



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, 4 December 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 S Powell
Councillor M Griffiths Councillor G 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 C Williams, Service Manager - Disabled Children

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor S Evans

44 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors H. Boggis, J. Brencher, A. Calvert, H. Fychan, A. Davies – Jones, M. Powell, G. Stacey, M. Diamond and Co-opted Member Mrs R. Nicholls

45 Declaration of Interest

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

46 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 6th November 2019 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

47 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.

48 Valleys & Vale Adoption Service Annual Report 2018/19

The Director of Children's Service introduced the Regional Adoption Manager, Vale Valleys and Cardiff Collaborative to Members of the Committee. The Chair Welcomed Ms Harris to the meeting and invited her to present the Report.

Members were informed that the report is the 4th Annual Report and covers the period 1st April 2018 to the 31st March 2019 although due to the reporting cycle some areas have been updated with current service information. It was explained that the report seeks to combine the reporting requirements set out in regulation and the governance arrangements for the region in one report.

Members were informed that at the latter part of the year, Welsh Government awarded a grant of £ 2.3M to improve the provision of the adoption service in Wales. It was explained that the grant has been allocated on a regional basis to support national and regional priorities. It was explained that as part of the grant VVC Management Board agreed to utilise the grant to support the areas of life journey work, better planning for children being placed for adoption and improving services to birth parents.

Members were informed of the findings of the annual report and the priorities for the service. After concluding her report the Regional Adoption Manager responded to Members questions.

A Member thanked the officer for the report and commented that it was a well-balanced report and asked if the additional investment from Welsh Government was a one off or would it be sustainable. Officer explained that funding would be reoccurring and the two post created within the Service are permanent posts.

Members asked for clarification as to the number of children who have waited longer than 6 months from SBA to matching and what was the main cause. It was explained that the Court has the final say and this can take many months as all areas need to be explored in the best interest for the child.

A Member asked for more comparative data, the Director of Children's Services explained to Member that there is work around the National Framework and we are looking to collect comparison better in the future. The Adoption Manger agreed that there would be more comparative data in the future.

In the context of recruitment of adopters a Member asked for clarity on whether the reason for us having more adopter at present is linked to the result of the work carried out through marketing. It was explained that there has been an increase in enquires and the marking officers role has made a significant impact.

Members question the number of non-responses with regards to the withdraw from adoption and found that 52 non response was very high and to lose that number of people is worrying.

Members commented that RCT pay in to the service and asked how we ensure we are getting value for money. It was explained that the best value review of the service has resulted in some changes to the governance arrangements for

the region. Members asked what amount RCT paid for the adoption service. The Director of Children's Services provided Members with an estimate and agreed to circulate the exact figure after the Meeting.

Officers agreed to provide this information in the near future. It was also explained that Joint Committee which comprises of one elected Member from each of the authorities. The Joint Committee approves the annual accounts, budgets and annual plans for the collaborative.

Members noted that part of the report was omitted from the papers and it was agreed that this would be forwarded after the meeting for completeness.

After further discussion Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Acknowledge the content of the report
- Receive feedback form the Cabinet Member for Children's Service in respect of work undertaken by the Joint Committee
- Receive the figure that RCT pay to the Adoption Agency after the meeting.
- Receive a future report on the adoption service at a future meeting.

49 Disabled Children's Team Review Update

The Service Manager Disabled Children's Services in conjunction with the Service Development Manager Children's Services presented Members of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee with a progress update on the Disabled Children's Service Review.

It was explained that over recent years RCT Children's Services have been working to ensure that its services are Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 compliant.

Officers continued to explain that following the restructure of the whole of Children's Services, only minor changes were implemented in the Disabled Children's Service at the time. The creation of the Resilient Families Service which became operational in January 2018 designed to provide appropriate early interventions to families to build resilience and prevent them from requiring statutory intervention.

Members were informed that Children's Services have adopted the Cwm Taf Joint Statement of Strategic Intent for Children, Young People and Adults with Learning Disabilities, Autism and / or Complex needs and their families 2017, which provides a clear vision and reflects what we want to achieve in the Disabled Children's Team.

It was brought to Members attention that during 2018 IPC undertook a review of the Disabled Children's Service to determine whether it was compliant with principles of the Act 2014 and Statement of Intent 2017. The review made six recommendations:

1. Devise a change management plan the will embed outcome and strength based person- centred approaches and commissioning.
2. Review and change the current eligibility statement and practice to ensure compliance with SSWB and ALN Acts and to assist with

- managing demand better.
3. Improve prevention and early intervention
 4. Improve confidence and competence through better learning opportunities
 5. Achieving best outcomes at lowest possible cost.
 6. Build and protect space to build more capacity in the community.

Officers confirmed that some initial steps to improve early intervention and prevention have been taken examples of which were present to Members. The creation of the Information, Advice and Assistance Team (IAA) in January 2019 and the development of the Children with Additional Needs Team within Resilient Families Service has introduced an early intervention provision for disabled children where historically all children have come straight through from referrals in to statutory services.

Officer continued to explain that the Disabled Children's Services Review has highlighted many points some of which are listed below:

- Through put through the team and through the service is slow with waiting lists in place for services;
- The majority of cases open to DCT are open for 2 years plus and are subject to Care and Support Plans. Once in the team there is a high chance of remaining open to the team.
- Only 9 cases are on the child protection register 1.7%. The vast majority are under care and support plans.

The Officers continued to highlight that the review picked up that some families had significant high levels of service which questioned where the services working with right level of need and in the most effective and efficient way.

Members were presented with the key priorities that the service would take forward.

After presenting the report Officers opened up the meeting for questions and observations.

A Member asked for some clarity with regards to the financial impact on families with the introduction of Universal credit, and the impact it is have on families especially with the appeals process. The Member commented that it is of great concerns for families across RCT.

It was explained that DLA is standard for young people under the age of 18 year. The Resilient Families Service will look financial advice and help families contact the right areas.

The Member continued by asking if there was a record of how many people have gone through finial help to maximise income. Officers explained that it was too early to tell.

A Member commented that the report concentrates on making the service more effective and asked what the issues were prior to statutory intervention. Officers explained that there wasn't a major problem the step were taken to comply with the Act, and some families were potentially having a high level of service which questioned where the services working with the right level of need and in the most effective way.

A Member commented that there did seem to be any evidence that the voice of the Service User was captured. It was explained that the service users' voice has been taken into consideration right through service and consultation.

Further debated was had by Members and after lengthy discussion Member **RESOLVED** to:

- Acknowledge the information contained in the report.
- Agree to take forward the priorities outlined in the report.
- Receive the Final Report when complete.

50 Urgent Business

The Chair announced that there was no urgent business

51 Chair's Review & Close

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their contribution to the meeting and provided them with a brief summary of items for the next agenda.

This meeting closed at 7:50pm

**CLLR S REES-OWEN
CHAIR.**