

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT**

Date Written	February 2020
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Service Area	Children's Services
Committee Date	10 <sup>th</sup> March 2020

*To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen*

### **Children's Services Strategy**

#### **1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This report provides Scrutiny Committee with information about development and progress with Children's Services Strategy.

#### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 That Scrutiny Committee receive this report and raise questions and challenge that will lead to improvement.

#### **3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

3.1 In October 2019, Children's Services provided Scrutiny Committee with an overview and update of the service strategy for improving the well-being of children and young people. The strategy sets out our approach to delivering the Council's duties to vulnerable young people. The same strategy also responds to children's services' role in contributing to outcomes under the Cwm Taf Statement of Strategic Intent for Children, Young People and Families, and the Public Services Board Cwm Taf Well-Being Objectives.

#### **Legislative Context**

3.2 <sup>1</sup>The [Wellbeing of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) specifies that we must work to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales by maximising our contribution to the Wellbeing Goals. We must do this in accordance with the sustainable development principle, which means that we act in a manner

<sup>1</sup> Read the [essential guide](#) to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

that seeks to ensure the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

There are 5 things that we need to do in order to show that we have applied the sustainable development principle. The five things are:

- Long Term
- Preventative
- Involvement
- Collaboration
- Integrated

3.3 <sup>2</sup>The [Social Services and Wellbeing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) specifies that we must seek to improve the wellbeing of people who need care and support, carers who need support and for transforming social services in Wales. The focus of this Act is on what matters to the person and how they can use their own strengths and resources to do those things, which is determined by an assessment that involves the person and the professional(s). The Act enhances the duty to collaborate in pursuit of early identification in order to prevent escalation of need.

3.4 In order to improve wellbeing, local authorities, health boards and NHS trusts must work closely to ensure better integration of health and social care. Local authorities and health boards must work together to assess care and support needs (and carer support needs) of the population in their area. As a result, they will identify what services are needed.

## 4.0 WHERE WE WERE

4.1 Included below is a summary and update against each area of business under children's services strategy. The Strategy on a Page itself is included at Appendix 1.

## 5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

5.1 The service strategy is directly related to the corporate vision statement included in Focus on the Future that is included on our Strategy on a Page:

*Children and young people are safe and healthy;  
have the right help at the right time;  
are supported to live with their family or close to home;  
and have stable and successful lives.*

5.2 Further progress has been made in relation to Children's Services' strategy as it has developed considerably since the last update to Scrutiny Committee in March 2019. Each area of development is aimed at preventing escalation of need, improving the wellbeing of vulnerable young people with care and support needs, and delivering budget efficiencies. Children's services management team, relevant partners, service users and staff have been engaged in the development of the strategy and its related action plans.

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<sup>2</sup> Read the [essential guide](#) to the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

5.3 Children's Services Strategy itself included the following components:

- **Earlier intervention to prevent escalation of need** - making sure those Children and their families receive the right help at the right time to prevent unnecessary escalation of need.
- **Enhancing services at the edge of care** - (Previously known as the Children Looked after Prevention Strategy) making sure intervention is evidenced based to prevent further escalation of need and risk; that where we need to look after young people we do so at the right time, ensuring every safe opportunity for care within the family network is fully explored.
- **Success, Stability and Transition** - making sure that looked after young people and care leavers achieve stable and successful lives as a basis from where to transition into adulthood.
- **Strategy for Improving Performance** - making sure that we continually improve the services we deliver and our outcomes.
- **Workforce Strategy** - ensuring that we can successfully recruit qualified social workers; and that the service is staffed by colleagues who are well supported with the right values, qualifications and skills.
- **Strategy for Sustainable Children's Services** - a 3 year plan setting out the services' approach to delivering short and long term efficiencies.

5.4 Children's Services Staff have highlighted the following **values and principles** as important to their **ways of working** and identity as a staff group:

- We listen to young people, their families and colleagues
- We step up and step down service but avoid stepping away too soon
- We are positive and have a 'can do' attitude
- We embrace change
- Continuous improvement lies at the heart of our work – we welcome challenge
- We want to innovate and be leaders in practice
- We are passionate about making a difference for future generations of Merthyr Tydfil families.

Included below is a summary of progress against the Children's Services' developing strategy:

Key Project and business areas	Progress
<p><b>Earlier intervention to prevent escalation of need - Right Help at Right Time</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Help Hub</li> <li>• Information Advice and Assessment</li> <li>• Young Carers</li> <li>• Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub</li> <li>• Step up Step down and MIA Co-ordination</li> <li>• Young Carers</li> </ul>	<p>The Early Help Hub is live and the Council has committed to continuously developing the work of the Early Help Hub. Elected member workshop will take place on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 on this and other matters.</p> <p>The EHH multi-disciplinary Steering group will oversee and track progress with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing partner engagement in improving the digital information that is available.</li> <li>• Implementation of regional Carers strategy in relation to young carers.</li> <li>• Develop the pathway to support services for families with Children with Disabilities.</li> </ul> <p><u>Emerging Information</u></p> <p>Evaluation of feedback from families has been better than expected and the number of assessments leading to take up of preventative services has been higher than expected. However, there is now a capacity challenge in preventative services. A summary of emerging information is included here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public have reported a satisfaction rate of 9 when providing feedback on the rate that their referral was dealt with.</li> <li>• Of those who took part in telephone interviews all 21 persons reported that the hub staff ‘did what they said they would do’.</li> <li>• Of those who took part in telephone interviews all 21 persons reported that they felt listened to. Participants were asked if they wished to make further comments to help the service develop, examples of the comments provided were: ‘Yeah she listened to me. She asked loads of questions about my family like she really wanted to help me.’</li> <li>• ‘I didn’t want any help, but I am glad I know I can ring them if I need to.’</li> <li>• When the public asked what the hub could have done differently to improve their experience the following feedback was provided: ‘No one has made contact with me from (preventative agency referred to) I am worried things might get worse.’</li> <li>• ‘I wish I had known about the hub sooner.’</li> </ul> <p>Quarter 3 was the first full quarter of Early Help Hub operation.</p>

<b>Measure:</b>	<b>Q3 19/20</b>
<b>No. of referrals</b>	253
<b>No. of Proportionate Assessments undertaken</b>	184
<b>% step up from TAF to children services</b>	5% (Previous Q2 7%)
<b>No. of re-referrals</b>	Unable to report due to infancy measure is over a six month period.
<b>% of EHH referrals that stepped up to children's services</b>	>1%
<b>% of EHH referrals signposted to an agency / provided with information (family wish to make their own referral)</b>	4%
<b>% family who consented to a referral being made to a preventative service.</b>	27%
<b>% of EHH referrals referred to TAF</b>	46% (105 children across 53 families)

**Next Steps**

- Settle in the Early Help Hub and track improvement plan, making improvements as data and feedback from family experiences becomes more evident.
- Look for every opportunity to increase the capacity and reach of preventative services.
- Evaluate and adjust based upon evidence of need and effectiveness.
- ICF funded Health post to commence their presence in the Early Help Hub.
- Early Action Together engagement to continue to explore a Police presence within the Early Help Hub to support information sharing and families accessing the right help at the right time.

**Enhancing Services at the Edge of Care - Right Decision at Right Time**

(Previously Children Looked After Prevention Strategy)

- Supporting Change Team
- Multi-agency Risk Assessment Framework (MARAF)

Appointments have been made to the Supporting Change (SC) Team which is now taking cases identified at the SC Panel. The tender for family group conference did not lead to identifying a provider, and further work is required. The Supporting Change Team will deliver the authority's duty under Part 9 of the Social Services and Well-Being Act to provide an Integrated Family Support Service.

The work of the team will support the service in making the right decision at the right time and notably look for opportunities to make lasting changes that prevent entry into the looked after system. Where a child needs to become looked after, this team will support the service in making that decision earlier in childhood when there are better outcomes for children looked after. Building on the learning from 18-19, we are keen to improve how we use the Public Law Outline.

Emerging Information

- Demand for the service is in excess of capacity and there is a brief delay in accepting cases whilst the team reaches full staffing capacity (1 FTE social worker and 0.5 FTE ed. Psychologist outstanding).
- Looked after numbers remain high (205 at 31.12.19) with some positive emerging signs:
  - a) The rate at which children become looked after has reduced and is now closer to the 2017/18 rate. (Number who became looked after Qs1-3 2018-19 = 73; Number for same period 2019-20 = 41).
  - b) The average age of becoming looked after has reduced from 6.5 years in 2018/19 to 4.1 years in 2019-20.

Next Steps

- Settle in Supporting Change and track improvement plan and outcomes.

**Strategy for Stability, Success and Transition**

- National Fostering Framework: Foster Carer recruitment and retention; Fostering Well-being
- Regional Adoption Collaboration
- Corporate Parenting
- Education for Looked after young people
- Pathway to Work
- Care Leavers' Strategy
- Therapy (Multi-agency Permanence Support Service MAPSS)
- Placement Commissioning Strategy

The following has been achieved during this period:

- Council Tax Reduction for all MTCBC Foster Carers.
- Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report has been debated at Scrutiny Committee and Council.
- Concluded Care Leaver's Strategy - Make Your Own Decision.
- Updated the Placement Commissioning Strategy Action Plan - including engagement events with providers linked to the services' Market Position Statement.
- Achieved Council Support to the Pathway to Work for care experienced young people.
- Regional agreement to the ICF funded Multi-Agency Placement Support Services (therapy for looked after young people is on track for February 2020).

Corporate Parenting Board has received reports in relation to foster carer recruitment and retention for its meeting in March 2020.

We are aware that a high number of our looked after young people require support with education and we are preparing for the significant impact of the ALN reforms.

We continue to be very proud indeed of our young people's achievements.

The annual report for the Regional Adoption Collaboration will be brought to this Scrutiny Committee.

**Next Steps**

- Continue to involve young people in our work via our contract with Voices From Care
- Continue the work of the regional fostering front door
- Implement the action plan for the Care Leavers' Strategy
- Finalise revised transition arrangements
- Implement the Placement Commissioning Strategy action plan
- Implement the action plan for the Pathway to work.

### **Strategy for Improving Performance**

- Participation and the Young Person's Voice
- Partnership Working
- Policies and Procedures
- Performance Review
- Quality Assurance Framework
- Outcome Focused Work
- Independent Reviewing Service
- Self- Evaluation and annual council report

Tracking of performance for 19-20 remains positive with strengths in relationship to timeliness of response to new safeguarding concerns and assessment. We have also noted an increase in the number of care leavers in work 24 months after leaving care.

Challenges are linked to:

- GP and Dentist for looked after young people - work is underway; is thought to be, in part, a recording issue.
- Care Leavers being in work at 12 months following leaving care (Corporate Parenting Board will request more information about solutions).
- Care Leavers experiencing homelessness.

At year end we will provide Scrutiny Committee with an annual break down of data and analysis. The service has completed Q3 of the self-evaluation which will be brought separately to Scrutiny Committee. We will update the Quality Assurance Framework for 20/21 to increase the involvement of practitioners in peer review and, ensuring that families' voices are afforded substantial importance in driving changes.

An area of work that has taken off during Q3 has been Passion4Practice which will see practitioners take a consistent step change in their approach to strength based outcome focused practice. More information will be shared about this at the members' workshop.

#### **Next steps**

- Ensure that young people's voices inform service improvements
- Continue the work of the Quality Assurance Framework and corporate self-evaluation
- Continue to monitor and improve performance
- Implement the national protection procedures
- Implement the Passion4Practice action plan.



<p><b>Workforce Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment</li> <li>• Retention</li> </ul>	<p>The service has recently been able to recruit successfully and during 19-20 we are able to focus more on staff retention and skills. Council recently supported the proposal that we employ 2 FTE social workers to address capacity issues in looked after cases, especially linked to cases of Placement with Parents.</p> <p><b><u>Next steps:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update the service workforce strategy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy for Sustainable Children's Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long Term efficiencies</li> <li>• Short Term efficiencies</li> </ul>	<p>Demand remains high and capacity is an issue, there are real pressures in the system. This is a precarious time for the service as we intend to meet need in statutory provision whilst increasing the reach and effectiveness of prevention work. The Council needs to think in a long term way in its investment in preventative services whilst being aware that there is no indication that complexity and level of demand for statutory services will change in the short term.</p> <p>There is a strong relationship between effective improvement of outcomes for people with care and support needs and effective use of resources. During 18-19 we finalised this piece of work that documents how our service strategy and the re-configuration was designed to deliver sustainability in the context of reducing resources; some examples of those long term efficiencies are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Help Hub - reduce avoidable escalations to statutory children's services.</li> <li>• Supporting Change - reduce numbers of children looked after and age at which child becomes looked after.</li> <li>• Placement Commissioning Strategy Regional Front Door Fostering - increase supply of LA foster carers and local lower cost provision.</li> <li>• Therapy - meet need in looked after system and reduce avoidable escalations.</li> <li>• Workforce - reduce reliance on agency staff.</li> </ul> <p>The service has also delivered the following in-year efficiencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closer to Home project - looking for opportunities to step down young people in high cost provisions to lower cost ones in ways that is in line with their well-being.</li> </ul>

- Supporting Change - efficiency linked to providing local rather than regional services.
- Continuing Health Care - examples of shared costs with LHB for some young people with CHC needs.
- Vacancy management.
- Escalation avoidance at Placement Panel.
- Family First - placement with safe relatives as opposed to foster care wherever possible.

As at Quarter 3 end the children's service budget was showing £622k overspend. However the Social Services Directorate Year end projection as at Quarter 3 is £289k overspend.

**Next Steps:**

- Update the services' action plan under the strategy for sustainability for 20/21 to incorporate the actions identified in the short term capacity review.

## 6.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

6.1 Merthyr Tydfil Children's Services plans to be a high performing service, working in co-production with partners and families, providing services within budget that are preventative, reduce risk, and increase resilience.

## 7.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT

7.1 Each project has a prioritised action plan which is updated quarterly with an annual review at year end. Action plans are linked to our performance management framework and the Council's policy Focus on Performance.

## 8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

8.1 This area of business is located in the following wellbeing objective:

*People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health.*

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**CABINET MEMBER FOR**  
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<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>		
<b>Title of Document(s)</b>	<b>Document(s) Date</b>	<b>Document Location</b>
Children's Services Strategy Scrutiny Committee Report	November 2019	Civic and Council website
<b>Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?</b>		No

HEAD OF SERVICE: Annabel Lloyd

Contributors:

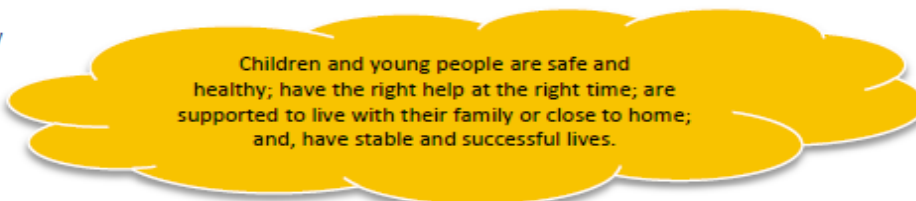
EIP and EoC:

IAA / MASH / Intake / Merthyr Family Centre / Safeguarding

SST:

Family Support / LAC / Fostering and Adoption / Care Leavers / Safeguarding

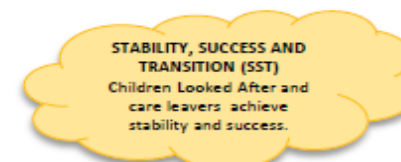
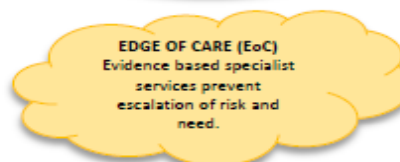
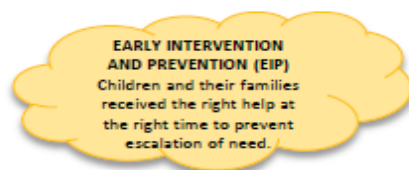
## Children Services



How will Merthyr Tydfil CBC work?



### Components



	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21	2021/22
		Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved Q3	Target	Target
LW: KPI	Percentage of re-registrations of children on Local Authority Child Protection Registers (CPR) within a 12 month period (Measure 27)			N/A	21.3	N/A	4.67	0	6.67 (12/180)	0	5.43 (7/129)	0	0
LW: KPI	Percentage of children supported to remain living within their family (Measure 25)			N/A	66.2	N/A	77.6	>78	72.5 (522/720)	>78	70.19 (478/681)	>78	>78
EIP	Percentage of children that received the right information or advice when they needed it			N/A	42 (38/91)	N/A	80 (28/35)	N/A	70 (65/93)	N/A	Yearly	N/A	N/A
EoC / SST	No. of Children Looked After at 31st March	* N/A	141	* N/A	145	* N/A	156	* N/A	198	* N/A	194 (Q2)	* N/A	* N/A
EoC	No. of Children on the Child Protection Register as at 31st March	* N/A	101	* N/A	113	* N/A	123	* N/A	132	* N/A	Awaiting Data	* N/A	* N/A
EIP / EoC	Percentage of assessments completed for children within statutory timescales (Measure 24)			N/A	97		87	≥ 90	94.14 (915/972)	≥ 90	94.11 (751/798)	≥ 90	≥ 90
SST	Percentage of Children Looked After in Cwm Taf (New local)							** N/A	60.10 (119/198)	** N/A	59.9 (Q1)	** N/A	** N/A
EoC / SST	Average age of Children at date of becoming looked after (BLA) (new local)							** N/A	6.5 (92)	** N/A	4 (Q1)	** N/A	** N/A
SST	The percentage of all care leavers who are in education, training or employment at 12 months after leaving care (Measure 34a)				45		70	≥ 70	52.63 (10/19)	≥ 70	42.86 (Q2)	≥ 70	≥ 70
SST	Percentage of looked after children on 31 March who have had three or more placements during the year (Measure 33)		9.22		11.72		13.46	≤ 10	12.63 (25/198)	≤ 10	4.39 (Q3)	≤ 10	≤ 10

\* Target setting is incompatible with our statutory duties.

\*\* New local PI – no baseline established