the Leader asked if all the action points illustrated in the relevant agreed Action Plan, had now been carried out.

The Group Manager – Placements and Provider Services confirmed that most of these had been finalised and completed, though there was a few areas where work was still ongoing. He added that all four homes were now fully compliant in terms of regulations laid down by the CIW. These standards would be maintained, he assured Members.

The Deputy leader referred to paragraph 4.1.3 of the report, where it outlined that there was a new facility planned at the site of the former Brynmenyn Primary School. He asked if the date for the opening of this new facility was still on target and what would the benefits of this facility when compared to the one it was replacing.

The Head of Children’s Care confirmed that planning permission had now been granted for the new facility and that it was on target to open next year. She added that this would be in an improved more semi-rural location, with improved outdoor open space, which would assist children’s emotional and physical wellbeing. The building was also bigger than the current facility at Maple House and there would be an extra emergency bed provided there totalling three beds, whereby at the current facility there was only two.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee received and approved the updated Action Plans, as attached to the report.

217. **APPROVAL OF THE STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE FOR CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL CARE SERVICES**

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to provide Members with the revised statements of purpose for the current children and young people’s residential services provision in Bridgend County Borough Council. It was a requirement under the Council’s constitution that these are presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee to approve.

He advised Members, that Bridgend County Borough Council currently has four children’s residential homes delivering services to children and young people aged 0-19 years, namely:-

- Maple Tree House;
- Sunny Bank;
- Bakers Way; and
- Harwood House

The introduction of The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (RISCA) came into force on the 2nd of April 2018. The purpose of the Act, was to build on the success of regulation in Wales and reflected the changing world of social care. It places service quality and improvement at the heart of the regulatory regime and strengthens protection for those who need it. Such regulation would move beyond compliance with minimum standards, and focus more on the quality of services and the impact which they have on people receiving them.

The Group Manager – Placements and Provider Services confirmed, that in the Autumn of 2018, all of the Council’s social services were registered to meet the requirements of the new legislation. Each in-house service provision has its own statement of purpose and these were attached at Appendices 1 – 4 of the report.

He advised the Committee that in terms of the above mentioned premises, Sunnybank and Maple Tree House, had the same Manager.

In line with the Regulations, the Group Manager – Placements and Provider Services confirmed, that the Statements of Purpose had now been subjected to their annual review and changes to the statements were detailed in paragraph 4.4 of the report. The revised Statements now more reflected a level of consistency across the 4 Homes, than had possibly previously been the case, he added.

The Chairperson confirmed that the report was very timely and made for interesting reading. Together with the supporting Statements of Purpose, it had put ambitions for our Care Homes firmly in place, with there being a clear perspective now in terms of aiming for the high standards in these facilities, the Directorate needs to be working to.

In terms of the revised Statements of Purpose, the Cabinet Member – Wellbeing and Future Generations asked if the staff at the Care Homes had been advised of these, as well as if there were any changes to their terms and conditions as a result of them being brought in.

The Group Manager – Placements and Provider Services confirmed that each of the Residential Managers at the Homes had confirmed any such changes that had been put in place to the staff that worked there. In terms of Maple Tree House and the revised staffing structure there, consultation had taken place with employees there regarding this.

The Leader asked if our children and young people had some involvement in the revised Statements of Purpose for reasons of service development, as well as receiving some recognition that ‘their voices were being heard.’

The Head of Children’s Social Care confirmed that this was the case. She then gave some examples of how children and young people were involved and listened to by the service, for the benefit of Members. She added that, their involvement was also registered in their records, which also formed part of any report’s to the CIW.

RESOLVED: That Members noted the content of the report and approved the Statement of Purpose for each of the 4 residential service provisions.

218. **REVISED STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE FOR CHILDREN'S FOSTERING SERVICES**

The Group Manager – Placements and Provider Services presented a report, in order to provide Members with the revised Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service in Bridgend County Borough Council. It was a requirement under the Council’s Constitution that these are presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee for approval.

He explained that the Fostering Service provided a range of foster care to children and young people who are looked after by Bridgend County Borough Council. The service offers the types of family care to children and young people from birth to 18 years of age, as were highlighted in paragraph 3.1 of the report.

The relevant provisions of The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (RISCA), came into force on 2nd April 2018. The purpose of the Act was to build on the success of regulation in Wales and reflected the changing world of social care. It placed service quality and improvement at the heart of the regulatory regime and strengthens protection for those who require this. Regulation will move beyond

compliance with minimum standards, and focus more on the quality of services and the impact which they have on the people receiving them.

The Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018 came into force on 29th April 2019 and sets out the Requirement of the Local Authority to prepare a Statement of Purpose and to keep it regularly under review, on an annual basis.

In line with the guide to compiling a Statement of Purpose that was provided under the above Act by Care Inspectorate Wales (April 2019), Bridgend Fostering Service had prepared its Statement of Purpose and this was included at Appendix 1 to the report.

In April 2020 the Statement of Purpose has been subjected to its annual review and changes to the statement were described in paragraph 4.4 of the report.

The Group Manager – Placements and Provider Services, then shared some of the salient points and key features of the Revised Statement of Purpose with Members.

The Leader asked if any further feedback could be given on the impact of Covid-19 on Foster Carers, as these were providing care for the majority of children we were supporting in their own homes. He added also, if any different support mechanisms that may have been put in place for these children since the pandemic came about, needed to be reflected in the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose.

The Group Manager – Placements and Provider Services, confirmed that Foster Carers were doing an incredible job particularly since the pandemic.

They had shown a very high level of resilience supporting their children during the hardest time imaginable, whilst also still having their other worries to deal with. Social Services staff have since last March, been monitoring how Foster Carers and Foster Children had been coping at least on a weekly basis through contact mainly by telephone or email, etc. The department had also developed a RAG status, in order to categorise different levels of support these families may have required during the ongoing crisis, in case any urgent home visits were required for priority placements by Social Workers, based on necessity.

He added that weekly newsletters had also been issued to Foster Carer families, highlighting updates and changes to the way services available were being provided, as well as giving them examples of ideas of activities that could be undertaken when families were subjected to periods of isolation during times of full lockdown.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet Committee noted the content of the report and approved the revised Statement of Purpose for Bridgend Fostering Service.

219. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.

The meeting closed at 16:00