**Notes and Actions from the Children First Pioneer Areas Meeting**

**Ysgol Pen Rhos, Copperworks Road, Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, SA15 2NG**

**4 December 2018**

**Present:**

**Children First Pioneer Areas/Partner Organisations**

Lindsey Watkins (LW), Newport, (Millbrook Primary School)

Jessica Sharma (JS), Newport, (Barnardos)

Sarah Mutch (SM), Caerphilly, (Caerphilly County Borough Council)

Noeline Thomas (NT), Carmarthenshire, (Carmarthenshire County Council)

Caryl Alban (CA), Carmarthenshire, (Carmarthenshire County Council)

Lisa Grice (LG), Carmarthenshire, (Carmarthenshire County Council)

Joe Cudd (JC), Carmarthenshire, (Ysgol Pen Rhos)

Angharad Stephens (AS), Cwm Taf, (Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council)

Diane Jones (DJ), Cwm Taf, (Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council)

Sally Holland (SH), Children’s Commissioner for Wales

Beth Williams (BW), Children’s Commissioner for Wales’s office

**Welsh Government**

Sarah Melkevik (SMe)

Wayne Warner (WW)

David Pearce (DP)

**Apologies:**

Karen Cornish (Welsh Government), Claire Hutcheon (Cwm Taf), Kathryn Bevan, (Newport), Catrin Thomas (Gwynedd), Caryl Lewis (Gwynedd)

1. **Welcome and introductions**

SMe welcomed the group, and thanked the Children’s Commissioner for attending. She also thanked Ysgol Pen Rhos and the Carmarthenshire Children First Pioneer for hosting todays meeting.

Round table introductions were made.

1. **Welcome by David Pearce**

DP introduced himself as the new head of Children’s Branch and thanked JC for inviting us to his school. He explained that he had previously worked in central government in the Department for Education and had been in post in the Welsh Government for three months. His career has included social policy, particularly relating to children and families.

DP gave an overview of the remit of the Children’s Branch and reiterated the importance of getting out and meeting people and working with a collaborative focus.

1. **The Children’s Commissioner for Wales, Sally Holland**

The Commissioner was pleased to be able to attend to give her presentation on embedding Children’s Rights, particularly in one of the Ambassador schools. She is also keen to hear from the Pioneers about the work that is taking place in their respective areas.

The Commissioner spoke about the links between Children’s Rights and ACEs, specifically her concerns about the language around ACEs (e.g. counting ACEs) and the risks of labelling children (as something that is wrong with the child). She also spoke about the causal effects of poverty and income inequality and that we should take care that ACEs aren’t the whole picture of children’s early year’s experiences.

The Commissioner shared a paper on ACEs and *The Right Way*, a practical guide to taking a children’s rights based approach to planning and delivering services for children. She spoke about the importance of embedding the five principles of children’s rights into everything we do:

* Embedding the UNCRC;
* Equality and non-discrimination;
* Empowering Children;
* Participation;
* Accountability.

The Commissioner highlighted that a one size Children’s rights approach doesn’t fit all. In the context of ACEs and the Children First approach the Commissioner felt that this was true and services will have to find a way to work with children and families in ways that most support them individually.

PHW research has given us confidence that that we understand the lifelong impact of adversity on outcomes, but there is a risk we ignore other structural inequalities e.g. poverty, discrimination, patriarchy etc.

Her final ask to the Pioneer areas was to involve children in decisions that affect them. Tell them what we are planning to do, what we have done, how we have done it and what children can expect to happen next.

The Commissioner took questions, arising from that discussion was:

* Labelling children with ACEs without the context of wider resilience.
* The need for a systems change event or approach.
* ACEs train the trainer and a move from ACE awareness to ACE/trauma informed services.
* The impacts of Universal Credit on families.
* There were thanks from Carmarthenshire that a letter from the Children’s Commissioner was one of the first to arrive following the announcement that they had been selected to become a Pioneer area and tasked them with ensuring participation of young people.

1. **Carmarthenshire Children First video**

Carmarthenshire Children First has produced a video of children from the local schools talking about their experience of living in their communities. Next steps for the Pioneer will be how they can use this video as a calling card to make a pitch to the local community.

The main messages arising from the children and the video were:

* How aware children are of the problems in the community and their maturity in naming and understanding, for example, drug paraphernalia that they find in their local environments;
* That children do not feel safe, for example, in travelling to and from school or visiting their local park/green space;
* That the children did have significant aspirations, for example, in the jobs they wanted to have and the type of community in which they wanted to live;
* That the children realised that there were problems in their communities, for example, drugs, crime, ASB;
* That despite these problems they wanted to stay in the area.

1. **Meet with Ysgol Pen Rhos pupils and tour of the school**

We were given a tour of the school by pupils from two year groups.

1. **Welsh Government update**

SMe provided an update from the Welsh Government.

20k seed funding

* Our Minister has now agreed the proposals you put forward as part of your seed funding bids. These have all been confirmed with you and we have received your signed grant offer acceptance letters.
* You have all been issued with your claim forms, so hopefully you are now in a position to carry on with your activities.

**Action 1:** Pioneer areas to submit their six month report on progress by end of January next year.

Reporting on Children First

* We will be using some of the updates you give today to inform a briefing to our senior team on the progress of Children First Pioneers to date.
* Also when we receive your January update that will form part of a brief we are hoping to provide to our Minister in the New Year giving an overview of Children First generally and discuss some of the ongoing issues.

Children First Pioneer visits

* SMe has been in post six months now, and wants to get out and visit all of the Pioneer areas.
* She has already visited Newport and is due back in Carmarthenshire for a visit on Thursday 6th. A visit to Cwm Taf is scheduled for Monday 10th December.

**Action 2:** Caerphilly and Gwynedd to contact SMe with possible dates for a visit, possibly early in the New Year.

Repository for information

* At our last meeting in Llandrindod in September, the Welsh Government agreed to look at options for a central repository where we could share information, good practice and relevant research.
* We have found a solution through using Objective Connect; it’s the way Welsh Government shares information and data. We would essentially set up a ‘share’ of which Welsh Government would invite people to share to the system.
* We are just waiting for the necessary agreement from our data colleagues, and I am expecting this any time now, and I will let you know once it is set up.
* In the meantime if you want to send SMe anything to share please do so.
* The Pioneers and non-pioneers have confirmed that they are happy to be involved, and share their email details to be part of this repository/Community of Practice.

Dates for 2019

* SMe thought it might be useful to provisionally pencil in our dates for next year. If anyone has any difficulties with these let her know.
* Provisionally w/c 18th March in Builth or Llandrindod Wells.
* w/c 17th June in one of the Children First areas (Caerphilly or Cwm Taf).
* w/c 16th September in Builth or Llandrindod Wells.
* w/c 9th December in one of the Children First areas (Caerphilly or Cwm Taf).

**Action 3:** Caerphilly and Cwm Taf to confirm their preferences for hosting either of the June and December meeting?

Additional support

* SMe has been thinking about the role Welsh Government can offer in supporting you to deliver the Children First approach, please have a think about whether we can offer any further support we can offer, or any suggestions you have about future agenda items for forthcoming Pioneer meetings.

**Action 4:** Welsh Government to look into support for systems change. Pioneer areas to let SMe know about any other support needs.

KAS (Knowledge and Analytical Services) update

* KAS colleagues have now undertaken workshops with all the Pioneer areas and draft Theory of Change/logic models have been completed for each of the Pioneers.
* Next steps for us in the New Year will be to develop a Welsh Government overarching theory of change.

1. **Carmarthenshire Children First Pioneer update**

* They spoke about the importance of having a strong steering group in place.
* In the New Year they will be working with Swansea University to develop stories and community enquiries. They plan to utilise personal stories.
* They have also been undertaking ‘planning for real’, which has involved a physical model of the area. They are in the prioritisation stage.
* They have a chance to bid for money through the Early Intervention Delivery Group.
* They are focussing their activities on health and well-being and links with the proposed Wellness Village. They are seeing a growing demand for sports and leisure opportunities.

1. **Caerphilly Children First Pioneer update**

* In Lansbury Park there is a £4m investment in Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) and £4m in exterior wall insulation.
* They have been looking at improvements to the physical environment, including in play facilities.
* A researcher is mapping data and analysing trends and looking at Flying Start to see if they are going in the right direction.
* Fochrhiw has organised its own Halloween event.
* They are continuing their work giving out free books, these are focussing on resilience and bumps in the road.
* The SHEP events in St James were successful and members of the Parent Network have been trained up as play workers.
* PCSO resources have been put into St James. The police are now giving a heads up to the school where incidents have occurred at home.
* Issues locally include ASB, loan sharking, drugs.
* Their Resilience Framework has created champions in the community.

1. **Cwm Taf Children First Pioneer update**

Merthyr

* The Gurnos pilot is a strengths based approach, based on Communities First legacy.
* The Steering group is made up of the PSB, police, residents and elected members.
* They have undertaken some consultation with residents, who say that they don’t feel safe.
* Their seed funding bid will be used for an information officer to man the hub.
* They have secured £40k through the ICF (Integrated Care Fund) Grant scheme to develop a single point of contact, working with Merthyr Valley Homes to develop facilities, co-located services and linking to integration.
* They will involve children and young people in naming the Gurnos hub.
* A Neighbourhood Network has been set up, which will be deciding how £15k of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) funding. This work is being linked with the place efficiency work and proposals by the Network will be put forward to the schools and local residents.

Rhondda Cynon Taff

* They have a hub and spoke model.
* Their seed funding has been spent on a community coordinator, who will be developing a neighbourhood network.
* They will be using NRW funding to improve green spaces through an edible play garden, litter picks and community walks.
* More than the Taylorstown/Ferndale area in Children First, RCT want to develop their Community Zone approach across the whole of the borough.

**10. Gwynedd Children First Pioneer update**

* No update given.

**11. Newport Children First Pioneer update**

* Last year Millbrook and Pillgwenlly schools undertook a research project with Barnardo’s including pupils identifying their ‘hot spots’ and ‘grot spots’.
* A toolkit for a roll out to others schools is being developed.
* The Heddlu Bach scheme now has 20 mini police forces in schools across Gwent.
* Dr Ian Britton has been researching and measuring impacts of ACEs across South East Wales.
* Operationally, the school is working with the police on Operation Encompass (where schools are informed before of the child arrives at the school, when they have been involved in or exposed to a domestic violence incidence the previous evening).

**12. AOB and Finish**

None

**Dates for next meeting: w/c 18th March 2019 TBC**

**Summary of Action points:**

**Action 1:** Pioneer areas to submit their six month report on progress by end of January next year.

**Action 2:** Caerphilly and Gwynedd to contact SMe with possible dates for a visit, possibly early in the New Year.

**Action 3:** Caerphilly and Cwm Taf to confirm their preferences for hosting either of the June and December meeting?

**Action 4:** Welsh Government to look into support for systems change. Pioneer areas to let SMe know about any other support needs.