



HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELL BEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON TUESDAY, 27TH MARCH 2012 AT 5.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor L. Binding - Chairman
Councillor D. Cullen - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

Mrs E.M. Aldworth, G.J. Hughes, S. Kent, K.V. Reynolds, Mrs L. Williams, R. Woodyatt.

Cabinet Members: Councillor J.A. Pritchard (Cabinet Member for Social Services).

Together with:

D. Street (Assistant Director Adult Services), A. Jarrett (Assistant Director Children's Services), S. Harris (Financial Services Manager), Mrs E. Lucas (Head of Procurement), D. Paton (Service Manager, Children's Services), A. Giordano (Service Manager, Adult Services) S. Brown (Client Finance and Property Manager), J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager), S.M. Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

Users & Carers: Mr C. Luke (Caerphilly People First) & Mrs M. Veater (Users and Carers)..

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr A. Heaney (Corporate Director Social Services), Councillors R. Bidgood, Mrs A. Collins, Mrs P. Griffiths, K. James, M.H. Newman, K. Smallman and Mrs B.M. Toomer.

2. COUNCILLOR ALLEN WILLIAMS

Members of the Scrutiny Committee paid tribute to Councillor Allen Williams, a former member of the Committee, who had recently passed away. Members and officers stood in silence as a mark of respect and extended their condolences to the bereaved family.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor L. Binding declared an interest in agenda item 5(2) - South East Wales Fostering and Residential Placements Framework Agreement. There is a potential for him to come into contact with the contractor in his professional capacity as an employee of Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council's Social Services Department.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Health, Social Care and Well Being Scrutiny Committee held on 14th February 2012 (minute nos. 1-12; page nos. 1-5) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

6. VERBAL REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

Councillor Judith Pritchard began by paying a personal tribute in memory of Councillor Allen Williams, whose funeral had taken place earlier in the day. Councillor Pritchard referred, in particular, to the friendship she had developed with Councillor Williams, the support he had given to the vulnerable and disadvantaged and the active role he had played as a former member of the Scrutiny Committee and in the voluntary sector generally.

This was the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee before the elections and Councillor Pritchard reminded all of the Social Services Bill Wales which is presently out for consultation with responses to be provided by 1st June. The Bill provides a very important indication of the way forward over the next few years with particular emphasis on collaboration. Members were advised that the collaboration between Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Social Services is progressing at a pace and the Workforce Development Plan will be implemented from 1st April as will the South East Wales Adults Placement Team, which Caerphilly leads.

Councillor Pritchard placed on record her appreciation of the help and support she had received from officers during the last four years. She also thanked members of the Scrutiny Committee for the compassionate way in which they had supported but also scrutinised the Social Services Department during a period of change. She felt sure that whatever the outcome of the election on 3rd May, the Authority would adopt a positive and cross-party approach as far as caring for vulnerable adults and children was concerned.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee endorsed the Cabinet Members' comments about the effectiveness of the scrutiny committee and the support received from officers. They also thanked Councillor Pritchard for the contribution she had made to Social Services during her term of office.

Members queried why there wasn't a budget monitoring report on the agenda for the meeting. Officers advised that there had been no significant changes since the last report to the Scrutiny Committee.

SCRUTINY REPORTS

Consideration was given to the following Scrutiny reports.

7. PRESENTATION BY THE YOUTH FORUM

The Scrutiny Committee welcomed Paige Cherrington and William Harris, representing the Caerphilly Youth Forum, together with Clare Jones, Youth Forum Coordinator.

Members were advised that the issue that the young people of Caerphilly had voted for as their overall priority for the Youth Forum to address this year was parks i.e. 'They need improving, they get vandalised and people smoke in them'. All other issues raised at the Youth Forum Conference 2011 are being brought to the attention of the relevant scrutiny committee to ensure that the views of the young people are being heard.

The priority issue chosen under the health theme this year relates to social services. Young people want to know where they can seek help if they are feeling vulnerable and how the Council can help them to address this issue. The Assistant Director Children's Services, advised the Scrutiny Committee that he would arrange for an officer to liaise with the Youth Forum to raise the profile of social services amongst young people. Members requested that a report on the outcomes be referred back to the Scrutiny Committee in due course.

The Scrutiny Committee supported the Youth Forum's recommendation to prohibit smoking in the Council's children's play areas, which was being progressed through the Living Environment Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair thanked Paige and William for their attendance and contribution to the meeting. A progress report would be presented to the Scrutiny Committee in due course.

8. SOUTH EAST WALES FOSTERING AND RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENTS FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

Councillor L. Binding declared an interest in this item as there is a potential for him to come into contact with the contractor in future in his professional capacity as an employee of Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) County Borough Council's Social Services Department.

The report set out proposals for Caerphilly CBC to enter into two collaborative framework agreements in relation to the commissioning of independent fostering and residential placements with local authority partners from across the South Wales region.

The Authority has been working within the South East Wales Improvement Collaborative to improve the outcomes for looked after children by jointly commissioning independent foster and residential placements. Participating authorities have experienced a number of benefits such as cost efficiencies of placements, shared improvement of provider verification and a regional commissioning unit.

In order to further develop the strategy it is proposed that Caerphilly CBC, alongside other local authorities, develop a regional procurement framework, which aims to provide value for money placements, increase placement choice and further improve outcomes for looked after children. Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC will act as the lead authority for the purpose of establishing the framework, which will be conducted under the governance structure of the Welsh Purchasing Consortium.

The Scrutiny Committee endorsed the Council's participation in the South Wales Framework for the provision of independent foster and residential care placements and supported the plan that the paper be placed before Cabinet for approval.

It was agreed that update reports would be presented to Members on a regular basis.

9. IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TEAM PILOT - PROGRESS REPORT

A report to Cabinet in August 2011 highlighted a need to develop a responsive service to families during times of immediate and urgent need. There was agreement to develop a new team as part of a pilot to address this area of need and the Immediate Response Team (IRT) was created and became operational in October 2011. The pilot is funded via a Welsh Government grant until the end of March 2013.

The Team consists of a Manager and five Child Care Support Workers. Team members have a range of experience and skills including Youth Offending Service, Education, Health Promotion, Youth Service, Children with Disabilities Service and Family Support. To date 24 children and young people have received a direct service from the team with a further 25 contacts from social workers directed to other more appropriate services. The Team has been able to deliver a high quality standard of service involving an intensive and responsive support to families at the point of need, often on the same day of referral. This is evidenced and reflected in the evaluation feedback.

Members complimented the Team on their achievements to date and discussed the potential to extend the scheme subject to the necessary funding being available.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the progress and development of the Immediate Response Team to date.

10. PROVISION OF RESIDENTIAL/NURSING CARE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The report had been prepared following a request from a member of the Scrutiny Committee for information on the current position within the County Borough with regard to the provision of residential care for older people, the Authority's position in placing residents from the care home in Brithdir where a contract was terminated and the Authority's contingency plans for emergency provision if one of the major care home providers closed.

A report to the Scrutiny Committee in September 2011 set out the issues impacting on In-house provision at that time, in particular the risks caused by the uncertain future of eight independent sector homes in the county borough owned by Southern Cross. Since that time further work has been undertaken in respect of two of the homes to change the type of services provided. Six assessment beds will be piloted at Ty Clyd in Bargoed. In addition, Castle View in Caerphilly is being developed to allow the home to move from having 28 elderly frail beds to 17 elderly frail beds and 11 EMI beds, which will assist in meeting the demand for EMI clients. On 16th May 2012 a workshop on 'developing sustainable models of residential care' is being held by ADSS in mid Wales. The workshop will focus on the vulnerabilities of private and third sector residential care provision for frail elderly people, the impact on residents, their families, providers and councils.

In December 2011 the Authority made a decision to terminate its contract with Broadway Care Centre Ltd., the owners of Hillside Care Centre, Brithdir. The decision followed a sustained period of working with the Provider to try and gain improvements to the quality of care delivered to residents. The Provider commenced legal action to obtain an injunction to prevent termination of the contract but this failed and an application was made for a judicial review. The application was heard on 21st December 2011 and the judge upheld the Authority's decision to terminate the contract. At the same time as the legal challenges were being dealt with staff were working with residents and their families to identify alternative accommodation. The process commenced in January 2012 and ended with the last resident moving out on 20th February 2012.

In terms of fees, it was noted that over the last year there had been three separate judicial review hearings regarding fee levels for independent sector providers. Agreement has been reached with providers that for 2012-2013 fee levels would be increased by a flat rate of 3% for the period April to October 2012. A further report would be brought to Members as this issue progresses.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the issues and themes emerging in respect of residential care homes for older people. Further reports on specific issues such as future care home fees would be brought to the Scrutiny Committee as they progress.

11. CLIENT FINANCE AND PROPERTY TEAM

The Scrutiny Committee received a short presentation on the main functions of the Client Finance and Property Team and the valuable service it provides to service users.

At the end of February 2012 the Authority was acting on behalf of 156 service users within the County Borough with thirteen additional cases pending. These figures do not take account of the number of service users who have had their finances managed by the team during the year but have now passed away. The numbers are continuing to increase even though the Directorate only acts as Deputy as a last resort, with family members/friends expected to take on the role unless there are specific concerns that prevent them from doing so.

Over the past three years the Team has entered into collaborative service level agreements with Merthyr Tydfil CBC (who have commissioned the Team to act as Deputy for 30 of their clients), Blaenau Gwent CBC (also commissioned the Team to act as Deputy for 20 of their clients) and the Aneurin Bevan Health Board (commissioned to act as Deputy for 45 of their clients who are eligible for continuing healthcare funding). The income derived from the collaborative agreements and fees paid by the clients mean that the Team has been self-financing over the past three years.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the work being undertaken by the Client Finance and Property Team, the continued demand in this area and the benefits the service brings to its service users in respect of safeguarding them and improving their quality of life.

12. REQUESTS FOR REPORTS

1. It was requested that six-monthly progress reports be provided on the SEW Fostering and Residential Placements Agreement.
2. Having regard to the issues raised by the Youth Forum in their presentation at the start of the meeting it was requested that a report be provided in due course on the outcomes achieved.

13. INFORMATION ITEMS

The following information item was noted: -

1. Rota Visits by Members to Social Services Establishments - 1st October 2011 to 31st December 2011.

This was the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee before the County Council Elections on 3rd May 2012. The Chair thanked all members and co-opted members of the Scrutiny Committee for their attendance and contributions over the last four years. Members of the Scrutiny Committee in turn thanked the Chair for the courteous and impartial manner in which he had undertaken his duties during this period.

The meeting closed at 6.45 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the next meeting, they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN