

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE  
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, ON  
MONDAY, 7 JULY 2014 AT 10.00AM

Present:

Councillor H J David - Chairperson

Councillor M E J Nott OBE - Leader  
Councillor D Sage - Deputy Leader  
Councillor M Gregory - Cabinet Member - Resources

Invitees:

Councillor E Dodd  
Councillor R D Jenkins  
Councillor J E Lewis  
Councillor H J Townsend  
Councillor D B F White

Officers:

C Turner - Head of Safeguarding and Family Support  
S Pryce - Head of Regeneration and Development  
E Walton James - Group Manager - Safeguarding and Quality Assurance  
M A Galvin - Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

68 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members/Officers

Councillor P J White - Holiday  
Councillor L C Morgan - Recuperating  
M Shephard - Other Council Business  
D McMillan - Annual Leave  
S Cooper - Other Council Business

69 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

70 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee dated 28 April be received as a true and accurate record, subject to:-

- (1) Councillor H Townsend being added to the list of Apologies for Absence due to her representing Wales in a dance competition.
- (2) It being noted that there was no need to list S Pryce in the minute entitled Apologies for Absence, as M Shepard was present representing the Communities Directorate.

71 WELCOME

The Chairperson on behalf of Members, gave a warm welcome to Councillor J E Lewis as a new Invitee on the Committee.

72 SAFEGUARDING AND FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE 2012-13 - HEAD OF SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

The Corporate Director - Children submitted a report, to present to the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee prior to its formal submission to CSSIW, the Annual Report of the Head of Service – Safeguarding and Family Support submitted for and within the Annual Council Reporting Framework. This was the fifth Annual Report of the Head of Service following the introduction of the current arrangements for evaluating Social Services in Wales. The process centred on self-evaluation, involve consultation with Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) and would continue to be the major source for CSSIW's inspection programme. The report was shown at Appendix 1 to the covering report.

By way of background information, the Head of Safeguarding and Family Support, confirmed that in 2010 CSSIW introduced a new "Annual Reporting Framework" requiring all authorities in Wales to produce an Annual Report on the Effectiveness of their Social Care Services. The Annual Report delivers the council's own assessment of performance in respect of their social services responsibilities and focuses on strategic objectives and improvement priorities across the department. This new approach to reporting is intended to:

- see performance management accountability transfer from the national centre back to Council Members, Chief Executives, Directors, Managers and Officers;
- present a recognisable picture to those delivering and served by their social services locally;
- generate the core set of information needed by CSSIW to deliver their annual performance;
- provide assurance function;
- link much more immediately to business planning for priority improvement.

Work to develop this framework for annual reporting came from a commitment shared by the WLGA and ADSS Cymru to report openly and promptly on the effectiveness of each authority in meeting both needs and statutory obligations in social services, and also to link that report urgently to planned and continuous improvement. The Annual Council Reporting Framework places social services firmly at the heart of corporate and democratic local government. The Statutory Director for Social Services in Bridgend was completing an Annual Overview Report which had been informed by the annual reports of the Heads of Service for both the Safeguarding and Family Support Service and Adult Social Care.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support, confirmed that the report had been considered by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any recommendations for change, to improve clarity and readability, would be taken on board.

The report at Appendix 1, would be submitted to CSSIW as a supplementary report to that of BCBC's statutory Director of Social Services' overview report.

He added that key issues to note in the attached report included;

- An overview of the primary aims of the Safeguarding and Family Support Service.
- An overview of the range of service provided by the service.
- An overview of performance
- An overview of significant strategic and operational developments throughout 2013-14

A Member referred to page 18 of the Appendix document to the effect on children of parents drinking alcohol excessively. He asked what steps were being taken to try and reduce and prevent this in communities.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support confirmed that steps were actively being pursued in relation to prevention and intervention with regard to the above, i.e. examining ways how key statutory bodies such as Social Services, could work with parents to reduce their alcohol consumption to a level whereby it does not have a negative impact on their role as responsible parents. This also applied to substance misuse he added.

Social Services perhaps with support from other key agencies, would intervene and take children away from their parents if they were considered to be at any sort of risk from them engaging in the above activities. Parents would then be referred to groups such as alcohol counselling services for support in a bid to reduce their levels of consumption, which in all probability, would then assist their parenting abilities.

A Member referred to page 20 of the report Appendix, and question 33, under the sub-heading Parenting Tasks. He asked if the question, i.e. "(Guidance) - Parents fail to enforce discipline", should be altered by replacing the word discipline with 'control'.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that he would consider this suggested refinement.

The Leader referred to Appendix 5 (i.e. page 5) and Child Protection Registration and De-Registrations during 2013-14. He asked for the Officer to expand on how both of these correlated with the other.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support confirmed that a child conference would be arranged if any young person was deemed at risk of abuse, in order to reach a decision whether or not the child should be placed on the child protection register. If this takes place, then after three months a Review Conference is convened to establish if the initial concern regarding risk had subsequently been minimised, or whether they should remain on the register this remains monitored thereafter he added.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support stated that what the two different graphs portrayed, is that young people can be initially placed on the Child Protection Register, but subsequently be de-registered if conditions within their family environment improve quite quickly.

A Member asked what actions the Department were taking to reduce cases of Looked After Children and referrals in relation to teenage pregnancies, and why are referrals higher at some parts of the year as opposed to others.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support confirmed that there is often an increase in referrals around the Autumn period, as young people previous to that have time off from school during the summer holiday, where they can spend a considerable amount of time

outdoors possible consuming alcohol and becoming involved with substance abuse, etc. These referrals usually are subject to an assessment which gets completed by around October/November time, hence then revealing an increase in referrals when compared to the rest of the year.

Teenage pregnancies often involved young women who are not in any way connected to Social Services, so the Department therefore worked with schools and the Youth Service in order to promote issues such as safe sex, and advising of the risks of promiscuity being enhanced through activities such as the consumption of alcohol and/or substance misuse, which could sometime result in unwanted pregnancies.

Should this occur however, there were services, for example Flying Start, who provided assistance for young mothers to adequately support their children. This was once more a case of a combination of prevention and early intervention and support mechanisms being put in place in these types of scenarios, the Head of Safeguarding and Family Support.

RESOLVED: That Members both considered and noted the Annual Report attached to the covering report, and the steps that were being taken to prevent teenage pregnancies as well as the Information in the form of date regarding registration.

73 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - PLACEMENTS AND PERMANENCY STRATEGY

The Corporate Director - Children submitted a report the purpose of which was to update the Cabinet Committee on the progress made to develop a refreshed "Strategy to reduce the number of Looked After Children and Young People in Bridgend, now known as the "Looked After Children - Placements and Permanency Strategy".

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that Members would be aware that throughout the last decade, there had been a significant increase in the overall number of Looked After Children in Bridgend, which had resulted in major pressures upon Safeguarding and Family Support Services and associated budgets. Consequently, in order to direct a strategic response to the growing numbers of Looked After Children, the Council intended to publish its "Placements and Permanency Strategy" within which one of the primary aims was to reduce the number of Looked After Children (LAC) but also to take a whole systems approach to preventing the need for children to become LAC in the first place.

He added that previously Committee had received comprehensive reports on statistical data and analysis of Looked After Children (LAC) in Bridgend, together with details of associated costs. Members requested that an update on the newly developed Strategy be presented to Committee in order for Committee to comment and provide feedback.

Attached at Appendix 1, to the report was the latest draft of the Council's "Looked After Children - Placements and Permanency Strategy".

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support stated that this Placement and Permanency Strategy described the placements the Authority wanted to provide and commission for its LAC, and focused on how to improve current arrangements to in turn improve outcomes for children in care.

Children's Services were driving a 'whole system' approach to supporting LAC and keeping families together, and together with the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy, these would form a multi-agency response to driving improved outcomes for children, he added.

The focus in the Strategy was on describing what will change in relation to work with children in care or at risk of coming into care. The Strategy contained an action plan for the future rather than an attempt to cover every detail of the current services and support.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support concluded his submission by advising that the Council had awarded additional funding of £66,169 from the Change Management Programme Fund to cover the associated costs for a project manager to lead the Permanency and Placement Strategy from the date this person takes up her post, i.e. mid-June 2014.

The Deputy Leader noted the key objectives of the Strategy as outlined on page 8 of the Appendix to the report, and asked if Substance Misuse should also be included as an added objective.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support confirmed that consideration would be given to this.

The Chairperson whilst commending the Strategy, felt that it should also refer more to other key agencies that the Social Services Department worked with, i.e. partners to include other departments of the Council.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support confirmed that this could be addressed within the Strategy.

A Member noted within the document that though there was reference to domestic abuse by the father in a family environment, there was no statistical evidence to suggest abuse having been committed by the mother, which was sometime the case.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that situations of such abuse was pre-dominantly committed by the husband/boyfriend to his wife/partner, and the data contained within the report to this end, had been supplied by organisations such as Women's Aid. As for husbands being abused by their wives, though there were in all probability cases of this it was hard to obtain any such data confirming this, as sufferers did not often look to seek help in terms of the problem, due to perhaps feeling inadequate or embarrassed to seek such help.

The Head of Regeneration and Development advised that it was positive to note that more Adult Supported lodgings were being made available as this could be linked to the Council's Supporting People Programme where there were avenues of funding available to support cases of tenancy rescue/tenancy crisis.

It was important she stated to ensure that young people had available to them their tenancy opportunities, i.e. that were low as opposed to high in cost. She felt that this could be developed further with Registered Social Landlords, with possibly capital revenue support being pursued for this purpose, e.g. adapting three bedroomed accommodation to one and two bedroom accommodation, where there was greater need for this for young people in particular.

RESOLVED: That Committee both noted and considered the report and associated appendices and agreed to receive a follow-up report on the development of the Strategy in nine months time.

74 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE REPORT (IRS)

The Corporate Director - Children submitted a report to the Cabinet Committee in line with the Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance Wales (WAG 2006). The report, aided by a PowerPoint presentation, provided an overview of the role and function of the IRS.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that the Independent Reviewing Service in Bridgend comprised of eight workers of which there were six full-time equivalent IRO posts.

In Bridgend County Borough Council, he advised that IRO's Chair Child Protection Conferences were commissioned under the All Wales Child Protection Procedures and LAC Reviews under the IRO Guidance (Wales).

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support then confirmed that the population of 'Looked After Children' in Wales had increased by 24.49% between 2007/8 and 2012/13, and gave examples of some charts reflecting the increase in Bridgend County Borough, particularly in the last year or so.

In terms of LAC between the 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014 there were 146 instances of children having "become looked after". This represented a near equal gender split of 46% female and 55% male.

He then broke this figure down in both percentages and actual numbers of LAC there were in each of the different areas of the County Borough.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support then gave the legal status of LAC for the period 1 April 2013 - 31 March 2014, in terms of those children that were subject to an Interim Care Order, those on Remand, under Police Protection, subject to an Emergency Protection Order, and instances where the parent(s) ask for the child to be looked after, including details of statistical information regarding the age of these children, for the same period.

The Presentation then outlined information regarding the different Permanence Plan types, for example:-

- Long Term Foster Carers (153)
- Parallel Planning (98)
- Long term relatives or friends (47)
- None (40)
- Placed with parents (26)
- Adoption (19)
- Residential placement (12)
- Eventual return home (8)
- Supported living (5)
- Remaining with birth family (3)
- Other (1)

The next tranche of data included the following information:-

Length of time Children Looked After at 31 March 2014 for:-

1 year	-	Approximately 117
1 - 2 years	-	Approximately 125
3 - 5 years	-	Approximately 85
6 + years	-	Approximately 88

The next section of the Presentation, then gave details of LAC Reviews due between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014, and compared the number of reviews due (on a month by month basis) compared with the number of reviews held in compliance with statutory timescales. The average overall percentage of reviews held within this period in accordance with statutory timescales averaged out at 96.6% which confirmed a high and level of performance in this area.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support then shared with Members the number of second LAC reviews due comparable with a Plan for Permanence in place during the course of the last financial year. These statistics showed an overall percentage of 93.4%, which as above, was very effective in terms of performance.

The next bar chart he referred to in his submission, reflected an average overall performance of Initial CP Conferences held within 15 working days of the Strategy meeting where a decision was taken to undertake Section 47 enquiries for the last year. This percentage totalled 87.7%, and the Head of Safeguarding and Family Support acknowledged that there was room for improvement in this area of work.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support was pleased to advise Members that an overall percentage of 99% had been achieved in relation to Review Child Protection Conferences held within appropriate timescales during the last twelve months.

To conclude his presentation, he advised that the following issues needed to be considered, monitored and developed over the next twelve months:-

- Improve performance of the IRO Service where level has fallen beneath targets;
- Better monitoring of children's cases including quality assurance duties of the Independent Reviewing Officer;
- Greater emphasis on exit pathways for children looked after by the Authority.

RESOLVED: That Committee noted the content of both the report, accompanying presentation and Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Service.

75 INFORMAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - JULY 2014 - OCTOBER 2014

The Corporate Director - Children submitted a report that sought approval for the proposed Informal Forward Work Programme (IFWP) for the above period, attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee agreed to approve the Informal Forward Work Programme appended to the Officer's report, subject to the further items being added as detailed above, and to invitations being extended to the recommended Invitees also outlined above.

The meeting closed at 11.40am.