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THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

10th September 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee will be held in remotely via Microsoft Teams on Thursday, 17th September, 2020 at 10.00 am.

Please note that a pre and post meeting will be held 30 minutes prior to the start and following the conclusion of the meeting for members of the committee.

Yours faithfully

Michelle Morris
Managing Director

AGENDA

Pages

1. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation will be provided if requested.

We welcome correspondence in the medium of Welsh or English. / Croesawn ohebiaith trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.

2. **APOLOGIES**

To receive.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATION**

To consider any declarations of interests and dispensations made.

4. **TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

To consider.

5. **SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES** 5 - 12

To receive the Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 13th February, 2020.

(Please note the Minutes are submitted for points of accuracy only)

6. **ACTION SHEET - 13TH FEBRUARY 2020** 13 - 14

To receive the Action Sheet.

7. **PROPOSED SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21** 15 - 20

To consider the report of the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.

8. **SOCIAL SERVICES RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC** 21 - 30

To consider the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.

To: Councillor S. Thomas (Chair)
Councillor K. Rowson (Vice-Chair)
Councillor D. Bevan
Councillor G. Collier
Councillor G. A. Davies
Councillor G. L. Davies
Councillor P. Edwards
Councillor L. Elias

Councillor K. Hayden
Councillor J. Holt
Councillor M. Moore
Councillor G. Paulsen
Councillor T. Sharrem
Councillor B. Summers
Councillor T. Smith

All other Members (for information)
Manager Director
Chief Officers

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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

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S.C. THOMAS (CHAIR)

Councillors: K. Rowson
 D. Bevan
 M. Day
 P. Edwards
 K. Hayden
 J. Holt
 J. Millard
 M. Moore
 J.P. Morgan
 T. Sharrem
 T. Smith

AND: 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	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G.A. Davies, L. Elias and G. Paulsen.</p>	

<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></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>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 13TH JANUARY, 2020</u></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><u>Item 7 - Corporate Parenting Progress Report</u></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"> • 3 – completed and gained apprenticeship and/or employment. • 1 – still in training • 1 – decided to find own pathway into employment • 1 – unable to continue due to health issues • 1 – due to start <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>LIVING INDEPENDENTLY IN THE 21ST CENTURY STRATEGY – ANNUAL PROGRESS UPDATE 2019/20</u></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> <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.</p>	

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 Member to liaise with the Head of Growing Space.

Head of
Adult
Services

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.

Director of Social Services

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.

Head of Adult Services

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.

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.

Head of Adult Services

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 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.

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.

A Member commented that Carers were not suitably recognised for the important work they undertake.

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.

A Member requested that a progress report on Domiciliary Care be included in the Forward Work Programme for 2020/21.

Head of
Adult
Services

The Committee AGREED this course of action.

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.

Councillor J.P. Morgan left the meeting at this juncture.

No. 7	<u>UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF THE MY SUPPORT TEAM</u>	
	<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> <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.</p> <p>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.</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 13TH FEBRUARY, 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	

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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Action Sheet

Social Services Scrutiny Committee – 13th February 2020

Item	Action to be Taken	By Whom	Action Taken
6	<p><u>Living Independently in the 21st Century Strategy – Annual Progress Update 2019/20</u></p> <p>Priority 3 Day Opportunities / Community Options: Growing Space contact to be provided to Cllr Malcolm Day.</p> <p>Priority 4 Assistive Technology: Article in press. Link to be provided for Members information.</p> <p>Priority 6 Accommodation: A Member requested information on the numbers on the waiting list for housing accommodation for people with disabilities.</p> <p>Priority 8 Domiciliary Care: A Members Briefing session to be arranged re innovative ways of delivering domiciliary care.</p> <p>A progress report on Domiciliary Care to be included in the Forward Work Programme for 2020/21.</p>	<p>Alyson Hoskins</p> <p>Damian McCann</p> <p>Alyson Hoskins</p> <p>Alyson Hoskins / Democratic Team</p> <p>Alyson Hoskins / Scrutiny & Democratic Officer</p>	<p>Contact provided</p> <p>The article appears as an appendix within the Progress report on the Telecare Enabled Care Provision on today's agenda</p> <p>Member Briefing Session arranged for 18th June 2020.</p> <p>Report to be included in the Forward Work Programme for 2020/21.</p>

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Agenda Item 7

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **17th September 2020**

Report Subject: **Proposed Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme 2020-21**

Portfolio Holder: **Leader / Executive Member Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Councillor Stephen Thomas, Chair of Social Services Scrutiny Committee**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
July 2020	July 2020	03.09.20			17.09.20	Executive FWP – 02.09.20	Council FWP – 24.9.20	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present the Social Services Scrutiny Work Programme for 2020-21 (Appendix 1) and to seek approval from Committee.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Scrutiny Work Programmes are key aspects of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and support the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the Forward Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's recently revised Corporate Plan, agreed by the Council on 23rd July 2020, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 The Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programmes are also aligned to the Audit Committee, Executive Committee and Council Forward Work Programmes.
 - 2.4 The Work Programme is a fluid document and there is flexibility to allow for regular review between the Chair and the Committee.
 - 2.5 Informal Scrutiny Briefing Sessions were held in July 2020, in order for all Scrutiny Members to contribute to the Forward Work Programme, prior to formal approval of the Forward Work Programmes at the first Scrutiny Committees in September 2020.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 The work programmes have been endorsed by the relevant departments of the Council.
 - 3.2 The work programmes have been considered and endorsed by the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny.

3.3 **Option 1**

To agree the Forward Work Programme for the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.

Option 2

To suggest any amendments prior to agreeing the Forward Work Programme.

DRAFT Social Services Scrutiny Forward Work Programme

Dates / Deadlines	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Executive / Council
Thursday 17th September 2020 Deadline: 1 st September 2020	1. COVID-19	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the response undertaken by Social Services to the COVID-19 pandemic	Damien McCann	Executive
Thursday 5th November 2020 Deadline: 20 th October 2020	1. Children Looked After	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the progress in relation to the Children Looked After strategy	Tanya Evans	Executive Information
	2. Integrated Care Fund	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the future and progress of the Integrated Care Fund	Alyson Hoskins	Executive Information
	Independent Reviewing Officer Report	Information Only For Members Information Pack	Tanya Evans	
Thursday 10th December 2020 Deadline: 24 th November 2020	1. Regional Partnership Board Update	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the decisions taken by the Regional Partnership Board	Damien McCann	Executive
	2. National Adoption Service Annual Report	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed about National and Regional progress of Adoption services	Tanya Evans	Executive Information
	3. Director of Social Services Quarter 1 and 2 update	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed about the performance and progress of the Social Services Directorate	Damien McCann	Executive Information

DRAFT Social Services Scrutiny Forward Work Programme

Provisional Dates / Deadlines	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose (if known)	Lead Officer	Executive / Council Meeting
Thursday 21st January 2021 Deadline: 5 th January 2021	1. Corporate Parenting Progress Report	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the progress made against the Corporate Parenting Action Plan	Tanya Evans	Executive Information
	2. Community Meals	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the progress made since the transfer of the service to Social Services	Alyson Hoskins	Executive
Thursday 11th March 2021 Deadline: 23 rd February 2021	1. Living Independently in the 21 st Century Strategy	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the progress made against the priorities within the strategy	Alyson Hoskins	Executive information
	2. My Support Team	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the progress of the team in returning children from residential placements	Tanya Evans	Executive Information
Thursday 22nd April 2021 Deadline: 6 th April 2021	1. Children Looked After	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the progress in relation to the Children Looked After strategy	Tanya Evans	Executive Information
	2. Regional Partnership Board Update	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the decisions taken by the Regional Partnership Board	Damien McCann	Executive
	3. Domiciliary Care	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the work undertaken around domiciliary care provision	Alyson Hoskins	Executive Information

DRAFT Social Services Scrutiny Forward Work Programme

Provisional Dates / Deadlines	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Executive / Council Meeting
TBA	Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy in Adult Social Care		Alyson Hoskins	
TBA	Children's and Community Grant		Tanya Evans	
TBA	Housing Support Grant		Alyson Hoskins	
TBA	Directors Annual Report		Damien McCann	

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Agenda Item 8

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **17th September 2020**

Report Subject: **Social Services Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr John Mason, Executive Member for Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Damien McCann, Corporate Director of Social Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
06/08/20	20/08/20	03.09.20			17/09/20	14.10.20		

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to provide Members with information on how the Social Services Directorate has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic over the last 4 months. It is particularly important that Members are able to get a flavour of the work that is being done, not just in relation to Covid-19, but in continuing our services to ensure that our most vulnerable residents and children continue to get the care and support they require, both in their own homes and registered settings.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the most dramatic and far reaching events to impact on everyday life. Whilst departments like Social Services are still in part in the responsive phase, there is a need for reflection on how we responded to this pandemic in order to inform and shape the recovery phase, as well as prepare for the possibility of a future outbreak or second wave.
- 2.2 At the beginning of the pandemic, the worst-case scenario was that hospitals and the wider Health and Social Care system would be unable to cope with anticipated massive numbers of patients. This first peak of this pandemic has been less intensive than previously predicted. Hospital capacity and care support in the community was able to cope. The significant input from staff and volunteers at all levels across organisations was extremely positive which enabled services to adapt to change in working conditions and was key to the response across Blaenau Gwent and the region.
- 2.3 It is unclear whether in the future there will be further resurgences of COVID-19. The measures now in place, such as changes to societal safeguards, social distancing, restricting travel, and limiting of commercial and leisure

services, will take time to illustrate the impact that the easing of these restrictions might have on infection transmission rates. The Health and Social Care system already experiences seasonal pressures in the winter period, and the prospect of a rise in COVID-19 infections later in 2020 or 2021, cannot be ruled out.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 The Report has been considered by the Corporate Leadership Team.

Option 1

Members are asked to scrutinise the report on the Social Services Directorate's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and contribute to the continuous assessment of the effectiveness of the directorate by making appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee.

Option 2

Accept the report as provided.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

The Social Services Directorate's response to COVID-19 links to the following key priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater;
- To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering health and social care involving key partners and our communities;
- To put effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

Welsh Government identified £40 Million to support the Adult Social Care sector in Wales in the fight against COVID-19 which was administered through the Emergency Hardship Fund. This involved the Council agreeing to fund additional spend related to the COVID-19 outbreak by Social Services and its commissioned services and then to submit claims for reimbursement from the Welsh Government for the money that the Council had committed. It is likely that the vast majority of additional funding we have issued will be reimbursed by Welsh Government but no doubt there will be some funding they will challenge and question which may result in additional cost to the Social Services budget.

5.2 The Directorate worked with colleagues across Gwent Local Authority's to put forward a proposal for the allocation of funding. Directors of Social Services agreed to a regional approach to funding care homes with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, with a focus on sustainability. Three phases were

proposed, firstly we wanted to rapidly provide a sum per registered bed to cover the 10-week period of the fund across Gwent, to support with their increasing costs and to maintain their sustainability during these difficult times. Secondly, we were then going to target support to those in greatest need and then finally we were going to look to support the domiciliary care market to retain their workforce.

- 5.3 However, this approach was not accepted by Welsh Government (WG) and did not meet the financial terms of the Emergency Hardship Fund (in full); with local authorities being asked to distinguish between healthcare and social care provision in care homes, which was another layer of administration for providers to consider when processing the claims. Health Board Chief Executives have also raised sustainability of homes and the impact of patient flow if providers seek to close their doors due to financial viability.
- 5.4 Claims have been submitted to WG for funding from the Hardship fund for the period March to July 2020 for £2.4m to fund additional costs incurred as a result of the Council's response to the pandemic, of which £1.06m relates to Social Services expenditure.
- 5.5 The table below provides an analysis of expenditure claimed from the Hardship fund for the period April to July 2020:

Table 1 – Analysis of Expenditure

	<u>£</u>	<u>Comments</u>
<u>Children's Services</u>		
Staffing Costs	80,957	
Mobile Phones for Parental Contact	402	
<u>Adult Services</u>		
PPE	203,969	
Staffing costs	40,033	
GWICES equipment store and PPE distribution	25,292	
Direct Payments	861	
External Care Providers financial support	646,074	Financial support for April to June 2020, and covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional staffing costs - Increased cost of enhanced infection control - ICT costs - Loss of income from voids as a result of Covid-19
In House Provider Services	58,483	

In addition to this the Council has estimated a significant loss in income mainly due to a suspension of services and reconfiguration of services in line with COVID response:

- Cwrt Mytton – income reduction of £18K - attributed to inability to provide weekly respite
- Community Options – reduction of £185K due to service closure
- Augusta House – reduction of £55k due to current service closure

5.6 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

To minimise the impact of COVID-19 on the Social Services budget the department has sought evidence of additional costs as a result of COVID-19 from our commissioned providers prior to paying for these additional costs, so we are confident given our approach that the vast majority of these costs will be reimbursed from the Emergency Hardship Fund. If WG challenge or refuse any of these additional costs, then we will provide further evidence if necessary. However as indicated above there may be some additional costs that do not meet the criteria established by WG for the Emergency Hardship Fund but we anticipate these will be relatively small.

5.7 ***Legal***

There are no legal implications within the report, but already there have been a number of reviews undertaken by different bodies and it is likely in the future there may be a public enquiry into the overall handling of the Coronavirus in Wales.

5.8 ***Personnel***

There are no personnel issues within the report other than to say it is important that we recognise the work of all the front line care staff including foster carers and their supervisors /managers who have, as always, pulled out all the stops to ensure services were maintained despite the anxieties of some we really can't praise them all highly enough.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Children's Services

Across Children's Services we have maintained the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) service throughout the pandemic and have prioritised home visits to safeguarding investigations, children on the Child Protection Register, Children Looked After and care leavers and those children on the 'edge of care'. In Children's Services all cases have been risk rated by team managers and these decisions are continually being reviewed. Prior to any visits by social care staff, we adopted a triage approach which consisted of contacting the family/individual to check if they were self-isolating or presenting

symptoms of COVID-19, if they were the visits would be delayed if possible. If due to immediate safeguarding concerns the visit needed to take place staff would comply with public health advice in relation to social distancing, hygiene and PPE if required. Staff have continued to work from our 2 main offices at Anvil Court and Beaufort Road. Each team has provided a skeleton staff to work from the offices on a rota basis.

6.2 Child Protection Conferences, Core Groups and Reviews have been undertaken virtually as have all Court attendances. However, contested Court Hearings and Final Hearings have been postponed. A number of digital platforms have been used to undertake these virtual meetings. These have included teleconferencing, SKYPE and Microsoft TEAMS.

6.3 The number of Children Looked After currently stands at 214 (down from a high of 237). The My Support Team has continued to engage with our most complex children in residential care by providing face to face support in line with public health guidance. We have seen a decrease in the numbers of children in residential care reduce from a high of 18 down to 13.

6.4 Children's Services have been able to continue working throughout the pandemic outbreak and meet the needs of our children and families, all teams including our preventative teams have kept in touch with parents and children virtually. Three of our Flying Start children's hubs have remained open for children of keyworkers throughout the pandemic. Some of the Families First staff have been redeployed to help the Supporting Change Team to support those children on the 'edge of care' as this is one of our highest priorities and seen as an even higher risk area during the COVID-19 crisis. A small number of our Flying Start staff were redeployed into adult domiciliary care. Our Early Year's Child Care and Play Team have played a crucial role during the crisis. They have worked closely with colleagues in Education to ensure school/child care provision was available for keyworker staff and the most vulnerable children in the borough. The Early Years and Child Care Team have provided significant support to child care providers during COVID-19 which has played a large part in 64% of providers remaining open throughout the crisis.

6.5 **Adult Services**

Across Adult Services we have maintained the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) services throughout the pandemic and have prioritised home visits to families and individuals to undertake safeguarding investigations, Adult Services have continued to discharge patients from hospital (including those recovering from COVID-19) and any emergency assessments. In Adults all cases have been risk rated by team managers and these decisions are continually being reviewed. Prior to any visits by social care staff, we adopted a triage approach which consisted of contacting the family/individual to check if they were self-isolating or presenting symptoms of COVID-19, if they were the visits would be delayed if possible. If due to immediate safeguarding concerns the visit needed to take place staff would comply with public health advice in relation to social distancing, hygiene and PPE if required. Staff have continued to work from our 2 main offices at Anvil Court and the Vitcc with staff working on a rota basis from office and home.

- 6.6 The Adult Services Department at the outset of the pandemic had to close our day services and respite care facility to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable people and to maintain social distancing and to ensure resources were concentrated at caring for people in their own homes and care homes. However, we have managed to have our respite facility available in case of an emergency to prevent carer breakdown, although we have not needed to use it at the moment. Careful consideration will need to be given to the timing of the reopening of these services.
- 6.7 We have successfully redeployed staff from community options to our care homes and home care teams to provide cover when staff became sick or more residents require 1:1 support due to isolation. We have seen a reduction in the care families require from domiciliary care agencies. This has been principally driven by family members providing care while they are off work and the fear that domiciliary care staff may transmit the virus into their home's. It is felt that demand will increase as more people return to work.
- 6.8 We have also supported the community hubs set up for those shielding and vulnerable in our communities, our community connectors and supporting people staff have been instrumental with corporate colleagues in delivering this service to vulnerable people in our communities.
- 6.9 From the start of lockdown Adult Services have had to work/ be available 7 days a week to ensure we could react appropriately to the issues being faced by us, i.e. getting recovering COVID-19 patients home, ensuring our care homes and domiciliary care agencies were being supported and provided with PPE and reacting and supporting our NHS colleagues to maintain bed capacity within the hospital system. This has meant our Adult Services staff working on the wards at our community and acute hospitals including working on the COVID-19 wards.
- 6.10 Social Services took over the operational running of the Community Meals service from the 1st April 20, at the point of taking the service on 4 of the 7 drivers had to be shielded as they were all over 70 years of age or vulnerable, whilst one was off on long term sick. We redeployed some of our community option staff to drive the vehicles and also due to the social distance rules only one driver could go out on a round rather than 2 staff previously. Since we took over the services the hot meals have increased from 91 meals a day on average to 128 meals a day on average. This figure will fluctuate on a weekly basis due to starters and leavers.
- 6.11 In terms of staffing, we did see initially a reduction in our staffing capacity early on as staff were expected to shield or classed as vulnerable, however where these staff can work from home we have facilitated this. Also a number of staff went off self-isolating due to symptoms for 14 days as we did not have access to testing at that point. A similar scenario occurred within our commissioned care homes and with our domiciliary care providers, however within the last couple of months both Local Authority staff and commissioned staff are at good levels.

6.12 National Issues

As you would have seen, national attention has been drawn to the supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), testing and outbreaks of Covid-19 in care homes.

If we take **PPE**, then initially there were difficulties around the supply of PPE encountered with supplies forwarded from the Welsh Government (WG) Pandemic store to local authorities (LAs) who for the first time were asked to supply PPE to local services providers who were in short supply (prior to this those providers were responsible for supplying their own PPE). For the five LAs in the former Gwent area, deliveries are made to the integrated community equipment store in Newport for onward delivery to individual Local Authorities. These deliveries are for both local authority and independent sector staff. Initially we used Augusta House for the supplies to be stored at and providers who required supplies picked these up from Augusta House, more lately we have moved the stores to the depot in Brynmawr. Social Services staff are continuing to distribute PPE on a weekly basis to all Social Care Providers working across Blaenau Gwent, our direct payment personal assistants and where requested by family carers.

- 6.13 Over the past few months and following representation at all levels, the situation with regards to PPE has improved significantly with regular deliveries and sufficient supplies to meet demand and internally we have continued to try to source our own PPE to reduce demand on WG stock, we have had some success thanks to colleagues in procurement across Gwent. Appendix 1 provides the amount and type of PPE that we have distributed to our commissioned providers of care and support and to our own staff over the last 4 months.
- 6.14 The position around PPE has been made more complex by frequent changing guidance from Public Health Wales through Welsh Government which has led to a level of misunderstanding amongst staff around the actual PPE they required. Despite this we are holding our own. Staff have the PPE they require to do their jobs safely across Blaenau Gwent.
- 6.15 **Testing** - Testing of staff exhibiting Covid-19 symptoms has been particularly problematic. At the commencement of the outbreak testing was very difficult to access due to prioritisation of NHS colleagues. When testing of social care staff did become available we were limited to 15 places per LA per day with the only testing facility available to staff being at the Cardiff City Stadium. This was obviously difficult for staff who could not drive nor had access to a car, or had the additional concern of driving when feeling unwell due to the symptoms of COVID 19. Appendix 2 identifies the number of tests on staff carried out in Blaenau Gwent up until the 3rd July 2020.
- 6.16 Testing of patients coming out of hospital was not put in place until the 29th April 2020, so prior to this discharges were occurring without any testing which may have resulted in some of these bringing the virus into the homes. Couple

this with no or limited staff testing in Care Homes to begin with created some of the problems that until recently we were having to deal with daily.

- 6.17 Thankfully the position has improved greatly over the past 3 months. The limit of 15 places has been removed, staff now have a choice of which testing station to attend, together with the offer of home testing and access to the Welsh Government portal to book tests. All Care Home staff and residents had been tested across Gwent by mid-June and for the last 8 weeks we have had testing of care home staff on a weekly basis and from the 24th August this will be on a fortnightly basis. Challenges remain in relation to the speed that test results are processed by the laboratories due to restricted capacity. This is due to improve from September 2020.
- 6.18 **Care Homes-** members will have seen over the last weeks and months the coverage around outbreaks in care homes. In Blaenau Gwent we own and run one care home for older people and commission services with a further 14 privately owned homes. Unfortunately, consistent and accurate information around the levels of outbreaks has been extremely difficult to obtain and we like all other LA's in Wales have struggled to get an accurate and timely picture in the private sector. Blaenau Gwent had the first case of COVID-19 within a Care Home in Wales in early March 20 and subsequently there have been a number of deaths related to COVID-19 in Care Homes across Gwent.
- 6.19 We are now collecting key data from all care homes across Gwent and supporting and ensuring rapid responses to outbreaks by ensuring all residents and staff are tested. Of the 15 Care homes in Blaenau Gwent 6 have had either staff or residents tested positive and 9 have had no outbreaks at all. As of the 4th August 2020 there are currently 14 clean homes within Blaenau Gwent, which means they have never had an outbreak or have not had an outbreak for the last 28 days.
- 6.20 ***Expected outcome for the public***
The work the Social Services Directorate has been doing during the outbreak of COVID-19 has been to ensure we minimise the harm of COVID -19 and to keep people as safe as possible from contracting this virus whilst continuing to deliver services to those who have required our help.
- 6.21 **Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)**
The Directorate has had to work at speed to try and ensure our communities safety against contracting the virus and has often had to make decision without the consultation or engagement of the public which has often been as a result of implementing Welsh Government and Public Health Wales guidance speedily. If at all possible we have tried to consult with providers who have delivered services to the public.
- 6.22 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**
Social Services are still in part in the responsive phase, however there is a need for reflection on how we responded to this pandemic in order to inform and shape the recovery phase, as well as prepare for the possibility of a future

outbreak or second wave. There have already been a number of reviews to ensure we learn from any of our mistakes and continue with our successes as we look forward and be better prepared for any future spikes in COVID-19.

6.23 Preventative focus

Social Services have tried to be proactive to prevent the spread of COVID-19, we have continued to make contact with vulnerable individuals, children and families throughout the pandemic as well as continued to visit where it has been necessary and safe to do so. This has been to try and prevent the spread of the virus but also ensure people are able to continue to manage during the lockdown period.

6.24 Collaboration / partnership working

In many cases responding to the pandemic has strengthened joint working at local, regional and national levels, with more agile and responsive decision making and action planning being enabled. Relationships with providers have been strengthened by the continual dialogue, with local authorities, and others, supporting homes with the provision of advice and updates, and sharing learning.

6.25 Integration (across service areas)

Health and Social Care have had to work closely together to reduce the potential harm of the Coronavirus outbreak for the public, this has included working in an integrated way to ensure we protect and safeguarding vulnerable individuals during these unprecedented times.

6.26 EqIA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)

There is not a requirement for this report to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 This report is a one off report to reflect on the work undertaken by the Social Services Directorate over the last 5 months of the Coronavirus outbreak within Blaenau Gwent. If and should there be a further outbreak of the virus then we would bring a further report back to identify how and what we were able to do as a Directorate to continue to support our most vulnerable residents and children to continue to get the care and support they require, both in their own homes and registered settings.

8. Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 and 2 (see below)

Appendix 1

Please find following PPE allocated by Blaenau Gwent from 24th March to the 27th July (inclusive):

Equipment	Number of Items
Face masks	408,800
Latex gloves	366,950
Disposable aprons	221,320
Full face visors	5,625
Total	1,002,695

Appendix 2

Access to Testing

Please find following numbers of symptomatic staff tested between 9th April and 3rd July (inclusive)*. *This does not include asymptomatic staff who have been tested via the routine care home weekly testing where an average of 3,200 staff are being tested each week across Gwent:*

Category	Numbers tested via LA
Commissioned Providers staff	67
Social Services staff	22
Other Local Authority staff	11
Family Members	21
Total	121

*Please note after the 3rd July any staff member could book a test through the Welsh Government Portal so we no longer having an accurate record of testing.