MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2025 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor J Gebbie – Chairperson

E L P Caparros	P Davies	M J Evans	N Farr
GC Haines	JC Spanswick		

Present Virtually

F D Bletsoe	J E Pratt	T Thomas	A Wathan
AJ Williams	E D Winstanley		

Officers:

Daniel Bolton	Group Manager, Provider Services
Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Raeanna Grainger	Group Manager, IAA & Safeguarding
Mark Lewis	Group Manager - Integrated Working
Claire Marchant	Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing
Oscar Roberts	Business Administrative Apprentice - Democratic Services
David Wright	Deputy Head of Children and Family Services

75. Apologies for Absence

Decision Made	Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Jones and H Williams
Date Decision Made	29 October 2025

76. Declarations of Interest

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

Decision Made	There were no declarations of interest received
Date Decision Made	29 October 2025

77. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	RESOLVED:	That the minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting dated 7 May 2025, be approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	29 October 2025	

78. Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report 2024-2025

Decision Made	The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing, presented a report that detailed the work undertaken by the Independent Reviewing Service between April 2024-March 2025. The reports set out the legislative framework that governs the work undertaken by the Independent Reviewing Service. Primarily the Independent Reviewing Officer's (IRO's) role was to ensure the child's care plan is appropriate and meeting their developing needs, that they challenge any issues of delay in achieving the objectives of the care plan and/or any issues of delay. The role has a strong emphasis on quality assurance and challenging the Authority when they are not satisfied in areas of decision making. The IRO's in Bridgend also undertake the chairing of Child Protection Conferences, their role is to ensure professionals make decisions based on evidence and safeguarding procedures. Most importantly the IRO Service must ensure the child's voice is central to decision making and that they are informed of their rights and their circumstances. There is a strong focus on qualitative data in the Annual Report and compliance rates but also strengthened processes and how the service has met the annual plan objectives. The updated Annual Plan was situate at the end of the report and this highlighted the aims for the next

	reporting period. the Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report was attached at Appendix 1 to the report, with the Action Plan at Appendix 2. Members asked a few questions on the report, as follows:- • Part of the role of the IRO, is to challenge Care Plans and therefore when challenges are made, how are they tracked and monitored. Also, how are improvements that are made fed back to the Department and to what extent is the child and the child's family involved in that process? • In terms of the Regional Advocacy Programme, the funding for this appears to end in March 2026. Will further funding for this continue? *The Chairperson confirmed that there would be further funding for this initiative following the end of March 2026*. • With regards to the above programme, is there any evidence to suggest that it had supported parents in re-directing them from the need for statutory intervention or from any formal care or child protection procedures? • In relation to the IRO Quality Assurance Audit – Parental Surveys, what themes have emerged from these, following consultation with parents, etc? The Group Manager, IIA, MASH and Safeguarding responded to the above questions for the benefit of members. RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting noted the Annual Report and Action Plan.
Date Decision Made	29 October 2025

79. Implementation of an Incentive Payment Scheme Based on Council Tax Liability and an Inflationary Increase of Allowances and Fees for Foster Carers and Kinship Carers in Bridgend County Borough

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

Council (BCBC)

Decision Made	This report presented by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing, sought Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting Committee endorsement on the implementation of an Incentive Payment Scheme based on council tax liability for foster carers, kinship carers and special guardians in Bridgend, as a measure to enhance recruitment and retention. The Incentive Payment Scheme aligns with recent legislative changes and supports the local strategy to improve placement sufficiency and stability for children. In addition, she confirmed, the report set out plans to apply a 2.6% inflationary increase (March 2025 Consumer Price Index) to all foster carers and kinship carers fees and allowances from April 2025. This uplift will ensure payments keep pace with the cost of living and forms part of the wider programme to strengthen the overall offer to carers. Financial modelling showed that while the Incentive Payment Scheme represents a cost pressure, it should be regarded as an invest-to-save measure. Increasing the number of in-house foster carers will reduce the need for higher-cost IFA and residential placements, delivering long-term cost avoidance and supporting better outcomes for children. Following the presentation of the report, members made a number of points and queries, including some questions, examples of which were:- • The Leader noted that those eligible under the Incentive Payment Scheme, would pay a fee initially, but then be able to claim this back. He asked why the discount could not be claimed from the outset without an individual making the initial payment. • A member asked if the local authority also had in its future planning, non-monetary support and improvements for foster carers. • Although the Invest to Save concept seems to be sound, is there a mechanism to track the effects of the scheme, ie through the provision of data outcomes • Up to what age limit does the benefit apply to? • Whilst the 2.6% of fees and allowances is noted, where does this increase originate from, for example Consumer Prices Index (CPI) or Retail Prices Index (RPI) RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting endorsed the report and the steps being taken to improve carer retention, encourage IFA transfers and support more children to remain in

	local, in-house placements.
Date Decision Made	29 October 2025

80. Regional Children's Advocacy Service

Decision Made	The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing presented a report that detailed a summary of Annual Service Delivery for 2024-25 of statutory advocacy for children & young people. The National Approach to Statutory Advocacy (NASA) was introduced by Welsh Government in July 2017. The overall aim was to provide a consistent and standardised approach to the delivery of advocacy services and ensure that all children and young people whose care planning is underpinned by statutory guidance and regulation have access to this. The report advised that Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) provided advocacy services across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region. They were a well-established provider for this purpose across Wales. There was evidence of the service provider working as a proactive and innovative regional partner in delivering statutory advocacy, alongside other services that help children, young people or their families. Attached to the report as an Appendix, was the Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) Regional Annual Advocacy Report 2024-2025. A member noted that there was a considerable amount of statistics and other data included within the report, information that reflected the Council's statutory obligations as a local authority. She asked if we had evidence where 'a child's voice had been heard' and actioned upon. Group Manager, MASH, IAA & Safeguarding stated that there was some evidence of this in the report and its supporting information, but she added also that it may be beneficial if examples of some case studies could be included in future reports on this topic going forward. The Deputy Head of Children and Family Services added the main components of the report in order to ensure some evidence based outcomes, relied on covering areas such as quality assurance, some

	significant changes, advocacy issues themselves and the receipt of service complaints and compliments to inform the Regional Children's Advocacy Service on how Children's Social Services should be working with children and young people, in order to further improve outcomes in the future. A member also asked that it would be of benefit to members if they could receive further details on the cost of this contracted service which covers 3 local authorities, outside of the meeting. RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting considered and noted both Annual reports in relation to the regional advocacy service.
Date Decision Made	29 October 2025

81. Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Improvement Check of Childrens and Family Services June 2025

Decision Made	This report presented by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing, described the findings of a Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Improvement Check (IC) visit to Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) children and family services in June 2025. The improvement check focused on understanding how well the Council had progressed recommendations for improvement set out in a Performance Evaluation Inspection and Improvement Check undertaken in May and December 2022 and a CIW led Joint Inspection of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) undertaken in June 2023. The IC found that BCBC leaders had consistently prioritised children and family services, to support sustained and timely improvements. This, in turn, had significantly strengthened the quality and delivery of the Authority's social services functions. The report also requested that the Cabinet Committee considered the report and approved the associated Action Plan, that had been developed in order to respond to the remaining recommendations that remained outstanding and the Action Plan would also be aligned with the Council's 3 year Strategic Plan for Children and Families. The full implementation of the Action Plan would be monitored through the Social Services Improvement Board, which was chaired by the Leader, and to which all group leaders were invited to be a part of.

	A member referred to Principle 2 of the Action Plan where reference was made of the need to improve the Communication Strategy, so that staff and partners were clear about certain services that were provided. He also asked, what evidence did we have to confirm that any confusion referred to in respect of 'referral routes' had been rectified. The Deputy Head of Children and Family Services confirmed that there had been two referral routes previously, but this had now been the subject of change to a one 'front door' referral access, for the support for children and families. He added that there were still some challenges however, in relation to where schools still accessed support, ie within the areas of education, early years and young people. A Family Support Commissioning Board had also been introduced to ease further the understanding of referrals, etc. It was noted that the report was presented to the Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25th September 2025 and was well received. For the benefit of Members, the Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing, gave some verbal feedback with regards to some recommendations the Committee had made as a result of the Improvement Check and the Action Plan and these were being considered. A member asked Officers if they were confident that the deadlines detailed in the Action Plan would all be met, to which they replied that they were confident that they would be. RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee – Corporate Parenting considered the CIW findings report and approved the associated Action Plan.
Date Decision Made	29 October 2025

82. Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Fostering Service Inspection June 2025

Decision Made	The purpose of this report presented by the Group Manager – Provider Services was to present to Cabinet Committee - Corporate Parenting, the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspection report following the inspection of Bridgend County Borough Council's (BCBC) fostering service in June 2025, and to request approval of the associated action plan**.** The report was presented to the Social Services, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25th September 2025 and was well received and the service is currently awaiting feedback from the

	Committee. This report presents the findings of the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspection of Bridgend County Borough Council's fostering service. The inspection followed a previous inspection in November 2023, where eight areas were identified as requiring significant improvement. The Group Manager – Provider Services confirmed that CIW found that progress has been made in all areas, with some requiring further improvement. Particular strengths related to safeguarding, oversight, and the support provided to prospective carers. The service has benefited from recent leadership stability and a clear strategic focus on improving outcomes for children. However, he added, three areas continue to require further improvement, namely the robustness of matching processes, consistency in the review and monitoring of foster carers, and the quality and delivery of carer training. CIW had not issued any Priority Action Notices which reflected that some improvements had been made across all areas. The Authority has already taken steps to address these areas as part of a wider service remodelling programme. An improvement plan was in place and would be monitored through the Council's governance mechanisms, including the regulatory tracker, which is reported to the Governance and Audit Committee and robust scrutiny at regular intervals to be determined by the Committee. A member referred to Appendix 1 and asked if he could have some clarification and explanation in relation to some of the changes and improvements made to the matching service. He also asked what methods had been adopted that had resulted in an improvement to collaborative working in the team. Finally, he also asked for an update on the BRAG report (Appendix 2 of the report referred). The report presenter and the Deputy Head of Children and Family Services in turn, responded to these questions. <u>RESOLVED:</u> That the Cabinet Committee – Corporate Parenting considered the CIW findings report and approved the associated Action Plan.
Date Decision Made	29 October 2025

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83. Urgent Items

Decision Made	There were no urgent items.
Date Decision Made	29 October 2025

To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this link

The meeting closed at 11:16.

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