

**Meeting of the Cross Party Group for**

**Looked After Children**

**Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

**12.30–1.30**

**AMs present:**

David Melding AM —Chairperson

Julie Morgan AM

Lee Waters AM

Mark Isherwood AM

**In attendance:**

Paula Foley - AMSS for Jenny Rathbone AM

Tom Davies – AMSS for Julie Morgan

Sian Thomas - Senior Researcher NAW, Observer

Deborah Jones - CEO, Voices From Care

Rhian Williams - PA / Administrative Secretary, Voices From Care – (minute taker)

Carol Floris – Advice and Support Coordinator, Voices From Care

Christopher Dunn – Programmes Manager, Voices From Care

Jennifer Coleman – Member, Voices From Care

Dr. Louise Roberts – Research Associate, CASCADE, Cardiff University

Reverend Philip Manghan - Catholic Education Service's Adviser (CSE) for Wales

Rachel Thomas – Children’s Commissioner for Wales Office

Tom Davies – The Children’s Society

Menna Thomas – Barnardo’s Cymru

Sean O’Neil – Children in Wales

Dr. Emily Warren, - Director, The Fostering Network Wales

Maria Boffey – The Fostering Network Wales

Charlotte Wooders – The Fostering Network Wales

**Apologies received from:**

Dan Willis – CEO, Stepping Stones Group

Dafydd Elis Thomas AM

Neil Hamilton AM

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR**

DM opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to meeting; extending a special welcome to those who were new. Roundtable introductions took place and DM gave a brief overview of the group for those new members present.

**MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2016 were noted and approved.

**MATTERS ARISING**

DJ requested and it was agreed the progress report on a group of young people that Voices From Care are currently working with in Carmarthenshire be deferred.

DM confirmed that that Estyn have produced a report “Raising the Attainment, Achievement and Aspiration of Children who are Looked After”. The report will form part of the evidence at the Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group and DM urged members to view the report.

**CROSS PARTY GROUP ON LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN 2016 WORK PLAN**

LW informed that he was a member of the Public Accounts Committee; a Committee led inquiry into LAC services would commence in 2017. The initial focus would be on general issues relating to effectiveness and efficiency. However, PAC is likely also to conduct more specific work into certain LAC services.

DJ raised the question of the possibly linking in young people into the inquiry. LW felt it would be useful and for different organisations to contact the clerks of the Committee in the first instance. DM felt this would be a great opportunity, especially if young people have direct participation and the work the Committee does really do look at effectiveness and delivers important recommendations.

From The Fostering Network Wales point of view, EW felt this work was very timely indeed and very welcome.

**ACTION: LEE WATERS AM TO FORWARD FURTHER INFORMATION**

DM stated he was keen to report on the Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group who had met in September/October. The group chaired by DM at the request of the Minister, advises on how best the WG deliver a national approach for looked after children and those on the edge of care.

A short discussion took place around the work plan for 2016. DM would like to use some of the information that comes from the Public Accounts Committee, but the key test would be how the CPG on LAC group influence the NAW. SON felt that there would be a series of outcomes from the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on Advocacy, EW raised the question how the When I am Ready Scheme is working in practice, RT felt a current piece of the CCFW's office are undertaking on the views on care leavers on the provision of support packages links in with the work plan and TD informed the Children's Society were looking at care leavers being exempt from paying Council Tax. DM felt it was a large agenda and quite a lot to squeeze into one session.

**PRESENTATION: EARLY PARENTHOOD FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN AND LEAVING CARE IN WALES**

Dr. Louise Roberts introduced herself and J. Coleman, an active member of Voices From Care. The presentation highlighted the three key themes of care experienced parents – Stigma, Discrimination and Support. CF distributed handouts of the Statement of Concern and briefly stating that she was keen to keep the momentum going on the following issues

- The Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Group – Phase 2 Work Programme should include a further work strand on developing support and guidance for care experienced young parents
- The revised and extended guidance on corporate parenting outlined in the above work programme should include a commitment to care experienced young parents and their children.
- The need for parent and child foster placements should run through Phase 2 work of the National Fostering Framework.
- The National Approach to Statutory Advocacy should include advocacy provision for care experienced young parents.
- The Welsh Government should develop a mechanism by which local authorities are required to report on data recording how many care leavers become parents and the outcomes for these parents and their children.
- The Welsh Government should support the setting up of a good practice sharing forum.

DM thanked LR, CF and JC for a crisp and effective presentation, with a list of poignant points of which was so powerfully delivered. DM added that this was the reason why the Cross Party Groups exist; so politicians can understand. JM agreed that the presentation was excellent and was very powerful.

**ACTION: RW TO CIRCULATE THE PRESENTATION ELECTRONICALLY**

MI raised the question of when were children old enough to ask questions. CF stated that advocacy providers are able to work with children and Voices From Care receive calls relating to advocacy from both children and parents. CF added that these questions needed to be looked at in terms of advocacy as there is a conflict between leaving care workers and social services as leaving care workers work for the same local authority.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business raised.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

RW to liaise with S. Sharpe and forward details of the next meeting to members.

**ACTION: RW TO LIAISE WITH S. SHARPE**

DM thanked everyone for attending and there being no further business the meeting closed.