



Report of the Cabinet Member for Care Services

Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel – 1 November 2022

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD UPDATE

Purpose	To provide an overview of the work plan for the Corporate Parenting Board for the next year, along with progress in taking forward the Board's priorities.
Content	<p>This report provides an overview of how the Corporate Parenting Board intends to develop a strategy to set out its aims and ambitions over the medium to longer term.</p> <p>There is also detail on the discussions and key areas considered at the first two meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board, feedback from children and young people about what they would like the Board to focus on and the key reports received and how these align to this feedback.</p>
Councillors are being asked to	Consider the report as part of their routine review of performance and improvement in Child and Family Services.
Lead Councillor(s)	Cllr Louise Gibbard, Cabinet Member for Care Services
Lead Officer(s)	<p>David Howes, Director of Social Services</p> <p>Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services</p>
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1. The role and function of the Corporate Parenting Board

- 1.1 As corporate parents, all councillors have a collective responsibility to ensure that care experienced children, young people and care leavers can have the outcomes every good parent would want for their children. This means ensuring they are safe and providing opportunities to help them achieve their potential. Corporate parents have responsibility for a child's education, training and employment, health, welfare, leisure, housing and cultural opportunities.
- 1.2 The role of the Corporate Parenting Board is to ensure that care experienced children and young people (including care leavers) can have the outcomes every good parent would want for their children. The Board supports the local authority in exploring and scrutinising areas such as;
- How safe looked after children are;
 - How well the local authority looks after them;
 - How well looked after children are doing educationally;
 - How the health needs of looked after children are being met;
 - What is being done to support looked after children when they leave care.
- 1.3 The concept of corporate parenting is well established. Section 78 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 imposes a duty upon a local authority to safeguard and promote the well-being of each child it looks after. Under sections 104 – 118, a local authority has similar duties to promote the well-being of care leavers.
- 1.4 Whilst local authorities in Wales take the responsibility of corporate parenting seriously, it is often seen as a function for children's social services and elected members. Welsh Government is looking to use existing legislative powers to strengthen statutory guidance, clarifying roles and responsibilities and extending duties across the public sector.
- 1.5 Current membership of the Corporate Parenting Board is Councillors, including the Cabinet Member for Care Services and internal and external partners (Social Services, Education, Culture and Tourism, Housing, Legal Services, third sector partners, Health Board, Youth Justice). There are co-opted members from the participation team and Foster Carers.

2. What is important to children and young people

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Board was supported by Child and Family Services Rights and Participation Officer to work with children and young people in December 2021. Together with children and young people, members of the Corporate Parenting Board explored '*what matters to me...our best ideas for a best life*'.
- 2.2 Through a series of on-line workshops, the following were identified as key pledge areas for the Corporate Parenting Board to focus its work on:
- Happiness
 - Love, family and friendships
 - Healthy relationships
 - No barriers to opportunities
 - Good education and a good job
 - A safe place to live

- Mental health

2.3 The workshops explored collaboratively the detail behind these areas and why they are important to children and young people. Wider groups of care experienced children were also consulted to hear what is important to them. From this a video was created and shared with the Corporate Parenting Board. The Children's and Participation Officer has continued to support the on-going conversation between Corporate Parenting Board members and children and young people. This has led to specific 'asks' of the Board:

(a) Love, family and friendships:

- Have a better approach to matching young people with their foster carers
- Look at how we recruit foster carers so they have the skills the child/young person needs them to have
- Listen to who matters to the child/young person and help them to stay in touch with them

(b) Healthy relationships:

- Helping children/young people to think about what healthy relationships are
- Giving children/young people the chance to ask questions and learn about good relationships
- Thinking about how we help and support children and young people as they grow older to become more independent
- Helping the child/young person and all the people that care about them, to think about how they will support the child/young person to be the best they can be as they grow up

2.4 The work plan for the Corporate Parenting Board includes on-going workshops with children and young people to unpick the detail behind the other pledges, as well as input from a range of agencies and local authority services about how they are supporting our care experienced children and young people to be the best they can be.

3. Progress of the Corporate Parenting Board to date

3.1 The Virtual School – the board received an update on the progress being made towards the establishment of Swansea's virtual school. The purpose of a Virtual School is to promote the educational outcomes for looked after children, ensuring the effective co-ordination of support, including for those children placed outside the local authority, at both a strategic and operational level. The Virtual School model enables national consistency which is particularly vital for those children subject to out of county moves.

3.2 A key part of the Virtual School model is the role of the Virtual School Head. The Virtual School Head is the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority's looked after children, including those placed out of county.

- 3.3 The Virtual School Head, as any head teacher, will focus on improving attendance and raising educational outcomes for ‘their learners’ but additionally and importantly, supporting and preparing them for transition to adult life.
- 3.4 The first phase of implementing the Virtual School model in Swansea is the development of the necessary infrastructure and processes so that quality data is available to effectively support looked after children. The key data includes attendance, exclusion rates, managed move data, PEP (Personal Education Plan) returns, attainment data and information on what matters to the child/young person. A grant has been awarded to the Local Authority to develop the software needed to run the Virtual School. The roll out of this software began in September with completion anticipated by the end of October.
- 3.5 The post holder in education who will be taking the lead as Virtual Head now sits on the Corporate Parenting Board. As part of the report to the Corporate Parenting Board in April 2023, on the educational attainment and progress of care experienced children and young people, an update will be provided on the implementation of the Swansea Virtual School.
- 3.6 Update on the Care Leaver Service – the Corporate Parenting Board received a presentation outlining the vision for the wider service, that the Care Leavers team is part of, and explained to the Board that the Care Leavers team had recently been brought back in-house, having previously been a commissioned service.
- 3.7 The main aims of the service include the provision of safe, stable and suitable living accommodation, to improve the wellbeing of individuals, to support young people to live close to home where possible, to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, training or employment and to ensure they are able to access other services and support in a timely way, such as health, housing and adult social services.
- 3.8 The local challenges highlighted were in relation to the Welsh Government initiative to eliminate profit from care (which is affecting the availability of suitable placements), the complexity of needs presented by young people, the lack of locally available supported accommodation, recruitment and staff retention, and the increase in emergency crisis situations which have resulted in some young people living in bed and breakfast for short periods of time.
- 3.9 A brief overview was given about the implementation of the national Basic Income Pilot for care leavers. Just over 10 young people have accepted the offer to take part in this Welsh Government pilot scheme. A report on progress, impact and challenges will be taken to a future Corporate Parenting Board.
- 3.10 Development of residential services – Child and Family Services plans to expand the in-house provision for children’s residential services was presented to the October meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board. This is a separate item on today’s Scrutiny and Performance Panel agenda.
- 3.11 The Corporate Parenting Board heard how the growth of local authority children’s homes will enable more children who need to be in the care of the local authority to

remain living in Swansea and also support them to keep in touch with people who are important to them.

- 3.12 Forward plan for the Corporate Parenting Board – the Board is next due to meet in January and April 2023. Items to be considered include an overview of the CAMHS service, an update on the Fostering Service, Basic Income Allowance for Care Leavers, update on the Adoption Service and the educational attainment and progress of care experienced children and young people. At each meeting the Board receives the views and feedback from children and young people.