



SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE DIGITAL MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

K. Etheridge, M. Evans, A. Gair, J. Gale, V. James, S. Skivens, C. Thomas 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), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) and A. Dredge (Committee Services Officer).

Users and Carer – Mrs M. Jones.

Also in attendance:

J. Welham (CCBC Regional Programme Director - MyST Regional Programme)
J. Hill (ABUHB Regional Clinical Director - MyST Regional Programme)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors A. Angel, J. Bevan, D. Cushing, D. Harse, L. Jeremiah and C. Luke (User and Carer).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES - 4TH FEBRUARY 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 4th February 2020 (minute nos. 1 - 11) 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 September to December 2020. Members were asked to consider the work programme and to make any amendments or request additional agenda items to be included for future meetings.

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

RESOLVED that:

- i. the Annual Complaints and Compliments Report be added to next meeting scheduled on the 20th October 2020, as an information item;
- ii. an overview report in respect of the impact that Covid - 19 has had across the Social Services Directorate be brought to the next meeting scheduled on the 20th October 2020.
- iii. the work programme appended to the report be approved and published to the Council's website.

6. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed new and returning Members to the Committee and thanked out-going Members for their contributions whilst sitting on the Social Services Scrutiny Committee and extended particular thanks to the out-going Vice-Chair Councillor J. Bevan. He welcomed the newly appointed Cabinet Member for Social Care, Councillor S. Cook to his first Social Services Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Binding referred to those individuals who had lost their lives across the County Borough during the Coronavirus Pandemic and extended his appreciation to the staff who've worked tirelessly during this time. Members clapped as a mark of respect in support of the staff and the work undertaken across the Council during this period.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

7. MY SUPPORT TEAM (MyST) - PRESENTATION

J. Welham and J. Hill delivered the presentation which provided Members with an update on the MyST service since they last attended the Social Services Scrutiny Committee two years ago. This is a community-based Specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service to children looked after who are otherwise cared for in residential children's homes, secure units, or mental health inpatient units. The role of the Team is to repatriate these young people to local (biological or foster) family-based care by working with the young person's themselves and their entire adult network.

Caerphilly MyST is part of a regional partnership programme and Caerphilly have taken a key lead role in this development, and host two of the regional leadership's posts (ABUHB host the other leadership post). The team have moved from being hosted in the third sector to being employed by Caerphilly County Borough Council and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. ICF capital funding has been secured to refurbish a new community base in Bargoed. The Team has also gained additional resources of Clinical Psychology and Lead Therapeutic Practitioner time to invest in and influence the therapeutic care approach experienced by young people in Caerphilly residential care. An example of the impact the service has had upon one child and their family was provided to the Scrutiny Committee. Professionals have witnessed the benefits of family-based care for children with even the most complex mental health needs. It was explained that young people's presentations typically worsen when moved to residential care (especially in out of area placements which involve removing children from their relationships and communities).

Members were advised that partnership working across agencies has been strengthened through delivering MyST together and there are cost savings associated with the services. This also provides a psychological resource for social workers and teachers, foster carer consultation as well as training for foster carers and the workforce (e.g. newly qualified social workers).

In terms of going forward emphasis was placed on the need to sustain the teams to continue to work with high risk, very emotionally demanding work which is an ongoing task that requires lots of attention. It is intended that MyST will be extended to more children across Gwent by influencing the provision of mental health care to vulnerable children and families. Having a greater influence upon the approach experienced by children who need a period in Caerphilly residential care homes. Further developing the evidence base, with statistical data, and most importantly, what children and families themselves can tell the service about what they need from the Team.

The Cabinet Member thanked colleagues for delivering the presentation and highlighted the benefits the service provides to the child but also the family by improving better communication with one another. He added that the new MyST base in Bargoed supports the regeneration of the town especially when towns are struggling at this time.

In responding to a number of Members questions, the Committee were informed that referrals for the service would be received via Caerphilly's Complex Needs Panel. The children would usually be known to the multiple services involved and the steering group would decide on a way forward for the child. The Assistant Director for Children's Services is an advocate for the service and Caerphilly has taken the lead and provided appropriate resource and strategic support. By working in partnership at all levels is one reason how the service has worked so well.

In terms of children accessing the service, consideration by the Team would be given to children interacting with others and what they would get out of the relationships. MyST tackles children's problems and puts children back in touch with naturally protective factors. They try to encourage group activities for example taking the children on trips and learning new skills. Members spoke in admiration for the dedication and support shown by both Officers in delivering this service. The Officers confirmed that in relation to their working environment, that they have worked together for approximately 15 years and have a great working relationship. Their support is also provided by the Assistant Director of Children's Services and the Heads of Psychology within ABUHB and regular joint meetings are held. There are lots of layers of support with the whole ethos of working together across the board. Members also discussed the varying placement costs depending on the circumstances of individual cases.

The Chair in summing up, expressed his gratitude for the dedication and enthusiasm evidenced by the Officers. He referred to the good cost benefit analysis and highlighted that the financial input is not the driver in this service. The needs of the child and continuity of the

support mechanism are paramount. The Chair once again thanked the Officers for delivering the presentation and the Scrutiny Committee noted the contents.

8. ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ADDITIONAL RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOME WITHIN THE COUNTY BOROUGH

The report provided the Scrutiny Committee with the proposals to utilise Welsh Government Integrated Care Fund Capital monies to establish an additional residential children's home within the County Borough in line with the strategic plan to increase in-house provision.

Members were reminded of the current development of Ty Isaf, a four bedded children's home utilising ICF capital grant funding. This is on schedule to be operational from around Christmas, a Registered Manager has been appointed and the staff team is in the process of being recruited. Four children currently placed out of county have already been identified to transfer to the home when it becomes operational.

Children's Services applied for additional ICF Capital in 2019/20 to establish a third residential children's home. This bid was successful and Caerphilly County Borough Council was awarded £750k. Unfortunately, appropriate properties were unable to be identified and the monies were unable to be spent so Children's Services requested that the capital allocation be carried forward into 2020/21 which was agreed by Welsh Government.

The Officer set out the overall strategic plan for children's residential care in Caerphilly and updated Members on the developments to date. In summary, the final residential provision planned for children in Caerphilly is three 4 four bedded children's homes and one single bedded home thereby offering up to 13 in-house placements. It was explained that given the nature of the service provided and the potential opposition within communities to any such proposed development, potential properties need to be detached within its own grounds and preferably with some level of isolation. To accommodate four children and meet registration requirements the property has to be large enough to offer a minimum of four bedrooms and two bathrooms in addition to spacious living accommodation and outside space.

Whilst there is no doubt that Covid-19 impacted on the housing market, it continued to prove difficult to identify suitable properties within the Borough within the budget allocated. Committee will be aware that due to a positive financial outturn for Social Services, Service Specific Reserves have been able to be allocated to numerous developmental projects across the Directorate. One of the Children's Services requests was to add capital funding to the ICF grant in order to support expanding the search for suitable properties. As a result, Children's Services has been allocated an additional £250k from Reserves to bring the overall budget up to £1 million.

It was noted that searches are ongoing using Right Move and independent estate agencies together with building personal links with local agents in an attempt to identify potential properties in advance. All possibilities are being explored but most are ruled out because of proximity to neighbours. Despite the increased investment available, to date an appropriate property has yet to be identified and secured.

In responding to a number of Members questions, the Officer confirmed that there are currently 18 out of County placements, 10 of which are within a 10 mile radius of the borough. The benefit to this is that they are able to maintain school attendance and contact with family members. The aim of the Authority is to absorb the demand in Caerphilly in moving forward. The new house must be purchased in the borough, for Caerphilly children to remain in Caerphilly. Members were advised that there is a good working relationship across all 22 Authorities in Wales in terms of placements and partnership working. He referred to the 4 C's, namely, Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru. They work on a framework of residential care and foster carers in the independent sector. There are opportunities of sharing and working together but quite often Caerphilly works with the Gwent Local

Authorities. In terms of the ICF funding of £750k, this must be used by March 2021. There may be some flexibility from Welsh Government in that if a property is identified and the purchase process has started then this may be accepted although it is uncertain at this time.

The Chair thanked the Officer for presenting the report and for the good news stories brought to the Committee Meeting this evening.

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

RESOLVED that:

- i. the strategic plan to increase in-house residential, care provision for children and young people, be noted;
- ii. the proposed development of an additional residential children's home within the County Borough, be endorsed.

The meeting closed at 7.20pm

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 20th October 2020.

CHAIR