

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

20 JULY 2016

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 'WHEN I AM READY' SCHEME.

1. Purpose of the Report.

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an update on the implementation of the "When I am Ready" scheme in Bridgend County Borough Council. To ask the Committee to approve the 'When I Am Ready' Policy and the accompanying 'When I Am Ready' Financial Policy.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority.

- 2.1 The report links to the following corporate priorities:
- Smarter use of resources.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report on the 'When I am Ready' scheme on 3rd December 2015. 'When I am Ready' is a scheme which came into force on the 6th April 2016 through the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014(SSWBA). The scheme was developed by the Welsh Government in partnership with local government and key third sector partners to enable eligible care leavers to have the option of continuing to live with their foster carers once they attain 18 years of age. 'When I Am Ready' is not a regulated service. The 'When I Am Ready' policy has been produced and is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.2 The 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.
- 3.3 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 the Local Authority must, through a Pathway assessment, ascertain whether a young person and their foster carers wish to make a post-18 years of age living arrangement. This is regardless of whether the young person is undertaking full or part time education, training or employment or none of these activities. 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 their future.
- 3.4. 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.

3.5 '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.

3.6 'When I Am Ready' extends until:-

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

4. Current situation.

4.1 There are currently three 'When I am Ready' living together arrangements in place in Bridgend County Borough. Through the Accommodation and Permanence panel, social workers present young people who fit the criterion for progression to be cared for through a When I am Ready placement. At present, there are 'When I Am Ready' arrangements for a further five young people agreed. There are a further nine young people who will meet the criteria over the next year based on our current cohort of Looked After Children.

4.2 A list of outcome measures has 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. The outcomes will also be reported through the requirements of funding provided by the Supporting People grant (see below).

4.3 There are implications for carers in terms of:

- Claiming benefits;
- Housing situation;
- Insurance notifications;
- Becoming excluded licensees.

These reasons may lead to carers choosing not to offer this option.

4.4 Young people may choose not to enter into a 'When I am Ready' arrangement due to them possibly not wanting to sign formal living together agreements or entering adulthood with the expectation that they claim housing benefit.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

5.1 There is no impact on the policy framework and procure rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 This scheme is being implemented as part of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act to promote equality of opportunity and life chances for previously accommodated children without discrimination. The 'When I Am ready' scheme is available to all Bridgend Looked After Children meeting the requirements of

category one; (A child who is aged 16 or 17 is being looked after by a Local Authority and has been looked after by a Local Authority for a period of 13 weeks or periods amounting in total to 13 weeks which began after he or she reached 14 and ended after he or she reached 16). Children and young people will have equal opportunities when transitioning into adulthood.

7. Financial Implications.

- 7.1 Each 'When I Am Ready' placement will cost the Local Authority £185 per week minus all relevant claimable benefits (see page 6 of the financial policy) and, as appropriate, contributions from the young people themselves as detailed in the 'When I Am Ready' policy. The £185 is the Welsh Government recommended basic allowance for all children accommodated aged 16-17 years. This £185 is subject to inflationary increase as directed by Welsh Government on an annual basis. Housing benefit is dependent on circumstances of individual applications; young peoples' contributions are a minimum of £20 per week. The Local Authority would meet any remaining cost i.e.; not more than £70 per week per placement but potentially less depending on the individual and their personal circumstances.
- 7.2 The 'When I Am Ready' placements will be funded partly by Bridgend County Borough Council Supported lodgings budget within Safeguarding and Family Support and partly from Welsh Government Grant (Supporting People Programme Grant - SPPG). The amount provided by SPPG is £69,252 for the year. Any further placement costs are funded through the Just Ask Plus team budget.
- 7.3 As all Category One Looked After children are entitled to 'When I Am Ready' provision upon attaining the age of 18, there is the potential for increased costs to the Local Authority over the forthcoming years. A significant increase in provision is not anticipated but would be partially offset by existing Supported lodgings arrangements ceasing. Requests for additional SPPG funding for those placements would be made in the first instance if required.
- 7.4 A When I Am Ready financial policy has been produced and is attached at **Appendix 2**.

8. Recommendation.

- 8.1 It is recommended that the corporate parenting committee takes note of the information contained within this report and approves the policies appended to the report.

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Background documents

None