



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL
CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on Monday, 30 September 2024 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 C Leyshon Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor S Hickman Councillor W Jones
Councillor S Rees

Officers in attendance

Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion
Ms A Lloyd, Service Director, Children's Services
Ms C Miles, Childcare Solicitor
Mrs C Tyler, Service Development Officer, Children's Services
Ms M Davies - TGP
Ms L Hawkins, Virtual School Head Teacher

13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillor R Lewis.

14 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following personal declarations were provided:

County Borough Councillor S Rees – Item 7 – '14 years ago, I worked for CIW'.

15 MINUTES

To approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on the 17th July 2024.

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

The Organisational Change and Transformation Officer, Children's Services advised that following endorsement of the Corporate Parenting Pledge for RCT by Cabinet in April 2024, CPB Members were being asked to consider proposals to further strengthen the Council Pledge to care experienced young people. The Officer then took CPB Members through the background of the report, advising that there was active discussions in Wales amongst Local Authorities regarding the benefits and disadvantage of recognising 'care experienced' as a protected characteristic before summarising the Children's Commissioner for England's arguments, for and against care experience as a protected characteristic.

Members were informed that in Wales, the Welsh Government (WG) had tasked councils to strengthen their CPB's pledge to care experienced young people, with RCT Council recognising the importance of diversity and equality and is committed to reducing the impact of discrimination. A small working group of Council Officers had met to discuss the information contained within the report and agree proposed next steps. Members were informed that there are legal issues relating to protected characteristics that cannot come into play where something is not protected in law, so the Council was not looking to 'treat care experience as if it were a protected characteristic', but would advocate undertaking the actions, which were listed, linked to implementation of the CPB Pledge to begin to address the disadvantages care experienced young people may face.

The Officer then highlighted the CPB Pledge Implementation progress at 3.6, before updating CPB Members on the progress achieved to date in taking forward the Pledge's 7 key priorities and the ongoing work. The Officer then concluded by highlighting the next steps.

A Member asked how employment training for children with disabilities was moving forward.

The Officer explained that there was an offer in relation to that and would provide the Member with specific details.

A Member acknowledged in relation to understanding the protected characteristics, that the information had been helpful regarding the work already done which clearly outlined the benefits or disadvantages, and that the suggestions for the way forward, particularly the work being done in Swansea in relation to Podcasts.

The Chair acknowledging the summary report, felt that it was all about accommodation, a stable home, housing, education, disability (all those things) which came into the mix and how that was put into the pledge.

The Officer acknowledged that there was no easy answer, and it was about trying to find the best way forward but agreed it was very much about accommodation, a stable home, housing, education, disability, etc., were implemented and delivered on, that would be the transforming factors, so it was important to get that right, as well as the whole Council understanding that everyone was a Corporate Parent and once that was clearly understood that would help in taking that forward.

A Member acknowledging the next steps at 12.1 felt that taking them forward individually was a good idea.

The Director of Children's Services noted the thoughtful comments from CPB, acknowledging the internal debate around the arguments, which was some of the thinking on deciding to step up some of the activities around the promises. In particular CPB would be aware of the CLA quality assurance process, which would write out to partners inviting them to share where they were with the promises and reporting back to CPB on this work with partners around their undertakings which, is one of the most important features of how the system of services work together.

Members were informed of the intention to complete some short videos for the website, to help to communicate what the role of CPB was, which would lead into some consultation work.

The Chair agreed that it was important to stick to the objectives and the priorities of the pledge and see how the WG would take this forward.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED**:

1. to consider and comment on the information contained within the report.
2. to give approval to implement the proposed recommendations in relation to care experience as a protected characteristic.

17 CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER PREVENTION STRATEGY

The Director of Children's Services explained that this was an update report, since the last report in June 2023, advising that when the strategy was set back in 2021, what was sought to do was to harness every potential possibility in making sure the right services were available for families particularly at the edge of care, knowing that prevention had become an umbrella term. Whilst in favour of prevention services, further reports would be brought at some point, around early help and resilient families but this was particularly around those families that received the most intensive support to stay together to prevent entry to the care system. Members were then taken through the report including the key points from the background at paragraphs 4.1, 4.3 and 4.4 and the graph at 4.5, highlighting that the LA had shifted position, in terms of the comparative data, and hoped that when the strategy was revisited and re-set some of the reconfiguration work around reunification would see a shifting of position again. Members were then taken through the strategy progress update at 4.6.

The Director of Children's Services acknowledged that these were difficult financial times, referring to the implications at paragraph 8, and that resources for the whole council were lower than they once were, so the duty was on demonstrating effectiveness, before concluding that some real benefits from working this way had been seen and the Director of Children's Services would like to review this area of strategy and build on it again, acknowledging that some successes had been seen and was hoping there was further to go in that area.

The Chair acknowledged it was important that services for children transform, to reflect changes in society. The Chair liked the use of the model that utilises the acronym of RCT to highlight the three key pillars of practice e.g., Relationships, Collaboration and being Trauma Informed and the shift of culture from keeping children safe to keeping families together unless it was unsafe for a child, and all of this needs a change in culture by social services and I think this is what this report does.

There were no questions from Members.

The Chair concluded that CPB looked forward to feedback early in the new year.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED**:

1. to note the information.
2. to ask questions in line with the duties and role of Corporate Parenting

Board Members.

18 TROS GYNNAL PLANT CYMRU

Tros Gynnal Plant provided the Corporate Parenting Board with a progress update for the quarter 1 period, which covered April - June 2024. Members were informed that in quarter one, 21 CE young people accessed IBA, including one Care Leaver, and 12 CE young people were referred for the AO, and increase in both cohorts, compared to quarter four. In respect of the AO referrals, 23 CE young people became eligible for the AO, and 12 referrals were received. 11 AO meetings were held, and 8 young people went on to receive Issue Based Advocacy (IBA). Six of the 12 CE young people referred for AO in quarter one became eligible for AO in the same quarter whilst four became eligible in the previous quarter. This means 26% of eligible CE young people were referred in quarter one, although we know at least 78% of those eligible had a conversation with their social worker about advocacy.

In terms of IBA Advocacy Issues, the most popular issue in need of advocacy support in quarter one was again 'placement' followed by social services issues. Most young people presenting with placement issues had issues with rules or relationships in placement or wanted to move somewhere else. In terms of Referral Source, 'Self-referral' and Social Services referrals continue to be the most popular route into the service and self-referral is usually either the result of the young person accepting the AO and going on to receive IBA, or the young person contacting their advocate directly with a new issue.

As in the previous quarter, most young people accessing IBA referrals were aged between 12 and 16, and although an increase of young people aged over the age of 17, accessing IBA in quarter 1, was observed. In terms of other information, 2 CE young people with ALN were referred for IBA in quarter 1, and IBA was also provided to unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, who were being supported to access advocacy in the language of their choice. Residential Visiting Advocacy (RVA) continued in five Local Authority community homes across RCT with the new advocate adding Willowford House and Cartref Mynydd to his visiting list and plan a review of the service which would include consultation with both children and young people, and staff working in the community homes.

Members were informed that on 9th April, the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) completed their first Inspection of TGP Cymru's Advocacy Services, which was very positive, before being informed of the conclusion and looking forward.

The Chair thanked the Team Manager TGP Cymru and noted, that the case studies were always interesting and great to see success, and also acknowledged that the new advocate would also add Willowford House and Cartref Mynydd to his visiting list and noted the unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people were referred for advocacy, which expanded the service. The Chair noted the praise from the CIW was excellent and well deserved.

A Member asked in respect of the case study if this was a typical request for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, recognising this threw up lots of different considerations.

The Team Manager TGP Cymru advised that this was something that could be included in future reports, given the increase in referrals for unaccompanied

asylum-seeking young people, including a breakdown of issues.

The Director of Children's Services explained that part of Foster Wales role was looking at specific campaigns to recruit foster carers that were able to meet the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, who were inspirational, and would be happy to provide a report on this work.

The Corporate Parenting Board **RESOLVED**:

1. To acknowledge the work undertaken by TGP Cymru.

19 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 14 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act.

20 INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC CARE (IPC) REPORT

The Director of the Institute of Public Care provided Corporate Parenting Board with information about the Independent review carried out by the Institute of Public Care (IPC) in respect of Children's Services Operating without Registration (OWR).

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

1. to acknowledge the information contained within the report.
2. to ask any relevant questions.

21 REGULATION 73 REPORTS

Members **RESOLVED** to defer this item to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

22 UPDATE IN RELATION TO THE CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER: RESIDENTIAL CARE STRATEGY 2022 - 2027

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.

This meeting closed at 11.12 am

**Councillor G Caple
Chair**

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