



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Written	January 2022
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Service Area	Adult Social Care
Committee Date	15 th February 2022

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Adult Services Advocacy Strategy

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report outlines the progress made in respect of the development of an Advocacy strategy for Adults.
- 1.2 The report indicates the current position and next steps.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION that

- 2.1 Scrutiny consider the position and provide comment.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 It is a requirement of the Social Services & Wellbeing Act (SS&WB Act) that people where necessary are supported by Advocacy services at various points in their contact with Social Services.

The Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 Advocacy Code of Practice (Pt.10) specifies the requirement for Local Authorities to:

- a) ensure that access to advocacy services and support is available to enable individuals to engage and participate when local authorities are exercising statutory duties in relation to them; and
- b) to arrange an independent professional advocate to facilitate the involvement of individuals in certain circumstances.

- 3.2 One of the requirements of the SS&WB Act is that a person's requirement for advocacy support is considered from the first point of contact with social services and where it has been identified that they require this support, arrangements are made to facilitate this.
- 3.3 Whilst there are several forms of advocacy the predominant areas are self-advocacy, informal and formal.
- 3.4 Advocacy can be provided on an informal basis through family member support through to specialist advocate services that are a requirement for those lacking capacity to make a decision around their care and support.
- 3.5 The majority of individuals are able to self-advocate and express their views and undertake decisions on their own lives.
- 3.6 The need to develop an Advocacy Strategy is included in the Recovery and Improvement Plan and Scrutiny has requested that they are provided with an update on the actions undertaken and the current position.

4.0 WHERE WE WERE

- 4.1 Adult Services had robust arrangements in place to support Advocacy for those individuals who lacked capacity to fully engage in the decision making process in respect of their care and support needs. The areas that this related to were in the main the Deprivation of Liberty, Mental Health Act decisions and actions and the Court of Protection.
- 4.2 Advocacy had also been commissioned to ensure the voice of the service users were included in the decision making process where service changes were being proposed such as the proposed changes to Day Services.
- 4.3 Informal Advocacy through the support of family members with the permission of the person is well established.
- 4.4 As part of the self-evaluation against the requirements of the SS&WB Act it was identified that improvements were required in the consideration of the need for advocacy at the first point of contact. This was confirmed during the inspection of Social Services by Care Inspectorate Wales undertaken in 2019.

5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

- 5.1 We have identified what is required to improve the offer of advocacy to Adults and have implemented the required actions however there are still areas that need to be progressed, though these have been delayed due to the pandemic.
- 5.2 These actions have included the appointment of a Senior Social Worker in the Adult Duty Team who has responsibility to enhance the practice of duty officers to consider advocacy as part of the initial proportionate assessment.

- 5.3 We have adapted the assessment documents within WCCIS so that the consideration of advocacy is a mandatory section that cannot be by passed during the assessment. This will also improve the data we hold in terms of the level of advocacy provided.
- 5.4 A mapping exercise of existing advocacy services that operate within Merthyr Tydfil CBC boundaries has been undertaken. However, during this process, we noted that these services are often subject to change as they are often reliant on short term funding or have a narrow eligibility criteria.
- 5.5 An Adult Services Advocacy Strategy has been developed in partnership with Cwm Taf Morgannwg Advocacy Forum. It was hoped that this could have been co-produced with people who use advocacy services however this was impeded by the pandemic.

6.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- 6.1 Whilst progress has been made we recognise that we need to continue to adapt our approach to advocacy in line with the changing needs of the people of Merthyr Tydfil.
- We recognise that we need to improve our data collection to enable us to commission appropriately.
 - We recognise that we need to promote advocacy appropriately and work on perceptions of its efficacy.
 - We recognise that we need to work co-productively with our service users and our advocacy provider on our approach to advocacy within Merthyr Tydfil.

7.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT

- 7.1 Work regionally to expand the advocacy offer for our citizens reviewing and adopting best practice where appropriate.
- 7.2 Utilise enhanced data to ensure we are taking the correct approach to the commissioning of services including consideration of the increase in demand for advocacy for parents whose children are involved with social services.
- 7.3 Review provision of advocacy services and promote their use in Merthyr Tydfil as appropriate.
- 7.4 Develop and improve training on advocacy to ensure that the correct information on the benefits of engaging in advocacy are being shared with potential service users.

8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

- 8.1 The provision of advocacy aligns to the Living Well objective in supporting people to have voice and control.

LISA CURTIS JONES
CHIEF OFFICER (SOCIAL SERVICES)

COUNCILLOR TONY ROGERS
**CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL
SERVICES**

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No