

REMOTE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Minutes of meeting held on 13th March 2023

Present: Councillors E. Williams, W.A. Hennessy, I.J. Johnson, S. Lloyd-Selby, I.A.N. Perry, N. Thomas; Mrs J. Ballantine (Principal HR Business Partner), Mr. L. Carver (Director of Social Services), Mrs. M. Coles (Vulnerable Groups Manager (CLA Education Co-ordinator)), Ms. K. Conway (Operational Manager CYPS), Mr. M. Dacey (Lead Officer for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing), Miss CL (Care Leavers Forum Representative), Mrs. R. Evans (Head of Children and Young People Services), Ms. M. Hudson (Head of Standards and Provision), Mrs. J. Rudge (Team Manager, Children and Young People Services), Miss. C. Western (Members and Committee Services Assistant.)

(1)	Apologies for Absence –
	None.
(2)	Minutes and Matters Arising –
	<p>The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed. Councillor Lloyd-Selby noted that she was present for the previous meeting and asked for the minutes to be amended to reflect that.</p> <p>RE raised that the agenda conference needed to be re-established and the work programme used to inform future agendas. This was noted by the Chair and agreed.</p>
(3)	Children Looked After –
	<p>KC shared a breakdown of children looked after as of 13th March. There are currently 324 children looked after. The number of children looked after fluctuates, influenced by the number of entrants, and exits. As seen this fluctuation was most visible in October 2022.</p> <p>KC noted in the presentation the age range, legal status and living arrangements of the children looked after.</p> <p>KC also noted that the Council was part of the mandated Home Office scheme to receive unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, these children are usually 16 and 17 years of age when they arrived in the UK. As a result of this the numbers had increased slightly in that age group.</p> <p>Councillor N. Thomas asked if there were any patterns in terms of age ranges. It was noted there are not.</p> <p>Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby queried the legal obligation to provide corporate parenting to UASCs?</p>

	<p>KC responded by advising yes, the Council did because they become children looked after.</p> <p>MC added that all children looked after have a personal education plan.</p> <p>Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby thanked everyone for their clarification on this subject.</p> <p>Councillor Dr. I. Johnson asked how the unique needs of UASC are met, for example their language needs.</p> <p>MC advised about the support offered by the Vulnerable Groups Team to support children and the young people with their level of language acquisition. Martine noted that there are many different dialects, and it was important to ensure all children's voices were heard. The Council had access to appropriate translations as well and was able to do that.</p> <p>The Chair thanked all who contributed to this discussion. He also asked whether the Council had capacity in the Service and how this was impacting the Service as a whole?</p> <p>RE noted that increasing and varying demand was an ongoing challenge for the Council, and this is continually kept under review.</p> <p>Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby spoke of the recent budget settlement and that the Council was now in a position where it would be able to provide some additional funding for CYPS to create an additional Social Worker post in its 14 Plus Team to add capacity in the context of an increasing number of UASCs, and queried whether there was any information on when this position would be advertised.</p> <p>KC confirmed steps were underway to create the post and it would be advertised asap.</p> <p>As this was a specialist area, the Service had learnt a great deal over the last year or so. The need has increased dramatically and so the additional funding has been welcomed and hopefully the Service would be able to recruit someone with existing experience.</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions.</p>
(4)	Draft Transgender Inclusion Toolkit and Guidance Document for Schools and Other Settings.
	<p>DD reminded the Panel that the reason for this coming to CPP was that on 23rd January 2023 from the report that went to Cabinet the Council were given</p>

authorisation to consult on this newly developed toolkit and as part of that process it was recommended that we delivered the report on that basis.

DD gave background to the Toolkit. He noted that the document was first adopted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council in 2018. The reason it had been developed was following requests from schools dating back to 2016 as they had been struggling with this area of work and asked for additional advice and guidance on this matter. Since 2018, the Council had recognised that social and political context and landscapes had changed quite significantly and there was a need to review the Toolkit.

The pandemic delayed the progress on this work. However, since emerging from the pandemic, this work was progressed at pace, and it was more important than ever now to ensure that appropriate advice was given to schools to ensure the duties owed by the Local Authority be met in respect of all people with a protected characteristic.

DD noted that the Council provided guidance to schools for a range of issues such as anti-bullying, safeguarding physical intervention, isolation amongst others, and the Transgender Toolkit Guidance now formed part of this suite of documentation.

The updated guidance to schools, which would be informed by the outcome of the consultation, would assist schools and their approach in meeting the duties owed to all pupils with protected characteristics and trans inclusion, this was one part of a much wider equality agenda for schools.

The Council had also had significant legal input into this document because it was an area which was subject to quite significant legal challenge from time to time. The Council had worked with its Legal Services to develop this to ensure its legality.

While developing this document it was noted that the Local Authority had also worked closely with Welsh Government, who were developing statutory guidance for schools in Wales. Whilst it was anticipated that Welsh Government would soon be developing their own guidance it was unclear when this would be received. The Council continued with developing its own guidance because it was important to ensure that schools were supported in the Vale of Glamorgan.

It was noted that recently the Welsh Government had published the LGBTQ+ action plan which was welcomed. This gave the Council support for this area of work which had been relied on heavily and the detailed research and consultation carried out by Brighton and Hove Council had been invaluable. The guidance document was held up as example of good practice and something which the Council had certainly relied on in developing its Toolkit, having been amended for the Vale of Glamorgan context.

The Council was consulting very widely as shown on page 5 of the report. This illustrated the collaborative approach that was being adopted to finalising this draft Toolkit and guidance. This approach sought to involve a range of different stakeholders including schools, parents, pupils, and other interested parties, in line with the ambitions of the Council around the Public Participation Strategy.

It was noted that consultation exercise would conclude on 17th March and had been running from 23rd January, 2023.

A report outlining the feedback received would be presented to Cabinet to determine whether to approve the Council's revised Transgender Inclusion Toolkit.

DD concluded by adding that it was vital to continue to support trans pupils and efforts to celebrate difference and tackle all forms of discrimination and prejudice were linked to the Council's aim to create safe, inclusive, inclusive learning environments for all pupils.

The Chair thanked DD for his presentation and invited questions from the Panel.

Councillor Dr. Johnson advised that he had asked for this to be referred from Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee. He raised a discussion in relation to the part of the Toolkit that related to children looked after and wanted to ensure that the members of the Panel were happy with that and the way it was framed.

As the Toolkit had been in place for the past 5 years, He queried whether there were any experiences of how the Toolkit had been operated and whether it worked and how it could be improved as he had experienced people being gender critical in the past.

DD thanked Councillor Dr. Johnson advising that it would be helpful to have the Panel's input, particularly in relation to the section relating to looked after children. It was a very short section on page 30 and was part of section 5.5 – pupils and students with additional vulnerabilities. He noted that he would be happy to take comments and advised members of the Panel to contact him via e-mail or take part as part of the consultation.

In relation to transitioning and seeing transitioning not as a neutral act and affirming transitioning, it needed to be dealt with and considered very sensitively and a great deal of work would be undertaken with the young person, to ensure that it was the right path for that specific young person.

Councillor N. Thomas added that he welcomed this Toolkit and thanked DD for all his comments relating to this subject.

Councillor W. Hennessey added that he had reservations regarding this Toolkit initially but after speaking with people and gaining knowledge from young people he now understood the importance of it and was pleased that was out

	<p>for consultation and would be updated. He also asked DD if he knew how many people so far had completed the consultation.</p> <p>DD added that it was now approaching around 500 at present, many of the returns were from parents which was positive, but the service was really trying to push this heavily with teachers now as they were yet to hear from some of them.</p> <p>Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby noted that she was a person of faith who was part of the Christian Community within the Vale of Glamorgan and wondered to what extent the Christian and other religious groups had been involved in this consultation?</p> <p>DD advised that the Service had reached out to many groups, however they were trying to remain as neutral as possible because if they started trying to engage with certain groups then they may unfortunately miss out other groups It had been on the VOG Council website the whole time and it was hoped that had had a wide reach.</p> <p>Councillor Lloyd- Selby understood the sensitivity and the approach to this but stated that there was still time for any interested parties to engage with the consultation and, as a member, would be happy to signpost these religious groups and other organisations to take part.</p>
(5)	Dates of Future Meetings –
	<p>The dates previously proposed were agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15th May 2023 • 3rd July 2023 • 11th September 2023 • 13th November 2023 • 8th January 2024 • 18th March 2024
(6)	Any Other Business –
	<p>It was noted by the Chair and agreed that an agenda conference take place at least two weeks before each meeting.</p> <p>Panel expressed an interest in receiving updates with regard to the following items over the coming months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health • Therapeutic Offer to Children Looked After <p>Panel also expressed an interest in maintaining regular contact with our care leavers, separate to the Panel meeting.</p>