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Health and Care Committee – 2 November 2020

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HEALTH AND CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL ON MONDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 2020

PRESENT

County Councillors G I S Williams (Chair), J Charlton, S M Hayes, E Jones, S McNicholas, G Morgan, L Rijnenberg, K M Roberts-Jones, D Rowlands, A Williams, J M Williams and R Williams

Cabinet Portfolio Holders In Attendance: County Councillors R Powell and MC Alexander

Officers: Alison Bulman, Corporate Director, Children and Adults and Jan Coles, Head of Children's Services

1.	APOLOGIES
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An apology for absence was received from County Councillor A Jenner.

2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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There were no declarations of interest.

3.	DISCLOSURE OF PARTY WHIPS
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There were no disclosures of party whips.

4.	MINUTES
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Documents:

- Minutes of the last meeting held on 11 September 2020

Outcome:

- **The Chair was authorised to sign the Minutes of the last meeting as a correct record**

5.	CIW FEEDBACK
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Documents:

- Performance Evaluation Inspection letter (English and Welsh)
- Improvement Conference letter (English and Welsh)

Discussion:

- The Corporate Director, Children and Adults, summarised the findings and was pleased to report that CIW were sufficiently assured to step down enhanced monitoring. She paid tribute to staff and Members for the way in which they have worked together for the benefit of the service. There has been significant amount of hard work with teams having to deal with the pandemic alongside improvement work in recent months.

- The Portfolio Holder echoed the sentiments and thanked the Committee as this was now more robust and was trusted to hold the service to account
- Members welcomed the report and the improvements that had been made. They also paid tribute to the hard work of staff and the stability of the management team.
- Members would welcome the return of Laming visits albeit virtually, and would also like to talk to those in receipt of service. The service was currently under severe pressure and the Corporate Director could not commit to such meetings. However, she agreed to consider how to facilitate Members attending existing meetings. This was unlikely before spring 2021.
- The Lead Member of the Adult Services Working Group suggested that there were three areas for that Group to focus on:
 - Mental Capacity Assessment – ensure fit for purpose
 - Service gaps and pressures identified through the staff survey
 - Community care issues
- Attention was also drawn to the fact that practitioners were more sceptical about the ability to meet domiciliary care needs
- The need for greater collaboration with other agencies is recognised and this must be led by Cabinet. This must be continually reinforced to ensure that Senior Managers have the authority to take relationships forward.
- Whilst credit is due to all staff, the focus must remain on providing the best service for clients
- The Leadership Team was committed to continued improvement. They had been open and transparent with CIW regarding areas for further improvement. Positive feedback had been received from other agencies, but it must be recognised that different partners have differing priorities.
- The Committee recognised that the service cannot be complacent
- Some time ago there had been meetings between councillors and staff which enabled each to understand issues from another perspective. The Corporate Director suggested that political awareness training for officers could be considered.
- The Committee were pleased to note that a wide spectrum of activities had been considered by the CIW
- In response to a question regarding the next steps, the Head of Children's Services identified a number of priorities including the right placements for children. A new home in Ystradgynlais is opening soon. A report regarding safe accommodation for children with complex needs was to be considered later in the meeting. The service must continue to invest in staff – 'grow our own', succession planning and provide the right training and development for staff to ensure retention.
- The Corporate Director went on to say that her aspirations for the service were greater than the requirements for CIW and that she embraced future challenges.

Outcomes:

- **The feedback letters were welcomed, and future challenges noted**

Documents:

- Report of the Portfolio Holder

Discussion:

- A need to work in a more modern way had been identified and the policy required updating to reflect recent research and development
- Consultation had taken place with partners
- A dedicated manager was in place to ensure consistency of practice and to monitor trends but there was expertise in this area across the service
- There were no resource or legal implications
- A number of agencies were involved including Police, Health, Education, Youth Service, and the third sector
- MACE (Multi agency child exploitation) strategy meetings were held and were showing great success in making communities safer. Strong operational management was in place and the meetings ensured that any structural barriers were removed.
- It was noted that the child's voice was paramount. However, a child's knowledge of what they may be consenting too should also be considered.
- Attention was also drawn to perpetrators also being victims and that they may be children themselves and in need of support. It was the role of social care to meet care and support needs – the Health Board and Social Care may also provide support identified through criminal and justice processes.
- The Head of Service acknowledged that this was a very complex area, but young people must be supported throughout the process including, if necessary, criminal proceedings. The school ambassador programme should have launched in March but has been delayed due to the pandemic.
- The Committee asked when the strategy was going to Cabinet and how it would be evaluated. Cabinet would consider the strategy on 10 November. MACE meetings were thought to be the most efficient way to monitor effectiveness. A self-evaluation was being developed which would include feedback from children. Regional data gathering will also be undertaken.
- MACE feeds into the Powys Local Operational Group which is overseen by the Regional Safeguarding Board. An ambitious work programme has been set.
- The pandemic has had an effect on spaces and places of concern, such as parks, bus terminals, shopping centres etc, with a decrease in incidents. However, there is concern that other cases may have been missed due to lower levels of public activity.
- Virtual contact with young people continues – in many cases they are more comfortable with digital communication. Social distancing is having an impact on gaining trust and this will have had an effect.
- Children are likely to phone Childline or disclose issues to peers which is why the School ambassador programme is key.
- A number of community practice events have been well attended to increase awareness. Culturally a wide understanding of the issues is needed.
- Members were concerned that with a number of agencies involved, a child may be missed. All the agencies involved have a good understanding and

are signed up to the process. There is confidence that children get the support they need. There is more work to do in identifying children that services are not aware of.

- Children's Services and the Police are joint lead authorities
- A question was raised regarding support for new or young staff. Comments were made that the safeguarding training was not robust enough. Officers would welcome a greater involvement by Education staff in safeguarding training.
- Children's Services will continue to build relationships with younger people and support both their physical and mental health. It is the role of the Police to disrupt any exploitation.
- Closer liaison with English border authorities and regulated providers in Powys is needed

Outcomes:

- **The Committee support the proposed Child Exploitation Strategy**

7.	SAFE ACCOMMODATION FOR CHILDREN WITH COMPLEX NEEDS
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Documents:

- Report of the Portfolio Holder

Discussion:

- The Committee had previously been informed of the Service's intention to improve the range of children's accommodation available within the County
- £300K capital funding, together with ICF funding, has been secured to purchase a property within Powys to adapt to provide for children with complex needs
- Therapeutic support would be provided
- Timescales are ambitious as the monies must be spent by year end and the report includes a mitigation of risks
- It was hoped that residents could be in the property by summer 2021
- The position will be reviewed in January 2021 to ensure the target can be achieved
- A five or six bedroom house, with sufficient living space and outbuildings would be ideal. Properties are being sought across Powys as a decision has not been taken regarding location. However, consideration will need to be given to staffing and health support requirements. Council properties are also being considered.
- It was noted that there were 9 young people out of County and Members asked how the two or three would be chosen to return to the property – young people would need to be carefully matched and places could also be considered to prevent further children being placed out of county. It would very much depend on circumstances.
- The Committee questioned the availability of resource and expertise to support the home
- Further concern was expressed regarding local communities' reaction to a such proposal and good communication would be essential

- Detailed care plans are in place but there are ongoing discussions regarding clinical interventions.
- An impact assessment would follow but it was key that scrutiny should see IAs at the time of consideration
- The proposal would provide a home environment for children with complex needs and avoid institutional care. It is hoped that children can be cared for in communities in line with the Brighter Futures Programme. This will not be 'secure accommodation' – security will be provided though developing relationships. It is hoped that children will eventually be stepped down to regular provision.
- The Welsh Government is very supportive of the development and it was hoped that if the timeline should slip, they would consider extending the deadline. However, officers were confident that this could be achieved given the planning that has been undertaken.

Outcomes:

- **The Committee support Option 1**

8.	WORK PROGRAMME
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The next meeting was scheduled to take place on 10 December 2020 at 2pm.

County Councillor G I S Williams (Chair)

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