

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale. on Wednesday 7th November 2018 at 5 p.m.

PRESENT

County Borough Councillor S Rees - Owen – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors

H. Boggis	S. Evans	G. Jones
J. Brencher	M. Griffiths	W. Lewis
A. Calvert	J. Harries	S. Powell
J. Davies	L. Hooper	

Non Committee Member

County Borough Councillor S M Evans - Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny

Co-opted Members

Mr J. Fish – Voting Elected Parent/ Governor Representative

Officers in Attendance

Mr G. Isingrini – Group Director, Community & Children's Services
Ms Z. Lancelott – Head of Community Wellbeing and Resilience
Ms A. Harris – Regional Adoption Manager, Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Collaborative
Ms L. Lewis - Service Manager Resilient Families Service
Mr P Nicholls – Head of Legal – Litigation, Planning & Environment,
Community and Children's Services
Mr G. Evans – Youth Support Service Manager

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from: County Borough Councillor H. Fychan, M. Powell and G. Stacey.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED – that in accordance with Members Code of Conduct, there were no personal interests made at the meeting pertaining to the agenda.

15. VALE, VALLEYS AND CARDIFF REGIONAL ADOPTION COLLABORATIVE ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

The Group Director, Community and Children's Services introduced the Regional Adoption Manager, Vale, and Valleys & Cardiff Collaborative to Members of the Committee. The Chair welcomed Ms Harris, to the meeting and invited her to present the report.

The Regional Adoption Manager explained the background of the Collaborative which comprised of the adoption services of the Vale of Glamorgan CBC, Cardiff Council, Merthyr Tydfil CBC and Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC. Members were informed that is one of five regional collaborative which form part of the National Adoption Service.

The Regional Adoption Manager highlighted that all adoption services are required to provide an annual review of their services as set out in regulation 22 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and in addition, Section 15(c) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Regulations) (Wales) 2015 and the legal agreement which requires the review to be brought before scrutiny.

Members were informed that the report is the 3rd Annual Report and covers the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018. Members were also informed of the current position of the VVC along with the findings of the Annual Report and the future priorities for the service. After concluding the in depth report the Regional Adoption, Manager responded to Members questions.

A Member put a question forward relating to children that have complex needs and what support is there for both the child and the adoptive parents as it is a stressful

process. The Regional Adoption Manager explained that every child deserves a chance in a forever home and as a Collaborative VVC has made some very successful placements ensuring with a robust support plan is in place as support is key to a successful placement.

A Member asked with regards to sibling groups how adopter may consider taking sibling groups. In replying the Regional Adoption Manager explained that the Family Court will consider if it is in the children's best interest to remain together and will order a sibling attachment assessment to be undertaken. VVC tries to work with the Courts and adopters for this to happen.

Another Member put her views forward in relation to the Service being a Collaborative and felt concerned of the move out of RCT and staff having to move away geographically from the authorities involved. The Group Director Children's and Community Services explained legislation requires a host for the region and the Vale was felt the most appropriate. It was explained that accountability stays with four authorities.

Members raised concerns in the shortfall of adopter recruitment and the number of children waiting. The Regional Adoption Manager explained that the decision to employ a Marketing and Recruitment Co-Ordinator is seen to be a curial role and a step in the right direction in terms of converting more enquiries into applications.

A Member questioned the level of support that is given within schools to help the children who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences and what work is being done with Health to support adoptive families through a very stressful time. In response to the question the Regional Adoption Manager explained that the Adoption Support Plan details all the children's needs and how they are to be addressed. VVC works closely with the Medical Advisors etc. In respect of schools work has been undertaken on a case by case basis and work is being done with Adoption UK, who have produced guidance for schools on adoption.

A Member enquired that when looking at the data there was an increase in the number of Children Looked After however the number of referrals for adoption are down and whether there are reasons for this. It was explained that at the time of referral a change to the child's circumstances may have occurred and alternative plans may have been put forward.

The Chair thanked the Regional Adoption Manager for her very comprehensive report, and asked whether a Meeting had been set up with a group of adoptive parent as previously asked for. It was explained that due to the move of the adoption service and availability of staff and parents it has been a challenge, however it was agreed that this will be looked at as priority.

The Chair also felt that information provided to schools on adoptive placements should be looked at greater detail. The Officer explained that the National Adoption

Service and Adoption UK have produced guidance which has been given to schools. The Committee felt that it would be beneficial for Adoption and Social Services to do information session within school as a step forward.

Members thanked the Regional Adoption Manager for her report and **RESOLVED** to:

- Acknowledge the Report
- Receive information on what is provided to schools regarding adoption
- Arrange for a small group of Members to meet with adoptive families to consider their needs and what is working for them.

16. RESILIENT FAMILIES UPDATING REPORT

The Head of Community Wellbeing and Resilience presented to the Committee an update on the Resilient Families Service with aid of a Power Point Presentation.

Members were informed that the Resilient Families Programme had been put in place to bring together a range of strategic work streams and priorities to provide a single focus for all partners to engage with and commit to the delivery of family – focused early intervention support service that makes a difference to families in RCT.

Members were presented with various charts outline area of the Integrated Family Support frame work.

The Head of Community Wellbeing and Resilience enlightened Members on what has changed within the Service. It was explained that we now have:

- A single point of access via MASH
- Single vision for family support services in RCT that was focused on service user experience
- TAF functions stratified into role:
 - Engagement and Assessment – frontload effort in engagement and swift diagnostic assessment
 - Brokerage and Review – build and review plan and manage professionals
 - Intervention Worker – focus on relationships
 - Family Aide Support – practical assistance at home, morning and evening routines
- Appraisals not referrals – recommendations and commitments from Education , Health , Housing, Parenting and Financial Inclusion at same time (Specialist Health staff in Teams)
- Risk Management overseen by Social Workers in the Team – swift direct step up and down.

- Timescales significantly reduced
 - Assessment completed within 2 weeks of referral
 - Plan completed within 3 weeks of referral
 - Plan review at 6 weeks
 - Maximum intervention of 12 weeks.

Members were presented with the data overview and it was explained that all data presented to Member was as of 31st August 2018 with 1032 referrals having been received which is averaging 129 per month. It was also brought to Members attention that 396 families that are currently open:

- 9% awaiting allocation
- 27% at assessment or brokerage stage, and
- 8% at review stage.

Members were taken through each step of the process and were given figures in respect of how the service is achieving its goals, along with case studies in respect of service users experiences.

The Chair thanked the officers for the robust presentation and opened the meeting up for any questions.

Members congratulated the Head of Community and Wellbeing and her team for all their hard work in setting up an excellent service.

A Member asked the officers present how the team had settle in to their roles and how moral was amongst the staff. In reply officers explained that the service is only as good as its staff and we have had a full complement of staff since July who work well together to produce better outcomes for our families.

A Member commented that families through this service have a critical friend which is fantastic for the future.

Members were also please to see the number of self – referrals, however wondered how people are finding MASH. Is it through other professionals that they are told they can self- refer how do they get the information. The Officers explained that there is a very positive interaction with health visitors and other 3rd Sector organisation that provide the information to families.

A Member raised concerns over the fact that universal credit is to be rolled out in the next few months and felt that it could be an issue in the future. The Head of Communities and Wellbeing explained that this factor was considered when the service was set up and this will be covered by the Financial Inclusion part of the appraisals, with information and work that is done with Citizen Advice Bureau.

After further discussion and consideration of the presentation Members **RESOLVED:**

- Acknowledge the excellent work the service has undertaken
- Provide Members with information leaflets for their Wards
- That the Democratic Services Officer would provide new Committee Members with the initial presentation that was presented to Committee in February 2018
- Provide Members with data that covers individual Wards if requested
- Receive updating reports at future meetings.

Meeting Closed at 7:35pm

Cllr S. Rees Owen

(Chair)

