

# MINUTES of Cross Party Group (CPG) for Children in Our Care

21 February 2024, 10:30am-11:30am, Video Conference Room Ty Hywel (Hybrid)

Sponsored by Jane Dodds MS

## Attendees and Apologies List

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## 1. Transformation Delivery Group and the National Practise Framework from the Deputy Minister for Social Services, Jonathan Griffiths and Alistair Davey

Opened by Julie Morgan MS, with introductions to Jonathan Griffiths and Alistair Davey (both online), who was very pleased to attend. Julie Morgan outlined their ongoing work and key priorities such as:

- Removal of profit from care;
- achieving the Social Work Bill before Easter Recess;
- the launch of the Corporate Parenting Charter (mentioned that no Health Boards have signed up to date);
- development of a national practise framework (engagement paper send out for consultation, aim to deliver first set of national standards for children's services in Wales, aim to be finished by the end of the year);
- 2.3 million per annum for adoption tailored support services (high feedback from parents);
- established a guardian group for a needs based approach;
- a ministerial oversight board that meets regularly (7 ministers, chaired by the FM)
- summit with care experienced young people on March 2<sup>nd</sup> – this is where they will report back to the young people to be held accountable.

Julie Morgan highlighted how care experienced children and young people are the responsibility of the government. Handed over the conversation to Jonathan Griffiths to explain the transformation services.

Jonathan Griffiths began by asking anyone that would like to get in touch to make direct engagement with the transformative journey to do so. Jonathan is the lead on transformation services delivery group and outlined it's progress:

- The delivery group has met 5 times, and the next meeting is on the 6<sup>th</sup> March. There are a wide range of projects moving forward, and two sub groups: the first one data ad metrics and the second on intervention, prevention and budget challenge. They are looking for best practise examples.
- Moved on to the National Practice Framework, which is supported by Anthony Douglas and social conferences around Wales, where the plan has been discussed nationally. The aim is to build up community voices and translate policy into practise, driving for consistency. This will sit alongside existing procedures. Encouraged individuals who want to engage to do so, reminded that the engagement closes on 8<sup>th</sup> March.
- The National Standards need to reflect multi-agency involvement, and are in the process of being developed with three local authorities – RCT, Wrexham and Ceredigion). This is moving forward.

Alistair Davey joined the conversation and stated that this is the biggest transformation of Children's Services in Wales in 40-50 years. Reiterated the large number of children in care (7000+), an increase in children in foster, kinship or special guardian care. Outlined that everything was starting to come together now, and the challenge was to build up provision. He also specified the need to make exemptions were necessary and the important of a transition period.

### Questions and discussion

Jane Dodds MS:

1. Poverty Awareness Practice – how can we knit across the whole of government to create a synergy on child poverty?
2. Corporate parenting – what happens if organisations chose not to sign up? Any chance it could be put under statutory footing? Concerned about Health Boards not signing up.

Julie Morgan MS responded: We are keen to get the corporate parenting strategy running as quickly as possible, we are doing our best to recruit, we have a toolkit and are monitoring closely. The Health Boards haven't had a lot of time to join. We will measure and see how it goes.

Alistair Davey commented: I'm involved in corporate parenting implementation group discussions. Also spoken to Health Boards who are keen and are asking what they can provide, eg, job opportunities. Like with Local Authorities there is a political process, and it takes time to sign up. It is voluntary, we all want them to sign up. Big debate around accountability – how will it be monitored? Need to ensure young people have confidence in what we are doing and, if not, look to put in statutory footing.

Jane Dodds MS replied: bringing the focus back to corporate parenting – what can we do as Senedd members, what about letters to the health boards within our regions?

Julie Morgan MS replied: Brilliant. Look to move it from the sector, and ask individuals, private, third parties, etc?

Action agreed for Jane to write letter, and to work with Sioned and Sarah.

Concerns were raised around the voluntary nature of the charter, and health boards not currently on board. Both Julie Morgan and Alistair Davey confirmed that health boards and authorities are interested, but that it takes time. Brendan Roberts queried if it would move to statutory footing if they didn't sign up; the Deputy Minister confirmed yes.

Sioned Williams MS asked: is there an evaluation framework, how is the evaluation going to happen? Appreciate the feedback and accountability back to the summit.

Julie Morgan MS confirmed they are reporting back through the summit and asked Alistair Davey for a time scale. He confirmed that there will be a review in 12 months; they are expecting all health boards and local authorities to sign up; they have their own website to report what they do. Confirmed the next meeting will firm up review periods. Jonathan Griffiths confirmed that they were meeting with Local Authorities.

Sharon Lovell, NYAS, suggested an idea of holding an event to showcase the Toolkit.

Helen Mary Jones, Voices from Care Cymru: This has to mean something – how will we know, who will we ask that these commitments are being met? Children should be asked during evaluation. There needs to be consequences if those that have signed up do not follow through – could this be through a kitemark? Organisations meet commitments to deliver on an annual basis, if they don't, kitemark removed. Need accountability in all structures.

Julie Morgan MS: we must be accountable, children must have confidence, needs to be meaningful. Agreed that Sharon's idea for an event was a good suggestion.

Sarah Thomas, Fostering Network: how big is the team from Welsh Government and who is the team that is resourcing this?

Alistair Davey – myself and Rachel Brown, please pass on any comments.

Jane Dodds commented on how exciting and positive this change will be and that it's such an important development.

Rachel Thomas, Children's Commissioner Office confirmed the office will be providing feedback to the consultation. Initial thoughts from the first six standards is that they don't look massively different or transformational, and discussed the difficulty of sharing information through a multi-agency approach. Also mentioned that they couldn't work out, in the Practice Framework, how people other than front line social services will be impacted.

Sharon Lovell, NYAS: we really welcome the NPF, and believe there are changes that will make a difference, especially the missing children; also encouraged by the 'must dos' in the standards section. We will give feedback. Questioned – who monitors them? Who reviews them? How do we know they are being adhered to and what happens if they don't?

Cecile Gwilym, NSPCC: We will give feedback. We welcome poverty awareness. Echo comments made earlier about multi-agency approaches. Who will be responsible for raising awareness and making sure they're embedded in practice? How is it being communicated to children so they know what to expect from professionals?

Brendan Roberts, VFCC echoed queries on responsibility and communication.

Tom Davies, Children's Society queried the commission framework service on return interviews, missing practice standard and asked if the commission framework will be shared.

Sarah Thomas asked about statutory advocates and how it fits in.

Jane Dodds MS summarised the themes of the discussion and reiterated the points on statutory advocacy.

Jonathan Griffiths relayed that it will be monitored and it is being driven through the Care Inspectorate as key partners, and holding them to account will be key. Also outlined the National Care and Support Office for Social Care that will be coming online and the Chief Social Care Officer.

Jane Dodds MS asked for more clarification on the National Office development.

Jonathan spoke on behalf of the Deputy Minister and outlined the development of a National Care and Support Office that:

- Is an office of Government, under Chief Social Care Officer;
- Accountable through the Welsh Government;
- Functions will be: commissioning framework and its delivery in social care, data, best practice, implementation of 10 year plan for a care and delivery service.

Julie Morgan MS echoed how important the development was and spoke of it being the first step towards moving to a National Care Service. The office will be operational from April 2024, and the Head of Office has been appointed. Reminded the group that it was part of the Co-Operation Agreement, an expert panel was set up, and one of the recommendations was a National Office.

Rachel Thomas stated this development was not widely known.

Brief discussion between Jane Dodds and Alistair Davey on statutory advocacy, as a key priority for the CPG.

Julie Morgan MS thanked everyone for attending, inviting co-productivity on the topic.

Jane Dodds MS thanked the Deputy Minister, Jonathan Griffiths and Alistair Davey for their time. Noted that Wales will be the second nation to eliminate profit from care.

## **Language Frameworks**

Proposed by Chair that the discussion around Language Frameworks, including the presentations, be moved forward to an additional meeting before June. Secretariat agreed to find a date and circulate for group approval.

## **AOB**

Sharon Lovell, NYAS: pleased to see an enquiry on children on the margins, and the ongoing consultation on that work.

Sarah Thomas, Fostering Network: concern around the foster carers allowance; it is important that this is considered in Eliminate and how this will implicate. If we don't get a national minimum allowance, there is a significant likelihood of fosters accessing employment rights. There is an ongoing court case in England on this – if they win, it will change the landscape and it will be impossible to meet.

Helen Mary Jones: wanted to raise that what they are saying about visiting advocacy is very different to what was being said before by government. Do we as a CPG want to write to the Minister to get some clarity on the situation? Get that put into the registration requirements?

Sharon Lovell agreed and said she would also raise it with the advocacy forum that she is on.

Members of the group were encouraged to response to the Consultation on the children Act 2004 Missing Education Database (Wales) Regulations.

Dates for the next meetings were discussed and approved.

### Actions

1. Draft letter written by Jane's team to Member's Local Authorities and Health Boards asking them to sign up to Corporate Parenting Charter. To share with offices of Sarah Murphy and Sioned Williams who will replicate.
2. Helen Mary Jones and Phoebe Jenkins to arrange another meeting before June on Language Frameworks
3. Sarah Thomas, from Fostering Network, to draft a letter on the National Minimum Allowance for fostering. Draft to be send to Phoebe Jenkins who will liaise with Jane Dodds to get it sent to the relevant ministers as soon as possible.
4. Helen Mary to write a draft on visiting advocacy with Sharon Lovells input.

## Attendees and Apologies List

Attendees		Venue: Video Conference Room, Ty Hywel (Hybrid)
Name	Organisation	Email
Jane Dodds MS	MS	<a href="mailto:Jane.Dodds@Senedd.Wales">Jane.Dodds@Senedd.Wales</a>
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