



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, 3 February 2021 at 5.00 pm.

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

Councillor S. Rees-Owen (Chair)

Councillor J Edwards	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor A Calvert	Councillor S Powell
Councillor D Owen-Jones	Councillor S Morgans
Councillor G Stacey	Councillor L Walker

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mr L Patterson, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

Officers in attendance:-

Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services
Ms A Lloyd, Service Director, Children's Services
Ms T Prosser, Head of Service
Mr L Lewis, Acting Head of the Youth Offending Service
Ms M Ropstad – Service Manager – Carers, RCT

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor W Lewis

54 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors L. De-Vet, S Evans, H Fychan, M Griffiths, M Powell and Co-opted Member R Nicholls.

55 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declaration of personal interest was received:-

In relation to Agenda Item 5 , Youth Offending Service Report , County Borough Councillor G Stacey - " My daughter works for the Youth Offending Service"

56 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 2nd December 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

57 Consultation Links

The Chair referenced the consultation links which were available through the RCT Scrutiny website. The Chair continued and reminded that if there are any relevant item Members would like to consider they should notify the Scrutiny Officers who will deal with the items.

A Member commented that there was an item with the link on School Improvement Guidance and felt that it would be an item the Committee may wish to consider.

After consideration Members **RESOLVED** to contact Scrutiny with any comments and the Chair and Director of Education would form a response on behalf of the Committee.

58 Young Carers Report

The Service Manager – Carers, presented Members with an updating report on the Young Carers Service.

Members were informed that the Young Carer Service sits within the Local Authority's responsibilities under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) (2014). It was explained that a new national plan for carers was expected for 2020/2021 however Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown and disruption has led to a delay in progressing the public engagement which is now planned for October 2020 – January 2021.

Officers continued and explained that once confirmed the Regional Action plan will be required to implement the National priorities and recommendations established in the new national plan. It was also highlighted that Welsh Government provided transitional funding of £1million per annum for Wales in 2019/20 (£161,00 for Cwm Taf Morgannwg) to protect and build on progress to date and to support the expansion of Carers rights under the implementation of the SSWB Act . Young Carers are included in this regional work.

Officers updated Members on the following key point of the report:

- The year has been extremely challenging for young carers as their circumstances have changed significantly. The support provided has continued within the Coronavirus restrictions and the RCT Young Carer Service has supported young carers and families to deal with challenges;
- A new national ID card for young carers will be launched before the end of March in RCT. This scheme has been piloted with a group of young carers currently accessing support and additional shopping discount has been added with support from RCT Council's Staff Benefit Scheme.; and
- Once restrictions allow, all age carers service in the borough will be co-located in a new refurbished office in Pontypridd, Grant funding has provided equipment and furnishing to allow space for carers events, workshops, training and meetings this will act as a carer's hub for RCT.

In respect of future plans Members pleased to see that once schools reopen fully

the service is hoping to promote the Young Carer Schools Award programme as it shows the hard work and commitment of our young carers.

Members thanked the Officers for the report and presented their questions. A Member asked a question regarding supporting young carers especially the intensive support and wanted to know if Members have a direct line to the service so they can help those in need. Officers explained Members can get in touch within the IAA Team and Staff there are able to address any issues and will direct the referral to the services that are able to help.

Another Member asked a question regarding the Covid 19 situation and asked if the service is aware of any new carers which may have been put in the situation due to the pandemic and is there any early indication of demand if so how are these young carers managing looking after parents.

The Team Manager Community and Children's Services explained that Covid has been a worry for all and assured Members that staff were still visiting families and monitoring their needs. Members were informed that contact through the front door had increased by 1000 compared to last year. Social Workers, Miskin Project, Resilient Families Service, YEP Service. working together to identify the child's needs and will refer to the service. If there is a need we will try and deliver a service to deal with needs of young carers. In the future we may see an increase and we will priorities and monitor this through many ways.

A Member asked what are we doing to raise the awareness of the Service across the County Borough, what information is out there to let people know the service is available to everyone who needs the service. .

The Officer explained we do need to raise the profile of young carers and with the National Scheme for ID card, the Carer Friendly Employer Scheme and the use of social media should put the service in the right direction to raise the profile of Young Carers. The service is producing a film showing the work of young carers and how they cope during Covid.

Another Member wanted clarity in relation to young carer who are supporting siblings, the Member asked how of these child have internet access and digital devices and also asked if these children are attending school.

In response the Officer explained the sibling carer service sound more alarming than it is. The Sibling Carer Service provides support for the siblings of the child with additional learning needs. The Service give the sibling time away from the family unit to develop friendships with other sibling carers. It also allows quality time for parents and the sibling carer.

In respect of the digital devices the officer explained that she did not have any numbers for the children at present. However there has been support where needed and there has been a joined up approach with Education and when identified the child has been provided with devices and internet access. The Officers explained they have worked with finance and have accesses a number of grants.

The Chair asked Officers to bring back figure in respect of how many carers have had access to the devices and how many may are still waiting as this is a main concern for the Committee and we need to make sure each child is

supported.

Finally Members highlighted concerns in respect of young carers during the pandemic and wanted to know if the access to the service had increase and if there had been any indication of new problems which have occurred due to the pandemic. Also Members wanted to know there had been more resource made available and if not was it needed.

In response the Officers explained that the assessor sits within the IIA service and some face to face work would be done. Young people we are aware of has had a service that meets their needs and we will have capacity within the service.

After further discussion Members RESOLVED:

- Receive an updating report challenges identified by young carers during the pandemic and beyond.
- Receive information in respect of the number of digital devices and internet access provided to young carers throughout the pandemic.

59 Youth Offending Service Report

The Head of Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service provided Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny with an update on the work of the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (YOS) 2020/21. Also included within the report is a summary of the Service's response to the Covid 19 pandemic along with the future challenge for the services.

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 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.

It was highlighted that the overall governance is facilitated by the Regional Cwm Taf Offender Management Board (OMB) which meets quarterly to hold the service to account. In addition to this the performance of the YOS is also reported to the Youth Justice System and to the Welsh Government.

The Head of Service explained that due to the result of Covid 19 the YOS were not required to provide an annual Youth Justice Plan for the financial year 2020/21. The Head of Service continued and explained that the YJB instead

requested that YOS completed a self-assessment and action plan in relation to a new set of National Standards for Youth Justice.

The Head of Service provided Members with an overview of the work carried out by the service since March 2020, it was explained that most of the YOS staff have undertaken the majority of their work remotely which has meant a reduction in face to face contact with young people and families.

It was also explained that during this unprecedented time staff have continued to support young people who appear in the law courts or required an appropriate adult at a police station.

Members were also informed that face to face contact with young people assessed as high risk has continued during this time.

The Head of the Cwm Taf YOS highlighted where the service is at now and what the future priority areas are for the service. It was explained that the service is currently in the process of restructuring the service in order to meet the demands of early intervention and prevention which now accounts for the majority of the workload. Members were updated on the use of the Viewpoint data feedback system, along with the YOS education training and employment team.

In respect of CAMHS the officer explained that YOS has recently negotiated CAMHS provision with Senior Health Managers to provide increased support for staff dealing with young people who present with more complex wellbeing issues and continue to work to strengthen links with the Health Service.

In concluding his report the Head of Cwm Taf YOS explained that currently the service is dealing with staffing issues which were not so apparent within the first lockdown, which includes sickness rates, caring for family member etc. The Officer finally explained that the potential impact of future Covid restriction, service change and the risks associated with potential changes to grant funding will need to be monitored closely to ensure that Cwm Taf YOS can alongside key partner can properly meet the needs of young people within the region.

The Chair thanked the officer for a comprehensive report and open up the meeting for Members questions and comments.

A Member commended the officer for the report and thanked staff and the service for the work that had been done throughout this year. The Members asked a question with regards to the hotspot areas within the County Borough the Member asked for an illustration of where these areas are and queried whether work is being done with the YEPS with these areas.

We meet on a monthly basis with community partners and police and we identify hotspots areas where the troubles are coming in. As a service our prevention teams are going out to these areas to try and better inform these young people and steer them in the right direction rather than use enforcement. However more recently due to the situation the police have asked for a more enforced approach however this can compromise some our staff.

In relation to the YEP services they have been working with the young people and this is a different type of work to the YOS team and we are having referral from YEPS.

The Member also questioned officers in respect of Care homes and county lines.

In his reply the officer explained that County lines has not been a major issue for the service, but we know there is an issue with child exploration and work is being done around this. With regards to care homes the officer explained that there has been a lot of restorative justice work and mediation work carried with care homes.

Members also raised questions regarding CAMHS and the Head of Cwm Taf YOS explained that there seems to be an increase in the number of young people presenting with mental health issues and was pleased that the services is working with health colleagues to address the situation.

Further questions were put forward and after further discussion Members RESOLVED to:

- Acknowledge the impact of Covid and the response of YOS during the past 10 months whilst setting out the future challenges for the service;
- Receive further report at a future meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

60 Chair's Review and Close

The Chair thanked Officers and Members for their input in this evening's meeting and wished the well in the future.

This meeting closed at 6.15 pm

**CLLR S REES-OWEN
CHAIR.**