

Appendix 1: Children Services Overview

Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) Service covering both Adults and Children's Services:

The Council has a statutory duty to provide an IAA Service under the Social Services & Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. The underlying principles of the Act include “*helping people to help themselves*” and identifying “*what matters*” to people in order to provide appropriate support to assist them to achieve their goals. The IAA plays a critical role in delivering these principles in practice. Although Caerphilly's IAA continues to have dedicated Adults and Children's Duty Workers, the team is managed by a single Team Manager within Children's Services. The Duty Workers answer telephone calls and respond to other forms of enquiry, providing information and advice to reduce the need for statutory services. If the Worker assesses that the individual requires assistance, a referral is passed through to the appropriate operational team to undertake a *proportionate assessment* to ascertain the need for *care and support*.

The Community Connectors and Carers Support Officer are also based at IAA providing appropriate interventions to reduce isolation and support carers .

Locality Teams, Children with Disabilities Team and the 16 Plus Team:

There are 6 Locality Teams covering the Borough; Risca, Blackwood, Bargoed, Rhymney, Caerphilly Town East and Caerphilly Town West. The Children with Disabilities Team and the 16 Plus Team are both countywide services. All eight teams provide direct social work support to children, young people and their families across the following key service areas:

- Children in need
- Children on the Child Protection Register
- Children Looked After
- Children with complex needs
- Young people Leaving Care and homeless young people

The Teams are responsible for undertaking assessments on referrals received from IAA, developing Care & Support Plans and delivering direct social work support. The key pressure across the Teams relates to court work. Family Justice is governed by a framework called the Public Law Outline (PLO) which sets a target for all court proceedings involving children to be completed within 26 weeks and local performance is currently 23 weeks. The local Judiciary are particularly demanding in terms of their expectations and this places significant demand on frontline staff. In addition to these demands, the number of children subject to care proceedings has increased over the last 8 months and it is proving difficult for both Social Work Teams and the Legal Team to keep up with this demand.

Youth Offending Service (YOS):

Caerphilly hosts the Blaenau Gwent & Caerphilly YOS which provides diversionary and preventative support to children and young people on the edge of offending as well as intensive support for those young people who have offended and are being dealt with through the criminal justice system. The Team is a multi disciplinary team and has significantly reduced offending behaviours across the two Boroughs through highly effective diversionary supports. The Team is funded by core Local Authority funding and annual grant funding from the OPCC, the YJB and partner agency contributions. As a result, services provided can be vulnerable to cuts which can have a significant impact on performance. The YOS is regulated and inspected by HMIP.

Safeguarding:

Children's Services has responsibility for the following key areas of safeguarding across the Council:

- **Children's Safeguarding & Review Team (SRT):** this Team consists of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) who chair all the Child Protection Conferences and Reviews and the Statutory LAC Reviews. One of the IRO's is the professional lead for Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and together with the Team Manager, is engaged in regional service developments through the regional Safeguarding Children Board. The Team Manager is responsible for managing referrals relating to allegations against professionals under the All Wales Child Protection Procedures.
- **Adult Safeguarding Team:** this Team comprises POVA (Protection of Vulnerable Adults) Co-ordinators and manages all referrals and allegations relating to vulnerable adults. The Co-ordinators undertake enquiries, chair strategy meetings and plan investigations in conjunction with operational staff and partner agencies. The Team Manager is fully engaged in service development through the regional Adult Safeguarding Board.
- **Education Safeguarding and LAC Education Team:** this team comprises the Education Safeguarding Manager and a team of LAC Education Workers providing additional support to Looked After Children to help them achieve academically. The Team has built excellent working relationships with Schools across the Borough.
- **Regional Safeguarding Boards Business Unit:** the Business Unit is hosted by Caerphilly on behalf of the four other Gwent LA's and supports the work of both the South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board (SEWSCB) and the Gwent Wide Adult Safeguarding Board (GWASB). The Unit also supports elements of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) work programme. The Team are responsible for administrative support to the Boards and various sub-groups, strategic practice development across the region, workforce development including training and managing Case Practice Reviews (CPR's) where serious incidents occur.
- **Corporate Safeguarding:** Children's Services assumes lead responsibility for promoting the Corporate Safeguarding Policy across the Council. The Policy clarifies individuals responsibilities for safeguarding all vulnerable groups and includes helpful information to assist professionals and Elected Members to take appropriate action wherever necessary. The Policy also identifies the lead Designated Safeguarding Officers for each service area of the Council.

Fostering:

The Fostering service is regulated and inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW). The Fostering Team are responsible for the recruitment, assessment and training of all new foster carers and the ongoing support, development and review of existing foster carers. The Team support Foster Carers to provide high quality care to children and young people who have experienced trauma in their lives and as a result are often emotionally and physically challenging. In addition, the Team are responsible for undertaking Connected Person's Assessments of family members identified as alternative carers in court proceedings under the PLO. Two Fostering Panels are held each month to approve new carers and review existing carers. Elected Members can volunteer to become Panel members if they have the time to commit to reading the associated documentation and attending Panel meetings.

The team will play a critical role in the implementation of Caerphilly MIST – the intensive therapeutic fostering service currently being developed in Caerphilly.

Committee need to be aware that there are proposals to consider the regional delivery for part or all of the fostering service across Gwent being driven by Welsh Government's implementation of a National Fostering Framework.

Adoption:

Welsh Government introduced proposals to establish a National Adoption Service based on regional service delivery in 2016. As a result, adoption services for the five Gwent Local Authorities are now delivered regionally through the South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS). SEWAS is managed by Blaenau Gwent and governance and performance is monitored through a Gwent wide Management Board. Two Adoption Panels are held each month and Elected Member can volunteer to become members.

Residential services:

Children's Services manage two residential establishments;

- Ty Ni – a four bedded children's home providing short and long term placements for the most challenging children and young people and
- Blackwood Resource Centre – a residential short breaks service offering respite support for children and young people with complex health needs and disability

Both services are regulated and inspected by CSSIW.

Support Services:

- **Immediate Response Team (IRT):** IRT provides intensive support to families at the point of crisis to prevent children becoming Looked After or to prevent foster placement breakdowns. Where children and young people are on the edge of care and at risk of being accommodated, the Team can provide flexible daily support including evenings and weekends tailored to the needs of the family. The Team also undertake Parenting Assessments for court under the PLO.
- **Supporting Family Change (SFC):** SFC is funded through Families First and provides the Team Around the Family (TAF) Service that is a requirement of the grant funding. It is an early intervention and prevention service supporting families on the edge of statutory interventions. The Team undertakes assessments and provides direct support to families to build resilience and prevent family breakdowns. With the support of SFC, families are supported to access the full range of Families First Services available across the Borough. The Team also provide 'step down' support for families where Children's Services is ending their involvement.
- **Integrated Family Support Team (IFST):** Provision of a regional IFST is a statutory requirement under Part 9 of the Social Services & Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. The current service is provided through two hubs covering the five Gwent Local Authorities and is hosted by Newport. Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent form one of the hubs. The Team provides intensive support to families whose children are on the Child Protection Register and where there are concerns regarding parental substance misuse, mental health and or domestic abuse. The IFST is managed through a multi agency Management Board which recently agreed to review the service delivery model to align it more closely with existing family support services. The proposed changes will be reported to Committee in due course.