



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL
CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

Minutes of the Virtual meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on Thursday, 30 March 2023
at 10.00 am.

This meeting was recorded, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

County Borough Councillors – The following Councillors were present:

Councillor G Caple (Chair)

Councillor R Lewis Councillor C Leyshon
Councillor J Bonetto Councillor S Rees
Councillor P Evans

Officers in attendance

Mr N Elliott, Interim Director of Social Services
Ms A Lloyd, Service Director, Children's Services
Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion
Ms C Miles, Childcare Solicitor
Ms J Thomas, Complaints & QA Manager, Social Services
Ms E Brabon, Senior EET Coordinator
Ms L Hawkins, Virtual School Head Teacher
Catherine Silver, Interim Service Manager
Ms M Davies - TGP

Apologies for absence

Councillor S Trask Councillor S Evans

35 Declaration of Interest

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

36 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on the 26th January 2023.

37 Employment, Education and Training Programmes for Children Looked After

The Senior Employment, Education and Training Co-Ordinator provides the Corporate Parenting Board with an update in respect of the Council's dedicated programmes to support Children Looked After, Care Leavers and those with care and support needs into employment, education and training.

The Corporate Parenting Board were provided were a breakdown of outcomes from April 2022 – March 2023 in respect of the Step in the Right Direction and Care2Work programmes.

The officer advised Members that a first for the service was linking up with USW and Cardiff University to a course to prepare young people for university. The officer advised that the young people would have the opportunity to visit the universities and experience a stay within the halls of residence.

Members were also informed of a summer employability programme, which provided CLA with employment opportunities and training with several businesses based in Treorchy. Members were informed that following the success of the scheme in Treorchy, similar schemes would be held in Aberdare and Pontypridd during the summer.

The Chair spoke highly of the summer employability programme and commented that it was excellent to witness the increase in self-esteem of the young people following their employment opportunities.

Referring to the Care2work programme, one Member noted that 15 young people did not engage and questioned if there were any reasons for this. The officer advised that at the point of referral, the young person could have other priorities such as moving from foster placement to independent living and the timing isn't right. However, it was explained that the Care2work programme wasn't time specific, and therefore the team engage with each young person and ensure they are there for them when the time is right.

The Chair thanked the officer for the detailed report and the Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report.

38 Virtual School Model Pilot - Year 1 progress update

The Virtual School Headteacher provided an update to the Corporate Parenting Board on the progress made during year 1 of the Virtual School (for CLA) Pilot, specifically looking at the steps taken to address and complete actions that form the Virtual School Implementation Plan. The officer reminded Members that in July 2021, Cabinet agreed to a proposal to progress with a strategy to pilot a Virtual School Model to improve the educational outcomes of children who are looked after. The Virtual School Model was well established in England and, under the Children's and Families Act 2014, local authorities have a statutory duty to appoint a Virtual School Head (VSH) whose key role is to promote the educational achievement of CLA.

Members were referred to Section 5 of the report where details of the Implementation Plan Activities for 2022-2023 were listed.

The Chair congratulated the officer on the role and commented that the pilot was a fantastic opportunity for CLA learners with the County Borough and questioned whether the 210 out of county school age learners were proving more challenging. The officer advised that there were no significant challenges and the team had received a very successful return rate from a questionnaire, which was sent in December 2022 to all out of county schools to ask questions such as whether they had a lead person, a CLA policy, attendance, and communications with foster carers etc. The officer added that she had attended reviews for RCT

children in Devon and Somerset and that the teams there had been very proactive and open in wanting to follow the RCT protocols.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To acknowledge the content of the report; and
2. To receive a further progress report on the Pilot at a later date.

39 Young Carers Annual Report

The Interim Service Manager for Carers, Direct Payments, and Service User Engagement provided the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on the work with young carers in RCT during 2022/2023.

The officer drew Members' attention to Young Carers Annual report, which was attached to the report and took the opportunity to summarise its key themes:

- The contract for the support element for Young Carers has successfully been retendered, with Action for Children winning the contract and continuing to offer Young Carer Support within RCT;
- Full levels of service delivery have resumed following the pandemic;
- There has consistently been double the number of referrals for Young Carer assessments compared to the preceding reporting period;
- Subsequently there has been an increased demand on services for Young Carers;
- Due to the success of the Siblings Pilot Project, the need for separate sibling support is now recognised and additional capacity to deliver this support has been made available as part of the new Young Carers contract;
- The Young Adult Carers Services has undergone a process of change and now delivers a slightly different model of support, which is outcome focussed and person centred;
- The grant funding for the Young Adult Worker post awarded for 2023/24 is subject to a deficit in terms of meeting salary costs, (no uplift was provided); and
- Despite the success of the Young Carers ID Card, no further funding will be made available by WG, however RCT will continue to deliver a card scheme for young carers.

The Chair thanked the officer for the update and acknowledged that the restored service would make positive a difference to the young carers and staff. The Chair was pleased to note the work of the Action for Children and the success of the Siblings Pilot Project and requested further information on the take up of the Young Carers ID Card project. The officer advised that the project was successful and popular among young carers and that it was disappointing to note that funding would no longer be available by Welsh Government. However, the officer assured Members that the team were passionate about the project and would continue to deliver a card scheme for young carers.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language spoke positive of the report and the plethora of support available for young

carers. The Cabinet Member spoke of the approximate 50% increase in under 18's referrals and questioned whether that was due to increased demand post-pandemic, greater awareness of the service or better practice by the Local Authority. The officer advised that the increase was reflected across all referrals and could be attributed to a combination of all the above-mentioned reasons. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that the service relies on a variety of funding avenues and suggested that discussions take place outside of the meeting to consider funding options. The Interim Director of Social Services agreed that it would be beneficial to identify the services provided, funding streams and how to maximise the use of funding for young carers across the region.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To acknowledge the information contained within the report.

40 Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru

Tros Gynnal Plant provided the Corporate Parenting Board with a progress update for the quarter 2 period, which covered October 2022 – December 2022.

Members were informed that during the period 35 young people accessed Issue Based Advocacy and 20 were referred for the Active Offer across RCT. The officer advised that 19 care experienced young people accessed Issue Based Advocacy, presenting with 22 issues; and 5 care experienced young people were referred for the Active Offer.

Members learned that, during the period, 14 Care Experienced young people became eligible for the Active Offer, 5 Active Offers were delivered by advocates and 5 young people accepted the Active Offer and went on to receive Issue Based Advocacy. This means 21% of eligible young people were referred for Active Offer compared to the 23% in the previous quarter.

It was explained that five of those who became eligible via the CLA pathway in quarter three, had been referred for the Active Offer via the CP pathway in quarter four and three young people were already engaging in advocacy after receiving the Active Offer via the CP pathway in previous quarters. This meant, that as of the 22nd of February 2023, 79% of CE young people who became eligible via the CLA pathway in quarter three, were either referred for Active Offer in quarter three, referred for Active Offer at a later date via the CP pathway, or were already engaged in advocacy services when they became eligible. Two young people were not offered the Active Offer meeting by their social worker because their parents did not want them to know children's services were involved, and the remaining young person was offered the opportunity to meet with an advocate but declined as he felt he had enough people in his life he was able to speak to.

The officer went on to provide Members with the statistics for Care Experienced young people accessing Issue Based Advocacy service and those referred for the Active Offer. This included information on age, gender, ethnicity and placement.

The Chair thanked Tros Gynnal Plant Cymru for the informative report and the Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report

41 To consider passing the following under-mentioned Resolution:

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 13 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act.

42 Residential Transformation Strategy: Children In Operating Without Registration Settings

The Director of Children's Services provided the Corporate Parenting Board with information about children in settings known as Operating without Registration (OWR), and Children's Services plans for supporting those children, and ending those arrangements.

Following consideration of the exempt report, the Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

1. To acknowledge the information contained within the report; and
2. To receive subsequent reports until such time as there are no OWR situations for Rhondda Cynon Taf looked after young people.

43 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 October 2022 – 31st December 2022.

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 consideration of the exempt report, the Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED:**

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

This meeting closed at 11.25 am

**Councillor G Caple
Chair.**

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh