

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL:

18 May 2011

Advocacy Service Provided to Looked After Children - Annual Monitoring and Reporting to Corporate Parenting Panel

AGENDA ITEM:

Reason for this Report

1. To provide the Corporate Parenting Panel with information about the way in which the Advocacy Annual Report for 2010/11, prepared by the Advocacy service provider, is considered by the Children's Services Management Team to ensure compliance with the service specification and to review and improve practice issues within the service area.

Background

2. In 2007, following a competitive process, Children's Services awarded Tros Gynnal the tender to deliver its advocacy services. The contract expires in June 2012. A young person was part of the selection panel, supported by the Children's Complaints Officer.
3. The service commissioned from Tros Gynnal provides advocacy to Looked After children and young people in foster and residential care, children and young people placed out of area, those placed with relatives, Care Leavers and Children in Need who wish to make a complaint, it also makes provision for children and young people involved in Child Protection processes, unaccompanied asylum seeking children and disabled children. This level of provision more than fulfils the statutory requirement of the council.
4. The Corporate Parenting Panel at its meeting in January 2010 received a briefing about the service from representatives of Tros Gynnal and a young person who had received advocacy services from the project. At that meeting it was agreed that Annual Reports on the performance of the Advocacy Service will be considered by the Corporate Parenting Panel and representatives from the service provider and users of the service would be invited to attend the panel to answer any queries arising from the Annual Report.
5. The Panel will hear from representatives of Tros Gynnal and service users at its July meeting

Issues

6. Monitoring of the performance and quality of the Advocacy service, and its compliance with the service specification takes place regularly is the subject of quarterly meetings between the Operational Manager (Resources), Tros Gynnal and the Children's Complaints Officer. The monitoring meetings include consideration of the arrangements for the annual report.
7. Following the quarterly monitoring visits, the Operational Manager reports the outcome to the CSMT for consideration and action by the relevant managers as required. The reports also provide information to Children's Services related to general practice issues identified by the advocacy service.
8. Monitoring of the service in 2010/11 found the service delivery standards to be of appropriate quality and that the service performed consistently at a level compliant with the service specification.
9. The annual report for 2011 is being prepared and will be considered by the CSMT prior to being submitted for consideration by the Corporate Parenting Panel.
10. The Welsh Assembly Government has proposed extending children's entitlement to advocacy services to other services. Children's Services managers consider that the service area is well placed to work with partner agencies on the implementation of these services and will seek to ensure that the standard of service currently provided to children who are looked after is maintained.

Recommendation

11. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Panel:
 - Note the content of this report and that the 2010/11 annual report of the Advocacy Service will be submitted for its consideration at a future meeting
 - Receive reports from Children's Services at regular intervals that enable it to monitor the potential impact of arrangements for the implementation of the proposed extension of advocacy services on the provision of advocacy to looked after children.

**Chief Officer
Children's Services
May 2011**