

Meeting of the Cross Party Group for Looked After Children

Tuesday 13th November 2018

12.30–1.30

AMs present:

David Melding AM – Chairperson (DM)

In attendance:

Joyce Watson AM

Lee Dutton – St Giles

Councillor Graham Hinchey – Cardiff Council

Bethan T James – Carmarthenshire County Council (BTJ)

Evan Jones – St Giles

Deborah Jones – CEO, Voices From Care Cymru (DJ)

Heidi Keiser – NSPCC

Councillor Ash Lister – Cardiff Council

Ben Madler – Intern for David Melding

Reverend Philip Manghan - Catholic Education Service

Sean O’Neil – Children in Wales (SON)

Elaine Speyer – NSPCC

Rachel Thomas – Policy Adviser, Children’s Commissioner for Wales

Claire Tyler – National Assembly for Wales

Iwan Williams – Social Care Wales

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

Apologies received from:

Lee Waters AM

Maria Boffey – Head of Operations, The Fostering Network Wales

Sharon Lovell – NYAS Cymru

Llinos Madeley – Clerk, Assembly Policy & Legislative Committee Service

Dr Louise Roberts – Research Associate, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University

Catriona Williams – Chief Executive, Children in Wales

Dan Willis – Stepping Stones

Charlotte Wooders – Programme Manager, The Fostering Network Wales

1. Welcome and introduction from the Chair

DM welcomed the group and thanked Evan and Lee from St Giles Trust for attending to deliver their presentation.

Apologies were received and Graham Hinchley was welcomed as a new member of the group.

2. Minutes

Minutes of the last meeting were agreed by those present.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Public Accounts Committee

DM reported back on the progress of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). He stated that a report is due from the PAC next week. DM would welcome feedback on the report. He also added that the membership of the PAC has changed and Lee Waters AM is no longer involved.

5. Ministerial Advisory Group

DM explained that he has chaired the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) for three years and the group is now on its second work plan. DJ is one of forty representatives that sits on the group.

Huw Irranca-Davies would be making an oral statement that afternoon on 'Improving Outcomes for Children: Reducing the Need for Children to Enter Care, and the Work of the Ministerial Advisory Group'.

It was agreed that Kinship care is an important issue. Care experienced children and young people also need to be understood in the context of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

There also needs to be a focus on reducing the numbers of children in care. There are nearly 6,000 children in care whereas twenty years ago there were barely 3,000. When the Assembly was formed there were 4,000 children and young people in care.

There is now support for young people who have left care until the age of 25. Homelessness, housing and education are all vital issues.

6. Teachers Who Care presentation by Voices From Care Cymru

DJ introduced a research report which VFCC and Become (England) have issued called 'Teachers Who Care'.

The research can be found on the VFCC website (<http://vfcc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Teachers-Who-Care.pdf>). Kirsty Williams AM has accepted

the findings. It is acknowledged that there are concerns for hard to reach young people.

GH said that Cardiff could do more to address this with governing bodies. Newly qualified teachers receive very little training on LAC and this is reflected in governing bodies.

DJ said that there is good practice in Carmarthenshire with attachment schools.

GH said that there is good practice within Cardiff in specialised schools such as St Teilo's where they have 46-47 care experienced children. The Deputy Head attended the Corporate Parenting event.

AL said only a third of councillors take up the Corporate Parenting training.

SL felt that funding for care experienced pupils was less well targeted.

DJ said that the Minister would work through the report. Better models should be promoted and senior management teams should take responsibility for care experienced pupils within their school. It would be good to have one of the governors take a lead.

7. County Lines presentation by St Giles Trust

Evan from St Giles Trust (SGT) delivered a presentation on County Lines and then Lee gave an update on the service that is running in Gwent.

EJ stated that some young people are being coached to get into care so that they can have access to more available/vulnerable young people. Gangs have also started to target young people that would be classed as Geeks because they would go under the radar. Care experienced young people are definitely vulnerable.

BTJ said she was aware of children who had disengaged with services; they had not signed on to benefits so what were they living on? There was definitely an attraction to selling drugs or prostitution. She quoted a young person who said, 'I'll get £57 a week with you or I can get that in a couple of hours'. Young people need viable options. Collaboration work is needed.

EJ said that when you deconstruct the earnings of the young people, they're actually on a lousy deal with County Lines.

RT asked about the issue of exclusion. Are the young people all officially excluded?

EJ replied that it was a mixed bag and some were off rolling or home schooled.

LD added that some young people were getting excluded to work on County Lines.

SoN said that we need to look at preventing exclusions. He then asked if there was any risk towards staff working with young people in County lines.

EJ answered that staff are generally seen as off limits but there are risks.

BTJ said that there needs to be a school education programme to prevent grooming by gangs.

PM asked if we could have an update on County Lines in a year.

8. Any other business

There was no other business.

9. Date of next meeting.

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