



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2020/21

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No: 3
4TH NOVEMBER 2020 REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES	Children's Services: Recovery and Contingency Planning

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Scrutiny Members in relation to:

- Children's Services response to the continuing impact of the pandemic, recovery and contingency planning.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1** Acknowledge the information contained within the report.
- 2.2** Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1** A Scrutiny Committee on 9th September, Children's Services provided a verbal report in relation to the functioning of the service during the Pandemic and the developing Recovery Plan. The period since has been a demanding one

operationally, and has seen the service move to a contingency planning mode, then adjusting to a business critical one in preparation for the national Fire Break following the First Minister’s announcement on 19th October. The service is poised to respond to additional adjustments to restrictions at the exit of the Fire Break phase on 9.11.20.

Children’s Services’ Recovery Planning

3.2 Much of Children’s Services’ provision is required by statute, and is not altered by the Pandemic and related legislation, hence, for the most part, we have been able to adjust our delivery method by working from home, using technology more, risk assessing face to face contact with families, and providing staff with PPE, but very little else has changed.

3.3 There continues to be uncertainty about the specific mid and long term impact of the Pandemic for vulnerable families, however, given the rate of referral and the conditions families face which, in many cases are understood to compound adversity, the service is sadly projecting increasing demand, whilst working to connect as many families as possibly to early help or preventative services.

3.4 The activity of the Recovery Plan has been developed in line with the following principles which are agreed as a national framework for children’s services’ recovery plans:

- The safety and well-being of children and young people and their families are paramount
- The rights and voices of children and young people must be regarded
- The well-being of staff and their families to be looked after
- Realistic delivery of priorities ensuring capacity and capability
- Working to clear and consistent guidance
- Keeping the whole system dynamic and responsive to meet the needs of children and young people by fulfilling care & support plans and moving children and families on through appropriate services as/when necessary
- Working with third sector organisations to support children and families

3.5 The following table provides an update on the Children’s Service recovery plan which includes the following actions:

Action	Update
1. Develop a fit for purpose agile/home working framework for Children’s Services, which supports both the physical and emotional well-being	Children’s Services current working arrangements aim to take into account these responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff continue to work from home as required and have been provided with equipment to do so by the Council. • A small number of office bases remain accessible for staff for essential functions, where PPE is available, some opportunity is consequently afforded for direct work with children and families and team meetings

<p>of staff and optimises our work with families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service has focussed an element of its quality assurance work on support for staff. <p>The service has provided regular updated information for all staff on working arrangements, the most version was circulated in preparation for the fire-break lockdown</p> <p>However suitable accommodation being available to Children's Services and accompanying facilities accessible by service users will be essential for the future.</p> <p>A staff survey has been conducted, there were 318 responses and the main findings collated and provided to staff, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 68% indicated that they preferred a combination of home/office working • 14% preferred full-time office • 14% expressed a preference for full-time home working • 40% had found working from home to be slightly challenging, whilst 13% had found working from home very challenging • 77% of those that responded to the survey indicated that access to team/peer support was important to them • 61% of those who responded raised issues in relation to equipment, e.g. seating, desks and monitor size. A number also highlighted difficulties accessing photocopying facilities.
<p>2. Building upon business critical and emergency functions currently being delivered develop a safe sustainable service delivery model to provide Children's Services statutory responsibilities that will meet WG guidance.</p>	<p>Children's Services endeavours to work to the Welsh Government statutory guidance which can be found here : https://gov.wales/childrens-social-services-during-covid-19-pandemic-guidance-html.</p> <p>Priority is being given to safely visiting and hearing the voices of children on the Child Protection Register and those looked after. Child Protection Conferences and children looked after reviews are taking place using technology, and other adjustments to ensure including of relevant people. We continue to support our foster carers. Our children's homes provide care for some of our most vulnerable young people and we have recommenced provision of some short-term residential breaks for disabled children. We continue to discharge our safeguarding duties including work with the Family Court.</p> <p>The reduction of face to face contact with our service users and carers as well as opportunities for direct work can often be challenging and restrictive for a profession and services built upon relationships with people and partners.</p>
<p>3. Ensure staffing capacity in Intensive Intervention is</p>	<p>We are currently working with a 33% social work vacancy factor in our Intensive Intervention Services, which has an impact upon provision and staff. Work is underway to develop a mid- term</p>

sufficient to meet need	solution whilst we complete a longer-term workforce strategy in conjunction with a review of the social work grading structure ahead of a recruitment campaign.
4. Ensure vulnerable children have access to Education and emergency childcare provision, working in partnership with Education	Action complete - Children back at school and all Flying Start provision recommenced and emergency childcare provision has ceased
5. Ensure robust safeguarding arrangements working with partners in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board	Full Board arrangements have resumed, and the subgroup structure supporting the Executive Board and Operational Committee has been amended to take account of the learning and good practice identified during the first lockdown.
6. Ensure the Youth Offending Service (YOS) undertakes its statutory duties and delivers its core functions.	YOS has continued to provide Appropriate Adult support to young people at the police station, and this has been central to the coordination of work with young people who attend the youth court in Merthyr Tydfil. All young people who are subject to Intensive Supervision and Surveillance community orders receive daily contact from YOS staff, and the YOS continues to prioritise those young people who are deemed to be a high risk to themselves or the community.
7. Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS) - Continue to offer virtual open access activities and plan for re-introduction of face-to-face provision and provide virtual information, advice and guidance to vulnerable young people utilising WICID TV and YouTube.	YEPS staff have returned to secondary school sites to deliver face to face to face support for young people. Service delivery pathway established in partnership with Attendance and Well-being Service, Resilient Families Service, Education Psychology Service, and Eye 2 Eye Counselling to support young people to return to school. Virtual youth offer remains available including virtual youth clubs, live Q&A sessions, live chat sessions. Planning is underway for YEPS to commence proactive street based youth work by following the Firebreak (subject to restrictions) across RCT working alongside, the YOS, (including CCTV) and BAROD

3.6 In anticipation of increasing Covid infection in the community, and in line with the Council's expectation, a contingency plan was considered and finalised in September 2020, the result of which has seen the service continue to prioritise business critical services and adjust the pace of our recovery planning business.

3.7 In preparation for the Firebreak Period, the services is re-categorising all cases by risk and need into red, amber and green. Notwithstanding that situations and

circumstances can change rapidly, responses to red cases only will be prioritised during the 2 week period whilst maintaining our business critical services which includes the following business areas :

Access to Services and Family Support

- Emergency Duty Team (EDT)
- Front Door for referrals – Information Advice and Assistance / MASH
- Assess and provide support at home where there is breakdown or where input is critical to support children and young people to remain at home
- Direct Payment Clients – we will prioritise these individuals as some may be assessed as high risk and there may be a risk of carer breakdown/withdrawal due to need for carers to isolate.
- MASH Business Support – all Child Protection functions
- High risk cases identified by Resilient Families Service
- High risk cases identified by Youth Engagement and Participation Service

Safeguarding Duties

- Strategy discussions, meetings and child protection investigations
- Child protection visits- children at the most immediate risk will be identified and prioritised
- Record of key decisions and drafting of Child Protection Plans
- Child protection medicals-dependent on Health Service capacity
- Children requiring placements
- Child protection conferences-virtual
- Decision making in respect of threshold for Professional Concerns
- Pre-birth assessments (remotely wherever possible)
- Public Law Outline meetings for emergency cases that require agreement to placement or court application
- Access to Child Protection Register and arranging temporary registration in other Local Authorities
- Hospital discharges of children at risk

Children Looked After

- Providing care to children placed in our residential children's homes
- Children looked after statutory visits- children at the most immediate risk will be identified and prioritised including potential placement break down otherwise contact will be by telephone
- Continue payments to all providers caring for children
- Non-essential visits to children's residential homes will be restricted
- RCT residential children's homes will be kept open for placements
- Adoption transitions for children following joint risk assessment with VVC.
- Contact for parents will be assessed on a case by case basis particular consideration being given to new-born babies and court agreed arrangements

Youth Offending

- Children held in police stations and requiring an appropriate adult (on basis of full access to PPE)
- Young people on Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Orders and Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Bail support
- Young people who are remanded into the secure estate or sentenced and residing in the secure estate
- Transition and resettlement of young people being released from the secure estate
- Young people deemed to be a 'high risk' to themselves and the community
- Young people appearing in Court

4. HOW ARE WE DOING?

Performance Area	This year / Last year as at q 2		Comment
	Q2 2019	Q2 2020	
Number of Contacts	8447	9279	10% increase in contacts received in the period up to Qtr 2 of 2020 when compared to the same period of 2019
Number added to Child Protection Register	264	302	14% increase in new child protection registrations
Number of children on the Child Protection Register	421	440	4.5% increase in the overall numbers of children on the Child Protection Register
Number Becoming Looked After	100	65	35% decrease in the number of children becoming looked after
Total Number of Children Looked After	693	709	2% increase in the overall number of children who are looked after
Rate of Looked After per 10,000 child capita	138.3	141.5	Increase in the rate of children looked after per 10,000 population
Number of Exits from CLA	81	73	10% decrease in the number of care leavers
Number of Adoption Placements Made	11	11	No change in the number of children placed with prospective adopters
Percentage of children who are looked after who are placed with their parents or extended family	43%	44%	Small increase in the percentage of children who are looked after who are placed at home with parents or placed with extended family

Number of Care Leavers Being Supported	240	274	14% increase in the number of care leavers requiring support
Care leavers not in education, employment or education	58.69%	48.82%	10% decrease in the number of care leavers who were not engaged in education employment or training

5. NEXT STEPS

5.1 The service will continue to provide services to families with a priority approach on the basis of risk and need as outlined above, and with an emphasis on prevention in line with the Welsh recovery framework principles for children’s services.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 This is an information report.

6.2 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the implementation process.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 This is an information report.
Further consultation will however be undertaken as part of the implementation process.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 There are no direct financial implications aligned to this report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 The legal requirements for children and young people are set down within the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Children Act 1989.

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL’S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP

10.1 This consultation links to the corporate priority of promoting independence and positive lives for everyone by ensuring that the Council listens to the people it provides for.

10.2 It also contributes to the following well-being goals:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales.
- A healthier Wales.
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A globally responsible Wales

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 Early help and statutory children's services have, and will continue to be provided during the Pandemic, in line with the adjustments set out above.

11.2 Foster carers, and Children's Services staff have worked hard to maintain services under difficult circumstances.

11.3 In anticipation of increasing challenges for families, our focus on early help and prevention remains a priority.