



TASK AND FINISH GROUP – TACKLING POTENTIAL MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES POST PANDEMIC

MINUTES OF THE DIGITAL MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY 3RD NOVEMBER AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

C. Bishop

Also Present:

Co-opted Member: Mrs M. Jones (Parent Network) – Chair

Together with:

M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) and K. Morris (Service Manager).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Bezzina, D. Cushing, K. Etheridge and M. Evans.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. TO APPROVE AND SIGN THE FOLLOWING MINUTES: - TACKLING POTENTIAL MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES POST PANDEMIC MEETING HELD ON 26TH JULY 2021

The Scrutiny Officer advised that no comments had been received from Group Members in relation to these Minutes. They were subsequently approved as an accurate record of the meeting held on 26th July 2021. Cllr Bishop abstained as she had sent apologies for the July meeting.

4. PRESENTATION ON THE CURRENT SITUATION

The group received a presentation from Karen Morris, Service Manager in Adult Services with responsibility for both mental health services (for those aged 18-65), and drug and alcohol services. Members heard how there were two Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT) responding to GP referrals for the north and south of the County Borough. Both teams consisted of a range of professionals including Consultant Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Community Psychiatric Nurses, Occupational Therapists and Social Workers. The Teams are a blend of Health Board and Caerphilly County Borough Council (Social Workers) staff. The Service Manager outlined how she met regularly with her counterpart from the Health Board to manage the teams. It was highlighted that 15 Social Workers are qualified to undertake Mental Health Act assessments should it be determined that a person may need detention to hospital under the Mental Health Act. Social Workers who hold this qualification are called Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs). One Member asked a question on environmental restraints. The Service Manager advised that this wouldn't be a role of AMHPs and that residential homes/hospitals would have procedures in place on the use of restraint. The Service Manager also advised that in order for a person to be detained under the Mental Health Act the AMHP and two Doctors had to be in agreement. The Chair asked if there had been a significant increase in CMHT workload during the pandemic. The Service Manager advised that there had been an increase in general referrals but not to the extent that would necessitate the need for additional staff and that the volume was currently being managed well by the teams. Members also heard how this situation was being constantly monitored by managers.

Members heard about the Assertive Outreach Team based in Blackwood which was also multi-disciplinary and helped individuals requiring a more intensive service to meet their severe and complex mental health issues. The Manager at this unit was jointly employed by the Health Board and Caerphilly County Borough Council. Members also heard about the role of the Gwent-wide Forensics Team which was based in St Cadocs Hospital. This team supports people who, as a consequence of their mental health, have had contact with the legal system and require a safe and secure environment such as specialist inpatient units and secure hospitals. The Service Manager also highlighted work carried out by the Mental Health Support Service, the Mental Health Ward (Ty Cyffanol) at Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr, the Drug and Alcohol Team and the 3 Older People Teams operating in the county borough. The Service Manager then outlined the service provided by CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and the Information, Advice and Assistance service.

The Service Manager then moved on to external working relationships in relation to the provision of mental health services. Groups that she was part of alongside representatives from Public Health Wales and the Aneurin Bevan Health Board. The first one highlighted was the Foundation Tier Steering Group which focussed on prevention. Members heard how the MELO website was developed as a result of meetings by this group. The Service Manager advised that this website promoted the mental wellbeing of people living and working in Gwent, and also the development of the "Gwent Connect 5 Workforce Training Programme" which trains staff in promoting mental health and wellbeing into everyday practice, increases understanding in this area and offers advice on self-help tools. Secondly, Members heard how the Service Manager represented Social Services at Suicide Prevention and Self-Harm Workshops, which were multi-agency and had helped to design an Action Plan for the Gwent region. Finally, the Task Group heard about the links established with the North Caerphilly Integrated Wellbeing Network. The Service Manager suggested that the Network's Service Development Lead, Dr David Llewellyn, would be a good contributor at a future meeting of the Task Group. The Chair agreed that Dr Llewellyn would be a good witness as part of the Task and Finish inquiry.

Members then heard about the working relationship with GPs and Primary Care Services. Good relationships had been developed with Primary Care Mental Health Specialist Services (PCMHSS). The Service Manager advised that GPs were the first point of contact and then it would be decided if an individual required Primary Care (which operated within GP surgeries) or if the case would be better treated at CMHT level. Primary Care Services would deal initially with low-level conditions such as anxiety and depression. The Group heard about the development of Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner (PWP) roles in some surgeries, which are non-registered practitioners who are trained to assess common mental health disorders. It was highlighted that sometimes it was more appropriate for people to see a PWP rather than their GP.

The meeting was told that Caerphilly County Borough Council alongside Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and Gwent Police had developed the Mental Health Triage Team which introduced Mental Health Professionals into the Police Control Room to offer advice and guidance to police officers dealing with mental health cases.

Task Group Members were then given a synopsis of the collaborative working which was taking place across all agencies including other Gwent Local Authorities. Every couple of weeks Mental Health Crisis Concordat meetings were held. Attendees at these meetings are Service Managers from each Local Authority, Gwent Police, Welsh Ambulance Service and Senior Managers from the Health Board. These meetings discuss the future development of mental health services in Gwent. Examples given were the Specialist Inpatient Unit, Crisis Assessment Team, Shared Lives Hospital Discharge Initiative and Sanctuary House. Members were also told about Mental Health Implementation Group meetings which focussed on issues pertaining to the adherence of the Mental Health Act. The Service Manager highlighted the role played by Caerphilly County Borough Council transport services during the pandemic in supporting AMHPs in the conveying of a person to hospital. As a consequence of transport not being utilised as much for Day Services and Schools during the pandemic CCBC's transport has become a valuable resource for AMHPs thus avoiding lengthy waiting times for ambulances. Members were also told about Gwent Mental Health & Learning Disability Partnership Board and Gwent Mental Health & Learning Disability Delivery Group meetings. These were strategic multi-agency meetings attended by Directors.

The presentation concluded with details of the support available to Caerphilly County Borough Council staff and included information on advice from Care First and Mindfulness courses run by Primary Care.

The Scrutiny Officer asked if a potential increase in demand for mental health services as a result of Covid-19 restrictions had been discussed at any of the collaborative meetings highlighted as part of the presentation. The Service Manager advised that validating data is an ongoing theme at meetings and also discussions about the need for additional resources. It was stressed that currently Caerphilly County Borough Council was equipped to deal with demand, but this is constantly being monitored. The Chair highlighted that the role of the review was to ensure that the Council was as prepared as possible for any peak in demand for mental health services and had adequate resources. The Service Manager gave assurances that the situation was constantly being monitored and that from a Social Services perspective there was currently adequate resources. The Scrutiny Officer then asked about recommendations and sought advice on service responsibilities to ensure the eventual review findings would definitely come under Council responsibility. The Service Manager advised that any issues are escalated and dealt with as part of the collaborative working practices. The Chair suggested that at the end of the review it might be concluded that the Council was as prepared as possible for any increase in demand for services because of the positive working relationships that have been developed.

In thanking Members and Officers for their contributions, the Chair closed the meeting at 18:15 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 15th December 2021, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR