



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on Monday, 13 September 2021 at 10.00 am

County Borough Councillors - Corporate Parenting Board Members in attendance:-

Councillor C Leyshon (Chair)

Councillor G Hopkins Councillor J Rosser
Councillor E Griffiths Councillor S Rees
Councillor L Hooper

Officers in attendance

Ms C Miles, Childcare Solicitor
Ms A Lloyd, Service Director, Children's Services
Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion
Ms J Thomas, Complaints & QA Manager, Social Services
Mrs J Clark, Head of Safeguarding
Ms Z Lancelott, Head of Community Wellbeing & Resilience
Mr L Lewis, Acting Head of the Youth Offending Service

Others in attendance

Annabel Galt at VfCC /Blueprint Forum

14 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was received by County Borough Councillor S Rees-Owen. County Borough Councillor J Rosser indicated that she would need to leave the meeting early due to her attendance at a funeral.

15 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

16 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THANKS

The Board put on record their thanks to Ms Anne-Marie Browning for the support provided to the Board and her work within the Children's Services team and **RESOLVED** that a letter of thanks be sent to Ms Browning following her recent retirement.

17 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Board were an accurate reflection.

The Head of Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service referred Members to his report which provided an update on the work of the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (YOS) for 2020/21. The report before Members included a summarised response to the Covid 19 pandemic and sought to inform members of future service challenges/risks.

The Head of Service provided Members with a detailed overview of the report outlining past and current positions of work including collaborative partnership working. Members were reminded that the service was running day to day tasks remotely and were advised of the difficulties that this created in the first instance, as everyone got use to the new way of working. However, during this time, YOS staff continued to support young people who appeared in the law courts (including a Remand court based in Cardiff), who required an appropriate adult (AA) at the police station when arrested, or who agreed to attend for interview on a voluntary basis. Face to face contact with young people assessed as 'high risk' or subject to 'intensive supervision and surveillance' also continued during this time and the input of experienced sessional workers ensured that contact with this cohort took place during evenings and weekends as necessary. Importantly, since May last year, the YOS has continued to work with a skeleton staff from its office base in the Merthyr Tydfil Law Courts and this arrangement provided invaluable managerial and peer support for those who most required it.

Members were informed that at the present time, all YOS staff are equipped with the resources to function more effectively and most staff can see the benefits of working in a more flexible and agile manner. However, the onset of Covid has brought new challenges in relation to managing risks both to the public and to the children known to our service, and more recently there has been a significant increase in referrals for prevention services. Following a lengthy delay as a result of Covid, the YOS has now completed the process of restructuring the service in order to meet future demands on the service. Details of the new structure were provided to Members.

Going forward, the monitoring of the National Standards for Youth Justice in Wales alongside partners will be central to the future effectiveness and governance of the service and improve accountability for ASB and offending across the partnership. It was advised that the YOS also recognises that it needs to develop better communication and awareness raising both ways between operational practice on the ground and how it relates to the work of the Offender Management Board, and wider elected members.

The Chair thanked the Head of Service for the detailed report and overview and spoke positively of the continuation of the face-to-face communication with young people over such difficult circumstances in respect of the pandemic.

The Vice Chair took the opportunity to query how the service was performing in relation to the provision of service to children looked after and those children and young people already known to the service. The Head of Service advised of the positive collaborative work with partners and the consistent work across the Board to ensure the best outcomes for young people. The Head of service suggested that a future report be brought before the Board highlighting the number of children Looked after who enter the youth justice system and whether there was any correlation between the two.

One Member referenced the recently negotiated CAMHS provision with Senior Health Managers and the Head of Service advised that this was to provide increased support for staff dealing with young people who present with more complex well-being issues, and informed Members that work continues in order to strengthen links with psychology, neuro development and speech and language provision. Members queried whether the Board could assist in ensuring that this service was provided and were advised that although previous there were concerns in relation to this provision strengthened working arrangements in this area were now proving successful following support from the Offender Management Board. The Director, Children's Services referenced discussions in relation to CAMHS provision at scrutiny.

With reference to a query about Court delays, the Board were advised that there was no delay with Court proceedings and that these had continued, due to strong links with the Courts to ensure efficient and timely service.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To acknowledge the proposed/potential changes within the Youth Justice System and potential impact upon the work of the YOS.
2. To receive further reports in due course in order to be satisfied of the progress and improvements being made as a result of the service restructure.

19 HOUSING OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS

The interim Head of Community Safety and Community Housing provided Members with a report which provided information about how 16+ looked after young people and care leavers are provided with move on accommodation and support.

Members learnt of the positive creation of the role of a housing officer to provide a single point of contact for care leavers. The role will work closely with the 16+ Team and young people leaving care at an early stage to help identify all available housing options in consideration of their housing and support needs. This will include supported accommodation, Housing First and general needs accommodation in both the social and private rented sector.

Further detail was provided in relation to social housing, private rented accommodation as well as supported housing accommodation, where it was advised that as young people are one of the highest needs in the Housing Support Grant Local Commissioning Plan additional units of supported accommodation are currently being explored. A further summary in respect of floating support, housing first project, supported lodgings and 'Get Ready Move On project' were provided to the Board.

The officer concluded that whilst a considerable amount of work had been undertaken to address the immediate housing and support needs of young people leaving care, further work is needed to reduce young people being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation and to explore more sustainable long- term support and accommodation options.

The Chair welcomed the role identified by the Mercury project in respect of the housing officer role and again reiterated the importance of continuing the face-

to-face contact with the service for the benefit of the young people it serves.

The Vice Chair commented on the important transition for care leavers and the need to ensure that the accommodation provided is fit for purpose. The Vice Chair welcomed the positive working relationship with social landlords and hoped that this could be explored further with other letting providers.

It was pleasing for Members to learn that the pandemic had not significantly impacted on the housing options available to young people with many of the Housing Support Grant funded projects operating as normal and receiving referrals.

The Chair of the Councils Planning and Development Committee spoke of the difficulties witnessed with the acceptance of proposed development of social housing within local communities and spoke of the need for open public engagement to ease the difficulties often experienced.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To acknowledge the information contained within the report

20 TROS GYNNAL QUARTERLY REPORT

The Board received Ms Davies who provided an update of progress made by Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru. Member's were advised that in the first quarter 29 young people accessed the Issue Based advocacy offer and advised that referrals had continued to decline with only 6 people taking forward offers this current quarter. It was advised that 94 children were eligible for the offer during this time period.

In respect of those that took forward the offer only 67% received an active offer within 5 days, which was attributed to additional risk assessments needed to carry out face to face meetings. Members were advised that a more streamlined approach to risk assessments were now being taken forward to reduce such delays in future.

In respect of issue-based advocacy, it was advised that social services made the highest number of referrals, with nine referrals coming from young people directly. Visiting advocacy continues with support continuing as virtual.

Within the report Members were provided with feedback from young people in respect of the advocacy service, which remained positive.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and spoke of the importance of the face to face engagement through the active offers.

The Vice Chair spoke of his concerns on the number of children rejecting the active offer and queried the potential rationale for this rejection. Officers spoke of the need to strengthen communication between the Local Authority and the service and spoke of the complexities often witnessed with the role of the advocate and who could actually represent a young person.

The Director of Children Services spoke of the video produced for the benefit of young people to assist them with their understanding of advocacy and it was suggested that the video be re-circulated to Members of the Board for information.

Members queried the support provided and the outcomes for those that were represented. It was suggested by the Chair that the Director of Children Services work closely with partners to address any potential issues with regards to the advocacy offer for the benefit of the young people involved.

It was **RESOLVED**

1. To note the report
2. To receive an update in respect of the item when deemed appropriate by the Director of Children's Services.

21 RESILIENT FAMILIES SERVICE

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation the Head of Community wellbeing and Resilience provided Members with details of the Resilient Families Service (RFS) performance over the last Municipal year to date.

Members were advised that the total number of referrals received into RFS decreased by over 24% between 2019/20 and 2020/21 to 1,269. During 2020-21 an increase in referrals from community-based services was witnessed who remained in direct contact with families during the pandemic.

Up to the point lockdown started in March 2020 RFS were on course to follow the trend of previous years and record a continuous improvement in the retention rate.

The Head of Service advised that the significant restrictions placed on the service during 2020/21 had a major impact on the services ability to provide the services families required and therefore the retention rates dropped to the services lowest level. A number of families struggled with virtual support which contributed to the fall in retention rates during the intervention stage.

In respect of outcomes of planned exits, 92.6%% in 2019/20 and 94% in 2020/21 of families completed full RFS package of intervention with the remainder requiring a supported step up to statutory services due to increased levels of need/risk. Of those families completing a full RFS package of intervention, 95.2% in 2019/20 and 95.5% in 2020/21 recorded improved resilience.

In relation to the work of the service and the reduction on Children Looked After since the introduction of the RFS in 2018 as a new model for providing early intervention support, the Local Authority initially recorded a reduction in the number of Children Looked After but this slightly increased last year.

The Officer concluded the presentation by providing Members with case details, the support work undertaken and the outcomes of such cases.

Members of the Board commented on the positive work of the service during difficult circumstances through the covid pandemic and expressed the Boards thanks be past to all staff involved within the service.

The Board **RESOLVED** to note the content of the update.

22 **INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE MONITORING REPORT TO THE GROUP DIRECTOR COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

The Head of Safeguarding presented Members with the report which looked to provide Member's information about the discharge of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) functions for children looked after (CLA) for the period 1st January 2021 – 30th June 2021.

The Head of Service advised Members of an error within the report before them and advised that an updated version of the report would be made available following the meeting.

Members were advised that 64 children became looked after between 01.01.21 & 30.06.21, which saw a 11% decrease in numbers compared to the same reporting period in 2020. Members were provided with further detail in respect of age range, placement details, placement stability, admissions and discharge and also adoption.

In respect of Children Looked After reviews, 918 CLA review meetings were undertaken over a 6-month period with a performance outcome of 97% at the end of June 2021. Members were informed that only 30 Reviews were not held in time between January 2021 to June 2021, which had remained stable since the last reporting period, and is a significant achievement considering the circumstances facing the service. Members were assured that every effort is made to ensure that cancelled reviews are reconvened within time, and when this isn't possible permission to go out of time is sought from a Service Manager or Head of Service.

The Head of Service continued by informing Members that in total 13 resolutions were raised during this reporting period, 2 more than previously reported. This continues to be a very low percentage in terms of the total number of Care and Support plans that are reviewed by the IROs.

Members of the Board **RESOLVED** to note the information contained within the report.

23 **EXEMPTION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act.

24 **SOCIAL SERVICES QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS**

The Service Improvement, Engagement & Complaints Manager provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the operation of effectiveness of the statutory Social Services complaints procedure between 1st April 2021 – 30th June 2021.

The report contained information on the number of complaints received, the nature of the complaints and any lessons learnt, as well as detailing Councillor, A.M and M.P enquiries and the number of complaints received.

Following discussions relating to the exempt report, Members **RESOLVED** to

1. Note the contents of the report and the work undertaken by the Complaints Unit.

25 REGULATION 73 REPORTS

Members **RESOLVED** to note the report provided in respect of the Regulation 32 visits undertaken at the children's homes – Beddau, Bryndar, Carn Ingli and Nantgwyn and welcomed further detail in relation to the outcome of the inspection at Beddau and the response by the Council.

This meeting closed at 12.20 pm

**Cllr C Leyshon
Chairman.**