

Minutes

Performance Scrutiny Committee- People

Date: 6 December 2022

Time: 10am

Venue: Hybrid Meeting - Committee Room 1

Present: Councillors W. Routley (Chair), T. Watkins, C. Townsend, D. Jenkins, A. Screen, B. Davies, J. Cleverly and P. Drewett.

Sally Jenkins (Strategic Director- Social Services), Natalie Poyner (Head of Children and Young Peoples Services), Head of Adult and Community Services, Councillor Jason Hughes Cabinet Member for Social Services.

Samantha Schanzer (Scrutiny Advisor), Pamela Tasker (Governance Support Officer), Felicity Collins (Governance Support Officer), Leanne Rowlands (Democratic and Electoral Manager)

1. Apologies

Councillors Paul Bright, Miqdad Al-Nuaimi and Matthew Pimm

2. Declaration of Interests

None

3. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee that the minutes of the previous meeting would be agreed at the next meeting in January 2023.

4. Service Area Plans 2022-24

Childrens Services

Invitees:

Director of Social Services- Sally Jenkins

Head of Children and Young Peoples Services- Natalie Poyner

The report was presented by the Head of Children and Young Peoples Services.

Questions:

The Committee asked regarding the International Team as there were no wellbeing objectives or anticipated date of completion.

- This team was being developed due to a large number of asylum seeker cases who arrive at port, stay in hotels, and move on. Others arrive spontaneously. Some families were No Recourse to Public Funds which the authority have a duty to support. Therefore, a team was needed to support these needs but would not cost additional money due to Home Office funds for each asylum-seeking child.
- It was confirmed that a different format of the report was sent to Committee and the International Team came under Wellbeing Objective 3.

The Committee congratulated social services in how they supported Ukrainian families in an exemplary way.

The Committee asked about the restructure of the Child Protection Teams.

- There were 4 Child Protection teams previously but with a growing demand in supporting adolescents with some young people being involved in Child Sexual Exploitation. A new Team that was developed would be more intense and worked with aged 10 and above with lower caseloads to stop those children going into care. There was a Team Manager in place with a senior practitioner social workers would be moving over to that team.

The Committee asked was there much interaction between social services and Headteachers in schools.

- There was a piece of research undertaken by Police and the Crime Commissioners team which looked at patterns of behaviour which traced some young people and currently there was a Llanwern cluster which was working with vulnerable children. The outcome was the young people that had speech and language difficulties had challenges in their transition years.

The Committee asked what was the percentage of reoffending children.

- There was a very low number of children that was supported on orders in Newport. 17 to 18% was preventative work with a lot of activities. In Newport there was a process called the National Referral Mechanism which took those children to Panel to stop them being trafficked etc as the young people were managed in a way to stop them reoffending. The Tool kit was also being reviewed by the service manager.
- It was confirmed the restructured team would be completed by March 2023.

The Committee asked were many disabled children in care.

- There was a small population in our care in placements. There were 20-30 children that we care for in the care system. Some of these with the consent of parents, and some had parents who were unable to care for them due to their own needs, so those children had been neglected. Those children had the most complex needs and there were not enough places and any providers that make profit from foster care would have to cease operating. The team relied on providers to provide care for disabled children, and they were working with Action for Children to develop residential provision. There were discussions with the regional partnership board for capital funding for our disabled children

to be back in Newport. The current provision would be expected to cease operating.

The Committee asked what the percentage was outside of Newport.

- There were 20 children some disabled, some not, in residential care with a lot in foster care out of Newport. Some of these children were placed in Caerphilly and Torfaen in foster care. The Disabled Childrens team supported 360 children at present so a small number.

The Committee commented on whether there were any unregistered placements.

- There were currently 3 children in unregistered placements with 2 placements identified for these children who will be moving shortly.
- The Committee stated that this was not satisfactory and could the Committee have a report on the elimination of these placements.
- The Strategic Director asked could there be a report submitted back to Committee which explained this in greater detail. The Team had been clear that there were working with Care Inspectorate Wales to work within the framework.

The Committee asked about care leavers and whether housing was provided for them when they left care.

- It was confirmed that there was a large stock of semi supported accommodation with a look at other providers also. There were 2 provisions for the last few years, one for 16–18-year-olds, a 24-hour provision and the other was for 18+ for a seamless transition for those care leavers. The team worked with Pobl which was a 16-18 provision, and the new Service Manager was also looking to offer supported lodgings.

The Committee asked was the transition good or bad for those care leavers.

- It was dependant on individual needs, but the team worked with housing, CAB and Skills for Living to prepare them for transition. There was an Independent Living Panel where 15+ teenagers were referred to make sure all options were covered. There were workshops available to ensure those young people had adequate finances and cooking skills. The Pathway team in Newport concentrated on looked after care leavers only.

The Committee asked about the limited range of housing options.

- It was hoped the portfolio would be increased as care leavers were supported post 18 and the team worked closely with Housing focusing on single unit accommodation and there was a housing strategy in the works. It stated limited in the report but there was a large stock compared to other authorities.
- Those eligible for adult services, were linked with adult services. Those children who were 18 were not evicted and were supported.

The Committee asked regarding the strategy on Parent and Baby residential provision.

- Local Authorities were offered to make bids for sums of money to have a small provision for mums and babies to remain together. This was seen here and in Caerphilly where there was a large number of women who needed additional support to give birth. The team was waiting on the grant award letter as to how the money needed to be spent.

The Committee asked about purchasing a new place or repurposing one for the Parent and Baby residential provision.

- There were current discussions ongoing as to whether there was an asset in Newport to use, to be renovated. This was early stages with the potential for a multi-disciplinary multi-purpose provision.
- The Committee asked about the results on this, and it was confirmed it would be longer than 2023 and was more likely to be completed in 2025.

The Committee asked about the total number of children deregistered from the Child Protection Register being 148 rising to 207 and the number of children becoming looked after being 91 rising to 106 and was there a correlation between these two.

- When children were at risk of significant harm there supported on a care and support plan. If the risk escalates then they were placed on the Child Protection register. The last resort was removing children. The overall amount has been static for a number of years. There was a significant increase in referrals received. Families were struggling so there was a lot of complexity due to Covid, Domestic Violence and the Cost of Living.

The Committee asked about the risks and pressures over the next two years.

- This was mainly the workforce which was not just Newport. There was a struggle to encourage people to the social work profession. There was a lot of work going on to support this.
- There was a complex need of families in society which lead to increased caseloads. Work was being done closely with Prevention to divert families from statutory provisions.

The Committee asked about whether Welsh Government was being spoken to about extra financial support.

- It was agreed that it was on the agenda and was on the agenda for Directors and Heads of Service level.

Adult Services

Invitees:

Strategic Director of Social Services- Sally Jenkins

Cabinet Member for Social Services- Councillor Jason Hughes

The Strategic Director presented the report to Committee.

The Cabinet Member stated that it was a difficult time for social workers and social

care staff with issues with recruitment etc and savings were mentioned which meant pressure on services on a local level.

Questions:

The Committee asked about hospital services and what support adult service provide.

- This was an extensive service, where the team worked with the hospital team to make sure the best possible services were available. There was a huge pressure on this system with Flu and post Covid. It was stressed that when looking for care for people, they can remain in the community, and this was a real challenge. The Cabinet Member had also been present for those discussions.

The Committee asked about the Grange Hospital and what was the number of Newport residents in hospital there.

- It was confirmed that the team worked with all the hospitals in Gwent as there was such a range of services. The team were aware of this figure and data could be provided on this if needed. This changed day by day and was constantly scrutinised. Staff looked at who we needed to assist and support.

The Committee asked about Step up Step down and expanding this.

- Access to this was so important. It was dependent on accessing the right therapy services. An increase to capacity was always being looked at.

The Committee commented that bringing back children was successful so could this work for adults.

- It was confirmed that all options were looked at, but the market was different for adults. A small local provider was used which was different to children's and there were different challenges for both. With Adults there was more short-term care. The quantity was also profoundly different with greater provisions needed in adults.

The Committee commented on the Ambulance service and when they queued, they only allocate one ambulance team.

- The Ambulance team were doing these things to ensure people come out of hospital quicker. Staff workforce was a big challenge. It was important that steps to ensure living wage was being paid but there were still considerable challenges in this workforce.

The Committee asked about pressure on the Health board to help.

- There were benefits on both sides to get it right but not perfect. It was very challenging and Health colleagues were under a lot of pressure all year.

The Committee asked about whether this could be on the work programme in future and for a special meeting to be convened for the Health Board to be invited.

The Committee asked whether it could be outlined as to how we can improve communications.

- It was explained that Safeguarding week was previously held with information in the foyer of the Civic Centre with a series of events to communicate more widely. In relation to external information social media was used to promote this.
- Training was made available for all Members and staff, and this would be continued. For those Members that sit on governing bodies those Members have responsibility to spread the message. There was also a local forum that meets and with Safeguarding week, all agencies could access activities. There was a lot of Domestic Violence campaigns also promoted with White Ribbon materials also provided to Members.

The Committee asked about concern for families outside of the Local Authority and how do we scrutinise if they have a safeguarding issue.

- This does happen but it was rare. Families were referred in and assessed in the same way and some families could come in from any other area. Safeguarding was recognised in these situations and the Local Authority did not shirk from their responsibility. The social services team was part of a Wales wide IT system, and this could be accessed from the whole of Wales. The relevant Local Authority would be contacted, and the team also worked closely with Police.

The Committee commented on Elected members associated with local wards and could an advert be facilitated through the local network as Safeguarding was everyone's responsibility.

The Committee commented on provision for adults with learning difficulties.

- It was confirmed that there was not a large number but there has been a lot of work on this in terms of models of care and if the Committee agreed, the Strategic Director stated that the team would come back to Committee to present this work to the committee to show the strides that these children make now that they are adults.

The team was working with range of people where the models offered positive good quality accommodation.

The Committee asked about the difficulty in finding staff.

- The workforce was easier as it was settled employment but still an issue. The work with registered landlords. The Eliminate Programme was for children not adult social care.

It was confirmed for the Committee that the Safeguarding Legislation would be fully in place by the end of next year.

The Committee asked regarding the service area risk register and the Risk was confirmed as 'Amber'.

- The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the risk colour keys were Red, Amber, Yellow and Green.

5. Director of Social Services Annual Report 2021-22

The Director introduced the report to the Committee.

Questions:

The Committee asked regarding the Rapid Response Service to families and whether funding was available and how does this impact.

- Covid recovery money was used to expand the service but there was other money available and referred to other pots of grant money.
- There was an early indication that this was successful but would wait for confirmation.

The Committee asked about the sourcing of additional educational support and was IT part of this.

- It already was and the team was proactive in using IT and the right kit where a lot of children completed courses and sessions online and this was positive for them. Child Protection Conferences ran better and there was improved attendance from Health colleagues.
- Working technology with older people was also important. Dementia patients received electronic babies to hold, and it was very beneficial for them. There would be very big changes in the next few years.

The Committee asked about financial resources and how the service planned for the future.

- 2021-2022 was an unrepresented year due to Covid recovery grants.
- There was an underspend due to grants so does not represent the budget going into 2022-23. There were areas of overspend such as the mother and baby placements, asylum seeking children etc. The reality was that the budget was now very different.

The Committee asked about whether Covid was still a financial pressure.

- Covid was still a pressure due to the fallout and results of Covid such as adult mental ill health.
- Staff were absent with Covid, and it was still present and there was a lot of work trying to retain staff which needed to be noted.

The Committee commented on staffing and the impact of sickness of staff.

- There was not a huge number of staff off, so the levels were manageable.

The Committee asked about vacancies in social services

- There were 21% of qualified social workers vacancies in children's services
- There were also similar rates in residential care.

6. Conclusion of Committee Reports

The Committee wanted updates on the Eliminate Programme, the Step-Up Step-Down, and registered landlords as well as an update regarding the unregistered children.

There would be a date added for the Committee in March 2023 for the update and presentation on the Eliminate Programme and the Committee agreed for an extra meeting to be convened for this presentation.

Members were to be provided safeguarding materials for distribution.

7. Scrutiny Adviser Reports

The Scrutiny Advisor stated that the next meeting would be the 24 January 2023 which would look at the draft budget proposals.

The Scrutiny Advisor informed committee that some actions had been escalated.

8. Date of the Next Meeting

24th January 2023 at 10am

9. Live Event

You can watch the recording of the meeting [here](#).