

REMOTE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Minutes of meeting held on 28th September, 2020

Present: Councillor B.T. Gray (Chairman), Dr. I.J. Johnson, K.F. McCaffer, R. Nugent-Finn, N. Thomas and, E. Williams; L. Carver (Director of Social Services), Mrs. M. Coles (LAC Education Co-ordinator and Lead Professional EAL), Mr. M. Dacey (Lead Officer for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing), Mrs. R. Evans (Head of Children and Young People Services), M. Hudson (Head of Standards and Provision), Mr M. Ingram (Head of Housing and Building Services) and Mr. M. Swindell (Cabinet & Committee Services Officer).

(1)	Apologies for Absence –
	<p>These were received from Cllr P. Drake, Ms. A. Condy (Operational Manager CYPS) and Ms. K. Conway (Operational Manager CYPS).</p>
(2)	Minutes and Matters Arising –
	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on the 20th January, 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p> <p>Councillor Dr. I.J. Johnson (IJ) asked for the final figures for the current projected budget overspend from last year. It was agreed the response would be provided following the meeting.</p>
(3)	Children Looked After –
	<p>Reduction Expectation Plans</p> <p>Mrs. R. Evans (Head of Children and Young People Services) (RE) took the Committee through the circulated papers.</p> <p>Intentions were set by the Vale of Glamorgan for safely reducing the number of Children Looked After following a Welsh Government requirement. This aligned with the Vale of Glamorgan’s own planning in relation to reducing the numbers of children coming into care and moving children out of care before the age of 18 where it was safe and appropriate to do so. The latter involves assessing whether applications can be made to the Court to seek the discharge of a Care Order/s.</p> <p>The Council’s submission for the period up to the end of March 2020 an achievement against those reduction targets which had been set and the figure at the end of March 2020 was 258. Subsequently, there was a recording error found and the final figure was 259.</p>

At the same period of time everything was then affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the end of June at the time of providing the next update, the position was less progressive in terms of reducing the numbers and there was an increase in the number of children looked after.

Entrant and Exit Data

RE took the Committee through the circulated papers which reflected Quarter 1, the period 01st April to 30th June 2020. Welsh Government had also asked for this information to be provided.

- It had been very busy with regards emergency admissions, with each child's admission being significant in its own right, particularly if that child were to be externally placed and therefore have an impact on that particular budget.
- Placement demand has been high across Wales and placement finding has been challenging.
- There is evidence of activity to exit children from care but the circumstances of the pandemic have caused a delay in the discharge in Care Orders in Court due to reduced Court capacity currently.

Breakdown

RE took the Committee through the circulated papers concerning a breakdown of Children Looked After in the Vale of Glamorgan as of the 16th September, 2020, for information. The position had last been reported at the January 2020 meeting and the 08th June, 2020 position had been circulated for information by email on the 09th June, 2020.

The presentation considered confidential information concerning children who potentially could be identified from the detail within the presentation. The discussion was therefore recorded under a confidential Part II report.

The Chairman thanked RE for the information and asked if there were any questions forthcoming concerning the information heard.

IJ acknowledged it was a difficult time for young people currently as a result of the pandemic. He asked about the gender split between male and female as this is often more of an equal figure as it was back in January 2020.

RE acknowledged there was a numerical difference currently but their reasons for being looked after were not centred on their gender.

The Chairman asked if COVID-19 had affected the ability to intervene as would normally have been the case and as part of these numbers had just seen an increase in the number of boys on this occasion. RE agreed things had been more challenging but stated again that it was not centred on gender. The ability to support families had been difficult under the pandemic, but they had been supported differently and every situation was different and required different

	<p>support. Social work was very different at the moment but there was no concern in terms of practice that one gender had been accommodated more than another. Councillor Thomas (NT) passed his congratulations to all staff concerned who have been working under difficult circumstances for the last six months. Summer time for boys could be more difficult than for girls as they would usually be outside and that was not currently possible which may have led to more required interventions.</p> <p>The Chairman referred to the age spread and asked whether that had affected individual / independent fostering decisions or costs. RE confirmed that placement demand during the pandemic had been across the age ranges. Staff were finding that as placements fill up internally there was additional reliance on externally purchased care and that we are finding this necessary in some incidences for young children or a sibling pair / group where the assessment indicates the need to keep them together, which may have been absorbed internally previously.</p> <p>The Chairman noted that there had been interaction with Welsh Government on reduction expectation. He thanked RE for the useful and informative information. The Panel would look forward to receiving the next update at a future meeting.</p>
(4)	Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4
	<p>Mrs. M. Coles (LAC Education Co-ordinator and Lead Professional EAL) (MC) took the Committee through the presentation onscreen.</p> <p>Members received a presentation from Officers concerning:-</p> <p>Comparison of Key Stage 4 GCSE Outcomes achieved at the end of Year 11 for 2019 and 2020; and Prior Attainment for Current Year 12 (August 2020).</p> <p>The presentation considered confidential information concerning children who potentially could be identified from the detail within the presentation. The discussion was therefore recorded under a confidential Part II report.</p> <p>IJ asked if not sitting exams this year and having marks awarded based on previous assessed work had had any effect. He also asked about pupils with mental health needs and whether they were local, out of County, out of Country and the status of the cases.</p> <p>MC advised that most of the Year 11s had already completed the majority of their coursework or completed some exams such as English Literature the previous year. In terms of predicted grades, there were some who had left matters to the last minute so wanted to opportunity to engage with schools as much as they could. Most faired well. Some had grades based on their Fischer Family Trust predictions and those were higher than anticipated. Overall the pupils had not lost out but did feel they had lost the opportunity to prove they could have done it themselves. They also wanted that 'last day' with their friends, which had not been possible with restrictions in place.</p>

	<p>In terms of those with mental health issues, they still had offers in place and work continued with colleagues to support them and access provision. One was based in Wales and the provision is close by and can access the work from home remotely. The other case currently was unable to access provision or options for courses or jobs. Work would continue with them when possible and even though they were out of County, there is still contact with Careers Wales for support and advice.</p> <p>MC concluded that:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% attained GCSE qualifications last year, with 57% achieving the same this year. • Staff do not stop working with the children in August but continue to work with them post-16. • The ongoing challenge was offering the variety of vocational courses and the children need to be kept engaged. <p>The Chairman thanked MC for the informative data and stated the importance of the Panel receiving such qualitative data as it provided an individual sense of individual pupils and the positive way staff work with those who are struggling to engage.</p>
(5)	Corporate Parenting Panel – Proposed Work Programme 2020/2021
	<p>The Chairman noted that the Work Programme for the year would normally have been set already but was affected by the lockdown period. Going forward it would be useful to have feedback from Members to structure the programme for the remainder of the year as well as receive updates from Officers concerning the effects of the pandemic on services and users. A draft programme could then be drawn up to be discussed at the next meeting.</p> <p>He suggested at the next meeting that Housing could reflect on how they had supported those who were Looked After during the pandemic and how it affected care leavers. Where there were reduction expectation reports, there could also be follow on information provided.</p> <p>It was further suggested that there be re-visits of previous presentations at meetings from fostering networks, the advocates and how advocacy is used.</p> <p>The Chairman asked if Members had any particular sense of what they wished to engage with at future meetings.</p> <p>IJ suggested there be a session that looked at the lessons and impact of COVID-19 and what should be taken forward. It was also important to ensure that the Panel heard the voice of young people.</p> <p>M. Hudson (Head of Standards and Provision) (MH) suggested inviting a school that had provided Hub support during COVID-19 to present to Panel and share how they support and continue to support CLA.</p>

	<p>Councillor K.F. McCaffer (KMc) suggested a look at the reasons why some young people choose not to engage, what is on offer at individual points, etc.</p> <p>Councillor E. Williams (EW) agreed that representation by young people at the meeting was important, as was hearing from them.</p> <p>NT referred to a discussion at Healthy Living & Social Care Scrutiny Committee concerning increased domestic violence and its impact. Schools had noticed an increased effect on children which would result in an effect on Social Services.</p> <p>IJ suggested looking at digital opportunities and divides amongst CLA and whether they have access to the technological opportunities that other children have. Do they have online access issues to resources and digital learning, issues with social media, are they able to participate with friends and teachers online, wellbeing impacts etc. NETA are doing a piece on data poverty which is starting soon. MC advised that access to technology was a red herring, but more about how adults are supported with the technology. Children often have a laptop or device, but carers and kinship carers have issues to be able to support those children. Children using different platforms in one household was challenging.</p> <p>The Chairman agreed to include the housing element into the next meeting and at that meeting would present a draft outline of the Work Programme.</p>
(6)	Any Other Business –
	There were no items of other business for consideration.
(7)	Date of Next Meeting –
	Monday, 09 th November, 2020 at 4.30 p.m.