

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Date: 23 March 2022

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors J Clarke (Chair), Hussain, S Marshall, R Mogford, M Spencer and T Suller

In Attendance: Sally Anne Jenkins (Strategic Director for Social Services), Dan Jones (Service Manager), Chris Cahill (Partnership Manager), Mark Carter (Assistant Director Bernardo's Cymru), Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Adviser) and Samantha Schanzer (Governance Officer)

Apologies: Councillors M Linton and K Whitehead

1 **Declarations of Interest**

None.

2 **Minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 February 2022**

The Committee asked that Councillor Mudd's attendance be corrected to apologies for this meeting.

The minutes of the previous meeting held 2nd February 2022 were **accepted** as a true and accurate record.

3 **Newport Barnardo's Strategic Partnership**

Invitees:

- Sally Anne Jenkins (Strategic Director for Social Services)
- Dan Jones (Service Manager)
- Chris Cahill (Partnership Manager)
- Mark Carter (Assistant Director Bernardo's Cymru)

The Service Manager, Partnership Manager and Assistant Director for Barnardo's Cymru presented an overview of the report. They highlighted:

- The partnership between Newport City Council and Barnardo's had been in place for over 10 years and was the first of its kind.
- Both organisations contribute financially within the partnership.
- That the partnership allowed for flexibility to address key issues and tailor services to priorities.
- The primary focus of the partnership was to support children on the edge of care.

- The successes during the pandemic, namely that they were able to support 658 children even with reduced visiting. Over 12 months, 94% of closed cases didn't see concerns increase or actively de-escalated, 12% were close to children services and 100% families recommend the services.
- The Family Support Service which delivers focused intervention with plan and goal development for children of families and agencies on the edge of care.
- The Family Group Conference service.
- The Life-Long Links service which the partnership had been successful in obtaining grant from Welsh Government to develop this service. The speakers highlighted that they had exceeded the target of 10 referrals in 12 months with 14 referrals.
- The Baby and Me service, which was a package of support offering 1-1 support bespoke and a 6-week group and Family Group Conference where appropriate. The speakers highlighted WG interest and noted that the service had been cited in research. The speakers highlighted that of babies born within this service, 61% were taken home, 53% of parents have had children removed previously, 34% were care experienced parents, 16 families had Family Group Conference meetings and 14 families took their child home at birth; there was a 48% reduction in care proceeding from birth which equated to 20 less babies coming into care in Newport.
- The Rapid Response Team which was part of the Safeguarding Hub and offers families at risk of breakdown a 6-week intervention aimed at preventing unnecessary admissions into the system. The speakers noted that 71 young people had been involved in the last 12 months and 91% of children remained at home or returned home soon after.
- The development of the team with the inclusion of a Exploitation Social Worker.
- Play therapy and Child Parent Relationship Therapy.
- The prevention services which run on a voluntary basis with families who don't meet the criteria for statutory intervention but where it is beneficial for the work to be carried out.
- The CNF Service which offers targeted support for families to recognise and build on strengths with the aim of becoming intervention free.
- The work done for Newport Young Carers, where 1-1 and group sessions are offered to these children as well as activities and trips aimed at improving their lives and offering respite.

The committee then asked the following:

- What plans were there for the future of the partnership?

The Partnership Manager informed committee that the service is constantly expanding, as well as the looking to develop the Rapid Response Team. He also noted that there had been ads placed to inform residents of the Family Group Conference service and were looking at increasing capacity. The Partnership

Manager also noted that they were recruiting intervention workers and family support workers.

- How the target of 10 referrals for Life-Long Links were decided?

The Partnership Manager informed committee that the Life-Long Links project was inherited from the Family Rights Group, and the number was dictated to them. The Partnership Manager noted that intervention under this can be extensive due to the necessary relationship building and child-led flexibility of the service which are considered when a target is created.

The Strategic Director noted that the Life-Long Links service was trialled this year and were they able to put more resources into the partnership, it would increase demand for this service. The Partnership Manager noted that they were hoping to get this service embedded into Looked After Reviews so it could be offered to all children in care. The Assistant Director then highlighted the benefit of partnership being a good relationships and transparency which enables both parties to maximise resources and monitor performance.

- Whether families who don't engage with the Baby and Me service were followed up?

The Assistant Director informed committee that that engagement was crucial in this service and efforts to engage families were made, as well as following up with families who chose not to engage to ascertain their reasoning. The Assistant Director highlighted that there was an ongoing Research and Practice Evaluation that focuses on learning from and improving the service for the authority and families.

The Service Manager highlighted that many families who engage with this project have a negative experience with Social Workers and persistence is key in engaging these families. The Service Manager also noted that social worker's practice has changed which has helped engagement.

- How long support continues for families that engage with the Baby and Me service?

The Partnership Manager informed committee that they tend to work with families 6 months post birth but must be flexible until the needs of the family are met. The Partnership Manager expressed that this highlights the need for capacity as they are unable to support families for a longer time. The Partnership Manager highlighted that one of the strengths of this service was that families were encouraged to call if they needed further support. The Service Manager highlighted that families within this service are often stepped down or connect with other services to ensure a smooth transition and continued support.

- How barriers have been overcome in BAME communities for services to be more accessible?

The Assistant Director noted that it was a fundamental aim for the partnership to be culturally sensitive and especially important in Newport. The Committee were assured that there was a focus on working in all communities within Newport and making services as accessible as possible with continued learning and improvement. Barnardos were concentrating on this area and were using platforms like this partnership to demonstrate how they could work within communities. The Assistant Director highlighted that they have been working with community agencies as families may not want to engage directly and would rather work with groups more closely

aligned to their cultural, religious, and linguistic needs, and that links were being built with these groups.

The Assistant Director added that they had met with strategic leads in Barnardos from London to learn best practice from evidence based and informed sources, and that there was always room for improvement.

- What do both Newport City Council and Barnardos bring to the partnership and what resources are shared by the partners?

The Strategic Director noted that the partnership had been in place for over 10 years and was an unusual arrangement for both partners, especially Barnardos who use voluntary funds to support services offered. The financial relationship was Newport City Council providing £700-800k to fund family support and Barnardos matches an amount at around £200k. This came from the core budget but the Life-Long Links service received a grant from Welsh Government and that additional various pots of money came through and work with partnership allowed them to identify what can be delivered quickly.

The Strategic Director highlighted that partnership working created innovation where it wouldn't otherwise exist. There was a formal contract between partners and regular reviews, as well as case audits. The Strategic Director highlighted that these are statutory services which they ask Barnardos to deliver with them and is a necessary provision for safe and quality care which the partnership allows them to do. The Strategic Director noted that the sharing of knowledge between partners allows a service without compare to be offered.

The Assistant Director noted that Newport is particularly special as there is the ability to draw on combined resources which provides a platform for innovation. The Assistant Director highlighted the Great British Tech Appeal with Vodafone that Barnardos ran so families were connected during the pandemic and services were able to continue undertaking interventions under restrictions. The Assistant Director highlighted that financial donations have supported families in Newport with supermarket vouchers. The Assistant Director noted that there was hope for something similar to be put into place with the cost of living crisis. The Assistant Director felt that the partnership brings an increased level of resource to each party.

- What can each partner bring moving forward?

The Partnership Manager highlighted the innovation the partnership creates and the main advantage being the speed of problems being identified and addressed as seen in Rapid Response Service. Moving forward looking at challenges that are expected to experience and what can be put in place to address these. The Partnership Manager informed committee that they were currently recruiting for a mental health worker primarily for Baby and Me service.

The Assistant Director felt that there were several potential opportunities and cited the learning done through Home Office funding, namely for domestic abuse work, to be beneficial to the partnership to elevate the quality of services. The Assistant Director also highlight that Bernardo's has set aside part of its donations for Ukrainian refugees to develop services and projects for them. The Strategic Director noted that they needed to be responsive to needs within Newport but also to research that can be learned from and implemented to improve services within Newport.

- Whether the protocol of the Council was included in partnership?

The Strategic Director confirmed that it was.

- What are the risks of the partnership and how are these mitigated?

The Assistant Director informed committee that safeguards had been written into the contract so either party could give notice and there were a range of monitoring requirements for both partners to ensure joint responsibility and sustained performance. The Assistant Director assured committee that there was a robust level of oversight and clear processes for both parties. The Strategic Director noted that Barnardos were a large and well-established organisation with its own framework for protection for obvious risks. The Strategic Director reminded committee that for Social and Childrens Services there was a constant risk associated and managed and the nature of the work was about managing these risks and understanding them but that they could never fully be eliminated.

- Whether there are any similar partnerships and is anything learned from them?

The Service Manager felt that this partnership was highly effective and integral to reflecting on other partnerships. The Assistant Director highlighted that this was the longest standing Barnardos partnership and that Welsh Government take notice of innovations made from this partnership. The Assistant Director noted that there was a Barnardos publication coming soon outlining best practice which includes much reference to the work done in Newport.

- Has the partnership opened doors to shared networks?

The Assistant Director highlighted the relationships developed with BAME organisations and assured committee that they were constantly looking at way to widen networks with a focus on improving delivery within Newport.

- Does the partnership work with businesses to offer opportunities to families engaged with the services?

The Service Manager informed committee that national and local organisations have offered a myriad of opportunities, particularly during the pandemic.

- What is the current turnover of staff and what provision was there for struggling employees?

The Partnership Manager informed committee that there was a strong ethos within the partnership to include approaching staff in a trauma informed way. The Partnership Manager informed committee that all staff have access to employee assistance programmes and that clinical counselling had been offered for workers if deemed appropriate but felt that promoting a positive and healthy workplace was important also.

- Whether there had been any difficulties pre-partnership and during the partnership?

The Strategic Director noted that pre-partnership, it had been challenging to separate what had been resolved, by whom and any outstanding, that there hadn't been an affective family support service where there was now, and children's services had experienced staffing issues. The Strategic Director felt that there was now a positive atmosphere due to the partnership, and while not 100% staffed, are in a better

position and staff morale is generally high. The Strategic Director highlighted that the initial creation of the partnership was a learning process, and that while some staff are employed by the authority and others by Barnardos, there was a general feeling of unity.

The Strategic Director agreed that there had been challenges during the partnership, such as issues with staff or case disagreements, as well as needing to change management and reviewing performance. The Strategic Director felt that the cultural and emotional investment in the partnership sees through hardships and challenges.

- Had anything been learned from the virtual conference with London Bernardo's regarding unaccompanied asylum seekers?

The Partnership Manager noted that this was a work in progress and that they were engaging with colleagues in pathways to reflect on how the partnership can look at improving their service. The Partnership Manager felt they already had good practices and were open to learning from other authorities. The Service Manager felt that Newport was leading in some areas (namely Baby and Me) but were also about to learn about the improvement of services.

- Had anything been linked with Future Generation and Wellbeing Commissioner or other regulators?

The Strategic Director informed committee that nothing had been linked specifically with the Future Generation and Wellbeing Commissioner, however they had had various links with the Children's Commissioner in parts of work. The Strategic Director informed committee that they had given evidence around the partnership to the Senedd historically. All work is regulated by Care Inspectorate Wales, including the partnership work. The Strategic Director felt that the strongest engagement had been with the Social Services and Wellbeing Act as it was more direct in terms of operation, organisation and function of the serve area.

- What is the overall performance management and reporting and how were plans to improve formulated and goals set?

The Strategic Director informed committee that this fell under the core Children's Services Plan and work fed into this, with the partnership being cited throughout the plan. The Strategic Director highlighted the close link with the Cabinet Member for Social Services and the regulatory oversight by Care Inspectorate Wales.

The Chair then thanked the officers for attending.

Conclusion

Members **noted** the content in the report and the proposals for continued work and developments in 2022/23, and wished to make the following comments and recommendations:

- The Committee praised the partnership for the detailed presentation and report, and wished for the officers to give Member's gratitude to all staff and teams for their excellent work throughout the Covid pandemic. Members were pleased to hear that all staff have access to counselling facilities and spoke of the importance that staff and management keep having this offered to help with mental health. Members also

praised the energy and enthusiasm of the partnerships and were pleased to hear that this partnership is also being recognised by other regions for its excellent work.

- The Committee recognised the need for the partnership to engage as effectively as possible with people, especially with BAME families and to ensure that services were accessible and culturally sensitive. Members were pleased to hear that the partnership were aware that engagement was an area that had room for improvement, and the importance of networking and working with a unified approach.
- Members spoke of interest in the partnership developing services and projects for Ukrainian refugees and asked if they could have further details on what is planned when they are available. Members also requested a follow-up on the cost of living crisis response that was mentioned in the meeting.

4 **Scrutiny Adviser Reports**

Invitee

- Neil Barnett (Scrutiny Adviser)

The Scrutiny Advisor informed committee that the minutes of the previous meeting had been forwarded to One Newport, the EAS Business Plan had been sent to Cabinet Members and Partners and that there was no update on the draft annual forward work programme. This is currently under review.

The committee asked that the Scrutiny Advisor and forward work programme be mindful to not overload agendas so that items can be given the proper scrutiny within a reasonable time. The Scrutiny Adviser told the committee that this would be fed back to management.

The meeting terminated at 6.50 pm