



MINUTES OF MEETING

SCRUTINY : SOCIAL SERVICES MEETING

TUESDAY, 8TH JUNE, 2021

PRESENT: Councillors: W R Smith (Chair)
S Jago (Vice-Chair)

Councillors G Richards, D Sammon and I Thomas

Officers:

L Curtis Jones (Chief Officer (Social Services)), A Edevane (Head of Adult Services), T Hudd (Family Support), M Rivers (Business Change) and M Phillips (Democratic Services Officer)

ITEM NO.	AGENDA MATTER	DECISION
31	Apologies for absence	No apologies for absence were received as all members were in attendance.
32	Declarations of Interest (including whipping declarations)	No Declarations of Interest were received by the committee
33	Forward Work Programme 2021/22	The committee requested a verbal update from the Chief Officer for Social Services in relation to the budget prior to the six-monthly budget report that is scheduled for October. It was agreed that a verbal update could be provided at either the July or September meeting. The committee approved the forward work programme for 2021/22.

34	Supporting Change	<p>Taryn Stephens introduced the report to the committee and highlighted the salient points.</p> <p>The following questions were raised by the committee and responded to in detail by the officers in attendance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report states that there has been a reduction in the number of children looked after in Merthyr Tydfil in the last twelve months, however a National report published today states that Wales has the highest proportion of children in UK being cared for by the state, if our numbers are being reduced we are going against the trend which you should be congratulated for. Can you please confirm the current number of Children Looked After in Merthyr Tydfil • The percentage of Children Looked After in Wales is on average 1.14% and in England it is 0.67% which is nearly half. Can you confirm what the percentage is in Merthyr Tydfil in relation to population <p>Councillor D Sammon requested that the officer provide the percentage figures for the number of Children Looked After in relation to the population in Merthyr Tydfil.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report states that the majority of families referred into the Supporting Change Team are affected by domestic abuse, parental substance abuse and/or parental mental health which takes up 70% of the referrals, can you tell us what the remaining 30% is made up of • The report highlights the Outreach Team – what does the team offer and how is the work referred to this team • Is there extra support available for foster carers • There was a story in the press last week that highlighted a reduction in child protection orders in Wales, how confident are we as an authority that children haven't been missed • The report shows that since March 2020, 26 referrals were received of which 16 were closed. Of the cases closed, 56% had a positive outcome. What are your feelings in relation to this statistic and the 44% that weren't successful • Children's Services have recently commissioned a pilot scheme of parental advocacy – who has been appointed is it an external organisation • Additional Learning Needs – how can Social Services work with Education in resolving the issue. At a recent Governors meeting it was stated that 20% of one age group were underachieving
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		The Chair thanked the officers for the report and requested that the committees thanks are passed on the staff for all the work they have done throughout the pandemic.
35	Social Services Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan Update	<p>The Chief Officer for Social Services introduced the item and led the committee through the report and highlighted the salient points.</p> <p>The following questions were raised by the committee and were responded to in detail by the officers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Children looked after budget can be volatile does the authority build in a contingency element into the Social Service Budget • The report states that a 'whole council approach' is required when dealing with extra demands within social services – is this the same as saying the Council will need a strategic approach or something different • We understand why regional working was curtailed in the last 12 months, what is the current situation are we returning to some sort of normality • The report states there are currently no cases of Covid-19 in our care homes is that still the case now • Are there any issues with hospital discharges at present • 6.4 of the report states that within Children's Services the referrals being received are of a more complex nature, can you explain the reasons for this <p>The Chair thanked the officers for the report.</p>
36	Scrutiny Referrals, Feedback and Follow up Actions	The Chair confirmed that there were no referrals, feedback or follow up actions.
37	Reflection and Evaluation of Meeting	The Chair and the Committee reflected in detail on the matters that had been discussed at the Meeting
38	Any other business deemed urgent by the Chair	The Chair confirmed that he had no other business deemed urgent and requested that the Chief Officer for Social Services pass on the committees thanks to the social services staff for all of their hard work throughout the pandemic.