

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the Community & Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, on Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2014 at 5.00 pm.

**Present:**

County Borough Councillor (Mrs) S Rees – in the Chair

**County Borough Councillors:**

W J David	C Davies	(Mrs) S Jones
I Pearce	(Mrs) A Roberts	B Stephens
(Mrs) J S Ward	D Weeks	D H Williams

**Officers:**

Mr N Elliott – Service Director, Direct Services, Business and Housing  
Mr R Gatis – Service Director, Community Care  
Mr A Gwynn – Service Director, Children's Services  
Mr C B Jones – Service Director, Legal & Democratic Services  
Ms C Daniel, Head of Service, Early Years and Family Support  
Nia Thomas – Service Manager, Early Years & Family Support  
Mrs A Edwards – Scrutiny Support Officer

**48. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from the Chairman, County Borough Councillor (Mrs) M E Davies and County Borough Councillors, A Fox, S Lloyd, (Mrs) J Rosser, R W Smith and L Walker.

**49. CHAIRMAN**

In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, County Borough Councillor (Mrs) S Rees took the Chair.

**50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**RESOLVED** to note that in accordance with the Code of Conduct, there were no declarations of personal interest relating to the agenda.

**51. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Community & Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2014 be approved as a correct record.

**52. AGENDA ORDER**

With the Chairman's approval it was agreed to bring forward agenda item 5 – Teenage Sexual Health & Teenage Pregnancy.

**REPORTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**53. TEENAGE PREGNANCY & SEXUAL HEALTH IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

The Head of Service, Early Years & Family Support reported on progress in improving the sexual health of young people and in reducing teenage pregnancies. Attached to her report for Members' information was a detailed surveillance report produced by Public Health Wales in relation to HIV and STI trends in Wales. She reported that across the Cwm Taf area there had been a 48% reduction in teenage conceptions over the past 5 years and rates are at their lowest since 1969 (office for National Statistics March 2014). Whilst the County Borough's teenage conception rates still remain higher than the Welsh average she pointed out that the gap was narrowing and at a time when overall birth rates were on the rise. However, she was concerned that whilst this downward trend was positive the incidence of sexually transmitted infection (STI) across Wales was increasing. She suggested that whilst the availability of Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) was partly responsible for the reduction in teenage pregnancies, the downside was that fewer young people were using the less popular barrier methods of contraception which protected against sexually transmitted infections. She also explained that there was disparity with regard to the quantity and quality of PSE lessons in schools.

Members questioned whether research had been undertaken to determine the reasons behind the rise in STIs and also any patterns of transmission. The Head of Service, Early Years & Family Support explained that Public Health would be best placed to undertake such scientific research.

A Member pointed to the transfer of responsibility for Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health to Public Health Services and hoped that the work which was being undertaking with schools would continue. The Service Director, Direct Services, Business and Housing reported that the work commissioned through Fframwaith would continue. He also assured Members that although the Local Service Board had assigned lead responsibility for Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health to Public Health, elected Members would still have the opportunity to scrutinise delivery through the Community & Children's Services and Education & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committees scrutiny of Fframwaith and in addition, the LSB Scrutiny Working Group would also be scrutinising the LSB in their delivery of their Health priorities set out within the Single Integrated Plan (SIP).

A Member pointed to the success of the Condom Card scheme in his area and asked whether this could be used as a platform for launching an awareness campaign with regard to STIs. The Head of Service, Early Years and Family Support reported that funding would continue to be available to roll out the

Condom Card Scheme on a gradual basis and she would feed this message back to the group.

**RESOLVED:** to note the content of the report.

**54. THE PROVISION OF ADVOCACY TO ELIGIBLE CHILDREN IN RCT**

In response to a request by the Committee at the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013, the Service Director, Services, Business and Housing provided Members with a presentation which provided an overview of the advocacy services provided to eligible children in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Service Director explained that advocacy provided an opportunity for the children and young people to have their say; understand their rights; access information and services; and get something stopped, started or changed. Above all, it provided the Council with an opportunity to listen. He explained that the Council had a statutory duty to provide advocacy services for children in need, looked after children/young people and care leavers but pointed out that these responsibilities may change with the introduction of the Social Services and Well-being Bill and could result in the Council having to provide a more universal service for all young people. However, it would be unlikely that there will be any additional funding to accompany any new requirements under the Bill. The current annual budget of £56k would be insufficient to meet any additional requirements.

Members were informed that Rhondda Cynon Taf's Children's Services currently commission Tros Gynnal, a well established charitable organisation in Wales, to provide an independent advocacy service. However, advocacy services will be re-commissioned jointly with Merthyr Tydfil CBC in June 2014 when the current contract expires. Currently the service is available to:

- Looked after children
- Children in Need including Disabled children and children in need of protection.
- Care leavers
- Young people known to the Youth Offending Service
- Young people in Education in relation to SEN appeals
- Young people in the care of the NHS, i.e. Hospital or primary care.

The Service Director explained that the Advocacy service is issue based ie one referral represents one issue and a child or young person may have a number of issues. During 2012/13 the Advocacy service worked with 86 children and young people dealing with 140 referrals, the majority of which were looked after children placed out of county.

The Service Director reported that the increasing demand for services and the potential widening of the Council's responsibilities as a result of the Social Services and Well Being Bill was a key consideration for the future both in meeting demand and the issue of finance with currently no financial contribution made by other partners, including the Health Board. Finally, the Service Director highlighted a number of recommendations for consideration that were

consistent with those previously put forward by the Children's Commissioner as best practice, namely:

- Quarterly reports on the provision of advocacy to be considered by the Corporate Parenting Board.
- Relevant Cabinet members and Corporate Parenting Board to receive further training on advocacy and meet advocacy provider.
- Annual reports on the provision of advocacy to be considered by Scrutiny Committee.

The Service Director pointed out that the Corporate Parenting Board was already provided with training but suggested that it would be sensible to arrange training for scrutiny members as well as the relevant cabinet members.

Following his presentation the Service Director, Direct Services, Business and Housing responded to Members' queries.

A Member asked how the young people were made aware of the advocacy service and the Service Director, Children's Services explained that when children first enter the care system they are provided with an information pack which includes details of the service. The issue is also raised at their first and subsequent reviews. He explained that this was particularly important for those placed out-of-county

The Service Director, Direct Services, Business and Housing added that there was still a need to do more to ensure that the advocacy service was promoted on a wider basis. The Service Director, Children's Services added that whilst the focus has been to promote the service to the young people, there was also a need to ensure that staff were well informed. He explained that whilst more young people were being seen by the advocacy service it was difficult to determine whether this was because there were more young people in the care system or because the service was being better promoted. The Service Director, Direct Services, Business and Housing reported that the administration of the advocacy service was managed by the Complaints and Quality Assurance Manager and there was a dedicated officer within the team to deal with complaints and promote the rights of children and young people.

A Member asked whether the advocacy service was a similar service as that provided in schools by 'Eye to Eye'. The Service Director, Direct Services, Business and Housing explained that 'Eye to Eye' was a counselling service although young people might go to them with similar issues. He explained that there was a good relationship between Tros Gynnal and 'Eye to Eye' and they did cross refer where appropriate.

A Member pointed out that the young people using the service were very vulnerable and asked what provision was in place to ensure that there was feedback from the young people regarding the benefit and quality of the advocacy service, including feedback from those placed out of county. The Service Director, Children's Services explained that one of the benefits of using Tros Gynnal was that they had local teams spread across the UK. They

also recruited largely from those who had been in care which would hopefully give them an understanding of the issues facing the young people. Members were informed that the forthcoming re-commissioning of the advocacy service would provide a good opportunity to ensure that improvements in collecting and using feedback are built into the new contract.

A Member asked whether it would be possible for the Committee to see the content of the Information Pack given to young people entering the care system and it was agreed that one would be brought along to the next committee meeting.

A Member asked whether it was more difficult for those placed out-of-county to be open about their feelings and the Service Director Children's Services confirmed that they were seen as more vulnerable as they were away from family and friends although this varied case by case. It was particularly important therefore for them to have access to the advocacy service.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) to note the information provided through the presentation;
- (ii) to endorse the recommendations put forward during the presentation and recommend that relevant training in respect of the Advocacy Service for children & young people is also provided to the Members of the Community & Children's Services Scrutiny Committee;
- (iii) that the Committee be provided with a sample information pack as provided to those children & young people entering the care system.

**55. COMMUNITY & HOSPITAL INTERFACE AND DELAYED TRANSFERS OF CARE**

The Service Director Community Care presented his report which provided an update on the work being undertaken to support the interface between community and hospital services and also on the numbers of people whose discharge from hospital is delayed.

The Service Director Community Care reported on the establishment of an Unscheduled Care Steering Board which will undertake an assessment of how Health and Social Care communities are managing what have been deemed '10 High Impact Unscheduled Care Transformation Steps' with the aim of reducing the number of unnecessary hospital admissions. The Local Health Boards and Local Authorities have also submitted plans to the Welsh Government on how they will better manage winter pressures this year. To date Cwm Taf LHB are reporting that these actions are having a positive impact on ensuring that they continue to have capacity to manage the demand and pressures on hospital admissions. The Service Director Community Care also drew Members' attention to the latest figures with regard to delayed transfers for November and December 2013 which did show some improvement when compared to 2012/13

A Member commented on the good work being undertaken by Cwm Taf LHB and the Council. The Service Director Community Care suggested that there were examples of good practice and learning to be found across all the health board areas. The Service Director also pointed out that although the Health Board and the Council had been successful in improving the flow of patients this had the unintended consequence of creating even greater pressures for home care services as patients are being discharged earlier, perhaps in a more fragile state and therefore requiring a higher level of support at home.

In conclusion, the Member questioned the likelihood of the Council receiving any of the financial benefit accrued by Health as a result of the early discharge of patients.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) to note the work being undertaken to ensure that hospitals are able to manage the demand on their services over the winter months;
- (ii) to note the number of delayed transfers of care for Social Care reasons.

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**56. FFRAMWAITH CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTNERSHIP BOARD – MINUTES OF THE PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETING – 29<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2013**

The Service Director, Legal & Democratic Services presented Members with a report which provided them with the opportunity to consider the minutes of the meeting of the Fframwaith Children and Young People's Partnership Board held on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

**RESOLVED:** to note the minutes.

**57. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Chairman announced that the date of the next meeting of the Committee would be Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2014 at 5 pm at the Council Offices, Clydach Vale.

(Mrs) S Rees  
Vice Chairman

The meeting closed at 5.55 pm.