

**Meeting of the Cross Party Group for**

**Looked After Children**

**Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

**12.15–1.30**

**AMs present:**

David Melding AM – Chairperson (DM)

**In attendance:**

Anna Collins – Consultant Social Worker – Bridgend (AC)

Bethan T James – Carmarthenshire County Council (BTJ)

Deborah Jones – Voices From Care Cymru (DJ)

Jackie Murphy – Tros Gynnal Plant (JM)

Sean O’Neil – Children in Wales (SON)

Jack Sellers – David Melding AM’s Office

Bill Thomas – Joyce Watson AM’s Office (BT)

Ceri Williams – Social Care Wales

Charlotte Wooders – The Fostering Network Wales

Tim Crahart – Business Support Manager, Voices From Care Cymru – (minute taker) (TC)

**Apologies received from:**

Bethan Beynon – Stepping Stones

Mary Clune – Social Worker

Sharon Lovell – NYAS Cymru

Reverend Philip Manghan - Catholic Education Service

Emma Sullivan – Children in Wales

Lee Waters AM

Dan Willis – Stepping Stones

**1. Welcome and introduction from the Chair**

DM opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. All present then introduced themselves, as there were several new attendees.

**2. Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> November June 2017 reviewed for accuracy. One correction was made as Anna Collins had attended but was not recorded as being in attendance. The rest of the minutes were confirmed as accurate.

### **3. Matters Arising**

Sharon Lovell was asked to present at this meeting but was unable to attend so JM is presenting on behalf of Tros Gynnal Plant and NYAS Cymru.

DJ sent Lee Waters a paper on the private residential sector.

DJ was asked to see if someone from Northern Ireland or Carmarthenshire could present to the CPG on educational attainment. BTJ attended the meeting from Carmarthenshire.

**Outstanding Action – LW to write to the new minister to ask for an update on the St David’s Fund.**

**Outstanding Action – MT to circulate the Care & Adolescence paper to the group**

**Outstanding Action – To provide LW with feedback on the MAG**

**Outstanding Action – LW to check whether there is a CAMHS representative on the MAG.**

### **4. Public Accounts Committee**

DM briefed the group on the progress of the PAC. He explained it is a long term review of Looked After Children (LAC) services focussing on value for money. Part one of the inquiry is concluding and a number of the organisations in the room had been involved in the process already.

Part two will commence after 30<sup>th</sup> April 2018 and will concentrate on corporate parenting. Following that, the inquiry will look at the Pupil Deprivation/Development Grant in part three and placement stability in part four.

### **5. Ministerial Advisory Group**

DM started by saying that the MAG will be meeting on Friday to discuss corporate parenting.

He went on to say that, a corporate parenting event had been organised by Voices from Care Cymru (VFCC) and Who Cares? Scotland. The event evidenced that there is a lot of good practice emerging. In Scotland they recognise the First Minister as the chief corporate parent. Scotland also has legislation in place.

In Wales there is the possibility of introducing a Charter Mark and statutory guidance. The intention is to ensure that workers understand that care experienced children and young people are everyone's responsibility. The guidance should cover:

- Professional practice
- Standards
- Assessment of risk
- Edge of care services

The principle being that, improving edge of care services will reduce the number of placements.

DJ went on to say that, the focus on corporate parenting is a work in progress and there needs to be a widening of what it means i.e. to include wider statutory services such as the Fire Service, Police, Health.

The event had also touched on the question 'what does love in the care system look like?' and how does that form part of a healthy care package?

DJ talked about the 5 Nations: 1 Voice (5N1V) collaboration between VFCC and its sister organisations throughout the UK and the Republic of Ireland, which includes Who Cares? Scotland. The purpose of 5N1V is to share good practice and to bring the individual countries up to the same level of service. The 5N1V CEOs recently met with the Children's Commissioners from around the UK and the Children's Minister for England is aware of the collaboration.

AC asked whether each local authority has a LAC Councillor. DM stated that there is, a discussion then took place regarding what support councillors are given, and the question was asked whether there should be an annual corporate parenting event for politicians.

SON sits on the MAG Operations Group. The group had met in North Wales. He said it is an ambitious programme and a number of activities have been delivered already. Some bespoke work had been done around developing a better understanding of edge of care. The group was also looking at identifying care and support needs and different routes away from care. A number of outputs had been developed but there was a need to look at outcomes. It had been identified that there were issues regarding getting information from the Welsh Government out to third sector organisations.

DM said the group was now moving on to decision making. SON felt there was a need to review/evaluate MAG. DJ added that time needs to be given to concentrate on issues/workstreams, reflecting on what's out there and what's working.

**Action – Conduct an evaluation of the Ministerial Advisory Group (DM)**

## **6. Presentation and Q and A Session on the national approach to statutory advocacy in Wales**

JM delivered the presentation on behalf of Tros Gynnal Plant and NYAS Cymru.

DM said that there has been real progress regarding the national approach to statutory advocacy and that data will be helpful for the Assembly's work and the Public Accounts Committee. Information will be key.

JM said that the main issues they were coming across were contact, change of Social Worker, leaving care – where will I be/what's happening to me, and safeguarding.

### **Action – Circulate the statutory advocacy presentation to elected members (DM)**

DJ said that advocacy is still not as independent as it could be. Young people don't trust statutory advocacy. JM added that a task and finish group had been a suggestion from MAG. DJ said that there are opportunities to utilise peer advocacy and community advocacy. The next stage could be to look into voluntary advocacy.

JM raised the issue of private children's homes and that it is good practice for a trusted adult to visit weekly.

SON added that many children and young people are not aware of advocacy and that there should be a robust evaluation of NASA (National Approach to Statutory Advocacy). He also stated that the funding for the active offer is only short term.

BT asked if there were any gaps in mid and west Wales. JM answered no and that numbers were doing well. She added that there is a stable population of Social Workers in the area. She also said that advocacy can be very helpful regarding disabilities and education.

AC asked about the active offer and JM replied that they are developing on line training for Social Workers.

JM explained that they are reviewing advocacy in health, however, the regional footprints don't match the healthboard footprints.

DP concluded the conversation by stating that statutory advocacy is not embedded in the consciousness of corporate parents. Education and health don't seem to be at the table regarding advocacy and MAG can help to address this.

### **Action – Circulate the statutory advocacy presentation to the CPG (TC)**

## **7. Presentation on educational attainment in Carmarthenshire**

BTJ started by introducing herself and explained that she is the Service Manager for Corporate Parenting and Child Welfare in Carmarthenshire County Council. She has been in the corporate parenting role for ten years. In terms of educational attainment, she has monitored and audited schools not meeting the needs of young people.

BTJ said that in Carmarthenshire they introduced a relational – whole school model where all staff were trained in the approach. The authority has a Corporate Parenting Strategy and a Corporate Parent Action Plan. They take the approach that the Corporate Parent role covers schools, housing, etc and ask the questions what are you prepared to provide young people with? Safety, aspiration, catch up work.

DJ pointed out that the Pupil Deprivation/Development Grant is going back to schools, which is disappointing. BTJ agreed stating that the relational model is not expensive and is cost effective as it becomes self-sustaining once a whole team has been trained.

JM noted how that the relational model is similar to the restorative approach.

BTJ said that it is a relational attachment model which is strength based. She explained that we need to help children feel safe as most perceived negative behaviour is related to fear. They look at emotion coaching and emotional resilience. BTJ pointed out that Scotland is exploring what love looks like in the care system while in Carmarthenshire they have been looking at relationships.

JM asked about the impact upon attendance and BTJ said it has increased since they introduced the approach. They also have low numbers of missing children and those at risk of child sexual exploitation. They are tracking long term outcomes for young people up to the age of 25.

As DM had to leave the meeting before the end of the presentation, DJ took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting. DJ felt that the good practice from the presentation should be shared with DM. She also felt it would be worthwhile to highlight the way Carmarthenshire had utilised the Pupil Deprivation/Development Grant.

**Action – Share good practice from BTJ’s presentation with DM (TC)**

**Action – Share how Carmarthenshire had utilised the Pupil Deprivation/Development Grant (TC)**

BTJ added that it was a shame that authorities didn’t have the opportunity to network, share good practice or attend national events. She felt that shared learning would be valuable.

**Action – Invite BTJ to present to MAG (DM)**

DJ proposed that DM writes to the Education Minister regarding the good practice in Carmarthenshire.

**Action – Request that DM writes to Kirsty Williams (Cabinet Secretary for Education) regarding the good practice in Carmarthenshire.**

**8. Any other business**

There was no other business.

**9. Date of next meeting**

TBC