

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, 15th April 2015 at 5.00 pm.

Present:

County Borough Councillor (Mrs) M E Davies – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors:

C Davies	S Evans	(Mrs) S Jones
I Pearce	(Mrs) S Rees	(Mrs) A Roberts
L G Walker	W D Weeks	

Cabinet Members

County Borough Councillor M Forey, Cabinet Member for Partnerships & Adults' Social Services

County Borough Councillor G Hopkins, Cabinet Member for Children's Social Services and Equalities

Officers:

Mr G Isingrini – Group Director, Community & Children's Services
Mr N Elliott – Service Director, Direct Services, Business and Housing
Mr R Gatis – Service Director, Adult Locality Services and Short Term Intervention
Mr A Gwynn – Service Director, Children's Services
Mr C B Jones – Service Director, Democratic & Legal Services
Mr N Griffiths – Head of Community & Children's Services Finance
Mr J O'Brien – Head of Cwm Taf Youth Offending Services
Mrs A Edwards – Scrutiny Support Officer

In attendance:

Mr P Griffiths – Service Director, Performance & Improvement
Ms Denise Moultrie - CSSIW

50. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors W J David, S Lloyd, (Mrs) J Rosser, B Stephens, (Mrs) J S Ward and D H Williams.

51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declaration of interest was made in relation to the agenda;

Mrs A Edwards (Scrutiny Support Officer) – Agenda Item 3 – “My mother is in receipt of Home Care Services.”

52 MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Community and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held on 17th March 2015.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

53. EXCEPTION REPORT – COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 31ST DECEMBER 2014 (QUARTER 3).

The presented Members with the Exception Report which outlined the financial and performance management information for the Community & Children's Services Group for the period to 31st December 2014. He explained that the Exception Report did not include information in relation to those service areas which have recently come within the remit of the Group as per the Council's new structure set out within the Quarter 3 Performance Report dated 19th March 2015.

Members were asked to consider the key issues extracted from the main report that had been presented to the Cabinet Performance and Resources Committee on the 19th March 2015 and the two priority areas within the remit of the Committee ie Keeping All Children & Young People Safe and Maintaining People's Independence. Members were informed that no Quarter 3 update had been provided in relation to Outcome Agreement performance as there had been no significant change in the performance position since Quarter 2.

The Committee voiced its concern in relation to the increase in sickness absence and the turnover of staff.

The Group Director, Community & Children's Services explained that the 'expression of interest' initiative undertaken by the Council has led to a restructuring of the workforce and a reduction in posts. The Service Director, Direct Services, Business and Housing also pointed out that the reduction in the number of Community Day Centres had affected the equivalent of 50 full time posts and in addition just over 100 Home Care Staff had left the service.

In response to the concerns raised the Committee asked for a report to be prepared for a future meeting to enable Members to have clearer picture of the current trends in sickness absences across the service areas.

A Member referred to the reduction in the number of Renovation Grants and Maintenance and Repair Grants completed in comparison with 2013/14.

The Service Director, Direct Services, Business and Housing explained that this drop in numbers was a result of the reduction to the Capital Funding programme which has impacted on the number of grants which can be awarded.

In relation to the Capital budget, a Member asked for explanation of the delayed implementation of some schemes/projects within the Modernisation Programme for Adults.

The Service Director, Direct Services, Business and Housing explained that some of the work within the Maintaining People's Independence WPI Action Plan was linked to the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and money had been held back to support the changes which will have to be made in response to the implementation of the Act in May 2016.

In response to a Member's question relating to funding deficits the Service Director, Direct Services, Business and Housing explained that the Council has been pioneering the Welsh Government's new initiative 'When I Am Ready' which relates to a young people's transition from care into adulthood and independence. However, there has been no additional money from the Welsh Government to support this new policy and Rhondda Cynon Taf as a result of its pioneering work has been hit by these additional costs sooner than other authorities.

A Member referred to the overall performance figures and asked whether following the reconfiguration of Children's Services whether the performance information could be front loaded rather than have a 'catch-up' situation.

The Service Director, Children's Services explained that the changes would be introduced on a phased basis through into 2016 and linked to the implementation of the Social Services & Wellbeing Act in April 2016. He reported that some progress could already be seen and the signs were that the full Quarter 4 figures would show an improvement.

A Member conveyed her concerns regarding the performance indicator relating to the percentage of open cases allocated to someone other than a social worker where the child is receiving a service (children on the child protection register).

The Service Director, Children's Services reported that those children on the Child Protection Register were prioritised and at the end of the 4th Quarter there were no unallocated cases. However, he explained that sometimes cases were allocated to student social workers who were overseen by qualified social workers or sometimes there was a delay in the recording mechanism when children became registered and re-allocated. He added that the aim was that all children on the Child Protection Register should be allocated to a social worker but if this were not the case there was always a good reason.

The Group Director added that during the last 6 months radical work had been undertaken to transform the way in which the service operated and there were signs that this was beginning to have a positive impact.

A Member referred to the delay in appointing a manager to the Regional Adoption Service given the urgent need to reduce the LAC numbers.

The Group Director explained that the performance of the Adoption service was not in itself the key issue and referred to his earlier comments and the need to focus on safely reducing the number of children coming into Looked After Children system by considering the reasons behind the placements.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Social Services and Equalities commented that the number of referrals had reduced quite dramatically and as a result the number of Looked After Children should also reduce. However, he pointed to the need to look for a mix of solutions such as more foster carers rather than more expensive residential care and the provision of more effective early intervention services which should then lead to a reduction in the pressures.

The Cabinet Member for Partnerships & Adults' Social Services referred to the introduction of the Social Services Health & Wellbeing Act in May 2016 and the shift in emphasis that this will bring. He explained that whilst Councils were still awaiting the more detailed guidance and regulations, the intention of the Welsh Government is that service users and carers will have a stronger voice. He pointed to the challenges that this would bring given that 34% of Wales's Lower Super Output areas lie within Rhondda Cynon Taf and its increasing elderly population and explained that that the Council could not continue to deliver services at it does and that there was a need to look at how things can be done differently.

Given the large numbers of performance indicators that did not meet target by more than 5%, the Chair asked Officers to provide an explanation and update in relation to those set out in the exception report and those remaining which were listed at Appendix C to the report, the key elements of which are summarised below:

Children's Services related:

The Service Director, Children's Services referred to the re-modelling work being undertaken and the introduction of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and reported that improvements are beginning to be seen. The percentage of initial assessments undertaken within 7 working days had increased to 76% in January and stood at 79% for February. The latest figures for Looked After Children show a decrease to 623.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Social Services and Equalities referred to the work being undertaken by the Looked After Children Scrutiny Working Group and thanked the Chairman for providing an update on the work to the Corporate Parenting Board.

With regard to updated assessments for Looked After Children the Service Director explained that the Council was dependent in part on Health to meet this target. In the case of children placed out of county the Authority is dependent on these assessments being carried out by the health services in

the areas where they are placed and therefore the problem is difficult to resolve.

In relation to the percentage of former LAC known to be engaged in education, training or employment at the age of 19, the Service Director, Children Services explained that there could be a number of reasons for this such as the young person being a parent themselves, they may have mental health issues or a criminal record which might make it difficult to gain employment. However, on the whole he did not think that the percentages were that dissimilar to the general population.

Members were informed that with regard to Personal Education Plans, the service is dependent on schools and the Service Director informed Members that he would endeavour to liaise with the education services to seek an improvement.

Adult Services related:

The Service Director Adult Locality Services and Short Term Intervention explained that Delayed Transfers of Care would be dealt with in detail later in the agenda.

The Service Director explained that the failure to meet the target in relation to the rate of older people supported in the community was actually conveying a positive message. The principle reasons for supporting fewer people in the community are down to the success of the Intermediate Care and Reablement Team and the fact that there have been fewer referrals coming through.

With regard to the timeliness of Care Plan Reviews the Service Director explained that some teams were under more pressure than others in this respect and that work was underway to see what could be done differently to improve the situation.

The Service Director reported that the targets in relation to young carers had dipped as a result of staff absences in what is a very small team. However, the team is now back to full strength and the performance figures have improved over the last three months.

Following this summary of performance Members further questioned officers in relation to the performance information.

A Member re-iterated his concerns in relation to the reduction in the number of child care teams from three to two.

The Group Director explained that the key issue was the delivery of the right service and pointed to the success of the single Intermediate Care and Reablement Team in adult services. The Service Director, Children's Services explained that the reduction from three Intermediate Care and Assessment Teams to two would help reduce the impact of staff sickness and

that there would be no reduction in the number of staff as a result of the changes.

A Member questioned whether the failure to meet the target in relation to the Adult Care Plan reviews impacted on the numbers having to be admitted to hospital,

The Service Director, Adult Locality Services and Short Term Intervention explained that whilst there may not always be a timely review, caseworkers would always be aware of change of circumstances. He pointed out that staff are now often dealing with clients in the 95 plus age bracket and sometimes due to their age there can be a number events over short period of time which need to be addressed.

As a general point, the Cabinet Member for Children's Social Services and Equalities pointed out that a target showing as green did not mean that the Council was outperforming other authorities and that there was a need to be mindful of the performance of all key indicators.

A Member asked whether it would be possible to receive information with regard to comparative performance and the Group Director explained that this information is available and would be provided to Members.

In conclusion the Cabinet Member for Partnerships and Adults Social Services reminded Members that the move to more collaborative work meant that the Council was often reliant on its partners to deliver on targets.

RESOLVED:

- (i) to note the content of the report;
- (ii) that a joint report from the Director of Human Resources and the Group Director Community & Children's Services be presented to the next scheduled meeting of the Committee.
- (iii) that Members be provided with a comparison of local authority performance across Wales in relation to social services performance indicators.

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

54. YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICES FOR CWM TAF

The Head of the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service updated the Committee with regard to the current arrangements that exist across the Cwm Taf area for the provision of Youth Offending Services (YOS) and the effectiveness and continued development of the service.

The Head of Service explained that the Youth Offending Service is a statutory partnership legislated by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 with the statutory partners being South Wales Police, Cwm Taf University Health Board, the National Probation Service and the local authorities of Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf. He reported on the creation of the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service which replaced the two separate youth justice services for the Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf areas. He also reported on the structure of the service and on the expected reduction in grant funding for 2015/16 as well as an expected reduction in core funding and explained that the known likelihood of funding reductions had been a consideration for the development of a regional service which would be more resilient to future funding pressures whilst maintaining service provision.

The Committee was provided with an explanation of the key performance indicators by which the service is measured and data in relation to custody rates and re-offending rates which highlighted that the Cwm Taf Regional Youth Offending Service is the amalgamation of two historically well performing services and that this level of performance has been maintained during the amalgamation process.

Both the Service Director Children's Services and the Head of Service responded to Members' questions and the Service Director explained that the dramatic reduction in offending rates in recent years in an area which historically had high youth custodial rates could in part be explained by the work undertaken by the service to prevent young children entering the Youth Justice system and it was this lesson which was influencing the work being put in place with regard to Children's Services.

In conclusion, the Committee thanked the Head of the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service for his informative report and it was suggested that the Committee should receive a presentation to a future meeting to provide an insight into the work carried out by the team.

RESOLVED:

- (i) to note the content of the report and the progress made in developing a regional Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service;
- (ii) to note the maintenance of the positive performance in relation to the key performance indicators;
- (iii) to receive presentation to a future meeting of the Committee in relation to the specific functions undertaken by staff.

55. COMMUNITY AND HOSPITAL INTERFACE AND DELAYED TRANSFERS OF CARE (DToC)

The Service Director, Adult Locality Services and Short Term Intervention reported on the work being undertaken to support the interface between

community and hospital services and the numbers of people whose discharge from hospital is delayed.

The Service Director, Adult Locality Services and Short Term Intervention reported on the winter plan which had been agreed with Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf local authorities and Cwm Taf University Health Board to mitigate winter pressures. He also reported that the Health and Social Care system this year had benefited from an Intermediate Care Fund, a one year grant from the Welsh Assembly and this had in part been used to add additional capacity within the intermediate care and reablement service and along with other measures had helped manage the demand and pressures on hospital admissions.

In relation to Delayed Transfers of Care, the Service Director, Adult Locality Services and Short Term Intervention reported that the performance for 2014/15 had been poor. He explained that the reasons were not altogether clear but a contributing factor had been the level of staff sickness during July and August. However, the DToC figures were generally higher throughout the year when compared to 2013/14. The Service Director reported that the current DToC measures were not in themselves particularly helpful and work is taking place to determine whether it would be more useful to collect the average length of stay as an indicator.

Following discussion it was **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.

(Mrs) M E Davies
Chairman

The meeting closed at 6.45 pm.