

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2016-17**

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**14<sup>th</sup> JULY 2016**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF  
LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC  
SERVICES**

**Agenda Item No. 3**

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE  
CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD  
FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015/16**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee of the first Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board for the Municipal Year 2015/16.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 On the 19<sup>th</sup> April 2016, Cabinet was presented with the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board for the Municipal Year 2015/16 along with the accompanying report of the Cabinet Business Officer, which sets out the work of the Board for the last municipal year.
- 3.2 The Annual report of the Corporate Parenting Board 2015/16 is attached as to provide the Committee with an understanding of the work which has been undertaken to date and also identifies those areas of work which the Board will consider in the future. The report is provided for information purposes and as such there are no proposed recommendations.

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## AGENDA ITEM 6

### RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

#### CABINET

19<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2016

#### CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16.

#### REPORT OF THE SECRETARY TO THE CABINET IN DISCUSSION WITH COUNCILLOR GERAINT HOPKINS

**AUTHOR(s): Emma Wilkins, Cabinet Business Officer**  
**Telephone 01443 424062**

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Cabinet with the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board for the Municipal Year 2015/16.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the work of the Board and its future work priorities as outlined in its Annual report, which is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

#### 3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Under the Leaders Scheme of Delegation (the 3A) the Corporate Parenting Board, comprising of a cross party membership was formed to take the lead in ensuring that the Council fulfils its responsibilities as corporate parent's to children who are looked after and formulate Council policy in respect of children who are looked after and children in need.

- 3.2 As part of the Board's Terms of reference, the Board must report its work to the Cabinet and it has been agreed that this will take the form of an Annual Report.

#### 4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 This is the first Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board, which provides a summary of the role and work of the Board undertaken this Municipal Year. The report is attached as Appendix 1.



## **5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

## **6 CONSULTATION**

The Chairman of the Board presented the report to the Corporate Parenting Board on the 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2016 and will forward the report for information to the CSSIW.

## **7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

## **8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

The Annual Report has been developed in line with the requirements of the Leaders Scheme of Delegation (3A).

## **9 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP**

- Keeping All Children & Young People Safe & Improving the life chances of vulnerable children.

## **10 CONCLUSION**

The Corporate Parenting Board Annual report outlines the work of the Board to date this Municipal Year and features the priority areas the Board will consider in the future ensuring that the Council provides continuous improvement to the services that it delivers for its children and young people within the Looked After System.

### **Other Information**

Scrutiny Committee - *Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee*

Background Papers - *None*

Contact Officer - *Emma Wilkins, Cabinet Business Officer.*



# **Rhondda Cynon Taf**

## **Corporate Parenting Board**

### **Annual Report 2015/16**



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## Foreword



It is with great pleasure that I present the first Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board, which provides a summary of the role and work of the Board undertaken this Municipal Year. This work is as always underlined by the Board's focus and priority of providing continuous improvement to the services that we deliver for our children and young people within the Looked After System, ensuring that we strive as much as possible to maintain children safely in their own homes, and where it is absolutely necessary for them to come under our corporate care to help them achieve the best they can in their education and development.

On behalf of the Council, the Board is the principal place within the Council where Elected Members, Officers and representatives of children come together as critical friends, to question and to analyse, to support and inform one another as we strive to achieve the best we can for some of the most vulnerable children in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Although in most cases parents and families will take the leading role in caring for their children, it is sometimes the case that the Authority must also take some measure of the collective responsibility for a parent.

As a Local Authority, Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) has a legal and moral duty to those children who cannot remain within their families, and as Elected Members and officers of the Authority we are therefore entrusted as Corporate Parents to these young individuals.

The children who have entered the 'Looked After' system have done so for many different reasons, but ultimately because it was felt that this was the safest and best option for the child. RCT, will strive to ensure that children and young people are kept with their parents and families if it is safe to so and if it is in the best interest of the child, however, the safety of the child is paramount and sometimes leads to the decision being taken to take the Child into care

Many of the Children and Young people who enter the 'Looked After' system are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people in our Community and often the outcomes for these individuals are much lower than other children within the County Borough. This was recognised by our dedicated scrutiny working groups who undertook a review into the educational achievements and outcome of Children who are Looked After within the County Borough and thanks to scrutiny I, along with the Vice Chair of the Board have produced a robust Action plan to ensure that the educational outcomes for children and young people within the system does not suffer simply because these young people are within the Looked After System.

Throughout the Year we as a Board and as Elected Members have been provided with detailed information and data on the role of Children Services and our Children who are Looked After, which assists us in determining areas that need to be taken forward and recommending priority areas for consideration. Although the Board welcome the data, we were reminded at one meeting, by a young care leaver that we should not focus on data alone, but that we should focus on the actual young people within the service, the person behind the figures. We need to ensure that our Children who are Looked After and young people are not treated as just a number, but as a young person who deserves to be treated with the same care and respect as their peers. We need to continually ensure that we see the stories behind the figures.

I would like to thank all Members of the Board, and of course my Vice Chair, Cllr Hanagan for the valuable contributions made over the Municipal Year and of course the support continuously provided to us as a Board by the officers. Their input both inside the Committee room setting and when we conduct our frontline visits is crucial to helping us as a Board carry out work and make the necessary recommendations for action. I must also acknowledge the commitment given to the Board by NYAS (our advocacy support service provider), with the attendance of Ms Emma Phipps-Magill at our meetings, not only reporting matters for our attention but providing her own insight and experience into the areas considered by the Board, and often sharing forms of best practice which is greatly appreciated. It was with pleasure that we welcomed Mr D Marshall to a recent meeting of the Board, who has taken forward the position of Areas manager for RCT with CSSIW and we look forward to working closely with him in the future. Of course, our biggest thanks must go to those young people within the Care system and those young care leavers who have given up their time to attend some of our meetings during this Municipal Year through the Blue Print Forum. They deserve the real credit, for helping to give us a better understanding of the life of young people within the Looked After system, and to help us and officers learn where we can improve services for the benefit of our young children.

Aspirationally, we look forward to a day when no young person has to be taken into care, and when all children are treated with the love, care, support that all deserve, but until that day, we as Elected Members and as a Board will continue to work hard as Corporate Parents to



ensure that the Children and young people in Rhondda Cynon Taff are given the best care, support and nurture that we can.

**Cllr G Hopkins, Chair of Corporate Parenting Board**

**Cabinet Member – Children’s Social Services, Equalities & the Welsh Language.**

## ABOUT THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

The concept of Corporate Parenting was introduced in 1998 by the then Secretary of State for Health, Frank Dobson, who outlined the duties of members towards Children who are Looked After:

*"For children who are looked after, your council has a legal and moral duty to try to provide the kind of loyal support that any good parents would give to their children...you should do your utmost to make sure that those children in public care get a good start in life..."*

When a child becomes looked after, he or she enters a system in which their care and upbringing is managed by professionals and paid carers. This has two major consequences for the child. Firstly, in addition to the problems of needing to re-form attachments, he/she moves into a world of paid, and sometimes changing, carers, where life is managed through formal and legal processes. Secondly, in addition to learning to cope with this world, they have lost the continuity of parental management of their access to services and opportunities

The Corporate Parenting responsibility is shared by the Council as a whole. All members, not just those with an interest in Children's Services, are 'Corporate Parents'.

For 'Corporate Parenting' to replicate the quality of care afforded by a 'good parent', each agency and professional involved needs to consider how they can be proactive, within their own remit, on behalf of Children who are Looked After, and for all agencies to strive for ever stronger collaborative working so that the whole of the 'corporate parent' can be greater than the sum of its parts.

Then with partners In 2005 Welsh Government published *'If this were my child ...' A Councillor's guide to being a good corporate parent.*

Subsequently in 2008 the then Deputy Minister Gwenda Thomas wrote to all Councillor's reminding them of their responsibilities

"When you became an Elected Member you also become responsible for ensuring that the council acts as a good corporate parent to the children in its care. The role of the corporate parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children. The local authority has a legal and moral duty to provide such loyal support to the children it is responsible for looking after.....

Elected Members should be able to ask and receive satisfactory answers to the following sort of questions:

- Are children safe?
- Have they got good homes in a secure and caring environment?
- Are they placed within the local authority area, close to their homes and communities, if not, why not?
- Do they get decent schooling?

- Are they being drawn out of antisocial behaviour?
- Are they healthy?
- Are they thriving and developing socially and emotionally as they should?
- Are we giving them enough help to cope with the problems they have in growing up?
- How well do we prepare them for their transition to adulthood?
- Are we ambitious enough for them?
- Do we help them achieve to the maximum of their ability?
- Do we have high aspirations for them and show pride in their achievements?
- Can we help them cope with their failures?
- Can we cope with the problems they give us?

### **Rhondda Cynon Taf's Corporate Parenting Board.**

The Corporate Parenting Board is a cross party Board comprising of 7 Members as listed below and has been in existence since 2007

- County Borough Councillors: G. Hopkins (Chair), E Hanagan (Vice Chair), C Leyshon, M Davies, M. Norris, M Weaver and L Walker.
- NYAAS (National Youth Advocacy Service) is also invited to attend the meetings. This enables both NYAS and Children Services to discuss issues that affect service delivery in the community on a strategic level and to work in partnership to provide improved and better outcomes.

#### **Terms of Reference:**

- To take the lead in ensuring that the Council fulfils its responsibilities as corporate parent to Children who are Looked After and formulate Council policy in respect of Children who are Looked After and children in need.
- To ensure that all Groups and divisions within the Council work together in order to promote best outcomes for Children who are Looked After and children in need.
- To promote effective relationships with key partner agencies in the best interests of Children who are Looked After and children in need.
- To monitor the implementation of the Action Plan arising from the Best Value Review of Services to Children who are Looked After, in addition to monitoring outcomes for Children who are Looked After and children in need.
- To consider the outcomes and promote positive learning practices following consideration of Child Practice Reviews
- In accordance with HMIP to routinely review the offending rates of Children who are Looked After by gender to ensure that the Corporate Parenting Board understand patterns of offending by girls and are able

to take actions to address where necessary.

- To consider the impact of relevant other systems/agencies (e.g. health, courts, schools) and see how these could be improved.
- To seek the views of Children who are Looked After - the advocacy service will be asked to facilitate.
- To invite representatives from other agencies to attend as appropriate.
- To report directly to Cabinet on a regular basis (frequency to be agreed).

**The officers who support the Corporate Parenting Board are:-**

- Group Director, Community & Children's Services
- Director, Legal & Democratic Services
- Service Director, Children's Services
- Acting Service Director, Access, Engagement & Inclusion
- Head of Safeguarding and Support
- Complaints & QA Manager
- Cabinet Business Officer
- Other officers depending on the meeting business.

**CHILDREN WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER WITHIN RCT.**

Rhondda Cynon Taf has the highest number of Children who are Looked After placements in Wales and in 2013/14 there were 650<sup>11</sup> in care. However, taking account of population size, i.e. based on the rate per 10,000, Rhondda Cynon Taf has the fifth highest level of Children who are Looked After placements, with Neath Port Talbot, Torfaen, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil Councils having higher rates of Children who are Looked After.

Research has established that there are a number of key factors which influence Children who are Looked After numbers, such as the demographic and socio-economic profile of an area. Areas of deprivation tend to have higher Children who are Looked After numbers as do areas which have a large number of single parent households. It is a fact that Rhondda Cynon Taf has some of the most deprived communities in Wales, which links to these research results and it is also established that Financial restraint and welfare reform can also give rise to increasing need and a reduction in resources.

**PUBLISHED PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND WALES PROGRAMME FOR IMPROVEMENT DATA**

- The number of Children and Young People in the Looked After System at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 is 603 which represents a decrease of 8 places from the number reported to cabinet at the 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2015 when there were 611 Children & Young People in the Looked After system. Despite the reduction in numbers, overall the number of Children in the Looked After system remains comparatively high and the service continues to experience demand with pressures continuing due to the age and needs of the young people requiring alternative accommodation and /or residential care. It is important to stress that the service will try to ensure that children can remain safely within their families when it is in the Child's best interest to do so. The safety of the child is of paramount importance.

Placement Type	No.s at 30/09/15	No. New to LA system	No. Leaving LA system	No. Moves between providers		Nos. At 31/12/15	Inc / Dec
In-house foster carers	290	33	-23	20	-22	298	8
Independent sector providers	166	11	-4	10	-14	169	3
In-house residential care	12	1	-1	4	-4	12	0
Independent sector residential care	44	1	-1	7	-10	41	-3
Adoption	34	0	-12	4	0	26	-8
With Family	59	2	-12	7	-3	53	-6
Other forms of	6	3	-6	4	-3	4	-2

<sup>11</sup> Statswales – First Release, 240914, Adoptions, outcomes and placements for children looked after by local authorities in Wales 2013-14

<b>accommodation</b>							
<b>Total</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>-59</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>-56</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>-8</b>

**(LAC placements as at 31.12.15)**

- The average weekly cost of external residential placements has reduced slightly during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the 2015-16 Financial year, from £2848 at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015 to £2821 at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015
- The number of young people aged 16+ entering the care system has remained lower than in previous years. Whilst a positive position, this area remains a risk due to limited housing options for this age group;
- The actual number of new adoptive parents approved during this financial year is 8, which is significantly lower than the annual target of 27 for the year, based on historical averages. The continued low recruitment levels may limit the capacity of the service in creating the necessary number of long term, stable and cost effective placements for children and young people. Work is underway with the regional Adoption Service to determine what actions can be put in place to support improved performance in this area.
- The total number of adoptive placements made between April 2015 and December 2015 was 16 against a target of 40 for the year. As noted above for 'new adoptive parents' the lower level of placements made compared to historical averages may also limit the capacity of the service to create the necessary number of long term, stable and cost effective placements and will be incorporated within the work underway with the regional Adoption Service.
- The recruitment of in-house foster carers continues to prove challenging with no carers recruited during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, a trend that is also being seen nationally. Within this overall position, the demand for such placements is falling due to increased use of Special Guardianship Orders and as such the focus in terms of recruitment of in-house carers has shifted away from increasing the number of carers and more towards attracting carers who are willing to accept more difficult to place older children (aged 10+).
- 95.93% of reviews of Children who are Looked After, Children on the Child Protection register and Children in Need carried out in line with statutory timescales.

**MEMBERS ENGAGEMENT.**

Throughout the Year the Corporate Parenting Board is provided with detailed information and data on the role of Children Services and Children who are Looked After, which assists the Board in determining areas that need to be taken forward and allows them to recommend areas for consideration by the Group Director and / or Cabinet.

Members were pleased to note the decrease in numbers of Children within the Looked After System over the Municipal Year and the positive trends in performance being displayed. Members have been keen to support the 'Foster Care' recruitment drives taken forward by the

Council, as not only do they provide a sustainable family life within the local community, but also a supportive upbringing, allowing the young person to access the same personal, social and educational opportunities as everyone else. It is a concern to see stagnation with the recruitment of in-house carers , although it is recognised that this is not unique to RCT alone, but a national trend. It is however positive to see that the need for in-house foster carers is decreasing due to the Council's use of Special Guardianship Orders, which again is assisting in reducing overall Looked after numbers. Members of the Board are keen to see this reduction continue.

Data has been presented to the Board on young people's contact with social workers or 'qualified person' and the statutory timescales needed for such contact. Due to the different way that RCT Council are working in this area, a detailed section specifically on this issue is highlighted further in the Board's report.

Members have been keen to receive the detailed information presented to them as a Board but they have been mindful of the need to balance their meetings by not looking at the data in isolation but also looking at the stories behind the data too, recognising the need to see the person behind the numbers.



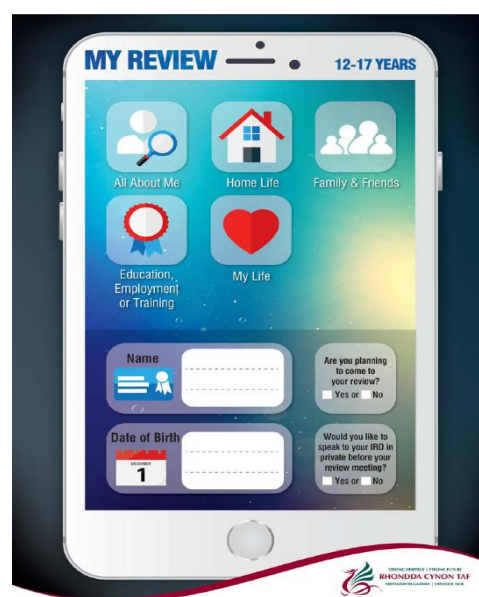
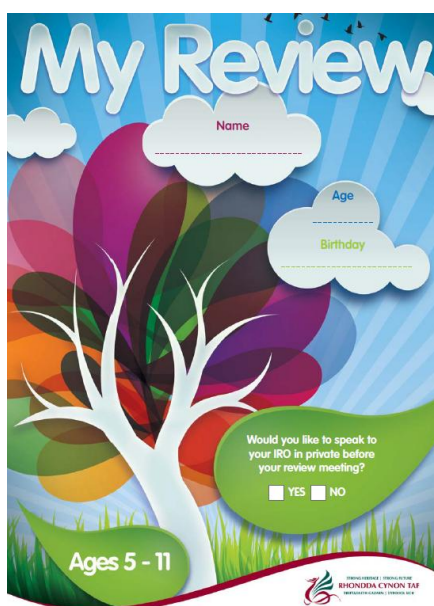
## CHILDREN WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER WEBSITE

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board welcomed the graduate officer review into improving engagement & participatory opportunities for young people within the review process. The review looked to enable children and young people who are looked after and accommodated by RCT Council to access a range of resources that allows them to actively participate in their review process and make more informed decisions regarding their future care.

One of the outcomes of the review was the development of a web based resource for Children who are Looked After. With the advances in technology and social media Members were keen to see the development of a child friendly web based resource, which would allow Children who are Looked After the opportunity to access information on the review system, and other services available to them.

The website was developed following a consultation with young people as to what they wanted and needed and with the assistance of a group of young people officers developed an engaging website. Members of the Corporate Parenting Board also provided feedback on the WebPages and its content to assist officers and pushed that the design of the website be given priority by the Councils ICT service. Most significant within the review is the development of age appropriate review consultation documents, which will be available on the website and in hard copy format, for young people to access. Members of the Board are keen to see further improvements made to the website to ensure that it fulfils the needs of the young people, although the Board appreciate that the creation of a website alone, is a big step forward in this area.

Members are keen to attend the launch of the website, which will be launched at the Achievement Awards for Children who are Looked After and look forward to receiving updates on the webpages usage and the positive engagement with young people.





## **VOICES FROM CARE – BLUE PRINT FORUM.**

Over the past two years the Board has received presentations from Children in care, as well as recent care leavers, which has greatly enhanced our understanding their needs. Again this year it was with great pleasure that the Board received Mr Chris Dunn (Development Co-ordinator) and a young person representative from the BluePrint Forum to one of the meetings of the Board, to discuss the work of the Blue Print Forum. The Blue Print forum's primary focus is to provide looked after young people and care leavers in RCT the opportunities to have their voice heard and to enable their life experiences to contribute at a strategic, policy and legislative level both locally and nationally. Having such feedback on the services provided by the Council for Children who are Looked After and care leavers to the Board is fundamental in helping the Board ensure that the provisions and support provided by the Council are adding benefit to the people that require them, and to ensure that the young people within the service are treated as equal to those young people outside of the service.

It was pleasing to hear of the positive experiences and to receive constructive criticism on provisions that the Council could look to further develop for the benefit of the young people involved. Following positive discussions surrounding the benefits of the DVD that the Council had produced, highlighting life in a Council Children's Home from the perspective of a young person, officers agreed to review the DVD to see if it needed to be updated. Board members were also advised that this DVD had been noted by Welsh Government as a form of good practice. The creation of the Council's LAC website was also discussed with the representatives from the Blue Print Forum, who also agreed to review the website to provide assistance where necessary.

Members acknowledged the breadth of work of the Blueprint forum, with Members of the forum being involved in 'Voices from Care's 5 Nations Project' (which aims to promote the voices of Children who are Looked After and care leavers from across Wales, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland.); and one of the young people involved also presenting to a member of the United Nations, Children's Right committee, whereby the young person involved has been invited to be part of the UK delegation that will present young people's views to the full committee in Geneva.

Receiving experiences of the Councils services from a young person who has utilised the system assists the Corporate Parenting Board in establishing where the Council needs to focus priorities for the benefit of the children in the looked after system and for care leavers to ensure that they receive the support and same start in life as everyone else. The Corporate Parenting Board is keen to develop the links with the young representatives from the Blue Print forum and have provided an open invite to all of their meetings. It has been established that links to the forum will also be posted on the Council's Looked After website.

On behalf of the Corporate Parenting Board, the Board would like to thank Mr Dunn and the young person representative for their attendance at the Corporate Parenting Board and would like to wish them every success in her future.

## **UPDATES:**

### **Vale & Valleys and Cardiff Adoption.**

The Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative is one of five regional collaboratives, which will form part of the National Adoption Service in Wales. The Collaboration includes Vale of Glamorgan Council, The City of Cardiff Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

The Adoption service will look to establish and deliver a unified regional adoptions service responsible for:-

- Providing information and advice to anyone interested in becoming an adoptive parent
- Providing preparation, pre-approval training and timely assessment for all prospective adoptive parents including inter country adopters.
- Undertaking assessments of step parent and relative adopters.
- Finding placements to meet the needs of all children in the regional area requiring adoptive placements.
- Providing a support service to adoptive families pre and post adoption
- Providing an intermediary service for those adopted adults seeking access to their birth records and those wishing to search for their birth relatives.
- Providing an intermediary service to birth relatives wishing contact with the adopted person.

As a Board, members have been keen to receive updates on the regional collaborative arrangement and have resolved that the Manager be invited along to a future meeting of the Board to discuss its work and outcomes. Members are mindful that the service provided by Rhondda Cynon Taf in this area has previously been of a high standard and wish to see this standard continue through the collaborative arrangement.

### **MASH**

Members have positively supported the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) since its inception and have requested updates on its position through different avenues, following its launch in May. The MASH is the single point of contact for all professionals to report safeguarding concerns, and has significantly improved the sharing of information between agencies, helping to protect vulnerable children and adults from harm, neglect and abuse. As a Board, the members look forward to receiving data to illustrate the benefits and positive outcomes this unique way of working will create.

**FRONTLINE VISITS AND REGULATION 32 REPORTS.**

The Corporate Parenting Board has established a systematic process for ensuring that the Director, Social Services, Service Director and Members of the Board undertake regular visits to the frontline teams in children's services and report their findings to the Corporate Parenting Board. This practice is consistent both with recommendation 41 of the Victoria Climbié report and with a previous CSSIW safeguarding inspection report recommendation.

Members undertook the following visits as outlined below throughout the Municipal Year:-

<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Rhondda Office	16 <sup>th</sup> December, 2015	Cllrs Hopkins & Walker
Cynon Office	20 <sup>th</sup> January, 2016	Cllrs Hopkins & Norris
Taff Office	17 <sup>th</sup> February 2016	Cllrs Hopkins & Davies
Ty Catrin	17 <sup>th</sup> February 2016	Cllrs Hopkins
DCT office	17 <sup>th</sup> March, 2016	Cllr Hopkins & Cllr Weaver
Early Years & Family Support	17 <sup>th</sup> March 2016	Cllr Hopkins

These meetings allow members to view the working areas and enable informal dialogue with staff members.

One of the main issues arising from the visits related to the use of IT and how this could assist in social workers productivity and the Board have requested further information in respect of the developments of Agile working in this area and the IT provisions available to staff. Although Members of the Board welcome agile working to increase productivity, Members are aware of the need to balance this concept to ensure that teams did not work in pure isolation, and the need to ensure staff are continued to be supported.

As well as undertaking frontline visits to the staff teams, as part of the Corporate Parenting Board remit, reports are presented to the Board on the current position of the residential Children's Homes and respite service, to allow Members to gauge a fuller picture of the service provision. These reports provided Members with important information surrounding the occupancy figures of the homes, any areas of concern and the general well being of the children within the residential service.

It has been pleasing to read the positive reports provided to the Board of the residential homes, and where issues are identified Members have witnessed the swift resolutions through the responsible and professional management at the homes.

## **SCRUTINY AND THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD.**

The Board highly values the work of the Council's scrutiny committees and considers that there is a good synergy between both the Board and the scrutiny Committees. Members are conscious not to duplicate any of the work undertaken by scrutiny and to assist in preventing any overlap it is useful that the membership comprises of the chair of the Children & Young People's Scrutiny Committee who updates on any work being taken forward by the Committee.

### **Scrutiny recommendations – Children who are Looked After.**

The Board were provided with updates on the work of the 2 scrutiny committees in respect of 'the rising number and cost of Children who are Looked After placements' and also concerns 'to improve the educational attainment of those Children 'Looked After' and the Board were in agreement with the 15 recommendations resulting from the 2 working groups.

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/Cabinet/2015/11/24/Cabinet24Nov2015.aspx> (Scrutiny Recommendations report link)

The Chair and Vice Chair of the Board, as the relevant cabinet members in this area provided a detailed action plan addressing the recommendations to the Children's & Young People committee and details of the plan were also provided to the Board. Production of a Plan allows officers to ensure a timely approach to achieving the recommendations and regular monitoring ensures that none of the recommendations lapse.

The Board, would again like to thank the Scrutiny Members involved in the reviews for their hard work and efforts in delivering both pieces of work which will have a positive impact on the Children who are Looked After within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

### **Performance Indicators.**

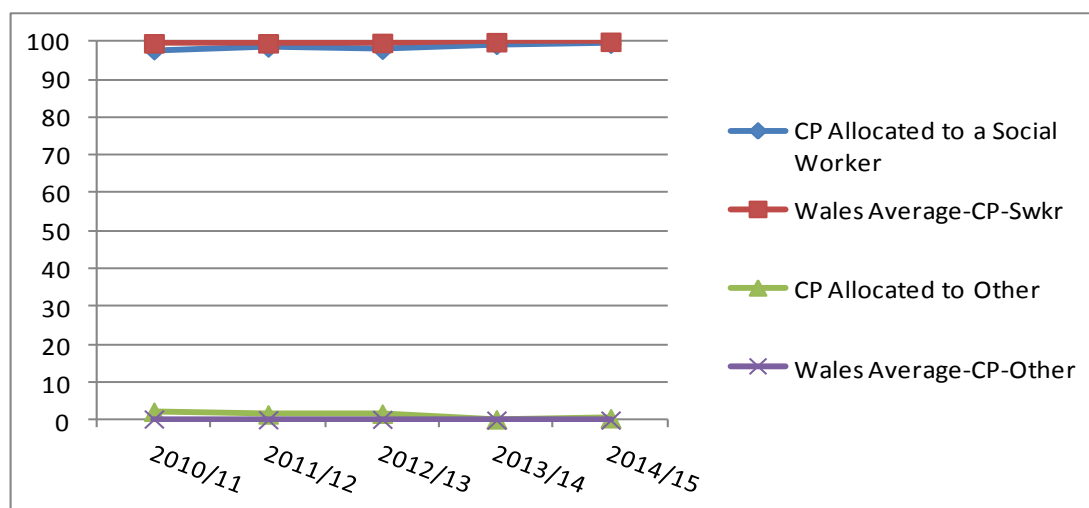
An item report to both Scrutiny and the Corporate Parenting Board this Municipal Year, due to its importance, was the Authority's use of non social work staff and its effect in relation to the Welsh Government Performance Indicators. This use of non social work staff had been highlighted by the CSSIW and although it was not suggested that this was inappropriate they had highlighted that the Council's position differs from others in Wales.

The report clarified to Members the qualifications and experiences held by staff who were not social work qualified and Members were assured at the meeting of the integral role such staff delivered, as part of the social worker teams.

Members considered the following information and data when considering this item, to allow them to compare against the Wales average the effects (if any) of the Council utilising 'unqualified' or ACM's (Assessor Care Manager) in comparison to qualified social workers.

Performance Indicators:-

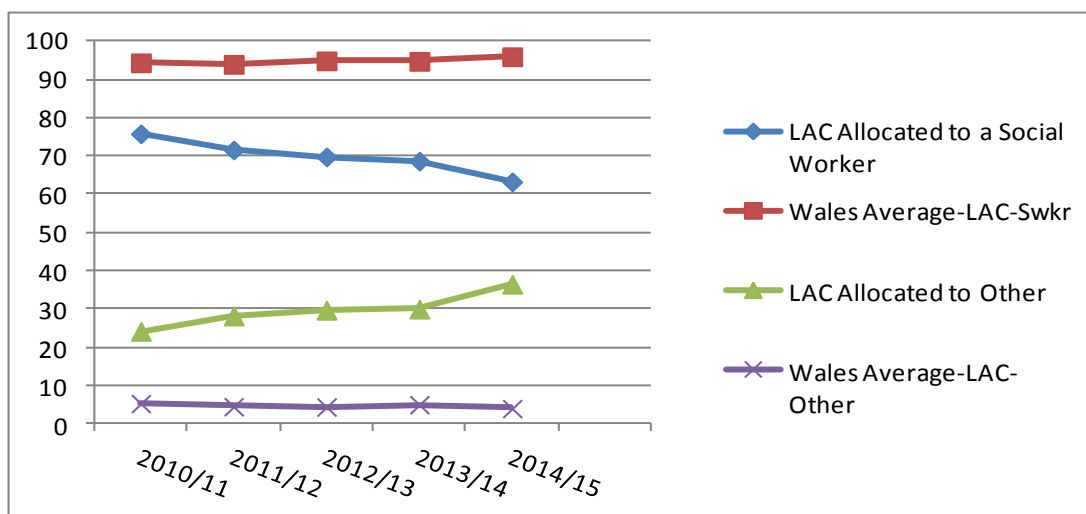
Child Protection Allocations ( SCCO13ai and SCCO13bi)					
	CP Allocated to a Social Worker	Wales Average-CP-Swkr	CP Allocated to Other	Wales Average-CP-Other	Total Number on CPR
2010/11	97.79	99.60	2.21	0.28	339
2011/12	98.50	99.60	1.50	0.10	420
2012/13	97.90	99.70	1.70	0.20	363
2013/14	99.20	99.90	0.20	0.00	471
2014/15	99.50	100.00	0.49	0.00	449



The above graph shows RCT’s performance in respect of children on the Child Protection Register (CP) who are allocated to qualified or ACM staff, in comparison to the all Wales average for Child Protection allocations.

The graph demonstrates that within RCT there has been a year on year improvement in the number of children on the Child Protection Register who are allocated to a social work qualified worker. This has been achieved against a background of increasing numbers of children on the Child Protection Register, 32% increase in the numbers between 2010 and 2015, but with a reduction recently as the new service model is introduced.

LAC Allocations SCCO13aai -SCCO13bii					
	LAC Allocated to a Social Worker	Wales Average-LAC-Swkr	LAC Allocated to Other	Wales Average-LAC-Other	Total Number LAC
2010/11	75.83	94.40	24.17	5.30	553
2011/12	71.60	94.00	28.20	4.50	594
2012/13	69.80	94.90	29.70	4.40	621
2013/14	68.70	94.80	30.00	5.00	651
2014/15	63.28	96.00	36.49	4.00	621

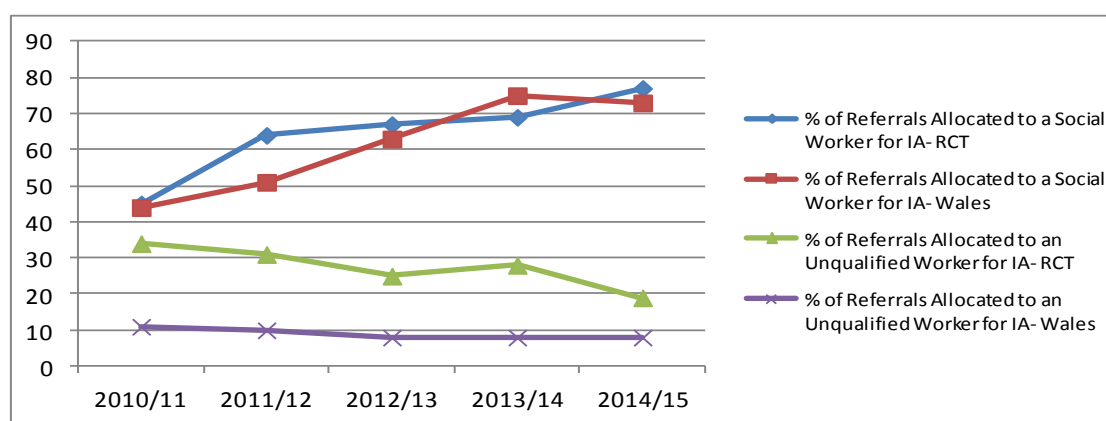


The above graph shows RCT's performance in respect of Children who are Looked After (LAC) who are allocated to qualified or ACM staff, in comparison to the all Wales average for Children who are Looked After allocations.

While the Wales Average performance for this indicator has remained fairly static, RCT's performance could be interpreted as having dropped year on year since 2010. The performance has undoubtedly been affected by the growing LAC population, 12% increase in numbers since 2010, and by the high increase in the numbers of children on the Child Protection Register during the same time period. In recent years it is pleasing to note that these figures are now reducing in accordance with the remodelling priorities for the service i.e. safely reducing LAC numbers.

It is also important to re-emphasise that in RCT Children who are Looked After are allocated to appropriately qualified and experienced workers and those that are not qualified social workers are allocated the Children who are in long term stable placements and where the risk has been assessed as being very low.

% of Referrals Allocated to a Social Worker/Unqualified Worker as part of an Initial Assessment				
	% of Referrals Allocated to a Social Worker for IA- RCT	% of Referrals Allocated to a Social Worker for IA- Wales	% of Referrals Allocated to an Unqualified Worker for IA- RCT	% of Referrals Allocated to an Unqualified Worker for IA- Wales
2010/11	45	44	34	11
2011/12	64	51	31	10
2012/13	67	63	25	8
2013/14	69	75	28	8
2014/15	77	73	19	8



The above table and graph shows RCT's performance regarding the % of referrals that are allocated to Social Workers/ACMs for an Initial Assessment in comparison to the All Wales average for this indicator.

As the graph demonstrates, performance for Part A of the indicator has improved year on year since 2010, with 2014/15 performance exceeding the Wales Average. Improvements in performance can also be seen in respect of Part B, which the % of referrals allocated to ACMs falling from 34% in 2010/11 to 19% in 2014/15.

Overall, RCT allocated 96% of all referrals received for an Initial Assessment compared to a Wales Average of 81%.

Following Members consideration of the data, the Board were happy with the current practices in place within RCT although acknowledged that the use of ACM staff should continue to be monitored in the light of service remodelling and the performance indicators set by the Welsh Government and the new requirements within the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

## **Plans & Reports**

Throughout the Municipal Year, numerous plans and reports are presented to the Board to ensure compliance and monitoring on a regular basis.

### **Safeguarding Action Plans.**

Following the publication of the Serious Case Review regarding the death of baby Peter in Haringey at the end of 2008, CSSIW required a series of actions from all Local Authorities (LAs) and Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs), to be satisfied about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in Wales.

Since this time, numerous reviews have been undertaken, with the current working practices of Child Practice Reviews being taken forward by the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children Board.

Ensuring effective safeguarding, stems not only from external inspection processes but also from internal reviews and audits, from Child Practice Reviews, from national reports, from national policy shifts and from collaborative developments with partners. Actively progressing, integrating and monitoring the actions required is therefore both a highly complex undertaking and subject to change over time.

The development of a Safeguarding Action Plan (SAP) as a management tool to enable managers across the service to sustain the process of improvement and review progress regularly is one of the services most important documents and it is appropriate that this plan is presented to the Corporate Parenting Board for Monitoring.

Members were presented with the SAP at their meeting in December and discussed the key achievements for 2015 and the actions that will now be taken forward in a different way.

(Link to the SAP report considered at the meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2015.  
<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/CorporateParentingBoard/2015/12/07/CorporateParentingBoard07Dec2015.aspx> )

### **Young Carers Annual Report**

Members were keen to receive the Young Carers Annual report, to provide further insight into the way young carers view the service that is provided and to establish areas for improvement.

Members noted the positive work being undertaken within the Young Carers service which is evidenced within the report, which highlighted that:-

- 96% of Young Carer's Assessments were completed and services provided.
- 42 of the young carers assessed in 2014-2015 were referred onto the Young Carers project and 27 received individual or family support from the service and were then signposted to other appropriate services.



- 257 young carers are currently known to the service and receive information/support
- Due to the focus on raising awareness in schools through the establishment of a Carers Measure Education Co-ordinator and the Schools Award pilot programme, referrals from education increased from 5% in 2013-14 to 11.5% in 2014-15.
- 41 young adult carers received a service in 2014-2015. 20 new referrals were received.
- In terms of young carers “having a voice” and making decisions, 9 young carers were trained to become Young Commissioners and were instrumental in re-commissioning the young carers project; young adult carers regularly meet as part of CASE to lead the work of the Young Adult Carer aspect of the service; the Schools Award was developed as a direct result of young carers highlighting the need for schools to improve the support they provide young carers.

Members were pleased to see that the young carers' service was also instrumental in building working partnerships with services and departments across RCT to ensure that young carers are able to access their services.

Members also commented on the aspirations for young carers and the need to ensure that no young person is disadvantaged from being a young carer and welcomed the vulnerability profiling undertaken within schools to ensure that young carers are not disadvantaged and the measuring of education outcomes.

### **IRO Reports**

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 requires the Local Authority to appoint Independent Reviewing Officers to conduct reviews for Children who are Looked After and monitor the Local Authority's performance in relation to implementing the care plans for individual children. Specific guidance is entitled “Independent Reviewing Officer Guidance Wales 2004”.

Regular reports are therefore presented to the Board to monitor the activities of the IRO service.

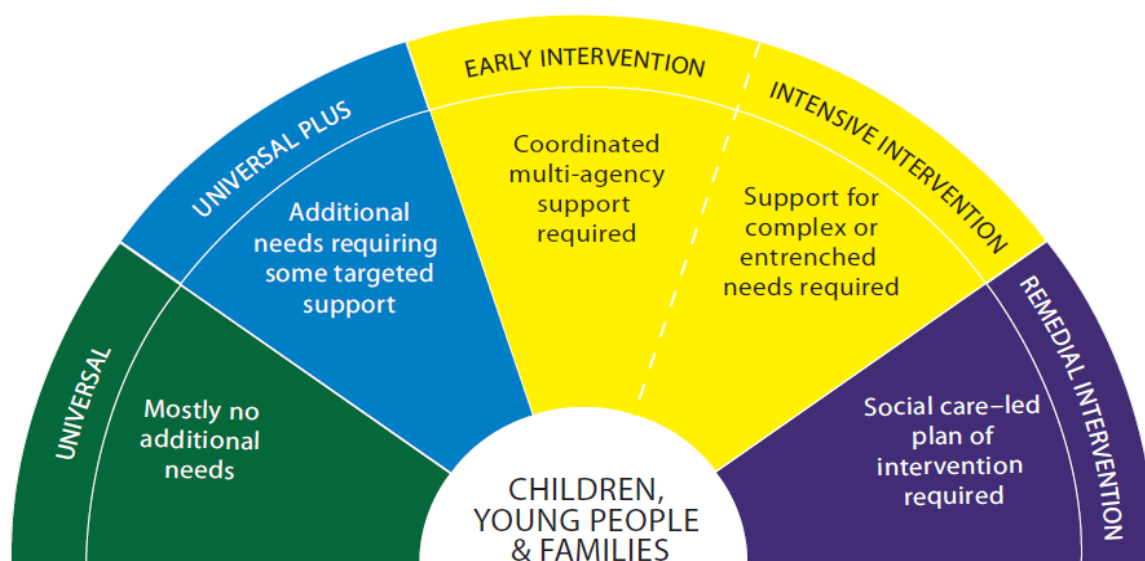
## Corporate Parenting Board - Going Forward

In the challenging financial climate that the Authority is finding itself in the Corporate Parenting Board will look to seek continual improvement in the delivery of service by Children’s Services, and as stated earlier in the report, the recent trend with the reduction in Looked After numbers is a positive which the Board will ultimately look to improve on. With this focus it is felt the following areas should be considered by the Board going forward, along with the usual updates that are presented to the Board on a timely basis.

### Remodelling of Children’s Services.

The most important measures for Children’s Services is that the desired outcomes for children and their families are being achieved, however, when delivering service change and improvement it is essential that the effect is measured in terms of what the change is expected to deliver.

A new model of delivery has been developed by the Rhondda Cynon Taf Children’s Services Management Team with the support of The Institute of Public Care at Oxford Brookes University (IPC). It describes the vision, principles, framework and direction of change that the Senior Management Team proposes across services to children and families in the future in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The overall framework describes an integrated network of services and support from all agencies at 4 different levels:



The key factors defining successful implementation of the revised model are as follows:-

- Reduced number of children & young people requiring intervention from statutory services.
- A reduction in the Looked After population year on year.
- Reduced number of repeat episodes where children & young people are placed on the child protection register.
- Reduced length of time that children & young people remain within the Looked After system.

- Minimise the level of intervention necessary when children and young people are in statutory services.
- Reduction in costs within the Looked After budget.
- Completion of more key activities within statutory timescales e.g. initial assessments

The Corporate Parenting Board are conscious to ensure that the remodelling currently underway delivers the outcomes that are needed and achieves a positive impact going forward for both service users and staff. As the new arrangements will need time to embed the provision of any quality data in respect of performance and the delivery of outcomes will not be available for at least the first half of the next Municipal Year, but Members are keen to support the new delivery model and entrust that the remodelling of the service has positive outcomes for service users and also for the staff involved in delivering these services.

### **Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014.**

Social Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf aim to provide a range of services which are responsive and well coordinated in protecting and supporting the population as a whole and vulnerable people in particular. However, like all Councils, Rhondda Cynon Taf is facing considerable financial challenges with significantly reducing budgets at a time of increased demand, higher expectations and legislation change with the implementation of the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014.

The SSWB Act provides a new statutory framework for social services in Wales. It applies to children, adults and carers equally and as such is groundbreaking in its approach. Whilst it consolidates a range of legislation some legislation, most notably parts of the children's act 1989 and 2004 remain extant.

Part 6 of the Act applies to Looked After and Accommodated Children, and its implications for RCT mainly relate to updating existing staff procedures and guidance and ensuring that staff are supported to understand the changes that apply to them in practice.

The management focus in this area of children's services will continue to emphasise challenge, improved decision making and supporting positive outcomes for children

Part 10 of the Act relates to Complaints, Representations and Advocacy. Positively the Council already has a well established and regarded complaints process which is compliant with the revised guidance issued in 2014. The Board regularly receive updates throughout the year in this area.

In respect of advocacy or making an 'active offer' work is ongoing to realign some of our advocacy services to provide a better fit with the requirements of the act.

The Board will continue to receive updates on the Act and its implementation when appropriate throughout the Municipal year. Providing the 'Active offer' of advocacy will be an item that the

Board will closely monitor and it welcome's the support provided by NYAS, who have recently commented on the positive performance and trends in this area. The 'active offer' has been raised through IROs and 'training principles' of advocacy which has been undertaken with social workers. Further assistance in this area will be addressed once the preferred model of approach in respect of support for the 'Active Offer' is finalised by the Minister.

### **Monitoring**

Following the good work of scrutiny it is important that as a Board we ensure that the actions that we proposed, which would deliver the recommendations highlighted by scrutiny, are implemented in a timely manner. Monitoring of the plan is essential to ensure that we deliver on the recommendations which will have a positive impact on the service that we provide. Of course, as a Board we will continue to monitor all the plans and performance reports that are presented to us as a Board, to ensure positive performance.

### **Training**

Training on Corporate Parenting earlier in the Year for all Elected Members was a success, especially with a presentation from the Blue Print Forum included in the training. Details surrounding Members registering compliments and complaints were also sent from the Chair of the Board to all Elected Members to ensure that the quarterly complaints report reflected an accurate picture and to ensure that all issues both positive and negative were dealt with in the right manner.

Members of the Board also established that in light of the forthcoming elections, that an induction programme should be developed in relation to Corporate Parenting for all newly Elected Members. Is it essential that the Corporate Parenting Board drive this forward to ensure that all Elected Members and officers are equipped to undertake their role as 'Corporate Parents'.

### **Website.**

Monitoring and further development of the Children who are Looked After website is essential to ensure that the website continues to develop and that it delivers what is both wanted and needed by the young people within the Looked After Care System. Through the next Municipal Year Members of the Board will be keen to see the website expanded upon, so that it becomes utilised not only for its original purpose of completing reviews but becomes a useful resource that young people access regularly to give them support and information. With the internet continually evolving, we need to ensure that we also evolve and communicate with our young people through the mediums that they prefer whether it be through forums on the website, links to other pages such as the Blue Print Forum or through social networks. Members of the Board are keen not to let the website standstill but to become an integral part of a young person's life.

## **MASH**

MASH is the single point of access for all safeguarding concerns relating to Vulnerable Adults, Children and Young People. It brings together expert professionals from services that have contact with children, young people and families making the best possible use of their combined knowledge to keep children safe from risk of harm.

MASH is designed to provide the highest level of knowledge and analysis of all known intelligence and information across the safeguarding partnership to ensure all safeguarding activity and intervention is timely, proportionate and necessary; as a result the MASH will support:

- early identification and analysis of risk
- the identification of victims and emerging harm
- the early identification of repeat low level referrals

Members have supported the concept of the MASH from its infancy and have high expectations for its delivery, recognising that collaborative working is the way forward. The MASH itself is unique in formation and is a collaborative model to be taken forward, which has been recognised and has gained interest from other Authorities with its new way of working. The Cwm Taf MASH is the first point of contact for new safeguarding concerns and it is hoped that this will significantly improve the sharing of information between agencies, helping to protect the most vulnerable children and adults from harm, neglect and abuse.

The Cwm Taf MASH is one of only a handful of MASHs nationally that handles concerns about children, adults at risk and high risk domestic abuse; taking a holistic, family approach. Nearly 50 staff from the Police, Health, National Probation Service, Community Rehabilitation Company, Education, Children's Social Care and Adult Safeguarding are working together in the MASH office.

Since its launch in May 2015, the board has recognised the need to allow the MASH to settle in to its own way of working and for timeliness for allowing the setting of base line data. The Board will welcome the production of performance data coming forward during the next Municipal year, to allow the Board to critically analyse performance.

### **Conclusion.**

The Board have had a varied work programme this year and are looking forward to setting themselves a full work programme for the next Municipal Year, focusing on the items already mentioned in the previous section of the report as well as other business that the Board feels is appropriate. Of course, work programmes can fluctuate due to varying priorities, especially in respect of Children Services and Children who are Looked After, but as with this year, as a Board we will continue to work for the best interests of the children within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Thank you for reading this report.

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