

REMOTE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Minutes of meeting held on 22nd March, 2021

Present: Councillor B.T. Gray (Chairman), P. Drake, 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), Ms. A. Condy (Operational Manager CYPS), Ms. K. Conway (Operational Manager CYPS), Mr. M. Dacey (Lead Officer for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing), Mrs. T. Dickinson (Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development), Mrs. R. Evans (Head of Children and Young People Services), Mr. M. Ingram (Head of Housing and Building Services), Miss CL (Care Leavers Forum Representative), C. O'Dare (Team Manager) and Mr. M. Swindell (Cabinet & Committee Services Officer).

Invited attendees: N. Cule (Headteacher Colcot Primary School), L. Powell (Deputy Headteacher Llantwit Major Comprehensive School), T. Bennett (Llantwit Major Comprehensive School), F. Bell (National Youth Advocacy Service) and G. Lloyd-Evans (Care Inspectorate Wales).

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| (1) | Apologies for Absence – |
| | <p>Apologies for absence had been received from M. Hudson (Head of Standards and Provision) and Mrs J. Ballantine (Principal HR Business Partner).</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed all parties to the meeting, including colleagues from Colcot Primary School and Llantwit Major Comprehensive School who would be presenting to the Panel, and a representative from Care Inspectorate Wales who was attending as an observer.</p> |
| (2) | Minutes and Matters Arising – |
| | <p>The minutes of the meeting held on the 18th January, 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and would go on in Part I form to a future Cabinet meeting.</p> <p>There were no matters arising from the minutes.</p> <p>C. O'Dare (Team Manager) (CO'D) advised the Panel that Miss CL had been put forward for the Welsh Government Civil Service Care Leavers Internship Scheme, had been interviewed and was successful in attaining the position of Executive Admin Officer, working in the Department of Work and Pensions. She would start at the beginning of April, and the position would hopefully lead on to an apprenticeship and further qualifications. The Chairman extended congratulations to Miss CL on behalf of the Panel.</p> |
| (3) | Schools that have provided Hub support during COVID-19. |
| | <p>The Chairman noted that this item on the agenda had come from Member's desire to look at the matter, with colleagues from Colcot Primary School and Llantwit Major Comprehensive School attending to present to the Panel.</p> |

M. Coles (MC) advised Panel members that both schools had provided Hub provision during the pandemic, but also provided additional provision for Children Looked After over the past year.

N. Cule (NC), Headteacher of Colcot Primary School provided a PowerPoint presentation to Panel members on-screen first, with the following additional points noted:

- School had seen a significant rise in the numbers of cases that required contact with Social Services.
- All staff are 'trauma informed' trained and the Senior Leadership Team had received additional training also.
- School have had emotionally available adults available throughout the school day for wellbeing, reassurance, etc.
- Wellbeing activities and needs had changed and grown significantly as a result of the pandemic and internal strategies had been adapted to best suit the pupils.
- School was part of a Hub of 5; 3 primary and 2 secondary schools.
- The number of vulnerable children grew during May and June 2020 and provision was extended to accommodate those additional families.
- School's relationship, as well as the Headteacher's relationship with Social Services had developed positively during the first lockdown period.
- September to December 2020 had been relatively 'normal', but the systems that had been put in place previously were ready to restart when the second lockdown came into effect in December 2020 / January 2021 and extended from 2 to 4 hub groups in January 2021 with CLA pupils in school full time.
- NC presented two anonymised vulnerable pupil case studies to the Panel which emphasised some of the issues faced by vulnerable pupils, steps taken to assist them and positive pupil feedback.

T. Bennett (TB), the Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo) at Llantwit Major Comprehensive School then provided a PowerPoint presentation to Panel members on-screen, with the following additional points noted:

- School usually had at least 2 emotionally available adults to speak to and deal with any issues that any of the vulnerable children could raise.
- A nurture group for CLA pupils would focus on enhancing literacy, numeracy and social skills.
- Trauma informed staff were available to assist vulnerable pupils.
- TB presented two anonymised vulnerable pupil case studies to the Panel which emphasised some work done between partner organisations to support the children.

The Chairman thanked NC and TB for their informative presentations which complimented each other well and opened the floor to Panel members for any questions.

Mr. M. Dacey (MD) said how positive the school arrangements had been through what was a difficult time, responding to the needs of not just vulnerable pupils but all pupils during the lockdown periods. Feedback had been overwhelmingly positive on the provision for vulnerable pupils.

Councillor N. Thomas (NT) added his congratulations to both schools for their work during an extraordinary year with increased pressure on both schools and families who may already have been struggling. He asked if the pupils had found it difficult, and if there had been an increase in risk to children generally due to family pressures, working remotely, etc.

TB said that the second lockdown had been more difficult than the first for families and pupils as they found it more stressful trying to manage home life, work life and keeping education on target. School had to provide a lot more devices out as initially pupils had been able to manage with sharing but there was more routine in the second lockdown that made sharing more difficult.

NC said that managing parent's stress levels had become more difficult, particularly for families with 3 or 4 younger children at home and why school had opened its doors to more children in the second lockdown but still being mindful of 'bubbles'. Some pupils attended more for wellbeing than other factors.

Councillor R. Nugent-Finn (RNF) asked if the role of the Challenge Advisor had been helpful and supportive during the last year.

L. Powell (Deputy Headteacher, Llantwit Major Comprehensive School) (LP) said the Improvement Partner had been in contact with the Headteacher throughout the last year, asking questions and asking for information on vulnerable learners.

NC said school had a very positive relationship with their Improvement Partner who had been available throughout. Also, the 24/7 availability of Vale of Glamorgan Council staff had been invaluable to school for support as more hands on and immediate from the Local Authority.

Councillor K.F. McCaffer (KMcC) said that what had been done by school to support the most vulnerable had been amazing and thanked all school staff for what they had done for all children.

MC passed on thanks from all in Learning in Skills to both schools for taking the time after the school day to attend and present to the Panel today, and to all their teams who have supported their vulnerable children.

The Chairman added thanks on behalf of the Panel to both schools as the presentations provided exactly the sort of information that Panel members had requested to learn more about and understand.

With no further questions, the Chairman thanked both parties for their presentations and contributions.

| (4) | Advocacy Provider |
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| | <p>The Chairman welcomed F. Bell (National Youth Advocacy Service) (FB) who was in attendance on behalf of NYAS. Panel members had requested an update as the last one was in September 2019. FB then provided a PowerPoint presentation to Panel members on-screen, with the following additional points noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue breakdown – This was a similar landscape to the previous year, contact issues were in relation to Covid 19 and a slight increase in education issues. • Support at meetings continued to be the main advocacy issue. • There had been a big increase in referrals during July to September 2020. • NYAS was already equipped for homeworking and were able to engage with vulnerable people quickly during the pandemic. • Schools being closed caused an issue as they were previously a venue where meetings would have taken place concerning child protection. NYAS worked in partnership with the Vale of Glamorgan Council to identify hubs and safeguarding leads. • NYAS changed their Active Offer process and sent out a letter to the young people and their parent/carer explaining they would be contacted with a video link explaining the active offer which was produced by TGP Cymru and Promo-Cymru. • Referrals were made to the NYAS Newid Project which helped care-experienced young people aged 16-25 with their mental health and wellbeing, and the Unity Project which works with care-experienced young Mothers. A grant was received to provide digital equipment and two young care leavers from the Vale of Glamorgan received laptops. • FB presented two anonymised advocacy case studies to the Panel which highlighted the benefits of advocacy that young vulnerable people had experienced. <p>The Chairman thanked FB for the presentation and opened the floor to Panel members for any questions.</p> <p>NT said that the need for advocacy for young people had been demonstrated in the presentation. He was surprised that more mental health referrals had not been received and whether there may have been a reason for that.</p> <p>FB said there had not been an increased call for advocacy based on mental health issues. Some issues were picked up separately via other routes and the Newid Project was utilised to support them.</p> <p>Ms. K. Conway (Operational Manager CYPS) (KC) acknowledged there had been an increase in referrals through to NYAS but they had worked well in partnership with the Vale of Glamorgan Council to ensure that people who had been newly looked after or subject to the child protection process received offers of support. Young people were aware of the support that NYAS could offer.</p> |

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| | With no further questions, the Chairman thanked FB for the contribution and looked forward to a future update to the Panel the following year. |
| (5) | Children Looked After – |
| | <p>Mrs. R. Evans (Head of Children and Young People Services) (RE) discussed the Local Authority Reduction Expectation Plans – Progress Statement (1st October 2020 – 31st December 2020), which was year 2 of the Children Looked After Reduction Expectations as a piece of work driven by Welsh Government, additionally noting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of Year 1, the reduction targets had been met in safely reducing the numbers of CLA. • Numbers had been fluid throughout Q3 and there were 273 at the end of December 2020. • The intention was for a net reduction of 13 children through the year despite an increased number of CLA through the year, influenced by the pandemic and the impact on families. • Progress on discharging of Care Orders for those CLA placed with parents had been impacted by the pandemic. • Work had slowed in the context of COVID-19 where the Court asked LAs not to submit non urgent applications whilst Court capacity was reduced. That position has now reversed, and applications are again welcomed. • Work to actively prevent children being admitted into care had been much more challenging as a result of the pandemic, particularly in Q2. • There had been a need for some children to be placed out of area as a result of additional places being required and less availability in-house. • The need to place children whose needs were often complex remained a challenge. • In terms of Entrant and Exit Data for Q3 some numbers remained high, particularly emergency admissions which remained high across the three quarters. <p>The Chairman thanked RE for the information and acknowledged that Panel members were confident in their understanding of the situation and would arrange for the circulation of the relevant information to Panel members.</p> <p><u>Breakdown</u></p> <p>KC took the Committee through the latest available information, which had not been circulated but was available on-screen at the meeting, concerning a breakdown of Children Looked After in the Vale of Glamorgan as of the 19th March, 2021, for information.</p> <p>KC advised that the number of CLA had increased to 285 as of Friday the 19th March, 2021, which was 12 more than the figure presented to Panel in January. KC then asked if there were any questions at this stage from Panel Members on the information provided.</p> |

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| | <p>The Chairman acknowledged that the numbers placed in IFAs had increased and that IFA placement costs were well known to Panel Members. He asked about mainstream foster carers and whether there was any capacity left currently. KC said that mainstream placement was currently very difficult and there was little capacity in-house. Placement finding currently was not only difficult within internal resources, but also with external providers and was near saturation point. The Chairman noted that point.</p> <p>RE noted the significant work that had been done by the Fostering Team in terms of recruitment and retention also to maintain pace with the activity over the last year. Demand was outstripping supply currently in terms of placements. The Welsh Government numbers do not reflect all the kinship assessments that the Fostering Service does, etc.</p> <p>KMcC asked about the further recruitment of foster carers and whether there were more or less available now that previously. KC said that the team were currently on track to approve 10 new mainstream carers this year, when last year there were 6 approved and 4 the year before that, in order to try and increase the numbers of approvals. The Marketing Officer for Fostering had been working hard, including planning for Fostering Fortnight in May 2021 which coincides with the launch of Foster Wales which was work done by the Fostering Framework to attract more people to become LA foster carers. The Chairman hoped to hear more about Fostering Fortnight as plans develop and further detail in one of the following Panel meetings, as appropriate.</p> <p>NT asked about the destinations of 18-year olds and ongoing support for them. KC reminded the Panel that at the previous Panel meeting, CO'D had advised of the Housing Gateway for young people where accommodation options for young people were discussed. Also, at the previous meeting the partnership with Llamau and the Supported Lodging Scheme was discussed. A number of young people remain in foster placements under the 'When I'm Ready' scheme; that can have a knock-on effect for fostering availability but was the right thing for that young person at that time. There were also a number of semi-independent living projects available.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked RE and KC for the information provided.</p> |
| (6) | Dates of Next Meetings |
| | <p>The Chairman referred to the regular submission on children looked after and opportunities for safe which would feature as part of the next meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17th May 2021 • 5th July 2021 • 13th September 2021 • 15th November 2021 • 10th January 2022 • 21st March 2022 |

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| (7) | Any Other Business – |
| | <p>The Chairman reminded Panel members that if there were any further topics of interest that had not been previously discussed as part of the proposed work programme, as a number of items on today’s agenda had been, to make those known for consideration.</p> <p>There were no items of other business for consideration.</p> |
| (8) | Date of Next Meeting – |
| | <p>As agreed under item 6, the date of the next meeting would be Monday the 17th May, 2021 at 4.30 p.m.</p> |