

CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

22 JANUARY 2024

Present: Councillor Merry (Chairperson)
Councillors Ash-Edwards, Lay, Lewis, Lister, Littlechild and Taylor

Officers Present: Deborah Driffield (Director, Childrens Services), Lucy Thomas (Senior Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee Participation Officer, Matthew Osborne (Operational Manager, Childrens Services), Leanne Weston (OM Legal Manager), Nick Blake (Operational Manager, Childrens Services), Craig Bartlett (Youth Services Manager)

Advisors Present: Candice Lloyd NYAS Service Manager, Scott Giles (NYAS Project Co-ordinator)

1 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Naughton

2 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on the 6 November 2023 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairperson.

4 : NYAS UPDATE

The Chairperson invited Candice Lloyd, Service Manager, NYAS Cymru and Scott Giles, Project Co-ordinator, from NYAS to provide a presentation to the Committee on the work undertaken by NYAS Cardiff Advocacy Service for the period April – September 2023.

Members received information in relation to the Background to the Service, the Active Offer, Issue Based Advocacy, Overview of Referrals Received, Awareness Raising and Key Achievements and Challenges.

Members asked questions and sought clarification on the following:

- In relation to NYAS supporting children from the age of 5+, Members asked what measures were taken to help a child of such a young age understand how they could access the service. The officer explained the Active Offer of Advocacy process. When a 5-year-old young person entered the child protection process, for example, their social worker would go out and meet with them to explain they were entitled to advocacy support. They would

explain how a young person could be their voice and help them voice their feelings and take them through the advocacy process. NYAS would let the 5-year-old young person know they would be contacted by an advocate and it was up to the young person whether they said yes or no to the offer of support. NYAS would then go out in a child friendly manner, explain the role, why they were there and how they could support them and be their voice in meetings with grown-ups and help with decisions that could impact their lives.

- Members sought clarification in relation to the numbers of active offer referrals, meetings and acceptances of active offers. The officer responded that out of the 230 active offer referrals received 144 meetings took place and as a result of the 144 meetings 88 children and young people accepted the active offer. The remainder declined the offer of advocacy as they did not feel they needed advocacy support as they were happy, there were no issues or NYAS was unable to contact them, (no responses received after numerous attempts to contact them).
- Members asked if there was anything that could be done in future to increase the acceptance rate of advocacy for the young person. The officer responded that that this was difficult as ultimately it was up to the young person themselves to decide if they wished to accept the offer of advocacy or not. However, the child or young person did know that as long as they were involved with Childrens Services they could make contact. NYAS provided them with contact details and let the social worker, school know and on occasions reminded them of advocacy support.
- The Operational Manager, Children's Services added that Childrens Services linked in with NYAS part of the performance monitoring process. In terms of the active offer process the social worker spoke to the child or young person and the parents. Training had been provided for practitioners. It was highlighted that many parents particularly in child protection situations were wary of introducing new people into their lives. The Service was keen to promote to parents and young people the value that advocacy could offer. It was important to note that the Active Offer was just the start of the process and that there was a need to re-visit the conversation at various points and there was a desire to make sure that conversation was as strong and clear as possible. To that effect NYAS had been helping in terms of training social work staff to make sure the message was as clear as possible.
- Members referred to the report mentioning incomplete referral information and late referrals causing some degree of difficulty and asked the nature of those difficulties and what measures were being taken to address them. The officer replied that the systems were challenging at times with the situation that sometimes the information held needed to be updated very quickly and rapidly. It was the case that sometimes NYAS was catching up with that information. In order to remedy the situation NYAS was working very closely with the business support team who submitted the referrals to ensure there was no missing information. Monthly steering meetings took place with Matt Osborne as the Operational Manager which was productive and very useful being very solution focussed. NYAS was able to talk in depth about the challenges they were facing, any barriers and very rapid responses were

being received. Although it was not a perfect system, as family lives were complex with contact details changing and often the requirement to source a placement very quickly for young people, by staying closely linked to the referral NYAS was able to explain to them what was needed and how a timely referral could be achieved to ensure there was representation at the meeting.

- Members asked if the situation was improving with information improving and fewer late problems arising. The officer responded that although updating systems and data would always be problematic as it was not a perfect system, this was recognised by the team and there was a very strong working relationship to be able to raise the issues. There was also direct access to the people who could make decisions in the local authority and it was being addressed by the Senior Leadership Team.
- The Operational Manager, Children's Services, added that from the Children's Service perspective there was a very strong working relationship with NYAS. He referred to the provision of training provided to the front door teams – a comprehensive package of training to identify the need for early referrals with complete information. A follow-up system was also in place in the case of a young person whose referral did not take place on time. If opportunities were missed they would still get the support in the 2nd or 3rd meetings. The ideal scenario was that there would be no missed opportunities but where there were they were followed up to make sure the child or young person received the support and information needed.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the information shared within the update as outlined at **Appendix A**.
2. Members' comments to be forwarded to officers in the form of minutes.

5 : CHILD FRIENDLY CITY UPDATE

Item deferred until next meeting in March 2024.

6 : VOICES FROM CARE CYMRU UPDATE

The Chairperson invited Helen Mary Jones, Head of Policy & Communications, Care Cymru, to provide an update on the Voices from Care Cymru. Members were informed that the report had been prepared to provide the Committee with an update in relation to Voices From Care Cymru and the work they were doing to support care experienced young people in Cardiff and was accompanied by the Radical Reform Summit Declaration, signed by the Welsh Government and Young Ambassadors.

Members were informed that Voices From Care Cymru was an independent Welsh voluntary organisation that had been supporting care experienced children and young people for thirty-five years. It supported individual care experienced children and young people through its wellbeing services, helping them develop resilience, and independent living skills, enabling them to support each other through peer support, formal and informal. The organisation organised enjoyable activities, enabling care experienced children and young people to relax and have fun with

others who share their experiences. And, crucially, they enabled young people to work together to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Members asked questions and sought clarification on the following:

- Where Voices from Care Cymru offered tutoring services for children needing extra help with their GCSES, Members enquired if there was a higher level of awareness around neuro diversity that could cause barriers to their education. In addition, whether any measures were being taken around diagnosis and if any tools, equipment, software, were provided. The officer responded that Voice from Care Cymru would not necessarily provide equipment but if they became aware of a young person with neuro diversity contact would be made with the school and through the foster carers to notify the local authority to raise awareness for the need for diagnosis and extra support. Voices from Care Cymru was very conscious of neuro diverse issues and also issues around trauma with support tailored to the individual child's needs.
- Members asked to what extent young people were involved in the reform to residential care and removing the profit and how far along Cardiff was in in delivering against that and what the risks and challenges were. The officer responded that this was a major Welsh Government commitment and presented challenges for local authorities and the third sector. Members were informed that it arose out of one of the requests in the organisation's manifesto that young people prepared before the 2021 Senedd election. Young people expressed the view that people who were caring for them should be caring for them but should not be making a lot of money out of it. Voices from Care Cymru had been very supportive of the agenda and very involved. Further, as far as progress, it was understood that the Welsh Government had gone out to obtain additional evidence to make sure its legislative proposals had the best evidence base.
- Members added that the commitment was also there from the local authority. It was recognised as a massive challenge for the local authority and Members were grateful for the support from the third sector. It was recognised that the focus was on the child and wellbeing.

RESOLVED:

- To note the Voices From Care Cymru Update.
- Members' comments to be forwarded to officers in the form of minutes.

7 : RESIDENTIAL HOMES UPDATE

The Chairperson introduced Nick Blake, Operational Manager, Childrens Services, to provide a presentation which had been prepared to provide the Committee with an update in relation to the Children's Services Accommodation Strategy and the new residential homes that had been created in Cardiff.

Members were informed that the Accommodation Strategy went to Cabinet on the 19 January 2023. The strategy provided an overview of the current position, analysed demand and detailed the proposals for the following work streams with consideration

for The Right Place and NEST/NYTH framework: Children's Residential Provision; Children with Disabilities; Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing; Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and Parent and Baby.

Members were then provided with updates on Children's Residential Provision and Progress; provision for Children with Disabilities; the Right Place Model; Removing Profit from the Care of Looked after Children and Aims for the next Phase of the Accommodation Strategy.

Members asked questions and sought clarification on the following:

- Members sought clarification on the registering of homes and the CIW, the process and the timeframe of how long it took when a property had been secured by the local authority. The officer responded that in terms of timeframe the purchase of the property took almost 12 months with up to 9 months to purchase and 3 months to register.
- Members asked and what input service users had in relation to the design of the accommodation. Officers responded that when consultation had taken place with young people on what was important to them one of the key aspects was a decent place to live which was one of the commitments of the Committee. When officers knew which young person was moving into a property the young person themselves could chose the furniture, (even helping make it), the colour scheme and bedding etc. Members noted that a large scale participation strategy would be presented to CPAC in the near future. All children looked after had been written to and this had been followed up with face to face contact to garner their views.
- Members asked if there were any specific criteria for properties that they should be aware of when looking in their wards, for example, minimum number of beds. Officers responded that properties were being sought city wide and the main thing was that the property was on the right plot, not too prominent, with enough space for parking etc. The types of properties being sought were CHAD solo units – 2/3 beds, and larger 5 property. All the new homes were 3 beds for 3 children initially with the potential for a 4th bed and a 5th bedroom for staff sleeping so 4 or 5 beds were being sought for those ones.
- Members expressed their excitement about the new residential placements and buildings. However, it was noted that there were some children who would be challenged by a new move and would be happy in their current placements and that their feelings needed to be considered. Officers assured Members that they would not be moving any children if it was against their wishes and their views would always be taken into account.

RESOLVED:

- To note the report.
- Members' comments to be forwarded to officers in the form of minutes.
- That officers present an update on progress on the Residential Strategy in 6 month's time.

8 : YOUTH SERVICE UPDATE

The Chairperson introduced Craig Bartlett Youth Service Manager, to provide Members with a presentation on the Youth Service Update.

Members were informed that Cardiff Youth Service was part of Cardiff Council's Education department and the Service worked with young people aged 11-25yrs to enhance personal, social and educational development through a variety of opportunities. This included activities in communities, participatory experiences, as well as information, support and guidance enabling young people to reach their unique and full potential. The service worked with young people in a variety of settings offering both universal and, for those identified as vulnerable, targeted support.

Members heard about the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board supported employability pathways. The Youth Service was currently working on a trial with Cardiff Commitment, in Eastern High School, for five care experienced young people to have the opportunity to attend work experience in University Hospital Wales supported to hopefully achieve internships and apprenticeships. There was also an initiative with Cardiff Met 'Reaching Wider' which was raising the aspirations for young to aspire to go to University to embrace education.

Members asked questions and sought clarification on the following:

- Members asked what steps could be taken to improve the consistency of youth services across Cardiff. The officer responded that consistency was the biggest challenge faced by the Youth Service and attempts were being made to manage and mitigate this risk. The officer added that the youth service was building sustainable relationships in order to build trust and consistency was key to this.
- Members enquired if the youth service had the resources needed to deliver all its activities and do justice to what it was trying to achieve. Officers responded that this was not the case but they were working with the resources they had. The officer added that being youth workers were resourceful and adept at prioritising the engagement of young people through a variety of funding strands including core and external funding. It was recognised that if a sustainable youth service could be delivered it could then be adapted to the needs of young people. There was a minimum sufficiency to meet the needs of the young people currently and if more funding was available the service would be able to deliver more.
- Members asked about the PA service, the time taken to allocate a worker to a young person and the relationship. The Officer responded that he was new to the post and had only just started to liaise with all departments about the support that could be offered to young people. He was very conscious of the need to not duplicate the support that could be offered. Key to the success were the lines of communication and being transparent. He added that if the Youth Service could support with any timelines they would be more than happy to do so.

- Members asked if the Youth Service contributed the cost of some of the kit for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. The officer responded that there were a number of items in storage that were updated and kept for such a purpose and if a young person asked for help the Youth Service would wholeheartedly support them and provide what was needed.

RESOLVED:

- To note the report.
- Members' comments to be forwarded to officers in the form of minutes.

9 : GUARANTEED INTERVIEW SCHEME FOR CARE LEAVERS

The Chairperson invited Lucy Thomas, CPAC Officer, to provide an update to Members on the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Care Leavers.

Members were informed that as part of the Corporate Parenting Operational Plan, there was a proposal to implement a guaranteed interview scheme for young people who had left care, when they applied for job vacancies within Cardiff Council. The scheme would only be applicable or jobs whereby Cardiff Council had authority to whom it employed, for example, it would not include school-based jobs or partnership posts. The care leavers would be guaranteed an interview as long as they identified as a care leaver on their application, and in addition, that they met the essential criteria on the person specification. Members were informed that this would support care leavers to secure employment within the Authority. It was anticipated that this would be implemented by the end of the first quarter of 2024/25 or sooner if system changes could be made to accommodate this.

Members were updated on the issues involved in introducing the scheme which included some changes being required, prior to the implementation of the scheme. All recruitment systems would need to be updated and the variety of application forms, both electronic and hard copy would need to be updated to confirm whether an individual was a care leaver or not. Work would take place with Human Resources to clarify the appropriate wording to be used in the documentation as well as to provide them with a clear definition of the term 'care leaver'. The Recruitment and Selection Policy would need to be updated with the amendment, and the change would need to be communicated widely across the Council to ensure all recruiting managers were aware of the position and what it meant for the shortlisting process.

Further Members were advised that the scheme would be applicable to Cardiff care leavers only and there would be no minimum period for having been in care. Consultation would need to take place with the Trade Unions and other considerations included how long after leaving care would it apply and would it cover those that had previously gained employment and were looking to move elsewhere or just those that were currently not working.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

10 : MENTORING SCHEME UPDATE

The Chairperson invited Matt Osborne, Operational Manager, Children's Services, to provide Members with an Update on the Mentoring Scheme. Members were informed that as part of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, Cardiff Children's Services were in the process of implementing an authority wide Mentoring Scheme to support Children Looked After.

Members noted that the Mentoring Scheme was designed to support and empower children and young people by offering practical experiences and opportunities. Members were provided with an outline of the objectives, structure, benefits and challenges of the Mentoring Scheme, aiming to enhance the well-being and development of children and young people in the care of the Authority.

The Mentoring Scheme would be a structured programme focused on providing guidance, support, and assistance to children and young people in various aspects of their lives. The scheme would pair young people with adult mentors to offer them supervision, positive role modelling, and opportunities for personal and academic growth. This would be facilitated by way of practical work experience and volunteering opportunities within the authority. The aim of the scheme is to increase social, academic and life skill development in children and young people by giving them positive, consistent role models to learn from. It is hoped that this will create a sense of community and belonging for those young people taking part in the scheme.

In terms of the issues to consider Members were informed that the first issue was the creation and availability of the opportunities offered to Cardiff's Children Looked After. Children's Services were actively promoting the scheme and the recruitment of volunteer mentors by delivering informative presentations across each Directorate. Ensuring compatibility between mentors and mentees was key to the success of the pilot. In addition, consideration needed to be given to the promotion of regular and sustained engagement. Members heard that there were plans to deliver further information sessions and presentations to assist in the recruitment of mentors.

It was noted that every Directorate had been contacted to ask for their suggestions as to how they could support the mentoring scheme, so that there was a consistent and varied programme on offer. Meetings would then be held in January 2024 to explore these prospects and include them in the Corporate Parenting Operational Plan.

Members asked questions and sought clarification on the following:

- Members asked what the process was in identifying mentors and if there was any training on coaching and mentoring given in addition to the mentor's experience in the subject. The question was also asked if diversity was taken into account with pairing or any other cultural aspects taken into consideration. The officer responded that as part of all the planned communications sent to staff, individuals were being asked to self-identify and volunteer. As part of that they will be asked what they can offer to support children and young people. The needs and interest of the Children Looked After were paramount and

there would be careful pairing and matching to get the right personality, traits and interests.

- In terms of supporting the mentors going forwards, Members were informed there was a training programme which had been developed and was ready. When the member of staff volunteered they would undertake the DBS and reference checks from their line manager and then receive training in wider safeguarding and how to work with children and young people. There would be supervision going forwards. In terms of diversity there was a hope that there would be diverse applications and then these could be taken into consideration. The children and young peoples' interests and backgrounds would be a factor in who they were paired with.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

11 : MEMBER VISITS UPDATE

Members received an update on the Members Visits that had taken place since the last committee meeting. The visits took place at services and organisations that supported care experienced young people in Cardiff.

Visits comprised:

- St Teilos Comprehensive School – Cllr Naughton attended the school and met with the Headteacher, Mr Ian Loynd as well as having the opportunity to speak to pupils and youth service mentors working within the school. Mr Loynd gave an in depth overview of the ethos of the school and their adoption of trauma informed processes for all of their pupils.
- Bright Sparks Awards 2023 – Cllr Sarah Merry and Cllr Ash Lister attended the Bright Sparks Awards, which was in its 18th year. The event took place in the committee rooms at county hall and saw over 200 people come together to celebrate the wonderful achievements of Cardiff's looked after children. There were 14 different award categories, including career of the year, performing arts, sport and music. Cllr Merry presented the Bright Sparks Group with the volunteer of the year award. Councillor Sarah Merry and Ash Edwards thanked staff for the efforts they had put into making County Hall feel such a special and stunning environment.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

12 : MEMBER VISIT PROGRAMME

The Chairperson invited Lucy Thomas, CPAC Officer, to introduce the item on the Member Visit Programme.

Members were informed that the visits provided an opportunity for members of the Committee to meet the staff and teams that supported young people. Some of the visits would also provide an opportunity to hear directly from the children and young people. Committee members were reminded that it was important to engage in these

opportunities if possible. There had been an attempt to increase the variety of opportunities on offer this meeting as a result of feedback from the last meeting.

There were opportunities to visit several different service areas including ENFYs (Tuesday mornings 9-10.00 am), Crosslands (Tuesdays or Thursdays at times to be agreed), Cardiff Youth Justice (John Kane Centre), Into Work Service/Bright Start Apprenticeship Programme (dates to be confirmed), Fostering Events (quarterly event held at Mercure Cardiff North Hotel), St Teilo's High School and Rumney Primary School.

The Chairperson stressed the importance of visits and engagements and said that it would good to get a number of visits done by the next meeting. Members were asked to contact Lucy if interested in doing a particular visit.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the programme of visits as outlined in Appendix A and indicate any expressions of interest in attending any of the visits contained with the programme.
2. To 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 their role.

13 : FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - MAY 2023 - APRIL 2024

The Chairperson invited Lucy Thomas, CPAC Officer, to introduce the item which was to provide an update on the Forward Work Programme May 2023 – April 2024.

Lucy outlined the items being considered for the agenda for the next Committee meeting on 11 March 2024 – which would concentrate on the last priority in the Corporate Parenting Plan – celebrating our children and young people.

The Proposed agenda items were as follows: -

- Bright Sparks Awards Update – An update to the Committee in relation to the Bright Sparks Awards that took place in December 2023.
- Update from the Fostering Team – to receive an update on the recent fostering recruitment.
- Youth Justice Service Report – An update to the Committee in relation to the new Crosslands Programme implemented by YJS.
- Update on Member Visits and Young People Services – Updates would include Member Visit meetings with the Virtual School and young people taking part in the Bright Futures Apprenticeship Programme
- Registered Individual Update on Homes for Children in Cardiff – Registered Individual has legal responsibility for our residential homes for children in Cardiff. An update on our established and new provisions.

- Update on the Corporate Parenting Strategy – To receive a progress report on the review of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and operational plan.
- Annual Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee Report – To give an overview of the work of the Committee in 2023-24.

RESOLVED:

3. To agree the Work Programme and;
4. To identify any other topic for inclusion on the work programme

14 : PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD - QUARTER 3 2023-2024

The Chairperson invited Matt Osborne, Operational Manager, Children's Services, to introduce the item on the Performance Indicator Dashboard (Appendix A).

Members were aware that the Key Performance Indicator Dashboard outlines a range of key data from internal departments and outside agencies that have an impact on the lives of Children Looked After and Care Leavers. This will help members of the Committee understand the services and organisations that support care experienced young people in Cardiff.

Members were informed that from engagement with partners, and as discussed previously by the committee, the key performance indicators included information from the following departments:

- Cardiff and Vale Health Board
- Children Services
- Bright Futures
- Housing Directorate
- Education Directorate
- Criminal Justice System
- Adolescent/ leaving care services

Where Key Performance Indicators for Children Looked After and Care Leavers had not been developed Children Services would work with the relevant organisation to increase the monitoring of Children Looked After and Care Leaver outcomes.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

15 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

There were no urgent items.

16 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee is on Monday 11 March 2024 at 2.00 pm in Committee Room 4, County Hall, Cardiff.

The meeting terminated at 4.15 pm