



MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL

MINUTES OF MEETING

SCRUTINY : SOCIAL SERVICES MEETING

TUESDAY, 16TH JUNE, 2015

PRESENT: Councillor W R Smith (**In the Chair**)

Councillors D Davies, R Braithwaite and B E Mansbridge

Councillor Linda Matthews (Cabinet Member for Social Services)

Officers:

Lisa Curtis Jones (Chief Officer (Social Services)), Mark Anderton (Head of Adult Services), Annabel Lloyd (Head of Children's Services), Richard Parry (Consultant for School Improvement) and Heidi Jones (Senior Administrative Assistant)

Outside Bodies:

Denise Moultrie (CSSIW – Area Manager)

Howard Jones (Scrutiny Officer)

Heidi Jones (Executive Support Officer)

ITEM NO.	AGENDA MATTER	DECISION
55	Apologies for absence	Apologies for absence were received from Councillor L Mytton and Councillor T Lewis.
56	Declarations of Interest (including whipping declarations)	No declarations of interest were made.
57	Merthyr Tydfil Looked After Children Strategy	Councillor Linda Matthews took members through the report.

		<p>Councillors queried why our LAC figures are high and what the LA are doing to reduce these.</p> <p>Officers advised that there was an increase in LAC figures nationally, this did not just relate to Merthyr Tydfil. In order to reduce the number of LAC we need to identify families early on, this is a key part of the strategy. As a result of restructuring the new Merthyr Tydfil Family Centre and ECIN service will have much closer links with Flying Start/MIA.</p> <p>Councillors asked where we are in comparison to neighbouring authorities.</p> <p>Officers stated there is no magic figure. There are a combination of factors which include deprivation of the area and a shift in culture can be very risk averse.</p> <p>Councillors queried, for a small authority, do we have enough social workers and was their skill set sufficient.</p> <p>Officers advised that we have a Social Care Workforce Development Partnership who carry out/organise relevant training. There is specific training being arranged which is associated with the SS&WB Act.</p> <p>The report suggests there is a potential saving of approximately £500k, Councillors asked what plans are in place for this.</p> <p>Officers stated that these figures are dependent on the reduction of LAC, with children being looked after by in-house foster carers rather than Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). The LA has also looked at the LAC population and there are a number of those who are now reaching 18 years old and therefore will no longer be looked after. We also have a good resource with 4Cs to ensure that our placements are the best and most cost effective placements.</p> <p>Councillors asked how many in-house foster carers have we got and how many more do we need.</p> <p>Officers were not able to say exactly but could find out the information and forward on after the meeting. The more we recruit, the more children we can place in-house and we will not have to rely on external fostering agencies. Also, training courses have been arranged to increase the skill level of foster carers. The target set last year was to bring back 5 IFA placements, this has already been achieved.</p> <p>Councillors queried as the new Act increases the age of LAC from 18 to 25 whether this would add more pressure financially.</p> <p>Officers advised that this could potentially have an impact, but that we were looking at different types of care rather than fostering.</p>
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58	Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) site visit - February 2015	<p>Councillor Linda Matthews advised that the site visit went well and suggested that a letter be sent to staff thanking them for their excellent work. An action plan has been developed and is attached to the report as Appendix 1.</p> <p>Denise Moultrie, CSSIW stated that from their perspective this was a very positive site visit. They were particularly impressed on the level of scrutiny and quality assurance. They felt the LA was keeping on top of safeguarding concerns and CSSIW were happy with how these were being dealt with. There was potential for capacity issues but they didn't see an impact as a result of this. Case files were looked at during the visit and CSSIW were very pleased with these. The LA has had issues with timeliness of reviews for adults but there is a recommendation in the action plan to deal with this.</p> <p>The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub was in its very early stages at the time of the site visit, and there is probably an improvement now in this area.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Denise Moultrie for attending and requested that the action plan be added to the work programme and be brought back to a future meeting.</p> <p>Resolved that:</p> <p>The information and contents of the report be noted; and</p> <p>The proposed action plan which will be monitored by both the Chief Officer (Social Services) and the Cwm Taf Adult Safeguarding Board be supported.</p>

59	Social Services & Wellbeing Act	<p>Councillor Linda Matthews went through the presentation, highlighting the 17 strategic priorities and the requirements/leads linked to those priorities. The LA are very much part of the discussions and there is representation on each group/work theme. Leads feedback the outcomes of the meetings to our internal working groups where these proposals are agreed and challenged.</p> <p>The Chair requested that all members be made aware of the impact of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and suggested that a presentation be made to Council for them to understand the importance and potential implications.</p> <p>The Chair requested that a list of names for each partner on each group be provided.</p> <p>The Chair requested that this item be placed on the work programme for every meeting. Members need to appreciate the importance.</p>
60	Scrutiny Referrals, Feedback and Follow up Actions	<p>The Chair advised that there was nothing to report on this item.</p>
61	Reflection and Evaluation of Meeting	<p>The Chair and the Committee reflected on the issues that had been considered at the meeting.</p> <p>They felt it was a very good meeting and that having the Cabinet member there to be challenged was beneficial.</p> <p>It was noted that reports had improved and that meetings had become more focussed. Questions posed to officers were being answered succinctly and that overall there has been a vast improvement.</p>
62	Forward Work Programme	<p>The Committee considered and agreed proposed items/ amendments to the Forward Work Programme.</p> <p>The Safeguarding Review (Rotherham) is being discussed at the next meeting, the Chair required that members be reminded of the importance of their attendance.</p>
63	Any other business deemed urgent by the Chair	<p>The Chair advised that there was no other business deemed urgent.</p>