

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 7 APRIL 2016 AT 10.00 AM**

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

M Gregory

CE Smith

HJ Townsend

HM Williams

Invitees:

Councillor E Dodd  
Councillor EP Foley  
Councillor RD Jenkins  
Councillor E Venables  
Councillor KJ Watts

Officers:

Judith Brooks	Group Manager Business Support
Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Nicola Echanis	Head of Strategy Partnerships & Commissioning
Deborah McMillan	Corporate Director Education & Family Support
Andrew Rees	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Susan Roberts	Group Manager School Improvement
Beverley Whiteley	Team Manager Children with Disabilities

122. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members:

Councillor DBF White  
Councillor PJ White.

123. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

124. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting of 3 December 2015 be approved as a true and accurate record.

125. SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELL-BEING (WALES) ACT 2014 (INCLUDING SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO PART 6 LOOKED AFTER AND ACCOMMODATED CHILDREN)

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing reported that the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 came into effect on 6 April 2016 and a project team had been established in the lead up to the implementation of the Act to ensure compliance with the Act under the leadership of Beverley Whiteley, Team Manager Children With Disabilities. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that the Directorate is working towards a cultural shift and is now in a strong position to implement the Act.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing outlined the two key policy objectives of the Act seeking to transform the way in which social services are delivered, primarily through promoting independence and giving people a stronger voice and control. The Act also sought to promote partnership working in social care and to enhance the preventative role of social care and health, setting out overarching wellbeing duties to reduce or delay the need for care and support. It ensured that people receive the right support at the right time and place.

The Team Manager Children With Disabilities informed the Committee of the main duties of the Act with reference to children in need of care and support, looked after and accommodated children and care leavers. She highlighted the main points of the 11 parts which make up the Act, particularly Part 6 of the Act which related to the authority's duties and responsibilities towards looked after and accommodated children as well as detailing arrangements and duties for leaving care, including making provision for post-18 living arrangements. The Team Manager Children With Disabilities informed the Committee that the Code explicitly states that once a child is in care all elected members and officers of the local authority, as corporate parents need to be concerned about that child and must take a set of principles into account when engaging with them and making any decision concerning them.

The Team Manager Children With Disabilities informed the Committee that Part 6 of the Act links with many other parts of the Act including duties surrounding Advocacy in Part 10 and required provision relating to children and young people in the Secure estate in Part 11. She stated that Part 6 stressed the duty to appoint an independent visitor for a child where it appeared to be in the child's best interest. Part 6 also makes provision for Short Breaks where required for a disabled child, although the Act also makes provision under Part 4, where this is considered most appropriate. She stated there is a duty under Part 3 to assess from time to time whether a looked after child has care and support needs and where those needs are eligible there is a duty to meet those needs. Part 6 also draws on the concept of working preventatively with looked after and accommodated children. She stated that the Act had strengthened the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer, although it had appeared to legislate what is already best practice in this authority.

The Team Manager Children With Disabilities informed the Committee that Placement choice has been highlighted as important and the Act introduced a placement hierarchy and set of "rules" that the authority must follow when deciding where to place a child it is looking after. It also placed a new requirement of an order of preference when considering out of area placements and also make clear that when considering the placement of a child in Key Stage 4 that a move of school should only be in exceptional circumstances. There is also a clear focus on the assessment of a child's mental/emotional health while undertaking a looked after child health assessment.

The Team Manager Children With Disabilities also informed the Committee that 'Foster to Adopt' has been introduced, which requires the authority to place a child with prospective adopters following the decision being taken that re-integration with birth family has been discounted but prior to the placement order being granted. This will require prospective adopters who wish to be considered to also be approved as foster carers.

The Team Manager Children With Disabilities informed the Committee that care leavers should expect the same level of care that others would expect from a reasonable parent. The local authority is expected to make sure that they are provided with the opportunities they need to come to terms with taking on the responsibilities of adulthood. She stated that there are also changes to the duties in respect of post-18 living

arrangements and the Act introduces the requirement for authorities to set up a 'When I am Ready' scheme for young people in foster placements who wish to remain living with their former carers beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing reported that planning for the implementation of the Act had involved a huge piece of work with 800 staff to be trained, with 50% of those staff having already been trained to support the transfer of knowledge into practice. She stated that the Act had brought about a whole range of new challenges and entitlements at a time of severe financial restraint with no additional resources being made available from the Welsh Government, apart from some transitional / transformational funding. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that funding had been available to the authority for two years to engage in work with prisoners at Parc Prison. The Committee questioned the demands of the prison population on staff time, the number of the authority's staff devoted to working in the prison and whether the pressures of having a prison in the authority's area could be recognised in the Revenue Support Grant. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that a working group had been established to work with Parc Prison where there is a need to provide care and support. She stated there may be a need to fund small aids and adaptations within the prison. Two Occupational Therapists and one Social Worker to support work within the prison. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that she would need to look at whether the financial pressures of supporting the prison could be included in the RSG. The Head of Strategy Partnerships and Commissioning informed the Committee of the role of Social Work staff working within the prison, it was hoped that the Youth Justice Board would fund continue to fund the Social Worker post at the prison.

The Committee questioned how better access to good information would be determined. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that the Dewis Information System had been purchased which would be accessed by service users to enable to exercise choice and to make informed decisions. The system is compatible with the Digital Transformation programme.

The Cabinet Member Childrens Social Services and Equalities thanked the Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing and team for the work they had undertaken in preparation for the implementation of the Act. She stated that the authority had already implemented many good schemes such as supported lodgings for people up to 21 years. The Cabinet Member Childrens Social Services and Equalities also informed the Committee that she and officers had met the Minister to discuss the lack of resources from the Welsh Government to support implementation of the Act as the Act was costing more than the grant funding received by the authority. The Team Manager Children With Disabilities informed the Committee that active offers in relation to advocacy were needed to be made to looked after children. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that the advocacy proposal was still being finalised and that the Head of Safeguarding and Assessment represents the authority on a working group which was looking at advocacy.

The Committee requested clarification of the foster to adopt scheme. The Team Manager Children With Disabilities informed the Committee that the scheme operates differently in Wales to its operation in England in that the Act allows the authority to place a child with foster carers prior to proceeding with adoption. She stated that there is a very careful matching process prior to the fostering arrangement taking place.

The Committee requested clarification of the meeting needs duty under Part 4 of the Act. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that the authority already meets its duties under Part 4 of the Act in order to protect the child

from abuse or neglect and by delivering a care and support plan. She stated that the Act strengthens processes the authority already has in place. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing also informed the Committee that the Western Bay collaboration has a child sexual exploitation strategy in place with the lead officer working closely with the police to identify children who are at risk and missing children. She stated that the MASH had been set up whereby key agencies such as the police, health and probation service had signed up to it and will be co-located. She also stated that a Child Safeguarding Board had been set up across Western Bay and is based in Bridgend. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that the service had been subject to audit by Internal Audit which had found that processes are in place to ensure children are safeguarded.

The Committee questioned whether Direct Payments are in place. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that Direct Payments are already in place, however the Act had brought about a change in duties in that service users can now purchase services from the authority. She stated that service users who have substance misuse problems can have direct payments however the authority will use the direct payment to purchase services on service users' behalf. The Team Manager Children With Disabilities informed the Committee that Direct Payments were previously offered to children with disabilities only; however the Act widened the availability of Direct Payments to all children with needs.

The Committee questioned the authority had put in adaptations at Parc Prison. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that small aids and adaptations had been put in place at the prison, but she would confirm the type of aids that had been put in place. The Committee was informed that there are 64 children at Parc Prison who are the responsibility of the home local authority and not this authority, but the authority would have responsibility if they are looked after. The Head of Strategy Partnerships and Commissioning informed the Committee that Social Workers will ensure that children in Parc Prison receive statutory visits.

The Committee questioned how the Future Generations Act will link with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that the wellbeing duty requires the authority to undertake a population assessment. She stated that wellbeing duty had been the subject of discussion at Corporate Management Board and there was a need to ensure the authority abides by its wellbeing duties. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that a project board on the implementation of the Future Generations Act would be set up.

RESOLVED: That the content and the actions set out for the future implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act be noted.

126. ROTA VISITING BY ELECTED MEMBERS

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that rota visiting to the Council's children's social care establishments is part of the quality assurance mechanism in place and is valued greatly. She stated that there are internal monitoring processes in place for rota visiting and that elected members contribute greatly to the programme and more visits by members are encouraged.

The Group Manager Business Support reported that comprehensive guidance for rota visiting had been developed with Members which is regularly reviewed. She stated that training sessions have taken place to ensure Members are updated on the process of rota visiting. The Group Manager Business Support informed the Committee that

concerns had been raised by Members about the variety of services they visit, however the purpose of the visits is to gain feedback on the quality of care received and it was hoped that Members would be able to spend time with different services users each time they visit.

The Group Manager Business Support reported that 28 visits had been carried out of a possible 63 visits to children's establishments between April 2014 and January 2016. She stated the next rota will commence in April 2016 and invitations will be sent to all Members to encourage a greater level of participation in rota visits. The Group Manager Business Support informed the Committee that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 9 March 2016 requested that consideration be given to including independent sector children's establishments on the rota visiting programme. This is currently being explored.

The Cabinet Member Children's Social Services and Equalities commented on the need for more visits to take place to the Transition Unit at Newbridge House as more visits had taken place to Bakers Way.

A member of the Committee commented that the purpose of the visits was to look at the welfare of children and young people at those establishments and not to look at the conditions of the facilities. The Group Manager Business Support informed the Committee that the guidance in place for rota visits is quite detailed and there are management processes in place to report problems which relate to the condition of facilities at the establishments.

The Committee commented on the excellent training offered to Members to assist them in undertaking rota visits.

**RESOLVED:**           (1) That the report be noted:  
  
                                  (2) That it be noted that next rota period will commence in April 2016 and invitations will be sent to all Elected Members to try and increase the level of participation.

**127. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN DEPRIVATION GRANT**

The Group Manager School Improvement reported on the support being delivered to improve the educational performance of looked after children. She stated that across Bridgend, there is an improving trend in GCSE performance at grades A\* - G for looked after children and in 2014/15 no looked after children left education at the age of 16 without a qualification. However, the proportion of grades above C is still too low and is therefore an area in need of improvement. She stated that setting targets for cohorts of looked after children is problematic across Wales, given the variable nature of the looked after children population and the relatively small cohort sizes at local authority level. She informed the Committee that the Welsh Government has set a national target in the educational achievement of 15 year olds at Key Stage 4 of the Level 2 from 17% in 2014 to 25% in 2016.

The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee that the authority is amongst the best performing local authorities in Wales for looked after children gaining GCSEs, however there remained a big gap in performance in educational attainment between looked after children and children who are not looked after.

The Group Manager School Improvement informed the Committee of the multi-level approach to supporting and targeting the educational performance of looked after

children, which is a priority in the Directorate's business plan. Each school had a designated teacher with responsibility to monitor and promote the education of looked after children. Designated teachers work closely with the Looked After Children in Education (LACE) Team. The plan is to develop capacity in schools and build on good practice across the five local authorities in the Consortium.

The Group Manager School Improvement informed the Committee of the change in the allocation of the Pupil Deprivation Grant for looked after children, which was now administered by the Consortium and not schools to facilitate more strategic working. It was intended that Pupil Deprivation Grant for looked after children would be used to support interventions and practices that are proven to have the greatest impact and sustainability in raising the attainment of looked after children. The Group Manager School Improvement highlighted a list of schools that were successful in obtaining Pupil Deprivation Grant for looked after children in 2015/16. In response to a question from the Committee, the Group Manager School Improvement stated that schools outside Bridgend had qualified for Pupil Deprivation Grant where they provide education for Bridgend looked after children who are educated out of county as they possess the specialist facilities to do so.

The Group Manager School Improvement informed the Committee that the authority had commissioned Thrive through Pupil Deprivation Grant to provide training to a member of staff in each secondary and special school and a member of staff from each cluster in order to support looked after children within their schools and within their cluster. She stated that the main objective of Thrive is to support children's engagement and progress in learning so that they are ready for school, willing to join in, curious and keen to learn.

The Group Manager School Improvement informed the Committee that a virtual head teacher would be appointed to promote the educational achievement of all looked after children. Those children would be on a 'virtual school roll' even though they attend schools across and borough. The virtual head teacher will have the specialist knowledge to provide extra support to designated teachers. She stated the authority intends to appoint a part-time virtual head teacher and to develop a virtual school for looked after children, funded from Pupil Deprivation Grant.

The Group Manager School Improvement highlighted 3 separate case studies which demonstrated local authority support for looked after children. The Committee commented on the positive impact which the LACE Team has had on achieving successful outcomes in the case studies reported for children who were formerly looked after.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

128. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 11.40 am