

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING

THURSDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2015

### REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - SOCIAL SERVICES & WELLBEING

#### WHEN I AM READY

#### 1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 Provide Information to Corporate Parenting Committee about the 'When I am Ready' scheme.

#### 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 'When I am Ready' is a scheme which comes into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 having been developed by the Welsh Government in partnership with local government and key third sector partners to enable eligible care leavers to continue to live with their foster carers once they attain 18 years of age. The Social Services and Well Being Act (SSWBA) uses the term 'post-18 living arrangement' to describe a situation where a care leaver who has turned 18 years of age continues to live with his or her foster parent/s in an arrangement facilitated by the Local Authority.
- 3.2 These arrangements differ from foster care as once a young person has attained 18 years of age and is an adult they are no longer legally 'looked after' or 'in care'. The legislation and regulation that apply to fostering no longer applies and the legal basis on which a young person resides in the foster carers' home changes. The Local Authority would be facilitating a 'post-18 living arrangement' for that young person.
- 3.3 'When I Am Ready' will be different to supported lodgings, which are governed by a separate statutory framework. Supported lodgings is primarily a housing scheme for vulnerable young people, and does not operate on the familial model promoted by 'When I Am Ready'. Supported lodgings placements are financed primarily by supporting people grant monies. The tax and benefit rules are also different especially in relation to qualifying care relief for the providers.
- 3.4 Supported lodgings may be a suitable option for some care leavers, instead of a 'When I Am Ready' placement, for example, where a person in full time education needs vacation accommodation. The relative merits of 'When I Am Ready' and supported lodgings will be discussed with the young person and their foster carers as part of the Pathway Planning process commencing at 16 years of age. If the young person wishes to remain with their foster carers beyond the age of 18 years

of age, this will in future almost always be under a 'When I Am Ready' arrangement. 'When I Am Ready' is also very different to the (adult placement) 'Shared Lives' scheme, which may be suitable for people with ongoing care and support needs who are unlikely ever to live independently.

- 3.5 The main aims for 'When I Am Ready' are:-
- To provide stability and continuity for young people leaving foster care as they prepare for independent living.
  - To improve the life chances of Looked After Children
  - To provide Looked After Children with increased opportunities to exercise choice and control over their lives.
- 3.6 'When I Am Ready' helps to ensure that young people do not experience a sudden disruption to their living arrangements which can have a negative impact upon their education, training or employment, or upon their developing independent living skills.
- 3.7 A list of outcomes have been developed in line with the National Outcomes Framework to monitor and evaluate the success of the 'When I Am Ready' scheme at a local and national level.
- 3.8 All 'Looked After Children' who have been placed in care and are approaching the age of 18 years of age are eligible to be considered for 'When I Am Ready'. Under section 108 of the SSWBA through a Pathway assessment the Local Authority must ascertain whether a young person and their foster carers wish to make a post-18 years of age living arrangement.
- 3.9 In summary a 'When I Am Ready' agreement may be made where:-
- The young person was a Looked After Child immediately prior to their 18th birthday and is living with foster carers in a placement arranged by the Local Authority (this includes in house, relative or Independent provider foster placements); and
  - The young person is deemed, under current legislation, to be an eligible child within the meaning of the Children Act 1989 immediately before they reached 18 years of age (from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 the term 'eligible child' will be replaced with the term category 1 young person under the SSWBA); and
  - The young person and the foster carers both wish to enter into a 'When I Am Ready' agreement and the arrangement has been set out in the young person's pathway plan; and
  - The Local Authority is satisfied that such an arrangement is consistent with the young person's wellbeing; and
  - A proportion of the allowance paid to the 'When I Am Ready' carer will be paid by the Local Authority.
- 3.10 'When I Am Ready' arrangements should cover all young people who were previously in foster care and who were looked after prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, as long as the above criteria are met. This is regardless of whether the young person is undertaking full or part time education, training or employment or none of these activities.
- 3.11 However there is an expectation that any young person accessing the 'When I Am Ready' scheme will commit to undertaking skills development to prepare for the

future. This could include education, training, employment or volunteering. This expectation should be written into the young person's pathway plan and will form part of the 'living together agreement' once the 'When I Am Ready' arrangement has started.

3.12 When I Am Ready' agreements extend until:-

- The young person leaves the arrangement; or
- The young person reaches their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday (provided they have been continuously living in that arrangement since their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday); or
- The young person completes their agreed programme of education or training after their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday (provided they have been continuously living in that arrangement since their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday)

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

4.1 We currently have 18 young people over the age of 18 years accessing ongoing living accommodation:

- 5 young people are residing within our supported lodgings service;
- 5 young people are living with BCBC foster carers who have converted to supported lodgings provision - specifically for them;
- 1 young person lives with their relative who was previously their relative foster carer;
- 7 young people are continuing to reside with independent foster agency providers who have converted to supported lodgings via BCBC, whilst remaining approved by the independent fostering agency to provide fostering placements.

4.2 We currently have 80 Looked After Children who are 15, 16 and 17 years old and will become 18 years of age after the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016. We have identified, via their current pathway planning, that 2 will seek a supported lodgings placement and 14 will be considered for assessment for 'When I Am Ready'. The remaining 64 young people have alternative identified Pathway plans; such as move on to Llamau or other housing projects, returning to family, or living independently.

4.3 Ongoing discussions are being held at a national level about the impact of providing 'When I Am Ready' arrangements for foster carers. There are issues relating to the potential for Local Authorities to implement differing standards and financial recompense across Wales. The South Wales Management group is working with the Fostering Network in order to discuss the potential of a uniform approach and rate set across Wales as a preferred option. Once this has been established we will be better placed to consider the budget implications relating to the implementation of the scheme locally.

#### **5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.**

5.1 Not applicable for the purposes of this report.

#### **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 Not applicable for the purposes of this report.

#### **7. Financial Implications.**

7.1 It is too early to assess any financial implications that may arise from the 'When I am Ready' scheme. Further government information is set to be made available in January 2016 that will inform the potential allowance rates payable and whether it is a budgetary pressure for the authority or not.

7.2 There will be no additional financial administrative burden

**8. Recommendation.**

8.1 That the corporate parenting cabinet committee takes note of the information contained within this report.

**Susan Cooper**  
**Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing**  
**26 November 2015**

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**Background documents:** There are no additional documents submitted with this report.