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## Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr

### Bridgend County Borough Council



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Rhowch wybod i ni os mai Cymraeg yw eich  
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Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 / 643147 / 643694

Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Democratic Services

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Eich cyf / Your ref:

**Dyddiad/Date:** Thursday, 21 July 2022

Dear Councillor,

### **CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING**

A meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting will be held in the remotely - via Microsoft Teams on **Wednesday, 27 July 2022 at 14:00.**

### **AGENDA**

1. Apologies for Absence  
To receive apologies for absence from Members.
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 - 12  
To receive for approval the minutes of 02/03/2022
4. To receive a Presentation on the Bridgend Information, Advice and Assistance Service
5. Implementation Of A Foster Carer Charter 13 - 30
6. Proposed Corporate Parenting Development 31 - 36
7. Urgent Items  
To consider any other item(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in accordance with Part 4 (paragraph 4) of the Council Procedure Rules and which the person presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should be reason of special circumstances be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Note: Please note: Due to the current health and safety requirements this meeting will not be held at its usual location. This will be a virtual meeting and Members and Officers will be attending remotely. The meeting will be recorded for subsequent transmission via the Council's internet site which will be available as soon as practicable after the meeting. If you have any queries regarding this, please contact [cabinet\\_committee@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk) or tel. 01656 643147 / 643148.

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Yours faithfully

**K Watson**

Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy

Councillors:

F D Bletsoe  
JPD Blundell  
HJ David  
N Farr

Councillors

J Gebbie  
W R Goode  
J E Pratt  
JC Spanswick

Councillors

T Thomas  
A Wathan  
AJ Williams  
HM Williams

# Agenda Item 3

CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING - WEDNESDAY, 2 MARCH 2022

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 2 MARCH 2022 AT 14:00

## Present

Councillor J Gebbie – Chairperson

SE Baldwin  
DBF White

HJ David  
AJ Williams

D Patel

CE Smith

## Apologies for Absence

KL Rowlands and HM Williams

## Officers:

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Lynne Berry      | Group Manager Housing & Community Regeneration   |
| Julie Ellams     | Democratic Services Officer - Committees         |
| Raeanna Grainger | Independent Reviewing Service Manager            |
| Lindsay Harvey   | Corporate Director Education and Family Support  |
| Steven Howell    | Group Manager Placements & Provider Services     |
| Ryan Jones       | Strategic Housing Commissioning Manager          |
| Carys Lord       | Chief Officer - Finance, Performance & Change    |
| Claire Marchant  | Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing |
| Iain McMillan    | Group Manager - Case Management & Transition     |
| Michael Pitman   | Democratic Services Officer - Committees         |
| Mark Shephard    | Chief Executive                                  |

## 236. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

## 237. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting on the 14 October 2021 be approved as a true and accurate record.

## 238. UPDATE ON THE REMODELLING OF CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL SERVICES AND THE BRIDGEND FOSTERING SERVICE

The Group Manager, Placements and Provider Services presented a report providing an update on the remodelling of Children's Residential Services and updated information about Bridgend Foster Care service provision and developments that were underway.

The Group Manager, Placements and Provider Services provided a background on the work that had been undertaken as part of the Remodelling of Children's Residential Services in Bridgend since 2018. He identified the issues from staff engagement sessions undertaken at that time and the key elements of the new model. In January 2019 Children's Social Care reported to Corporate Parenting Committee on the Remodelling of Fostering Services. It was anticipated that the work would benefit the population of Care Experienced children, by providing improved placement choice, improved placement matching and more local placements. In addition it was identified that it would achieve cost savings contributing to the Directorate's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

The Group Manager, Placements and Provider Services then outlined the current situation and proposals. He explained that Residential Services had been remodelled, with Sunny Bank now offering Medium to Long Term Placements to children and young people aged 8-17 years. The Service had provided a safe and stable home to a number of young people, two of whom had lived there for over five years, one for four years and one for three years. Maple Tree House (MTH) had been open since 2018 offering a two bed emergency unit and a four bed assessment unit. It offered a therapeutic environment for children and young people, using a trauma informed approach to provide the most effective support possible, enabling them to understand their individual circumstances, develop resilience and self-care skills. The aim, during a young person's time at Maple Tree House was to provide them with consistency and routines and to enable them to develop trusting relationships that would support their recovery from trauma allowing them to gain the maximum benefit of any therapy that they received. Since April 2020 the service had faced a number of challenges linked with Non-Compliance with Regulatory Requirements and the Covid Pandemic, with its impact on staffing and the young people who were living at MTH. Despite these challenges the service achieved a positive inspection outcome in October 2020 and the understanding and confidence of the staff team had continued to improve. The next step was for the new Residential Hub to be built in Brynmenyn (re-locating Maple Tree House) and the old Brynmenyn Primary School had been demolished and the site cleared in readiness for construction work to commence during spring 2022 with an anticipated completion date in January/February 2023. Within this building there would also be office accommodation where the fostering and placements team would be co-located to support with identifying the right placement options for a young person following their time in the residential home.

The Group Manager, Placements and Provider Services explained that the role of Transitional Foster Carers was developed which identified that six foster carers were required, due to the demands of the role and the need to have an opportunity post placement for a short period of recovery and to have two carers available at any time to support other Transitional Carers who had a young person in placement. However, the service was only able to recruit three transitional foster carers. Two of these later made a decision to step away from that role as they wished to provide on-going care to a young person who they were looking after and one choosing to leave the role of foster carer altogether. Work had been undertaken to review the role and develop a policy which set out in detail the expectations and also the support available. The service was currently working with Golley Slater on a targeted recruitment campaign for Transitional Foster Carers that began in February 2022. He explained that the development of the therapeutic support for young people was at the heart of the remodelling work. Following unsuccessful recruitment for the psychologist, the service now employed a Behaviour Analyst. To further support the development of this model, nine members of staff and one liaison foster carer had been offered places on the "Practical Skills in Applied Behaviour Analysis" course at University of South Wales providing them with the opportunity, once they successfully completed the course, to undertake a competency based assessment and become a Registered Behaviour Technician with the Behaviour Analyst Certification Board.

The Group Manager, Placements and Provider Services explained that since 2018 the Service had identified the need to develop a new residential "pop up" service that could be made operational at short notice to provide accommodation to a young person/young adult who, due to their complex needs, could not be placed alongside others. This provision could provide, for example, an alternative to secure accommodation. Whenever the young person moved on from this accommodation the service could be "popped down" with staff being re-deployed across the other residential homes to provide cover for staff absences. This service would be registered

as a children's home but would also be able to support young people up to the age of 25 years. BCBC worked closely with Valleys to Coast (V2C) who identified a property where this service could be based. In 2021 V2C, supported by BCBC, successfully applied for Discretionary Integrated Care Funding (ICF) Grant, in order to renovate the property with all works being completed in January 2022. BCBC also secured Safe Accommodation revenue funding for 2021/22 and re-aligned the budget to allow for the recruitment of permanent staff for the service. They were currently in the process of recruiting staff and preparing all required documentation in order to apply to Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) for registration.

The Group Manager, Placements and Provider Services explained that In December 2021 the re-structure of the Fostering Service in Bridgend was completed. Bridgend Fostering was now divided into:

- General Fostering and Placements – Recruitment, assessing and supporting all general foster carers (including transitional foster carers) and placement services.
- Kinship and Permanence – Assessing and supporting Connected Persons Foster Carers, Permanence, "When I am Ready" carers, Supported Lodgings and Re-unification workers.

The service currently had 5 Liaison Carers, one of whom was a Connected Person Foster Carer. This service was currently being reviewed and further consideration being given to their role and its development including issues such as Out of Hours support for foster carers. He outlined the Post-Approval Learning and Development Framework for Foster Carers, the

purpose of which was to provide a basis for a national approach that could underpin a more consistent approach to learning and development for foster carers across Wales. The framework was being phased in gradually across the CTM region in line with Annual reviews due over the year. He added that the proposal regarding the fee payment to all general foster carers was successfully implemented. A draft eligibility and Fostering Allowances Policy had now been developed which would allow Connected Persons Carers to be assessed against the criteria and also be entitled to an "Additional Allowance" (formerly Fee). The Service did introduce the £250 reward scheme for carers who "refer a friend" however, this had had very limited impact on the number of referrals received.

The Group Manager, Placements and Provider Services reported that all new IFA placements were reviewed by the placement team within 16 weeks of the placement being made. However, it had been identified that a more formal multi- agency process was needed. The Terms of Reference for the Accommodation and Permanence Panel were currently being reviewed and consideration being given to reviewing these placements within this meeting. At the present time the number of children and young people who were placed with IFA foster carers was 45 which represented a significant reduction from 70 on the 31st March 2020. He added that in September 2021 Maethau Cymru/Foster Wales was launched with BCBC fostering service being named Maethau Pen y Bont/Bridgend Fostering and the Fostering Website updated. In January 2022 Bridgend Fostering launched its Social Media pages on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

The Group Manager, Placements and Provider Services explained that as at 23rd March 2021 within Bridgend Foster Care there were:

- 99 approved Fostering households for general foster placements
- 129 children placed with in-house general foster carers
- 56 approved Connected Persons fostering households

- 88 children placed with Connected Persons Foster Carers
- 65 children placed with independent fostering agencies

Bridgend Fostering had faced significant challenges during 2020 due to the Covid 19 pandemic but during this time had sought to provide on-going support to carers. In November 2019 funding was secured to recruit 4 re-unification workers whose main aims were to:

- support foster placements at risk of placement breakdown,
- support children to transition into step down provision (from residential and out of county placements) and
- support children to be reunified into the care of their birth family.

The Chairperson thanked the Group Manager, Placements and Provider Services for the comprehensive report. She added that she was particularly pleased to see the trauma informed approach being developed and asked how long it would usually take from someone expressing an interest to actually fostering.

The Group Manager, Placements and Provider Services replied that this could be achieved on average in around 3 months however there were sometimes delays beyond their control such as enhanced disclosure from DBS or delays getting medical records. He acknowledged that health colleagues had turned the information around quickly whenever possible.

The Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations thanked the officer for the report and also all those residents who had come forward and opened up their homes to be foster carers. She asked for reassurances around what had changed to reduce the number of placements before a young person found a permanent environment.

The Group Manager, Placements and Provider Services replied that with regard to placement stability, looking at the experience, knowledge and particular skills of the foster carers and ensuring they matched the needs of the child was a key issue. They were getting better at this and developing foster care profiles around families. If there were not enough foster carers then matching was tougher but they were continuing to work on and develop this area. There were Placement Support Workers within the teams who provided bespoke training, advice and guidance. There were also Reunification Workers to promote placement stability. The whole point of that was rather than allowing a placement to breakdown and a child having to move to a different foster placement, they tried to support the carers and the child to get to a point where that placement continued. They also had to put in some interim steps and guidance around things like increased visits at that time.

The Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations asked if there was data available to show how the impact of training and support services had reduced the breakdown of relationships.

The Group Manager, Placements and Provider Services replied that he did not have the information to hand but he would be able to track it if required.

The Chairperson referred to a time in the previous year when there were 437 accommodated in a foster placement which was an immense achievement for the service.

The Leader echoed the words in regard to achievement and progress and asked about the lack of interest in becoming a foster carer and if they had any idea what was causing this, the size of the problem and what could be done to address this. He also asked what

the conversion was for referrals to assessments and about support for siblings of foster children. He asked if the number of children about to leave provision to transition to independence gave flexibility to bring out of county children back into the Borough.

The Group Manager, Placements and Provider Services replied that from the initial phone call expressing an interest to an assessment, the dropout rate was around 60%. Then from the initial visit to the assessment, 80 to 85% would be approved. With regard to numbers dropping off, there had been considerable uncertainty with the pandemic. There had been challenges around recruitment and different jobs available with well-paid salaries. Inflation and energy costs were creating uncertainty and people were asking if they could afford it. A new Fostering Finance Policy was being submitted to Cabinet. He would be undertaking a review of allowances for foster carers to ensure they were not expected to look after children at their own expense.

The Cabinet Member for Communities thanked the team for their hard work and referred to the needs of the child and matching the appropriateness of that individual being placed with the right individual or couple. He asked what the service was doing around diversity of foster carers and how they were reaching minority groups and organisations of interest to see how they could promote fostering. With regard to the 60% dropout figure, he asked what barriers were in place.

The Group Manager, Placements and Provider Services replied that 60% was not an unusual figure. Some of the initial calls were general enquiries regarding the need for a spare bedroom or someone looking for a property in an area or wanting to understand more about the process. He thanked the Member for some of the ideas regarding support groups and added that they had been offered a vacant unit in a nearby shopping centre to offer support and recruitment activity. He was unable provide figures in relation to the level of diversity but would look into it. He added that recruitment did target myth busting taking away the idea that they had to be a stereotypical type of person. They welcomed applications from all backgrounds and areas.

The Chairperson referred to the complexity of some of the foster children and asked if the Behaviour Analysts were available to the foster carers and their skills could be utilised in that area.

The Group Manager, Placements and Provider Services replied that they had limited availability as there was currently only 1 analyst who had recently increased her hours from part time to full time to increase capacity. They would consider this on a case by case basis moving forward. As of January 2022, there was a maps service to support care experienced children where there were placement stability issues.

**RESOLVED** That the Corporate Parenting Committee noted the updated information contained within the report and supported the further development of the Bridgend Foster Care service as set out in the report.

239. **INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE (IRO) REPORT**

The Independent Reviewing Service Manager provided a report to Corporate Parenting Committee in line with the Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance (Wales) 2004. The report covered the period April 2020 to March 2021, just as the pandemic started and this presented a number of challenges across the Council.

The Independent Reviewing Service Manager explained that the Independent Reviewing Service had had some real successes within that time. They were able to keep a very high level of compliance in terms of Child Protection Case Conferences and Looked

After Children reviews. The IRO's chaired/reviewed 195 Initial Child Protection Case Conferences between April 2020 and March 2021 compared to 235 in the previous year. A total of 518 Review Child Protection Case Conferences between April 2020 and March 2021 were convened compared to 595 in the previous reporting period and 1,159 Looked After Child review meetings were held between April 2020 and March 2021 compared with 1,191 the previous reporting period. They had to take on a completely new way of working, utilising new technologies to ensure that everybody who participated in conferences and LAC reviews could take part. She was pleased to report the level of compliance in terms of those meetings and that COVID had not stopped consultation.

The Independent Reviewing Service Manager explained that Conference Chairs consulting with children who were party to a Child Protection Conference was an area they were working to improve. They successfully overcame various challenges to enable parents to take part in all conferences and LAC reviews and often had to be quite pragmatic and think outside the box. They were now undertaking all midpoint reviews across the board for all care experienced children as per the standards, and that was an achievement as not all local authorities had been able to do that. The Independent Reviewing Officers continued to undertake quality assurance exercises after every single meeting to provide a wealth of information to identify what was outstanding and help the Team Manager to make sure that they were aware of what work needed to be done. The number of children on the Child Protection Register and those that were looked after, fluctuated over the period but did remain stable. It was lower at the date of the meeting than it was in that period but pleasing to see that the numbers had not increased. Another real positive was that they had managed to significantly reduce the number of children that had been on the Child Protection Register for over 18 months which at its highest had been 44 children but it was currently 8. Various processes had been implemented to bring the figure down and it was really positive and not just due to the Independent Reviewing Service but due to Team Managers, the Principal Officer and everybody working together to really move the cases on.

The Independent Reviewing Service Manager explained that there were various new processes in place to ensure coordinated working and she was working very closely with the Safeguarding Officer looking at ways that they could develop their escalation of concerns process and that was working well. They had greater use of case mapping and family group conferencing supporting families and helping to bring those numbers of children on the register for a long period of time. Also over the same period, the Independent Reviewing Service received no complaints and they had managed to maintain stability in the team.

The Independent Reviewing Service Manager explained that there was a full time Team Manager, four full-time and four part-time IRO positions. In this period one part-time IRO has been on maternity leave. The service had experienced higher levels of sick leave compared to the last report and this had a significant impact on IRO caseloads and the use of agency IROs. They had one agency member of staff that had been really helpful and they had agreement for two additional posts currently being advertised.

The Independent Reviewing Service Manager concurred with the comments made by the Group Manager, Placements and Provider Services about the work of the reunification workers. There was a new process in place to get them involved at an earlier stage when a placement had been identified as being unstable and that was working well.

The Independent Reviewing Service Manager explained that in terms of figures, as a comparison from today to the period covered by the report, the LAC population was 375



and the number of children on the Child Protection Register was 173, the lowest it had been for a very long time

The Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and future Generations was pleased to see that the Conferences had taken place and asked if this was an opportunity to bring them forward and if the service was more or less efficient. She also asked what partners contributed and if relationships had improved.

The Independent Reviewing Service Manager replied that the timescales were set out in legislation and they did not bring them forward but they ensured that they were within the timescales. If the risk had reduced then they could bring them forward. They had not seen a difference in terms of efficiency but it was quite rigid in terms of legislation. Partnership working had improved and they made sure all the agencies were fully onboard.

The Chairperson was pleased to hear about hybrid working and asked if the team had enough time to process the information in between.

The Independent Reviewing Service Manager replied that they had talked at length about the importance of reflecting and with 2 more IRO's in the teams, there would be more opportunity to check in, to reflect, offload and discuss.

The Chairperson thanked the team for working above and beyond on traumatic and complex cases.

The Leader said he was pleased to see the action points were green. He was aware they were under acute pressure at the moment and pleased to see additional capacity and asked what action they would be taking in terms of safeguarding children. There were areas where they needed to make rapid improvements and was there anything they could do to help. He asked for information regarding the process from the first point of contact.

The Independent Reviewing Service Manager replied that a case would come to MASH and a decision would be made if a Child Protection Conference had been convened and she would be informed of this. She would do a quick audit to look at the suitability of that case and if there were immediate concerns she would discuss them with the Team Manager, Social Worker and the Chairperson. The first audit started at that point when they checked if all the steps had been followed correctly and if not they would address it. They would then do an outline child protection plan which was crucial in ensuring that the case was going to progress in the right way. The reviewed guidance was important in terms of the role of the Chairperson and put a lot more emphasis on the Chairperson, tracking and monitoring. There was also a very good escalation process in place thanks to the Principal Officer, Case Management. If she or the Chairperson escalated concerns to him, he would work with other people to map out a course of action. He had consultations with the social worker and sometimes the team manager to look at why some cases were stuck and then would take action to move them on. This had been fundamental in moving cases and bringing down the number of children on the Child Protection Register.

The Corporate Director for Social Services and Wellbeing stressed that the essential role of the IRO service was to provide quality assurance for their practice, and that was a real safety net in terms of the challenges around child protection and safeguarding work to ensure the service was stable, well led and managed. They were increasing capacity in the service because it was critically important that the caseloads in the IRO service were closer to the level of best practice. She paid tribute to the Independent

Reviewing Service Manager in terms of the work that she had been doing to support some of the challenges they had.

The Chairperson added that she was really encouraged to hear that there would be an IRO following a child. One of the biggest criticisms of children's social work was that they changed the social workers too often and would have to start all over again which could be very disruptive.

**RESOLVED:** The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the report and the IRO Service Action plan

240. **HOUSING FOR CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Chief Officer, Finance Performance and Change presented a report providing information to the Corporate Parenting Committee regarding the work being undertaken with regards to care experienced children and young people and their future accommodation needs. She explained that all Welsh Councils had recently been tasked by Welsh Government to examine their corporate parenting response in relation to care experienced children and young people and their future accommodation needs. Care leavers in Wales had a range of entitlements set out in social services legislation to ensure that they were properly accommodated. These were detailed in Appendix A to the report. The requirements placed on local authorities in this regard were detailed in section four of the report. It demonstrated a need for joint working not only across the authority but also with other agencies to ensure the cohort of young people received the level of support they required. There was joint working across social services and housing to support this cohort and more recently, work had been undertaken to consider how this may be improved to ensure a better understanding between the two services with regards to current service demand, current service availability and also future service provision. A proposed action plan to deliver these improvements was attached to the report. This would look at corporate outcomes, commissioning, joint working and projected needs to ensure the experience and outcomes for young people who required these services to progress, was improved. An Action Plan Working Group would be established at the first meeting to agree Terms of Reference. The membership of the group would include external agencies and they could also agree timelines for the completion of the works included within the action plan. She suggested that progress against that action plan should then be reported back to the Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Communities referred to the Action Plan and asked if the individuals concerned would be involved in the process. He said that it looked like they were trying to develop housing and not including individuals in the design of the service.

The Corporate Director for Social Services and Wellbeing replied that this was a fundamental point. There had been managerial workshops looking at the Barnardoes framework and a desktop exercise had been undertaken involving the young children. The supported accommodation projects were key in terms of quality assurance. They had also just appointed a new Corporate Parenting Officer and his role would be to take forward participation.

The Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations added that it was really pleasing to see this area under the spotlight in a Cabinet meeting. Young person's accommodation was important to all members and especially with care experienced children and young people. She asked if it would be possible to see timescales in the meeting so that they could get an understanding of when progress would be made. She

**CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING - WEDNESDAY, 2 MARCH 2022**

was really pleased that they were extending personal advisors support up to the age of 25.

The Leader asked for more information around timelines in the action plan.

The Corporate Director for Social Services and Wellbeing replied that it would be the role of Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting to monitor the delivery of the action plan. This would be submitted with timescales and progress made, to the next meeting where further monitoring of the Action Plan could be agreed.

**RESOLVED:** Corporate Parenting Committee noted the content of the report.

241. **URGENT ITEMS**

None

The meeting closed at 15:30

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## BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

27 JULY 2022

#### REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

##### IMPLEMENTATION OF A FOSTER CARER CHARTER

### 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting with an update into the development of a Foster Carer Charter for Bridgend Fostering Service; and to approve the adoption and implementation of the Charter on behalf of the Council as Corporate Parents.

### 2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-

- **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
- **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

### 3. Background

- 3.1 As part of Bridgend Fostering Service's Service Development Plan for 2022/23, a questionnaire was developed in conjunction with liaison foster carers and sent to all foster carers asking them a range of questions.

- 3.2 The questions included how satisfied foster carers are with the Service, what is working well and areas for improvement.
- 3.3 57 responses were received with scores ranging from “Happy” to “Extremely Unhappy”. Overall, most of the responses received were positive.
- 3.4 The key themes identified as requiring improvement were:
- Allowances
  - Communication
  - Support
  - Training and Development
- 3.5 Some of the comments received included:
- *Becoming very disillusioned with the lack of support and the failure to be treated as a professional.*
  - *Lack of support and communication. Feeling used and abused.*
  - *Communication between Departments and keeping foster carers updated with any information regarding the children in our care to make us feel appreciated. Volunteer drivers should be used again to take pressure off foster carers to allow us to look after the children in our care.*
  - *XX has been absolutely outstanding. She has been able to deal with a very complex and difficult case with grace and dignity but also with a firm hand to ensure the best possible outcome for our foster daughter. She has kept us updated every single step of the way and we feel confident that whatever the outcome for the child the right decision will be made as XX is extremely competent at what she does.*
  - *I would like to see foster carers opinions considered a little bit more in regard to matching in adoption. Foster Carers end up knowing these children better than anyone else.*
  - *I feel lots of carers go to private agencies as there has been no rise in payments in around 18 years. Who else would work for a company that doesn't appreciate the hard work of fostering.*
  - *No holiday allowance, no paid respite, no birthday allowance, no Christmas allowance.*
  - *Allowances and foster carer fees. Inflation affects foster carers too. There's not enough of a rise to compensate, look at the rise of fuel, gas and electricity. We don't get a minimum wage, we don't get holidays, we don't get sick pay. If you value your carers take this seriously or you'll end up losing them all to IFA's.*
  - *Great communication between Social Workers and ourselves, even throughout the Covid 19 pandemic.*
- 3.6 In addition to the above, a State of the Nation survey undertaken by The Fostering Network in 2021 highlighted that both foster carers and fostering services agree that

improving the status of foster carers in the team around the child is the number one thing that will change children's experience of foster care for the better.

- 3.7 Furthermore, since 2011, The Fostering Network has been campaigning for every fostering service to commit to a Foster Carers' Charter that sets out clear expectations for how foster carers should be treated, trained and supported which is agreed by the Corporate Parents, fostering service and foster carers. A Charter can help to build understanding between those involved in delivering care to children, promoting more cohesive working in the team around the child and improving experiences and outcomes for children in care.
- 3.8 The Foster Carers' Charter supports local authorities' responsibilities as Corporate Parents and sets out a framework of rights and expectations for foster carers. It sets out mutual roles and responsibilities, which are 'owned' by both foster carers and the fostering service. It covers issues such as supervision, involvement in planning and decision making, information and payments.

#### **4. Current situation/proposal**

- 4.1 In order to address some of the areas for improvement identified within the Foster Carer feedback and to improve the status of foster carers, it is proposed that Bridgend County Borough Council implements a Foster Carer Charter (attached as **Appendix 1**) in line with the work and recommendations of The Fostering Network following their State of the Nation report in 2021.
- 4.2 The proposed Charter sets out Bridgend Fostering Service's Vision Statement (launched with our Foster Carers at the Information, Consultation and Engagement (ICE) Event on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022. The vision is:

*We aim to ensure that Foster Carers are recognised as professionals whose views are actively sought and considered when decisions are being made about children in their care. Foster Carers will be provided with the right support and skills at the right time to ensure that children and young people in their care achieve the best possible outcomes.*

- 4.3 The Charter defines the roles and responsibilities of Corporate Parents, Fostering Service and Foster Carer. In simple terms, a Corporate Parent is intended to carry out many of the roles a parent would. They may not be able to provide everything a loving parent can, but they should still be able to provide our children and young people with the best possible support and care. At the heart of corporate parenting is an intention to encourage people and organisations to do as much as they can to make sure children and young people feel in control of their lives and able to overcome the barriers they face.
- 4.4 Corporate Parents need to be satisfied, and ensure, that there is a joined-up, effective and holistic approach to meeting the needs of care experienced children through the

local planning arrangements – the Foster Carers’ Charter is one element of committing to make this a reality for foster families.

4.5 The Charter sets out the following commitment:

*The Foster Carers’ Charter represents a commitment on behalf of Bridgend County Borough Council in its role as the Corporate Parent, the fostering service and the foster carer to work in partnership in the best interests of the children for whom they care. It is a promise, owned by everybody involved, to always strive for best practice.*

4.6 The proposed Charter was shared with foster carers at the ICE meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022, providing opportunity for discussion amongst carers and feedback. Overall the proposal and Charter were well-received by those attending and agreement that establishing this within Bridgend County Borough Council would assist in raising the status of foster carers.

4.7 If the proposal and Charter are accepted by the Committee the next steps would be the development of an Implementation Plan which will include a self-assessment for Councillors and Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) Officers and Foster Carers which will establish a baseline and set out the actions to be taken to improve on this baseline.

## **5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules**

5.1 There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules arising from this report.

## **6. Equality Act 2010 implications**

6.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

## **7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications**

7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Authority should work to deliver well-being outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report:

- **Long Term** – Central to Children’s Social Care’s Strategy to reduce the number of children who need to be looked after, is being able to place children with foster carers who live within the County Borough allowing continuity in terms of education, health care, peers and contact with birth family. This proposal will



deliver a message to our carers about how valued their contribution is, encouraging them to continue being foster carers for BCBC.

- **Prevention and Integration** - Having a sufficient number of foster care placements available for children who cannot continue to live at home with their family is a significant challenge across Wales. There is significant work taking place as part of Maethu Cymru/Foster Wales around both recruitment and retention in recognition of the size of the challenge. The proposal in this report would support BCBC's attempts to retain the Foster Carers we currently have, thereby preventing further reduction in the number of placements that are available, by acknowledging the resilience and dedication shown by our foster carers throughout the pandemic and demonstrating that they are a valued part of the wider social care team.
- **Collaboration and Involvement** – Regular consultation events (ICE meetings) are ordinarily undertaken by Bridgend Fostering that support consultation and collaboration with carers regarding matters that are going well and issues/concerns. In addition to this the service has 5 liaison carers who regularly support foster carers and provide further opportunity for consultation and feedback. At the ICE meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022 foster carer were consulted with regarding the proposal to introduce the attached Foster Carer Charter and this was well received by those in attendance.

## **8. Financial implications**

8.1 There are no specific financial implications arising directly out of this report.

## **9. Recommendation**

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the information contained within this report and approves the adoption and implementation of the Foster Carer Charter on behalf of the Council as Corporate Parents.

**Claire Marchant**  
**Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing**  
**July 2022**

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**Background documents:**  
Foster Carer Consultation Questionnaire

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**Bridgend County Borough Council**  
**Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr**



[www.bridgend.gov.uk](http://www.bridgend.gov.uk)



# Bridgend County Borough Council

## Foster Carers' Charter

Social Services and Well-Being

# Vision Statement

We aim to ensure that Foster Carers are recognised as professionals whose views are actively sought and considered when decisions are being made about children in their care. Foster Carers will be provided with the right support and skills at the right time to ensure that children and young people in their care achieve the best possible outcomes.

## Roles and commitment

The foster carers' charter represents a commitment on behalf of Bridgend County Borough Council in its role as the corporate parent, the fostering service and the foster carer to work in partnership in the best interests of the children for whom they care. It is a promise, owned by everybody involved, to always strive for best practice.

### The corporate parent's role

The role of the corporate parent when placing and supporting children in a foster home is to:

- act in their best interests, and promote their physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing
- encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings and take them into account
- help them to gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the Bridgend County Borough Council and its relevant partners
- promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes for them
- ensure that they are safe, and that there is stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

### The fostering service's role

The fostering service aims to provide both a stable home environment and first-rate family system, to foster and care for children who are valued, supported and encouraged to grow and develop as individuals. To achieve this aim the service recruits, trains and approves foster carers and delivers ongoing support

to them, in order to give them the skills and confidence they need to develop meaningful relationships with the children and young people they care for. In this way the service provides stable, inclusive, loving relationships within a home environment, continuing to nurture healthy attachments as part of the foster family.

## The foster carer's role

Foster carers look after children by developing meaningful relationships in a safe and nurturing family environment. The stability, care and love provided by foster carers helps the child to achieve recovery and healing from past trauma and promotes resilience for the child to realise their full potential.

A foster carer's relationships with other members of the team around the child should be based on mutual trust and respect.

This charter explains what all parties can expect from one another.

## What foster carers and fostering services can expect from the corporate parent

### 1. Working in partnership and valuing relationships

We understand that we must provide foster carers with the best possible opportunity to give the children in our care a loving, stable home, and to enable those children to enjoy a positive, nurturing experience of family life – one that does not set them apart from their peers.

We must:

- treat foster carers as experts on the child and include them in all relevant meetings where planning and decision making affect them or the children they care for
- treat foster carers without discrimination and respect them as colleagues
- value foster carers' skills and expertise equally to those of other professionals
- embed the [Keep Connected Principles \(Appendix 1\)](#) into practice to support children to remain in contact with former foster families where it is in the best interest of the child.
- respect confidentiality.

## 2. Information

We know that information is vital in order for foster carers to provide care that meets the child's need. We must:

- share, with the fostering service and foster carers, all the relevant information needed in order to care safely for the child and to support the child in fulfilling their potential
- provide this information in writing prior to the placement, or as soon as possible in the case of emergency placements
- secure clear and timely plans for the child's care.

## 3. Clarity about decisions

We recognise that for children to live a full family life, foster carers must be able to make decisions regarding the children they look after.

We must:

- ensure that foster carers can make everyday decisions that mean that their fostered child is not treated differently from their peers and can feel part of their family
- provide clarity about any decision foster carers cannot take at the outset so that everyone is clear about their respective responsibilities
- deal swiftly with any requests for decision making on matters that are outside of the foster carer's authority.

## 4. Communication and consultation

We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship.

We must:

- facilitate communication between foster carers and decision makers

# What foster carers can expect from the fostering service

## 1. Working in partnership

We recognise that foster carers have skills and expertise and can make the biggest difference to the everyday lives of children in care.

We must:

- value foster carers' skills and expertise equally to those of other professionals
- recognise that foster carers are the people who live with children every day and usually know them best
- include foster carers in all meetings that affect them and the children they care for
- ensure that our fostering service will comply with fostering regulations and guidance
- treat foster carers without discrimination and respect them as colleagues
- respect confidentiality.

## 2. Information

We know that information is vital for foster carers to provide care that meets the child's needs. We must:

- share all information we have about the child in order to care safely for them
- provide this information in writing prior to placement, or as soon as possible in the case of emergency placements
- provide foster carers with information on all financial matters including tax, allowances and additional entitlements
- provide foster carers with full details of all relevant policies and procedures.

## 3. Support

We recognise that fostering can be an isolating and challenging task, and that appropriate and timely support makes all the difference to the fostering family and to the children in their care.

We must:

- ensure there is a robust post-approval induction process
- respond promptly to requests for additional support, including respite/short break support and out of hours support
- provide foster carers with regular supervision and phone contact
- give foster carers honest and open feedback
- provide foster carers with access to 24-hour support from people with fostering expertise
- pay foster carers' allowances, expenses and fees in a timely manner
- ensure that there is a local group, recognised by the fostering service, where foster carers and their family can find support and share experiences with other fostering families
- support foster carers when facilitating contact with birth families
- follow the [Keep Connected Principles \(Appendix 1\)](#) to support foster carers to maintain contact after a child moves on where it is in the best interest of the child
- provide support to 'children who foster'
- recognise and champion the contribution foster carers and their families make to fostering.

## 4. Learning and development

We believe foster carers must have learning and development opportunities throughout their fostering career. This will ensure they have the skills and knowledge they need and allow them to develop their practice in order that they can help transform the lives of the children they foster.

We must:

- ensure all foster carers have an individual annual training plan
- provide foster carers and their family with appropriate, accessible and relevant training by trainers who understand fostering
- support foster carers to develop meaningful relationships with the children in their care and the other members of the team around the child
- continue to provide all foster carers with other development opportunities which make the best use of their skills and expertise, such as mentoring or providing training or support.

## 5. Fair treatment

We recognise that foster carers have a right to be treated fairly, no matter what the circumstances. We must:



- consult with foster carers before changing terms and conditions
- ensure honesty and openness in all our discussions and communications with foster carers
- provide a framework for dealing with allegations, including access to independent support and identified internal support mechanism, and adhere to agreed timescales
- ensure that foster carers are treated with respect, kept informed and provided with emotional support should they be subject to an allegation
- ensure that foster carers know the arrangements for the payment of fees and allowances if they are not able to foster while the subject of an allegation.

## 6. Communication and consultation

We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship.

We must:

- ensure that we consult with foster carers in a meaningful way on matters that affect them
- give foster carers timely feedback from consultations
- provide clear information on how foster carers can give us feedback and report concerns.

## What fostering services can expect from foster carers

### 1. Working in partnership

We must demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct. We believe that open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship and we will aim to build a meaningful and collaborative relationship with our supervising social worker and the child's social worker.

We must:

- demonstrate our expertise and make use of our skills to the best of our ability
- provide children with a positive experience of family life
- attend meetings about the children and young people we care for
- work with the individuals and agencies involved with the child such as the child's social worker, fostering service, school, and health and religious bodies

- work with birth parents, wider family and any other significant people in a child's life, inclusion in FGC where considered in the best interest of child.
- meet the standards set out in fostering regulations and guidance and follow policies and procedures
- inform our supervising social worker about factors that impact on our fostering including changes in our household
- inform our supervising social worker about any difficulties that arise for us
- inform the child's social worker about any concerns we have related to the child
- respect confidentiality
- maintain an open dialogue with the fostering service.

## 2. Respect for the child

Every child and young person should be respected as an individual and be supported in meeting their needs and achieving their aspirations and potential.

We must:

- develop a meaningful relationship with the child - understand their needs, support their growth, become an advocate and champion for them, and maintain relationships with them when they move on where in the child's best interest
- care for the child in a manner that recognises and respects their identity - including their ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural heritage
- afford the same level of protection and care to a child as we would our own child
- support the child to make decisions regarding their own lives, as appropriate to their age, understanding and ability
- support the child to inform the development of the services which affect their care, as appropriate to their age, understanding and ability.

## 3. Learning, development and support

We must access learning and development opportunities throughout our fostering career in accordance with the needs of the children we are caring for. This will ensure we have the skills and knowledge we need and allow us to develop our practice in order that we can help transform the lives of the children we foster.

We must:

- be willing and able to develop our skills throughout our fostering career
- attend relevant training
- be willing to attend and contribute to support groups.



# Keep Connected Principles

**Children and young people who move within and out of the care system should be enabled and supported to maintain their relationships with their former foster families and other people who are significant to them.**

## Rationale

Moving on in foster care – to adoption, back home or to wider family, to another foster family, to residential care or to adulthood – is a time for a proper ending, not a forever goodbye, as abrupt endings are likely to lead to separation and loss issues for the child.

What we know about attachment in terms of transitions is very different from thinking 20 years ago. Previously it was believed that a child should be supported in transferring their attachment from one set of carers to another – old attachments would be replaced by a new attachment.

Now, it is widely held that an important role of the foster carer is to support a child to develop a strong internal working model<sup>1</sup> (incorporating resilience, confidence, self-esteem, problem solving abilities) and because of this children are capable of developing additional secure attachments.

This change in understanding is critical to the role that foster carers play in supporting a child in the transition to their new family or living arrangements, and advocates a need for the supportive and positive presence of the foster carers throughout and beyond the transition process. While there will be some occasions when it is not in a child's best interests to keep in contact with their previous foster families or others, these will be the exception rather than the rule. We need a culture shift to ensure that the starting position in any transition planning is for ongoing contact.

1. An internal working model is a set of expectations and beliefs about the self, others and the relationship between the self and others developed by John Bowlby, founder of attachment theory.

The Fostering Network has developed a set of principles, in consultation with foster carers, fostering services and organisations in the care sector, including those working with young people, to shape how transitions from and within the care system are approached across the UK. The aim is for all children and young people who are moving on from foster families to be enabled to keep in touch with them – and with other significant people in their lives – through better understanding of the importance of this, planning and support.

## Principles

1. The child’s relationship with their foster family is important and this relationship – alongside those with other significant people in the child’s life – should not be ended abruptly, which could cause unnecessary trauma.
2. The child’s feelings should be held in mind and responded to sensitively. Where it is possible, children should be consulted about the relationships that are important to them and how they would like to maintain contact.
3. Every member of the team around the child should understand the importance of the child’s key relationships, particularly the foster family, throughout the transition and beyond.
4. Maintaining contact after a fostered child moves on should be routinely considered part of the role of a foster carer, and foster carers should be supported to carry this out.
5. The relationship between the foster carer and the new family, in whatever form that takes, should be promoted as an ongoing working relationship that needs to be sustained and supported sufficiently over a period of time.
6. Birth family members and adopters should be encouraged and supported to enable their children to maintain contact with former foster families.
7. Where it is not possible to maintain direct contact with foster families in the longer term, children and foster carers should be encouraged to keep in contact in other ways. This could include letters, cards, telephone calls and social media, but should not be used as substitutes for the initial face-to-face contact post-move, unless absolutely necessary.



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## BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

27 JULY 2022

### REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELL BEING

#### PROPOSED CORPORATE PARENTING DEVELOPMENT

#### 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out proposals for consideration by the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting for the development of Corporate Parenting in Bridgend.

#### 2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

- **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
- **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

#### 3. Background

- 3.1 The Council appointed to the new post of Corporate Parenting & Participation Officer in March 2022 and this role commenced at the end of April 2022. The post is cited within the Case Management & Transition portfolio within Children's Social Care but has responsibility for working across the Council and with partners to promote and progress corporate parenting in Bridgend.
- 3.2 The Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer's role is to support and develop the governance and activity of Corporate Parenting in Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC). Following on from their induction, the Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer has identified steps to establish a refreshed approach to addressing how our

care experienced children and young people and our care leavers (our children and young people) are parented by their Corporate Parent.

#### **4. Current situation/proposal**

4.1 The first Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting meeting of the municipal year is an opportunity for Bridgend to begin and establish a revised approach to Corporate Parenting.

4.2 As a starting point to a refreshed approach, it is important there is a shared understanding of:

- what Corporate Parenting is;
- who has Corporate Parenting responsibilities and specifically,
- what these responsibilities are.

4.3 Following on from a shared understanding of Corporate Parenting, through the engagement of Councillors, workforce, partners and importantly our children and young people, there needs to be a strategic and operational plan for how these responsibilities are fulfilled, monitored and evaluated. It is proposed to develop a clear Corporate Parenting Vision and Strategic plan through the following:

##### 4.3.1 Establishing a shared Vision for Corporate Parenting Responsibilities

In order to understand how well our children and young people are being cared for, our aspirations for them and our expectations for their lives. To have a holistic view, we must engage with all involved or responsible for the care of our children and young people and be led by the children and young people themselves. By working together, we can be clear on:

- What constitutes a good parent;
- What good Corporate Parenting is;
- What the responsibilities of Corporate Parenting, are and who has these responsibilities;
- The expectations we have of ourselves and our partners;
- Most importantly, what our children and young people expect from their Corporate Parents and how can we achieve this and in turn raise the aspirations they have of us.

This vision will be developed via detailed conversations in workshops on Corporate Parenting topics. It is proposed that an event will take place in September 2022 to progress the development of the vision and clear roles and responsibilities. Whilst the workshop will take place in September 2022, the Corporate Parenting & Participation Officer will be seeking to gain the views of our children and young people throughout the summer school holiday period. These views will be collated and presented in a format chosen by the children and young people.

##### 4.3.2 Establishing a governance structure that supports the strategic and operational approach to Corporate Parenting

Bridgend County Borough Council already has an established Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting that meets quarterly and the current terms of reference for the Committee are set out in Part 3 Responsibility for Functions in the Council's Constitution. This Committee provides strategic scrutiny to Corporate Parenting. To



enable the Committee to deliver its responsibilities, it is proposed to develop a supporting multiagency Operational Group of professionals that can provide the expertise around how we collectively care for our children and young people. It is proposed the Corporate Parenting Operational Group will provide high level advice, guidance, and support to ensure all Directorates of the Council, key partner agencies and Elected Members understand and embrace their Corporate Parenting responsibilities resulting in a positive impact for our children and young people.

This work will be achieved through staff briefings, workshops, training and more especially through the direction and support of the Committee and its multiagency Operational Group driven by the priorities and objectives of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

The membership for the Operational Group will naturally evolve overtime according to the need for specific expertise. However, it is proposed that the core membership will include representation from Children Social Care, Adult Social Care, Education, Youth Justice, Leisure, Health, Housing and the commissioned Advocacy provider. The Chair will be elected by the Group at the first meeting, however, in order to ensure that there is continuity, regular reporting, monitoring of progress between meetings and clear lines of communication between the Committee and the Operational Group, it is proposed that the Operational Group be chaired by the Chair of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting. The draft Terms of Reference for the Operational Group will also be presented to the first meeting for consideration and approval with the intention for this to be ratified by the Committee in October.

#### 4.3.3 Establishing a Corporate Parenting Performance Framework

In addition to the development of a strategy and operational plan, it is essential that we also measure and monitor the effectiveness of the care and parenting we provide for our children and young people. Therefore, it is proposed that the Corporate Parenting Operational Group identify key performance indicators on the priority themes identified within the workshop event along with any other relevant evidence for parenting performance. The Performance Framework would be both quantitative and qualitative and would be collated into an agreed formatted dashboard to be used by the Operational Group for benchmarking and reporting to the Committee for scrutiny.

It is proposed that the Performance Framework would highlight multiagency data and therefore, whilst it is recognised that Children's Social Care would host the dashboard, there is a commitment and expectation of all Council Directorates and partner agencies to provide their agreed data in a timely manner as agreed by the Operational Group.

#### 4.3.4 Establish care experienced forums to provide our children and young people with a collective voice.

Whilst the Corporate Parenting and Participation Officer continues to engage with children and young people and champions their voice through briefings, training and supporting recruitment and selection panels there is a need for the establishment of regular forums that require more support. Having consulted with other local

authorities, it is noted that once an Operational Group, Strategic Plan and Performance Framework for Corporate Parenting is being supported and coordinated by the appointed officer, little time remains for the support needed to run participation groups on a regular basis.

It is proposed to therefore commission a specialist support to establish and facilitate a care experienced young people forum and a care leavers forum. The following points provide an explanation to the support:

- The purpose of this expertise is to establish an independent voice for our care experienced and care leavers with a dedicated resource;
- As the forums will be supported independently of BCBC, they will be able to provide suggestions and challenge;
- The recruitment, promotion for young people, session planning, young people liaison, facilitation and refreshments would be included within the support offered by two workers;
- The forums would benefit from two workers at all times which would enable more variety for activities and facilitation;
- The two forums will develop their own work programme from their experiences and as a collective voice from themes and issues drawn out of advocacy that is provided for children and young people in Bridgend;
- The forums will serve as a pool of expertise for the Corporate Parenting & Participation Officer and Children Social Care to call on for consultation, recruitment and selection along with specific projects;
- The forums will also act as a conduit for communication to all care experienced children and care leavers in Bridgend;
- The forums will be linked with regional and national projects that are relevant to their interest and status;
- It is hoped that these forums will further strengthen both the offer of advocacy across Bridgend and Children Social Care's / Bridgend Corporate Parents' understanding of the lived experience of our children and young people.

## **5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules**

5.1 There is no impact on the policy framework or rules arising from this report.

## **6. Equality Act 2010 implications**

6.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

## **7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications**

7.1 Long term – the proposals enable the short term issues to be addressed whilst looking at how Corporate Parenting can be approached in a strategic manner to make plans for the future.

7.2 Prevention – the proposals that have been made mean that the responsibilities we all have for Corporate Parenting are identified and established into what we need to

report on. Measuring and reporting on these responsibilities will enable us to take early action on any issues identified.

- 7.3 Integration – the consultation workshop event is intended to draw out who has specific responsibilities for our children and young people in particular circumstances. Moreover, the event will identify where professionals and agencies need to work together in the future to forge a coherent approach to the care of our children and young people.
- 7.4 Collaboration – the success and effectiveness of our Corporate Parenting in Bridgend is dependent on how well we work together to achieve shared goals and aspirations for our children and young people. These goals and aspirations will be agreed and worked to in the proposed multiagency Operational Group and in liaison with the ; Committee.
- 7.5 Involvement – due consideration has been given to how different ‘providers of care’ are involved in the proposals around Corporate Parenting. Specific attention and proposals are given to enabling the voice and lived experience of our children and young people.

## **8. Financial implications**

- 8.1 The proposed Consultation Workshop event in September 2022 will cost approximately £400 and will be funded by the Social Services & Wellbeing Training budget.
- 8.2 The specialist participation support provided for 12 months will cost approximately £10,000 and will be funded from within existing Childrens Social Care budgets.

## **9. Recommendations**

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Committee consider the contents of this report and support the proposals set out in the report to establish:
- a shared vision for corporate parenting responsibilities;
  - a governance structure that supports the strategic and operational approach to Corporate Parenting;
  - a Corporate Parenting Performance Framework;
  - care experienced forums to provide our children and young people with a collective voice.

Claire Marchant  
**Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate**  
July 2022

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**Background documents:**

None