



**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, 6 November 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 A Calvert
Councillor S Powell Councillor H Boggis
Councillor M Griffiths

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Mrs R. Nicholls, Voting Elected Parent/ Governor Representative

Officers in attendance:-

Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services
Ms A Batley, Service Director of Children's Services

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor S. Evans, Vice Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

31 Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillors S. Evans, A. Davies- Jones, G. Jones, M. Powell, G. Stacey, M. Diamond and Co-Opted Members Mr A. Ricketts and Mr J. Fish.

32 Declaration of Interest

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

33 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 9th October 2019 as an

accurate reflection of the meeting, subject to the following amendments:-

- **Minute 24, page 9**, to read “*Regularly* monitor the progress at future meetings of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee”.

34 Matters arising

Minute No 22

The Service Director, Legal Services provided the Committee with an update in respect private care home provisions. In England, a Location Assessment is required before a Care Home can open. A Location Assessment is not obligatory in Wales. It is a tool for good practice in Wales but it is not currently part of the regulations set by Welsh Government. The focus is on safeguarding issues and not planning. Members felt that any concern should be considered within the planning application process. The Service Director informed Members that the Committee’s concerns have been passed to the Director of Prosperity & Development and assured Members that an update would be provided in due course.

35 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Update

Members received a Power Point presentation from Cwm Taf Morgannwg Children and Mental Health Services.

To begin, Members were advised about local CAMHS services, such as Primary CAMHS and Specialist CAMHS.

Members were reminded about the new investments into CAMHS, such as Welsh Government funding into specialist and primary CAMHS and ICF funding in respect of emotional wellbeing services and the development of a dedicated advice line.

In relation to specialist CAMHS, the target is 28 days from referral to assessment. Members were informed that CAMHS are currently 80% compliant with this target and emphasised that this is a sustainable position.

In respect of primary CAMHS, the total number of children waiting over target time has come down from 362 in April 2019 to 120 by October 2019. However, CAMHS emphasised that the figure of 120 is misleading, as one child had only just been added onto the list.

Going forward, Members were informed that the focus will be on performance; prevention; delivering on the SCAMHS waiting time target and maintaining this position; reducing the PCAMHS waiting times and achieving this target by the end of the financial year; the ongoing provision of the Crisis Services with plans to expand into weekend cover;

and significant new investments into services.

In Conclusion, CAMHS advised Members that they are continuing to focus on monitoring demand and capacity for all CAMHS services. The focus will also be on the further integration of Bridgend into CAMHS; conducting a peer review of SCAMHS services; ensuring delivery of a 4 week waiting time in PCAMHS; filling any outstanding vacancies; seeking alternative office space; responding to Welsh Government guidelines on ED services; and reviewing the impact of social media on staff and offering continual support.

A key area of focus will be to continue with ongoing work such as working with education psychologists, Local Authorities' and Eye to Eye Counselling Services.

Members scrutinised the presentation in detail and put forward their questions.

A Member queried whether the integration of Bridgend into CAMHS had resolved previous issues such as weekend cover, targets and staff training. CAMHS replied by reminding Members that waiting time targets do fluctuate. It was confirmed that staff have not been moved between sites and CAMHS emphasised that staff are responding to emergencies within target time. However, they cautioned that the two models are different and that Bridgend will be adopting the Cwm Taf model going forward.

In respect of Neuro-development, a Member queried whether new types of drugs on the market had increased the number of psychosis episodes and if so, if CAMHS have a relationship with any other areas in the Local Authority to manage demand. Members were advised that there is a 'First episode Psychosis' Team and that the team are managing service pressures well.

A further query was raised in respect of educational psychologists. A Member sought clarification on the number of educational psychologists that are being recruited to the service. The Service Director, Children Services informed the Committee that the recruitment process is extremely difficult. Professionals are attracted to the profession; however, maintaining staff in the profession is a huge problem for the Authority. The Member sought clarification on the type of financial package being offered to psychologists by the Authority. The Service Director advised Members that the Authority offers a rate of pay above the National Standard; however, recruitment continues to be difficult. The Service Director, Children Services informed Members that the Council takes a pro-active approach in respect of recruitment, for example, the Council has a professional connection with South Wales University and will often encourage and support psychology students to find work experience placements within the County Borough.

Discussions ensued and a Member queried whether CAMHS have done any preventative research in respect of Mental Health, particularly whether CAMHS have developed any intervention procedures with schools across RCT. Members were reminded that there are a number of social and environmental factors that can influence a young person's mental health. This can include social media, school exams and family life. CAMHS emphasised that they want to promote family resilience and to provide parents with the appropriate tools and support. Members agreed that prevention has to be a key factor in the Council's decision-making process. The Service Director Children Services advised Members that the Council is aware that children as young as seven are suffering from anxiety and are constantly looking at preventative measures. However, the Service Director emphasised that a lack of funding is a detrimental factor in this area.

In respect of Primary CAMHS and the 120 children waiting 5 months to be seen, a Member queried what effect the waiting times have on a young person's mental health. Members emphasised that a young person's mental health can seriously deteriorate during this time. CAMHS advised the Committee that, unfortunately, some children may deteriorate further during this period, however, they would subsequently be escalated to specialist CAMHS. Committee Members expressed their concerns in respect of waiting times; however, they were assured that being under CAMHS is not an indicator that the child will reach crisis point. Members requested data in respect of the percentage of children who deteriorate further during the waiting period as well as data in respect of the number of children who are escalated to specialist CAMHS. Members were reminded that it could be difficult to get an objective measurement; however, CAMHS assured Members that they would circulate the figures accordingly.

Referring to the presentation given to Committee by CAMHS in 2018, a Member queried whether the mobile app has been launched and if so, has it been successful. CAMHS advised the Committee that the app is still in the process of being developed. Members were informed that a researcher from South Wales University has been developing the app in conjunction with a private company. Members expressed their disappointment and emphasised that young people are increasingly using the internet as a means of communication.

Further discussions ensued and a Member questioned whether CAMHS had done any research on what is causing children as young as seven to suffer with anxiety. CAMHS emphasised that every child is different but that factors such as social media, family background, school experiences and parental relationships can all be contributing factors. CAMHS were also eager to stress that social media exposes young children to a lot of pressure for their age and development and it was felt that there needs to be more education in school in respect of using social media. A Member queried whether mental health could be linked to an increase in poverty. CAMHS admitted that the landscape of mental health has changed

completely, however, they emphasised that there is currently no data linking mental health and poverty.

In respect of the impact of social media on staff, a Member queried the effect that this is having on staff absences and queried what steps CAMHS are taking to support staff welfare. CAMHS informed Members that there are currently no staff absences specifically related to the impact of social media. CAMHS emphasised that they are continuously working with their communications team, occupational health team and line managers to improve staff welfare.

A Member commented that there is no 'quick fix' in respect of mental health and that a variety of groups and departments need be working together to tackle the crisis. CAMHS agreed and stressed that more work needs to come from the families and local communities. There needs to be a collaborative approach with the families in order to ascertain who should be taking the clinical lead.

In respect of school exams, a Member referred to the SATS exams that children are required to take at the age of seven. The Member queried whether we are operating in a way that is causing children to become more anxious. CAMHS advised Members that we have to expose children to a certain degree of stress, however, support mechanisms need to be in place at the same time to support them through it. CAMHS emphasised the importance of family resilience. The Member agreed and referred the Committee to the Council's 'risky play' strategy, where it is left to the child to decide what risks they take. Committee Members agreed with this strategy and a further query was raised in respect of how CAMHS co-ordinate with schools to tackle mental health. The Member questioned whether CAMHS are sharing models of good practice. Members felt that seven year olds are not engaging enough in outdoor activities. In respect of the 21st Century School Programme, the Member questioned whether the Local Authority is looking enough at the physical environment of the school, particularly whether there is enough outdoor space for the child to play. The Member also questioned whether the Local Authority is supplying schools with the correct tools to tackle mental health, such as happiness lessons. It was felt that the Local Authority needs to be doing more to put the child at the forefront and to incorporate mental health into its processes. CAMHS emphasised that extra curriculum activities need to be promoted at home and that, unfortunately, children spend a lot of time at home on their computers. However, CAMHS agreed that schools could be doing more to promote outdoor activities. CAMHS referred Members to the use of mobile phones on school premises and emphasised that young people have no idea how to express themselves emotionally. Members were informed that CAMHS will often need to give the young person emotion literacy lessons. CAMHS emphasised that if the family engages in outdoor activity then the child is likely to follow suit.

In respect of outdoor activities, a Member felt that schools should be taking children up to the local forestry instead of taking them on trips to

theme parks. CAMHS agreed and emphasised young people are not interacting fully in school and are not developing the necessary social skills. The Chair agreed and noted that the Director of Education should be invited to a future meeting with CAMHS.

A number of Members voiced their concerns in respect of mobile phones and their increased usage by young people. Members agreed that mobile phones can have a detrimental effect on the young person's mental health. Discussions ensued and CAMHS noted that mobile phones have become a part of our society and that a certain amount of exposure to risk can help a young person to develop life skills. Members agreed that CAMHS needs to be reviewed alongside education. Members also emphasised the importance of reviewing CAMHS and education in conjunction with the requirements of the Future Generations of Wales Act 2015. The Service Director Children Services agreed, however, the Service Director also emphasised that support in the community is a key factor in respect of supporting mental health in young people. The Service Director referred Members to the report by the Welsh Government titled 'Mind over Matter' and noted that the Welsh Government are aware of the importance of collaborative working. The Chair requested that the 'Mind over Matter' report be circulated to Committee Members.

Discussions continued and a Member commented that it would be useful for the Committee to review the ways in which we develop resilience in children. The Chair advised the Committee that the Service Director, Legal Services will assess whether this is within the Committee's remit and will report back to Members accordingly. A Member referred the Committee to The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the importance of putting children at the forefront of every decision made by the Council. Committee Members agreed that children should be the focus in the Council's planning processes. In respect of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Chair advised Members that the Service Director, Legal Services would consult with the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Service Director, Legal Services advised Members that the issue of family resilience is a cross cutting issue and that further research would be necessary. Members noted that the Service Director, Legal Services would provide feedback to the Committee following further discussion with relevant officers.

In respect of CAMHS, discussion continued and a Member commented that the number of children looked after has increased within RCT. The Member queried what effect this has had on CAMHS. CAMHS advised Members that the difficulties faced by the service in respect of children looked after arises when the child is moved to a different Local Authority. CAMHS informed Members that issues associated with children in a different locality can include access issues and problems with dispensing prescriptions. Members were reminded that if the 'Eco Mapping' project is awarded the required funding by Welsh Government then this will improve the service in respect of children looked after.

The Chair queried the timeline for implementation in respect of the significant investments from the Welsh Government and ICF funding into the service. CAMHS informed the Committee that they are currently part way through recruiting additional staff. Members were reminded that there is a finite pool of staff and that demand can often outweigh the numbers that are available.

Discussions ensued and the Chair queried what the Scrutiny Committee could do to help the service, in particular whether the Local Authority could do more to assist CAMHS. The Service Director Children Services advised Members that the Authority's partnership working has been enhanced by recent regulations and a Regional Partnership Children and Young Peoples Group has been set up. The Service Director emphasised that the group had agreed that emotional wellbeing is a priority and noted that the work need to be undertaken not only with parents but also within the community itself.

To conclude the discussion, the Chair thanked CAMHS for attending the Committee and for updating Members in respect of the service.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED:-**

- To Acknowledge the contents of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services report;
- Agreed that CAMHS would send out the requested information to Committee Members via the Democratic Services Officer; and,
- Agreed that the Service Director, Legal Services would look further into the issue of resilience in children and would report back to the Committee in respect of the Committee's remit on this issue.

36 Consultation Links

The Chair referenced the consultation links, which were available through the 'RCT Scrutiny' website. The Chair reminded Members that Information is provided in respect of relevant consultations for consideration by the Committee, which are circulated on a monthly basis by the Graduate Scrutiny Research Officer

This meeting closed at 6.37 pm

**CLLR S REES-OWEN
CHAIR.**