



## HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 22ND MARCH 2016

**SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTENSIVE THERAPEUTIC FOSTERING  
SERVICE FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN CAERPHILLY**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES**

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To apprise Scrutiny Committee Members of a proposal to develop a multi-disciplinary intensive therapeutic fostering service for Looked After Children and young people and to seek Committee's endorsement of the proposed service and funding stream, prior to a report being forwarded to Cabinet.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Looked After Children and young people with the most complex needs tend to experience multiple foster care placement breakdowns. Their risk taking behaviours and significant emotional needs often exceed the resources of Local Authority Foster Carers and due to the frequent placement moves, their needs are often unable to be addressed by core Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Consequently, many of these most troubled young people are placed in residential care out of area, with poor clinical outcomes and at great expense.
- 2.2 There are currently 13 young people placed in out of area residential care. 6 of these young people have complex disabilities or additional learning needs requiring specialist support that cannot currently be provided locally. However, the remaining 7 young people are troubled teenagers who have broken down multiple foster care and residential placements. The full year cost of these 7 placements is £1.28 million.
- 2.3 In addition to the high cost, the outcomes for young people in these placements are not always positive. Contact with family can be challenging because of the distance, their relationships with their peers and communities are severed and the standards of education provision are often poor or unable to be evidenced.
- 2.4 It is recognised that our 'standard practice' approach is not sustainable and a different approach is needed if we want to better meet the needs of this troubled group of Looked After Children and young people.
- 2.5 Torfaen County Borough Council commission a therapeutic fostering service called MIST (Multi-disciplinary Intervention Service Torfaen) which has been running for 12 years. MIST provides intensive support to a small number of specially recruited and trained therapeutic foster carers to repatriate young people placed in out of area residential care and to prevent young people who may be at risk of residential care from moving out of area.

- 2.6 It is proposed that a MIST type service is developed to meet the needs of Caerphilly children and young people.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014.
- 3.2 Children's Services Commissioning Strategy 2015-2020.

### **4. THE REPORT**

#### **Clinical Approach:**

- 4.1 MIST's clinical approach is rooted in Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of child development and is in line with the Welsh Government strategy 'Together for Mental Health'. It is multi systemic; providing a variety of different types and styles of intervention simultaneously at many different points in the young persons' system. The approach places particular emphasis on four psychological models; attachment, family systems, person-centred and social learning approaches.
- 4.2 Equally important is MIST's approach to working with risk which recognises the necessity both of safeguarding and of tolerating well understood and managed risks, which are both inevitable and provide essential opportunity for young people to build resilience and trust and to learn new skills. The service benefits from a well-developed model, knowledge base and practical experience of working in this way and has published a peer reviewed journal on the issue (Hill, 2011).
- 4.3 The model effectively creates a team around the young person, where the staff members have good relationships, communicate well, hold a shared understanding, act consistently and provide mutual support. The team works with well understood and managed risks to keep young people safe whilst building their skills and resilience which, over time, leads to a reduction in their risk taking behaviours.
- 4.4 The team around the young person can provide a buffer against the disruption caused by changes in professional personnel and can hold in mind the young person's life story and make sense of the present in light of this. This helps to counter the problems of disruption that often prevent progress in the care of looked after young people.

#### **Staff Team:**

- 4.5 The MIST Team consists of:
- Service Manager – Registered Mental Health Practitioner
  - Consultant Child Psychologist
  - Therapeutic Practitioners – from a range of disciplines including CAMHS, Social Work, Teaching and Youth Work.
  - Therapeutic Foster Carers – jointly recruited, trained and supervised by the Local Authority Fostering Service.

#### **Benefits:**

- 4.6 The MIST service in Torfaen has been independently evaluated twice; in 2008 and 2011. Both evaluation reports were positive. The 2011 evaluation was a 'Social Return on Investment Study' which concluded that for every £1 spent on MIST, a saving of £5.20 is made across statutory services.

4.7 For the Local Authority the benefits have been:

- Residential placements have reduced from an average of 15 at any time to being consistently below 5, despite a rise in the overall number of LAC
- Significant financial savings as a result
- Placement stability averages at 93% for MIST young people
- 85% of MIST young people are engaged in education or training
- Shared learning and benefits for foster care recruitment and training
- Provision of clinical advice and consultation to wider staff groups.

**Proposed Caerphilly development:**

4.8 It is proposed that the service will be commissioned from the third sector and a draft service specification is being developed to inform the procurement process if approved.

4.9 It is anticipated that following the awarding of a contract, the recruitment to posts will take at least three months. During and following recruitment, key strategic and operational relationships will need to be established including with partner agencies and attendance at Resource and Permanency Panels. Strong links will need to be established with the Fostering Team to support the recruitment and assessment of therapeutic foster carers.

4.10 From 3 to 12 months, the service will commence working with individual cases as staffing levels allow, with the aim of being fully operational within 12 months. From 12 months on, the service will be expected to work with 15 placements in the intensive element of the service. Their work will include supporting the return of young people from out of area placements to Caerphilly, working with existing in-house placements to prevent the need for out of area placements and working with families to support rehabilitation home.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The development of the service outlined in this report is aimed at enhancing and improving services for Looked After Children and young people and as a result there are no foreseen equalities implications.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 As outlined earlier, the full year cost for the existing 7 young people placed in out of area residential care is £1.28 million which gives an average unit cost of £182,865 per placement.

6.2 The estimated full year cost for a MIST type service in Caerphilly is £583k. This includes staffing, accommodation and running costs for the team (£400k) and the estimated fees and allowances for the therapeutic foster carers (£112k fees and £71k allowances). Whilst the team costs are able to be predicted, the costs associated with the foster care placements will be determined by the numbers able to be recruited.

6.3 If the total cost of the service when fully operational is estimated to be £583k per annum and the average out of area placement cost is £182k per annum, then by reducing or preventing out of area placements by four will ensure the service covers its own costs leaving the small surplus to off-set any pressures within the placement budget.

6.4 The aim would be for the service to cover its own costs within 18 months of being established. Over time the savings can be anticipated to grow as increasing numbers of young people are supported to remain in Caerphilly.

6.5 It is proposed that Directorate budget reserves are utilised to fund the establishment of this service in Caerphilly.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 It is proposed that the service is commissioned from the third sector and as a result there will be no direct personnel or Human Resources implications for the Council.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 The views of the consultees listed below have been incorporated into this report.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 That Scrutiny Committee:

- Note the content of this report;
- Confirm support of the proposed service development and proposal to utilise Directorate budget reserves to establish the service and;
- Agree that this report is presented to Cabinet for approval.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 To ensure Elected Members are aware of the proposal and support the development of the new service.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 To ensure the Council's statutory functions in relation to children and young people Looked After are met in accordance with the relevant legislation and statutory guidance.

Author: Gareth Jenkins, Assistant Director – Children's Services  
Consultees: Social Services Senior Management Team  
Cabinet Member for Social Services  
Corporate Management Team  
Children's Services Divisional Management Team  
Marie Reid, Contracting Officer  
Sarah Ellis, Principal Educational Psychologist  
David Williams, Clinical Director, ABUHB