

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

THURSDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2015

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - SOCIAL SERVICES & WELLBEING

REQUEST TO PROVIDE PARENT AND CHILD PLACEMENT VIA THE IN-HOUSE FOSTERING SERVICE

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 To share with corporate parenting committee a proposal to establish and provide an in house parent and child fostering service; to describe the current arrangements for commissioning these placements from external providers; to outline the potential benefits of taking a new approach, including reduced costs.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The report links to the following corporate priorities:

- Working with children and families to tackle problems early
- Working together to make the best use of our resources

3. Background.

- 3.1 Bridgend County Borough Council is currently unable to provide an in-house service offering parent and child fostering placements. If required, parent and child (typically mother and baby only) placements are provided by commissioning the placements through a range of independent fostering agencies (IFA's) via the children commissioning support resource (CCSR).

- 3.2 This cost of commissioning these external parent and child placements is significant, totalling an expenditure of £248,256.06 in 2014/2015.

Year	Expenditure (£)
2014/2015	247,656.25
2014/2013	241,889.77
2013/2012	233,015.48
2012/2011	188,093.58

- 3.3 There are 2 main circumstances in which a Local Authority will require a parent and child placement:

- The Court will recommend the Local Authority to provide a parent and child placement and will not sanction any other placement for the child; and
- The parent of the child will agree to their baby becoming Looked After under section 20 and the Local Authority wants to assess the parent's ability to care for the baby and to do so in the safety of a parent and child

foster placement. In some cases the parent may be a child who will also be Looked After (LAC).

- 3.4 It was determined via the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4C's) that there was a gap in provision for parent and child placements across Wales and in response a number of the larger independent fostering agencies (IFA's) established such a provision, within the framework parameters. These placements come at a cost.
- 3.5 Currently, the standard level 1 parent and child placement costs £1,364.70 per week and a level 2 placement costs £1,650 per week. Placements are initially set up for a 12-16 week assessment period but can last the length of care proceedings, namely 26 weeks.
- 3.6 Levels 1 and 2 are determined by the issues/risks associated with the family e.g. if either parent is already a Looked After Child, there is a history of substance misuse, challenging behaviour /aggression, where previous children have been removed, or where there is a history of offending behaviour. Family situations where the risks are higher require a more specialist, level 2 placement.
- 3.7 The Local Authority commissioned 12 parent and child placements in 2014/2015, 11 at level 1 and 1 at level 2, resulting in a cumulative spend of £247,656.25.

4. Current situation / proposal.

- 4.1 The Local Authority currently commissions all parent and child foster placements via independent fostering agencies (IFAs).
- 4.2 As at 18th September 2015, there were 13 active mother and baby placements that have, in this financial year, thus far cost the Local Authority £266,587.03
- 4.3 As at the 31st October 2015 we have 8 referrals for potential parent and child placements for unborn babies. Since the Public Law Outline was introduced we have experienced a steady increase in the demand for parent and child foster placements. The explanation for this is that the legal test for justification of removal of a child from parental care now demands a high level of evidence of imminent risk of harm. If this evidence cannot be adduced, for example in the case of a new baby where no firm evidence of parenting ability yet exists, the Court will refuse to endorse a care plan that proposes to separate a baby from parental care. In these situations, where it is not safe enough to leave a baby in the care of its parent in their own home and without supervision, the Local Authority has little alternative than to assess the first months of the baby's life in a parent and child foster placement. The supervision by experienced foster carers provides the necessary safety measures to keep the baby safe in parental care.
- 4.4 The benefits of providing an in house service are as follows:-
- More cost effective and flexible in terms of what can be offered. For example, it would potentially enable fathers to be placed with the mother and baby and participate in the assessment. Increased opportunities for families to remain in their locality and when appropriate enabling cases to be stepped down for community assessments in a more timely way.

- Local placements enable parents to maintain extended familial links and access local support services including education or training. This provides a more realistic assessment as parents are tested in their local environment and not placed in an artificial environment in an area remote from their home county which may not expose them to the same challenges they will face when they return to their home community.
- Social work staff will have greater time to spend assessing and supporting the families as their placement will be in the local area. This also reduces the travel time and expenditure for families and Local Authority staff.

4.5 For the Local Authority to promote and effectively utilise a parent and child scheme there would need to be clear guidelines and processes in place for potential carers, including a transition plan for the young people and the carers offering the service. The service will be managed and will be fully compliant with the Fostering Regulations Wales (2003)

4.6 Currently, whilst Bridgend County Borough Council has in place a principle that an IFA parent and child placement will end after a 12 week assessment, we have been faced with significant delays with courts directing that the parent and child placement should continue until the Final Hearing at 26 weeks. To mitigate some of the costs in these situations, our fees for in house carers would be on a sliding scale with a reduction after the assessment phase is complete.

4.7 This service will adopt the brand of and be formally launched by Bridgend Foster Care. There will be a bespoke marketing campaign for the new service. It is positive to note that we already have some expressions of interest from our existing carer cohort.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules.

5.1 The service would need to be added into the Fostering Services Statement of Purpose The statement of purpose will therefore require amendment by the addition of this service.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 Not Applicable for the purposes of this report.

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 Parent and child placement spend financial year 1.4.14 – 31.3.15

	Date started	Date ended	No. of weeks in placement	Weekly cost £	Total cost £	level
1	21.2.14	17.7.14	21	1,364.70	28,658.70	1
2	28.2.14	16.1.15	50	1,349.10	67,455.00	1
3	30.5.14	3.2.15	37	970.55	35,910.35	1
4	12.6.14	7.11.14	18	970.55	17,469.90	1
5	17.7.14	27.10.14	14.5	1,364.70	19,788.15	1
6	14.11.14	31.3.14	20.5	1,364.70	27,976.35	1
7	27.10.14	28.11.14	4	1,256.78	5,027.12	1
8	24.12.14	5.01.15	2	1,349.10	2,698.20	1
9	8.1.15	31.3.15	12.5	1,364.70	17,658.75	1
10	2.2.15	31.3.15	10.5	1,650.00	17,325.00	2
11	18.3.15	31.3.15	2	1,394.50	2,789.00	1
12	19.2.15	31.3.15	5.5	999.95	5,499.73	1
Total			207.5		248,256.25	

Parent and child placement spend year to date 1.4.15 – 18.9.15

	Date started	Date ended	No. of weeks in placement	Weekly cost £	Total cost £	level
1	1.4.15	19.5.15	7	1,364.70	9,552.90	1
2	1.4.15	8.5.15	4.5	1,364.70	6,141.15	1
3	1.4.15	10.7.15	13.5	1,650.00	22,275.00	2
4	1.4.15	Still in	27	1,394.50	37,651.50	1
5	1.4.15	Still in	25	999.95	24,998.75	1
6	31.3.15	26.5.15	17	1,650.00	28,050.00	2
7	22.4.15	Still in	21.5	1,386.08	29,800.72	1
8	5.5.15	Still in	19.5	1,593.12	31,065.84	2
9	26.5.15	Still in	16.5	970.55	1,614.07	1
10	16.6.15	Still in	13.5	1,364.70	18,423.45	1
11	19.6.15	Still in	13	1,386.08	18,019.04	1
12	26.6.15	Still in	12	1,499.55	17,994.60	2
13	21.8.15	Still in	4	1,650.00	6,600.00	2
Total			194		266,587.03	

- 7.2 BCBC would continue to use IFAs for level 2 placements due to the complex requirements of these cases but attempt to bring level 1 placements in-house
- 7.3 The proposal is that Bridgend Foster Care will provide a fostering fee of £721.86* to foster carers offering parent and child placements (*this is based on one parent and one child in placement). This would reduce each individual placement cost by £642.84 per week.
- 7.4 The service would require a member of staff to recruit, assess and supervise the scheme. Research from the existing IFA providers suggests this would need to be a full time post at senior practitioner level. The cost to the Local Authority based on 15 parent and child households offering the service, of providing this member of staff (SCP 39-41) would be £58.89 per week bringing the overall placement cost to £780.75 and offers a potential saving per placement of £583.95 per week
- 7.5 Summary of potential savings

	01/04/14 to 31/03/15	01/14/15 to 18/09/15
Total Current Costs	£248,256	£266,587
Level 1 No. of weeks	197	128
Proposed Level 1 Weekly Rate	£721.86	£721.86
Plus Additional Weekly Staff Cost	£58.89	£58.89
Total Level 1 Weekly Rate	£780.75	£780.75
Revised Level 1 Costs	£153,808	£99,936
Level 2 Costs (as current)	£17,325	£105,985
Total Revised Costs	£171,733	£205,921
Potential Savings	(£77,123)	(£60,666)

8. Recommendation.

- 8.1 That the corporate parenting cabinet committee takes note of the information contained within this report and agrees to bring forward proposals to make changes to the existing Bridgend Foster Care Statement of Purpose to include the ability to offer parent and child foster placements in house.
- 8.2 That the corporate parenting committee agrees that a Parent and Child fostering service is added to the Statement of Purpose for Bridgend Foster Care

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Background documents: None