

REMOTE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Minutes of meeting held on 21st March, 2022

Present: Councillor B.T. Gray (Chair), P. Drake, Dr. I.J. Johnson, K.F. McCaffer, R. Nugent-Finn and N. Thomas; Mrs. M. Coles (Vulnerable Groups Manager (CLA Education Co-ordinator)), 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), J. Rudge (Team Manager, Children and Young People Services) and Mr. M. Swindell (Cabinet and Committee Services Officer).

(1)	Apologies for Absence –
	<p>These were noted from Councillor E. Williams, Miss CL (Care Leavers Forum Representative), Mrs J. Ballantine (Principal HR Business Partner), M. Hudson (Head of Standards and Provision) and C. O'Dare (Team Manager 15 Plus).</p>
(2)	Minutes and Matters Arising –
	<p>The minutes from 10th January, 2022 were agreed.</p> <p>The Chair advised that the minutes would go forward for noting at a future Cabinet meeting. He asked Panel Members if in order to also forward the minutes of this meeting to Cabinet before May, that he be granted dispensation to clear the minutes for the meeting before the local elections, which was agreed,</p> <p>RESOLVED: T H A T the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel be granted dispensation to clear the minutes of the 21st March, 2022 Corporate Parenting Panel meeting in order to refer them to a Cabinet meeting before the local elections in May 2022.</p>
(3)	Children and Looked After – Breakdown (Karen Conway)
	<p>KC advised of the latest figures as they were as of the 18th March, 2022 where there were currently 287 Children Looked After (CLA), a slight decrease from the figure of 289 as presented at the 10th January, 2022 meeting.</p> <p>Over the last year, the numbers of CLA had remained relatively stable overall but had fluctuated during that period, influenced by the number of entrants, and exits but related to 259 at the end of March 2020, 284 at the end of March 2021, 295 at the end of September 2021 and 289 on both the 15th November, 2021 and 10th January, 2022.</p> <p>It was noted that:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no cases on Secure Order or remand.

- The numbers of children placed in residential placements had increased over the year.
- The costs of external placements had been increasing recently.

The Chair said that it was testament to the work of Officers to ensure that numbers had remained relatively stable over the last year, noted there had been a slight increase in children placed in IFA placements and invited questions from Members.

Responding to Rachel Evans stating that the numbers placed in IFAs had doubled over the last three years. Councillor Nugent-Finn asked about what initiatives were being undertaken going forward and referred to children having been placed who settle and would not want to be moved unnecessarily and if decisions were based on need or on cost.

KC said that was an issue looked at closely by Foster Wales and referred to by Amy McArdle when she had presented to Panel in September 2021, and there had been a great deal of activity about fostering nationally. The Vale of Glamorgan Council Tax bills had recently been issued and each envelope also contained a flyer about becoming a foster carer. The numbers of foster carers had increased, with ten taken on last year and twelve this year. However, those who made up the fostering population were an ageing group, and some had not come forward to foster again after the pandemic and due to retirement.

Councillor Dr. Johnson (IJ) thanked all staff for all their work to support CLA over the last 5 years as this was the last Panel meeting before the local elections in May. He asked where Welsh Government stood going forward in terms of CLA, was there a future strategy for CLA in the Vale of Glamorgan and what influence the Panel could have going forward.

Rachel Evans (RE) indicated there wasn't yet clarity as to what would follow WG's safe reduction expectations, but she understood WG's priorities to safely reduce the number of CLA and place children locally remained.

He also referred to the 'Annual Delivery Plan Monitoring Report: Quarter 3 Performance 2021/22' report which had been considered at Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 17th March, 2022. The report referred to children, young people and families who accesses Council services and the work of the CLA Manager. He did not think that that work had been presented to the Panel and had requested an update be given to Panel Members. It was noted at the Scrutiny meeting that further details would be requested from the Children and Young People Services.

Rachel Evans (RE) committed to reviewing Cllr Johnson's request and providing feedback.

RNF referred to there being 17 CLA in kinship placements which was hugely positive. She had been promoting foster care recruitment on social media and on the doorstep and hoped that helped in encouraging recruitment. She asked if Welsh Government legislation to end the physical punishment of children had

	<p>an impact on the Intake and Assessment Team, Flying Start, Families First foster parents and whether Officers needed any further support from Welsh Government, Corporate Parenting Panel or Members.</p> <p>Amber Condy (AC) was aware that the new legislation had launched and would continue to work with South Wales Police and Welsh Government over the coming year as currently there was no indication on what impact the legislation may have. Historically services were put in place when matters were reported but it was not currently known if reported incidents would increase or decrease. The estimation in Scotland was 22 incidents a year, but it was difficult to say what any figures would look like for the Vale of Glamorgan. Colleagues from across Wales would look to come forward if mor resources may be required.</p> <p>RNF thanked AC for the update and said it would be interesting for Corporate Parenting Panel to be advised of the position over time.</p> <p>The Chair echoed IJ's comments thanking staff for all they had done to support CLA and those in the Council's care over the last 5 years and beyond.</p> <p>RESOLVED – T H A T</p> <p>(1) the latest Children Looked After breakdown be noted. (2) all staff be thanked for all they had done to support CLA and those in the Council's care over the last 5 years and beyond. (3) Panel would receive a future update regarding the Welsh Government legislation to end the physical punishment of children and its impact on services for those in the Council's care.</p>
(4)	Corporate Parenting Panel – Review
	<p>The Chair referred to the circulated paper highlighting the work done by the Panel since January 2019. He noted that there were consistent agenda items such as the CLA breakdown, but also the varied input from a variety of Service Areas and external presenters.</p> <p>He asked if Panel Members wanted to expand on the information provided, draw out any matters they felt were positive or negative, matters that had been missed or should have been included or should be looked at again.</p> <p>RNF said she would like to see more service user representation and suggested inviting young people to attend Panel meetings so as to have more input from those accessing Council services and support, where appropriate to do so.</p> <p>The Chair said that the Panel could be constituted for best effect and possibly a matter for consideration after the elections for the next Panel Members. He said that the sessions where the Care Leavers Forum Representative had been able to attend and have input had been most useful and informative.</p> <p>IJ said it would be useful to hear from Officer what they felt would be beneficial to look at going forward. He felt that some meetings were more presentations to Members than engagement. There was clearly a wide breadth of information</p>

looked at by the Panel. He asked if the matters that were 'annual' could be programmed as such going forward to provide a rolling programme of work for the next Panel that could be added to as required by both Members and Officers.

The Chair advised that Agenda Conference had been held to map matters going forward raised by both Members and Officers but agreed that such a rolling work programme could be set up for the next Panel.

Councillor Thomas (NT) said that the voice of the child was crucially important and supported young people attending future meetings, suggesting there should be two so that they could have peer support for each other and potentially have a mentor from within the Panel. He too thanked Officers for all their work over the years.

RE referred to the Purpose of the Corporate Parent as contained within the existing Terms of Reference, which stated:-

"The role of the corporate parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children. The local authority has a legal and moral duty to provide such loyal support to the children it is responsible for looking after."

In order to achieve that purpose, colleagues from across a number of Service Areas work collaboratively together for the benefit of the child, but with a focus on CLA for the Panel. The Panel over time had become more pro-active, engaged and forward-thinking whilst considering a diversified amount of subject matter.

Martin Dacey (MD) said he thought that the use of online attendance could be beneficial and that he had found video testimony useful to expand knowledge. He thought that some children may be reluctant to attend an in-person Panel meeting but may consider it if it were online.

Martine Coles (MC) said she would be happy to look at some potential candidates who may wish to take part in Panel meetings going forward, either to attend in person or online, but needed some time to be able to set that up.

The Chair said it helped that Panel meetings were not held in public which might encourage some children to attend who may otherwise have been discouraged.

IJ referred to the 'Corporate Strategy for Children who need Care and Support 2019 -23' referred to on the Topics Discussed list. He said that the new Panel would potentially have to address that as an agenda item and requested that be more than a presentation and suggested a workshop. RE said that the Strategy did need to be renewed and that a workshop had been held previously when it was last looked at. The Management Group would come together first to look at the objectives and assess who would need to be brought in to review the Strategy, and Corporate Parenting Panel would be one of those consultees as part of that process.

	<p>The Chair summarised the way forward as:-</p> <p>RESOLVED – T H A T</p> <p>(1) there be an annual programme mapped out in order to agenda specific matters at relevant times of year for the next Corporate Parenting Panel. (2) continued reports from the National Youth Advocacy Service. (3) Panel be included in the forthcoming Corporate Strategy for Children who need Care and Support consultation. (4) exploration take place to look to invite further service users to present / Attend at future Corporate Parenting Panel meetings.</p>
(5)	Any Other Business –
(i)	The Chair asked Panel Members and Officers to refer any further ideas for topics for the next Panel to consider to the Cabinet and Committee Services Officer for inclusion on future draft agendas.
(ii)	The Chair passed on his thanks to all Members of the Panel, all Officers across the Council and everyone who had engaged for the benefit of CLA. It had been useful to see how Council Services Areas worked together for the benefit of the CLA population of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, particularly as a result of challenging circumstances as a result of the pandemic.
(6)	Date of Next Meeting –
	The schedule of future Corporate Parenting Panel meetings would be determined with the new Panel after the local elections in May 2022.