

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT**

Date Written	11 <sup>th</sup> January 2022
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Service Area	Social Services
Committee Date	15 <sup>th</sup> February 2022

*To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen*

# **Social Services Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan Update**

## **1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

1.1 Scrutiny members have requested the Chief Officer of Social Services provide a position statement on the Social Services Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan along with any details of issues/barriers experienced and how these have been overcome.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 That the scrutiny committee discusses and comments on the issues set out in the report.

## **3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Coronavirus (Covid-19) has had a devastating impact on many people's lives in the past two years, and it's had significant impact on Health and Social Care. The need to lockdown for periods of time, self-isolation and shielding have had a serious impact on well-being and quality of life in local communities. The focus for much of the work in the initial lockdowns was about 'keeping people safe' and dealing with safeguarding concerns. Some of the areas of transformation and improvement were delayed due to the need to refocus resources in other areas for a short period of time. Within the last year we have been able to consider the recovery, transformation and improvement of the service, and review the plans we had put in place.

3.2 Prior to the outbreak of Covid-19 Merthyr Tydfil was working with the 'Improvement Board' to consider areas of Transformation and Improvement. Social Services

already had plans in place to look at future service delivery and were in the process of drawing up plans to take the service forward. Some areas we have been able to progress, but others had been delayed due to the pandemic, which as we have moved out of restrictions we have start to address. We are now focussing on recovery from the pandemic. We have been able to make positive progress in some areas with some projects being completed.

- 3.3 Since the initial lockdown in March 2020 we have continued to work hard to ensure that the public still receive a service when required. Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, along with partners from other public bodies and third and independent sectors, have continued to provide targeted front-line responses to the constantly changing situation that the Coronavirus pandemic has presented. We have worked within the guidance provided by Welsh Government and the Council has continued to deliver core services with a shared commitment to work in partnership. Where required we have worked in different ways to meet emerging and existing needs.
- 3.4 It is important to highlight that the virus did not alter Social Services duties to vulnerable children or adults. Safeguarding has remained a priority throughout. Managers and staff have worked closely together to ensure that we have discharged our duties to the public, whilst promoting both public and staff safety.
- 3.5 Services have had to adapt to changes in legislation in respect of restrictions eg social distancing and isolating when required. It is fair to say that the pandemic has put Social Care provision under strain in the past months. We are still not at full capacity pre covid levels for service delivery due to the restrictions still in place, but we continue to plan for future pressures and the changes that maybe required longer term as we recover from the pandemic and consider the growing needs of the public.

#### **4.0 RECOVERY, TRANSFORMATION AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

- 4.1 As outlined in previous scrutiny reports the Social Services element of the RTI plan is focussed on improving resilience. This has been the focus of the areas for development and improvement during 2021/22. It is broken down into three areas:
  - Recovery;
  - Resources and Service Improvement; and
  - Resilience and Sustainability.
- 4.2 Covid-19 hasn't gone away and will continue to be part of our day-to-day work for some time, and we need to continue being mindful of this as we move forward. The vaccination programme has had huge success, and the majority of social care staff within Merthyr Tydfil have now been vaccinated three times. The guidance had altered regards the requirement to isolate if you had received the double vaccine, then this did have positive impact on the availability of workforce. However due to recent increases in COVID numbers new guidance suggested that if you had been in contact with a COVID positive case then the person should self-isolate until a negative PCR test was confirmed.
- 4.3 In relation to resilience in Social Services, overarching priorities will be to manage demand, performance and budget. We will continue to monitor and review Children

Looked After figures as this has had a huge impact on the budget previously. We will also monitor and review the high demands on Adult Services eg. discharges from hospital and an increase in Learning Disability Placements breaking down. However we are conscious that we are seeing more complex cases since the initial lockdown due to people being isolated for a period of time. Also the Health Board have seen an increase in hospital admission, not necessarily COVID related but for other medical reasons, which impacts on the flow of patients and puts more pressure on social care to find appropriate placements and care packages in a timely manner.

## **5.0 WHERE WE WERE**

- 5.1 Safeguarding has always remained a priority for Social Services. It is imperative that we protect the most vulnerable Adults and Children in our community.
- 5.2 Planning has been focussed on recovery and how we deal with extra demand in Social Care in the future. This will require a whole Council approach, and also working with partners. Regional Working has been re-established and clear priorities set for children and adult services boards. Close links have been made with the Health Board, with Director of Social Services being invited to the health Integrated local group (ILG) for Merthyr Tydfil and Cynon areas, and a Health Summit being held involving Chief Executives and Directors across all 3 Local Authorities. Clear regional goals and priorities were set, which link with local recovery plans.
- 5.3 The Hardship funding has continued this financial year and there has been regular dialogue with Welsh Government about market stability within the care home sector. Advice from Welsh Government is that the Hardship fund will continue until March 2022, but that funding will be tapered off from September 2021.
- 5.4 New guidance was issued in August 2021 around the expectations for future requirements to isolate if contact had been made with someone COVID positive. We started to see numbers of staff having to isolate reducing as a result of this, appreciating that within care homes this needed to be risk assessed depending on needs of the resident.
- 5.5 There were care homes in Merthyr Tydfil in red status, due to staff members testing positive or awaiting test results. If someone tests positive then they are routinely tested again via a PCR test as there have been some cases of false positive results. Twice weekly testing has continued across the service, including social work teams to continue to offer safe care and support to people when they need it.
- 5.6 Referrals across Adult's and Children's Services saw an increase with pre covid levels being seen. Adult Services are supporting individuals to be discharged from hospital in a timely manner with packages of support or being placed in a care home setting if required. Within Children's Services the referrals being received are of a more complex nature although numbers are consistent with pre Covid levels.
- 5.7 Five of the projects listed within the RTI plan have been completed:

- Increase the number of foster carers in Merthyr Tydfil and implement the Placement Commissioning Strategy Action Plan.
- Analyse and understand our children looked after cohort (CLA) and continue implementation of the CLA strategy and closer to home project.
- Implement the action plan for the Care Leavers Strategy including Pathway to Work.
- Work with partners in the council and the Third Sector to finalise revised transition arrangements.
- Develop Advocacy Services for adults.

5.8 Comprehensive closure reports were developed for these areas of improvement which demonstrated that the actions identified in the RTI plan were completed.

## 6.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

6.1 In respect of the improvement plan the following table gives you an overview of the summary updates of each project line:

Project	Original deadline	New deadline	Reasons / Comments
Review, reset or renew all service models across social services <b>(LCJ)</b>	March 2021	March 2022	<p>Impact of Covid delayed progress. Additionally, the recovery from Covid could lead to changes in service delivery which will not be evident yet.</p> <p>There is regular dialogue with teams around future plans, and the recovery element of the plan.</p> <p>NB. This project also links to new ways of working linked to the corporate project around agile and digital working. Deadlines for this element will be aligned to the corporate deadlines.</p>
Review existing programmes for impact of pandemic and risk mitigation <b>(LCJ)</b>	March 2021	March 2023	<p>We know we need to think about future working in social services and about where the demands are. There are high level complex cases that need to be resourced, but also lower level support cases where we need to ensure we align our prevention services to have the best impact for the people we work with.</p> <p>Review of governance across the Region (since Bridgend joined) has</p>

			<p>led to new regional priorities.</p> <p>Regional priority areas identified for Children's Services over 3 years:</p> <p>Priority 1: Integrated approach to accommodation and care and support for those with complex needs.</p> <p>Priority 2: Integrated approach to promote emotional and physical resilience.</p> <p>Regional priority areas identified for Adult Services over 3 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Care Homes</li> <li>- Community Services Model review</li> <li>- Mental Health</li> <li>- Learning Disabilities</li> <li>- Carers</li> </ul>
Develop Advocacy Services <b>(AE)</b>	March 2021	May 2021	Project Completed.
Continue to work with Housing colleagues to develop an additional extra care facility for adults <b>(AE)</b>	March 2025	No change	<p>In progress.</p> <p>Meetings continue with colleagues to develop this proposal. We know this is an area that will grow in the future. Funding was agreed at Council in recent months to consider this approach in future. An application for ICF funding has been submitted to undertake a feasibility study. The outcome is awaited.</p>
Launch the new service to support people with dementia in collaboration with Meaningful Care Matters <b>(AE)</b>	March 2021	March 2022	<p>The Project had been severely hampered by Covid 19.</p> <p>The opening of Ty Enfys now enables the project to move to the next phase as the environment is now conducive to the full implementation of the Meaningful Care Model.</p> <p>Workshops are being undertaken</p>

			with the staff group and MCM and it is anticipated that Meaningful Care Matters will return to undertake an audit in February 22 to establish how effectively the model has been implemented to date.
Increase the number of foster carers in Merthyr Tydfil and implement the Placement Commissioning Strategy Action Plan <b>(TS)</b>	March 2021	No change	This project is complete. We will continue to strive to recruit more local carers but we have achieved all the actions in our plan.
Analyse and understand our children looked after cohort (CLA) and continue implementation of the CLA strategy and closer to home project <b>(TS)</b>	March 2021	No change	This project is complete. We understand the data around our CLA and work hard to achieve the goals we set for the closer to home project and the CLA strategy.
Implement the action plan for the Care Leavers Strategy including Pathway to Work <b>(TS)</b>	March 2021	No change	All actions have been completed so the project is complete.
Work with partners in the council and the Third Sector to finalise revised transition arrangements <b>(TS)</b>	March 2021	No change	All actions completed so the project is complete.
Develop further support for carers <b>(AE)</b>	March 2022	No change	In progress.  The carers officer has been focussing on engaging with carers to establish the current position and inform further actions. This has included utilisation of social media and pop up sessions for carers.  Based on the feedback from carers the current carers contracts have been revised to better reflect the needs of carers and are being tendered
Develop a cultural change programme	March 2022	Need to align	This project is linked to the corporate project around agile and

across Social Services that fits with the wider council transformation <b>(LCJ)</b>		timescales to corporate project - JB	digital working. Deadlines for this element will be aligned to the corporate deadlines.
Work with the Third Sector and social enterprise organisations to improve the range of community-based support available <b>(AE)</b>	March 2022	No change	In progress.  We meet regularly now with the CEO of VAMT to discuss these issues. There is also a piece of work underway with Lloyds bringing all partners together to consider support in this area.  We have worked with the third sector around wellbeing support for people working or volunteering in the sector supported through the recovery grant
Agree with partners how we need to commission accommodation services in the future that reflects the needs of the people living here <b>(AE)</b>	March 2023	No change	In progress.  There is regional work being undertaken in this area, we have commissioned Practice Solutions to undertake a feasibility study and to date they have undertaken individual meetings with all care home providers and completed a literature search of models of care. It is anticipated that a draft report will be available by March 22
Strengthen MTCBC's contribution to, and benefits from, working within the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership <b>(AE)</b>	March 2023	No change	In progress.  Relationships within the partnership are much stronger than they have been. The Children & Adults groups and sub groups are progressing the priorities identified

- 6.2 Each remaining project has a plan in place and is being progressed. It's worth noting that for social services within our plan we have key improvement actions rather than major change projects. Many of which revert to business as usual so they don't necessarily close as projects but are embedded into day to day service delivery.
- 6.3 The risks around the latest wave of the pandemic are being managed in terms of progress whilst ensuring service delivery continues. In terms of the overarching aim

of Resilience in Social Services, a meeting is scheduled with members of the Improvement and Assurance Board to take stock and ensure progress, risks and concerns are shared and mitigated. Additionally, as part of the ongoing monitoring of the RTI Plan, the Management Team will review the remaining projects to ensure the actions and targets are on track.

6.4 In past months you will be aware that we have received significant grant funding to assist with recovery. There has been a set criteria for this and was to consider support to staff and providers (wellbeing), children services, and carers. A plan has been submitted to Welsh Government in line with the guidance. The grant has to be spent by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. The areas we are supporting include the following:

- Young carers.
- Parent advocacy (extending the service for a further six months).
- Development and scoping of support for carers to children with disabilities and unpaid carers.
- Wellbeing sessions for staff and team development across children and adult services to support staff resilience.
- Preventative services – therapies and packages of support to families.
- Family Group Conference.
- Additional Agency staff to support Covid recovery including Mental health social worker, support workers, Children Social workers and Community Occupational Therapist.
- Baby and you project – to add additional pre birth support to meet demand.
- Commissioning of parenting assessments.
- Develop digital stories to promote access to services and understanding of service provision.
- Third sector support.
- Review of fee cost analysis.
- PPE (regional service costs)
- Financial sustainability of the care sector (Residential care sector has been impacted upon and hardship fund diminishing though requirements remain.
- Additional and enhanced respite services.
- Service monitoring officer for six months.
- Children Services – residential costs.

6.5 The above is some of the pressure areas within the service and the financial support will assist the recovery within the next few months. Its also gives us the opportunity to give teams additional support.

6.6 The recovery grant has been welcomed and allows the service to be innovative and assist with current service delivery and adding some additional support. There are significant pressures within some service areas at present, for example, domiciliary care and this is an area that may require additional funding in future to consider contracted hours, the Real Living Wage and extra demand within the system.

## **7.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE**

7.1 We want to provide an excellent service to the public of Merthyr Tydfil.



- 7.2 We wish to be resilient in future and ensure we are in a stable position financially to continue to provide the service that people need, when they need it. There are currently discussions ongoing about additional demands in the service and what issues may arise next year with changes required in some sectors e.g. Domiciliary care.
- 7.3 We wish to continue to improve our services and change and adapt when required. We need to learn from the past year and focus resources on recovery for social care.
- 7.4 Partnership working is important, so we need to build on the positive partnership working that has taken place over the past two years. There is new guidance from Welsh Government regards future regional funding and this will be on a five-year plan, which is a positive position.

## **8.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT**

- 8.1 We need to continue to address all aspects of the Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan. All areas of the plan are being addressed and need to continue on the improvement journey.
- 8.2 Continue to work with our partners across Cwm Taf Morgannwg. Clear priorities have been set for Children and Adult Services, which fit with our local plans. There are regular meetings with all agencies to consider existing pressures and plan for the future.
- 8.3 Ensure we continue to support staff in recovering from the pandemic. The recovery grant allows us to focus on staff wellbeing and development by providing funding and this is part of the criteria of the grant.
- 8.4 The posts that were identified within the capacity exercise and the RTI plan have all been successfully recruited to. We have also built in some additional temporary support through the recovery grant to assist service delivery. We need to consider whether any of his resource needs to continue longer term.
- 8.5 Early help and prevention is key to the service and we need to continue to promote this.

## **9.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES**

- 9.1 This report specifically links to the Living Well objective within the Council's Corporate Wellbeing Plan: People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health.
- 9.2 Through the continued provision of services through the Pandemic we will also be able to demonstrate the team's contribution to support progress against other wellbeing objectives set down by the Council in focus in the Corporate Wellbeing Plan. That is:

- Best Start in Life - children and young people get the best start to life and are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals.

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<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>		
<b>Title of Document(s)</b>	<b>Document(s) Date</b>	<b>Document Location</b>
<b>Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?</b>		No