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For all enquiries relating to this agenda please contact Charlotte Evans
(Tel: 01443 864210 Email: evansca1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Date: 21st April 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

A meeting of the **Social Services Scrutiny Committee** will be held via Microsoft Teams on **Tuesday, 27th April, 2021 at 5.30 pm** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda. Councillors and the public wishing to speak on any item can do so by making a request to the Chair. You are also welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, both these requests require a minimum notice period of 3 working days.

This meeting will be recorded and made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. Therefore the images/audio of those individuals speaking will be publicly available to all via the recording on the Council website at www.caerphilly.gov.uk

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chrissy'.

Christina Harrhy
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

AGENDA

- | | Pages | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | To receive apologies for absence. | |
| 2 | Declarations of Interest. | |

Councillors and Officers are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest (s) in respect of any item of business on this agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Officers.

A greener place Man gwyrddach



To approve and sign the following minutes: -

- 3 Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 16th March 2021. 1 - 4
- 4 Consideration of any matter referred to this Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.
- 5 Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme. 5 - 14
- 6 To receive and consider the following Cabinet reports*: -
1. Interim Report from Task and Finish Group on Non-Residential Care Charges.

**If a Member of the Scrutiny Committee wishes for the above Cabinet report to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting please contact Charlotte Evans, Committee Services Officer, Tel no. 01443 864210 by 10.00am on Monday, 26th April 2021.*

To receive and consider the following Scrutiny reports: -

- 7 Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Assurance Check 2021: Caerphilly County Borough Council Social Services - Feedback. 15 - 28

Circulation:

Councillors: A. Angel, J. Bevan, C. Bezzina (Vice Chair), L.J. Binding (Chair), D. Cushing, K. Etheridge, M. Evans, A. Gair, Ms J. Gale, D.C. Harse, V. James, L. Jeremiah, Mrs A. Leonard, S. Skivens, C. Thomas and W. Williams

Users and Carers: Mr C. Luke and Michelle Jones

Aneurin Bevan Health Board: A. Gough (ABUHB)

And Appropriate Officers

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Those individuals that attend committee meetings to speak/give evidence will be named in the minutes of that meeting, sometimes this will include their place of employment or business and opinions expressed. Minutes of Meetings including details of speakers will be publicly available to all via the Council website at www.caerphilly.gov.uk. except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items.

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SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE DIGITAL MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY
16TH MARCH 2021 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor L. Binding - Chair
Councillor C. Bezzina - Vice Chair

Councillors:

A. Angel, K. Etheridge, M. Evans, A. Gair, V. James, L. Jeremiah, S. Skivens and W. Williams.

Cabinet Member: S. Cook (Social Care).

Together with:

D. Street (Corporate Director - Social Services and Housing), J. Williams (Assistant Director Adult Services), G. Jenkins (Assistant Director - Children's Services), R. Roberts (Business Improvement Manager), I. Richards (Business Improvement Officer), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer) J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer), and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

Users and Carer – Mrs M. Jones and C. Luke.

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being filmed but would not be live streamed, however a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – Click [Here To View](#). He advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors J. Bevan, A. Leonard and C. Thomas.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 2ND FEBRUARY 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd February 2021 (minute nos. 1 - 8) be approved and signed as a correct record.

4. 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.

5. SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer introduced the report that informed the Committee of its Forward Work Programme planned for the period March 2021 to January 2022.

The Committee discussed the Forward Work Programme at length and sought an update on discussions undertaken at the last meeting regarding the request for a cross party Task and Finish Group to consider Mental Health provision. The Scrutiny Officer advised that he would seek advice from the Monitoring Officer on the scope and composition of a future Task and Finish Group and report back to the Committee.

Following consideration and discussion the recommendation in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers be published on the Council's website.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

6. DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT SIX MONTH UPDATE 2020

The report presented Scrutiny with the new Social Services Directorate Performance Assessment (DPA) which is part of the Council's new Performance Framework.

It was noted that the DPA provides information and analysis for the 6-month period April to September 2020. The DPA forms part of the overall Council 'self-assessment' activity, of which members were invited to discuss, challenge and scrutinise the information in DPA.

The Council's Performance Framework had been in its current format for several years and formed a foundation stone of the Council's governance arrangements.

As the Council embarked on its ambitious Transformation Programme, Team Caerphilly, alongside the emergence of new legislation such as the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill 2019, it became both timely and opportune that the Framework was redeveloped and enhanced.

The new Performance Framework was endorsed by Cabinet February 2020 and the report introduced one of the key components of the Framework, the Directorate Performance Assessment (DPA). The DPA is a 'self-assessment' of Directorate's progress across a wide range of information types.

It was noted that Directorate Performance Assessments are an opportunity to bring together a range of information and intelligence into one picture to answer the self-assessment question of 'how well are we performing and how do we know?' Appendix A to the report provided the Social Services Directorates Performance Assessment up to September 2020.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

Members raised several queries within the report around risks and performance and Officers provided the Committee with a detailed background of the performance surrounding the included data.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By show of hands this was unanimously agreed

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report Appendix A and the information within be discussed, challenged and Scrutinised.

7. WHITE PAPER ON REBALANCING CARE AND SUPPORT – PRESENTATION.

The Director for Social Services and Housing provided the Committee with a presentation on the White Paper 'Rebalancing Care and Support', which was published on 12th January 2021 and provided a 12-week consultation period, which is due to expire on 6th April 2021. It was noted that Annex 2 of the report, which was circulated for consideration prior to the meeting provided 12 questions for response as part of the consultation.

The Committee thanked the Director for the presentation and discussion ensued.

The Committee raised several concerns within the document, which included concerns around the Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) in relation to accountability and governance, which has previously been fed back to Welsh Government. Other concerns raised included contradictions within the document, concerns around the reshaping and level of power awarded to the RPBs and concerns around the role of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee should the proposals be implemented.

The Officer thanked the Committee for the detailed feedback, and supporting many of the points raised, agreed to provide the feedback to Welsh Government as part of the consultation process.

8. SOCIAL SERVICES COVID-19 POSITION STATEMENT

The Scrutiny Committee noted that on 1st December 2020, the Social Services Scrutiny Committee received an overview of the Directorate's response to the coronavirus pandemic. The report provided information on the approach taken to identify, mitigate and manage the risks that emerged during the first phase of the pandemic and identified issues that were likely to remain a challenge in 2021. The report presented at the meeting on 1st December was attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

Members recalled that at the meeting, it was agreed that Members would use the report to identify further areas for "deep dives" on areas of interest or in relation to issues that emerged as the pandemic continued into 2021.

The report provided more detail on some of the issues raised in the December report and subsequent questions raised by Committee Members. The report also provided further service issues that have emerged during the ongoing pandemic.

It was noted that the ongoing pandemic has meant that over the past 12 months the Directorate has had to look at the way it delivers services and deploys its resources very differently. From early on, some services have had to be paused, staff redeployed into new areas of work and resources redirected to deal with priorities that often emerged overnight.

Staff have had to work alongside partners in the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Education, Housing, the independent sector and the third sector.

Members noted that a recovery pathway is anticipated shortly, but whilst this is welcomed there is little doubt that the impact in terms of service delivery will be felt for years to come. It was noted that there has been significant learning from the pandemic, both positive and negative and alternative ways of delivering services required will be in the forefront of all plans as people come to terms with the outcome of the pandemic.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued. A Member, in noting the critical work being undertaken by the Buddy Scheme and Caerphilly Cares, sought further information on sustainability of services should cuts be required in the future. Officers assured that Committee that there are no proposed cuts to the 2021/22 budget and therefore services will remain. In addition, the Pandemic has afforded the department the opportunity to work differently and utilise community services and schemes for delivering services.

The Committee discussed the vaccination plan and the exceptional work of the NHS and services in delivering the programme.

Discussions took place around the hardship fund and Officers explained that this will be extended for a further 6 months but plans are in place for an exit strategy.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

The meeting closed at 7.22pm

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 27th April 2021.

CHAIR



SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 27TH APRIL 2021

**SUBJECT: SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD
WORK PROGRAMME**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND
CORPORATE SERVICES**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To report the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 Forward Work Programmes are essential to ensure that Scrutiny Committee agendas reflect the strategic issues facing the Council and other priorities raised by Members, the public or stakeholder.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 That Members consider any changes and agree the final forward work programme prior to publication.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 To improve the operation of scrutiny.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 The Social Services Scrutiny Committee forward work programme includes all reports that were identified at the scrutiny committee meeting on Tuesday 16th March 2021. The work programme outlines the reports planned for the period April 2021 to March 2022.

5.2 The forward Work Programme is made up of reports identified by officers and members. Members are asked to consider the work programme alongside the cabinet work programme and suggest any changes before it is published on the council website. Scrutiny committee will review this work programme at every meeting going forward alongside any changes to the cabinet work programme or

report requests.

- 5.3 The Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1, which presents the current status as at 6th April 2021. The Cabinet Work Programme is attached at Appendix 2. A copy of the prioritisation flowchart is attached at appendix 3 to assist the scrutiny committee to determine what items should be added to the forward work programme.

5.4 **Conclusion**

The work programme is for consideration and amendment by the scrutiny committee prior to publication on the council website.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 No assumptions are necessary.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 As this report is for information only an Integrated Impact Assessment is not necessary.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no specific financial implications arising as a result of this report.

9. **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no specific personnel implications arising as a result of this report.

10. **CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been included in this report.

11. **STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 The Local Government Act 2000.

Author: Mark Jacques, Scrutiny Officer jacqu@carphilly.gov.uk

Consultees: Dave Street, Corporate Director Social Services
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services/ Monitoring Officer
Lisa Lane, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer,
Legal Services
Councillor Lyndon Binding, Chair of Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Carmen Bezzina, Vice Chair of Social Services Scrutiny
Committee

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme
- Appendix 2 Cabinet Forward Work Programme
- Appendix 3 Forward Work Programme Prioritisation Flowchart

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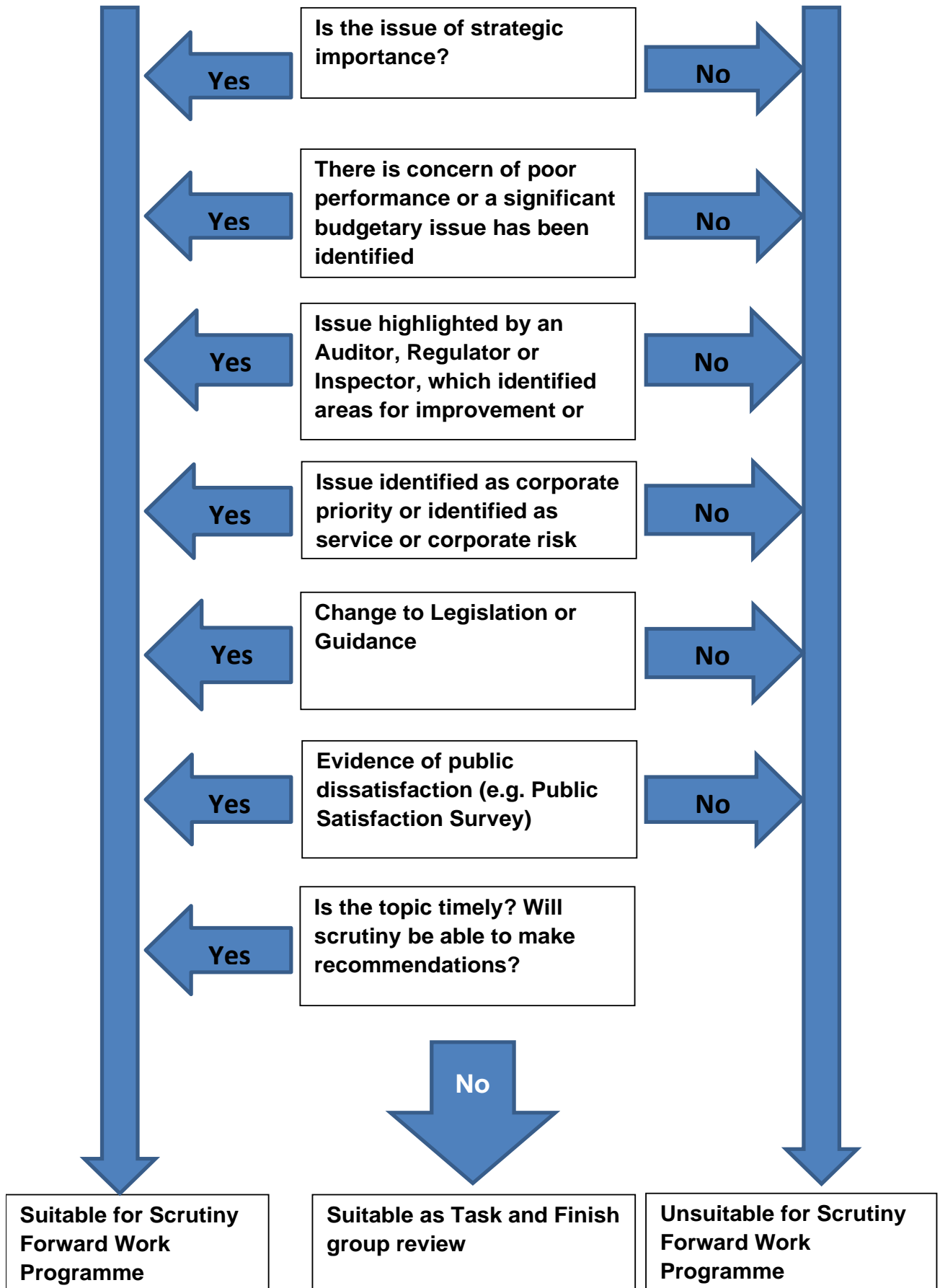
Forward Work Programme - Social Services				Appendix 1
Date	Title	Key Issues	Author	Cabinet Member
27/04/21 17:30	CIW Inspection Feedback			Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
15/06/21 17:30	Regional Partnership Update (June 2021)		Street, Dave;	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
15/06/21 17:30	Information Item - Social Services Revenue Budget for 2021/22			Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
15/06/21 17:30	Information Item - Social Services Specific Grant Funding for the 2021/22 financial year			Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
02/09/21 17:30	Directorate Performance Report – Social Services Year End Report 2020/21		Street, Dave;	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
02/09/21 17:30	Annual Report from the Director of Social Services		Street, Dave;	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
02/09/21 17:30	Period 3 Budget report 2021/22			Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
12/10/21 17:30	Period 5 Budget report 2021/22			Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
12/10/21 17:30	Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report			Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
12/10/21 17:30	ABUHB Presentation (October 2021)			Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
23/11/21 17:30	Report from Task and Finish Group on Non-Residential Care Charges		Jacques, Mark;	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
23/11/21 17:30	Regional Partnership Update (November 2021)			Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
25/01/22 17:30	Period 7 Budget report 2021/22		Jones, Mike J;	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;

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21/04/2021 10:30	Team Caerphilly Transformation Programme – 6 monthly update	To provide members with an update on progress against the Team Caerphilly Transformation Strategy	Richards, Sue;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;
21/04/2021 10:30	Corporate Performance Assessment Quarter 1/Quarter 2	To provide Cabinet with a high level performance update of the Council (from April – September 2020) based on the information from the Directorate Performance Assessments (DPA) for the same period.	Roberts, Ros; Richards, Sue;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;
21/04/2021 10:30	Regeneration Board Project Update	To recommend the allocation of up to £107k Regeneration Project Board Development Fund towards a recently endorsed and evaluated project and note the allocation of Licence to Innovate Funding for Coffi Vista, Caerphilly. To consider the allocation of additional funding for the Regeneration Project Board	Kyte, Rhian;	Cllr. Morgan, Sean;
21/04/2021 10:30	Cwmcarn Forest Drive	To consider a proposed collaborative approach with NRW to enable the reopening of the Forest drive	Hudson, Paul; Kyte, Rhian;	Cllr. Morgan, Sean;
19/05/2021 10:30	Levelling Up fund	To outline the opportunities and constraints for the Council presented by the new UK funding programmes and initiatives including eligibility criteria, funding allocations and development timescales and propose an initial pipeline list of Council projects eligible for submission to the new funding programmes	Kyte, Rhian; Williams, Mark S;	Cllr. Morgan, Sean;

19/05/2021 10:30	A469 Troedrhifwuch Highway Improvement Scheme	Seeking approval from Cabinet to allocate £300k of Capital available to allow progression and development of the outline design and detailed budget estimate for the next phase of the A469 Troedrhifwuch highway improvement scheme."	Lloyd, Marcus; Williams, Mark	Cllr. Ridgewell, John;

Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme Prioritisation



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SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 27TH APRIL 2021

**SUBJECT: CARE INSPECTORATE WALES (CIW) ASSURANCE CHECK
2021: CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL SOCIAL
SERVICES – FEEDBACK**

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR SOCIAL SERVICES & HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Social Services Scrutiny Committee of the outcome of the recently completed CIW Assurance Check. The purpose of this assurance check was to review how Caerphilly's Social Services Directorate continues to help and support adults and children with a focus on safety and well-being.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The attached letter from CIW summarises the findings of their assurance check which took place between the 15th March to 19th March 2021. In March 2020, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) suspended its inspection programme in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to enable local authorities and providers to focus fully on responding to the challenging circumstances. A revised programme with local authorities recommenced in September 2020 to provide assurance about how people had been being safeguarded and well-being promoted during the pandemic.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members note the content and findings of the CIW letter.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The CIW letter provides the Council with a position statement in relation to its response to the Coronavirus pandemic.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 In undertaking the assurance check referred to in the attached report, CIW considered:-

1. How well is the local authority discharging its statutory functions to keep people who need care and support and carers who need support, safe and promote their well-being during the pandemic?
 2. What is the local authority doing to prevent the need for children to come into care; and are children returning home to their families quickly enough where safe to do so?
- 5.2 The Inspection took place over 5 days with CIW staff reviewing documentation supplied in advance of their visit, which included reviewing 34 files and holding 10 case tracking interviews with staff. Inspectors spoke with carers and people who were receiving or had received care and support including 6 young people who had left care, all virtually. CIW administered a survey to people who had experience of care and support, providers, third sector organisations, staff, police and healthcare professionals. Inspectors also met with representatives from police, education Health and the third sector, again all virtually.
- 5.3 In undertaking the assurance check CIW considered the following areas:-
- People – voice and control
 - Prevention
 - Partnership and Integration
 - Wellbeing

And their summary of findings and priorities for improvement to each of these areas are contained within the attached letter.

5.4 **Conclusion**

Overall, the assurance check presents a positive picture of current practice within Caerphilly's Social Services Directorate through the coronavirus pandemic. As would be expected in an inspection of this nature a small number of areas for improvement have been identified and officers have already started work on rectifying these points. These areas for improvement identified will also be included in the relevant Improvement Plans for the Directorate.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in compiling this report.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 This report is for information and has no decision making requests, so the Council's full Integrated Impact Assessment process does not need to be applied.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no specific financial implications arising as a result of this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no specific personnel implications arising as a result of this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been included in this report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 The Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

Author: Dave Street, Corporate Director Social Services & Housing

Consultees: Councillor Shayne Cook, Cabinet Member Social Care
Councillor Lyndon Binding, Chair of Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Carmen Bezzina, Vice Chair of Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Christina Harray, Chief Executive
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director - Economy & Environment
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director - Education and Corporate Services
Jo Williams, Assistant Director Adult Services
Gareth Jenkins, Assistant Director Children's Services

Appendices:
Appendix 1 Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Assurance Check 2021: Caerphilly County Borough Council Social Services

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Dave Street
Director of Social Services
Caerphilly County Borough Council
Penallta House
Tredomen
Ystrad Mynach
Caerphilly
CF82 7PG

Dyddiad / Date: 16 April 2021

Dear Director,

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Assurance Check 2021: Caerphilly County Borough Council Social Services

This letter summarises the findings of our assurance check on the 15 March to 19 March 2021. The purpose of the assurance check was to review how well the local authority's social services continue to help and support adults and children with a focus on safety and well-being.

Overview

In March 2020, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) suspended its routine programme in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to enable local authorities and providers to focus fully on responding to the challenging circumstances. A revised programme with local authorities recommenced in September to provide assurance about how people are being safeguarded and well-being promoted during the pandemic. We considered safety and well-being of people who use or may need to use services, the safety of services they access and the safety and well-being of people who work in services.

We focused our key lines of enquiry within the four principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and have recorded our judgements and findings

<p>Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru (AGC) Swyddfeydd Llywodraeth Cymru Sarn Mynach Cyffordd Llandudno Conwy LL31 9RZ www.arolygiaethgofal.cymru</p>	<p>☎ 0300 790 0126 ✉ ciw@gov.wales</p>	<p>Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Welsh Government Offices Sarn Mynach Llandudno Junction Conwy LL31 9RZ www.careinspectorate.wales</p>
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

aligned to these: People - Voice and Control, Prevention, Partnerships and Integration, Well-being.

We asked:

1. How well is the local authority discharging its statutory functions to keep people who need care and support and carers who need support, safe and promote their well-being during the pandemic?
2. What is the local authority doing to prevent the need for children to come into care; and are children returning home to their families quickly enough where safe to do so?

Summary of findings and priorities for improvement:

People - voice and control – We asked: How well is the local authority ensuring people, carers and practitioners are having their voices heard, making informed choices, and maintaining control over their lives. While also balancing the recommendations and requirements made by Public Health Wales and Welsh Government to limit the spread of COVID-19?

Caerphilly County Borough Council social services has proactively responded to the challenges of the pandemic. Positive collaborative working between social services, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) and other partner agencies has assisted the shared identification and coordination of support with all adult and children's cases being prioritised according to vulnerability. We found evidence of good operational communication and responsive practice, for example, Gwent Wide Integrated Community Equipment Service (GWICES) sharing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) with local care homes and care providers.

The local authority has had to significantly advance its agile working arrangements to enable its workforce to work more flexibly from home, in addition to continuing a reduced staff presence in dedicated offices.

People we spoke with told us that the local authority had maintained safe contact with them throughout the pandemic. Where needed, direct safe face-to-face contact has continued, subject to a COVID risk assessment, and staff have been provided with appropriate levels of personal protective equipment (PPE). We saw examples of staff working creatively using e-mail, WhatsApp, and video meetings as means of delivering their professional responsibilities. Also providing laptops to support family contact, holding virtual bingo sessions, 'meet and munch' and afternoon teas as a way of reducing isolation and maximising their engagement with people.

Young people who had left care spoke positively about the support they had received from their personal advisors. They told us of the practical support provided during the pandemic to continue with their studies and employment. It was noted that some young people raised issues regarding a lack of priority for care leavers in accessing the housing register.

There was a recognition of the additional pressures experienced by carers during the pandemic. We found evidence of carers' needs being appropriately considered and supported alongside the cared for person, with their needs being assessed and documented separately to those of the cared for person. We heard from carers how they had received regular additional welfare phone calls from the carer's service. Social services had also worked hard to maintain a reduced respite provision for both adults and children.

Providers told us how established working relationships and excellent communication from the local authority enabled financial, emotional and practical support to be delivered efficiently. The local authority had supported and enabled providers to be more flexible during the pandemic to provide what was needed for people.

Overall, we found people's views were sought and their choices respected with practice increasingly focused on helping people to achieve their self-identified outcomes. We saw some good examples of the use of independent advocates in facilitating the voice of the person in both adults and children's safeguarding. We also saw a number of examples where informal advocacy was appropriately promoted.

People were able to communicate in their preferred language. We found the Welsh language 'Active Offer' of having an assessment in the person's language of choice was being implemented and consistently recorded. We were also told of the availability of a number of staff confident in providing services in Welsh.

The recruitment and retention of staff is a recognised business critical priority and social services have adopted a proactive 'grow your own approach'. As with many local authorities, recruitment to children's services continues to be particularly challenging and where appointments have been possible they have tended to be social workers who are more recently qualified. While some staff identified that vacancies, sickness and social work supply had created pressure for some teams, overall we found staff morale was good and practitioners were positive about their experience of working for the local authority. Staff described feeling valued and said managers were supportive and accessible.

Staff described workloads as manageable but busy and demanding due to the growing complexity of issues. Management oversight of practice was generally identifiable within records. Staff valued the regularity of supervision although the quality of the supervision record seen was variable.

We heard how the development of the workforce has been maintained as far as possible during the pandemic. Training opportunities have continued with a number of digital platforms used to enable staff and partners to access on-line training. Newly qualified staff told us how they are supported in their first year of practice by regular supervision and mentoring arrangements that include bi weekly reflective sessions.

Quality assurance systems are utilised in both adults and children services and the importance of capturing and disseminating learning from case file audits, practice, and the impact of training is well established.

Although we saw evidence that people's voices are sought and their choices respected, the quality of assessments and care and support plans seen was inconsistent. The electronic record did not always demonstrate the positive work we heard about during interviews. While we saw some good adult records capturing 'what matters' to the person written in their own words, other assessments and care plans were incomplete. In children's services the good quality of the information and analysis seen in the assessments was not always translated into a relevant care and support plan.

In both adults and children's services we saw examples where a more explicit focus on strengths and outcomes would have been beneficial in providing a holistic view of the person, and in promoting a shared understanding and ownership of the changes needed to achieve the outcomes sought.

Supporting children looked after and young people leaving care to reach their full potential and achieve positive outcomes is clearly high on the local authority's agenda. We heard there is good support for corporate parenting across the council. Representation has been strengthened by the inclusion of both young care leavers and foster carers on the Corporate Parenting Group.

Caerphilly County Borough Council has a relatively stable number of children looked after. Senior managers and officers have a good understanding and knowledge of the profile of the children it is looking after. There is strong commitment to the preventative agenda and to the safe reduction of the number of children being looked after. A proactive assurance framework has been embedded to strengthen managers' and practitioners' line of sight on practice, this includes a number of panel arrangements chaired by the assistant director of children's services and the dissemination of performance information to staff and partners. At the time of this assurance check the authority had achieved a 5% reduction in its children looked after population but was realistic regarding the potential unknown demand for services post lock down.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the local authority has continued to successfully recruit foster carers, this has included 13 new foster carers last year and a further 19 applications currently in progress. The fostering team have used a range of initiatives such as Facebook, radio, and television as a recruitment platform. Whilst virtual panels, training, and supervision arrangements had all helped to ensure there is no drift in securing appointments to this crucial service. Established foster carers also told us how they appreciated the efforts made to maintain good communication and placements support during the pandemic, including the work of the Intensive Support Team (IST) to promote family-led planning and foster carers access to their own psychological support service.

For young people with the most complex needs, the development of children's residential homes within the county is underway. This initiative is intended to

minimise the need for children to be placed in high-cost specialist residential provision outside of the county.

Prevention - We asked: To what extent is the local authority successful in promoting prevention and reducing need for increased or formal support from statutory agencies?

Prevention is an integral part of the Caerphilly County Borough Council's business.

We found a positive integrated approach to a developing culture of prevention evidenced through joint working and information exchange with partners including third sector providers. The local authority mostly demonstrates a prudent approach to service delivery, with resource allocation focused on ensuring early support to prevent the escalation of need. In response to our staff survey, workers were positive about the range and quality of the preventative resources but recognised, despite best efforts, the quality of the offer available to families had been adversely affected by the restrictions in face-to-face contact due to the pandemic

The local authority has established 'front door' arrangements described by staff as responsive, proportionate, and holding expertise regarding preventative services. We saw evidence in records of innovative practice with people being appropriately directed to early intervention service at the right time.

Within adults services the integrated Community Resource Team and Community Occupational Therapists have maintained their work during the pandemic to prevent hospital admission, support early hospital discharges, and ensure the provision of reablement which supports people to achieve their independence goals. This integrated team works closely with health services such as the frailty/rapid nurses, and has close links with the hospital social workers. The assessments seen were timely, undertaken remotely wherever possible or through risk assessed face-to-face contact. We saw good evidence of domiciliary care service provision, including a home first service, as well as the availability of appropriate aids and equipment helping to maintain people remain or return safely home. No waiting lists for community services were identified.

Within children's services we saw a very strong suite of preventative services such as My Support Team (MyST) playing a significant role in supporting the most complex children in the community, supporting foster carers and staff within residential homes. Safe Families has recently been commissioned to offer bespoke packages of support, delivered through a network of volunteers providing support to families in crisis or in need. Intensive Support Team (IST) working with families seven days a week, undertaking a range of preventative and support services with children, families, and foster carers to prevent breakdown.

We observed how the resource panel and the complex needs panel, chaired by the assistant director of children's services and attended by a range of partners, ensured

senior officer oversight of cases. This provided constructive challenge and supported the preventative agenda of maintaining children to remain safely within their family or maintaining them in placement. It was noted that the panels had already started to identify and respond to emergent issues resulting from children's recent return to school following a long period at home. While staff considered panel arrangements as helpful, managers need to ensure workers attending panel take appropriate responsibility for developing clear recommendations for the panel based on the reassessment of progress.

Partnership and Integration: We asked: To what extent is the local authority able to assure itself opportunities for partnership working are positively exploited to maximise person centred planning and ensure integrated service delivery and service sustainability?

Partnerships were generally found to be working well at all levels and delivering a more integrated sustainable approach to meeting need and promoting well-being in line with legislation.

On an individual level we saw examples of good working relationships between professionals and people receiving care and or support. However, personal outcomes were not always consistently recording the extent to which people were involved as equal partners in the design and delivery of their care and support. Although staff are working towards understanding people's circumstances, the person's views must remain central to care planning and be reflected strongly in their assessment and plans.

Strategically, Caerphilly County Borough Council and its partners had responded to the pandemic through working together to support a shared approach. For example, adapting policy and procedures with health colleagues to support the safe discharge from hospital. The Regional Partnership Board, despite a pause in its activity during the initial stages of the pandemic, has continued to be influential in shaping health and social care services within the local authority.

Representatives from health, police, education, and the third sector confirmed there is a clear commitment to collaborative working across Caerphilly. During interviews, partners told us about strong partnership working with the local authority in the development of the new multi-agency Safeguarding Hub. The Caerphilly Hub went live in January 2021 and we found this was already having a positive impact on intelligence gathering, information sharing, and risk based decision making. Plans are in place to enhance the safeguarding hub response to missing children and those at risk of exploitation. The increased use of digital platforms has also meant agencies are contributing more effectively at strategy discussions and statutory meetings.

Social services staff also told us how the improved working relationships with education colleagues, including regular meetings, facilitated a better understanding and agile response to the changing support needs of children, young people, and their families during the period of lockdown. We heard from social work staff and managers about the challenges of supporting the emotional needs of children and

with mixed feedback regarding the timely availability of face-to-face therapeutic and emotional support services.

Providers spoke positively of the support they had received from local authority during the pandemic. They valued the level of communication and the quality of the advice and support received from local authority commissioners and Community Resource Teams (CRT) including, for example, the flexible use of staffing and resources to help maintain provision within the residential sector.

Overall, we found a positive shared commitment and growing emphasis on collaboration between the local authority and partner agencies at an operational level across children's and adults services.

Well-being: We asked: To what extent is the local authority promoting well-being, ensuring people maintain their safety and achieve positive outcomes that matter to them?

From the case file sample reviewed, we found that the people of Caerphilly could be assured that their safety is promoted. There was a focus on safeguarding and partners demonstrating a shared understanding of the new procedures.

In children's services we found most safeguarding concerns were responded to promptly in line with statutory requirements. From the arrangements we reviewed, particularly strategy discussions, these were timely and well-supported by partner agencies; which led to effective enquiries. It was noted from January 2021, health's involvement in strategy discussions was helping to ensure more holistic approach to information sharing.

In adults services we identified good analysis of risk, decision making, protection plans in place, and appropriate action taken when necessary. We heard from partners how the Safeguarding Team worked well with people from across the sector. We found evidence of good collaboration between social services, the police, and the third sector working directly with people to meet their safety outcomes.

Staff awareness and practice to establish whether people have mental capacity to make specific decisions and where necessary to make best interest decisions on their behalf was reflected in records and the sample of assessments seen were of a good quality.

Management oversight was evident in both adults and children's safeguarding. However, the level of professional challenge provided was not consistently well recorded. Staff in children's services clearly valued the risk assessment model and the accompanying training (Bruce Thornton model), but could not always articulate when they would use the approach.

Safeguarding practice in children's services highlighted some practice variability. While the best case file examples demonstrated timely early responses with prompt information gathering to help inform planning which addressed child protection concerns. In other cases seen, the quality of the response including the resulting

multi-agency safety plans were less visible for example historical factors were not always sufficiently considered as potential indicators of risk. The evaluation and analysis of risk and safety planning in relation to neglect and domestic abuse was identified as a particular area for improvement. It is positive the local authority had already identified this as a practice issue in relation to re-referral rates and it is important plans are developed to evaluate and address this fully

Methods

- we reviewed documentation supplied in advance of our visit
- we spoke with carers and people who were receiving or had received care and support including six young people who had left care
- we reviewed 34 files
- we held ten case tracking interviews with staff
- we administered a survey to people who had experience of care and support, providers, third sector organisations, staff, police, and healthcare professionals
- we attended a Resource and Complex Needs Panel
- we met with representatives from police, education department, health, and the third sector

Next Steps

We have identified strengths and areas for priority improvement and we will review the progress of these areas through our performance evaluation review meetings with the heads of service and director. We expect the areas of improvement we have identified to be included in the local authority's improvement plans. We would like to extend our thanks to all those who helped with the arrangements for this assurance check and to those people and staff who spoke with us.

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Yours sincerely,



Lou Bushell-Bauers
Head of Local Authority Inspection
Care Inspectorate Wales

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