

CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

9 MARCH 2021

Present: Councillor Merry(Chairperson)
Councillors Bowden, Hinchey, Lent and Naughton

Officers Leigh Vella, Senior Policy Officer

Present:

Advisors Deborah Driffield (Director, Children's Services)

Present: Gillian James

131 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lister and Parkhill, and from Rose Whittle, Committee Advisor.

132 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.

133 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November were approved as a correct record.

134 : CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT - 2019-2020

The Chair welcomed Leigh Vella, Senior Corporate Policy Officer to the meeting. The Committee had had sight of the Annual Report at its meeting in November 2020 . Further information in respect of a visit by Members to Parc Prison was provided, as a consequence an amendment had been made. The change appears at page 25.

It was also noted that a visit to Rumney Primary School also took place, details had previously been provided.

RESOLVED:

- To approve the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee Annual Report to be laid before Council

135 : CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY 2021 - 2024

The Chair welcomed Deborah Driffield, Director Children's Services to the meeting to present the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

The Strategy is a revised three year strategy to ensure the need to have high aspirations and obtain excellent outcomes for our children looked after and our care leavers. This strategy has been shaped by Members of the Committee and by young people themselves. It covers 5 key priority areas, health and well-being, healthy

relationships, appropriate homes, education employment and training and lastly to ensure that the children and young people are to be celebrated.

Members wished to compliment Officers for all the hard work that has gone in to the preparation of the strategy.

RESOLVED:

- To agree the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021 – 2024 and recommend its approval by Cabinet.

136 : FAMILY THRIVE PROJECT

The Chair welcomed Libby Jones, Project Manager, Family Thrive Team, to the meeting to provide Members with information in relation to the Family Thrive courses for parents and carers being explored and piloted by the Looked After Children in Education (LACE) Team. The purpose of the course is to support parents and carers to meet the wellbeing and social emotional development needs of their children. It also forms part of a whole school approach to wellbeing by communicating information about how Thrive is used in school and to give parents and carers the tools and knowledge to compliment this approach at home. Currently, 70% of schools are engaged with Thrive or have Thrive Practitioners; the aim is to make sure that Looked After Children are really experiencing the benefits of that.

RESOLVED:

- To note the development of the Family Thrive course.

137 : BRIGHT SPARKS CLUB - PARTICIPATION UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Samantha Anderson, Participation Officer, National Youth Advocacy Service, Cymru (NYAS Cymru) to the meeting to provide Members with a presentation/update on the Bright Sparks Award for 2021, the Bright Sparks consultation event and the plans to address the first of the five priorities identified after consulting with care experienced children and young people in Cardiff.

The Chair thanked Samantha for her presentation and invited questions from Members.

- Members discussed the success of previous events, the last event took place virtually, in December 2020. It was noted that the debrief conducted after the event raised a number of issues; including the ceremony being too short and appearing rushed; and the sound quality. It was also felt that the various categories of awards should be revisited. Members also suggested connecting the Awards ceremony with a Christmas event, citing a previous event which where 200 young people attended Winter Wonderland after the event. Members were advised that the suggestion would be fed back to the young people for consideration. Certainly, if the event can be face to face City Hall rather than a Committee Room at County Hall would be a far better experience.

- Members sought information about the engagement with young people and felt that Councillors attending various workshops would be a positive step. It is important that young people see Councillors as ordinary people and that they be allowed to provide updates to Members in whatever form makes them feel comfortable. Members felt that it was important that young people have input into the reports that are provided to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee. Members were advised that young people have informed the report that has been provided today in relation to Bright Sparks. They want to feed in, they want to feel part of this journey.
- Members were advised of the important of increasing Membership, fortnightly meetings are now taking place, the 11 – 16 years, followed by the 16+. There is a need to reach out to those Children's Home who are not engaging with, contacting them and trying to meet the staff, although that has to be balanced with how busy people are. Previously they would go cycling, play pool and do fun things – there were lots of members as a result. Engaging people virtually has been and remains a challenge.
- Members were also reminded of the Voices from Care annual Proud to be Me event, that is another platform that can be explored.

RESOLVED:

- To note the update provided by NYAS
- To receive regular updates on the work of Bright Sparks

138 : PROVISION FOR CARE LEAVERS UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Sharlane Bird to the meeting to update the Committee on the current work being undertaken to support young people leaving care to ensure they make positive transitions in education employment and training and are supported with their housing needs. The support needs to be sustainable.

The Chair thanked Sharlane for her presentation and invited questions.

- Members discussed the number of young people assessed by a Social Worker noting that 33 were given their options in accordance with the Southwark Assessment and that 22 chose the housing route. Members queried the reasoning behind that decision rather than opting for the enhanced package of support that is offered by the Children's Services route. Members were advised that having a Social Worker in housing helps young people to understand the choices they are making. Some of those young people who decide to go down the housing route make the decision as they have family support in place which is so important. There are regularly meeting with housing providers to really identify needs of young people and in particular during the last year identifying what is missing.

Members noted that in terms of the Southwark Judgement, young people have the opportunity of going down the homeless route in terms of legislation or to be classified as Children Looked After. The numbers provided just look at the legislation however children and young people would still be supported without becoming Children Looked After.

- Members discussed where Cardiff, as an authority, sits in relation to extending entitlement. Welsh Government are considering moving from extending entitlement being a draft position to it being a statutory requirement. Members were advised that a paper has been prepared which also involved capacity. Meetings are taking place with other authorities to look at best practice. At the current time Cardiff is supporting 364 over 18's which is the right thing to do. Members referred to conversations with young people that have taken place in relation to them not being ready at 18 to attend university or study and if they had tried at that age they would have failed.
- Members discussed the transition for young people at 16 or 18; it is a feature of the Corporate Plan. Funding has been provided to help but it is important that young people who are starting out without parents and/or grandparents putting money in the pot are able to access financial help to help them to attend university or go on to further education when they will not have any other income; they are our corporate children and we must want for them what we would want for our own children. We need some extra incentive for our young people. Members were advised that, as extended entitlements are coming in, in terms of a business case there are a huge number of young people involved. It is important to understand the impact of that on the budget. There will be a plea for extra money next year but we are also considering whether we could work differently with care leavers; should we have a Leaving Care Team; should some of the Social Workers be moved to Personal Adviser Service area to focus on the 16+ team. Additional funding will be required which is currently being costed.

Members were advised that in terms of accommodation there has been a struggle to find accommodation that is both appropriate and sufficient. 16 additional units have been commissioned through the Young Persons Gateway; the relationship with Housing & Communities is vital. Those additional units are shared accommodation with intensive support and currently young people are being identified between the ages of 16 – 18 to be moved on. A new post has also been created to co-ordinate the moves; it is about matching young people with other young people and then matching them with the correct support.

- Members sought clarification in respect of the increased numbers of care leavers not in education, employment or training (NEET) and

how those figures compare with general population; is it down to COVID or are they being more affected; and whether more funding is available to address this issue. Members were advised that figures can be provided. At the present time the difficulty is COVID based as placements and training opportunities are just not available. Work has been ongoing about digital deprivation with care leavers; laptops have been provided; encouraging online training; and work with the Wellbeing Services, Cardiff & Vale college to try and really engage those that are really isolated at the present time. It is possible to look at the data and report back to Committee.

- Members discussed the differing opportunities for young people. Previously the opportunities the authority could offer were very limited, those opportunities are now much wider. Over the last 3 years the funding via the budget has increased; this year there was an increase of 9.5% net. A lot of that extra funding goes into the service and is used for very positive projects; however, it is never enough. It has been so difficult over the last months. It is also important to listen to the young people about their wants and needs, evaluate that information and then act and spend the money wisely, for example the purchase of bicycles previously; a suggestion from young people.
- Members discussed the data in respect of those young people who are NEET; whether that is a one off bearing in mind the pandemic and whether further resources would be provided over the coming years. Members also discussed the opportunity of the Committee receiving an update in relation to the use of 9.5% increase to help those who are NEET.
- Members queried whether support would still be provided to those over 21 who were still in full time education and were advised that currently have 19 young people up to 25 years of age who in higher education and at university who are being fully supported.

RESOLVED:

- To note the update provided.

139 : PERFORMANCE REPORT

RESOLVED:

- To note the information contained in the report

140 : COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT

Members discussed the complaints from parents being more about the process rather than specific issues. In respect of the number of emails being sent as a result of complaints Members were advised that the providing written responses is

sometimes process driven and perhaps consideration should be given to having a conversation initially to listen to the concerns raised.

Members asked for a breakdown of who is making the complaint, Members were advised that very few children make complaints, normally it would be through their advocate for via their foster carer. It is predominantly parents.

Members discussed the timescales in relation to the response to complaints, and requested information to be captured and supplied in relation to response times.

RESOLVED:

- To note the information contained in the report.

141 : FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021-2022

The Chair welcomed Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services to the meeting to present the Forward Work Programme.

RESOLVED:

- To note the proposed review of the structure of the Forward Work Programme;
- To approve the committee's Forward Work Programme (FWP) as at Appendix A

142 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were received.

143 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee is on Tuesday 18 May 2021 at 2.00 pm

The meeting terminated at 3.30 pm