



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024**

### **PROGRESS UPDATE: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD PLEDGE FOR RCT**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

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#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 In April 2024 the Corporate Parenting Pledge for RCT was endorsed by Cabinet. The purpose of this report is to ask Corporate Parenting Board Members to consider proposals to further strengthen the Council Pledge to care experience young people.
- 1.2 To update Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) Members on the progress achieved to date in taking forward the Pledge's 7 key priorities.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board:

- 2.1 Consider and comment on the information contained within the report.
- 2.2 Give approval to implement the proposed recommendations in relation to care experience as a protected characteristic.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 There is active discussion in Wales amongst Local Authorities regarding the benefits and disadvantage of recognising 'care experienced' as a protected characteristic. See **Appendix 1** 'Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic Summary Report' for further information regarding the approach taken in the 4 nations of the United Kingdom and a number of Welsh Local Authorities.



3.2 The Children's Commissioner for England has summarised the arguments in favour and against care experience as a protected characteristic as follows:

**Arguments in favour**

- Care experience can have a lifelong impact. It could bring change and a voice to young people.
- It could prevent discrimination, spark conversations and empower people who have experienced discrimination or trauma.

**Arguments against**

- Could result in more discrimination and stigmatisation.
- Some young people want separation from being care experienced.
- The system should be improved rather than politicised.
- People might feel pressured to reveal their experiences of being in care.
- Discrimination by existing protected characteristics is still prevalent.

3.3 In Wales, the Welsh Government has tasked councils to strengthen their corporate parenting boards' pledge to care experienced young people.

3.4 RCT Council recognises the importance of diversity and equality and is committed to reducing the impact of discrimination. A small working of council officers (including the Diversity & Inclusion Manager and Service Director Children's Services) has met to discuss the information contained within the report (Appendix 1) and agree proposed next steps.

3.5 We have been mindful that there are legal issues relating to protected characteristics that cannot come into play where something is not protected in law. We are therefore not looking to 'treat care experience as if it were a protected characteristic', but we would advocate undertaking the following actions linked to implementation of the CPB Pledge to begin to address the disadvantages care experienced young people may face:

3.6 **Actions:**

- To develop a module on The Source outlining the meaning of 'Corporate Parent' and the collective responsibility of the whole Council; elected members, employees and partner agencies for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for children who are looked after by us.
- To include Care Experienced as a group for consideration within the Council's Equality Impact Assessment Framework.

- To consider the disadvantages faced by care experienced young people when setting and reviewing the Council’s Strategic Equality Objectives.
- Corporate Parenting Board to continue to work across all Council departments to take forward the 7 Priorities of the Pledge to care experience young people.

3.6 CPB Pledge to Care Experienced Young People implementation:

<b>4. CPB PLEDGE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS:</b>	
<b>Objective:</b>	
<b>Increase information awareness and understanding of the role and function of the CPB with CYP, Carers and staff.</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Progress (September 2024)</b>
Create a section on the Children’s Services webpages dedicated to CPB.	Completed <a href="https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk">Corporate Parenting Board   Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (rctcbc.gov.uk)</a>  Work in progress (see below), further feedback from young people to be sought to make the information more engaging.
To develop digital content that highlights the role and function of CPB to support engagement with young people. Link to the Pledge Priorities.	Children’s Services Workforce Officer and Communications Graduate Officer undertaking a review of CPB content from a range of Councils. Outline plan developed to support understanding of the role and function of the CPB. This work will be undertaken in collaboration with young people, through the development of an animation and Cllr videos outlining what /why CPB is important to them. Provisional digital content completion date 18/11/24.
Communication Cycle - establish opportunities for CPB members to meet with care experienced young people	Head of Service Intensive Intervention (II) and Service Manager II leading on this to progress a conversation with care experienced young people. To develop an outline plan by November 2024. CPB to attend a joint session when preparatory work with the young people has progressed. Timeline to be finalised, Provisional date for a joint activity January 2025.
Review our Pledge priorities and our progress on an annual basis 'You said, we did'.	Due June 2025

<b>Objective</b> <b>The Pledge 7 Priorities and Actions</b>	
<b>Priority 1: How we will care for you and support you.</b>	
We will provide young people and the adults that support them with information (including information on their rights).	Children's Services webpages have been developed. <a href="https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/childrens-services">Children's Services   Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (rctcbc.gov.uk)</a>
We will provide young people with information about the role of a Social Worker.	Web pages developed: <a href="https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/what-is-a-social-worker">What is a Social Worker?   Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (rctcbc.gov.uk)</a>
We will provide staff with induction packs and ongoing learning and development, to support their knowledge and understanding of how we can best support and care for you.	New Induction pack for Children's Services practitioners developed, to be uploaded to The Source by December 2024.  Work has commenced re. focusing training in line with the Model of Practice.
<b>Priority 2: How we will support you to have a voice</b>	
Facilitate voice events. These could be themed events e.g. housing, where will I live, education opportunities etc.	Head of Service & Service Manager Intensive Intervention leading on this to undertake preparatory work with team managers and care experienced young people to develop an outline plan by November 2024.
We will continue to ask you about what is going well, what could be better and how you may like to communicate and get involved through participation events. We will provide a 'You Said, We Did' which shows how things are changing because of your voices.	Annual survey.  My Voice My Review feedback.  Develop an annual 'You Said, We Did' infographic
We will ensure that our annual voice report captures feedback from a range of sources and informs next steps.	Due June 2025

**Priority 3: How we can support you to feel safe, have a stable place to live and support for independent living.**

<p>We will work towards the provision of a range of accommodation to meet the needs of children looked after through attending events/ a forum with young people.</p>	<p>Residential Care Transformation Strategy, and the Accommodation and Support Strategy for Care Leavers taking this forward.</p>
<p>Provide a stable home and for young people leaving care with a continuum of accommodation and support, whilst adopting a clear accommodation pathway for care leavers.</p>	<p>Residential Care Transformation Strategy and the Accommodation and Support Strategy for Care Leavers taking this forward.</p>
<p>Young people told us they would like a range of ways to keep in touch with family and staying 'local' matters to them.</p>	<p>Staying local matters videos created.</p>

**Priority 4: How we can support you to access mental health and wellbeing support.**

<p>Young people told us that they would like accessible information in a range of formats that can be easily accessed and shared for their mental health and well-being.</p>	<p>Section developed on the Children's Services webpages.  <a href="https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/Information-on-staying-safe-and-healthy-Rhondda-Cynon-Taf-County-Borough-Council">Information on staying safe and healthy   Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (rctcbc.gov.uk)</a></p>
<p>Develop and maintain 16+ website pages.</p>	<p>Children's Services webpages have been developed.  <a href="https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/Information-for-16-Rhondda-Cynon-Taf-County-Borough-Council">Information for 16+   Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (rctcbc.gov.uk)</a></p>
<p>We will make sure that you know how to access information for your health, fitness and wellbeing in your community through our websites for children and young people.</p>	<p>Children's Services webpages have been developed.  <a href="https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ChildrensServices/ChildrensServices.aspx">https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ChildrensServices/ChildrensServices.aspx</a></p>
<p>Work with partners to develop robust training to ensure all staff understand neurodiversity when communicating with young people.</p>	

**Priority 5: How we can support you to access the information that you would like or need.**

<p>Developing our public facing information (webpages) and other resources for children and young people.</p>	<p><a href="#">Information for Children and Young People   Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (rctcbc.gov.uk)</a> Work in progress, further feedback from young people to make the information more engaging.</p>
<p>We will make sure all trusted adults explain who they are by providing children and young people with information in a range of formats.</p>	<p>In the Annual Social Services Survey 2024 for children and young people; 86% (141 responses) responded yes to the question: Do you know why you have a social Worker? The Reviewing Team has been piloting individual practitioner profiles.</p>
<p>Developing Advocacy Support.</p>	<p>Further develop support to young people with a disability to access advocacy services.</p>

**Priority 6: How we can support you to have improved outcomes for education, training and employment.**

<p>Develop mentoring opportunities across the Council.</p>	<p>EET Services deliver a range of learning, development and employment opportunities. Young people 16+ told us that Care2Work is really helping them and key relations with staff is important to maintain. Consult to see if we can extend the offer to more care experienced young people.</p>
<p>We will support you to engage in your education, training and employment and to have high aspirations for your future.</p>	<p>EET Services deliver a range of learning, development and employment opportunities. Consult to see if we can extend the offer to more care experienced young people.</p>
<p>We will provide you with information about alternative education opportunities (if you need them) and support you to succeed.</p>	<p>To consult with colleagues in the CLA Virtual School to develop an implementation plan to deliver this action. To include a review of current information provision to identify gaps and ways forward.</p>

**Priority 7: How we can support you to achieve your potential**

Celebrate your successes.

Hold an annual Celebration Event and capture successes of young people.

**5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 5.1 There are no negative impacts on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, or socio-economic disadvantage as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.
- 5.2 Council staff will benefit from relevant training to support awareness and understanding of our collective responsibility as Corporate Parents.

**6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no adverse Welsh Language implications associated with implementing the recommendations as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

**7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 Consultation with care-experienced children and young people and key stakeholders will be ongoing to support the implementation of the CPB Pledge.

**8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 8.1 At the current stage of the CPB Pledge implementation, there are small financial implications aligned to the report, linked to the development of digital content.
- 8.2 Future funding opportunities may have to be sought to support the implementation of the 7 priorities of the CPB Pledge.

**9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 The development of Welsh Government’s Corporate Parenting Charter: “A Promise for Wales” and the draft Corporate Parenting Board Pledge for Rhondda Cynon Taf takes into account the overarching duties laid



out in Part 2, General Functions of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Specifically, that a person exercising functions in relation to an individual for example a looked after child must have regard to the characteristics, culture and beliefs of the individual (including, for example, language. [www.law.gov.wales/social-services-and-well-being-wales-act-2014-further-legislation-codes-and-guidance-made-under-act](http://www.law.gov.wales/social-services-and-well-being-wales-act-2014-further-legislation-codes-and-guidance-made-under-act)

- 9.2 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked After and Accommodated Children) will be revised by Welsh Government to include additional guidance on the Charter. The updated Code of Practice will be published in 2024 and the Charter will be reviewed as part of this process.
- 9.3 The Principles and Promises link to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC Article numbers). Children and Young People have 42 rights under the UNCRC Article numbers.
- 9.4 The role of a corporate parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children.

## **10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

- 10.1 The recommendation in this report supports the Council's well-being objectives and priorities, namely:

**People and Communities - Supporting and empowering RCT residents and communities to live safe, healthy, and fulfilling lives.**

In People and Communities our priorities are:

- **Children and young people have the best start in life and can learn and grow safely,**
  - **Residents can take care of their health & well-being so they can live healthy, independent, and fulfilling lives, and**
  - **Safeguarding our most vulnerable residents of all ages, providing protection, care and support when they need it most so that they can maximise their potential.**
  - Residents will have access to affordable, good quality and energy efficient homes.
2. Work and business
  3. Nature and the environment
  4. Culture, heritage and Welsh language





- 10.2 The recommendations also support the Council to contribute to all the seven well-being goals:
- **A prosperous Wales:** children who receive the right care and support are better prepared for adulthood and achieving prosperous futures.
  - **A resilient Wales:** children who are given every opportunity to meet their developmental milestones and overcome barriers to developing skills are prepared with the space to grow and the tools to build resilience throughout life.
  - **A healthier Wales:** access to high quality local services supports children to meet their developmental milestones and develop social skills, enhancing their emotional wellbeing.
  - **A more equal Wales:** by delivering a full range of provision in all localities to meet the needs of children and parents ensures that children and families have access to high quality childcare irrespective of where they live.
  - **A Wales of cohesive Communities:** access to services that are not restricted to particular communities promotes equality and harmony across communities and the means sharing community resources to be responsive to need and build resilience.
  - **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language:** children who are given the potential to thrive learn to be tolerant and accepting, preparing them for a multi-racial, globalised adult world.
  - **A globally responsible Wales:** children who have access to high quality care and support are afforded experiences that prepare them to be globally responsible.

## 11. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

- 11.1 This report applies to all electoral wards.

## 12. NEXT STEPS

- 12.1 Progress has been made in implementing the 7 priorities of the Corporate Parenting Board Pledge, but it will be noted that further action is still required.



- 12.2 Corporate Parenting Board members may in future wish to consider focusing on one of the Pledge's priority areas at a time, to enable detailed scrutiny.



**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

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**Background papers**

None

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