

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT: SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 13TH FEBRUARY, 2020**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER**

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**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. THOMAS (CHAIR)**

Councillors K. Rowson (Vice-Chair)  
D. Bevan  
M. Day  
P. Edwards  
K. Hayden  
J. Holt  
J. Millard  
M. Moore  
J. P. Morgan  
T. Sharrem  
T. Smith

**WITH:** Corporate Director of Social Services  
Head of Children's Services  
Head of Adult Services  
Communications & Marketing Manager  
Communications & Policy Officer  
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b>  It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b>	

	Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G.A. Davies, L. Elias and G. Paulsen.	
<b>No. 3</b>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATION</u></b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
<b>No. 4</b>	<p><b><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 13th January, 2020 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<b>No. 5</b>	<p><b><u>ACTION SHEET</u></b></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 13th January, 2020 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p>Item 7 - Corporate Parenting Progress Report</p> <p>The Head of Children's Services gave a verbal update on the Corporate Traineeship programme on what the 8 young people who had left the programme were doing now:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 – completed and gained apprenticeship and/or employment.</li> <li>• 1 – still in training</li> <li>• 1 – decided to find own pathway into employment</li> <li>• 1 – unable to continue due to health issues</li> <li>• 1 – due to start</li> </ul> <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
<b>No. 6</b>	<p><b><u>LIVING INDEPENDENTLY IN THE 21ST CENTURY STRATEGY - ANNUAL PROGRESS UPDATE 2019/20</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Adult Services which was presented to provide an overview on the 'Living Independently in Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century' Strategy.</p>	

The Head of Adult Services spoke to the report and gave a detailed progress update on the 8 priorities of the Strategy over the previous 12 months.

**Priority 1 Long term care:**

A Member commented on the 24 vacant beds in the Authority's commissioned Care Homes and enquired regarding the new care home operating in Tredegar. The Head of Adult Services informed Members that this was not a registered Nursing Home but was a supported living setting.

A Member raised concerns regarding Care Home closures due to the number of vacant beds. The Head of Adult Services assured Members that even though there were a number of vacant beds there were no imminent Care Home closures, however, this situation would be monitored. In relation to closure of private Care Homes, the Authority had a contract with a six month notification period of any closure and in the event of an incident such as bankruptcy, residents would still be supported. The Officer clarified that the Authority had a contract with the Health Board and not the Care Home for citizens with more complex needs.

**Priority 2 Reablement/Enabling Services:**

Members raised no comments on Priority 2.

**Priority 3 Day Opportunities/Community Options:**

With regard to the Community Options Green Shoots project at Bryn Bach Parc, Members reported that some members of the public had been unable to purchase items e.g. flower baskets etc. as no staff member was on site. A Member suggested promoting the project via Town Centre Street Markets. The Head of Adult Services said that staff worked 9.00am to 5.00pm and not at weekends. With regard to selling products the Officer felt that perhaps a social enterprise project could be established.

A Member commented on the partnership with Growing Space, the third sector Mental Health Group, and enquired if school visits could be arranged to develop an outdoor classroom project. The Head of Adult Services commented that Growing Space was keen to work with schools and would provide a contact link for the

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Member to liaise with the Head of Growing Space.

**Priority 4 Assistive Technology:**

A Member enquired regarding the cost of Assistive Technology for residents. The Head of Adult Services said that there was a flat rate cost of approximately £5.20 for pendants.

With regard to dementia therapy and the use of dolls, cats and dogs there was no charge as they were loaned out to residents, however, a report on charging regimes may be prepared next year. Some everyday technologies such as the amazon echo and google home hubs operated from telephone landlines so it was not always necessary to have an expensive internet connection. A Member commented that internet connection had been requested at Ty Parc for residents use and felt that this could be considered and incorporated into rents etc.

The Director of Social Services informed Members that there had been an article in the Guardian newspaper regarding the use of dementia therapy re: dolls, cats and dogs and he would forward the link for Members information.

**Priority 5 Direct Payments:**

In response to a Member's comment regarding Direct Payments, the Head of Adult Services said that Direct Payments were offered to individuals as part of the care and support assessment and it was up to the individual to decide if this option was suitable for their circumstances.

**Priority 6 Accommodation:**

In response to a Member's question regarding the number of citizens waiting for specially adapted homes, the Head of Adult Services said that this level of detail would be contained within the Housing Strategy and she would forward this information to Members.

The Occupational Therapy Support Worker continued to work within Tai Calon to identify properties to meet specific health needs and ensure that adapted properties were allocated to appropriately identified individuals or families. A register of adapted properties across Gwent was being developed.

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### **Priority 7 Carers:**

A Member enquired regarding what measures were in place to identify young carers in schools. The Head of Adult Services explained that a great deal of work had been undertaken in schools to enable young people to identify themselves as carers such as board games, etc. The identification of young carers was also a key criteria within the Estyn Inspection framework, PSE sessions in schools also helped young people recognise their role as carer.

The Head of Children's Services commented that there was a dedicated role in Families First to support young carers and the numbers of young carers supported were monitored.

### **Priority 8 Domiciliary Care:**

In response to a Member's question regarding sustainability and delivery of domiciliary care, the Head of Adult Services explained that the Directorate were looking at flexibility in domiciliary care contracts and raising awareness of the benefits of working within this field and were targeting specific groups e.g. veterans, retired people and mums (contracts between school hours). It was suggested that a Members Briefing session be arranged to inform Members on the innovative ways of delivering Domiciliary Care.

The Committee AGREED this course of action.

With regard to the increase in Domiciliary Care Providers on the Blaenau Gwent framework from 5 to 10, the Head of Adult Services said that Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly CBC collaborated jointly to establish a list of accredited and approved Service Providers to deliver the support at home service. Some citizens with complex needs required 2 or 3 carers at a time and it could be that one Care Provider operating in a neighbouring authority could also have a presence in Blaenau Gwent. This provided flexibility and more efficient cover of geographical locations.

Councillor Mandy Moore left the meeting at this juncture.

In response to a Member's question regarding checks on Care Providers, the Head of Adult Services said that Care contracts

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	<p>were monitored, social workers undertook reviews and questionnaires were sent to citizens using the service to identify any issues. Contracts could be cancelled if any major issues were identified. The Directorate also worked with the Regulator, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), regarding contract compliance.</p> <p>The Director of Social Services commented that sustainability of domiciliary care was a national issue not just a local issue with some rural authorities having difficulties in recruitment. In some cases, caring for citizens with complex needs could be stressful and staff could earn the same wages elsewhere but without the stress of caring for an individual.</p> <p>A Member commented that Carers were not suitably recognised for the important work they undertake.</p> <p>The Head of Adult Services responded that the registration of the Domiciliary Care Service as a profession was supported. Social Care Wales could provide an end of year report on the risks associated with regulating this area of work and the impact regulations have made on this particular service.</p> <p>A Member requested that a progress report on Domiciliary Care be included in the Forward Work Programme for 2020/21.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED this course of action.</p> <p>The Committee FURTHER AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Members support progress in the 8 priority areas and the Directorate continue to provide progress updates on an annual basis to the Scrutiny Committee as outlined in the report.</p> <p>Councillor J.P. Morgan left the meeting at this juncture.</p>	
<p><b>No. 7</b></p>	<p><b><u>UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF THE MY SUPPORT TEAM</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children's Services which was presented to provide an update on the work of the My Support Team since it became operational in May 2019.</p> <p>The Head of Children's Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p>	

A Member enquired if consideration had been given to setting up a Local Authority Children's Care Home. The Head of Children's Services said this was probably not an option for consideration, children's care homes were difficult to manage due to the complexity of issues affecting some children and young people. There were four private residential care homes for children and young people in Blaenau Gwent and currently only two children were placed in these homes. It was sometimes necessary for some children to be placed outside the area due to safeguarding issues.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the positive work My Support Team had undertaken in demonstrating good outcomes for our children looked after and the positive impact the work of the team had on the Children's Services budget be acknowledged.

**No. 8**

**FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - 2ND APRIL 2020**

Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.

The Director of Social Services advised that the report on Preventative Model of Service to meet future social care demand would not be available until the new cycle.

The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 2nd April, 2020 be approved.