



## **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 October 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 S. Rees-Owen (Chair)

Councillor W Lewis      Councillor J Brencher  
Councillor H Fychan      Councillor S Powell  
Councillor M Griffiths      Councillor G Jones  
Councillor A Davies-Jones

### **Co-Opted Members in attendance:-**

Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative  
Mr K Wilhite, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

### **Officers in attendance:-**

Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services  
Ms A Batley, Director of Children's Services  
Mrs C Tyler, Service Development Officer, Children's Services  
Ms K Benjamin, Regional Manager for 4C's

### **County Borough Councillors in attendance:-**

Councillor S Evans and Councillor C Leyshon

#### **18 Declaration of Interest**

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

#### **19 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors S.Evans, A.Calvert, M. Powell, H. Boggis, G. Stacey, M. Diamond and Co-opted Member R. Nicholls.

#### **20 Information Reports**

The Chair referenced the information reports (as listed below), which were available through the 'RCT Scrutiny' website.

- Annual Complaints Report 2018-19
- Cwm Taf Safeguarding Annual Report 2018-19

## 21 Cabinet & Scrutiny Engagement

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services thanked Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee for the opportunity to present the progress made in advancing the portfolio as Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services along with the Director of Children's Services explained that Children's Services provide a wide range of services and support throughout the County Borough. The services protect and support vulnerable children, young people, families and carers.

Members were provided with a summary of performance for the year, it was explained that the teams across Rhondda Cynon Taf have again delivered a high quality of service. There has been strong commitment to joint working with our strategic partnerships in developing new models of care.

The Cabinet Member Children's Services highlighted some of the development such as Community Hubs, Resilient Families, which will bring further benefits to people's wellbeing.

The Cabinet Member ensued and presented Members with further information under various headings some of which are as follows:

- Resilient Families
- More engagement with Children Looked After
- Child Protection
- Supporting Children Looked After
- Fostering Service
- Accommodation and Placements for Children Looked After

Members were also presented with case studies within the report, which they found very helpful to understand some areas. Finally, Members were presented with the priorities for next year. After roust discussion the Chair opened up the meeting for Members questions.

Members thanked the Cabinet Member for a very informative report and proceeded to put forward their questions.

A Member asked with respect of future priorities whether there is any engagement with young people in relation to policy making. The Director Children's Services explained that young people views are sought during the youth forums; she explained that we encourage young people to influence our policy.

Members congratulated the Resilient Families Service for the positive work and a Member asked if there had been any resource implication. The Cabinet Member explained that there is grant funding which we have to look at opportunities that give us a maximum use.

In respect of career services for our young people what has been put in place to help mentor the vulnerable young adults going forward in to the next phase of their life. Officers and the Cabinet Member explained that the YEPS Service work with the young people, showing that their choice is key. We also encourage

peer mentoring. YEPS help prepare CVs and create an action plan to work with.

Members were pleased to see that there were a number of case studies, which provided interesting reading. One Member commented on the complaints, compliment sections of the report, and asked if there was a reason why complaints had dropped. It was explained that complaints are handled at an early stage, people are now complaining through the right channels and the response is immediate. We are encouraging children to put their complaints forward as we need to listen to them.

A Member suggested that there should be more information regarding the transition to adulthood as it is a critical area which needs to be developed. Members felt strongly that work need to be done on the following areas:

- 16+ Accommodation
- Out of County Placements
- Resilience Resources
- Children's Mental Health

After further scrutiny Members thanked the Cabinet Member for Children's Services for a very in depth report and **RESOLVED:**

- Receive a report with regards to Early Years.
- Receive an update in respect of the 16+ Accommodation Strategy.
- To Email the Democratic Services Officer with any item that Members would like on the work programme.

## 22 Report in respect of Private Care Home Provision

The Chair invited the Manager of the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs) to present her report to the Committee.

Members were presented with snapshot of the provision of Residential provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf as at September 2019. It was explained that there are:

- 61 registered beds
- 16 care settings
- Highest cluster geographically: Aberdare, Pontypridd and Porth.

In respect of provision out of the 61 beds: 12 are targeted at children with disability, additional learning needs or impairment, the 12 beds are across 3 care settings (1 charity; 1 LA; 1 Private provision). It was explained that previously RCT had a specific contract with a voluntary provider for RCT'S sole use only but this had now ended The 1 private setting is with a framework provider who It was explained RCT has a contract with voluntary provider for RCT'S sole use. The 1 private setting is with a framework provider who is highly ranked for quality. Welsh provider employing local staff. Specialist in this area of provision.

Members were also informed that 45 beds are targeted at children who have experienced childhood trauma and neglect who may require a range of different supports to be safeguarded and achieve improved outcomes. There are 4 beds in 2 settings are targeted at 16 plus transition, 8 beds in 2 settings are targeted at children requiring specific therapeutic interventions and the highest level of

need. Members were given information on providers under the following headings:

- Provider Profiles;
- Shaping the Market & Local Sufficiency;
- Framework Provision;
- Quality Assurance Checks;
- Quality (Who Does what checks);
- Approach to improving quality; and
- LA Quality Assurance Processes

After concluding her presentation, the Regional Manager 4Cs opened up the meeting for questions.

A Member raised concern regarding private care homes and gave an example of bad practice within her wards. Members felt that any concern should be considered with planning application process. It was highlighted that the concerns being raised could at present not be dealt with through planning as it was not a planning issue.

The Regional Manager 4Cs explained that the care home in question was a non-framework provider. She explained that within England a Location Assessment was needed before a Care Home could be considered for development. Members queried why the Location Assessment for Care Homes which are carried out for care home in England could not be used in Wales.

Officers explained that the Location Assessment is a tool for good practice in Wales but it is not currently part of regulations set by Welsh Government the focus in regulation is on safeguarding issues and not planning.

Further questions were put forward and the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** that:

- Officers would speak to the Chair of Planning and Development along with Director of Prosperity and Development in respect of points raised and report back to a future meeting.

## **23 Presentation of Findings of the Youth Engagement and Participation Services " Your Voice" Survey**

The Children and Young People's Service Manager informed Members that the Youth Engagement and Participation Service is presenting this report to Committee to raise awareness of the provision that young people like and wish to see replicated, and what young people feel are the gaps in the provision that could be considered moving forward.

The Children's Services Manager explained that on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2018, the Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS) launched its 'Your Voice' consultation to capture the views of young people aged 11 – 25 years on the matters that impact their lives. Young people were given the opportunity to complete a series of interactive questions based on a range of thematic areas using an online survey platform. The officer went on to explain that almost 5,000 young people completed the survey in schools, colleges, youth clubs and other

community setting, representing the diversity of young people living, being educated or working in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Members were provided with a full report of the survey findings along with the next steps. In summing up the report the Children's Services Manager highlighted that the findings and subsequent actions are fully inclusive of all young people from Across Rhondda Cynon Taf. Below are the YEPS 'Your Voice Priorities' :

### **Priority 1**

- A focus on providing more effective guidance to young people making post 16 decisions regarding further education, employment or training, in order to reduce the number of young people unsatisfied with the decisions made and requiring further information

### **Priority 2**

- To increase the influence of our online information platforms, through social media and the Wicid Website, by increasing the volume of information and advice we provide while effectively signposting to sources of information, advice and assistance on and offline.

### **Priority 3**

- To more effectively promote the wellbeing and advice services offered through the YEPS service, to increase the understanding of young people of the breadth of the roles of the YEPS staff. To ensure young people are more aware and feel more confident of who they can talk to, to access advice services.

### **Priority 4**

- Increase the influence of both the County Youth Forum and the Local Youth Forums, ensuring a clear communication strategy for the promotion of all forums including mechanisms for young people to contact them.

### **Priority 5**

- Increase the awareness of sporting, leisure and cultural opportunities and increasing availability of 9-11 years' provision through the development of structured transition events across RCT.

The Officer stated that in addition to the YEPS priorities, the findings highlighted matters pertaining to the wider local authority and partner organisation. As such the officer informed Members that a series of working groups had been established to review these findings and implement service improvements to meet the needs of young people.

These multi agency working groups include:

- Education, employment and training opportunities/access
- Wellbeing, information and advice available to young people
- Community engagement, safety and participation
- Tackling bullying

After concluding her report, the chair opened the meeting up for questions and observations. The Committee thanked Officers for a very informative and enlightening report.

A Member commented on the use of Community and Town Council's and felt that involving young people would fit in with what were are considering for the Community. The officer agreed with the proposal and will link with Members to offer support to achieve this.

Another Member comment on that it was a fantastic report and raised a few point regarding pupils' lack of knowledge and interest around school councils. The Member expressed the importance of school council and felt that young people should be encouraged to put their views forward and have a voice.

Members commented on the high level of young people responding that they would like greater community supervision (more police presence and CCTV coverage) and felt that this needed to be looked at as to why they felt this was needed (community safety).

The officer explained that at present there are 21 youth clubs around RCT. Members suggested that as an authority we need to raise the profile of youth clubs. Working in partnership with other organisations, community and town councils to achieve this and that encouraging collaborative working between all partners is essential.

A Member raised a point with regards to the bullying responses and suggested that this could be considered as part of the PSE agenda within schools , with governors having a key role. The Officer welcomed the offer of RCT's Governing Body Association actively participating in the Bullying Working Group.

After further consideration, Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Acknowledge the information contained with the report
- Receive information in respect of the areas that provide a youth club service
- Update Welsh Government

## 24 **Update in respect of the Bright Spots Survey undertaken within Children Services with children, young people and carer**

The Service Development Manager Children's Services thanked the Committee

for allow her to update Members on the progress of the implementation of the Bright Spots Survey Findings.

As Members would recall in September 2018 a report outlining the results of the Bright Spots Survey conducted with children looked after was presented to Members for scrutiny.

Members were reminded that the areas identified in the survey where improvements could be made are listed below:

Social workers need to:

- Ensure that children and young people understand who they are.
- Work with children and young people to involve them in decisions.
- Explain to every child why they are in care and regularly review this with them to establish if they would like more information.
- Continue to communicate with schools to identify and help children who feel bullied at school and those who feel that they do not have a good friend.
- Give carers further training in therapeutic parenting.
- Consider not just organised activities but contact with nature when reviewing opportunities to have fun/hobbies
- Regularly review contact plans taking into account children and young people's wishes and feelings
- Be aware of gender difference and give opportunities to young people (11-18 years) to build self-esteem and a positive self-image.

It was explained that a number of the areas for improvement raised by the survey had previously been identified and incorporated into plans that were already being implemented. It was therefore agreed that the areas of improvements as outlined in the survey would be actioned under the following headings:

- The Children Looked After Quality Assurance Work Plan 2019-20
- The Children Looked After Friendly School Quality Mark
- Revised and Updated RCT Education Anti- bullying Policy
- Quality Assurance Framework

Member were presented with the progress to date and Members were informed that the next step is to incorporate the developments into everyday practice with children and families ensuring that we are inclusive in our approach and their voices are heard.

After robust consideration, Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Acknowledge the information contained within the report
- Monitor the progress at future meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

**25 URGENT BUSINESS**

**This meeting closed at 7:20pm**

**CLLR S REES-OWEN  
CHAIR.**