

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 5th December 2018 at 5 p.m.

PRESENT

County Borough Councillor S Rees - Owen – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors

H. Boggis	J. Davies	G. Jones	G. Stacey
J. Brencher	S. Evans	W. Lewis	
A. Calvert	H. Fychan	S. Powell	

Non Committee Member

County Borough Councillor C. Leyshon – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

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

Co-opted Members

Mr J. Fish – Voting Elected Parent/ Governor Representative
Ms N Crowley – Voting Elected Parent/ Governor Representative

Officers in Attendance

Mr G. Isingrini – Group Director, Community & Children's Services
Ms A. Batley – Service Director Children's Services
Mr P Nicholls – Head of Legal – Litigation, Planning & Environment,
Community and Children's Services
Mr L Lewis – Acting Head of Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from: County Borough Councillor M. Powell

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. CWM TAF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

The Chair explained to Members of the Committee that due to there being an issue with Members accessing the background papers that if Members had any questions regarding the plan for 2018/19 at a later date then Members could E-mail Officers directly for a response.

The Acting Head of Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service introduced himself to Members of the Committee. It was explained that the report is to provide Members with an annual review of the work of the Youth Offending Service (YOS) for 2018/19, which included a summarised review of the implementation of a post inspection of a post inspection action plan following a full joint inspection of the work of the YOS which took place during March 2017, the findings of which were published in July the same year.

Members were informed that the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service is a statutory partnership legislated by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and provides a service across two local authority areas, namely Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. It was brought to Members attention that in August 2014 the local authority YOS areas merged to form Cwm Taf YOS.

The Acting Head of Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service enlighten Members that the aim of the service is to prevent the offending and re-offending of the children and young people within our communities. The statutory partners involved are South

Wales Police, Cwm Taf University Health Board, HM Prison and Probation Service along with Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil Local Authority areas.

The Acting Head of Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service went on to explain that the partners above provide financial and staffing contributions to the YOS, the service also receives grant funding from the, Youth Justice Board, Welsh Government and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Members were presented with a summary of the 2017 Full Joint Inspection and YOS Action Plan / Review. It was explained that overall it was felt that the judgements of the inspection presented a balanced picture of the service with clear indicators of areas that required developing or further attention.

Members were presented with the key recommendations along with the recommendations made within the FJI report.

Before concluding his report the Acting Head of Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service advised Members that the Youth Justice System is currently under review both nationally and regionally and the YOS has already been notified by the Ministry of Justice that there will be changes to the way YJB grant money will be distributed to Local Authorities in the next financial year and it is uncertain what this will actually mean for the service in the future.

The Acting Head of Cwm Taf Youth offending Service concluded his report and open the meeting up for questions from Member of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

A Member commented that it was very disappointing to see that the partnership working between YOS and the Child and Adolescent Mental Service is deemed to be poor; the Member went on to say that it seemed to be a fire fighting exercise and invest where there is a problem not investing in preventative measures. It was explained to Members that the Offender Management Board have continued to raise concerns regarding the quality of the quality of the service health providers and in June 2018 a meeting took place between YOS AND CAMHS to resolve the issues and a new YOS/CAMHS Pathway is now in place and the Offender Management Board is there if any problems arise and will hold the service to account if need be.

A Member commented on the grant funding and the budget set up show in table 8 of the plan

Members felt strongly that early intervention is key to try and prevent reoffending with our young people. Officers explained that reoffending is less since the resources have been put in to the prevention end of the service. The progression of the Blueprint for youth Justice in Wales which looks at the initial response to ACEs and the YEPS has helped greatly.

Members were informed of the potential changes to Youth Justice System and YOS performance, it was explained that the Youth Justice System is currently under review both nationally and regionally and that YOS has already been notified by the Ministry of Justice that there will be changes to the way the YJB grant money will be distributed to Local Authorities in the next financial year. It is uncertain what this will actually mean for the service at present.

Members felt strongly regarding the need for securing suitable accommodation for our 16 and 17 year olds. It was explained that the Local Authority along with YOS are currently working on a strategy for suitable accommodation and a report will be brought to Committee in January 2019 with its progress.

Members consider the report in great detail and RESOLVED to:

- Acknowledge the proposed strategic changes with the Youth Justice System and potential impact on YOS business
- Acknowledge the findings and outcomes of the full inspection of Cwm Taf YOS and actions in this year's Youth Justice Plan that link to the post inspection improvement action plan, reviewed in July 2018 , and send any other questions, observations to officer after considering the report in depth.
- Agree to receive further reports in due course in order to be satisfied of the progress and improvement action plan and receive updates on the work /changes that impact upon the YOS generally.

16. THE PLACEMENT OF RCT CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER REPORT

The Service Director Children's Services presented the report to Members providing information regarding the placements of children from RCT that are looked after.

It was explained that children looked after by the local authority, rather than their parents are amongst the most vulnerable groups in our society and as a corporate parent it is our responsibility to keep them safe, making sure their experience in care are positive and improve their ongoing life chances.

The Service Director Children's Services explained that when considering a placement, consideration is given to what is in the child's best interest regard must be given to the requirements of the Social Services Wellbeing Wales Act (2014). It was explained that there were 684 children looked after in RCT on the 07/11/18. The Children's age range 26% were aged 4 and under.

Members were presented with the various placement types, along with the age group categories.

It was brought to Members attention that the majority of children looked after are place with RCT foster carers and with relative carers. There is a minority of children

who are placed out of county and a few are placed out of Wales. It was explained that on the 07/11/18 there were 177 children looked after that were placed outside of RCT and 17 placed outside of Wales, placement of which were :

- 9 are placed with relatives
- 3 placed for adoption
- 1 is with independent sector foster carers
- 4 placed in residential homes.

The Service Director Children's Services informed Members that the recruitment and retention of in house foster carers remains a challenge and during the year from November 2017 to October 2018:

- 10 additional foster carer households were recruited and approved during the year offering 14 new placements
- 19 were however deregistered. The reason for deregistration were mainly due to retirement or leaving fostering because of illness or other commitments. One was deregistered because due to competency issues.
- 24 kinship carer households were approved during the year, offering 33 new placements

It was highlighted to Members that numbers of approved carers had increased slightly in 2018 compared to 2017; however there is still a need to recruit more.

The Service Director Children's Services took Members through the procedure of commissioning placements and concluded her report by presenting 2 case studies which showed two very different scenarios. The Service Director then proceeded to answer questions from Members of the Committee.

A Member asked when placing a child is there a time period for each placement, in response officers explained that the authority looks to seek permanency for each child and we work with the providers to manage both the needs of the child and the foster carer / placement. Short term placements are used sometimes but only when necessary. It was explained that a placement would need to give 28 days' notice that it is no longer able to continue with arrangement and the local authority would need to make alternative arrangement however we try and stop this situation occurring.

A Member raised concern over placements of children outside of Wales, it was explained that the children either needed specialist settings or are placed with relative carers however it was stressed the child still remains the responsibility of the local authority.

In respect of costing for children placed out of County, Members requested extra information. The Chair gave Members of the Committee feedback from the Quality Assurance Panel Meeting she attended and explained that she felt it would be beneficial to all Members of the Children and Young Scrutiny to have a report relating to costing data at a future meeting.

Another Member of the Committee was concerned over the fact that a Child Looked After was currently in Bed and Breakfast, The Service Director Children's Services explained that it was the choice of the young person to go in to this setting and that person is doing very well and is working with children's service on a daily basis.

After further robust discussion Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Acknowledge the information received within the report
- Receive a report regarding Costing of Placements at a future meeting
- Updating report of the work carried out with the fostering service.

Meeting Closed at 6:20pm

Councillor S Rees - Owen
(Chair)

