



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 13 February 2019 at 5.00 pm at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

### **County Borough Councillors - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-**

Councillor S. Rees-Owen (Chair)

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

### **Co-Opted Members in attendance:-**

Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative  
Mr D Price, Representing UNISON

### **Officers in attendance:-**

Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services  
Ms A Batley, Director of Children's Services  
Ms A Richards, Head of 21st Century Schools  
Ms K Webster, Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist  
Ms C Williams, Service Manager - Disabled Children  
Ms H Jeans, Principal Educational Psychologist

### **County Borough Councillors in attendance:-**

Councillor S Evans

#### **45 Declaration of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

#### **46 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received for the following County Borough Councillors J. Davies, A. Davies –Jones, M. Griffiths J. Harries and M. Powell.

#### **47 Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2019 as an accurate reflection of the meeting subject to it being noted that Co- Opted Members Mr J. Fish and D. Price were present at the

Meeting.

#### **48 Report in respect of School Based Counselling Service 2017/18**

The Head of the Educational Psychology Service presented Members with an overview of the provision and effectiveness of counselling services for young people in Rhondda, Cynon, Taf (RCT) during the academic year 2017/18 and inform Members of the current plans to ensure ongoing provision that meets the needs of the service users.

The Head of Educational Psychology Service gave Members the background of the Service. It was explained that within schools counselling complements other approaches to support the health and wellbeing of learner, such as school based wellbeing interventions and pastoral support or more specialist interventions from teams such as the Educational Psychology Service or Behaviour Support Service as well as service provided externally the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

It was explained that the appointment of a counselling service in each local authority is carried out via a tendering process every three years and in RCT, the Eye-to-Eye Young People's counselling service is currently contracted to provide the statutory service within schools and in the community.

Members were informed that during the academic year (2017/18) a Counselling Service Management Board was established. The purpose of the Management Board, is to ensure that the Eye to Eye Counselling Service is meeting the requirement that is set out in their contracts to meet the needs to the children and young people in RCT and to consider the necessary requirements of an effective counselling service for children and young people, as we move towards the next tendering process.

Members were informed of the current position with RCT along with a number of graphs which demonstrated the number of young people who accessed counselling during the last three year period along with the number of sessions attended, the year groups, the number of male and females accessing the service and the number of vulnerable learners who access the counselling.

The Head of the Educational Psychology Service highlighted that the graph shows a decrease in the figures since 2015/16 due to a change in measure, as historically the figures quoted were for the number of referrals, rather than the actual number of individuals who attended counselling. She went on to explain that this has now been corrected from 2016/17. The figures show more school registered pupils (11 – 18 years).

The Head of Educational Psychology Service informed the committee that data in respect of males and females accessing counselling has shown that there is still significantly more females than males that have had counselling. She explained that it is pleasing to see that RCT has employed two male counsellors to encourage male students to take up the offer of the service

Members scrutinised the data in detail and put forward their questions to Officers. A Member commented on the extremely long waiting list for CAMHS and questioned whether this had an effect on the service. It was explained that there is no research at present to indicate this however; collaborating between the services is being carried out to provide a better service for the young people.

In respect of missed appointment, Members raised concerns in respect of how this is managed. It was explained that the new triage service would improve and help the situation.

Funding for the Service raises great concerns amongst Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee as there has been no extra funding from Welsh Government over the 5 years. One of the main concerns is the increasing number of young people wishing to attend the counselling service and staffing numbers remaining the same. Members felt that Welsh Government should be contacted to share the concerns of Members and make a case for increase in the funding.

The Service Director Children's Services explained that Welsh Government had announced that there would be funding of 7 Million pounds to be distributed throughout Wales the details of which is unknown at present. There has been a piece of work entitled "Mind over Matter" which looks at the support needs of children and young people with emotional and mental health difficulties. She hoped this could create extra capacity for the services.

A Member commented on the raising awareness of the service and how is it being advertised. Officers explained to Member that pupils are made aware through poster being put up within the school, school websites etc. The Member also asked what was being done to encourage boys to take up the service. Members were informed that boys engaging in counselling has increased however; boys coping strategies are different to girls and were are working on way to manage their social and emotional needs.

In respect of the pupils that did not attend, (DNA) Member raised concerns regarding the reasons behind the non-attendance and how are we making sure the pupil is getting the help that is needed. It was explained that the service will try and work with the vulnerable young person and will try and contact them via an email, text etc. On occasions many issue get resolved and therefore the is no need for intervention. Work would be done with the link member to see if there is a reason for the non-attendance and the link member would do the work, as it is a confidential service.

Members continued to scrutinise the report and **RESOLVED:**

- Acknowledge the information contained within the report
- That the Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee contact the Cabinet Member for Education expressing the views of the Committee in relation to the funding of the Service from Welsh Government.
- Receive a report at a future meeting of the Committee

The Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist provided Members with an update on the educational outcomes of Children Looked After (CLA) in Rhondda Cynon Taf following on from results in Summer 2018 and the previous report which was presented in July 2018.

Members were informed that Rhondda Cynon Taf has a significant looked after population. The data provided indicates that the risk factors which can be a significant and long term barrier to achievement, however the Local Authority has a key role to ensure that children in their care have equal opportunity to access and engage with good quality supportive education and develop key skills to support their relationships, attainment and positive progression into adulthood.

The Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist continued to explain outcomes for CLA continues to be a strategic priority within the local authority. The Children Looked After team within the Access, Inclusion Service works in collaboration with schools, foster carers, children's services and other external agencies to promote the educational outcomes along with life chances, and social inclusion of children looked after.

Members were provided with the national and local data, Members were reminded that national data considers all looked after children regardless of where they are placed in their respective placements. However, local data reports relate to the children and young people looked after and educated in Rhondda Cynon Taf only. The scope for making direct comparisons between local and national data sets is therefore restricted.

Members were presented with various graphs outlining both sets of data. It was explained that Welsh Government Statistics Wales website records show that on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 there were 675 looked after children and young people within Rhondda Cynon Taf which suggests that the local authority has the second highest total of children and young people looked after and the second highest number of school aged children (5 -15) within Wales.

The Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist informed Members of the successful launch of the CLA Friendly Schools Quality Mark which has been operational since September 2018. The Quality Mark has two levels, which include gold and platinum awards. To date six schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf have achieved the Quality Mark with one school attaining the gold award and five schools attaining the platinum, with further schools currently working towards completing the Quality Mark. Finally, it was explained that the CLA Quality Mark supports the underpinning principles and key priorities identified for the effective use of the PDG LAC funding and support for CLA pupils.

Members scrutinised the data within the report extensively and put forward their views and questions.

A Member welcomed the CLA Friendly Schools Quality Mark and asked who in the school contributes towards the pastoral care part of the data. It was explained that it would be the designated person in school usually someone from the Senior Management team with training. There has been a shift in schools pastoral care, with some mainstream schools, each school structure is different, and we have CLA Reviews, which enables us to identify the right person to carry out direct work with the staff and pupil.

A Member acknowledged that there is a significant number of children looked after with the Local Authority and reminded other Member and Officer that each of the children has a back-story and we need to consider their needs as well as data.

In respect of narrowing the attainment gap between children and young people looked after and their peer groups Members felt that there is a need for work to be done differently to narrow the gap as much as it is possible. Officers explained that they are continuing to focus on the attainment gap to achieve both academic and personal success with the new way of working through CLA Friendly Schools Quality Mark in the future.

After further discussion Members **RESOLVED:**

- Acknowledge the content of the report
- Receive a copy of the PDGLAC Report which was presented to Corporate Parenting Board.
- Receive an updating report at a future meeting.

## **50 Young Carer Annual Report**

The Service Manager Intensive Intervention (Disabled Children's Service, Contact, Young Carers) presented the Rhondda Cynon Taf Young Carers Annual Report 2017-18.

Members were informed that the Young Carers Service sits within the Local Authority's responsibilities under the Social Service and Wellbeing Act Wales (2014) and this has seen practice development within the Service with new systems being embedded over 2015-16.

Members were brought up to date with the current position of the service, it was explained that the service is currently staffed with 3 posts and in addition commissions Action of Children to provide direct support. There are currently 298 young carers known to the service and receiving information and support.

Members were also informed that there had been a 30% increase in referrals from schools and college campuses during the first 3 quarters which is a result of how successful the rollout of the schools award has been. The Awards has been highlighted as good practice among Local Authorities and has received positive feedback from Estyn.

It was highlighted to Members that the demand for sibling support is currently higher than this relatively small service can respond to and there are 30+ young people on the waiting list. It was explained that negotiations are taking place with Action for Children to provide support for siblings as part of their contract with RCT and will offer more resource and stability of service to this young group of people going forward.

Members were also informed that Welsh Government had provided a small

additional grant this year which enabled the Young Carers Service to fund an extra residential trip for young carers, a provision that they identified as being of the greatest benefit to them from the feedback they have given.

In respect of future developments and next steps it was explained to Members that during 2017 -18 there has been a review and restructure of the carers services within RCT , and the carer's support project set to become an all age service from March 2019. It was also explained that assessments of young carers will now be undertaken within the new information Advice and Assistance Team.

Members were pleased to see that the funding for the Young Adult Carers worker has been confirmed for the next financial year

Members considered the Key actions within the report, whilst considering the report a Member asked for clarification on a number of points. Members asked for more comparative data within the report.

Members agreed that the report needed to be more informative and the report contained similar data to the previous year. Members felt the report should be updated before being presented to the Corporate Parenting Board with comparative data.

A Member what link is the with the resilient families service and the young care especially with regards to providing support. It was explained that the service will assess the needs of the young person and direct them to the appropriate service. The Member also queried if any consideration had been given to the new Universal Credit and how it would affect the Young Carers. It was explained that staff would work with young carers throughout the changes however; we do not know what effect Universal Credit will have at present. We have a duty of care to the children of Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Service Director Children's Services explained that we are working with the Young Carer that we know however, there may be many more that we are not aware of and we need to increase awareness raising, advice, assistance and support.

Member continued to scrutinise the report and **RESOLVED:**

- To acknowledge the information within the report
- That the report that is going to be presented to the Corporate Parenting be updated with comparative data against the previous year.
- For Members to receive information of any up and coming award recognition events.

## 51 URGENT BUSINESS

This meeting closed at 7.50 pm

CLLR S REES-OWEN  
CHAIR.