

Statement from Cllr Joanna Wright

In the Department for Education's Statutory Guidance for local authorities on Applying corporate parenting principles to looked after children and care leavers it states:

1.1 The role that councils play in looking after children is one of the most important things they do. the critical question that local authorities should ask in adopting such an approach is:

'would this be good enough for my child?'.

1.2 A strong ethos of corporate parenting means that a sense of vision and responsibility towards the children they look after and their care leavers is a priority for everyone.

In January's Children's, Adults Health and Well being PDS I asked questions on how the ACAS discussions would impact the morale of Officers working in Children's Services. The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that the majority of staff would benefit through the "Being Our Best" process, but she was aware that some colleagues were unhappy and that they were working to find solutions to the issues raised. Today we have strike action on this matter.

In March's Children's, Adults Health and Wellbeing PDS, many Officers from Children's Services demonstrated outside the Guildhall before, during and after the meeting because a further new "consultation" to restructure Children's Services was being undertaken. This "restructure" is due to the government's new directive on improving services for looked after children, which requires a new approach to supporting our Looked After Children.

How this Council decides to implement that new directive is up to all of us. We are all Corporate Parents. Clearly the 350 front-line children services experts are deeply unhappy about the process that this council is currently pursuing.

These Officers have LOST TRUST with this Council. They are saying that they now "feel undervalued, deskilled and frustrated."

Before the restructuring there was an incredible amount of good will from these officers. Take that good will away and they say you will have major capacity issues. They do not understand how their caseloads, which they believe are already at unsafe levels, will be managed after this restructure.

We must ask ourselves the basic question: is this restructure going to deliver a service that **'would be good enough for my child?'**.

Presently it appears to me, as a Corporate Parent, that the front-line staff delivering for us are completely demoralized and disillusioned by the way B&NES Senior Management has decided to implement culture change. There needs to be real and meaningful consultation. All parties need to rebuild trust before any new systems are considered and implemented. It is our statutory duty as Corporate Parents to

ensure that stability for those most vulnerable is in place, and this restructuring process must be stopped and started in a fairer way.