

CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

11 MARCH 2024

Present: Councillor Merry(Chairperson)
Councillors Lay, Lewis, Littlechild and Naughton

Officers Present: Deborah Driffield (Director, Children's Services)

73 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Rhys Taylor, Candice Lloyd and Deborah Williams

74 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

75 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on the 22 January 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson

76 : BRIGHT SPARKS AWARD UPDATE

The Chairperson invited Lucy Thomas, CPAC Officer and Rayya Boccus, Bright Sparks Member to present the item by way of a presentation. The report provided an update to the Committee of the annual Bright Sparks Awards ceremony and the Bright Sparks group.

Members were advised that the Bright Sparks Group was a participation group for children and young people aged between 11-25 who were looked after or care experienced. It had been started by two young people to celebrate and share achievements but also to seek to challenge stereotypes of being care experienced.

Members were informed that the 18th Annual Bright Sparks Awards in December 2023 took place in County Hall and 200 people attended including more than 50 children and young people, Children's Services staff and Council Members. It was described as the highlight of the year and one which everyone looked forward to. The Bright Sparks Group led the event, made all the decisions and had complete autonomy in how things were run. Partners included the Into Work Service, Encon, Child Friendly City, NYAS and The Youth Service.

One of the first items that was celebrated were the children and young people that attended Jamie's Farm who were presented with a certificate. The farm facilitated a residential stay for children and young people who were looked after to experience

life on a working farm. It provided the young people with the opportunity to experience life on a working farm and transfer those skills into their everyday life.

Members were informed there were 14 different awards categories with nominations from staff members across Children's Services, Education, the PA Services, Inter work service. Each nomination was anonymised and sent to Bright Sparks Group.

Members were informed that Cllr Merry and Lister had attended the Awards and commented on the success of the event. The Young People were supported by Children's Services staff as well as those from the wider authority. The Bright Sparks Members also made a wish list of celebrities they would like to invite to the event.

In terms of what was next for Bright Sparks Members were advised that:

- NYAS participation contract had come to an end and therefore there was an opportunity to grow the Bright Sparks group from within Children's Services. There was an opportunity for the committee to explore that and work as closely as possible to meet the Council's corporate parenting objectives and make sure children in care were able to access the opportunities they deserved.
- There was already an existing CLA group being facilitated by the Youth Service
- Discussions had taken place for a 3 month pilot for Children's Services/Youth Service to collaborate and deliver a CLA participation group
- There was an opportunity to ensure services were working as closely together as possible, and also aligning to meet CPAC objectives.

The Chairperson invited Members to ask questions.

Members thanked Rayya for participating in the meeting and asked her if she could liaise with the Bright Sparks Group and Lucy Thomas on any suggestions or feedback they had as part of ensuring that the Council's corporate parenting objectives were met and making sure children in care were able to access opportunities.

RESOLVED: that the Committee note the report.

77 : CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT
2023-2024

The Chairperson invited Matthew Osborne, Operational Manager, Children's Services, to introduce the item.

Members were advised that the report presented the Committee's main activities during 2023/24 commencing with background information to aid understanding the Committee's function, purpose, and the scale of its responsibilities. This included:

- A record of meetings and attendance
- Committee Training
- Young People Engagement
- Activity of the Committee
- Monitoring Performance

During 2023/2024 Committee members had received a wide range of updates and information from a variety of organisations which helped the Committee gain an understanding of the issues impacting care experienced young people and the services, projects and initiatives that support them.

Areas of particular interest from Committee Members for 2023/2024 were:

- The Accommodation Strategy
- The Virtual School Annual Report
- The Participation Strategy for Children and young people
- Bright Sparks Awards

Members were advised that looking ahead the focus would be building on the information gained from the participation consultation and using this to expand ways of listening to children and young people to ensure they were at the heart of decision making.

Members were informed that the themes and discussions from listening to young people had been reflected in the members Forward Work Programme. This year there would be a focus on building connections between young people, working closely with schools in the authority and supporting young people to take part in vocational and educational activities.

The new Corporate Parenting Charter presented a new opportunity for the Committee to review how Cardiff Council could work together with its statutory partners and the independent sector. The charter provided the opportunity of improving engagement and joined up work, as well as strengthening combined Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

Members agreed that the work of the Committee was valuable and the importance of placing children and young people at the forefront to achieve the best possible outcomes for them.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the draft report.
2. To delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Chair, to finalise the Annual Report, having regard to comments provided by Members of the Committee and Members of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee and;
3. The Chairperson to present the Annual Report to full Council in June 2024.

78 : FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - MAY 2024 - APRIL 2025 & THE WELSH GOVERNMENT CORPORATE PARENTING CHARTER

The Chairperson invited Matthew Osborne to introduce the item.

Members were advised that FWP for the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee set out the committee business that would be considered during the period identified in the programme. It was noted that the Committee had identified that the agenda for its meetings should be driven by Children Looked After in Cardiff and that a greater

emphasis should be placed on the participation of young people in the work of the Committee.

The themes of the Forward Work Programme were reflected the Corporate Parenting Priorities with each meeting focussing on one of these themes. Members were also advised that the incorporation of the Welsh Government Corporate Parenting Charter needed to be a combined Authority approach in collaboration with corporate partners.

Other aspects of the FWP, referred to in the Annual Plan included developing an operational plan to bring to committee structured. The importance of targets was also discussed in terms of what was being done by Council departments in terms of further opportunities for children looked after such as mentoring or sponsoring a Bright Sparks Award, for example.

The Chairperson invited the Members to ask questions. A summary of the discussion is outlined below:

- Members discussed the benefits of visiting the services and organisations that supported care experienced young people in Cardiff.
- Members requested more notice if possible in terms of dates and timings for events such as the Bright Sparks event.
- Members agreed that the structure of the meetings should continue to be linked to the Corporate Parenting priorities.
- Members asked for clarification of their role in terms of the differences with scrutiny.
- Members asked officers for an update on children looked after not based in Cardiff and how the Council ensured that wherever they were based they were being provided with the same consistency of care that Cardiff offered and principles of the Welsh Government Corporate Parenting Charter. Officers responded that an overview of children out of county could be provided detailing how the LA ensured that those children were still providing the same level of care.
- Members requested an update on young people after leaving care and the pressures of housing.
- Members asked for an update on how a school's internal complaints procedure was linked to Children Looked After. Officers responded that they would carry out some research on the dashboard, education section and enquiry work with Education colleagues.
- In relation to the participation of children and young people, it was noted that the school day finished at 3.00 pm and Members suggested that the time of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee could be changed from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm.

RESOLVED:

- To note the Corporate Parenting Charter (Appendix 1) and the Forward Work Plan (Appendix 2)
- That Members' comments to be forwarded to officers in the form of minutes.

The Chairperson invited Lucy Thomas to introduce the item.

Members were advised that the report set out a programme of activity that would help the Committee to find out about the services and organisations that supported care experienced young people in Cardiff. The proposed members visits outlined in Appendix 1 had been developed to show the Children Services teams and other services within and outside of the local authority that supported care experienced young people.

Members were informed that the proposed visits had been expanded to try to reflect areas of interest. The intention was to make the visits as flexible as possible with every area willing to accommodate Members as and when they could make the visits. Additionally, visits could be set up on request if there were other services or provisions Members would like to find out more about. The work programme would then be amended to reflect this change.

RESOLVED: that the Committee

1. note the programme of visits as outlined in Appendix 1 and indicate any expressions of interest in attending any of the visits contained within the programme.
2. identify any other appropriate and relevant services or organisations to be included within the member visit programme that would benefit the committee in carrying out the role.

80 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None.

81 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note the date of the next meeting of the Committee would take place in June 2024 – to be confirmed.

The meeting terminated at 3.30 pm