



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 9 January 2019 at 5.00 pm at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park. Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

County Borough Councillors - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor W Lewis (Chair)

Councillor S Evans	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor S Powell	Councillor J Davies
Councillor H Boggis	Councillor M Griffiths
Councillor G Jones	Councillor G Stacey

Officers in attendance

Mr P Nicholls, Head of Legal - Litigation, Planning & Environment, Community & Children's Services
Mr G Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Ms A Batley, Service Director, Children's Services
Mr L. Owen, Senior Accountant
Mrs C Tyler, Service Development Officer, Children's Services

32 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

33 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors S. Rees-Owen, A. Calvert, H. Fychan, J. Harries, M. Powell, A. Davies- Jones and Co-opted Member Mr S. Emanuel

34 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 9th January as an accurate reflection of the meeting subject to it being noted that County Borough Councillor M. Griffiths attended at the Meeting and County Borough Councillor J. Harries sent his apologies, which was omitted from the minutes. .

35 Report in respect of Placement Costs for Children Looked After in RCT

The Service Director Children's Services introduced the Principal Account for Children's Service to Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. It was explained that the report was brought to Members of the committee on the request of the Chair after she attended the Children's Service Quality Assurance Panel Meeting. The Chair felt that the information would help Members understand the financial costings of the Service.

The Principal Accountant took Members through a Power Point Presentation in respect of the weekly cost of Children Looked After Placements and Placements where an ongoing financial contribution is made.

It was explained that the two tables in the presentation gave a breakdown of the CLA placement expenditure and numbers broken down into type of placement.

Members thanked the Officers for the report and put forward their view and questions in respect of the figures put before for them.

After further discussion Members **RESOLVED** to

- Acknowledge the content of the presentation
- Agreed to receive further reports at a future meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

36 Accommodation Strategy Draft Report

The Service Director Children's Service and the Service Development Manager presented Members with the Draft Accommodation and Support Strategy for Young People 16+ years of age Leaving Care.

The Service Director Children's Service explained to Members that the purpose of the report was to give Scrutiny the opportunity to consider and endorse the Draft Accommodation and Support Strategy for Young People 16+ years of age Leaving Care.

The Service Development Manager presented Members with the background of the report. It was explained that children and young people looked after by the local authority rather than their parents are amongst the most vulnerable groups in our society. Members were reminded that as corporate parents it is the Authority's responsibility to keep them safe, make sure their experiences in care are positive and provide suitable accommodation and support when they eventually move on from care.

The Service Development Manger continued to explain that finding suitable accommodation and providing the required support has been a challenge. The draft strategy outlines how Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council will in the future approach supporting young people 16+ years who will leave care and need accommodation and support.

The Service Director Children's Service and the Service Development Manager explained the process so far. It was explained that the consultation on the draft strategy is still in the process of being completed. Officers explained that when the consultation on the draft strategy has been finalised the key agreed actions will be developed into a plan with set timescales and targets.

Members were informed that as part of the consultation process Member's views and observations along with other stakeholders and young people will be considered as part of the wider consultation process.

The Service Development Manager took Members through the document in detail and after concluding her report opened up the meeting for Members questions.

A Member asked a question relating to the age group 16+ the Member wanted

clarification in respect of age of the child leaving care. Officer explained that a child is looked after until the child is 18 years of age. It was explained the majority of care leavers (18 to 25 years) are known to the 16+ team.

Members were informed that the authority work with Children Looked After at around the age 15 to start planning the process to leave care. It was explained that officers work with the children to see what type of pathway they want to consider and the best way to take it forward.

A Member enquired about the provision of starter flats and training flats and the difference between the two. The Member felt that there should be more starter flats for the young people within RCT and wondered if there could be a change to the data to make a more rapid approach.

It was explained that the starter flats and training flats are classified as different accommodation settings; one is housing support and the other under children's service. This strategy will start the process of looking at the provision of these flats.

The Member also enquired about the mother and baby placement, and asked for more clarification. Officers explained that mother and baby placement are specialist placements some as residential and other placements are with specialist foster carer.

In respect of supporting people, a member commented that there is a range of things available with a high level of need for 16 to 25 years; the Member asked if the committee could have data to understand how many use the provision.

The relevant officer explained that over recent times there has been an increase in young people 16+ coming into care, along with 18 to 25 year olds coming back and asking for help. It was also explained that ICF funding has been obtained to purchase a house with 24 hour support. This will also be available to 16+ who need individual packages of care to assess their needs so that they can settle and move on to their next steps.

Members asked questions regarding the Get Ready and Move On Scheme (GRAMO). Officers explained that the scheme is a support and learning scheme for young people.

A Member comment that it is a timely and crucial piece of work as when we look at the figures in the report the number of children in care at present and the number of children leaving in the future, the demand will continue to be high and if we as an Authority do not do something now we will be heading for a big problem.

The Service Director Children's Service explained that the strategy will be implemented by March and there are strict timescales. We will work with Housing and other organisations to start the process.

Members raised the concerns about the young person's health and wellbeing when leaving care and asked about what support is available. Loneliness is a concern for the young person and as a corporate parent; we need to consider the wellbeing. Officers explained that there are many schemes in place including housing mentoring scheme. Voices from Care Wales and the blue print forum also focus on helping the children who have been through the Care System.

The Director of Community and Children's Services also commented on the level of complexity that some children within the system have as their physical and mental health needs are more apparent at a younger age.

One Member highlighted that within the report it stated that two of the carer leavers went on to study at university and asked what provision is given to them financially to help them through. It was explained that the authority covers all their needs.

The Children and Young people scrutinised the report in great detail and after robust scrutiny **RESOLVED** :

- Acknowledge the information contained within the report
- Agree the next steps outlined within the report
- Receive a further report in the future to monitor the progress of the plan and its outcomes.

This meeting closed at 6.15 pm

**Cllr W Lewis
Chair**