

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 29 MAY 2019 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor PJ White – Chairperson

MC Clarke	N Clarke	HJ David	DK Edwards
J Gebbie	CA Green	D Patel	CE Smith
CA Webster	DBF White	HM Williams	RE Young

Apologies for Absence

T Giffard

Officers:

Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Laura Kinsey	Head of Children's Social Care
Elizabeth Walton-James	Group Manager Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

195. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

196. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting dated 6 March 2019, be approved as a true and accurate record.

197. CHILD PRACTICE REVIEW

The Head of Children's Social Care introduced a report, that provided Committee with information in respect of the most recent Child Practice Review from Bridgend.

Following this introduction, the Group Manager, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance then gave a power point Presentation for the benefit of Members, that covered the following key areas of the covering report.

In 2013, Child Practice Reviews replaced what were known as Serious Case Reviews (SCR). This new process stems from the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales report published in October 2009 - Improving Practice to Protect Children in Wales: An Examination of the Role of Serious Case Reviews. This work was pivotal to where we are today, and concluded that action was required to replace the SCR process which had become ineffective in improving practice and inter-agency working.

The guidance sets out arrangements for multi-agency Child Practice Reviews when a significant incident has occurred where abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected.

The overall purpose of reform of the review system is to promote a positive culture of multi-agency child protection learning and reviewing in local areas. The Regional

Safeguarding Children's Board is responsible for ensuring that reviews are carried out effectively. Future reviews concerning any Bridgend children will come under the Cwm Taff Morgannwg Children's Safeguarding Board.

Concise Reviews: a 'concise' Child Practice Review is carried out in cases where abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected and the child has:-

- died; or
- sustained potentially life threatening injury; or
- sustained serious and permanent impairment of health or development; and the child was neither on the child protection register nor a looked after child on any date during the 6 months preceding –
- the date of the event referred to above.

Extended Reviews: an 'extended' Child Practice Review is carried out in cases where abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected and the child has:-

- died; or
- sustained potentially life threatening injury; or
- sustained serious and permanent impairment of health or development; and the child was on the child protection register and/or was a looked after child (including a care leaver under the age of 18) on any date during the 6 months preceding –
- the date of the event referred to

She further explained that on 17 April 2019 Bridgend County Borough Council published a Child Practice Review. The review commenced January 2018 and was commissioned by the Western Bay Safeguarding Children's Board following the identification of concerns where the above criteria for a 'concise review' was met. This review relates to a 9 week old child who died during the night whilst co sleeping with his parents.

The subject of this review was a 9 week old child who died in November 2017 whilst co-sleeping with his parents. Following an inconclusive post-mortem examination and a coroner's inquest concluding an open verdict, the death was viewed as a result of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (S.I.D.S)

Between 2008 and 2017 there were 10 referrals received in respect of the child's mother who was under 18 years of age at the time of the child's birth due to family instability, homelessness, substance misuse and mental health issues. The review highlighted that significant information in respect to these issues was not shared between professionals particularly between health professionals.

There were 9 historical referrals received in respect of the child's father when he was a child. The father was also "Looked After" for short periods due to his mother's poor mental health and domestic abuse within the family.

Whilst there was nothing to suggest the infant's death could have been prevented, there was evidence within the timeframe that the young family may have benefited from a pre-birth assessment and targeted support services.

At the time of the infant's death, the young family were living in private rented accommodation and, their family support structure was unclear. They were not receiving any local authority intervention and home conditions were noted to have deteriorated.

The Group Manager, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance confirmed that the themes highlighted from the review were:-

- The GP did not share relevant information around the mother's mental health with health colleagues and the extent of family support available to the parents was also not adequately explored.
- The mother was not assessed in her own right as a child and the assessment of the child did not consider the wider risk factors about the parent's experiences e.g. parental domestic abuse, mental health, lack of family support.
- There was no specific risk assessment undertaken to consider the above matters.
- Referrals were dealt with in isolation and focused on housing being the dominant factor.
- There was no report to the Police by agencies about the mother having under age sex.

The implementation of actions recommended within the report will be reported into both the Cwm Taf and the Western Bay Child Practice Review Management group. In addition BCBC will convene team based learning events for practitioners and the findings will also be incorporated into core safeguarding training for employees.

A Member made the point that improved lines of communication between partners may prevent situations such as the above arising.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing and the Leader in turn, advised that key partners were working closely and that improved engagement had taken place between key stakeholders particularly since the different agencies had installed the WCCIS IT System. This had led to a marked improvement to methods of information being shared between organisations who work together to look after the most vulnerable in society, such as the young and elderly, including those who have experienced problems in their lives.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee noted the report and accompanying presentation.

198. **APPROACHES TO CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH CARE LEAVERS**

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing submitted a report, that provided Committee with an update in respect of the approaches being used within the local authority to engage and consult with care leavers. The report also provided an update on the Care Inspectorate Engagement event which took place with care leavers in November 2018.

In conjunction with this item, representatives from Voices From Care Cymru (VFCC) were present at the meeting to give a power point presentation. This organisation provided organised events through which engagement with young people was encouraged, more particularly those that were in/leaving a care environment. The organisation was also supported by an Advisory Group that covered different regions of Wales, with a contingency of members on this group being care leavers.

The Chairperson then invited Ms. Deborah Jones, Chief Executive and Chris Dunn, Programmes Manager from VFCC, to present their submission.

The presentation covered the following themes:-

Introduction:

- The organisation worked with Care Experienced Young People from across Wales;
- The organisation was led by young people;
- It provided opportunities for young people to influence decisions about their lives and also the lives of care experienced young people on a national basis;
- It looked to build a strong care experienced community;
- Services included – participation; influencing and wellbeing;
- The organisation was based in Cardiff; established in 1990 and had a staffing compliment of 13

Organisation Values:

Being Young-Person Led

Everything VFCC does is guided by care experienced children & young people. Our Board of Trustees is split between young people and professionals and we regularly consult children and young people on issues that are important to them.

Equality For Everyone In Care

We believe that care experienced children & young people should have the same chances and opportunities as their non-care experienced peers. They should not have to face stigma, discrimination and barriers in life because of their care experience.

Creating A Care Family

VFCC provides the opportunity for care experienced children & young people to meet, grow, learn and develop long lasting friendships.

Being Aspirational

VFCC wants care experienced children & young people to be everything that they can be. We want to inspire them and nurture their potential.

Celebrating Individuality

VFCC is a unique organisation and we recognise and celebrate the individuality and diversity of the children & young people we work with. We see that the different backgrounds, experiences and views of care experienced children & young people help us to develop as an organisation and better represent the wider care population

Key Initiatives:

1. Regional Groups;
2. Local Participation Groups;
3. National Advisory Groups;
4. Proud to Be Me;
5. CareDay Event;
6. Summer Celebration;

7. When I Am Ready Project; and
8. Sing Proud Choir

VFCC influenced work such as Siblings Relationships; Passports (ie supporting ID), Supporting Young Mums and providing a Corporate Parenting role.

The representatives advised Members that the top 3 topics young people shared with VFCC were:

- The stigma of being care experienced
- Support avenues when leaving care
- Emotional wellbeing issues

Support mechanisms such as the above, helped prevent individuals needing CAHMS support, etc.

VFCC aspirations for the Care System

1. "What would I do if this were my child?"
2. "Aspirational"
3. "Inspirational"
4. "Nurturing"
5. "Holistic"
6. "Focus on Emotional Wellbeing"
7. "A United approach"
8. "Hopes and Dreams"
9. "To develop the person not a statistic"

The Chairperson thanked the representatives from VFCC for attending and giving such an interesting and informative presentation.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing advised the VFCC representatives that she was looking forward her team engaging with their organisation going forward.

She added that that the Social Services and Children's Services teams were doing a considerable amount of good work in the support of young people and carers, though there was room for improvement still.

She confirmed that the 16 Plus team worked with people in care up to the age of 25 and provided effective support to individuals within this age range in order to provide support for their differing needs.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing added that BCBC always conducted a Risk Assessment of a young person, prior to them being placed into any care situation. She added that there were also a number of projects in place to avert a person being placed in care where this was preventable. She further added that young people were supported through the Council's Emotional and Wellbeing Strategy that was work in progress.

Bodies such as the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting and Overview and Scrutiny Committees also regularly monitored the effectiveness of support mechanisms that the Authority had in place for young people, particularly those that were considered as

vulnerable. Work with health colleagues also assisted in the continued development of avenues of support, she added.

A Member asked how the care system in Wales compared to that in England and certain wider European countries.

The Chief Executive, VFCC advised that there was increased care arrangements in place in Wales when compared to England (on a pro rata basis), as here in Wales organisations that provided care support were very risk averse. She was unsure how the comparison was with European countries outside the UK though she could find this out and come back to the Member(s) with some information outside of the meeting.

A Member made the point that there was an insurance issue to consider when dealing with people placed in residential care. This was due to the fact that there was currently no legislation in place in Wales or the wider UK, that allowed for persons in care to be physically restrained with any force. Therefore, both those young people and carers were at a level of risk due to this. Policy and guidance needed to be introduced here she felt.

The Chief Executive of VFCC advised that she would discuss this with their Trustees and also link in with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate on this issue as she agreed that this could give rise to a potential serious situation.

The Leader concluded debate on this item, by advising that he, the Chief Executive and the Cabinet Member – Communities had recently met with the Chief Commander of Police, to discuss key relevant organisations working more closely together, with the view of ensuring that young people are kept safe. BCBC wished for young people to have their say also more than perhaps they may have had in the past, and to more take their views on certain issues on board. He added that it would be beneficial he felt, if a representative of South Wales Police and Cwm Taf Health Authority (and representatives from other health partners) were invited to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss improving lives of young people, particularly those that were in the care system.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives from VFCC for attending today's meeting and providing such an interesting and informative presentation.

RESOLVED: That the report and accompanying presentation be noted and should it be in line with the wishes, feelings and requirements of the young people (of Bridgend), the Care Leaver's Forum be re-established in July 2019, and that a report be presented to a future meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting outlining progress on this issue.

199. **LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - NATIONAL TECHNICAL GROUP**

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing presented a report, in order to inform the Cabinet Committee of the work being undertaken by Welsh Government to develop reduction expectation plans with each local authority across Wales.

The report also described the process in place to take this forward and the local activity underway to progress this.

A presentation on the local headline data/key findings contained in the preparatory framework documents was attached at an Appendix to the report. This had been shared with Welsh Government

The report confirmed, that as at March 2018, there were 6,407 looked after children in Wales. This was an 8% increase on the previous year. Over the past 15 years, the number of looked after children has increased by 34%; this increase cannot be attributed to austerity alone.

In 2018, the number of children starting to become looked after decreased by 2%, however the number of children leaving the care system also decreased by 10%.

National data also highlights some other noteworthy patterns. For example, 24.6% of looked after children are placed out of county (1,575) and 5% are placed outside Wales (320). There will be good reasons why some of these children are placed out of area (e.g. placement with family or friends or the development of regional approaches to specialist provision), but it is recognised that others are placed further afield because there is no suitable provision locally. Some of the underlying issues have begun to be addressed through the National Fostering Framework, the Children's Residential Care Task and Finish Group and other work strands within the Improving Outcomes for Children programme. However, Welsh Government also wants to take this opportunity to explore with local authorities the factors that influence decision making around out of county and cross-border placements, to ensure that more children can be placed closer to home where this is in their best interests. It was confirmed that there were more LAC in Wales than in England, however, there was no concrete evidence that could fully confirm this.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing, advised that Welsh Government would like to work in partnership with local authorities across Wales to better understand the context in which organisations are working and to co-produce realistic and bespoke reduction expectation plans which focus on safely reducing the numbers of children in care whilst continuing to improve outcomes for those already in or leaving care. This will require close analysis of existing data at a local, regional and national level to help better understand the pressures within the system and how these can be best relieved.

A visit to Bridgend County Borough Council took place on 10th May 2019 where officials from Welsh Government met with the Chief Executive, Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing, Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing, Corporate Director of Education and Family Support, Head of Children's Social Care, Head of Education and Family Support, and colleagues from legal.

A conversation framework developed from this that covered the following themes:-

- Reducing the need for, and number of, children entering care;
- Looking to provide positive, stable placements (including details of key questions on this issue);
- Enhancing exit strategies that better enable exit from care;
- Managing the business;
- Co-production of Bespoke Targets

When all the visits have been completed, an overarching report will be collated and shared with a technical group established, prior to it being presented to the First Minister. The overarching report, will highlight the key messages and also identify some actions to be taken forward nationally. The technical group will also be considering monitoring and review.

A Member referred to page 62 of the report and instances of repeat pregnancies. She asked how these can be prevented in respect of young women.

The Head of Children's Social Care, advised that there was a project called Reflect that had been in place around the last 12 months initiated by Welsh Government based on a model in England. This initiative attempted to encourage young women to pause and think of the consequences and responsibilities attached to becoming pregnant, for example if they were too young to be able to sufficiently care for a child, due to reasons for example, of being unemployed and not having their own home etc. The Project also stressed preventative measures they could turn to to prevent pregnancy, such as contraception. A report on this Project could be submitted to a future Committee meeting she felt.

The Chairperson considered it important to monitor the numbers of LAC in the County Borough going forward.

The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing advised that the situation regarding LAC had been stable in Bridgend for some time, and numbers were actually starting to slowly reduce. Out of County/Out of Wales placements were also reducing she added.

The Head of Children's Social Care added that there was also attempts being made to reduce Court Order Looked After Cases.

The Leader asked why there was an increase in the percentage of LAC within the age range of 5 to 9 years old, particularly due to the good work that had taken place which had led to a reduction of a third of young people coming into the care system during the last few years.

The Head of Children's Social Care advised that this was going to be looked into by herself and the Head of Education and Family Support, as there was no apparent reason substantiating the above increase.

The Deputy Leader asked if there was any data that confirmed not only the number of children who had entered the care system, but if their parents/guardians had also.

Officers advised that they would look into this and collate the appropriate data accordingly, and provide the Member with this outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee noted the information contained in the report.

200. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.

The meeting closed at 12:30